

5. Appendix 1: Statement of ethics

As participatory researchers with children we will:

- respect the rights of children as provided in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- ensure that the research is conducted in a way that benefits children's physical, psychological and social development;
- encourage children to speak, and listen to them;
- ask for informed consent of children, and their parents where appropriate, before involving them in research or in disseminating research information;
- honour children's priorities and interests;
- honour children's cultural values;
- treat children as adequate and capable social actors;
- not impose the researcher or the researcher's ideas on children;
- not use any form of abuse or exploitation for research purposes;
- not put children at risk for research purposes;
- not hide information from children;
- not discriminate against children on the basis of age, gender, socio-economic status, caste, religion, language, race, ethnicity, capacity;
- where appropriate, try to involve children in conducting the research;
- ensure research report ownership by children or where appropriate their parents or other related persons;
- not use material without the informed consent from the participants;
- not give out real names of persons or organisations without informed consent; confidentiality of all sources will be maintained;
- not use material that will be threatening to the children, even if they have given their informed consent;
- give appropriate weight and value to children's feelings;
- disseminate findings to the group(s) that contributed to the research, in media that they can understand;
- give materials gathered from research participants back to the participants, keeping copies only with their informed consent.

Adapted from a declaration during a course for researchers in participatory research with children in India/Nepal in 1995, as recorded in Boyden, J and Ennew, J (1997).

4. References

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Ivan-Smith E. and Johnson V. 1998, The Way Forward. In E. Ivan-Smith and V. Johnson (Eds.), *Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.

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Analysis

There is a high awareness of certain products amongst children. Few of these products are healthy. It is easy to see how children would buy those foodstuffs that advertising has caused to be top-of-mind.

Slimming products are presented as a first option for losing weight rather than other methods. One product in particular has been very successful at marketing itself. This is worrying when coupled with the pressure that girls and boys experience from the media to be thin and beautiful.

There is an awareness of eating disorders and diet-pill abuse amongst children in suburban groups. This awareness does not extend to children in other areas.

A full set of recommendations is included at the front of this report.

In addition, when discussing beautiful bodies children talked about the influence of the media.

A lot of women, when they look through magazines and then they see these nice bodies and then they try to be like them. And they abuse themselves saying I want to be like that. But sometimes there's lots of airbrushing to that. But some of the people starve themselves. You should be happy with yourself the way you are. (suburbs)

Interestingly this kind of discussion took place in suburban schools mostly where it seems children are more media literate possibly because of the emphasis in the curriculum. In township and rural groups, in spite of raising the issue of media, children did not have similar reflective discussions. This suggests that they are not being taught media literacy at school.

The quote above also raises the issue of abuse of diet products and eating disorders. This was discussed in the suburban group and the group run in an Indian area but not in other groups. The discussion also took place amongst the girls.

Girls will be worried about being fat and take pills. Some girls do not eat at all. There is a girl who is so thin, she has a big problem, she is dieting. (suburbs)

This shows an experience of eating disorders and an awareness of the danger of diet products. What is important to note is that the other groups talked about the pressure to be thin and have a beautiful body but did not refer to any kind of abuse or eating disorder in spite of probing by researchers. In the light of research that suggest that this is a growing issue among teenage girls in townships this lack of awareness among girls is worrying.

Boys also talked about the pressure of media. Again this was in the suburban groups.

*- These adverts say that all men are perfect.
- They're rich and have perfect bodies.
- If you've got a perfect body, you'll be rich
- When you're look like that, and wear like that and you've got sunglasses like that and you got hair like that and shoes like that and eyebrows like that, well then you're better than others. (suburbs)*

*- They're (adverts) judging.
- I need to be like that.
- I am not ok the way I am.
- No. (suburbs)*

- *It is what is inside that is important. Even if you are fat or have a disability.*
- *No, my girl friend must be thin. (coloured area)*

Analysis

Children associate health and beauty with a perfect body. This perfect body is a physically strong one with muscles for men and a shapely bikini-clad or well manicured and made up body for women. Few girls or boys saw larger women, even when they were well-groomed, as attractive, though the one photograph of a woman who was clearly at ease with her large body did create some positive comment from girls.

