

## 4.R. Reproductive and child health

### Vitamin A Supplementation Among Children Aged 6-59 months in 23 sub-Saharan African Countries

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#### Background:

Vitamin A deficiency is a major contributor to under-five mortality. Improving vitamin A status of children through supplementation increases their resistance to disease and reduces childhood mortality.

#### Objectives:

To examine prevalence and determinants of Vitamin A Supplementation (VAS) among children aged 6-59 months in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

#### Methods:

We pooled cross-sectional data from the Demographic Health Surveys conducted in 23 SSA countries. Our study sample included 215, 511 children aged 6-59 months. The key outcome variable was VAS in the last 6 months. A multilevel logistic regression model was used to explore factors associated with VAS.

#### Results:

The overall coverage of VAS among children aged 6-59 months in SSA was 59.4%. VAS coverage was highest in Senegal (88.4%) and lowest in Guinea (40.8%). In the multivariable analysis, children whose mothers had primary (adjusted Odds Ratio (aOR) = 1.43; 95 % Confidence Interval (CI) 1.39, 1.47) or secondary and above educational (aOR = 1.72; 95% CI 1.67, 1.77) status were more likely to receive VAS as compared to children whose mothers had no formal education. Other factors associated with significantly increased likelihood of VAS were; living in urban areas, children of working mothers, children whose mothers had higher media exposure, children of older mothers as compared to children whose mothers were aged 15 to 19 years and older children as compared to children aged 6-11 months. At the country level, lower media exposure was significant and negatively associated with VAS.

#### Conclusions:

Universal coverage of VAS in SSA can be achieved through information, education and communication activities focusing most on children at risk of non-receipt of Vitamin A as highlighted in our study.

#### Key messages:

- Vitamin A supplementation coverage among children in sub-Saharan Africa is below the optimum level.
- To achieve universal coverage of Vitamin A supplementation in sub-Saharan Africa there is a need for sustained public health interventions.