



EDRI

Reducing childhood poverty in Ethiopia

Through the *Young Lives* project, the *Ethiopian Development Research Institute* (EDRI) is using long-term socio-economic research to promote welfare policies for less fortunate children in Ethiopia.

SETTING THE SCENE —Despite international assistance and sustained economic growth, thirty percent of Ethiopia's population live on less than US\$1.25 a day. Ethiopia's high level of poverty has a far-reaching adverse impact on children. Children make up Ethiopia's largest demographic and as such are heavily affected by poverty's severe and lifelong consequences. Extreme poverty, malnutrition, child labour and low levels of literacy are therefore major threats to the survival and development of children.

A project known as *Young Lives*, an international study of childhood poverty coordinated by the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford, provided an opportunity for the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI) to get involved in research on this important issue. The *Young Lives* project follows the changing lives of 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam over 15 years, and is unique in that it directly links the evidence-base of research to policymakers and planners, both in the study countries and internationally.

WHAT DID EDRI DO? —EDRI is a semi-autonomous government development research institute. Its research focuses on the development of the Ethiopian

economy, particularly poverty, agriculture, rural development, and macroeconomic modeling and analysis. For the *Young Lives* study, EDRI set out to follow the development of 3,000 children in Ethiopia over 15 years, from early infancy to young adulthood. The research institute set out to collect five rounds of data from the 3,000 children, and to provide policymakers and development partners with rigorous knowledge about the changing profiles of poor children.

The study considered two groups of children at the outset: the first cohort involved 2,000 children who were born in 2001/02 and the second consisted of 1,000 children who were born in 1994/95. EDRI used large scale household surveys of the children and their caregivers interspersed with in-depth interviews, group work and case studies of children, parents, teachers and community representatives. The surveys took place in 2002, 2006, 2009 and 2013, and a fifth round is set for 2016.

As part of an ongoing process, the research has produced working papers, technical notes, policy briefs, journal articles, country reports and impact and learning case studies. In addition, at the conclusion of each round of surveys, discussion forums have been held at the domestic and international level to share the



findings with scholars, policymakers, parliamentarians and development stakeholders.

THE OUTCOME —EDRI has now been involved in this project for seven years. By collecting information about not just the material and social circumstances of Ethiopia's impoverished children, but also their perceptions and aspirations, it has been possible to explore the causes and consequences of childhood poverty and to plan appropriate policy responses. Overall, the survey results and reports, as well as the discussion forums, have generated inputs that are relevant to policymakers in the field of education, nutrition, health, poverty reduction and youth development. For example, in the educational sector, the research demonstrates a strong need for public pre-primary education in Ethiopia, which to date exists only in urban areas and is often provided by the private sector to the middle-class and higher income groups.

As evidence of its impact, the first round of the survey resulted in a move by policymakers to embrace youth

development and poverty reduction in Ethiopia's *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* (PRSP) as one of its pillars. The second round survey informed the *Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development and Eradication of Poverty*, the second generation of PRSP on child welfare; as a result, this plan included a chapter on child welfare for the first time. The third round has, to date, contributed to the ongoing *Growth and Transformation Plan* (2011-2015) and the country's social protection program.

Additionally, demonstrating collaborative sustained efforts aimed at reducing childhood poverty, a national network known as the *Child Research and Practice Forum* has evolved. It comprises the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, UNICEF and Save the Children. This forum began in September 2010 with the main objectives of linking research, practice and policy. It hosts a monthly lunchtime seminar during which research on children is presented to a number of participants who engage in debate and discussion.

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