Preventing violence with Responsible, Engaged and Loving (REAL) Fathers

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Project Snapshot

- **Partners:** Georgetown University’s Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) and Save the Children

- **Purpose:** Develop and test a set of father-centered interventions that reduce Inter Personal Violence and physical child punishment

- **Duration:** Oct 2012 to Sept 2014

- **Location:** Post-conflict northern Uganda

- **Beneficiaries:** Young fathers (ages 16-25) who are parenting toddlers
Participant Characteristics

- **Age**: 17-25
- **Education**: 24% completed primary school
- **Employment**: 15% engaged in paid work
- **Relationship**:
  - 74% with partner 1-3 years
  - 64% partially paid bride price
  - Companionship, economic benefit,
- **Wife age**: 15-25
  (Data for Cohort 1 of 340)

Rationale

*Global evidence indicates:*

- Childhood physical punishment and witnessing IPV is important risk factor for later IPV
- Importance of reach young men before their expectations, attitudes and behaviors related to relationships are set.
- Involving men more effective than exclusive focus on women.
- Fatherhood promising avenue for promoting positive masculinity
Theoretical Perspectives

- Ecological model
- Positive masculinity
- Influence principles

Project Design

1. Develop an evidence-based intervention:
   - **Mentoring program** for young fathers to build relationship skills and positive parenting practices;
   - **Community message board series** to catalyze diffusion of reflection on inequitable gender norms and intimate partner violence.

2. Test the effectiveness and feasibility of the intervention through:
   - **Rigorous evaluation** using pretest-posttest control experimental design, including randomization and focus group discussion with both the young fathers and project staff.
   - **Monitoring and Learning agenda** to reflect and document on lessons learned.
**Experimental Design**

- **Random assignment**
- **Intervention (N=250)**
  - Baseline Interview
  - 12 mentoring sessions
  - Community Posters
- **Control (N=250)**
  - Baseline Interview
  - End line Interview

**Expected Outcomes:**

**Short-term**

**Parenting**
- Fathers increase their knowledge of child development
- Fathers gain positive parenting skills

**Violence**
- Fathers report decreased acceptance of intimate partner violence
- Fathers report decreased support for harsh child discipline
- Fathers gain skills in non-violent conflict resolution

**Gender / fatherhood norms**
- Fathers hold more gender-equitable attitudes toward parenting roles
- Fathers report equal support for their boy and girl children’s hopes and dreams
Expected Outcomes: Intermediate

Parenting
- Fathers report using positive parenting techniques
- Fathers demonstrate positive and nurturing parenting styles
- Fathers spend more time positively interacting with children
- Fathers report increase self-efficacy related to fatherhood role
- Fathers report greater emotional investment in children’s lives

Violence
- Fathers report decreased incidence of IPV
- Fathers report decreased utilization of harsh child disciplining methods

Gender / fatherhood norms
- Fathers report engaging in non-traditional parenting roles

Key Baseline Findings
- Overall, over 30% of the respondents were violent against their partners in the past three months.
- About 50% of the fathers administered some form of physical punishment to their children.
- 60% of the respondents ever witnessed a woman (including their mother) being beaten by a man (including their father) during the course of their childhood period.
- 35% of the respondents believe that there are justifiable grounds upon which a woman can be beaten by the husband, for example, when she neglects the children or argues with the husband.
Key Baseline Findings…contd

- 66% of the respondents believe that physical punishment is a good method to instil discipline in the children. About 68% somehow believe that their wives have no right to disagree with you about raising the child.
- 50% of the fathers believe it is hard to raise a child without some form of physical punishment.
- However, for both IPV against their wives and physical punishment against their children, the respondents seem to have first attempted to resolve the situation calmly before becoming violent.
- 68% of the fathers acknowledged that they are not very confident to handle a young child without physical punishment.

Intervention:

Mentoring Program

- The project has identified and will train 64 (44 already trained) men to serve as mentors to young fathers
- Each mentor will advise/guide/support 4-5 young fathers using a structured protocol
- Mentors will have 12 points of contact with each young father:
  - 6 individual home visits
  - 6 group meetings
Intervention: Community Posters

- 6 large posters will be placed at community meeting points.
- Boards will have images and emotion-based messages to catalyze diffusion of reflection on inequitable gender norms and intimate partner violence.

Poster Themes

1. “My son is a REAL father!”
2. “My dad is a REAL father!”
3. “My friend is a REAL father!”
4. “I am a REAL father!”
5. “My husband is a REAL father!”
6. “REAL fathers bring our community hope.” (Public pledging)
Critical enablers for your population of caregivers?

- Supportive partner/wife who is involved throughout the project.
- Skillful and committed guide/mentors.
- Supportive social environment extended family/clan and community (ecological framework).
- Existence of Young father who are just “beginners” in parenting and committed to improve their parenting skills.
- Availability of the curriculum and resource materials for the mentors.
- Existence of government structures both at National and local government levels (both district and sub county level).
- Tapping input of both the stakeholders i.e. young fathers, mentors community leaders, the wives etc in guiding the intervention.

How can we do a better job of engaging fathers?

- Re-cognizing the existing parenting support structures and strengthening them.
- Equipping mentors with appropriate knowledge and skills for effective mentoring.
- Evidence based programming is essential for success.
- Targeting young fathers before development of parenting attitudes.
- Use the people who are experienced in parenting and trusted by the young to offer mentoring to the young fathers.
Engaging religious and traditional leaders

- Sensitized on the project, for their buy in.
- Spearheading identification of the target group.
- Some trained as mentors
- As part of the local leaders/community make commitment during community celebrations.
- Use of the traditional bone fire; *wang-oos* as one of the approaches during mentors training.

“ I want my child to appreciate me for what I will have done. I can’t say what that is now, but I am trying to build it.”
Thank you
Dickens Ojamuge
Project Specialist REAL Fathers Project Uganda
dickens.ojamuge@savechildren.org