

Can Children in Ethiopian Communities Combine Schooling with Work?

Yisak Tafere and Alula Pankhurst



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Abstract

Combining school with work presents challenges for children growing up in contexts of poverty. Drawing on evidence from three rounds of surveys and three rounds of qualitative research with case study children, we examine the complex relationship between school and work in the lives of children in Ethiopian communities studied by Young Lives.

Analysis of Young Lives survey data showed that a third of the children were not in school at the age of 8 (when they should have started when they were 7) and almost a third of the caregivers mentioned the need for children to work as the reason. Primary school completion rates were low, with less than a fifth of children having completed primary school (Grades 1–8) at the age of 15. Children across the board worked as well as going to school, irrespective of age, gender, location and wealth. However, girls spent slightly more time at school and boys somewhat more time studying out of school, and children from poorer backgrounds spent less time at school and more time doing all kinds of work than those from non-poor backgrounds. As children grew older they spent more time on work but the amount of time they spent in school and studying at home hardly changed.

The qualitative analysis revealed that all the children were engaged in some domestic work, with a greater burden on girls. Most were also involved in paid work, and the time they spent on work increased as they grew older, putting greater strain on their ability to go to school, study and learn. Parents, schools and employers often made flexible arrangements to allow children to work. Parents expected their children to contribute to the household's livelihood by working at home. They also sometimes facilitated their work for pay. Schools in rural areas had a half-day or shift system allowing children to work. Employers introduced flexible arrangements to enable children to combine work and school. Children felt a strong sense of obligation to work to assist their families, especially those from poor backgrounds or living in households facing health or economic shocks.

Children in poor families faced challenges carrying out work alongside attending school. Some missed school to work, which affected their motivation and results. Many became pessimistic about succeeding in and through school; work became more attractive or the only viable option. Some girls preferred marriage to manual labour when they did not succeed in school. The case studies showed that some work affected children's health, resulting in absence from school and leading them to drop out. Nonetheless, despite the risks, most children did not see an alternative to working and viewed this as their duty. However, some children were able to continue their schooling because of earnings from work, and a few persevered with school. Others developed skills through working and started small businesses.

In a context where opportunities for paid work have expanded, the underlying structural poverty, poor quality of the school system and limited chances to succeed through education have put a strain on children's ability to combine work and school successfully. This resultant pressure tended to lead children, especially in households that had faced health and livelihood shocks, to miss classes and eventually give up and become engaged in full-time work.

The findings raise questions about the quality and value of education for children living in poor circumstances, the risks associated with the expansion of paid work and the constraints on children managing school and work. Potential policy implications include the need for social protection for children living in households facing shocks, the need for flexible learning opportunities for working children and ensuring that when children have to work they are not involved in the 'worst forms' of work, nor in excessive hours or hazardous working conditions.

The Authors

Yisak Tafere is the Lead Qualitative Researcher for Young Lives in Ethiopia. He is a PhD candidate at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim, Norway. He has an MA in Social Anthropology from Addis Ababa University.

Alula Pankhurst is the Young Lives Ethiopia Country Director. He has a PhD in social anthropology from the University of Manchester and was previously Associate Professor in Social Anthropology at Addis Ababa University. His research has mainly focused on poverty, well-being, migration, food security, customary institutions and social exclusion.

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About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, following the lives of 12,000 children in 4 countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam) over 15 years. www.younglives.org.uk

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1. Introduction

There are opposing views regarding the link between children's work and schooling. The dominant view contends that children's work affects their schooling negatively and, at one extreme, that it should be banned. From its inception in 1919, the ILO mandate included child labour. Convention No. 138 sought to restrict children's work under the age of 15 and in 1999 Convention No. 182 promoted the banning of the 'worst forms of child labour'. The latter gained widespread international acceptance (ILO 2006). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted in 1989) sought to protect children from 'exploitative work and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development' (Article 32). The African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (adopted in 1990) echoes these sentiments, but also stipulates that children have responsibilities towards their family and society, the state and the international community (Article 31). Much of the international literature assumes that work negatively affects children's development, including their health and above all their schooling. The alternative view, while acknowledging possible detrimental effects of work on children, suggests that the beneficial effects for households living in poverty and for the children themselves are much greater and therefore contends that combining work with schooling is not only possible, but can be useful and in some cases is necessary (Bourdillon et al. 2010; Spittler and Bourdillon 2012). This view is the basis for arguments about the right of children to dignity and respect at work and it reflects the position of organisations such as the African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY) (Liebel 2012).

By drawing on longitudinal data, this paper considers how children, particularly those living in poverty and difficult circumstances in Ethiopia, experience both work and schooling and how these are inter-related in selected urban and rural communities. We begin by reviewing relevant literature and the policy context in Ethiopia, then introduce the methods used. This is followed by a presentation of the findings from both survey and qualitative data. We then discuss the implications of the findings, draw conclusions and identify potential implications for policy.

2. Literature review

There is a debate regarding the use of the terms 'child labour' and 'child work'. Although some authors tend to use them interchangeably, 'child labour' is often used by economists to denote economic activities outside the household, even though most work that children do is within the household (Bourdillon et al. 2010: 25). In much of the policy-related literature 'child labour' is assumed to be inappropriate and dangerous. Some researchers therefore prefer to use the concept 'children's work' rather than 'child labour', given the latter's negative connotations. Work during childhood can be seen as an integral part of children's everyday roles, responsibilities and development. As long as it is not excessive and does not involve serious health risks it may be considered innocuous and sometimes beneficial to children's development and well-being. Thus, the dichotomy between child 'work' and 'labour' seems an unhelpful framework, which may lead to confusion (Bourdillon et al. 2010: 11). Bourdillon et al. suggest avoiding the term 'labour' and preceding the term 'work' with qualifiers such as

harmful, illegal, paid, economic, light, etc. Likewise, in this paper, we use the term 'children's work' because first, it allows us to investigate all activities children do and secondly, a broader approach is useful to examine the relationship of this work to children's schooling.

In Ethiopia, policy and legal frameworks have been developed by adapting international provisions protecting children from work that is deemed harmful. By reiterating the rights of the child stipulated in the UNCRC, the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia specifies in Article 36: 'Every child has the right not to be subject to exploitative practices, neither to be required nor permitted to perform work which may be hazardous or harmful to his or her education health or well-being' (Article 36 (1) (d) (FDRE 1995). In line with ILO Convention No. 138, Article 89 of The Ethiopian Labour Proclamation of 2003 provides the minimum age for employment to be 14, with special protective measures in place for children over 14 until they reach the age of 18. Young workers (aged 14–18), may not work for more than seven hours per day. Article 90 further prohibits them from working during the night, doing overtime work, and working during rest days or public holidays (FDRE 2004).

In accordance with ILO Convention No. 182, the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA 2009) issued a National Action Plan (NAP) on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2015, in line with the ILO's roadmap to the elimination of hazardous work. The NAP aims to prohibit children from carrying out certain types of dangerous activities including in transport, warehouses, electric power plants, street cleaning, hotels, cutting/splitting wood, and other activities that can affect children's physical and moral development. It precludes any labour that impedes the education and full development of children under 14 years of age, hazardous work performed by children aged between 14 and 18 years, particularly work that would affect their physical, mental or moral well-being, and any 'unconditional worst forms' of child labour such as slavery, trafficking, debt bondage and forced labour, and the recruitment of children for armed conflict, prostitution and pornography.

