



Communicating the PrEP Category to Adolescent Girls and Young Women

BRAND POSITIONING STRATEGY BRIEF



Introduction

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is now a category of products, including oral PrEP, (injectable) CAB PrEP, and the PrEP ring. For the first time ever, the HIV prevention field has the element of choice of PrEP products and the market is rapidly expanding.

Adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) aged 15 to 24 years comprise only 10% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa, but they account for 25% of new HIV infections.¹ While they are a critical audience for PrEP, demand for oral PrEP among AGYW has not been as high as hoped, uptake has been low, and among those who initiate oral PrEP many young women do not continue use.² As the PrEP category expands to include new products, our marketing and demand generation efforts must remain relevant to a youth population and understand how to communicate choice of method to AGYW today.

Considering the current reality of traditional and digital media, there are thousands of messages aimed at AGYW daily. To stand out to young women and get them interested in the PrEP category and what it has to offer, there needs to be a strategic approach. Our objective as MOSAIC was to determine how best to brand the PrEP category for AGYW in order to align marketing, communications, and demand generation activities under a common strategy built on robust evidence. Our hope is that this work will provide implementers in markets introducing choice of HIV prevention methods with actionable guidance on how to engage with AGYW.

Successful branding of the PrEP category can help communication and demand generation efforts better connect with their intended audiences by having a deeper understanding of the fundamental aspects that influence the audience's relationship with the category. Branding creates an affinity with our audience. It helps build trust, credibility, and reputation of our products and services, and it articulates the value added to our audience's lives. A brand ideally lives in the heart and mind of a consumer.

Brand positioning requires an evidence-based starting point that takes into consideration the past (lessons learned from previous oral PrEP communication and demand generation efforts, including all available evidence), the present (what our audience today thinks and feels about PrEP), and the future (what will work best for our audience as we have a choice of PrEP products in the market) so we can deliver communication that inspires behavior change and achieves impact in the field of HIV prevention.

Brand positioning is the first step towards building a brand. It acts as a roadmap or guide for how implementers and program designers should approach all communication and demand generation efforts. Creative execution all lives under the umbrella of one brand positioning strategy, which helps to make the brand stand out, resonate, be easily understood, and be consistent. What is essential is that brand positioning lays out what a brand stands for in the eyes of the target audience.

Principles of brand positioning we centered our work on include focus, relevance, resonance, and distinctiveness. Focus relates to the frame of reference or the goal of using the brand for the target audience. Relevance relates to understanding what is most important to the target audience. Resonance is how well the audience relates to the brand, and distinctiveness relates to making sure the brand stands out.

There are a variety of frameworks that can be used to develop brand positioning. We chose to use the funnel, a process which considers four inputs—culture, category, consumer, and product—that build to the key output called the key brand benefit (KBB). We used this process because the principles underpin each input: through our process we uncover AGYW's ultimate goal for PrEP use, we understand what is most important to them, how PrEP as a brand can relate to them, and how to stand out to them.

- Culture:** Understands the impact a larger macrotrend has on AGYW and HIV prevention and how the PrEP category should respond to that trend.
- Category:** Uncovers our opportunity to change to better stand out to AGYW given the typical conventions and expectations of the PrEP category.
- Consumer:** Identifies what AGYW most want from the PrEP category given the job they are looking to PrEP to fulfill and the tension that is holding them back from fulfilling that job.
- Product:** Examines PrEP attributes and associations to understand what can be leveraged to inform the unique right to win of PrEP in a given market (i.e., leveraging what AGYW care about most).

All these inputs funnel down to the KBB, which serves as the emotionally engaging, core focus of the brand. The KBB underpins all communication.

