

Draft Report

The Lego Foundation Play Every Day Project Needs Assessment

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Executive Summary

The Play Every Day project, a partnership between the Sesame Workshop and the LEGO Foundation, is to be implemented in India, Mexico, and South Africa. The project is aimed at helping children become creative, lifelong learners by unlocking the power of play to create transformative, hands-on learning experiences. This document reports on a needs assessment that was conducted to inform the development of the Play Every Day Project in South Africa in order to enhance its impact. The goals were the following:

1. to understand the role of play in children's lives;
2. to assess parents' understanding of the value of play;
3. to learn more about families' access to materials and media, which can support play;
4. to examine barriers to play.

The needs assessment was conducted at three early childhood development (ECD) service providers located in Diepsloot, Protea South, and Meadowlands. The target population, from which the sample was drawn, was children between the ages of three and six who attended programmes offered by the above-mentioned service providers, as well as their parents. In total, 85 parent-child pairs participated in the needs assessment. Data was collected through a demographic questionnaire, as well as a parental and child interview protocols.

In terms of the results, a significant proportion of parents agree that they have children's books (53%) and art and craft materials (60%) at home. The majority (70%) do not have toys or other learning materials.

- *Parents need to be educated on the importance of play and how to exploit objects around them for the benefit of their children's development.*

The most widely owned media device was a TV with over 80%, and the least owned was a tablet with a little over 20%. Smartphone and TV usage were the highest for both parents and children.

- *Given the high TV, DVD, and smartphone ownership, these devices would be the most ideal avenues through which video content could be consumed. This should be distributed in the form of pre-loaded files.*

Parents value the role of play in providing the foundation for the realisation of the dreams they have for their children.

- *Parents would benefit from training aimed at engaging their children in pretend play, particularly as it relates to their future professional interests.*

Parents make a distinction between learning through play and formal education and regard the two as mutual exclusive.

- *This is a misconception that the programme should seek to counter.*

Parents believe that the main reason why some parents do not hold positive conceptions of play, is because of ignorance, lack of education, or because they do not have time.

- *The programme should therefore seek to address these misconceptions. It should also emphasize the importance of quality rather than the quantity of the play interaction; and it should focus on promoting play activities that are not physically demanding.*

Parents have positive attitudes towards play, including that adults should play with children often; and that children learn problem-solving and self-regulation through play. Negative attitudes include the view that adults don't need to play with children because children can play on their own; and that play keeps children busy and out of the way.

- *The programme should aim to reinforce the positive attitudes and counter the negative attitudes.*

Because of limited physical living spaces, children tend to play outside rather than inside. As a result, they risk being knocked over by cars.

- *If possible, the programme should make provision for safe outdoor play.*

The children's explication of the indoor and outdoor play routines is similar to that of their parents. There were clear gender differences in terms of toy and game preferences. While 75% of the children have siblings, most of them preferred friends as play partners. Most of them (76%) also listed their mother as the likely parental play partner.

- *These factors should be considered in the development of the programme.*

Many of the children seem to lack imagination when it came to what they could do with some of the play objects they were presented with. Their lack of familiarity with some of the objects also means that these could be potentially hazardous to them.

- *The programme should give careful consideration to making sure that while children could use everyday objects to engage in pretend or imaginative play, care should be taken that their exposure to these objects does not jeopardize their safety.*

List of Abbreviations

ACRWC - African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

ECD – Early Childhood Development

HSRC – Human Sciences Research Council

NGO – Non-governmental Organisation

NPA – National Action Plan

RIA – Research Use and Impact Assessment Unit

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

UNCRC – United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child

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1. Introduction

The *Play Every Day* project, a partnership between the Sesame Workshop and the LEGO Foundation, is to be implemented in India, Mexico, and South Africa. The project is aimed at helping children become creative, lifelong learners by unlocking the power of play to create transformative, hands-on learning experiences. It is underpinned by the belief that it is essential for all children to grow up in environments that nurture their natural curiosity to learn through engaging and meaningful interactions with caring adults. Within this context, the role of play is critical because it is at the heart of emotional wellbeing and mental health. The *Play Every Day project* ultimately aims to increase parents' awareness about the importance of guided play for children's development, and build parents' capacity for engaging in play. Through a series of play experiences, Sesame Workshop will develop play activities that will help parents develop this awareness and engage their children in play in various ways. In order to inform the development of the project, needs assessments were to be conducted in each of the implementing countries. This document reports on the needs assessment that the Research Use and Impact Assessment Unit (RIA) at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted in South Africa.

The HSRC was established in 1968 as South Africa's statutory research agency and has grown to become the largest dedicated research institute in the social sciences and humanities on the African continent, doing cutting-edge public research in areas that are crucial to development. The organisation's mandate is to inform the effective formulation and monitoring of government policy; to evaluate policy implementation; to stimulate public debate through the effective dissemination of research-based data and fact-based research results; to foster research collaboration; and to help build research capacity and infrastructure for the human sciences. The HSRC conducts large-scale, policy-relevant, social-scientific research for public sector users, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international development agencies. Research activities and structures are closely aligned with South Africa's national development priorities.

2. Background to the study

Play is the innate childhood instinct that is not only enjoyable, but also crucial to the process of learning and development (Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012). It is essential to the social, emotional, cognitive and physical wellbeing of children beginning in early childhood (Milteer, Ginsburg, & Mulligan, 2012). It is the very freedom and child centeredness of play that makes it an effective and comprehensive learning process (Play Wales, 2005). Globally, the issue of children and play has gained momentum among children's agencies, researchers and policy makers. There is significant empirical data that suggests a strong correlation between play and scholastic improvement and attainment. According to Piaget, play provides children with extensive opportunities to interact with materials in the environment and construct their own knowledge of the world, thereby making play one of the most important elements of cognitive development (Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012). Vygotsky (1967), on the other hand, asserts that play is one of the first ways in which children explore symbols, and through which they learn that one thing can stand for, or symbolise another (in Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012).

The problem-solving that occurs in play may promote executive functioning and higher level skills that integrate attention and other cognitive functions such as planning, organizing, sequencing and decision-making (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005). Through play, children learn to master skills, which contribute to the development of self-esteem and confidence (Howard & Munnes, 2013). Children who play together, learn to work together (Carlson, White, Davis, & Linger, 2014). They are able to learn how to collaborate, share, negotiate and resolve conflict. It, therefore, follows that play offers the potential for breaking cultural, ethnic and racial barriers, and foster unity among children. It provides opportunities for children to learn social interaction, and as such, develop sustaining friendships, as well as the ability to lead and to follow (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005).

For these reasons, children's right to play, recreation, leisure, art and cultural activities is set out in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), as well as Article 12 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (Talbot & Thorton, 2009). In South Africa, Chapter 26 of the Children Act 28 of 2005 explicitly highlights the significance of play. In addition to this, the National Plan of

Action (NPA) 2012-2017 on Play, Sports and Leisure of the then Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, in conjunction with UNICEF, aim to encourage and resource play activities for children and adolescents through national school curriculum. Strategies to accomplish this include (1) promoting the play of indigenous games among all children; (2) maintaining and developing safe play parks for children in each community; (3) encouraging town planners in local governments to ensure that safe parks for play and leisure by children are part of all special developments in the municipality, including inner cities; and (4) facilitating parent education and capacity development programmes on the importance of play (Republic of South Africa, 2012).

Despite this commitment, in practice, play is not given the recognition that sport has. There is little evidence to suggest that South Africa is on a strong “play rights” fulfillment path (Preston-Talbot, 2015). It does not appear to be integrated in the formal school curriculum and is only regarded as a useful tool in teaching methodology and in the promotion of sport. Thus the *Play Every Day* project is a direct attempt to address the shortcomings. It is demonstrative of Sesame Workshop and the Lego Foundation’s commitment to the creation and provision of stimulating play environments and programmes that promote the physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, and cognitive development of children. The needs assessment is a vital component in the development of the project. It is hoped that it will contribute to a context specific understanding of children’s play practices, the values, perceptions and beliefs that parents hold around the significance of play for their children’s development, and the factors that constrain their capacities to engage their children in play activities that are developmentally more meaningful. These insights will then be used to inform the development of the *Play Every Day Project* and potentially enhance its impact.