Throughout Ethiopia work is prevalent among boys and girls in both urban and rural areas, as evidenced by both surveys and qualitative studies. However, much of the literature does not distinguish clearly between different types of work and there is confusion regarding what the term 'child labour' refers to.

Three national surveys consider children's work. The first and only national survey that attempted to assess 'child labour' was carried out in 2001 and estimated that 85 per cent of children aged 5 to 17 were engaged in some form of work (CSA 2002). In terms of broad type of work, 52 per cent were involved in 'productive activities' and 78 per cent in 'domestic activities', with greater proportions of boys and rural children involved in the former and double the proportion of girls and urban children involved in the latter (Woldehanna and Jones 2009). On average children worked for 33 hours per week in 'productive activities', and one-third of the children worked for more than 40 hours. The number of hours worked was higher for boys in rural areas and for girls in urban areas. Over a third of children were involved in domestic activities for three to four hours per day. Of the working children, 8 per cent were involved in 'elementary' occupations, namely street-vending, shoe-shining, messenger services, agriculture, mining, construction, manufacturing and transport, with greater involvement of younger children (CSA 2002). Also using the data from the 2001 'Child Labour Survey' Guarcello and Rosati (2007) excluded children doing domestic work and noted that half the 5–14 year-olds or a projection of more than 7.5 million children in absolute terms worked in economic activities. They suggested that children's economic

activity rose steeply with age but even among the youngest group (5–9 year olds), 40 per cent were ‘economically active’ meaning working for the household and/or for pay, with boys and rural children more ‘at risk’. However, the question of benefit and harm was not addressed. They also suggested that involvement in agriculture, which is the main sector in which children worked, decreased somewhat with age, while manufacturing, services, waged work and self-employment became slightly more important.

The 2011 *Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey* (CSA 2012) suggests a figure for ‘child labour’ of 27 per cent for children under 15 (with 17 per cent for children aged 5–11 and 55 per cent for children aged 12–14). Child labour is defined as including (a) children aged 5–11 working for someone who was not a household member with or without pay or engaged in any family work or doing household chores for their family for 28 hours or more, and (b) children aged 12–14 who worked for someone who was not a household member with or without pay or engaged in any family work for 14 hours or more or doing household chores for 28 hours or more (CSA 2012). This definition gives more weight to work done outside the household and sets rather arbitrary cut-off points in terms of what constitutes ‘child labour’, without reference to potential harm or benefit. The results suggest that most of these children were involved in household chores, followed by work for family businesses, while paid work was very limited. Less than 1 per cent of children aged 5–11 and 2 per cent of children aged 12–14 were engaged in paid work, 3 per cent of 5–11 year olds and 6 per cent of 12–14 year olds were engaged in unpaid work for non-household members, and 14 per cent of 5–11 year olds and 30 per cent of 12–14 year olds worked for a family business. Furthermore, 18 per cent of 5–11 year olds and 40 per cent of 12–14 year olds were engaged in household chores for 20 hours or more per week. In gender terms ‘child labour’ was claimed to be higher among boys (31 per cent) than girls (24 per cent) – though this is no doubt largely related to the greater weighting given to work outside the house – and much higher in rural areas (30 per cent) than urban areas (13 per cent). ‘Child labour’ was found to be much less prevalent among children with educated mothers (6 per cent) and decreased with increasing wealth quintiles.

The 2005 National Labour Force Survey data are used by Woldehanna and Jones (2009) to suggest that among children aged 5 to 14 about 41 per cent of boys and 31 per cent of girls were involved only in ‘economic activities’ and a further 17 per cent of boys and 11 per cent of girls were involved ‘in school and an economic activity’. The proportions were found to be considerably higher in urban areas. The survey suggested that 60 per cent of boys and 46 per cent of girls were involved in work.

There is limited evidence regarding combining school and work, although gender and age differences in children’s work are discussed, notably on the basis of data from the 1999 Ethiopia Rural Household Survey, fifth round. Haile and Haile (2012) suggested that children tended to combine work and school increasingly as they grew older. They found that 77 per cent of children aged 4–15 started undertaking work (including domestic activities) prior to their 8th birthday. Furthermore, approximately 12 per cent had already begun work at the age of 4. There was a clear specialisation of work activities, with girls spending more time on domestic work than boys (28 hours compared to 17 hours per week), while boys spent longer hours on market activities, including farm work and herding (35 hours compared to 25 hours per week). Using the same source and focusing on children aged 4–15, Admassie (2002) suggested that the school participation rate was higher for boys than for girls and participation in work (broadly defined as farm work, domestic work, herding, child care and

other informal activities) was higher among girls. With regards to the distribution of work and schooling activities by age, the author found that participation in work (as a child's reported main activity) increased with age, but peaked at 11 years of age, when it started to decline, presumably due to more time spent in school. School attendance (as a child's reported main activity) also increased with age for all children, as did the likelihood of combining work with school attendance, reaching approximately 45 per cent at the age of 15. On the basis of the same data, Alvi and Seife (2011) examined the effects of sibling composition on children's school attendance and work. Focusing on children aged 7–14, they found that earlier-born rural boys had a higher chance of attending school. Older boys also had a higher likelihood of engaging in market work than their younger siblings and older girls were more likely to engage in domestic work than younger siblings.

The potential link between school and work is indirectly raised in relation to drop-out rates. The Welfare Monitoring Surveys (1996, 1999, 2000, 2004, and 2011) provide data on dropout, suggesting a fall in drop-out rates from 1996 to 2011 in both rural and urban areas, especially between 2004 and 2011. The data also provide reasons for dropout. However, the proportion dropping out of school for work does not seem to have declined and in fact increased from the 1998 to the 2011 surveys for primary school (Pankhurst et al. 2015).

Qualitative studies have indicated that it is commonplace in Ethiopia for children to combine work with schooling. Based on her ethnographic work with children in Addis Ababa in 2000/1, Eva Poluha documented that work was part of life for children. She stated that children under-reported work in their diaries because 'children surrounded by poverty ... took it for granted' (Poluha 2004: 45). Working at home or outside the home to generate income was a normal routine for children. Similarly, drawing on his fieldwork among Ethiopian children from coffee-growing communities, Tatek Abebe notes the invaluable contribution of children to the household economy. Although their work activities overlapped with their schooling, in addition to socialisation, work often involved traditional apprenticeship and skill development (Abebe 2011:167).

Drawing on Young lives data and using mixed methods, Kate Orkin (2012) found that children combined work with schooling in a rural area. On the basis of qualitative data generated from one rural site (24 children, aged 13–14 years, together with a selection of caregivers and community members), she found six features of rural schools and work which made school and work competitive: high schooling costs, less flexibility to local work patterns and the effects of illness, work that was scarce, work that could not be divided into small chunks, more tiring work, and the fact the chores and study were both done in the home. Through exploratory analysis of survey data from 2006 (625 Older Cohort children, aged 12 years, from rural sites only) she found some correlation between proxies for four characteristics (high schooling costs, flexibility to the effects of illness, work being scarce and less divisible work) and decisions about children's schooling and work. She suggests further research is warranted in order to understand children's negotiation power vis-à-vis school and work decisions within the household, and to explore school characteristics that enable children to attend school, or combine work with school.

