MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES



Responsible Engaged and Loving (REAL) Fathers Scaling in Uganda

With the support of The LEGO Foundation

Responsible Engaged and Loving (REAL) Fathers Scale Up Across Uganda

An evidence-based, community-led initiative empowering young fathers (ages 18–25) to reduce intimate partner violence, prevent violence against children, and promote early childhood development through play. By mentoring fathers at this pivotal stage of life, REAL Fathers helps break the cycle of violence and fosters thriving families and healthy, playful beginnings for children aged 0–3.

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES



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Design and layout: Joyce Naiga Kyeyune // ICT Creatives Ltd

Background

Impact and Innovations Development Center (IIDC) in collaboration with Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is leading the scale up implementation of of an evidence-based parenting program, "Responsible Engaged and Loving (REAL) Fathers" in six subregions of Uganda. The intervention is implemented in partnership with 10 locally based NGOs operating in Ankole, Buganda, Busoga, Bunyoro, Teso, and Lango sub regions.
The objectives of the REAL Fathers Program include:

- Eliminating intimate partner violence (IPV) between young fathers and their spouses.
- Promoting positive parenting behaviors and practices.
- Improving early childhood development (ECD) through skills and practices in child learning and play.
- Fostering healthy, gender-equitable relationships.

IIDC also works with University of California San Diego (UCSD) Centre for Gender Equity and Health to scientifically measure the impact of the program. The measurement of the program impact is carried out by quantitative methods of baseline and endline surveys of annual intervention cycles and a qualitative method of documentation of Most Significant Change Stories.

This report presents the Most Significant Change stories documented for REAL Fathers intervention cycle of Cohort 1 of the four cohorts.

Most Significant Change Methodology

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation that involves the collection and analysis of personal stories of change, both expected and unexpected change resulting from the project implementation on participants in the following domains of change:

1. Strengthened young father-spouse relationships

Evidence of reductions in intimate partner violence (IPV), improved communication and teamwork, and increased emotional and financial support within families.

2. Enhanced father-child relationships and early childhood development (ECD)

Evidence on how young fathers are actively engaging in bonding, stimulation activities, responsive caregiving, and early learning through play with their children.

3. Shifts in young fathers' perceived roles and status within the community

Evidence of increased involvement and shared responsibilities related to childcare and household needs, community groups and how these changes contribute to a more equitable and supportive family environment.

4. Transformation of community systems and structures

Evidence of shifts in social norms, support networks, and institutional responses that reinforce positive fatherhood and gender-equitable parenting practices.

The Most Significant Change Study

This MSC study presented open-ended questions to the participants to capture stories related to the change domains mentioned above. Implementing partners (IP) staff and community members supported the initial identification of the most critical changes that resulted from the project, regardless of the changes prioritized by the project team. The process involved the following core steps:

1. **Identification and training of IPs on the MSC methodology:** The Consultant conducted the training which was cascaded to IP field teams.
2. **Identification of potential stories for screening:** This was done by IP field staff and mentors after the training to identify the stories.
3. **Field work:** After obtaining informed consent from the participants, the Consultant recorded videos as young fathers, their spouses and community members narrated stories of change. During the video recording, live translation was supported by IP field staff, mentors and local leaders to support the data collection.
4. **Review and transcribing:** This was conducted by the Consultant after collecting the stories.
5. **Ranking and selection of the MSC stories:** The initial selection was done at the Consultant and IP level at each IP office on the last day of story collection in each region. During a guided selection exercise, the collated MSC stories were presented by the Consultant to a group of IP staff who reviewed them as a team against predetermined criteria and ranked all the stories in relative order from "most significant" to "least significant". In addition to ascertaining the level of alignment with the domains of change, they were ranked by criteria. For example, when a young father who used to drink alcohol and routinely fight stopped drinking and fighting, the perceived degree of change and impact was deemed higher than for another who has just reduced his drinking or acts of violence. The selection exercise at IP level was conducted for three hours with less than five IP staff and somewhat longer with larger groups. Everyone had equal opportunity to review, score and rank the stories.

The second level of selection was done at Consultant, IIDC and UCSD level. Six team members (three from IIDC and three from UCSD) paired-up to review allocated stories from at least two regions before the scheduled selection meetings. A score sheet was developed for them to rank the stories against predetermined criterion.

