Creating a gender-equitable environment for very young adolescents

What is a gender-equitable environment?

Why should we create one?

How will we do it?

Presented by: [ORGANIZATION NAME]| DATE

ICEBREAKER!

Let’s get on the same page…

What are **gender norms**?

Gender norms = **Informal rules or expectations for how boys and girls, and men and women should look, act and think.**

Boys/men should be tough and not cry or show emotion.

Girls/women should remain ‘pure’ and ‘innocent’ regarding virginity and menstruation.

Girls/women should be thin and ‘pretty.’

Boys should be tall and strong.

Boys/men should be tough and not cry or show emotion.

Girls/women should remain ‘pure’ and ‘innocent’ regarding virginity and menstruation.

Girls/women should be thin and ‘pretty.’
Boys should be tall and strong.

What is

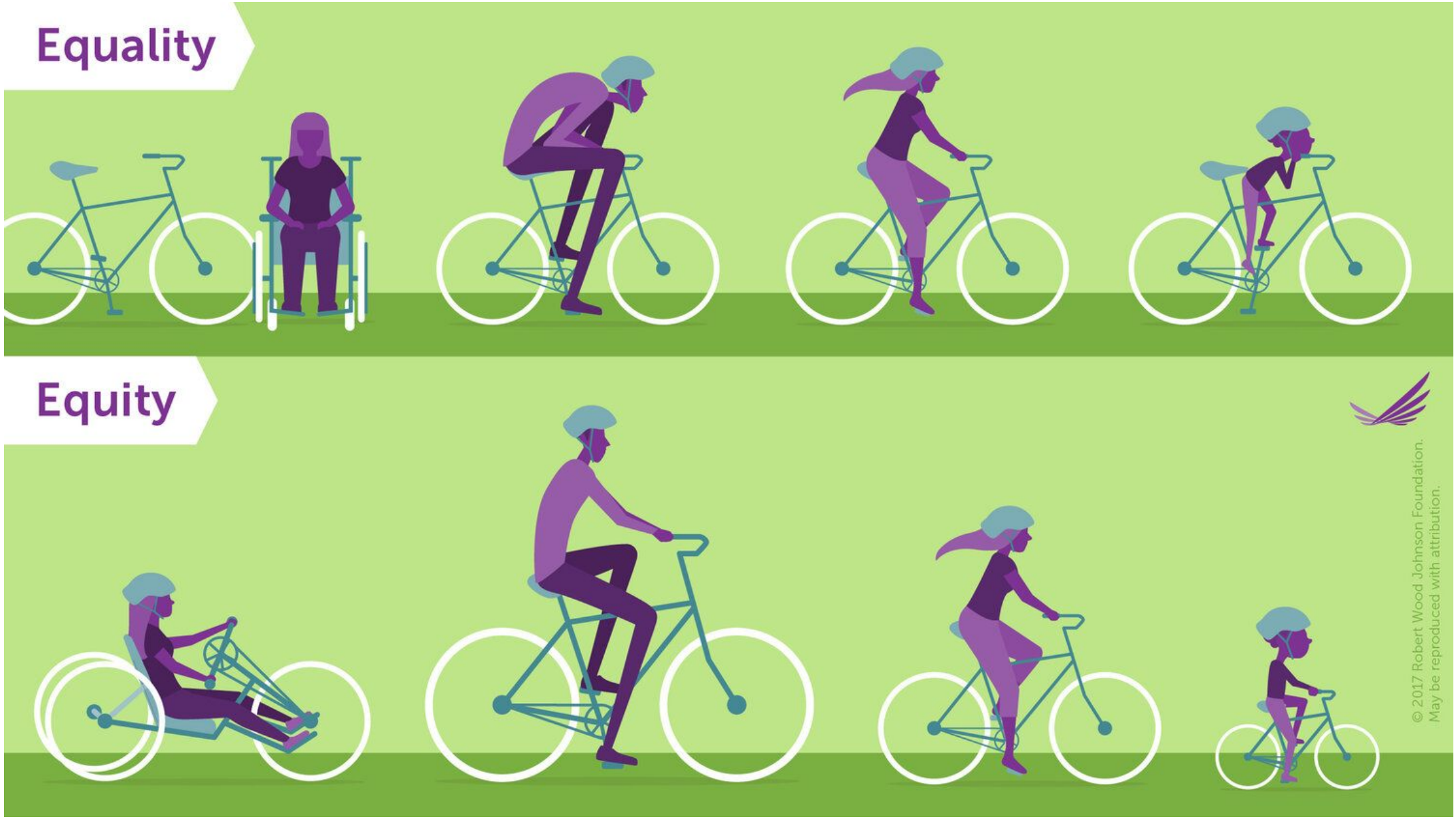
gender equality?

Gender equality = **Equal rights, treatment and opportunities regardless of sex or gender**

What is

gender *equity*?

Gender equity = **helps people get to a level playing field by addressing the historical gender-based disadvantages**


Equality
Equity
© 2017 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
May be reproduced with attribution.

Gender norms	**Social expectations for what it means to be a boy or a girl**
Gender equality	**Equal rights, opportunities and choices for boys and girls**
Gender equity	**Creates a level playing field by addressing historical gender-based imbalances**

“Very young adolescence [10-14 years old] is a time when young people experience increased pressure to adhere to unequal gender norms that negatively affect their current and future health and well-being…”

Breakthrough ACTION. (2023). Creating a gender-equitable environment for very young adolescents: Messages and evidence to persuade decision makers. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University. Page 6.
https://breakthroughactionandresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Creating-a-Gender-Equitable-Environment-for-VYAs-Messages-and-Evidence.pdf

“While intervention during this life stage has great potential to improve young people’s health and wellbeing, there has been less investment in this age group compared to older adolescents and insufficient focus on boys.”

