

Pitchside VCT and VMMC increases access for vulnerable adolescent boys and young men in Nairobi's informal settlements

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Background

Adolescent Boys and Young Men (ABYM) primarily aged 10 – 19 years old, in slum or informal settlement areas in Nairobi, Kenya, face significant barriers to accessing Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC), including

- lack of youth-friendly services
- lack of trusted sources of health information
- fear
- self-stigma
- low level of understanding of the benefits
- societal and family pressure of participating in traditional circumcision practices
- lack of support networks or trusted role models/mentors



TackleAfrica's program in Nairobi, Kenya, delivered through our partner Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA), indicated the effectiveness of using community football coaches as sexual health educators to reach this group. Coaches were trained to deliver interactive weekly football sessions, and community football tournaments served as a vehicle for mobilizing, informing and ultimately providing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services to ABYM in slum areas and informal settings in Nairobi, Kenya, who would not normally present in a traditional healthcare setting.

Football coaches trained as sexual health educators provided young men in their teams with a trusted source of information, and the football team provided a natural support network that can be lacking in a clinical setting.

How it works

Every week...

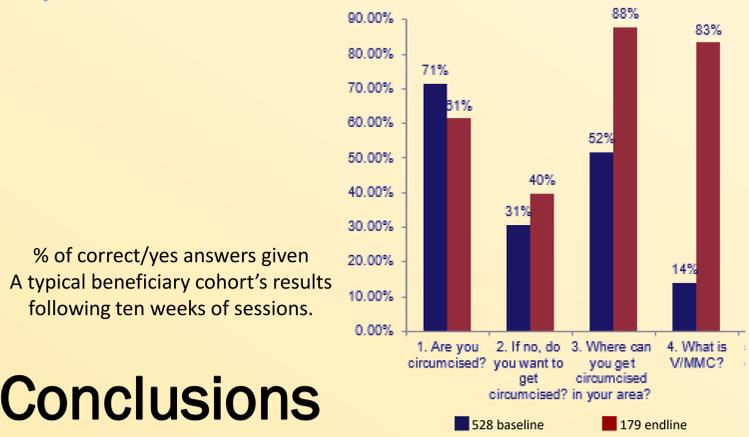
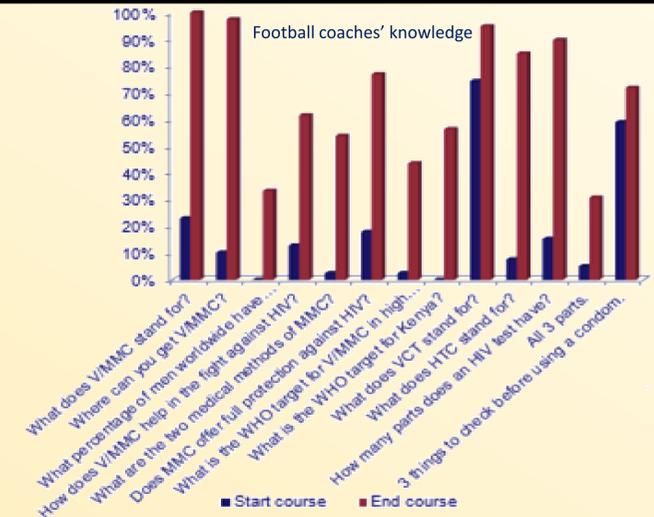
On average 600 young people participate in SRHR education sessions across 30 locations. Mobile VCT teams move from field to field offering clinical services to complement the sessions.

Every 3 months...

An estimated 500 young players and community members participate or watch our football tournaments with VCT services on the field and VMMC surgeons available. In addition, on average 100 ABYM undergo VMMC at every tournament.

Every football session...

On average, 9 hard-to-reach young people get tested for HIV at every football session or tournament we run.

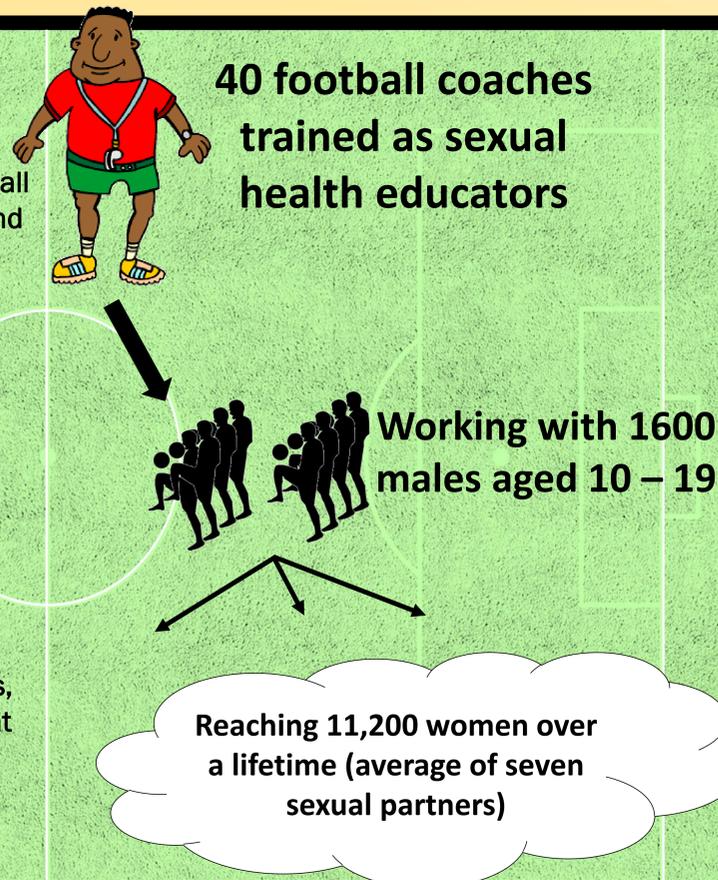


Methods

In January 2017, a cohort of 40 community football coaches were first trained to deliver innovative and interactive football drills, with VCT and VMMC sexual health messages built-in to the sessions.

All information unfolded through play, making players' education interactive and experiential. Consequences during the game were linked to consequences in their sexual lives. Decision making during the game was analogous to decisions young people face about their sexual lives on a daily basis.

By linking with the Ministry of Health and local NGOs, after sessions and at football tournaments, free, confidential VCT and VMMC were provided at pitch side, taking services to where the young people were, and removing significant barriers to access for this demographic.



18 month results

40 coaches trained as SRHR educators.

1038 interactive football sessions with integrated sexual health messaging delivered through football coaching, on the football field.

1704 hard to reach young people participated. 859 of those attended more than 5 sessions, constituting engagement in the program.

1738 tested for HIV and received their results on the field, in a voluntary, confidential and youth-friendly service and setting.

478 VMMC performed in mobile clinics set up at pitch side. Many players undergoing surgery then attended a 5 day medical camp for optimum recovery.

Conclusions

Provision of free, youth-friendly medical advice and clinical services at weekly football sessions and quarterly tournaments are key ways to create demand and drive uptake of VCT and VMMC.

Tournaments and other outreach events also proved successful in engaging older age groups and people who do not play football, but who took advantage of the free services offered in a friendly non-clinical setting in the heart of their communities.



TackleAfrica MYSA football tournament group photo