

CALD PAR Project Title: Strength2Strength



The storyteller:

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What is the project about? Family and domestic violence is a gendered crime perpetrated mainly by men against female intimate partners and children. Although violence in the family occurs across all classes, cultures and social groups in Australia; specific social circumstances and historical contexts experienced by different cultural groups impact on experiences and expressions of violence towards women and children in unique ways.

Save the Children's settlement services have supported humanitarian and refugee entrants within south-east metropolitan Perth over the last 10 years. For many of the families engaged by the services, domestic violence is common. Women frequently requested support with VROs, family court proceedings, securing alternative housing, moving into refuges, and navigating the ostracism of their own communities whose members pressured them to accept the violent behaviour of their partners.

In 2016, the "Healthy Family Relationships" program was piloted with Burundian and Karen women to address these issues. After engaging with the women, it became evident that there was a need for a program focused on challenging the learned and/or culturally embedded attitudes towards family violence, that could target the younger generation of males before attitudes became fully embedded.

Based on these learnings the Strength2Strength project was implemented, working with young men and boys from Afghan, Arab and Burundian communities, and men from the African community to discuss, confront and reframe attitudes towards manhood, masculinity and violence towards women.

Activities: Working with three tiers of the community, the project targeted cultural community leaders at Tier 1, boys aged 11-16 years in Tier 2, and high-school aged young people at Tier 3.

Tier 1: cultural community leaders were engaged in one-on-one conversations and focus group discussions on healthy family relationships, run by a group facilitator with domestic violence expertise. The aim was to increase knowledge and understanding of healthy attitudes towards women and children, and manhood and masculinity, in their respective cultural communities.

Tier 2 and 3: a series of primary prevention workshops, consisting of sporting activities, discussions and excursions, delivered through an after-school program over four school terms with boys from refugee backgrounds (Tier 2) and school-based workshops (Tier 3). Using the Our Watch framework, Tier 2 and 3 participants role played responding to disrespectful behaviour and learned about the different forms of violence against women. Some highlights of the Tier 2 program included attending a Wildcats Basketball game, a picnic and soccer game with players from the Perth Glory Women's team, excursions to a high ropes course, trampolining, rock-climbing and ice-skating, as well as in-house art and drumming sessions. These experiences were new to participants and provided opportunities to test boundaries, work in teams and learn new skills. The school-based workshops covered topics such as intimate relationships, manhood and masculinity, gender inequality and the treatment of women and girls.

Where was the project conducted?

City of Gosnells - a local government area within south-east metropolitan Perth, which is a major settlement destination for humanitarian and refugee entrants to Australia. Partners included the City of Gosnells, Redeemed Care Inc. and White Ribbon. A counsellor from Redeemed Care offered cultural expertise critical to the engagement with some of the targeted communities (Tier 1), while White Ribbon brought expertise around program content development and delivery. The City of Gosnells provided logistical support through the provision of office and activity delivery space in the City.

The timeframe: April 2018 to April 2019

What were your action research activities?

- Entry and exit surveys (Tier 1: 11, Tier 2: 22, Tier 3:39 participants) assessing values and attitudes towards the four gendered drivers of violence against women - based on Our Watch's *Change the Story*.
- Mid-point focus groups.
- Observations and reflections tool following each session.
- Capturing of contributions from participants during sessions.
- Minutes of staff partnership meetings, staff progress meetings and Advisory Group meetings.

How has this project impacted communities/organisations/the region?

Results from the entry and exit surveys indicated that the program achieved important impacts. There were notable changes in beliefs, attitudes and perceptions associated with masculinity, the role of women and girls, and treatment of women and girls, particularly among Tier 2 participants:

- At entry 48% of Tier 2 participants (boys aged 11-17 years) disagreed that one needs to be tough to be a man. At the end of the project, 62% disagreed with that perception.
- Initially 62% of boys agreed that it is "okay for men and boys to feel sad, talk about their feelings and to cry". This increased to 86.7% at the end of the project.
- 65% of Tier 2 participants initially agreed or mostly agreed that a girl or woman must behave, dress or act in a certain way to have respect from men. This had reduced to 37% by the end of the project.
- At entry 33% mostly agreed that a woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook. Only 12% agreed with this perception at the end of the project. In addition, there was a decrease of 38% among participants in their belief that looking after children is a mother's responsibility.
- 69% of participants in Tier 3 school workshops identified that violence against women has wider impacts than just the individual affected and another 69% perceived that gender stereotypes can limit how individuals live their lives. At the end the third workshop, 87% of Tier 3 participants agreed that they can do something about violence against women in their communities.

