

# BREAKING THE CYCLE OF TRANSMISSION

HIV prevention decisions by at-risk young women in South Africa: proposing a novel *Integrated Behavioral Journey Framework* using a mixed methods research approach.

## BACKGROUND

In South Africa, HIV incidence rate of 1.51% among Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) is three times higher than men of similar age (0.49% incidence rate). Poor uptake of HIV prevention methods such as condoms is a key reason.

The project objective was to understand behavioral drivers influencing adoption and adherence of HIV prevention methods among at-risk AGYW.

## METHODS

The research was conducted over two sequential phases in high prevalence districts of South Africa.

**PHASE ONE:** was a qualitative research with 240 AGYW split across 6 sub-groups based on their self-reported HIV prevention behaviors. The research focused on understanding decision-making contexts, journey pathways and behavioral drivers influencing AGYW prevention decisions.

**PHASE TWO:** was a quantitative field survey conducted with stratified random cluster sample of 1987 AGYW. Cluster modeling analysis was performed to identify distinguishing motivational factors and derive distinct behavioral segments.

## RESULTS

AGYWs prevention decisions are moderated by their relationship and sexual health goals. HIV prevention is not the ultimate goal but may serve as a means to achieve the goals of AGYW.

AGYWs who exhibited positive prevention behaviors had undergone a perspective change from focusing on pleasing their partners to protecting their sexual health as the path to achieve their goals.

Three distinct segments emerged from the quantitative research differentiated by relationship expectations, power balance in sexual decision making, perceived risk of acquiring HIV relative to other AGYW and emotions associated with HIV.

## CONCLUSION

HIV prevention needs to be viewed in the context of AGYW's relationship and sexual health goals. We recommend an integrated behavioral journey framework that provides an understanding of sexual decisions of at-risk AGYW. The framework is comprised of four discrete decision milestones that AGYW crosses in order to sustain safe sexual behaviors. Each of the segments have unique relationship and sexual health goals and crosses the decision milestones due to specific combination of behavioral drivers.

### AGYW SEGMENTS:

	 LIFESTYLE SEEKER	 AFFIRMATION SEEKER	 RESPECT SEEKER
<b>RELATIONSHIP EXPECTATIONS</b> (What do you want from a partner)	Functional <b>55%</b> Provides gifts and other material needs	Emotional Validation <b>60%</b> Makes me feel safe and desired	Mutual Respect <b>76%</b> Respects me
<b>POWER BALANCE IN SEXUAL DECISION MAKING</b>	Ceded sexual decision making to partner <b>51%</b> Partner decides most often / always <b>51%</b> Partner gets angry to use condoms	Willing to trade risk for emotional rewards <b>33%</b> Partner decides most often / always <b>30%</b> Partner gets angry to use condoms	Most perceived control and negotiating power <b>28%</b> Partner decides most often / always <b>23%</b> Partner gets angry to use condoms
<b>PERCEIVED HIV RISK</b> (Relative to other AGYW)	Minority believe they are at lower risk <b>32%</b> Believe less likely	Almost half believe they are at lower risk <b>48%</b> Believe less likely	Majority believe they are at lower risk <b>62%</b> Believe less likely
<b>EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO HIV</b>	Less likely to take action <b>67%</b> Scared <b>60%</b> Hopeless	Likely to avoid HIV related info. <b>67%</b> Hopeless <b>60%</b> Confused	More likely to take action <b>72%</b> Scared <b>31%</b> Angry

### THE FIVE-PHASE JOURNEY:

