MEASURES OF CHILD POVERTY PROJECT

Children's Views of an Acceptable Standard of Living for Children in South Africa

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1   Introduction

Large numbers of children worldwide live in poverty and it is universally recognised to be a major problem. In South Africa, the legacy of apartheid has left a large proportion of the population, particularly children, in severe poverty.

Many governments, including that of South Africa, have committed themselves to tackling child poverty. This contributes to a wider development strategy by improving the future life chances of today's children and thus the future of the country (White et al., 2002). However, childhood is also important in its own right and so child poverty is not only unacceptable because of its long-term implications but also because of the present experienced reality of poverty (UNICEF, 2004). Such a position can be seen in the then President Nelson Mandela's speech at the launch of the National Programme of Action for Children in 1996:

> *Our children are our nation's future. Prospects for development are seriously undermined by the kind of large-scale deprivation of children that South Africa has experienced. On the other hand investing in their health, nutrition and education not only improves our children's quality of life - the gains reverberate into future generations. […] Children can be our spearhead for attacking poverty, reinforcing human rights, and accelerating economic growth and development. Such a programme will also help alleviate the urgent plight of the children of today, the principal victims of yesterday's neglect of the majority of South Africa's people.* (Mandela, 1996)

Since 1994 the South African government has committed itself to protecting child rights and reducing child poverty through initiatives such as the National Programme of Action for Children and the Office on the Rights of the Child, national legislation such as the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (Act 108 of 1996) and the *Children's Act* (38 of 2005), international commitments such as the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations, 1990) and the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child* (Organisation of African Unity, 1999), and the provision of social assistance in the form of three grants for children: the child support grant (CSG), the foster care grant and the care dependency grant. Since its introduction in 1998, the CSG has been a key element of the government's approach to tackling child poverty and over eight million children are currently in receipt of the grant (SASSA, 2008; Skweyiya, 2007b). The recent change to the means test threshold and extension of the grant to children under 15 years of age means that more children will benefit from the grant.

Nevertheless, as remarked by Dr Zola Skweyiya, Minister for Social Development, on the occasion of a child poverty symposium, poverty is still experienced by large numbers of children in the country:

> *…despite Government's commitment to the long-term objective of transforming the country into a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic nation,*

children remain on the periphery of social transformation. Children continue to be hard hit by poverty in various parts of the country. (Skweyiya, 2007a)

The budget vote speech delivered by the Minister in May 2007 therefore asserted 'a renewal of our pledge to a national partnership to fight child poverty, social exclusion and to promote social cohesion and improve service delivery' (Skweyiya, 2007b).

This research project speaks directly to the government's renewed commitment to tackle child poverty. It aims to provide detailed analysis of the current levels of child poverty in South Africa, in order to provide an evidence-base for policies to tackle child poverty. The project involves exploration of different concepts, definitions, and subsequent measurements[1], of child poverty.

In the first project report money metric measures of child poverty were explored (Barnes, 2009a). The second report looked at child poverty from the perspective of adults using a socially perceived necessities approach. Both qualitative (focus group) and quantitative methods were used to obtain an adult definition of child poverty which was subsequently measured. In this report the views of children, elicited from focus group work, are explored and compared to the adult definition. Children are well informed about their lives and pertinent issues and they have 'their own set of opinions and judgements, which, while not always the same as those of adults, nevertheless have the same moral legitimacy' (Ridge, 2002: 7), and they arguably have the best perspective on what is required for an acceptable standard of living for children.

Previous studies in South Africa have shown the importance of involving children:

> *[the studies] confirmed the value of engaging children as partners in decision-making […] highlighted the insights that arise from considering a child's perspective […] illustrated the feasibility of soliciting children's views on child rights and other issues, and emphasised the importance of hearing their voices and taking them seriously.* (Berry and Guthrie, 2003: 7)

The work described in this report contributes to the growing body of research internationally and in South Africa involving children in research on issues relating to children's lives. Examples from South Africa include ACESS (2002), Clacherty and Budlender (2004), Clacherty and Donald (2002), Ewing (2004), Giese et al. (2002), Streak et al. (2007) and Swart-Kruger and Chalwa (2002). This project is different in that children are consulted for their views on an acceptable standard of living for children: a child's view of child poverty.

The methodology employed in this study is briefly described in Chapter 2 and the focus groups are presented in Chapter 3.

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[1] Concepts of poverty are 'the theoretical framework out of which definitions are developed' (Noble et al., 2007: 54). Definitions of poverty distinguish the poor from the non poor, and measurements of poverty are the ways in which definitions of poverty are operationalised, enabling the poor to be identified and counted, and the depth of poverty gauged (Lister, 2004).

2   Methodology

Child definition of an acceptable standard of living for children was obtained from qualitative research with children in two stages: large focus groups and smaller group discussions. Children were invited to list the items they feel that children need for an acceptable standard of living and then were asked to state which of a set list of items are essential for children. The lack of these can be treated as a direct measure of child poverty (although this is not carried out here).

2.1   Large focus groups

Fifteen focus groups with children were conducted in May 2007 and February 2008 in different areas of South Africa. The aim was not to interview a statistically representative sample of children, but rather to include children from a variety of backgrounds who would have different experiences of growing up in South Africa. The majority of the focus groups were held in the Western Cape province. The population of the Western Cape is quite diverse and allowed for children from a range of different backgrounds to be interviewed. Two focus groups were held in the Eastern Cape in order to include children from rural, former homeland areas. The three main criteria for selecting groups of children were: area type (urban/rural), household income level and population group. These were considered important factors that might influence children's views of an acceptable standard of living.

Groups of children with a target age of between 12 and 17 were accessed through schools. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Western and Eastern Cape Departments of Education[2]. The procedure for selecting schools involved first, the selection of possible areas, and second, the selection of schools from within those areas. Areas in which to conduct the focus groups were selected from the 2001 Census (the ward geography was used[3]), based on area type, income level and population group criteria, as follows:

1. Wards were classified as either mainly urban or rural (using the EA type variable).
2. The Provincial Indices of Multiple Deprivation (PIMD) income domain score[4] was used to determine whether the ward is high, middle or low income (quartiles were calculated, within the province in question: lowest quartile =

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[2] The project also received ethics approval from the University of Oxford's Research Ethics Committee.
[3] There are 332 wards in the Western Cape and 604 in the Eastern Cape.
[4] See Noble et al. (2006). The PIMD is a ranking of all wards in South Africa, by province, in terms of various aspects of deprivation, constructed from the 2001 Census. The South African Index of Multiple Deprivation for Children (Barnes et al., 2007b) income domain score, a more appropriate income measure, could not be used because the index is at municipality - a very large area - rather than ward level. The PIMD income domain measured the proportion of people in a ward living in a household that has a household income (equivalised using the modified OECD scale) that is below 40% of the mean equivalent household income; or living in a household without a refrigerator; or living in a household with neither a television nor a radio.

high income, highest quartile = low income, interquartile range = middle income).

3. Wards were selected that had 80 per cent or more from a single population group.

Background knowledge of the Western Cape and Eastern Cape provinces was used to select broad geographical areas to visit. Within these broad geographical areas, a choice of schools in wards selected in the first stage was available, either from the Annual Survey of Schools database on the Western Cape Education Department website or supplied by the Eastern Cape Education Department. One school was chosen using the school fee information in the Annual Survey of Schools, a proxy for income, as a guide [5].

In order to allow for inclusion of children not attending ordinary schools, two special focus groups were held, the first for children with learning difficulties and the second for children in care. Both groups were accessed through schools for learners with special education needs, the second of which had a children's home attached to it.

The final selection of groups of children is shown in Table 1 below. The characteristics of the final sample of 157 children, in terms of sex, age and home language[6] is shown in Figure 1. There were more female than male participants[7], the children ranged from 11-19 years old[8] and the home language of the majority was either Afrikaans or IsiXhosa (or English/Afrikaans and English/IsiXhosa).

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[5] Wards in South Africa can have quite large populations (they range from fewer than 50 people to 80,000). Thus, although the broad picture may be of a particular income level, there could be pockets that present a quite different picture. To ensure that the school selected within the ward actually has the characteristics required, it is helpful to use the school fee information.

[6] Information obtained from the demographic forms completed at the end of the focus groups.

[7] This was due to the selection of an all girls school and a large number of females in the focus group that had the highest number of participants.

[8] Although children are defined in this project as under 18 years old and therefore only the views of the participants in this age range should be taken into account, it is not possible to discount the participants who are too old without discounting the entire focus group (it is not possible to distinguish individual views). The school was given the age range 15-17 and so it was assumed that the children were of the correct age. It was only at the end of the focus group when the demographic forms were completed that the ages were disclosed. Only four children in the entire sample were aged 18 or 19.

