

SUMMARY

I am a Research Fellow in the Sexual Health (including HIV) Unit at the Institute of Tropical Medicine (Antwerp), specialising in access to health services, including HIV and non-communicable disease care, in Eastern and Southern Africa. I am an epidemiologist and mixed-methods researcher with 20+ peer-reviewed publications in leading international journals such as *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, *BMJ Open*, *Vaccine*, *AIDS and Behavior*, and *Journal of the International AIDS Society*. I am a recipient of the Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy Award and have led the conceptualisation of successful grant applications funded by major international donors, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In 2025, I defended my PhD at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, examining engagement in routine child health services among children of adolescent mothers in South Africa.

My work is motivated by the recognition that health is shaped far more by structural context and circumstance than by individual choice. I approach global health research and practice with a problem-driven perspective, guided by a commitment to ethical research and to having a positive impact for participants and their communities. For over a decade, I have worked across the research–practice continuum, combining academic research with long-term fieldwork, programme implementation, and close collaboration with local partners and stakeholders. Building on my work in maternal, adolescent, and child health, I am increasingly interested in how existing HIV- and maternal-child health-focused service delivery platforms within primary care can be expanded to serve other populations, including men and older/ageing adults.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Life-course health | Health Services & Systems Research | Primary care | Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health | HIV | Immunisation | Sexual & Reproductive Health

EDUCATION

2025	London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine PhD - Epidemiology & Population Health <i>Well-Care Visit Attendance and Retention Among Children of Adolescent Mothers in the Eastern Cape, South Africa: A Mixed-Methods Study</i>
2015	London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine MSc Public Health (Health Economics Stream)
2013	Amsterdam University College Bachelor's in Liberal Arts and Sciences (Major in Social Sciences with concentration in Public Health and Law) with distinction (Honours)
2010	United World College of South-East Asia International Baccalaureate

POSITIONS

Dec 2025 -	Research Fellow Department of Public Health, Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp <i>Antwerp, Belgium</i>
Nov 2021 – Nov 2022	Project Coordinator (Part-time, Maternity cover) Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology and International Health London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine <i>London, United Kingdom</i>
Jan 2019 – Oct 2021	Programme Manager Department of Social Policy & Intervention, University of Oxford <i>Oxford, United Kingdom</i>
Aug 2017 – Dec 2018	Project Manager Department of Social Policy & Intervention, University of Oxford <i>Oxford, United Kingdom</i>
Oct 2016 – Jul 2017	Study Manager (HEY BABY, Mzantsi Wakho) Oxford Research South Africa Ltd., University of Oxford <i>King William's Town, South Africa</i>
Oct 2015 – Sep 2016	Fieldwork Manager (Sinovuyo Teen Study) Oxford Research South Africa Ltd., University of Oxford

TEACHING

2026-	Course Facilitator and Lecturer Research Approaches in International Health, Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp
2022-2024	Course Facilitator Global Adolescent Health Short Course, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
2018-2021	Guest lecturer MSc Evidence Based Intervention and Policy Evaluation, Department of Social Policy & Intervention, University of Oxford
2020	Guest lecturer MSc Behaviour Change, University College London

ACADEMIC SERVICE & AFFILIATIONS

2025-	Honorary research affiliate Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town
2022-24	Research Ethics Committee Member London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
2020-21	Research Ethics Committee Member Department of Social Policy & Intervention, University of Oxford

SKILLS

Research methods: Health services and systems research; longitudinal cohort studies; mixed-methods and qualitative research; evidence synthesis

Implementation & Engagement: Field-based research delivery; programme implementation; stakeholder and policy engagement

Data & Analysis: STATA, NVIVO, Rayyan, RevMan

Language: English (mother-tongue); Dutch (fluent); French (basic)

RESEARCH GRANTS & AWARDS

2023	Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy Award
2019	Awards for Excellence at Department of Social Policy & Intervention, University of Oxford
2018-2020	Gates Foundation (Grand Challenges Exploration). US\$100,000. Co-Investigator. Ask, Boost, Connect, Discuss (ABCD) for Improved Mental Health for HIV-positive Adolescent Mothers in Africa. Agnes Ronan (PI), Elona Toska (Co-I) & Lucie Cluver (Co-I).

