



**Save the Children**



## Primary prevention of violence against women with boys and men from immigrant and refugee backgrounds

**THE STRENGTH2STRENGTH PROJECT WITH ACTION RESEARCH**  
FINAL PROJECT REPORT 2020



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## Executive summary

Addressing violence against women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) populations is a complex task because of the diverse landscape within which such violence occurs. Nevertheless, in just 12 months, through this innovative program, Save the Children demonstrates how engaging and educating men and boys from CaLD backgrounds has reduced harmful attitudes and beliefs that have been linked to domestic and family violence.

### The Strength2Strength project

The Strength2Strength project with participatory action research was an innovative three-tiered approach to engaging CaLD communities in domestic violence (DV) prevention. The aim was to examine, discuss, confront and reframe attitudes towards manhood, masculinity and violence towards women. The project was implemented in the Perth South East corridor from April 2018 to April 2019, in the City of Gosnells local government area.

### How the project worked

The project worked at three levels of the community. Tier 1 engaged African men and community leaders in a series of twelve facilitated group discussions delivered over three months. Tier 2 engaged boys aged 11-16 years from Afghan, Arab (Iraqi and Syria) and Burundi backgrounds in an after-school program over four school terms. Tier 3 consisted of school-based workshops covering gender equality and respectful relationships delivered to high school-aged young people.

A participatory action research component involving collection of qualitative and quantitative data through surveys, focus group discussions and interviews, was incorporated into the program to assess changes in knowledge, attitudes and perceptions. Data was also collected in the form of observations and reflections, capturing participants' contributions during sessions and minutes from staff meetings and advisory committee meetings.

The program was coordinated by Save the Children with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services. Cultural and content development expertise was drawn from Redeemed Care; White Ribbon; and an advisory group composed of government, domestic violence sector and community members. The Australian National Research Organization for Women's Safety (ANROWS) supported the research component of the project.

### Project achievements and impacts

The Strength2Strength project successfully engaged nineteen African men; twenty-two boys aged 11-16 years; and nearly forty young people from two schools. The project's impact was significant.

Tier 1 participants reported increased knowledge about domestic violence policies and laws in Australia; greater awareness of the elements of healthy relationships; a broader understanding of non-physical forms of violence and the impact of domestic violence on women and children. Participants also reported increased confidence in addressing violence against women and their children in their communities.

Quantitative and qualitative data indicated positive changes among Tier 2 participants in their beliefs, attitudes and perceptions linked to harmful masculinity and violence against women.

#### **Notably:**

- The proportion of participants holding the perception that one needs to be tough to be a man reduced from 28% to 12%. The perception that it is okay for men and boys to feel sad, talk about their feelings and to cry increased from 62% to 86.7%

- By the end of the project, all Tier 2 participants rejected statements associated with unhealthy/harmful treatment of women and girls such as; “a woman must behave, dress and act in a certain way to take care of her home”; “boys or men can treat a woman or girl in an aggressive or possessive way if it’s perceived to be part their culture or if they have a reason”; “it’s ok for a boy or man to share pictures, videos or texts online of a woman or girl that would embarrass or scare her”
- Initially 28% of participants agreed that a woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and cook, this reduced to 12%. By the end of the project 81% rejected the statement that taking care of the baby is a mother’s responsibility
- Information obtained from discussions with Tier 2 participants’ mothers during and after the program attested to aspects of behaviour and attitudinal change among some of the boys.

Tier 3 participants identified that violence against women has wider impacts than just the individual affected and 87% of participants agreed they can do something about violence in their communities.

The value of Strength2Strength was found to have extended beyond the intended objectives to include; (1) providing a culturally safe space for men and boys to express themselves on a range of other issues; (2) building friendships and connections; (3) building self-confidence among young people; and (4) exposing CaLD boys and young men to youth, recreation and sporting opportunities.

### **Key issues for consideration in future programming**

***The main learnings that emerged from working with CaLD men and boys and CaLD communities more broadly included:***

- Program planning and content development in consultation with the community is indispensable.
- Consultations and relationship building take time.
- Faith-based leadership can be useful as an avenue for recruiting and retaining CaLD men in primary prevention initiatives.
- Flexibility in the project design to respond to emerging needs among young people is essential.
- There is much the community can learn about different kinds of abuse, not just physical abuse.
- The focus of education should be on challenging assumptions about gender (in)equality not merely on educating about violence.
- Recognizing and acknowledging intersections between gender, race, class and culture is key to engaging CaLD men and addressing resistance.
- Future efforts should consider focusing more on CaLD boys and young people because of their openness to adapt to their new world and to challenge attitudes that support violence against women.

### **Conclusion**

The Strength2Strength project demonstrates that it is possible to successfully engage CaLD communities through men and boys in violence prevention efforts. This engagement impacts beliefs and attitudes by providing culturally safe spaces to reflect, express views, share experiences and challenge one another about culturally embedded attitudes towards domestic violence and violence against women.

# Background and context

## Violence against women

Violence against women (VAW) is widely recognized as a significant global health and human rights problem. Globally about 1 in 3 women (35%) have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime (World Health Organization (WHO), 2017). In Australia, at least one woman a week is killed by a partner or former partner and over 300,000 women experience violence, often sexual violence, from someone other than a partner every year (OurWatch, 2015). Violence against women is a gendered crime perpetrated mainly by men against female intimate partners and children. Violent and abusive tactics are intentional, systematic and ongoing; used to create fear and obtain power and control. Forms of abuse used by perpetrators of domestic violence are wide-ranging and include physical and sexual violence, emotional/psychological abuse, social isolation and financial or economic abuse.

## Gendered drivers of Violence against Women

Research has shown that gender inequality, defined as “a social condition characterized by unequal value afforded to men and women and unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them” sets the necessary social context for violence against women (OurWatch, 2015). Factors associated with gender inequality are the most consistent predictors of violence against women and result in gendered patterns of violence (OurWatch, 2015).

### ***Four factors have been identified as the “gendered drivers” of violence against women:***

- Condoning of violence against women;
- Men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s independence in public and private life;
- Rigid gender roles and stereotyped construction of masculinity and femininity;
- Male peer relations that emphasize aggression and disrespect towards women.

