

# Youth and Alcohol: Using PhotoVoice participatory methods to understand the role of alcohol availability, promotion and affordability on young people's HIV risk and safety in South Africa

Lebohlang Letsela, Renay Weiner, Katherine Fritz and Sue Goldstein

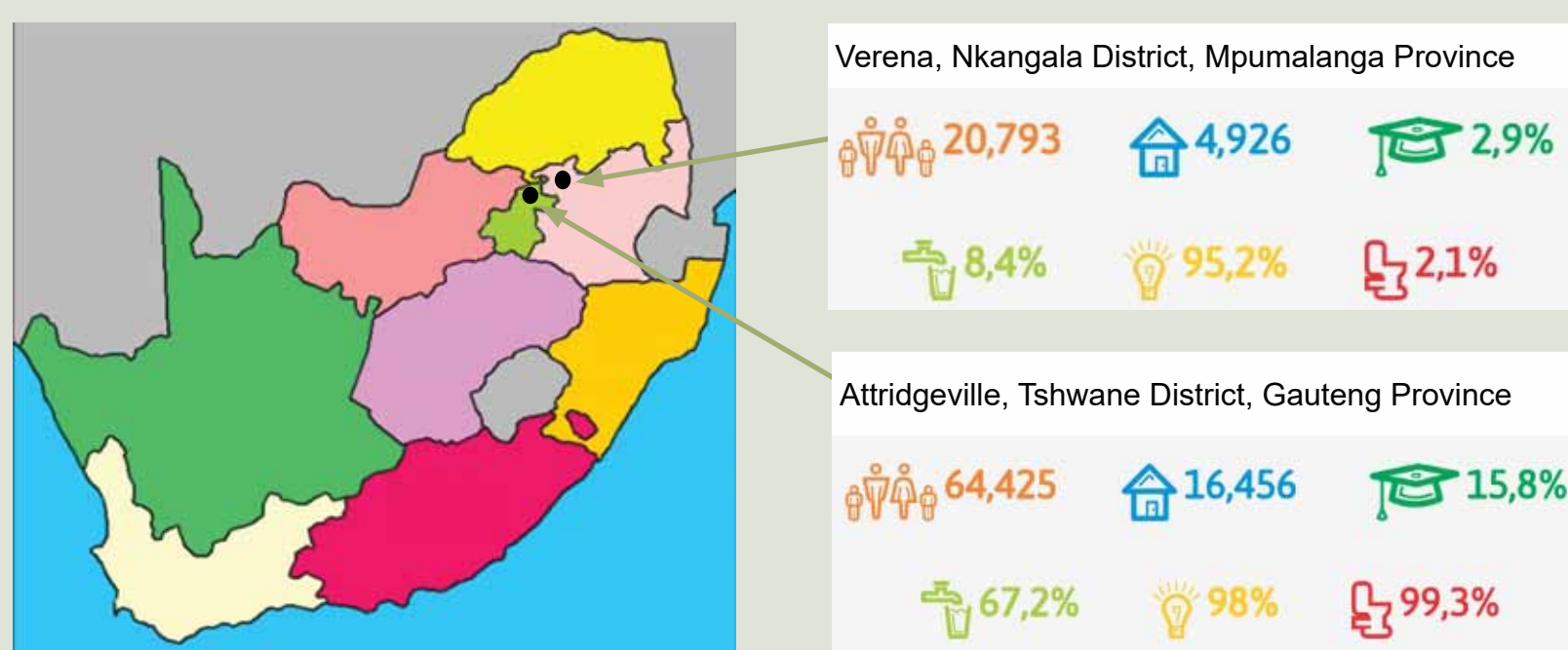
## Background

- Harmful alcohol use, including heavy episodic drinking, is a global public health concern<sup>1</sup> and South Africa is among the countries with the highest rate of harmful alcohol use.<sup>2</sup>
- Sexual risk behaviours and HIV prevalence amongst young people have been associated with high levels of alcohol misuse.<sup>3,4,5</sup>
- Alcohol advertising and packaging efforts have been noted to target young males and females and linking drinking to socialising, fun, sex appeal, masculinity and success amongst other things.<sup>6,7</sup>
- International and local strategy and policy documents exist to reduce the harmful use of alcohol and its availability and marketing, especially related to youth.<sup>1,8</sup>
- A few studies in South Africa have explored the relationships between alcohol availability to youth at community level, youth perceptions of the risks and consequences including sexual health impacts of alcohol misuse and/or youth views of how alcohol advertising affects their drinking and related risks. Thus, this study aimed to quantify the availability of alcohol, young people's views and experiences of exposure to alcohol advertising and sexual risk and safety in their communities.

