

# REAL FATHERS INITIATIVE

## Women's Group Session Guide

**Purpose:** To strengthen the skills that wives need to support their husbands in building and maintaining the parenting skills acquired from the REAL Fathers Initiative mentoring sessions.

**Preparation:** Reflect on discussions with the young fathers during concluded six mentoring sessions. Focus discussion particularly on the last two sessions (i.e. *Session 5: Communication* and *Session 6: Parenting*), in which the wives participate with their husbands.

**Time:** 60 – 90 minutes

### INTRODUCTION

Husbands and wives are central pillars of the family. While marriage is not always easy, it is important to try as a couple to understand each other and build a strong relationship and family. The wife and the husband are equal parts of a marriage, and each can help set a positive tone for the relationship. Each day will present new situations and unique challenges, and it is important that wives and husbands understand that how they approach these situations will affect their relationships.

As you are all aware, the mentoring activities that we have been conducting through the REAL Fathers Initiative are coming to an end. It is against that background that we will discuss ways in which you and your husband can maintain a harmonious relationship and work together to use nonviolent discipline with your children. Your husband counts on your support to help him apply the skills and knowledge he has acquired to improve his relationship with you and your children. Remember that husbands and wives are like the front and rear “*boda boda*” tires: without both tires intact, the motorcycle cannot run!

### 1. GENERAL FEEDBACK ON THE MENTORING PROJECT

10 min.

**Explain:** A lot of mentoring activities have been conducted with the young fathers over the past six months. As part of the winding down of activities for the project, we would like for you, the wives, to provide your impressions and feedback about the activities.

**Ask:** What are your impressions about the completed mentoring activities?

**Ask:** What changes, if any, have you seen in your husband's parenting methods since he enrolled in the project?

**Ask:** What changes, if any, have you seen in the way your husband communicates with you? With the children? Does he prioritize his time differently? In what way?

## 2. NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ON CHILDREN & FAMILIES 20 min.

**Explain:** In one of the sessions with your husbands we reflected on the pressures that men, as fathers, experience. One example is the pressure to spend time with their friends, sometimes drinking alcohol. From discussions with the young fathers and with community members, it has become clear that women also have the same pressures. Drinking alcohol can be a good way to enjoy time with family and friends, but drinking too much and getting drunk can have a negative effect on the family. Today we will reflect briefly on the effects of drinking too much alcohol and learn ways for men and women to deal with alcohol responsibly.

### Exercise: Spinning out of Control

**Ask:** What kind of a parent do you want to be and what do you want to achieve for your family and children?

**Pick** a point across the compound 3 - 5 meters away. Use a stick to draw a straight line in the dirt.

**Explain** that the end point of the line represents the mother's goal for her family and her hopes and dreams for the family. The line represents the mother's journey in life to achieve these goals.

**Instruct** the wife to spin around quickly five times and then walk on a straight line toward the point, trying not to step off of the line.

**Next**, instruct the wife to close her eyes and spin around quickly five times and then walk in a straight line toward the end point, trying not to fall off of the line.

**Ask:** How did that feel?

**Explain:** Each time you spin, imagine it was like having another round of beer.

### Discussion

**Ask** the wives to explain how drinking too much alcohol is like the spinning game, and how drinking affects one's ability to reach her goals for her family.

**Explain** that even if she does not get drunk, she may feel pressure in the future to do so, or have friends who do.

**Ask:** What do you think a child sees, learns, and feels when she sees both of you drunk?

**Invite** volunteers to role play the scared reaction of the children when they see their parents drunk. Another person can play children modeling the drinking behavior of their parents. How would you feel as parents going to drink the next day?

**Ask:** What role can you play to avoid drinking too much alcohol? What role can you play to help your partner avoid drinking too much, or help both of you to avoid drinking too much? What can you do to help your partner reflect on drinking behavior?

## 3. GENDER ROLES IN THE HOME/SUPPORT BETWEEN PARTNERS 10 min.

**Explain:** After the completed mentoring sessions, the young fathers are committed to changing their parenting methods by using less violence with their children and improving their relationships and communication with

their wives. Experience has shown that a man's effectiveness in parenting positively depends on the support he gets from the people around him, especially his wife.

