

Background

Kenya has made great strides in its HIV response, resulting in a reduction in new HIV infections of 59% and a decline in AIDS-related mortality of 64% from 2013-2019. However, despite the availability of a wide array of effective HIV prevention tools and methods and a massive scale-up of HIV treatment in recent years, the progress made in reducing new HIV infections, increasing access to treatment, and ending AIDS-related deaths has been unequal, with too many vulnerable people and populations left behind.¹

HIV testing services are an important component of an HIV program and provide an entry point for clinical care of those newly diagnosed. Although uptake of HIV testing has increased in Kenya, men are still less likely than women to be tested and access services.² Evidence in documented program and evaluation reports suggests that men exercise poor health-seeking behaviors that has led to a low uptake of services among men.

Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Local Innovations Scaled through Enterprise Networks (LISTEN) process integrates the voice of the community into the design and testing of solutions to reach at-risk populations that are currently not being reached with conventional strategies. The process, which includes the use of human-centered design (HCD) and continuous review of relevant data within communities of practice (CPs), expands engagement at the community level and supports linkages to the formal health system. In Kiambu County, the National Syndemic Diseases Control Council (NSDCC) is implementing the LISTEN process to engage men in order to improve their uptake of health services.



Methodology

The NSDCC identified 31 male champions from the 12 sub-counties, who formed a CP. The male champion CP was trained on application of HCD and sensitized on basic facts about HIV and AIDS, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and advocacy. The CP employs community advocacy forums and peer engagements to reach men and provide them with health information, provide condom and HIV self-test kit demonstrations and distribution, link men to free health services, provide sensitization and referral for gender-based violence, and promote screening for NCDs. To facilitate sustainability, the male champions conduct some of the activities using existing community resources and mobilize resources of the county government and partners, including the private sector. They also leverage other programs to integrate their prioritized needs.

The NSDCC also established a county innovation CP consisting of representatives from county departments, implementing partners, and the community. The innovation CP supports the male champions and provides them with links to government structures and resources that address their priorities.




¹ <https://www.hiv.gov/federal-response/pepfar-global-aids/global-hiv-aids-overview>

² <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0231645>

Results:

- The 31 male champions are spread across all 12 sub-counties of Kiambu and are linked to other communities of practice such as motorcycle, or “boda boda”, youth advisory champions of health, and MAISHA youth with whom they share best practices and challenges. They are also linked to Kiambu county departments and implementing partners to ensure that their priorities receive implementation support. The champions also facilitate the engagements with other sectors such as the police to review progress in addressing insecurity, teenage pregnancies, gender-based violence, and police harassment.
- The champions have successfully reached older men in both rural and urban settings at various touch points that include churches, markets, pool table establishments, quarries, bars, bus and boda-boda stages, slaughterhouses, shoe shine and mutura (African sausage) establishments, and farms. This also occurs during events such as World Environment Day, World AIDS Day, and others. The champions reach out to young men through rites of initiation events where the youths are sensitized on sexual reproductive health and their role in society and culture.
- The male champions use an Online Data Kit (ODK) mobile tool to report quantitative data from their outreach activities. The ODK has been developed based on CP data and information needs and installed on the CP Champions phones. The platform makes it easier to collect data and has enabled the Innovation CP to monitor the scale-up of activities and reporting across the 12 sub-counties. They also belong to a WhatsApp group where they share data and other health and non-health information.
- Twelve champions received initial training on HCD application. An additional 19 have been mentored to apply HCD tools to identify and solve priority challenges.

As a result of their activities in 2022, their accomplishments include, but are not limited to:

 **919**
Referred for HIV testing

 **421**
Tested for HIV

 **2,314**
Sensitized on mental health

 **4,859**
Reached with HIV prevention messages

 **30,185**
Condoms distributed

 **30,185**
Sensitized on condom use and disposal

 **320**
Screened for TB

 **1,734**
Referred for national health insurance



“Male Champion is a great platform. I am proud to be a voice for behavior change especially when it comes to health-seeking behavior for men. I’ve reached out to the youth and the old with health messages on prevention of HIV, TB, COVID-19, and GBV among other issues that are of interest. I reached a father through his son and engaged him. For 5 years he had been lonely and keeping to himself after his wife died while he raises their 3 sons. After several attempts he opened up. We are walking together as we address the many issues affecting him and his family. He is not in denial anymore, he is healing. I have introduced him to other people who have been giving him counseling.”

~ Kuria-Male Champion