Creating a gender-equitable environment for very young adolescents, p6

Breakthrough ACTION. (2023). Creating a gender-equitable environment for very young adolescents: Messages and evidence to persuade decision makers. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University. Page 6.
https://breakthroughactionandresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Creating-a-Gender-Equitable-Environment-for-VYAs-Messages-and-Evidence.pdf

How are very young adolescents (VYAs) doing?

What the research says…

INSIGHT

Many adolescents do not feel comfortable talking to their parents or main caregivers about changes occurring during this critical period in their lives where they need trusted adults to guide and support them.

FACT

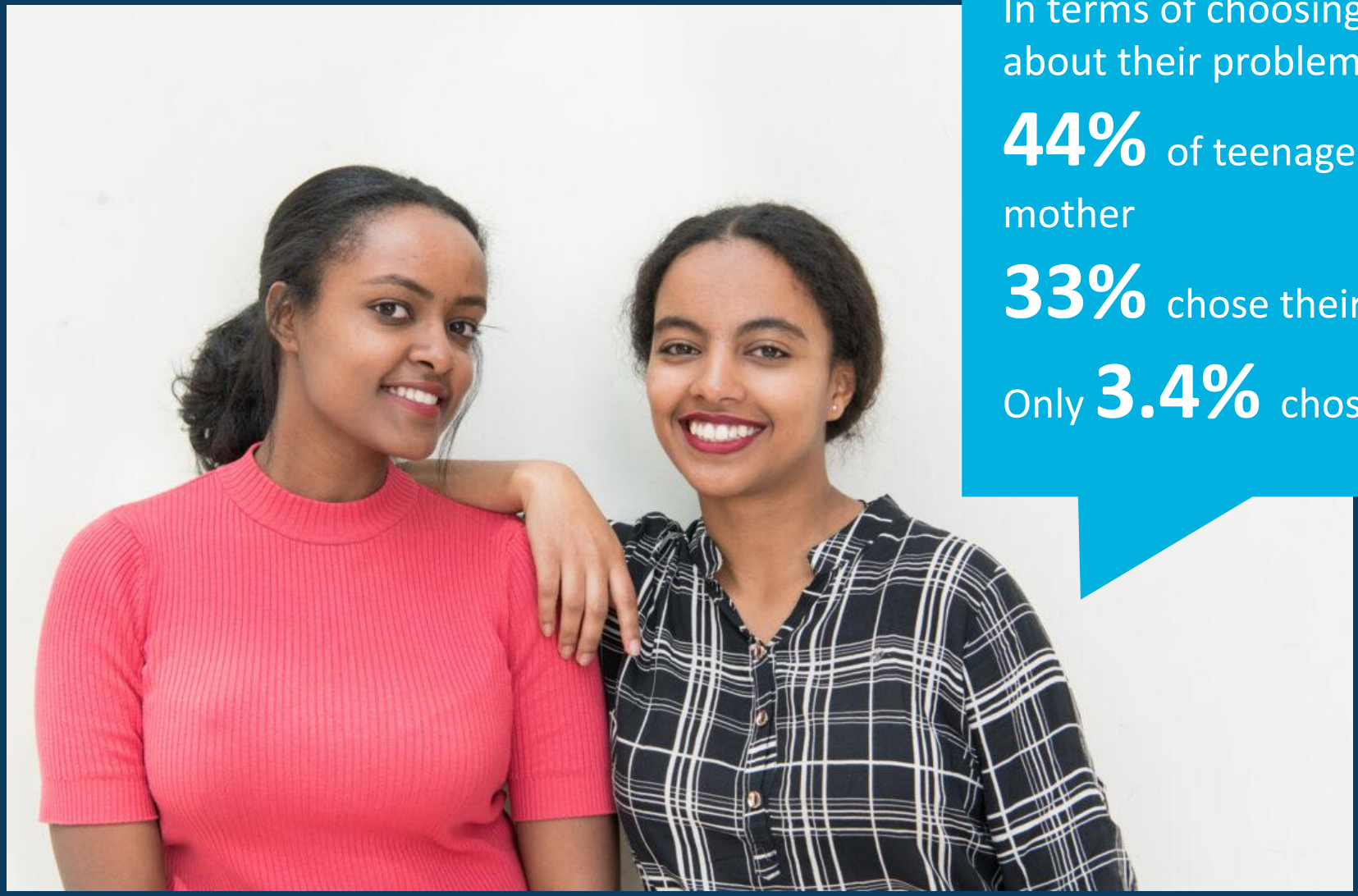
62%

of adolescents report feeling close to their parents/main caregivers, but only

55%

adolescents feel comfortable talking to them.

FACT



In terms of choosing who to talk to about their problems,

44% of teenagers chose their mother

33% chose their peers.

Only **3.4%** chose their fathers.

