



# KWAKHA INDVODZA



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June / July Newsletter

# Executive Director's Foreword

"Men don't like clinics. They prefer asking their friends" "Men don't think about their health until its too late" "Men do stupid things". "All they want is sex". "Men are scared of feeling weak". "It's their fault if they get sick".

These are some of the generic responses we hear every day, from community members, NGO staff, health practitioners and government officials. And it's an easy bandwagon on which we all, at some point, have jumped. Men are deliberately hard to reach. Men are the problem. Women are responsible, health-conscious and health seeking for themselves and their families. Their male partner's guestimate their health by proxy and the occasional visual once-over in the bathroom mirror. It could be argued that there is some truth to the stereotype. Generally men make up a minority of clinic clients, the majority of AIDS-related deaths and top a whole list of other leading causes of death, painting men as the more difficult (dare I say weaker) sex. Like all mistruths, it's attractively simple, if not binary, in its narrative. But real narratives are hardly ever that obvious. Why do men not go to clinics? Why do women make up a significant number of HIV tests? What is it about masculinity that leads many men (especially young men) to feel completely comfortable driving recklessly but will actively avoid a needle-prick?

In order to get to the root of this, we need to look beyond the individual man, beyond "men" even, to the gender and social norms to which we all, men and women, feel pressure to observe. From an early age, men are exposed to a catalogue of invisible privileges which are associated with their (all but randomly assigned) biological sex. Very young boys are often handled, treated, spoken to, listened to, disciplined and provided for in a different way to their female age-mates. At every stage of development, gender-discrimination affects our development, whether deliberately, or because it just "feels right" for the parents. This continues throughout childhood and adolescence. At every turn, there is something for girls and something else for boys. Walk into any toyshop, in any country, including some of the most gender-equal countries in the

world, and you will see the most obvious demonstration of this phenomenon. Look at how movies, TV and video games are marketed based on gender. By the time a young man reaches adulthood, he will have witnessed between 20,000 and 40,000 on-screen murders (even more in western countries), significantly more than his female counterparts. By this point, he is conditioned towards enacting and espousing the norms of his gender and, whilst all men negotiate these societal demands to various degrees, all men will at some point experience the judgement of women and other men when they fail to live up to these expectations of what it means to "be a man".

So what can be done? After all, men and women do not lead separate lives. We are intrinsically intertwined, especially when it comes to sexual reproductive health. And with shared lives, comes shared challenges and shared responsibility for solutions. Men's health, just like women's health is, in fact, community health. We all have a task ahead of us, including men. And it's with men where we at Kwakha Indvodza have seen the most gains. Amongst the generic responses, amidst the same old dissenting voices, we are seeing change. Men are taking a claim in their health, if not for themselves, but for their families. Men are getting 'woke' to their own weaknesses and slowly, men are realising what is required of them.

We still have a lot of work to do, a number of miles until we get to the last mile, but I am proud to say that Kwakha Indvodza and partners are challenging this social self-harm, we are changing this narrative in Eswatini. Change it with us. Be part of the solution. Be proactive with your health, talk about it with other men, and look after yourselves and your loved ones.

# Engaging men to improve their health

Antiretroviral therapy (ART) programmes in sub-Saharan Africa have been reporting that a disproportionately higher number of women are on treatment compared to men. Compared to women, men are less likely to be diagnosed with HIV, less likely to start ART, more likely to start ART with advanced HIV disease and at older ages and have shorter life expectancy and higher mortality rates on ART.

A lack of health awareness and unwillingness to adopt a healthier lifestyle puts men at a health disadvantage. Men's health in our country still lags behind that of women. We have a cultural script about masculinity that tells men they need to be tough, brave, strong and self-reliant. It's exemplified in phrases like "be a man" and "men don't cry". Men learn from an early age that if they don't act in this tough, masculine way they lose their status and respect as men.