Other factors interact or reinforce gender inequality to contribute to increased frequency and severity of violence against women, but do not drive violence in and of themselves. Such reinforcing factors include condoning of violence in general; experience of, and exposure to violence; weakening of prosocial behaviour, especially harmful use of alcohol; socioeconomic inequality and discrimination; and backlash factors whereby violence increases when male dominance, power or status is challenged (OurWatch, 2015). Violence against women can be prevented before it occurs by addressing the gendered drivers of violence which is known as primary prevention.

## Primary prevention with men and boys

Constructions of masculinity shape acts of violence against women and violence-condoning attitudes among individuals, within families and communities and in the wider society (Flood, 2010; 2011; 2017). At the same time, conforming to conventions of masculinity can negatively impact boys’ development (Ellis, 2008). Investigative studies show that boys’ socialization — towards masculine ideals that emphasize, for example, physical toughness, emotional stoicism, and projected self-sufficiency — may lead boys to suppress their natural behaviour and devalue and disconnect from their emotions and relationships (Chu, 2014). This indicates that although boys may reap social benefits in aligning with norms of masculine behaviour, they pay a psychological and relational price, and this may have unintended impacts on their families.

Thus, targeting men and boys and addressing masculinity is central to ending violence against women. Men also need to be involved in primary prevention because they derive benefits from progress towards achieving gender equality such as freedom from conforming to dominant forms of masculinity; and can be motivated to participate in violence prevention efforts for the sake of the women and girls in their own lives (Flood, 2017). Research also shows that greater

engagement in caregiving and involved fatherhood brings benefits to men's health (including physical, mental, and sexual health, and reduced risk-taking). Men who are involved in meaningful ways with their children report this relationship to be one of their most important sources of wellbeing and happiness, and, as such, this has great promise as an entry point for addressing men as fathers, as well as breaking down harmful masculinities among men and boys (MenCare, 2014).

In Australia, however, activities and evidence-based programs with immigrant and refugee men have been found to be lacking given that most programs are notably developed for and by white men and their effectiveness therefore only proven for white, privileged populations (Murdolo & Quiazon, 2016).

### **Violence against women in culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia**

Violence against women is prevalent across all classes, cultures and social groups in Australia. However, expressions and impacts of violence differ in some ways between refugee and immigrant populations and non-migrant populations (Vaughan et al., 2016). For example, immigrant and refugee women are less likely to seek help and/or have a higher likelihood of enduring violence for a longer period before seeking support and are more likely to experience family violence perpetrated by the extended family and community members (Vaughan et al., 2016).

*There are a range of factors that increase the risk of VAW in particular groups and contexts. They do this by interacting with the influences of gender inequality and cultural support for violence (AMES, 2016)*

A range of intersecting factors underlie immigrant and refugee women's unique experiences of violence. These factors include migration pathways, traumatic pre-arrival experience, as well as acculturation stress, social isolation, language barriers, and lack of knowledge about rights and available services (El-Murr, 2018; Vaughan et al., 2016). Additionally, sociocultural norms contribute to normalisation of family/domestic violence (DV) in various cultural contexts (Vaughan et al., 2016). In a report from kitchen table consultations held with women from CaLD backgrounds between 2014 and 2015 (Department of Social Services (DSS), 2015), it emerged that such women often live in extended family households where they are subjected to violence from family members including their adolescent sons. The way that women are obligated to bear responsibility for violence and are shamed or pressured to maintain the status quo in family relationships is seen to be embedded in sociocultural norms.

For some communities, domestic and family violence is not perceived as a crime in their countries of origin or is considered a "private matter" even when it is against the law (DSS, 2015). In other communities, family and domestic violence, in particular sexual assault, is regarded as a taboo subject and protecting the family's reputation is prioritized over reporting cases of assault (DSS, 2015). Other researchers (Metusela et al., 2017) highlight that women and girls from CaLD and refugee backgrounds experience reproductive coercion (e.g. pregnancy coercion, interference with birth control and controlling pregnancy outcome) as they often feel incapable of refusing sexual advances from their partner. Normalisation of reproductive coercion occurs against a background of cultural values that emphasize women's reproductive role, and cultural taboos that forbid premarital sex.

Given this context, the need to develop culturally aware and responsive approaches to preventing men's violence against women in CaLD communities has become imperative.

## Policy Context

Primary prevention with CaLD communities is acknowledged as a priority in The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (Commonwealth of Australian Governments (COAG), 2011). The National Plan is the current framework for addressing violence against women and their children by the commonwealth, state and territory governments.

The *Change the Story* framework (OurWatch, 2015) provides the evidence and a conceptual approach for preventing violence against women and their children in Australia. The framework notes the necessity and appropriateness of addressing “the cumulative impact of multiple factors – not only the gendered drivers of violence against women, but the many other reinforcing factors that increase the likelihood of violence against, for example, women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities...” (p.36).

In Western Australia, the state government is currently developing a 10-year strategy for reducing family and domestic violence (the Strategy). This is expected to “guide a whole of community approach to prevention and earlier intervention, victim safety and perpetrator accountability” and will include “a focus on access and inclusion, and consider the unique and diverse needs” of among other groups, people from CaLD backgrounds (WA Department of Communities, 2019).



# The Strength2Strength project

## Introduction

The Strength2Strength project with action research was an innovative primary prevention initiative that worked with men, boys and young people from refugee and immigrant backgrounds. The overall aim of the project was to examine, discuss, confront and reframe attitudes towards manhood, masculinity, and violence towards women among CaLD boys and men. The project further sought to deepen understanding of the kind of approaches most likely to secure the sustained engagement of men and boys from CaLD backgrounds in learning, dialogue and activities related to DV awareness and prevention.

## Background

The Strength2Strength project emerged from Save the Children's experience delivering settlement services and working with CaLD families since 2009. Through various engagement with women from immigrant and refugee backgrounds, it was established that domestic violence was common amongst many of the families. Women frequently requested Save the Children staff for support with violence restraining orders (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 response to these issues, Save the Children piloted the "Healthy Family Relationships" program with Burundian and Karen women in 2016. The program was organised into four sessions (10-15 women per session) covering the topics: self-esteem and self-care, elements of a healthy relationship, legal information, the impacts of violence on children, and women and children's safety. The Healthy Family relationships workshops provided insights into the cultural dynamics of the families and it became evident that there was a need for a program focusing on challenging the learned and/or culturally embedded attitudes towards family violence, and particularly one that could target the younger generation of males whose attitudes were not yet fully embedded.

