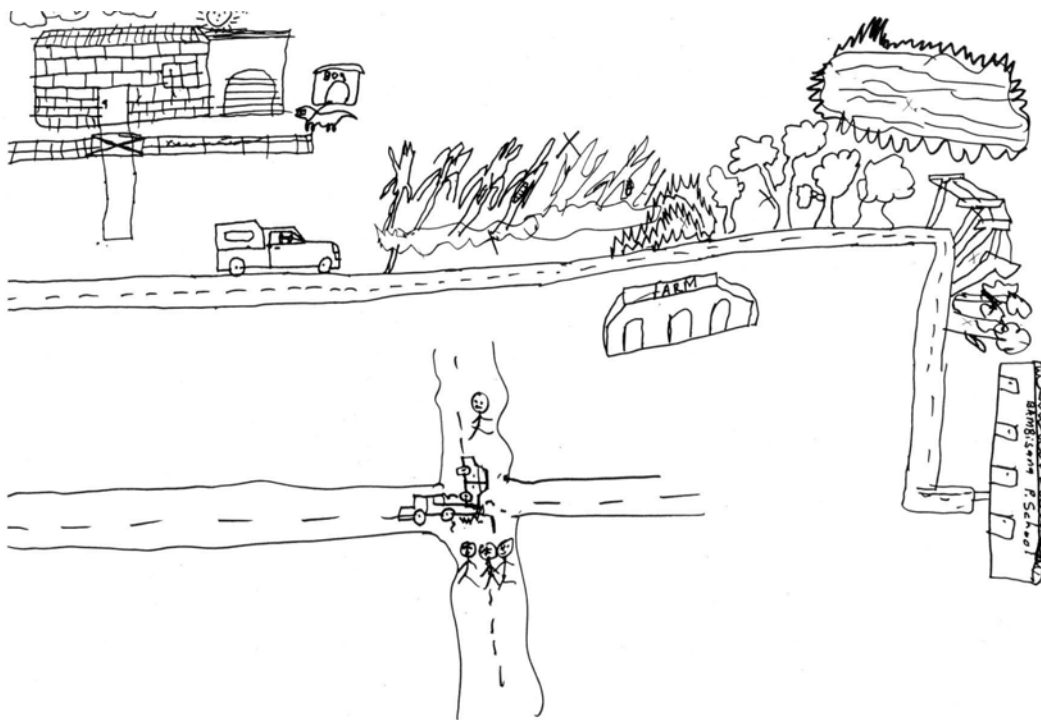


Soul Buddyz Audience Research

“Stop speeding and ride a bit careful!”

Children’s experiences of road accidents, what they know about road safety and how they perceive their ability to stay safe on the roads

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**SOUL
Buddyz**
tomorrow is ours

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Recommendations for *Soul Buddyz*

- The journey to school is a daily fear for many children in South Africa and if the *Soul Buddyz* series could reflect this it would resonate with many children and serve to support the protective strategies they employ to keep themselves safe.
- In spite of the fact that children do appear to have a high degree of knowledge about road safety the series should reinforce the key safety messages. Pedestrian and school transport issues are particularly important.
- Parents seem to engage children around the issue of road safety but teachers do not seem to do so as much. The series could role model teacher engagement.
- It seems that road safety is not dealt with as much as it could be in schools. *Soul Buddyz* should produce learning material rooted in children's experience that deals with the key knowledge areas as well as how to negotiate around the issue of road safety with adults.
- The series should show school communities (children, SGBs, parents and teachers) engaging with the environmental issues relating to road safety such as the placement of speed humps, closing roads and the placement of traffic lights, scholar patrols and traffic officers.
- Advocacy around the fact that fear of a traffic accident dominates many children's day needs to be a focus of the series. This advocacy should include educating the public that road safety is an environmental issue that should be a development priority.

1. Introduction

Introduction to *Soul Buddyz*

Soul Buddyz is a multi media edutainment vehicle created for 8 to 12 year olds by the Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication. It consists of a television drama, radio drama and print materials. The first television drama series was aired on SABC 1 during 2001. Since then two further series have been screened and *Soul Buddyz* has become an important part of life for many South African children, particularly now many of them belong to the *Soul Buddyz* club programme which operates in schools all over the country. A new *Soul Buddyz* series is planned and this report forms part of the formative research for the television series.

The new series of *Soul Buddyz* will deal with the following issues:

- Road safety
- Psychological trauma related to crime and violence
- HIV/AIDS

This report covers the road safety 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 the new *Soul Buddyz* series.

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 for the TV drama. 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.

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 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.

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.



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 research on road safety aimed to understand:

- Children’s perceptions of how safe the road environment is and their knowledge of danger spots in their local area;
- Their experiences of road accidents;
- Their knowledge of dangerous practices;
- Their knowledge of prevention strategies;
- Their sense of a child’s power/ability to prevent accidents themselves.

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 road safety.

Province	Age	Area	Language
Gauteng	11-12	Katlehong township	IsiZulu/seSotho
Gauteng	8-10	Eastern suburbs Johannesburg	English
W Cape	8-10	Cape Flats coloured township	Afrikaans
NWP	11-12	Traditional rural	Tswana
NWP	8-10	Farming rural	Tswana
Mpumulanga	11-12	Middleburg Informal settlement	siSwati
Mpumulanga	11-12	Farming rural	siSwati
KwaZulu/Natal	11-12	Pinetown Suburban	English

Total children: 80

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.