Criteria to guide MSC selection

- Relevant alignment to at least one of the four REAL Fathers outcomes of interest (i.e., household violence, alcohol use, relationship quality and child development and play).
- Degree of change described in the story
- Degree of impact on the beneficiaries
- Clarity of the story

After the scoring exercise, average scores were calculated and stories ranked for the best five stories per region (top 30) and then the best three stories per region (top 18). The selection exercise at this stage took about one hour for each round and all six reviewers scored and ranked the stories. The overall top three stories were then selected by the Consultant from the list of the top 18.

Final study products included a 5-minute general video and 4 other short videos blended according to key emerging themes including:

- Intimate partner violence
- Child play and early childhood development
- Increased economic productivity
- Alcohol and drug abuse

Results: Most Significant Change stories

This section presents a story album of 18 Most Significant Change testimonies/ stories comprising the top 3 stories from each of the six sub regions of Ankole, Buganda, Bunyoro, Busoga, Lango and Teso. The stories are presented along the domains of change.

The MSC documentation process efficient due to the incredible support of the IIDC leadership team and invaluable technical guidance from University of California San Diego team. Implementing partners supported strong mobilization and facilitated the initial story identification together with the community mentors and provided field logistical support.

A list of individuals who participated in the story review process is shown in the table below.

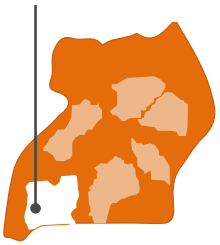
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Impact and Innovations Development Center Deogratius Yiga - Executive Director Moses Komagum- Head of Programs Anslem Wandega - Deputy Head of Programs Dickens Ojamuge -Project Manager Dennis Nabembezi- Monitoring and Evaluation	**University of California San Diego** Rebecka Lundgren-Professor Kathryn Barker-Assistant Professor Michelle Bulterys- Assistant Professor
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Sub-region: Ankole

Domain of Change

Transformation of community systems and structures

ANKOLE REGION DISTRICTS
Mbarara, Rubirizi, Isingiro and Ibanda





"I play with my child, bath him and take him to school in the morning. I recently took my child for immunization, which I did not do before the mentorship process. Now, I also help my wife to wash the clothes."

Mentorship Reconciles Twesigye's family

Twesigye Lawrence and his wife are residents of Nyakihanda village, in Rubirizi District. Their child is three years old. Lawrence describes his experience in the REAL Fathers mentorship program.

"I used to plan alone and make decisions without my spouse since I knew that I was the household head and it was my role as a man. Mentorship sessions have made me open up to my spouse. Whatever money I make, I put it on the table for better planning with my spouse. I no longer come home late in the evening since I realized that I have a role to play in supporting my spouse at home.

Quarrelling and fighting has reduced at home. The journey of mentorship helped me stop drinking alcohol since I used to consume a lot of my money buying alcohol for my friends. Ever since my mentor started visiting me under REAL Fathers there are fewer fights and less use of abusive language by my spouse.

My parents had refused to give me a portion of land and I used to struggle to take care of my family but when they saw my behavior change, they gave me a plantation of matooke (edible plantain/banana). This helps me to feed my family daily and has brought peace in the home. Many people think I have been bewitched while other people are admiring me these days especially the elders and women who are wishing that their husbands would be like me."

Domain of Change

Strengthened young father and spouse relationships



“In my community, people trust me because of the change in my behavior; they have trusted me with a catechist position in St. Peters Church Kagogo to lead the people of God. I no longer look for a seat when I arrive at public gatherings, but my seat is always reserved because now people respect me.”

From Alcoholic to Preacher

Twenty six-year-old Barekye Alex, a resident of Nyakagyera cell in Isingiro district experienced a complete transformation when he joined the REAL Fathers mentorship program.

“ I was a habitual drinker violently beating my wife every night when I returned drunk. My wife, Evelyne, would sleep out many nights and she had no peace in our home. I was part of rowdy community peer groups that did not believe in home responsibilities.

When I agreed to join the REAL Fathers, my relationship with my wife greatly improved because I now do things that I never used to do. For example, I respect her as my wife, we work together fetching water, collecting firewood and while she’s cooking, I carry the child. My wife loves me and no longer fears me, because I do not beat her anymore.

My two young children no longer fear me unlike before when they would run away whenever I returned home. I play with my children and I always return early to see them; I always have a small gift for them, like sweets. They now call me ‘daddy’ but back then they didn’t know me because I was barely at home.

