



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

BOOK ON THE BIRTH TO TWENTY PLUS (Bt20+) COHORT STUDY 'Mandela's Children'

South Africa's Birth to Twenty Plus (Bt20+) cohort study was started in 1989 by a group of scientists who saw value in a longitudinal study of children during the political, social demographic, nutritional and health transitions then underway in South Africa. The study recruited more than 3 200 children, born within a 6-week period and resident in Soweto-Johannesburg, together with their mothers. To date, at age 27, the cohort of children and their caregivers, have been seen on 21 occasions. Measurements have been made of their physical and mental health, educational progress, entry into the labour market and, more recently, their own children's growth and development. More than 400 scientific papers, several books, and hundreds of conference papers have been produced. The study has made unique contributions to science in its own right, as well as in collaboration with similarly long-term cohort studies in Brazil, Guatemala, India and the Philippines.

At the start of 2018 we will be re-interviewing the cohort to document their transitions to adulthood, and to re-assess their health, social and economic wellbeing. We want to understand how they, as adults, now see their own experiences of growing up in post-1994 South Africa.

We want to record the history and contribution of the study to science and policy through a general interest book that describes the changes in the political and social context in the last 27 years, and that tells the stories of the scientists who started and continue the research, the individuals and their families who participate in the study, as well as the implications of the findings and the glimpses they give into the future.

These children grew up in a free South Africa. The recruitment period took place just after the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990 and, as a result, the study is colloquially called 'Mandela's Children'. They were the first South Africans to enjoy free health care and education for young children, social security through the revision of the Child Support Grant, and other efforts under the Reconstruction and Development Programme designed to repair the terrible injustices of our Apartheid past. It's a story worth telling.

We call for proposals from authors and/or editors to tell this unique story, using study documents, media outputs, interviews with scientists and staff who have worked with the families, as well talking to the children and parents who have given their time generously for many years. We envisage short accounts written by the many stakeholders and participants and the use of photographs participants are prepared to share or have taken, so that the many 'stories within stories' can be heard. A previous book, *Mandela's Children: Growing Up in Post-*





Apartheid South Africa (Barbarin & Richter, 2001) gives an account of the early years of the study. Helen Pearson's (2016) *The Life Project: The Extraordinary Story of our Ordinary Lives* documents the British birth cohorts, and both provide ideas for how some aspects of the Bt20+ project could be tackled.

Starting in the last quarter of 2017, we envisage the book project being of 6-9 months duration, with a further 3 months for the preparation of the final manuscript for publication, incorporating feedback from the current leaders of the Bt20+ study. We would like the book to go to press by July 2018. The contract will cover the author's time, local travel for interviews and meetings, and running costs. The study is based at the University of the Witwatersrand and the Bt20+ offices are at Chris Hani-Baragwaneth Hospital.

We call for proposals, no longer than 5 pages, with a separate motivation of the candidate's suitability for the task, including other successfully completed projects and names and addresses of contactable referees. We are open to suggestions for creative approaches to the book.

Due date for proposals is 14 August 2017, to be submitted to Professor Linda Richter, linda.richter@wits.ac.za, office telephone +27 11 717 2382.