3. Goals

More specifically, the needs assessment will have the following goals:

5. to understand the role of play in children’s lives;
6. to assess parents’ understanding of the value of play;
7. to learn more about families’ access to materials and media, which can support play;
8. to examine barriers to play.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Sites

The needs assessment was conducted at three early childhood development (ECD) service providers located in Diepsloot, Protea South, and Meadowlands. Diepsloot is a densely populated, poverty-stricken township that is located north of Johannesburg, South Africa and not far from the affluent suburb of Dainfern. Its population size is estimated to be around 350 000 with many people living in shacks without access to basic services such as running water, sewerage and rubbish removal (<http://www.diepsloot.com/>). The area, which would qualify as a slum by Western standards, is characterized by high levels of crime and violence and all its attendant social ills. Protea South is part of the greater Soweto, the largest township in South Africa. Situated at the South-end of Soweto towards the Western townships, it has a combination of formal and informal houses that were occupied by Coloured people¹ during the Apartheid era. These houses were abandoned and are now occupied by predominantly Black Africans². In many instances, a house would be occupied by multiple families, with each family living in one room in the house (Mabitsela, 2012). Poverty and unemployment is high and the area has been the site of ongoing community protests against the lack of basic services. Meadowlands was created in terms of the *Natives Resettlement Act, Act No 19 of 1954* in order to facilitate the forced removal of Black people out of the centre of Johannesburg from multi-cultural areas such as Sophiatown and the Western Native Townships (Tomlinson, Beauregard, Bremmer, & Mangcu, 2014). While it is classified as a working class area and is occupied by a large number of people living in poverty, Meadowlands is not among the poorest residential settlements in Greater Johannesburg (Beall, Crankshaw & Parnell, 2002).

In Diepsloot, participants were accessed through *Afrika Tikkun*, which is an NGO that provides education, health and social services to children, youth and their families through centres of excellence in South African townships. Their approach is based on the assumption that investing in early childhood development not only safe guards the well-being of children, but is also the best guarantee of future peace, security and prosperity

¹ In South Africa, this term is used to refer to people who have a mixed racial heritage.

² This term is used in referenced to those of African ancestry.

for the community at large. For this reason, Afrika Tikkun's ECD centres are state-of-the-art facilities with a curriculum that produces quality school ready children. One of the main objectives of the Afrika Tikkun ECD programme is to provide children an opportunity to develop in the areas of numeracy and literacy through play and creative activities. In the remaining two geographical areas, participants were recruited through Cotlands, which is a non-profit ECD organisation. It was established in 1936 with the aim of addressing the education and social crisis. This was achieved by establishing early learning playgroups and toy libraries in under-resourced communities to serve vulnerable children from birth to age six.

4.2. Sample

The target population from which the sample was drawn, was children between the ages of three and six who attended programmes offered by the above-mentioned service providers, as well as their parents. In total, 85 parents responded positively to the invitation and participated in the needs assessment, along with one child each. Almost half of the interviews were conducted in English (44%). The others were conducted in Zulu (16%), Sepedi (6%), with the rest (34%) code switching between English and either Sepedi or Zulu. Almost 70% of the parents fell between the age ranges of 21-30 and 31-40, with most (67%) being single parents. While it was hoped for a more or less equal gender split, only two fathers participated in the needs assessment. While 54% of the parents had a high school education and just fewer than 10% had a post-school qualification, more than 60% were unemployed. For more details on parental and child demographics respectively, see tables 1-6, and 7-8 below.

Table 1 – Adult demographic information

| AGE | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| 15-20 | 1 | 1.2 |
| 21-30 | 32 | 37.6 |
| 31-40 | 27 | 31.8 |
| 41-50 | 16 | 18.8 |
| 50+ | 9 | 10.6 |
| Total | 85 | 100.0 |
| GENDER | Frequency | Percent |
| male | 2 | 2.4 |
| female | 83 | 97.6 |
| Total | 85 | 100.0 |
| MARITAL STATUS | Frequency | Percent |
| married | 19 | 22.4 |
| single | 57 | 67.1 |
| Divorced/separated | 1 | 1.2 |
| Widowed | 4 | 4.7 |
| Other | 4 | 4.7 |
| Total | 85 | 100.0 |
| RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD | Frequency | Percent |
| Parent | 71 | 83.5 |
| Grandparent | 10 | 11.8 |
| aunt or uncle | 2 | 2.4 |
| other | 2 | 2.4 |
| Total | 85 | 100.0 |
| EMPLOYMENT STATUS | Frequency | Percent |
| employed full time/part time | 21 | 24.7 |
| self-employed | 10 | 11.8 |
| Unemployed | 54 | 63.5 |
| Total | 85 | 100.0 |
| EDUCATION | Frequency | Percent |
| no formal education | 3 | 3.5 |
| primary school | 28 | 32.9 |
| senior certificate | 46 | 54.1 |
| degree/post school diploma | 8 | 9.4 |
| Total | 85 | 100.0 |

Table 2 - Child demographic information

| GENDER | Frequency | Percent |
|--------|-----------|---------|
| Boy | 45 | 52.9 |
| Girl | 40 | 47.1 |
| Total | 85 | 100.0 |

| AGE | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|
| 3 | 30 | 35.3 |
| 4 | 14 | 16.5 |
| 5 | 29 | 34.1 |
| 6 | 12 | 14.1 |
| Total | 85 | 100.0 |

4.3. Data Collection and procedure

The data collection instruments consisted of a demographic questionnaire, as well as a parental and child interview protocols. Sesame Workshop had initially drafted these and shared them with the HSRC team. The data collection instruments were internally discussed by the HSRC. This was followed by a broader discussion with Sesame Workshop during a two-hour conference call on 21 July 2016. During this meeting, the HSRC raised various questions around the possible relevance and or cultural appropriateness of certain questions. On the basis of this discussion, changes were made to the instruments. To further refine them, the instruments were piloted with five parent-child pairs in Diepsloot on 08 August 2016. The pilot study gave a further sense of whether (1) there were questions that could potentially make parents uncomfortable and which they may find objectionable, and (2) if any of the questions were not relevant or appropriate for their culture. On the basis of this, further changes were made to the instruments.

The demographic questionnaire was geared towards eliciting parental and child demographic data, as well as information on the extent of the child's access to, and use of toys, learning materials, and other electronic media devices at home. The parental interview protocol consisted of open-ended, closed-ended, as well as Likert-scale questions. The child protocol consisted of open and closed-ended questions. Both

protocols were aimed at eliciting information regarding the child play practices, and preferences. In addition to this, the parental protocol also sought to gauge the parents' knowledge and their understanding of the importance that play provides for his or her child's development.

The accessing of participants was facilitated by Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between Sesame Workshop and the services providers (Afrika Tikkun and Cotlands). These service providers were also responsible for recruiting participants. To achieve this, officials from the two organisations sent out invitations informing parents of the children enrolled in their ECD programmes about the needs assessment, its purpose and significance, and requesting their participation. On the basis of this, and numerous follow-up telephone calls from the officials, 85 parents responded positively to the request. They all agreed to be interviewed at the site where their child attends an ECD programme. Interviews took place at the three sites over seven consecutive weekdays as follows:

- (Diepsloot from 10 -12 August);
- Protea South (15 and 17 August); and
- Meadowlands (16 and 18 August).

Before the start of each interview, parents were again explained in non-technical terms, the purpose of the needs assessment, and the benefit it could potentially have for them, their children, and society as a whole. They were assured that they were under no obligation to participate, and that they could withdraw at any stage if they so wished without it having any negative repercussions from them, or their children. They were also notified of how their anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured and were given an opportunity to ask any questions that they may have. Once they were satisfied, they were asked to sign two copies of an informed consent form, and to retain one copy. In addition to providing details on the needs assessment, they were made aware that the consent form also included contact details of the project leader, should they require any additional information, as well as the contact details of the HSRC Research ethics Committee should they wish to lodge any complaint arising from their participation. They were also made aware that the study had obtained ethical approval from **SolutionsIRB**, a reputable US-

based institutional review board (Protocol #2016/08/6). Following this, the interviews were conducted starting with the demographic interview, followed by the parental interview. Parents were requested to respond to questions as honestly and openly as possible, but also to not feel compelled to answer question that they did not wish to answer. Children were typically interviewed once the parental interviews were completed. The interviews were conducted in English, Sepedi, and Zulu. In the case of some English interviews, parents were allowed to code-switch in instances where they were struggling to express themselves.

