The Opportunity: In high-income countries, such as the United States, cervical cancer is rare because of regular screening and HPV vaccination, which prevents the infection that causes cervical cancer. In Kenya however, cervical cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among women. Every day seven Kenyan women die from the disease. While cervical cancer screening is available in Kenya, less than 15% of eligible women ever receive screening. Awareness of cervical cancer is low, and many women do not feel they are at risk, since symptoms do not present until it is too late, and the cervical cancer is invasive.

Additionally, the HPV vaccination, a highly effective “best buy” for cervical cancer prevention, is not yet widely available in Kenya. However, the HPV vaccination is slated for a national rollout among girls of eligible age in 2019. Now is a critical time to increase awareness of cervical cancer prevention through screening and HPV vaccination to prevent death and disease from cervical cancer in Kenya – now and for generations of women to come.

The Project: With the support of American Cancer Society’s All of Me Grant, Women for Cancer Early Detection and Treatment (W4C) is working to increase awareness and demand for cervical cancer screening and HPV vaccination through the development of strategic and culturally appropriate communication materials. The development of these materials is based on a thorough understanding of current knowledge, attitudes, and practices, as well as common barriers surrounding cervical cancer screening and vaccination coverage. These materials will guide the content and messaging. Key stakeholders have been involved in the process and all materials will be pretested among target populations prior to dissemination. By early 2019, materials will be ready for production and dissemination to increase awareness of cervical cancer screening and support the successful rollout of the national HPV vaccination.