

Challenges and strengths of a longitudinal cohort study:

Young Lives findings from infancy to young adulthood

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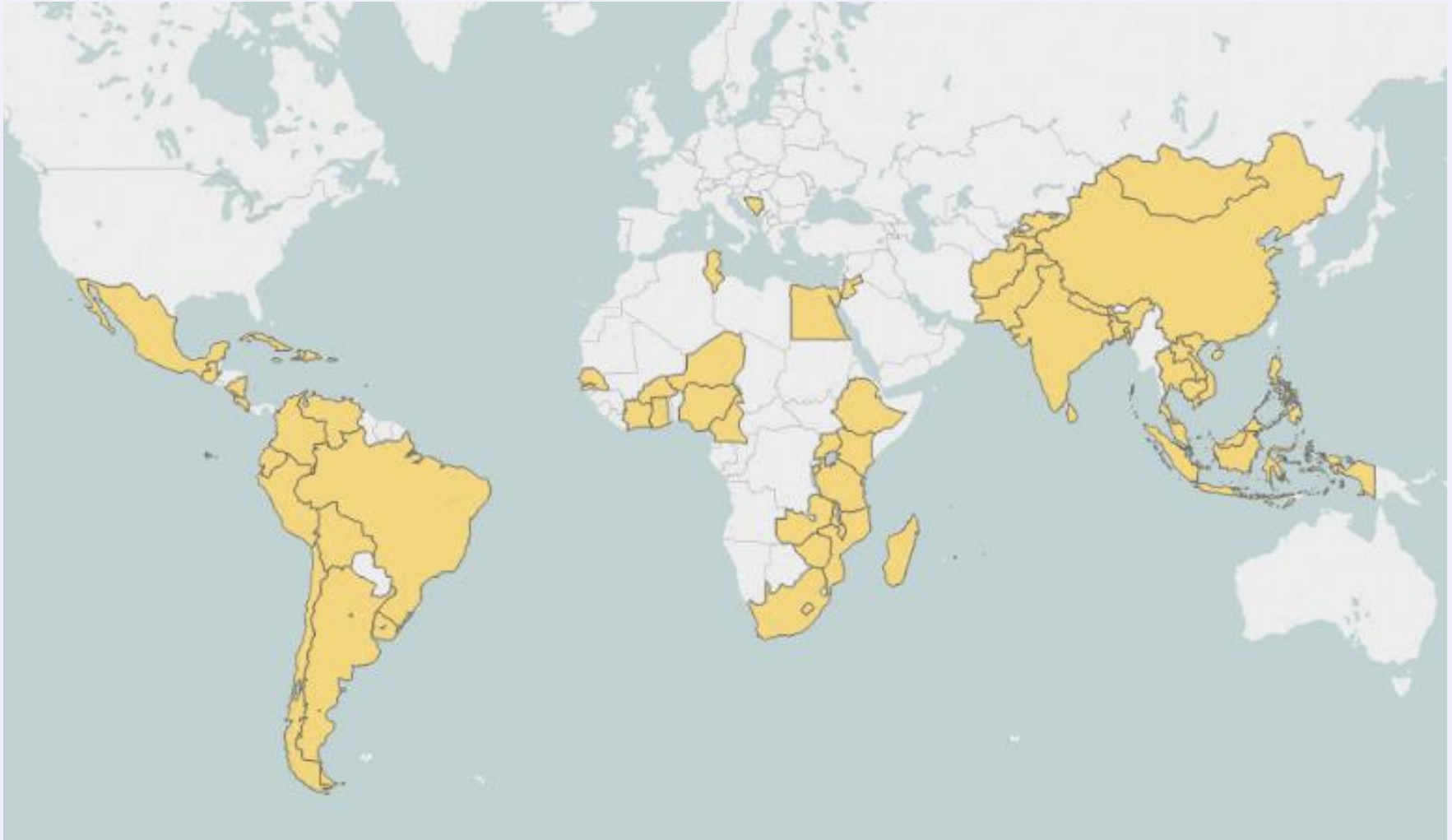
JA Kids conference, May 31th

University of West Indies



@MartaFavara
@ODID_QEH

Longitudinal studies, scarce but not inexistent!



[Source: IFS LMIC LPS Directory](#)



Birth cohort studies are fewer



Outline



- ❑ What is Young Lives?
- ❑ Challenges and achievements of a multi-cohorts, multi-countries longitudinal survey
- ❑ Key research areas and key findings
 - Nutrition
 - Education and skills development
 - Youth and family formation
 - Youth and transition to the labor market



Young Lives **in pills**



- ❑ Interdisciplinary, mixed methods, comparative, cohort-sequential study
- ❑ Established in 2001 with a 15-years horizon
 - partners in each study country
 - core-funded by UK Department of International Development
- ❑ Objectives:
 - Improving understanding of childhood poverty
 - Providing evidence to improve policies & practices
 - Monitoring progress of the MDGs
- ❑ Following nearly 12,000 children in 4 countries: Ethiopia; India (Andhra Pradesh & Telangana); Peru and Vietnam, over 15 years

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Young Lives: study components

Young Lives components

Household survey

- Two age cohorts in each country:
 - 2,000 children born in 2000-01
 - 1,000 children born in 1994-95

Qualitative study

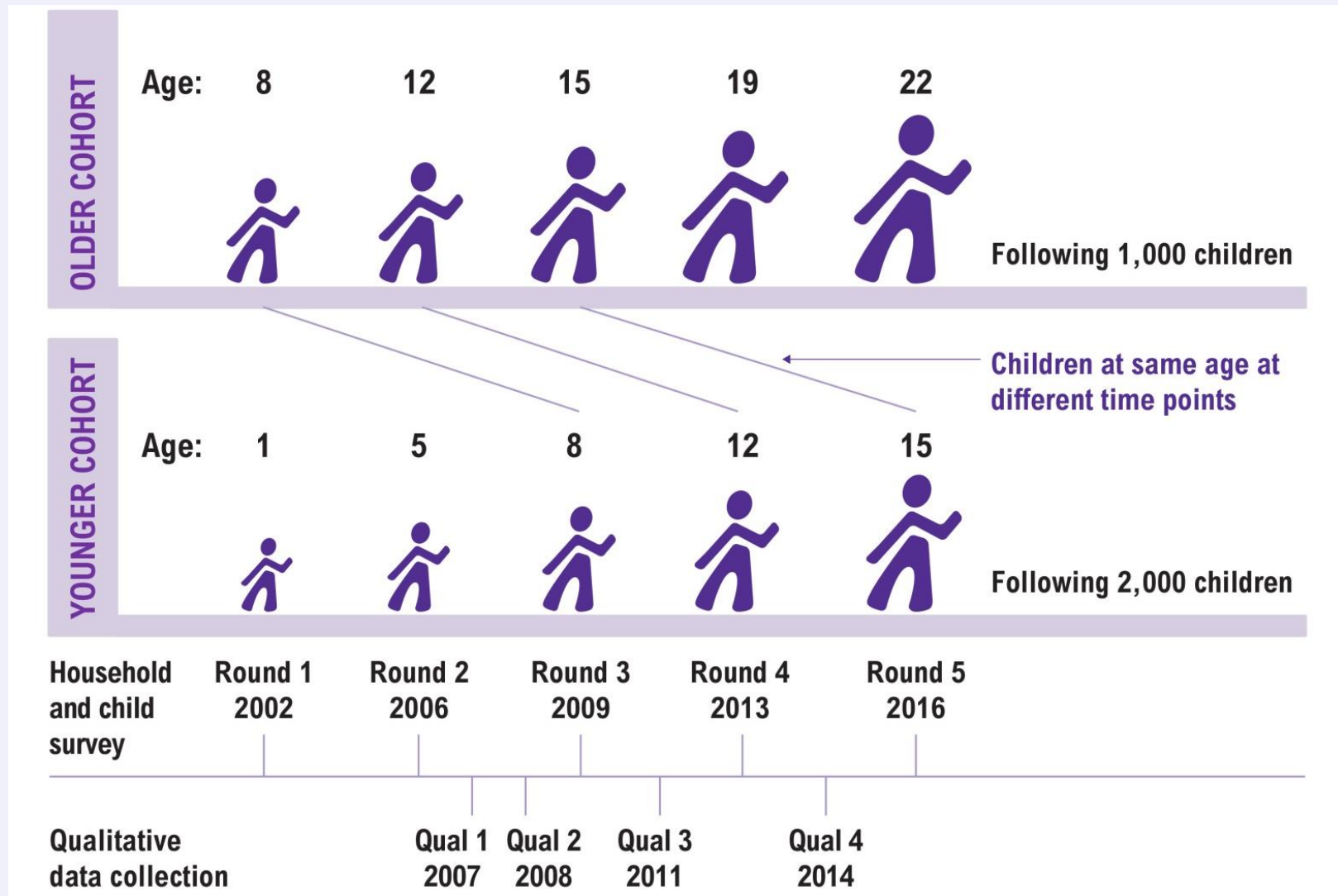
- 4 rounds, first round in 2002
- Nested sample of 50 children in each country