"I don't have time, going to the hospital and waiting in the long queues is a waste of time",  
"I often get this and it goes on its own, so I don't need to go to hospital"  
"I can't go there to be attended by a woman"  
Men are often embarrassed about health issues that they feel might reflect on their masculinity. It is important to engage men about health care and address the common misconceptions that may be influencing their health care decisions.

Kwakha indvodza's ambition is to ensure that men and boys particularly those in disadvantaged areas and communities – have the information and services they need to live healthier, longer and more fulfilling lives. One way to reach men is by adapting HIV services to their needs and interests, a strategy that KI has used through the Seyetfu Majaha Project.



Going to seek medical attention for men is similar to asking for directions when lost, something to be avoided or delayed until all other options are exhausted. Putting off medical examinations however can have far more serious effects on one's health than avoiding to ask for directions when lost. While working with men and boys we have noticed some common attributes of this masculine behaviour where Swazi men refuse to seek medical attention even when they need it. Some of the common excuses that we often get from men are,

Going to the community or places that men like to be and engaging men about HIV/STI basic facts and transmission knowledge, myths and misconceptions, condom use, VMMC and other prevention services has proven to be an effective method in growing the number of men who receive HIV testing and counselling. Community based testing is an important component in Eswatini as statistics indicate that men and boys are less likely to visit the clinic for health services, this strategy will also contribute to the country's vision of ending AIDS by 2022.



*Nurses during a training for the male friendly corner inside Lomahasha clinic.*

Barriers to male health provision reported by nurses in some of the hospitals in the Lubombo region were: lack of male-friendly training among staff and lack of a dedicated space for males in their clinics. Male friendly health services are a key strategy for improving male health in Eswatini. The Seyetfu Majaha project provides technical assistance to 9 facilities across Lubombo to offer male friendly corners. Working with the health care workers in developing strategies to encourage men to access clinics is an effective way of ensuring that existing clinic services are being utilized by community by helping them develop new methods of attracting men to health care services. Whilst a dedicated space for men is unlikely to be feasible or necessary, all facilities have the potential to be male-friendly in terms of staff attitudes and actions.

Despite men's often reluctant engagement with health services, most men do care about their health and do respond to messages when the information is presented in formats that appeal to them. Helping to improve men's health allows men to be more healthy active citizens, who can play a meaningful role in their communities for longer.

# Community Health

*If we want to see meaningful change in health, both women and men are integral. Kwakha Indvodza is dedicated to enriching men's health and wellness through a broad spectrum of national screening and educational campaigns. We are always ready to be part of actions that aim to improve male health, through our two health focused projects we have engaged more than **3000 men** about health care behaviour since January 2019.*

## *Seyetfu Majaha*

The Seyetfu Majaha project, one of Kwakha Indvodza's male health focused projects aims to scale up access to HIV testing, care and treatment as well as improve treatment retention to achieve the national target for HIV prevention. To reduce the prevalence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections among men, the KI Seyetfu Majaha project provides technical assistance to 9 facilities across Lubombo to offer male friendly corners in their clinics.



*Engaged = 1930 men*

*Tested = 791 men*

*& 107 Females*

## *Sincumo Ngesakho*

Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision is an important part of the country's HIV prevention strategy. Male circumcision provides young men with a low-risk, lifelong protection which is proven to reduce the chances of contracting HIV by 60%. In collaboration with the Government of Eswatini's Ministry of Health, USAID and CHAPS Eswatini, Kwakha Indvodza's Sincumo Ngesakho Project recruits young men for circumcision, giving them a chance to take responsibility for their health, make a positive life choice and protect themselves against HIV and AIDS.



*Engaged = 1500*

*Circumcised = 204*

# My Welding Journey

Work is central to most of our lives, it enables us to get by in the world and has become the key to how we define ourselves and measure our self-worth. The job searching period for out of school youth has become consistently longer than it is for experienced workers, which leads to gaps in employment history, loss of skills and productivity and future work opportunities harmed. Youth unemployment in Eswatini continues to have a high negative impact on the economic growth and productivity of the country.