INSIGHT

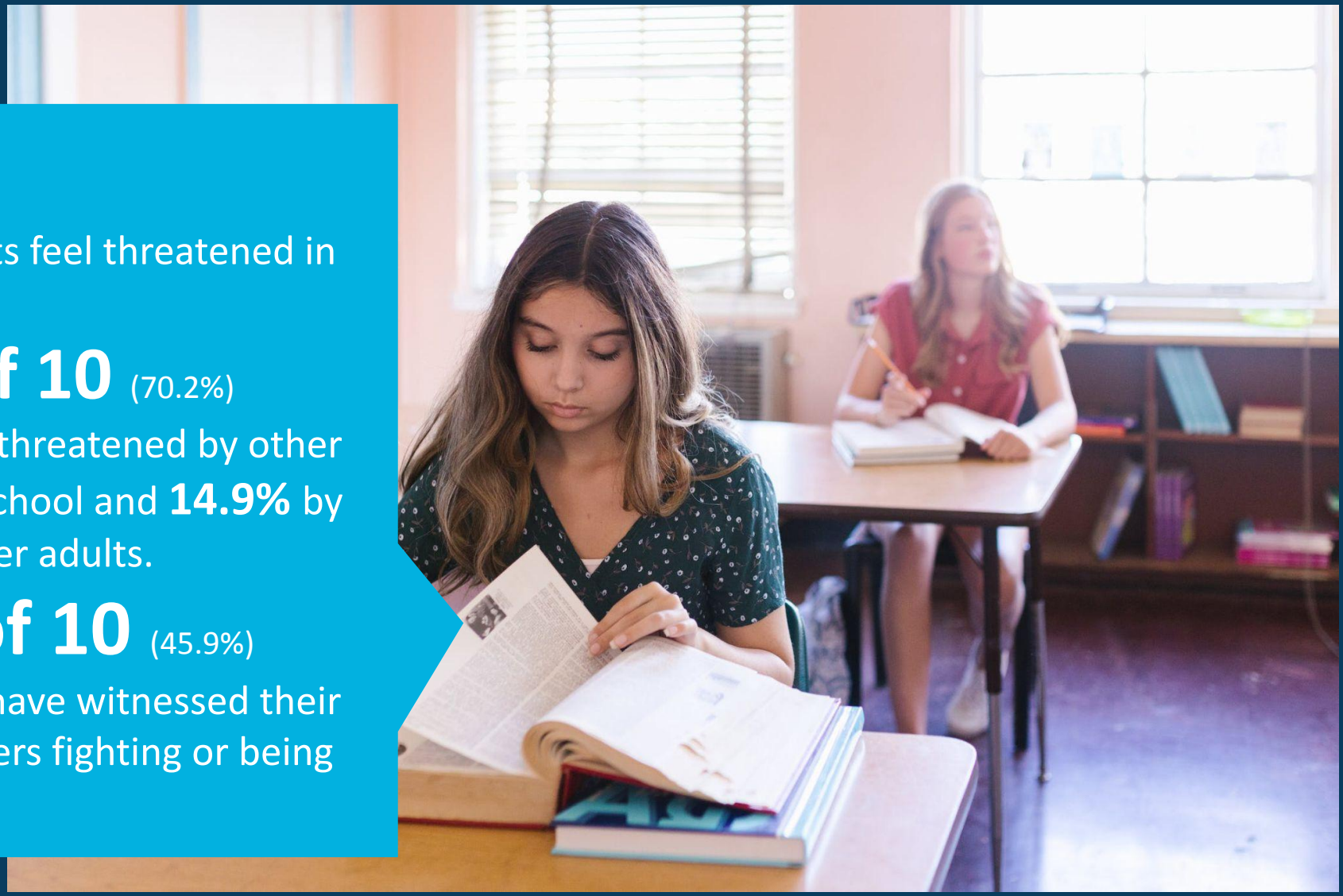
In what is supposed to be a safe learning environment, many adolescents feel threatened in schools - both by peers and adults - and do not feel comfortable asking for help. School-based professionals often feel ill-equipped to support students.

FACT

18%
of adolescents feel threatened in schools.

7 out of 10 (70.2%)
of those feel threatened by other students at school and **14.9%** by teachers/other adults.

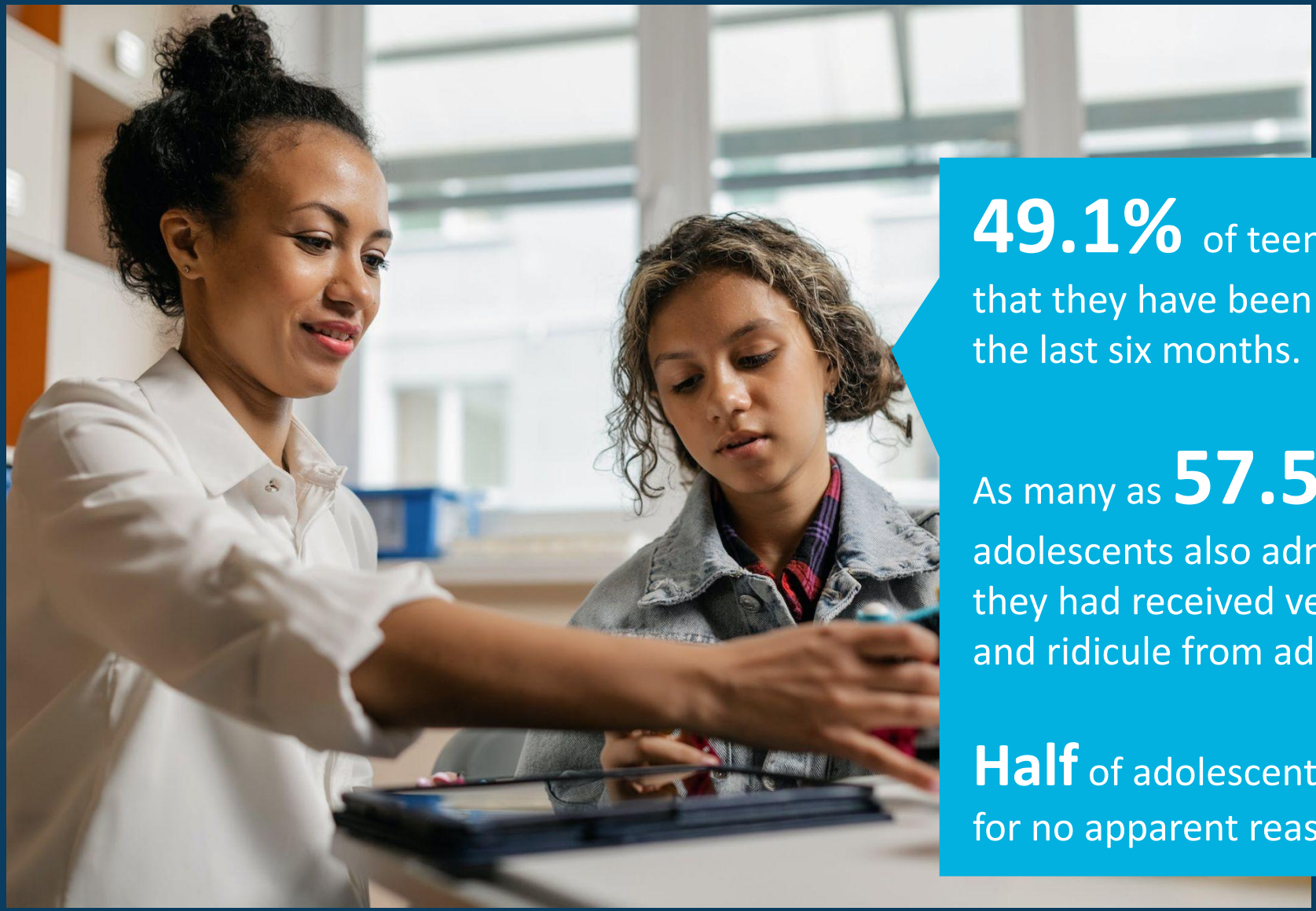
4 out of 10 (45.9%)
adolescents have witnessed their friends or peers fighting or being bullied.



