

Child, Youth and Family Development

Child, Youth and Family Development (CYFD) contributes to poverty alleviation through high quality peer-reviewed research, social and economic development, social transformation and integration, and the creation of safe living environments. CYFD aims to achieve this by:

- understanding the links between child, youth and family development and socio-economic development
- analysing the conditions that undermine the obligations of society towards children and youth
- facilitating the extension of scientific findings to promote, monitor and evaluate interventions that support the development of human and social resources

Several prominent researchers have been recruited to the programme. With 16 full-time staff members and more than 10 interns and short-term researchers, CYFD is evenly represented in Durban, Cape Town and Pretoria.

Current and recently completed projects

Community dynamics and the prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT) of HIV/AIDS: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) South Africa contracted CYFD to undertake community-based social research to explore social, cultural and community dynamics with the potential to influence the effectiveness and implementation of the government's national PMTCT pilot programme. The work takes place in rural and urban areas of Limpopo province, and will serve as the basis for the design of a communications strategy for PMTCT to be developed by UNICEF this year, in collaboration with other research programmes.

A substantial equipment grant from the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) has allowed for the establishment of a digital audio-visual laboratory for the collection, analysis and documentation of observational material on an ongoing basis.

Material is currently being collected in:

- studies of the effect of iron and zinc supplementation on children's development
- youth gestures to establish affiliation on the streets
- family communication about HIV/AIDS
- maternal depression and early infant development

As part of an overall approach to increasing protection and care, CYFD is undertaking research for the economic sector of the Alexandra Renewal Project to assess the potential to develop care work as a job opportunity. This will address unemployment and simultaneously meet the needs of people for affordable and sustainable care over a five-month period. The study involves analysing existing care work, training initiatives, learnerships, and employment opportunities.



Families provide support to workers, to older persons and to women who nurture those close to them as well as the needy in their community.

Birth to Twenty: CYFD is the lead partner in this longitudinal birth cohort study, where a majority of 3 500-odd children, born in Soweto-Johannesburg, have been successfully followed up for 12 years. The study will continue until the children are 20. In 2001, a book on the first five years of the study was published, entitled *Mandela's children: Growing up in post-apartheid South Africa*.

As the children enter adolescence, the focus of the study is on persistent individual differences between children as a result of early growth and health, family support, school socialisation, and peer involvement. Birth to Twenty is largely funded by the UK-based Wellcome Trust.

Building on a study commissioned by the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund to assess the capacity of youth organisations at the provincial and district level, CYFD has launched a baseline-funded study on youth civic engagement in a variety of activities at the local, neighbourhood and political level, in association with Pennsylvania State University.

One aspect of the project will focus on the capacity of young people to support young children affected by poverty and HIV/AIDS. A television documentary, funded by the Ford Foundation and created by Vuleka Productions, has been produced to illustrate how young people can be of assistance to vulnerable children.

The family-based intervention programme is a five-year study to assess the impact such a programme would have on fostering the mental health and psychosocial development of young people, starting with middle childhood. This has been funded by the National Institute for Mental Health in Washington, and was done in collaboration with the Universities of Columbia, Illinois (Chicago), Durban-Westville and the Valley Trust. The intervention focuses on the prevention of HIV infection and the promotion of positive psychosocial adjustment among young teenagers by re-establishing family systems and support networks.

Understanding gender-based violence in schools and communities: UNICEF commissioned CYFD to conduct a series of case studies on South African schools' responses to violence against girls. Working with community-based research and intervention programmes, including KwaZulu-Natal Survivors of Violence, CYFD found that routine and discipline at schools, uniformly supported by school authorities, teachers, learners and parents, protected girls from abuse. As a result of the study, UNICEF, in consultation with national and provincial departments of education as well as the South African Council of Educators and the non-governmental organisation sector, has embarked on several major initiatives.

CYFD is a partner in the third and fourth phases of Transitions to adulthood in the context of AIDS in South Africa, a study of close to 4 000 adolescents (aged 14-22), in rural and urban KwaZulu-Natal. Other partners include the Centre for Social and Development Studies at the University of Natal, the Policy Research Division of the Population Council in New York, and the Tulane School of Public Health in New Orleans.

Phases 1 and 2 focused primarily on the impact of school-based life skills initiatives on young people's sexual and reproductive knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. The next phases, with funding from Horizons, will expand the scope of research to the socio-behavioural impact of HIV/AIDS on youths' transitions to adulthood.

CYFD has allocated money to initiate a study of families and households in South Africa. The aim is to collect information relevant to current social security efforts within government, for example, appropriate mechanisms for ensuring access and maximum use of the child support grant.



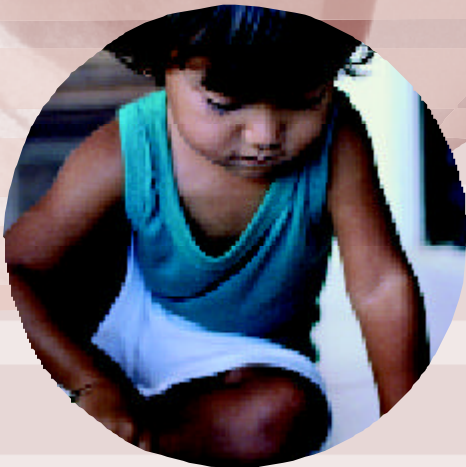
-year-olds in BT10 born within weeks of one another



CYFD has taken the lead in providing empirical data on the fosterage and orphanhood of children, one of the enduring effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on our society. Dr Barbara Anderson, a visiting scholar from the Population Studies Institute at the University of Michigan is assisting in this.

Social aspects of health and AIDS: CYFD is forming a partnership with the Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS and Health (SAHA) research programme in a major initiative to oversee research-driven interventions for orphans and vulnerable children. Efforts will be concentrated on improving the health and well-being of children, keeping children in homes and communities, increasing the economic viability and coping of affected households and communities, and to build capacity at the community level to respond to affected children and families. The WK Kellogg Foundation funds the initiative.

Zanzibar Zinc and Iron project: CYFD 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 infants. CYFD will conduct a sub-study on the possible long-term effects of impaired communication due to the poor health either of the mother or the infant.



Future developments

For the forthcoming year, the research priorities are the following:

- early child development and intervention, including nutrition, psychosocial development, health and illness, and preschool education
- rights and protection, including violence and abuse, child labour, children and youth in care, law and justice
- socialisation and learning, including language and literacy, schools and neighbourhoods and social identity
- youth development, including civic engagement, work, livelihoods and life skills, sub-cultures and networks
- risk and resilience, including context and determinants, risk behaviours, prevention and intervention to reduce high-risk environments and behaviours
- sexuality and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy and parenthood, sexual violence, gender and relationships
- families and households, including family dissolution and coping, roles and responsibilities, culture and values, the impact of HIV/AIDS

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