Another study based on Young lives data suggests that children combine work and schooling in various ways (Morrow et al. 2014). The study found that children's time use remained relatively 'flexible' over time, in the sense that the shift system in schools enabled children to continue herding cattle or doing other tasks outside school hours, and the expectation that children contribute to their households also persisted. In some cases, children temporarily left school because their labour was needed for other reasons, or because they relocated to a

different household. Young Lives studies in Ethiopia have also indicated that children have been engaged in some type of work from an early age and have begun paid work as young as 9. Children's work ranges from family chores to paid activities including working in the government-run Productive Safety-Net Programme (PSNP) (see, for example, Tafere and Woldehanna 2012).

Young Lives studies suggest that children work for different reasons. They are needed to help their families in domestic or farm work in rural areas, and they may be required, or wish, to generate income by becoming involved in waged labour; some are also involved in their own income-generating schemes; they may be learning skills, or seek to earn income for their future. For many young people, the type of work they do may be a mark of a key life transition that they have to pass through. Moreover, working is an integral part of family life and children are therefore expected to participate in it (Tafere and Camfield 2009). Many children from poor households have to do paid work to subsidise their families and contribute to their own needs. As they grow older their economic role in helping their families moving out of poverty increases (Tafere 2014). Children living in different economic situations demonstrate their agency by helping their families and meeting their own needs through paid work (Chuta 2014). For many, it has helped to make their schooling possible but for some it has come at the expense of their education; some quitting school to work or girls working for many years and getting married before finishing school (Tafere 2012).

The literature review suggests that there is a lack of clarity about the types of work children are engaged in and the implications for their lives. Although age and gender differences in children's work are discussed, there is limited understanding of the relationships between domestic and paid work and how these relate to schooling. Although combining school and work is commonplace, as noted in both surveys and in-depth studies, only a few qualitative studies consider the question of the compatibility of school and work and there is also almost no discussion about the benefits children gain from working versus the possible harm it causes. Furthermore, children's own views about how they seek to combine the demands of work and school are seldom presented.

3. Data source and methods

Since this paper explores children's experiences of combining schooling and work over the years, it draws on three rounds of both the Young Lives household and child survey and the qualitative study, as noted in the analysis below. We focus on data from the Older Cohort children (born in 1994/5) since their involvement in work and schooling is more apparent than among the Younger Cohort. The survey data were collected from nearly 1,000 children drawn from 20 sites and the qualitative data from five qualitative study sites involving 30 Older Cohort children (equal numbers of boys and girls, with 18 children from rural and 12 from urban sites).

Households in the qualitative study areas are generally poor. In urban areas, such as Bertukan in Addis Ababa and Leku in Hawassa,¹ households earn their living through petty trade, street vending and casual labour and children are much involved. In the rural areas of Leki in Oromia, Tach-Meret in Amhara and Zeytuni in Tigray, agriculture is the main source

¹ All names of sites and children are pseudonyms, to protect the identities of respondents.

of livelihoods. The majority of the households are poor and many rely on the government-run PSNP (Tafero and Woldehanna 2012). Over recent years, however, there has been increasing diversification of possible income sources, with the expansion of private irrigated farms in Leki, haricot-picking businesses in Tach-Meret and stone-crushing plants in Zeytuni. These and other new investments provide better livelihood opportunities to the communities and also involve children. These activities are within the communities and very close to schools, allowing children to combine work with schooling.

Although education policy stipulates that schools should teach a full day, in the rural areas they teach for half a day only or in shifts (with children attending for the morning or the afternoon). In Tach-Meret full-day schooling was rejected by parents, who needed their children to help them with work at least for half a day. In Leki, the school teaches only in the morning and in the afternoon children are free. In Zeytuni, the school teaches in the shift system, alternating between mornings and afternoons, and children are expected to work only in the other half of the day.

From the survey, we reviewed data on schooling and children's work and activities. The data are analysed to show changes in time spent by children on work and in school over the years. Differences based on urban/rural location and gender of children are analysed. From the qualitative study, we consider the different work–schooling relationships among children who combine paid work with schooling, do family or income-generating activities outside of their school time and those who quit school because of work. The data were generated through (1) interviews with children, (2) diaries recorded by children, (3) education timelines, and (4) relevant questions on combining work and schooling. All, except one boy who never joined school, were able to complete their own one-week diary. The researchers checked them every three days and translated them from local languages into English.

4. Analysis of results

In presenting the results, we begin with the survey data focusing on the general incidence of and trends in schooling and work. We then present the qualitative evidence to demonstrate the lived experiences of young people with regards to schooling and work.

4.1 Quantitative data

4.1.1. *Schooling*

Children's school enrolment at the ages of 8, 12 and 15 is presented in Table 1. The evidence suggests that overall, the enrolment rate is fairly high. There is a notable increase in the enrolment rate from Round 1 in 2002, when the children were aged 8, to Round 2 in 2006, when they were 12, but a small decline in Round 3 in 2009, by which time they were aged 15. Although differences with regard to gender and the economic status of the household seem low, urban/rural differences are significant.

Table 1. *Enrolment, primary school completion and school dropout of Older Cohort children in three survey rounds (%)*

	School enrolment			Primary school completion rate (R3)	Dropout (R2–R3)
	R1 Age 8	R2 Age 12	R3 Age 15		
Average	66	97	90	18	8
Urban	89	98	96	29	4
Rural	51	97	85	10	12
Boys	64	97	88	19	9
Girls	68	98	92	17	7
Poor	–	98	89	15	9
Non-poor	–	95	92	24	6

At the age of 8 in 2002 about 34 per cent of the children were not in school. Children are expected to start school at the age of 7. Their caregivers were asked why the children were not enrolled in school. Almost one-third of the caregivers (30 per cent) responded that the child was needed to help the family with various work activities. Others said that they did not send their children to school because the school was too far away (24 per cent) or school expenses were too high (22 per cent). Other less frequently reported reasons included children refusing to go to school, the poor quality of education and disability. There were rural/urban differences, with a greater proportion of rural parents indicating distance to school as a reason, whereas for urban households the cost of schooling was more important (Alemu et al. 2003).

Although enrolment had increased between the ages of 8 and 12, the overall rate of completion of primary school (Grades 1–8) at the age of 15 was very low. At 15, less than a fifth of the children had completed primary school. There were clear urban/rural and wealth differences; only 1 in 10 rural children had completed primary school, urban children were three times more likely to complete primary school at 15, and almost a quarter of children in households classified as non-poor had completed primary education, as compared with 15 per cent of those in poor households. In addition to late entry, dropout was another reason for the low level of completion. Between the Round 2 and Round 3 surveys about 8 per cent of children dropped out of school. Drop-out rates were three times higher in rural than in urban areas, and children from poor families were more likely to drop out of school than those in wealthier households.

4.1.2. *Children's work*

Children usually begin work before schooling. As indicated above, more than a third of the children in the sample were not in school at the age of 8 and almost a third of parents reported that their children were needed to work for their families. At the age of 12, almost all children (97.6 per cent) were doing some type of work (Woldehanna 2009). This suggests that not just the small proportions who were not enrolled in school and/or had dropped out, but also those children who attended school, spent some time on non-school work-related activities. Table 2 shows how many hours children spent on work, schooling and study on a typical day at the ages of 12 and 15. The evidence suggests that children spent a large proportion of their day on a range of work-related activities. At 12, children spent only slightly more time on schooling (5.42 hours) than on work (4.46 hours). Although urban children seemed to spend slightly more time in school than rural children, no doubt largely due to the shift system prevalent in rural areas, all children spent less than six hours in school. The data

therefore show that children, across the board, irrespective of gender and urban/rural location of residence, worked as well as attending school.

