

Vunja Ukimya, Zungumza na Mwenzi: A Mass Media Campaign to Motivate Couples to Communicate Effectively for HIV-Free Households



KEY POINTS

In 2010, the CHAMPION Project launched *Vunja Ukimya, Zungumza na Mwenzi* (“Break the silence, Talk to your partner”), a mass media campaign to encourage couples to communicate more effectively to engender healthier, more equitable relationships and prevent the spread of HIV.

Campaign messages focused on the role of gender equity in ensuring health and targeted individuals, couples, and communities in promoting dialogue around HIV, gender equality, and positive health-seeking behavior.

As a result of the campaign, couples were motivated to communicate about health, and men and women were more likely to seek reproductive health services together.



BACKGROUND

Societal expectations of men’s and women’s behavior are a significant factor in fueling the HIV epidemic in Tanzania and around the world. Men who adhere to inequitable gender norms are more likely to practice unsafe sex and treat women violently, placing themselves and their partners at risk for HIV (Barker & Ricardo, 2006). In 2009, the CHAMPION Project conducted formative research to explore the sociocultural factors that motivate adults to engage in risky sexual behaviors. While reasons cited by men for engaging in extramarital relationships focused largely on the actions of female partners (e.g., repeated pregnancies and breastfeeding, inability to cook, sexual dissatisfaction), dialogue between couples about these issues was glaringly absent.

Poor communication and lack of trust between couples increases the likelihood of infidelity and gender-based violence (GBV) within the home, both of which contribute to poor reproductive health (RH) outcomes and increase HIV risk (Cox et al., 2014; Mishra et al., 2009; Mah & Halperin, 2008). According to a USAID study on the dynamics of concurrent sexual partnerships, many couples in Tanzania lack the communication and conflict resolution skills that would help them address challenges within their relationship (USAID | Project SEARCH, 2011).

MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGN

To address inequitable gender norms, high-risk sexual behavior, and poor communication between couples, CHAMPION launched a national social and behavior change communication (SBCC) campaign, *Vunja Ukimya, Zungumza na Mwenzi* (“Break the silence. Talk to your partner”). National and regional radio and television were utilized, as well as national newspapers, to reach the target audiences of adult men and women over the age of 25 and in established, longer-term relationships (the campaign’s primary and secondary target audiences, respectively). Additional outreach events and activities were conducted in 14 districts within the project’s intervention regions. The campaign aimed to promote dialogue between couples and provide simple, effective ways for couples to effectively communicate.

COMMUNITY INTERVENTION



DEVELOPING THE CAMPAIGN

Campaign Strategy Workshop

The *Vunja Ukimya* campaign was designed during a three-day participatory workshop. Participants were recruited by CHAMPION Community Action Teams (CATs) to be representative of communities throughout all project districts. Project staff solicited participants' opinions on couple communication, perceptions of gender norms, and attitudes toward previous SBCC campaigns with similar themes. Based on workshop input, CHAMPION developed and pretested a three-phase campaign strategy (Box 1). Once the strategy was finalized, media companies were invited to bid on the project.

Campaign Messages and Materials

Based on workshop feedback, four campaign slogans were developed around the *Vunja Ukimya* ("Break the silence") theme. The slogan "*Vunja Ukimya. Zungumza na Mwenzi*" ("Break the silence. Talk to your partner") was selected based on focus groups with adult men and women. The campaign concept ("*really raw food*") was selected from among three and used food as a metaphor for relationships, indicating that both (dinner and happiness) require preparation and care to achieve the desired results. Campaign messages focused on positive couple communication and increased awareness of HIV risk and prevention, and were disseminated through the following media and community-based outlets:

- Radio spots on regional and national radio
- National television commercials
- A *Vunja Ukimya* song
- Billboards
- Newspaper and magazine advertisements
- SBCC materials (e.g., brochures, football schedules)
- *Vunja Ukimya*-themed community outreach events in project districts

CAMPAIGN IMPLEMENTATION

Phase 1: The campaign was launched in May 2010 and ran for five months. Prior to the launch, a one-week "teaser" print advertisement ran in national newspapers to elicit curiosity and build logo recognition without initially informing audiences that the campaign was related to HIV prevention and RH.

