



# Men's involvement in a parenting programme for reduction of gender based violence and child maltreatment: formative evaluation in Uganda

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# Introduction

Most parenting programmes find it difficult to recruit fathers:

- if programme is presented as being for ‘parents’ it is widely interpreted as intended for mothers
- failure to draw from specific motivations by fathers

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We tested a 21 session manualised intervention that draws on pre-existing motivation among parents (fathers) to reduce violence and child maltreatment:

- parents concern for family respectability (Siu et al 2013)
- actively targets recruitment of fathers
- highlights the positive gains to the fathers from their involvement

# The intervention

*Parenting for Good Behaviour and Respectability programme (2013-2016)* is pilot parenting programme with a core of 10 single sex and 11 mixed sex group sessions, led in a semi-participatory way by a trained local facilitator.

Long term goal is to modify familial process that predict SGBV and child maltreatment:

- poor attachment and parental bonding
- inequitable gendered socialisation
- harsh parenting
- spousal conflict and disrespect

# Key questions for the pilot

We sought to clarify several questions:

- How can community groups be mobilised and recruited?
- **What is the best way to recruit and involve fathers in a parenting programme?**
- **How can we involve parental couples at some stage?**
- **How is engagement between fathers' and mothers' groups structured?**
- What is the best way to select and train facilitators?
- **How is the intervention perceived in terms of relevance and acceptability?**

# Stages in the development of programme

Stage 1: intervention drafting and manual development

Stage 2: formative evaluation with six groups in Wakiso District, in two stages:

first with two groups in one village and then, following revisions, in another village with four groups

Stage 3: large scale pilot with before and after outcome evaluation

# Programme content (21 sessions)

Bonding and attachment:  
5 sessions

Gender socialisation:  
4 sessions

Introduction and  
benefits (to father)

Achieving good behaviour and  
respect through positive  
discipline:  
5 sessions

Spousal relationships:  
4 sessions

# Structure and mode of delivery

Piloted the programme with

- 4 parental groups (15-28 members) in two communities in Wakiso district near Kampala
- first with 2 groups and then following revisions, in another village



Problematic sessions revised and tested again

The first 10 sessions are single sex, and the other 11 mix sex





# Number of parents in the programme

	Men	Women	Total no of parents	No attending as couples
<b>Bweya</b>	17	28	45	7
<b>Kigungu</b>	20	21	41	10
	<b>37</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>17</b>



# ***Recruitment and retention of fathers***

We designed the programme to start with single sex groups, with men recruited to a fathers group

Fathers valued starting in single sex sessions - they were safe for discussing issues:

*“The fact that we first attended as single sex it was good before joining together. We could easily bring up a challenge in the home and could be discussed with other men.”*

# ***Acceptability and motivation by fathers***

Two main motivations for men to join programme:

- it addressed their pre-existing concerns for children  
showing *It is terrible*

*“For me and my family, we are going to put holes in the culture to pick the relevant things for my family. Because indeed how can I name my child of my own clan but am not involved in her/his growing up.”*

# ***Favourite sessions for men***

Participants liked the sessions which reinforced

*You cannot say that this is the best – each built on each other. Like session 10 about alcohol use also built on the one on marital relationship. Someone can even be surprised that the baby in the womb hears (session 3)*

Men participated with their relationships

*“We managed to learn what annoys the wife, and each of us could know our mistakes.*

# ***Men's participation in the programme***

More open discussions in single sex sessions than in mixed sex groups, with fathers discussing in detail

In mixed sex groups, due to the presence of partners/ the opposite sex, participants needed some means to avoid being identified with the views they expressed

However, men and women shared their experiences better if exercises started in single sex sub-groups and views subsequently fed back to whole group

# ***Engaging couples and integrating men's and women's groups***

We aimed to recruit parental couples to promote programme as a programme for both male and female parents

