



REAL FATHERS

Mentor Group Discussion Guide for Less Literate Mentors

Adapted to include early childhood development (ECD) content.
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The Republic of Uganda



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Table of Contents

About REAL Fathers	3
REAL Fathers' Goal	3
REAL Fathers' Evaluation	3
Intervention Components	3
Topics	5
Rationale	6
Program Resources	7
Introduction to the REAL Fathers Mentor Discussion Guide for Low Literate Populations	8
Inception Meeting	10
THEME 1: Fatherhood	12
Group Meeting #1: Fatherhood	13
THEME 2: Tips & Tricks to Being a REAL Father	22
Group Meeting #2: Tips and Tricks to Being a REAL Father	23
THEME 3: Family Dreams	29
Group Meeting #3: Family Dreams	30
THEME 4: Loving My Family	34
Group Meeting #4: Loving My Family	35
THEME 5: Communication	39
THEME 6: Parenting	45
Group Meeting #6: Parenting	46
THEME 7: Family Planning	50
Group Discussion with Wives: Family Planning	51
Community Celebration	58

About REAL Fathers

REAL Fathers' Goal

REAL¹ Fathers is a four-component intervention designed for fathers (aged 16-24 years) of children (1-3 years). The goals of the program are to: 1) increase fathers' ability to use positive parenting techniques with their children, 2) develop healthy, gender-equitable relationships with the mothers of their children, and 3) stop intimate partner violence (IPV).

REAL Fathers' Evaluation

The REAL Fathers intervention was rigorously evaluated in Northern Uganda between 2013 and 2015. Men participating in REAL Fathers demonstrated significant reductions in IPV and physical child punishment at the study's end line compared to fathers who did not participate in the intervention.²

Intervention Components

REAL Fathers is a comprehensive intervention that takes place over seven months and includes four components.

1. Mentor Training

Master Trainers facilitate a five-day training for community mentors. Mentors also receive follow-up booster training and supportive supervision.

REAL Father Mentors

One unique aspect of the REAL Fathers intervention is the engagement of community mentors to serve as role models and teachers.

Mentors are carefully selected from the community with one selection criterion being that they are admired by, trusted by, and relatable to young fathers from the same community. They must also possess the ability to work well with young men in a non-judgmental, open, and proactive way.

¹ REAL stands for **R**esponsible, **E**ngaged **A**nd **L**oving

² Ashburn K, Kerner B, Ojamuge D, Lundgren R. Evaluation of the Responsible, Engaged, and Loving (REAL) Fathers Initiative on Physical Child Punishment and Intimate Partner Violence in Northern Uganda. *Prev Sci.* 2017 Oct;18(7):854-864. doi: 10.1007/s11121-016-0713-9. PMID: 27738782; PMCID: PMC5602091.

For more information about the Mentor Training, see the *REAL Fathers Mentor Training Manual*.

2. Home Visits

Mentors conduct four home visits with the young fathers assigned to them and three home visits with fathers and mothers (total of seven visits).

Before starting the home visits schedule, there is a short inception visit where mentors and the couple become acquainted with each other and the program.

Through monthly home visits, mentors provide young fathers the opportunity to reflect on and practice newly learned positive communication and relationship skills, as well as specific ways to support their partners. Along with their wives, they are also encouraged to try new parenting and discipline skills, and become more involved in child care.

Eight themes frame each of the home visits and the group meetings. They are:

1. Fatherhood
2. Tips and Tricks to Being a REAL Father
3. Family Dreams
4. Loving My Family
5. Communication
6. Parenting
7. Family Planning
8. Early Childhood Development (ECD)

For each theme (except ECD, which is weaved into the other seven themes), there is one home visit and one group meeting. Every month, for seven months, the mentor conducts one home visit and one group meeting on a theme. For example, the mentor will conduct a home visit on fatherhood for each father he mentors in the first month.

3. Group Meetings

Mentors from the same sub-parish facilitate four group education meetings with their mentees and three group education meetings with their mentees and their wives. These monthly meetings reinforce new information and skills discussed during home visits and provide social support for young fathers to make positive changes.

At the end of the program, there is a closing ceremony with community members. During the ceremony, fathers commit to being REAL Fathers.

4. Community Poster Campaign

Posters promoting positive parenting norms are posted around the community. They are designed to spark discussions in the community at large and during the group education meetings.

Resource Sheets

Mentors received 13 easy-to-read resource sheets. Mentors can reference these resource sheets as needed, as well as share them with their mentees during home visits and group education sessions. The titles of the resource sheets are listed below.

1. Tips and Tricks to Being a Great Father
2. Train, Improve, and Score! Fatherhood Is Like Football!
3. Fatherhood Discipline Styles
4. Positive Discipline
5. Communicating with Children Ages 1-3
6. When Parents Hit Children
7. Kind and Assuring Words Daughters AND Sons Need to Hear from their Fathers
8. Home Communication Conduct
9. Communication Skills
10. The Rules of Football vs. The Rules of Marriage
11. How Toddlers Grow
12. What Fathers Can Do to Support their Toddlers Growth
13. Uganda Policies and Strategies Related to Positive Fatherhood and Violence Prevention

There is also a booklet titled Teaching Aides to Support Early Childhood Development. The booklet contains several activities and resources to support a toddler's physical growth and movement, thinking and problem-solving, relationships and managing feelings, and communication. Mentors are free to share the booklet with their mentees.

Topics

Using interactive learning methods (e.g., role play, critical reflection, small group work), mentors engage fathers in learning information and skills related to parenting young children, positive discipline, gender-equitable

relationships, communication skills (with child and spouse), family planning, and joint decision-making.

