

# WHATSAPP PRE-REMINDERS & YOUTH CARE CLUBS

## SPOTLIGHT ON RETENTION

Gauteng | Tshwane | 22 Siyenza (POPS) Sites



### IMPROVEMENT AREA & AIM

Restrictive COVID-19 regulations prevented adolescents and youth living with HIV (AYLHIV) from accessing Youth Care Clubs (YCCs) activities which led to a decline in care retention. When open, the YCCs offered a group-based clinical and psychosocial HIV management approach, a mix of newly initiated, virally suppressed, and unsuppressed AYLHIV.

**The aim** was to increase retention of AYLHIV among YCC members from a baseline of 81% in June 2020 to 95% by December 2020 and to foster peer learning.



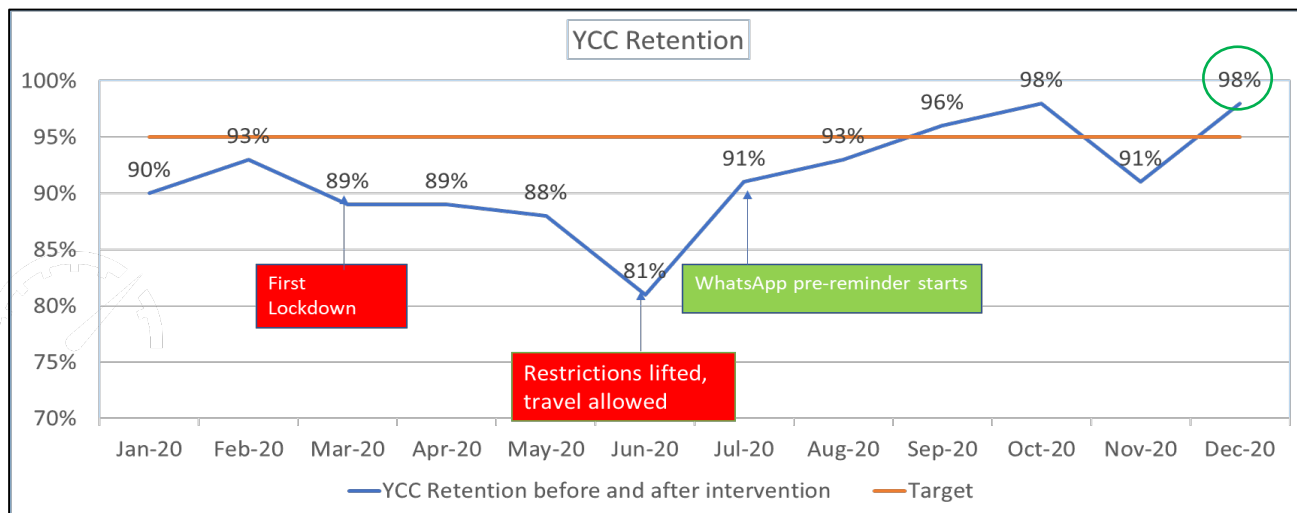
### DESCRIPTION

A WhatsApp group pre-reminder system was created to strengthen access to care and treatment for AYLHIV during the COVID pandemic. The groups were established by YCC facilitators and split by age (12–15, 16–19, and 20–24 years). Participants received a standardized WhatsApp message 2–3 days before their YCC visit and were required to respond confirming attendance. Calls were made to those who did not respond or had undelivered messages to trace missing participants. For those who confirmed attendance, their patient files were then pre-retrieved for their clinic visit. During the implementation period, multi-month scripting was also used to decrease visit frequency.



### OUTCOMES

The WhatsApp pre-reminder system was put in place and by July 2020, the retention rate started to steadily increase to 91%. By October 2020, the retention rate had peaked to 98% surpassing the target of 95%. Social cohesion and clinical discussions with facilitators and clinicians proved beneficial. The approach enabled a sense of belonging and peer support for the AYLHIV.



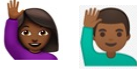
# STEPS TO IMPLEMENT

## PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

- ❑ YCC Facilitator obtains consent according to age (12–17 years: caregiver, 18–24 years: self).
- ❑ YCC Facilitator creates WhatsApp groups.
- ❑ The YCC team designs pre-reminder texts.

## IMPLEMENTATION

*2–3 days before clinic visit, the YCC Facilitator:*

- ❑ Pre-retrieves files for all booked YCC members.
- ❑ Sends pre-reminder texts to members regarding appointment.
- ❑ Member confirms attendance using a “hands up emoji.” 
- ❑ If member is unable to make it, will respond with a 🙅 and arrangements will be made with the Facilitator for a more convenient date for the member.
- ❑ Follows-up with those who did not respond to the text telephonically.
- ❑ YCC Facilitator informs Clinician of those who have confirmed their appointments.

*After the clinic visit:*

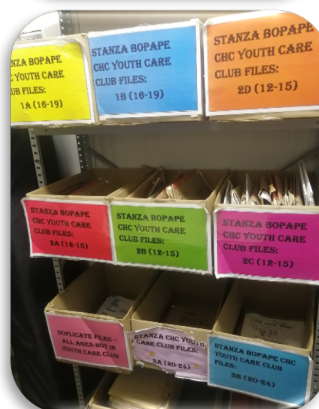
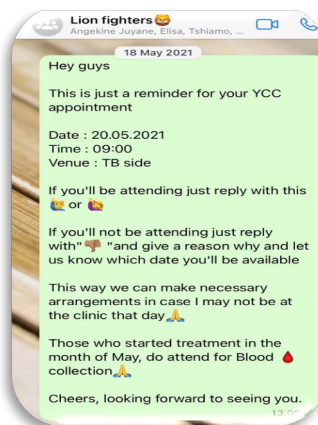
- ❑ YCC Facilitator makes 3 follow-up calls to those who confirmed but did not come (within the 5-day grace period, as per integrated clinical services management (ICSM).
- ❑ WBPHCOT physically trace YCC members who could not be reached through telephonic tracing.

## FACILITATORS

- YCC Facilitators and Love Life Facilitators worked in tandem.
- Buy-in and support from Department of Health Clinician, facility staff, and WBPHCOT streamlined patient flow.

## CHALLENGES & ADAPTATIONS

- Facility ownership (YCC facilitation, clinical support) → It was a challenge to get buy-in from Counsellors, especially in relation to YCC facilitation which is a major enabler to implementation.
- Network coverage and access to mobile data → This was a challenge for the patients, especially those who were residing in informal settlements. Data costs were also a challenge.



## ABBREVIATIONS

- ✓ AYLHIV– adolescent and youth living with HIV
- ✓ ICSM – integrated clinical services management
- ✓ POPS – Pepfar Operation Phuthuma Support
- ✓ WBPHCOT – ward-based primary health care outreach team
- ✓ YCC – youth care club

## RESOURCES

- ✓ Smartphones
- ✓ Airtime/Data
- ✓ YCC Register
- ✓ Process measure Tools

## STAFFING

- ✓ YCC Facilitator
- ✓ Clinician

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that process measures be monitored effectively. This can be done through development of a monitoring and evaluation plan with clear indicators before implementation to enable monitoring of the intervention impact.

## IDEA INSPIRATION

The idea was a collaborative effort that involved YCC clients clearly articulating their needs and the AYFS Team responding.