Table 1: Characteristics of schools selected for large focus groups

Group number	Population group	Income	Location	Number of children
1	black African, coloured, white	middle	urban	10
2	black African	low	urban	16
3	white, coloured	middle	rural	10
4	black African	low	urban	11
5	white	high	urban	10
6	white	middle	urban/rural	10
7	white, coloured	middle	rural	8
8	children with learning difficulties			7
9	coloured	low	rural	12
10	coloured	low	rural	13
11	children in care			10
12	white, coloured	middle/high	urban	10
13	coloured	low/middle	urban	10
14	black African	low	rural	10
15	black African	low	rural	10

Figure 1: Characteristics of children in large focus groups
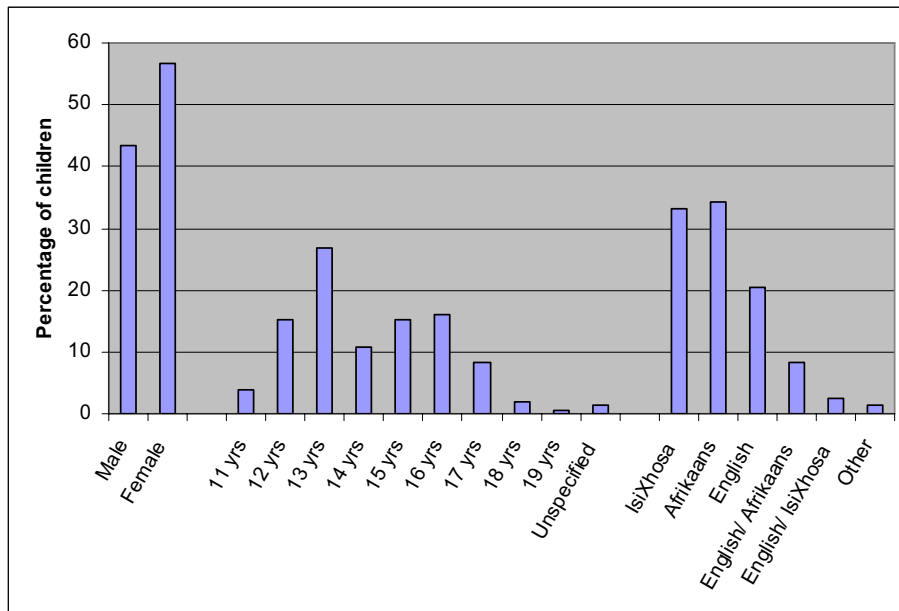
Figure 1: Characteristics of children in large focus groups

Contact was made with the principal of the school, who was then sent the relevant documents (a summary of the research, the focus group schedule, an information sheet for parents and children, and parental consent forms). The principal made arrangements with the class teacher for a group of 8-12 children to be released from their lesson for approximately 1.5 hours, and organised a room in which to conduct the focus group. The school did not have any involvement in the focus group beyond this.

The focus groups were conducted by members of the CASASP research team, usually in English, but where the teaching language at the school was other then English, or where the school was a dual language school, an Afrikaans or IsiXhosa speaking facilitator was recruited to assist at the focus groups. Sometimes an Afrikaans or IsiXhosa facilitator was recruited to assist at schools where the teaching language was English but it was felt that extra support in the home language of the children would be useful. Facilitators were given training by a member of the CASASP research team with experience in conducting qualitative fieldwork with children, particularly vulnerable children.

The focus group schedule was piloted in two schools but was changed very little as it worked well. As such, the 'pilots' have been included in the overall analysis.

The focus group was designed to be more activity than discussion based as it was felt this would be more suitable for children. The focus group was conducted as follows:

1. Introduction - explanation of project and purpose of focus group and consent from children.
2. Ground rules (with opportunity for children to add own rules).
3. Confidentiality game - children chose a pseudonym which was used for the whole of the session[9].
4. What do children need? - a brainstorming session to find out all the things (in 6 areas: health, personal things, safety inside/outside the home, education, the home and what's in it, neighbourhood) that children feel they need to grow up in South Africa.
5. Necessity or luxury? - two or three of the areas were chosen (depending on time and how many items the children came up with) and the group had to decide whether the item is a necessity or a luxury.
6. What's in your basket? - the children were divided into four groups and had to draw up a shopping list for a cousin who is coming to stay. Each group had a cousin of a different age: a baby/toddler, pre-school age, primary school age, and secondary school age/teenager.
7. Break for refreshments, during which time the children had the opportunity to privately write about the things they need specifically as boys and girls.
8. Running for President - as a wind down activity, the children were divided into two teams and had to draw up a manifesto of the changes they would make to improve the lives of children if they were elected as President. Each team presented their manifesto[10].

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[9] No names and/or identifying details are used in this report.
[10] These findings will be presented separately at a later stage.

9. Close - closing comments from researchers, opportunity for children to ask questions about the research, children filled in a demographic/evaluation form and received a certificate of thanks[11].

Many of the activities were not suitable for recording and so the lists generated by the activities form the data from these large focus groups. Where the lists were written in Afrikaans or IsiXhosa, the Afrikaans or IsiXhosa speaking facilitators provided translations.

Figure 2: The focus group set-up

2.2   Small focus groups

The large focus groups were geared towards the generation of lists of items that children (all children, children of different ages, and boys and girls) need, with some limited discussion of which items were necessities and which luxuries. In order to focus the qualitative work more on the definition of an acceptable standard of living, it was decided to re-visit some of the schools and carry out smaller focus group discussions with the children. This second phase of the qualitative research allows for more detailed analysis of a child definition of child poverty.

Five of the schools were re-visited in February 2008[12] and the same group of children took part in smaller focus group discussions. There were three or four

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[11] It was not considered appropriate to offer children money as a reward for participation. It was felt that this could cause resentment amongst other children not selected to participate, it could encourage selection bias on the part of teachers, and it could put children at risk, especially in poorer communities, where it would not be safe for them to leave the workshop with money in their pockets. Instead, children participating in the research were given refreshments (biscuits and juice drinks) and received certificates. In addition, the children were sent a summary of the research findings.
[12] In the Eastern Cape the small focus groups took place on the same day as the large focus groups.

children per group and 13 groups in total. These were again conducted by CASASP researchers, either in English or IsiXhosa. In order to make meaningful comparisons with the adult definition (Barnes, 2009b), the children were asked for their views on whether the list of items included in the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2007 (used to quantitatively determine the adult definition of necessities for children - see Barnes, 2009b) were necessities or luxuries. The children discussed in more detail than was possible in the large focus group why the items were necessities or luxuries. The list of items is given in Table 2 below.

Table 2: List of items discussed in small focus groups

Three meals a day including at least one portion of fruit/vegetables and at least one portion of protein (e.g. meat, fish, eggs, pulses, nuts, seeds)
Shoes for different activities (e.g. school shoes, takkies for sport/play, smart shoes for special occasions)
Toiletries (e.g. toothbrush and paste, soap, shampoo, hairbrush/comb) to be able to wash every day
Story books
Some new clothes (not second hand or handed on/down)
Educational toys/games
Presents at birthdays, Christmas or other religious festivals
Toys or materials for a hobby
A visit to the doctor when ill and all the medication prescribed to treat the illness
Own bed
Leisure/sports equipment
Clothing sufficient to keep warm and dry
A birthday party each year
All fees, uniform and equipment (e.g. books, school bag, lunch/lunch money, stationery) required for school
A computer in the home for school aged children
A school trip once a term for school aged children
A desk and chair for homework for school aged children
Pocket money/allowance for school aged children
Bus/taxi fare or other transport (e.g. bicycle) to get to school
A PlayStation or Xbox (computer games) for school aged children
A hi-fi/CD player and some tapes/CDs for school aged children
Own room for children over 10
Some fashionable clothes for secondary school aged children
Own cell phone for secondary school aged children
An MP3 player/iPod (portable music player) for secondary school aged children

The schools to re-visit were chosen partly with regard to whether the children were still at the school[13] and partly to give a range of backgrounds. Table 3 below shows the groups re-visited and Figure 2 gives the characteristics of the 44 children who participated. This time there were more even proportions of

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[13] Children in the top year at primary school in May 2007 left at the end of the school year in December 2007.

males and females, the participants ranged from 11-16 years old[14], and the majority had IsiXhosa as their home language (with more equal numbers of English and Afrikaans speakers).

Again, contact was made with the principal of the school, who was then sent the relevant documents (an information sheet for parents and children and parental consent forms) and made arrangements with the class teacher for the children to be released in three groups for 30-45 minutes, and organised a room in which to conduct the small group discussions. The focus groups were recorded on a digital voice recorder and transcribed verbatim (and translated into English where necessary) by the facilitator of the group.

Table 3: Characteristics of schools selected for small focus groups

Focus group number (small focus group number)	Population group	Income	Location	Number of children
3 (12 and 13)	white, coloured	middle	rural	8
4 (7 and 8)	black African	low	urban	7
5 (9-11)	white	high	urban	9
14 (1-3)	black African	low	rural	10
15 (4-6)	black African	low	rural	10

Figure 3: Characteristics of children in small focus groups
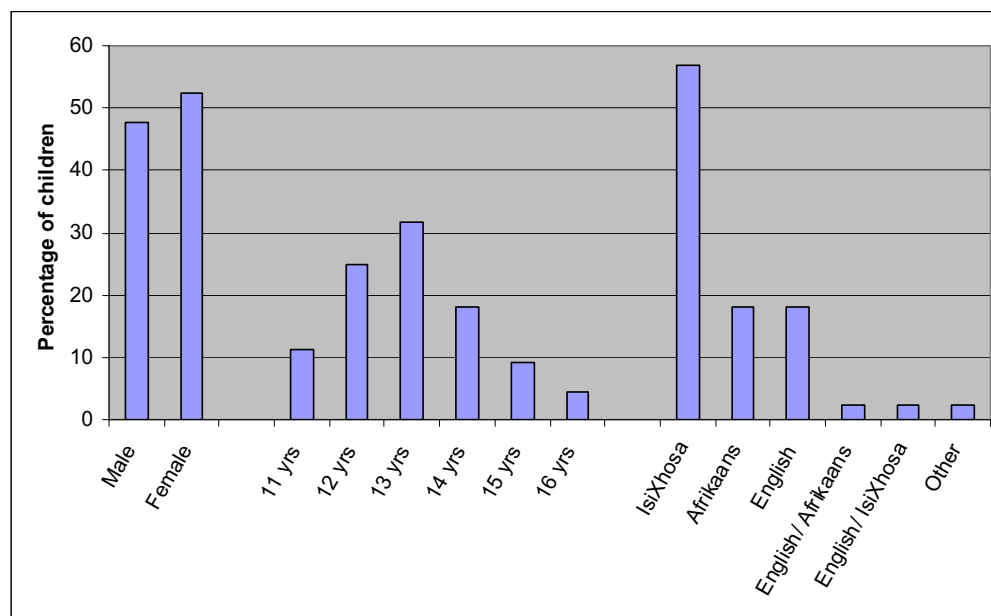
[14] This is based on the information given on the original demographic form, and so the children in the Western Cape who were re-visited 9 months later, will obviously be older. The age range is perhaps more like 12-17 years old.

3   Children's definition of an acceptable standard of living for children

3.1   Children's general needs

It is important to look at the data from the large focus groups in some detail for two reasons: first, the large focus groups fed into the questions included in the SASAS module (for adults, although the same questions were then asked of the children in the small focus groups), and second, many more issues relevant to an acceptable standard of living for a child were discussed than could be included in the SASAS module.

The items that were included in the SASAS module, and subsequently asked of the children in the small focus groups, do not cover everything that would, in an ideal world, be part of a definition of an acceptable standard of living for children. The number and variety of items that could be included in the SASAS module was governed by available space in the survey. The aim was to include child-focused items that covered a range of different domains of a child's life and a range of standards of living. It is not a comprehensive list, and it is recognised that more general household items such as adequate sanitation and heating in the home are missing. These were discussed in the large focus groups. Some of the items that were mentioned in the large focus groups could not be taken further as the socially perceived necessities approach focuses on items that can be purchased with money. It is acknowledged that these other items may be central to an acceptable standard of living for children, and therefore it is important to pay due attention to what the children said in this regard.

The discussions with children in the large focus groups were wide-ranging and there were many thoughtful responses. Each of the domains discussed by the children is taken in turn. Where appropriate, throughout this and the following section, children's responses are compared to those made by adults in both the adult focus groups and the SASAS 2007 (see Barnes, 2009b; further detail on the adult focus groups can be found in Barnes et al., 2007a)

3.1.1 Health

A range of formal medical services were regarded as important for children by focus group participants. Doctors were mentioned most frequently, variously prefixed by 'more', 'qualified', 'educated', 'experienced' and 'free'. The cost of visiting a doctor was an issue in some groups, and not always the lower income groups: 'money to pay doctors', 'free primary healthcare' and 'government should pay for healthcare' are some examples. Dentists were the other healthcare professional mentioned most often. In terms of facilities, clinics and hospitals were mentioned, and in the rural areas particularly, children expressed the need for clinics in the local area: 'clinics close by', 'more health facilities' and 'community clinic' were some suggestions.

In a number of the groups personal hygiene was considered important, and this included washing or showering and brushing teeth. Toiletries, including toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo and deodorant were seen as important.

Food was seen as important by the focus group participants for having a healthy life. In particular, a balanced and nutritious diet was considered crucial. Fruit, vegetables, protein, dairy, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals were all mentioned. In one group, 'enough food' was suggested as important. In most groups, water ('clean water' or 'fresh water' in some groups) was regarded as important.

Various healthy behaviours were discussed, the most frequent of which was sport or exercise. Sleep, rest and relaxation were mentioned, as were 'keeping away from people smoking and smoking drugs' and 'don't be interested in the wrong stuff'.

Family and friends were regarded as important for good health in many focus groups, and being able to communicate and discuss problems and being loved and supported were part of this. Indeed family and friends were discussed in many different contexts and were clearly seen as vital for an acceptable standard of living.

3.1.2 Education

A whole range of items needed by children for education were mentioned in the focus groups. Books (textbooks, reading/story books, writing books, dictionary) and stationery (ruler, eraser, pencils, pens, crayons, scissors, sharpener, pritt, calculator) were some of the items seen as important. In a few groups a computer was regarded as important. In addition to the resources required, a range of uniform items were said to be important across the focus groups. Shoes, socks, trousers/shorts/skirt/dress, shirts, jersey/pullover, blazer, tie, as well as sports kit (tracksuit, takkies) were listed.

In a few focus groups, particularly the low income groups, having the money for school fees was regarded as important. Other expenses relating to school attendance included 'tuck money', lunch or lunch money and money for transport. Transport to school was raised in a number of focus groups.

The need for various facilities and resources within the school was recognised. The two main facilities mentioned were libraries and sports/playing fields. Sport was one of the most frequently discussed activities, with some suggestions that it should be a subject in schools. Desks and chairs were the most frequently mentioned resource.

Aspects relating to the school environment that were considered important include class size (e.g. 'small enough classes - less than 20-25' and 'less children in class'), comfort, especially warm classrooms in winter and air-con in summer, and security or safety from internal and external dangers (e.g. 'safety

from gangsters', 'safety in playground (from fighting)', 'security - for internal problems e.g. bullying' and 'less vandalism'). Related to this, some focus group participants expressed the need for good discipline and punishment for children who misbehave.

In most focus groups teachers were mentioned. Some of the words used to describe how the teachers should be were 'good', 'educated' or 'qualified', 'respectful', 'understanding' and 'attentive'. Having support and encouragement from parents or family members was also considered important: 'someone to encourage you - a parent', 'parents/someone to help with homework', 'supportive parents/adults' and 'support from parents' are some examples.

Another aspect relating to education that was discussed was homework. Some focus group participants felt that it was important to have a 'good environment for homework' or 'no distractions at home and school'. Having somewhere to do homework was also mentioned, particularly in discussions about the home.

Although attending school was considered important, it was also recognised in some focus groups that breaks during the school day, rest, sleep and holidays are necessary (e.g. 'holiday to rest mind', 'recreation time', 'longer intervals' and 'time to rest').

3.1.3 Personal things

When children were talking about their personal things, the discussion often focused on the bedroom and the contents of the room. In many groups it was felt important to have a room of one's own. This actually came up far more frequently in discussions about the home.

Privacy and personal space were important as well as being able to lock one's room. Again, this came up when talking about the home. Related to privacy, a personal toilet was considered important in a number of focus groups and sometimes even an en-suite bathroom. A window and a door were also regarded as important in some groups.

In terms of furniture, the items that children most frequently said they needed were a bed (and a blanket/duvet and pillow), a cupboard/closet/wardrobe/chest of drawers, some form of lighting and a desk. A mirror was mentioned in a few groups and posters to decorate the walls in some groups.

Children in several groups felt that sentimental items were important. Examples include birthday cards, photographs, letters and certificates or 'things with meaning'. In the majority of focus groups a diary was considered important.

Clothes and footwear were mentioned in very general terms, with a couple of references to warm clothes and fashionable or designer clothes.

There were a number of general comments such as 'something to keep you busy', 'stuff to do' and 'things for hobbies', as well as simply 'toys'. Specific

things mentioned include a bicycle, sports equipment, a quad bike, board games, art materials and dolls. Books were considered important, and these might be story books, reference books or magazines. A bible was mentioned in a couple of groups.

A range of audio-visual items were mentioned across the focus groups. In terms of music players, hi-fi, CD player and MP3 player, as well as the unspecified 'music system' and 'sound system', or simply 'music' were listed. A number of focus groups listed a television as important. A DVD player or DVDs were mentioned by a few groups. Both of these items came up more frequently in discussions on the house, and so it may be that they are considered shared rather than personal items. Computers were considered important by children in a number of focus groups. Play Station and X-Box were also mentioned. A cellphone was seen as important in the majority of focus groups.

Although not a personal item as such, the importance of family and friends came through in the discussions about personal things. This was particularly so in the lower income groups, where love was mentioned as important for children. This was mentioned frequently by adults in the adult focus groups.

3.1.4 The home

The key characteristics of a home according to the children in the focus groups are that it should be: warm, clean and safe. Interestingly, these basic characteristics are all mentioned by lower income groups. A home should have running water/plumbing/sanitation, clean water, hot water and electricity. A home should also be comfortable: 'comfort rather than fashion', 'comfortable' and 'homely atmosphere' were some of the ways the home was described.

Various rooms were felt to be important to have in a home. The ones that came up most frequently were a kitchen, bedrooms (as discussed above), a bathroom/toilets, and somewhere to study (as discussed above).

The two items that were mentioned most frequently in the focus groups were beds and security. Examples of security related items are an alarm system and security gates. Other furniture that children considered important was chairs or a couch, a fridge and a stove. The latter was only mentioned in the rural focus groups.

A range of leisure and entertainment items were listed, some the same as for personal things. In almost all groups a television was considered important. Cable or satellite television was mentioned in a few groups. The other items listed most frequently were a computer, a swimming pool and DVDs.