Some friends who see me fetching water with my wife say she bewitched me and is now the head of the family while others like what I do and approach me for more tips on how I have managed to change. The change has been very positive.”

Domain of Change

Strengthened young father and spouse relationships



"I started knowing as a man I have to be responsible and take care of my family; it took a while for me to change but finally I started changing. I reduced my alcohol drinking and started using my money to buy basic needs for the home."

No More Police Cases

Ankunda Jonas, 26 years old, a resident of Kagera cell in Isingiro District is married with a one-year old child.

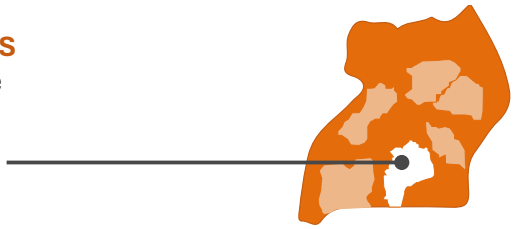
"Before joining the fathers' mentorship program, I was an alcoholic and I would sleep in bars most of the time and would only return home when I was hungry. I was violent and abusive to my wife and would beat her every time I was drunk. I had no time for my children, and they feared me. I always had cases with the police for abusing my family. I was so aggressive because I believed that if I did not beat my wife and did not drink alcohol then I was not a man.

After the mentorship, things in my family started changing. I started knowing as a man I have to be responsible and take care of my family. It took a while for me to change but I reduced drinking alcohol and started using my money to buy home basic needs. I made a decision to stop beating my wife and when I started changing, I noticed that my wife became happy and there was peace in the home. I started helping my wife with the chores and talking to her calmly instead of beating her. My child loves me today and our bond is strong. I'm now a responsible father and I provide and look after my home.

In my community, people have started trusting me and they chose me as the Youth Councilor for the parish."

Sub-region: Buganda

BUGANDA REGION DISTRICTS
Luwero, Nakasongola, Buikwe and Kayunga



Domain of Change

Shifts in young fathers' perceived roles and status in the community



"When I'm walking from work, I find items to make toys for my daughter and I carry it home for her with joy. Before, I never even thought about cooking, but today I cook for my family."

From Fighting to Loving

Ziwambazza Richard, a young father of three children from Lumonde Village, Luweero district.

"Before I joined REAL Fathers mentorship, I was known for frequent arguments and fights with my wife. I believed that as the man of the house, I had the right to discipline my wife. My violent behavior created a fearful environment for our child who always run away from me. At the same time, I drank a lot of alcohol with my friends. I thought that as long as I provided food, I had fulfilled my role as a man.

After the mentorship I began to clean the compound and bring home firewood something I never used to do. Even when my wife is not around, I do household chores. Before, I would go straight from the garden to the pool table to gamble. But now, I come home directly from work and help my wife. We are now on good terms. We no longer fight; instead, we sit down and talk calmly to find solutions together. I now help my wife with household work and people are beginning to admire me. Before, I never even thought about cooking, but today I cook for my family. My daughter used not to recognize me; now I play with her, and she knows that I am her father. People used to say that my wife had bewitched me but I chose to ignore them and continued doing the right thing. Now, other young fathers in the area are also following my example."

Domain of Change

Strengthened young father and spouse relationships



"Before, I believed that everything at home was the woman's responsibility because that is what I grew up seeing my father do. I thought a man's role was simply to wake up, leave the house, and leave all the domestic work to his wife. But now, I have changed, I help my wife with everything at home."

Making Decisions Together

Vincent, 25 years old, is married to Betty Adaneilla, and together they have three children, the youngest three months. In their village, Bujjabe, in Nakasongola District, Vincent used to be known as an abusive man.

"Before joining the REAL Fathers Program, I had the worst drinking habits and behavior. I used to fight and beat my wife almost daily. I depended on alcohol, smoking, and gambling, and had no respect for my wife. She worked hard doing porter jobs, brickmaking, and hawking tomatoes just to feed the family. I never gave her money or respected her effort. I used not to discuss with my wife because I felt I was the sole decision-maker at home.

But after joining the REAL Fathers Program and going through all seven sessions with my mentor, everything changed. I stopped drinking and gambling. I now talk to my wife with respect, and she has become my friend and advisor. We plan together and manage our home as a team. I even stay home and help her with work at home.

