

Navigating the Road to Health

Understanding Declining Well-Care Visit Attendance Among Children of Adolescent Mothers in South Africa

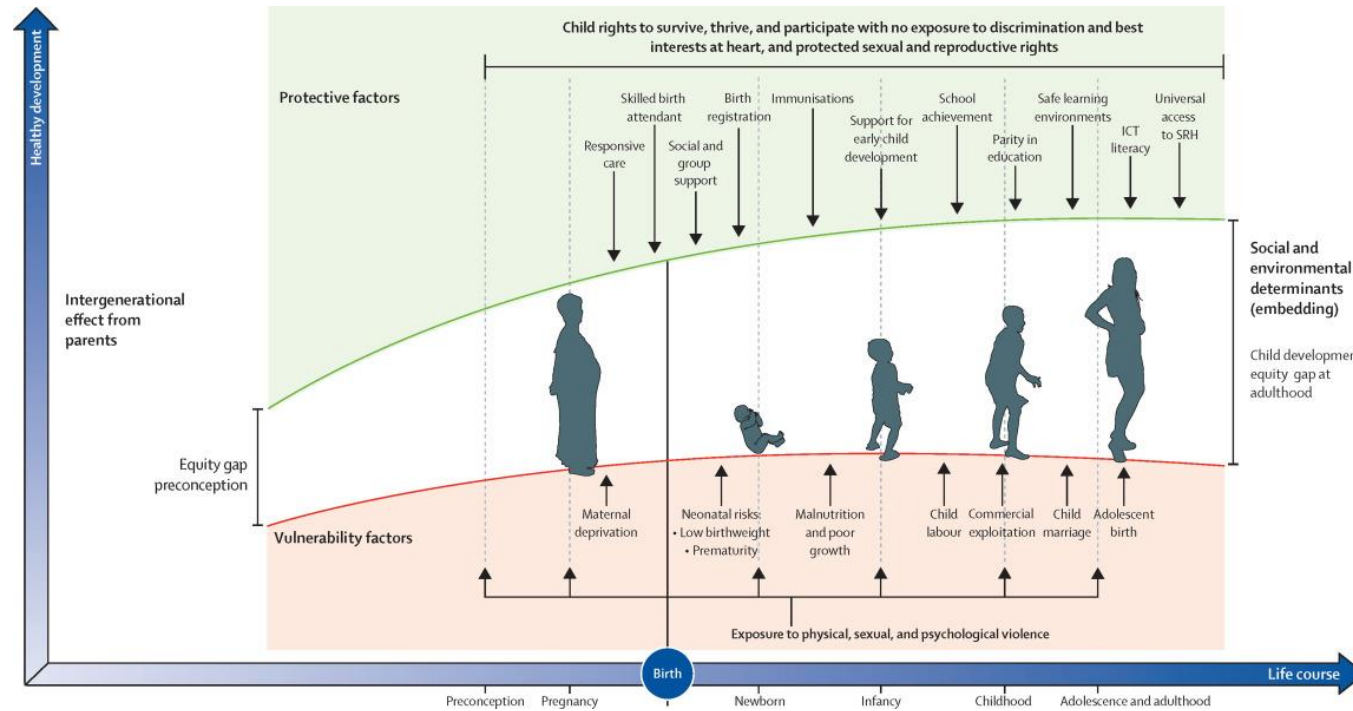
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Well-Care Visits

Addressing risk in early-life can impact health and well-being along the life course



Source: Clarke et al., Lancet (2020)

Well-Care Visits

Improving the health and wellbeing of children and adolescents: guidance on scheduled child and adolescent well-care visits



unicef
for every child

World Health Organization

	3-6 d	6 w	10 w	14 w	4 m	5 m	6 m	7 m	8 m	9 m	10 m	11 m	12 m	14 m	16 m	18 m
Growth monitoring & promotion																
PMTCT/HIV																
TB Status																
Immunisation																
Feeding																
Vitamin A																
Deworming																
Development screening																
Oral health																

- ✓ Promotion
- ✓ Prevention
- ✓ Early detection
- ✓ Integrated management of childhood illness



Rationale for this study

Children born to adolescents experience worse outcomes compared to those born to adult mothers

In 2016, **16% of adolescent girls (15-19 years old)** had either given birth or were currently pregnant



Adolescent pregnancy

- Low access to health services
- Sexual risk behaviours



Children born to adolescent mothers

- Anthropometric failure and undernutrition
- Early breastfeeding cessation
- Delayed access to child support grant