A theme in the home domain was the need for company, whether this be family, friends or a pet (e.g. 'company/someone to play with' or 'dog for comfort and company'). Children in some groups felt that love and care in the home were important: 'someone to cook' and 'one parent who cares' are two examples.

Good behaviour was also considered important (e.g. 'respect', 'code of conduct' and 'must be good to parents').

A garden or yard was only mentioned in three groups, all coloured and low income. Gardens were mentioned by other groups in discussions about the neighbourhood though.

3.1.5 Safety

Organisations and people who keep children safe were discussed. The organisation mentioned in every focus group was the police. Security firms were also seen as important in many focus groups. Other emergency services were mentioned (e.g. fire brigade and ambulance), as well as the army.

Participants felt that various features were needed in the neighbourhood to keep children safe. Road safety was a particular concern, with, for example suggestions of pedestrian crossings and stop streets. In some focus groups, the need for 'more schools so don't walk as far to school' was raised. This came up again in the discussions on the neighbourhood. A neighbourhood watch was also mentioned in a couple of groups.

Simply having a house was considered important in many focus groups. A wide range of measures for the home were suggested: burglar bars, alarms, a dog (sometimes 'big dog' or 'Rottveiler'), and security fences and gates are some of the most common examples.

A variety of personal safety measures were considered important: having a cellphone, not going out alone, particularly at night but also during the day, using condoms, abstaining from sex and being faithful are some of the more common ideas.

Someone to 'keep an eye on you' was regarded as necessary in many focus groups. This could be family, friends or a neighbour, and all were mentioned in many focus groups.

3.1.6 The neighbourhood

A large number of buildings and activities were mentioned as important. The most common were a shopping mall or shops, with a few groups citing clothes shops particularly, and sports facilities, including a gym, sports fields, a swimming pool and tennis courts. A school, a hospital and a cinema were also all mentioned by a few groups. The overall opinion seemed to be the need for somewhere for young people to go, such as a youth centre, or activities for them to do. A playground was mentioned in some groups, and parks and green space were a common theme. Trees, grass and wildlife were all important.

Besides the road safety aspects such as robots, stop streets, pavements and speed bumps, various other infrastructural aspects were mentioned including

piped water and clean water, street lighting, good roads and a clean environment. In some groups the children felt it was important for the neighbourhood to be safe, with 'security', 'someone watching over the neighbourhood' and 'night patrols' all mentioned. Similar comments were made by adults in the adult focus groups and these important aspects of the environment were often justified with reference to children.

Friends and neighbours were regarded as important components of a neighbourhood. A range of values were suggested as important for people in a neighbourhood to have, for example respect and love.

3.2   Necessity or luxury?

As mentioned in Chapter 2, from these broad discussions, a list of possible necessities was generated. This module was included in SASAS 2007 (for adults to define essential items for children) and was discussed with children in the small focus groups. In the following sections the small focus group data is analysed. The responses have been divided into a group of 'luxuries' and a group of 'necessities' based on what appeared to be the majority view. Differences of opinion are however highlighted.

3.2.1 Luxuries

Items that are definitely luxuries, according to the children, include an MP3 player or iPod, PlayStation and hi-fi/CD player. These were considered essential for children by only a small percentage (less than 15 per cent in the SASAS module) of adults also.

Two reasons given for an MP3 player or iPod not being necessary were that it could be stolen or it could distract you in class or when doing homework:

[…] You don't need an MP3 player, there's likely to be people watching you too and one day they'll come snatch it. Even here at school it can be snatched, and R700 is gone just like that. (black African, urban, low income)

P1: It will keep you from doing your school work. It's not necessary.
P2: Yes, it can be distracting. (black African, rural, low income)

A hi-fi or CD player was generally considered a luxury, for example 'because it's expensive and it uses up electricity' (black African, rural, low income). Some children felt it was useful for listening to the news, but others thought a radio would suffice.

I think it's a necessity because you can use it to listen to the news and learn things. (black African, rural, low income)

P3: Yeh a luxury, but… No, I just thought, a radio, and then you might hear important things that are going on.

P2: Like news.
Facilitator: So a radio maybe, but not having something to play music on.
All: Ja.
(white, urban, high income)

A PlayStation was almost universally regarded as a luxury (again because it is a waste of electricity and stops children doing their school work). In one focus group, however, one child argued that it keeps children safely at home.

Because if you have a PlayStation when your family is looking for you to undertake a chore they'll find you at home. It also saves you, you don't go around other children's houses when you have a PlayStation, you stay at home and are protected from a lot of injuries out there. (black African, rural, low income)

In addition to the above items, several others were generally regarded as luxury items by children, including fashionable clothes, new clothes, a birthday party, birthday/Christmas presents, and a desk and chair.

Having some fashionable clothes was in the main regarded as a luxury for various reasons. However, the pressure to conform - to 'fit in' - was recognised by participants:

P1: I think it's a luxury, but sometimes when the girl or boy is under the influence of his friend-
P2: Yes.
P1: And everybody wears brand takkies, like Nike takkies and Puma shirt, or even the caps with Quicksilver or Billabong, I'll feel out if I don't have it then I'll feel, I'll be wanting to be in there, want to fit.
(white and coloured, rural, middle income)

I think it's a necessity because other children wear such clothes and if you don't you get laughed at, they put you down saying you dress from Pep stores. (black African, rural, low income)

To some extent the same was true of having some new clothes, which many children felt to be a luxury. This contrasts with the views of adults in the SASAS, 66 per cent of whom regarded some new clothes as essential. The children frequently remarked that as long as the clothes are in good condition (i.e. not torn and without holes) and clean then it is fine to wear them.

All: It's a luxury.
P3: Yes it's fine, but I don't want torn clothes.
P2: Even if it's torn, I mean what are you going to do, you have to wear it if you don't have an alternative.
Facilitator: So you think it's a luxury.
P2: It's a luxury.
P1: It's fine having second hand clothes.
(black African, urban, low income)

It can be a necessity or a luxury, but I think mostly it's a luxury, because if second-hand clothes are still good and there's not, it's not damaged or something, you can wear, there will be nothing wrong with it, at least you have clothes. But to buy new clothes every time, and somebody gave you clothes and you don't want to wear it, it's a waste, and there are charities you can give the clothes to. It's not necessary to buy new clothes for every event. (white and coloured, rural, middle income)

P2: A luxury ja. You can use, you can get second hand clothes, it wouldn't really make any difference.
P1: It's just as good. It might just look a bit faded or whatever but it's just as good.
(white, urban, high income)

As long as you wash your clothes and you are clean, you don't need new clothes. (black African, urban, low income)

P3: I think it's a necessity because if it's like really cold and you need like a warm thing and it can't have holes in and everything.
Facilitator: Okay.
P2: But if the clothes are still fine, like your older brother or something like never wore it and you like it, then you could, ja.
(white, urban, high income)

However, some children did express the importance of having new clothes in order to present themselves respectably:

All: It's a necessity.
Facilitator: Why?
P1: Because if you need to go to East London urgently, to the hospital for example, you need to wear a new jersey – you can't wear an old one.
P2: People will laugh at you if you wear a jersey that's handed down. They'll say you are wearing your big sister's jersey.
P4: You may not even like your sister's jersey but you end up being laughed at anyway.
(black African, rural, low income)

Almost all the children felt that a birthday party each year was a luxury, although there was some recognition that they may be important for younger children. Birthday presents were also frequently regarded as luxuries, and where they were regarded as necessary, it was argued that this was only in order to make the child feel good and/or special and to show someone cares, and not for the presents per se.

It's kind of a necessity because it means somebody actually cares about you to get you things, but if it's expensive then it could be a luxury. (white, urban, high income)

It's a necessity because it's something that makes you happy. Your friends send you well wishing cards and when you read them they make you happy,

so it's a necessity. You have to be happy on your birthday. (black African, rural, low income)

P4: It's not necessary, but for a child to get a present on his birthday or Christmas, it's just, it does something to him, so like one present, but not ten or-
P2: It makes him feel good about himself.
(white and coloured, rural, middle income)

The majority of children felt that a desk and chair are unnecessary as it is possible to do homework on a kitchen or dining room table, on a chair, or sitting on the floor or bed. In contrast, approximately half of the adult survey respondents regarded a desk and chair as essential. A couple of children did however note that such arrangements are not suitable and therefore a desk and chair are essential:

Facilitator: You said you think it's a necessity?
P1: Yes
Facilitator: Why?
P1: Because people use a table to eat. There may be oil left over and it stains your book, then you get into trouble at school.
Facilitator: What do you think?
Participant 3: It's a necessity because there may also be water spilt on the table, you may not see the water then your book gets wet.
(black African, rural, low income)

[…] some other children, some people don't have like a nice floor to work on, they could have um really dirty floors and no one ever cleans them. (white, urban, high income)

There were some items where opinion was divided, but which on balance were regarded more as luxuries than necessities. These items include a computer, pocket money and own bed.

A computer at home was by and large seen as a luxury item by focus group participants, and they were quite adamant that a computer was definitely not necessary for children if it was only used for playing games. However, some children saw the value of a computer for school work, and the internet was regarded as particularly important.