I never used to talk to my children, especially the youngest, because she didn't talk, and I didn't understand her signs. I also felt I couldn't provide for them because I didn't have money to buy toys especially clothes and play materials. But now I have learned that I can use local materials. I now make toys for them, play with them, and also provide clothes for them. The money I used to waste on gambling, I now use it on my children. You should see how smart they look now."

Betty, his wife says: "Sometimes Vincent arrives hungry and finds that I haven't cooked yet. Instead of waiting, he either cooks or helps me with the chores I was doing, like washing dishes, so I can prepare the food."

Domain of Change
Strengthened young father and spouse relationships



“I left the Fangone peer group which pressured me into wild behaviour and deleted their contacts from my phone. I help my wife with digging in the garden, sweeping, fetching water and washing clothes and dishes. Some say my wife bewitched me, but it is mentorship which changed me.

Together, with the mentors we formed a young fathers’ savings group to empower young men economically. From the savings we make this year, my plan is to open a business to improve our family’s livelihood.”

From Convict to Good Daddy

Enos Sembuggo is a husband to Nakiganda Precious, and their only child is two and a half years old. In Bujjabe Village, Nakasongola District, their home was once known as a hub for conflict and Enos was popularly referred to as ‘Badman Enos’. Today Enos and Precious have set up a thriving home-based livestock business selling goats, sheep, and hens on market days.

“ I used to live a troubled life. I fought constantly with my wife and beat her whenever she asked me anything. I did not care about my family. My lowest point was when I became lost in excessive drinking, promiscuity, theft, and gambling. My friends nicknamed me ‘Fangone’, “a very dangerous person” and I became their leader. They would pick me from home, and we would abuse drugs (marijuana). I even told my friends how beating my wife gave me full power and control over my home. In early January 2024, I chased my wife away from home.

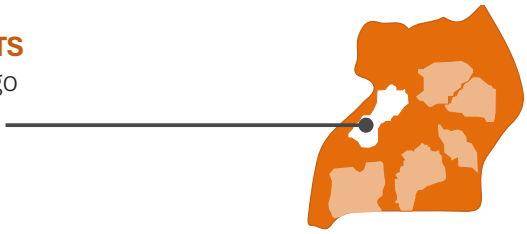
I stole from homes, shops, and farms, often selling what I stole to fund my drinking. Eventually, my actions caught up with me and I was arrested. I spent five months in prison on charges related to theft and drug abuse.

When I joined the REAL Fathers Program, the first thing I did was to bring my wife back and committed to taking care of her. I stopped drinking because it had fueled my promiscuous behavior, caused fights, wasted money, and damaged my relationship with my wife and child.

Now, I save money and invest wisely. For example, when I earn UGX100,000 I give my wife UGX50,000 and use the rest to invest. Together, we plan for our future and have decided to start a salon business for my wife. I have stopped womanizing and now see my wife as my pride. Previously, my wife was hesitant to have another child because she doubted our relationship, but now she is pregnant with our second child. I take full responsibility for her and ensure she attends all antenatal care visits. My child is now in school, and we have built a strong bond because I play with her regularly. Because of my changed life, now, community members trust and respect me and give me jobs.”

Sub-region: Bunyoro

BUNYORO REGION DISTRICTS
Masindi, Kikuube, Kiryandongo and Hoima



Domain of Change
Strengthened young father and spouse relationships

A Fisherman's Awakening to Fatherhood

Wanadi Emanuel, a 20-year-old fisherman living in Hoima District with his 19-year-old spouse Brenda, and their one-year-old son Chris were enrolled in the REAL Fathers Program. Wanadi's story captures the journey of a young father who moved from detachment to deep involvement in his family life. Through regular mentorship with his mentor, Miryesi Mayaya, Wanadi has made major changes in his life.

"Before joining the REAL Fathers Program, my life was the lake. I spent most of my time at the trading center or fishing at distant sites, and I rarely came home. My relationship with my wife was filled with arguments and sometimes even fighting. I never planned for our future. I used to see my child as someone my wife had to take care of. I never bathed him, played with him, or even thought about what he wore. But things changed when my mentor started visiting us. I slowly reduced how much alcohol I drank, I started listening to my wife, and now I support her with housework. We make decisions together. Now, I carry my son, bathe him, and we even make toys together using local materials. I started making budgets with my wife to manage the money I make from fishing. I recently bought my son a pair of shoes. At first, I thought being a man was about making money and doing whatever I wanted. Now, I understand that true respect in the family comes from being responsible."