3. Findings from participatory groups

The findings are presented under five themes:

- Fear of road accidents
- Children as witnesses to road accidents
- Knowledge about road safety
- Protection strategies children employ
- Sense of power to protect themselves

“I always pray before I leave home”

Theme 1: Fear of road accidents

For all the children who participated in this research the journey to school is touched with fear of a traffic accident. For children in the rural areas who walk to school along busy national roads this fear is more pervasive but even children who travel to school in a family car in an urban area worry about traffic accidents on the way to school.

During this research the discussions with children focussed around a map they had drawn of the area in which they live. A central part of the map was the journey to school. Children were asked to mark on the map “any places where they did not feel safe”. Note that initially road safety was not mentioned by researchers. This strategy was used to find out how predominant a fear traffic accidents were.

Children who walked to school in the rural, informal settlement and township groups talked about their fear of being raped and abducted on the way to school. The long and often lonely walk for rural children past bushes and small forests was very scary for many children.

I worry when I go to school and go back home. I pass near bushes and there is a person who hides in those bushes. (Girl, NWP rural, 8-10)

- The path that I use when I come to school and go home is not safe because it is isolated. There are hardly any people who use it. Just me and the children that I walk with.

- My problem is that people steal children. They can steal us and kill us. This place is surrounded by big trees. These trees are much longer than us. We are not visible when we walk there. You sometimes do not see properly where you are going. It is just bushes, trees. (Boys, NWP rural 8-10)

- This place is surrounded by bushes. I think it is not safe because someone can grab you, pull you into these trees and rape you.

- I worry about the road that we use because it is bushy and we are only two who walk together. (Girls, NWP rural 8-10)

I become worried in the bushes when I am going to the store. I usually see people that I do not even know what they are doing there. So I feel uncomfortable because of these people. (Boy, Mpum rural 8-10)

Then at the bushes. We leave our homes early in the morning and sometimes you are a girl walking alone and then the guy called Makhabeni who stays in the bushes can appear and rape you and no one will know. (Girl, Mpum rural, 11-12)

For urban children living on the Cape Flats the threat of gangsters and bullies was also a fear.

Now here (referring to his map) are people who rob you. There's people next to us (refers to another point) who also rob you. And now here in the morning me and my brother must walk another way and we are late because of them now (because it is further). Then we must run to school every time. (Boy, W Cape, 8-10)

When I come there by the "gangetjie" (passage) the children bully me when I walk past and there are few adults there, then I am scared of them. (Boy, W Cape, 8-10)

There are people who sell "Tik" and things and when we walk by. Across the road there are also people who sell "Tik" like there across the Spar. These people chase us. (Girl, W Cape, 8-10)

For children living in informal settlements and townships harassment and bullies were also a fear.

There is this guy, he stands at his gate and calls you, when I ignore him he says he will set his dog on me. Sometimes he stands with his dog on my way and I have to go around and avoid walking on his street. (Girl, Mpum inf.set 8-10)

The other guy when we come to school he stops us and he beats us, so when we come to school we have to worry about him and use other streets. He used to tell me that I owe him R 1. Girl, Mpum inf.set 8-10)

As were big dogs.

On my way to school I worry about dogs, there is this house at the corner here, their dog always chases me, but sometimes its chained. (Boy, Mpum inf.set 8-10)

But apart from these fears the fear of a traffic accident predominated for rural children who usually walked to school.

I worry a lot when we walk on the tarred road. We walk on the side of the road. There are many of us who walk there and there are cars that come at such speed. So we are afraid that they will knock us. (Boy, NWP rural 11-12)

The school is surrounded by many main roads. What I fear most is that bridge over the highway? When we walk it is very narrow and cars can bump you. (Girl, Mpum rural, 11-12)

It was also the predominant fear for children in township and informal settlement areas, who also mostly walked.

*- This is a dangerous corner, cars come running fast and hit children.
- This is the other girl from our school (referring to her drawing), she was hit by a car near our school on the corner, she didn't die though.
(Girl and boy Mpum inf.set 8-10)*

Children in the suburbs also feared traffic accidents on the way to school.

We travel on the N3 and we see accidents. I often think about them on the way to school. (Girl, KZN suburbs, 11-12)

Rural children

For rural children one of the main issues was the long walk along a busy national road. Children who participated in this research walked along and crossed the busy N4 and N12.

*- I worry that we can be knocked off by cars that are not easy to see on the road.
- How many tarred/main roads do you have to cross when you come to school?
- Three. It is the N4, the one next to the school and the other big one.
(Girl, NWP, rural 8-10)*

There are children who are afraid to walk over the Highway (N12) and we sometimes have to hold them and walk them over. They cry. Sometimes they are afraid even when you are holding them. (Girl, Mpum rural (11-12)

I do not feel safe on the road especially here at the corner (the school is on a T junction of tarred roads) where there is no pedestrian crossing. Children can be knocked down by cars when they cross there because most cars do not stop. The other unsafe place is there at a highway, there is a road that goes down and it is obscured by long grass, so when a car appears it is not visible. You'll just see it in front of you and that can be very dangerous. (Boy, Mpum rural 11-12)

Others worried about the drivers of the car and *bakkies* that take them to school

- *I worry that the car will bump people. Our driver drives fast.*
- *I worry because the car that brings us to school nearly had a bad accident with us last week. It nearly bumped another car. (Girl and boy, NWP, rural 8-10)*

Crossing a freeway or big national road was another common problem for rural children. One group of 11-12 year olds described how afraid young children were of the freeway,

The other place is the freeway. Small children, even me, am afraid there. Small children cry, they want us to hold them and they are many. (Girls, Mpum rural, 11-12)

Children in the rural groups also talked about how bush and trees often obscured their view of oncoming cars.