The discussions about inner beauty emerged amongst girls, while the boys were somewhat dismissive of this idea. It is possible that boys did not discuss the idea of inner beauty because at upper primary school age most boys are not yet concerned with issues of adolescence, whereas the girls are more mature and have begun to worry more about their appearance. On the other hand it could be because boys are less accepting of less-than-perfect girls. If one looks at the research done on gender it is clear that boys do discuss the appearance of girls and have a clear idea of what they see as an attractive girl. In the light of this it is perhaps fair to say that boys of this age have less of an awareness of or commitment to 'inner beauty'.

Theme 5: The influence of media on perceptions

It is clear that advertising has a strong influence on children and nutrition. A few products were mentioned consistently by children. Fanta is the favourite drink.

Kelloggs cereals were consistently seen as healthy breakfasts. In fact in township groups having 'Kelloggs' (the word used to refer to all cereals) for breakfast was a sign of status.

Everyone used the word 'Simba' to describe crisps that were bought at school. Kentucky Fried Chicken was often mentioned by township children as a favourite, and McDonalds by children in suburban areas.

Every group mentioned Bioslim (a slimming product) as a way of reducing weight. Marketing of this product has obviously been very successful as many children also used the term 'fat attack' which is part of the Bioslim campaign.

But now you can eat anything because you just need to eat a Bioslim afterwards. (suburbs)

Another photograph of a large woman was described in this way.

- *You can see that she's open and she's not like hiding herself in big bundle clothes. She's ready to give what she's got.*
- *Here I am - Large body.*

Children talked about how fat and thin people are teased and victimised by others.

- *People are nasty when someone is fat.*
 - *Treat them like garbage.*
 - *They tease you.*
 - *I wouldn't tease them.*
 - *I'd just tell them you are thin, put on more weight.*
 - *You wouldn't tell a fat person to lose weight.*
 - *I have Fataphobia. (suburbs)*

 - *It is not nice to be long and thin. People will be scared that they break you. You must be just right.*
 - *It is more acceptable to be in the middle. (coloured area)*

 - *They treat them as if they are not the human being.*
 - *They tease them and run away from because they know they can't run to catch them. (township)*

 - *They treat them like pigs*
 - *They call them pigs.*
 - *Call them names.*
- How do people treat people who are thin?*
- *They also tease them.*
 - *They say they are sick*
 - *They think they have HIV/AIDS.*
 - *They tease them.*
 - *They call you skinny bones. (rural)*

Being too fat is associated in children's minds with not being able to get around easily.

- *It must be very uncomfortable because it must be difficult to go down stairs.*
- *It must be hard because of all the weight – you can't walk.*
- *A lady can't even go to the shopping centre because she gets tired. (coloured area)*

Two groups spent some time talking about being accepting of your body the way it is and the fact that it is what is inside a person that is important. In both instances this discussion took place amongst the girls rather than the boys and the boys in one case were even dismissive of this idea.

The woman that children thought was beautiful was shapely and model-like. Other photographs of women were rejected because they were too thin or too fat. It seems though that clothes and make up are also considered part of making a woman beautiful.

- *She looks sexy. She is not thin or fat.*
- *She eats fruits and vegetables*
- *I think she has a nice body because she is not thin or fat*
- *I like her shape.*
- *Her clothes make her beautiful and her make up. (suburbs)*

Interestingly children in the one rural group said they did not like one of the women because of her skin colour.

- *I don't like this one she is too black. (rural)*

Health was also associated with a body that looked physically strong.

- *She eats fruits and vegetables*
- *I think she has a nice body because she is not thin or fat*
- *I like her shape*

In some groups the discussion of men and women led to a discussion about how boys and girls should eat.

Researcher: How should girls eat?

- *They should diet*
- *They should not eat too much*
- *Girls should eat vegetables*
- *Cheese, bread*
- *Rice and meat*

Researcher: How should boys eat?