## Methodology

**Context and setting:** The study was conducted in Verena, a rural village and Atteridgeville, an urban township in South Africa.

- Atteridgeville has a population size of 64 425 people. The area has tarred roads connected through regional roads.<sup>9</sup>
- Verena has a population of 20 793. The area has dirt roads connecting to main national roads.<sup>9</sup>



**Sample:** A convenience sample of 27 young people between 18 and 24 years old volunteered to participate in the study. A total of 13 youth (6 females and 7 males) in Verena and 14 (6 females and 8 males) in Atteridgeville participated in the study.

**Data Collection:** Two data collection methods were used:

- Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of alcohol outlets to capture the density, distribution and proximity to community resources such as schools. A template was used to record advertising and promotional data observed on the exterior of all the outlet buildings.
- PhotoVoice, a participatory research technique, was used to gather qualitative data through photography and reflective dialogue to understand young peoples' perceptions of alcohol availability, and marketing in their communities, and how these relate to sexual risk and safety behaviour. Community exhibitions were held to enable the voices of youth to be heard.



Analysis of alcohol outlets was done through mapping on QuantumGIS. The photo and focus group discussion data were analysed thematically using ATLAS.ti.



1. World Health Organization. (2010). *Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol*. Switzerland: WHO Press.  
 2. Parry, C. (2005). South Africa: Alcohol today. *Society for the Study of Addiction (Addiction)* 100, 426-429. doi:10.1111/j.1360-0443.2005.01015.x  
 3. Fritz, K., Morojlele, N. & Kalichman, S. (2010). Alcohol: The Forgotten Drug in HIV/AIDS. *Lancet*, 376 (9739), 398-400. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(10)60884-7  
 4. Shisana, O., Rehle, T., Simbayi, L.C., Zuma, K., Jooste, S., Zungu, N., Labadarios, D., Onoya, D., et al. (2014). *South African National HIV Prevalence, Incidence and Behaviour Survey*. Cape Town, HSRC Press. Retrieved from: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/uploads/pageContent/4565/SABSSM%2019%20LEO%20final.pdf>  
 5. Soul City Institute (2014). *Stories from Galeshewe*. Retrieved from <http://www.soulcity.org.za/projects/advocacy/phuza-wize/resources/print-systems/stories-from-galeshewe/view>  
 6. Smith, L.A. and Foxcroft, D.R. (2009). The effect of alcohol advertising, marketing and portrayal on drinking behaviour in young people: a systematic review of prospective cohort studies. *BioMed Central Public Health*, 9 (51), 1-11. doi:10.1186/1471-2458-9-51  
 7. Casswell, S. (2004). Alcohol brands in young peoples' everyday lives: new developments in marketing. *Alcohol and alcoholism*, 39 (6), 471-476. doi: 10.1093/alcalc/agh101  
 8. Department of Trade and Industry. (2015). *National norms and standards in terms of the Liquor Act, 59 of 2003*. Retrieved from: [https://www.thefti.gov.za/business\\_regulation/docs/nia\\_Norms\\_Standards.pdf](https://www.thefti.gov.za/business_regulation/docs/nia_Norms_Standards.pdf)  
 9. Statistics South Africa. (2016). Statistics by main place: Atteridgeville and Verena. Retrieved from: [http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=4286&id=11387](http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=4286&id=11387) and [http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page\\_id=4286&id=11594](http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=4286&id=11594)



## Results

### Alcohol availability

#### Atteridgeville

A total of 147 licensed alcohol outlets were mapped (taverns/bars/liquor stores) with a ratio of alcohol outlet to population as 1:438. There were between 2 and 5 outlets per main road, 24% had no signage for legal age, only 3% had operating hours outside the building, as required by law, while 76% had some form of advertisement outside of the venue.

A total of 74 educational venues (schools, public libraries and day-care centres) were mapped. All outlets were within a 500m radius of schools, the legal distance allowed for liquor outlets from educational institutions. The minimum distance was 10m with a maximum of 400m.

