



From Dr A Majid Katme

Zimbabwe's MPs to be circumcised in bid to fight HIV



The campaign was first suggested by Deputy Prime Minister Thokozani Khupe in September 2011

A group of Zimbabwean MPs is getting circumcised as part of a campaign to reduce HIV and Aids cases.

A small makeshift clinic for carrying out the procedures was erected in Parliament House in the capital Harare. Blessing Chebundo, chairman of Zimbabwe Parliamentarians Against Aids, said his main objective was to inspire other citizens to follow suit.

Research by the UN has suggested male circumcision can reduce the spread of HIV and Aids.

A [report](#) by UNAids and the World Health Organisation said the risk of HIV infection among men could be reduced by 60%.

More than a million people in Zimbabwe are believed to be HIV-positive, with about 500,000 receiving anti-retroviral treatment.

Mr Chebundo said more than 120 MPs and parliamentary staff had shown an interest in the circumcision programme.

Local artists, MPs, and drum majorettes from local schools led a colourful procession in Harare's city centre towards Africa Unity Square, just opposite parliament to kick start an event that is expected to see dozens of MPS getting circumcised.

The message today is get circumcised and reduce the rate of HIV infection.

It's the first time that MPs have ever been circumcised to raise the HIV and Aids awareness.

The BBC's Brian Hungwe, in Harare says that by 12:00 local time (10:00GMT), four had had the procedure performed, with more expected later.

Blessing Chebundo was the first to undergo the 10-minute operation.

He told the BBC there was a possibility that some members of the executive may also attend, including President Robert Mugabe.

The circumcision programme had attracted a lot of attention in Zimbabwe, and had divided opinion, our correspondent said.

The issue was raised in parliament in September 2011, when Deputy Prime Minister Thokozani Khupe made a plea to her fellow politicians.

At the time, many MPs shunned the idea.

As well as a clinic in parliament, the initiative has seen a tent set up across the road from parliament, where counselling sessions will be held.

Dr Owen Mugurungi, Director for Aids and TB unit with the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, applauded those involved, the Zimbabwe Mail reported.

"We are happy with this initiative and we are happy more leaders will come on board," he was quoted as saying.