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

2026

Wittesaale, C., Toska, E., Cluver, L. D., Weiss, H. A., & Doyle, A. M. (2025). Factors Associated with Retention in Routine Well-Care Visits Among Children of Adolescent Mothers Living With and Without HIV: A Community-Based Study in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. *BMJ Open*, 15(12), e106412. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2025-106412>

Wittesaale, C., Mangqalaza, H., Toska, E., Cluver, L., Weiss, H.A., and Doyle, A.M. Well-care Visit Attendance Among Children of Adolescent Mothers in South Africa: A Theory-informed Mixed-Methods Study. (*under review*)

2025

Chen-Charles, J., Bekker, L., Jochim, J., **Wittesaale, C.,** Cluver, L., and Toska, E. Missed HIV prevention opportunities: the PrEP cascade among adolescent girls and young women who are pregnant and/or mothers in South Africa. *Frontiers in Reproductive Health* 42, no. 26 (2025). DOI: [10.3389/frph.2025.1648786](https://doi.org/10.3389/frph.2025.1648786).

Little, M. T., Butchart, A., Massetti, G. M., Hermosilla, S., **Wittesaale, C.,** Pearson, I., Jochim, J., Swingler, S., Schupp, C., Böhrer, I. A., Neelakantan, L., Backhaus, S., Martin, M., Mase, M., Page, S., Janowski, R., Blackwell, A., Bernstein, K. T., Rakotomalala, S., & Cluver, L. (2025). Interventions to prevent, reduce, and respond to violence against children and adolescents: a systematic review of systematic reviews to update the INSPIRE Framework. *The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health*, 1, 49–61. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(25\)00214-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(25)00214-7)

Zhou, S., Laurenzi, C., Tolmay, J., **Wittesaale, C.,** Langwenya, N., Armstrong, A., Gulaid, L., & Toska, E. (2025). Determinants of Antiretroviral Treatment Adherence Among Young Mothers Living with

2024

Wittesaele, C., Toska, E., Cluver, L., Weiss, H.A., Collins, C., Amponsah-Dacosta, E. and Doyle, A.M. Vaccine Coverage and Timeliness among Children of Adolescent Mothers: A Community-Based Study in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Vaccine* 42, no. 26 (2024): 126318. DOI: [10.1016/j.vaccine.2024.126318](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2024.126318).

Toska, E., Zhou, S., Laurenzi, C.A., Saal, W., Rudgard, W., **Wittesaele, C.**, Langwenya, N., Jochim, J., Banounnin, B.H., Gulaid, L., Armstrong, A., Sherman, G., Edun, O., Sherr, L. and Cluver, L. Healthcare Provisions Associated with Multiple HIV-Related Outcomes among Adolescent Girls and Young Women Living with HIV in South Africa: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 27, no. 2 (2024): 1–9. DOI: [10.1002/jia2.26212](https://doi.org/10.1002/jia2.26212) .

Cluver, L., Jochim, J., Mapukata, Y., **Wittesaele, C.**, Shenderovich, Y., Mafuya, S., Steventon Roberts, K., Banounnin B., Sherr L., and Toska E. Associations of Formal Childcare Use with Health and Human Capital Development for Adolescent Mothers and Their Children in South Africa: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, no. March 2023 (2023): 1–17. DOI: [10.1111/cch.13138](https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.13138).

2023

Steventon Roberts, K. J., Smith, C., Toska, E., Cluver, L., **Wittesaele, C.**, Langwenya N., Shenderovich, Y., Saal, W., Jochim, J., Chen-Charles, J., Marlow, M. and Sherr, L. Exploring the Cognitive Development of Children Born to Adolescent Mothers in South Africa. *Infant and Child Development*, no. January March 7, 2023): 1–21. DOI: [10.1002/icd.2408](https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.2408).

