

# The Cost of Inaction

The Global Economics of Community  
Action to End Vertical Transmission of  
HIV

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# The cost of inaction of a failure to eliminate vertical transmission

- Constitutive cost:
  - Infant infections
- Consequential cost:
  - Treatment costs: Families and society
  - Further household impacts
  - Loss of potential

# All current infections?

- The cost of inaction is not the cost of doing nothing, it is the cost of not doing some particular thing
- To say that there is a cost of inaction is to suggest that there is something (an action) which could be implemented to avoid the cost
- Can we virtually eliminate vertical transmission? What action, or set of actions, would lead to the desired end?

Is community action part of the  
necessary set of actions?

- Community action almost always refers to the need for poor, disadvantaged or marginalized people to do things for one another
- You don't often hear of community action in wealthy communities
- Yet it is in wealthy communities that vertical transmission is lowest

- Is the focus on community action a way to shift responsibility on to the poor?
- As if all poor people are somehow related and have some special responsibility for one another?

# Yes, but...

- Affected communities are strong and are an essential resource if barriers to accessing services are to be overcome and if people are to be retained in programs
- You must see the resilience of these communities!

# Yes, but...

- We must guard against attributing super human qualities to poor and disadvantaged communities
  - People are strong and pull together and keep going because that is what people do
  - Poor people are not especially strong, they are especially challenged
  - A recognition of these challenges is what points to the need for community action, it should shape the types of action and points to the need to support communities when they undertake these actions