[…] People often start to get like quite lazy, and everything they do they rely on the computer, to type and they play games and I don't think it's actually important at all. People may use it but it's so simple to write. Basically everything a computer does can be done just not maybe as fancy. (white, urban, high income)

All: It's a luxury.
P2: You can use computers here at school during lunch time.
(black African, urban, high income)

Ja, so it's a luxury because you don't need to type it out, you can write it and you can use books to research things, not Google and things like that. (white, urban, high income)

All: It's a luxury.
P5: It's also a necessity because if I'm given homework that needs to be printed and the library is closed over the weekend, I'll be able to do my homework if I have my own computer and printer. It's also educational having a computer.
(black African, urban, low income)

P3: A luxury.
P2: It depends if you're doing research maybe for school work.
P3: But then you're going to use books as well.
P2: Ja.
P1: But you might not have the certain type of book. I mean if you're looking up something like random then you're not going to really find it in any book you look into.
P2: It's a necessity if you're doing research but if you're just like playing games then it's a luxury.
P1: But I suppose you could use the school's one if the school has one.
P2: Ja.
(white, urban, high income)

With regard to pocket money, a number of focus group participants were concerned that children will buy things they do not need (and even spend on drugs or alcohol) and therefore it would be better for parents to buy items for them.

D: Because pocket money you start buying things you don't really need.
(white and coloured, rural, middle income)

P1: It's a luxury, your parents can get you what you need. You can get into all sorts with pocket money anyway, you can end up buying and smoking drugs.
All: True.
P3: Or buy cigarettes.
P1: Your parents won't see what you are doing with your money.
Facilitator: So it's better for them to buy things for you?
All: Yes.
P3: It's best if they ask you what you need and buy it for you.
(black African, rural, low income)

P1 and P2: It's a luxury.
P3: Yeh, a luxury.
Facilitator: Why?
P2: Because children aren't going to buy themselves like stuff that they need.
P3: They're just going to buy sweets.
P2: Ja.
P1: They're going to get what they want.

P2: Luxuries.
(white, urban, high income)

On the other hand, some thought that pocket money was a necessity in case of emergencies and some felt that it could be used to buy food.

P1: Even though I also agree it's a luxury because you don't actually need it, but it actually can be used as a necessity […] I don't know, say now you need something, but you actually need it, it's vital at that time, without it you're actually going to die or something. Then, it's, you need money and the closest hospital is a private hospital and you need to pay, then, I think, I don't know but maybe some hospitals you have to pay before you go in and if you… I don't know but maybe now and then you might actually need it.
P3: Ja, you might need it-
P1: In an emergency.
P3: But I'd say it's a luxury.
P2: It's more of a luxury but can be used as a necessity.
(white, urban, high income)

Because you can use it when you go to school to buy things. When others are eating you can't not eat. (black African, rural, low income)

Many focus group participants felt that a child could share a bed with other family members and therefore did not need to have a bed of his/her own. Generally it was not considered appropriate for anyone to sleep on the floor - sharing was definitely preferable.

P1: It's a luxury because even if you share a bed with an adult it's fine, what's important is for you to sleep on a bed, that's all.
P2: I also think it's a luxury. You can share a bed with your mother, there's nothing wrong, you'll be the same as the person who sleeps on their own bed, there's no difference.
(black African, rural, low income)

All: It's a luxury.
P4: It depends, there may not be space for your own bed.
P3: You can share with your sister.
All: A luxury.
P1: Because you can easily sleep-
P2: With somebody else.
P3: You can have like, you can have like a double mattress or something and then you can share with your sister or your brother.
P2: Even a comfy chair.
P3: Ja, like um. You get those like sleeper couches and things like that, or maybe just even a couch, you just lie on it which is nice.
(white, urban, high income)

P3: Because you can live without your own bed, you can share a bed with your mother.
P2: It's impossible to live without a bed, where are you going to sleep?

P4: You can sleep on the floor.
P2: You can't sleep on the floor, you get cold. It's a necessity.
P1: You can sleep with your Mom.
(black African, rural, low income)

Other focus group participants argued that it could be necessary for children to have their own bed as they get older or if a family member has an illness.

I was going to say as you grow older you realise you can't share a bed with your Mom, you then need your own bed. (black African, urban, low income)

P1: Necessity.
P2: Mmm.
P3: No, that might be a luxury, because, you could, you don't need to have your own bed, you could share, like, if it's a big bed, you don't need a special-
P1: So would you share with a member of your family, would you?
P3: Yeh.
Facilitator: Would there be a point, like an age when you'd think, no, I can't any longer share with-
P3: Yeh.
P1: Perhaps like an 18 year old sister and like a 13 year old girl or something.
(white, urban, high income)

I agree. No actually I disagree. What if the person you share a bed with is a restless sleeper and you end up never sleeping well – you can get ill from that. (black African, rural, low income)

P3: I think it's a necessity because you have to have your own space, your private space, but in some circumstances you must sleep together because if you're like a little poor and you can't afford another bed you have to like, but there is some stuff, like you can get sick because all the people are in like, everyone is like altogether and they could get sick and they can't be cured.
P1: Yes, and I think it would be a bad thing if I sleep, me and my brother and my sister, and my, all the children, all five of us sleep on the one bed. But then my brother has a serious illness, and there's no other way our brother should sleep. And I think maybe that can be very bad because the brother can affect me and I'll affect and the whole house could have sickness. Or when the brother or the sister is drunk and he comes home, it's not always comfortable.
(white and coloured, rural, middle income)

3.2.2 Necessities

At the top of the adults' list of necessities based on the SASAS 2007 were three meals a day, toiletries to be able to wash every day, all fees, uniform and equipment required for school, a visit to the doctor when ill and all medicines required, and clothing sufficient to keep warm and dry (over 85 per cent of

SASAS respondents regarded each of these items as essential). These were similarly regarded as necessities by children in the focus groups.

The 'three meals a day including at least one portion of fruit/vegetables and at least one portion of protein' question did cause some difficulty for the focus group participants. It seemed that some children were not clear whether the one portion referred to each meal or only in one of the meals each day. Some agreed that a balanced diet was necessary, but it didn't have to be in three meals, while others thought that three meals were necessary but not always fruit and vegetables or protein.

> *P1: It's a necessity, a balanced meal is important so that you don't just eat the same thing over and over again.*
> *P3: Yes, otherwise you won't be healthy.*
> (black African, rural, low income)

> *P3: It's a necessity because if you don't eat you be hungry and can faint and all sorts.*
> *P2: And you'll lose weight too.*
> *P1: And if your meals are not balanced you won't be healthy.*
> (black African, urban, low income)

> *P1: It's a necessity, it's important because even if you have one meal a day, it's important that's it's a healthy meal so that you have energy and are able to interact meaningfully with other people during the day.*
> *P2: I think so too. If you have a healthy supper, one meal only, it will last you the next day too.*
> *Facilitator: So you are saying it's okay just to have one meal as long as it's balanced.*
> *All: All three are important but one must be balanced.*
> (black African, urban, low income)

> *P2: You definitely need breakfast because that's the thing that gets your body moving for the day.*
> *P3: Going in the morning.*
> *P2: And then um, lunch, supper.*
> *P3: I'd say you do need 3 meals a day.*
> *P2: Ja.*
> *P3: Because they keep you going during the course of the day. So that you don't get, you aren't say like at night you want to eat much more than you would have usually, so-*
> *P2: Ja.*
> *P3: I guess three meals.*
> *P2: But between meals you don't need-*
> *P3: It's mainly, you just need the three main meals.*
> *P1: It might not need to be fancy and you know luxurious, but-*
> *P2: Maybe bread and fruit and veggies.*
> *P1: Actually I think you do need-*
> *P3: Three meals.*
> (white, urban, high income)

I think it's important but you don't have to eat these things in one day. (black African, rural, low income)

Almost all children in the focus groups thought that toiletries are a necessity, but this was qualified as meaning only very basic items such as soap and water, toothbrush and toothpaste.

> *P2: I think it's a, well I would say soap is a necessity because that washes the germs off you. Ja, so, but… I wouldn't say like face wash and those things, those are luxury, but you need soap and a toothbrush and toothpaste.*
> *Facilitator: Okay.*
> *P3: Ja, I'd say it would be a necessity and a luxury. Because I mean some people they go and get all of this really fancy stuff like face cream-*
> *P2: Face cream and moisturisers.*
> *P3: Ja.*
> *P2: But people, ja you don't need it, unless your skin is-*
> *P3: Well you wouldn't need it.*
> *P1: You would-*
> *P2: Like soap.*
> *P3: You won't die.*
> *P1: Nothing… it won't really affect you if you don't have face washes and moisturisers and everything.*
> *Facilitator: Ok, but if you have a soap and toothbrush and toothpaste that's enough?*
> *P2: That's enough, ja.*
> (white, urban, high income)

School fees, uniform and equipment were generally regarded as necessities. Again, as with toiletries, only certain items - the basics - were regarded as necessary.

