



This generation of young people can transform all our futures. There is no more pressing task in global health than ensuring they have the resources to do so. This means it will be crucial to invest urgently in their health, education, livelihoods, and participation.

**Professor George Patton, Commission Leader**



# OUR FUTURE

A *Lancet* Commission on  
Adolescent Health and Wellbeing

**South African Launch**

**29th September 2016**



THE LANCET

Our Future: A Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing was launched in 2016.

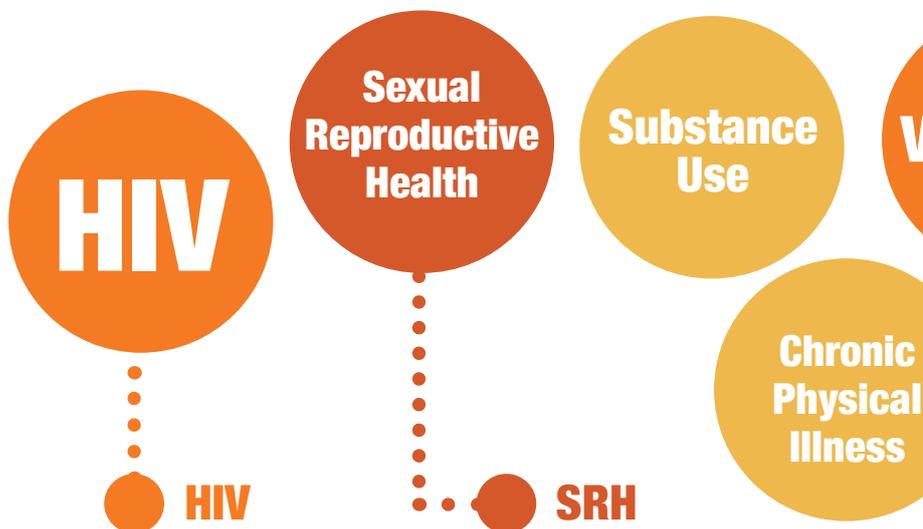
It brings together perspectives from public health, economics, political and social science, behavioural science and neuroscience and provides recommendations for action to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of adolescents.

Investment in this generation, the largest in human history (1.8 billion, 89% of whom live in developing countries) will yield a triple dividend of benefits—today, into adulthood, and for the next generation of children. The Lancet Commission report makes a number of recommendations towards securing adolescent health and well-being. The South Africa launch takes place in the context of a meeting which aims to identify implementation challenges and knowledge gaps for effective action.

**South Africa is multi-burdened, however, unlike many countries, it has strong research capacity, innovative programmes and significant data across a broad range of adolescent health areas. These examples give insight into a number of these areas.**

STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUNG

# Adolescent health



**HIV**

South Africa recently hosted the international AIDS conference with the theme of 'access equity rights now'. A clear message was that attention to adolescents is key to ending the epidemic.

#### NATIONAL DATA ON HIV -

- Prevalence among those aged 15-24 years has decreased significantly since 2005, but is still high (7.1% in 2012)
- Very high incidence among young people, particularly young girls - nearly a quarter of all new HIV infections in 2012 were in young women aged 15-24.
- HIV-positive young people aged 15-24 are less likely to be on treatment than any other age group (ART coverage is 14% vs 45% for children aged 0-14)
- Condom use has decreased among young people aged 15-24, reversing a previous trend of increasing use
- Only 29% of young people aged 15-24 had correct knowledge about HIV prevention/transmission
- Sexual risk behaviours among those aged 15-24 continue to increase (early sexual debut, multiple sexual partners, age-disparate relationships)

**SRH**

Sexual behaviour and pregnancy among South African teenage girls aged 15 years and younger: of those who had ever had sex, 42% had more than 1 sexual partner in the 3 months prior to the study. 31.4% reported always using a condom. (South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey, 2011)

**42%**  
of young people had more than 1 sexual partner in the 3 months prior to the study

Only  
**29%**  
of young people aged 15-24 had correct knowledge about HIV prevention

# and wellbeing in South Africa

## Violence

## Nutrition

## Injury

## Mental Health

## Infectious Diseases

### Violence

Two studies, involving 3103 men and boys in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape identified masculinity profiles in terms of a range of male behaviours which vary in degree of violence. Led by Rachel Jewkes, the studies showed that lower socio-economic status is associated with increased likelihood of childhood trauma. Both these attributes are associated with a belief in the superiority of men, which makes a man more likely to rape. Understanding why men rape is key to developing strategies to address the issue - especially important for adolescents as they become sexually active.