It's important to note that a positioning strategy is not communicated directly to the target audience. It is not a message or a campaign slogan, but a guide for designers and implementers. It should inform creative brief development for communication and demand generation interventions. It can also be shared with creative agencies and marketing teams when developing campaigns or creative executions as an addendum to a creative brief. The positioning strategy is intended to be broad; it incorporates inputs from across MOSAIC countries and was validated in Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. The creative brief should be tailored to a specific setting and targeted to a specific audience to ensure the nuances of young women's lives and unique circumstances are captured.

Our brand positioning strategy for AGYW looks to answer the question: what do we want young women's hearts to feel and minds to think about PrEP?

¹ UNAIDS. Global AIDS Update, Confronting Inequalities: Lessons for pandemic responses from 40 years of AIDS. 2021.
² Allison BA, Widman L, Stewart JL, Evans R, Perry M. Adherence to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis in Adolescents and Young Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. J Adolesc Health. 2022 Jan;70(1):28-41. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2021.04.001. Epub 2021 May 29. PMID: 34059426.

Key Brand Benefit

PrEP is a way for young women to prioritize their physical health and mental well-being, to live a life uninterrupted by HIV.

It affirms that self-love is strength.

Brand Positioning Inputs

PrEP supports young women in putting themselves first.

AGYW are working hard, recognizing their own strength, and nurturing their well-being. They are listening to artists, viewing social media, and watching shows that portray women believing in and expressing themselves fully. They are less cautious of others' expectations or traditional roles. AGYW are not looking for permission to live up to their potential, and they seek programs, services, and products that believe in them and support them for who they already are. They are looking for acknowledgment of their inherent strength. PrEP confirms the strength and power young women already have and supports AGYW in putting themselves first.

PrEP is self-care.

For AGYW, PrEP is strongly associated with self-care, which to them means having the confidence, self-worth, and self-respect to care for themselves, their health, and their lives. Self-care is about making the brave choice to take care of themselves by taking PrEP. It goes beyond face masks and bubble baths, and even beyond self-administered products. Self-care is about not letting HIV stand in their way, and young women know they are worth the effort it takes to care for themselves. Self-care is also a collective act between AGYW and their sisters, or close friends: they see their success and survival as up to them and their sisters.

PrEP provides peace of mind.

AGYW are especially conscious of managing their mental well-being. PrEP is seen as an essential way to negate the anxiety of momentary perceptions of risk for young women (e.g., after unprotected sex or when they feel sick). While not long-lasting, these moments occur frequently in young women's lives. Thus, PrEP is like a form of therapy for some young women. AGYW also see themselves as their own emotional safe spaces. They believe their inner strength allows them to be their own protectors, and that PrEP can play a big role in maintaining this. Leveraging the peace of mind that comes with taking PrEP is a significant benefit for AGYW and has the potential to outweigh the challenges of PrEP use, such as taking it daily, managing side effects, going to the clinic, etc.

PrEP choice puts young women in control.

Though there are things that young women often can't control when it comes to sex, such as the HIV status of a partner or instances of sexual assault, PrEP offers them a measure of autonomy over their bodies. A sense of being in charge of decisions for their health renders AGYW more confident in other areas of life. If she is the driver of her HIV prevention decisions, she firmly believes that she can also control other things, such as her relationships, livelihood, and beliefs. In the context of choice, there is an even greater measure of control—for the first time, young women can not only control whether to use PrEP, but also which method to use.

CULTURE

CATEGORY

CONSUMER

PRODUCT

KBB

KEY BRAND BENEFIT

PrEP Category Brand Positioning Narrative

How can PrEP show up for AGYW?

AUDIENCE INSIGHT Understanding AGYW's motivation and needs in their own words:

"Life is a balancing act of what I want, what I need, and what's expected of me. Prioritizing myself by taking PrEP requires that I overcome the many challenges that surround PrEP use, especially judgment and stigma. This is difficult, but I know I'm at my best when I feel good about myself because I've taken PrEP. When I feel confident and strong, my actions, decisions, and words reflect it."