Kwakha Indvodza's Social Entrepreneurship and Income Generation (SEIG) training programme's objective is to create economic opportunities, primarily for out-of-school youth. The programme aims to foster emotional, intellectual and artistic growth in young people through business skills, career guidance and income generating training sessions to give those from deprived areas the opportunity to break through the barriers of poverty and lack of opportunity. To date, more than 300 young boys have completed one or more of the Kwakha Indvodza SEIG training programmes.

having an attractive personal brand as well as how to write a good CV and present myself professionally during an interview. I had the opportunity to apply the interview skills we were equipped with and I was commended by an interviewer who told me I did better than most of the interviewees he had met that day."

The SEIG project essentially strives to 'Build young men' by economically empowering youth in rural and semi-rural communities through income generating projects and skills training. Of the various skills development trainings offered by SEIG, Samkeliso chose to do welding. "I chose welding because this is a field most young people shy away from and therefore I believe there is still quite a lot of opportunity there, be it for employment by a company or starting my own micro business in the community."

"The SEIG programs I have undergone thus far have had a significant impact in my growth. I hope that this knowledge will not end with us but other young people will get to experience it."



*Samkeliso receiving his certificate from the welding trainer after the training*

Samkeliso Lokotfwako, a 21 year old lijaha from Mantabeni, under the Siphocosini constituency, is one of the many young boys to have started the SEIG training programme. Samkeliso is the last born in a family of 4 boys. Before joining the 'Learn2Earn' course Samkeliso would depend on part-time jobs to get by. "The Learn2Earn course played a significant role in helping me accept what I cannot change, understand the importance of



At the end of his training, Samkeliso can now create a metal storage unit, buckler doors and windows and road signages. He would love to learn more about this chosen skill and is looking forward to gaining more skill from working with an already established welding person.

# Litfuba Ngelakho Project Testimonials

**Name & Surname: Phinda Mabaso**

**Residential Area: Msunduza**

**Age: 25**

“The Litfuba Ngelakho project is the perfect project for Msunduza. I wish that a lot of our community boys would join this programme. Msunduza has a high crime rate and if young people do not get the right mentorship they end up involved with crime. This project came at the right time for me, I completed my high school last year and the Kwakha Indvodza project has been a good programme to be a part of. I have learnt a lot through this programme and I am happy to be a part of it. Through this programme I have learnt about GBV, the drivers of HIV and how to be a responsible and respectable man in my community.”



**Name and Surname: Banele Zulu**

**Residential Area: Makholweni**

**Age: 22**

“I joined the Litfuba ngelakho project after seeing some pamphlets around the community and later hearing a presentation by the Litfuba Ngelakho Coordinator. I really wish that this project would have been introduced to our community much earlier, young people in my community have resorted to crime as a means of survival and programmes such as these can help shape their perceptions. I have learnt a lot through this programme, some of the things that I have learnt here will help me become the man that I desire to be, one with respect, dignity and honour.

Thank you KI for finding us and helping us, continue with the great work that you do.”



# Programs In Action



*Sincumo Ngesakho at International Men's health week at the ICC in Ezulwini.*

*Sincumo Ngesakho member during a VMMC recruitment registration at Malkerns Primary school.*



*Seyetfu Majaha Session at Siteki.*





*Emajaha from the Mahwalala Chapter during a session.*



*Emajaha from the Mbhuleni Chapter during a session.*



*KI SODV Training with Nedbank staff members.*



*Learn2Earn' and Carpentry Skills Development training graduates during their apprenticeship at Makhwane*

*Participants doing group work during one of KI's SODV Trainings.*



*Lijaha during a 'Learn2Earn' session.*

# Our Current Partners

Kwakha Indvodza is funded by a number of bilateral, governmental and grant making organizations. The stories and projects featured in this issue are currently funded by the following partners.



# Upcoming Events

- *One billion rising campaign: March against the killings of women and children- 6 August( Manzini)*
- *KI March against drugs and crime- Mathendele 10 August*
- *Suicide prevention day - 10 September*



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