



Building a supportive ecosystem for access to and retention in HIV care

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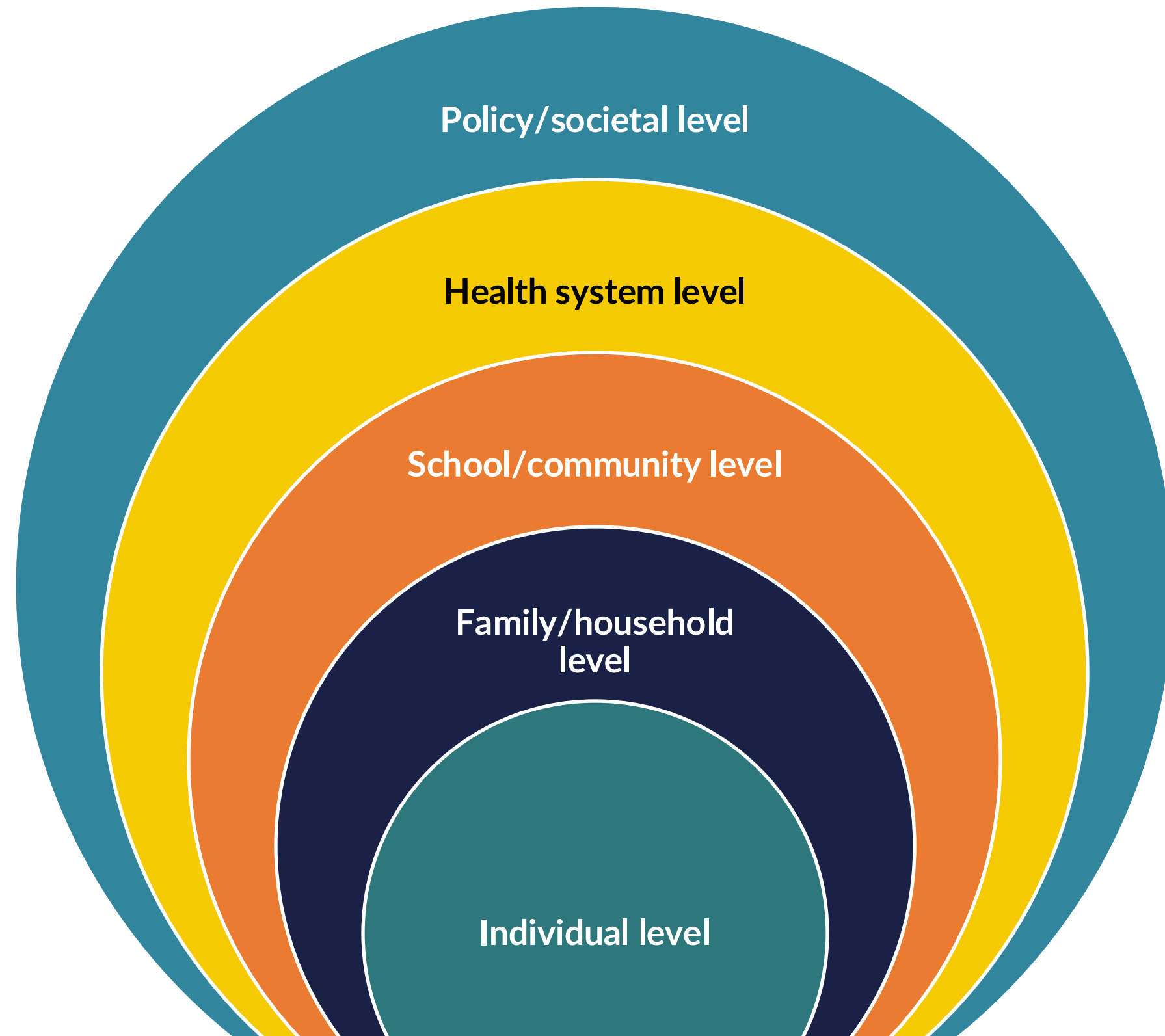
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Barriers and enablers to accessing, and staying in, care