- *Sour milk and pap*
- *Brown bread*
- *Pap and meat. (rural)*

A discussion on being fat also took place. This is what children said about one of the photographs.

- *She eats too much. Not healthy.*
- *She is a bit overweight.*
- *Maybe she should use some bioslim, fat attack. (suburbs)*

- *She doesn't look happy with her body. She's just like I don't know.*
- *She looks slobbish.*
- *Hiding herself. (suburbs)*



Analysis

Children perceive a number of factors influencing their ability to choose healthy food. In many of the poorer groups children expressed the idea that healthy food is expensive and that this was what prevented them from eating healthier food. Children pointed out that they do not often have the choice of what food is bought for the home.

In addition, children said the appeal of tasty and sweet food often affected their choice.

Access to adequate amounts and quality of water was an issue for children in the rural areas.

Theme 4: Children's perceptions of a beautiful and a healthy body

Children were shown photographs of different people in order to get discussion going about what they thought a beautiful and a healthy body was.

Apart from one child who said

I think that a healthy body is on the inside and a beautiful body is on the outside. That is the difference. (coloured area)

Most children equated healthy with beautiful. They also saw a male body as beautiful if it was strong and physically well built. It seems that having a six pack (abdominal muscles) is particularly important.

- *Strong and with a six pack.*
- *Yes, that is a beautiful body.*
- *The man is healthy too because he is strong in his body. (township)*

want. But then I say but why did I bring this, I'm not coming here for nothing so I buy some junk. (suburbs)

When we discussed choice of food most children agreed that they did not have much say in what was bought for the home, but they could decide what to do with their own money.

- *It's because you don't usually buy that stuff when you go shopping.*
- *When your parents go shopping, they normally buy what they want because they don't usually have a diet and stuff like that. (suburbs)*

Access to water was an issue in the rural groups. Children in the rural area in Limpopo Province talked about how they had no choice often in how much water they drank.

Researcher: Where do you drink water in school?

- *From the taps but sometimes the water doesn't come out so we get water from the dam. I don't think that water is healthy because cows also drink that water.*

Researcher: How do you take the water out?

- *We use the lunch box.*
- *If you don't have the lunch box you use your hands*
- *I was going to say cows also drink there, others don't wash their hands before they drink water. Some people do wash their feet there because there's no water.*

Researcher: How do you get water for your house?

- *We get them from the taps.*
- *Do you have taps next to your houses or in the yard?*
- *Some people do have in the yard*
- *Sometimes we buy the water from people who sell it.*

Researcher: How much is it?

- *Is R1 per container*
- *I live at Ga-Chuene but I don't drink water from there. My father buys water from Lebowakgomo. Others get water from the river and it's far.*
- *Sometimes we get water from the taps but we have to pay R10 for the water so that we can have water in the taps.*

- *Sometimes we do pay R10 and people who are responsible they keep the money.*
- *If we don't pay we cannot have access to the water. (rural)*

- We don't eat healthy food because we don't have money to buy them and all healthy food is expensive. (rural)

The last point is interesting as it shows the perception that healthy food is expensive.

Children also agreed that another factor that influenced how they ate was their own choices – mostly made around taste and appeal.

- We eat unhealthy food because we like the taste.*
- You like the taste.*
- I think we eat unhealthy food because we like the taste because at home they give us money to buy food but we buy sweets and snacks because they taste good.*
- My parents give me R2. I buy snacks. I wish to eat healthy food because my mind tells not to eat snacks but I do it anyway.*
- Who else has a mind that tells them that?*
- We all have that mind. (rural)*



Children in the one suburban group also said that they often buy something at the shop because they simply want to buy something with the money they have.

