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## PREPPED FOR PREP!

### Accelerating HIV elimination in Vietnam with oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)

Oral HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, is a powerful prevention tool that can reduce the risk of HIV infection by up to 92 percent when taken as directed. In 2015, the World Health Organization strongly recommended PrEP as part of a combination HIV prevention strategy for people at substantial risk of HIV.<sup>1</sup>

In Vietnam, key populations at substantial risk of HIV include men who have sex with men (MSM), female sex workers (FSW), transgender women (TGW), people who inject drugs (PWID), and their sex partners. Although HIV prevalence among PWID and FSW has largely declined, prevalence among MSM and TGW remains high and is increasing in urban areas. PrEP has the potential to dramatically reduce the number of new HIV cases and enable Vietnam to meet its goal of HIV elimination by 2030.

“PrEP is a great way to protect yourself against HIV, along with practicing safe sex and using a condom. The response we’ve gotten from our clients towards PrEP has been very positive, and prescription rates are increasing—people in Vietnam are ready and eager for PrEP!”

*Nguyen Anh Thuan, Galant Clinic, a PrEP provider in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

### INTRODUCING PREP IN VIETNAM

In a 2016 survey conducted by the PATH-led Healthy Markets initiative, funded by the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), 91 percent of 799 MSM and TGW self-assessed as being at substantial risk of HIV. Eighty-nine percent said they would opt for PrEP if it was available in Vietnam. The majority (71 percent) said they would prefer to receive PrEP services through a community-based organization (CBO).

Healthy Markets is working closely with the Vietnam Ministry of Health (MOH), private sector stakeholders, and CBOs to pilot the first PrEP services in the country. This pilot aims to demonstrate that PrEP: 1) is acceptable to MSM, TGW, and HIV-discordant couples as a HIV prevention method; 2) can be provided safely by community clinics and with community leadership; and 3) can be delivered at costs that are feasible and affordable in Vietnam.

## HOW THE PILOT WORKS

Key populations at risk of HIV in Ho Chi Minh City can receive an initial screening for PrEP eligibility through eight key population-led CBOs and are prescribed PrEP through a network of two private and four public clinics. PrEP is being offered at a low monthly price to clients, thanks to access pricing from the local importer of generic Truvada.

Between late March and June 2017, 125 people initiated PrEP and up to 1,200 are expected to start PrEP by the end of 2018. The PrEP intervention evaluation is underway, and results will be used to inform the MOH's strategy to develop clinical guidelines, health care worker training, and financing of PrEP to ensure greater access.



People interested in PrEP receive counseling on how to take PrEP correctly. PATH.

## THE POWER OF LOVE AND PREP: ONE COUPLE'S STORY

Chung and Minh are a couple who are already benefiting from the introduction of PrEP in Vietnam. Chung is a 22-year-old volunteer for HIV prevention activities in Ho Chi Minh City. He met Minh, a 28-year-old man living with HIV, when Minh needed additional support to follow his antiretroviral treatment plan. Love soon blossomed between the pair.

Chung is resolute that their love is so strong that Minh's HIV status doesn't change things. But when the pair learned about PrEP, they jumped at the opportunity to add an extra layer of protection to their relationship. Chung says that "Condoms and PrEP are the best bodyguards of our love."

## BOOSTING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF PREP IN VIETNAM

PrEP is a new concept in Vietnam. Many people, like Minh and Chung before, do not know about PrEP, how it works, or where to access it—and so Healthy Markets has deployed a targeted communication strategy to provide information and promote enrollment:

- CBOs have been provided with attractive educational material and training to integrate PrEP into face-to-face events.
- PrEP services are promoted through MTV Vietnam and Healthy Markets' popular roadshow series, MTV Bus.
- Promotional ads that link to more information and service providers have been broadcasted through Grindr, the most popular gay social and sexual networking app with over 270,000 users in Vietnam.



A post on Rainbow Village, promoting the MTV Bus episode that was all about pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis, and where to access it. PATH.