> *It's not necessary for kids to have a pen, colour pens and pencils. If they have at least one pencil and a rubber, it's not always necessary to have a rubber, it will be right, because you don't need a pen and a pencil, and when they say you need a pen, you only say you only have a pencil.* (white and coloured, rural, middle income)

> *A school bag is a luxury. You can use a plastic bag.* (black African, rural, low income)

> *P2: […] But you do need stationery to, but you don't have to get, not like the proper stationery, like Tippex and those things.*
> *P3: Ja, you don't need the best.*
> *P2: You just need a pencil and a rubber. Ja, you don't need the-*
> *P3: You need the basics.*
> *P2: I think it's a necessity and a luxury.*
> *P3: Well for some things I think it's a necessity, um like having an education and being able to pay for the school fees. But I mean some things I'd say are luxuries, like having the latest clutch pencil or the latest ball point pen.*

P2: Ja.
P3: You don't need that, you could just have a pencil and a rubber and you could do everything.
(white, urban, high income)

Some children remarked that if children have not paid their fees or do not have the appropriate equipment then they are discriminated against, for example, they are not given their report card and so cannot progress to the next grade, or are told they cannot come to a particular lesson. Previous studies with children have reported similar findings (ACESS, 2002; Clacherty and Budlender, 2004; Clacherty and Donald, 2002). This was only reported by children from low income schools, which are perhaps the schools with the greatest proportion of children who struggle to pay their fees.

P4: Some schools don't give you your school report if you haven't paid fees.
P3: They tell you to remain in the same grade until you get your report and pay fees.
(black African, rural, low income)

All: It's a necessity.
P1: Without school fees or uniform you'll be asked to leave the school.
P3: You can't come to school without school fees.
P5: They call your parent to school if you haven't paid.
P4: You don't get your school report, you don't proceed to the next class.
(black African, urban, low income)

All: It's a necessity.
P3: Yes because you need those things, for example you need to take notes with a pen and note book.
P1: You need books too.
P2: There's a teacher for example who tells us we can't attend her class if we don't have the appropriate file so you can end up missing lessons.
(black African, urban, low income)

For some, having the correct uniform is a necessity simply to fit in and look the same as everyone else:

All: It's a necessity.
Facilitator: Why do you think it's a necessity?
P2: Because if other children are able to wear school uniform and you can't that will sadden you.
Facilitator: You also think it's a necessity?
P1: Yes because if you can't wear school uniform you'll stand out and that won't be nice. Also teachers will say they want everybody to wear full school uniform.
(black African, rural, low income)

A visit to the doctor when ill was universally regarded as a necessity. Almost all participants regarded clothing sufficient to keep warm and dry as a necessity also, mainly to prevent illness.

P1: It's a necessity because you can get sick from the cold and rain if you don't have the right clothes on.
P5: In June you can't always be sitting at home when it's cold and rainy, you need the right clothes.
(black African, urban, low income)

Because you'll freeze without adequate clothing, with just a jersey in winter. You can get ill from that, chest infection even. (black African, rural, low income)

There were some items that were considered to be necessities by almost all children, but were less favourably regarded by adults in the survey. A bus/taxi fare or other transport to school was universally considered to be necessary, particularly for children who live a distance from the school (some children live very close and are able to walk). Only 75 per cent of adults in the SASAS thought this to be essential.

P3: It's a necessity.
Facilitator: Why?
P3: Because they stay far, they'll be late for school if they walk and they'll be in trouble with the school principal, she'll give them a hiding.
(black African, rural, low income)

Facilitator: So is it a necessity or luxury to have taxi or bus fare?
All: Necessity.
P3: Otherwise you can't come to school, it's too far to walk.
P4: And if you are a girl you can't be asking people for lifts, it's dangerous you can lose your life. Train fare is important, I have to come to school.
P1: You can miss out on education if you can't come to school.
(black African, urban, low income)

Many of the children saw a school trip as important, perhaps more so than adults (only 45 per cent of adults in the survey regarded a school trip as essential). The main reasons given were that it is important to see new places and meet new people. School trips were, however, generally regarded as a necessity only if they are an educational experience, but not if they are 'just for fun'.

P3: That's kind of a necessity because you're going to learn lots of stuff.
P2: Yeh, but it's also kind of a luxury because it's just, we're going to do school work, but mostly just to have fun.
P1: Ja, to bond with each other.
P3: To get out.
(white, urban, high income)

P2: It's good to see different places, see where history took place. Like Robben Island, it's better to see it for yourself.
P4: Yes it enhances your identity as an African if you are an African.
(black African, urban, low income)

All: It's a necessity.
Facilitator: Why?
P4: Because we are get to see different places.
Facilitator: Okay.
P1: Nice places.
P4: Nice places we didn't know.
P1: And we meet people we've never met before.
(black African, rural, low income)

Once a year, I think it might be necessary once a year, but I mean you've got to learn something from the trip, you can't go for the fun of it, you've got to learn something from the trip. (white, urban, high income)

It also depends on the type of tour, a fun tour is a luxury. (black African, urban, low income)

Educational toys were generally seen as a necessity by the children in the focus groups.

P2: They are a necessity because we learn from them.
P1 and P3: They are a necessity.
Facilitator: Why do you think they are a necessity?
P2: Because they are educational, they teach us how to count properly.
(black African, rural, low income)

P1: I think it's a necessity because once again, if you're at school and you have those educational games and at home you don't have, you won't improve it and you won't know how and everybody else maybe knows it and then you don't have it so I think it's a necessity.
P2: Yes, but it's not really necessary if you have like a, you have games on a computer. Then you must have a computer and all that stuff, that's not necessary, but like she said, the stuff, games and stuff.
P1: But to like have puzzles and stuff like that, and blocks. It's not always necessary to have a computer with Word and Excel and all that. You can normally have a few games.
Facilitator: Okay.
P4: A child must learn how to play with others because if he gets big and he plays like with somebody around him and he loses then he gets cross and then. He must learn how to play nice and fair.
(white and coloured, rural, middle income)

They are a necessity because they are educational and it will help in the long run, by the time a child goes to school they know something. (black African, urban, low income)

In the same vein, story books were frequently regarded as a necessity in order to help with reading and homework. Indeed story books were sometimes seen as less important than more factual books that would provide children with information for their school work, or for life in general.

P4: A bit of both because you have to learn somehow. One or two books is a necessity, but if you have many then it's starting to become a luxury.
[…]
P2: I think it depends, you know if, if you buy books that has life skills in it, that can help you with your life in the future, but if it's books that don't really mean anything.
(white and coloured, rural, middle income)

P4: It's important when a child is bored at home to be able to take a story book and read.
P1: You don't just leave home when you have books to read, if you are asked to look after your younger sibling you can just read your book instead of wanting to go and play.
(black African, rural, low income)

It's a necessity, other types of books too, to keep your mind active. (black African, urban, low income)

P1: Many children can't read and then the only time they read is in school and many parents don't have books, they don't spend time with their children to see can my child really read. But if you have books at home, the child can read it and think I can read this because I must improve my reading. Then it's necessary to have at least a magazine or something
Facilitator: Okay. And you said necessity too? Why?
P4: Yeh, it's good for a child to read because if he grows up one day, he's not going to know these words if he doesn't read and he's not going to know what that persons saying because it's never the same.
P1: Yeh, and reading is, you can read something and think it's worthless, but in the end reading is knowledge, you can like when they ask a question you can say oh I read that and then you can do it.
Facilitator: Okay.
P3: You would learn new words, because if you have to write an essay, then you can't write, you don't know how to write certain words and then you get it all wrong. And I think your general knowledge will get better.
Facilitator: Okay.
P1: And you need books because if you do a task, then you can read in the book about this or that and then you can finish the task.
(white and coloured, rural, middle income)

However, others thought that there were other ways of accessing stories and story books.

All: It's a luxury.
P1: Because someone can orally tell you a story, through chatting.
(black African, rural, low income)

P2: You can live without them.
P1: Yes you can.
P4: So where are you going to get more information from?

P3: I think it's a necessity.
P4: Maybe it's a luxury because there are libraries.
P1: It's a luxury because even at school there are books to read.
(black African, urban, low income)

Age was also considered to be an important factor. Story books may be necessary for younger children, but less so for older children (who require factual books rather than story books).

P3: That's a luxury.
Facilitator: A luxury, why do you think?
P3: You don't need to have like a story, just entertainment or-
P1: It depends on age I suppose.
P2: But if it's like fact, fact books, then it could also be a necessity, for like maybe like history or stuff about like-
P3: Yeh, you need to know that stuff.
P1: If you're like young young, then you might want to read some, your mother or father read some stories to you.
P3: They could just make up the stories.
(white, urban, high income)

On balance, story books were seen as essential by children, probably to the same extent as adults (50 per cent of adults in SASAS regarded them as essential).

Opinion was divided on a number of other items: shoes for different activities, cell phone, toys, and own room. However, overall the items were regarded as necessities more than luxuries.

There was some debate as to whether shoes for different activities are necessary. Almost 80 per cent of adult survey respondents regarded different shoes as essential, but it appears that fewer children hold that view. Four different types of shoe were mentioned by those who did feel that different shoes are necessary: school shoes, takkies, shoes for church and flip flops or sandals.

P2: It's a necessity because when you go to school you can't wear takkies, you have to wear a black pair of shoes.
P3: I also think it's a necessity because you can't wear takkies to church or flip-flops.
P4: I agree.
(black African, rural, low income)

Because sandals are not going to help you when it's raining or cold. (black African, rural, low income)

P1: Because you need different shoes for different activities. You have shoes you wear when you are sitting around at home, those who play soccer can't do it without soccer boots and you need shoes to go to church.