We just want to buy something with our money. We are not really wanting it. I buy Fanta grape often. (suburbs)

Like me, if my dad sends me to the shop and I say Ah man please can I take some money. Then I tell myself, No you can't, Yes I can. Then I take like the R1 and I go to the shop. And then there isn't a thing I

- *So that children can be healthy and strong.*
- *So that they don't become fat.*
- *Training prevents children from being sick.*
- *So that we don't grow old quickly because people who don't do anything grow old quickly. (township)*

The issue of safe places to do sports was raised by children. Most children in township and rural areas indicated that they did not have sports facilities. Children particularly wanted soccer fields and places to play netball.

- *We have a playing ground where we can play netball. It does not have many stones like the other place.*
- *But it is near the houses and when we play parents complain about breaking windows and making dust for them. There's lots of sand and stones so it is hard for us to kick the ball.*
- *Some playgrounds are better because of the grass.*
- *We don't have the good playing ground because it has lots of sand. -*
- *The sand makes us cough after playing.*
- *We don't have a good playing ground where we can run free without being disturbed by the sand and stones. (rural)*

Analysis

Knowledge about healthy food was sketchy, with many misconceptions. It appears that in the context of hunger, feeling full is more important to children than eating healthy food and in many cases enough food is seen as the same thing as healthy food.

Children understood that water was necessary for health but most agreed that they did not drink enough. The depth of poverty and the reality of hunger was brought home by children who describe water as good because it fills your stomach when you are hungry.

Children understood the importance of exercise for healthy living.

Theme 3: Why children are eating the food they are

When children were asked if they would like to eat any differently from the way they do, children in the rural groups and two of the township groups said they would like to have more fruit and vegetables but that these foods were expensive.

- *Sometimes our parents don't have money to buy vegetables and fruits. That is why we don't always eat healthy food.*
- *It is because we don't have money to buy healthy food.*
- *I agree. It is because we don't have money.*



Few children believed they drank as much water as they should.

- *I do forget to drink water.*
- *I drink water when I am extremely thirsty. Sometimes I do not drink it at all.*
- *I think about it now there and there (sometimes). (rural)*

The issue of lifestyle was also explored. Most groups agreed that exercise was important for a healthy lifestyle, though some had strange ideas about the actual biology of exercise and health!

Why do children need to exercise?

- *To stretch the bones*
- *You become tired when you do not exercise*
- *You become slow when you do not exercise. Everything takes you long*
- *Other people who play sport like rugby need to exercise so that they can have strength*
- *They can either run to town or cycle to town*
- *Blood needs to be shaken. It should not stay in one place.*

They also knew that it was not necessary to go to the gym or to do sport but that walking was also exercise. The rural children agreed that they walked a lot and this kept them healthy, though they felt that often they had to walk too far or run when they were late.

- *Walking to school is a good exercise because when we are late we have to run so that we came in time.*
- *When I come to school I run and that makes me to cough sometimes and I think is not good. (rural)*

Most children understood why exercise was important.

It is important to note that 'feeling full' is associated with healthy food in many children's minds. This was particularly obvious in the rural groups, where researchers suspected that children often went hungry.

I think the food that I eat keeps me healthy because I feel full and strong after eating them. (rural)

I just know sour milk helps you with getting full. Even if you eat them in the morning, you can stay the whole morning and part of the day full. (rural)

Having enough food was more important than what kind. It was also clear that some of the children we worked with had experience of being hungry.

Researcher: How do you feel about the way you eat?

- I feel very good because we do have something that we eat. It is good food. We are even able to play because we are full. You can't play when you are hungry.

- We feel very free and happy in our life.

- We love the food.

- There is enough to eat at home, you can even buy veggies from neighbouring farmers. (rural)

Children in two groups talked about water in terms of something that filled you up when you were hungry.

Water, to fill you up when you are hungry. (township)

If you drink water after eating, you become even fuller. So if you were not full, you'll then become full. (rural)

The importance of water for health was also explored with children. Most knew that one needed to drink water if you were to stay healthy. Some even knew you should drink 8 glasses a day. The general feeling was that that was an awful lot of water. In some groups children spent time discussing how they would be able to drink that much in one day

I am going to keep on drinking one long jug because it is big. I think it makes eight cups a day. (rural)

The issue of availability is a key one here. This is dealt with in the theme that looks at why children make the choices they do.

