

# HIV PrEP for female-sex-workers in the context of combination HIV prevention: Impact on community-wide awareness, uptake and perceptions in a rural area KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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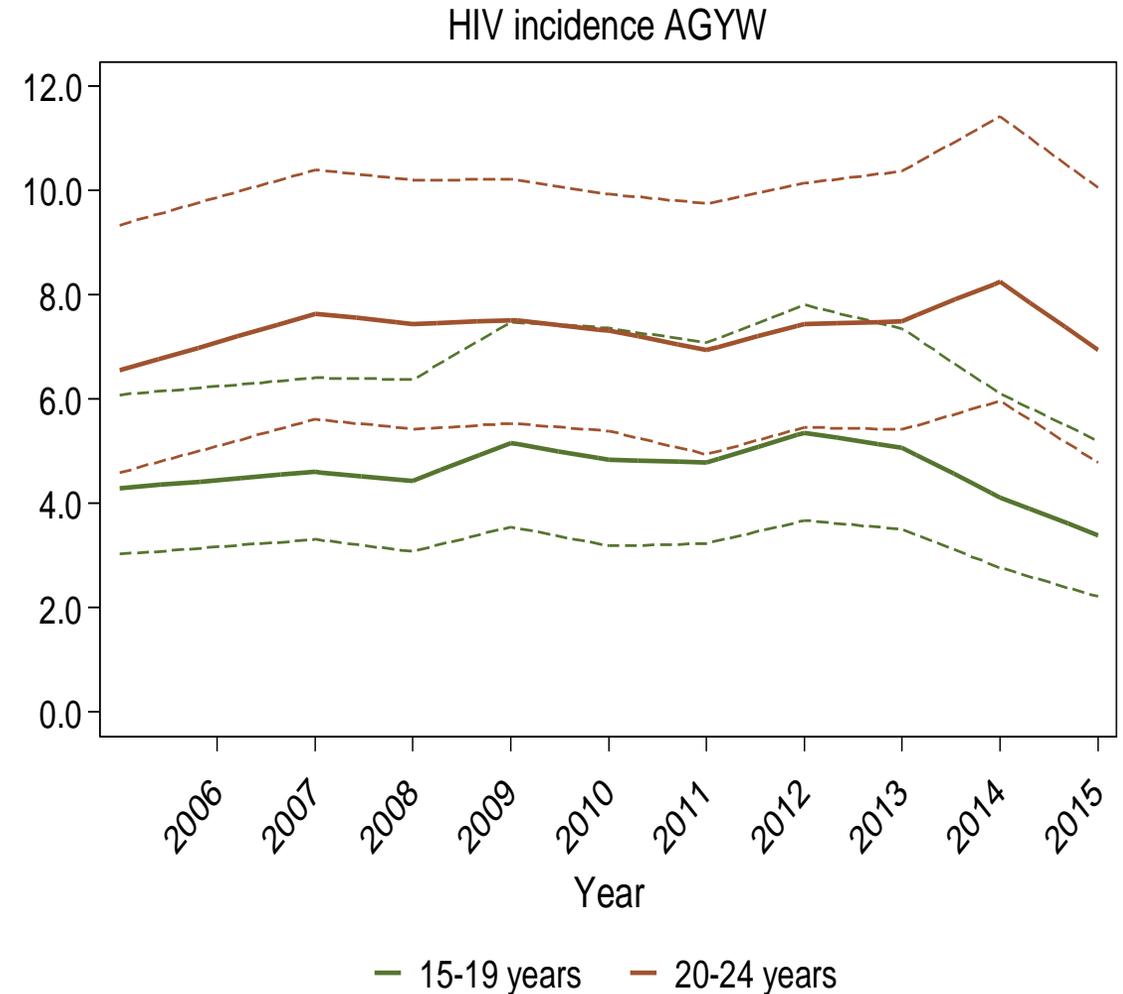
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# Background