This edition of the REAL Fathers Intervention (2021) integrates an early child development (ECD) lens. An ECD lens, corresponding to the ECD content in this manual is also added to the Home Visit Protocol, Group Education Discussion Guide, Resource Sheets and Community Posters. This was done to facilitate expansion of REAL through Uganda ECD programs and to contribute to government priorities.

Rationale

There are few programmes focusing on the development and parenting of children 0 - 3 years, yet these years are a critical time for children's physical growth, and ability to think and problem solve, relate to others, manage emotions, and communicate. Engaged fathers can have a positive impact on all of these areas of development. REAL Fathers + ECD (2021) recognizes the need for an intervention that teaches fathers about early childhood development while also addressing its original aims of preventing violence against children (VAC) and violence against women (VAW). The two goals combine well together as experiencing or witnessing violence can have multiple negative effects on all areas of child's development.

REAL Fathers + ECD incorporates family and community engagement through the selection of respected mentors from the communities, home visits, group education session, and a community poster campaign. The intervention recognizes that the home is at the center of healthy childhood development. This programming approach aligns well with the National Integrated Childhood Development (NIECD) policy aimed at reducing VAC and VAW.

In addition to being aligned with NIECD policy, REAL Fathers + ECD is aligned with Uganda's Vision 2040 which aspires to have a progressive and developmental culture that blends traditional beliefs and national values. Ugandans aspire for a future in which men, women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities are empowered to participate as equal partners in development. This can only be achieved if families are stable, children are healthy and educated, and parents are engaged in eliminating VAC and VAW. REAL Fathers + ECD is one programme that can support the government in this direction. Lastly, REAL Fathers + ECD is also aligned with two National Development Plan (NDP) programmes—Human Capital

Development (HCDP) and Community Mobilization and Mindset Programme (CMMP).

Program Resources

A list of REAL Father Intervention Resources is listed below.

1. Mentor Training Manual
2. Mentor Home Visit and Group Meeting Protocol
3. Mentor Group Discussion Guide for Less Literate Mentors
4. Resources Sheets (13)
5. Community Posters (6)
6. Implementation Guidelines for Adaptation and Use

For More information

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Introduction to the REAL Fathers Mentor Discussion Guide for Low Literate Populations

This group discussion guide was designed for use with low literate mentors. It was adapted from the original REAL Fathers Mentor Home Visit and Group Meeting Protocol which was designed for more literate mentors.

When REAL Fathers was adapted for use by low literate mentors, several revisions were made to the original home visit and group meeting protocol and mentor training manual. See Table 1 below for a summary of these adaptations.

Table 1: Summary of Adaptations to REAL for Use with Less Literate Mentors	
More literate mentors	Less literate mentors
Mentor training completed in a one-time, 5-day workshop before implementation.	Mentor training divided in two 5-day parts covering Themes 1-4 and 5-7 (see list of themes above).
Mentors work independently and meet for group mentorship.	Less literate mentors paired with more literate mentors to facilitate group meetings and increase support structures in the program.
Conduct home mentorship first and then group meetings.	Conduct group meetings first then home mentorship to allow less literate mentor time to practice and remember material before home visit.
Mentor visit protocol includes activities, text, and questions for use in home visit.	Mentor visit protocol revised for simplicity and included key questions for mentors to use in home visit.
During training, mentors engage in reading and writing, use of flip charts, and written aids to complete tasks.	During training, mentors talk through homework and tasks. Use of picture cards as prompts and rely on strong oral tradition.
The mentor may use the resource sheets during the group meeting or home visit to illustrate a point or to leave with the family if there is someone literate in the household.	Depending on the literacy of the Mentors and the family, the mentor may use the resource sheets during the group meeting or home visit to illustrate a point or to

	leave with the family if there is someone literate in the household.
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Inception Meeting

1. **Greet** participants by saying something like:

- Hello! My name is _____. I am a REAL Fathers mentor. My role is to teach, guide, and support young fathers to become more involved with their families and children.

2. **Share** the goal of the program by saying something like:

- One thing we are going to learn about is how toddlers develop and what fathers can do to support their toddlers' growth. "**Toddler**" is a special name that we give to children between 1 and 3 years.
- Many people think that a child's growth is about how tall they become or how much they weigh, development is more than that. By "**develop**," I mean all the new things they can do with their bodies and their minds as the months and years go by.
- Another thing we are going to talk about is about how to be the best **husband** he can be.
- So, we are also going to talk about relationships skills, couple communication, and ways to support each other. We will also have an opportunity to create a vision for your future.

3. **Ask** and then **explain**:

- What do you think are some of the benefits of a father who is more involved in parenting and the family?"
- Families in Uganda think it is good when fathers are involved in their children's lives. This helps the children grow up healthy and educated.

4. **Explain** how often the group will meet by saying something like:

- There will be 7 group talks over the next 7 months. After each group talk, you will get a follow up visit from me at your home.
- The first 4 group talks and follow up visits are with the young fathers. The final 3 are for fathers and wives together.

5. **Ask** for participant's consent to participate in the program:
 - Do you have any concerns?
 - Do you agree to be involved?

6. Give participants an **assignment** by saying something like:
 - I have an assignment for you.
 - Think about someone in your extended family who has had a big say in your marriage. Share your involvement in REAL Fathers with one or two people. Watch their response.

7. **Set a date and time** for the first visit and **share mobile phone numbers**.

THEME 1: Fatherhood

Group Meeting #1: Fatherhood

Activity A: Introduction

1. **Welcome** everyone. Then **introduce** your colleague mentors and all of the young fathers to each other.
2. **Say** something like:
 - Fatherhood is important for men. Fatherhood has changed from the past in some ways. There are new and different challenges for families today. Young fathers need to learn new ways of being involved with their children and families.
 - In this group talk, we will share what this means. We will support each other to be the best fathers possible. This is for our children, families, and ourselves.
 - Before we start our first activity, let's go over the homework assignment. (Review homework assignment with the fathers.)