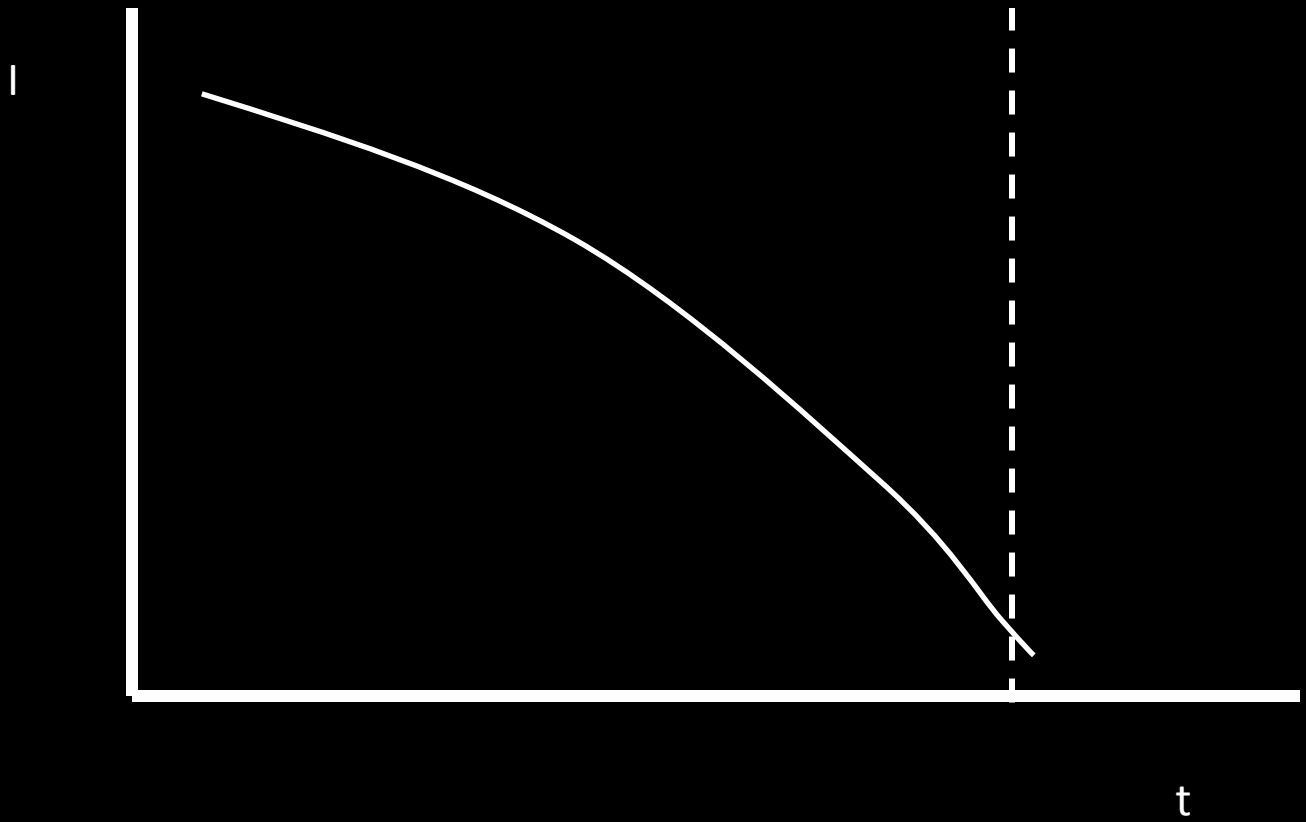


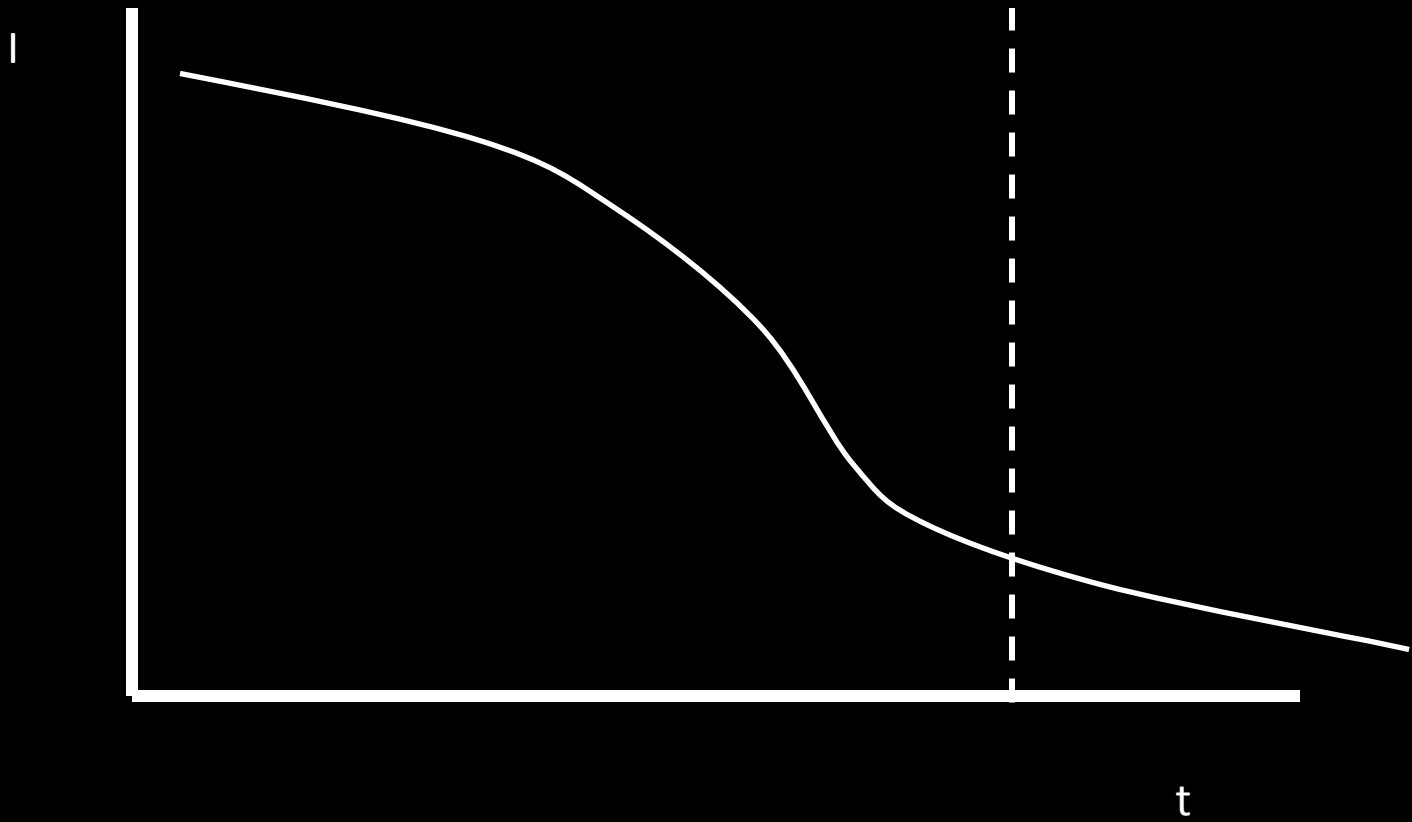
# Put simply

- To reach the levels of success seen in wealthy communities, poor communities must overcome more obstacles
- Specifically,
  - Key role in retention
  - Possibly even more important role in uptake

Have we really thought through  
what it will take to reach the targets  
set?

0-50 is not the same as 50-100





So community action is important  
and in many contexts will be an  
essential component of the set of  
actions necessary to reach our  
targets

But what community action?

- ‘Globally, numerous community-based groups provide support to pregnant women living with HIV, as well as their families. The type of community support may vary, but the results do not. Women who have the support of their community are far more likely to seek HIV prevention and care services, both for their benefit and their children’s.’

– Sidibe´ M and Goosby EP. Journal of the International AIDS Society. Community action to end new paediatric HIV infections

The type of  
community support may vary, but the results  
do not.

