Partners for Positive VMMC Coverage: How Advocacy Partnerships Can Influence VMMC News Coverage

Emily Bass, Program Director, AVAC
About AVAC

- Founded in 1995 AVAC is an international non-profit organization that uses
  - education, policy analysis, advocacy and community mobilization to accelerate
  - the ethical development and global delivery of biomedical HIV prevention
  - options as part of a comprehensive response to the pandemic.
Think globally ... & locally

- AVAC works through partnerships in countries where research or implementation of new biomedical strategies is planned or ongoing
- Guided by the principle that local partners and stakeholders have the expertise in developing strategic plans and setting priorities
- An international focus on key issues
- A “go-to” source of information
AVAC’s work on VMMC

- Anticipating results
- Engaging key issues – the Women’s HIV Prevention Tracking Project (WHiPT)
- HIV Prevention Research Advocacy Fellowship
- Coalition-building to gather evidence and effect change
- Africans Telling the Truth about VMMC
- VMMC Communications Working Group
Who We Are
We’re a unified African voice speaking the truth of voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) as an HIV prevention intervention for us. We stand for accelerated roll out of VMMC for HIV prevention in Africa.

Building an African VMMC Movement
• Formed in early 2012 to consolidate African ownership and support of VMMC for HIV prevention
• A response to the dismissal of VMMC as an effective intervention by (mostly Western) denialists
• Stands for accelerated roll out of VMMC for HIV prevention in Africa
• Formed to help create a platform to facilitate ongoing conversations among different stakeholders across the continent
About...

- Started via social media platform Facebook
  www.facebook.com/africansformalecircumcision
Highlights

• 500+ African scientists, nurses, doctors, counselors, advocates, journalists, artistes, political and traditional leaders etc from at least 20 countries

  – Some high profile members include:
    ▪ Dr. Specioza Wandira, Former Vice President, Uganda
    ▪ His Royal Highness Chief Jonathan Mumena XI, Zambia
    ▪ Hon. Blessing Chebundo, MP, Zimbabwe
    ▪ Hon. Dr. Oburu Oginga, MP & Dep. Min. of Finance, Kenya
Highlights...

• Ever-expanding membership base with vocal, engaged social media presence
• Rapid response to negative media coverage – eg letter to the editor in Botswana
• Key resources including “Debunking” tool kit for taking on Boyle & Hill-type myths and misconceptions (available on website)
• In person consultations and media trainings in four countries
Highlights...

Moses Supercharger: we need to find a best way of involving our leaders in this prevention alternative they must be examples by circumcising right from the president himself people believe in him and one day if does it am sure many of our people will follow him pls mr president it works
June 6 at 4:12pm · Like

Leader Kanyiki: Robust campaigns of this calibre will create a revival and keep the momentum for MMC. People are starting to realise the urgent need for effective preventive interventions to end the AIDS pandemic!!! Yeah, We'll keep the voice up...
June 7 at 9:41am · Unlike · 2

Joseph Nyende: Moses, I think we need to advocate for MMC before District leaders so that they own the campaign so that their voices can be heard by the president and through the different voices...
June 8 at 11:07am · Like

Moses Supercharger: yah today was great day we had the first great meeting of the 100 African men for VMMC in kampala at hotel Protea. it was every resourceful meeting with the likes of HASUNIRA and...
June 8 at 2:26pm · 2

Joseph Nyende: As Ugandansm we need to have information sharing meetings at National and regional levels.
June 11 at 2:10am · Like

Wini Ikilai Rachel: Personally felt empowered though not a man, I get the courage to spread the gospel even to my brothers at home
June 11 at 9:39am · Unlike · 2

Africans telling the truth about voluntary medical male circumcision: Great advocacy Wini, and women will be good at encouraging the men to go for the service and your voice is what we need now....
June 11 at 3:23pm · Like · 1

Moses Supercharger: thats great winiie keep the fire burnin
June 11 at 3:30pm · Like

Betty Odada: As women we shall steer the campaigns to greater heights because this the best thing that has happened to the non circumcising African communities....Watch the space !!!!!!
June 12 at 10:45am · Unlike · 2

Elijah Odoyo-June: Looking forward to refreshing truths about VMMC at the upcoming meeting in Kisumu.
June 12 at 11:13pm · Like
Highlights...

You are posting, commenting, and liking as Africans telling the truth about voluntary medical male circumcision — Change to Angelo Kagwaa

Africans telling the truth about voluntary medical male circumcision

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Renew commitment to male circumcision

With male circumcision as the clear leader in the recent promotion of circumcision as a way of preventing HIV transmission. Some are asking, could this be the solution that has been missing all along in HIV prevention? Read more about it here and please let us know your views on the issue.

Mambo Lifestyle shared a link.
August 8

Decision time. Whether or not to get circumcised? This is something that some African men are considering as a result of the recent promotion of circumcision as a way of preventing HIV transmission. Some are asking, could this be the solution that has been missing all along in HIV prevention? Read more about it here and please let us know your views on the issue.

To cut or not to cut?
www.mambo.org.uk

The debate about whether or not it’s good to get circumcised has taken on a new importance, with researchers suggesting it helps to protect a man from...
Highlights...

Here is an update from the Clearinghouse on Male Circumcision about VMMC at the upcoming International AIDS Conference in Washington D.C. Details below:
https://app.e2ma.net/app/view:CampaignPublic/id:1407563.11082642832/rid:0a630e78d60c88c8ef40bd2ace8a5a941

Male circumcision for HIV prevention will be highlighted in more than 70 presentations and abstracts at the XIXth International AIDS Conference in Washington, DC, from 23 to 27 July.

