



## Child, Youth, Family and Social Development (CYFSD)

Social science that enhances human potential and advances the rights of vulnerable populations

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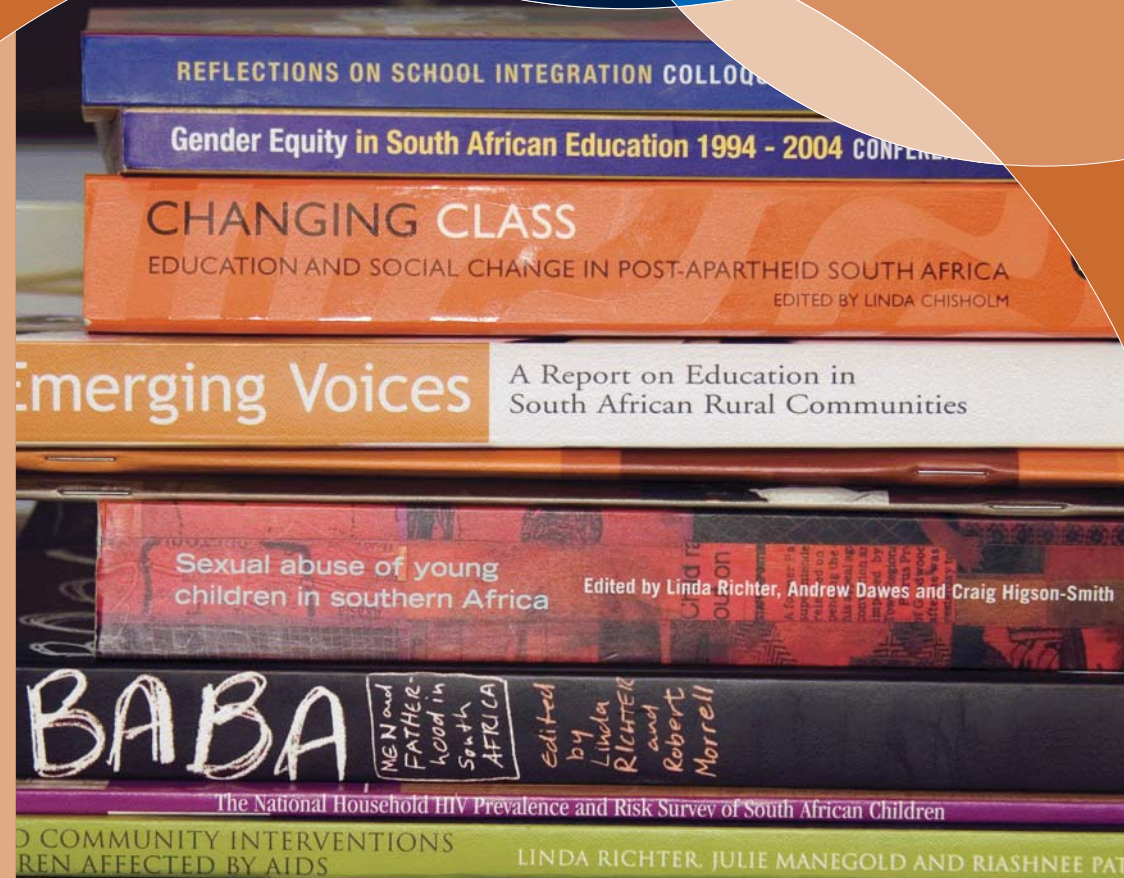
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Social science that makes a difference





## *People at the heart of social and economic development*

### Our vision

Child, Youth, Family and Social Development (CYFSD) aims to promote human and social development through the production of high quality applied research that addresses challenges arising from social inequality, poverty, violence, HIV/AIDS and other causes of ill-health, suffering, and loss of human potential. Our interdisciplinary approach contributes knowledge and evidence to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes to achieve a better life for all South Africans.

### Our focus

We research aspects of the life course, from infancy to old age, with an emphasis on understanding how contexts, policies and politics shape and distribute life chances. Throughout the life cycle, people learn, interact and develop within families, social and cultural groups, schools, workplaces, communities, and the economic, political and social orders. Our research focuses on individuals, groups and institutions relating to children, youth, families, and vulnerable populations, including older individuals and people with disabilities.

### Thematic research areas

**Early childhood:** This theme focuses on the economic, educational, psychological and social data that demonstrate the importance of early childhood to both personal and national development. As illustrated below, the gains from human development investments in early childhood, especially health and education, far outstrip any value that is achieved from development programmes at later ages. In this regard, CYFSD conducts studies on nutrition, early child care, vulnerability associated with the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and indicators of early child development.

**Youth development:** CYFSD studies the resources and assets of youth, including their demographic presence, capacity to cope with rapid change, their openness to the future, as well as the challenges facing them. These include quality work-oriented education, employment, civic participation, and health and wellbeing.

**Family studies:** Families are the fundamental building block for positive human development and the principle safety net for people facing chronic and acute challenges. Families are also the repository of social values, livelihoods, and legacy. The work of CYFSD focuses on family policy, changing family and household patterns, dynastic families, the role of older people, and fatherhood.

**HIV/AIDS:** CYFSD seeks to understand the psychosocial, behavioural and contextual issues of HIV and AIDS that form the basis for the evaluation of best practice interventions for the most vulnerable populations, including children, caregivers, families and community-based groups.

**Social inclusion:** Research in this theme addresses contextual factors that lead to and exacerbate social exclusion, such as mental health, homelessness and disability. Risk factors for social exclusion, such as chronic illness, activity limitations and age, intersect with high levels of poverty and require investigation and

intervention to develop and maintain supportive civic and community life.

**Monitoring and evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation have become essential tools for service delivery. CYFSD develops monitoring and evaluation systems, indicators and costing methods to improve the evidence base of interventions, and assesses programme and policy outcomes for children, youth, families and vulnerable populations.

### Our national and international collaborations/partnerships

While CYFSD conducts most of its research in South Africa, the programme extends its reach through an extensive network of long-standing national, regional and international collaborators. Researchers in the programme also act as consultants to a number of national and international organisations. In addition, many of the senior CYFSD staff hold minor time and/or honorary appointments at universities in South Africa and abroad.

### Some key funders and implementing networks

The work of the programme is supported by various local, regional and international partners including local and foreign government departments, foundations and civil society organisations (eg Nelson Mandela Foundation and Bernard van Leer Foundation), continental-wide bodies (eg African Union, Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative for Children Affected by HIV/AIDS), UN organisations (WHO, UNICEF, and UNESCO) and international funding agencies (eg NIH and Wellcome Trust).

### Key publications

Below is a list of the top 10 high impact key publications by CYFSD:

JAMA  
Science  
Lancet  
Journal of Health Psychology  
AIDS Care  
Journal of Ethnicity and Diseases  
American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene  
Journal of Pediatric Psychology  
American journal of orthopsychology  
British Journal of Psychiatry  
Journal of comparative family studies  
Social Science and Medicine  
Substance use and misuse  
Journal of Adolescence  
British medical journal  
Harvard Health Policy Review

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## Collaboration in Africa



One of CYFSD's most significant achievements was winning a National Science and Technology Forum award in the category ORGANIZATION over the last ten years. The HSRC nominated CYFSD, and Cathy Ward and Linda Richter prepared the 40-page submission. CYFSD is one of the few social science groups ever to win an NSTF award.