School Effectiveness Study

- All students in a selected sample of schools in the 20 YL sentinel sites



Young Lives: Household survey set up



Young Lives: **sampling design**

- ❑ One country from each major developing region:
 - Countries at different stage of economic development (& political condition)
 - External validity of Young Lives Research funding
 - Learning from the experience of the others
- ❑ Purposively over-sampled poor areas : 20 sites in each country, reflecting country diversity (rural-urban, diverse livelihoods, ethnicity)
- ❑ Sentinel site sampling: four stages (region, district/provinces, sentinel sites, random sampling of children of right age within sites)

Ethiopia



India



Peru



Vietnam



Young Lives: nice features of the data

- ❑ Longitudinal study covering a period of 15 years from early childhood to adulthood
 - Repeated measures of cognitive and soft-skills
 - Health, anthropometrics and education history
- ❑ A life-course approach, very relevant for policy design
 - Early childhood: ECD services, access & impact for poorer children
 - Middle childhood: Potential for learning and health remediation. Schools as delivery platform
 - Adolescence: under-recognised second critical window, particularly for gender differences.
- ❑ 5 generations: across cohorts comparison and intergenerational mobility
 - Parents, younger cohort, older cohort, younger sibling and new generation of babies
 - Younger cohort and Older cohort observed at \approx same age (7 years gap)
 - Younger cohort and Younger siblings observed at \approx same age (3 years gap)
 - Enhance understanding of how outcomes are shaped and how countries changed over time



Multi-cohorts-countries longitudinal survey: Challenges

Challenge 1

Cohort maintenance



Multi-cohorts-countries longitudinal survey: Challenges

Challenge 1

Tracking; in-country field teams; reciprocity and trust

Low attrition: YC: 2.5% (VN)-8.2% (PE); OC: 7.6% (IN)-17.7%(ET)



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Cohort maintenance

Challenge 2

Getting comparable measures over time



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Comparability over time; adapting survey to child age; trade-off *new/old* questions

Panel variables; across cohort comparison (core base variable)



Multi-cohorts-countries longitudinal survey: Challenges

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Cohort maintenance

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Challenge 3

Across countries coordination and comparability



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Challenge 3

Define research priorities; country specific modules; translation & back translation

External validity; measures usable in different contexts; what works in term of policy



Multi-cohorts-countries longitudinal survey: Challenges

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Cohort maintenance

Challenge 2

Getting comparable measures over time

Challenge 3

Across countries coordination and comparability

Challenge 4

Ensure high quality data and friendly access



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Define research priorities; country specific modules; translation & back translation

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Challenge 4

Pilot; data validation and cleaning; limit interview burden; manual and protocols; training; ethics

Data publicly archived (raw & panel); technical notes; data visualizations; data management



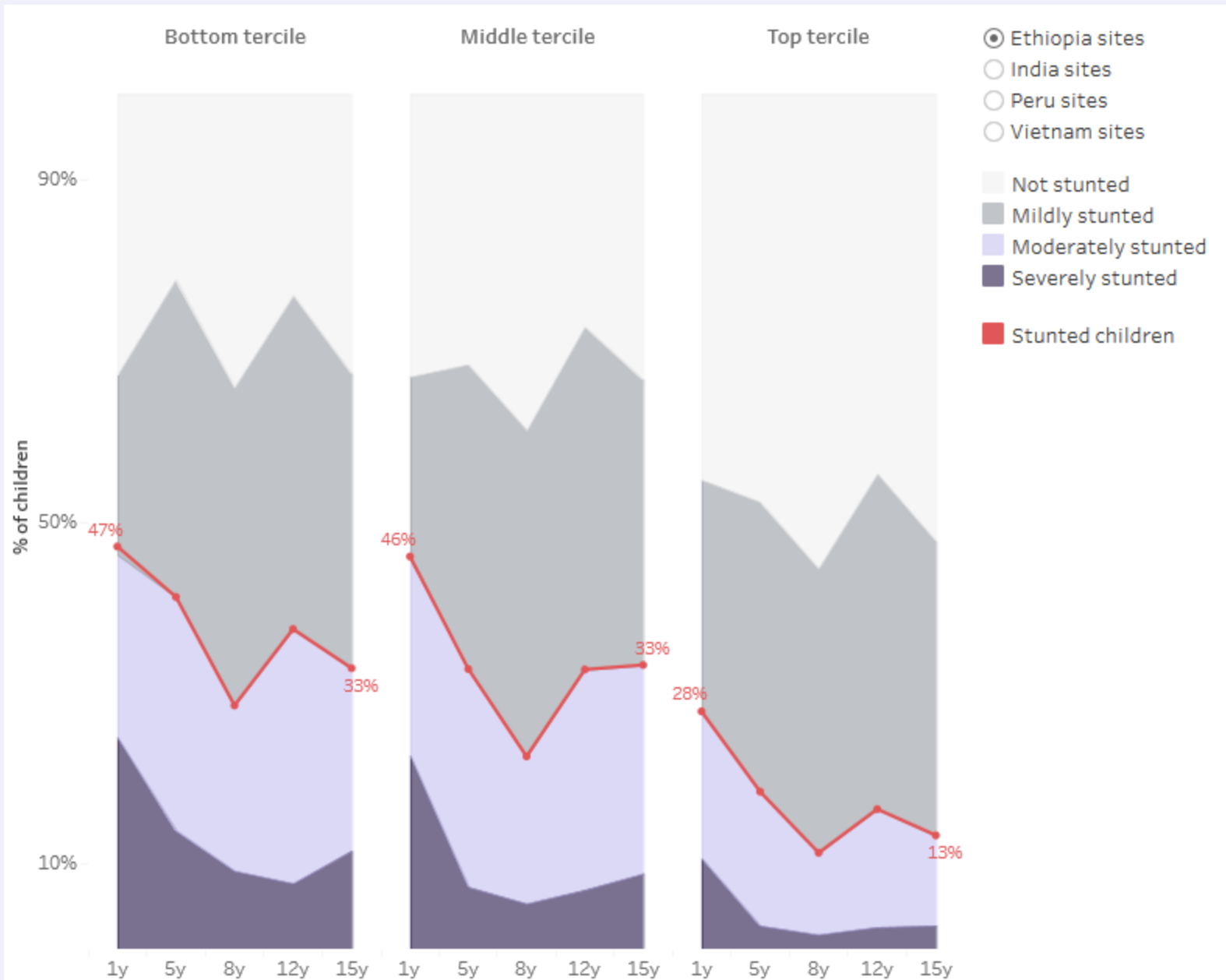
Nutrition

Stunting prevalence, trajectories and recovery

- Significant socio-economic gradients in nutritional status and stunting prevalence