"After attending the family planning session, my wife and I sat down and decided to only have children we can support. At first the community used to laugh and call me a weak man, but now people say, 'Even older men should join that program'."

Domain of Change

Shifts in young fathers' perceived roles and status in the community

The Yellow Card that Changed Isaac



"I started playing football with my daughter, she now laughs around me."

Isaac Mukhwana, 25 years, of Kalungi Village in Kiryandongo District, lives with his wife Suzan, 23, and their daughter Priscilar, who is two and half years old and another child, less than a year old. Their family, once marked by discord and distance, has undergone a profound transformation.

"Before the REAL Fathers program, I never used to share things with my wife. Every day came with a quarrel. I would shout for whatever I wanted and I expected Suzan to follow. I disrespected her often and would come home late in the night. I used to scare my daughter. I'd come in shouting, angry from the day, and she would run away from me. I didn't know how to show love. I thought my role was just to provide and give orders.

But all that started to change through the REAL Fathers mentorship. One of the things that really helped us is something called the 'Yellow Card.' It's simple, but powerful. When I come home and find the card placed on the bed, I know it's time to talk, not to fight, not to shout, but to talk. We use it now to solve issues calmly", says Isaac.

Now, I play football with my daughter, we make toys together, and I even make ropes for her to swing on. She laughs around me now.

I was known in the community as someone to avoid. But now, people see something different. They see me walking peacefully with my wife to church, helping her fetch water and firewood. Some of my peers made fun of me; I told them that helping at home is not a weakness, it is love, it is my responsibility. Slowly, even those who laughed at me are changing their views."

"Because of the change people have seen in me, I was recently elected as the area Youth Chairperson. That role means a lot to me. I now speak to other young people about responsibility, respect, and how to build peaceful homes."

Domain of Change

Enhanced father-child relationships and early childhood development



"These days, when I return home, my son Edwin runs to me. He doesn't want anyone else to carry him. Sometimes, I even go to play football while holding him."

The Journey to Partnership and Parenthood

Rogers, 25 years, and his wife Gloria live in Apodorwa I Village, Kiryandongo District. Together, they are raising their one-year-old son, Edwin. Through the REAL Fathers Program, they have journeyed from traditional gender roles and regular family fights to mutual support, love, and community leadership.

"Before the program, we were always quarreling. I thought my only job was to provide, and Gloria had to do everything at home, including taking care of the child. But after the first few sessions I attended I applied what I learned at home; better communication replaced the fighting. Now we do things together".

Rogers's wife, Gloria says, "He never used to help, not even when I was sick. But now he cleans, carries the baby, and helps around the house. Our marriage used to be full of tension, but now we're true partners, respecting each other and sharing responsibilities."

"I never remained the same after the program" says Rogers. "I used to think being a father was just about bringing money home. Now I fetch water, carry the baby, and make decisions together with Gloria. We live in peace now, and I feel like a real father and husband".

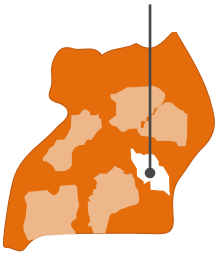
Gloria added, "I used to go everywhere with baby Edwin because I couldn't leave him behind or with my husband Rogers. But now I can leave him with Rogers when I go to the market. I'm happy he has made that change. We know what we want for our family, so it doesn't matter what others say or how they laugh. I see the change in Rogers, and it has made our home stronger."

Sub-region: Busoga

Domain of Change

Strengthened young father and spouse relationships

BUSOGA REGION DISTRICTS
Mayuge, Iganga, Bugiri and Kamuli





"I realized I needed to make time to play with my child so that she wouldn't be sad or afraid of me. Now, I spend time with her, play with her, and protect her. I want her to see me as a loving father, not someone to fear."

A New Path to Family Happiness

Alibaba Noah, a 24-year-old father from Buleebi Village, Kamuli District, live with his wife Nakisiga Viola and their four-year-old child.

"Before joining the program, I was one of those men in the village that people avoided. I didn't listen to anyone not even my wife. I believed that being a man meant making all the decisions alone, often by force, because in our culture men should be the final decision-maker.

But through the REAL Fathers mentorship sessions, I learned that a husband and wife should sit together, plan together, and make decisions as a team. Today, my wife and I make all our decisions jointly, and this has brought us much closer."