Activity B: Fatherhood Discussion

1. **Explain:**
 - Being a father is a very important role. Being a father to a young child is a special time. This is when your child learns about love, care, and values.
2. **Ask** these questions and listen to the young father's response.
 - How did you feel when your child was born?
 - What animal would represent a father and why?
 - How is being a father today different from the past?

Activity C: Vision Exercise

1. **Explain:**

- I will guide you through a vision exercise. A vision creates hope and a goal. A vision is the first step to a plan.

2. **Ask** the father to listen. Ask 3 questions. Speak slowly. He can close his eyes if he wants. Read the questions a second time to make sure the fathers understand them.

- What hopes and dreams do you have for your child in the future?
- What do you want your child to say about you as a father when they grow up?
- To achieve these things, what type of father do you want to be?

3. **Give** the father time to share his vision.

4. **Explain** your role as a mentor by saying something like:

- Some men feel pressure to be like other men. They feel that there are a lot of expectations on how they should act as a father and a man.
- I am your mentor. I will not judge you. I know that you are a real man already. Fatherhood today requires new skills and a new way of thinking.
- I will help you learn skills and make plans to achieve your goals.

Activity D: Discussion about Child Development

1. Introduce the topic by **saying** something like:

- Part of being a good father is understanding how your toddler is growing. Having this information in mind will help you better understand normal behavior for your child's age and help you support them in their growth.

- During our first visit, I mentioned that toddlers are growing and developing rapidly. I want to share with you four areas in which children grow.

- Physical Growth and Movement
- Thinking and Problem Solving
- Relating to Others and Managing Feelings
- Communication

2. **Explain physical growth and movement** by saying something like:

- Toddlers grow in height and in weight. Their muscles are also growing and becoming stronger. They can do more and more things with their bodies.
- Some of our muscles are large—like the muscles in our arms. For example, a three-year-old could not lift a heavy piece of wood, but an older child, with more developed arm muscles could.
- Other muscles are small—like the muscles in our fingers. A child that is one year can't hold a pencil to draw, but as they get older, the muscles in their fingers become stronger, and they can control a pencil in their hand.
- All of this growth affects what toddlers can do, play, eat, etc.

3. **Ask:**

- How have you seen your child grow in their ability to use their muscles and move around?
- What have you done to help your child strengthen their muscles and move in new ways?

4. **Explain thinking and problem solving** by saying something like:

- The ability to think and problem solve is another way children grow.
- For example, a two-year-old (or even younger) can figure out that to drink water, they need to raise the cup to their mouth and tilt it to drink the water. This may sound simple for us, but this is a major accomplishment for a 1-year-old! They solved a problem. They were thirsty and figured out how to get water.

- As they grow, toddlers learn by observing others. They model more of what they see around them. For example, after a child sees people saying "bye-bye," they learn to say "bye-bye."
- Toddlers are very curious and it's normal for them to want to explore everything in their surroundings. By doing so, they learn.

5. **Ask:**

- How have you seen your child learn new things and problem solve?
- What have you done to help your child learn and problem solve?

6. **Explain relationships and feelings** by saying something like:

- Another way children grow is in how they relate to others and manage their feelings.
- For example, when a child is one, they may be afraid to go to others who are not part of their immediate family. Having their parents nearby makes them feel secure. By the time they are three, they are more likely to have friends and show that they want to be independent by playing with friends (rather than you), dressing themselves, and feeding themselves.
- They are also learning how to manage their feelings. For example, they might feel frustrated because they can't do something they want to do (or don't know how to do something they want to do) or because one of their siblings is bothering them.
- Rather than asking for help, having patience to try to do something again, or compromising, they might cry or hit their sibling out of frustration. This is normal behavior for a toddler, and it's also an opportunity for a father to teach them about how to treat others and how to cope with their feelings.

7. **Ask:**

- How have you seen your child change in the way they relate to other people?
- What have you done to help your child learn about relationships and coping with their feelings?

8. **Explain communication** by saying something like:

- Another way children grow is in how they communicate.
- For example, a 1-year-old has few words but can communicate by pointing, crying, or making gestures. In comparison, a three-year-old has many more words and can more clearly communicate what they want, what they don't want, and their feelings.

9. **Ask:**

- How have you seen your child grow in their ability to communicate?
- What have you done to help your child learn how to communicate?

10. **Ask** the father if he has any questions about what you just presented.

Activity E: Talk about the Community Poster

1. **Show** the group the poster.

2. **Ask** the group:

- What do you see happening in this poster?
- What do you think the poster is trying to communicate?
- How do you feel when you look at the poster?



“My son is a REAL father!”

Elders' thoughts of fathers' behaviors:

- He works hard.
- He cares for his children financially and emotionally.
- He has a vision for his children's future and works hard to achieve it.
- He disciplines children without violence to teach his children well.

Activity F: Assign Homework

1. Assign homework:
 - Share your vision for your family with your wife.
 - Ask her to do the same.
 - Choose one new behavior from the poster and promise to try this month.
2. **Make a group sign** of this promise: like a fun handshake, noise, or saying.
3. **Inform and remind** fathers of the plan for individual visits in their homes.

OPTIONAL Early Childhood Activity

Activity: Ordinary Objects

Facilitator Note

In preparation for this activity, gather the materials listed below.