Hertzog, L., Chen-Charles, J., **Wittesaele, C.**, De Graaf, K., Titus, R., Kelly, J., Langwenya, N., Baerecke, L., Banounnin, B., Saal, W., Southall, J., Cluver, L. and Toska, E. Data Management Instruments to Protect the Personal Information of Children and Adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa. *IASSIST Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (2023): 1–15. DOI: [10.29173/iq1044](https://doi.org/10.29173/iq1044).

Jochim, J., Meinck, F., Toska, E., Roberts, K., **Wittesaele, C.**, Langwenya, N., and Cluver, L. “Who Goes Back to School after Birth? Factors Associated with Postpartum School Return among Adolescent Mothers in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.” *Global Public Health* 18, no. 1 (January 2, 2023). DOI: [10.1080/17441692.2022.2049846](https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2022.2049846).

2022

Toska, E., Wylene S., Chen-Charles, J., **Wittesaele, C.**, Langwenya, N., Jochim J., Steventon Roberts, K.J., Anquandah, J., Banounnin, B.H., Laurenzi, C., Sherr, L. and Cluver, L. (2022) Achieving the Health and Well-Being Sustainable Development Goals among Adolescent Mothers and Their Children in South Africa: Cross-Sectional Analyses of a Community-Based Mixed HIV-Status Cohort. *PLoS ONE*, 17, no. 12: 1–13. DOI: [10.1371/journal.pone.0278163](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0278163) .

Steventon Roberts, K., Smith, C., Toska, E., Cluver, L., Haag, K., **Wittesaele, C.**, Langwenya, N., Jochim, J., Saal, W., Shenderovich, Y., & Sherr, L. (2022). Risk factors for poor mental health among adolescent mothers in South Africa. *Psychology, Health and Medicine*, 00(00), 1–18. DOI: [10.1080/13548506.2022.2124295](https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2022.2124295)

Steventon Roberts, K. J., Smith, C., Cluver, L., Toska, E., Jochim, J., **Wittesaele, C.**, Marlow, M., & Sherr, L. (2022). Adolescent mothers and their children affected by HIV—An exploration of maternal mental health, and child cognitive development. *PLoS ONE*, 17(10 October), 1–20. DOI: [10.1371/journal.pone.0275805](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0275805)

Sherr, L., Haag, K., Steventon Roberts, K. J., Cluver, L. D., **Wittesaele, C.**, Saliwe, B., Tolmay, J., Langwenya, N., Jochim, J., Saal, W., Zhou, S., Marlow, M., Chen-Charles, J. J., & Toska, E. (2022). The development of children born to young mothers with no, first- or second-generation HIV acquisition in the Eastern Cape province, South Africa: a cross-sectional study. *BMJ Open*, 12(10), e058340. DOI: [10.1136/bmjopen-2021-058340](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-058340)

Jochim, J., Meinck, F., Steventon Roberts, K. J., **Wittesaele, C.**, Langwenya, N., Toska, E., & Cluver, L. (2022). Which factors affect postpartum educational enrollment of adolescent mothers in South Africa? A latent class analysis. *Psychology, Health and Medicine*, 00(00), 1–17. DOI: [10.1080/13548506.2022.2108085](https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2022.2108085)

Jochim, J., Meinck, F., Toska, E., Roberts, K., **Wittesaele, C.**, Langwenya, N., & Cluver, L. (2022). Who goes back to school after birth? Factors associated with postpartum school return among adolescent

2021

Hertzog, L., **Wittesaele, C.**, Titus, R., Chen, J. J., Kelly, J., Langwenya, N., Baerecke, L., & Toska, E. (2021). Seven essential instruments for POPIA compliance in research involving children and adolescents in South Africa. South African Journal of Science, 117(9–10), 1–5. DOI: [10.17159/SAJS.2021/12290](https://doi.org/10.17159/SAJS.2021/12290)

