



# 1. Accountability in action: Engaging with new tools and technologies

## WHAT TO DO?

- Create safe, active spaces for ongoing consultation that are accessible and open, supported, and friendly. This could be a WhatsApp group, Facebook group, email list-serve, or in-person meetings. New concepts, tools and programs can then be discussed and reviewed, providing real time insights and feedback.

## WHY DO IT?

- Young women have the right to information. It is essential that they, for example, be provided with the necessary information about new tools and technologies that exist and the consequences of such options so they can make informed and free decisions.
- Young women have the right to participate and express their views in all matters affecting them and have their potential to enrich decision-making processes and to share perspectives recognized.
- Ongoing consultation creates a space where people are comfortable to share questions and experiences.
- Provides an opportunity for real time feedback.
- New tools can be introduced early, and feedback gathered as people first hear about it.
- Supports accountability to the community in planning and rollout of new tools.
- Supports effective implementation of new tools and highlights barriers.
- Fosters space to ask questions and builds understanding of decision-making structures.
- Expands community engagement and participation in decisions impacting their lives.
- Gives insight to communities' recourse, advocacy and potential actions.

## WHO BENEFITS?

- Women and girls who are able to learn about new tools and articulate their own views, including opportunities and challenges.
- Communities who are given voice and opportunities to improve policy and practice.
- Marginalized, unseen and unheard communities that are far too often the least represented and most heavily impacted by lack of engagement, investments or inclusion. This includes economically, socially, and educationally disenfranchised communities of women and girls.

## STEP-BY-STEP

1. Create a space for consultation, utilizing easy and accessible means of engagement, such as WhatsApp or other social media. Follow the steps for how to set up a group on pages 7 and 8.
2. Outline session goals and objectives:
  - Discuss how the participants came to be in the group and what they hope to gain from participation
  - Learn the definitions relevant to the topic
  - Learn how the new tools and technologies will impact their lives
  - Participants articulate their own views, preferences, and ideas

3. Determine what participants want to get out of the group and what information they need. Discussions can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the women in the particular group.
4. Provide factual, evidenced-based information on the new tool/technology, including in-country context when relevant.
5. Use multimedia teaching resources – print, videos, internet resources, etc.
6. Ask participants to share their own experience with the new tool/technology enabling participants to support each other as peers.
7. Encourage questions about the new tool/technology, openness and learning throughout the process through validation and moderating.
8. Directly address misconceptions when they arise and provide clarification on an on-going basis.
9. Document responses and questions.
10. Follow up: share the findings with relevant parties; continue to consult the group over time, feedback updates on the new tool/technology and identify further opportunities for engagement.



#### IN ACTION: ENGAGING YOUNG WOMEN AROUND PrEP

The #WhatWomenWant WhatsApp focus group continued to operate after a formal consultative process for the UNAIDS HIV prevention guidance (see also page 15). The focus group adopted an informal approach, providing an ongoing space for open discussion over a period of time where people are comfortable to share questions and experiences. Because of this, **real-time feedback could be collected as participants were able to share experiences as they were occurring.** The outcome was a tremendous response rate with rich feedback as young women were given the opportunity to share on their terms. This is useful to inform implementation of new tools and to highlight barriers.

In particular, this method was used to **engage young women around pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)**. As PrEP is a new prevention tool, only a small number of participants reported knowledge about its availability in their country. It became apparent that there was also confusion between PrEP and PEP – post-exposure prophylaxis. The confusion with PEP was widespread, and suggests one key area for information strategies to address, not just understanding what PEP and PrEP are but the relative risks, benefits, and efficacy of each. Fear of developing resistance to antiretrovirals emerged as a barrier to acceptability of PrEP among AGYW. Participants suggested that an unsupportive environment due to fear of stigma would prevent AGYW from accessing PrEP. Further, participants were unsure of access to PrEP, and accessibility of the drug to all those who may benefit was raised as a concern. Many participants understood that PrEP was available only to specific populations such as female sex workers. Participants suggested a number of strategies to improve PrEP availability and acceptability, including intentionally packaging information to cater to a young audience.