*It became evident that there was a need for a family program focusing on challenging the learned and/or culturally embedded attitudes towards family violence.*

In early 2018, the Strength2Strength project was conceptualized with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services. Commencing in April 2018, the project was implemented in the City of Gosnells in the Perth South East corridor. In 2015, the population of Perth South East region was approximately 514,171 or 25.2% of the Greater Perth population of 2.04 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2015). The CaLD population within the Perth South East corridor represents 22.9% (107,380) of the total population.

## Project description

The Strength2Strength project worked with men, boys and young people from immigrant and refugee backgrounds as summarized in Figure 1. The program content and activities for each group are discussed in detail later in this report.

The Strength2Strength project was coordinated by Save the Children. The project team included a program manager, team leader for CaLD programs, two youth workers and three bicultural workers. Save the Children partnered with the City of Gosnells, Redeemed Care Inc. and White Ribbon. A counsellor from Redeemed Care offered cultural expertise critical to engagement with Tier 1 participants, whereas White Ribbon brought expertise around program content development and delivery. The City of Gosnells provided logistical support, office space and

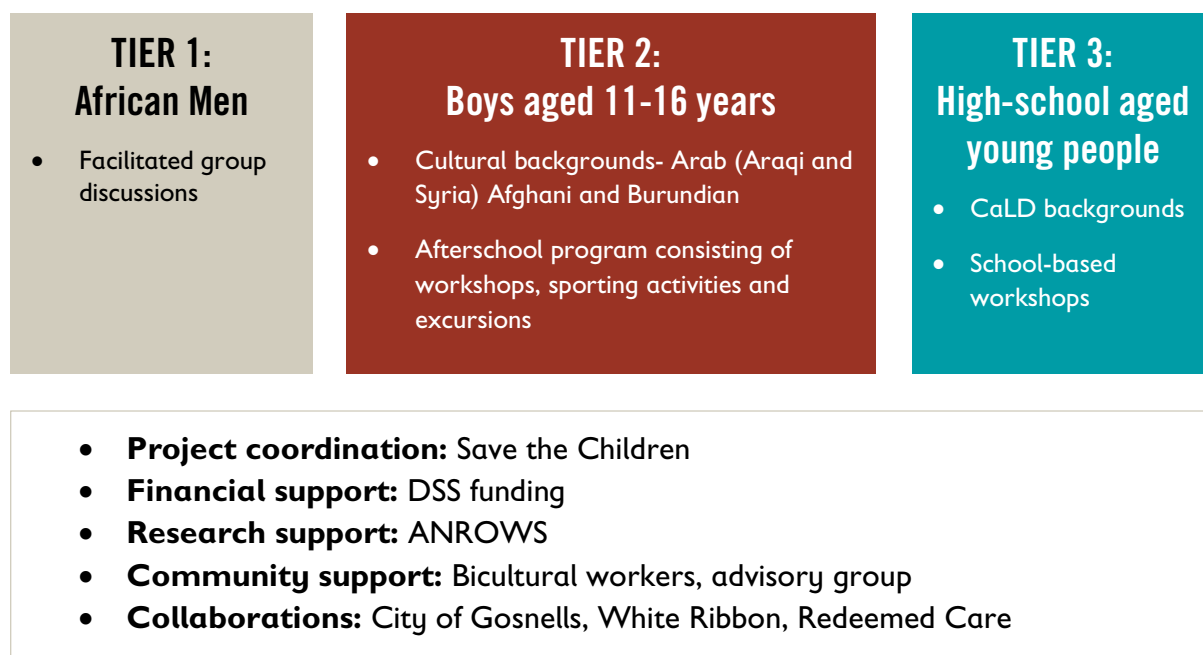
activities' delivery space. An advisory group comprising of representatives from the community, the DV sector and government, provided ongoing support regarding engagement with the communities and program content. The research component of the project was supported by ANROWS.

The project maintained strong community links through the bicultural workers and communal activities organized during project implementation. On 24 November 2018 a White Ribbon Day community event was held at Gosnells Pioneer Park, designed to highlight the positive role men can play in the prevention of violence against women. The City of Gosnells co-hosted this event and provided staff, promoted the event amongst its own networks and provided activities for children and young people. Approximately 200 people attended the event with almost all attendees being of CaLD backgrounds.



## Strength2Strength project (April 2018-April 2019)

Figure 1.



The project was implemented between April 2018 and ended in April 2019. An end of year celebration was held for Tier 2 participants at the Castle Youth Space in Thornlie. The event was attended by 54 people including the participants' mothers, fathers and siblings. The Mayor of the City of Gosnells, and Member for Gosnells and attended the event. The participants were presented with certificates recognizing their completion of the program.

Additional funding covering the period July 2019 to June 2020 was obtained for a second phase to document the impacts, key achievements and learnings from the project as detailed in this report.

## Assessing project impacts and learnings: Data and sources of data

The data sources are described in the following sections.

### Survey data

#### **Surveys were completed with project participants as follows:**

**Tier 1:** participants completed a simple five-question survey after each session. This survey assessed engagement and self-reporting of anticipated attitudinal and behavioural changes, but not how participants' attitudes and knowledge may have shifted from the beginning to the end of the program. The survey format addressed the rolling attendance of participants throughout the 12 weeks.

**Tier 2:** participants completed surveys at the start and at the end of the project to assess changes in attitudes and perceptions. The survey questionnaire contained twenty close-ended questions covering four areas: perceptions of masculinity, role of women and girls, treatment of women and girls, and boys as agents of change. Twenty-one and sixteen Tier 2 participants respectively completed both exit and entry surveys.

**Tier 3:** entry and exit surveys containing six close-ended and two open-ended questions were administered with participants from two high schools. In the first school (Intensive English Centre at Lynwood Senior High School) participants responded to the surveys before and after each workshop session while in the second school (Australia Islamic College campus Thornlie) surveys were administered at the start and at the end of the three workshop sessions. On average, twenty-six Tier 3 participants completed the surveys in each school.

The survey forms are provided in the appendix section.