Table 2. *Hours per typical day spent on different activities by children at 12 and 15 years old, in 2006 and 2009*

	Age 12 (N=955)					Age 15 (N=970)						
	Rural	Urban	Girls	Boys	All	Rural	Urban	Girls	Boys	Non-poor	Poor	All
Domestic activities (child care and chores)	2.90	2.76	3.59	2.12	2.84	3.54	2.94	4.40	2.25	2.03	2.69	3.30
Unpaid family business outside home	2.33	0.57	1.03	2.18	1.62	1.93	0.49	0.43	2.21	0.73	1.85	1.35
Paid activities	2.17	0.42	0.90	2.01	1.47	0.45	0.36	0.32	0.51	0.01	0.02	0.41
All kinds of work	5.23	3.33	4.63	4.31	4.46	5.91	3.79	5.15	4.97	0.88	0.95	5.06
School	5.12	5.87	5.49	5.36	5.42	5.04	6.22	5.75	5.30	6.10	4.35	5.51
Studying at home	1.59	1.94	1.71	1.75	1.73	1.64	2.19	1.82	1.89	1.26	0.87	1.86

The amount of time children spent on work in their average day increased by 20 minutes between the ages of 12 and 15. At age 15, rural children spent more than two hours per day on work than urban children. While girls did more domestic work, boys were more engaged in unpaid family business work. Moreover, children from poor households were more likely to participate in all the various work activities than children from richer households.

On a typical day, children spent nearly six hours in school, with slightly more time spent there by urban children. Girls spent more time in school than boys but boys spent slightly more time studying at home. Rural children spent less time than urban children both attending school and studying at home. Children from non-poor families spent more time in school and on school work than those from poor families. The former spent about seven and a half hours in school and studying as opposed to just under five hours by children from poor families.

As they grew older, the time children spent on work increased while the time devoted to schooling remained almost the same. On a typical day, at the age of 12, the children on average spent 4.46 hours on all work but the figure increased to 5.06 hours when they reached the age of 15. In contrast, the time they spent in school only increased only very slightly from 5.42 at the age of 12 to 5.51 hours at the age of 15.

Overall, the Young Lives survey data therefore show that all children were involved in both work and schooling. However, their time use varied in relation to their schooling, and their activities changed over time. In order to understand whether children engaged in both work and schooling found it hard to succeed in both activities, we need to consider the qualitative evidence. For some, work may have been necessary for their schooling; for others it may have impacted negatively on their education, and may have forced them to quit school and take on full-time work when they failed to be successful in combining school with work.

4.2. Qualitative evidence

The qualitative data provide evidence on children's schooling and how they combined it with work over the years. The data, drawn from case studies, illustrate the lived experiences of children with regard to schooling and work.

4.2.1. *Schooling and work experience*

All 30 children in the qualitative sample, except one rural boy, attended school at some point in their lives. All the urban children began primary school at the expected age of 7. However, most rural children began school, as indicated in the main quantitative survey, at an age when they could travel some distance. A majority (10 out of 18) joined school between the ages of 9 and 12 while the rest started school before the age of 9.

The disparity in the ages of children starting school, together with school interruptions, resulted in diverse school trajectories among the children. At the age of 16/17, at the time of the third round of qualitative research in 2011, only four children (all girls) had finished primary school. The rest were in various grades, ranging between 2 and 8. At the same time, four girls had already dropped out of school, two due to marriage and the other two for economic reasons. The low primary school completion rate for the Older Cohort children, as also indicated in the survey data, was due to interruptions and repetition caused mainly by family problems, illnesses and the need for children to work. Before discussing the impact of work on schooling, we present the work situation of the children who are involved in both work and school.

All 30 children reported that they had been engaged in some type of domestic work, such as house cleaning, cooking, fetching water and firewood. The paid work they did depended on the job opportunities available in their respective communities. In rural sites this included work in private stone-crushing plants, helping with irrigation on private farms, picking haricot beans, weeding, fishing, selling stones, collecting and selling fodder, and related activities. In the urban sites it included washing cars, shop keeping, assisting minibuses drivers, street vending and other casual work. Fifteen children (10 rural and 5 urban) reported having been engaged in some such activities to earn money. In addition three girls in the urban sites reported having helped their mothers to earn income by baking *injera* (a type of flatbread, an Ethiopian staple) for sale or washing clothes for cash. Some of the children had begun paid work when they were as young as 8, and by the age of 12 or 13 many were already working for pay.

4.2.2. *The challenges of combining schooling and work*

Most of the children who were involved in paid work tried hard to combine work with school. Though the children and their caregivers suggested that their educational performance was affected, most seemed to manage to continue with their schooling. Only four of those included in the qualitative study had completely dropped out by the age of 16 and were engaged solely in work.

We documented how children combined work and schooling as reported in their one-week diary, which they wrote during the data-gathering periods. Children reported on what they did from waking up early in the morning until bed time. The data generated showed how they used their days mainly for work and schooling. An example is presented in Table 3 for Mulatua, a 16-year-old girl who was a paternal orphan living with her mother in the rural site of Tach-Meret.

Table 3. *Mulatua's diary of three typical days, 2007, 2008 and 2011*

Time	15/10/2007, age 12	17/11/2008, age 13	20/04/2011, age 16
6:00–6:30am	Put on my clothes, washed my hands and face	Put on my clothes, used toilet, washed my face	Put on clothes and used toilet
6:30–7:00	Did homework	I cleaned house	Cleaned house alone
7:00–8:00	Cooked <i>wat</i> [stew]	Had breakfast	Fetches water from outside alone
8:00–8:30	Had breakfast	Went to school	Had breakfast
8:30–10:00	Studied	Learned, played at break	Sorted haricot beans (8:30–11:00)
10:00–12:00	Attended extra class in school	Learned after break and returned from school	Returned from work, washed (11:00–12:00)
12:00–12:30	Had lunch	Had lunch	Had lunch
12:30–1:00	Fetches water outside home	Washed	Went to school
1:00–6:00	Sorted haricot beans at employer's house	Sorted haricot beans (1–3), combed my hair (3–3:30), studied (3:30–5), played (5–6)	Attended school (1–5), did homework (5:30–6)
6:00–8:00	Baked <i>injera</i> [flatbread], cooked <i>wat</i>	Boiled coffee, cooked <i>wat</i> (6–8)	Cooked <i>wat</i> and made coffee (6–9)
8:00–8:30	Ate dinner and slept	Ate dinner, slept	Ate dinner, washed utensils, studied and finished assignment (9:50–12), slept (midnight)

Note: *Wat* is a common type of stew made with meat or vegetables. *Injera* is the staple flatbread eaten with *wat*.

Mulatua's diary indicates that she was involved in a wide range of types of work besides her schooling. She did household chores, fetched water outside the home and did paid work sorting haricot beans. She combined this with her schooling and study time. She was able to combine both work and schooling/study because her employers were flexible with her working arrangements. They agreed to pay her a piece rate for work, which they allowed her to do either in their workplace or at home.

