

VOLUNTARY MEDICAL MALE CIRCUMCISION (VMMC)

Video Discussion Guide

2012



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Communication for Change (C-Change) Project
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INTRODUCTION

Communication for Change (C-Change), USAID's project for improving the effectiveness and sustainability of communication programs, provided support to the Kenya Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) program from 2009 to 2011. C-Change worked closely with the Government of Kenya and partners to operationalize the National Male Circumcision Communication Strategy, developing 17 distinct materials in the VMMC Communication Toolkit in close collaboration with the Nyanza VMMC Provincial Task Force and the National VMMC Task Force. Toolkit components can be downloaded from C-Hub (www.c-hubonline.org/7815/).

One component of this toolkit is a 10-minute, three-episode video that illustrates the critical role that women can play in supporting VMMC, both for their partners and within their communities. The Nyanza Provincial Task Force requested a discussion guide to accompany the video to help ensure that the issues it raises are explored, including how and why women can advocate for VMMC and talk to men about its benefits.

The video and discussion guide also aim to underline the importance of interpersonal communication around VMMC, the benefits of VMMC, the decision-making process related to male circumcision, and some of the barriers to uptake of VMMC services.

Purpose of the Guide and Intended Users

This discussion guide and the accompanying video are designed to be integrated into existing HIV prevention activities at the community level. Intended users of the guide include anyone working at the community level to promote VMMC and HIV prevention, such as community mobilizers, peer educators, VMMC advocates, HIV counselors, and communication specialists.

This guide is intended to facilitate discussions, reflection, and debate about VMMC and on the video's story line and contents. Discussions can occur after each three-minute episode. Each episode should be shown separately so participants can engage with it and offer their reflections during discussions that follow. These last approximately 45-60 minutes.

The discussion guide can be adapted for settings outside Kenya, provided that C-Change is acknowledged. For guidance on adaptation, please refer to C-Change's [*VMMC Communication Materials Adaptation Guide*](#).

HOW TO USE THE GUIDE AND PREPARE FOR DISCUSSIONS

The guide can be used to facilitate single-sex or mixed group discussions about the video's story line and contents. The discussion questions provided are suggestions. Skilled facilitators should feel free to remove some questions and add others.

Those using this guide should be experienced in leading discussions. Ideally, users should support VMMC and be familiar with the topic, but they do not have to be medical experts on HIV prevention or VMMC.

Prior to leading a discussion, facilitators should watch the video at least once, review this guide carefully, and familiarize themselves with information in Kenya's VMMC Communication Toolkit and the materials on VMMC available at local health facilities.

The user of this guide may be the person who invites participants to the viewing and discussion, or the responsibility may rest with a community leader, health-facility personnel, a community organization, or another party.

Preparing to Hold a Discussion

Who: Single-sex or mixed discussion groups of 10 to 12 people ages 18–35. To ensure in-depth discussion, no more than 20 should be in a group.

Where: In an entertainment hall, church, school, health facility, or another location suited to the intended audience.

When: At times convenient for the intended audience, after consultation with local leaders.

Duration: Ten minutes for the video and approximately 45–60 minutes for the discussion after each episode. How long discussions last will be affected by whether the facilitator is skilled and informed about VMMC and HIV prevention and by the audience's composition, size, and level of interest in and knowledge about VMMC.

It is important to invite the same people to watch all three episodes and participate in each of the discussions. This is more effective than showing all episodes before a discussion or inviting different participants to watch each episode.

After each discussion, participants are encouraged to talk about any individual plan or community plan that develops as a result of watching and discussing the different episodes. There is also a follow-up activity. Facilitators invite participants to meet again and discuss progress on individual and community action around HIV prevention and VMMC.

Facilitation Skills Needed

Successful facilitators use a participatory and interactive approach and make sure that all interactions are respectful. The following recommendations will help to ensure the discussions are fruitful and outcome-oriented:

Make participants feel comfortable and valued: Most participants will need to feel comfortable with other members of the group and confident that their opinions will be heard before they participate fully in a discussion. Facilitators help create this environment by encouraging participants to relax and ensuring they value each other and different perspectives. Facilitators should also pay attention to their body language and use it to suggest warmth and acceptance.

Encourage active participation: Some discussion participants are likely to be more outspoken and energetic than others. Facilitators should make sure everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. This can be accomplished by paying attention to silent or disengaged members, catching their eyes and drawing them into the discussion, perhaps by asking open questions—those that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Questions that begin with when, what, and how may spark detailed answers and additional ideas.