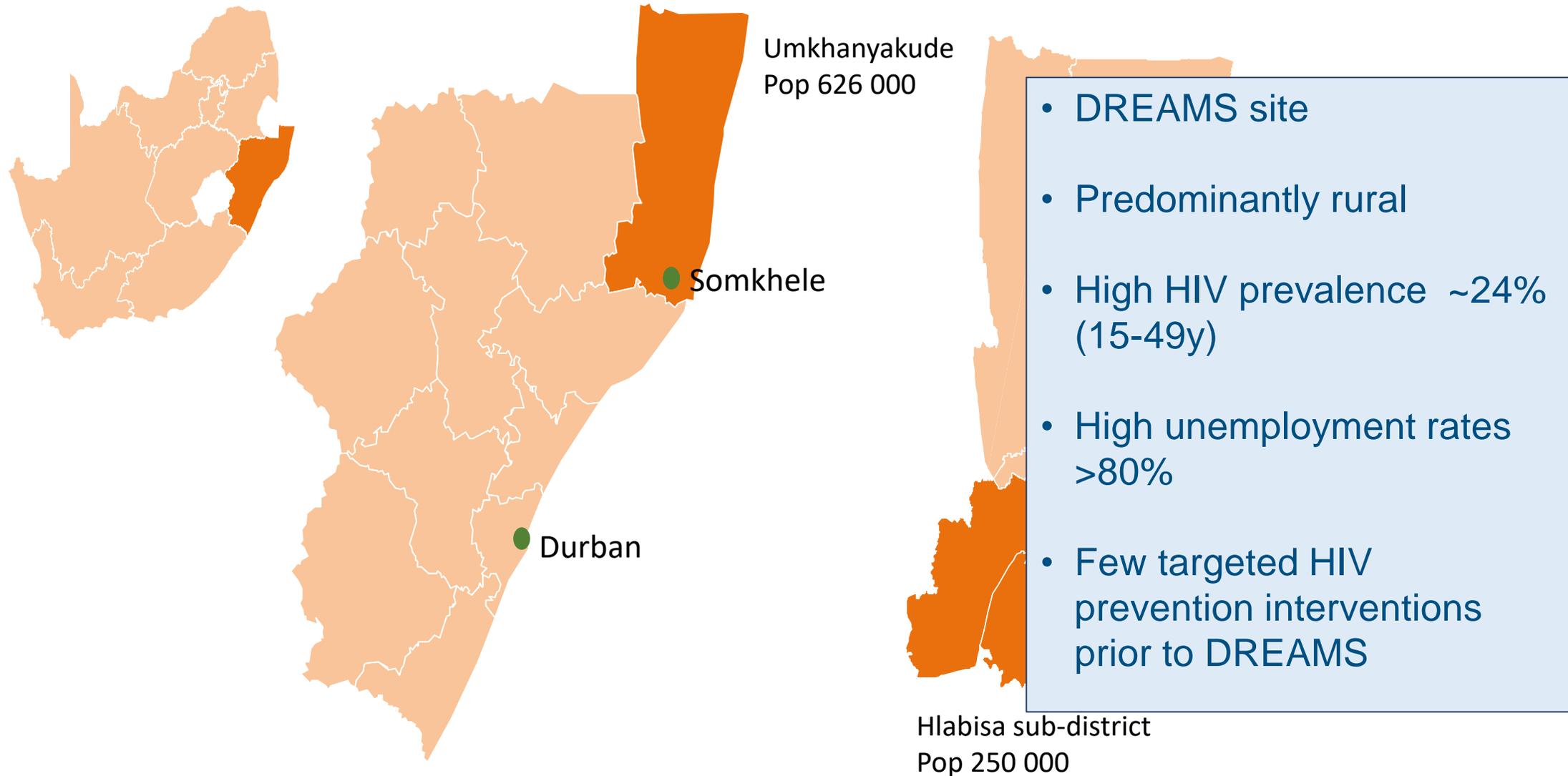
- Young people in South Africa remain at highest risk of HIV acquisition  
[Chimbindi et al 2018, Baisley et al 2018]
- A variety of effective HIV prevention tools are available including Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)
- PrEP roll-out was part of PEPFAR-funded DREAMS partnership
  - Targeting young female-sex-workers
  - Roll-out 2016-2018



# Aim

1. Describe PrEP eligibility, awareness and uptake among a representative cohort of adolescent girls and young women (AGYW)
  - a) We use an HIV prevention cascade framework to understand how implementation impacted at population-level, demand and uptake of PrEP
2. Describe how this targeted roll-out affected community members' perceptions towards PrEP

# Study setting



# Study Design

## **Mixed-method process evaluation**

- participatory community mapping (2017) & quantitative survey (2017-18)

## **Community-mapping of 4 purposively sampled communities**

- Key in-depth interviews with implementing partners (n=33) & young people (n=58)
- Community based group discussions (n=19)
- Stakeholder interviews (n=9)

## **Quantitative survey**

- Enrolled a representative cohort of n=2184 AGYW aged 13-22 years
- Collected data on uptake of HIV prevention, including eligibility, awareness and uptake of PrEP
- Data collected electronically and self-filled