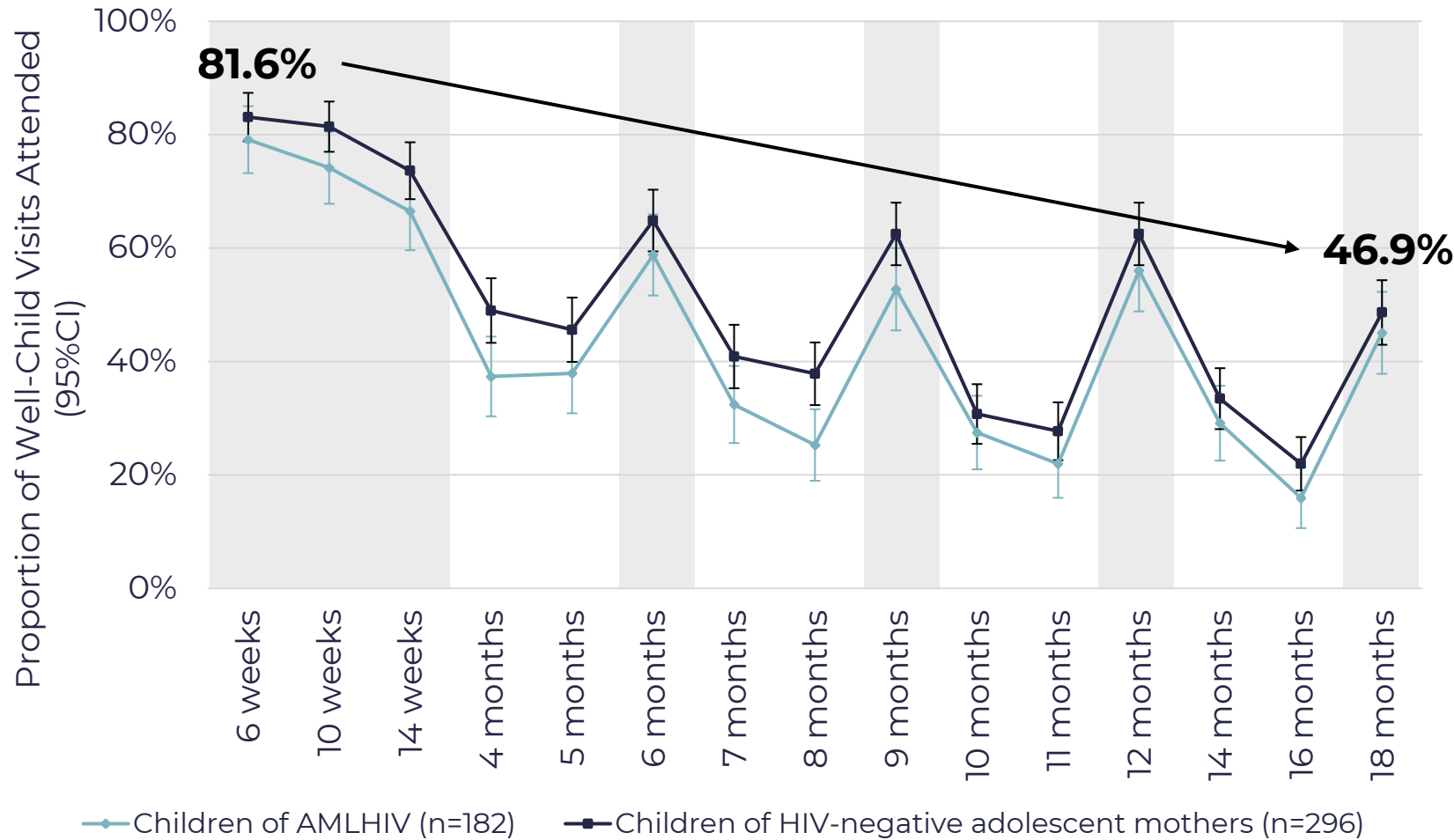
Children with perinatal HIV exposure:

- 3 x higher risk of vertical transmission of HIV
- Lower access to early infant HIV testing
- Increased risk of negative outcomes from vaccine-preventable diseases

Sources: Christofides et al. 2014; Jonas et al. 2016; Nkosi et al. 2019; Wood and Jewkes 2006; South African DHS 2016; Govender et al., 2017; Ramraj et al., 2018; Horwood et al., 2013; le Roux et al., 2019; Branson et al., 2013; Ngandu et al., 2019; Finlay et al., 2011; Fall et al. 2015; Welch et al., 2023

SUB-OPTIMAL & DECLINING ATTENDANCE

Well-care Visit Attendance by Maternal HIV Status among children ≥ 19 months old (n=440)



- Decline in attendance over time.
- Higher attendance during visits that coincide with the childhood immunisation schedule.
- No evidence of difference by maternal HIV-status

Vaccine coverage and timeliness published in *Vaccine* this week!