P2: If you don't wear soccer boots when playing soccer, if your feet are bare you'll get injured. Also if you go to church bare foot people will laugh at you.
P3: Also you have to wear proper school shoes at school, you can't wear any other type.
(black African, rural, low income)

P3: I think, I'm doing lots of sports so I would need the different types of shoes to go like to school and then after school it's tennis, and then netball. I won't be able to play netball with my tennis shoes on.
Facilitator: Okay. *D*.
P4: I think it's a luxury because necessities are things you can't live without and shoes you can live without. Food or water is more important than having four or five pairs of shoes.
Facilitator: Okay.
P1: I agree with *D*.
Facilitator: *B*.
P2: I think it's a bit of both because you don't have to do sports, but if you want to make a living out of sport then you have to buy it to get around with sport. But if you don't like sport at all but you want the shoes then it's a luxury.
(white and coloured, rural, middle income)

The last quote shows very mixed views. As with participants 1 and 4, other focus group participants felt that children could manage with one pair of shoes, or even with no shoes at all.

P3: It's a luxury.
Facilitator: Why?
P3: You can be okay without shoes, walking bare foot, no big deal.
Facilitator: Any other thoughts? It's alright to have different views. We don't all have to agree.
P1: I think it's a necessity.
Facilitator: Why?
P1: Because you can't live without shoes, you'll freeze in winter.
P4: You'll be prone to accidents without shoes, get cut by a broken bottle maybe and wounds can get septic.
(black African, rural, low income)

P1: Luxury.
Facilitator: Okay, luxury, do you all think that?
P2 and P3: Yes.
P1: You just need a pair of slip slops or-
P2: Takkies.
P3: Not really hey, not really.
P1: Takkies would be the best. If you just have a pair of takkies then you wear them to school, if you go hiking, if you're walking around outside, takkies would be, just one pair of shoes is fine.
(white, urban, high income)

P2: You can live without different types of shoes. Make do with one pair.

P1: Just get school shoes and play soccer bare foot.
P3: You can also go to church with your school shoes.
(black African, rural, low income)

However, although some children felt that one pair of shoes, usually takkies, was adequate, they also recognised that some schools do not allow takkies and so school shoes would also be necessary.

P2: You can do everything with takkies.
P1: And they're fine with school uniform, it's fine.
P3: Yeh, but with most school uniforms it would be fine, but with some you would have to wear school shoes probably.
Facilitator: Like would you have to, you couldn't wear takkies to school?
All: No.
(white, urban, high income)

It is probably the case that more children thought a cell phone is a necessity than a luxury, and more so than for adults in the SASAS (only 22 per cent regarded a cell phone as essential). The main reasons for it being a necessity were to do with safety, for use in emergencies, and for communicating with parents.

P1: It's a necessity because when you are lost your family can reach you and also when your family doesn't know where you are they can find you.
P3: It also helps if your mother is away and needs to communicate with you when you are at home.
(black African, rural, low income)

P1: It's necessary because I'm from *G* and my school is here, *L*. I need to speak to my parents when there's a problem.
P2: You can use a public phone because you need airtime anyway on your cell phone and if you don't have it you can't call.
P1: I'll send a free call back message.
P2: And if they don't have money to call?
P1: At least they'll know something's up and make a way.
(black African, urban, low income)

P2: Not like a really expensive one, just to like be in contact like with your parents.
P1: Ja, necessity, but not one that's like 10,000 Rand, just like a little phone.
P3: Because you might need it for emergencies and things like that.
(white, urban, high income)

P3: I would say it is a necessity because you need to phone your parents if you're going like on trips like to Cape Town with the school like, going to sports events, you have to contact your parents to know where you are and like. Because I think like everybody has cellphones because it's like the in thing now.
P4: You need a phone because just now you and your mother go to the mall now, and there are everywhere people and your mother's somewhere, you

don't know where your mother is, but you've got your phone on you and your mother's also got a phone. Then you can phone your mother and ask her where are you now? Because you won't find your mother if you haven't got a phone.
P1: I think, I agree with *C* that it, sometimes it's a necessity. Like my phone, I can have it. It's a necessity, it comes in handy when I'm at a place and I call my mother and say I'm coming home late from school or stuff like that. It's a necessity but not all. It is a necessity, but like, the children like *D* said, this thing, MXit[15]. They MXit and then it influences their grades. Like, that's why.
P2: Yes and there's some children that have, not that expensive, but you get very expensive phones, but then there's some phones that's not expensive and you can still call your mother and stuff like that.
Facilitator: Ok. So you sort of think it's important to have something but it doesn't have to be the top of the range one.
P2: Yes.
(white and coloured, rural, middle income)

P2: It's a necessity because if you have a problem and you mother is away at work, you phone your mother and she can ask the neighbour to give it to you. Or if you can't come to school you can phone the school office.
P1: It can be a luxury too. Just remember your mother's phone number and phone from wherever. At the same time you can lose your life over a cell phone from robbers, it's not worth dying over a cell phone.
P5: It's a necessity because if you get lost you can phone someone.
(black African, urban, low income)

Toys or materials for a hobby and sports or leisure equipment were conflated because for many children, sport is their hobby. One reason given in a few focus groups for hobbies being necessary was that it is important if your hobby becomes something you do as a job later in life.

P1: It's a necessity because maybe you can make money from the sport.
P2: Yes. Maybe you become successful.
P3: Maybe someone (important) is watching and likes your skill and takes you elsewhere to play and you get there and win.
P4: And be successful.
(black African, rural, low income)

If it's something you're going to do one day, for example art, if you want to become an artist one day then I think it's quite necessary, but if you just want to do it for you or something then it's a luxury. (white and coloured, rural, middle income)

P1: It's a necessity.
Facilitator: Okay, why is it a necessity?
P1: Because your hobby may become a skill later, to earn a living.
(black African, rural, low income)

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[15] MXit (pronounced 'mix it') is a free instant messaging software application popular with young people in South Africa. It allows the user to send and receive text and multimedia messages to and from PCs that are connected to the internet and other phones running MXit.

Toys and hobbies were also seen as important for keeping children occupied and out of mischief. Similar comments were made in the adult focus groups.

P1: It could, ja, it could be a necessity because something to keep you busy instead of like just wandering round the house bored or something. And also if it's educational again it's also good.
P3: And to get fit. If it was a soccer ball and you play with it.
P1: Yeh, a soccer ball and get fit, keep your body healthy.
(white, urban, high income)

Sometimes it's a luxury and sometimes it's a necessity. Why it's a necessity and a luxury? A necessity, like boys in particular, sometimes they need a hobby to keep them busy, like then they won't do bad stuff and steal. It will keep them busy and they won't, their attention will be at the hobby and not at other bad stuff. And a luxury, not many people can afford to give your child art class and that, but you can, a hobby can't always be expensive, you can get cheaper. (white and coloured, rural, middle income)

P2: It's probably a necessity otherwise you've got nothing to do cause then you just-
[…]
P3: And then you steal then because you've got nothing to do, so like young people say why don't we go and steal this since we've got nothing to do.
(white, urban, high income)

However, many children remarked that it was not necessary to have expensive toys or materials for a hobby (e.g. sports equipment).

A: So you get ja, a ball, a simple ball. But I mean for girls probably crayons and a little bit of paper or just a book, but, but um, pencils.
C: But definitely not scrap-booking, that's like so expensive.
(white, urban, high income)

If you do like sport or tennis, it's a hobby for you, you don't need like that Wimbledon tennis rackets that costs many Rand, you can just have one that you can play with. (white and coloured, rural, middle income)

P2: Like if you're playing hockey, a hockey stick? Um, well you can't play a sport without one. So for example if you're playing rugby you'll need a rugby ball to play with the rugby so-
P3: Not necessarily. Some people they use-
P2: Use soccer balls.
P3: Like they use different things to play-
P1: They use like a bottle of something.
P3: And some people, they'll use, if they if the only sports item they have is a cricket bat then they'll use that to do everything.
P2: Yeh you can use different things for a cricket bat.
P1: But I think it actually it depends whatever the hobby is.
P2: What the hobby is, yeh.

P1: Say now it is sport, then it's important that you get, that you exercise and stuff and yeh exercise.
P2: It's important to get good things in your body.
P1: So if the material or whatever helps you with that and makes it ja and makes it happen then I think it's quite important, but if it's something like scrap-booking or card making then it's actually not that important because you don't need to actually do that. But say for a sport then I think it is quite important. But it doesn't need to be the best, and maybe not even the real thing, it can be improvisation.
(white, urban, high income)

As with own bed, some focus group participants thought that children could share a room with other family members, and therefore it was not necessary for a child to have his or her own room.

It's a luxury because you can always share a room with your big brother.
(black African, rural, low income)

It's a luxury, you can easily sleep on the floor in the same room as your mother.
(black African, rural, low income)

Others thought that it is important for a child to have his or her own space and privacy.

I think it's a necessity because if you are sharing your room you are most likely to be always losing things, whoever you are sharing with has access to your things and they don't treat them the same way you would. If you have your own room, your own space, then that doesn't happen, nobody comes into your room. (black African, rural, low income)

I think from the age of 13 you need privacy. I can't explain it well but there are things you can't do with other people around. Even your homework, you can get disturbed with others around. (black African, urban, low income)

Age was considered an important factor. As children become older, having their own room is necessary.

