



## DFID MSP PROJECTS: DURBAN STREET CHILDREN

**Project title: A situational analysis of the physical and psychosocial health of street children in Durban.**

**Service Provider: University of KwaZulu Natal**

### **Aims and objectives**

The Street Child project aims to provide information that will inform the development of effective strategies to avert children moving to the streets, and to improve the health, well-being and future of children who presently live on the streets of Durban, South Africa.

Specific objectives included, to:

- document the reasons children move to the streets and their experiences there;
- note the influence of HIV/AIDS in regards to the choice of a street lifestyle;
- produce basic demographic and health data such as malnutrition, stunting, substance abuse, HIV and TB status of children living in the streets of Durban;
- document the mental well-being of these children; and
- document the services and resources available to the children and their experience of these services.

### **Project description**

Four methods were proposed to achieve the above objectives. These were

- Participatory workshops
- A health survey: interviews with individual children
- Interviews with local service providers including the municipality and the SA Police Service
- Anonymous HIV testing of children 12-18 years

The UKZN Biomedical Research Ethics Committee closely examined the legal and ethical aspects of the study design and changes were made before the study was approved. These changes involved the deferment of the HIV survey and the provision of additional support to children in need.

At the end of the MSP-funded period of this project the first three parts of the study had been completed, but data analysis was still ongoing. Four participatory workshops were conducted with children of different ages (12-14 years and 15-18 years). A health survey interview tool was developed and piloted prior to testing. Fieldworkers were trained in the administration of the health survey and 110 children were interviewed. Interviews with ten service providers were conducted.

**Lessons learned**

Prior to the full data analysis, informal feedback from the workshops has been shared. It was found that children experienced a heavy burden of emotional stress and nothing helps them to relieve it. Their problems are worse on a Monday and Tuesday when food is scarce and work on the beachfront it hard to get.

Fascinating information was collected from the groups on coping strategies. The groups had a very clear disciplinary code, enforced by older boys that concerned cleanliness, littering and not smoking glue. These rules were necessary to survive in the area where they lived.

The authors of the report noted that at the end of one of the workshops the boys heard that the Metro Police had gone to the site where they lived and thrown away all their blankets and clothes. Many other instances of this and other kinds of abuse were documented.

**Good news stories**

The project has increased the profile of street children in Durban at home and abroad. Several British politicians, eg the former British High Commissioner, have engaged actively with the project. Findings will be fed into a Round Table discussion on 'Street Children and the 2010 World Cup'.