Table 3 – Research site and language

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|
| Diepsloot | 48 | 56.5 |
| Protea South | 14 | 16.5 |
| Meadowlands | 23 | 27.1 |
| Total | 85 | 100.0 |
| | Frequency | Percent |
| English | 37 | 43.5 |
| Zulu | 14 | 16.5 |
| Sepedi | 5 | 5.9 |
| English & African | 29 | 34.1 |
| Total | 85 | 100.0 |

4.4. Data Analysis

The interview data was be subjected to both qualitative and quantitative analyses. SPSS was used to generate descriptive statistics in the frequencies and percentages for close-ended and Likert scale questions. In addition to this, inferential statistics (Chi-square, t-test, and ANOVA) was used to establish mean differences with regards to gender and age. Open ended questions were subjected to thematic analysis.

5. Limitations

The central limitation relates to the generalizability of the findings. The needs assessment was conducted at three sites located in and around Johannesburg. While the sites share the socio-

economic profile of the majority of Black townships in South Africa, they also have linguistic and ethno-cultural characteristics, which make them distinct and could influence how play is perceived in relation to early childhood development. It also needs to be added that the parent-child pairs who participated in the needs assessment were primarily accessed through a convenience sampling strategy, and not random sampling. This also made it difficult to achieve an equal gender split in terms of the parent sample. Be that as it may, the results the results of the needs assessment identified priority issues and needs of parents and children that should be considered in the development of the Play every Day project in order to enhance its impact.

6. Results

6.1. Toys and Learning Materials

In response to whether there were learning materials at home, 62% of parents responded in the affirmative with regards to children’s books, 71% with regards to arts and crafts materials, and 29% responded that there were other learning or play materials at home.

Table 4 - Frequency and percentages of toys and learning material ownership

| | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Children’s books | 53 | 62.4 |
| Art and craft materials | 60 | 70.6 |
| Other play or learning materials | 25 | 29.4 |

No statistically significant relationship was found between the type of toys and learning materials that children have access to, and their ages. There was a statistically significant difference between children's age groups with regards to whether they have books at home as determined by a chi-square test, $X^2 (3, N = 85) = 13.2, p = .004$. There was also a statistically significant difference between children's age groups with regards to whether they have art and craft material at home as determined by chi-square test, $X^2 (3, N = 85) = 10.1, p = .018$. Thus older children are more likely to have art and craft material at home.

Cross-tabulation 1 - Child age & Do you have children's books at home?

| | | | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Do you have children's books at home? | no | Count | 18 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 32 |
| | | % | 60.0% | 42.9% | 24.1% | 8.3% | 37.6% |
| | yes | Count | 12 | 8 | 22 | 11 | 53 |
| | | % | 40.0% | 57.1% | 75.9% | 91.7% | 62.4% |
| Total | Count | 30 | 14 | 29 | 12 | 85 | |

Cross-tabulation 2 - Child age & Do you have art and craft materials at home?

| | | | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| Do you have art and craft materials at home? | no | Count | 13 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 25 |
| | | % | 43.3% | 42.9% | 20.7% | 0.0% | 29.4% |
| | yes | Count | 17 | 8 | 23 | 12 | 60 |
| | | % | 56.7% | 57.1% | 79.3% | 100.0% | 70.6% |
| Total | Count | 30 | 14 | 29 | 12 | 85 | |

Implications – *Although a significant proportion of parents agree that that they have children's books and art and craft materials at home, the majority do not have toys or other learning materials. This is understandable if one considers the fact that many of these children are from low-income families with limited resources, and thus struggling to meet basic needs. In many cases, more than one family lives on a housing unit. This material poverty is also reflected in the paucity of toys and learning materials that the children have access to, as well as the lack of suitable environments, both indoors and outdoors, to engage*

in safe and meaningful play activities with their children. This has a bearing on the children’s play routines and activities, and in the process, impedes their cognitive, social-emotional, and self-regulatory development. While commercial toys and learning material might be beyond the reach of most of these families, this could be compensated for through the use and adaption of natural low-cost items available in the living environment. In addition to this, household objects could be used to engage children in pretend play, which is known to enhance the child’s cognitive, social-emotional, and motor skills. Examples of these objects include chairs, beds, cushions, clothes such as socks, boxes, toilet paper rolls, cups, cans, squirt bottle, mirrors, water bottle, empty cartons, food wrappers, and brushes. At the same time, parents need to be educated on the importance of play and how to exploit objects around them for the benefit of their children’s development. While many parents agreed on the importance of play for their children, many do not seem to understand the benefit of age-appropriate play for child development. For this reason, they are likely to benefit from practical workshops and discussions around these issues.

6.2. Media access and use

Parents were asked whether they own particular media devices that were in working order at home. In terms of this, 82% reported that they own a TV, while it was 62% in the case of children’s books. The percentage of parents, who reported to have a radio, smart phone, and DVD that the child had access to, was 55%, 54%, and 53% respectively. The lowest level of ownership was a tablet, with only 21% of parents reported to have one that was in working order.

Table 5 - media device ownership

| | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| A TV that is in working order | 70 | 82.4 |
| A DVD player that is in working order | 45 | 52.9 |
| A radio that is in working order | 47 | 55.3 |
| A smartphone that is in working order | 46 | 54.1 |
| A tablet that is in working order | 18 | 21.2 |
| Children’s books that are in working order | 53 | 62.4 |

6.3. Frequency of use of each device by adult

Parents were asked to report on the frequency with which they used the devices that they owned. A TV was the most frequently used device for the majority of parents. Thus 61% reported that they used a TV on a daily basis. The next most frequently used device was the smartphone and radio, with 41% and 33% of parents reported to use these respectively on a daily basis. The device that was most rarely used amongst parents was the tablet, with 85% reporting to never use it. For all the other devices (apart from TV), the proportion of parents who reported to never to use them, ranged from 39% to 43%. Only 20% of parents reported to never using a TV.

Table 6 - Device usage – Parents

| | TV | DVD | Radio | Smart- phone | Tablet | Children's Books |
|--------------------------------|------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------|
| every day | 52 (61.2%) | 7 (8.2%) | 28 (32.9%) | 35 (41.2%) | 6 (7.1%) | 22 (25.9%) |
| 3-5 times a week | 13 (15.3%) | 8 (9.4%) | 8 (9.4%) | 3 (3.5%) | 3 (3.5%) | 12 (14.1%) |
| 1-2 times a week | 2 (2.4%) | 19 (22.4%) | 6 (7.1%) | 5 (5.9%) | 3 (3.5%) | 8 (9.4%) |
| 1-2 times a month | - | 6 (7.1%) | 2 (2.4%) | - | - | 3 (3.5%) |
| less than 1-2 times a month | 1 (1.2%) | 2 (2.4%) | 2 (2.4%) | - | 18 (21.2%) | 1 (1.2%) |
| Never | 17 (20%) | 43 (50.6%) | 39 (45.9%) | 42 (49.4%) | 72 (84.7%) | 39 (45.9%) |
| Total | 85 | 85 | 85 | 85 | 85 | 85 |

As with parents, the device mostly used on a daily basis by children, was the TV (58%), followed by children's books (34%), and the smartphone (33%). Also similar to the parents, most of the children (81%) never use a tablet. The proportion of children who never use a radio, stood at 67%; while for the DVD player and smartphone, this stood at 60% and 51% respectively. There were no statistically significant gender or age differences in children's usage of the different devices.