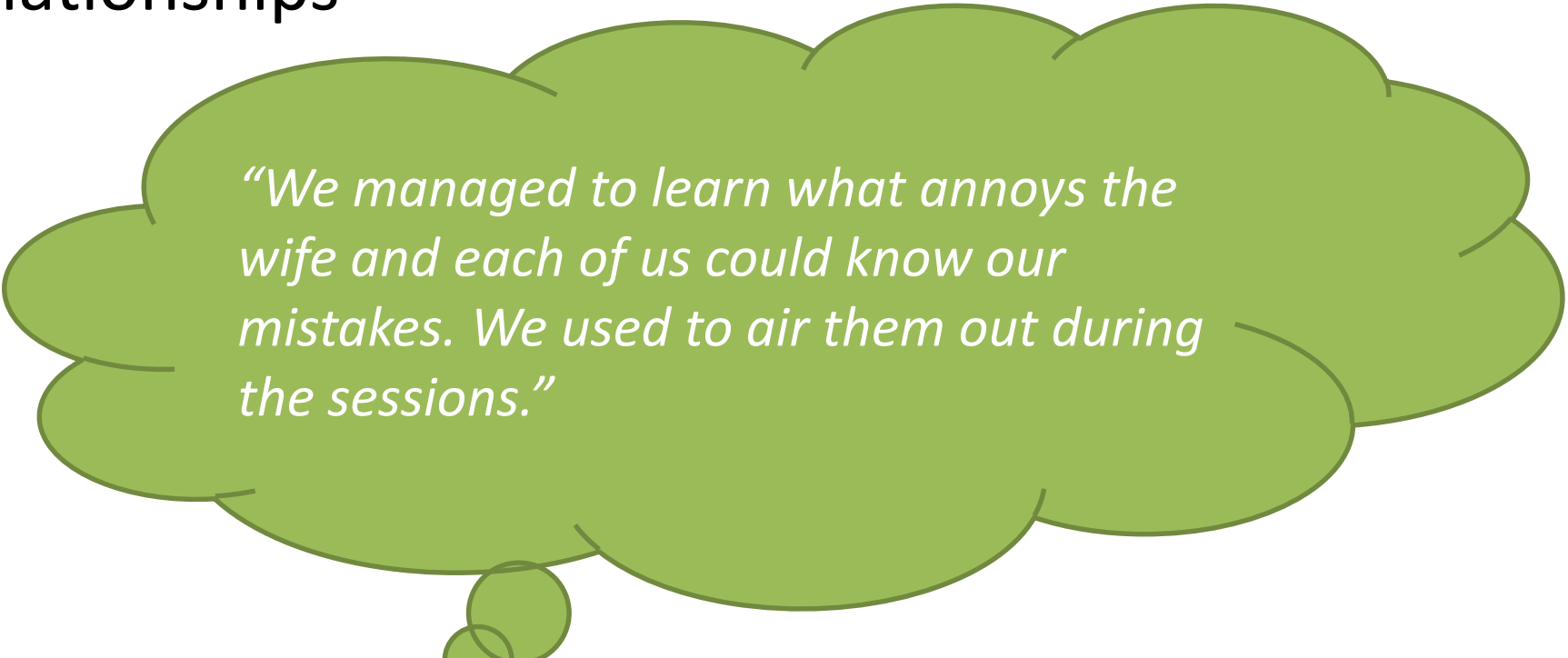
- 9 couples initially recruited and they welcomed being recruited to start in single sex groups
- no man objected to mixed sessions that started mid-way through the

*It was better that our partners be around and we could learn together. If I attend alone, we cannot kukwatagana bulungi (understand each other well). If I study alone the other cannot change. But if together you can remind the partner*

Couples  
together

## ***More positive relationships with spouses***

Men resolved to communicate better with their wives, and husbands realised the value of respectful relationships



