



PSPPD
PROGRAMME TO
SUPPORT PRO-POOR
POLICY DEVELOPMENT

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FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

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In this issue

Feature article: ECD: From research through consultation, and cooperation to policy impact

Page 04 »

Policy brief: Strengthening the impact of the Grade R programme

Page 07 »

Spotlight on: The Children's Institute

Page 08 »

All about EBPM&I: What is evidence-based policy-making all about?

Page 09 »

Learning platforms: Child gauge 2015

Page 10 »

Resources: Events and current research grants

Page 11 »



**planning, monitoring
& evaluation**

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



PSPPD
PROGRAMME TO
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Editorial

We're back! And we're very excited to introduce you to the first issue in our new series of From Evidence to Action newsletters. Packed with interesting information and useful resources, From Evidence to Action will not only share the work of the Programme to Support Pro-poor Policy Development's (PSPPD) Learning Facility, but also hopes to stimulate discussion and serve as a platform for building networks.

Established in 2014, the Learning Facility is an integral part of the second phase of the PSPPD (PSPPD II) and plays a crucial role in supporting the PSPPD as it strives to address poverty and inequality through improved evidence-based policy-making (EBPM). To achieve this, policy-makers need good quality research so that they can make informed policy choices and improve the implementation of interventions. On the other hand, researchers need to understand the policy-making process to ensure their research evidence is relevant and presented in a way policy-makers can use. The Learning Facility therefore aims to build the capacity of both policy-makers and researchers, building a bridge between them by creating platforms for engagement, knowledge production and sharing, and accessibility of research.

In this issue of From Evidence to Action we focus on early childhood development (ECD), and why it is so important for the future of our country.

» *For more information, visit our website at www.psppd.org*

The Programme to Support Pro-poor Policy Development II (PSPPD II)

The PSPPD, a research and capacity-building programme within the Presidency, aims to transform the conventional relationship between policy-making and the use of social science evidence by assisting policy-makers and researchers to systematically harness the best available evidence to inform policy-making. The Programme strives to improve this evidence-based policy-making (EBPM) process in South Africa, with a specific focus on addressing poverty and inequality, as well as contribute to the building of an evidence base and sharing of knowledge through its partnerships with a range of organisations, academia, think tanks and the public sector.

The first phase of the PSPPD took place from 2007 to 2012. The second phase, PSPPD II, runs from 2014 to 2017 and will leverage the knowledge and experience gained in Phase I, continuing to strengthen the use of EBPM and enhance implementation of policies.

» *For more information about PSPPD and the benefits of the programme, please visit www.psppd.org.za*

"We as a nation must address the damaging effects of poverty and inequality on children. We should work within a comprehensive view of ECD, do more for children and families in the first 1,000 days, improve the availability and quality of child care, and promote and support parenting."

- Professor Linda Richter



Introduction to early childhood development in South Africa

Research, both nationally and internationally, illustrates that the early years of a child's life are critical for development. Furthermore, there is a substantial body of evidence that speaks to the developmental benefits of access to quality early childhood development (ECD) and care. ECD is classified as the process of emotional, mental, spiritual, moral, physical and social development of children from birth to eight years. Scientific evidence confirms the importance of the early years of life which has significant impact on future education and earnings, on health and longevity (Diagnostic Review 2011 and Child Gauge 2012 and 2013).

In a context such as South Africa, where there are high levels of poverty and inequality, with children adversely affected, the democratic government has prioritised the need for interventions that ensure the healthy development of children during these early stages of their lives. This focus on ECD is observed in the Constitution and the subsequent plethora of related legislation and plans, as well as the ratification of relevant international conventions (Richter L, 2012).

Combined effort

As a policy and programme priority, ECD is associated with a package of services aimed at enabling the healthy development of children from birth until at least eight years of age. ECD services are not the domain of a single government department, nor that of a specific sector. Rather, interventions aimed at the holistic development of children to enable them to thrive require the input of multiple stakeholders, from within and outside of government. The breadth of services is inclusive of social security, birth registration, nutrition and health services, infrastructure (such as access to clean water and sanitation), as well as a day care that is safe and affordable.

