



CYW-RPF

**Children, Youth and Women
Research and Practice Forum**

**CYW-RPF
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Editor's Note

Dear readers,

Welcome to the June 2025 edition of the CYW-RPF Quarterly Newsletter. In this issue, we feature highlights from two insightful research presentations by Young Lives: *Lightening the Load - New Evidence on the Impacts of Unpaid Care Work on Women and Girls*, and *Building Fairer Futures: Enabling Women's Economic Empowerment in the Face of Climate Change*.

We also spotlight the Young Lives Ethiopia 7th Round Longitudinal Study Dissemination Workshop, where Professor Tassew Woldehanna shared preliminary findings from the 2023–24 Round 7 Survey, presented through three key factsheets: Education and Learning, Health, Nutrition, and Well-Being, and Work and Family Lives.

As always, we welcome your feedback, insights, and contributions. For more information, please contact us at crpf.ethiopia@gmail.com or +251 11 154 0121.

Young Lives Ethiopia Shares Groundbreaking Insights at 7th Round Dissemination Workshop

Young Lives Ethiopia successfully hosted the 7th Round Longitudinal Study Dissemination Workshop on April 2, 2025. The event convened over 90 stakeholders from key government ministries, regional bureaus, academic institutions, development partners, and embassies.

The workshop opened with remarks from H.E. Fekadu Tsega, Director General of the Policy Studies Institute, followed by Dr. Debebe Barud on behalf of H.E. Dr. Ergogie Tesfaye, Minister of Women and Social Affairs. The primary objective was to present preliminary findings from the 2023–24 Round 7 Survey, summarized in three factsheets: Education and Learning, Health, Nutrition, and Well-Being, and Work and Family Lives.

Professor Tassew Woldehanna, Principal Investigator, led the presentation, joined by Dr. Kefyalew Endale and Dr. Mesele Araya, who offered additional insights. Participants actively engaged in discussion, raising important issues and providing valuable feedback to strengthen the research and inform policy development.

Closing the event, Dr. Alula Pankhurst, Young Lives Ethiopia Country Director, underscored the importance of stakeholder input and reaffirmed the program's commitment through the ongoing 6th wave of qualitative research.

To access the factsheets, visit: <http://bit.ly/4kJhM7N>.

Research Summaries from CYW-RPF presentations

Lightening the Load – New Evidence on the Impacts of Unpaid Care Work on Women and Girls

Kath Ford, Fiona Curtin and Alula Pankhurst

Introduction

Unpaid care work—tasks such as child care, elder care, cooking, and cleaning—remains a critical, yet undervalued component of global economies, predominantly carried out by women and girls. Globally, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that unpaid care work is equivalent to 9% of global GDP, valued at over US\$11 trillion annually. Despite its significance, unpaid care work continues to be distributed unequally due to entrenched gender norms.

This study draws on new data from Round 7 (2023–24) of the Young Lives longitudinal study in Ethiopia to explore how unpaid care work affects women's and girls' lives over time. Young Lives has followed cohorts of young people from childhood into adulthood since 2002, offering unique longitudinal insights. The 2023–24 survey includes data on time use, employment, education, family life, and responses to shocks such as conflict and climate change.

Methodology

The research is based on quantitative and qualitative data collected from two cohorts in Ethiopia:

- The Younger Cohort, born in 2001, surveyed at age 22
- The Older Cohort, born in 1994, surveyed at age 29

Time-use data was collected at multiple ages (12, 15, 19, 22, and 29), providing insights into how gendered responsibilities evolve. The study used structured questionnaires to measure time spent on unpaid care work, paid work, and leisure, disaggregated by gender, location, wealth, and family status.

Supplementary qualitative data was drawn from thematic interviews in

conflict-affected areas, especially Tigray, and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Findings

A. Persistent Gender Inequality in Care Work

By age 29, Ethiopian women perform 5.3 more hours of unpaid care work per day than men. Even when employed, women spend 3.3 more hours than their male counterparts on unpaid care. Despite doing less paid work, women perform more total work than men daily.

B. Gender Gaps Emerge Early

Gender differences in unpaid care begin as early as age 12, with girls consistently taking on more household responsibilities. These gaps grow with age and are reinforced by marriage and parenthood.

C. Leisure Time Disparities

Women and girls consistently have less leisure time than men and boys. At age 29, Ethiopian men enjoy 1.3 hours more leisure per day than women. This disparity begins in adolescence and persists into adulthood.

D. Socioeconomic and Geographic Inequities

- Poorest women spend 3.6 more hours per day on unpaid care than wealthier women.
- Rural women spend 2.2 more hours per day on unpaid care than urban women.
- Birth order matters: older sisters do significantly more unpaid care work than younger sisters, but not older brothers compared to younger brothers.

E. Impacts on Education and Employment

- At age 22, 24% of Ethiopian women were not in employment, education

or training (NEET) compared to 9% of men.

- Unpaid care responsibilities, particularly early marriage and motherhood, limit women's access to education and formal employment.
- Gender employment gaps are evident by age 12 and widen over time, with men doing 4.1 more hours of paid work per day than women by age 29.

F. Effects of Shocks and Crises

The COVID-19 pandemic and Ethiopian conflict increased unpaid care demands:

- 70% of women reported increased household duties during lockdowns.
- Conflict in Tigray exacerbated care burdens and risk exposure for girls, with education often disrupted.

G. Signs of Progress

Young men are doing slightly more unpaid care work than in the past. Between 2016 and 2023, care time by 22-year-old men increased by 52 minutes per day in Ethiopia—an encouraging trend, though women's workload remains significantly higher.

Conclusion

The Round 7 Young Lives findings highlight the enduring and gendered nature of unpaid care work in Ethiopia. Despite growing awareness and some positive shifts, women and girls continue to shoulder the majority of care responsibilities. This unequal burden restricts their opportunities for education, employment, and personal development, perpetuating cycles of gender-based inequality and poverty. The intersectionality of poverty, location, birth order, and gender deepens these disparities, with rural and poorer women particularly affected. While small shifts among young men and greater recognition of unpaid care work in global agendas are promising, significant structural barriers remain.

Recommendations

To address the inequalities and reduce the burden of unpaid care work, the study recommends:

1. Challenge Gender Norms: Promote community-based campaigns and school programmes that advocate for gender-equitable care roles, involving

2. Invest in Public Services: Expand access to affordable childcare, eldercare, and health services, especially in rural areas, to reduce women's time burdens.
3. Support Adolescent Girls: Prevent early marriage and pregnancy; provide support for girls to remain in education and access vocational training.
4. Care-Friendly Employment Policies: Encourage flexible work arrangements, paid parental leave, and inclusive hiring practices to support work-life balance.
5. Infrastructure and Technology: Improve access to clean water, energy, and efficient cooking stoves to reduce the time needed for domestic tasks.
6. Gender-Sensitive Social Protection: Design programmes that consider care responsibilities and avoid reinforcing traditional gender roles—e.g., conditional cash transfers should be accompanied by services and awareness efforts.
7. Conduct Regular Time-Use Surveys: Institutionalize gender-disaggregated time-use data collection to inform policies and monitor progress.
8. Respond to Crises with Gender Lens: Integrate unpaid care considerations into disaster response planning and recovery, ensuring women's care burdens do not escalate unaddressed.



Research Summaries from CYW-RPF presentations

Building Fairer Futures: Enabling Women's Economic Empowerment in the Face of Climate Change

Kath Ford, Fiona Curtin and Alula Pankhurst

Introduction

Climate change is a pressing global crisis that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, particularly women and girls in low- and middle-income countries. While climate-induced shocks such as droughts, floods, and rising temperatures impact all communities, the intersection of poverty, gender inequalities, and discriminatory social norms renders women and girls more susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change. These impacts threaten not only their well-being and education but also their long-term economic empowerment. This research, led by Young Lives, a longitudinal study tracking the lives of children across Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam, investigates the intersection of climate change and gender inequality. Drawing from over two decades of panel data and newly gathered insights from Round 7 (2023–24), the study examines how climate-related shocks affect women and girls' development outcomes and explores policy strategies to foster a gender-equitable climate transition.

Methodology

Young Lives employs a longitudinal cohort design, tracking 12,000 individuals across four countries since 2002. The data includes two cohorts: a younger group born in 2001 and an older group born in 1994. The most recent survey round (Round 7, conducted in 2023–24) gathered extensive data on participants' education, employment, mental health, family life, and exposure to climate shocks. Additionally, in 2024, Young Lives launched a dedicated Research Hub on Climate Change and Environmental Shocks to deepen the evidence base on

gendered climate impacts, particularly in rural and impoverished communities. The methodology combines survey data, in-depth interviews, and policy analysis to explore both immediate and long-term consequences of environmental stressors.



Key Findings

1. Early Childhood Climate Exposure Impacts Long-Term Outcomes

Exposure to droughts and floods in early life significantly affects children's cognitive development, nutritional health, and educational attainment. For example, in Peru, children affected by early-life climate shocks showed deficits in memory and concentration by age 12. In Ethiopia, children of mothers exposed to the 1983–85 famine were shorter and had lower educational achievement.