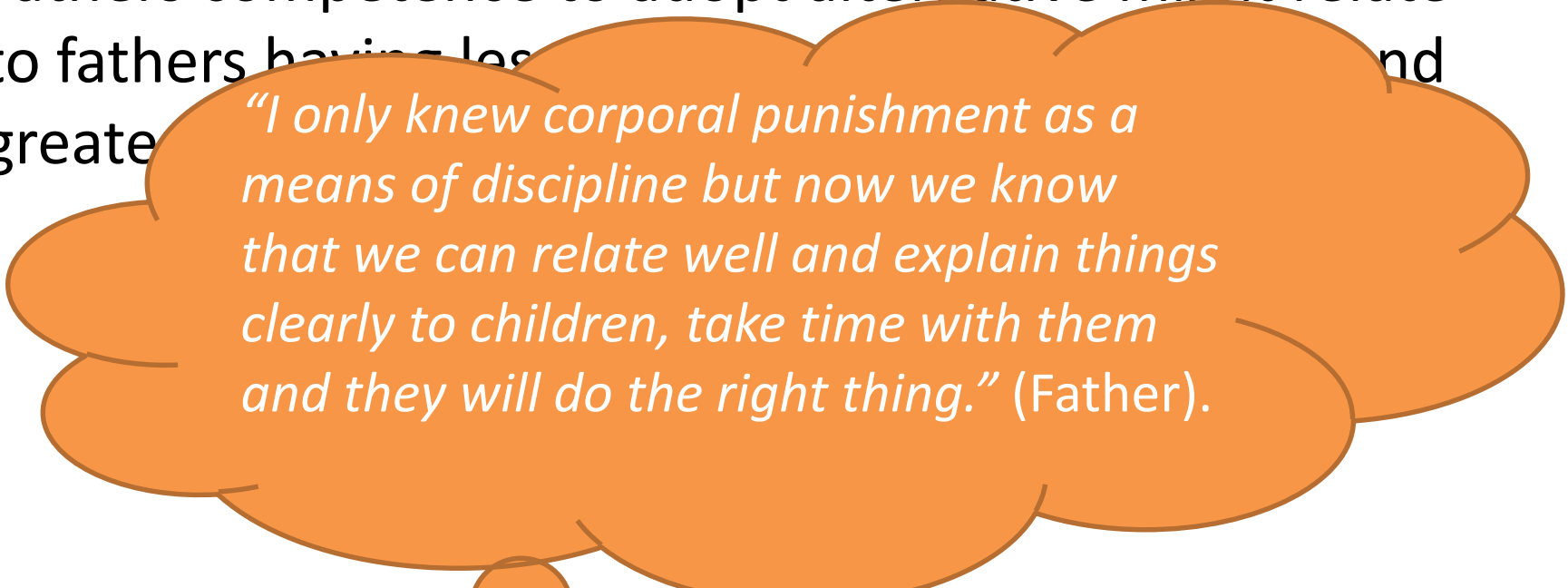
*“We managed to learn what annoys the wife and each of us could know our mistakes. We used to air them out during the sessions.”*



# ***Use of positive discipline***

Fathers seemed to find it easier to adapt alternative to corporal punishment, e.g. 'grounding' than mothers

Fathers competence to adopt alternative might relate to fathers having less and greater



*"I only knew corporal punishment as a means of discipline but now we know that we can relate well and explain things clearly to children, take time with them and they will do the right thing." (Father).*

# ***Challenges to resolve***

## Potential to further disempower mothers

- Male participants thought they were more receptive to the programme

their  
day

*"The mothers change for only a day or two. After that they return to their normal behaviour of shouting and beating the children as if they are not attending the lessons"*

- m

men to

behaviour in an area of life in which women had autonomy?

# ***Challenges to resolve***

## Entrenched norms of masculinity

- despite father's readiness to get more involved in children's upbringing
- with the pressure

*"My brother, don't you think you need to make a will because you are about to die? Are you yourself any more? What are you trying to do?"*  
(Woman who found her brother involved in children's games)

# Conclusion

- Recruitment and retention of men is one of the main contribution of the programme
- Promising to draw from pre-existing motivation among fathers to involve them in programme
- However, there's need to explore mechanisms for wider dissemination beyond the participants in the programme to address the entrenched norms of masculinity

## Next steps

1. Continue testing the intervention with two more groups of men and women
2. Collect more process data
3. Finalise the programme
4. If funding becomes available implement stage 3: **large scale pilot** to evaluate the effectiveness of programme in reducing SGBV

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