Introducing oral pre-exposure prophylaxis to adolescent girls and young women in Tanzania: Overview of findings from implementation science research

Population Council
Policymakers and other key stakeholders in Tanzania are currently considering making oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) available as an HIV prevention option for adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) and other vulnerable populations. PrEP is an antiretroviral medication taken by HIV-uninfected persons to prevent HIV.

The Population Council in collaboration with the National AIDS Control Program (NACP) and CSK Research Solutions Limited conducted implementation science research in one urban district (Dar es Salaam) and one rural district (Mbeya) to provide needed evidence for informing decision-making on whether and how to introduce PrEP to AGYW in Tanzania. The aims of the research were to:

- Assess the acceptability of PrEP among AGYW, their male partners, their parents/guardians, healthcare providers (HCPs), and policymakers.
- Determine the feasibility of and opportunities for providing PrEP to AGYW.
- Identify key facilitators and barriers to PrEP introduction to AGYW.

**KEY FINDINGS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR PREP INTRODUCTION**

- **Need for PrEP:** All study participants agreed that AGYW need PrEP due to existing socio-cultural circumstances that increase their risk of HIV. Specifically, participants described a lack of trust in sexual relationships; limited or inconsistent condom use; restrictive gender norms that prohibit women, particularly young women, from refusing sexual intercourse with their partners; and women’s experiences of sexual violence as important reasons for AGYW having access to PrEP.

- **Fear of stigma:** Because PrEP is an ARV, all participant groups were concerned that individuals taking PrEP would be seen as being HIV positive and therefore, the existing stigma and discrimination toward people living with HIV could apply to them, as well. Additionally, AGYW who take PrEP might be labeled as promiscuous. Of importance in reducing stigma was appropriate community education and sensitization about PrEP, and ensuring that PrEP delivery was integrated into preventive health services rather than offered at HIV care and treatment centers.

**Research Partners:** CSK Research Solutions Ltd & National AIDS Control Program (NACP)

**Collaborators:** PEPFAR/Tanzania & Sauti/Tanzania

**Funder:** Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

**Location:** Dar es Salaam and Mbeya Districts

**Study Duration:** 2016–2018
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