Box 1. Three-Phase Campaign Strategy

Phase 1 (the "teaser") consisted of nonbranded teaser advertisements featuring the campaign's slogan and linked to the overall campaign through color schemes, typography, and styling.

Phase 2 (the "problem") included a "general" campaign and a World Cup-based subcampaign, both focused on the lack of communication between couples.

Phase 3 (the "how to") touched upon the health benefits of effective communication between partners and demonstrated to target audiences how to effectively communicate through examples broadcast in print and electronic media.



CHAMPION staff and Community Action Team (CAT) members participating in the launch of the *Vunja Ukimya* World Cup-themed subcampaign.

Phase 2: This phase of the campaign ("the problem") lasted two months and included a general and a World Cup-themed subcampaign. During the first month of this phase, the print advertisement from the "teaser" was changed for the general campaign to include the message "*Mabusiano ni sava na chakula! Yabitaji maandalizi*" ("*A relationship is like food! It needs preparation*"). Two radio spots were aired on national and regional radio stations, and one television commercial was aired on national television. A *Vunja Ukimya* song airing on national radio and appearing on 17 billboards—with the same artwork as the print advertisements—publicized the campaign's message in high-traffic areas across all project districts. CATs conducted campaign-themed community events in project districts to build on the momentum generated by the media campaign.

The World Cup-themed subcampaign ran concurrently to the general campaign and encouraged positive health-seeking behavior by linking attributes of an effective football team with healthy relationships. Two football-themed print advertisements ran during this period. Community-based activities were conducted around the World Cup finals, including mobile street outreach (*boda boda*), community viewings of football matches with half-time health discussions, and health fairs. World Cup-themed print SBCC materials were distributed during community events, which included t-shirts, football jerseys, World Cup match schedules, and vuvuzelas.¹

Phase 3: As the general campaign continued, World Cup-themed print advertisements and billboards were replaced by a new advertisement featuring couples preparing food together. Two radio spots were aired on national and regional radio in this phase. One radio spot likened a relationship to an onion—a good ingredient in food, but if not prepared with care, your eyes will suffer. Print advertisements also continued to run in the national newspaper, as did commercials on national and regional television.

The campaign closed with a one-month *Vunja Ukimya* Activation Tour, in which musicians, drama artists, and CHAMPION field facilitators traveled through 14 project districts on a campaign-branded bus to disseminate campaign messages. Before the tour, an orientation workshop was held with the musicians and artists to increase their knowledge of the importance of couple communication as a strategy to prevent HIV. The musicians created and performed campaign-themed songs throughout the tour.



Campaign Phase 3 advertisement.

[Woman] The food is very delicious!

[Man] Me and you, we have prepared it with love.

A relationship is like food, it needs preparation every day.



Vunja Ukimya “General” campaign Phase 2 branded advertisement for television, radio, and print. *Can you eat like this? Relationships are like food—you need to prepare them.*

EVALUATION

Vunja Ukimya campaign-related questions were included in the national omnibus survey and measured awareness and perceptions of the campaign and its impact on motivations, intentions, self-efficacy, and behavior regarding couple communication and health-seeking behaviors among Tanzanian adult men and women (EngenderHealth/ CHAMPION Project, 2011). A total of 2,000 randomly selected respondents were interviewed in 82 of 136 districts on mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. The sample was nationally representative, and findings can be generalized to all Tanzanian adults aged 18 and older.

IMPACT

Awareness and Perceptions of the Campaign

Exposure to and awareness of the campaign was high. Almost six in 10 (59%) of all respondents were aware of the campaign. Awareness of the campaign slogan was high among the primary target audience, with nearly eight in 10 (77%) men aged 25 and older in long-term relationships having heard or seen the campaign slogan, compared with 56% of respondents in non-CHAMPION districts stating that they had heard or seen the slogan. Moreover, the campaign’s messages resonated with Tanzanians, who responded well to messages of couples closeness and “transparency” within relationships.