2020

Toska, E., Cluver, L., Laurenzi, C. A., **Wittesaele, C.**, Sherr, L., Zhou, S., & Langwenya, N. (2020). Reproductive aspirations, contraception use and dual protection among adolescent girls and young women: the effect of motherhood and HIV status. Journal of the International AIDS Society, 23(S5), 47–53. DOI: [10.1002/jia2.25558](https://doi.org/10.1002/jia2.25558)

Cluver, L., Shenderovich, Y., Meinck, F., Berezin, M. N., Doubt, J., Ward, C. L., Parra-Cardona, J., Lombard, C., Lachman, J. M., **Wittesaele, C.**, Wessels, I., Gardner, F., & Steinert, J. I. (2020). Parenting, mental health and economic pathways to prevention of violence against children in South Africa. Social Science and Medicine, 262(July), 113194. DOI: [10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113194](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113194)

-2019

Cluver, L. D., Meinck, F., Steinert, J. I., Shenderovich, Y., Doubt, J., Romero, R. H., Lombard, C. J., Redfern, A., Ward, C. L., Tsoanyane, S., Nzima, D., Sibanda, N., **Wittesaele, C.**, Stone, S. De, Boyes, M. E., Catanho, R., Lachman, J. M., Salah, N., Nocuza, M., & Gardner, F. (2018). Parenting for Lifelong Health: a pragmatic cluster randomised controlled trial of a non-commercialised parenting programme for adolescents and their families in South Africa. BMJ Global Health, 3(1), e000539. DOI: [10.1136/bmjgh-2017-000539](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2017-000539)

Cluver, L., Meinck, F., Shenderovich, Y., Ward, C. L., Romero, R. H., Redfern, A., Lombard, C., Doubt, J., Steinert, J., Catanho, R., **Wittesaele, C.**, De Stone, S., Salah, N., Mpimpilashe, P., Lachman, J., Loening, H., Gardner, F., Blanc, D., Nocuza, M., & Lechowicz, M. (2016). A parenting programme to prevent abuse of adolescents in South Africa: study protocol for a randomised controlled trial. Trials, 17(1), 328. DOI: [10.1186/s13063-016-1452-8](https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-016-1452-8)

REPORTS

WFP (2019). Leaving No-one Behind: How WFP's Approach to HIV Social Protection Will Help Us Achieve Zero Hunger in Eastern and Southern Africa. ([link](#))

Cluver, L., Toska, E., Hodes, R., Orkin, M., Gardner, F., Boyes, M., Sherr, L., Casale, M., Carty, C., Gittings, L., Langwenya, N., Natukunda, H., Pantelic, M., Zhou, S., Vale, B., Haghighat, R., **Wittesaele, C.**, & Evans Gutierrez, V. (2019). Pathways to survival: Identifying psychosocial, family and service mechanisms to improve anti-retroviral adherence amongst adolescents living with HIV in Southern Africa. ([link](#))

INVITED PRESENTATIONS, CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS

02/07/2025	Well-Care Visit Journeys and Missed Opportunities for Children and Their Adolescent Mothers. (Oral presentation)	<i>Early Childhood Systems: Perspectives and Research Working Paper and Webinar Series</i> (link). Online/Cape Town, South Africa.
25/02/2025	Understanding Declining Well-Care Visit Attendance Among Children of Adolescent Mothers in South Africa: Research-in-Progress. (Oral presentation)	<i>Centre for Social Sciences Research (CSSR) seminar, University of Cape Town.</i> Cape Town, South Africa.
27/09/2024	Navigating the Road to Health: Understanding Declining Well-Care Visit Attendance Among Children of Adolescent Mothers in South Africa. (Oral)	<i>World Congress of Epidemiology 2024.</i> Cape Town, South Africa.
27/09/2024	Unveiling Vaccination Disparities: Findings from a Community-based Study of Children of Adolescent Mothers in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. (Poster)	<i>World Congress of Epidemiology 2024.</i> Cape Town, South Africa.

