

MARGINALISED YOUTH INFORMING POLICY AND PRACTICE IN ETHIOPIA AND NEPAL

Across the globe, many young people come of age in circumstances marked by poverty, environmental fragility, and political volatility. Increasingly, NGOs, policymakers, and academics are realising the importance of considering how this level of uncertainty forms the next generation of adults. Research enabled by the [ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research](#) demonstrates how marginalised youth in Ethiopia and Nepal can get their voices heard in policy and practice. In contexts of environmental fragility and political change, ministries and governmental organisations have worked with the YOUR World team to influence community, national, and international discourses on childhood, youth, and uncertainty and to develop more inclusive regional and national youth policies.

THE CHALLENGE

The research aims to address youth understandings of uncertainty, violence, poverty, and rights in post-conflict and fragile environments, to provide insights into how to support and sustain pathways out of poverty for street-connected and marginalised youth. These young people have been left out or discriminated against because of gender, sexuality, caste, ethnicity, religion, poverty, abusive situations within families, negative school experiences, or due to fragile environments or conflicts amongst communities. They have not been heard in decision-making and policy formulation, and face limited employment opportunities. Many are working in the informal sector, their small businesses and hard labour at best not supported; at worst illegal. Some want to leave the country in search of new, more hopeful futures.



Cover photo: Youth analysing how they navigate uncertainty in the earthquake affected hills of Nepal.

Credit: Shubhendra Man Shrestha, 2018.

THE RESEARCH

YOUR World Research is a collaboration between universities and civil society organisations.

The research, conducted from 2016 to early 2019, used qualitative case study interviews and engaging, participatory visual and moving methods: mapping, rivers of life, photo narrative, network and support diagrams. The methodology was co-constructed in Ethiopia and Nepal with marginalised young people.

In each country, YOUR World worked with around 500 youth, conducting detailed, focused case studies with 250 marginalised young people across four research sites. From drought- and earthquake-prone sites, to small towns and capital cities the team collected qualitative comparative data alongside participatory research to illuminate the realities of young lives.

In both countries, the research found marginalised young people to be resilient in the face of difficulties. In Ethiopia, many have dropped-out of school, work in the informal sector, and view successful migrants as their role models. Young people do not see formal education as a pathway to support their families and so often migrate to towns to find work. In smaller urban areas, services are not adequate for the most marginalised, such as access to health services, and decently paid work. This can result in them becoming street-connected or turning to risky and illegal forms of employment as strategies for survival. Many escape poverty by migrating to Gulf countries in search of alternative futures.

In Nepal, despite many challenges, poor and marginalised youth are creative and take initiatives to support their families. While most young people in the study had dropped-out of school to support their families, some balanced education with part time or seasonal work. Nevertheless, a lack of skills-based education is preventing access to decent jobs and livelihoods. Frustration has led some to drug abuse, living on the street, or leaving the country to find work. Rejecting traditional lives, their definitions of marginalisation reach beyond indicators of caste, ethnicity, and poverty.

THE IMPACT

In Nepal, 29 young people in Kathmandu received skills development training from project partner organisation HomeNet. In addition, youth abusing substances in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia have requested training so they can set up small businesses.

In Ethiopia, project partner NGO, CHADET, has committed to developing its policies and designing interventions with marginalised youth based on findings from this research.

In Nepal, based on recommendation from the research team, ActionAid Nepal, along with HomeNet, has developed strategies focusing on marginalised young people, looking at youth definitions of marginalisation that include experiences of poverty and abuse and extend beyond gender, caste, and ethnic group. At the local level, elected local government representatives in Kathmandu, Sindhupalchowk, and Kapilvastu are keen to develop programmes targeting youth based on findings from this research.

In Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, the regional representative from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has requested advice on training for the most marginalised youth.

At national level, in Ethiopia, the former Ministry of Youth and Sports (now the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth) revised the draft *2018 National Youth Status Report and Indicators of Ethiopia* based on findings from this research. Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) asked the team to inform national curriculum development for training marginalised youth. Representatives from the Ethiopian ministries and TVET are also jointly holding a national youth seminar in Addis Ababa to create a space for marginalised youth voices to inform the development of youth policy nationally.

In Nepal, the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports has pledged to develop programmes targeting youth based on findings from this research.

The Child Welfare Board intends to use the research findings to inform its ongoing strategy.

The Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), Nepal, has started a forum to discuss the issues of marginalised youth. CERID, based at Tribhuvan University, brings together academics, government officials, development workers, university students, and practitioners, raising interest in marginalised youth amongst university teachers and students.

The research continues to shape discourse, leading Matiya Assefa Chefa, Director-General for Youth Participation at the Ethiopian Ministry of Women, Children and Youth to say, 'This research will change the lives of youth across the country in years to come'.

FURTHER READING

Goldsmiths, University of London (2019) [Youth Uncertainty Rights World Research](#)

Johnson, V. (2017) 'Moving Beyond Voice in Children and Young People's Participation', *Action Research* 15.1: 104–24

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YOUR World Research (n.d.) 'Insecurity and Uncertainty: Marginalised Youth Living Rights in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations in Nepal and Ethiopia', Briefing

YOUR World Research (n.d.) 'Insecurity and Uncertainty: Marginalised Youth Living Rights in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations in Nepal and Ethiopia – Emerging Findings Phase 2/3', Briefing



Insecurity and uncertainty: marginalised youth living rights in fragile and conflict affected situations in Nepal and Ethiopia (also known as Youth Uncertainty Rights (YOUR) World Research)

The research team was funded by ESRC-DFID's Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research, led by Dr Vicky Johnson (PI), Dr Andy West (Co-I), Signe Gosmann, Professor Andrew Church and Dr Mark Erickson. In Ethiopia: Dr Melese Getu, Milki Getachew and Amid Ahmed. In Nepal: Dr Sumon Tuladhar, Shubendra Man Shrestha and Sabitra Neupane. NGO partner directors: ChildHope, Jill Healey; CHADET, Anannia Adamassu; and ActionAid Nepal, Sujeeta Mathema.

THE IMPACT INITIATIVE

For International Development Research

The Impact Initiative seeks to connect policymakers and practitioners with the world-class social science research supported by the ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership, maximising the uptake and impact of research from: (i) the Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research, and (ii) the Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Programme. We seek to identify synergies between these programmes and their grant holders, support them to exploit influencing and engagement opportunities, and facilitate mutual learning. The Impact Initiative is a collaboration between the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the University of Cambridge's Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre.

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CREDITS

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