- **Objects for Physical Growth and Movement:** a ball that can be thrown or kicked, plastic cup half full with maize kernel or beans for a child to pick up and put into a container like an empty water bottle or a box or can with a hole in it, box or pot and spoon that can serve a drum, crayon (or pencil) and piece of paper, string and large beads (also can cut up toilet paper rolls into to three or four pieces), three small cups and a small item that can be hidden under one of the cups, a banana, one cup with water and one empty cup.
- **Objects for Thinking and Problem Solving:** Items from the REAL Fathers ECD Teaching Aides booklet: Colored shapes, counting sheet, flower and cat puzzles. Also, little boxes that can be used for building, a box or a water bottle with an item in it that the child has to figure out how to remove.
- **Objects for Relationships and Feelings:** Relationship and Feelings photos found in the REAL Fathers ECD Teaching Aides booklet. Select 3 or 4 photos for the station.
- **Objects for Communication:** Ugandan folktales and Ugandan child songs (see the REAL Fathers ECD Teaching Aides booklet). One recommendation is to have one of the songs or book readings cued up on a smartphone or laptop and ready for mentors to watch when they are at the station. Keep the video clip short. Remember, mentors will only have five minutes. Another option is to have a prayer written on a piece of paper—this will depend on the religiosity of the group.

1. Explain the activity by **saying** something like:

- Today, we are going to learn how we can use ordinary objects that we can find in or outside the house to support our children in the four areas of development that we discussed earlier.
- First, I would like you to pair up with one of the fathers sitting near you.

- I am going to give each pair of fathers an ordinary object (or objects). You and your partner to take 5 minutes to think of as many ways that the object(s) can be used to stimulate the four areas of child development.

Facilitator Note

Depending on the time you have, you can assign each pair one object or multiple objects.

- Let's do one together so you can see what I mean. Here I have a ball. How do you think the ball can be used to support a child's physical growth and movement? How about her ability to communicate? How about her ability to think or problem solve? And how about her ability to relate to others?

2. After five minutes, **ask:**

- I would like each pair of fathers to share at least one idea they came up for the object(s) assigned to you. Who would like to start?

3. Conclude the activity by **asking:**

- What do you think of these ideas?
- Are there ideas for other ordinary objects that could be used to stimulate a toddler's development in the four areas we have been talking about?
- Do you think you could try one of them? Which one?

THEME 2: Tips & Tricks to Being a REAL Father

Group Meeting #2: Tips and Tricks to Being a REAL Father

Activity A: Introduction

1. Before we start our first activity, let's go over the homework assignment. (Review homework assignment with the fathers.)
2. Introduce the group meeting by **saying** something like:
 - Fathers (and mothers) have many roles in their children's lives. During the program, we are going to be talking about four roles in particular:
 - 1) Teacher
 - 2) Designer
 - 3) Gardener
 - 4) Disciplinarian.
3. Explain the four roles by **saying** something like:
 - The 1st role is as a **teacher**. A teacher shares knowledge, helps children learn to do new things, gently corrects mistakes, and models good values and character.
 - **Ask:** Can you give me an example of how you have been a teacher to your child?
 - The 2nd role is a **designer**. A designer is like an architect or an engineer. He plans the form, look, safety, or workings of something like a house, car, airplane, or cell phone.

A father is a designer when he creates an area for his children to play or organizes his house in a way that is safe for a toddler.

 - **Ask:** Can you give me an example of when you have been a designer for your child?
 - The 3rd role is a **gardener**. Most of us have had experience as farmers or gardeners. We know how to grow crops. A gardener has to spend a lot of time cultivating the seeds that he plants. He tends to the soil, waters

them, fertilizes them, and protects them from pests. By doing so, he will have healthy plants that will bear fruit.

Like a gardener, a father supports his child's growth by caring for their physical and emotional needs, helping them, consoling them, encouraging them, and protecting them.

- **Ask:** Can you give me an example of how you have been a gardener to your child?
- The 4th role mothers and fathers have is **disciplinarian**. Discipline means setting rules and limits that help children to behave well. The aim of discipline is to improve children's behavior in the future by teaching, guiding, or correcting. Discipline is not the same as punishment

Punishment means to penalize for doing something wrong. Punishment often instills shame and fear in children. While it may immediately stop misbehavior, it does not teach the child.

Positive discipline helps children in their development. Punishment does not.

Being able to use positive discipline means understanding normal behavior for children 1-3 years old based on the state of their development and appropriate techniques to correct misbehavior.

- **Ask:** Can you give me an example of how you have disciplined (not punished) your child? (Praise the father's example, however, only for correct examples where physical punishment was not used.)

4. Then **ask:**

- Which of these four roles do you relate to most?
- Which role would you like to be better at?

5. **Conclude** this discussion by saying something like:

- These roles are not always easy to do in a positive way. Sometimes when a father is feeling tired or stressed, or around his friends, he may not act the way he would like. He may feel pressured to behave in ways that reflect the old way of thinking that is not always good for the father, child, or family.

- Learning new skills, preparing in advance, and practicing can help us be the father we want to be. Remember that we are not perfect, and we can always get a second chance to try and communicate and discipline in positive ways.
- Communication is a key tool for fathers to use in all of his roles. Communication also creates strong bonds between the child and father.

Activity B: Discussion

1. Explain:

- Men are usually taught that fathers should provide material things, while mothers should be the ones to care for children.
- Because of this, boys and new fathers are often denied the opportunity to learn the skills to be a REAL father. But fathers need to provide care to children as well. There are many ways to do this. We will learn some tips and tricks for you to be a REAL father and man.
- Fathers have many responsibilities. Sometimes we feel pressure or feel tired and your child will sometimes anger you. When this happens, you can learn to communicate better with your child. Communication is a very important skill for parents.
- Communication is both verbal and nonverbal. Communication with young children includes talking and teaching and also through nonverbal communication like holding the child.

2. **Show** the fathers Resource Sheet #5, and ask them which methods they could try with their child.

Activity C: Group Exercise

1. Put 3 sticks or rocks on the ground for 3 answers: "Agree", "Disagree", "Don't know"

2. Explain:

- I will read 5 methods of discipline and punishment. After each method, stand next to 'Agree', 'Disagree' or 'Don't know'. Then I will ask you to share your views.