- Headaches in the morning are caused by not eating. (rural)

It is interesting to look at the children's daily menus and see what they are eating. Most children do not eat large amounts of unhealthy food. The main issue is breakfast. Many children appear to have only tea, a few have bread too, but only those in suburban areas eat fruit and healthy breakfasts. This is probably an issue of finance, time and availability.

In addition, when asked what food they ate at school many children are eating what they call *simba* – these are most often highly coloured and flavoured snacks packaged and sold by hawkers in the school grounds. Only a few children could articulate why these were unhealthy. Some thought they were healthy because they have cheese on them.

- They are healthy*
- Because they have got cheese*
- And corns*
- What's that yellow stuff on knickknacks?*
- It is cheese. (rural)*

Children in the group run in Westpoort on the Cape Flats appeared to eat a lot of fried chips. In fact, overall their diets seemed less healthy than other groups of children.

- Chips, sweets, bread, hot chips. On Sundays sometimes cornflakes and jungle oats with a glass of milk.*
- Fish and chips with cold drinks.*
- The nice hamburgers with meatballs in them.*

Researcher: What do you guys eat in the mornings?

- Coffee, rusks, chips, rooibos, cold drink and cake and vetkoek. In the evenings, fish and chips, burgers, pies, steak and cake.*
- In the mornings, porridge and coffee, sweets and a packet of chips and a cold drink, when I get back from the school, white bread with peanut butter and cup of tea, sometimes a roll with crisps and if there are donuts or koeksusters.*
- Fish and chips, or cake and tea or cold drink. This is Fridays. (coloured area)*

Children said that brown bread was healthier than white bread but could not say why. In the rural and township groups children indicated that they preferred brown to white bread as you felt full after eating it.

- The brown bread makes you full, gives you energy, has got taste*
- White bread is nice but you don't get full from eating it*
- It feels like you haven't eaten at all. (township)*

Theme 2: What children understand as healthy and unhealthy eating

Most of the groups of children knew key words related to nutrition such as 'carbohydrates' and 'protein'. Some even knew words such as 'roughage' and 'preservatives'. But generally their knowledge was sketchy. They have clearly been taught about healthy food at school but their learning is not comprehensive; they seem to be able to repeat key words only.

The one thing they all seemed clear on was that vegetables were important. They knew the different food groups but were not sure what fitted in to these.

Researcher: Which foods give you proteins?

- Meat.
- Milk.
- Vegetables.
- Brown bread.
- Water.
- Pap.
- Fruits.

Researcher: What about carbohydrates?

- From cornflakes. (township)

I wish to eat rice everyday because it has protein. (rural)

Some children knew that certain foods were not good for you. Many said too much oil was not good for you. They also articulated that sugar in sweets was not good for you. They had very little understanding of why these foods were unhealthy, although they had many theories.

- Too much sugar.
- Too much sugar gives you too much energy.
- Rots your teeth as well.
- If you're eating a lot of sugar, like sweets, watching TV, and you're not using the energy that you're getting from the sugar and that's not good for you.
- Like caramelize in your body. (suburbs)

Children also had their own theories about when one should eat what. It is clear that many of the children we worked with go to school hungry in the morning.

- Just be sure not to eat samp in the morning when you wake up. It makes your stomach hard. You should eat something soft like pap.
- You also get a headache if you eat samp in the morning.
- If you do not eat in the morning when you come to school, then you get stomach ache.
- In the morning, never eat meat.
- Sweets, and apples. Do not eat them in the morning.

It seems that children are limited by what the hawkers are selling. This photo shows a typical school stall with *khota*, walkaways and sweets.



Analysis

The food children eat is influenced by socio-economic status, with children living in poorer homes eating less variety. Local culture also plays a role in what children are eating.

