CHAMPION in Tanzania

“Channeling Men’s Positive Involvement in the National HIV Response”

An initiative of EngenderHealth
Inspiring social change through male involvement in health

CHAMPION encourages men to be actively involved in caring for their own health, and for the health of their families and communities.

CHAMPION empowers Tanzanian men to talk about their lives, to share their stories, and to reflect on their roles as men and the gender norms in their society.

In doing so, men become partners in combating serious reproductive health challenges: HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, maternal mortality, and unintended pregnancies.
The Photo/Story Project

In 2008, CHAMPION set out to find role models – champions – within communities who could positively demonstrate that men’s involvement in achieving better health was not only possible but desirable.
Searching for Men’s Role Models

We hosted focus groups, conducted district assessments, and engaged community leaders.

We asked them: “Which man in your community stands out because of his efforts to promote the health of his family or community?”

In each place, we found that the names of two or three men were mentioned over and over again.
Finding Local Champions

At specially arranged community meetings, the men identified made a presentation about their lives, their motivations and their efforts to promote better health.

And after hearing their testimonies, each community chose one of the men as their local champion.

The CHAMPION Photo/Story Project introduced these local champions to a national audience.

These are the men chosen.
Changing men’s attitudes and behavior towards seeking care, including going for VCT, will be a big challenge as the stigma of HIV reinforces long-held beliefs to avoid health services. The situation will only get better through community education that uses different channels to get the messages out there.

Mohamed Mkanangwamba
My wife and I wanted to ensure our children had a good life. So we used family planning to ensure a sound interval of time between each child. Being religious, we used the natural means of family planning by counting the safe and unsafe days. This decision to have the number of children that I knew I could provide for made our family happy and tightened our bonds. Without birth spacing, I think it is quite difficult to raise a family properly.
Sadly, many men have lacked guidance when young, and now live irresponsibly as adults. Some progress has been made in gender relations and reproductive health in recent times, but much still needs to be done. Parents must care for and communicate with their children so that they grow up to live their lives with integrity.

Silvester Ndima
A man must consider fundamental issues before getting married. A man must have the means to satisfy his wives socially, economically, and even sexually. But, unfortunately, many men ignore these important matters. They view having more than one wife as a source of pride – a sign of manhood, a sign of wealth. However, I have seen that men who practice polygamy often have lives full of tension, mistrust, and violence.

I am a leader in my community and in the Islamic Council of Tanzania. I have only one wife and, personally, I have a sense of freedom. I am rich – not materially but psychologically – because I am satisfied with what I have.
I take ARVs now and encourage men and women to go for VCT. I think that much more education among adults on HIV is needed, as well as change in the practice of men having many sexual relationships. Otherwise, men will remain vulnerable to HIV and have huge potential to infect their spouses.

Abdurahaman Kindimbo
I am close to my three children. I take great pride in looking after them, and have often accompanied them to the hospital when they needed care. Indeed, my wife is very strict, so the children tend to be closer to me than to her! Providing role models can inspire men to lead more responsible lives. Education is important too. But programmes will have to be innovative and must take into account the realities on the ground.

Leornard Kushoka
Through my commitment to their education, all of my children have attended secondary school and above. I have watched them grow up with integrity to become independent and successful professionals, who contribute positively to building our country. My children are also proud of my investment in them and share close bonds with me, my wife, and each other. Men must act as role models for their children, as the costs of not doing so are too great.

Rev. Paulo Misigalo
I love my wife and she loves me. I am 75 years now, a retired businessman, and I have eight children, twenty-eight grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren. What is it that I do not get from my wife that would make me look for women outside wedlock?! Indeed, my community has recognized my faithfulness as my strength. Now, when faced with family problems, community members come to me for advice.

Msenda Hamisi
By choosing to leave the street, I was able to restore my respect and dignity. I have even been able to marry, a thing that was once difficult, as no parent would give their daughter to a street loiterer. I have a stable, loving family who I am responsible for. Now I work to persuade my peers to leave the risky and unhealthy life on the street, and to seek solutions to the problems they face. Society needs to support young people, especially as many lack education and employment. The community must act as a buffer zone to stop youth being pushed into the street.

Emanuel Gaiza
I am a painter by profession but I am also a community educator for HIV prevention among the deaf community. I organize and lead community meetings. At these gatherings, I ask sets of questions to provoke discussion so that participants reflect on their behavior. I, too, strive to lead a responsible and healthy lifestyle. I help my wife with house chores and when she is sick. I also cook and help care for my five children. My education work has earned me respect in my community and beyond. Now, even people who are not deaf come to me for advice.
I was one of the first men in my community to disclose my HIV status. I did not want to be stigmatized. I come from the Sukuma tribe which believes a man has to be brave and endure challenges. And the counseling I received helped me to accept my situation and to protect my wife and child. By being open, I have achieved a peaceful life. My family regard my status as normal. My story has also served as an example to other men to change their behavior. Men are the principle decision makers in relationships and sex, so their engagement in the fight against HIV is vital.
I work voluntarily in my community to stop domestic violence and restore peace to troubled households. If violence is common in a particular house, there is a tendency for the community to get tired and no longer help the victim. But I never give up on a couple until I’m certain that the violence is over and the couple has moved on with their lives. This is my calling. I strive to help couples address the root causes of their problems. I believe everyone has the responsibility to stop violence and ensure that future generations inherit peace in their homes.

Thomas Mponda
The National Launch and Local Outreach

An exhibition of the stories and photographs of the champions was launched nationally, and in each of the districts in which CHAMPION is operating.

Since then, the men have taken part in numerous community events on behalf of CHAMPION, and have been frequently featured in the print and electronic media.

And at every step, the champions were supported with project training such that their capacity and confidence grew as ambassadors for men’s health.
The men have related profound personal transformation through their involvement with CHAMPION:

• Positive change - in their own lives, in their relationships, and in their homes

• Community leadership - the champions have become leaders and mentors, sought after for advice and education at home and in workplaces

• Public recognition – the men's efforts have been acknowledged by their peers, communities and government authorities with awards and recognition.
Transforming Communities

The men have also witnessed and promoted broad social dialogue, reflection and change

• As influential speakers, the Champions have helped the project reach nearly 120,000 individuals in the last 20 months with curriculum-based education, community engagement, workplace programming, and advocacy.

• Through their outreach, the CHAMPION project has been enthusiastically embraced and supported by the communities in which it works.
Everyday Effort with Long-term Consequences

Most importantly, the idea of men’s involvement in the prevention of HIV and the promotion of reproductive and family health is entering the public consciousness at local and national levels.

The project’s champions have demonstrated that men are already involved, working every day – recognized or just quiet achievers – to bring about hope-inspiring individual and social change.

They are actively working to recruit even more men to join their ranks.

CHAMPION is creatively and innovatively supporting them in every which way we can.