24/07/2024	Leveraging Well-Care Visits to Deliver HIV Services to Children and Adolescent Mothers: A Community-Based Mixed-Methods Study in South Africa. (Poster)	<i>AIDS 2024, the 25th International AIDS Conference.</i>
25/04/2023	You dread the distance, but you understand that it's necessary: Mixed-methods study of well-care services engagement among children of adolescent mothers, Eastern Cape, South Africa. (Oral presentation)	<i>Munich, Germany.</i>
21/04/2021	Are we keeping our promise of health for all? Understanding access to essential child healthcare services among children of adolescent mothers in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.	<i>University of Cape Town, Centre for Social Sciences Research (CSSR) lunchtime seminar.</i>
17/09/2020	Making evidence work for you (Facilitator)	<i>Cape Town, South Africa.</i>
08/07/2020	Intergenerational patterns of healthcare access: Identifying adolescent maternal risk factors for child health service uptake in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.	<i>Research Degree Poster Event.</i>
27/01/2020	Accelerating Impact for Adolescent Girls and Young Women Living In Adversity: Understanding the effect of HIV and early motherhood (Presentation)	<i>Online.</i>
7/12/2019	HIV-Sensitive Social Protection: Harnessing SDGs for people living with HIV (Presentation)	<i>UNICEF ESAR Network Meeting.</i>
5/12/2019	Adolescent Mothers Living with HIV and their Children (Presentation)	<i>Online.</i>
7/5/2019	HIV-Sensitive Social Protection (Workshop)	<i>Research in Progress meeting.</i>
18/4/2018	Lessons from working with local, national and regional policymakers in Africa (Presentation)	<i>Online.</i>
28/11/2018	Empowered with Evidence: Using research and data to improve services for AYPLHIV (Skills building session for Healthcare Providers)	<i>UKRI GCRF Accelerate Hub Year 1 Meeting.</i>
06/07/2017	Sinovuyo Teen: Reducing child abuse for AIDS-affected adolescents in South Africa (Presentation)	<i>Cape Town, South Africa.</i>
26/10/2016	Between Testing and Implementation in the Real-World: A Parenting Programme to Prevent Abuse of Adolescents in South Africa (Presentation)	<i>WFP Satellite Symposium at ICASA Conference 2019.</i>
		<i>Kigali, Rwanda.</i>
		<i>International AIDS Society through CIPHER grant at ICASA Conference 2019.</i>
		<i>Kigali, Rwanda.</i>
		<i>World Food Programme Learning Event, Regional Bureau Nairobi.</i>
		<i>Nairobi, Kenya.</i>
		<i>ESRC O2RB Impact Conference 2018.</i>
		<i>Oxford, UK.</i>
		<i>PATA 2018 Youth Summit in partnership with Y+ (link).</i>
		<i>Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.</i>
		<i>SAAIDS Conference 2017.</i>
		<i>Durban, South Africa.</i>
		<i>South Africa government and PEPFAR Conference: Best Practices and Innovations in Reaching Adolescent Girls and Young Women.</i>
		<i>Pretoria, South Africa.</i>

VOLUNTEERING

2015	Event Manager, TEDxLSHTM <i>London, United Kingdom</i>
2014	Fieldwork Coordinator, Clowns Without Borders South Africa <i>Cape Town, South Africa</i>
2013	Volunteer, Emmaus Hospital <i>Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa</i>
2012	Volunteer, Yayasan Senyum <i>Denpasar, Indonesia</i>
2009	Volunteer, Kalahari Experience Teaching <i>Kalahari Desert, South Africa</i>
2009	Volunteer, Christina Noble Children's Foundation <i>Hanoi, Vietnam</i>
2006-10	Volunteer & Co-Funder, Drug Free Indonesia: Global Concern at UWCSEA <i>Singapore</i>