INSIGHT

Adolescents report not just being bullied by their peers but by adults in their lives who are supposed to be guiding and helping them.

FACT



49.1% of teenagers admit that they have been made fun of in the last six months.

As many as **57.5%** of adolescents also admitted that they had received verbal abuse and ridicule from adults.

Half of adolescents feel worried for no apparent reason.

INSIGHT

Many adolescents have unequal beliefs about the traits boys and girls should have. These beliefs are taught, not inherent.

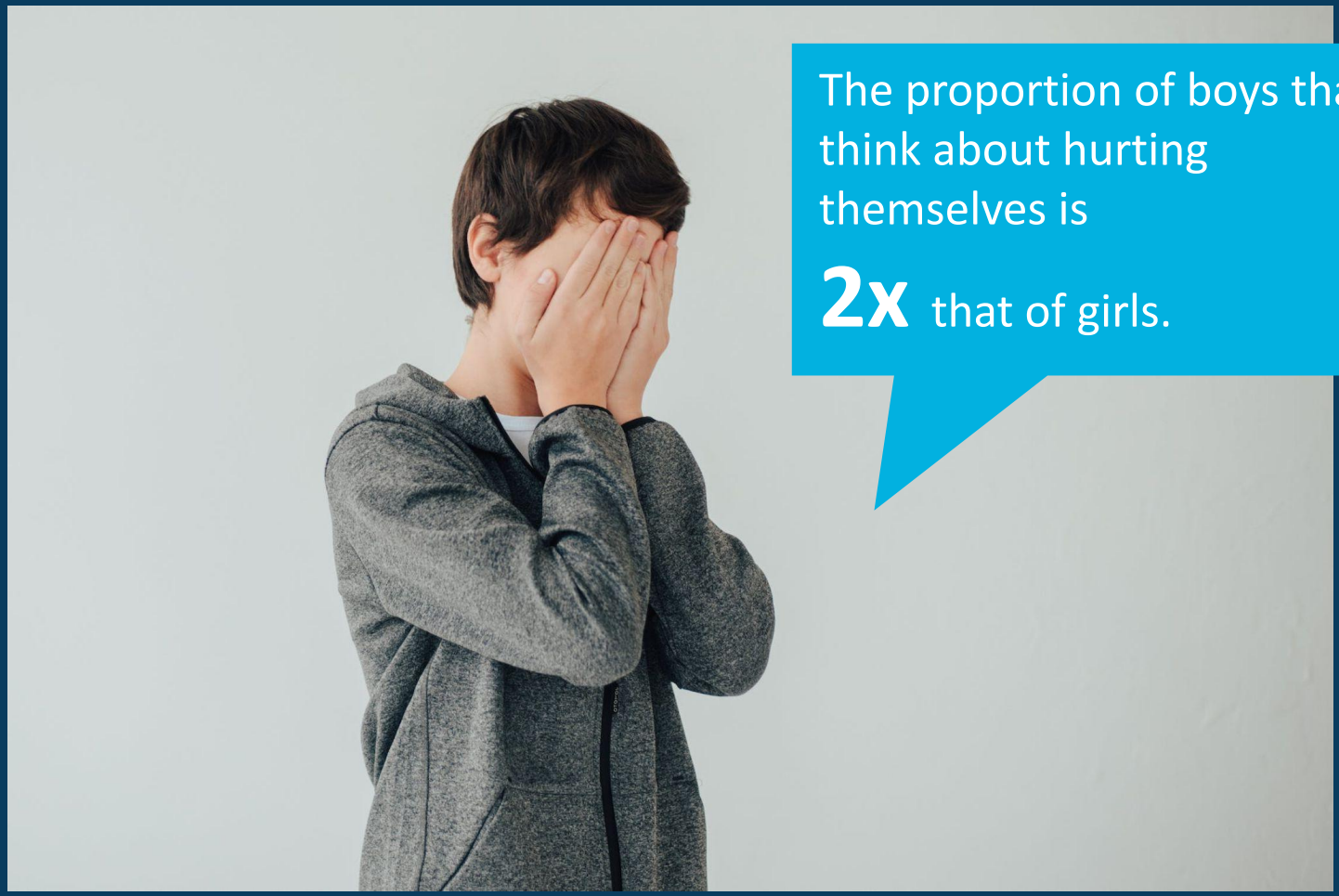
FACT

Half of boys and **one third** of girls have unequal beliefs in the traits boys and girls should have.

One third of all adolescents believe in stereotypical roles for girls and boys in their household and communities.

FACT

Both boys and girls think about or engage in self-harm.



