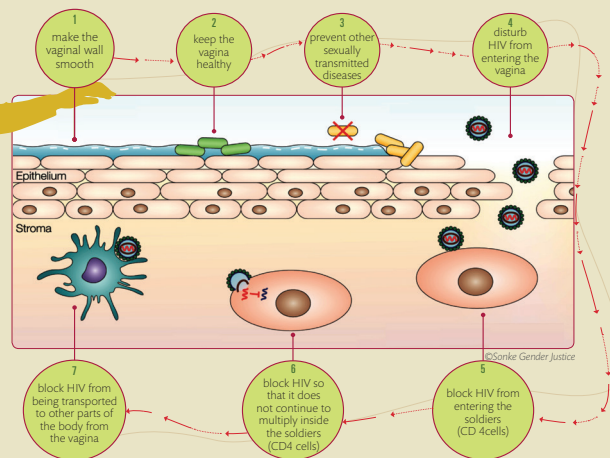


A SANAC POCKET GUIDE TO THINKING ABOUT GENDER & VAGINAL MICROBICIDES

Microbicides: A gel or ring that could help prevent HIV

A microbicide could:



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Men's Sector



MICROBICIDES

are substances being tested in clinical trials that could be used in the vagina and/or rectum to reduce the risk of HIV transmission during sex. If proven effective, they will offer women an important and fundamentally different HIV prevention

option – one that could possibly be used without their partners' knowledge, if desired. Sonke Gender Justice & FHI 360, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), conducted a gender analysis to make recommendations for an effective and rights-based microbicides roll out in South Africa. In addition to access to microbicides reaffirming every woman's right to health and to live free from HIV, the analysis found:

1 Microbicides should be made available to **all women**, and not just high-risk populations. However, women in steady partnerships and youth are key populations to reach.

2 Microbicides should be **integrated into existing** health services and programmes.

3 Microbicides should be made available **free-of-charge** in public health facilities, but additional costing and branding options should also be made available **to cater to the diversity of women**

4 Microbicide promotion should be **sex-positive** and highlight pleasure.

5 Marketing should **"normalise"** microbicides to create an enabling environment for women to **use the product**.

6 Messages on microbicides should **reach couples** in addition to women.

7 Women have the **right to choose** whether they inform their partner of their microbicide use, and health providers need to support them in making the decision that is **appropriate for them**.

8 Men should be **positively engaged** to help increase microbicide acceptability and adherence and promote couples' communication and **relationship quality**.

9 Providers need to be equipped to identify, support, and refer **women experiencing partner violence**.

10 Microbicides have the **potential to empower women**, but underlying **gender norms and power imbalances need to be challenged for real changes** in gender equality to occur.

11 Microbicides are **strongly linked to issues of sex, sexuality and women's health**. Working within spaces created for women (such as stokvels and other women's groups) to introduce microbicides may **create opportunities** for women to have broader conversations on all of these topics.