



# News

September 2011  
Issue 30

## MCC News

An e-newsletter about male circumcision for HIV prevention in Kenya

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Jonathan Obaje and Lucy Auma share their experience with participants in the 4<sup>th</sup> Stakeholders' Meeting on Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention at Tom Mboya Labour College in Kisumu.

*Photo by Kenneth Owino Odiwuor*

### Male circumcision: A couple's story

When Jonathan Oluoch Obaje, a 45-year-old father of two and a committed Christian, first heard about voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC), he dismissed it as an HIV prevention intervention meant only for young people and the promiscuous. After all, he says, he has been a faithful husband since he got married 17 years ago.

“All the time that I heard about medical male circumcision, I could hear people say it reduces one's chance of contracting HIV or other venereal diseases, and I thought to myself, if I am faithful to my wife as I have always been, why do I need to be circumcised?” he said. “I always dismissed it as something that is meant for others, not me.”

Lucy Auma, Obaje's wife, had learnt about male circumcision at the Impact Research and Development Organization (IRDO), where she works. IRDO is one of the partner organizations implementing the government's VMMC programme. After talking to others about the benefits of medical male circumcision, she decided that it was now time to discuss them with her spouse.

It took several attempts for Auma to finally persuade her husband that VMMC has additional benefits, other than reducing the risk of HIV infection, for both of them. "I used to carry materials on medical male circumcision home so that he could read them," she said. "When he finally agreed to get circumcised, I was very elated."

Obaje says that learning about the additional benefits medical male circumcision helped him decide to get the "cut."

"When I read about diseases like cervical cancer and learnt that male circumcision could help prevent my dear wife from getting it and also other aspects like hygiene, I decided to gather courage and get circumcised," he said. "From that moment, I have never regretted the decision I took."

Today, the happy couple encourages other couples to talk to each other about VMMC and its benefits. "We have not just reduced our chances of getting sexually transmitted diseases, but because we decided to embrace male circumcision, we are now aware of our HIV status too, unlike many couples," Obaje said. "We try to convince our friends to go for it."

The couple recently shared their story with participants who attended the **4<sup>th</sup> Stakeholders' Meeting on Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision** in Kisumu on 9 September.

### **Clients benefit from reconstructive surgery**

Forty-five men benefitted from free urological reconstructive surgery provided at Kisumu District Hospital from 8-17 September.

This corrective surgery for congenital malformations of the penis was provided by the International Volunteers in Urological Medicine (IVU Med), in conjunction with the World Health Organization and the national and provincial task forces on male circumcision.

Two urologists from Harvard University collaborated with a team of international and local surgeons, anaesthesiologists, urologists and nurses in carrying out the

surgeries. The local surgeons were drawn from the Kisumu District Hospital, Nyanza Provincial General Hospital, the Nyanza Reproductive Health Society and the Eldoret-based Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital.

The need for reconstructive surgery was identified when the patients initially sought voluntary medical male circumcision services. This need and the lack of adequate capacity among local surgeons to perform the special surgeries prompted the invitation to international volunteers.

Another 46 men received corrective surgery through the first IVU Med mission in April. During both missions, local surgeons were trained to perform the surgeries, while local nurses learned how to monitor and care for the surgical wounds.

### **Stakeholders meet in Kisumu**

The assistant minister of public health and sanitation hailed Kenya's leadership in providing voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) as an HIV prevention method and singled out the progress that has been made in Nyanza Province during a speech at a 9 September forum in Kisumu.

"I am happy to report that Nyanza has set the pace, not only for Africa but for the world," Dr. James Gesami said, noting that more than 320,000 men and boys have been circumcised in less than three years and the majority of the clients were from Nyanza.

Kenya's programme has accounted for about 40 percent of all the men circumcised under VMMC programmes under way in 14 African countries. This progress has been achieved, Dr. Gesami added "through the cooperation and support of the various stakeholders."

About 330 of those stakeholders converged at the Tom Mboya Labour College to participate in the forum, organized by the national and provincial task forces on male circumcision to review the progress of the government's VMMC programme. This fourth annual stakeholders' meeting brought together members of Parliament, local leaders and representatives of community-based organizations from Nyanza, Teso and Turkana, donors, implementing partners, and representatives from the National AIDS/ STI Control Programme and the National AIDS Control Council.

The Nyanza provincial AIDS/STI control officer, Dr. Charles Okal, reminded participants in his speech that "there are challenges ahead in meeting the programme's five-year goal, which is to reach 80 percent of uncircumcised men in Nyanza ages 15 to 49." He said that the programme is almost halfway toward

achieving that goal.

During the day's discussion, Opiyo Otondi, the Chairman of Luo Council of Elders, noted the change in attitudes toward VMMC in Nyanza. "While there was initial resistance to male circumcision amongst the Luo, they have now fully embraced it, going by the demand," he said.

## **Male circumcision in the news**

### **Obstacles slow an easy way to prevent HIV in men**

*The New York Times*, 26 September

### **Adoption of male circumcision lauded**

*Women e-News Kenya*, 1 September

## **Resources**

### **Progress in Scale-up of Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention in Eastern and Southern Africa: Focus on Service Delivery, 2011**

Compiled by the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, this is the latest progress report on male circumcision programmes in areas identified as priorities because they have high HIV prevalence and low rates of male circumcision. One section describes innovations that have been used to accelerate expansion of VMMC services in some of the 13 countries.

### **The Unpeeled Mango: A Qualitative Assessment of Views and Preferences concerning voluntary medical male circumcision in Iringa Region, Tanzania**

This document describes the findings of a qualitative assessment conducted by the USAID-funded Maternal and Child Health Integrated Program in three districts of Tanzania's Iringa Region to guide the implementation of a VMMC programme for HIV prevention. The title refers to a quote from one of the 142 men and women who participated in focus group discussions and participatory exercises.

**The Male Circumcision Consortium (MCC)** works with the Government of Kenya and other partners—including the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which supports service delivery—to prevent HIV and save lives by expanding access to safe and voluntary male circumcision services. FHI 360, EngenderHealth, and the University of Illinois at Chicago, working with the Nyanza Reproductive Health Society, are partners in the Consortium, which is funded by a grant to FHI from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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