They should cut trees and reduce them where we walk so that we can see where we are going. (Girl, Mpum rural, 11-12)

Getting lifts in open vans was another issue mentioned by rural children.

What worries me when I am in the van are children who sit on the sides of the van especially because there is no canopy. They might fall. It is safer to all sit inside the bakkie. The force of other cars can push the children (off the side). (Girl Mpum rural 11-12)

What I worry when we have hiked and got a lift is that we get on to a bakkie and we are many and we all do not have enough space to sit or stand. Others end up hanging on the sides of the car. (Boy, Mpum rural 11-12)

Accepting lifts from strangers was another issue raised. One group had an animated discussion with much finger wagging about how one of the girls in the group had accepted a lift from a stranger.

- *There was one old white man who used to drive an old skorokoro. We were walking as a group and he came to us and he chose only girls to give a lift to. They got in and Ivy (she is in the group) was one of them. Researcher: So you got in?*
- *Yes, but they (my friends) were telling us not to. (Ivy - the girl)*
- *But what were you thinking? You are walking as a group and someone just chooses girls to give a lift to. What you did was foolish. (The children in the group are really getting angry with Ivy).*
- *Why did you think he chose only girls? Something bad will happen to you one day because of these lifts that you like. An old man that you do*

not even know chooses you amongst boys and you go? You must learn to think.

- Why is he leaving boys and take girls. And the person is a man. You must never do that again. It is not right. (Girls, Mpum rural 11-12)

We are definitely not safe as children on the tarred road especially because there are people who sometimes offer us some lifts. What will we do if they do not stop and they drive away with us. It is even more unsafe for the young children from Sunrise Primary when they walk on their own and sometimes we are on our own. They are in more danger. I worry about them. They also like lifts. (Boy, Mpum rural 11-12)

Crossing rivers during the rainy season was another issue for rural children.

I become worried at the stream. I am not able to pass/cross when it has rained and there is a lot of water. (Boy, NWP rural 11-12)

And crocodiles!

- I worry a lot when I pass by the bridge because there are many crocodiles there.

- Have they ever eaten someone?

- Yes. They come up to the road where we walk. (Boy, NWP rural, 8-10)

Suburban children

One issue that was highlighted by children in suburban schools who travelled from outlying suburbs was the long journey from school in the taxi or bus. Children talked about the complexity of changing buses. One small boy of 8 told a particularly poignant story of his daily journey to school from Soweto, through central Johannesburg to a school in the Eastern suburbs.

I use the bus to school. Two buses. One bus to Ghandi Square. Then to Eloff and then one bus to school. I am scared of Ghandi Square, because I don't ... because this is the first time I am coming to Joburg. Before I was living in KZN. And I am worried about Ghandi Square because I don't know where I am going at Ghandi Square, I only know when I get off the bus I must go to 57B, so I can go to "Neshuena" so I can go to my school. I have to look for bus 19. I cannot sometimes see it. If I miss it I do not know what to do then because I do not know Ghandi Square. (Boy, Gauteng suburbs, 8-10)

Unsafe taxis and buses were another issue raised by children in suburban schools who lived in the townships.

In the taxi I am afraid. It is making a noise in the taxi with music. It is not okay. The driver will not concentrate. He drives fast. I think we are going to have an accident. (Girl, Gauteng suburbs, 8-10)

It is the bus when it goes, it goes like going up and down and then it is like we are going, the bus will roll. And then I feel scared. It is loaded and it bumps on the street. (Girl, Gauteng suburbs, 8-10)

One suburban child also described the anxiety caused by coming to school in an unreliable car that he worried would break down.

- *The car goes do-do-do-do. When it goes do-do-do I think that is when I will be stuck. I get worried because when you are stuck, there is no other transport that can take us. Then I cannot get to school.*
- *I see you marked two places that are not safe.*
- *It (the car) starts going do-do-do everywhere. (Boy, Gauteng suburbs, 8-10)*

The fear of being late for school and the fact that they were often punished for this also worried children.

Roads sometimes to school. So, sometimes there is an accident on the road and you see there's a huge traffic jam and then you are late and you get punished. (Boy, KZN suburb 11-12)

For children travelling in family cars the freeway with its speeding cars was a big fear.

