

Healthy Cities Project



A collaboration to investigate the relationship between urban environments and well-being in the global South

The Children's Institute is a collaborator in this multi-study, inter-disciplinary research project, initiated by the African Centre for Cities (ACC) at the University of Cape Town.

Internationally, a growing body of work recognises the role of the urban environment in shaping illness, health and well-being. Most of the knowledge on this topic is based on empirical work undertaken in the global North. The Healthy Cities project aims to contribute to this existing work by undertaking extensive research on the relationship between urban environments and well-being in the global South. A first round of desk research to identify existing datasets was underway, and qualitative and quantitative fieldwork will start in the second half of 2011.

The Institute, as a core member of the larger research team, aims to contribute especially to understanding linkages between the urban environment and child well-being through a sub-project on 'Healthy Cities for Children'. Comprising various research strands that will bring together researchers from different disciplines, the research will focus on how child nutrition and health are influenced by a particular urban setting and new urban planning; develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which urban planning influences the accessibility of health care services and the health-seeking behaviour of children, youth and their caregivers; contribute to understanding how various urban settings and the new urban planning affect child care networks; grow expertise in the fields of urban planning and children's studies, and of "mixed methods" studies in these fields.

It is hoped that the research will provide evidence to assist policy-makers and practitioners to create policies, programmes and institutions that support children's well-being in urban environments. The project will build research capacity among emerging academics, and enhance capacity for policy-relevant research by being part of an international and national group of researchers on this topic.**

Grants from the South Africa–Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD) and Atlantic Philanthropies support this work.

** This partnership with the ACC is facilitating regular contact between the Children's Institute, "urban practitioners" and various other universities and research bodies, such as the Centre for Urbanism and Built Environment Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, the Human Science Research Council, and the South African Cities Network.