Not all community action is equally effective. We have to be clear on what constitutes success and which programs are succeeding



# Accounting and counting

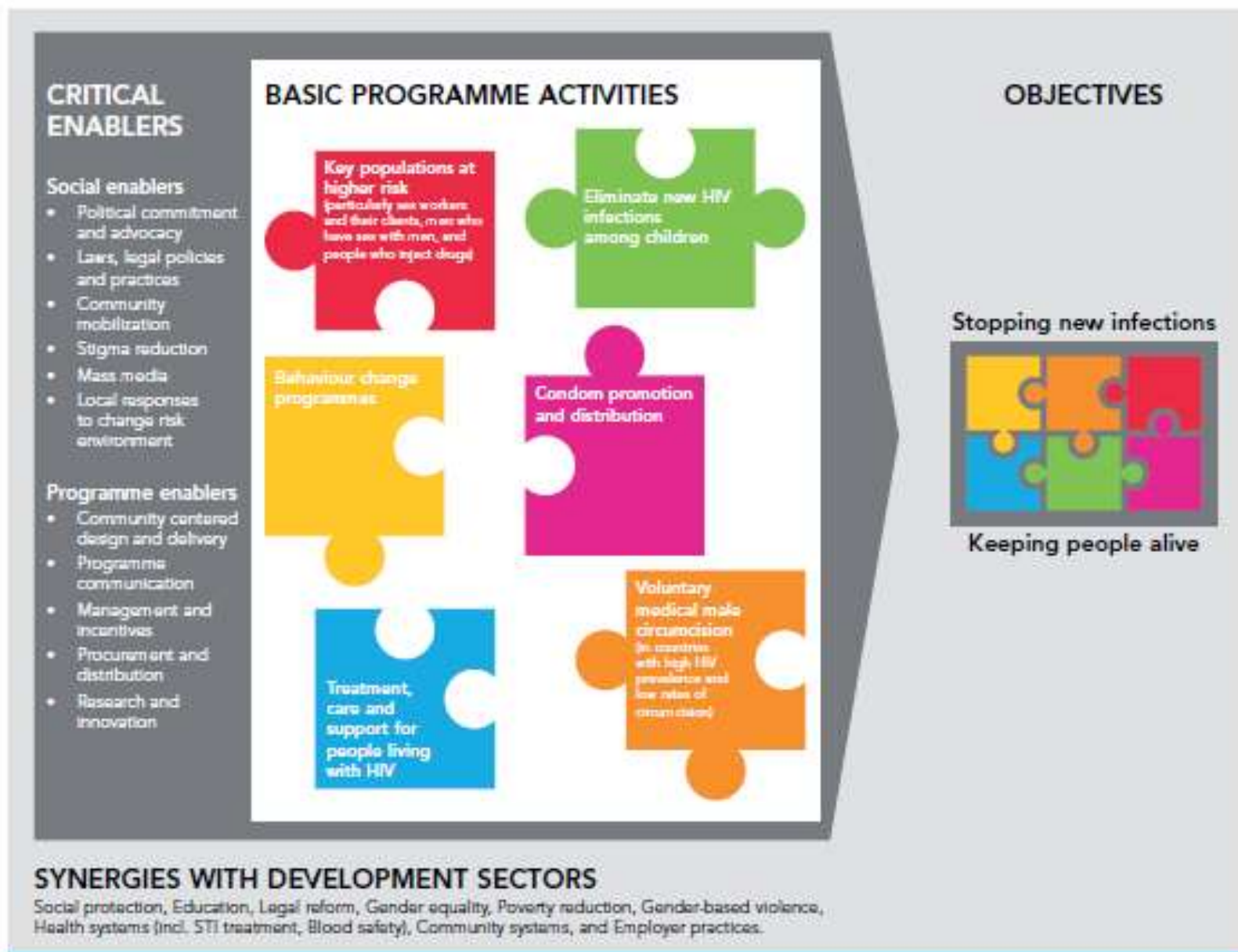
- The investment framework draws attention to the need to use resources efficiently
- To fit into such an approach it is important to clearly identify how and which community actions contribute to the outcome, if there are alternative actions which make similar contributions, and how much they all cost
- Without the right information, community action to end vertical transmission will be sidelined in the push for efficiency

Has the drive for evidence based  
cost effective interventions put the  
children's sector in retreat?

# A retreat to PMTCT?

- PMTCT is critical, but we must guard against the danger of being caught in the current re-medicalization of HIV and AIDS
- Are we keeping an eye on care and support?
- Will the drive for efficiency benefit efforts in this area? Or will it push it off the HIV/AIDS map?

FIGURE 1: Proposed Investment Framework



# Caring for care and support

- If something is good for children does not mean that we should do it!
- There may be something better
- What constitutes care? What constitute support? How do we achieve them efficiently?

The most important thing that economics has taught me is the importance of family!

# Counting and counting

- We have the science, we need to use it
- We need to work on the indicators
- We need to identify efficiencies
- And we must drop laundry lists
- Or the cost will be from our inaction...

Thank goodness for PEPFAR!