

## **Abstract**

### **PURPOSE:**

We sought to assess the potential acceptability of intravaginal rings (IVRs) as an HIV prevention method among at-risk women and men.

### **METHODS:**

We conducted a qualitative assessment of initial attitudes toward IVRs, current HIV prevention methods, and common behavioral practices among female sex workers (FSWs) and men who frequent FSWs in Mukuru, an urban slum community in Nairobi, Kenya. Nineteen women and 21 men took part in six focus group discussions.

### **RESULTS:**

Most participants, both male and female, responded positively to the concept of an IVR as a device for delivering microbicides. Women particularly liked the convenience offered by its slow-release capacity. Some female respondents raised concerns about whether male customers would discover the ring and respond negatively, whereas others thought it unlikely that their clients would feel the ring. Focus groups conducted with male clients of FSWs suggested that many would be enthusiastic about women, and particularly sex workers, using a microbicide ring, but that women's fears about negative responses to covert use were well founded. Overall, this high-risk population of FSWs and male clients in Nairobi was very open to the IVR as a potential HIV prevention device.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Themes that emerged from the focus groups highlight the importance of understanding attitudes toward IVRs as well as cultural practices that may impact IVR use in high-risk populations when pursuing clinical development of this potential HIV prevention device.