The diary shows that the hours spent by Mulatua sorting haricot beans increased between the ages of 13 and 16. It also shows that as she got older, Mulatua had less time for rest, play or leisure activities. At the ages of 12 and 13 she had to do all kinds of activities between 6:00am and 8:30pm. She spent 14 and a half hours of the day on work and school between waking up in the morning and going to bed in the evening. When she reached the age of 16, she had to work and study for an extra three and half hours, leaving only six hours for sleep. When she was younger she went to bed after dinner, but when she was 16 she had to do more household chores and study after dinner. Her mother, however, complained that Mulatua was becoming increasingly reluctant to do more household chores as she wanted to give more time to her studies.

The shift system at her school enabled Mulatua to spend half of the day at school and the other half working. In all the rural qualitative study communities, schools teach in half-day or shift systems.² Our data suggest that the resistance to moving away from half-day (or shift) schooling to full-day schooling was a result of pressure from families who want their children

² In the shift system children alternate going to school in the morning and afternoon every fortnight, whereas in the half-day system some children go to school in the morning and others in the afternoon (see Orkin 2012).

to help them with work. The school director at Mulatua's school explained how the shift system was adopted and his view of its detrimental impact on education.

There is a shift system because the community wants its children to help in herding cattle and doing other activities at home after or before going to school. For this reason, it has not been possible to implement the full-day school system. Indeed, the shift system is negatively affecting the children because in the full day, the students would get enough time to revise what they had learned and to do their homework as well as classwork with their classmates. In the shift system, they have to go home after school and help their parents; they can't revise what they have learned and they can't do homework and can't study. So, under these circumstances, it is not expected that these students can be educationally successful. Therefore, it will be important to work in sensitising the community about this issue and some activities have already been started

(School director, Tach-Meret, 2011).

A similar pattern of increasing workloads as children grow up can be seen from the following example of a boy in an urban site. A summary from the diaries of Bereket, an orphan who lived with his maternal grandmother in Bertukan, in the centre of Addis Ababa, is presented in Box 1.

Box 1.

Bereket's diary for three days during the three fieldwork periods, when he was 12, 13 and 16 years old

Woke up 7am, washed and went to school. Returned from school at noon. In the afternoon, after lunch went back to school and attended afternoon classes until 4:30. Then played with my friends and did homework. I only washed a car for cash for 30 minutes (7:30–8:00pm). Then I washed, ate dinner, got rest and slept at 9:00pm.

(4/10/2007)

After a year, he had similar time for schooling but longer work hours afterwards.

Woke up at 7:05, prepared myself, ate breakfast, went to school, attending classes, had lunch. At 2:00pm, returned to school where I continued attending classes and played football during the break. I returned home at about 4:00pm and ate my snack. Then, I washed cars for nearly three hours (4:15–7:00). I used the remaining time for studying (one and half hours), eating dinner, and watching television before I slept at 9:45pm.

(7/10/2008)

Three years later his routine was similar though he was in a new school and had more work after school.

Woke up at 7:00 and went to school after having breakfast. Stayed in school until 3:30. I had my lunch after school because I could not come home during the midday break as my new school was a bit far. Late in the afternoon, I worked at a garage and car washing place for four hours (4–8pm). I used the remaining one hour for washing and eating dinner before going to bed at 9pm.

(8/4/2011)

Bereket's diary provides interesting insights. He was involved in working and full-day schooling in all three rounds. He spent the whole morning at school. The afternoon was shared between further schooling and work. His time at school remained the same but the time for work increased. However, his diary shows that Bereket, unlike Mulatua, was hardly involved in household chores or other family work. This was because his grandmother and his niece, who live with them, took care of all household chores. As a boy he was not expected to do any domestic work.

The diaries of other children reveal a similar trend, with the children spending considerable and increasing amounts of time on work in addition to school-related activities. For those who did paid work, the timing of it sometimes made it very difficult to combine with schooling, as shown in the following conversation between the researcher and Bereket during the 2011 fieldwork:

Researcher: Have you ever been absent from school? If so, why and for how long?

Bereket: I don't go to school regularly; I might be absent for three days.

Researcher: Is it this year or last year or are you telling me about the whole three years?

Bereket: I had many absences in the last year and the year before that.

Researcher: What was the reason?

Bereket: I was supposed to go to work if I had a job. Sometimes, I could give the job to my friends and would go to school. Otherwise, if it is a must for me to do it I don't go to school.

Researcher: You didn't attend because you had to go to work?

Bereket: Yes.

Researcher: How often were you absent in a week and a month?

Bereket: In a month, I can be absent from five to seven days.

Researcher: How many times did you take your parents to school?

Bereket: I was told to bring my parents because I had many absences.

Researcher: So it means it has no impact on your results, for example, if you don't attend classes regularly? Can you miss some important things and exams?

Bereket: Yes but my teachers take and multiply my results if I miss an exam. For example, if I miss an exam which is out of ten by next time when we have other exams out of ten, mine will be graded out of 20.

In the rural communities, there was more flexibility, owing to the shift system and employers' adaptations, whereas in urban areas children had to work after school or abandon schooling.

In some cases, combining work and school seemed to create difficulties. In the third round of qualitative research, in 2011, we conducted a school and classroom observation in Leki.

Table 4 shows the figures for enrolment, attendance and dropout at the school.

Table 4. *Enrolment, attendance and dropout at Leki school (2 April 2011)*

	Enrolled in school	Attending during observation	Absent during observation	Dropped out
Grade 1	117	47	70	9
Grade 2	100	39	61	20
Grade 3	58	39	19	2
Grade 4	54	27	27	6
Grade 5	50	36	14	4
Grade 6	51	33	18	2
Grade 7	53	36	17	10
Grade 8	56	32	24	1
Total	539	289	250	54

Source: Classroom observation (April 2011)

Nearly half of the students enrolled in the school were absent during the observation. The school director confirmed that about 10 per cent of the students had dropped out of school that year.

During the observation, some were attending school, others running through the fences to go to work and a few of them coming late to classrooms after doing some work at the irrigated fields. About 30 students were outside the school compound and were late, apparently having been doing some type of work. For example, one girl stated that she was late because she had to do some work in the irrigated fields. They were allowed to enter classrooms after some classes had finished. The director blames the expansion of investment in the community for the poor school attendance. He said:

“I came to this school in 1997. This school was famous for its brilliant students in the early 2000s. They were top when they joined secondary schools in other places. Some have become teachers and engineers after finishing a university education.

However, the situation started to change from 2004, when the development work flooded to this *kebele* [neighbourhood]. The focus of children shifted to work and the value given to education declined. Since the introduction of irrigation by investors on farmlands, most children are engaged in daily labour. This has affected education negatively.

The farms are adjacent to the school compound. The students pretend that they go to toilets but they escape through that. They don't want to listen to their teachers. In fact, they tell the teachers that it is their business whether they want to learn or not. They tell them that they want money, not education. They have learned working in the vegetable farms since a young age. So they do not bother about education. They prefer money to education.”

(School director, 2011, Leki).

Children suggested that they needed money for immediate consumption purposes and some weighed the benefit they might gain from poor-quality education against the money they could earn through paid work. During the observation, four classes were found to be without teachers. The students were either playing outside or simply sitting in the classrooms, suggesting serious problems with the quality of education. Others were squeezing through or jumping over the fences to go home or to workplaces. For example, Beletech, one of the qualitative study children, who had been involved in paid work for years, ran away during the

observation day. When she was asked about it by the researcher, she said she had decided to go to work as there were no teachers in her classroom.

As the school and the irrigated fields are both within the community, children try to do both. Unlike the other study communities, where schools provide lessons in shifts, the school in Leki teaches for half a day, in the mornings only. Moreover, the school is tolerant towards those who miss classes. A teacher interviewed in 2011 said, "Honestly speaking, more than half of the students do not come to school for a day. And the next day, those who were absent will come and others will miss class in turn." The local employers also adapted to the situation by offering work quotas against payment so that children could do their share of work when it suited them. The impact has been apparent. Every year, children enrol in school but many never finish the year. For example, three of the six study children in Leki reported being in the same grade in all three rounds of data collection (2007, 2008 and 2011). They had neither progressed through the grades nor dropped out of school. These experiences suggest that when children attend school and have a large burden of work, this can affect their schooling and they are less likely to succeed. They then become more involved in their work, and increasingly less inclined to maintain an interest in schooling.

The following case studies illustrate experiences of children living in conditions of poverty who combined work and schooling but faced challenges to succeed in school, often due to problems their families faced.

Denbel, a boy from Leku, worked as a shop assistant for a monthly wage of 150 birr (US\$7.00). In 2011, he stated his happiest experience was when he got the job. He attended school for half a day and worked in the shop in the other half. But he focused increasingly on his job. He said:

"As there is [an economic] problem in the family, I am less interested in my education. I rather want to work than go to school because I need to earn enough money. I am absent from school at least twice a week."

Earlier, Denbel was working as a messenger in a garage for some time to support his impoverished family and buy school materials. While he believes that the money he earns has helped his family and himself, it did affect his schooling and deterred him from pursuing his aspiration to succeed in school and eventually become an 'engineer'.

Miki, a boy from Bertukan, who lives with his paternal grandmother, had been doing all kinds of household chores when he was younger, but as he grew up he began earning money to assist his family. Although he tried to work during the weekends and outside school time, working affected his studies and sometimes his school attendance. In 2011, he said:

"As there is no girl in the family, I was doing all the household chores. I prepared food, cooked chicken stew ... Now I am working as a taxi attendant with a monthly wage of 80–90 birr (US\$3.90–4.40). The work is hard. I buy school materials for myself as well as coffee and sugar for the family with the money I get. ... When the taxi needs repair I am absent from school."

Another boy from the same community, Bereket, whose discussion with the fieldworker was quoted above, has been working for cash since a very young age. In 2011 he narrated his story of work and how it had affected his schooling and his interest in education.

"I began working for cash washing private cars in our area at the age of 8 or 9. I also worked as an assistant to a taxi driver. When I was very young, older boys used to order me to wash a car and we shared the money. When I became older, I began working on

my own and took all the money. ... In the last three years, I have been working fixing car tyres and washing cars. Sometimes, I work in a garage. I combine all three activities depending on the time. ... Two years ago, I stopped going to school because I preferred to work. As I did not attend regularly, the school gave me a report card stating: 'incomplete'.

I used to think and hope that education would change my life, but now, I have changed my mind. Now, I am only hoping that having a business will change me. I used to believe in education before but now I prefer to work. I want better things by doing business. I want to become involved in selling cars; we meet people while doing our jobs and they tell us how to do it. So I don't think selling cars will be difficult for me."

At the age of 12 (in 2007), Bereket stated that education was the most important thing in his life and he wanted to finish a university education and become an engineer. Later he preferred to work and pursue his business rather than continue with school and achieve his earlier aspirations. At the age of 16, Bereket expressed his belief that combining both school and work was too difficult. He said, "You can make money with work and it is hard to be in the middle. Either you have to be serious in your education or in the business. You can lose both if you are undecided!"

When children become involved in work for a long period and develop some skills, they tend to lose interest in schooling. While some continued to struggle in school, repetitions, interruptions and poor performances, mainly caused by work, led some to leave school altogether.

Four case studies are presented as illustrations of the constraints poor children face in combining school and work. These relate to the experiences of two boys and two girls who were involved in both family work and paid work that slowed down their schooling, and led to their eventual dropout. Defar, from Tach-Meret, carried out family work and paid activities from a young age. He was involved in fetching water and firewood, weeding, ploughing, harvesting and other agricultural activities. He joined school as late as 11 years old because he was needed to do family work. After joining, he continued doing all the family work activities but combined them with school. At the age of 13, he began paid work. He was employed to sort haricot beans for 25 birr (US\$1.20) per quintal (100kg). He also collected stones from open areas and sold them in a nearby town with his father. While working, he suffered serious headaches caused by the sun. As the family relied on agriculture and PSNP transfers, and was too poor to afford his schooling, he had to drop out of school at Grade 4. After leaving school, Defar earned his living mainly from daily labour and carrying things for others in the nearby town. The impact of leaving school to work was described by Defar in 2011 as follows:

Researcher: Why did you stop going to school from September?

Defar: It was because I needed to work and support myself.

Researcher: How do you feel about leaving school?

Defar: I feel that I am below my classmates and my friends as the result of it. I am sad.

Researcher: Who decided that you must discontinue your education?

Defar: It was due to lack of economic capacity.

Tufa, another boy living in Leki, began his schooling at the age of 8. He also did all kinds of family work. Every year he went to school and enrolled but, owing to interruptions, he only reached Grade 2. When he was 13, he had to stop going to school after his father, who was

a guard, was imprisoned after a water pump was stolen from a store where he was working. Tufa found it difficult to combine school with heavy work. He earned additional income through fishing and paid work at irrigated fields. Initially, he feared that the employers might not take him on because he was too young, but his mother persuaded them to employ him. During the 2011 fieldwork, he was no longer attending school and saw little chance of going back. He only envisaged his life in farming. He stated that his happiest moment was when he joined school at the age of 8 but the saddest event was to see his friends attending school when he had to leave.

Two girls, Ayu from Leki and Haymanot from Zeytuni, have ended up in marrying, interrupting their schooling in Grades 2 and 5, respectively. Both had begun schooling at an early age and tried hard to continue with their education. While Ayu began working at 12 in irrigated fields to support her impoverished family, Haymanot began working at a stone-crusher plant at the age of 13, after her poor and single mother became ill. While Ayu enrolled every year but interrupted her schooling after a few weeks of attendance, Haymanot had to drop out to work full days in the stone-crusher plant. When both found it impossible to continue with schooling, they married in the same year, when they were aged 16. Haymanot expressed her happiness with her marriage saying it “relieved me of the heavy work”.

4.2.3. *Work, health and schooling*

All the case-study children who participated in paid work reported having experienced some type of injury or other health problems while working. Haymanot suffered an injury to her fingers in the stone-crusher plant and needed some treatment. Ayu fell ill continually during the years when she was working in the irrigated fields in the sun. Defar experienced severe headaches while collecting and carrying stones in the sun. He was taken to be sprinkled with holy water and was forced to leave work for some time. Tufa also complained about repeated headaches when working in the sun. The 2009 survey data from Older Cohort children shows that 13.8 per cent sustained some injuries, with half them related to work (Morrow et al. 2013). The same data suggest work injuries were to some extent associated with economic status and urban/rural location of residence. Children from poor families and those who lived in rural areas seemed to be more at risk, as exemplified by these cases.

For schoolchildren, the health problems they face impact on their schooling. Mulatua worked at the private haricot-picking business for long hours, her schedule depending on the timing of her schooling (see her diary in Table 3). During the weekends, she worked for about ten hours a day. While the income she earned from the work helped her to meet her basic needs and to buy school materials, the impact on her health and schooling was apparent. She said:

“We were suffering a lot from a shortage of food ... When I do daily labour, I earn some money, but my educational performance is negatively affected. My health is also affected because of the dust. Now, I am not healthy because of the dust at the daily labour place.”