### Focus group discussions and individual interviews

#### **Focus group discussions and interviews were held with program participants as follows:**

**Tier 1:** One discussion consisting of 11 participants during the mid-term review of the project in October 2018 and four individual interviews conducted in October/November 2019;

**Tier 2:** Mid and end of program focus groups with participants. Four group discussions in October 2018, one group discussion with six boys (Arab-1, Afghan-4, African-1) in October 2019.

**Tier 2 participants mums:** one group discussion with seven mothers (Afghan-3, Arab-4) in October 2019.

### Key informant interviews

Key individuals involved in the project were interviewed formally and informally during the development of this report. Interview and discussion guides are provided in the appendix section.

### Desk review

A review of various project documents was conducted. These documents included; project workplans, fortnightly activity reports, observations recorded project staff regarding implementation and participants' engagement with the program content, minutes from staff meetings and advisory group meetings, and the mid-term review report.

### Limitations of quantitative and qualitative data collected

- The findings from quantitative and qualitative data presented in this report should be understood in the context of the relatively small sample of the overall CaLD population that participated in the program. Difficulties were also experienced in reaching participants once the project was complete. Nevertheless, the use of multiple sources of data to triangulate findings enhances their validity and applicability.
- The school workshops were piloted in two schools. It was not possible to secure participation of additional schools within the project period. As such, the survey questionnaire for Tier 3 was not standardised.

This report now turns to a detailed overview and discussion of the achievements and the impacts of the Strength2Strength project starting with Tier 1.

## Engaging men

Tier 1 of the Strength2Strength project worked primarily with African men. The project originally intended to work with men from Arab, Afghan and Burundi communities. However, focus shifted to men from various African backgrounds when it became difficult to reach the anticipated communities despite program staff and contracted facilitator making significant relationship-building attempts and advocacy about the program. Tier 1 sessions were delivered by a trained facilitator for approximately two hours over a 12-week period.

***The program content and source materials were developed through Redeemed Care Inc. and covered the following topics:***

- Healthy relationships
- Signs of abusive relationships
- Domestic violence in Australia
- Power and control
- Thinking patterns
- Respectful communication
- Victim empathy

## Recruitment

Overall, 19 African men attended Tier 1 sessions with 57 attendances recorded over 11 sessions. A core group of men regularly attended the sessions. Most of the men lived locally in the Gosnells area while a few travelled from the north metropolitan region to attend.

Due to difficulties encountered reaching men across the three initially targetted groups, recruitment of Tier 1 participants relied on direct referrals<sup>1</sup> from the contracted facilitator- a counsellor and religious (Christian) leader of African background.

All Tier 1 participants identified as Christians, and most were leaders in their churches. While some participants reported attending the initial discussion session “reluctantly” and mostly out of respect for the facilitator as a church leader and not initial

interest in DV prevention, others reported personal and professional interests in DV prevention as their reason for participating in the project. Of the four men interviewed at the end of the project, three shared that they perceived DV as a serious issue because of their experience intervening in “marital matters” and other instances of DV in their church/community. One interviewee’s motivation for joining the program was his belief that although DV is problem with serious consequences, it is not always taken seriously in his community.

“When I found out it [S2S program] was about domestic violence, I became interested- because I think domestic violence is a serious issue, people are dying from domestic violence, yet it is not being taken seriously.”

***Tier 1 participant***

<sup>1</sup> Nothing that this was a targeted primary prevention program focussing on working with community leaders to support prevention and awareness activities in their communities, recruitment screening did not explicitly identify participants’ past or ongoing history of using violence in their homes. The trained facilitator ensured that sessions provided the space for private disclosure of any concerns. However, no concerns were raised or identified during the program.

## Participation and engagement in program sessions

To achieve the objectives of the program, it was important for the sessions to be interactive and participatory. A survey conducted during the final discussion session indicated that 97% of participants found the sessions interactive and engaging. Observation reports from the sessions also noted a high level of participation and engagement with the subject matter in each session. The sessions were described as “fun”, “lively” and “exciting”. Some of the participants interviewed for this report noted that sessions often turned into long energetic debates as the men shared their perspectives and opinions.



- “The duration of the sessions was often too short because the discussions among us could get very engaging then go on and on and time went by so fast...Pastor Ernest [the facilitator] often had to interrupt to tell us it was time to conclude the session.”
- “The fun was in the discussions because sometimes a simple point would blow up into a heated discussion.”
- “It was interesting when people shared their experiences about settling in Australia...How they came here and found that things are so different from what they were used to. That was very interesting.”
- “During the discussions people were bringing in examples and experiences, either their own experiences or other people’s, and that enriched the discussions.”

### Factors encouraging participation:

- Skilled facilitator of the same cultural background as the participants
- Strong facilitation skills and expert guidance
- A respectful, non-judgmental environment
- Informal structure of the sessions

Further, most participants felt the environment allowed for free and honest expression of views and perspectives among the men. They described the facilitator as “competent” and appreciated that not only was he able to relate to their cultural backgrounds, but he skilfully guided the discussions to ensure respectful debates. It was also notable that an African background and Christianity as a common thread between the men fostered bonding and sharing among them.

Interviewees also emphasized the sharing of personal experiences as immigrants as an important positive experience about their participation in the sessions. They utilized the discussion sessions as a platform to share their personal journeys and settlement journeys as African male immigrants in Australia in a way they had not done before. One Tier 1 participant commented that the way that “men opened up” about their individual lives not only enriched the discussions but also brought about the realization that they were not alone in their experiences.

## Impacts on knowledge, attitudes and perceptions

It was not possible to collect comprehensive quantitative data concerning changes in perceptions about masculinities and attitudes towards violence against women due to inconsistent attendance among some Tier 1 participants. However, a short survey administered in the final session showed that 75% of participants said they had “learnt a lot” about women and healthy relationships; 72%

reported that information received from the workshop would “very likely change their beliefs and attitudes about women and healthy relationships”; and 83% said information from the workshops would “very likely change their behaviour towards members of their families.”

Focus group discussions with eleven men at the mid-term review further highlighted improvements in knowledge and understanding. In addition, four individuals interviewed in October/November 2019 described their understanding of domestic violence prevention as “advanced” as a result of participating in the program.