2. **Intergenerational and Gendered Vulnerabilities** - Climate shocks do not only affect the exposed generation; their effects reverberate intergenerationally. Girls and women bear a disproportionate burden due to increased unpaid care responsibilities, nutritional deprivation, and education disruption. In India, children of mothers exposed to climate shocks during pregnancy exhibited long-term deficits in vocabulary and numeracy.
3. **Worsening Gender Inequalities During Crises** - Climate-induced crises exacerbate existing gender disparities. Girls are often withdrawn from school to manage household tasks or care for siblings. Evidence from the COVID-19 pandemic showed that 70% of Ethiopian girls took on more housework, compared to 26% of boys. These inequalities reduce girls' study time, increase school drop-out risk, and jeopardize their future economic independence.
4. **Negative Impacts on Mental Health** - Girls and young women experience higher levels of anxiety and depression during and after climate shocks. In Ethiopia, 22-year-old women showed reduced university attendance and increased mental health distress following school closures during the pandemic. Drought-related food insecurity further exacerbated emotional stress, especially among girls from low-income households.
5. **Skills and Labour Market Disparities** - Gender gaps in academic and socio-emotional skills become evident during adolescence. In India and Ethiopia, girls perform significantly worse in mathematics by age 15. By age 22, young women in all four study countries report lower levels of self-efficacy than their male counterparts—limiting their participation in education and formal employment.
6. **Gender Employment Gap in the Green Economy** - Women are underrepresented in emerging green sectors such as renewable energy, despite being equally or more educated in some contexts. Structural inequalities, limited access to STEM education, and social norms confine women to informal and unpaid labour.

For example, 41% of employed young women in India work in agriculture, often without contracts or job security.

7. **Potential of Social Protection** - Social protection programs can buffer the adverse effects of climate shocks on women and children. In Ethiopia, participation in the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) mitigated the cognitive impacts of maternal exposure to drought. In Peru, the JUNTOS cash transfer scheme improved concentration skills in children exposed to rainfall shocks. These programs demonstrate how well-designed interventions can build resilience and promote long-term development outcomes.



Conclusion

The study provides compelling evidence that climate change is not gender-neutral; its effects disproportionately burden women and girls, deepening cycles of poverty and limiting their educational and economic prospects. The intersection of climate shocks and entrenched gender inequalities results in compounded disadvantages—particularly for adolescent girls and young mothers. While the climate transition presents risks, it also offers a vital opportunity to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Realizing this potential requires intentional, inclusive, and gender-responsive strategies.

Recommendations

- 1. Scale Up Gender-Responsive Social Protection**
 Expand programs like PSNP and JUNTOS to address climate-related vulnerabilities of girls and women. Ensure coverage includes nutritional support, cash transfers, and education incentives, especially for adolescent girls and young mothers.
- 2. Prioritize Girls' Education and Skills Development**
 Invest in climate-resilient educational infrastructure and targeted support to prevent school dropouts during climate shocks. Promote girls' access to higher education and vocational training, particularly in STEM fields linked to green job growth.
- 3. Reduce Gender Gaps in Employment**
 Create enabling environments for women's participation in green industries by eliminating discriminatory norms, supporting flexible work arrangements, and improving access to childcare and maternity protection.
- 4. Mainstream Gender in Climate Finance**
 Ensure international and national climate financing mechanisms are gender-responsive. Prioritize investments that empower women economically and socially within climate adaptation and mitigation frameworks.
- 5. Enhance Women's Leadership in Climate Policy**
 Promote equal representation of women in climate negotiations and policymaking. Ensure national climate action plans (NDCs and NAPs) include clear gender targets and implementation strategies.
- 6. Invest in Data and Research**
 Strengthen gender-disaggregated data collection and conduct targeted research to monitor and address the impacts of climate shocks on women's lives. This includes studying barriers to women's formal employment in green jobs across various contexts.



Interested to Know about CYW-RPF?

The Child Research and Practice Forum (CRPF) was recently renamed Children, Youth and Women Research and Practice Forum (CYW-RPF) in order to expand the mandate of the Forum at the request of stakeholders and after holding a survey poll of the mailing list members.

CRPF was established in 2010 to promote work on child research, policy and practice. CYW-RPF makes use of monthly seminars, quarterly newsletters and annual publications as a means to achieve its objectives. The publications are also available on the Young Lives Ethiopia website (<https://www.younglives-ethiopia.org/>). CYW-RPF is organized by Young Lives with the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and UNICEF.

If you want to know more, please contact us via crpf.ethiopia@gmail.com