Manage conflict: Effective facilitators try to prevent conflict and manage any disagreements that may arise during discussions. To this end, they help group members get to know one another and insist that they treat each other with respect, even when they disagree. Facilitators can ask participants to establish their own ground rules at the beginning of the session.

Listen and observe: Facilitators listen attentively and observe group interactions, paying attention to how the whole group and each individual responds during the discussion. They maintain eye contact with the person speaking and listen attentively before adding to the discussion.

Keep to the topic and the allotted time: It is important for facilitators to move the discussion along and help the group stick to the topic. Because of many demands, it is easy to lose track of time. A participant can be asked to help with timekeeping. If the group brings up important issues or questions unrelated to the current discussion, facilitators can place them in a “parking lot,” perhaps by listing the question on a sheet of newsprint taped to a wall. Before the meeting ends, facilitators can discuss with the participants how each of these items should be followed up and by whom.

Ensure the meeting has an outcome: Facilitators ensure that the group arrives at specific outcomes and decision-making around VMMC. A decision to get more information about VMMC from the nearest health facility is one example of an outcome; another is a commitment to conduct community mobilization meetings on VMMC within the next two days. Facilitators should allow the participants to write down the steps that need to occur, who is responsible for each step, and the time frame.



Oti, Achi, and Omosh discuss VMMC while watching a football match on TV.

SYNOPSIS OF VIDEOS

Three Kenyan youths—Oti, Achi, and Omosh—are watching a football match on TV at Oti's house during the 2009 World Cup. Omosh is Achi's boyfriend. He has been circumcised, unlike Oti. Their discussions about VMMC are integrated into their remarks on the football match, where Oti's team is not defending well. This brings up the topic of the need to defend against HIV infection through VMMC. Oti is not aware of the benefits of VMMC, which are explained by both Achi and Omosh. Though Oti has some concerns about potential pain and six weeks of abstinence, he makes the important decision to get circumcised.

Episode 1: Oti, Achi, and Omosh

The central role that women can play in advocating for VMMC is reflected in the fact that Achi's name appears in the middle of this title and she is seated between the two men. Oti asks how circumcision can help to prevent HIV and Achi explains, challenging the stereotype that women have little or no role in advocating for VMMC services.

Episode 2: Half-Time

Achi uses her advocacy skills to confront Oti's unstated concern about pain associated with VMMC. Omosh reassures him that the pain is not as bad as he thinks, and Achi helps Oti confront openly his concerns and fears. Oti gathers the courage to expose his fear of getting an HIV test. Achi tells him that getting tested is a good thing, but not a must. Achi and Omosh also confront Oti's third concern: the need to abstain from sex for six weeks after circumcision for complete healing. They both explain why this is necessary and provide accurate information about the consequences of not abstaining from sex after circumcision.

Episode 3: Chai

Oti's football team is decisively beaten. He is disgusted by their lack of defense and says, "Circumcision can't help them!" This leads Achi to pose the question: "Do you know that circumcision alone is not enough?" Oti responds: "What's the use of getting circumcised if it is not enough?" Achi continues the football analogy, pointing out that VMMC is "like the last line of defense.... You still need defenders." To win the match against HIV and AIDS, other defenders are required, including faithfulness to one partner and consistent condom use. The video ends after Oti asks Omosh to take him to get VMMC services and Achi declares, "You have spoken!"

GUIDANCE FOR FACILITATORS OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Episode 1: Oti, Achi, and Omosh

Session objectives

- Help participants describe the three characters (Oti, Achi, and Omosh).
- Help them analyze their own attitudes and perceptions about VMMC.
- Guide their exploration of the benefits and limitations of VMMC.
- Encourage them to develop an action plan for the decisions they make during and after the discussion.

Materials needed: A sheet of blank paper and a pen for each participant

Time required: 45–60 minutes

Steps

1. Introduce yourself as the facilitator and show the video.
2. Ask participants to sit in a semi-circle so everyone faces one another.
3. Pose preliminary questions:
 - What did you think of the first episode?
 - Is this a realistic situation? Why or why not? Have you heard similar conversations about VMMC in your community?
 - Which character did you like most? Least? Why?
4. Ask participants to tell you the names of the three characters and briefly describe them. Ask them whether any of the three characters share any of their own views about VMMC, then ask whether the characters share the views of other people they know in their communities.
5. Ask participants to reflect on Omosh's statement at the beginning of the episode: "*My friend, you are losing.*" Ask them to discuss briefly what this means in relation to HIV and AIDS and the impact of the disease on their communities.

