

# Communicating about Microbicides with Women in Mind

## FACT SHEET

### PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Representatives of the following organizations in Kenya served as members of the Project Advisory Committee:

Department of Health Promotion

Family Health Options of Kenya

Kenya Medical Research Institute

LCVT (formerly Liverpool VCT)

National AIDS/STI Control Programme

Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS in Kenya

National Organization of Peer Educators

National AIDS Control Council

PSI Kenya

Sex Workers Outreach Programme



Research is under way to identify an effective microbicide — a substance that could be inserted in the vagina or rectum to reduce the risk of HIV infection during sex, meeting the urgent need for an HIV prevention method that women can control. The most advanced candidate is a vaginal gel containing the antiretroviral (ARV) drug tenofovir.

The *Communicating about Microbicides with Women in Mind* project explored how a communication campaign might market a microbicide gel so that women at risk of acquiring HIV could use it in a variety of contexts – from intimate relationships to commercial sex work – while also avoiding the association with infidelity that has often stigmatized condom use.

FHI 360 implemented the project in Kenya under the USAID-funded Preventive Technologies Agreement (PTA). It was part of a larger USAID initiative to begin preparing for introduction should ongoing clinical trials identify an effective microbicide.

Conducted in collaboration with the National AIDS/STI Control Programme, the project consisted of three phases: 1) landscape analysis, 2) materials development and pretesting, and 3) materials assessment. It culminated in the publication and dissemination of a communication strategy and adaptation guide that will help programs design their own microbicide communication campaigns or adapt the prototype materials developed by the project for use in other contexts.

The final materials, study results and the Microbicide Communication Strategy and Adaptation Guide were presented to representatives of government, civil society, research and implementing partner organizations at a PTA-sponsored meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, on June 24, 2014. The materials will be available on the FHI 360 website: [www.fhi360.org/projects/preventive-technologies-agreement-pta](http://www.fhi360.org/projects/preventive-technologies-agreement-pta).

### MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

- Achieved substantial community and stakeholder engagement, including collaboration with an in-country project advisory committee consisting of Kenyan policymakers, program implementers and civil society advocates and extensive consultation with members of the potential audiences of a microbicide communication campaign.
- Tested and refined a package of prototype materials for raising awareness about microbicides, generating interest in their use and helping health care providers counsel women about them.
- Developed messages and materials that generated strong interest in microbicide use among all target audiences in a research study assessing their impact.
- Obtained data on the impact of message framing that will be useful to programs in Kenya and other countries as they plan for microbicide introduction.
- Developed a communication strategy and adaptation guide presenting recommendations for future campaigns and providing guidance for adapting the Kenyan materials for use in other contexts.

### LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

After meeting with experts in Washington, D.C., in 2012, the FHI 360 team conducted literature reviews and assessed media coverage of microbicides in three countries that were considered for the development of materials: Kenya, South Africa and Zambia. Once Kenya was chosen, the PTA held a policy-level consultation in Naivasha, Kenya, with 43 stakeholders.



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Through this analysis, young women, female sex workers and women in stable relationships were identified as primary audiences for the microbicide communication materials in Kenya. Men and health care providers were identified as secondary audiences.

## MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT AND PRETESTING

The FHI 360 team conducted 12 audience consultations with target audiences in four regions to provide input on draft microbicide messages and visual images. They also facilitated a message development workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, where 24 stakeholders worked together to draft audience profiles and messages for each target audience.

Prototype communication materials were developed by Artful Eyes Productions, a local Kenyan design firm, for awareness-raising (posters, TV storyboards and radio spots), in-depth education (flip charts, an informational brochure and a counseling algorithm), and digital media (website and social media concepts).

Awareness-raising materials were framed in two ways: 1) HIV-framed materials highlighted the HIV prevention benefit of microbicides and 2) non-HIV framed materials focused primarily on other benefits: empowerment, greater intimacy and increased sexual pleasure.

The draft materials were pretested twice and revised based on results from a total of 33 focus group discussions with target audience members in three regions.

## MATERIALS ASSESSMENT

The materials assessment consisted of:

- Intercept surveys with 200 men and 600 women, randomized to receive a) information only; b) HIV-framed materials; or c) non-HIV-framed materials
- Group education sessions with nine groups of priority audiences, evaluated through pre- and post-session questionnaires
- In-depth interviews with 24 health care providers about educational materials developed for use in community and clinical settings

## KEY RESULTS OF THE MATERIALS ASSESSMENT

- Awareness-raising materials were considered relevant to both men and women, with animated storyboards generating the most interest.
- Women and men in stable relationships expressed greater interest in future microbicide use after viewing non-HIV framed materials compared to other materials.
- Framing did not appear to have an impact on interest among the other audiences.
- The use of the flip charts in group discussions helped increase interest in future microbicide use without encouraging the replacement of condoms with a less effective gel product.
- In-depth interviews with health care providers revealed that materials were effective in helping providers counsel women in different sexual contexts about microbicide use.
- Potential implementation challenges identified by the assessment include the need for clear training on the current insertion regimen for tenofovir gel.

