



**Elizabeth Glaser
Pediatric AIDS Foundation**
Fighting for an AIDS-free generation

Improved Identification, Linkage, and Retention of Adolescents and Youth Living with HIV in Malawi via Youth Champions in the Red Carpet Model



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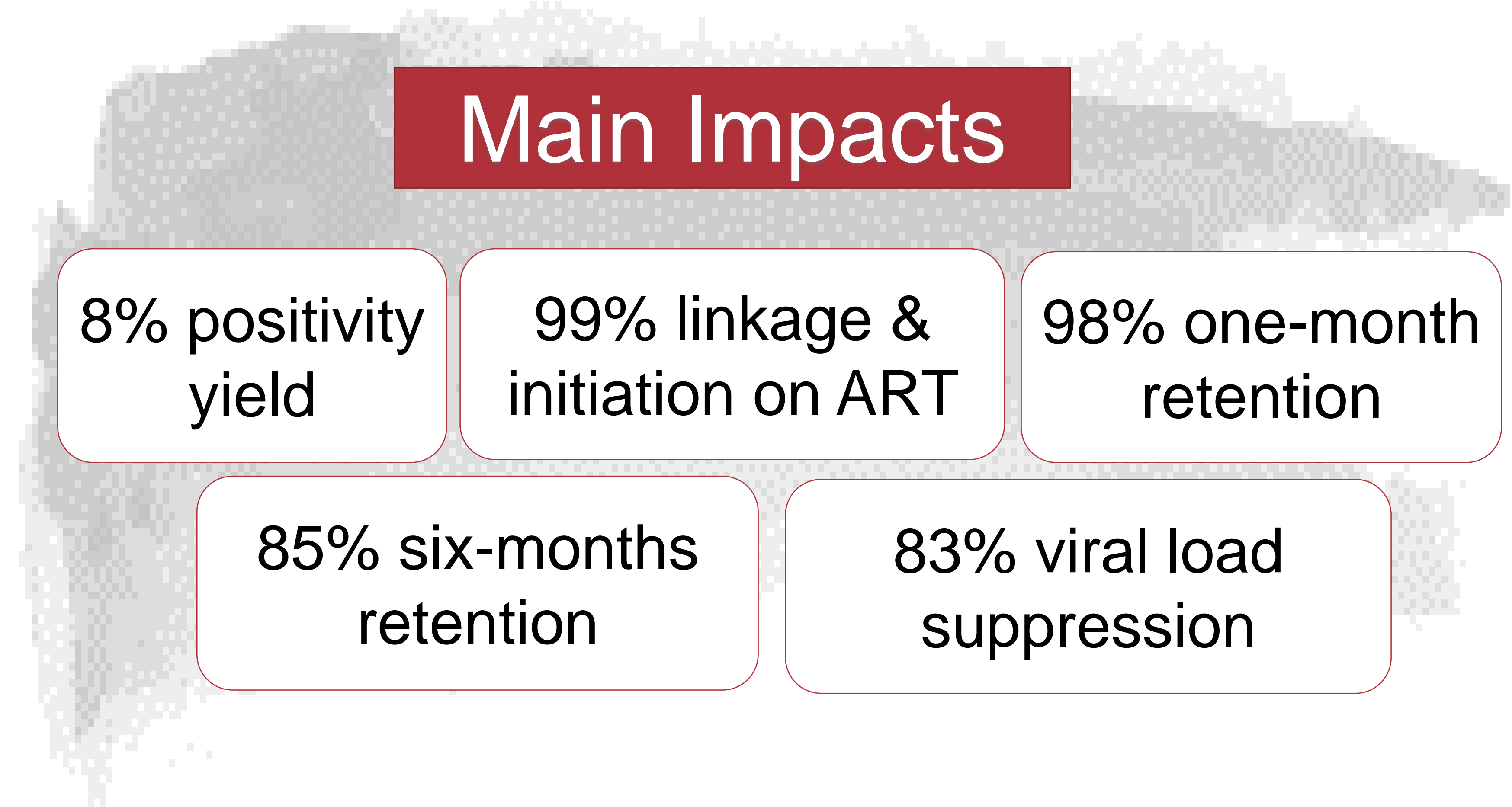
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BACKGROUND

- Adolescents and youth (AY) have high HIV incidence and poor treatment outcomes.
- EGPAF-Malawi, with support from ViiV Positive Action and in coordination with the Ministry of Health, adapted the Red Carpet Program (RCP) to improve identification, linkage, and retention in care among AY in Blantyre.

