

REAL FATHERS INITIATIVE



Photo Credit: Save the Children/Dickens Ojamuge



LOCATION

8 parishes of Atiak sub-County, Amuru District

PARTICIPANTS

Fathers between the ages of 16 and 25 years who are parenting a child between the ages of one and three years old.

Atiak Sub-County, Amuru District

THE OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of the Responsible, Engaged and Loving (REAL) Fathers Initiative is to develop and test a set of interventions to reduce intimate partner violence and harsh punishment of children among young fathers (ages 16-25) in post-conflict northern Uganda.

Specifically, the project will:

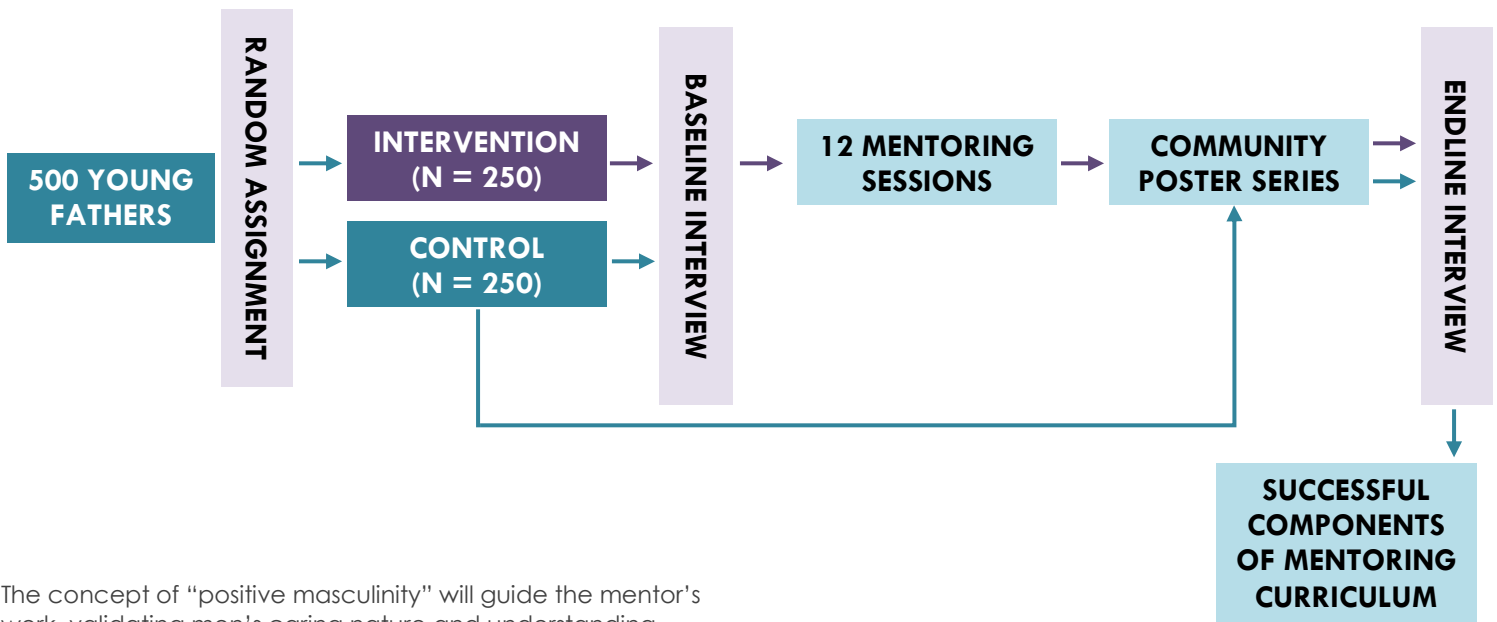
1. Develop an evidence-based:
 - Mentoring program for young fathers to build relationship skills and positive parenting practices;
 - Poster series that uses emotion-based messages to catalyze diffusion of reflection on inequitable gender norms and domestic violence.
2. Test the effectiveness and feasibility of the interventions through:

- A rigorous pre-test/post-test control experimental design, including randomization and control groups;
- Focus group discussions with mentors;
- Focused Life Histories with 10 young fathers.

THE APPROACH

1. Randomly assign 500 fathers to either participate in the full set of activities (N=250), or to be a control group, exposed only to community poster series (N=250).
2. Interview all 500 young fathers to learn about their current parenting practices, and their relationship and communication skills.
3. Select and train 44 mentors from the community (each mentor will support approximately four fathers).
4. Mentors meet with young fathers participating in the project once a month for six months (four individual sessions and two couple sessions with their wives). Mentors also invite fathers to attend six monthly group discussions with other young fathers and their mentors.
5. Place six large-scale community posters purposefully sequenced over time in central meeting locations to reinforce themes raised in mentor sessions and spark community dialogue.
6. Interview all fathers again 10 months after baseline to measure changes in attitudes and behaviors.
7. Bring the most effective activities to fathers in the control group.

RESEARCH DESIGN



The concept of "positive masculinity" will guide the mentor's work, validating men's caring nature and understanding how violence is caused both by male privilege and powerlessness.

EARLY INDICATIONS OF ACCEPTABILITY AND CHANGE

Pretesting of concepts for the community posters found that young fathers are ready to participate. They care deeply about their families, and want to be the best fathers and husbands that they can be. The young fathers want their children to grow up healthy and educated, and respect them for working hard. As one young father shared, *"In the future I want my child to say 'Baba is the one who made me the way I am. Baba showed me the right way.'"*

The young fathers' willingness and ability to make positive changes are evident. After discussing the proposed mentor sessions and community poster concepts, young fathers reported making a number of changes at home. Some became more involved in child care and spent more quality time playing and talking with their children. One said,

This makes my child happy, so it makes me happy. I feel closer to my child.

Others communicated more with their wives and helped their wives with household chores such as peeling sweet

potatoes and washing dishes. Finally, some young fathers reduced the amount of alcohol they drink and shared the savings with their wives.

While not all of these things were easy for them, the young fathers said that they would continue making changes for the sake of their marriages and the welfare of their children.



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