His wife, Viola, says, "Before, I felt distant from him. But now, our love has returned. When I speak, he listens and respects what I say. In January, we saved money and bought a cow. People in the community wonder what changed because they no longer see us fighting. Noah used to believe that early childhood education was a waste of money, given our family's limited resources; after the REAL Fathers mentorship, he decided to enroll our daughter at Oasis Nursery and Primary School, a local private school in our village. She is now happily attending baby class."

Noah says: "The training has made me a better man. I fetch firewood and water, cook, and care for my child. This has brought more love into our family. I even mentor other young men in my community."

Domain of Change
Strengthened young father and spouse relationships



"I used to think that a man should never fetch water or eat with his children, and that men should eat alone. But I learned that these things only create distance. Now, I eat with my children, and we are much closer."

Sadam's Transformation to Love and Shared Responsibility

Sadam Wankya, a 23-year-old boda boda (commercial motorcycle rider) from Musubi Kakooge Village, Mayuge District, lives with his wife Namuyomba Sharifah and their two children, the youngest six months old.

"We were always fighting in my home, and our income was low. When I joined REAL Fathers mentorship communication was the most touching topic. I remember using the yellow card to write issues that I needed to discuss with my wife. From then on, I started sharing all my plans with my wife. I started saving and gave my wife some money to start selling snacks at a nearby school. This has increased our household income.

Sharifah, Sadam's wife says: "There is now a connection between us. Before, he treated me harshly, even when I was calm. But now, even when we disagree, he talks to me calmly. I had wanted to leave him, but now we make decisions together as a family. I see progress in our family."

Sadam recalls his indifference to the children: "I used to treat my children as if they weren't mine, that I had no responsibility for them. After the sessions, I started playing with them. Now, when I return home, they run to hug me and they know I will have a chapatti snack for them.

The community trusts me, and I have been selected as Vice-Chairperson and Secretary in local associations. I am the secretary of the Musubi Tusimbudde Burial Association."

His wife adds: "Before, he never used to farm with me in the garden but now we go together. When we return, he carries the baby while I carry firewood. This change amazes people in the community, and some young boys even copy what he does."

Domain of change

Strengthened young father and spouse relationships



"Sometimes, I even carry my wife on my lap, something I never used to do before. She is happier and enjoys the home. People in my family now appreciate the REAL Fathers Program because they had tried several times to advise me to change my bad habits, but they all failed. They had given up on me, and never thought I would change."

From the Bar to the Farm, Alex Brings Love Home

Byona Alex, a 26-year-old father from Namukunya Village in Iganga District, lives with his partner Shamira Nagendo and their two-year-old son.

"I used to behave badly. I didn't communicate with my wife. When I made some money, I would spend it all on drinking instead of providing for the home. My wife used to advise me, but I was stubborn and wouldn't listen. I drank a lot and sometimes ended up in bar fights.

When the REAL Fathers Program came, I joined for fun, not taking it seriously at first. But through the training, I learned how to treat my wife with respect and how to love my children. Since then, I have changed. Now, I communicate well with my wife, we plan together, and I listen to her. I also stopped drinking. Last season, we sat down and planned together. We saved about UGX 700,000 and decided to rent land and start farming rice, which we have now started harvesting.

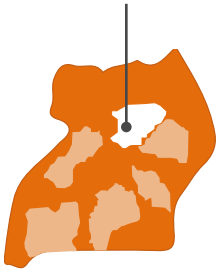
I didn't love my child, and he used to run away from me. I didn't have time for him. But now, we are connected. I make time for him, and we play together at home using balls and old tyres. Sometimes when I am away from home, I call my wife and ask her to put the child on the phone, and we talk. He tells me what he wants, and I make sure to bring it for him. This has really helped us bond as father and son. I now advise people; families who never believed in me now come to me for help. Mentoring others helps me stay on track. Every time I sit with a young man and share my story I'm also reminding myself where I came from. It keeps me grounded and pushes me to keep growing. I don't want to go back to who I was."

Sub-region: Lango

Domain of Change

Strengthened young father and spouse relationships

LANGO REGION DISTRICTS
Lira, Dokolo, Kole and Oyam





"At first the community said my wife had overpowered me and that I was a weak man. However, these days when I wash clothes and some people see me, they encourage me to go on saying it is good to help wives. Because of this, these days I receive friends at my home seeking advice and mentorship to be like me."