(2008, aged 13)

The problem continued over the years. At the age of 16, in 2011, she reported:

“I work in sorting out the haricot [beans] from the dust. I get 25 birr per quintal [and one quintal] takes me three days to finish. ... This is affecting my health and schooling but my mother obliges me to continue to work. I cannot study properly after I come back home as the seat we use during the sorting of the beans is not comfortable.”

During the interviews, Mulatua complained that she had increasingly suffered from back pain as she was bending for hours to sort the beans from the dust. She has also suffered from eye infections and breathing problems.

Work-related injuries forced some children to abandon school and caused a few of them to incur high costs, depleting the savings they had accumulated through paid work. Bereket, while working at a garage at the age of 14, damaged his hand when he misused electric power while inflating a tyre. He had to go to a hospital for treatment and it took him three months to recover. He had to interrupt school that year and repeat the grade. As the employer only gave him a small amount of financial assistance, he had to spend much of his savings.

Habtamu from Tach-Meret was collecting stones with his father to sell in the nearby town. At the age of 12, while chopping wood, Habtamu slashed his leg with an axe. He sought some treatment in the area but his leg did not heal. During the 2007 fieldwork, the year after the accident, Habtamu was found to have a serious problem with his leg. He was unable to walk, and his older brother had to put him on horseback to travel to the health centre. He had to have treatment for about three months. Although his school allowed him to resume his education after a long spell of absence, he failed the final exam and had to repeat a grade.

4.2.4. *Benefits of work*

Despite the potential risks inherent in some of their work activities, for many children living in conditions of poverty, hard work remains their main means of survival. Some children are able to continue with schooling because of their work, which can have long-term benefits, but for some there may not be any realistic alternative to work.

Children work to meet their obligations to help their family, ensure their basic needs are met, and, in some cases, to make their schooling possible and invest in their future. Students from poor families often feel they need to work. Despite the fact that it was likely to prevent them succeeding at school, work was considered a necessity by many of the children in our sample. This is expressed by Kassaye from Tach-Meret, who did all kinds of family work and had little time for study. He said:

“I herd livestock and do all family work ... I do the work in one shift of the day and go to school the other shift. I do not have time for study. The work is affecting my education, but because we are the children of poor farmers and here things are difficult, we need to work to get food. That is why I should work. ... My father told me ‘You should do what I do because it helps you for the future if you fail in your schooling. You can be a good farmer like me.’”

(2008, aged 13)

Kassaye continued to be involved in family work and as he grew up he began investing in his future through paid work. He began earning some money to support his schooling, family and for savings. He said:

“I collect straw and sell it to those who need it as animal fodder. I earn some money which I use to buy school materials, [and I] give some to my mother to buy sugar, cooking oil and red pepper. I use the rest to buy chickens for breeding. I sell the eggs and earn more money.”

(2011 aged 16)

Bereket, whose case was discussed earlier, developed skills and experience by working in car washing and in a garage assisting drivers. He was ready to obtain his driving licence when he reached the required age of 18. He has also developed business skills working with car brokers and is hopeful that he will succeed in business.

Beletech, from Leki, used the money she earned to set up a new business. She said, "Through my earnings from my work in irrigation, I set up a small kiosk and bought a goat for breeding. I sell sugar cane, chewing gum and sweets in my shop."

In circumstances where children do not have time and resources to attend school effectively, they often do less well and focus more on their work, which can pave the way for other life options.

5. Discussion

Both the survey data and qualitative evidence illustrate the reality of children combining work and schooling. All the children had been working from an early age but later tried to combine work with schooling. The survey results show that at the age of 8, children were engaged mainly in family work with few involved in paid work, though involvement in paid work had increased by the time they were 12 and then further by the time they had reached 15. The qualitative data confirm these findings, demonstrating how children's work burden increases with age and showing that girls face greater pressure to combine domestic tasks with school, as well as to work outside the household in rural areas where employment opportunities are available.

A major implication of the findings is that while work remains an underlying life route, schoolchildren go through intermittent educational trajectories. This involves, for some, starting late and not progressing as expected but repeating grades, and, for others, some periods out of school often related to family poverty and shocks, notably illness or loss of a parent's income. In some cases we were surprised by the 'ambiguity' regarding children's educational status. While the survey reported children as either in or out of school, the qualitative data presented a more mixed picture. Some were registered as students but were actually working. Thus, combining work and schooling does not necessarily mean that children are regularly attending school.

The context of this study is one in which there has been greater availability of schooling, as well as international and national pressures for all school-age children to go to school, in line with globally defined goals. At the same time opportunities for children to work, particularly in rural areas have expanded. In Ethiopia, children have traditionally been expected to do some type of work from a young age and work remains one of children's expected roles (Tafere and Camfield 2009). In the past, children were expected to work for the family before they set up their own independent livelihoods. Very few had the opportunity to go school. However, since the 1990s, there has been widespread expansion of schooling and rapid economic development. This has brought new responsibilities for children. In addition to family work, children have had to handle both schooling and paid work. In the rural areas of our study, primary schools and investments attracting children's work have come to their backyards. Private irrigation schemes in Leki, haricot bean cultivation in Tach-Meret, and a stone-crushing plant and some irrigation works in Zeytuni have meant there are opportunities for children to work as waged labourers. Nowadays children are attracted to paid work because

the work is available nearby and they may also be pushed into it by their parents or feel a sense of obligation to earn money to assist their families. Moreover, schooling is bringing new costs to families, many of whom are already struggling economically. Some children in our sample felt responsible for costs associated with their schooling, including fees, uniforms and exercise books.

Parents, schools and employers seem to have generally responded by facilitating the efforts of children trying to combine work and schooling. The qualitative data show that there was high 'flexibility' on the part of all three parties in encouraging children to be involved in 'everything'. The half-day or shift system made children's work possible. Employers accommodated children by allowing them to do piece work (e.g. irrigation work), or do the work at home (sorting haricot beans); schools were tolerant of those who came late or missed classes; parents believed that their children could do family work, outside paid work and schooling. They expected them to do family work early in the morning, late in the evening or during the weekends. During the day, they were often engaged in paid work as well as attending school. This suggests that all the burden and time adjustment falls on children.

What does this mean for children who work and learn? For some, the type of work they do and the hours they work clearly affect their health and schooling. When they go to school after work they get tired and are unable to follow their class attentively; when they work after school, they do not find time for study and homework. The survey and the qualitative data also revealed that some children worked before the age of 8 and some suffered injuries or health problems while working.

Children overburdened by work found it hard to succeed in their schooling and some found work and school incompatible. Many performed less well at school and some ended up leaving and concentrating on work. The 2009 survey showed a very low primary school completion rate (18 per cent) and an increase in dropout between ages of 12 and 15 (8 per cent), as compared to the rate between 8 and 12, which may be partly attributable to work. The qualitative data also provide evidence that some children were lagging behind in comparison to their peers and the grade levels they should have been in, and some stopped school. While trying to combine both work and schooling, inability to progress through grade levels made it likely that they would leave school and continue to other life transitions. There is a gender dimension to this. While boys who stopped school focused on their work (e.g. Tufa and Defar), girls began a new family life. For example, Ayu and Haymanot married at 16 after they realised that they were unable to progress beyond Grades 2 and 5. With limited or arduous work options available locally, they decided that the next best option was to get married. In general, as children grow up, work and schooling become increasingly competitive and eventually the need or desire to work prevails.