- Adolescence is a period of transition, with multiple psychological, social, and biological changes happening at the same time
- For adolescents living with HIV, or living in high HIV burden areas, these changes combine with the need for routine engagement in testing and/or care
- This presentation shares key insights about factors shaping access to and retention in care in adolescents' ecosystems – and considers how to better respond to their diverse needs

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Socio-ecological models can help us to imagine these competing forces:

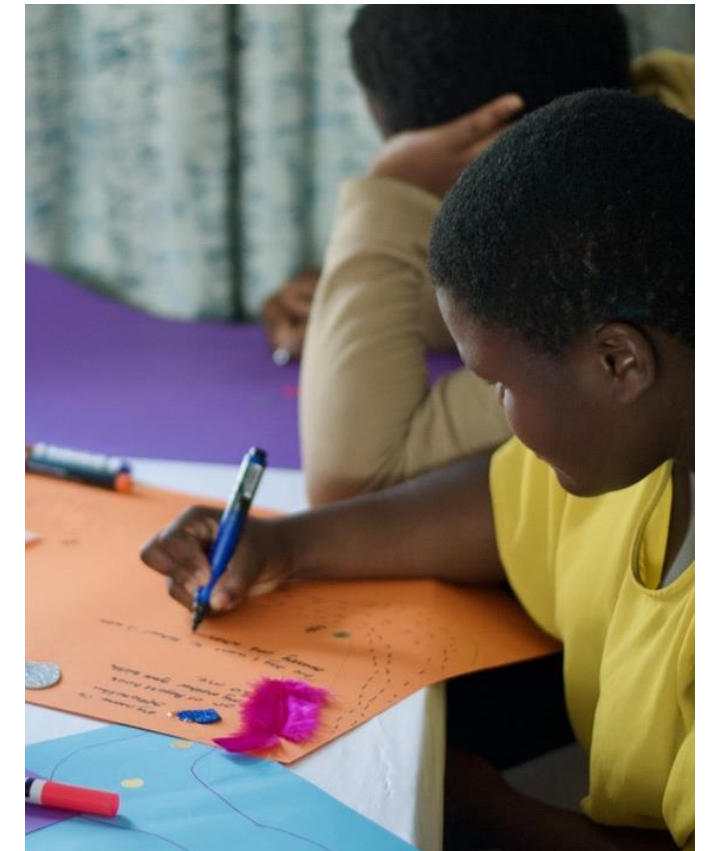


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Individual level

- **Stigma, self-esteem, mental health, and resilience** can all shape motivation to seek care, comfort with testing and initiating conversations with health care workers, or ability to overcome barriers to daily pill-taking
- Among a cohort of adolescent mothers living with HIV in South Africa (n=311), younger age at first birth (<18) and higher levels of internalized stigma were associated with poorer adherence

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*Masana Young Moms Project,
stakeholder engagement (2024)*

Family/household level

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Masana Young Moms Project, stakeholder engagement (2024)

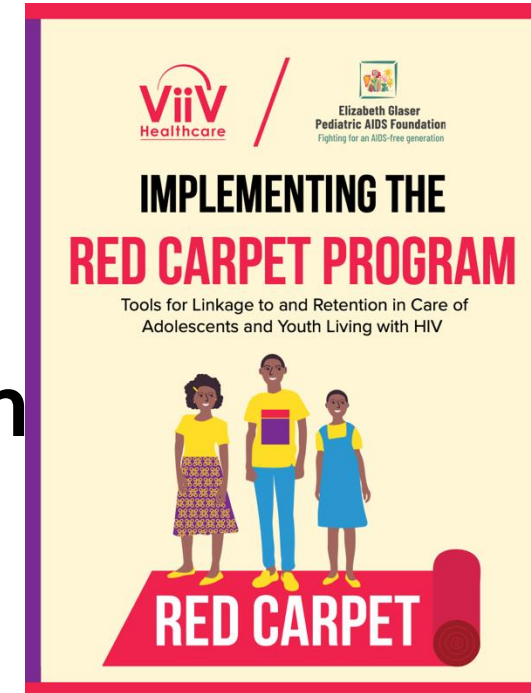


VUKA intervention, South Africa (Bhana et al, 2014)

