

## CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT



The Child, Youth and Family Development (CYFD) Research Programme is dedicated to national social development through innovative research that has significant intervention and policy implications.

CYFD works in seven priority areas:

- **Early child development and intervention**, including nutrition, psycho-social development, health and illness and pre-school education;
- **Rights and protection**, including violence and abuse, child labour, children and youth in care, and law and justice as it affects children, youth and families;
- **Socialisation and learning**, including language and literacy, schools and neighbourhoods, and social identity;
- **Youth development**, including civic engagement, work, livelihoods and life skills, subcultures and networks;
- **Risk and resilience**, including context and determinants, risk behaviours, prevention and intervention to reduce high-risk conditions and behaviours;
- **Sexuality and reproductive health**, including HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy and parenthood, sexual violence, gender and relationships;
- **Families and households**, including family formation and security, dissolution and coping, roles and responsibilities, culture and values and the impact of HIV/AIDS.

CYFD is made up of a multi-disciplinary team of 17 researchers working out of Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town. In 2002/03, CYFD opened up new research areas in child sexual abuse, youth civic participation and families through Parliamentary-funded activities.

### Current and recently completed projects

In the spirit of co-operation with other African countries, CYFD's Dr Jane Kvalsvig is working with a multi-national team on Pemba Island, Zanzibar, to **measure the effects of zinc or iron supplementation** on the motor and language development of young children. CYFD's role is, firstly, advisory given its experience of field conditions in Africa and, secondly, investigative as a collaborator in the scientific work. CYFD is responsible for a sub-study on the possible long-term effects of impaired communication between young children and their caregivers, which might result from the poor health of either the mother or the infant. This project is funded by Johns Hopkins University and will be completed in 2004.





A commissioned technical review of **the importance of caregiver-child interactions for the survival and healthy development of young children** forms part of a series on child development. This series is published by the Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development at the World Health Organisation in Geneva. The review is a summary of the theory and findings that link interactions between caregivers and children to the survival, growth and healthy development of infants and young children under the age of three years. The principal investigator was Professor Linda Richter. The project has been completed and reviewed internationally. WHO intends to disseminate the report widely as part of a programme area entitled Care for Development.

In 2002, the CYFD expanded its research efforts to promote youth development through a number of projects.

The aim of the **Collaborative HIV/AIDS and Adolescent Mental Health Project** (CHAMP) is to apply a community collaborative partnership model to the adaptation, implementation and evaluation of a family- and community-based HIV preventive intervention in South Africa, targeting pre-adolescents and early adolescents. The aim of the intervention is to delay the onset of sexual initiation and HIV-risk behaviours by improving family communication and involvement. One of the project's outputs is innovative cartoon-based material designed by local artists. The focus on strengthening families is also expected to impact on the ability of caregivers to deal with other issues related to young people in high-risk environments, including substance abuse and non-accidental injury. This project is headed by Professor Arvin Bhana and funded by the

National Institute of Mental Health. It will be completed in 2007.

The **HIV and Alcohol Prevention in Schools (HAPS)** project focuses on delivering an alcohol and HIV prevention programme based on two successful curricula: Amazing Alternatives (a peer-focused alcohol prevention curriculum), and a modified version of the Reducing the Risk curriculum (a skills-based HIV prevention programme). A combined classroom and media intervention, designed to be novel and participatory, is used to reach adolescents, particularly those most likely to engage in sexual risk-taking. The project also pays attention to the social environment, and psychological mediating variables, that are related to alcohol use and risky sexual behaviours among urban South African adolescents. The principal investigator is Professor Arvin Bhana. The National Institute of Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA) funds this project which will be completed in 2008.

CYFD's study on **preventing substance use among rural African American and South African youth** is a supplement to a parent study by Dr Murelle Harrison of Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in the United States. It is funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse. The study compares baseline data of rural African American families with data from rural South African families. The aim is to determine similarities and differences in areas such as the role of routine in family environments, supportive mother-child relationships, monitoring of child behaviour outside of the home, maternal involvement in education and participation in church. It also examines mechanisms through which family processes are linked with individual self-regulatory processes that contribute to academic

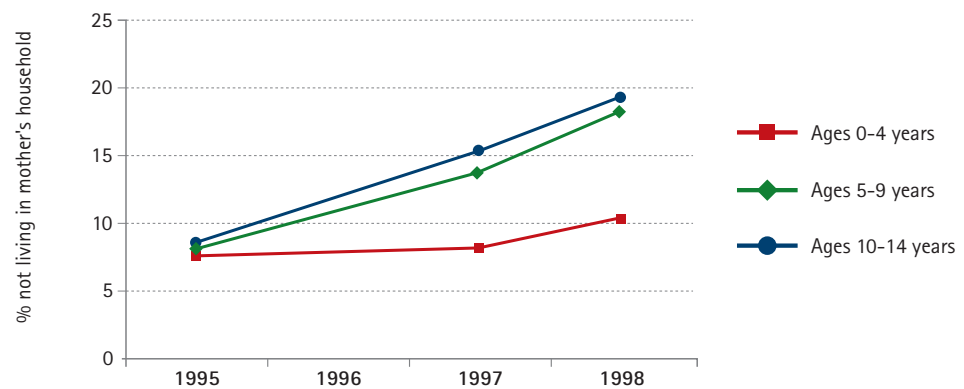


Figure A: Increase in the percentage of children informally fostered, by age, from 1995 to 1998, from the recent study of trends in orphaning and fostering between 1995 and 1999 (as determined from OHS and Census data)

competence, psycho-social competence and avoidance of substance use. Professor Yaw Amoateng is conducting the study in the Limpopo Province and initial baseline data has been collected from about 200 rural families in the province. This is an ongoing project and will be completed in 2008.