Its unsafe on the Higgenson Highway, because people are going 140 and also on the N2, the freeway, and also on the N3. Cars are travelling very fast on the freeway, most of them travelling a hundred, hundred and ten, hundred and twenty and it is scary sometimes. (Girl, KZN suburb 11-12)

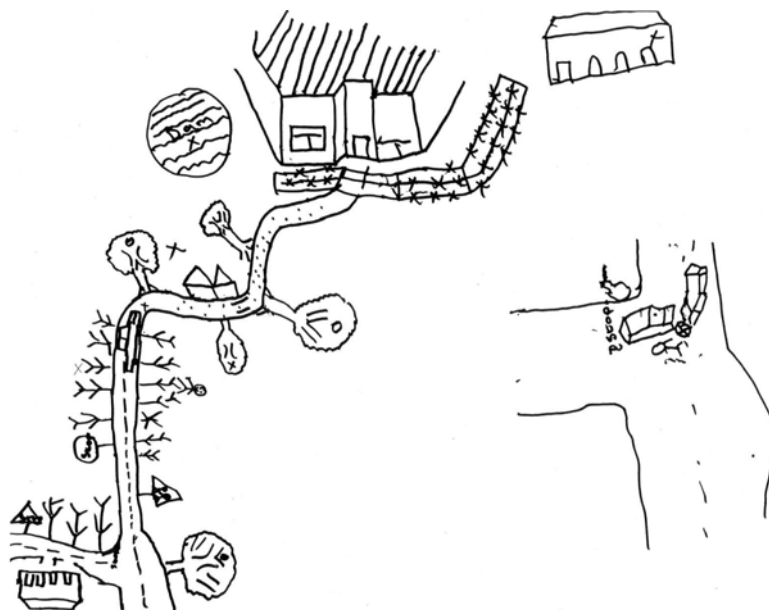
Township and informal settlements

Children who walked to school feared walking on busy roads and crossing roads. They also worried about unsafe taxis. In the Western Cape group the fear of abduction was closely linked to the fear of traffic accidents.

This is where I nearly got an accident, the taxi we were in nearly fell over the bridge because the driver was driving very fast. (Girl, Mpum inf.set 8-10)

Children in a Gauteng township also talked about the danger of crossing the railway line.

We cross the railway line. We live on the other side and cross the railway line when we come to school. You have to be careful of the train. (Girl, Gauteng township, 11-12)



“And the BMW came and chase us!”

Theme 2: Children as witnesses to road accidents

All of the children interviewed had witnessed and a few had been involved in a road accident. Again the nature of the accident differed according to the area the children lived in.

Children in suburban schools who came to school in a family car had seen accidents on the freeways though none had been involved in accidents themselves. Children who came to suburban school in taxis or buses told stories of accidents witnessed on the way to school. One child told of an accident she had been involved in.

And the BMW come and chase us. It came into the back of the taxi. And then it hit our taxi, and then we get hurt. I got hurt at the back of my ear. (Girl, Gauteng suburb 8-10)

Children living in urban townships and informal settlements told stories of pedestrian accidents witnessed on the way to school or in their neighbourhoods. Some of these involved family members.

I also saw an accident near the bottle store, we were going to extension 8 when this girl tried to cross the street, one taxi came from the right and the other came from the left. She tried to run from this one, but was hit by this one. (Girl, Mpum inf.set 8-10)

There in Muizenburg Road and so they drive there, so they bumped. That whole car smashed in. The car is small like a...yo. The children were sitting in front on the mommy's lap. So the children shoot out of the windscreen. (Girl, W Cape 8-10)

- *When I went to the shop, and so I saw the motor biker and so they bumped the girly over.*
- *What happened to her?*
- *She ran over the road.*
- *Was she okay?*
- *No. (Boy, W Cape 8-10)*

My cousin was in the accident she went here by....Jamaica Primary. She's still in the hospital miss. (Boy, W Cape 8-10)

A friend of mine she came from the mosque so she walk. There came a lady in a car, she was very fast. So my friend did walk over the road. So she was on the pavement so the lady just turned so the lady did bump her over. And so here was something here by her head...here...is blood. (Girl, W Cape 8-10)

The children in the three rural groups had the most stories to tell. The most common accidents recounted by rural children were those involving pedestrians. The following is a verbatim transcript of a rural group's answer to the question "have you seen any road accidents?"

- *There was this girl not far from home. They had sent her to the shops. Two cars came, from opposite directions. They sandwiched her in between. Her skull was shattered into pieces.*
- *We were playing with stones on the tarred road. One stone smashed the windscreen of a Z3 and the Z3 smashed on to an oncoming BMW.*
- *So they knocked on each other because of the stones that you were playing with?*
- *Yes.*
- *I saw an accident of a Golf. I was on my way from school. It was on the tarred road and there was this girl who was playing on the road and I was screaming at her "Hey wena stop playing on the road" and she was saying something to me. The car came and knocked her. I went to call her people and they took her to hospital.*
- *I saw an accident once when I was coming from school. A car bumped a school child who was walking on the side of the road. It lost control. The child died on the spot. He was a learner here at school.*
- *We were walking from school when we saw a car bumping one man who was crossing the road. He broke his leg and put on a plaster. The guy is still alive. (Girls and boys, NWP rural, 8-10)*

I saw a car bumping my aunt's child at Withuis. They had sent him to the shops. He was walking on the side of the road and the car was coming behind him. He was on the correct side. It hit him and he died. It was during the week after school. He hadn't even taken his uniform off when his mother sent him. It happened last year. (Boy, Mpum rural 11-12)

Drunkenness was a common cause of the accidents children witnessed.