Methods

1. Model what you want the child to do.
2. Hit with a stick
3. Talk to the child about your expectations and rules.
4. Shout at the child.
5. Praise the child for the good behavior you want to reinforce.

3. Explain:

- Praising what a child does well has many benefits.
 - Positively reinforces good behavior.
 - Lets the child know that you love and care for them.
 - Helps build the child's confidence and self-esteem.
- Praising is part of a father's role as a teacher, gardener, and disciplinarian.

4. Ask:

- What kind of things can a father say to praise the child?

Activity D: Talk about Community Poster

1. Ask the group:

- What do you see happening in this poster?
- What do you think the poster is trying to communicate?
- How do you feel when you look at the poster?



“My dad is a REAL father!”

A child says:

- My father teaches me.
- My father knows me.
- My father comforts me.
- My father plays with me.
- My father loves and works hard for me.

Activity E: Assign Homework

1. **Ask** the father to do an assignment between now and the next home visit.
 - Practice doing four things:
 1. Being a **teacher**. Teach your child something, no matter how small.
 2. Being a **designer**. Assess the areas where his child lives and plays. See if there is anything you can do to make it safer for your children and more enjoyable for them to explore.
 3. Being a **gardener**. Give words of praise to your child.
 4. Being a **disciplinarian**. Use a positive discipline technique.
2. Make a group sign of this promise.
3. **Inform and remind** fathers of the plan for individual home visits.

THEME 3: Family Dreams

Group Meeting #3: Family Dreams

Activity A: Introduction

1. Introduce the meeting by **saying** something like:
 - As fathers and men, we face many pressures. One of the ways that men relieve the pressures they feel is sometimes to spend time with other men and drinking alcohol. Drinking alcohol can be a good way to enjoy time with friends. But drinking too much and getting drunk causes problems.
 - Men can feel pressure build up and sometimes not know how to deal with the stress and emotions that come with this pressure. Sometimes the pressure is so great they feel like they are going to “explode.” This is a terrible feeling.
 - Today, we will reflect on alcohol abuse and learn ways to manage stress and pressure in a healthy way.
 - Before we start our first activity, let’s go over the homework assignment. (Review homework assignment with the fathers.)

Activity B: Spinning

1. **Ask:**
 - What kind of father do you want to be?
 - What do you want to achieve for your children, wife, and family?
2. **Find** a place 3 to 5 meters away. Use a stick to draw a straight line in the dirt.
3. **Explain** that one end of the line represents the fathers’ hopes and dreams for his family. This is his goal; the line is life’s journey to achieve this goal.
4. **Tell** the father to spin around quickly 2 times and then walk on the line towards the goal.

5. Next **tell** the father to close his eyes and spin around quickly 5 times. Tell him to walk in a line to the end goal and to try not to fall off of the line.
6. **Ask** and then **explain**:
 - How did that feel?
 - Each time you spin; it is like having another beer.
7. **Ask**:
 - How is drinking too much alcohol like the second time?
 - How does it affect you reaching your goals?
 - What do you think a child sees and learns and feels when they see you drunk?
 - How do you think drinking too much affects a father's ability to be a teacher? Designer? Gardener? Disciplinarian?

Activity C: Managing Pressure

1. **Explain**:
 - At times everyone feels pressure. People expect men and fathers to do many things without talking about our stress. Stress may build up and come out in ways we don't want. These ways include drinking, anger, or fighting.
2. **Lead a group discussion** with the questions below.
 - Do you find it easy to be a father?
 - Do you feel any pressures?
 - What do you do to handle the pressures?
3. **Ask** each father to close his eyes. Read these questions:
 - Think of a recent time when you were angry at home?
 - What were you thinking and feeling during this time?

4. **Ask** a few fathers to share their feelings.

5. **Explain:**

- All feelings are okay. Feelings are neither good nor bad. It is *the way that we show our feelings* that can cause problems.
- There are different ways we can manage stress that are healthy. One good way is to play sports; playing games with your child can also be a way to feel better. Some men talk to friends and laugh with family members, others tell stories or fix something in the home. It depends on what you like.
- Playing games with your child can also be a way to feel better. When a child has fun and laughs, it's hard not to have fun and laugh as well. Remember that play is often an opportunity to teach your child. It supports them in all the ways they develop: movement, thinking and problem solving, relating to others, and communicating.
- It is important to know when you feel too much pressure and decide how to manage it in a way that is good for you and your family.

Activity D: Talk about the Community Poster

1. **Ask** the group:

- What do you see happening in this poster?
- What do you think the poster is trying to communicate?
- How do you feel when you look at the poster?



“My friend is a REAL father!”

A friend says:

- He drinks responsibly.
- He does not drink until he cannot control himself.
- He loves his children, and his children love and respect him.
- I learn from him about new ways of caring for my family.

Activity E: Distribute REAL Fathers Reminder Gifts

1. **Congratulate** young fathers by saying something like:
 - Congratulations on taking important steps for your children, your families, and yourselves. It takes courage to make changes. You have shown your commitment to being loving and caring fathers and husbands
 - Sometimes maintaining change over time is a challenge. You will face new challenges as a father every day.
 - The reminder gift will help you remember the skills you have learned and practiced. You can feel proud every time they see it.

Activity F: Assign Homework

1. **Ask** the father to:
 - Prepare what to say to friends to reduce alcohol intake.
 - Practice ways to manage pressure.
2. **Ask** the group to decide one new behavior from the poster they will all promise to try this month.
3. Make a group sign of this promise.
4. **Inform and remind** fathers of the plan for individual visits in their homes.