**Nearly all participants reported:**

- Increased knowledge about DV laws and policies in Australia;
- A broader understanding of non-physical forms of violence such as emotional abuse;
- Increased awareness regarding elements of healthy relationships including how to engage in open, respectful and honest discussions with their partners and managing negative emotions;
- Greater awareness of the impact of DV on women and children;
- Increased confidence to educate other men in the community about DV.

**Some comments illustrating these changes include:**

- “...I learnt that silence can be a form of malice that one spouse can use to inflict emotional abuse on another. So, I learnt that silence can be a form of emotional abuse which I didn’t know before.”
- “I’ve gained a lot – especially this issue of communication. For peace to reign in the home there must be good communication, especially between the man and woman. If communication breaks down that is the beginning of problems.”
- “What I learnt, and this is important is that you can disagree - a husband can disagree with his wife and vice versa but not necessarily in an abusive way.”
- “...If there is DV probably for men you are building up adversaries or enemies, you are raising up your own children against you.”
- “I benefitted a great deal from the program, and I have been able to incorporate some of that into the pastoring work that I do. Things are changing for good and not just at home but in my work as a community leader- I am applying the teachings I received from the program.”

A few participants also reported improved understanding of how gender inequality and cultural attitudes that promote inequalities influence men’s violence against women. Three of the interviewees described DV “back home” in their countries of origin as “normal” where women “have no voice” and “men see themselves as “kings” because “that is what culture says”. One interviewee stated that “a normal African man sees himself as king” - an attitude which he believed to be a primary cause of DV in his culture. The interviewee went on to say that participating in the program had challenged him “to reflect and question” those aspects about his culture such as the idea that a man is the king of his home and how such culturally prescribed masculine ideals promote violence against women and children.

“The program helped me acknowledge that men and women are equal.”

**Tier 1 participant**

**Consequently, he reported a shift in his attitudes towards gender equality including the issue of financial control as a measure of masculinity:**

- “Before the program I was afraid of being financially open with my wife. I used to think if I give her access to my finances then I am handing over everything to her. But the program motivated me to try and be more open. Now, I can confidently say I have no such fear anymore. I no longer feel embarrassed if my wife knows how much money I have in the account. I ask myself, what do I have to prove...And because she has access to my account then we no longer have the fights we used to have over finances...So, I can say I am more than relaxed, I have peace of mind.”



## Men's role in domestic violence prevention

Most participants generally felt that men have a role to play in DV prevention work within their communities. Some noted the importance of involving men because they are largely the perpetrators of DV while others spoke about good fatherhood, and the seriousness of DV as reasons to encourage men's involvement in DV prevention efforts.

- “Men are the perpetrators [of DV] so they are the people to stop it.”
- “We all recognise that any violence is harmful to everyone. It's about getting the message. In some instances, the violence response is natural and instinctual. As we start to mature and strengthen our society, it's about asking are these things really acceptable.”
- “It is in the interest of men to be good fathers and role models for their children.”
- “...after this training, how can we get this out into the community? For me, not to wait until the cases come but as a way of prevention. To inform people: this is how the system deals with this.”

Although none of the men were actively involved in DV prevention initiatives before joining the Strength2Strength program, all four interviewees perceived DV as a real a problem in their community. Drawing on cases encountered from their work as religious leaders they felt that more men would benefit from participating in such a program.

- “It would have been nice to have more people participating in the program. I think a lot of other men would have benefitted from the program and not just African men. You know Perth is a multicultural society so the program should have included others from other cultural backgrounds. I think that would have made the discussions of issues even broader, we would have been able to learn from others.”



Some men indicated their desire and plans to continue engaging in DV prevention efforts as individuals. For example, one interviewee with a background in social work had enrolled for a certificate course in DV prevention after the Strength2Strength project.

At the end of the program, 11 men received formal recognition for their commitment to further DV awareness and education in their communities.

## Resistance and persistence of violence-condoning attitudes

Although all Tier 1 participants agreed that physical violence is not acceptable, most of them did not seem to accept male accountability for the presence of dominance, control and abuse in intimate relationships. Some denied the extent of the problem and others persistently expressed attitudes condoning violence and/or expressed support for rigid gender roles.

### ***Violence-condoning attitudes were noted during the program sessions and among those interviewed in October 2019:***

- Some men believed that more women than men are perpetrators of DV in marital relationships, but men are less likely to share experiences of DV or display their emotions compared to women therefore men's experiences as victims of DV are often not captured.
- Several men insisted that DV policies and the law in Australia favour women and that cases of DV are only taken seriously when reported by a woman. One participant commented that “a DV issue is only an issue when raised by a woman.” Relatedly, others called for DV to be addressed in ways that “do not empower one group [women] over the other.”
- Others argued that research and DV statistics are biased against men due to an inherent assumption that men are the perpetrators of DV, and women are the victims. They asserted that they “know the truth behind the statistic” and were aware of “things that are going on in the

families”. One participant stated that often “a [male DV perpetrator] is put in the corner and the only thing he can do is react” while an interviewee remarked that “women provoke because they know that the police will come and when the police come, they take the man away.”

- When reacting to the evidence that DV is perpetrated largely by men against women, one interviewee commented that “there must be something that triggers DV among men” which in his view had nothing to do with masculinity.
- The men repeatedly expressed that men in African communities were “frustrated”, “hurting”, “being tortured”, “feeling betrayed” and were “in pain” - feelings that they identified as arising out of the behaviour of women.
- Three of the four interviewees perceived gender roles to be fixed and hierarchical whereby the man occupies the leadership position and plays the role of provider. Women were described using terms such as “nurturers”, “homemakers” and “helpers” and men as “captains of the ship”. While quoting the bible, one interviewee maintained that “the man has to be the leader of the home”. Another interviewee believed on the one hand that men and women are equal but maintained on the other hand that men and women have different roles and “spheres of influence” and proposed the term “heathy democracy” instead of gender equality which he defined as “the man exercising his sphere of influence while respecting his wife and children.”
- Echoing a similar view, another interviewee expressed difficulty understanding the concept of gender equality. He said “I do not believe there is something called gender equality. There is a difference between a man and a woman, a mum and a dad. They have different roles, and each is superior in their own roles... So, saying that they are equal... I find that hard to understand.”