[OPTIONAL: TRANSITION SLIDE]

"Advancing gender equity for VYAs **requires a holistic approach to policies and programs** that addresses contextual factors, including community- and structural-level factors that affect health."

Creating a gender-equitable environment for very young adolescents, p6

Creating **environments where young people are unconstrained by harmful gender norms** can help improve health and well-being of young people.

How?

THEORY OF CHANGE

By addressing gender norms,

- Girls/women should remain 'pure' and 'innocent' (virginity and menstruation)
- Girls need their parents protection more than boys (girls are vulnerable and boys are not)
- Boys should be tough and not cry or ask for help
- It is important for boys to show they are tough even if they are nervous inside
- Boys and girls face different expectations for their appearance based on their gender

using proven change mechanisms

1. Role modeling
2. Diffusing positive social norms
3. Observed social normative decision making
4. Empathy building
5. Envisioning alternative futures
6. Collective reflection and discussion
7. Building cross-sectoral collaboration.
8. Confronting power imbalances

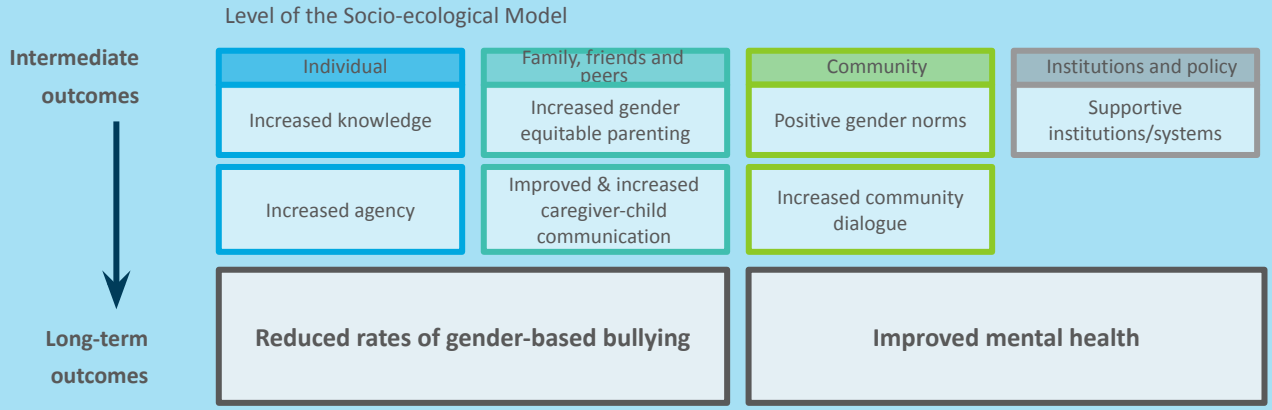
throughout a comprehensive intervention package

- Multi-Stakeholder Forum
- Interactive Video
- Exhibition
- Safe Schools
- Family Space

that spans the VYA environment,

- Government institutions
- Community leaders
- Schools
- Families and caregivers
- VYAs

we create a more supportive environment for boys and girls that helps improve their health and wellbeing.



By addressing gender norms

Girls/ women should remain ‘pure’ and ‘innocent’

Girls are vulnerable and boys are not

Boys should be tough and not cry or ask for help

Gendered expectations for appearance

using proven change mechanisms

1. Role modeling
2. Diffusing positive social norms
3. Observed social normative decision making
4. Empathy building
5. Envisioning alternative futures
6. Collective reflection and discussion
7. Building cross-sectoral collaboration
8. Confronting power imbalances