- Rainbow Village—a Facebook community supported by Healthy Markets with over 226,000 members—uses videos, photos, and testimonials by key opinion leaders in the MSM and TGW communities and live Q&A to start conversations around PrEP and link Facebook followers to offline services.

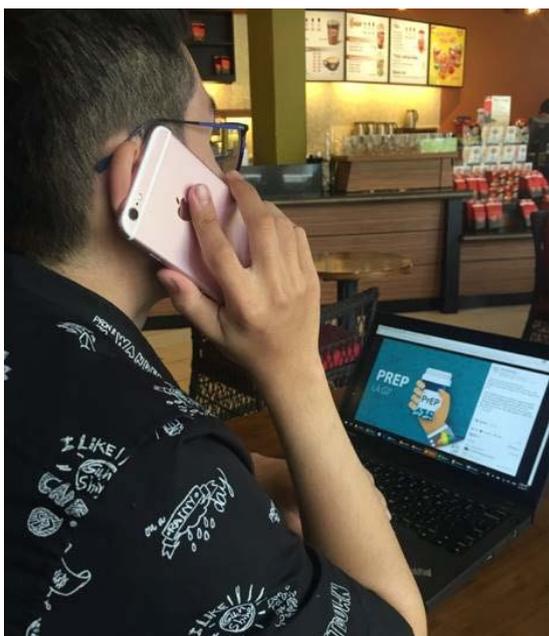


  
DỰ PHÒNG TRƯỚC  
PHƠI NHIỄM HIV

**PrEP  
hôm nay  
Hạnh phúc  
mai sau**

[www.facebook.com/xomcauvong](http://www.facebook.com/xomcauvong)

A post on Rainbow Village, featuring the PrEP logo—a protective shield—and slogan 'PrEP today for tomorrow's happiness'. PATH.



Chung gets his daily PrEP reminder from Minh, as he browses Rainbow Village. PATH.

## “HE REMINDS ME TO TAKE PREP EVERY MORNING. THAT’S LOVE.”

It’s through Rainbow Village and local CBOs that Chung and Minh heard about PrEP, and were able to get Chung enrolled in the program. He was assessed for eligibility—including a test for HIV and Hepatitis B—and was prescribed the PrEP antiretroviral (ARV) drugs. He will return for follow-up tests and prescription refills every three months.

Chung and Minh say integrating the daily medication into their routine has been extremely easy. In a sweet role-reversal, it is Minh who is more attentive about making sure Chung takes PrEP correctly. Every morning at 10.30 when he takes his own antiretroviral medication, he calls Chung to remind him to take PrEP at the same time. Chung relishes the calls. “He reminds me to take PrEP every morning. That’s love.”

## THE FUTURE OF PREP IN VIETNAM

The Prepped for PrEP pilot is providing much-needed learning to aid Vietnam’s MOH in planning how to scale and finance PrEP in the long run. Healthy Markets is working with them to update national ARV guidelines to include PrEP and expand access to post-exposure prophylaxis. PrEP prescription, adherence support and management will also be integrated into health care worker training curricula. Moving forward, sustainable financing includes working with ARV manufacturers and representatives to maintain affordable prices, building in service delivery cost-recovery strategies, understanding key populations’ ability and willingness to pay, and integrating PrEP into national health insurance.

“PrEP is a new and exciting evidenced-based method for HIV prevention that is increasingly being adopted around the world, including in lower- and middle-income countries. By introducing PrEP services in Vietnam, we have the opportunity to dramatically reduce the number of new HIV cases, and eliminate HIV in Vietnam by 2030.”

*Dr. Nguyen Hoang Long, the Director of the Vietnam Administration of HIV/AIDS Control, MOH*

For more information about PrEP in Vietnam, contact the Healthy Markets team at [HM@path.org](mailto:HM@path.org).

**HEALTHY MARKETS**

*A strong market for a healthy community  
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### REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization (WHO). *Consolidated guidelines on the use of Antiretroviral drugs for treating and preventing HIV infection. Recommendations for a public health approach, Second edition.* Geneva: WHO; 2016.