At school, children are eating mainly unhealthy food. The range of food sold in tuckshops is clearly unhealthy and the food sold by hawkers equally so. In two suburban schools discussions with the tuckshop manager gave extra interesting information. They claim that children will not buy healthy food even when they attempt to sell it. Children's comments under Theme 3 below supports this view. In one school the tuckshop had stopped selling fizzy drinks and crisps and then found that children were crossing a busy street to buy this food from the local café. The school made the decision to sell the food again in the tuckshop to keep children off the street.

- At home when they cook spinach they pour water first. When the spinach is about to be ready then they add nut. (rural, Limpopo)

Children from the KwaZulu-Natal township described a few traditional foods.

- Tripe and pap.*
- Samp and chicken bones.*
- Utini – the one that they cook even at a funeral. (porridge made of wheat).*
- Dumplings and beef bones. (township)*

Taste and appeal also influence what children are choosing to eat. This theme is dealt with in the next section.

What children are eating at school was also explored. It seems that most children in the groups brought some money to school and bought food to eat there. Only children from suburban schools seemed to bring lunch from home. Some suburban children buy food from the tuckshop. Children who had a tuckshop all complained that the food was unhealthy and unappetising.

- The food in the tuckshop. It's oily and microwaved.*
- And then the cheese like melts into it. It's not cooked properly.*
- It's oily. It's put into the microwave.*
- They sell like toasted cheeses that aren't cooked properly and stuff.*
- What would you like them to sell?*
- Burgers.*
- Sell fruit.*
- Or salad.*
- I wouldn't buy salad.*
- Yoghurt.*
- They only sell frozen yoghurt.*
- A mixture of nice food like pizza, burgers and healthy food. (suburbs)*

For township children the best thing to eat at school was a *khota* (quarter bread with a filling) – if you could afford it. If not they ate chip-like snacks and sweets and some bought fruit. Others bought *walkaways* (chicken feet).

This lady sells pap and walkaways. (township)

3. Findings from participatory groups

The findings are presented under five themes:

- What children are eating
- What children understand as healthy and unhealthy eating
- Why children are eating the food they are
- Children's perceptions of a beautiful and a healthy body
- The influence of media on perceptions

Theme 1: What children are eating

A number of factors influence what children are eating at home. In the groups run for this research the following were influential:

- Socio-economic status
- Culture and local availability

It is clear that children from poorer homes eat more staple food such as bread or *pap* while children from more middle class homes are eating a greater variety of foods.

For breakfast, yoghurt and cereal, fruit and juice. For lunch I'll have a peanut butter and ham sandwich and for supper, cottage pie with some vegetables in it. (suburb)

*- I drink tea in the morning. Pap and sour milk for supper.
- Pap and tomato or pap and eggs for supper. (township)*

*- Rice, samp, mielie meal, home baked bread, meat and vegetables.
- Samp, beans, pap and vegetables, fruit and yoghurt.
- Meat, pap, rice, samp.
- Pap, mvubo (pap and sour milk) and pumpkin. (rural area, Eastern Cape)*

Cultural and regional preferences also played a role. For example, children from Chatsworth in KwaZulu-Natal and the Cape Flats areas in Cape Town ate curries and locally available fish while children in the Eastern Cape ate *samp* and children in Limpopo ate local wild spinach and nuts.

Researcher: What did you eat for supper last night?

*- Crab
- Macaroni
- Potato Curry
- Spaghetti
- Fish curry
- Curry. (Indian area, Durban)*

Limpopo	Ga-Maja, traditional rural village 60 km from Polokwane	Sepedi
Limpopo	Suburban Polokwane	English
KwaZulu-Natal	Chatsworth, Durban, Indian area	English/Zulu
KwaZulu-Natal	Clermont, township area, Pinetown	Zulu
Northern Cape	Barkley West, small rural town	Afrikaans
Eastern Cape	Nompompolelo, shack area outside East London	Xhosa
Eastern Cape	Traditional rural area	Xhosa

Data analysis

Group discussion took place in the children's home language. All the discussion during the participatory workshops was taped, translated and transcribed. These transcripts formed the data that were then analysed. The transcripts were analysed using a standard qualitative data analysis tool, thematic analysis.