One evening when I was coming back from the store a car came and knocked one man and he hit an iron pole. He was drunk. He died because he was removed in plastic bags. (Boy, Mpum rural 11-12)

An accident I saw involved one man who was coming from Tikkie line and was drunk. He wanted to jump the road and the car came and bumped him and he broke his leg. (Girl, Mpum rural, 11-12)

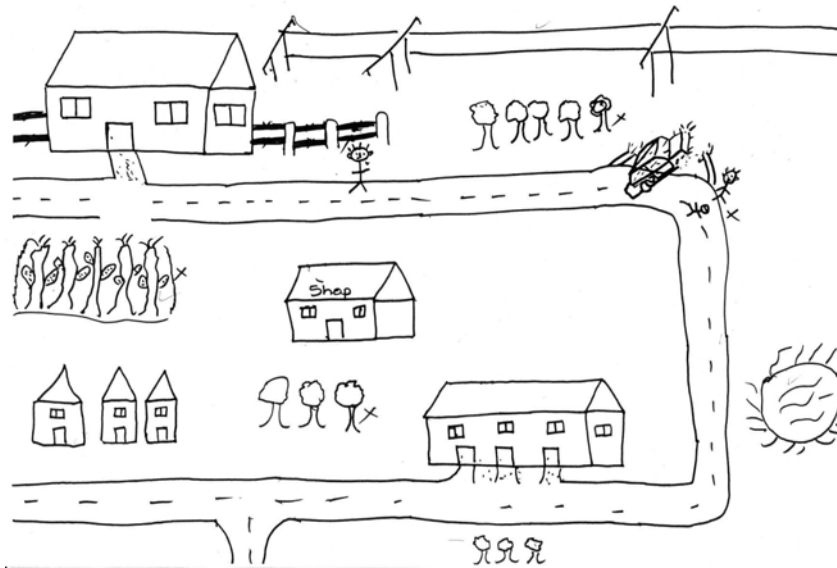
The accident I saw happened here at Maitapela near Sunrise. One man who was drunk and was lifting his child on a bicycle. An old BM and a white golf appeared, the golf wanted to overtake and there was an oncoming car and they bumped each other and the man on the bicycle died (I don't know how) and the child ran to our next door neighbour crying and told them that his father has died and when we all got there the ambulance had already taken him. (Boy, Mpum rural, 11-12)

Rural children who lived along main routes also described witnessing traffic accidents often.

The accident that I saw was on my way to school. It involved a taxi and a bus. We were following them. They bumped each other and some children were hurt and were taken to hospital. (Girl, Mpum rural 11-12)

Another accident that I saw when I was coming from school happened at KIP Kip not far from Michael's home. A lorry was crossing only to find the car that was coming was on high speed. It knocked the lorry and the lorry came to a standstill and other vans came and knocked the stationery car and they were all under the lorry. Eight people died in that accident. One boy picked boerewors (he giggles, others laugh and say he did too) at the scene. (Boy, Mpum rural, 11-12)

The accident that I saw happened on the highway not far from the Medikip. A lorry with onions bumped into something and it fell and the onions spilled all over. Cars started stopping and they called the ambulance. The driver was already dead. They lifted the lorry and they went and people came back to pick the onions. (Boy, Mpum rural 11-12)



“Stop speeding and ride a bit careful.”
Theme 3: Knowledge about road safety

Children in all groups were very knowledgeable about road safety. They could articulate all of the important rules of road safety.

Pedestrian safety

They (children) must listen to the robot and if it says green they must jump and then look right and left. And not run because when they run, maybe there is a stone and they will slip over it and fall and the car bump them. (Girl, Gauteng suburbs 8-10)

You must walk on the side of the road where you can see cars that are coming in your direction. (Girl, Mpum rural, 11-12)

- They must look left, look right and look left again before crossing the street.*
- They must cross at the stop signs and not where cars run fast. (Boys, Mpum inf.set. 8-10)*

Children in all groups except the two suburban groups mentioned wearing light colours and reflectors when walking at night.

- You should wear white clothes so that cars can see you.*
- Or wear things that have something shiny on them. (Boy and girl, NWP rural 8-10)*

Alighting from a bus

They must not walk in front of the bus after getting off. (Girl, Mpum rural, 11-12)

The children should wait for the bus to drive off before they cross. Boy, Mpum rural 11-12)

They should not cross in front of the bus; there might be another car coming that they cannot see which might run them over. (Boy, Gauteng, township, 11-12)

You see when you are getting out of a bus, like the bus driver mustn't stop at the road, because, because I know some bus drivers stop at the road and people get out, when the robot says stop. Because the robot might be green and then some cars go and then the people are crossing. (Boy, Gauteng suburbs, 8-10)

Driving in a car

All the people who come by car should put on their safety belts. If you are sitting in the front and you do not fasten your safety belt you can fly out of the windscreen. (Boy, Mpum rural, 11-12)

You must never put your head out of the window also. (Girl, W Cape township, 8-10)

They must not run around and they must look at the front and they must not jump and make noise (in the car). (Boy, Gauteng suburb, 8-10)

Taxi safety

Children knew what taxis needed to make them safe

Its tyres are old and slippery. (Girl, Mpum rural 11-12)

Maybe the taxi does not even have brakes which means it might not stop when he brakes sometimes. (Boy, Mpum rural 11-12)

These wheels are old. They look like the axles do not work well. The taxi can capsize when he tries to turn. Then all the occupants can all die. (Boy Mpum rural 11-12)

She is worried that the indicators of this taxi are not working. (Boy Mpum rural 11-12)

They were also aware of the danger of drinking and driving.