From Absentee Father to Role Model

Adeka Tonny, 26 years, lives in Adit-Awuru Village, in Oyam District with his wife and two children both under three years.

"Before joining the REAL Fathers Program, I used to ignore my wife's opinions. I would drink alcohol and engage in fights. I used to think that engaging in extra-marital affairs was a way of expressing my masculinity. However, after being mentored under REAL Fathers, I stopped drinking alcohol completely. Peace returned to my home and I once again started showing my wife love by returning home early and my wife welcomes me back home with joy and love. We have also discussed how to start using family planning, something we had never tried before the mentorship. I am now doing farm work together with my wife. We want to grow together.

After REAL Fathers, I began to show love to my children. I set aside time to play with them since I was taught how to make local play materials. I even made for them a play space. I teach them to pronounce letters. We also do body fitness by jogging around our home. I also taught the older child hygiene, especially how to use the latrine correctly.

Because of these changes, I was elevated by my clan to Head of Family. Currently, I am rearing chicken and ducks, something that I undermined a lot but REAL Fathers taught me the value of hard work and visioning under the theme of 'Family Dreams'."

Domain of change

Enhanced father-child relationships and early childhood development

‘Olwa Jai’: An Addict Becomes a Church Leader

Olwa Jai (Olwa the addict) was feared in Obanga-Konya Village, Kole District because he was known to drink alcohol heavily, smoke tobacco and abuse drugs.

“Although I had a three year old child, our neighbours did not want me to interact with their children because they feared I would pass on my habits to their children. I would come home late in the night and quarrel a lot with my wife. When she gave birth, I continued smoking in the house where my child was sleeping. I would yell at my child because he looked dirty to me and not worthy of touching me. I never played with hin.

My attitude only changed after I joined Real Fathers’ mentorship. I started intentionally showing my child love and care that he had missed. I taught my child how to read A to Z even though he was not of school-going age. I made him a special play space and stocked it with play materials.

I stopped drinking, smoking and drug abuse. People began to respect my family. With my wife we baked bricks that we are using to construct a well-sheltered permanent home.

After the mentorship program, everyone was surprised at the significant changes I experienced. I became a trusted and respected member in the community and I was recently elected to a leadership role in the local church as Vice-Chairperson for the youth.

Brenda Aciro, his wife says: “He is now a respected man in the community and that makes me proud of him.”



“Fortunately for me, the community elders are appreciating the change that I have experienced and are encouraging me not to stop working with my wife even though my peers laugh at me.”

Domain of Change

Enhanced father-child relationships and early childhood development



"My mother has also been encouraging me to carry on with the good behavior of helping my wife and living in peace with my family. With time those who laughed at me stopped. I think they noticed that the new me was better than the old me."

From Community Violence to Trusted Leader

Otyek Ronald, 24 years, is a father of two; his youngest child is two months old. In Bua-Atyeno village, Kole District, Otyek was known for being extremely violent.

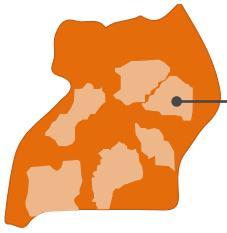
"I drank heavily, constantly quarrelled with my wife, and was involved in extramarital affairs. At times, I even chased my wife and children out of the house, forcing them to sleep outside. I didn't want to carry my child. Everything changed when I became part of the REAL Fathers Program.

After being mentored, these days, I cook, I respect my wife and best of all, I stopped drinking and fighting. Now, whenever we face any disagreement in our marriage, we resolve it peacefully.

Today, things are very different as I carry my child, play with him, I make local play materials like balls, cars and others. I now enjoy spending time together with my children as a father should.

The community are wondering what has really changed me to the point that these days I don't fight at all. Because of the change, I was elected the Chairperson in-charge of our village borehole. I now interact with high level leaders in our area owing to my newly acquired position in our village. I have even bought two cows and four chicken. I have plans for building a permanent house. This vision for the family came after the mentorship on 'family dreams'."

Sub-region: Teso



TESO REGION DISTRICTS
Amuria, Katakwi, Soroti and Serere

Domain of Change
Transformation of community systems and structures



"My wife and I now run our small cassava business together. We're also part of a savings group which helps our family survive financially. But the most important change is how I've grown as a father. That's a big change for me. I've learned that marriage is a partnership."

Choosing Family over Negative Cultural Norms

When Julius Okiror, a 25-year-old father from Echodu, Amuria District married his wife, he managed his home exactly as he remembered his childhood.