Other men in the groups shifted the conversation from the impact of DV on women to a discussion of their feelings of alienation in Australia expressed in statements such as “a typical African man in Australia is by himself” or “African men feel that nobody looks after them.” They went on to say that men have no avenues to talk and to be heard while women have access to “sufficient cushions” such as Centrelink and favourable laws and policies in Australia. They linked their feelings of alienation to the belief that men are victims in multiple ways – from their female partners and from the pressure to shoulder their families’ financial burden in a country where they often face difficulties finding job opportunities due to factors such as limited or unsuitable work experience. Limitations to their capacity to fulfil the role of breadwinner as a salient issue in their experience as migrant men therefore influenced their readiness to engage with the program content.



## Lessons learnt from working with men

The Strength2Strength project was successful at recruiting and engaging African men in dialogue about DV/VAW in their communities. Despite the persistence of violence-condoning attitudes and perceptions among some men, the findings indicate that the project was successful at building awareness, increasing participant's knowledge and challenging their attitudes about violence against women.

***Alongside these achievements, the Strength2Strength project generated learnings to inform future engagements with CaLD men in DV/VAW education and awareness efforts:***

- **Faith-based leadership can be useful as an avenue for recruiting and retaining men in primary prevention initiatives:** For the African male participants in this project, Christianity provided common ground for engaging with the program content, the facilitator and with each other. Most Tier 1 participants attended the initial session only because of the high regard and respect they had for the facilitator as a religious leader. Thus, religion can be an important entry point for reaching men and retaining them in DV prevention initiatives. There is also an opportunity to mobilize faith leaders as advocates of change in their communities while building their capacity and skills to engage with the key concepts of gender equality.
- **There is room for additional education on DV particularly in the settlement space:** Participants reported increased knowledge and understanding about forms of violence against women. Notably, most of them were previously unaware of other forms of behaviours and attitudes that characterize non-physical abuse. This is consistent with findings from the 2017 community attitudes report (Webster et al., 2019) that whereas most people (between 93% and 96% depending on the behaviour) from non-main-English speaking countries (NMESC) recognize physical behaviour as forms of violence against women, they are less likely to recognize non-physical abusive behaviour. Low levels of knowledge and attitudes supportive of gender inequality were associated with recent arrivals. Therefore, there is much that CaLD men can learn about the different kinds of abuse, not just physical abuse, particularly if such education is introduced in the settlement space.
- **Challenging condoning violence against women:** The focus of an education program should include gendered drivers of Violence against Women and challenging beliefs endorsing gender inequalities, not merely educating participants about violence. An emphasis on equal rights to safety and non-violence and on safety and non-violence when pressures mount should also form a key component of DV/VAW education and awareness.
- **Engaging men and addressing resistance through the lens of intersectionality<sup>2</sup>:** Using an intersectional approach means that a discussion of the gendered drivers with men can be supplemented by an exploration of the gender norms and power structures that inform experiences of DV for both men and women, shape the contexts in which immigrant and refugee men experience inequality and marginalization and shape men's perceptions of their stake in gender equality.

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<sup>2</sup> An intersectional approach to engaging CaLD men is about "locating immigrant and refugee men in particular within intersecting relations of power, and thus understanding them as both oppressed and privileged in relation to dominance and subordination" (Murdolo & Quiazon, 2016, p.12). While immigrant and refugee men enjoy male privilege, their experiences as immigrants are also shaped by structural disadvantages such as social exclusion and isolation, limited access to employment opportunities, and discrimination (Murdolo & Quiazon, 2016).

## Engaging boys and young people

The Strength2Strength project engaged boys aged 11-16 years from Arab, Afghan and Burundi backgrounds at Tier 2. The aim of this tier was to improve participants' perceptions of masculinity, develop their level of knowledge and skills about healthy attitudes towards women and girls and increase their understanding of the impacts of family violence.

### **The program content<sup>3</sup> centred on four thematic areas:**

- Culture and identity;
- Gender and gender relations;
- Respectful relationships;
- Domestic violence and opportunities for leadership.

The program drew on the four Gendered Drivers of Violence established in the *Change the Story Framework* (OurWatch, 2015) by integrating these into three of the thematic areas.



## Recruitment

A generalized appeal in the form of a flyer (see appendix section) was distributed in the local government area as a strategy to reach the boys. The flyer invited “boys and young men to build on the strength and pride in their communities” and provided details about the program in English.

However, Tier 2 participants were mostly recruited through existing relationships with mothers attending the ‘It Takes a Village’ program which Save the Children has been running in Perth’s South East since 2009. The senior youth worker and bicultural workers approached the mothers to inform them about the program. The mothers in turn approved and encouraged the boys to join the program.



### **Some mothers indicated that they were initially hesitant about approving their son’s participation in the program for various reasons:**

- “Before I was worried that my son would not like it.”
- “I was concerned that they would teach them things that are not proper for his age.”
- “My son was transitioning to a new high school and he was already having problems at the new school. I was worried that in the program he would get into the wrong company which would have increased the problems he was having at school.”
- “I was also worried about the type of peers my son would interact with in the program.”

Concerns about the program content, particularly discussions about sexual intimacy with the boys, were addressed over time through various discussions between the mothers, the youth workers, and the bicultural workers.

At the beginning of the program the young people were advised of Save the Children’s child protection approach whereby the organisation works with the family should abuse be disclosed while still honouring its obligation to report cases of abuse. This provided a safe space for the young people to be involved in discussions. There were no disclosures during program implementation.

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<sup>3</sup> The program content and resources developed for Tier 2 and 3 will be shared separately.

## Participation and engagement in program sessions

The after-school weekly program for Tier 2 participants started on 1st May 2018 with 20 participants. Overall, 22 boys participated in the program.

The program comprised mostly of group discussions; role-playing, sport; outdoor excursions; games and cooking exercises designed to be both educational and fun for the boys.



Tier 2 participants were transported to and from the workshop venue and supporting activities on the program bus driven by the male youth worker. The mid-term review report documented a high level of attendance and participation in the sessions. Notably the program recorded an attendance rate of 90-96% in the first term of delivery and 78-87% for the rest of the project period.

### **Some comments from the mothers confirm the boys' enthusiasm for the program:**

- “The boys loved the program.”
- “The boys liked it very much.”
- “You could see the happiness on their faces.”
- “The boys were very excited and happy with the program. They used to wake up very early on the days that the program was on. They loved soccer, painting and they learnt about cooking.”