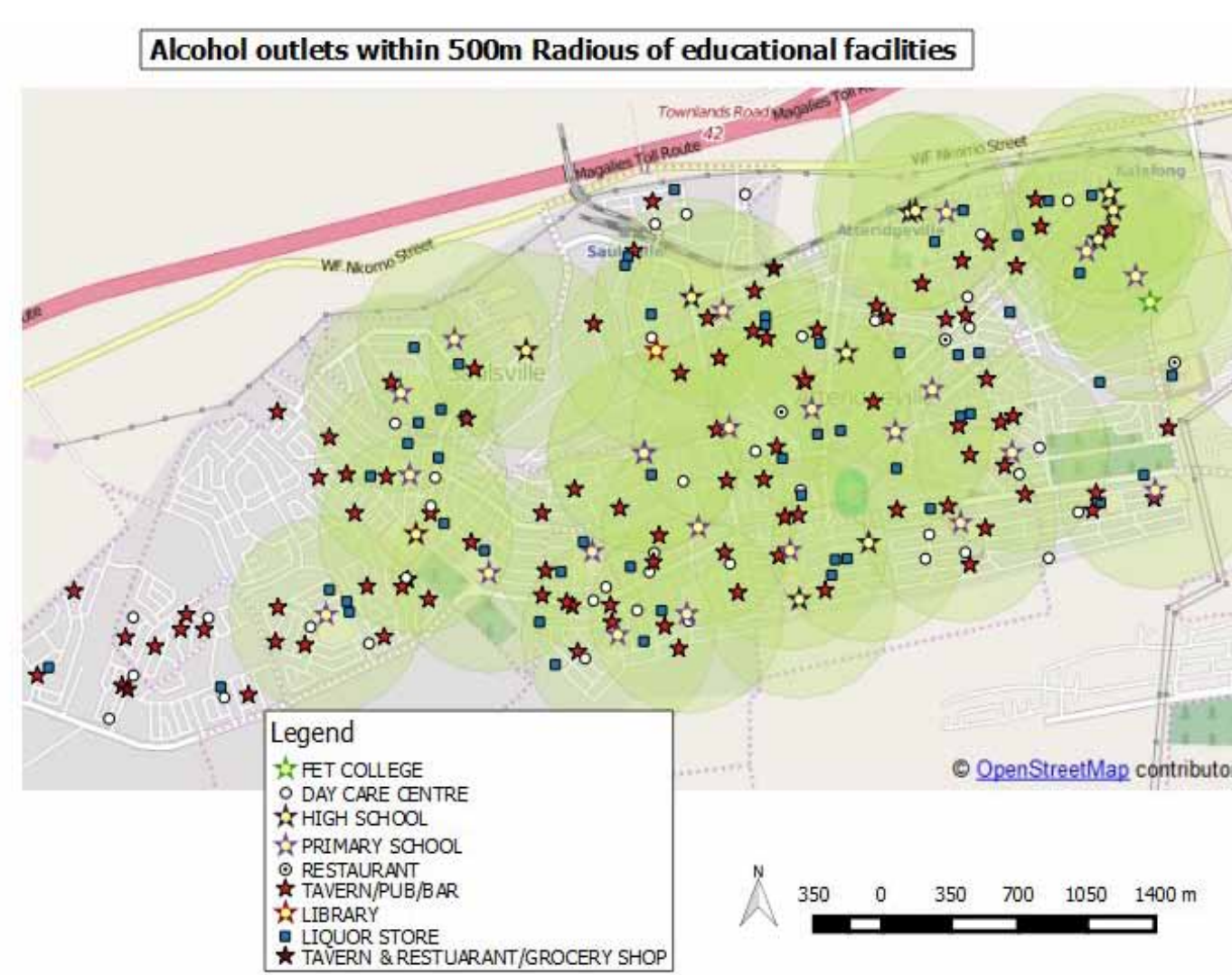


Figure 1: Density of alcohol outlets and educational facilities, Atteridgeville

#### Verena

A total of 28 licensed alcohol outlets were mapped, giving a ratio of alcohol outlet to population as 1:743. There was at least 1 tavern per main road in the community. A quarter of the outlets had a sign for legal age, none had a sign with operating hours and 92% had some form of advertisement outside of the venue.

A total of 11 schools were mapped. No libraries could be found. Most of the outlets (79%) were within a 500m radius of schools, 32% also sold groceries or had grocery shops in the same yard, and seemed to facilitate easy access of alcohol during school breaks. The minimum distance was 100m with a maximum of 700m.

