

# *Child, Youth and Family Development*

In its business plan for 2001/02 the HSRC identified child, youth and family development as a prospective research area for achieving its objective of conducting policy-relevant social research for South Africa and the subcontinent. The business plan includes the appointment – in the new financial year – of a top-level research manager and the establishment of infrastructure for focusing on the development of children, youth and the family.

This represents a renewed emphasis on the human and social foundations of national development in a programme that will interface with education and human resources, welfare, urban and rural development, democracy and governance, and public health.

The New Priority Area (NPA) Child, Youth and Family Development will, together with colleagues at universities, in the public sector, NGOs, CBOs and international agencies, undertake basic and applied research aimed at policy and programme development, implementation and evaluation. The following **priorities** form part of the NPA's research plan for the **future**:

- Investigating the links between child, youth and family development and socio-economic development at the national level. (This will include studies on the impact of poverty on young people and their families, as well as factors affecting the health, education, values, skills development and civic participation of children and youth.)
- Analysing the conditions that undermine the obligations of society towards children and youth in terms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Such conditions include poverty, marginalisation, racism, sexism and other types of exclusion abrogating the fundamental rights of children and youth to care and support.)
- Facilitating the transfer, uptake and extension of scientific findings for implementation in projects, programmes and services to promote child, youth and family development; and monitoring and evaluating interventions to support the development of human and social capital.

The **focus** will be on child and youth participation in order to promote social and economic development, on schools as sites for the advancement of personal and social values, and on the transition from home to school in the context of recent education policies.



*I want to be a lawyer or a computer programmer,  
and have a house of my own and  
make my mom proud.*

*– Fifteen year old schoolboy in Soweto*

Regarding the impact of HIV/AIDS on children and youth, studies will be undertaken in conjunction with the NPA on social aspects of HIV/AIDS to determine youth risk factors and early indicators of the risk of sexual and reproductive ill-health, to evaluate care models for the young children of AIDS-affected families, and to investigate potential roles for young people looking after AIDS-affected children.

A project on social capital and resource-based development will be undertaken to devise strategies for sustaining and building social cohesion and co-operation in support of the specific goals of the NPA, as well as the broader goals of national development and democratisation.

Stationed in Durban, the NPA leader will guide a national programme with staff in several centres. The research programme will be formally launched at a consultative workshop later in 2001.



## Centre for Gerontology

The HSRC has been researching aspects of child, youth and family development for many years, often in close partnership with other role players and stakeholders. An example is the Centre for Gerontology, a joint venture between the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the HSRC dating back to 1991. For almost a decade the Centre has been operating as an independent unit funded by the HSRC. It is located in the UCT's Faculty of Health Sciences and is managed by an HSRC staff member seconded to the UCT.

Various research projects were completed in 2000/01, including a study on the perceptions and experience of elder abuse among older Africans in townships on the Cape Flats; a similar study among the Muslim population of the Cape Peninsula, and an evaluation of the Abigail Women's Movement in Khayelitsha.

Staff members of the Centre contributed to the finalisation of the national Strategy on Elder Abuse, the rewriting of the Older Persons Act, and the drafting of an international policy framework on aging and older persons at the Organisation of African Unity's experts meeting in Uganda. Staff also participated in workshops and public hearings on elder abuse, the impact of HIV/AIDS on African grandmothers, and sexual violence and crime against older persons.

Following the HSRC's decision no longer to renew its funding, the Centre for Gerontology closed its doors at the end of March 2001. However, UCT simultaneously established an Institute of Aging in Africa in its Faculty of Health Sciences. All ongoing research in the Centre for Gerontology has been taken over by the new Institute and collaboration will continue between it and the HSRC. This has already been manifested in a new research project on the development of a dataset on aging for the Department of Health.

### ENQUIRIES

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