However, for a few children work was a means to ensure they could continue with schooling, suggesting some degree of complementarity of schooling and work. For example, Mulatua was overburdened by family and paid work, which affected her health and schooling. However, despite all these challenges, her earnings helped her impoverished family and enabled her to continue with her schooling. She was one of the few students who were able to perform well and progress beyond primary school. She was determined to continue working and hopes to complete university education and become a medical doctor.

Work has also helped some children gain life skills. For example, Bereket and Beletech had already begun setting up small businesses before they left school. Others, like Kassaye, continued to do agricultural activities like their fathers. They were confident that they could pursue their business or farming if they could not succeed in school. Thus, staying in work while attending school opens up other life options.

6. Conclusions

This paper has considered how the involvement of children in school and work are inter-related. The literature review revealed a lack of clarity regarding the concepts of 'child labour' and 'child work'; to avoid confusion and biases we have used the more neutral term 'children's work'. A range of studies show that work undertaken by children is prevalent throughout Ethiopia. However, the extent and type of children's work is related to age, gender, location and household wealth, with the amount of work, particularly outside the household, increasing as children get older. Girls were involved in more domestic work and in some contexts were doing more work overall, while boys were more involved in farm work, herding and in some contexts paid work. Rural children were carrying out more work for the household as well as for pay, and poorer children often undertook more work than those whose families were less poor. Children were also found to be working at a young age before going to school, and the amount of work they did increased despite their involvement in school, though in some cases their involvement was found to peak at around 12 and then decline. Some evidence suggests that the primary school drop-out rate seems to have been decreasing nationally, although the proportion of children dropping out because of work seems to have increased. Young Lives studies have suggested that in some contexts school and work can be competitive but also that the shift system can enable children to work as well as attending school.

This study documents that during different periods of data collection, a significant number of children were either not enrolled in school or had interrupted schooling. Moreover, the primary school completion rate was very low across the research sites. Location of residence (rural or urban), gender and economic status of family were markers of difference in the schooling situation of children.

The qualitative analysis showed that all the children were engaged in some domestic work, with more burden on girls. Most of the children were involved in paid work, in rural areas in various forms of waged labour and income-generating activities, and in urban areas mainly in informal-sector activities or casual employment. Many children also felt a strong sense of obligation to work to assist their families, especially those from very poor backgrounds or families facing health or economic shocks.

Many children, especially those from poorer backgrounds and those with families facing shocks, soon found themselves entering a cycle of missing school to work, which then affected their ability to learn, their motivation, and their results. If they repeated grades they tended to become increasingly disillusioned and pessimistic about the likelihood of succeeding in and through school. They aspired to alternative livelihoods or careers that did not require education, and which became more attractive or the only viable option, often compounded by parental pressure. However, a few were successful in finding gainful forms of livelihood, despite having no formal qualifications.

Despite the risks children faced, most did not see an alternative to working and viewed this as their duty, and as a natural way to follow in the footsteps of their parents, who sometimes encouraged them to give up school to work. Some enterprising older children were able to develop skills through working, and a few were able to invest and start small businesses that might grow. Very few children living in these poor circumstances had the energy, time and perseverance to succeed at school and keep faith in their ability to improve their options through education.

To conclude, it is important to ensure that children are not involved in the 'worst forms' of child labour as stipulated in ILO Convention No. 138, to which Ethiopia is a signatory. However, the bulk of the work that children do in our communities takes place within a domestic context from an early age and involves increasing responsibilities. While this is often necessary and beneficial for the children and their families, excessive work can detrimentally affect children's schooling, and there is a greater burden children from poorer families. It is also important to raise awareness of the extra burden placed on girls. Much of the work that children do to earn an income outside the home involves petty trade or work in the informal sector, and employers are often flexible in allowing children to work at home or at times which do not interfere with their schooling.

While prohibiting children from doing certain harmful activities and working for long hours at a young age may seem logical at face value, it may not be realistic in certain contexts. Children from poor families, like those included in our study, need to work while trying to attend school because their circumstances oblige them to do so. Children may not have the capacity to change the structural impediments they face, but they may make best use of the situation (Lieten 2008). However, children who are unable to change their family poverty, but have the opportunity for work, can make the best of their conditions by combining work and school as far and as long as possible.

These findings raise questions about the quality and value of the education available to children living in poor circumstances, the risks associated with the expansion of paid work and the strains on children managing school and work. Potential policy implications of the findings include the need for social protection for children living in households facing shocks to avoid them becoming engaged in excessive or potentially harmful work, the need to ensure that conditions for older children in paid employment are acceptable and avoid health risks, and the need to facilitate flexible learning opportunities for children who need or want to work in order to contribute to their households or earn a living.

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Can Children in Ethiopian Communities Combine Schooling with Work?

Combining school with work presents challenges for children growing up in contexts of poverty. Drawing on evidence from three rounds of surveys and three rounds of qualitative research with case study children, we examine the complex relationship between school and work in the lives of children in Ethiopian communities studied by Young Lives.

Analysis of Young Lives survey data showed that a third of the children were not in school at the age of 8 (when they should have started when they were 7) and almost a third of the caregivers mentioned the need for children to work as the reason. Primary school completion rates were low, with less than a fifth of children having completed primary school (Grades 1–8) at the age of 15. Children across the board worked as well as going to school, irrespective of age, gender, location and wealth. However, girls spent slightly more time at school and boys somewhat more time studying out of school, and children from poorer backgrounds spent less time at school and more time doing all kinds of work than those from non-poor backgrounds. As children grew older they spent more time on work but the amount of time they spent in school and studying at home hardly changed.

In a context where opportunities for paid work have expanded, the underlying structural poverty, poor quality of the school system and limited chances to succeed through education have put a strain on children's ability to combine work and school successfully. This resultant pressure tended to lead children, especially in households that had faced health and livelihood shocks, to miss classes and eventually give up and become engaged in full-time work.

The findings raise questions about the quality and value of education for children living in poor circumstances, the risks associated with the expansion of paid work and the constraints on children managing school and work. Potential policy implications include the need for social protection for children living in households facing shocks, the need for flexible learning opportunities for working children and ensuring that when children have to work they are not involved in the 'worst forms' of work, nor in excessive hours or hazardous working conditions.



About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, involving 12,000 children in 4 countries over 15 years. It is led by a team in the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford in association with research and policy partners in the 4 study countries: Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.

Through researching different aspects of children's lives, we seek to improve policies and programmes for children.

Young Lives Partners

Young Lives is coordinated by a small team based at the University of Oxford, led by Professor Jo Boyden.

- *Ethiopian Development Research Institute, Ethiopia*
- *Pankhurst Development Research and Consulting plc, Ethiopia*
- *Save the Children (Ethiopia)*
- *Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad, India*
- *Save the Children India*
- *Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam (Women's University), Andhra Pradesh, India*
- *Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (GRADE), Peru*
- *Instituto de Investigación Nutricional, Peru*
- *Centre for Analysis and Forecasting, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam*
- *General Statistics Office, Vietnam*
- *Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford, UK*

Contact:

Young Lives

Oxford Department of
International Development,
University of Oxford,
3 Mansfield Road,
Oxford OX1 3TB, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1865 281751

Email: younglives@younglives.org.uk

Website: www.younglives.org.uk