throughout a comprehensive intervention package

Multi-Stakeholder Forum

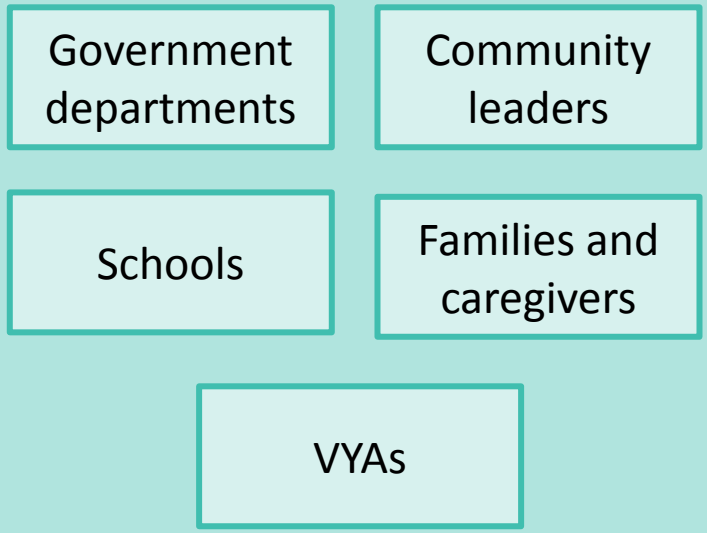
Exhibition

Interactive Video

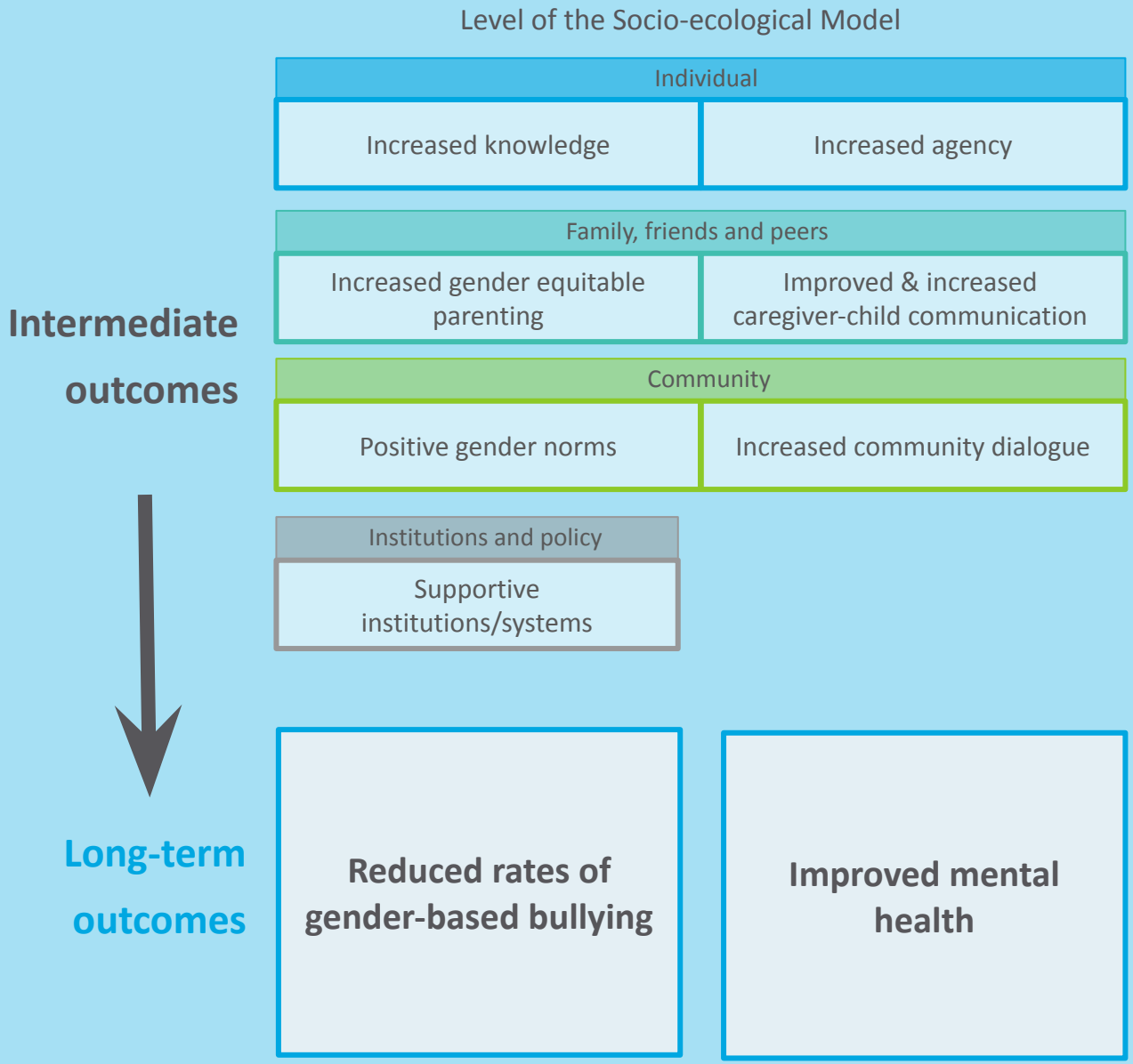
Safe Schools

Family Space

that spans the VYA environment



we create a more supportive environment for boys and girls that helps improve their health and wellbeing.



Theory of Change

By addressing gender norms,

- Girls/women should remain 'pure' and 'innocent' (virginity and menstruation)
- Girls need their parents protection more than boys (girls are vulnerable and boys are not)
- Boys should be tough and not cry or ask for help
- It is important for boys to show they are tough even if they are nervous inside
- Boys and girls face different expectations for their appearance based on their gender

using proven change mechanisms

1. Role modeling
2. Diffusing positive social norms
3. Observed social normative decision making
4. Empathy building
5. Envisioning alternative futures
6. Collective reflection and discussion
7. Building cross-sectoral collaboration
8. Confronting power imbalances

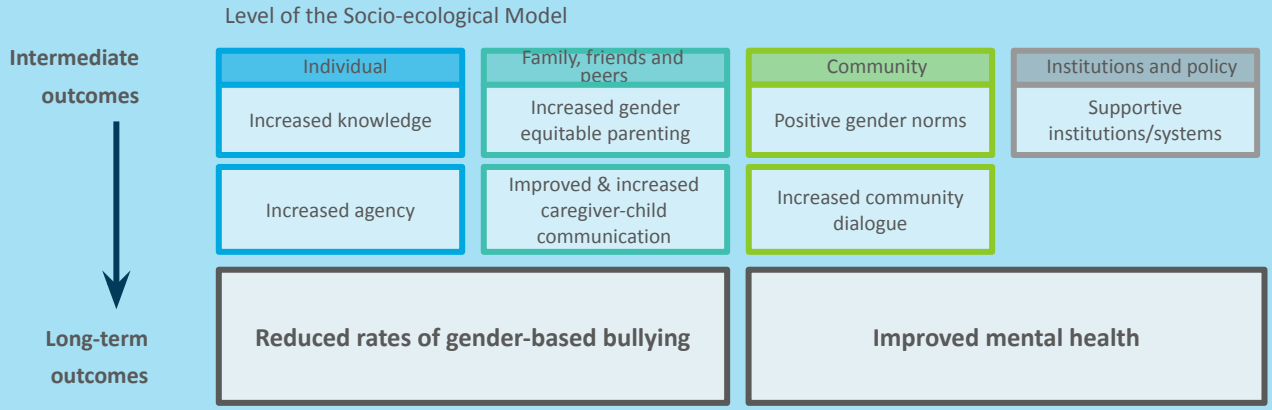
throughout a comprehensive intervention package

- Multi-Stakeholder Forum
- Interactive Video
- Exhibition
- Safe Schools
- Family Space

that spans the VYA environment,

- Government institutions
- Community leaders
- Schools
- Families and caregivers
- VYAs

we create a more supportive environment for boys and girls that helps improve their health and wellbeing.