Qualitative feedback from program participants highlighted that the participants found the program content beneficial in building their knowledge and understanding of family and domestic violence.

Tier 1 attendees demonstrated a high level of engagement with the program and its facilitator and discussed the possibility of opportunities to further the work in their own communities:

"This is an important thing we can do from this training – go back to our communities and form groups like this so men have a safe space to talk" (Tier 1 participant)

"In African communities, one thing we have in common is that we do value marriage, (sometimes at the expense of one party). It shouldn't be at the expense of the women and children" (Tier 1 participant).

Tier 2 participants reported increased confidence about getting involved in prevention of violence against women and shifts and/or willingness to change their attitudes and behaviours regarding violence against women:

"When someone at school will push or hit a girl, I'll say it's not right. [That] wasn't something I did before, because I wasn't confident enough" (Tier 2 participant)

"Sometimes the way I talked to [girls] wasn't nice. It has changed now. It has changed a lot." (Tier 2 participant)

Tier 3 participants explored gender equality through the lens of gender roles and learnt about healthy relationship behaviours:



Tier 3 workshop

"I learnt plenty of things, but the main thing is that girls and boys are equal and being a girl isn't what you should be ashamed of."

What worked well?

Tier 1 worked well as a safe space for men to share their experiences and be guided by a facilitator who understood their cultural context.

Tier 2 participants provided feedback midway through the program that they wanted to focus on leadership, employment pathways and linking into other engagement options post project. Using external facilitators for some activities on topics of interest to the young people provided opportunities to link in project content while keeping the young people positively engaged.

Engaging families to recruit participants for Tier 2 ensured buy-in from the community which was continued through follow up activities including a White Ribbon Day event and end of program celebration.

The second series of Tier 3 workshops were held as a full day incursion in class which allowed the young people to stay engaged in the content and enabled the facilitators to focus on this program outside of Tier 2 facilitation.

What did not work?

- Lead in time for recruitment of participants for all three Tiers was not adequate to ensure that all participants were appropriate for the project due to language barriers, cognitive delay and trauma experienced as part of the refugee journey, and in the case of Tier 3 to facilitate workshops in several schools.
- Facilitators in Tier 2 faced challenges and felt conflicted in delivering program content based on commitments made to families during recruitment to limit any discussion of intimate relationships and sexuality. Sexuality was addressed through professional guest speakers providing information as workshops.
- It was difficult and time intensive keeping momentum across a school year with the same participants in Tier 2.

What did you learn from the project?

- Successfully engaging with men and boys from CaLD communities in efforts towards violence prevention is possible, contrary to reservations expressed by women in the beneficiary communities before the start of the program.
- Religion could be used as a unifying way to work with men in Tier 1-all Tier 1 participants including facilitator were Christians of African background.
- All prevention programs must anticipate the element of **resistance** which is very strong even amongst men who don't think that violence is acceptable. Most participants rejected violence but also demonstrated unequal approaches to gender roles and responsibilities. The focus of education should be on challenging these assumptions not merely on educating about violence.
- There is much the community in general can learn about the different kinds of abuse, not just physical abuse
- Such a program is not necessarily for everyone because trauma from the refugee and acculturation experience can play a role in whether the participants in Tier 2 are ready to hear the information.

Do you have suggestions for policy- makers/educators/service planners?

- Focus on young people not just on older men. The boys exhibited openness and keenness to adapt to their new world and explore attitudes towards the gendered drivers with other young people.
- There is need to include family and domestic violence education alongside other settlement support for humanitarian and refugee entrants.

Where to from here? Current funding is limited to compiling and promoting the learnings from the project, through the production of a manual for dissemination to the community. Save the Children is committed to securing funding to continue working with young people through an after-school program focusing on both young men and women (ages 14-16) from refugee backgrounds using a culturally safe approach based on the content developed through this project. In the meantime, we continue to work with our partners to promote violence prevention through advocacy and network opportunities.

People/organisations to thank:

City of Gosnells	Department of Communities: Child Protection and Family Services	
White Ribbon	Starick	Redeemed Care
Our Watch	ANROWS	Stopping Family Violence