In addition, the package of ECD services also needs to provide children with structured programmes for group learning and solid preparation for formal schooling. Over and above targeting children from 0-8 years of age, complementary services also need to be directed at parents and caregivers in order to optimise the effectiveness of ECD interventions.

The improved impact of ECD interventions therefore requires coordinated collaborative efforts from multiple government departments, especially the Departments of Social Development, Education, and Health, as well as local government, together with the use of evidence to inform decisions on what types of ECD interventions are best suited for the South African context.

ECD is associated with a package of services aimed at enabling the healthy development of children from birth until at least eight years of age.

Early childhood development

From research through consultation, and cooperation to policy impact

By Professor Linda Richter, Distinguished Professor and Director of the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Human Development, University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)

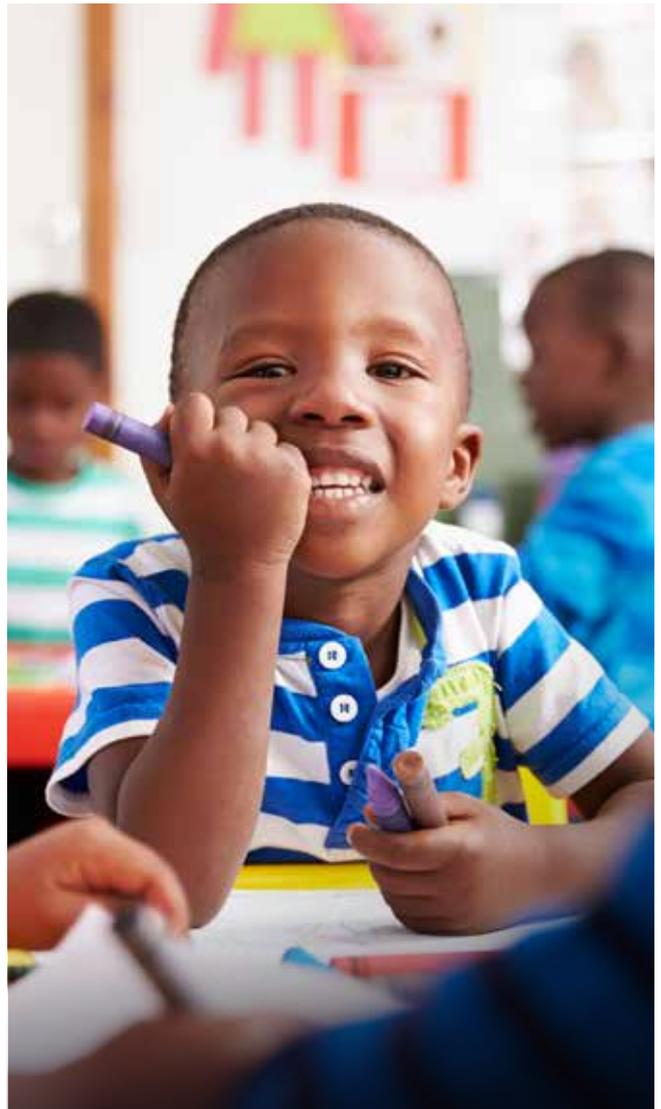
South Africa has long-standing commitments to early ECD, at least in the form of preschool. As with ECD programmes in other parts of the world, the goal of South Africa's pre-primary provision is to reduce the educational and income disparities that were engineered during apartheid. South Africa's reception year (Grade R), the only fully government-funded preschool year in an African country, took less than a decade to become universal in 2015.

The first 1,000 days

While uniformly high quality learning has still to be achieved in Grade R, its roll out, particularly in the poorest sections of the population, is a major accomplishment. At the same time, government subsidies to community-based ECD centres (kindergartens or crèches catering mainly for children three years and older), all of which are owned and run by civil society organisations, have been growing steadily.

