

PrEP Ring Consultations Lesotho Detailed Summary

WHO-led consultation: May 11, 2022

IPM-led consultation: December 2021

MOSAIC-led consultations: January 20-21, 2022



LESOTHO WHO-LED CONSULTATION SUMMARY (MOH)**OVERALL REACTIONS**

- Lesotho needs additional HIV prevention options specifically for women, as young women have the highest incidence of HIV of any population in the country.
- MOH is hoping that the ring will increase PrEP uptake among AGYW
- Funding may be a barrier to Lesotho's ability to offer CAB PrEP

GUIDING QUESTION	SUMMARY
RING PLANS AND CONSIDERATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ring is included in Lesotho's HIV guidelines and the Essential Medical List. • Training of Trainers (TOT) that includes ring has been conducted across the country
PERCEPTIONS OF THE RING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ring is part of a prevention portfolio in Lesotho • MOH is hopeful that the use of ring among AGYW will reduce their risk of IPV and challenges with their parents over taking PrEP.
WITHDRAWAL AFFECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even with awareness of IPM's withdrawal, Lesotho decided to offer the ring for women. • Understood that ring is not needed in the U.S. market • Lesotho follows South Africa's regulatory decisions
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION NEEDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation studies are the next step in understanding ring in Lesotho's context
PROCUREMENT/FUNDING NEEDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesotho has agreed to begin implementing ring with pilot studies and are looking to partner with organizations to provide funding.

LESOTHO IPM-LED CONSULTATION SUMMARY (IPM, MOH)

GUIDING QUESTION	SUMMARY
OVERALL REACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MOH still plans to introduce the ring.
RING PLANS & CONSIDERATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ring is included in updated PrEP guidelines.
WITHDRAWAL EFFECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lesotho will move forward to introduce the ring since WHO guidance has not changed.
PROCUREMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If PEPFAR cannot procure the ring, Lesotho would turn to other partners, including the Global Fund. Lesotho is not in a position to fund procurement of the ring immediately and may not be able to do so in the next fiscal year due to budget constraints brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION NEEDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional information will come from additional consultations.

UPDATE

On February 17, the MOH issued a memo that the ring had been added to the essential medicines list for women ages 18+.

LESOTHO MOSAIC-LED CONSULTATION SUMMARY (AGYW, FSWs, PEPFAR IP)

OVERALL REACTIONS

- AGYW were dissatisfied and disappointed that the ring might not be available to them because they believe it could be helpful to many young people, especially young women, who are at risk of contracting HIV.
- Young women need as many tools as possible to prevent HIV infection.
- FSWs expressed confusion and concern about the ring not being good enough for Americans but potentially good enough for women in Lesotho.

GUIDING QUESTION	SUMMARY
RING PLANS & CONSIDERATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A PEPFAR IP representative believed WHO approval should be enough for the ring to be funded for HIV prevention. PEPFAR moved forward with supporting rollout of COVID-10 vaccines without US FDA approval.
PERCEPTIONS OF THE RING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral PrEP users were excited by the possibility of a discreet HIV prevention product that they do not have to hide from friends, sexual partners, and family. • Not introducing the ring would be detrimental to many people who depend on sexual activity to make a living. • Introducing the ring as another HIV prevention product will help reduce the number of new HIV infections among people in Lesotho.
WITHDRAWAL EFFECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving forward with the ring without US FDA approval has the potential to cause reduced acceptance by end users. They may read about it and resist uptake, as seen with the COVID-19 vaccines. • Conspiracy theories may also arise if the ring is provided only in Africa.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION NEEDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None mentioned
CIVIL SOCIETY ROLE & REACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEPFAR IP felt civil society must be capacitated to create demand and nullify any potential negative publicity about ring use. <p>*Concerns around conspiracy theories if the product is provided only in Africa arose separate from alignment of stakeholders on the need for the ring.</p>

Verbatims from Lesotho



“As a young woman in Lesotho I like to always feel like I am protecting myself against HIV at all times. I am getting that from PrEP pill every day, but I have to always hide from my family because they do not understand my reasons for taking pills. Also, sometimes when we go out with my friends, I am too embarrassed for them to see me taking a pill, but now knowing that there is something that can protect me while I also have my own privacy feels good but disappointing to know we might never get it.” – AGYW representative



“This ring would really help. I personally believe as young people and Basotho in general, for us to get to the point where we are HIV free, we need as many tools as possible to protect ourselves and I believe this ring is one of them.” – AGYW representative



“The Lesotho authorities can just make an example with us when they are trying to convince Americans about this product that every day we are at risk of contracting HIV while we are doing our job. We are really a perfect example of the reason why the PrEP ring should come to Lesotho.” – Female sex worker