Prevalence and severity of stunting: Ethiopia



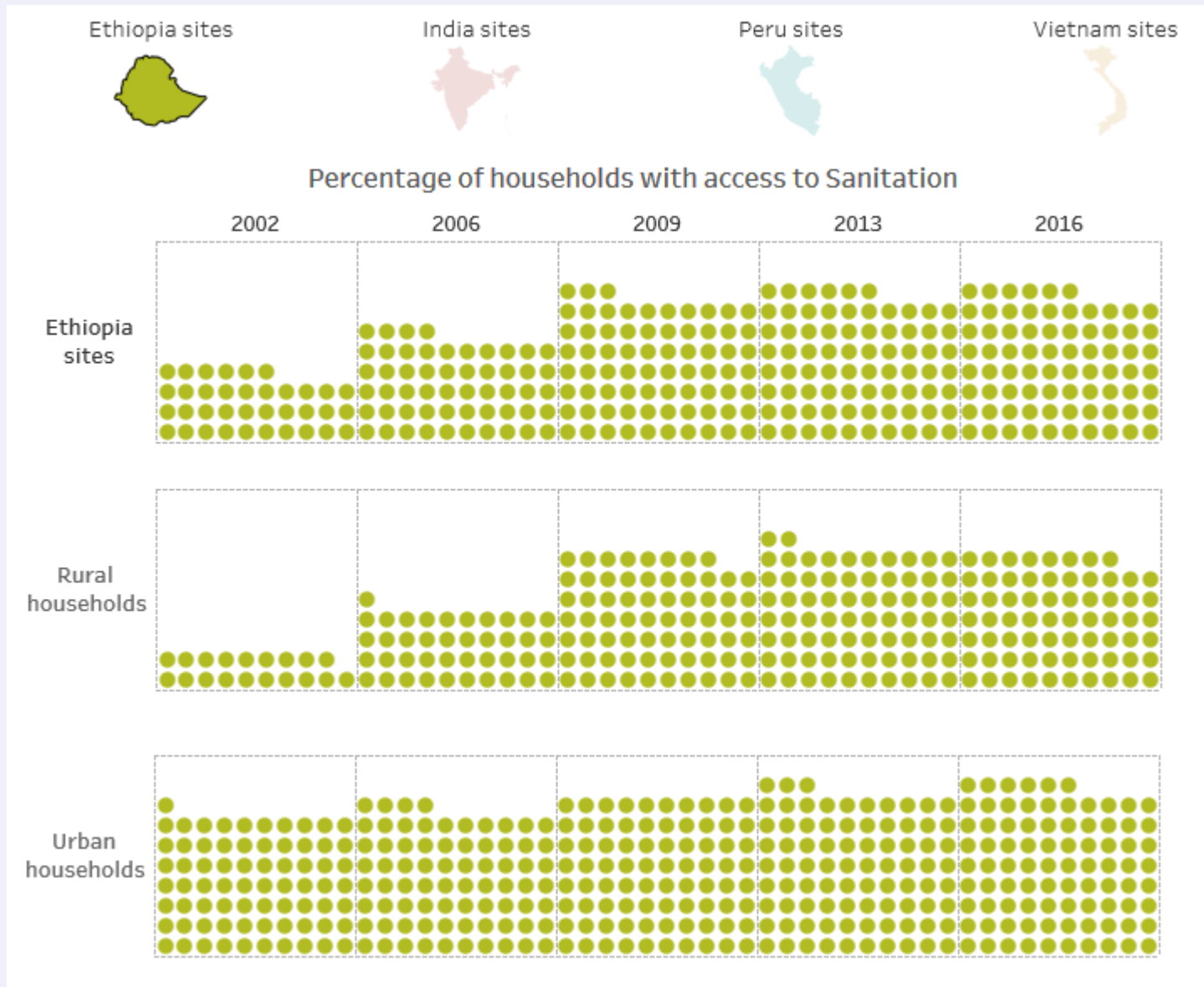
Nutrition

Stunting prevalence, trajectories and recovery

- Significant socio-economic gradients in nutritional status and stunting prevalence
- Access to clean water and sanitation substantially improved over time (and dietary diversity as well) and it is associated with lower risk of stunting



Unequal access to services: Sanitation in Ethiopia



Nutrition

Stunting prevalence, trajectories and recovery

- Significant socio-economic gradients in nutritional status and stunting prevalence
- Access to clean water and sanitation substantially improved over time (and dietary diversity as well) and it is associated with lower risk of stunting
- Recovery is possible: growth recovery and faltering continues during childhood throughout adolescence.



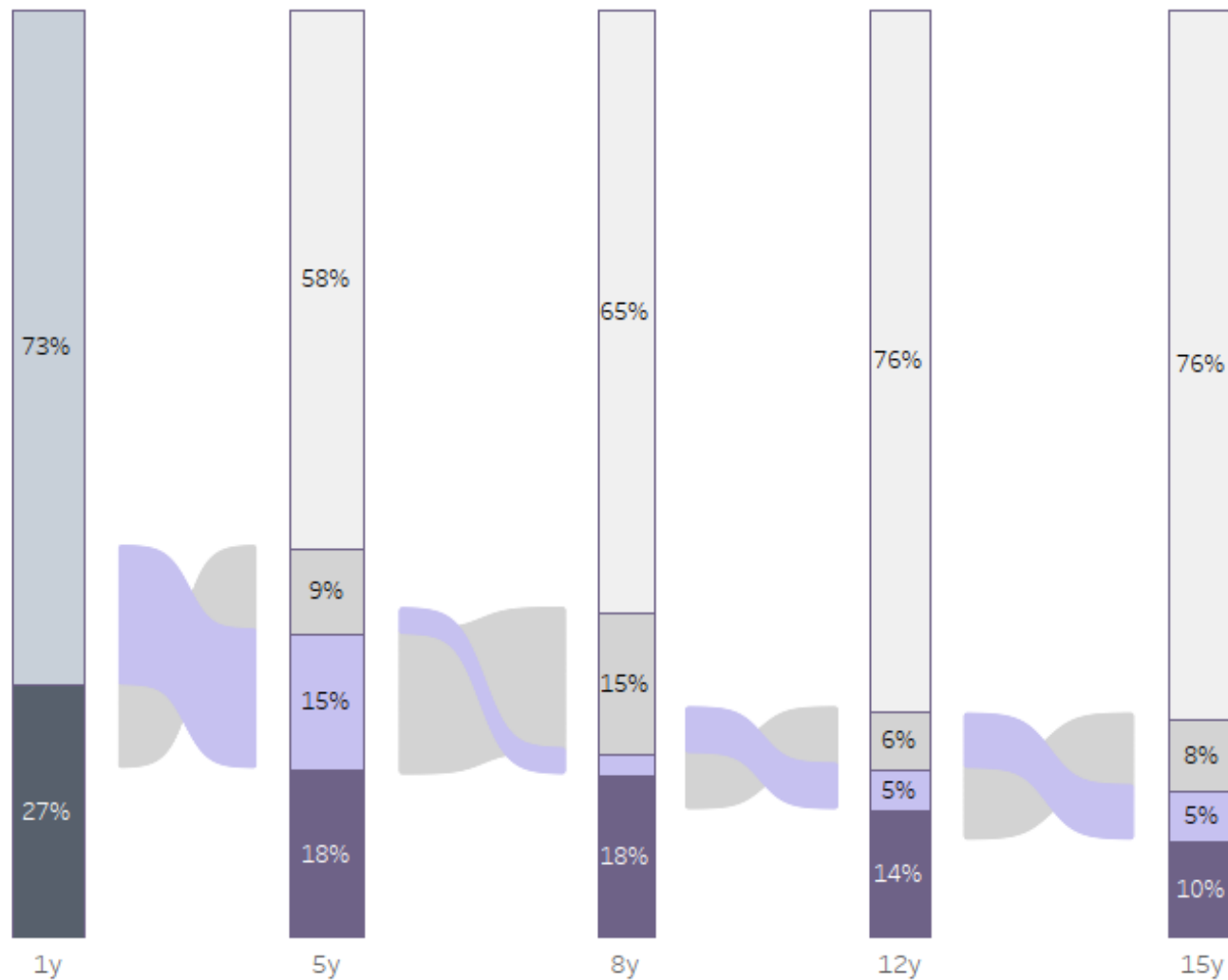
Stunting trajectories: Peru

Stunting status at age 1

Not stunted Stunted

Change in stunting status between subsequent rounds

Remained not stunted Recovered Filtered Remained stunted



Nutrition

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The importance of the first 1,000 days

- ❑ The first 1,000 days play a crucial role for physical, cognitive and psychological development
- Being stunted at early ages is associated with lower cognitive tests, schooling level, self-efficacy and self-esteem at age 12.
- Growth recovery is associated with a reduction in cognitive performance deficiencies



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Intergenerational transmission of health

- ❑ Maternal nutrition plays a key role in child growth and development.
- A child who was born to a malnourished mother is more likely likely to be malnourished and at increased risk for adverse cognitive outcomes.