**Birth to Twenty** is the largest and longest-running birth cohort study in Africa and one of the few longitudinal studies of its kind in the world. From before birth, more than 3 000 children and their families have participated in a long-term study of health and psychological well-being. Dubbed Mandela's Children, because the cohort was born just weeks after Nelson Mandela was released from prison, they are the first generation of children growing up in a democratic South Africa. The current focus of the project is the manifestation of sexual and lifestyle risk behaviours during puberty. Professor Linda Richter is the principal investigator, and the project is funded by the Wellcome Trust, the Human Sciences Research Council, the Medical Research Council, Anglo American Chairman's Fund and the University of the Witwatersrand. It is hoped that the project will continue until 2010 and beyond.

Dr Heather Brookes led a **study into gender-based violence in schools and communities**, initially funded by UNICEF. The research involved conducting a series of case studies of South African schools' responses to violence against girls. The study, which was completed in 2002, found that understanding and acknowledgement of gender violence, clear communication of policy and consistent implementation, as well as school culture, were key factors that predicted levels of violence against girls in schools. The results of this research received national publicity in the media. UNICEF has commissioned the HSRC to assist with some of the activities resulting from this research. These include:

- collaboration between UNICEF and national and provincial departments of education as well as the South

African Council of Educators and NGOs;

- a campaign to raise awareness among learners and parents in their communities;
- the establishment of a South African Council of Educators (SACE)/UNICEF Project Office to address gender-based violence;
- the development of databases of public and private service providers and funders; and
- the facilitation of provincial working groups to build partnerships between Government, funders and schools.

CYFD investigated **school and community networks** that protect children from abuse to identify the links that either protect children from abuse or make children vulnerable to abuse. Craig Higson-Smith was the principal investigator of this project, which was completed in 2003 and funded by Parliamentary grant funds. Focus groups with learners, teachers, support staff and parents were conducted in six schools in Gauteng and six in KwaZulu-Natal. Findings indicate that there is a need for educators to be trained in dealing with child abuse cases, as almost all schools surveyed are struggling with cases involving sexual abuse of children. Most schools struggle with a lack of parental participation and, in this context, questions of child protection are often seen as interference by the school in the private affairs of the family. The study found that supervision was key: where children are collected from school by parents or through carefully monitored lift schemes, they are exposed to fewer dangers. Avoiding discussion with children about abuse or sex, for fear of prematurely heightening their awareness of these issues, is misguided, given that even the Grade 1 children included in the study had a clear understanding of sexual abuse. The study also found that children need to know the difference between "good secrets" and "bad secrets", given that the first person in whom a child confides about sexual abuse is often another child who is then sworn to secrecy.



A survey of Gauteng schools to determine **youth civic engagement in a period of transition in South Africa** focused on a range of issues, including civic responsibility, involvement in community organisations, tolerance of social differences, social trust, civic knowledge and skills, altruism and commitment to the common good. The purpose of the project was to determine the current status of civic engagement of various social categories of youth in Gauteng, and to investigate the major factors determining current levels of civic engagement among various segments of the population and their implications for youth development. Preliminary findings reveal a number of areas of concern. Dr Tony Emmett was the principal investigator for this project, which was funded through Parliamentary grant funds and will be completed in 2003.

CYFD's focus on families in studies of infants and young children, as well as of youth development, was further developed by projects on strengthening families.

Dr Yaw Amoateng led an examination of the social and demographic conditions that influence family life in South Africa. The project aims to develop a conceptual framework that will be used as a basis for **strengthening families**. The study is based on analyses of secondary Census and survey data sets, spanning the period of the country's transition. It looks at family-related issues such as the incidence and timing of marriage, divorce, childbearing, family dissolution and displacement, care of dependents, and social assistance for families. The goal of the project is to publish a book on families and households in post-apartheid South Africa. The study, which is funded by a Parliamentary grant, will be completed in 2004.

The national Department of Social Development has commissioned CYFD to provide the Department with **research to support the development of a family policy**. CYFD has reviewed the state of families in South Africa, including conditions that affect the quality of family life and the capacity of families to support dependants. Information has been fed back to the Department at monthly meetings of an advisory group, and a document has been prepared for dissemination and comment in preparation for the publication of the Family Policy. Professor Linda Richter leads this project, which will be completed in 2004.

### **Future developments**

In 2003/04, CYFD will initiate three new areas of research. One focuses on men and masculinity, in response to a need to understand the role of male identity in the context of gender oppression and health. An associated intervention study focuses on promoting caring and responsive relationships between men and children, called the Fatherhood Project. Disability studies, a neglected area of research, is an important new focus, with research planned to investigate cross-cutting issues such as disability and AIDS. Lastly, CYFD has initiated a long-term project to develop and test child and adolescent indicators.

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