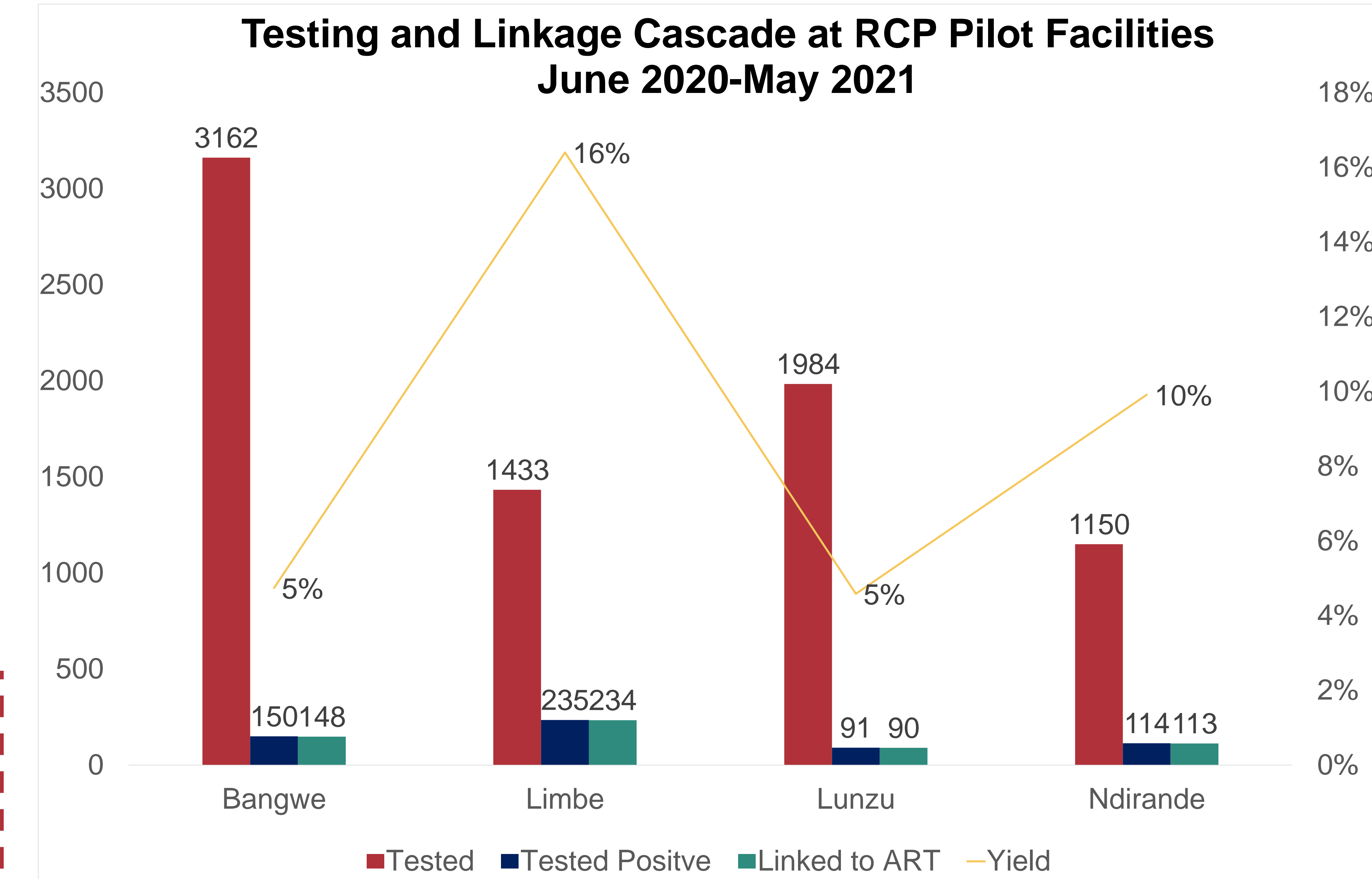
METHODS

- RCP was piloted in four high-volume, urban facilities from April 2020. RCP institutes fast-tracked, peer-led VIP services for AY living with HIV (AYLHIV).
- A trained Youth Champion (YC) cadre was introduced to support service provision for AYLHIV. YC conduct HIV education to increase awareness of services; facilitate triaging of AY seeking care via various entry points (outpatient, HIV-testing, ante-natal, family planning, maternity ward, ART, STI clinics); conduct standardized HIV-testing eligibility screening; escort eligible AY to HIV-testing via fast-tracked entry.
- AY testing positive receive express services such as being escorted to ART counseling and initiation. HIV-negative AY are escorted to prevention services.
- YC retention support activities for AYLHIV include conducting appointment reminders, tracing for missed appointments, PSS, and home visits.



RESULTS

- As of May 2021, 13,166 AY (10-24 years) were screened for HIV-testing eligibility by YC; 73% (n= 9565) were female and 60% (n=7848) were tested.
- Of AYLHIV screened, 26% (n=3420) were tested from the HIV-testing clinic, 22% (n=2889) from the STI clinic, and 21% (n=2827) via the antenatal clinic.
- Overall, **yield ranged from 5-16% between pilot sites with an average of 8%** (n=597) testing positive for HIV; 78% (n=464) were female and the majority were aged 20–24 years (74% (n=442)).
- Almost all (99% (591/597)) of the AYLHIV were linked and initiated on ART.
- Early retention at one, three, and six months for those initiated in September 2020 was **98%, 92%, and 85% respectively, an improvement from 55% in March 2020 for six-month retention.**
- Only 27% (n=58) of eligible AYLHIV completed a viral load test and received a result—83% (48/58) were virally suppressed. Low testing resulting from COVID-19 restrictions.



CONCLUSIONS

- RCP in Malawi highlights the benefits of engaging trained and supported youth cadres in supporting identification, care, and retention activities for AYLHIV.
- The consistent high yield over 12 months illustrates the viability and efficacy of this strategy.
- COVID-19 restrictions pose challenges for consistent viral load testing and documentation.



RCP youth champions in Malawi