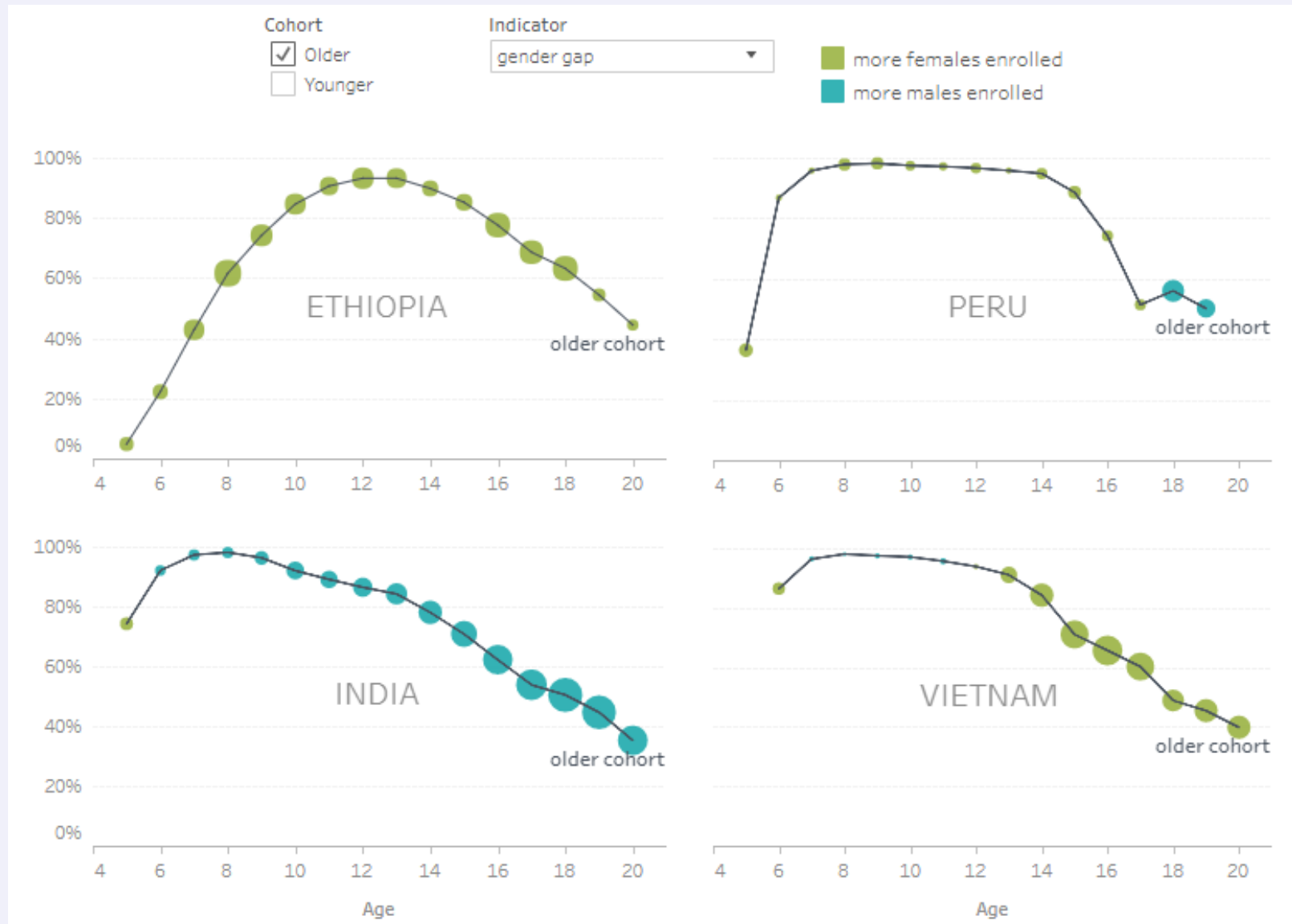
Education and skills development

Education, learning and ECCE

- ❑ Education trajectories markedly differs across the four YL countries



Enrolment rate: trajectories and gender gaps



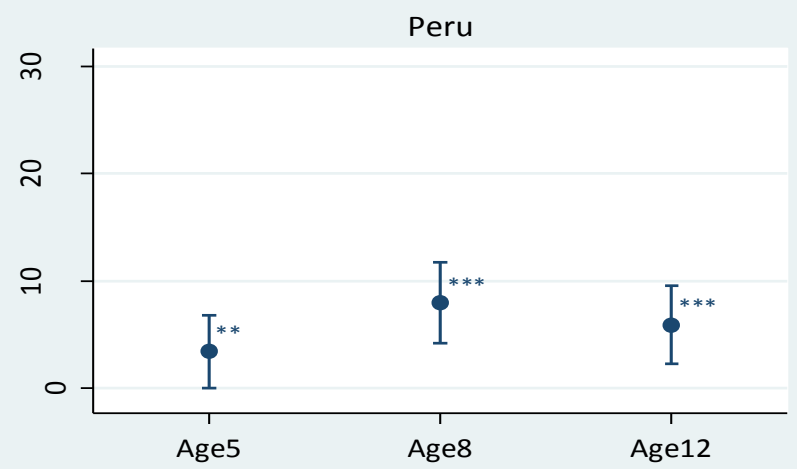
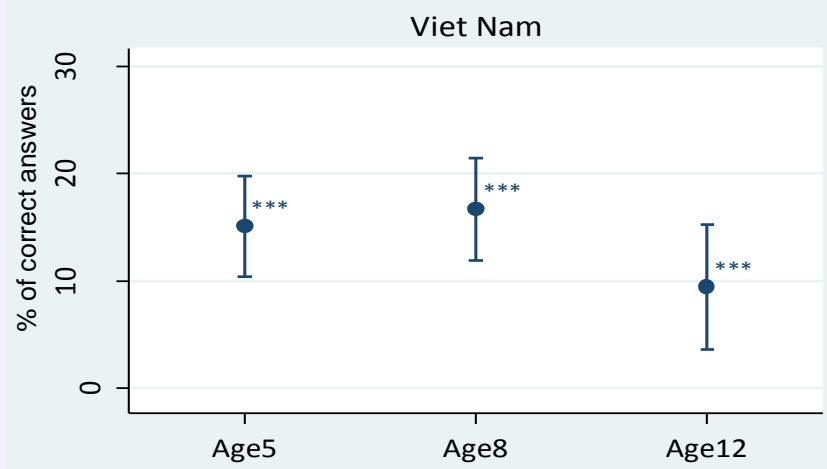
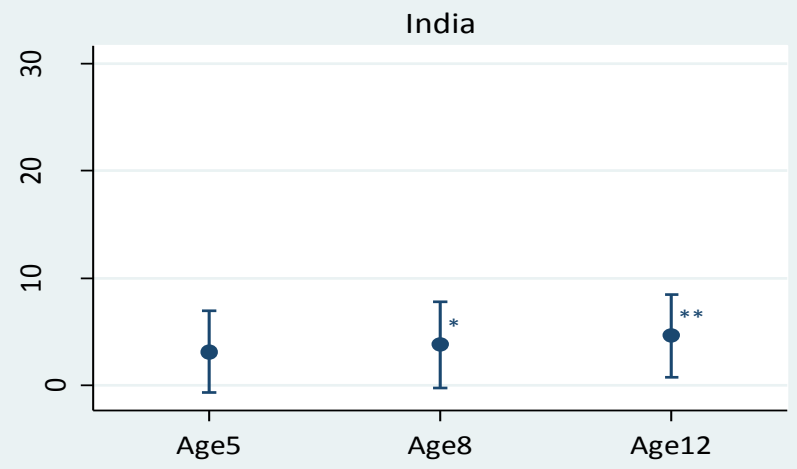
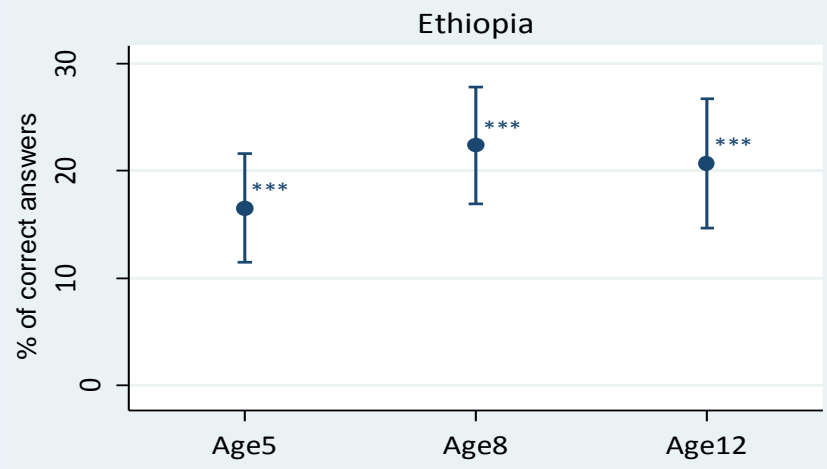
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- ❑ (Quality) Education has the power to provide children from disadvantage backgrounds with better opportunities for the future.
- Achievement at age 5 predicts later learning outcomes
- Socio-economic gradients in learning indicators already exist since age 5
- ECCE can set a child on the right track