At the global level, scientific advances over the last 20 to 30 years have drawn increasing attention to the importance of the earliest periods of development, particularly pregnancy (270 days) and the first two years of life (365+365), known collectively as the first 1,000 days. Accumulating evidence is showing that this very rapid phase of development is a period of enormous susceptibility to 'environmental' influence, whether the foetal environment provided by the health and wellbeing of the mother, or the infancy environment provided by the family.

Acting for good or ill, these environmental influences 'programme' many aspects of the child's development, biologically and emotionally, in ways that predispose the individual to develop in particular ways, either towards health, adjustment and productivity or towards illness, social difficulties and lost potential. This is especially the case if they remain, as many of us do, in the environments in which we are conceived, born and grow up.



"The personal tragedy of the unfulfilled promise of one child, combined with that of many other children in similar circumstances, constitutes a serious challenge of dependency, exclusion and ill-health in society."

- Diagnostic Review of Early Childhood Development (2012)

Birth to Twenty Plus

We are fortunate to participate in this global knowledge building, particularly through data generated by our 25-year birth cohort study, Birth to Twenty Plus. Recommendations based on this new science were incorporated into the 2011 National Development Plan through an emphasis on health in the first 1,000 days and two years of preschool learning.

In 2012, a team was commissioned by the Department of Performance (now Planning), Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), in collaboration with the Inter-Departmental Steering Committee (lead by the Departments of Social Development, Health, and Basic Education, as well as several other cognate departments) to conduct a Diagnostic Review of Early Child Development in South Africa¹. On the basis of a comprehensive review of prior documentation and interviews with policy, programme and research experts, the authors concluded the following:

1. South Africa must focus on the health and wellbeing of children from pregnancy to age 3, as well as from 3-6 years;
2. This means giving more support to families who have the main responsibility for caring for young children, and improving early learning, nutrition and out-of-home child care;
3. That the subsidy funding needed to be re-oriented to support the poorest children; and
4. That government should take responsibility for funding and provision in collaboration with civil society.

Essential package for all children

Several other events, such as the 2012 national conference on ECD convened by the Department of Social Development, as well as the advocacy of Minister Bathabile Dhlamini, contributed to growing national interest in ECD. In 2013, the Inter-Departmental Steering Committee, in collaboration with UNICEF, commissioned the Diagnostic Review team to develop the national ECD Policy and Programme².

The policy and programme proposed preventive as well as age- and needs-based services in an essential package for all children in South Africa, with state responsibility for poor children and families using a population-based approach with government taking the lead. Services should be delivered through a range of models, including media, home, community (non-centre) and centre-based by differentiated categories of personnel; one attached to primary health care teams and the other to early learning opportunities and preschools. The funding model proposed ensures universal availability and equitable access for all poor children, with programme and salary allocations as well as running expenses.



“ECD services are not the domain of a single government department, nor that of a specific sector.”



The draft policy and programme were the subject of two rounds of provincial consultations and a national consultation. Further comment was invited when the National ECD Policy was published in the Government Gazette in February 2015. The Department of Social Development is bringing comments together and undertaking revision of the policy for submission to Cabinet, planned for September 2015.

The three year process, in which representatives from government and civil society met together on several occasions with academics and researchers has built common purpose, although disagreement remains on a number of points. The policy recommended that the launch and initial leadership of the new ECD Programme fall under a special purpose agency, an issue on which consensus has yet to be found. Similarly, it is not clear how the pre-Grade R year can successfully build on the existing educational system, yet retain exploratory and play-based learning which best suits preschool children.

In- and out-of-home care effects on children's educational prospects

Our research team at the Developmental Pathways to Health Research Unit and the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence at Wits University, with funding from the PSPPD in 2014, is examining how quality in-home and out-of-home care affects children's educational prospects. We are using data from the Birth to Twenty Plus study, examining two groups of children, 0-2 years of age and 3-5 years, and assessing readiness for school at age 5 (age of entry into formal school), and number of grades repeated during the foundation phase of school.