Table 7 - Device usage - children

| | TV | DVD | Radio | Smart-phone | Tablet | Children's Books |
|-----------------------------|------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|------------------|
| every day | 49 (57.6%) | 5 (5.9%) | 16 (18.8%) | 28 (32.9%) | 10 (11.8%) | 29 (34.1%) |
| 3-5 times a week | 7 (8.2%) | 7 (8.2%) | 5 (5.9%) | 5 (5.9%) | 2 (2.4%) | 11 (12.9%) |
| 1-2 times a week | 11 (12.9%) | 13 (15.3%) | 6 (7.1%) | 9 (10.6%) | 2 (2.4%) | 9 (10.6%) |
| 1-2 times a month | 1 (1.2%) | 7 (8.2%) | 1 (1.2%) | - | - | 1 (1.2%) |
| less than 1-2 times a month | 1 (1.2%) | 2 (2.4%) | - | - | 2 (2.4%) | 1 (1.2%) |
| Never | 16 (18.8%) | 51 (60%) | 57 (67.1%) | 43 (50.6%) | 69 (81.2%) | 34 (40%) |
| Total | 85 | 85 | 85 | 85 | 85 | 85 |

6.4. Smartphone use - Frequency of each activity by adult and child

The most popular smartphone activity for parents was text messaging, with 32% engaging in it on a daily basis, and 54% never engaging in it. The second most popular daily activity amongst parents was playing games (15%). Between 70% and 90% of parents reported to never use a smartphone for other activities. Parental activity for a tablet was even less, but followed more or less the same trend as the smartphone activity. Here, text messaging was again the most popular with 8% reporting to use a tablet for this daily. More than 90% of parents never use a tablet for any of the other activities. For children, the most popular daily smartphone and tablet activity was playing games. This stood at 32% for the smartphone, and 11% for the tablet. The activities that children least engaged in for both the smartphone and tablet, was text messaging, social media, and downloading apps. The percentage of children who never used the two devices for these activities, ranged from between 95% and 100%. Here there were also no statistically significant gender or age differences in children and their smartphone and tablet activities.

Table 8 – Parent and child - smartphone and tablet activity

| PARENTS – SMARTPHONE ACTIVITY | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | Downloaded videos | Streamed videos | Games | Text messages | Social Media | Apps |
| every day | 5 (5.9%) | 2 (2.4%) | 13 (15.3%) | 27 (31.8%) | 9 (10.6%) | - |
| 3-5 times a week | 2 (2.4%) | 1 (1.2%) | 5 (5.9%) | 3 (3.5%) | 2 (2.4%) | - |
| 1-2 times a week | 11 (12.9%) | 7 (8.2%) | 7 (8.2%) | 5 (5.9%) | 3 (3.5%) | 4 (4.7%) |
| 1-2 times a month | 3 (3.6%) | 5 (5.9%) | - | 4 (4.7%) | 1 (1.2%) | 2 (2.4%) |
| less than 1-2 times a month | 2 (2.4%) | - | - | - | 1 (1.2%) | 1 (1.2%) |
| Never | 62 (72.9%) | 70 (82.4%) | 60 (70.6%) | 46 (54.1%) | 69 (81.2%) | 78 (91.8%) |
| PARENTS – TABLET ACTIVITY | | | | | | |
| every day | | 2 (2.4%) | 2 (2.4%) | 7 (8.2%) | 1 (1.2%) | |
| 3-5 times a week | 2 (2.4%) | 2 (2.4%) | 1 (1.2%) | 2 (2.4%) | 1 (1.2%) | |
| 1-2 times a week | 4 (4.7%) | 1 (1.2%) | 4 (4.7%) | | 2 (2.4%) | 1 (1.2%) |
| 1-2 times a month | | 1 (1.2%) | | | | 2 (2.4%) |
| less than 1-2 times a month | | | | | | |
| Never | 79 (92.9%) | 79 (92.9%) | 78 (91.8%) | 76 (89.4%) | 81 (95.3%) | 82 (96.5%) |
| CHILD – SMARTPHONE ACTIVITY | | | | | | |
| every day | 6 (7.1%) | 3 (3.5%) | 27 (31.8%) | 2 (2.4%) | - | 1 (1.2%) |
| 3-5 times a week | 2 (2.4%) | 3 (3.5%) | 5 (5.9%) | - | - | - |
| 1-2 times a week | 5 (5.9%) | 6 (7.1%) | 7 (8.2%) | - | - | 1 (1.2%) |
| 1-2 times a month | 4 (4.7%) | 2 (2.4%) | 1 (1.2%) | 1 (1.2%) | - | - |
| less than 1-2 times a month | 1 (1.2%) | - | - | - | - | 2 (2.4%) |
| Never | 67 (78.8%) | 71 (83.5%) | 45 (52.9%) | 82 (96.5%) | 85 (100%) | 81 (95.3%) |
| CHILD – TABLET ACTIVITY | | | | | | |
| every day | 1 (1.2%) | 1 (1.2%) | 9 (10.6%) | - | - | 1 (1.2%) |
| 3-5 times a week | 3 (3.5%) | 3 (3.5%) | 2 (2.4%) | - | - | - |
| 1-2 times a week | 4 (4.7%) | 2 (2.4%) | 2 (2.4%) | - | 1 (1.2%) | - |
| 1-2 times a month | - | - | 1 (1.2%) | - | - | - |
| less than 1-2 times a month | - | - | 1 (1.2%) | 1 (1.2%) | - | - |
| Never | 77 (90.6%) | 79 (92.9%) | 70 (82.4%) | 84 (98.8%) | 84 (98.8%) | 84 (98.8%) |

Implications – *The most widely owned media device was a TV with over 80%, and the least owned was a tablet with a little over 20%. Ownership of all other devices was lower than for TV, but over 50%. Smartphone and TV usage were the highest for both parents and children. The most popular usage of a smartphone for parents were texting, while for children it was playing games. Of the 18 parents who owned a tablet, most of them never use it to watch downloaded or streamed movies. Like the smartphone, the most popular usage for tablets was texting for adults and playing games for children. Both these ownership and usage trends make sense if one considers the socio-economic conditions of most parents. A TV is regarded as a necessity that is likely to benefit the whole family. Coupled with this, radio's and DVD players are relatively cheap compared to smartphones and tablets. Another important factor is the excessive data costs associated with downloading and streaming content on smartphones and tablets. This would put these activities, which consumes huge amounts of data, beyond the reach of most of these parents, particularly if one considers that 63% of them are unemployed and 67% are single mothers. Therefore, given the high TV, DVD, and smartphone ownership, these devices would be the most ideal avenue through which video content could be consumed. Also given the inability of most parents to access this content online, this should be distributed in the form of pre-loaded files for those parents with phones and tablets, and DVD's for those who do not own those devices.*

6.5. Children's awareness of Takalani Sesame

The majority of children (87%) watch Takalani Sesame on television. Of those, 69% claim to watch it a lot, while 6% never watch it. The majority of the children could not recall the names of their favourite Takalani Sesame character. There was no statistically significant difference with regards to how often children of different ages or genders watch Takalani Sesame.

6.6. Parental goals and challenges

For all of the parents, the most important dream they have for their children is education so they, the children, do not befall the same fate as the parents. They see education as the primary vehicle to escape poverty. They also tend to associate education with enhanced career prospects and earning money, being successful, being happy, and being independent. The following verbatim quotations are presentative of this.

- *I want him to have a good education*
- *I want her to be educated and successful*
- *She must grow up, go to school, she must learn something for her future.*
- *She must be educated, not be like me*
- *She must learn so that she does not depend on someone*
- *I want her to finish school*

Some parents also express clear preferences in terms of the type of professional careers they want their children to pursue. The most common were a doctor, nurse, social worker, pilot, lawyer and teacher. Their choices for their children seem to be motivated largely by income potential and job security that they assume their preferences are likely to have. This was the primary motivation behind the choices, and it naturally led to them listing possible professions, often more than one, that they thought would realize the dreams they have for their children. So, for most of the parents, the profession was seen as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.

- *I want her to become a doctor or a social worker.*
- *If he can be a lawyer, it would be good*
- *I see Munei as a lawyer because the money is good*
- *She wants to be a social worker and help people*
- *I want her to be a nurse because there are many jobs*

In terms of issues that would make the realization of their child's dream challenging, the most commonly cited perceived barriers that parents mentioned were lack of resources, specifically insofar as it pertains to financial resources. This accounted for 71% of the responses. They also mentioned the poorly resourced schools in their community and the lack of resources in the community (10%). Because of their impoverished backgrounds, they cannot afford to send their children to well-resourced schools, and this will hinder them in their quest to realize the dreams they have for their children. One of the less frequently mentioned obstacle anticipated was peer pressure. The following quotations represent some of the salient sentiments that parents expressed.

