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## MCC News

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

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Dickson Omanje talks to his wife, Florence, outside their home in Kisumu.

*Photo by Silas Achar, FHI*

### Male circumcision not just a man's decision

Dickson Omanje heard about the benefits of male circumcision from a cousin and wanted to go for “the cut” right away. But he knew that he should discuss this decision with his wife, Florence, and he was concerned about whether she would like the idea.

So, Dickson raised the topic indirectly, without telling his wife about his intentions. As they talked, he was surprised to learn that Florence had heard about male circumcision for HIV prevention, and that she encouraged him to go for the procedure.

Florence accompanied Dickson to the Kisumu District Hospital, where they

received counselling and decided to be tested for HIV together for the first time in their 13-year marriage.

Like other sites participating in the government's voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) programme, the hospital provides the full package of services associated with male circumcision—risk-reduction counseling, the offer of HIV counseling and testing, and screening for other sexually transmitted infections.

Months later, Florence admits she had some reservations about her husband's wish to be circumcised.

Florence had heard that male circumcision has many benefits. She knew that being circumcised reduces a man's chances of getting HIV infection and offers his female partner some protection against human papilloma virus, which can cause cervical cancer. She also knew that it helps in maintaining good hygiene.

But, like many married women, Florence wondered about her husband's true intentions. Why did he want to get circumcised? And why now? Was he planning to be unfaithful?

Florence says that the benefits of male circumcision outweighed her fears. She argues that being unfaithful has nothing to do with circumcision. "An unfaithful man is an unfaithful man, whether circumcised or not!" she said.

Besides, she trusted her husband. Florence says that he helped maintain that trust by consulting with her before he got circumcised.

Dickson says he knew this was a decision that he and his wife needed to make together. But it was not until after the surgery that he realized just how important their joint decision-making was.

After the surgery, which Dickson describes as satisfactory, he was advised to abstain from sex for six weeks to allow the wound from his circumcision to heal properly. During that time, he says, his wife was very supportive.

Florence agrees that women play an important role in not only influencing their partners to go for circumcision, but also supporting them during the healing period. "I supported him psychologically," she said. "In fact, we even extended the abstinence period by one more month, to ensure that he was healed completely."

The Omanjes urge other couples to talk to each other about male circumcision for HIV protection. The national VMMC programme counsels couples as well as

individuals about HIV prevention and offers additional HIV prevention services for the partners of male circumcision clients.

The national programme aims to reach more than 1 million men by 2013. Since it began in October 2008, about 175,000 men in Nyanza Province have been circumcised.

### **Male circumcision clients quadrupled in August**

Intensified efforts to encourage more men in Nyanza Province to take advantage of voluntary medical male circumcision services (VMMC) reached 19,342 men and boys in the month of August—more than four times the monthly average of 4,125.

The government and its partners were able to more than quadruple the number of VMMC clients for the month by employing strategies and lessons learned from the Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) of November-December 2009, when more than 37,000 men and boys were circumcised over 30 days.

Like the 2009 RRI, this effort to accelerate uptake of VMMC services was conducted during the school holidays, when programme implementers have noticed an increase in the number of clients seeking male circumcision. And, like last year's RRI, the effort addressed supply and demand, with measures to make VMMC services more accessible and others to promote men's use of the services.

The partners who collaborated with the ministries of health (MOH) during the August initiative were the Nyanza Reproductive Health Society, IMPACT Research and Development Organisation, Family AIDS Care and Education Services, the Catholic Medical Mission Board, and the AIDS Population and Health (APHIA) II Nyanza Project.

These and other partners are working with the MOH to prepare for an even more extensive effort to meet the demand for VMMC, through the 2010 Rapid Results Initiative. The campaign will be held from November 22 to December 17.

### **Male circumcision in the news**

#### **Belief in male circumcision varies in Sub-Saharan Africa**

*Gallup news*, 19 October

### **Resources**

#### **The Clearinghouse on Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention**

Developed by the World Health Organization, the Joint United Nations

Programme on HIV/AIDS, the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition, and FHI, this Web site is a comprehensive source of information and resources about male circumcision for HIV prevention.