## Characteristics of nested cohort baseline (N=2184)

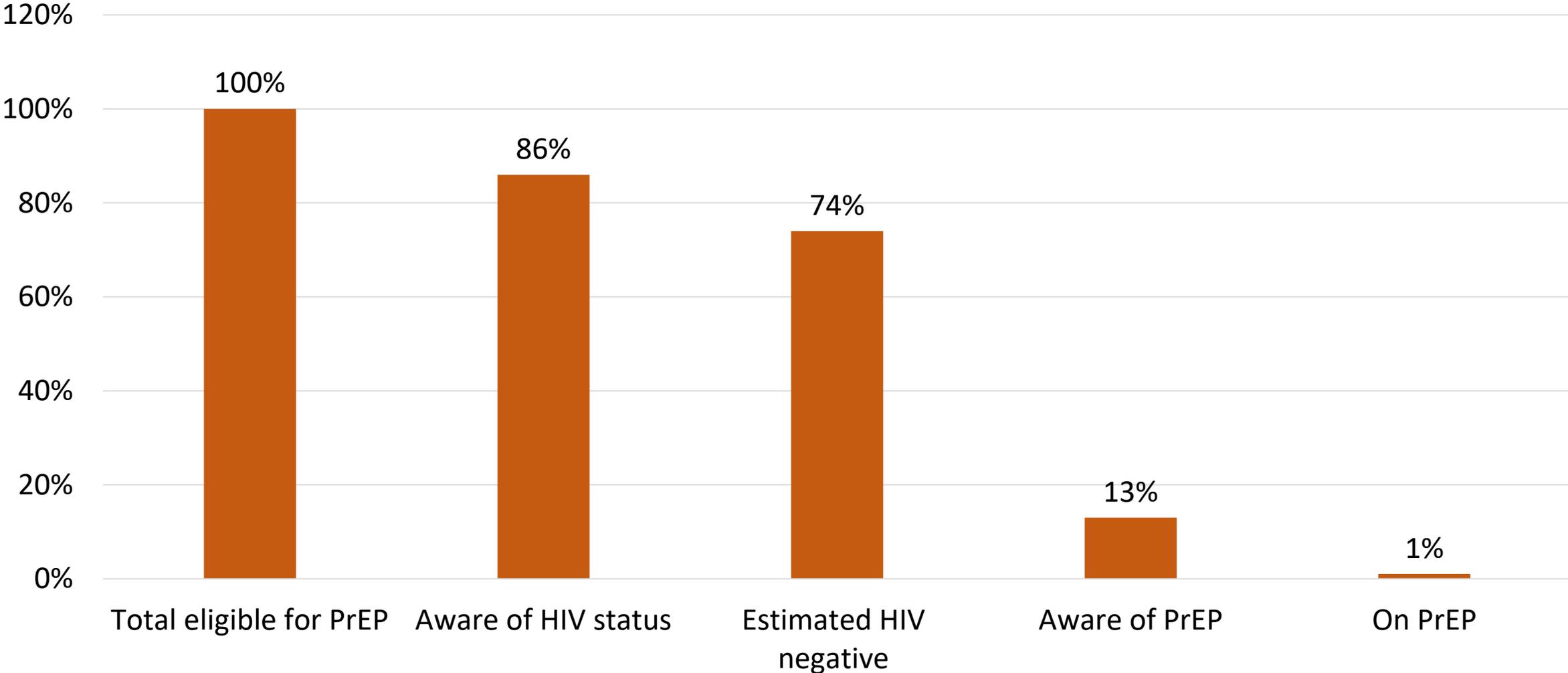
Characteristic	% (95% CI)
<b>Age group</b>	
13-17	52.6 (50.5-54.7)
18-22	47.4 (45.3-49.5)
<b>Location</b>	
Rural	64.1 (62.1-66.1)
Peri-urban	30.5 (28.6-32.5)
Urban	5.4 (4.5-6.4)
<b>Currently in school (Yes)</b>	75.3 (73.4-77.0)
<b>Ever migrated in the past years (Yes)</b>	18.5 (16.9-20.1)
<b>Food insecurity (Yes)</b>	31.2 (29.3-33.2)

# PrEP awareness for AGYW (N=2184)

- PrEP awareness increased from 2.0% (95% CI:1.5-2.7%) in 2017 to 9.0% (95% CI:7.3-9.8%) in 2018 ( $p<0.001$ )
- 44.2% reported being sexually active
- Among the 194 PrEP-eligible AGYW:
  - 13.4% AGYW reported transactional sex
  - 10.6% AGYW reported sex for money



# HIV prevention cascade for PrEP-eligible AGYW (n=194)



■ Adolescent girls and young women involved in transactional sex and eligible for PrEP n=194

# Community and young people's awareness of PrEP

- Interview respondents were generally unaware of PrEP
- Some young people it was their first time to hear about PrEP and could not attach meaning to it

*“I don't know what it means even in Zulu”*

- Most community members were not aware of PrEP, often confusing it with post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)