ECCE (can) set a child on the right track: numeracy



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Cognition, personality and brain development

- ❑ The experience of poverty early in life and undernutrition have a negative effect on the development of foundational cognitive skills.
 - In utero shocks “possibly” affect brain development and shape personality
- ❑ Executive functions (working memory, inhibition) and other FCS (declarative memory, implicit learning) remain malleable during adolescence: second window of opportunity?



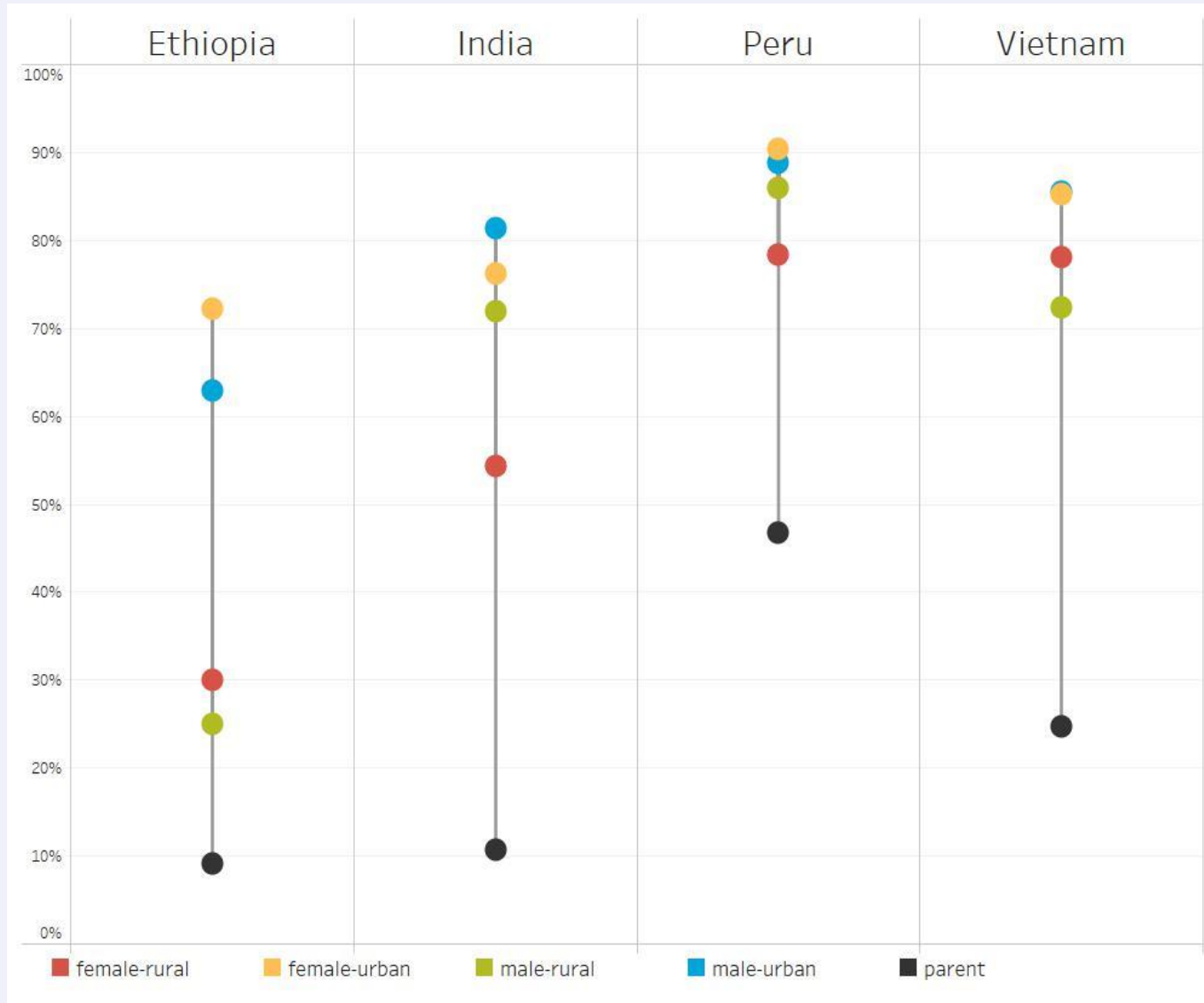
Youth & Transition to the Labour market

Post-secondary and vocational education

- ❑ Access to post secondary education (and particularly university) is still largely limited to individuals who grown up in better off households
 - Cognitive skills and educational aspirations are two of the main predictors of post-secondary education enrolment
- ❑ Significant intergenerational improvements in education attainments happened in all YL countries



Intergenerational mobility: Lower secondary education completion rates



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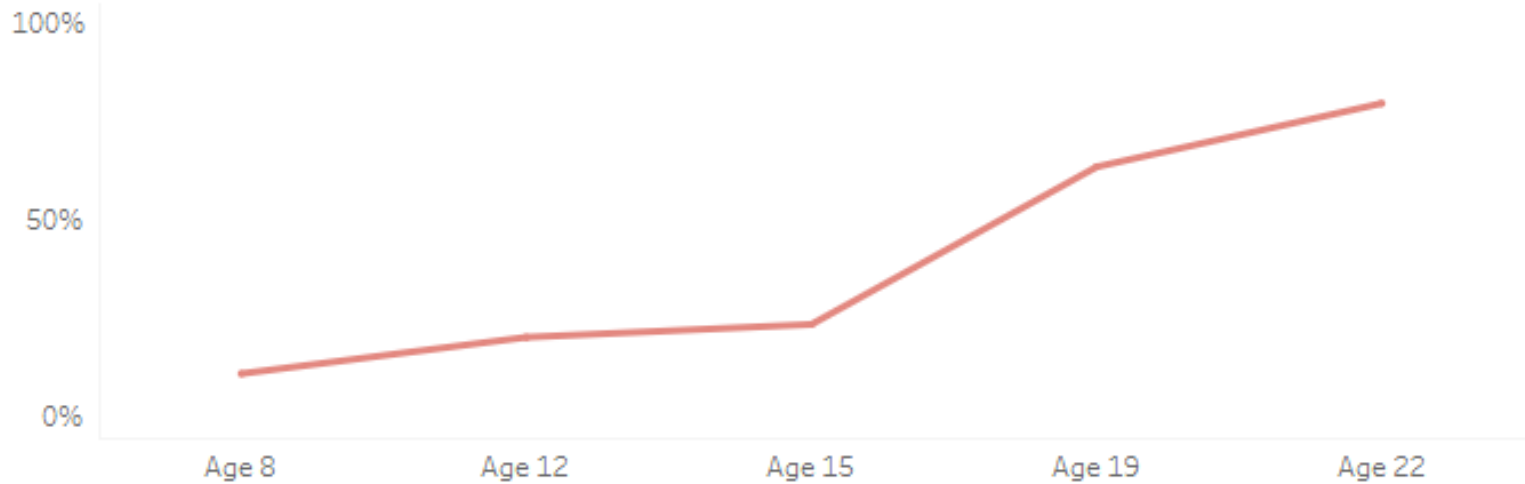
Labour market participation

- ❑ A profile of jobs: who, where and when do young people start working?
 - Children's involvement in economic activities starts at early ages
 - The type of work accessible to young people changes with age, shifting from agricultural to non-agricultural work