Wittesaele, C et al. In Review.

Themes mapped onto COM-B & TDF

COM-B	TDF	THEME
CAPABILITY	Behavioural regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritising children's health • Indifference & tolerance of harsh attitudes from healthcare workers
	Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of health promotion and prevention • Receiving guidance about well-child services & the RtH booklet • Good comprehension of well-child services and childhood vaccinations
	Memory, attention, & decision processes Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with nurse's schedule Sub-theme: Decision to skip visits despite intention to adhere to schedule • Organisational & financial acumen
OPPORTUNITY	Environmental context & resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's attendance is not influenced by adolescent mother's availability • Barriers: Poor accessibility, lack of childcare support, service delivery factors, COVID-19, weather • Facilitators: RtH Booklet, Support, mother's availability, accessibility of services
	Social influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's caretakers value attendance
MOTIVATION	Beliefs about capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescent mother is responsible for taking child to clinic • Opportunity to learn & obtain reassurance about child's health
	Beliefs about consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of child illness if visits missed Sub-theme: Avoid criticism from nurses when child is sick • Nurses penalize missed visits
	Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information seeking
	Intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of well-child services & childhood immunisations Sub-theme: Decline of well-child visit importance • Compliance with schedule
	Reinforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurses monitor attendance
	Social professional role and identify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescent mother's role is to care for child • Adolescent mothers presenting themselves as "good moms"

Wittesaele, C et al. In Review.

MOTIVATION

Importance of well-care services & childhood immunisations

... it was difficult because you dread the distance, but you understand that it's necessary. (#002)

I feel like I am not in the mood, but then I have no choice because I am a mother... I have to take this child... I have to cancel that job and not go to it because I have to take the child to the clinic... That job will pass and it will be given to someone else. (#014)

→ **Perceived benefit of well-care visits declined**

I don't miss [well-child visits] until she reaches 1 year. (#008)



CAPABILITY

- Compliance with schedule
- Organisational & financial acumen
- Indifference & tolerance of harsh attitudes from healthcare workers

Yes, they shout, I have that thing that says there is a reason they shout. They would never just shout at you; they have a right... They are helping your life at the end... Without knowing them I love them; I love it maybe it's being used to it. (#011)



OPPORTUNITY

Barriers

- Distance and cost of transport
- Weather
- Clinic hours, unsuitable waiting area, COVID-19
- Lacking of availability (school/work commitments)

Facilitators

- Road to Health booklet
- Social support network
- Mother's availability
- Accessibility of service



Since you've never had a child, the clinic shows you how you take care of a child, what are the dos and don'ts when you have a child. (#001)

[My child's dad] knows first before I go, so we are able to prepare... He knows he has to give me money to go to the clinic. (#001)

I struggle...I get a letter from school that explains that I am a student and I needed to bring my child to the clinic, so I'm served faster because of that. (#016)

SUPPORTING WELL-CARE VISIT ATTENDANCE

Existing scaffolding to promote attendance



Capable & highly motivated

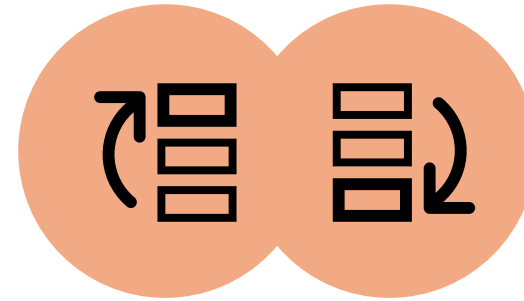


High decision-making autonomy

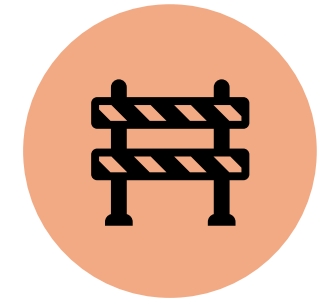


Availability of support

Emphasise importance of ongoing attendance and address barriers



Declining importance over time



Barriers to access remain

→ Missed opportunity to offer services to adolescent girls and young women

THANK YOU

Adolescent mothers, their children and families
Researchers | Partners & Funders