We define quality of care at home through parental engagement and efforts to provide a learning environment for a young child; in out-of-home care, quality indicators

include the number of children in care, the education of the caregiver, and the facilities provided for protection, care and learning. We are also working with the University of Stellenbosch and UNICEF South Africa and have contracted the Frameworks Institute in Washington to help us understand the 'frames' South Africans use to understand what young children most need and how best to provide these essential inputs through families and services.

Again, government officials and civil society organisations are working with us to understand what seems like an inclination to "outsource" early childhood development to caregivers and preschool teachers, and how we might generate trust in, and responsiveness by, parents who almost all want to do the best for their children. The important point is that what is happening in policy, implementation and research is becoming more collaborative, helping to build consensus and political priority for early childhood development.

"The important point is that what is happening in policy, implementation and research is becoming more collaborative, helping to build consensus and political priority for early childhood development."

- Professor Linda Richter

Professor Linda Richter (PhD) is a Distinguished Professor and Director of the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Human Development, University of the Witwatersrand and a 2014 recipient of a PSPPD grant for The impact of poverty and inequality in early childhood on long-term outcomes: Evidence from the Birth to Twenty study.

Policy brief

Strengthening the impact of the Grade R programme

*Authors: Haroon Borat, Morné Oosthuizen and Aalia Cassim,
Development Policy Research Unit, University of Cape Town
Published by: Labour Market Intelligence Partnership (LMIP) (2014)*

This policy brief, written by Dr Stephen Taylor, describes the expansion of the Grade R programme in South Africa, summarises the findings of a study evaluating the impact on learners, and makes several policy recommendations based on the evaluation results.

The Grade R programme has expanded dramatically since 2001 so that approximately 95% of children attend Grade R nowadays, either in a public school or an early childhood development centre. A recent impact evaluation conducted by independent researchers confirmed the strategic importance of providing pre-school educational opportunities.

“Early educational interventions are more cost-effective than later remedial interventions.”

However, the evaluation also demonstrated that the Grade R programme as implemented up until 2011 has had a limited impact on later educational development. Improving the quality of the programme, especially in schools serving poor communities, is thus essential in future planning.

“Quality is key: A quality curriculum, a quality teacher, a quality response to development needs.”

Policy recommendations include developing the professionalism of teachers, practical in-service teacher support, equipping teachers with the skills to assess the development of their learners, increasing learner access to story books, and tightening the provincial education departments’ financial record keeping.

Stephen Taylor is a researcher and advisor in the office of the Director General, Department of Basic Education.

» **To read the full policy brief, please visit http://learningfacility.org/images/pdf/Policy_Brief_new_design_GRADE_R.pdf**



Spotlight on...

The Children's Institute

Established at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2001, the Children's Institute is a leader in child policy research and advocacy and aims to provide policy-makers and practitioners with the evidence and support needed in the development of policies, programmes and institutions that serve the best interests of South Africa's children. The Institute's activities focus on key challenges to the well-being of South Africa's children, including poverty, inequality, HIV and AIDS, high infant and child mortality and morbidity, violence and abuse, and limited voice.

Despite a commitment to child rights and a significant increase in child-focused policies, laws and programmes, much remains to be done to fulfil children's rights in South Africa. UCT supports social responsive research, and has a long and proud track-record in providing an evidence base for policies and programmes that can help vulnerable communities, especially children. Against this background, the Children's Institute aims to harness the collective academic capability at UCT to promote enquiry, to build capacity through teaching and training, and to present evidence to guide the development of policies, laws and interventions for children.

"The Children's Institute is an exceptionally valuable resource, to the academic community, and to research activists in non-profit organisations (and there is some overlap between these). The research is thorough, and there has been a tremendous improvement in technical skill over the years. It is also timely, in the sense of allowing rapid feedback over new policy development and implementation."

