

# COUNTING PENNIES

## A review of OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Impact: Uganda



"I feel changed. I understand that in a home we should talk over certain issues that could cause serious quarrels...be good examples to our children and use positive ways of communicate to make a happy home. This is indeed post war time." Okello, young father.

### ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AT HOME

In Northern Uganda, an area that experienced over 20 years of civil conflict, nearly all children have experienced physical abuse, most frequently in their homes.

These dramatic facts have prompted the start of a project funded by the US Agency for International Development on positive relationships and parenting skills targeting young fathers (ages 16–25). It consists of a mentoring program and a community awareness campaign to reduce physical punishment of children and intimate partner violence.

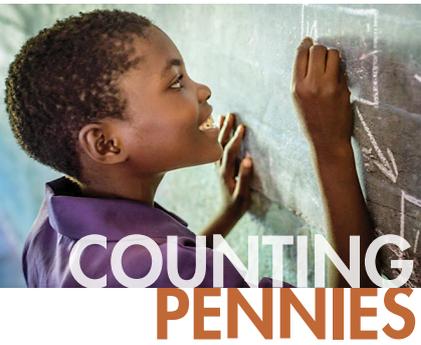
The twelve-session father mentoring program is implemented by volunteers and designed to reduce child exposure to violence in the home, where child maltreatment and intimate partner violence often co-occur.

About 500 fathers participated in this program, based on improving relations between parents and on global evidence showing that reaching young men before their relationship expectations, attitudes, and behaviours are set, is critical.

### MEET PETER, A RESPONSIBLE, ENGAGED, AND LOVING FATHER

Many of these young men had experienced violence themselves when growing up, and as adults, they struggled with alcohol consumption and peer pressure. "When I started to make changes, some community members mocked me," says Peter, a young father. "Others accused the mentors of inciting my wife against me. Some even thought my wife used witchcraft on me because the changes shocked so many people in my community."





A final evaluation indicates that fathers enrolled in the project were less violent toward their partners (from 62% to 29%) and children (from 68% to 42%) after ten to twelve months of the programme. These significant reductions in intimate partner violence and in child punishment suggest that these investments have the power to transform. As Peter said: "This is a project that transforms the foundation of the Acholi culture and the lives of young people who started to have children early. Benefiting from the mentoring sessions has also set a different pace between us and our own fathers."

The programme has been adapted and replicated in Sierra Leone and Malawi and has the potential to reach other countries and regions.

*Official development assistance (ODA) investment helps children across the world by preventing and addressing violence against children. But this is not enough to end the problem. Imagine what can be done if we increase investments.*

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