The Gender Equity 4 Youth Package

GET 4 YOUTH PACKAGE

Family Space

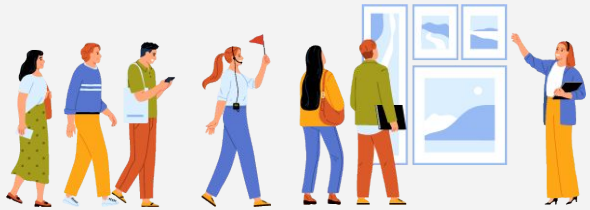
Goal:
Provide a safe, fun space to strengthen relationships and communication between caregivers and very young adolescents

Trying to solve:
Many adolescents do not feel comfortable talking to their parents or main caregivers during this critical period in their lives where they need trusted adults to guide and support them.

Exhibition

Goals:
- Increase knowledge and empathy about the impact of gender norms, including bullying
- Provide a space to release and express emotions related to gender-based bullying
- Provide a space for community dialogue about gender norms

Trying to solve:
Providing a more approachable and interactive space for communities to reflect upon and improve gender equity.



Safe Schools

Goals:
- Help VYA boys and girls feel comfortable reporting bullying because it will be dealt with fairly
- Help school faculty and staff build knowledge and skills to respond to bullying in a gender-equitable way

Trying to solve:
In what is supposed to be a safe learning environment, many adolescents feel threatened in schools - both by peers and adults - and do not feel comfortable asking for help. School-based professionals often feel ill-equipped to support students.

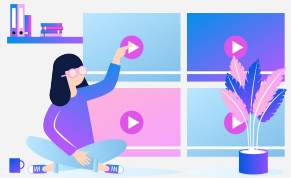
Multi-stakeholder Forum

Goal:
Increase prioritization of gender equitable programming

Trying to solve:
Increasing multi-sectoral coordination around gender and youth and to customize piloting and implementation of this package to the local context.

Interactive Video

Goal:
Spark critical reflection and discussion on how gender norms impact the lives of boys and girls and envision an alternative future



Trying to solve:
Finding creative ways to generate discussion around gender norms.

Family Space

What is it?

A series of dynamic, activity-based classes for caregivers and VYAs that focuses on strengthening caregiver-VYA relationships and communication.

What makes this unique?

- For caregivers AND children.
- Highly interactive.
- Designed around participant interests.
- Allows time for parents to talk to professionals.

Interactive Video

What is it?

A “choose your own ending” style video stories with 3-5 decision points where viewers select between two options: one that reflects current behaviors and norms, and another that reflects the desired behaviors and more equal norms.

What makes this unique?

- Quickly captures audience attention and, through facilitation, sparks critical reflection and discussion
- Customizable to different audiences

Exhibition

What is it?

An interactive and immersive art experience where adults and VYAs can come to understand and empathize with bullying (specifically gender-based bullying), release and express their emotions through participatory art, and engage in a community dialogue around gender norms.

What makes this unique?

- Can reach a large audience
- Appeals to families
- Novel way to interact with gender content
- Emphasizes local ownership, customization and creativity
- Attracts organic participation

Safe Schools

What is it?

A three-pronged program for middle schools that complements existing bullying prevention programs by equipping schools to respond to bullying in a gender equitable way:

- Training
- A reporting system
- External referral system for complex cases

What makes this unique?

- Whole-school approach
- Complements existing bullying-prevention interventions
- Dynamic, engaging training with new content
- Reporting mechanism
- Connects schools and community resources

Multi-stakeholder Forum

What is it?

A steering committee style convening of community leaders that aims to localize and customize the package

What makes this unique?

- Rejects the “top-down” approach of traditional implementation
- Cross-sector collaboration and customization

Come to the next meeting

Talk to your colleagues and supervisors about this

Identify existing channels for implementation or integration

Bring your family to the Exhibition

Sign up for the Family Space activity

[CALENDAR]

This report is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Breakthrough ACTION and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Get in touch!

@[handle]

@

[ADDRESS]

