

# Youth and children

We acknowledge the importance of youth and children



**Providing social science that develops human potential and advances the rights of vulnerable populations.**

## EARLY CHILDHOOD

**Studies on early childhood development (ECD) focus on data that demonstrate the importance of early childhood to individual and national development, as well as on developing and testing measures and interventions to improve policy and programmes to improve ECD.**

### Our initiatives have resulted in

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- Setting up a web-based resource assessment for researchers across Africa to determine psychosocial functioning in early childhood;
- Providing resources for home-based palliative care programmes for children;
- Participating in a long-term study project (Bt20) to understand how the environment influences child and adolescent health and development;
- A finding that increased investment in quality ECD services is vital as the early years provide the critical platform for all future human development; and
- Publishing a book that contains comprehensive indicators for monitoring children's situation and their access to health and development support.

#### Web-based assessment instruments

A web-based resource assessment instrument for Africa was developed to determine psychosocial functioning in early childhood. With this resource, researchers across the continent will be able to access information about measures that have been used and validated in Africa.

#### Improving care in health facilities

A psychosocial programme to improve the care of children in health facilities in the context of HIV and AIDS was developed with funding from the Mellon Foundation. A training package, including a manual and videotape were produced and evaluated in a tertiary hospital and adaptations are being made for implementation in home-based palliative care programmes for children.

#### From birth to 20 (Bt20)

Three thousand children from Soweto were enrolled in this long-term study when it started in 1990. The overarching objective of the project is to understand how the environment influences child and adolescent health and development. This complex study is now in its nineteenth year, and is enrolling the third generation since inception – children of Bt20 children. Called 3G, these children of both young mothers and fathers in the cohort, as well as their partners, are being enrolled in a repeat birth cohort study, together with qualitative studies on young parenting and three-generation genetic studies, particularly on risks for chronic diseases. Bt20 is one of five birth studies in a Wellcome Trust-funded initiative called Collaboration on Health Outcome Research in Transitional Societies (COHORTS), which includes Pelotas (Brazilia), Delhi, Guatemala, and the

Philippines. The first combined publication of the group – ‘Maternal and Child Under-nutrition: Consequences for Adult Health and Human Capital’ has appeared in *The Lancet*.

## The Early Years

Early Years provide the critical platform for all future human development. Increased investment in quality ECD services is critical for children's health, well-being and development, and for the future economic well-being of the society.

The Early Years is an initiative to test large-scale interventions that will improve the growth and development of children from birth to the end of the first phase of schooling. As part of the project, a variety of reviews and case studies were compiled to support the expansion of ECD services for children 0-4 years of age.

Called Scaling ECD 0-4, the national Department of Education and the WK Kellogg Foundation provided support to the HSRC to study efforts that could improve ECD service delivery and integration, as well as to assist ECD programme staff in providing evidence-based and better quality

ECD interventions that can be scaled up and have the possibility of creating jobs. The finding of the study was presented to government and international advisors at a two-day seminar in April 2008. Research outputs included 10 research papers, each with a set of key findings and recommendations to government, including proposals for demonstration projects to test the effects of early childhood interventions. In sum, the study found that early years provide the critical platform for all future human development. Increased investment in quality ECD services is critical for children's health, well-being and development, and for the future economic well-being of the society.

## A policy on child well-being

To improve the capacity to track the impact of policy on child well-being, the HSRC with many collaborators produced a publication, *Monitoring Child Well-being: A South African Rights-based Approach*. With support from Save the Children Sweden, the book contains comprehensive indicators for monitoring children's situation and their access to support for health and development. Apart from Internet access and sales, the book has been distributed to more than 120 stakeholders. A set of core indicators is available on the HSRC Press website for free dissemination. The book has had one of the highest hit rates on the HSRC Press website in the period since its release, and has received considerable international attention. Government departments and NGOs continue to request training on the system. Along the same line, a project on the development of indices of multiple deprivation for children in South Africa has culminated in a HSRC Press publication (2007) titled: *The South African Index of Multiple Deprivation for Children: Census 2001*.