THEME 4: Loving My Family

Group Meeting #4: Loving My Family

Activity A: Introduction

1. Introduce the meeting by **saying** something like:
 - Husbands and wives are the central part of the family. It is not always easy, but it is important to put in the effort to build a strong relationship and family.
 - The husband can set an example for the relationship. Being loving and understanding can help your wife. Reacting badly or violently without asking questions or listening is bad for the family.
 - Children who see violence in the home do less well in school and are more likely to have health problems compared to children who do not see violence in the home.
 - Today, we will discuss some challenges in maintaining a harmonious relationship and skills that you can try.
 - Before we start our first activity, let's go over the homework assignment. (Review homework assignment with the fathers.)

Activity B: Jerry Can Exercise

1. **Explain:**
 - Some young fathers feel fear that being too nice means their wives will overpower them. But being too tough will cause the wives to mistrust them or even leave. This is difficult, especially if the man and wife are not talking with each other.
 - Balancing the power should be our goal. This balance leads to peaceful families.
2. **Hold** two jerry cans equally full of water and stand on one foot.
3. **Ask:**

- Do you feel balanced?
- (Next, empty half the water from one jerry can and stand on one foot.)
- How does this feel different?

4. **Explain:**

- Power and respect are like this. If the couple gives equal respect and has the same amount of power in the relationship, then the family can move forward.
- Being caring is part of a healthy relationship and household. It is not about who makes decisions. It is about making the home a happy place for you, your wife and your child.

Activity C: Practice

1. **Explain:**

- Every couple has times when they do not agree. This is normal. Fighting, running away, or being silent are not effective. Issues can be solved while still showing respect to each other.
- To do this:
 1. Focus on the issue at hand.
 2. Discuss possible solutions together.
 3. Make a decision based on the solution that is mutually agreeable and benefits both the husband and wife.

It may not be perfect for either person, but it should benefit both. This is called 'win-win'.

- Then, forgive, forget, and move forward. This is how your relationship will improve over time.
- It is also good for a child when a father maintains a peaceful relationship with the child's mother. This is a model for the child for future relationships, and gives the child a stable foundation.

Activity D: Group Exercise

1. Put 3 sticks, rocks or marks on the ground for 3 answers: 'Agree', 'Disagree', 'Don't know'.
2. **Explain:**
 - I will read statements. After each statement, each father moves to a place to show that they 'Agree', 'Disagree' or 'Don't know'.
 - After moving, some fathers in each section share their views.

Statements

- I have to use violence when my wife does not greet me nicely. I have no choice.
- If I treat my wife nicely, she will overpower me.
- Violence is not the only way to be the head of the family.
- Violence in the household leads to fear and a weaker relationship.
- Children who see violence at home can fear their parent and or grow up to be violent.
- When children see violence in their family, they are more likely to feel stress, feel depressed, and not do as well in school.

Activity E: Talk about the Community Poster

1. **Ask** the group:
 - What do you see happening in this poster?
 - What do you think the poster is trying to communicate?
 - How do you feel when you look at the poster?



“I am a REAL father!”

A young father says:

- I have the courage to try new things and become a responsible father and husband.”
- I am man enough to share power in the home with my wife.
- I know that working together with my wife benefits our family.
- I know that supporting my wife benefits our family, and me.
- I can express my feelings in a constructive way.
- I respect my wife and she respects me.
- I teach my child that violence is not answer to problems.

Activity F: Assign Homework

1. **Assign** homework:
 - Practice showing love and respect to your wife.
 - Discuss family issues with your wife and make a decision together.
 - Decide on one new behavior from the poster and promise to try it this month.
2. Make a group sign of this promise.
3. **Inform and remind** fathers about the visits in their homes and that wives are invited to the next group discussion.

THEME 5: Communication

Group Meeting #5 (with wives): Communication

Activity A: Introduction

1. **Introduce** the meeting by saying something like:

- Mothers and fathers want happy, healthy and strong children. They have ideas about their children's future. Sometimes husbands and wives have different ideas from each other.
- Communication is very important for a couple. When we communicate carefully and politely and listen to each other, even if we are not in agreement with each and every point, it leads to understanding.
- Communication is the key to a successful and harmonious relationship that can last over time.
- A husband and wife should talk about their family's quality of life, how many children they want to have, how to parent their children, and many other things.
- Before we start our first activity, let's go over the homework assignment. (Review homework assignment with the fathers.)

Activity B: Couple Introductions

1. **Ask** the husband to introduce his wife to you and say 3 positive things about her. Then, ask the wife to introduce her husband to you and say 3 positive things about him.

2. **Ask**

- How does it feel to have nice things said about you?
- How can you continue this on your own?

Activity C: Blind Communication

1. **Explain:**

- The couple will practice communication by leading each other. One person will cover their eyes. The other person will direct them towards an object using only words. Then you can switch roles.

2. **Ask** the couple these questions. Make sure they both have turns answering.

- What did your partner do well?
- What could they do better?
- What did you learn?
- What is good communication compared to bad communication?

3. **Add** these tips:

- Listen well.
- Do not interrupt while your partner is talking.
- Use open body language to show you are not defensive or angry.
- Show respect and acknowledge what your partner says even if you disagree.
- If you need time to think or be quiet, explain this and agree to continue the discussion later.
- Find a 'win-win' conclusion for both of you.

Activity D: Broken Spear Card (Or Yellow card)

1. **Ask:**

- What does a broken spear mean?

2. **Explain:**

- I will give the husband and wife a broken spear card. The husband or wife can show the broken spear card when they need to stop and talk.
- For example, a husband returns home late and expects food. You can take out a broken spear card as a way to get you both talking about the situation.

3. **Show** the broken spear card and clues on the other side:

1. Explain: Share your feelings.
2. Ask: What is the situation and why?
3. Ask: What can we do to solve this together

4. **Ask:**

- Where can they keep the broken spear card so that both the husband and wife can easily find it?
- When can they use the broken spear card?

5. **Say** something like:

- Let's work through a pretend situation together to practice using the broken spear card.