The sessions, which lasted for approximately 1.5 hours, were facilitated by one female senior youth worker of Anglo-Saxon background and one male youth worker of Tanzanian background.

### **All the mothers spoke highly about the facilitators:**

- “The staff was good. The boys connected with the staff. The first time my son was going for the program he was so scared. He did not want to go. But Kawaka [male youth worker] was amazing. He encouraged the boys to talk.”
- “I think the staff did their best. It was good to have a male facilitator to connect with the boys.”

Despite the high level of participation, some challenges that impacted the level of engagement. For example, some participants demonstrated challenging behaviour which was difficult for staff to manage while still delivering the required program content. This behaviour appeared to be directly related to trauma. Low English proficiency amongst some participants at times impacted on the quality of thematic discussions. Many participants could make simple contributions to discussions but struggled to take a “deeper dive” into some ideas and perspectives. Addressing the risk of boredom and applying new and stimulating methods of engagement was an ongoing challenge, with some participants reporting that they found the conversations “boring” although still identifying that they had learned things.

## Impacts on knowledge, attitudes and perceptions

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected to assess achievement of the program's objectives and changes over time in the participants' attitudes and perceptions. Findings from the surveys indicate notable changes in beliefs, attitudes and perceptions amongst the boys as discussed in the following sections.

### **Perceptions of masculinity**

To improve perceptions of masculinity, Tier 2 participants engaged in activities such as exploring their understanding of what it means to be a man and the things that men do; what it means to be a woman; discussing the meaning of the statement “act like a man” and what would be seen as

“being a woman”; and exploring messages about manhood and emotions. During these activities, participants’ statements and comments mostly reflected understandings of masculinity along stereotypical ideas about masculinity and femininity. For example, being a man was associated with words such as: provider, leader, powerful, muscles, husband and hardworking. On the other hand, the boys used words such as: mother, long hair, feminine, eyeliner, lipstick, kind and colourful to describe their perception of a woman.

***Some of the statements regarding their understandings of what it means to be a man included:***

- men have businesses
- men marry women/ marrying a beautiful/nice wife or woman
- men are independent - do things without needing help
- men fix things in the house such as cars, houses, shoes
- men pay for the house and pay the bills for the family/ buy the house or build the house for the family
- men have more responsibilities than women
- men help the women and take care of his children
- men pay school fees for his children

***Additionally, statements to describe what it means to “act like a man” included:***

- provide/ be a provider/ be hardworking
- toughen up/ be brave
- take responsibility - for the house and family
- man up - don’t be shy/don’t show fear
- get a job and earn money
- help the family
- be powerful
- don’t be a sore loser/ be the better man/ be good/ be mature
- take charge

***Participants perceived the statement “acting like a woman” when said to a man to mean:***

- being jealous
- being too emotional
- not providing for the family

Some of the boys felt that a man should not cry, with one of them disclosing that he had not cried since 2016.

***Survey data from 21 and 16 participants who responded to the entry and exit surveys respectively showed that the program impacted such perceptions about masculinity:***

- Initially, 28% of the boys agreed that one needs to be tough to be a man. The proportion holding this perception had reduced to 13% at the end of the project.
- 62% of the boys initially agreed that it is “okay for men and boys to feel sad, talk about their feelings and to cry”. The proportion increased to 86.7% at the end of the project.
- At entry, 14% of the boys reported that they “definitely would” defend their reputation, with force if necessary, if someone insulted them. This proportion reduced to 6%.

Qualitative data from focus group discussions with Tier 2 participants conducted during implementation and at the end of the project further suggested improved perceptions of masculinity.

**One of the impacts that especially stood out regarding the participants' understanding of masculinity before and after the program concerned expression of emotions and feelings as highlighted in this comment:**

- “At first, everyone said, don’t cry, don’t show feeling in public, you will lose your reputation, someone might not respect you. [here] we learnt it’s ok to be emotional, to cry.”
- Others shared that before joining the program their understanding of masculinity was that “men are strong, and “they do not cry” but concluded after participating in the program that “the stereotype is wrong” and that “men have feelings and can cry too”.

### **Perceptions about treatment of women and girls**

**At baseline, participants' endorsement of statements associated with unhealthy and harmful treatment of women and girls was relatively low and decreased further by the end of the program:**

- At entry, 90% of the boys definitely agreed that they “should respect the women in their lives” and all participants agreed with this statement at the end of the program.
- 90% and 100% of the survey participants respectively at the start and at the end of the program respectively responded with “it is never ok” to the statement “Do you think it’s ok for a boy or man to share pictures, videos or texts online of a woman or girl that would embarrass or scare her”.
- Similarly, 90% vs 100% at entry and exit respectively responded with “it’s never ok” to the statement “do you think it’s okay for a boy or a man to treat a woman or girl in an aggressive way (for example, pushing, hitting or yelling at her) if he is angry with her?”.
- Initially, one participant thought that “it’s sometimes ok for a boy or man to treat a woman or girl in an aggressive or possessive way if he thinks it’s part of his culture”. Another participant thought that “it’s always ok for a man or boy to treat a woman or girl in an aggressive or possessive way if he thinks he has a reason for it”. In the exit survey however, all respondents rejected both statements.

At the same time, qualitative feedback highlighted that the participants found the program content beneficial in building their knowledge about how women and girls are often abused and disrespected.

**One participant commented:**

- “I didn’t know men hated women that much. All these things happening to women without men knowing. Men acting very bad to them.”

**Others emphasized that their behaviour and treatment of girls, among them their sisters, had changed as a direct result of participating in the program:**

- “Sometimes the way I talked to [girls] wasn’t nice. It has changed now. It has changed a lot.”
- “Yes. I have more respect for my older sister. Before I had it but here, I get lots more information about violence against women.”
- “The way I think, behave, talk to my parents, think about girls...everything’s changed.”

### **Perceptions about the role of women and girls**

At the start of the project, most Tier 2 participants pointed to various traditional gender roles when asked about their understanding of what it means to be a woman including the things that women do.