- *They must stop drinking wine.*
- *The person that is driving?*
- *Yes.*

When you driving you must not drink wine at all because you might loose control and you might drive on while the robot is still red.(Boy, W Cape township, 8-11)

They were also aware of common protective measures for children such as zebra crossings, traffic officers and scholar patrols.

- This school is near a busy street. What can the school do to make sure the children are safe?*
- There could be a scholar patrol.*
- There could be prefects at the gate during break so that when there is a child who wants to cross the street they should help him/her cross the street. (Girl, Mpum inf.set. 11-12)*

They can put a police officer there to help children cross (Boy, Mpum rural 11-12)

Children in the township group in Gauteng pointed out that taxis should wait in the school grounds for children as it was dangerous for children to cross roads to get to the taxis. They also mentioned that vendors should sell in the school grounds.

The driver of the children who use private taxis should make sure that they enter the school yard because there are some who alight. (Boy, Gauteng township, 11-12)

The vendors who sell food to the children should be allowed to do so inside the school yard so that the children do not have to go out of the school yard to get their food. Girl, Mpum rural 11-12)

Children were also knowledgeable about bicycle safety.

She must not lift people on her bicycle. (Girl, NWP rural 8-10)

- She should get a small reflector light for the back of her bicycle.*
- She should look where she is going when riding.*
- She should put on a helmet and put those things that they normally put on the elbows and knees. (Girls and boys, Mpum rural, 11-12)*

When asked where they had learned about road safety. Parents were most often mentioned as a source of information. Here is what one group said they had learned from their parents.

- What do they (parents) say about road safety?*
- They say we must not play on the tarred road.*
- They say we must not walk alone in bushy areas.*
- We must face cars when we walk.*
- Look on the left and right before we cross any road.*

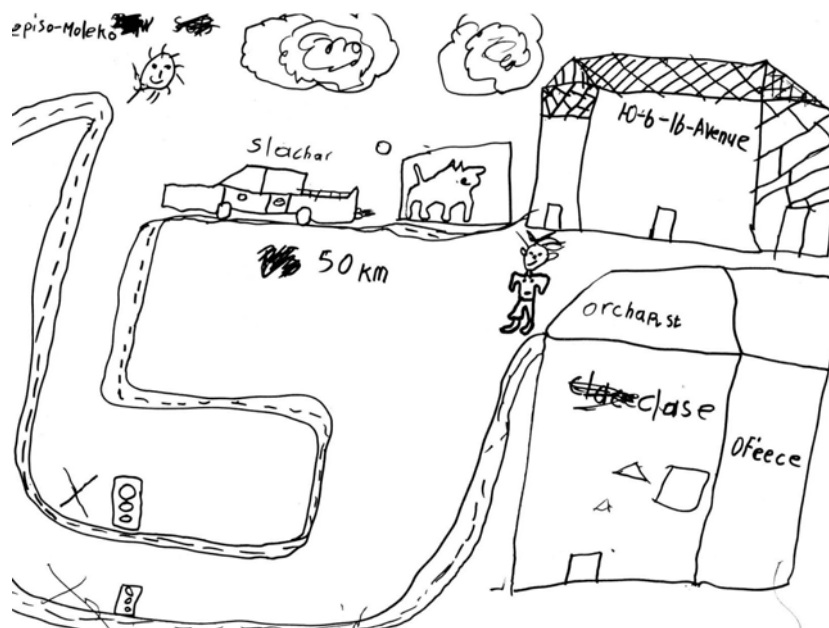
- They say we must be careful on the tarred road.
- Tell our drivers not to drive at a fast speed.
- My parents say when I come from school I shouldn't get in any car (refuse lifts). (Girls and boys, NWP Rural, 8-10)

TV was mentioned as another source of information about road safety.

- Other people who warn us to be beware on the road are the Road Safeties on TV. They show us what we should do on the road.
- They say you should look at both sides of the road before they cross. - That is said many times on the road safety and is shown many times on TV. (Girl and boys, Mpum rural 11-12)
- We see the people who are acting on TV.
- Those people they wear those things, they wear the robot and the street, the signs, yes. They say to us we must cross where there are white things.
- Oh, the Zebra crossing?
- Yes. (Boys, Gauteng suburbs 8-10)

Only two groups mentioned learning road safety in school. One group mentioned Life Skills at school.

- At night you should wear light coloured clothes a night when we walk on the road.
- In what way do light coloured clothes help you?
- The motorists will spot you and not knock you down.
- Where did you learn that?
- From the Life Skills class. (Boy, Gauteng township, 11-12)



“Keep your eyes on the road and do not talk too much.”

Theme 4: Protection strategies children employ

Children apply all sorts of strategies for protecting themselves on the road. Some of these are the rules they have learned others involve their own strategies. For example young children in a group in the rural North West Province insisted that if they were walking on a tar road they must walk as far away from the tar as possible, even in the grass area at the side of the road.

- *They should walk on the very far end of the side of the road so that cars cannot bump them.*
- *They must not just walk on the side of the road, they must walk away from the tarred part. (Girls, NWP rural, 8-10)*
(Researcher’s note: Children in this group were at pains to explain that walking on the side of the road was not safe enough. They mentioned walking on the far side of the road in the grass if they could or taking another route to school away from the tarred road. From their experience children have been bumped by cars who lose control even though they (the children) were on the side of the road. It seems according to them so long as you are anywhere near the tarred road you are in danger.)

They also indicated that they walked in the middle of a gravel road. This was because they feared people in the thick grass.