- Professor F Lund, School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal



In positioning itself as an independent broker of evidence, the Institute provides information to those who are advocating on behalf of children, and engages in own evidence-based advocacy. The Children's Institute aims to ensure that children are given primary consideration by society. In particular, the Institute pays special attention to promoting children's participation in its work, and advocates for their voices to be heard in decisions affecting their lives.

The Children's Institute's objectives are to conduct research that characterises the situation of children in South Africa and identifies gaps and opportunities to strengthen law, policy and practice, as well as make academic research accessible to government and civil society, engage in dialogue and evidence-based advocacy to promote effective policy design and service delivery, contribute to discourses on children and childhoods, and provide education and training to ensure that children's rights are respected in professional practice.

The Institute's substantial body of work in research and scholarship, education and training, technical assistance and support, and advocacy has contributed significantly to a number of policy and legislative processes in the country, and has been instrumental in the work of many academic and civil society organisations involved in the South African children's sector.

The Institute has also participated in collaborations and networks with both government and civil society, as well as implementing some of the most important child-related projects in the country, including the South African Child Gauge (see page 10 for more) and Children Count, an ongoing data and advocacy project aimed at monitoring the situation of children in South Africa by developing, presenting and tracking child-centred statistics to a wide range of audiences.



All about EBPM

What is it?

Billions of rands are spent every year on development policies and programmes, but there is relatively little evidence on the true impact these interventions have on the lives of the poor. To support the transformation agenda in South Africa, policy-makers need evidence so that they can make informed policy choices and improve the implementation of interventions to support those policies. Good quality research can help to illustrate the extent of problems and the underlying causes. This is important in deciding where to focus, as well as which interventions are needed to address these issues. This approach of using scientific research and other evidence to formulate policies is known as evidence-based policy-making (EBPM).

From page to practice

The idea that policy and practice should be underpinned by rigorous evidence is internationally accepted, yet the level of rigour in evaluating 'what works' in social policy remains limited. In a time of public service reform and more decentralised decision-making, the need for timely, accessible and reliable evidence is becoming ever more important. EBPM is advocated internationally for its potential to contribute to effective policy. EBPM aims to increase the use of scientific research, including research from the social and economic sciences, as a source of evidence for policy-making; asking questions about the nature of the problem under scrutiny, how it has been addressed elsewhere and the cost, benefit and effectiveness of interventions.

The National Development Plan (NDP) has highlighted the need for EBPM to improve the effectiveness of government policy; if the best available evidence can be understood and used, new policies and projects will be more effective and have a higher probability of success. But the process of transferring research evidence from the page and incorporating it into a workable policy solution has long been a challenge for researchers and policy-makers. Many factors hinder the process, including ineffective communication among stakeholders, lack of access to research, poor comprehension of how research is relevant to policy-making, lack of skills to interpret and use evidence, lack of relevance of research, political interference, and power and budget struggles. Not surprisingly, a recurring theme in the literature on evidence-based policy and practice is the need for better dialogue, partnerships, and collaboration across sectors.

In this series of newsletters, we'll tackle a new topic related to EBPM in each of the next six issues:

1. EBPM: The supply and demand theory of change
2. How evidence-literate are policy-makers? Examining the knowledge, skills and attitudes of policy-makers
3. How well connected are researchers and policy-makers? Examining linkages and networks
4. How well is research communicated to policy-makers? Examining effective communication strategies
5. How evidence-based is policy? Examining the extent to which existing policy is informed by evidence
6. Building capacity for evidence-informed research: Exploring capacity-building strategies to build both the supply of and demand for research

Don't miss our next issue to find out more about the supply and demand theory of change, and which factors affect the supply of research information to policy-makers, and which affect the demand for evidence from policy-makers.

Learning platforms

The Children's Institute

The South African Child Gauge is a flagship annual publication by the Children's Institute. It is distributed locally and internationally, and examines a critical area of wellbeing that impacts on South Africa's children. Each year the Children's Institute uses a major challenge affecting the lives of children as a lens to critically analyse the position of children and the potential policy responses required.