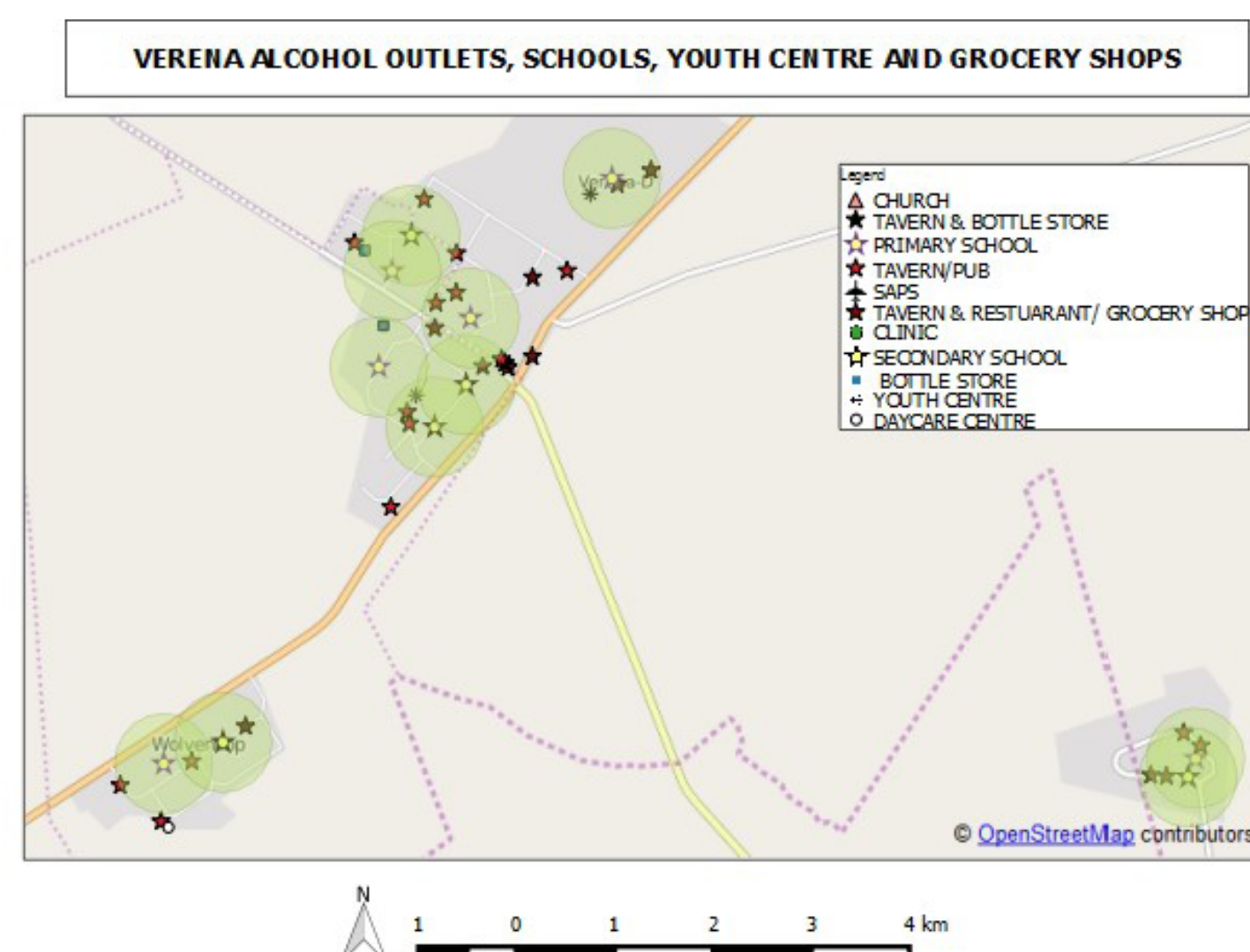


Figure 2: Density of alcohol outlets and educational facilities, Verena

Qualitative findings supported the mapping data, showing easy access of alcohol by youth at outlets that also sell food:

*There are schools and taverns in the same street ... we are exposed to it in our daily lives [mixed group, Atteridgeville]*

Access also through home and community gatherings, and increased drinking around festive holidays:

*... this mentality..., that in order to have fun there has to be alcohol ... Do you know how expensive alcohol is during the year, but around the 31<sup>st</sup> December ... there are specials, prices go down, and alcohol is highly available! ... [mixed group, Verena]*

Access was also linked to the norm of adults sending children to purchase alcohol on their behalf which consequently results in sometimes buying for themselves.