This is not a story about HIV. This is a story about young women in Africa. Every day is a balancing act of juggling different needs with limited resources. But instead of relinquishing their power, they are giving main character energy. They have a strong sense of self and are determined to live a healthy life.

SELF-CARE IS A VIBE.

Young women today have figured out that it is up to them to take care of themselves. This determination makes AGYW resourceful and proactive, even though it is often not easy. They understand the world they live in; they know that their communities and those around them might not always be open to their choices. It takes bravery and strength for AGYW to take care of their sexual health and each other. They see taking care of themselves as an act of self-love, and strength goes hand in hand with self-love. It is their self-love that gives them the confidence to be positive and fierce in the world.

For young women, PrEP use can come at a price. There is often significant stigma towards PrEP in their communities; however, they know that taking PrEP can give them peace of mind. PrEP makes them feel physically and, importantly, mentally safe. The PrEP category has the potential to significantly enhance young women's lives—not only on a physical level by protecting them from HIV, but also on an emotional level, by providing them with peace of mind.

THE ULTIMATE FLEX? CONTROL.

The expanding menu of PrEP methods creates further space for young women to exercise control, emphasizing that they are in the driver's seat when it comes to their HIV prevention needs. Discreet, long-acting methods offer their own benefits compared to daily oral PrEP, and young women are eager for the opportunity to make personalized decisions about their health that complement their lifestyle at any given time.

AGYW are not just determined in their efforts to take care of their own lives, but are aware that by standing strong in themselves they inspire their peers to do the same. They are passionate about ensuring their sisters—their close female friends—have the information they need to choose life, health, and PrEP confidently. For AGYW, every act of strength reinforces their determination, motivation, and ability to design the life they want to live, and encourages their sisters and peers to do the same.

AGYW WANT STRAIGHT-UP FACTS.

AGYW are excited about messages that inspire courage and offer affirmation to young women who may still be hesitant about their own inner strength to take PrEP. They are dedicated to supporting each other by seeking and sharing facts about PrEP. They want to assure their peers and communities that PrEP is safe. PrEP safety is often still questioned, and this leads to myths and misinformation. AGYW also need comprehensive information on effectiveness, side effects, and other product attributes. They feel confident that if they are armed with reliable information, they can break down stigma with truth.

This is not a story about HIV. This is a story about young women in Africa.

PrEP use is not always easy. It requires repeat visits to the clinic, taking time off work, remembering to use a medication, managing side effects, and much more. For more AGYW to use PrEP, the category needs to be linked with the audience's own sense of strength. To stand out, communication should resonate with young women's inner strength, unwavering determination to live a full and healthy life, and commitment to self-care as an act of self-love.

PrEP is a way for young women to prioritize their physical health and mental well-being, to live a life uninterrupted by HIV. It affirms that self-love is strength.

Summary

For...	AGYW in Africa
who...	want to give themselves the peace of mind PrEP affords.
PrEP is the...	support for their physical health and mental well-being
that...	affirms that self-love is strength
because...	it is safe, effective, free, and available in different forms (oral, ring, injectable) depending on the setting
so that...	AGYW can use their own power and control to live a life uninterrupted by HIV.

PrEP Category Brand Framework

Key Brand Benefit

PrEP is a way for young women to prioritize their physical health and mental well-being, to live a life uninterrupted by HIV. It affirms that self-love is strength.

How do we speak to AGYW?

Young women are consistently showing confidence, strength, bravery, and motivation. Marketing and communication must mirror this.

What do AGYW want?

"I am self-assured. I respect myself and my body. I am powerful and strong, brave, and vibrant. Show me trustworthy information that is inclusive and builds my knowledge. Show me that PrEP is accessible and you are open to my needs."



Today's AGYW...

- Are not passive bystanders in their own lives. They are claiming their power and are bold.
- Understand their daily realities, but also understand that they are inherently strong because they navigate these realities every day.
- Understand the need to prioritize themselves.
- Are brave, know their own worth, and are not settling for anything that does not acknowledge and celebrate their sense of worth and their journey.
- Do not need to be empowered. They are already empowered.