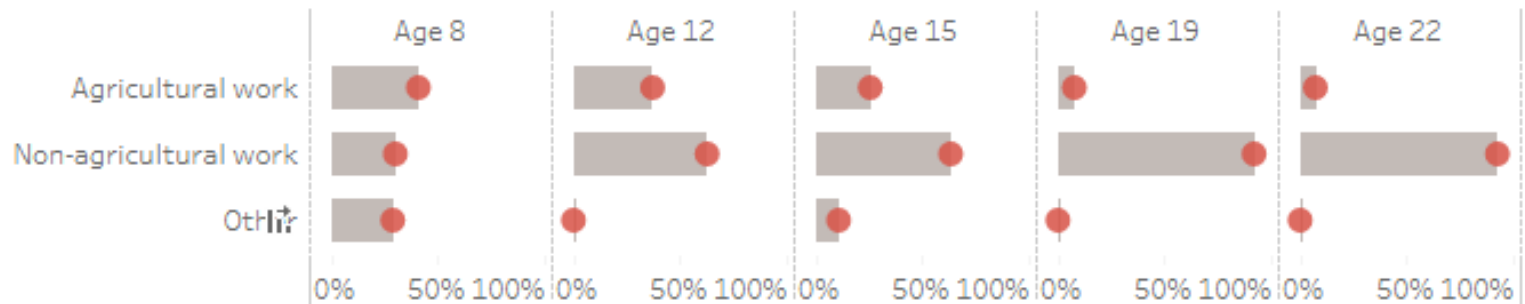


Working status and type of activity: Peru

Percentage of Older Cohort children in paid work



Type of paid work



Youth & Transition to the Labour market

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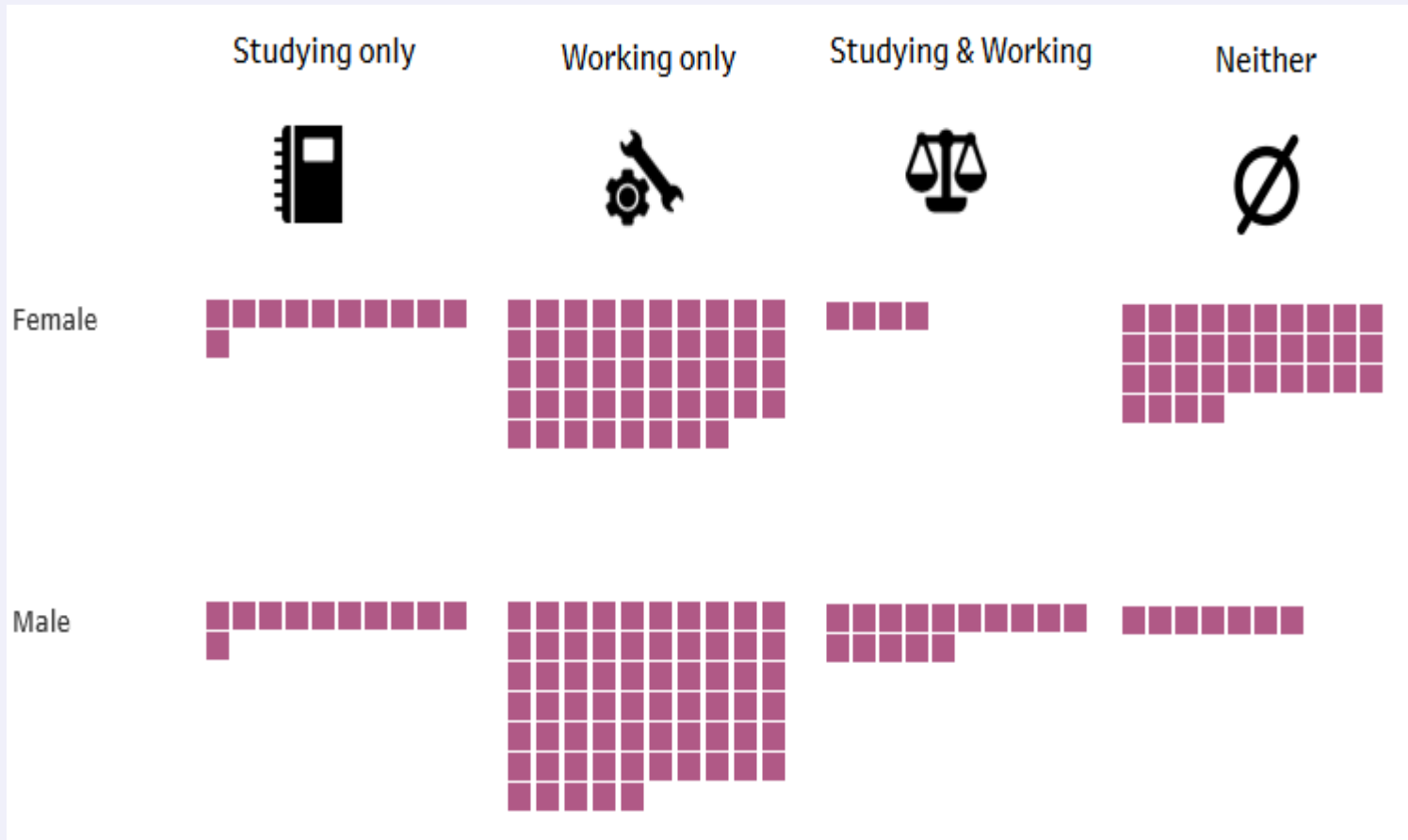
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 - Low female labour market participation and intertwined transitions



Work and study status: India



Youth & Transition to the Labour market

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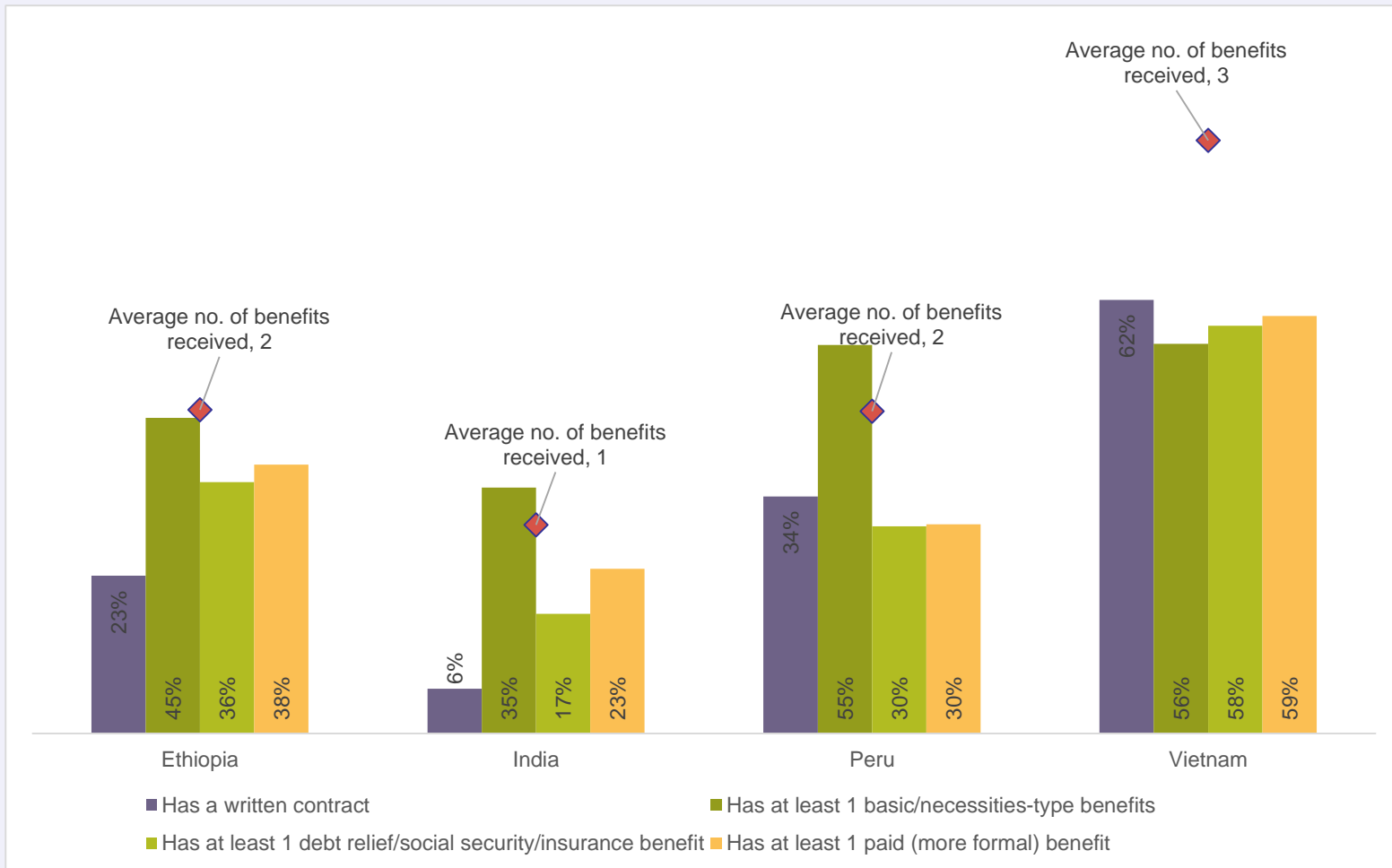
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 - Informality, poor working conditions and working over-hours are quite common challenges that young people have to face in all study countries