This 2015 Child Gauge will highlight the precarious situation of children as they transition into young adulthood and the need for interventions that aim to support youth development, such as quality early childhood development (ECD) and care. The Child Gauge is an important tool to generate discussion and debate among policy-makers as to the effectiveness of policy responses in addressing poverty and its impact on children.

The Child Gauge 2015 is a collaboration between the Children's Institute and the Poverty and Inequality Initiative, University of Cape Town, UNICEF South Africa, and the PSPPD. In response to the need for evidence-informed policies and interventions aimed at empowering youth to create meaningful lives for themselves and to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, the 2015 edition of the Child Gauge will serve as a key resource for policy-makers, researchers and practitioners as they work on the new National Youth Policy and related implementation plans and programmes.

The evidence presented within the Child Gauge 2015 will be used to draw the attention of government and civil society alike to the critical issues facing young people and highlight the ways in which existing policies allow poverty to be transmitted from one generation to the next, and how this can potentially be addressed.

» *To read past issues of the Child Gauge, please visit www.ci.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=509&Itemid=81*

"Interventions aimed at the holistic development of children to enable them to thrive require the input of multiple stakeholders, from within and outside of government."



Resources

Events

5th Conference of the International Society for Child Indicators

2-4 September 2015 in Cape Town, South Africa

The 5th Conference of the International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI), hosted by the Children's Institute in partnership with the African Child Policy Forum, UNICEF and UCT's Poverty and Inequality Initiative, will see researchers, practitioners, policy-makers and child advocates from across the world will gather for three days to share and discuss the latest child indicator research and implications for policy and interventions. The main theme of the conference is "From Welfare to Well-being: Child indicators in research, policy and practice" with the following sub-themes:

- Early childhood development
- Youth transitions to adulthood
- Child participation and citizenship
- Child-focused indicators of social change
- Measurement of child poverty and inequality
- Child protection and violence against children
- Making sense of household form and care arrangements
- Combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies
- New information technologies and alternatives to traditional surveys
- The use of administrative data in child indicator work
- The power of surveillance site and cohort data
- Conceptualising and communicating child indicator research to influence policy
- Lessons learnt in establishing indicator projects

» **Please note, the Call for Abstracts is now closed. To find out more or to register for the conference, please visit www.isci2015.org**

ECD study tour

August/September 2015 in Chile and Sweden

The Department of Social Development (DSD), in collaboration with the PSPPD, will be undertaking a study tour to both the developed and developing countries of Chile and Sweden to benchmark child wellbeing and to examine contexts where a suite of ECD interventions have been delivered at scale in resource poor environments. The study tour provides an opportunity to explore how ECD interventions are structured as well as their impact on the development of children. It provides a platform for stakeholders from key government departments responsible for ECD services to critically engage

with various ECD implementation options and consider the likely implication of these options within the South African context.

The ECD study tour will be co-led by the PSPPD Programme Manager, Mastoera Sadan, and include the participation of six representatives from the Departments of Social Development, Basic Education, and Health, and the DPME.

» **Keep reading our newsletters for updates from the study tour!**

Current PSPPD research grants focusing on children

Amajuba Newborn Hearing Screening Programme

University of KwaZulu-Natal, College of Health Sciences, Discipline of Audiology

At least 0.5 – 5/1000 newborn babies and babies under one year of age will have permanent hearing loss. As they grow, these children can display delays in speech and language development as well as delays in skills involving the processing of thoughts, knowledge and memory. This may result in learning difficulties and problems at schools as well as social and emotional problems. Early intervention is crucial within the period when the brain pathways responsible for these functions are developing. It is therefore important to detect children with hearing loss as soon as possible. This project aims to determine the prevalence and causes of newborn hearing impairment in rural communities and develop a model for a Newborn Hearing Screening Programme (NHSP), as well as assess its cost and feasibility, and the community response to such a programme.