*They send the kids to go buy for them at the shebeen; when they are done, they have left bits of the alcohol and ... the kids finish it off [male group, Atteridgeville]*



## Advertising, packaging, promotion and youth drinking behaviours

Alcohol advertising that is attractive through the use of colour, images and settings such as youth having fun, creative slogans, and images of fruit to demonstrate flavours often leads youth to try different brands and beverages.



*FR: I wanted to say that this Castle Lite, the new brand, ... now it's got an indicator that shows that it is extra cold, meaning that it is extra monate [delicious or nice]... young people are attracted to buy it. MR: It gives you the extra cold refreshment ...like when you feel hot try Castle Lite and you will be fine because it's extra cold... And it unlocks...It does not only give you a cold feeling to cool you down, but it unlocks the cold from inside you; so the whole body will be refreshed [mixed group, Verena]*

Promotional activities including celebrity events, competitions, and discounts such as 'happy hour', 'ladies night' or 'buy 1 get 1 free' attract youth to taverns.

*MR: Sometimes you'll hear people talk and say it's Thursday, its Ladies' Night... MR: Yes and its 6 to 6 [6pm in the evening to 6am morning] MR: Ja! FR: They say Ladies' Night because ladies get their alcohol for free [mixed group, Verena]*

Youth are exposed to gendered marketing strategies that attract women to drink ciders/alcopops, flavoured pre-mixes (brandy and juice) which are sweet.

*MR: Brutal Fruit is mostly drunk by the ladies. So ... like its market is the ladies... They know that most of the time it is the girls that drink this Brutal Fruit. So, this advert is for (the) ladies that is why they are using the lady to advertise this brutal fruit [mixed group, Verena]*

On the other hand, men were targeted by beer adverts using symbols and images portraying conventional notions of masculinity such as strength, success and aspiration.

*Champion men drink a champion beer. It makes me feel like it starts here, it starts by drinking Black Label, in order for me to be a champion, and I need to start there... [mixed group, Verena]*

*... Yah! You have a bigger picture in your mind after you have drank Hansa. You would say again like 'Brewed for the dreamers'. If you have dreams then it gives you the courage to take action towards achieving your dreams. You see neh! [mixed group, Atteridgeville]*

Females also expressed being attracted to light or flavoured beer adverts:

*FP: The most attractive adverts of alcohol are the Flying Fish ones [chorus: Yah!] Make no mistake! They have a good way of attracting people that they must try the new flavors and even the people they use on the advert neh! Like it is very youthful ... [FP: you look like you like it... laughter] And I do, shame with all my heart, very much. [Interrupt MP: You can see it too, they advertise with a smile, you can also fall for that] FP: [they are also showing] different flavors, this is the latest flavor. MP: When you look at it, like you are chilling at the beach, drinking. [MP: You go wow! And try it] [mixed group, Atteridgeville]*

## Consequences of alcohol consumption

While respondents cited some benefits of alcohol consumption including temporary emotional relief, bravery and heightened fun, they mostly discussed the negative consequences, including interpersonal violence, unsafe sexual intercourse, HIV risk and potential sexual assault and interpersonal violence.

*Uhm... when it comes to sexual intercourse. Okay, I go to the tavern, I get drunk, therefore I'm looking for a girl, then I find that girl we go wherever we go to, to have sex then like we forget the safety-first... [male group, Verena]*

*FP: Eeh, you can get away with it when you don't want, but it is not easy. It is either you run or chase them away cos when they realise that you want to run, they are going to kick you. And if they get you they are going to rape you... and when you are intoxicated, you are unable to fight him back. They say alcohol hit you in the knees and you are not able to fight him off. You try to push him and you find the person is a giant old man. [female group, Atteridgeville]*

## Conclusion

The results of this study have demonstrated that alcohol is a driver of HIV risk and potential sexual assault. This is often in the context of harmful alcohol drinking. Easy access and strong alcohol advertising campaigns increase youth vulnerability to harmful drinking and related sexual risk behaviour and vulnerability. Public policies need to protect young people from easy access, persuasive and appealing advertising as a matter of urgency for better public health outcomes. Norms and standards that have been legislated need effective implementation. It is important to regulate alcohol availability in communities and ensure that children and youth are not exposed to the product. Advocacy efforts, public education and media literacy are required to shift norms that advertisers use to attract youth to consume alcohol.