**BACKGROUND**

- Adolescents and youth (AY) have high HIV incidence and poor treatment outcomes.
- EGPAF-Malawi, with support from ViiV Healthcare 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, antenatal, 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.