### Nutrition

Chris Kuzawa, a collaborator on Birth to Twenty Plus (Bt20+), a project of the Human Sciences Research Council, found that the nutrition of a woman during pregnancy, and of her infant daughter during her first few years, are linked with the birth weight of that daughter's own baby when she has grown up and gives birth. This suggests that the impact of under-nutrition persists across generations.

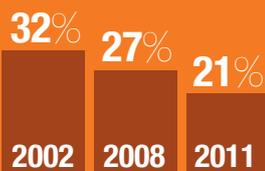
The South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2011 found 7% of those surveyed in 2011 to be underweight (weight for age) and 23% overweight (Age-adjusted BMI >25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>).

### Mental Health

Professor Priscilla Reddy and collaborators on the National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2011 found among Grade 8-11 learners during the 6 months preceding the survey, that:

- 1 in 4 teens had experienced sad or hopeless feelings
- 17.6% had considered attempting suicide
- 17.8% had one or more suicide attempts
- 31.5% of teen suicide attempts required medical treatment
- 43.6% had tried to seek help (counselling) after considering suicide

Young people who felt unsafe at school



YRBS 2011

The South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2011 found

**7%** underweight **23%** overweight

Among Grade 8-11 learners

**18%** had one or more **suicide attempts**

YRBS 2011

The 3rd South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS), was conducted in 2011 by the Human Sciences Research Council following surveys in 2002 and 2008.

## Research organisations in South Africa working in adolescent health include, among others:

Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA)

[www.caprisa.org](http://www.caprisa.org)

Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

[www.hsrc.ac.za](http://www.hsrc.ac.za)

The Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Human Development (University of the Witwatersrand)

[www.wits.ac.za/coe-human/](http://www.wits.ac.za/coe-human/)

Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute

[www.wrhi.ac.za](http://www.wrhi.ac.za)

South African Medical Research Council

[www.mrc.ac.za](http://www.mrc.ac.za)

Research Centre for Adolescent and Child Health (REACH) - University of Cape Town

[www.paediatrics.uct.ac.za/research-centre-adolescent-and-child-health-reach](http://www.paediatrics.uct.ac.za/research-centre-adolescent-and-child-health-reach)

MRC/Wits Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research Unit (Agincourt)

[www.agincourt.co.za](http://www.agincourt.co.za)

Healthy Adolescents & Young Adults Research Unit (HAYA)

[www.hayarsearchunit.com](http://www.hayarsearchunit.com)

Africa Health Research Institute

[www.ahri.org](http://www.ahri.org)

Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation

[desmondtutuhivfoundation.org.za](http://desmondtutuhivfoundation.org.za)

## Hosted by:

### The HAYA (Healthy Adolescents & Young Adults) Research Unit

Unit is a partnership between the Centre for Maternal, Adolescent, Reproductive and Child Health (MARCH) at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and the Africa Health Research Institute (AHRI). HAYA works to engage youth, conduct research and develop partnerships and capacity to improve the health of Africa's adolescents.

[www.hayarsearchunit.com](http://www.hayarsearchunit.com)

### The DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Human Development

at the University of the Witwatersrand is a network of the best South African researchers in the study of child, family and community well-being. It produces and supports excellent research, expands research capacity and shares its findings in the service of human development in South Africa and beyond.

[www.wits.ac.za/coe-human/](http://www.wits.ac.za/coe-human/)

### The Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute

aims to tackle Africa's health challenges through science and innovation and lead the way in the field of HIV, sexual and reproductive health and related conditions. The institute comprises an extensive research portfolio, along with programmatic support, training, policy development, health systems strengthening and technical assistance at a national and international level.

[www.wrhi.ac.za](http://www.wrhi.ac.za)

### The Department of Health's

mission is to improve health status through the prevention of illnesses and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The key research areas which their programmes focus on are HIV/AIDS, TB and Maternal and Child Health.

[www.doh.gov.za](http://www.doh.gov.za)