Quality of work: informality

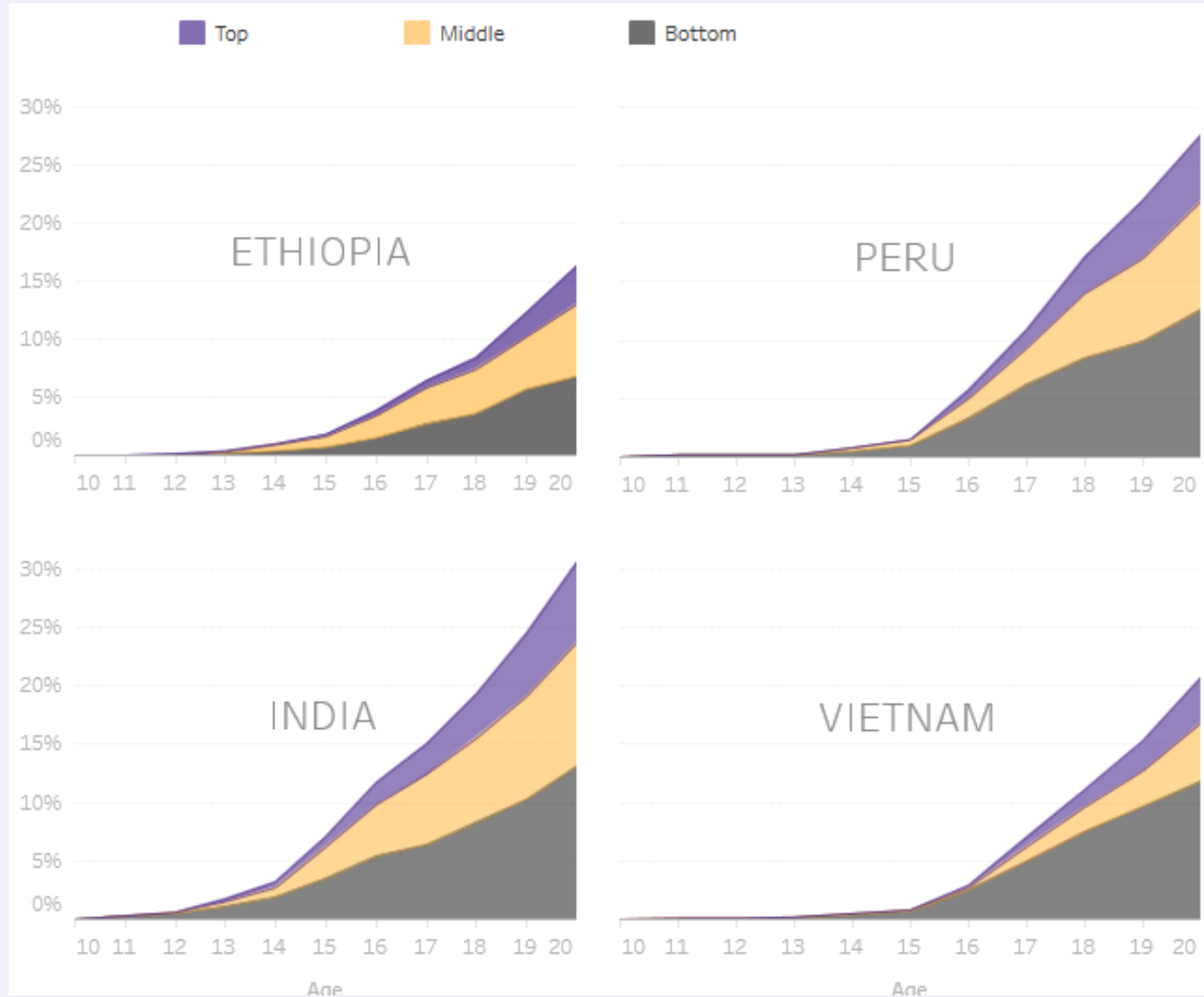


Youth & gender

- ❑ Gender gaps and different trajectories increase significantly during adolescence
- ❑ Intertwined transitions and differences in gender roles and responsibilities are at the origin of increasing gender inequalities



Early family formation (and fertility)