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

**Youth studies include probing the resources and assets of young people, as well as evaluations of interventions that could improve youth well-being in the present and into the future.**

### Our initiatives have resulted in

- Findings that work in subsistence agriculture is as much of a problem for child well-being and development as work in commercial agriculture;
- Influencing youth policy and practice through the cumulative store of research, expertise and experience on key issues of youth development;
- Findings that grade 10 learners are more prepared to delay sexual debut and have confidence in their ability to refuse unwanted sexual advances; and
- Rolling-out of an evidence-based family intervention programme to enhance the protective influence of the family on pre-adolescent children.

### Child labour

Child work and labour among 12- to 16-year-olds, commissioned by the International Labour Organization (ILO), confirms that work in subsistence agriculture is as much of a problem for child well-being and development as work in commercial agriculture, and that poverty is the primary cause of child agricultural activities. The findings and proposals for action inform the future work of the programme Towards the Elimination of Child Labour in South Africa (TECL). The TECL-commissioned study aims to address child labour and to implement the Child Labour Programme of Action. The study has also been disseminated to organisations involved in advocacy to protect the rights of working children in South Africa.

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## Youth Policy Initiative

The YPI intends to influence youth policy and practice in this country through the cumulative store of research, expertise and experience on key issues of youth development. The initiative takes the form of eight roundtable discussions, a public lecture and seminar series, publications in scholarly and popular press, media reports, and an HSRC-wide conference. Topics that were discussed in the reporting year include youth policies and institutions, the youth 'bulge' in the population, livelihood strategies, learner retention, teen pregnancy, and crime and violence. Some achievements of the YPI include the study of all contemporary international best practices of social security provisions for youth; the insight that young people (the youth bulge) form the majority of the population and offer an unprecedented opportunity to achieve rapid development; and a focus on creating second chances for marginalised youth, which also features prominently in the new youth policy. It also led to support for the National Youth Commission to develop an implementation plan and monitoring and evaluation framework for the policy, including advising the President and the Cabinet on youth policy through the Presidential Working Group for Youth.

**Grade 10 learners involved in the intervention, were more prepared to delay sexual debut and showed greater confidence in their ability to refuse unwanted sexual advances. They also had weaker intentions to have sex, and were less likely to have initiated sexual activity.**

## Youth, alcohol and sex

An HIV and Alcohol Prevention in Schools (HAPS) project, using innovative electronic technology for data collection, found that grade 10 learners involved in the intervention, were more prepared to delay

sexual debut and showed greater confidence in their ability to refuse unwanted sexual advances. They also had weaker intentions to have sex, and were less likely to have initiated sexual activity. At follow-up, six and 18 months later, the intervention group showed a greater increase in positive attitudes about waiting to have sex and in their confidence to refuse sex. They also had a lower increase in intentions to have sex and to use alcohol with sex, as well as less initiation of sexual activity. At 18 months, they showed greater increase in sexual refusal self-efficacy, less increase in intentions to have sex and less initiation of sexual activity.

## Champions for families

An evidence-based family intervention programme to enhance the protective influence of the family on pre-adolescent children (Collaborative HIV/AIDS and Adolescent Mental Health Project, or CHAMP) has been rolled-out to approximately 400 control group families. This followed a successful randomised control-trial, which showed that families in the intervention group were better at communicating with their pre-adolescent children on issues such as sex, puberty, and alcohol and drug use, than families not involved in the trial. The intervention group were also better at reducing stigma toward people living with HIV. The intervention has been extended through a Section 21 Company and represents an example of science to service.



Peotona Group Holdings founder and chair Ms Cheryl Carolus and HSRC executive director Prof. Linda Richter at the Teenage Pregnancy Roundtable organised by the Youth Policy Initiative