Key Benefits

FUNCTIONAL:

- Safe
- Effective
- Free of charge
- Choice of a variety of formats: oral, ring, injectable (depending on setting)

EMOTIONAL:

- Self-love
- Strength
- Peace of mind
- Control

PrEP Category Commitment

- We don't sugar-coat the realities of taking PrEP.
- We understand the courage, effort, and commitment required to be a PrEP user.
- We show that we believe young women have what it takes.
- We affirm young women's strength, determination, and commitment.
- We work towards creating broader awareness of PrEP.



Guidance Checklist

Positioning alignment for communication materials and messaging

KEY



Language



Imagery



Context



Information

ALIGN WITH THE BRAND PERSONA.



Description: Ensure communication materials and those who represent the brand (e.g., peer advocates, providers) use language consistent with how AGYW see themselves.

Action:

- Use stories, language, and imagery that affirm AGYW as self-assured, confident, powerful, strong, brave, self-respecting, and having self-worth.
- Avoid imagery or language that could suggest fear or anxiety about HIV or that is critical, judgmental, arrogant, or ingratiating.

SPEAK TO YOUNG WOMEN IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE.



Description: To resonate more strongly, make language more familiar to young women.

Action:

- Listen to how AGYW speak to each other, what slang they use, and how they express themselves. Be inspired by it.
- When doing national campaigns, identify and use all dominant languages, not just English. For sub-national or local campaigns, use the dominant language of the area.

SITUATE PrEP IN THE CONTEXT OF SELF-CARE.



Description: AGYW's reference to self-care is about taking care of their physical, mental, and emotional health, and is rooted in the desire to live a life uninterrupted by HIV.

Action:

- Steer clear of definitions of self-care that reduce it to self-indulgent practices (i.e., bubble baths or face masks), while emphasizing that taking PrEP means having control over one's mental and emotional health as well as physical.

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT TAKING PrEP IS HARD.



Description: AGYW know it is hard to take PrEP, for multiple reasons, and don't want the realities of taking PrEP sugar-coated.

Action:

- Don't use language like "just once a day" or "easy to use".

WATCH OUT FOR EMPOWERMENT.



Description: Young women today are already empowered and don't want to be empowered by others.

Action:

- Don't use language that tells them they have potential, but rather remind them that they are already living up to their potential.
- It is not about others saving or empowering AGYW, but rather that they can empower themselves by choosing PrEP.

BE LESS PRESCRIPTIVE.



Description: Ensure that AGYW feel respected and not dictated to.

Action:

- Prescriptive instructions are less effective than personal stories, examples, and honest conversations.

INCLUSIVITY IS IMPORTANT TO AGYW.



Description: AGYW don't want to feel that they are being singled out or stigmatized. They want to bring knowledge of PrEP to those close to them and need to be able to show that PrEP is for all genders, age groups, and ethnicities.

Action:

- Even though the focus is on supporting AGYW's PrEP use, include images of people of all ages, genders, and ethnicities so the communities AGYW live in and those around them know that PrEP is for everyone.

SHOW YOUNG WOMEN TODAY.



Description: AGYW want to see themselves represented on communication materials. They don't want to see models, but rather real young women from their country and background.

Action:

- Use images that look like young women look today—similar hairstyles, clothes, and, importantly, similar energy and vibrancy.

UNDERSTAND THAT PrEP ISN'T ONLY FOR PEOPLE IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS.



Description: AGYW may not be in a relationship or may have different types of relationships. While relationships are part of AGYW's lives, they are not in themselves the emotional drivers for PrEP use (those are self-care, peace of mind, and control). AGYW know that only showing PrEP use in the context of relationships ignores other modes of exposure.

Action:

- While including images of men on communication materials reinforces that PrEP is for all genders, do not only use images and language showing PrEP use in the context of relationships.