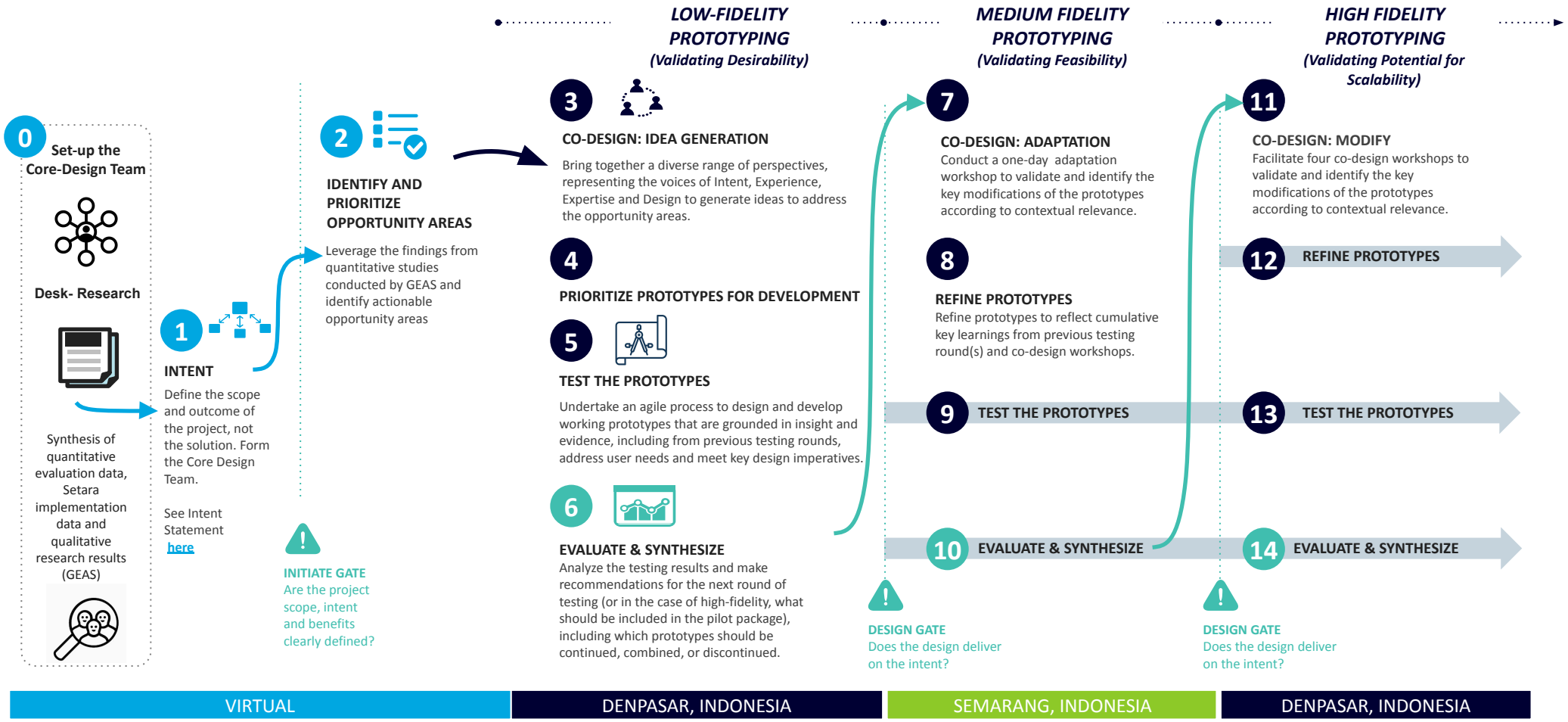
email

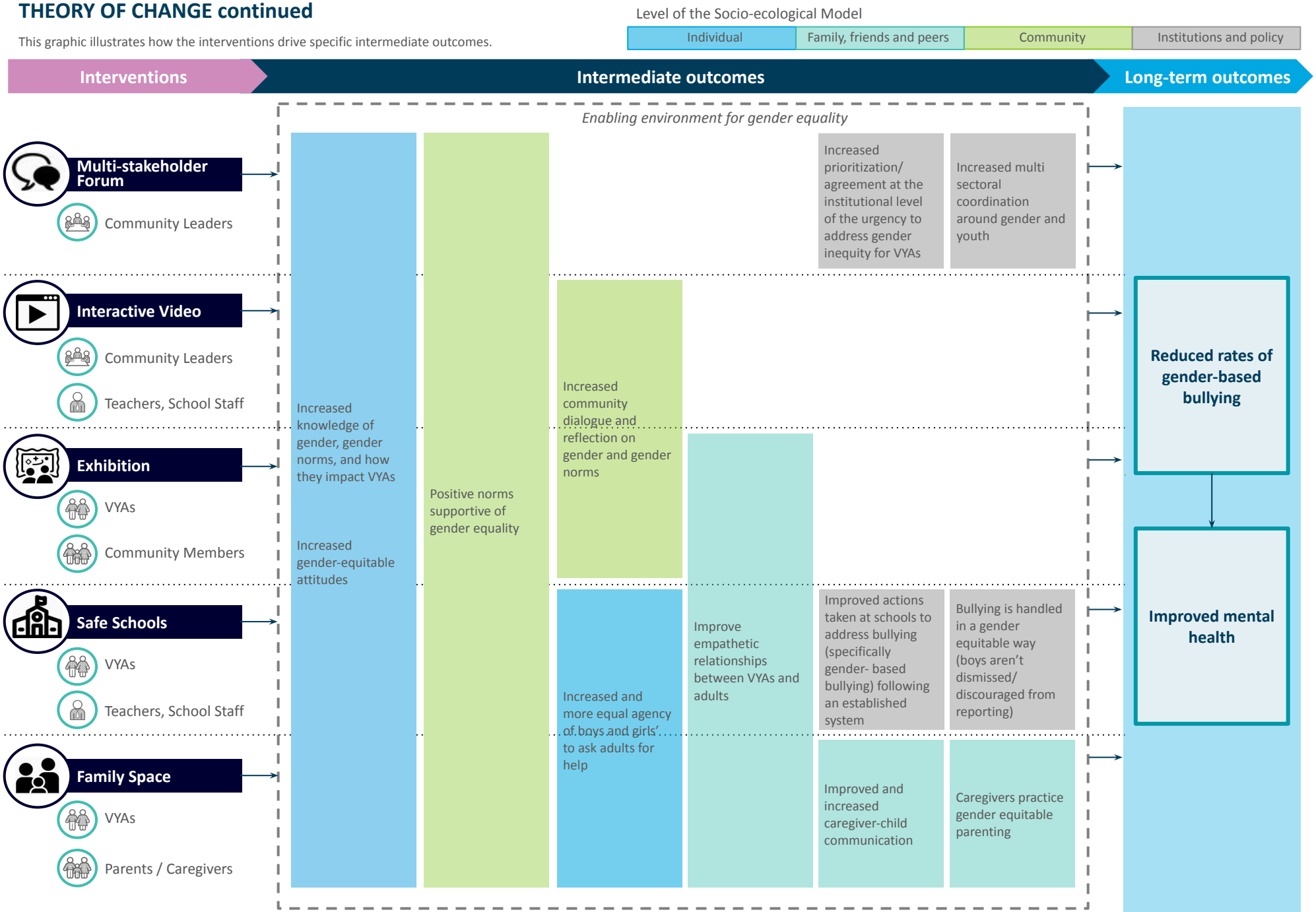
Acknowledgements

This presentation is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Breakthrough ACTION and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Optional Slides

Process overview



THEORY OF CHANGE continued

This graphic illustrates how the interventions drive specific intermediate outcomes.