**Ask:** What obstacles do you see that might hinder husbands from achieving the goal of being a REAL Father?

**Ask:** What role can you play to support your husband so that he can maintain the positive parenting skills and nonviolent communication skills acquired from the mentoring project?

## 4. CONTROLLING EMOTIONS AND COMMUNICATING WITHOUT VIOLENCE AT HOME

15 min.

**Explain:** In one of the sessions with the men, we discussed the high importance of communication. The way we communicate determines the way the other person responds and reacts to what we say. When we communicate in a careful and polite manner and listen to each other even when we disagree, it leads to understanding and a mutually agreed upon conclusion. Communication is the key to a long-lasting successful and harmonious relationship. There are many causes of poor communication including alcohol abuse. In this segment, we will reflect on how we commonly communicate.

### Role Play: Scenarios

**Ask** volunteers to step forward to play roles in scenarios depicting good and bad interpersonal communication.

**Read:** Yesterday, Kidega and his friend Juma returned home from drinking and watching an Arsenal vs. Manchester United football match in the wee hours of the night. They returned home drunk, staggering, and angry since their team had lost. Earlier in the day, the wives of the two young men had met at the bore hole and expressed their dissatisfaction with the behavior of their husbands because the men were drinking, coming home late and acting irresponsibly as parents. The two wives promised to deal with the two husbands.

**Scene 1:** When Kidega reached home he knocked on the door, however, there was no response from his wife or even the children. Instead his wife shouted at him and told him to go back to where he had come from. In annoyance, Kidega kicked the iron sheet door open. A quarrel ensued and there was a scuffle, however the wife managed to escape and run away.

**Scene 2:** Meanwhile, Juma also had a similar reception. The door was only opened after several knocks and pleas by Juma. Reluctantly, his wife opened the door and allowed him inside and asked him why he had stayed out so late, as it had become habit. She reminded him about the dangers of coming home late. Juma kept quiet, feeling guilty. As Juma sat on the chair in the house, he discovered that the "yellow card" was hanging on the wall. This was a sign that there was a problem in their relationship that needed to be discussed. He ashamedly asked his wife, "Why is the yellow card up?" His wife replied firmly, "When you are sober, we will discuss how I am feeling and your habit of returning home late when the children and even the flies have gone to sleep."

### Discussion

**Ask:** What is your comment on Scene 1? And on Scene 2?

**Ask:** Have you experienced similar situations with your husband? If so, how did you react?

**Ask:** What lessons (both bad and good) can you learn from the two scenarios?

## 5. POSITIVE, NONVIOLENT CHILD DISCIPLINE

15 min.

**Discuss:** Discipline means setting rules and limits that help children behave well. The aim of discipline is to improve children's behavior in the future. Discipline is not the same as punishment. Discipline means to teach, guide, or correct someone. Punishment means to penalize for doing something wrong. In a family, both husbands and wives have the responsibility of teaching and guiding children to grow up and behave correctly. Parents should therefore discipline children with love. In this segment we will reflect on the ways we discipline children and review some of the skills your husbands have been learning to positively discipline children.

**Ask:** What would you consider to be good ways of disciplining children? What are the bad ways of disciplining children? What are their effects? (*Hand out REAL Fathers Resource Sheet #4.*)

**Discuss** if they have seen their husbands using these skills. Could they, as mothers, also discipline in these ways?

**Ask** how it felt as a parent to use good versus bad discipline – which seemed to work better?

**Remind** the wives what happens when parents hit/beat children. (*Refer to REAL Fathers Resource Sheet #6.*)

**Remind** the wives that it is important for parents to agree on how to work together to provide guidance to their child nonviolently.

## 6. WRAP-UP AND NEXT STEPS

15 min.

**Explain** that while the project has been working with the young men, positive parenting depends on both the husband and the wife. Both fathers and mothers are therefore important partners in parenting. The young fathers look to their spouses/wives for support in achieving positive parenting goals.

**Remind** the wives that a community ceremony is planned for the men/husbands to share with their views and experiences related to what they learned, how they have changed and what they have committed to continue.

**Ask** for views from the wives about what they would want to share with the community on what has changed in the parenting style of their husbands. What are the women committed to doing to support their husbands as good parents?