We also attempted to reduce the power relationships between children and adults in the research process by playing games with children before we began the work and by working in a space where children felt comfortable.



Research aims

The audience nutrition aimed to understand:

- What children were eating and why
- The level of understanding of some concepts around nutrition
- What children perceived as a healthy body

Research groups and activities

The research consisted of a series of participatory discussion groups held with randomly selected children aged between 8 and 12 from a diverse range of environments in 6 provinces around South Africa.

The following table outlines the range of groups who participated in the research around nutrition. Children ranged in age from 8 to 12.

Province	Area	Language
Gauteng	Sebokeng, township outside Vereeniging	Sesotho/Setswana
Gauteng	Blairgowrie, suburban area in Johannesburg	English
W Cape	Westpoort, Cape Town, an area classified 'coloured' under apartheid	Afrikaans

Practically this meant that researchers made it possible for children to withdraw at any stage, were sensitive about issues which might have caused shame or embarrassment, did not challenge the child about answers given, and did not ask questions which could have been upsetting. They also created an environment in which children could tell just as much of their story as they felt safe to tell. They did not probe about the details of a painful event, nor ask about a child's feelings. What the child offered was accepted, even if not all the details were present. Note that this applies only to information that was potentially painful. In other situations the researchers used secondary questions to probe for details.

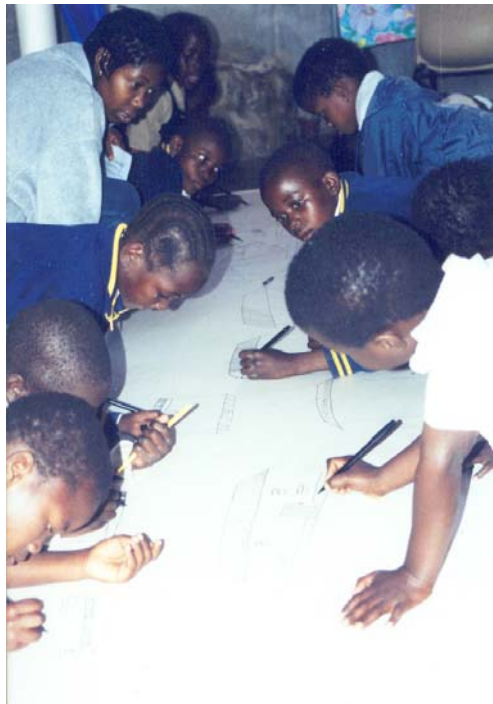
In addition, ensuring complete confidentiality of data was another way in which we sought to minimise harm. Particular schools are not named in the research report and descriptors are used to identify quotes.

Appropriate activities

To make sure the research was truly participatory group activities were devised in such a way that

...children's ideas and perceptions could be expressed in their own terms without being blocked or misrepresented by the ways adults think and talk. (Boyden and Ennew, 1997, p45).

This meant that we used techniques that were less dependant on words, for example mapping and drawing.



unaware of the problems and issues that concern children and young people we cannot hope to devise strategies or solutions [or media] that will address their concerns, and will constantly be struggling to make sense of the world without some of the vital information we need. (Ivan-Smith and Johnson, 1998, p299)

This last argument is perhaps the most important in the context of the creation of *Soul Buddyz*. If we want a media vehicle that educates while it entertains, it must take into account the real problems and issues that concern young people. We can only do this if we allow them to participate in the making of the media at an early stage in the process.

Boyden and Ennew (1997) point out that if children's participation is to be more than token it needs to be devised in such a way as to take particular ethical issues into account and to make sure the activities are suited to the ages and stages of development of the children and youth. Both these issues were taken into account in this work.

Ethics

An adapted form of the ethical guideline for research work with children reproduced in Boyden and Ennew's (1997) publication on research with children (see Appendix 1) was applied in this work.

In addition another key ethical principle was applied in this research.