"In our culture, a man was not supposed to be too close to his wife or help out with home chores. I never supported my wife with household tasks like carrying the baby or cooking. My wife and I didn't walk the same path. She did her things alone, and I did mine. Our two young children would always ask their mother where I was. I was never around at home.

When I was enrolled in the mentorship sessions, I understood that helping at home doesn't reduce my value as a man, in fact, it shows strength.

Now, in my community, I'm known for having a good relationship with my wife and for being a present father. I've learned to love my wife, care for my children, and value peace and harmony in my household and community. Now, we plan and make household decisions together. We both share responsibilities. We take care of our children together and we play with them. I understand what it means to be close to your children. That has made our home much happier.

People in the community ask, 'What has happened to this man? Why is he so close to his children now? Has his wife bewitched him?' I laugh because I know what I'm doing is right. I now understand what it means to be a responsible father and husband."

Domain of Change
Strengthened young father and spouse relationships

From Isolation to Community Leader, Simon's Story



"I used to think doing work at home was only for women, but mentorship has changed my mindset. People in my community now realize that domestic work is not a woman's role alone, it is a shared responsibility."

In Ogemu Village in Amuria District, Simon Opio lives with his wife, Susan Atim, where they are raising their three and a half year old child. The REAL Fathers mentorship program transformed their family and community life.

"Before joining the program, I didn't value joint decision-making with my wife", says Simon. "I would make decisions alone, especially when it came to money. For example, after harvesting groundnuts, I would sell a bag and a half and misuse the money without consulting her. But now, after the mentorship, everything has changed. We plan together, whether it's cultivating crops or selling produce like maize. We've even made bricks together to build a permanent house for our family.

Previously, I didn't see it as my role to take care of my child, now, my wife and I plan our child's future together. I bathe my child, make toys like balls, and even help her practice the alphabet for school. These small moments with my child have made me feel more connected and responsible as a father.

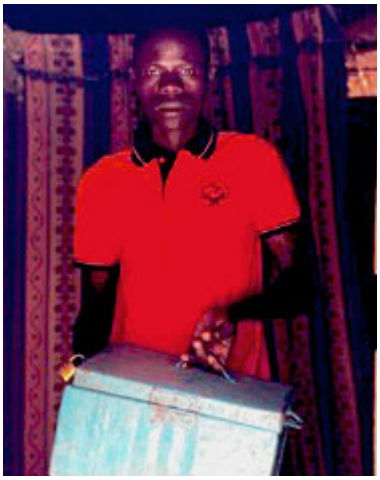
In the community. I used to be rowdy and disrespectful, not helping elders or participating in community affairs. But after the mentorship, I realized the value of respect and community service. I now help the elderly and engage positively with my neighbors. I was even elected as the Youth Chairperson for my village.

I now believe that all fathers should share responsibilities in the household, including cooking, washing clothes, and caring for children."

Domain of Change

Enhanced father-child relationships and early childhood development

Becoming a Responsible Father and an Accountable Spouse



"My relatives say I have become more mature and responsible. I feel proud to be seen as someone who can lead and support the family."

Pampas Apedu, 25 years, and Amodot Hellen Beatrice, live in Akoboi Village, in Katakwi District with their three year old son, Emmanuel. As a family they willingly agreed to enrol in the REAL Fathers program.

Pampas credits the program for changing his life. "Before joining the program, I never talked to my wife about anything serious. I didn't involve her in decisions, and I didn't respect her opinions. After the mentorship sessions, I realized that communication is the key to a strong family. Now, we discuss things together, whether it's about money, our child's education, or future plans. I have learned to respect her and show her love.

I didn't know how to relate with my son Emmanuel. I thought parenting was just about feeding him and making sure he had clothes. I didn't play with him or talk to him. But through the program I learned that love and presence are just as important as providing basic needs. Now, I spend time with Emmanuel every day using toys I made myself. He looks happy when we are together, and he runs to me when I come home. I even enrolled him into the ECD school.

After the mentorship, I began to talk openly with other young fathers at the trading centre, sharing what I learned. Now, some of them are also spending more time with their children and wives. We also formed a savings group of young fathers. I was trusted with the responsibility of keeping the savings box safe for our group. That role has helped build my confidence and accountability."

REAL Fathers Leading the Way for Early Learning and Play

The Learning Partner

GET IN TOUCH

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