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These papers will be presented at the *Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality Conference* to be held at the University of Cape Town from 3 until 7 September 2012. The 2012 conference will focus on understanding the experiences and causes of inequality, and particularly on considering practical strategies – policies and actions – that are aimed at significantly reducing inequality and poverty in both the short- and long-term.

There will be a host of experts in social, economic, labour and health fields and will include contributions from Trevor Manuel (Minister in the Presidency, National Planning Commission) and Dr Mamphela Ramphele.

A pre-R year: is it worth it, and what would it cost? An applied policy analysis/critique focused on the practical, financial and policy implications of increasing support to the Pre-R year in South Africa.

Elizabeth Girdwood, University of Cape Town (elizabethgirdwood@gmail.com)

It is hazardous to make a direct leap from neuroscience to policy recommendations. Simply because early childhood provides opportunities for more efficient interventions which have dramatic impact on inequality, this does not mean that the Early Child Development (ECD) policies actually implemented by communities, provinces, or national government are worthy investments.

Nationally the field of early childhood learning is characterised by remarkably little data, and limited focus on child outcomes. From an economist's perspective, it is therefore challenging to make and build the economic case for increased investment based solely on the benefit side of the equation. This paper carefully considers the financial implications of a phased national scale-up of centre-based support for a pre-R year.

The paper reviews the international and domestic economic evidence base for early learning investments, provides a realistic picture of current South African government support for early learning, and examines the country's capacity and appetite for increased investment as revealed by the past decade's Grade R scale-up.

It explores the costing of quality centre-based programmes, and the financial, policy, and timing implications for scale up of both quality and access. In exploring different financing models which facilitate the scale up of provision, the paper provides a targeted examination of the country's responsibilities and potential response to developing the promise of these children.

The Sobambisana ECD Evaluation: Lessons learnt from home visiting, playgroups and Centre-based support in poor communities

Linda Biersteker, Andrew Dawes and Lynn Hendricks

Early Learning Resource Unit
Psychology Department, University of Cape Town (adkinloch1@gmail.com)

The Sobambisana project was supported by Ilifa grantmakers. Over four years, we tested integrated ECD interventions in five rural and informal communities in four provinces to assess implementation and provide evidence for programming and scaling up in low-resource community contexts.

The effects of home visiting programmes on caregiver affectional care, responsiveness, academic stimulation, and safety and hygiene practices were assessed. Findings showed that home visiting improved caregiver coping, affectional care, child stimulation, and safety and hygiene.

The cognitive development of children in community playgroups improved if the inputs were aligned with skills required in school, and if attendance was high. Home visiting did not improve outcomes on these measures, but had a significant impact on access to health and social services and parenting. In all cases, significant gains in the quality of the daily programme for children in ECD sites were observed following training and enrichment.

However, high levels of malnutrition reduced the ability of the interventions to improve child outcomes. Home visiting provided the most effective way to reach vulnerable children. Parent education workshops tended to be poorly attended and required high attendance to make a difference to parenting behaviours.

Note to journalists

**For full programme visit
For accreditation please
RSVP**

www.carnegie3.org.za
kemantha.govender@uct.ac.za or 021 652
5627

Accredited media will have access to all sessions of the conference.

Parking

Plenty of free parking will be available near the venue (on the south side: P5, P4 and P17)

Updates

Key sessions will be recorded and webcasts can be accessed via the conference website or UCT's youtube site. Daily blogs and links to media reports will also be placed on the conference website.

Conference venues

The main conference will be held in the Leslie Social Science Building on UCT's upper campus.

All evening events will be in the Baxter Theatre on Rondebosch Main Road. (Please note that media wishing to attend the Impumelelo Social Innovation awards ceremony should contact Impumelelo directly at (021) 424 6360 or info@impumelelo.org.za)

ENDS

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