Example 1: Let's say that a wife comes home late from working in the field where the couple has maize. The husband is angry because dinner is not ready. The wife tries to explain why she is late but the husband pushes her against the wall and says that she is useless.

- I would like you (point to the wife) to use the yellow card now with your husband. This exercise is pretend. You are simply actors in a drama practicing the use of the yellow card.

6. Provide positive and constructive feedback as appropriate. Then **ask:**

- How do you think this situation could affect a child's development?

7. Agree on how each person will react if the other uses the broken spear card.

8. Ask them to promise that they will never use violence against the other if they take out the broken spear card. They must have trust and not fear what happens if they talk.
9. It is best not to use the broken spear card if one of them is drunk. Instead, wait until the following morning to use the broken spear card and talk.

Activity E: Talk about the Community Poster

1. **Show** the poster.
2. **Ask** the group:
 - What do you see happening in this poster?
 - What do you think the poster is trying to communicate?
 - How do you feel when you look at the poster?



“My husband is a REAL father!”

A young wife says:

- He respects me and I respect him.
- He spends time with me and the children.
- He shows care for me and the children.
- He discusses important issues with me.
- He is the best husband!
- He talks with me about our issues before they become problems.
- He uses soft words instead of violence with me.
- We parent together.
- We work as a team to have a peaceful home and family.

Activity E: Assign Homework

1. **Assign** homework:
 - Make relationship agreements and discuss issues before they become problems.
 - Use the broken spear card when there is a need to stop and talk.
 - Decide one new behavior from the poster and promise to try this month.
2. Make a group sign of this promise.
3. **Inform and remind** fathers about the visits in their homes and those wives are invited to the next group discussion.

THEME 6: Parenting

Group Meeting #6: Parenting

Activity A: Introduction

1. Introduce the meeting by **saying** something like:
 - Today, we will talk about the types of parents we all want to be.
 - Mothers and fathers are both important as partners. Both can provide care. Each brings different ideas and skills to raise a child. Each can teach the child special things.
 - A mother and father who raise the child together do the best.
 - Before we start our first activity, let's go over the homework assignment. (Review homework assignment with the fathers.)

Activity B: Interviews

1. **Explain** that first it is important to know each other well. This includes your hopes and expectations.
2. **Ask** the couple to interview each other using these questions you will read.
 - What do you want for your child in the future?
 - What would you like your child to say about you in the future?
 - How many children do you want to have?
 - What kind of husband or wife do you want to be?
 - What is your husband or wife's best characteristic that you want your child to have as well?
 - How do you think that characteristic can be transferred to your child?
3. After the interviews, **ask**:

- Did you hear any points of similarity or difference while the interviews were taking place? What were they?
4. **Encourage** the couple to continue asking each other questions and learning about each other.

Activity C: Parenting Commitment

1. **Tell** the husband and wife about parenting promises.
 - This is a way of showing that you mean to be an involved and committed parent to the child. It can help show how the two parents will work together.
 - For example, some parents agree that they will:
 - Set certain rules for the child.
 - Support each other when one is having a bad day.
 - Listen to the child and respect the child's ideas.
 - Never hit their children.
2. **Ask** the couple to talk and give 3 ways they want to parent and 3 rules for the children that they both agree on.

Activity D: Discussion

1. **Ask** young fathers and their wives:
 - What does it mean to be a REAL father?
 - What have you learnt from this program?
2. **Explain:**
 - There will soon be a closing ceremony. Young fathers can share their experiences and what they have learned with the community. Elders, leaders, and families will be invited.

- It is good for the community to see how much you have learned. They will respect you as fathers and as husband and wife and give you needed support.
- Remind the couples that everyone who has taken steps to be involved and positive parents will be congratulated.
- None of us is perfect. We all make mistakes and we can all improve. We can still be role models for others to make healthy and safe families and communities. We can promise to try new actions to improve our lives.

Activity E: Talk about the Community Poster

1. **Show** the group the poster.
2. **Ask** the group:
 - What do you see happening in this poster?
 - What do you think the poster is trying to communicate?
 - How do you feel when you look at the poster?
3. **Explain** that at the community celebration, we will ask some of you to make voluntary promises to be loving and caring husbands and fathers.
4. **Ask** for ideas about the ceremony and how the couples want to plan for this event.
 - Who else in the community can we invite?
 - Are there any special guests they can also recognize for being loving and caring husbands and fathers?
 - How can we involve our children?

REAL Fathers Bring Our Community Hope

- A REAL father spends time with his wife and children.
- A REAL father shares and listens to his wife and children.
- A REAL father teaches his children.
- A REAL father helps to care for his children.
- A REAL father disciplines with love.
- A REAL father continues to learn and get better.
- A REAL father is loved and admired.

REAL fathers, sign here:



Photos: Courtesy of SCI/ Dickens Ojamuge

THEME 7: Family Planning

Group Discussion with Wives: Family Planning

Activity A: Introduction

1. Introduce the meeting by **saying** something like:
 - Both husbands and wives have visions of what their future lives will look like. Mothers and fathers typically want the same thing for their children— that they grow up healthy, happy, and strong.
 - They want their children to thrive in all areas of their development, including: 1) how they grow and move, 2) think and problem solve, 3) relate to others, and 4) manage their feelings and communicate.
 - A husband and wife have a better chance of making their family visions become a reality when they talk about:
 - The quality of life for all the family members
 - When their next child should come
 - Ways to prevent pregnancies before they are ready for another
 - A decision on the ideal family size.
 - Family planning is often seen as a woman's issue but raising a child is the responsibility of both parents— not just the mother.
 - When a woman wants to use a family planning method it does not mean that she does not love or respect her husband.
 - It is important that men learn the true reason for a woman's decision to use family planning and understand why it is good for the family. Without agreement between a couple, arguments can arise. Couples that talk about planning for their family are showing responsibility and love for each other.
 - It is important to talk to a health worker about the different family planning options available for you.