I mean on the gravel road they (children) should walk in the middle of the road so that people can see them otherwise if they walk on the sides they can be grabbed by people in the bushes and no one will see what happened to them. (Girls, NWP rural, 8-10)

Children also talked about other strategies they employ when walking.

When you walk, you must keep your eyes on the road and do not talk too much. (Girl, Mpum inf. set. 8-10)

Children who walk to and from school should be very patient on the road. You must not run out of patience because you can walk right into an accident. (Boy, NWP rural 11-12)

The road that I cross is used by many taxis so I wait for the taxis to pass before I cross the road. (Girl, Gauteng township, 11-12)

I use the bridge to cross the railway line instead of crossing on the railway line. (Girl, Gauteng township, 11-12)

Walking in a group was a common protective strategy employed to keep them safe on the road, not only from cars but also from abuse and abduction.

Walking with an older sibling was also a common strategy for keeping safe on the road.

- *We stay together in one road. We can be a lot when we want to be safe.*

- *So You can be a group?*

- *And when we walk we must walk on the pavement, even if a group. (Boy, W Cape township, 8-10)*

- *I walk with my friends, we are four and we are always together, we don't leave anyone of us behind.*

- *Why is that?*

- *We are good friends.*

- *It is safer to walk in a group, when you walk alone people trouble you. (Girls, Mpum inf. set. 8-10)*

I walk with my older brother, he hold my hand when we cross the street. But I can cross by myself. (Boy, Mpum inf. set. 8-10)

Older children talked about their concern for younger ones. There were many examples of older children actually assisting younger ones to cross busy roads.

We do speak to the young children in our group that we should no longer cross under the bridge because it is not safe. We ask the younger children to wait for us after school so we can help them cross the busy road on the bridge. They don't watch out for cars when they walk on the bridge. (Girl, Gauteng Township, 11-12)

Being home before dark was another protective strategy.

- *Be in the house before seven o' clock.*

- *So its best if they go home before its dark?*

- *They must go get in the bath and go to bed.*

- *It will be dangerous if they are on the road when it gets dark.*

- *They must walk hand in hand with each other and walk together.*

(Boys and girls, W Cape township, 8-11)

Children who travelled in a car also had safety strategies.

- *We sit still in the car.*

- *We do not throw things out of the car because we might disturb other cars on the road. (Boy and girl, NWP rural 8-10)*

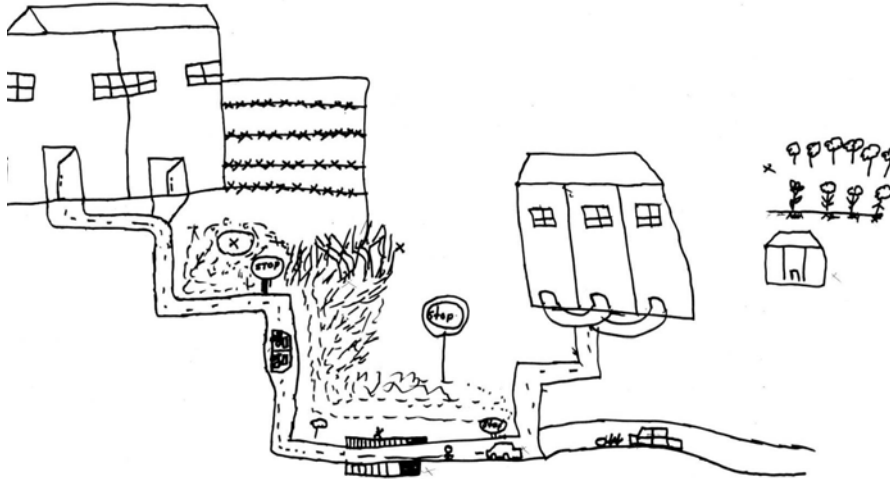
Children also talked about what they would do if a taxi did not look safe. Most commonly they said they would wait for one that did not look old. They also indicated that they would look for a taxi association sticker. Of course they did not always have a choice about the taxi they chose as many of them came to

school with 'school transport'. Children's ability to do anything about unsafe school transport is discussed below.

- *If the taxi does not have the taxi sticker, you must not trust it, because it could be criminals and if their windows are dark, don't go into that taxi.*
- *Don't get into a taxi alone. (Girls, Mpum inf. set. 8-10)*

One child described why children should always sit in the middle of the taxi.

She mustn't sit at the front because maybe the driver is going fast and then crashes another car and then the taxi brakes can't work. You see, this school girl must sit in the middle and then if the taxi is hit because if the other taxi braked and then the other taxi will crash the other taxi. (Boy, Gauteng suburbs, 8-11)



“If the car wants to chase me!”

Theme 5: Sense of power to protect themselves

Younger children have less sense of their own power to prevent accidents happening to them. The groups with younger children are all similar in that the 8 –10 year olds (8 year olds particularly) ascribe an agency to cars no matter what they do to protect themselves. From the point of view of an 8 year old cars 'chase' them.

*If the car wants to **chase me** and then I didn't look left and right, when I didn't look left and right, the car will **chase me**. (Girls, Mpum inf. set. 8-10)*

*We walk on the side of the road. Far from the road. Cars that pass here and cause accidents **follow** children to the side of the road. (Girl, NWP rural, 8-10)*

Younger groups also made comments that show they cannot always judge how far away a car is from them.