As you grow up you, if you're small you can sleep with your Mum or your Dad in the room on a bed or a mattress or something, but as you grow, you want some privacy for yourself and stuff like that. (white and coloured, rural, middle income)

It depends how old you are, if you are older than 18 you need your own room. For now I share with my brother but when we are older we can't share anymore. (black African, urban, low income)

Well around the age of 16 you can have a shack in the yard. Before that, like around the age of 10, up to 13 years, you can sleep next to your Mom. You can share a bed with your Mom. (black African, rural, low income)

P3: A necessity.
P4: A necessity.
Facilitator: Do all of you think necessity?
P3: Ja, because at this stage you wouldn't want to be sleeping in the same room as your little brother or something.
Facilitator: Okay. What age does it become important to have your own room?
P3: 13, 14.
P4: 12.
Facilitator: 12, 13, 14?
P1: 12.
P2: When you become a teenager actually.
P3: Ja.
(white and coloured, rural, middle income)

Participants in two focus groups (both black African, rural, low income - but different areas) made the point that a child having his or her own bedroom is not a sensible idea for reasons of safety, as these quotes illustrate:

I think it's neither a necessity or luxury, it's just the fact that if an intruder comes into our house and starts in my room and I'm on my own it's not safe. For security reasons you can't have your own room. (black African, rural, low income)

It's a luxury because if you've had an argument with someone they can come find you in your bedroom alone and beat you up. (black African, rural, low income)

4   Concluding remarks

In this report focus groups conducted with children to find out their views on an acceptable standard of living for children have been discussed.

In the brainstorming activity in the large focus groups, a wide range of goods, activities and services in different domains of their life were considered important by children. The children were very moderate in their responses to the list of items in the small focus groups. Over and over again the children stressed that only very basic versions of items were required. The quantity of items (e.g. one or two story books) and cost of items (e.g. 'It's a necessity, but you don't need that expensive maybe 1000 rand jacket, you can just get some others that is also as warm as that expensive one' - white and coloured, rural, low income) were important considerations for the children. A number of the children had a fairly minimalist outlook, and it was clear that some were thinking only of things that are necessary for mere survival. For example, one child remarked:

> *It's a luxury because you can live without a radio and DVDs. All you need is food and water to drink, you can live your life without the rest.* (black African, rural, low income)

It is not easy to compare how the responses differed by population group, age and sex as in some instances there were quite mixed groups of children. There did not appear to be any noticeable differences between the responses of urban and rural children in the discussions on necessities and luxuries.

In terms of income levels, children from higher income groups were no more generous than any other group, which based on the adult responses to the SASAS module is slightly unexpected. However, it may simply have been that these children were giving what they thought was the appropriate response. There were a few occasions in the high income focus groups when a participant reflected on a different standard of living for richer children and one for poorer children, as the following quotes demonstrate:

> *If you have, if you have like the money then, ja, then I'd get like lots of books, but I mean if you're in the township or whatever and you don't have that much money, then ja, even one book's enough for five children, you can sit them down and read.*

> *But who are we actually talking about, like us or the less fortunate or…?*

> *[…] if someone's on the streets or they're not as fortunate, they don't need a book, but to have something good for reading, I think's good.*

There were some instances where it seemed that children were speaking from their own experiences of not having the item in question, where they had adapted their preferences because they knew that their family could not afford and would probably never be able to afford the item. For example:

It's a luxury because it does happen that your family doesn't have the money to meet all those school needs. If you think it's a necessity you'll be bothering your mother and crying demanding those things and she won't have the money. (black African, rural, low income)

We are used to not receiving presents on our birthdays. It's definitely a luxury. (black African, rural, low income)
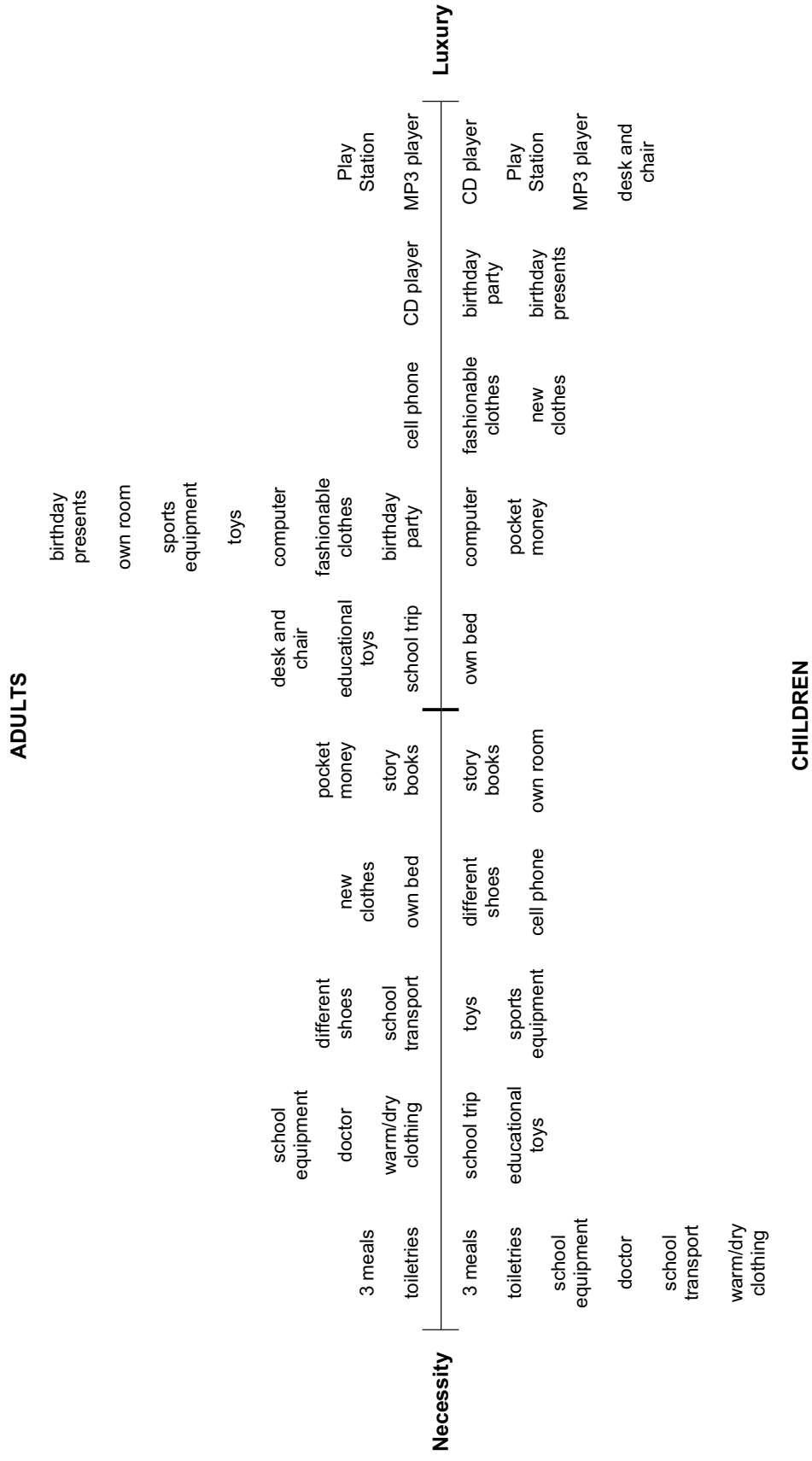
Alternatively, these children perhaps took a very literal translation of the term essential to mean 'I don't have it, but I'm okay, therefore it can't be essential'. As one child remarked: 'Here we are alive and well but we've never toured with the school' (black African, rural, low income).

The comparison of the child and adult views is partly aimed at demonstrating the validity of the socially perceived necessities approach - which in international studies has so far taken the views of adults only - for child poverty research. If adult and child definitions are broadly the same then - notwithstanding the desirability of consulting children - it is valid to only ask adults. If it is the case that the views of adults and children differ substantively then a change to the methodology to take into account the views of children may be necessary.

So, how does the child definition compare to the adult definition? The responses of children are quite similar to adults for many items, and there are many instances of apparently identical views in the adult and child focus groups. There are, however, clearly some differences of opinion. The chart below (Figure 3) attempts to compare the views of adults and children, by positioning each item on a scale ranging from necessity to luxury. However, it is difficult to accurately summarise the child responses from the focus group material and position the items on the scale to compare with an adult definition derived from a survey.

Although a quantitative approach would have enabled a more detailed and accurate comparison with the adult definition, there is certainly value in the qualitative approach as it gives explanations, highlights issues and provides the detail that it is just not possible to obtain from responses to a survey. However, in order to be able to produce a definition that can be measured, it is necessary to use the survey approach. Future work should therefore be considered to consult children through a nationally representative survey, in the same way that adults have been consulted.

Figure 4: Comparison of adult and child views

ADULTS

Necessity ———————————————————————————————————— **Luxury**

CHILDREN

ADULTS:
3 meals, toiletries, school equipment, doctor, warm/dry clothing, different shoes, school transport, new clothes, own bed, pocket money, story books, desk and chair, educational toys, school trip, birthday presents, own room, sports equipment, toys, computer, fashionable clothes, birthday party, cell phone, CD player, Play Station, MP3 player

CHILDREN:
3 meals, toiletries, school equipment, doctor, school transport, warm/dry clothing, school trip, educational toys, sports equipment, different shoes, toys, story books, own room, cell phone, own bed, pocket money, computer, new clothes, fashionable clothes, birthday party, birthday presents, CD player, Play Station, MP3 player, desk and chair

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