Expanding social mobility through education

Stellenbosch University Department of Economics, Research on Socio-Economic Policy (ReSEP)

Social mobility is the phenomenon whereby social class or income group changes from one generation to the next, or in a person's lifetime from one period to another. The term is often used to refer to upward movement that is sustained in the longer term. Intergenerational mobility reflects the degree to which children's outcomes (in the labour market and in life) cannot be explained by family background. The overall objective of this project is to contribute to knowledge to improve policy-making and implementation regarding the labour

Resources

market and education and to provide tangible policy advice that would diminish factors retarding mobility and would strengthen education's role as pathway out of poverty. This will advance social mobility, reduce poverty, create a more equitable society and add to human capita, thereby strengthening economic growth.

Food choices and body mass index (BMI) in adults and children: Evidence from the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) and empirical research from Khayelitsha and Mitchell's Plain in South Africa

University of the Western Cape

Obesity is increasingly becoming a global health epidemic. South Africa is not immune to the global challenge of obesity. The problem of obesity in South Africa is also linked to its political history where a misleading perception of 'benign obesity' popularised in the early 60s which refers to 'healthy obesity' was used to keep black women fatter than their white counterparts. Food choices and Body Mass Index (BMI) in adults and children are seen as an 'important channel that would enable people to live a healthy life and, ultimately lead to societal transformation and higher economic growth at national level. The aim of this research is to empirically explore and quantify food choices and Body Mass Index (BMI) in relation to people's self-perceived health status and actual measurements using the 2013 NIDS data.

Increasing access and improving the quality of Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Effective early childhood development programme options meeting the needs of young South African children

Centre for Early Childhood Development

There are over 200 million children in the developing world alone who are in need of immediate ECD interventions. These interventions protect children against the effects of poverty, poor nutrition, inadequate health care and a lack of education. In rural areas, where ECD programmes are less available, ECD is not accessible to the majority of children. Quality ECD interventions can have a significant impact on reducing poverty and inequality across South Africa. Globally, various ECD programme interventions in communities clearly indicate that communities and families want quality ECD programmes for their children at a cost which is affordable. The overall objective of this project is to analyse, review and evaluate ECD programme options which

will increase the access and improve the quality of ECD for young children in South Africa. This will be used to influence policy changes so that children have greater access to quality ECD programmes, thereby reducing inequality and poverty.

Informal Early Childhood Development Centres – a new area-based approach for improved and up-scaled ECD services for the urban poor

Project Preparation Trust

Currently, most children within informal settlements are cared for within less formal, unregistered ECD centres that generally provide insufficient stimulation and care by untrained caregivers. However, such centres do not fall on the official 'radar' of government, do not form part of the 'system' and do not benefit from related support programmes. Most children are therefore left highly vulnerable and disadvantaged and the centres which care for them are without meaningful support. This research project aims to initiate and roll out a new ECD support programme in eThekweni Municipality for less formal, unregistered ECD centres in the short-term, while the medium-term objective is the acceptance and mainstreaming of a new standard of basic, acceptable but less-formal ECD care, and a new framework and method for rapidly assessing and categorising all ECD centres in order to extend structured funding and support.

Longitudinal perspectives on violence in the lives of children

University of the Witwatersrand

Violence against children is pervasive but it is largely undocumented and inadequately researched. As a consequence, it is frequently treated as a marginal social issue attributed to the violent predisposition of isolated individuals. However, violence against children is widespread, and it is both an abrogation of children's human rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and a cause of significant personal suffering and long-term ill-health, poor psychological adjustment and a range of social difficulties, including adverse effects inter-generationally. This project aims to gain longitudinal perspectives on violence in the lives of children in South Africa by analysing exposure to risk factors for violence among South African children of different ages National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) data, and examining exposure to risk factors for, and expressions of, violence towards South African children over the timespan of childhood through an analysis of data from the Birth to Twenty Plus (Bt20+) between pregnancy and 18 years of age.