# Community and young people's benefit of PrEP

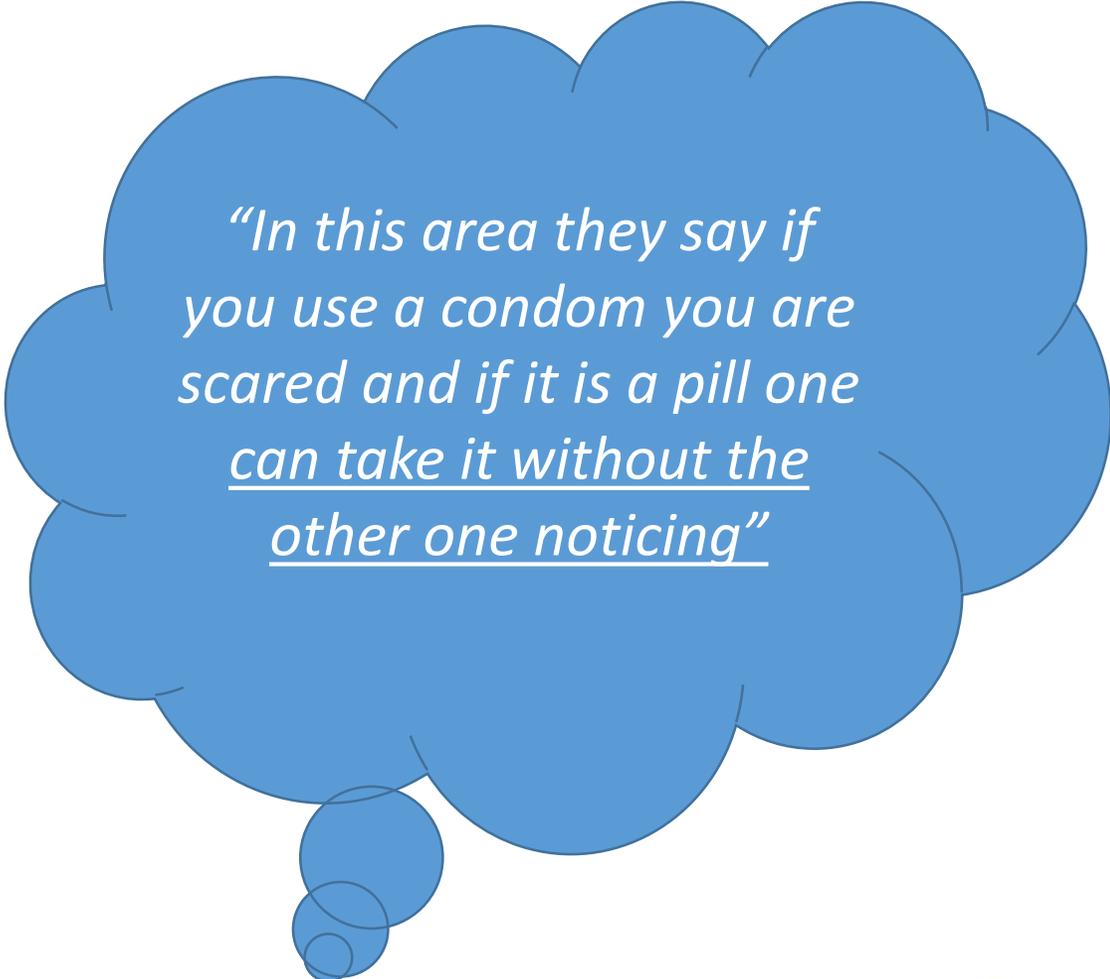
- PrEP was seen as a possible alternative to condoms,

*“eating sweets in a wrapping paper”* and

*“killing your babies”*

Because

*“...it will be in their system”*



*“In this area they say if you use a condom you are scared and if it is a pill one can take it without the other one noticing”*

# Community and young people's benefit/candidates of PrEP

- PrEP was imagined would benefit young people, discordant couples and those with long-distance partners
- PrEP was thought to be more beneficial to boys or young men who were believed to *“love sex more than women”*

*“I think it is a good thing because...those who are in relationships with older people who are infected, they can be able to get treatment beside leaving him because of his HIV status.”*

# Community members attitude towards PrEP

- Teachers and healthcare providers were more ambivalent about PrEP

*“Mmm doing that will mean setting them free to engage into unprotected sexual intercourse anyhow”*

# Conclusion

- PrEP awareness increased and was generally acceptable
- Uptake was low amongst eligible AGYW who reported FSW activity
- Targeted nature of public-sector PrEP may have affected reach and may affect future roll-out of PrEP to the wider population
- Community-based approaches to PrEP education and provision, including engagement of youth and key stakeholders, may help improve demand for, access to, and optimise the PrEP cascade

# Acknowledgements

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