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Issue 12

## MCC News

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

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Andrew Kitheka, a clinical mentor with APHIA II Nyanza in Rongo District, shares a word with Peter Owino, a male circumcision client at the Mariwa Health Centre in Awendo.

*Photo courtesy of FHI*

## Strategy aims to enhance demand for male circumcision

Over 30 days in November and December, 35,000 men in Nyanza Province sought and received voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) services through the Rapid Results Initiative (RRI), which was carried out by the Government of Kenya to accelerate access to these services for HIV prevention.

Seeking to maintain that tempo and build on the success of the RRI, EngenderHealth, one of the government's partners in the VMMC programme and a partner in the Male Circumcision Consortium (MCC), launched a three-month enhanced recruitment strategy (ERS) in four districts of Nyanza Province in late February.

The strategy is the result of close coordination among the EngenderHealth- led APHIA II Nyanza Project, the EngenderHealth/Male Circumcision Consortium, the district health management teams, and hospital management teams. .

Since then, health facilities supported by APHIA II project in Rongo, Homa Bay, Rachuonyo, and Nyando districts have provided VMMC services to about 900 clients compared to 48 clients in the previous month. The VMMC teams aim to serve at least 50 clients per team, per site, per week.

### **Implementing the strategy**

Careful planning with the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation and the Ministry of Medical Services ensured the success of the RRI, noted George Odingo, research officer for EngenderHealth/Male Circumcision Consortium. The ERS builds on this lesson.

EngenderHealth/MCC has worked closely with officials from these ministries and with healthcare providers at public health facilities to prepare for the ERS and to coordinate its implementation.

The strategy consists of well-structured collaboration with government health officials, service providers, and mobilisation teams; engaging clients in making referrals; and ensuring that health staff and facilities are equipped to meet the increasing demand for VMMC services

The ERS is being rolled out in 19 sites, including Awendo Sub- district Hospital, Rachuonyo District Hospital, Homa Bay District Hospital, Mariwa Health Centre, and Sony Sugar Company.

Public health staff provide VMMC services routinely at some of these sites, while other sites serve as outreach sites where two or more teams of VMMC providers are deployed on appointed days to offer the service. A total of nine VMMC teams—each consisting of a clinical officer, a nurse, a counselor, and an infectious disease specialist—are working in the four ERS districts to deliver services.

Because male circumcision does not provide complete protection against HIV infection, VMMC clients receive not just the surgical procedure, but a comprehensive package of HIV prevention services. These services include counselling about male circumcision and other ways to reduce the risk of HIV infection, provision of condoms, voluntary HIV counselling and testing, and testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.

### **Enhancing demand**

Dr. Emmanuel Odhiambo, medical officer in charge at the Awendo Sub- district

Hospital, says that people in the area are embracing voluntary medical male circumcision for HIV prevention. On some days, his team attends to about 20 clients, especially during the market days.

Sarah Kangogo, nursing officer in charge of the Mariwa Health Centre, concurs, saying that her facility, which is an outreach site, sees at least 10 VMMC clients on the days when the service is offered, and that number is increasing by the day.

The ERS strategy also aims to address human resource shortages by collaborating with nursing officers in charge to strategically deploy the limited number of trained male circumcision providers to ensure adequate coverage of MC services.

Sites such as Awendo Sub -district Hospital have public health workers who do one-on-one mobilisation in the communities to educate people about VMMC for HIV prevention and to enhance demand for the service. One of these mobilisers, Tom Wanyama says that they go door-to-door to answer community members' questions about VMMC and HIV prevention and refer men to MC service sites.

The ERS involves satisfied clients in this mobilisation effort. VMMC clients are asked to talk to their friends and family members about VMMC and to encourage them to seek more information at health facilities and outreach sites. Mass communication and targeted outreach are also used.

With initiatives like the ERS, EngenderHealth hopes that the VMMC programme's goal of providing voluntary circumcision to 80 percent of uncircumcised men in Kenya (about 1.1 million) by 2013 will be attained. About half of those men are expected to be from Nyanza, which has the lowest rate of male circumcision and the highest level of HIV in the country.

### **Road show spreads the word about male circumcision for HIV prevention**

A road show to sensitize communities on voluntary medical male circumcision and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV visited towns in 11 Nyanza districts from 9 to 14 March.

Conducted by the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation, in conjunction with the Nyanza Provincial Task Force on Male Circumcision and UNICEF, the road show travelled to Kisumu West, Rarieda, Bondo, Kisumu East, Nyando, Nyakach, Rachuonyo, Rongo, Migori, and Ndhiwa before ending in Homa Bay.

Nyanza Provincial Commissioner Francis Mutie launched the caravan from Kisumu. He noted that such efforts were highly welcome, because the Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey of 2007 found that 15 percent of adults in Nyanza are infected with HIV. “That is more than twice the national HIV prevalence rate of 7 percent,” he said. “This means that as a province, we must double our efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS.”

Dr. Jackson Kioko, provincial director of public health and sanitation, also spoke at the event, noting that “preventive interventions for public health diseases require community involvement and participation.”

In his remarks at the launch of the road show, Ker Riaga Ogalo, the chairman of the Luo Council of Elders, said that voluntary medical male circumcision for HIV prevention is important for the community. However, he warned the youth against engaging in risky behaviour, because circumcision does not provide full protection against HIV. He said that abstinence was the ultimate assurance of being HIV free.

The caravan stopped at different towns in the 11 districts, drawing crowds who watched skits, participated in interactive community dialogues, and listened to speeches from the district administration officials and health management teams.

## **Male circumcision in the news**

### **Government targets a million men for the cut**

*Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, 23 March 2010*

## **Resources**

### **Male Circumcision: Saving Lives in Kenya**

In this 15-minute documentary, Kenyans describes the role of safe and voluntary male circumcision in their efforts to prevent the spread of HIV infection. Government officials explain why their health services are offering the procedure as part of a comprehensive package of HIV prevention services. Men and their wives recount their own experiences and discuss why they chose male circumcision to help protect themselves from HIV.

### **Male Circumcision for HIV prevention: Progress in Scale-up**

This update on efforts to scale up male circumcision for HIV prevention in 13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa was presented at the 17th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in San Francisco, California, 16-19.

### **PEPFAR Male Circumcision Partners Meeting: Commodities and Improved Coordination of Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention**

This report describes a 19-20 May 2009 meeting that brought together PEPFAR partners working in male circumcision to share experience and recommend solutions for commodity and procurement issues that constrain male circumcision scale up. Some of the **presentations** made at the meeting are also available.

**The Male Circumcision Consortium (MCC)** works with the Government of Kenya and other partners to prevent HIV and save lives by expanding access to safe and voluntary male circumcision services. Family Health International (FHI), 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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**Please send questions or comments to Silas Achar at: [mccinfo@fhi.org](mailto:mccinfo@fhi.org)**; also, please indicate whether you want to continue receiving this e-newsletter regularly.