



A Message to the Community Elders in Nyanza

Help reduce HIV by encouraging Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) today



Why you should promote Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC):

The Luo community has higher rates of HIV than anywhere else in Kenya. Your community needs your help to prevent further infections. Now there is another tool to fight HIV. Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) has been scientifically proven to reduce the chances of a man getting HIV. Use this information to find out more about VMMC and encourage the people in your communities to get circumcised to help protect themselves from HIV.

Q: What is Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC)?

A: Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) is the removal of the foreskin from the penis. It can be done for many reasons, including tradition and religion, but it is now being promoted to reduce the spread of HIV and prevent other infections that are passed on through sex. While many men in Kenya have already undergone the procedure, only 10% of Luo men in Nyanza are circumcised today.

Q: How does VMMC help protect a man against HIV?

A: The inside of the foreskin is soft and moist and is more likely to get a tiny tear or sore that allows HIV to enter the body more easily. The foreskin itself contains many 'target cells' that allow HIV to enter the body easily. After circumcision, the skin on the head of the penis becomes thicker and is less likely to tear. A circumcised man is up to 60% less likely to get HIV than an uncircumcised man.

Q: Is VMMC a safe procedure?

A: Yes. Male circumcision provided by a trained health provider in a registered clinic or hospital is a very safe procedure and complications are rare. Most patients do not have any problems. An injection is given at the base of the penis to make it go numb, so that no pain is felt while the foreskin is cut off. The wound is then stitched, cleaned and bandaged. After 3 days the bandage is removed, and there is a check up after 7 days.

Q: Does VMMC provide 100% protection against HIV?

A: No, it only reduces a man's chances of getting HIV by up to 60%. VMMC cannot protect him completely.

Q: What else should we tell our people to protect themselves from HIV?

A: It is still possible to get HIV after VMMC and couples still need to practice other HIV prevention methods. Encourage couples to go for HIV testing to know their status. They should remain faithful or use protection if one of them is infected or does not know their status. Others need to be encouraged to reduce the number of their sexual partners. Also, excessive drinking of alcohol causes people to lose control and can lead to risky behavior, including having unprotected sex. This can get them easily infected with HIV.

Q: VMMC is not in our culture. How can we promote it?

A: The Luo people have always been an adaptable people. Long ago, when we came to the Lakeside, we learned how to fish. When we were attacked by the plague of tetanus, we learned to remove the six bottom teeth, so that food, water and medicine could be put into the mouth. HIV is another health issue, and there is no reason why we cannot adapt again by encouraging our men and boys to get circumcised.

Q: Men will worry about sexual matters after VMMC. What should we tell them?

A: Tell them that they must not have sex for 6 weeks after the operation in order to heal completely. This is like the Luo tradition which did not allow men to have sex while they were at war. Getting circumcised is part of the war against HIV. Assure them that VMMC does not affect their sexual performance or their enjoyment. You know how important these things are to young men.

Q: What should we say to our women?

A: Wives and mothers play an important role in convincing their husbands to go for VMMC. Explain to them the health benefits for both their husbands and themselves; encourage them to join their partners for HIV testing and counseling; and ask them to encourage their husbands, sons and other male relatives to get circumcised.

Q: When is a good time to discuss VMMC with our communities?

A: Communal events provide a chance to address VMMC, such as sporting events, weddings, funerals and barazas. Other occasions are World AIDS Day and AIDS memorial nights. You can also discuss VMMC issues at your church or high schools. Help reduce HIV by encouraging voluntary medical male circumcision today.



**Help reduce HIV by encouraging
Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) today:**

- Invite VMMC counselors from local clinics and hospitals to talk to your community.
- Encourage your community to visit the local health clinic or hospital to find out more information about VMMC and HIV testing and counseling.
- Talk to the District MC Steering Committee, Ministry of Health and the Provincial Administration about how else you can help.