Self-Efficacy and Behavior

Nine in 10 respondents exposed to the campaign reported feeling capable of initiating or strengthening communication with their partner as a result of the campaign. Respondents exposed to the campaign were 1.8 times more likely to report that they would seek RH services jointly with their partner in

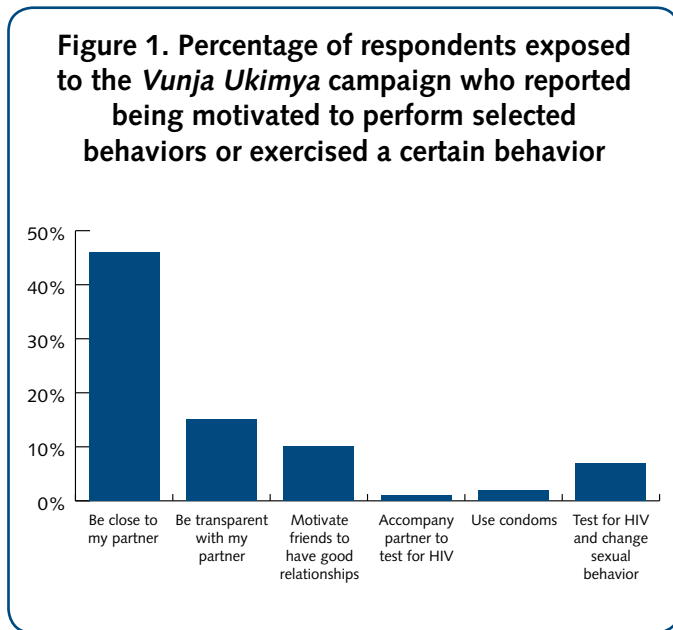


Promotional football jersey, football, and vuvuzela from World Cup-themed subcampaign

the future. They were also significantly more likely to report communicating with their partner about a health-related issue in the month prior to the survey ($p < .05$).

Motivation and Intention

Seventy-two percent of those exposed to the campaign said that the Vunja Ukimya message motivated them to take action, including being close to their partner (46%), being transparent with their partner about relationship issues (15%), encouraging friends to have good relationships with their partners (11%), and making “wise decisions” about getting tested for HIV and changing high-risk sexual behavior (8%), including using condoms (Figure 1).





Musical artists performing at a community event to launch the *Vunja Ukimwe* campaign.

LESSONS LEARNED

Several key lessons emerged from the campaign slogan pretest, implementation, and focus group discussions that can inform future SBCC and mass media campaigns related to gender and HIV:

- Campaign slogans need to be specific about the parties being encouraged to communicate and should not reinforce gender inequality by encouraging male involvement at the expense of women. Such campaigns should use “neutral” words not specific to particular regions within a country.
- Public gatherings, holidays, and international events are key opportunities to increase awareness about gender and health. Large and well-known events can provide a platform on which advocacy campaigns can capitalize.
- Impressive community participation during the *Vunja Ukimya* Activation Tour suggests that combining entertainment with community dialogue—called

edutainment—is an effective way to communicate campaign messages. The tour also showed that people were eager to participate in dialogues about sensitive health and social issues through this approach.

CONCLUSION

The *Vunja Ukimya* campaign had good saturation in target areas. Campaign messages were accepted by community members, who responded especially positively to the promotion of couples being close and the concept of “transparency” within relationships. Respondents were motivated to communicate with their partners as a result of the campaign, with high self-efficacy to do so, and self-reported communication between partners was encouraging. The slogan “*Vunja Ukimya. Zungumza na Mwenzi*” is widely recognized as a result of this initial campaign, and future campaigns can build upon this foundation.

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¹ Vuvuzelas are noisy plastic trumpets that are especially popular among football fans and were featured prominently during World Cup matches.

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