EMPHASIZE THE BENEFIT OF PEACE OF MIND.



Description: Peace of mind and mental health go hand in hand. This is a powerful consumer benefit of PrEP to be emphasized.

Action:

- Use language and stories that emphasize the mental and emotional safety provided by PrEP.

SUPPORT AND FULLY EXPLAIN CHOICE.



Description: Every touchpoint (at the clinic, in the media, in conversations with healthcare providers, etc.) should equip AGYW with information regarding PrEP. Where different PrEP options are available, choice should be a key message.

Action:

- Provide comprehensive information on all available PrEP options so that AGYW know they can exercise control in choosing a method that's right for them.

INCLUDE INFORMATION ON THE SAFETY OF PrEP.



Description: All touchpoints (at the clinic, in the media, in conversations with healthcare providers, etc.) should affirm the safety of these products by linking to both the functional and emotional benefits of PrEP.

Action:

- Information about safety should be clearly stated on all communication and complemented by other product attributes. Refer to the brand framework for specific functional and emotional benefits.

PROVIDE AGYW WITH COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION ON PrEP.



Description: Misinformation about PrEP is rampant and AGYW see themselves as advocates for the cause of combating misinformation about PrEP. To do this well, they require access to correct and consistent information.

Action:

- Include or point to easily accessible, comprehensive information on PrEP products. Ideally, provide a trusted resource (digital or in-person) for them to be able to ask questions confidentially.

MAKE THE LINK TO PrEP CLEAR AND CREATIVE.



Description: Communication should immediately be associated with PrEP.

Action:

- Get creative with how and where PrEP products are placed because AGYW want to see the methods they can choose from.
- Headlines should be emotionally engaging, but every piece of communication should have a clear link to PrEP.
- Include visuals of the products in communication materials. This can be done creatively. For example, use icons of the products or place images of PrEP products on models' clothing.



Acknowledgments

Thank you to the organizations and individuals involved in developing this PrEP category brand positioning strategy for adolescent girls and young women (AGYW).

While brand positioning is typically built through an internal process involving a narrow set of stakeholders, this process involved designing the strategy alongside many stakeholders within and outside the MOSAIC project in order to have the strongest possible strategy with buy-in towards application across settings. Many workshops and sessions were held to develop this strategy with implementing partners, ministry of health representatives, and advocates and activists from Lesotho, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. MOSAIC's youth advisors, the NextGen Squad, played a pivotal role in developing the strategy. Representing eight different countries, they ensured audience insights brought into the strategy reflected and were resonant with today's young women in their countries. The NextGen Squad also supported application of a gender-transformative³ lens to the insights brought in, helping to ensure those that form the backbone of this brand positioning strategy support equality and promote the relative position of women, girls, and marginalized groups.

This brand positioning strategy was validated and optimized alongside 121 AGYW in urban, peri-urban, and rural locations across Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. For complete details on the process and approach used to develop this strategy, please visit: www.prepwatch.org/positioning-prep-for-adolescent-girls-and-young-women-agyw/.

Throughout this strategy we have referred to the PrEP category, by which we mean those biomedical HIV prevention products that are already in market and those soon to be in the market: oral PrEP; CAB PrEP; and the PrEP ring.

This is a strategy focused on reaching AGYW with communication about the PrEP category. The most successful communication is targeted to specific audiences and the value of PrEP will be different to different audiences. That said, we know the importance of making PrEP famous for everyone. We've learned lessons about stigma when PrEP is only marketed to one group of people. We are not suggesting PrEP only be marketed to AGYW but are focused on robust, tailored strategies to better reach the intended audience with communication. We have shared the full process in the hopes that it can be replicated by those undertaking positioning work for other populations, and welcome collaboration and sharing beyond what is found in this document.

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3 The Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG). Lessons Learned in Gender Transformative Health Programming: A Rapid Literature Review. August 2022