It is not ethical to expose a child already vulnerable to any additional risk through an investigation that carries no benefit for the child. Interviews about painful subjects should be performed with the principle of 'least harm' (Boyden and Ennew, 1997, p43).



Researchers who ran the focus group discussions were aware that some of the topics we were exploring could touch on sensitive and difficult issues for many children. The principle of 'minimising harm' was applied throughout.

States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child... (Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Clearly, within the context of the CRC children have a right to participate in the creation of media such as *Soul Buddyz*. It is not enough, however, to say that children have a right to participate. It is also important to understand why they should participate.

Children's participatory rights are legitimated in a number of different ways. The most common arguments are summed up in the following three points (adapted from Kj rholt and Qvortrup, 2000).

1) The first argument for children's participation suggests that participation is in the best interests of children. It contributes to a positive development of individual identity, competence and a sense of responsibility.



2) The second argument for children's participation emphasises the way in which children's social participation constitutes an important area for social democratisation insofar as it represents the extension of some democratic rights to a disenfranchised group.

3) The third argument is that children's participation in social processes gives us access to essential information that we could get from no other source, thereby making society a better place for all of us. The following quote sums up this argument:

Developing better methods of working with children and enabling their participation is beneficial not only to children. By including some previously invisible groups we are making our research, our programmes and our communities [and our media] more inclusive, more functional and effective. Omitting a large sector of society means that everyone loses and fails to see the bigger picture. If we are

1. Introduction

Introduction to *Soul Buddyz*

Soul Buddyz is a multi media edutainment vehicle created for 8 to 12 year olds. It consists of a television drama, radio drama and a book for use in the Grade 7 Lifeskills classroom. The first television drama series was aired on SABC 1 and the book was distributed around South Africa during 2001. The second series was aired on television in 2002 and the book distributed in 2003.

Based on the success of *Soul Buddyz* and *Soul Buddyz 2 Soul City* is presently developing *Soul Buddyz 3*. *Soul Buddyz 3* will deal with the following issues:

- Financial management
- Gender and masculinity
- How schools are dealing with children affected by HIV/AIDS
- Nutrition

This report covers the nutrition theme.

The Soul City research and development process

Over the years Soul City has developed a particular approach to the creation of a mass media vehicle such as *Soul Buddyz*. This includes an extensive consultation and research process that ensures that all stakeholders and target groups have input into the materials. The research reported on here is part of the target audience research for *Soul Buddyz 3*.

This research, along with a literature review and input from stakeholders, will be discussed at a message design workshop. The messages will inform the script writing process. Once the scripts have been written they will be tested with the target audience and only then finalised.

2. Research approach

Child participation

Children participate throughout the creation of the *Soul Buddyz* series. This strong commitment to child participation is motivated by a number of factors.

Firstly, the right of children to participate in issues that will affect them is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which South Africa is a signatory.

Recommendations for *Soul Buddyz 3*

- Many children do not have the power to choose what they eat at home but the area where children have free choice is in relation to food at school. Within the context of limited choice at school children need to be shown making healthy choices.
- One key message would be that it is possible to eat healthy food even with very little money.
- *Soul Buddyz 3* needs to develop educational material that will help children to put together the piecemeal information they have about a healthy diet. This material needs to be presented in such a way that children can relate the information to their own lives and situation.
- It is clear that many children are experiencing hunger and *Soul Buddyz* needs to continue to advocate around the right of all children to basic needs.
- Easy access to drinking water prevents children from drinking enough water. This needs to become part of the *Soul Buddyz* advocacy programme.
- Space needs to be created for discussion around what makes a person beautiful and healthy. The role of media in creating stereotyped perceptions needs to be questioned.
- Education material that helps children understand how advertising sells products needs to be developed.
- Messages around healthy dieting and eating disorders and how these are created by societal expectations need to be developed and included in *Soul Buddyz 3*.
- The concept of inner beauty needs to be opened up for discussion for boys and girls.

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Soul Buddyz 3

Audience Research

Children's understanding and perceptions of nutrition, health and body image



**Soul
Buddyz**
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