- **Parental / caregiver availability and psychosocial support** can buffer some of these negative effects of internalized stigma
- **Disclosure of HIV status** – by parents/caregivers to children about their own status, as well as by adolescents to their family members – can reduce barriers to access care and enhance relationships
- **Resources within the household** also shape the type of health system engagement that is possible – especially in high-adversity settings

School + community level

- As schools are where the majority of adolescents spend most of their time, **health and education priorities** should be well-integrated
- **Supportive ecosystem:** engaging teachers, parents, community leadership, NGOs
- The *Red Carpet Program* (ViiV/EGPAF) works specifically to enhance care for adolescents living with HIV in boarding school environments, integrating testing, disclosure, counselling, and mentorship while ensuring timely ART supply



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Masana Young Moms Project, stakeholder engagement (2024)

Health system level

- Accessible, adolescent-responsive health services are critical to supporting adolescents' engagement in care
- Safe and affordable facilities + kind and respectful staff have been found to improve multiple HIV outcomes for AGYW living with HIV

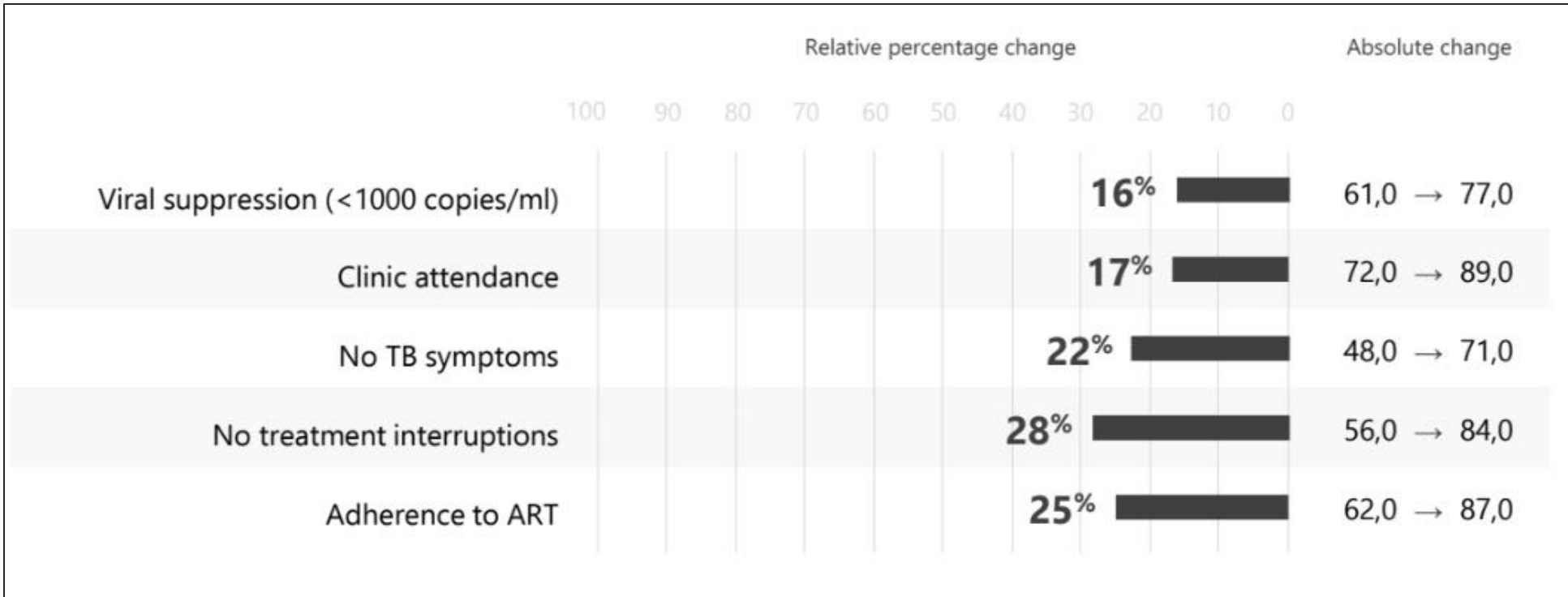
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Accessible clinics
(Safe & affordable)