- *I'm not employed, so financial problems will hinder her*
- *Schools might be a challenge, because they don't have resources like good books*
- *We don't have electricity and there's a lot of crime. We are also staying in a shack and no one is employed*
- *I think maybe money because we are both not working*
- *I will not have money for university*
- *She will have pressure through puberty*

A significant proportion of parents (13%), did not foresee any challenges that would hamper the realisation of the child's dreams. The mother of a boy whose father was deceased also did not anticipate any future problem. She, nonetheless, seemed to imply that growing up without a father could be an issue for her son in future.

- *No, there are no problems*
- *Everything is fine, but he will grow up without a father*

In addition and related to the above, parents expressed clear views on the type of skills they believe their children will need in order to be successful. The most salient of these can be characterized as academic (36%), as well as social skills (32%). An interesting observation here is that parents conceive success not only in professional terms, but also in social, and relational terms. Thus while literacy and science was emphasized, parents expressly stated that they regarded things such as respect for one's fellow man as a vital requirement for personal success. There was only one parent who related play as a skill that is directly linked to future success. In addition to this, 19% were not sure of the skills their child would need for future success.

- *He will have to do maths and science*
- *She needs to respect others and work hard.*
- *She has to learn how to take care of herself, and to read and write.*
- *She must learn to respect other people*
- *She has to learn science*

Implications - *Given the premium that the parents place on their children's future, and the role of play in providing the foundation for the realisation of the dreams they have for their children, they are likely to respond positively to programmes aimed at helping them maximize the benefits that play hold. Self-learning resources such as brochures that highlights the importance of play for their child's development would be a good starting point in educating parents. These should emphasize the importance of play and the many benefits they hold for children. These should be supplemented with parent workshops that focus on practical demonstrations and where parents have the opportunity to also participate in play role plays. Parents should be educated on the importance of balancing home and work schedules so that time is made to engage in play activities. While most of the parents are relatively poor and unable to buy toys and learning materials, they should also be made aware of how engaging their children in unstructured play can help them compensate for this shortcoming. Parents could also be trained in engaging their children in pretend play, particularly as it relates to their future professional interests. Additionally, parental peer support programmes where parents share information and resources should also be encouraged.*

6.7. Time spent with child

A significant proportion of parents (35%) claim to spend almost every day with their children. These are more likely to be those who are unemployed. Some parents (16%) spend time with their children in the evening and on weekends. These are most likely to be those parents that are employed. Others only spend time with them in the mornings (8%), afternoons (27%), or on weekends (11%). While most of them are unemployed, many parents are occupied with domestic chores even when the children are at home. Another challenge is the prevalence of single parenthood, and how the demands of this compete with the child's needs for attention. These are some of the reasons why parents find it difficult to spend time with their children, even on weekends. Some parents were explicit of how their time is spent with their child, while others were not. The quotations below are illustrative of this.

- *We mostly spend time in the afternoon until late. We do activities like shopping, walking from school; he likes to also sweep, he cleans with me, he likes to draw with me.*
- *We spend time later in the day and weekends*
- *Sometimes in the afternoon and also on weekends*
- *When he comes back from school and when I am home on the weekend*
- *During the week after he comes back from school*

Implications – *While it is important to spend as much as possible time with your child, making sure that it is qualitatively meaningful is even more important. The types of parent-child interaction that have been shown to have positive outcomes are those that emphasize the quality of the engagements and include activities such as reading to a child, sharing a meal, talking to a child and engaging with them one to one. Involving the child in domestic chores is a good way of accomplishing the latter. It, however, needs to be emphasized that the child's lead should be followed, and that it is important to engage the child with warmth and sensitivity, rather than on completing the chore. This not only benefits the child, but the parent as well.*

6.8. Parent perceptions of play

It was clear that parents value the importance of play for their children with 83% holding this view. For many parents the importance of play derives from the learning that takes place when children engage in it.

- *It signals the health state of the child, it refreshes the mind and it helps a child to learn*
- *If the child does not play, there is something wrong with the child. The child might be sick.*
- *Children are learning through playing.*
- *When they play they learn to speak other languages*
- *When they play their mind becomes fresh*

Yet, while they appreciate play for the learning potential it has, they see this different to and less important than more formal kinds of education. Thus most parents (87%) regard studying as more important for a child than play. The following quotations illustrate this point.

- *School work is more important than playing.*
- *Studying is more important than play. Play is more important than doing chores*
- *Books are more important than playing*
- *I think studying is more important than playing*

When asked what they thought children learn when they play, the majority of the parents responded that children either learn to relate with others (46%), or they learn language and communication skills (39%) when they play.

- *She learns to be friendly with others, and she learns other languages*
- *He learns to interact and he learns to speak in other languages language (e.g. learned Sotho from friends)*
- *He learns to speak many languages*
- *I think they learn how to behave with other people*

In response to what they thought children learn when they (the parents) play with them, 53% of parents responded that children learn literacy and numeracy, while 36% felt that the children learn language and communication skills when they play with them. The remaining 11% believe that children learn literacy, numeracy, and also language when the parents play with them.

- *He learns letters, associations with names, colours*
- *I teach her how to talk to people*
- *I teach good language and not to insult and use bad language*
- *He learns how to read and write*
- *We count together and she learns numbers*

When asked what they thought children learn when they play with their peers, 72% of parents think that children learn language skills and interpersonal relationships from others.

- *She learns to interact , he learns language (learned Sotho from friends)*
- *He learns to be involved with others*
- *He learns how to treat others well*
- *He becomes strong and to stand up for himself because he plays with bigger boys*

When reflecting on their own play experiences as children, many parents recall playing rope skipping in the streets, and chasing each other around houses. Few were able to recall solitary play habits that they had, but were able to recall playing in groups such as a group playing with a ball. Most of the parents (67%) added that their parents never played with them. They feel that children play differently now compared to when they were children and they see these differences as a function of the changing times. Because of technological advances, children now also spend more time playing with phones and TV games.

- *We used to chase each other, or swim in the river*
- *We played houses and pretended to be parents and cook*
- *Play has changed a lot, these children cannot run around the streets, there are cars*
- *Play has changed children like these new things like TV and phones*

Implications – *Parents value the significance of play for their child’s development and regard it as important. It is also important to note that they appear to make a distinction between learning through play and formal education. They regard formal education as more important than play. This is understandable given the dreams that many of the parents have for their child and the fact that they see formal education as a key driver towards realising those dreams. While they recognize the value of play for the child’s socio-emotional and motor development, they extend this to cognitive development only insofar as it relates to language development. Even here, they regard play as important for language development*

to the extent that it would enable the child to interact and engage in socially acceptable ways. It therefore appears that the parents almost see the learning through play and formal education as mutually exclusive and this is a misconception that the programme should seek to counter.

6.9. Barriers to play

The majority of parents (87%) believe that the main reason why parents generally do not play with their children was because they were either tired or because they had no time. They attribute both of these to the fact that working takes much of parents' time leaving them with little time or energy for their children. Others (13%) believe ignorance and lack of education to be a main stumbling block.

- *There is not enough time because they are coming from work*
- *They are busy because they are working*
- *Sometimes they come home tired after work, but a parent should make time for their kids*
- *They say they don't have time because they work*
- *Some of them are not educated and are ignorant*

Implications – *Because of the value they attach to play for their child's development, the overwhelming majority of parents do engage in play activities with their child. The reason for this could possibly be that all of the parents have children enrolled in an ECD programme where the importance of play is underscored. They have, therefore, been educated in the development benefits that play have for their children. However, not all parents hold positive conceptions of play and this is attributed to ignorance, lack of education, or because they do not have time. This is understandable given the fact that almost 40% of the parents either had a primary school level or no formal education. The majority of parents are poor and research has shown that socio-economic status to a large extent determines the role of play in parenting philosophy (Lin & Yawkey, 2013). Perhaps this is also why 25% of parents strongly agreed that adults don't need to play with children because children can play on their own. The programme should therefore seek to address these misconceptions on the importance of*

parents playing with their children, and that playing with their child is about more than merely occupying or amusing the child. In the case where exhaustion or lack of time may serve as a barrier, the programme should emphasize the fact that the quality of the play interaction is more important than the amount of time that is spent with the child. In addition to this, the programme should focus on promoting play activities that are not necessarily physically demanding.