6. Ask participants to suggest what things each of them could do to ensure that they do not “lose” as a result of HIV and AIDS.
7. Ask participants what Achi means when she says male circumcision helps in defense. After a few answers and if not clarified already, ask them to explain how VMMC helps to defend against HIV.
8. Ask participants to consider and respond to Achi’s statement that circumcision helps reduce new HIV infections by 60 percent. List responses so the whole group can see, clarifying any misperceptions and correcting wrong statements.
9. Ask participants to list and discuss some of the benefits and limitations of VMMC.
10. Refer to Omosh’s statement that circumcision “makes your skin stronger,” then ask participants to recount some myths and misconceptions about VMMC they have heard in their communities.
11. Remind participants about the benefits of VMMC mentioned by Achi, including reduced risk of cervical cancer for women, reduced risk of other sexually transmitted diseases, and easier penis hygiene. Ask participants to list other VMMC benefits for men, women, and communities.
12. Ask participants what they are doing to prevent HIV, both for themselves and within their communities. Ask if watching the episode and participating in the discussion has sparked any new ideas around HIV prevention.

Episode 2: Half Time

Session objectives

- Help participants explore some of the barriers to VMMC and their individual roles in addressing these barriers.
- Help participants explore the role of women in promoting VMMC.
- Encourage participants to develop an action plan for decisions they make during the discussion.

Materials needed: A sheet of blank paper and a pen for each participant

Time required: 45-60 minutes

Steps

1. After showing the second episode of the VMMC video, ask the following questions:
 - What did you think of the second episode?
 - Is this a realistic situation? Why or why not? Have you heard similar conversations about VMMC in your community?
 - Which character did you like most? Least? Why?
2. Let participants know they will be exploring some of the barriers to VMMC, what they could do to reduce these barriers, and the role of women in promoting VMMC.
3. Ask participants to talk about fear of pain associated with VMMC and how this fear might have affected uptake of VMMC services in their community.
4. Ask them how health facilities manage pain associated with VMMC.
5. Ask the participants to briefly discuss how men in their community react when informed they should be tested for HIV before getting circumcised.
6. Ask them to list reasons why it is important for men to be tested for HIV before they are circumcised.

7. Ask them to describe how Oti responds to Achi's statement that a newly circumcised man must abstain from sexual intercourse for six weeks.
8. Ask participants how men and women in their community react when they are informed that newly circumcised men should abstain from sex for six weeks.
9. Ask if the abstinence requirement deters some men from going for VMMC services.
10. Ask participants to talk about the consequences of not abstaining from sexual intercourse during the six-week healing period for newly circumcised men and their sexual partners.
11. Ask participants to list some strategies that newly circumcised men and their sexual partners could use to avoid sexual temptation during this six-week period.
12. Ask participants if watching the episode and taking part in the discussion has sparked any new ideas around HIV prevention.

Episode 3: Chai

Session objectives

- Help participants explore the process of change.
- Ask participants to identify the process Oti went through in making the decision to get circumcised.
- Allow participants to discuss the roles played by Achi and Omosh in Oti's decision.
- Help participants identify some of the factors that could make Oti reverse his decision.
- Get participants to list supportive strategies that will help Oti accomplish his plan to get circumcised.
- Encourage participants to develop action plans for decisions made during the discussion.

Materials needed: A sheet of blank paper and a pen for each participant

Time required: 45–60 minutes

Steps

1. Ask participants to briefly describe how Oti's views on VMMC changed from the beginning to the end of the video.
2. Ask participants to identify some of the things Oti needs to do and decisions he needs to make before getting circumcised.
3. Ask participants to discuss the specific roles played by Achi and Omosh in Oti's decision-making.
4. Ask participants to identify factors that may make Oti change his mind about getting circumcised (in addition to fear of pain, fear of an HIV test, and concern about six weeks of abstinence).
5. Ask the participants to list some supportive strategies that would help Oti carry through with his decision to get circumcised.
6. Ask participants if watching the episode and participating in the discussion has sparked any new ideas around HIV prevention.

Follow-Up Activities

Discussions around VMMC and follow-up action should not end here. After a few weeks, participants should be invited to meet again to address the following questions:

- Did participants implement any of the individual or community prevention actions discussed?
- Did participants work with anyone else from the group to realize these plans?
- What were some of the challenges faced? How were they overcome?
- What can be done to reinforce positive progress on actions and other efforts in relation to HIV prevention and VMMC?



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