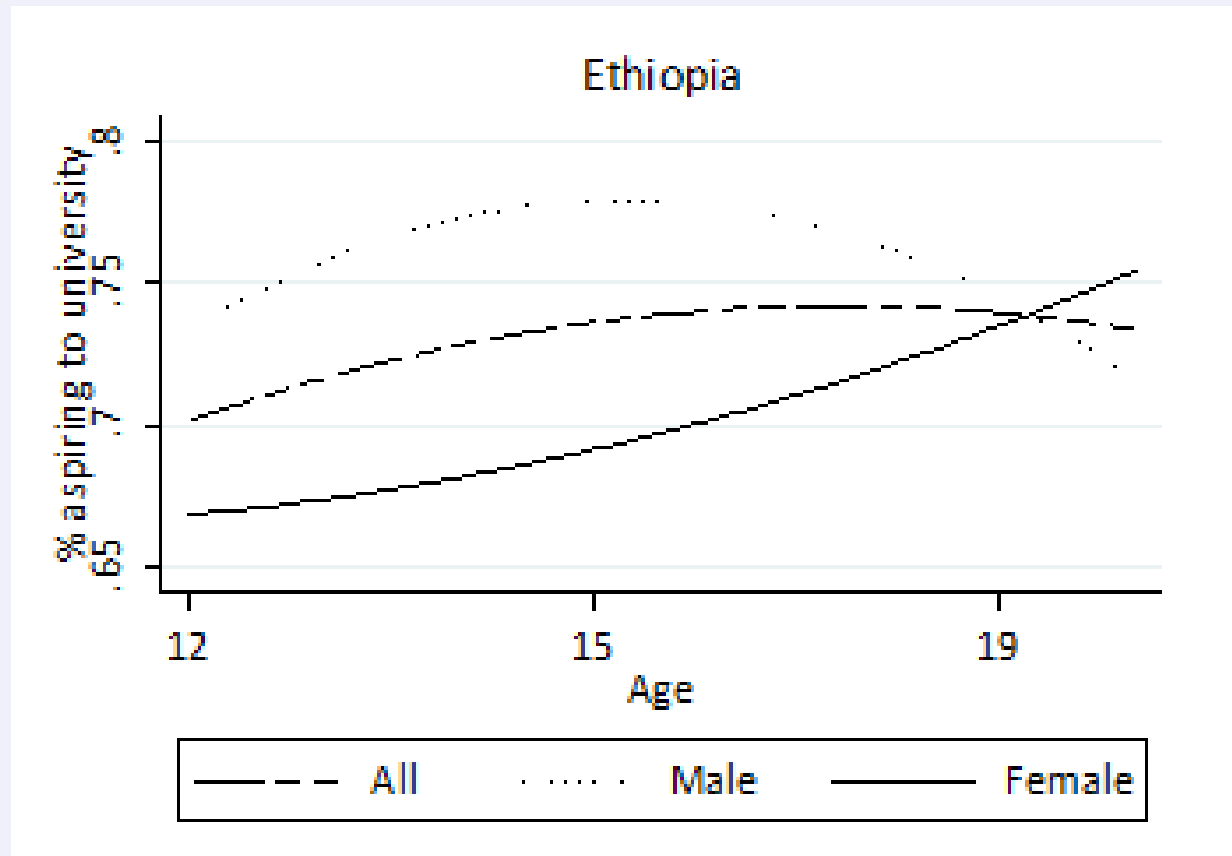


Youth & gender

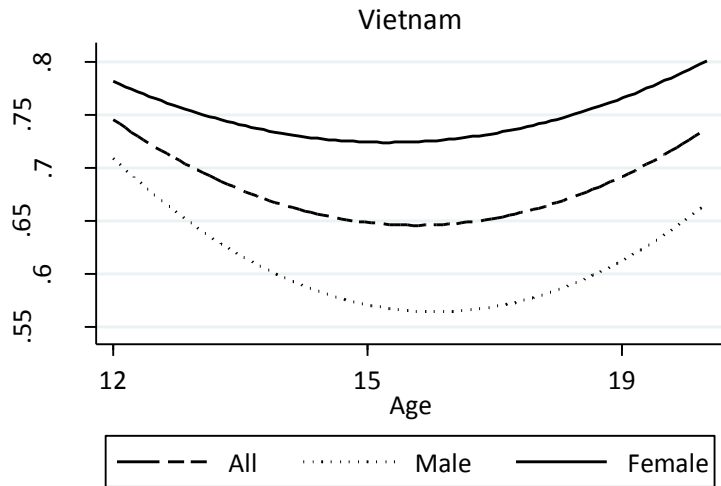
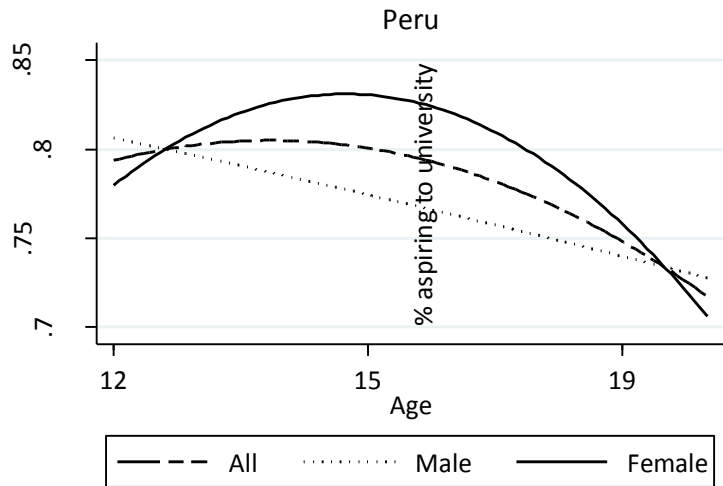
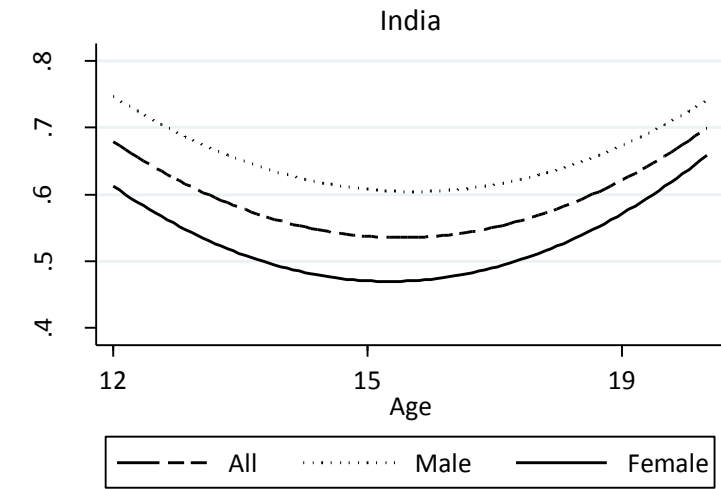
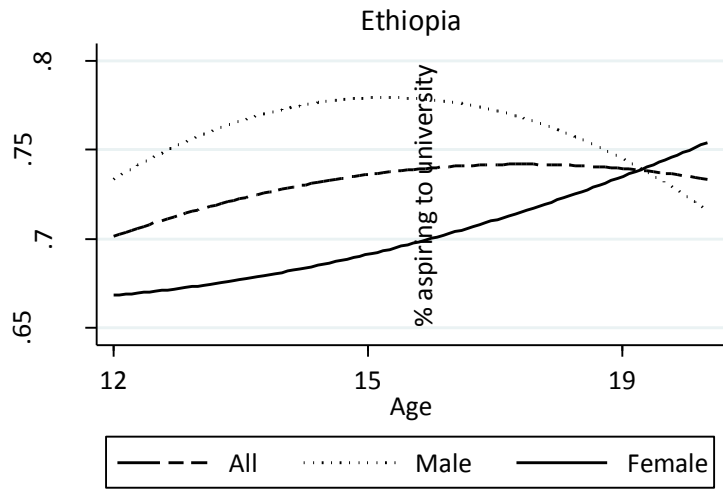
- ❑ Gender gaps and different trajectories increase significantly during adolescence
- ❑ Intertwined transitions and differences in gender roles and responsibilities are at the origin of increasing gender inequalities
- ❑ What predict early fertility and marriage?
 - Growing up in a poor household
 - School performance and dropping-out of school
 - Parental expectations about marriage/fertility
 - Educational aspirations
- ❑ Dreams and reality: males and females adjust their aspirations to the reality



Aspiring to post-secondary education: dream and reality



Aspiring to post-secondary education: dream and reality



Young Lives: looking at the future

Five (+2 proposed) rounds of data collection in four countries:
Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), Peru, Vietnam

YOUNGER COHORT



Round 1 2002 Round 2 2006 Round 3 2009 Round 4 2013 Round 5 2016 Round 6 2020 Round 7 2023

OLDER COHORT



Round 1 2002 Round 2 2006 Round 3 2009 Round 4 2013 Round 5 2016 Round 6 2020 Round 7 2023

CHILDREN OF OC



Round 4 2013 Round 5 2016 Round 6 2020 Round 7 2023

Thank you



Young Lives is a collaborative partnership between research institutes, universities and NGOs in the four study countries and the University of Oxford.

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We are hugely grateful to our collaborators, research teams, wider staff and funders.

Special thanks are owed to the children and families who participate in Young Lives, without whom this study would not exist.



Finding out **more**

Child profiles and photos

Datasets (access via the **UK Data Service**)

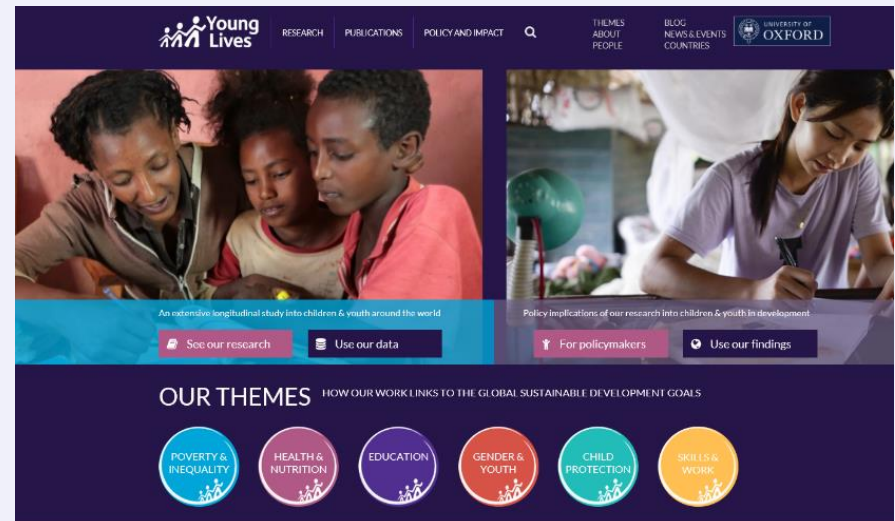
Data visualization (via YL website)

e-newsletter

Impact case studies

Infographics

Methodology and research papers (including technical notes and survey documentation)



Publications (including summative reports)

Social Media (Twitter [@yloxford](#))

Website www.younglives.org.uk
country websites in national languages