6.10. Roles of different people in play

Parents generally consider mothers to be the most appropriate play partners for their children. They were asked whether mothers should play with, encourage, supervise, provide a safe place, or provide the child with things to play. Not a single parent gave a negative response to these questions. Only four parents were unsure as to whether a mother should fulfill these roles. While the responses to the same questions in relation to the father were also mostly affirmative, there were between 2 and 3 negative responses to each of these questions.

Table 9 - Role of mothers and fathers as play partners

| | Mothers | | | Fathers | | |
|--|---------|----|-------|---------|------|-------|
| | Yes | No | Maybe | Yes | No | Maybe |
| Play with the child | 97.5% | - | 2.5% | 95.7% | 2.9% | 1.4% |
| encourage the child to play | 98.8% | - | 1.3% | 92.8% | 4.3% | 2.9% |
| supervise/watch the child when s/he is playing | 98.8% | - | 1.3% | 95.7% | 4.3% | - |
| provide a safe space for child to play | 100% | - | - | 97.1% | 2.9% | - |
| provide things for the child to play with | 100% | - | - | 94.2% | 4.3% | 1.4% |

Responses to the first three questions with regards to siblings followed the same trend as that of fathers. For the last two questions, however, 11% felt that siblings were not responsible for providing a safe place for the child to play, while 20% felt that siblings were also not responsible for providing the child things to play with. In the case of grandparents, 13% believed that it was not the responsibility of grandparents to provide the child with things to play with. Only about 20 parents responded to these questions in

relation to other people. With regards to the above, there no statistically significant difference in terms of child age and gender.

Table 10 - Role of siblings and grandparents as play partners

| | Siblings | | | Grandparents | | |
|--|----------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|-------|
| | Yes | No | Maybe | Yes | No | Maybe |
| Play with the child | 92.4% | 2.5% | 5.1% | 92.1% | 3.2% | 4.8% |
| encourage the child to play | 91.1% | 3.8% | 5.1% | 92.1% | 4.8% | 3.2% |
| supervise/watch the child when s/he is playing | 92.4% | 3.8% | 3.8% | 90.5% | 4.8% | 4.8% |
| provide a safe space for child to play | 86.1% | 11.4% | 2.5% | 90.5% | 4.8% | 4.8% |
| provide things for the child to play with | 73.4% | 20.3% | 6.3% | 80.6% | 12.9% | 6.5% |

Implications – *Generally parents were considered to be the most appropriate play partners for children, with mother being given more importance than fathers. This is understandable given the fact that almost 70% of the parents interviewed were single mothers and custodial parents. While it is not a given that non-custodial father were necessarily absent from the children’s lives, this was often the case. There were also cases where fathers were deceased. About 15% of the children were also raised by someone other than a biological parent, in most cases a grandmother or aunt. All of the above is reflective of the communities that the parents come from. Siblings and grandparents were also regarded as important play partners for children. In the case of grandparents, there was, however, a strong view that they should not be responsible for providing the child with things to play with. There was also a strong view that the responsibilities of siblings should not involve providing a safe space for the child to play, or provide things for the child to play with. These are all factors that the programme should consider.*

6.11. Parental attitudes toward play

Parents were asked a number of Likert-scale questions that seek to determine their attitudes towards play. The majority of parents (92%) either agreed or strongly agreed that adults should play with young children often, while 8% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. All parents also either agreed or strongly agreed that children learn

language, social skills, and imagination and creativity when they play. The majority of parents (90%) either agreed or strongly agreed that children learn problem solving when they play. The rest were either neutral, or they disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, 88% of the parents either agreed or strongly agreed that children learn self-regulation when they play, while 8% strongly disagreed, with the remaining 4% being neutral. A significant proportion of parents (70%) disagreed with the statement that *adults don't need to play because children can play on their own*; while 25% either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement. More than 90% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that children learn important skills when adults guide them in play. A slightly smaller percentage (83%) were of the opinion that play keeps children busy and out of the way.

There was little agreement as to whether there are many more important things than play. Thus 49% either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while 46% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The rest (4%) were undecided. Most of the parents (95%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they did not know how to play with their child. In addition to this, 12% felt that it was not important to ask the child questions when playing with him/her. Most parents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they did not know how to play with their child. Parents were also split in relation to the statement that their child had enough toys and objects to play with. The majority of parents (94%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that playing feels like a waste of time for their child. The same percentage of parents agreed or strongly agreed that playing together helps her bond with her child, while all of the parents responded positively to the statement: *I enjoy playing with my child*. All the parents responded positively to the statement: *I enjoy playing with my child*. As was the case with some of the statements, there was little agreement in parents' response to the statement: *children should mostly with other children because they learn important skills when adults don't interfere*. The majority agreed or agreed strongly with the statement, while 31% did not agree. For a breakdown of parental attitudes towards play, see Table

Table 11: Parental attitudes towards play

| | strongly agree | somewhat agree | Neutral | somewhat disagree | strongly disagree |
|--|----------------|----------------|---------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Adults should play with young children often | 78.6 | 13.1 | | 4.8 | 3.6 |
| Children learn language when they play | 94% | 6% | - | - | - |
| Children learn social skills when they play | 89.3% | 10.7% | - | - | - |
| Children learn imagination and creativity when they play | 94% | 6% | - | - | - |
| Children learn problem solving when they play | 82.1% | 8.3% | 2.4% | 1.2% | 6% |
| Children learn self-regulation when they play | 79.8% | 8.3% | 3.4% | - | 8.3% |
| Studying is more important than playing | 73.8% | 10.7% | 2.4% | 2.4% | 10.7% |
| Adults don't need to play with children - can play on their own | 19% | 6% | 4.8% | 6% | 64.3% |
| Children learn important skills when adults guide them in play | 83.3% | 9.5% | 3.6% | - | 3.6% |
| Playing keeps children busy and out of the way | 73.8% | 8.3% | 2.4% | 1.2% | 14.3% |
| There are more important things for the child to do than play | 38.1% | 11.9% | 3.6% | 6% | 40.5% |
| I don't really know how to play with my child | 2.4% | 1.2% | 1.2% | 7.1% | 88.1% |
| I ask my child lots of questions when I play with him/her | 70.2% | 13.1% | 4.8% | 6% | 6% |
| I don't have time to play with my child | 4.8% | - | 3.6% | 8.3% | 83.3% |
| My child has enough toys and objects to play with | 29.8% | 21.4% | 4.8% | 3.6% | 40.5% |
| Playing feels like a waste of time for my child | 4.8% | 1.2% | - | 3.6% | 90.5% |
| Playing together helps me bond with my child | 94% | 2.4% | - | 1.2% | 2.4% |
| I enjoy playing with my child | 92.8% | 7.2% | - | - | - |
| Children should play with other children - learn important skills when adults don't interfere. | 53.6% | 11.9% | 3.6% | 1.2% | 29.8% |

Implications – *There are positive attitudes that the programme can reinforce and negative attitudes that it should seek to counter. Some of the positive attitudes include the fact that adults should play with children often; and that children learn problem-solving and self-regulation when they play. On the negative side, the programme needs to address the misconception that adults don't need to play with children because children can play on their own. The same applies to the notion that play keeps children busy and out of the way. An alarming 82% of the parents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This feeds into the perception that the primary aim of play is to occupy children, so that they are not bored. The programme should underscore the point that play has much more value than this. Equally alarming is the fact that 65% of parents believe that children should play with other children because they learn important skills when adults don't interfere. Furthermore, exactly 50% of parents believed that there are more important things for children aged from 3-6 years than to play. These are all misconceptions that the programme should aim to counter. In addition this, 51% of the parents felt that their child did not have enough objects to play. If possible, the programme should make an effort at remedying this. If it does not provide object to play with, it should focus on how one could use everyday objects to play with.*

6.12. Child's play routines

According to most of the parents (88%), their child likes to engage in physical play such as running around, playing touch games, and playing with ball. In addition, many parents (42%) also reported that their child likes to play with toys.