Adolescent-responsive healthcare
(respectful & kind staff)

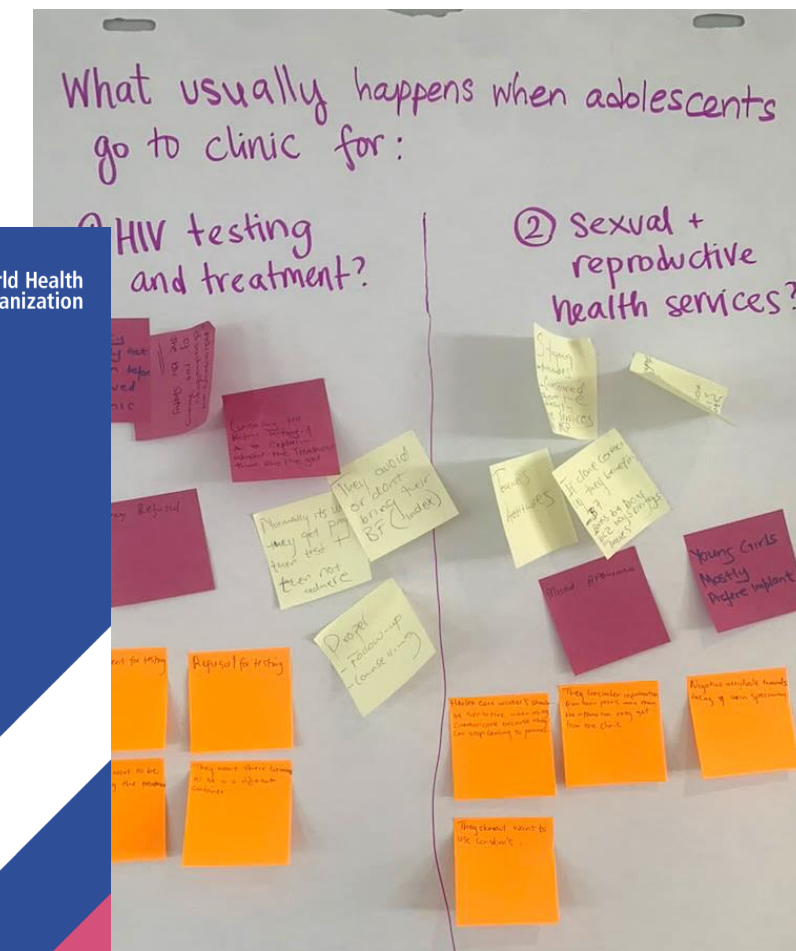


Toska et al, 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1002/jia2.26212>

Societal level (enabling policies and environments)

- Safety from gender-based violence, discrimination, and forced disclosure
- Removal of HIV criminalization laws
- Harmonizing age-of-consent laws for sexual activity, marriage, HIV testing, and initiation in care
- Recognizing adolescents' growing autonomy and their evolving capacity to make their own health decisions

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Gaps and future directions

- More **adolescent-driven solutions** are needed: peer support, adolescent advisory committees, and research that involves young people along the continuum
- More platforms for **multi-sector, intergenerational exchange** – to bridge perspectives and create places for dialogue
- **Stigma and discrimination** remain persistent roadblocks to care for adolescents especially

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Thank you

Contact

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