

PrEP Ring Consultations Zambia Detailed Summary

MOSAIC-led consultations: January 13-20, 2022



ZAMBIA WHO-LED CONSULTATION SUMMARY (MOH)

Zambia put the formal ring stakeholder consultation on hold. The MOH indicated that it would await further research and data from other countries currently implementing pilot studies to inform policy and final resolution concerning the ring.

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It was felt that data from the region, particularly from countries with a similar demography to Zambia (i.e., Zimbabwe) would be more informative to direct policy. Meanwhile, guidance has been given to optimize the implementation of the existing PrEP method (oral PrEP), looking at the achievements in uptake over the last year, whilst exploring other novel and more efficient PrEP methods (i.e., CAB PrEP) for consideration to add to the current HIV prevention toolbox for Zambia.

Zambia MOH

ZAMBIA IPM-LED CONSULTATION SUMMARY (IPM, MOH)

GUIDING QUESTION	SUMMARY
OVERALL REACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Information was not provided.
RING PLANS & CONSIDERATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The MOH added the ring to their HIV prevention guidelines.
WITHDRAWAL EFFECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Without US FDA approval, it is unlikely that Zambia will move ahead and adopt the product.The ring will need to have an application in country through ZAMRA.The rationale for the withdrawal of the NDA from US FDA is needed.
PROCUREMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Zambia will need PEPFAR support to procure the ring.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION NEEDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Information was not provided.

ZAMBIA MOSAIC-LED CONSULTATION SUMMARY (AGYW-FOCUSED CSOs, HIV PREVENTION AND SRHR CSOs, PrEP USERS, FSWs)

OVERALL REACTIONS

- The fact that a PrEP method was offered and withdrawn will sully the waters for introducing new products, regardless of how convenient or appealing those products are.
- More PrEP options are needed in Zambia. Women would welcome the ring as an additional method but need to be properly informed of how to use it and its efficacy compared to oral PrEP.
- Lack of US FDA approval may have some negative impact on perceptions of the ring in Zambia, but this can be overcome by emphasizing WHO's guidance and bringing in perspectives from end users.
- The reasons for IPM's withdrawal of the NDA from US FDA consideration should be disclosed; this omission may hamper advocacy efforts and the way the ring will be viewed.

GUIDING QUESTION	SUMMARY
RING PLANS & CONSIDERATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PrEP users feel they should be able to try the ring to determine if it is suitable for them but also expressed concern that proceeding with ring introduction would raise doubts about the product because of its lower efficacy rate and lack of US FDA approval.
PERCEPTIONS OF THE RING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGYW believe the ring will be a useful HIV prevention tool, but many young people do not know about it yet. • Some PrEP users will choose to continue taking oral PrEP, but others might prefer the ring because of its discreetness.
WITHDRAWAL EFFECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PrEP users feel they should be able to try the ring for themselves. • FSWs noted they would need clarity on why the NDA was withdrawn to decide to try the ring. • Advocates felt that the US FDA opinion matters to people in Zambia, particularly policymakers, and the withdrawal of the NDA from the US FDA will have trickle-down effects because a lot of countries look to US FDA guidance.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION NEEDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions were raised about why the product has not already been introduced, why IPM withdrew the ring's NDA, and the science behind the ring. • FSWs' questions were about how it works if someone is using the ring for both HIV prevention and family planning.
CIVIL SOCIETY ROLE & REACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consensus among CS representative was that there are no advantages to not moving forward with the ring. • Most FSWs are already aware of the ring and injectable PrEP, and demand is already there. • Products need to be provided at the community level and over the counter. • Social media is likely to amplify myths and misconceptions if messaging around withdrawal of the NDA from the US FDA is not clear. • Civil society has a big role in community sensitization via SRHR and HIV advocates and through grassroots organizations.

Verbatims from Zambia



[The ring] is a good empowerment tool for the female gender; specific to young people, the ring gives them freedom to make decisions on how they can prevent themselves because they don't have the power to negotiate for safe sex." – AGYW representative



"My reflections are that more research should be done, because it might affect a lot of people here in Zambia because most women forget to take oral PrEP. Since I have information about the ring, I can use it, so much sensitization should be done." – PrEP user and former PrEP preferences trial participant



"There is no advantage [to not introducing ring], but the disadvantage is that a lot of people complain about oral PrEP being taken daily. But for the ring, you just insert it once and remove after 28 days, and depending on the effectiveness and sensitization about the ring, a lot of people will have information about it will be able to make a better choice if they would want to use it." – PrEP user