See recent report by Kenyan journalist, Henry Neondo in an online publication "Key Correspondents, a network of more than 250 journalists in 50 countries. See report below:
http://www.keycorrespondents.org/2012/07/06/facebook-used-to-promote-medical-male-circumcision/

Email: Webview
app.e2ma.net

Here is some coverage of our initiative in a Kenyan newspaper today -

Like · Comment · Share
118 people saw this post

Like · Comment · Share
2 people like this.
Highlights...

- Resources website: [http://truthaboutvmmc.org/](http://truthaboutvmmc.org/)

This group stands for accelerated roll out of Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) for HIV prevention in Africa. We reaffirm the fact that the evidence for VMMC is strong, consistent and undeniable. We believe that as scientists, advocates and others continue to work towards adding more options to the HIV prevention arsenal, we MUST make the best of the interventions we currently have, to begin to end the AIDS epidemic.

Here are a number of resources to help spread the truth about VMMC:

- Renew commitment to male circumcision—Uganda’s Minister of Health, along with a number of co-authors, wrote this piece appearing in Uganda’s most read newspaper, The New Vision.
- Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision Talking Points.
- Separating Fact from Fiction: Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision—An evidence-based, proven HIV prevention strategy.
- Angelo Kagwa, AVAC staffer, speaking about his recent experience getting circumcised (read it in the Ugandan New Vision or hear Angelo read his story aloud).
What lies ahead?

• Continue building & diversifying membership
• Launch members Listserv to ensure that all members are part of the conversations
• Build VMMC speakers’ bureau
• Continue support members to gain skills to be proactive in developing and sending positive messages esp in the media
• Support key members in priority countries to proactively monitor VMMC scale up and coverage in media
VMMC Communications Working Group

- First call this quarter – draft terms of reference being finalized
- Proposed objectives include:
  - Build and sustain a network of communications representatives among different VMMC implementers, donors, research networks and sites, national VMMC task forces, and advocacy groups.
  - Develop channels of communication among CWG members with the goal of developing consistent messages and achieving shared communications goals when possible.
  - Maintain a consistent flow of information within this network and between this group and other prevention communications networks: the Microbicides Media and Communications Initiative, and the PrEP and Vaccine Communications Working Groups.
• Strengthen the ability of communications experts, implementers and national VMMC task forces to anticipate and respond to the communications challenges around VMMC and other HIV prevention needs.

• Support country-specific communications plans for different scenarios related to VMMC implementation, including demand creation and introduction of new devices.

• Support plans for grassroots and mass media marketing campaigns to generate VMMC uptake, including the targeting of women and older men, as well as more donor support and political will.

• Support informed and accurate media reporting on VMMC research and implementation in targeted countries and globally.

• Revitalize the communications aspect of the VMMC Clearinghouse website.
Comms Working Groups

- TFV Gel Clinical Development Team
- TFV Gel Regulatory Team
- CAMI/IMPT
- Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise
- Office of HIV/AIDS Network Coordination (HANC) – Behavioral Science & Comms Interest Groups
- Microbicide Access & Intro Working Group
- TFV Gel Implementation Steering Committee
- PrEP Clinical Trialists Working Group
- PrEP “Proof of Deliverability” Grantees
Comms WG priorities

- Conduit of information through the 3 groups 80 + members – communicators from trial sponsors, networks, funders (+advocates, researchers and trial site staff for MMCI)
  - Technology-specific conference calls; joint calls across groups to coordinate messages on emerging issues, share best practices
  - Informational emails, news analysis
  - Annual meetings, regional meetings, issues/messaging workshops
Comms WG priorities

- Coordinated and accurate information about developments in the field (expected and unexpected) to media, other audiences
  - Key messages about the state of the field and the promise of HIV prevention research
  - Develop and maintain shared messages and accurate materials that reflect the reality of the field and explain the changes in the field
  - Work with WG members and partners to disseminate accurate messages and responding to changes in the field
2012 media outreach activities

- Media engagement in Africa
  - 2-day reporter/researcher training Johannesburg; reporters from Botswana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia
  - Media round tables Kampala, Nairobi, Kisumu (June)
  - 2-day media training and conference support at AIDSVAX2012: reporters from Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, US, Latin America, Asia
  - Ongoing education and support of a cadre of reporters in key African countries
  - Additional round tables and reporter/researcher trainings
“Some believe in the old traditional way – media has worked hard to break the barrier where you think the only way to do it is traditional.”

– Ayanda, South Africa

“Hill & Boyle was a scandal. It played to stereotypes. That’s why editors liked it.” – Wycliffe, Kenya

“ In the remote areas, there are no papers or radio. We have no reach. You need community leaders there.”

-- Violet, Zambia

“We used to cover [VMMC] when the trials came and we got the results. That was exciting.”

– Esther, Uganda
We focus on the bad....

Zimbabwe: Is Circumcision Not a Costly Sideshow?

Uganda: Bishop Against Circumcision

Circumcision and HIV: are we being fed on half-truths?
 Posted by Agnes K. Namaganda

Circumcision doesn’t reduce HIV spread, study reveals
But the coverage is mostly good

New Zimbabwe

MPs undergo HIV tests, circumcision

THE HERALD

Zimbabwe: Male Circumcision Is the Way Forward

New Vision

Safe male circumcision kicks off in Ngora District

The Star (Nairobi)

Kenya: New Medical Devices to Boost Circumcision

Nyanza residents warm up to infant male circumcision
Media outreach for vmmc kampala
Discussing VMMC w/ reporters in JNB
VMMC advocates in Kisumu
NBO vmmc advocates
VMMC advocates in Kampala

June