Sometimes when you cross the road, the car looks like its far and when you cross it hits you because it drives too fast. (Boy, Mpum inf set 8-10)

The perception of powerlessness is also obvious in statements such as this where the child feels he has to call on a higher power for protection.

The first thing in the morning when I wake up I get up praying so I can walk safely home and so there's no people who will just like grab me. I first pray. (Boy, W Cape township, 8-10)

Further evidence is the evidence of 'magical thinking' when asked how the problem of traffic accidents can be solved. Magical thinking is usually employed by young children when they cannot see any logical solution to a problem.

- *Is there something that children can do to prevent accidents? Some say yes and some say no.*
- *Yes. We can take stop signs and stand on the tarred road so that other can cross.*
- *We can stop cars.*
- *How?*
- Silence.*
- *We can put up a sign that shows school children on the road.*
- *I can put up a sign that shows that people cannot overtake.*
- *I can put up a sign that shows a speed that cars should travel in.*
- *I can draw the white lines (zebra crossing) on the ground that school children normally have to cross on. (Girls and boys NWP rural 8-10)*

(To slow the buses down) They can jump in front of the buss and say stop, stop. (Girl, W Cape township, 8-10)

Just how powerless children are is illustrated by the following interaction. Two children describe their worry about the driver who brings them to school.

- *I worry that the car will bump people. Our driver drives fast.*
 - *I worry because the car that brings us to school nearly had a bad accident with us last week. It nearly bumped another car.*
- Later the researcher asks the same children*

- *What about those who travel by car to school? What can be done to make sure that they are safe?*
- *We could talk to the driver of our car to drive at a good safe speed.*
- *Will he listen?*
- (Silence)*
- *We can talk to the person who drives our car pause..... not to drive standing. - Standing?*
- *Yes. He is short. (there are some giggles, they turn into laughter but the boy looks worried although he smiles)*
- *So you become worried when he drives?*
- *Yes.*
- *Have you told your parents?*
- *No. (NWP, rural, 8-10)*

Older children did show more agency about their ability to prevent accidents. These were some of the ideas they came up with if a child felt the taxi he or she came to school in was not safe. Though even these ideas also realistically include the fact that some taxi drivers will ignore you when you ask them to slow down.

She can talk to her father and the driver so that they can come together and buy a few things that are needed to fix the taxi. Things like lights and wheels. (Boy, Mpum rural 11-12)

She should approach the teachers to organise another transport for her because the one she uses is not safe. (Girl, Mpum rural 11-12)

- *She should tell the driver should not speed the taxi because when it turns round a corner it might overturn.*
- *Is that something that she can do? Is that possible?*
- *Some people do tell them but the drivers don't accept to be told. He will tell you that it is his taxi and you cannot tell to him what he should do.*
- *So, what can the girl do to make sure that she is safe?*
- *She should not get on the taxi; she should rather wait for another one.*
- *Take the number plate (registration number) of the taxi and report it to the traffic department.*
- *You could report him (driver) to the department of transport that he is driving an un-roadworthy vehicle. The government does give out the telephone number of the department to the public on radio. (Girls and boys, Gauteng township 11-12)*

Interestingly when older children discuss ways of preventing accidents they, quite rightly, talk about environmental and law enforcement solutions suggesting that they themselves are already doing all they can to prevent accidents happening to them.

We have talked about the accidents. Do you think that there was a way of stopping those accidents?

The way I see it there was no way of stopping accidents where people were drunk.

Do you think the accident would have happened if those people were not drunk? (A boy in the group asks this)

No.

The accidents will happen if there are no road signs.

If the cars did not overtake unnecessarily some of the accidents could be avoided.

I think police should patrol the area a lot because most of the people who are bumped by cars are drunk people.

People should keep to the speed limit and observe the road signs and there won't be accidents.

Traffic cops should patrol and arrest those who are drinking because the law says do not drink and drive. (Girls and boys, Mpum rural, 11-12)

4. Analysis

The 2004 National Household HIV Prevalence and Risk Survey of South African Children (Brookes *et al*) highlights the fact that the majority of children travel to school on foot accompanied by peers and with little adult protection. The study points out that this makes the journey to school one of the most risky things that children in South Africa do. The evidence presented by children in this study corroborates this fact.

The children who participated in this research are well aware of the risks they face from traffic and from violence. This is why so many of them fear their daily journey to school. The number of accidents they witness only serves to highlight for them the danger of the traffic they encounter.

In response they employ a number of protection strategies, most based on a fairly sound knowledge of how to prevent road accidents. Yet, quite justifiably, they also show a measure of powerlessness in the face of danger from traffic.

The research reported on here corroborates much of what is said in the accompanying literature review (Soul City 2005). We see evidence here that "children are especially vulnerable to road traffic injury as their physical and cognitive skills are not fully developed and their smaller stature makes it hard for them to see and be seen." We also see evidence here that in Africa, children are more likely to be hurt as pedestrians and as users of public transport. The work with the children shows too that poorer children are more vulnerable; those that walk to school, those that live in rural areas.

Finally, too even the children point out what is now becoming an accepted approach to prevention of traffic accidents, that road safety needs a broader

conceptualisation as a complex and dynamic development issue. It seems to us that children are presently doing almost as much as they can to stay safe on the roads and it is now up to the adults to “stop speeding and ride a bit careful.”

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6. 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; confidentially 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).