Activity B: Harvesting Maize

1. **Explain:**

- In earlier visits and group meetings, we talked about fathers (and mothers) being gardeners to their children. Gardeners know when to plant, how to plant, cultivate seeds, and take care of their plants. When they pay attention, take the time needed, they grow great crops with lots of fruit. Just like parents raising and caring for their children.
- We will talk about growing strong and healthy maize. Growing maize will symbolize growing families.

2. **Tell** a story of two farmers living in the same village.

Story

Both farmers had the same number of seeds, which they just planted in their gardens. One farmer named Okello yielded big maize cobs and the other farmer, Komakech, grew maize with very thin plants with miserable maize cobs.

3. **Show** the couple the grains of maize you brought.

4. **Ask** the couple to make two rows of maize that are planted with the right amount of space between each grain. Then ask the couple to plant another two rows of maize that are planted very close together.

5. **Discuss** these questions:

- From the story, which farmer would they prefer to learn from?
- Will the rows of maize grow differently?
- Why will they grow differently?
- What happens if maize is planted too early or too late?

6. **Explain:**

- Maize will not grow properly when planted too close together. The maize will compete for nutrients in the soil and won't be properly nourished. The maize will not grow as tall, not be as strong, and not produce big cobs of maize. Maize that is planted with the right spacing will grow tall, strong and be more abundant.
- The timing of planting maize is very important. Maize planted too early or too late in the season will not grow strong and healthy.

7. **Explain:**

- What you were discussing was how to harvest strong and abundant maize. We want to relate this to your families and to space the births of our children.

8. **Ask** the couples:

- How is planting maize related to how we plan our families?
- Like the space between maize grains, why is the spacing between children important?
- Like the timing of planting maize is important, why is the timing of our first birth important?
- Why don't you want children close together or a lot of children?
- What happens when the farmer plants too many seeds, and he simply does not have enough time, energy, or equipment to cultivate them?
- Who in your community can provide you factual information about child spacing?

9. **Encourage** the couple to make links between the example of planting corn and family planning.

10. **Explain:**

- There are many reasons why couples do not use family planning methods to space their children, even though they know spacing children will help their children grow healthy and strong.

11. **Ask** the couples:

- Who makes decisions about planning our families?
- Who makes decisions about using family planning?
- What is the influence of our family and elders on your decision about when to have children?
- How could a husband and wife decide together if they want to use family planning?
- What would you like your child to say about you in the future?
- How many children do you want to have?
- What kind of spouse / partner do you want to be?
- What is your spouse's best characteristic, that you want your child to be as well?

12. **Explain:**

- There are family planning methods available to you at the health center and through the Village Health Teams. There are also private clinics and pharmacies where family planning is available.
- I've heard from others using family planning that they are very safe to use and other people in their lives do not even know they are using them.
- It is a decision that a husband and wife can make, after sharing their vision of their family. Their vision can include how to space children so they grow big and strong, like the maize planted by Lokiru.

Activity C: Talk about the Community Poster

1. **Show** the group the poster.
2. **Ask** the group:
 - What do you see happening in this poster?
 - What do you think the poster is trying to communicate?

- How do you feel when you look at the poster?



“My client is a REAL father!”

A health worker says:

- He learns about contraception.
- He talks to his wife about spacing pregnancies.
- He talks to his wife about family planning.

Activity D: Assign Homework

1. **Ask** the couple to:
 - Share with each other:
 - When they want their next child.
 - How they will plan together so they do not get pregnant before the time they actually want another child.
 - Make a commitment to each other about how they will space and limit their pregnancies.
 - Find more information on family planning services in their community.

Activity E: Wrap up

1. **Congratulate** the couple for working together to have a strong relationship and planning when to have children and how to care for them together.

2. **Tell** fathers about the visits in their homes and that, wives are invited to the next group discussion.

Home Visit with Wives: Family Planning

1. **Ask** the young fathers and wives if they have been following their relationship agreements that were discussed at the last home visit -
 - To talk about issues before they become problems and
 - To use the broken spear card to stop heated moments and discuss.
2. **Discuss** how this went and what they will continue to do. If they did not try, encourage the couple to do it this week and report back to you.
3. **Ask** the young fathers and wives:
 - What new behavior did you try from the poster?
 - What was hard that we can help you improve?
4. **Remind** the young father about the next session.

Community Celebration

Preparation

1. Meet with the other mentors to look at this session and divide tasks. How will you work together to conduct this discussion?
2. Plan a ceremony that is meaningful to your community. Request a community and/or traditional leader to lead the ceremony. You could ask a music, dance, or drama troupe to perform. Ask a leader to talk about positive fatherhood and sign the pledge board along with young fathers.
3. Prepare the pledge board, and all supplies needed.
4. Invite wives and family members to the ceremony.

Introduction

1. Introduce by **saying**:
 - This is the final group meeting. It is a community celebration of young fathers. The young fathers can make a public promise and commitment to keep the changes they have adopted. They will continue to try to be REAL fathers.
 - It is a time for the fathers to show the community what they have learned and get recognized by their families and community members for what they have changed.

Ceremony

1. **Show** the final community poster.
2. **Explain**:
 - At this time of the ceremony, we want to give time to young fathers who want to commit to being a REAL father. This means they will be engaged and loving with their children. It means they will be loving and respectful to their wives.

3. Invite young fathers to come up and **sign the pledge** board. Each young father can share their promises with the community about what they will do differently or keep doing. This will keep their child and family healthy and peaceful.
4. Mentors and leaders can also sign the pledge board to provide guidance to young fathers.
5. **Congratulate** the fathers, and the community.
6. Also, congratulate and recognize yourselves as mentors!