- *She runs around, jumps, play with toys and she sings a lot*
- *He plays with his small cars, and plays with his ball*
- *He plays the touch game with his siblings and sometimes with his friends*
- *Sipho has a ball so he plays soccer with his friend all the time until I call him*
- *She talks to her doll like a mother, all the time she is on the bed with it*

Most parents (43%) reported toys to be their child's favourite object when playing indoors. Other popular indoor activities include playing games on phones (18%) and

watching TV (27%). There were not any age or gender differences in indoor play activities, with children also not adhering to supposed gender appropriate toys.

- *She loves to watch TV, and sometimes she plays with her toys*
- *This one likes the phone, he takes my phone and plays games all the time. He also plays with toy cars and his ball*
- *She plays with her doll most of the time*
- *She drives toy cars like a boy*
- *He uses his toys and sometimes he likes TV too much*

The majority of the parents live in single roomed shacks that leave little place for children to play. Thus children tend to play on bed, on the floor, or near the door.

- *In the bedroom where we sleep we live in a shack*
- *Inside the shack we live in, but near the door*
- *All over because we live in a one room shack*

Only 66 parents responded to the question of whether they consider the indoor playing location to be safe for their child. The majority of parents (91%) believed that the indoor location was safe for their child to play in. Parents gave reasons for why they did or did not consider the indoor location to be safe for play purposes. The common reason for those who deemed it safe was that because of the small living unit, they were able to keep an eye on the child. Those who deemed it not safe were concerned about the child's easy access to cooking facilities. There were no significant gender or age differences with regards to indoor safety.

- *Yes it is safe inside near the door but when he is outside near the door it is not safe as he can get out of the gate and there are cars passing by and he might get hurt*
- *Yes because the stove is far up and all the dangerous things are up on the walls and not near here*
- *It's safe because I am there all the time so she cannot burn herself*

- *It is not safe because he can fall off the bed.*

When playing outdoors, the most common play activities were running around and playing with toys with 98% of parents claim their children to do this. The most popular outdoor playing location was the yard (93%) where there was one, or in the immediate vicinity of the house where there was not a yard. There were no significant gender differences with regard to outdoor playing location. Some of the illustrative quotations include the following:

- *She plays in the yard where there is a gate*
- *He plays in our small yard*
- *We have a yard in front of the house that's where she plays*
- *Inside the gate in our yard*

In terms of the safety of the outdoor location, 82% consider this to be safe. The most popular reason for this is the fact that the yard is fenced with a locked gate, or that the child could be watched over while playing. In cases where this was not deemed safe, the reasons forwarded were that there was no fence and that children can go missing, or go out in the street and be potentially knocked over by a car.

- *It is very safe and other kids play there as well*
- *Yes it is because I am always looking at her to make sure she is safe and does not go on the street*
- *It's generally safe there are no cars*
- *It is a safe place because I am always there*
- *Yes our yard is safe*

6.13. Types of play

In response to Likert-scale questions with regards to the types of play that children engage in, most parents (74%) reported that their child engage in pretend play often or at least some times. Almost 25% never engage in pretend play. In terms of gender, boys

and girls were almost equal on all levels of the scale. There was also no significant difference in terms of age. Almost 80% of the children pretend that one thing is something else when they play, with 18% never engaging in this activity according to parents. There were also no significant age or gender differences. More than 90% of parents reported that their child plays with blocks or things they can build with often (39%), or at least some times (25%). According to the parents 27% of children either never or rarely make up story. In the case of whether their child pretend they are in some place else when they play, 30% reported that their child never do that. Similar trends existed to whether the child plays with cuddly toys, or toy sets like doctor sets. There were no statistically significant age or gender differences with regards to the above.

Table 12 – Types of play

| | Often | Sometimes | Once in a while | Never |
|---|-------|-----------|-----------------|-------|
| Pretend to be someone else? | 36.6% | 37.8% | 1.2% | 24.4% |
| Pretend one thing is something else? | 47.6% | 31% | 4.8% | 16.7% |
| Play with blocks or things they can build with? | 39.3% | 25% | 4.8% | 31% |
| Make up a story? | 45.2% | 27.4% | 4.8% | 22.6% |
| Pretend they're someplace else? | 42.9% | 27.4% | - | 29.8% |
| Play with dolls or cuddly toys? | 59.3% | 27.2% | 2.5% | 11.1% |
| Play with toy sets like kitchen or doctor sets? | 53.3% | 24.4% | 2.2% | 20% |

Implications – *In terms of outdoor play, children typically engage in physically demanding play activities. In-door play routines tend to be less physically demanding and often involve playing with toys, watching TV, or playing games on phones. Because of limited physical living spaces, children tend to play outside rather than inside. Limited physical living spaces also increases the safety risks where children do play inside, since playing areas are not adequately separated from work and cooking areas. Playing outside also carries safety risks in that children can go into the streets where there's a risk of them being knocked over by a*

car and where there is not likely to be adult supervision. Research has highlighted the importance of outside play for cognitive, physical, social, and affective development in early childhood years (Lester & Maudsley, 2007). This is particularly the case when these play activities are child-initiated or child-directed (Ernst, 2012). If possible, the programme should make provision for access to safe outdoor play. This will offset the inequality of opportunities to safe and effective outdoor play that is imposed on these children as a result of their socio-economic demographics.

6.14. Child's routine

When asked what they liked to do before they go to the playgroup, 30% of the children mentioned playing with toys, or with siblings. Some (20%) also said that they liked to watch TV before going to the playgroup. The most common responses (50%) were that they get up in the morning; they get ready by brushing teeth and getting dressed, and then eating breakfast. There were no age or gender differences in their responses. The following are illustrative quotes:

- *I bath, put Vaseline on, wear clothes*
- *I eat my porridge and brush my teeth*
- *I bathe and I eat my porridge*
- *I eat and I put on my clothes and I play*
- *I eat porridge and bread and put on my clothes*
- *I wash myself and eat then I go to school*
- *I like watching TV*
- *I play with my brother and sister*

By and large, the children reported that they like to play at the playgroup (81%). The most common play activity was playing with friends (47%). To a lesser extent, children also reported that they liked to play with toys, which involved also playing with a friend, or doing it as a solitary activity (34%). The boys tended to engage more in physical group play than the girls. Girls' physical-based group play tended to be confined to skipping.

Some of the children (19%) also enjoyed the story telling sessions and learning at the playgroup.

- *I play with the toys*
- *I play skipping with my friends*
- *We draw on the board with my friends*
- *I play swings and the playground*
- *I play with Thato, we do skipping*
- *I like story telling*
- *I like learning school*

As far as what children liked to do before sleeping at night, the responses were varied, with the most common being washing, eating and then going to sleep. This accounted for 46% of the responses. Some also reported watching TV (19%), or playing games on the phone (23%); while a few (9%) said that they played with friends before going to bed. There were not many that were engaging in any activity with parents or siblings. There were gender differences insofar as girls and boys tended to play with toys that are deemed appropriate for their genders.

- *I eat my supper*
- *I wash and put on my pyjamas*
- *I play with my doll and my cars also*
- *I eat and play with my toys*
- *I watch Generations (soap opera)*
- *I leave the phone alone, wash and sleep*
- *I play with my friend Nhlanhla*

6.15. Child's play routine

The majority of children (63%) reported that they like to play with toys. Girls tend to play with dolls, while the toys of choice for boys tend to be cars, and bicycles. Boys also tend to play sporting games (17%) with the most popular being soccer more than any other sport.

The group play preferences of girls were either skipping rope or playing a clapping game with their hands, which is accompanied by singing. This accounted for 16% of the responses. The remaining 4% prefer playing games on phones or TV games.

- *I play with my car*
- *I do skipping skipping*
- *I like to play skipping and toys*
- *I like to play games on the phone*
- *Zig-zag (clapping hands game)*
- *Play games on the phone*
- *I like to play soccer with my friends*
- *I like to play games on the phone*

Almost 75% of the children reported that they tend to play outside rather than inside the house. The younger children were more likely to play inside than the older children. Girls also reported playing more inside the house than boys. Outdoor play locations were usually in the yard where there is one, or in the next door neighbour's yard. The children also tended to play at a playground, or in the street. The older boys were more likely to play further from home than the girls. Playing soccer in the street, and playing on the playground is especially popular with older boys.

- *I play soccer in the street with my friends*
- *I like to play in the playground*
- *I like to play with my friend next door*
- *I play in the yard in my friend's house*
- *I play near our house*
- *I play on the street with Thuli*
- *I like to play inside the house*

The overwhelming majority of the children (93%) like to play with others, either siblings or friends whereas only 7 % reported that they like to play alone.

- *I like to play with Jabu from next door*
- *I like to play with my younger sister and Thuli*
- *I like to play with my sister, I like skipping with my sister*
- *I like to play with my friends, because I like them*
- *I like playing with Karabo because she's my friend*
- *I like to play with my twin brother*

The children's favourite indoor play routine consisted of mostly playing with toys (47%), learning materials (23%), or with a sibling (19%). To a lesser extent (11%), watching TV was also a favourite indoor play activity. For those playing inside the house, the bed is the favourite place to play.

- *I play with toys*
- *I play with football, and also play with toys*
- *I draw on my books*
- *I play with my cars*
- *Play with sister, run around*
- *I watch TV*

The most popular outdoor activity for boys was playing with toys (42%) and playing soccer (37%). The most popular outdoor activity for girls was skipping (59%). Both boys and girls tended to run around playing the touch game (which involves one person chasing the group in order to touch someone, with that person having to do the same.)

- *We play the touch game, we chase each other and touch. Then we chase again and touch*
- *I play skipping*
- *I play with my ball*
- *I play with cars, running*
- *I like playing football*
- *I like playing basketball and football.*

Implications – *The children’s explication of the indoor and outdoor play routines is similar to what their parents understand their routines to be. They were, however, more detailed than their parents, specifying the toys they played with, their preferences in terms of games and play partners, as well as where they liked to play. There were clear gender differences to the extent that boys and girls expressed a preference for gender appropriate toys and games. Boys’ games tended to be physical and competitive. The older boys also preferred to play outside where the play partners are more often friends. In the case of the younger boys, the play partners are more likely to be siblings. In the case of a few of the younger boys, there was a preference for dolls. Here however, the focus seemed not so much on the object, than on the play partner, which would be a sister to whom the doll actually belonged.*

6.16. Play partners

The majority of children named their play partners as either friends (65%), and to a lesser extent, siblings (30%) and parents and grandparents (5%).

- *I play with my brother*
- *I play with Mpho and my little baby brother*
- *I play with Friends and baby-brother*
- *I play with Mpho – a friend*
- *I play with Pfanelo (name of sister)*
- *I play with Thando and Tshepo*

The friends are also named as the favourite play partner for most of the children (85%) primarily because they liked them, they have fun together, and they liked the same things. There were no gender or age differences with regards to whom the children liked to play with.

- *I like to play with my friends because we can both catch the ball*
- *I like to play with my friends because we can both catch the ball and it bounces*
- *Nomfundo (friend) we play with our dolls and that is nice*

- *My friends we talk and have fun*

6.16.1 Parents as play partners

When asked whether their parents played with them, 76% of the children responded in the affirmative with the mother being by far the parent that played more often (in almost 80% of the reported cases) with the child. Parents were generally more likely to engage in play that involved physical contact with boys than girls.

- *My mother and I we play touch*
- *I play ball with my father*
- *We play hide and seek and she runs after me*
- *We play with the ball and we skip*
- *We play with my Barbie and my teddy bear*
- *We play with my dolls*

Parents mostly play with children after school and on weekends (92%). While all of the children liked to play with their parents, they did not elaborate much on the reason other than to say that they liked their parents.

- *We play when I come from school and on weekends*
- *We play when she has no work.*
- *When he come home from work*
- *I play with her because I like it*
- *I like her because she plays with me*
- *Yes, it is beautiful, it makes me happy*

6.16.2. Siblings as play partners

Of the children, 25% (12 boys and 9 girls) was an only child and had no siblings. Of these 9 were 3-year olds, while 8 were 5 year olds. Of those children with siblings, 23% reported to engage with them in either physical play or playing with toys. There were no differences by child age or gender.

- *With my brother we play with the ball with my sister we play with the dolls*
- *We jump around and play soccer*
- *We play soccer and dolls*
- *We play with action figure toys*
- *We play touch*

6.16.3. Grand-parents as play partners

Less than 10% of the children reported to play with their grandparents. This was often in the case where the grandparent and the child lived in the same house. Grandmothers were more likely to play than grandfathers, and were also more likely to engage in non-physical play inside the house with the younger children. This include singing and playing with toys on the floor.

- *She sings to me and teach me to sing*
- *We play with dolls and teddy bear*
- *We play with my cars and she plays catch with the ball.*

Implications – *While 75% of the children have siblings, most of them listed a friend as a play partner of choice, rather than siblings. Most of them (76%) also listed their mother as the likely parental play partner. This is understandable if one considers the fact that the majority of the children are raised by single mothers and where the father’s presence in the child’s life is either limited or non-existent. Mothers also seem to reinforce the significance of gender appropriateness in the games and toys that are used when they play with their children. Thus, mothers are more likely to play physical games with boys such as chasing them or playing hide and seek. When it comes to girls, their play interactions are likely to centre around a doll or girls games. These are issues that the programme should consider.*

6.17. Play objects

When asked to choose an object, 45% (n=32) chose the doll to play with. The doll was also the toy of choice for more than 60% of the girls and was much more popular than any other toy. For the boys, the blocks were the most popular choice, followed by dolls, and

the cardboard box. There was a statistically significant difference between children's gender and the objects they chose as determined by a chi-square test, $X^2 (5, N = 71) = 15.80, p = .007$.

Cross-tabulation 3 - Choice of object & child gender

| | | boy | girl | Total |
|--|---------------|-----|------|-------|
| Which one would you pick to play with? | box | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| | blocks | 14 | 4 | 18 |
| | tube | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| | doll | 10 | 22 | 32 |
| | clay | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| | stones/leaves | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | | 36 | 35 | 71 |

With regards to the dolls, most of children (90%) implied that they would engage in imaginative play. They would pretend the doll was a baby, and they would therefore feed it and wash it. Some of the children also mentioned combing the dolls hair, although the picture was of a doll with no hair. The dolls were most popular among the 3 and 5 year olds. Boys mostly chose the blocks and stated that they would build something with them, although they were not specific what they would build. The four girls who chose blocks did not give a clear indication of what they would do with them. The blocks were also the most popular among 5-year olds than any other age. The preferences for the other objects were more or less evenly spread across all ages. The boys said that they would use the box to either hide in or build a house. More girls than boys chose the clay, with all of them stating that they would use it to make different figures. The boys who chose the tube stated that they would use it as swords and pretend to be fighting, or be a super hero.

- *I will talk to it and I will feed it*
- *I will wash him and comb his hair*
- *Make something with it, like a horse*
- *I will be a superhero to protect you*
- *I will build a house*

- *To play hide and seek*

With regards to who they would play with, most of the children responded that it would either be friends (57%), or siblings (36%). In a few cases it was a mother. There were no age or gender differences with regards to the play partner of choice. The sibling of choice was in most cases a sister. One boy did not know what clay was and said he would eat it.

- *I will play outside with my friend*
- *With my sister*
- *Outside with my friends*
- *Play inside with my mother*
- *I will play inside with my sister*
- *I will eat it*
- *In the house on the bed*

Implications – *Many of the children seem to lack imagination when it came to what they could do with some of the objects. This was especially the case with the younger ones. Their lack of familiarity with some of the objects also means that these could be potentially hazardous to them. This was exemplified by the boy's response that he would eat the clay. The programme should give careful consideration to making sure that, while children could use everyday objects to engage in pretend or imaginative play, care should be taken that their exposure to these objects does not jeopardize their safety.*

7. Conclusion

The needs assessment was conducted in effort to respond towards opportunities, obstacles, and disparities that exist in ensuring that young children from impoverished communities gain from the benefits that play have to offer. It identified priority issues and needs of parents and children that should be considered in the development of the Play every Day project in order to enhance its impact.

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