**They said for example:**

- men work and women stay home
- take care of children - look after the home, cook and clean and wear scarf to cover hair
- women wash clothes





- women change nappies and babysitting
- women help their daughters to get married or look for a husband for them
- women help children with education/homework, taking them to places like parks, beaches
- women are caring
- women take children to see relatives
- women give birth to children/babies

Moreover, 14.2% of the 21 entry survey participants agreed with the statement that “a woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and cook” and 28% agreed that changing nappies, giving children a bath and feeding children are the mother’s responsibility.

By the end of the project, attitudes and perceptions about the role of women and girls appeared to have shifted. For example, in the exit survey only two participants (12%) definitely agreed that a woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and cook, and the greater majority (81%) rejected the statement that taking care of the baby is a mother’s responsibility. Moreover, some of the boys reported increased awareness that “everyone is equal” and “chores are everyone’s responsibility” during the post-implementation discussion session.

Information obtained from discussions with the mothers attested to behaviour and attitudinal change among some of the boys with respect to aspects such as participation in household chores and reliance on their mothers for their needs.

**Some of the mothers stated for example:**

- “They [the boys] are helping with the cooking, and cleaning. They have become more helpful.”
- “I think they have more respect for their mothers.”
- “I can say 100% there is a difference. My sons are no longer insisting that I stay home to cater for their every need. Whenever I want to go somewhere, they tell me “mum please go [out of the house], it’s your right to do so, please go, you need to rest”. But before they used to nag and say, “we do not want you to go”. The younger kids are listening to the older one. So, it has changed my son and this change is impacting the whole family.”
- “I have seen a huge progress in my son’s behaviours and attitudes. They are always repeating some of the things they were taught in the program for example, “a person is like a house, when you construct it with a strong foundation it will last long, and an individual is the same way.”

While it was not possible to collect additional data regarding actual behaviour change, feedback from the mothers supports the assessment that the project contributed not only towards a shift in Tier 2 participants’ attitudes but also in their behaviours and practices.

**The role of boys in violence against women prevention efforts**

“Men hold more power, and nothing will change unless they are involved.”

**Tier 2 participant**

Fifteen of the twenty-one (71%) Tier 1 participants that responded to the entry survey definitely agreed that it is important for boys and men to be part of efforts to stop violence against women and girls, while fourteen (87%) exit survey respondents held the same perception. In addition, at least 50% of the boys interviewed at exit said they would be “very interested” in participating in activities and events that will promote equality and freedom from violence for women and girls in the Gosnells community. A similar proportion reported increased confidence about challenging violent and abusive behaviours. Improved awareness, interest and confidence about their role in violence prevention efforts was also reflected in some of the comments and statements made in

response to the open-ended questions included in the surveys and from discussion with the boys at the mid-term review and after the project ended.

- “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.”
- “Men hold more power, and nothing will change unless they are involved.”
- “This program has been six months... it won’t last forever, we need to remember these sessions, what we’ve learnt and how to apply them to our lives, tell others about it, and provide information to others, tell them how to respect each other, be a good person in society, how to do different things in society and how to be a better person, provide our knowledge to others.”

## School workshops with young people

Tier 3 consisted of a series of three workshops delivered to young people (males and females) in a school setting. Two schools - Lynwood Senior High School Intensive English Centre and Thornlie Australian Islamic College (AIC), participated in the workshops. The program content was also informed by the *Change the Story framework*.

**Workshop 1:** the aim was to increase young people’s understanding of gender and the role of society and culture in shaping gender expectations; and the concept of equality in relationships including the importance of shared control of resources and decision-making. Participants also reflected on women’s experiences in relation to gender stereotypes.



**Workshop 2:** focused on improving participants’ perceptions of the components of healthy relations; equipping them with skills for effective communication and conflict management; and identifying avenues for seeking help if concerned about unhealthy relations.



**Workshop 3** concentrated on increasing young people’s knowledge and understanding of the definitions and impact of family violence; bystander responsibility and skills for identifying situations where bystander intervention may be safe and appropriate; reflecting on campaigns and identifying strategies involved in campaigns to facilitate change around healthy relationships; the role of young people as advocates for positive change around respectful relations; and preventing violence against women.

### Increase in knowledge among young people

At Lynwood Senior High School, the workshops were held on three separate occasions with approximately twenty-six participants across all three workshops.

**Most workshop participants at Lynwood Senior High School had a good understanding of the concept of gender equality which notably increased by the end of the workshop series:**

- At the start of the first workshop 89% agreed that boys and girls should have the same value in society and should have the same opportunities. Nearly all (94%) participants agreed with the statement at the end;

- 89% disagreed that boys are naturally good at science and math, but girls are better suited to other school subjects, a proportion that increased to 94% at the end of the workshop;
- 83% and 89% of workshop participants respectively agreed at the start and at the end of the first workshop that women should be able to make their own decisions about how they want to live their lives.

Participants' understanding of the influence of the media and society on gender expectations, components of healthy relations and forms of abuse also improved.

**By the end of the third workshop series at Lynwood Senior High School:**

- 50% of participants agreed that being stopped from seeing one's family and friends by a partner is a form of abuse compared to 31% at the start of the session;
- 56% agreed that one person controlling all the money in a relationship can be a sign of abuse which was an increase from 44%;
- At least 80% disagreed that relationship abuse is always physical compared to 69% who initially agreed with the statement and 69% identified that violence against women has wider impacts than just the individual affected.

**In addition, participants reported increased knowledge and awareness about gender equality and violence against women:**

- "Women and men have the right to make their life choices."
- "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."
- "[I learnt that] violence is a serious problem"
- "I learnt that a lot of violence against the women is ongoing in the world and we can do something to eliminate it."

Surveys with young people at Thornlie AIC also demonstrated promising results along some measures. For example, all students at the end of the day disagreed with the statement "in some cultures it's ok for men to be violent towards women and we need to respect that." However, the survey results did not show positive knowledge growth (or attitude change) across all of the domains with some more rigid thinking particularly around gender stereotypes and gender roles remaining in place at the end of the sessions.

## Unintended positive outcomes

Some Tier 2 and 3 participants found the program beneficial as an opportunity to ask questions about dating, relationships and relationship ethics which they would not otherwise have asked because dating is not encouraged in their cultural communities. For Tier 2 participants, the bus rides home turned into learning sessions too as the boys discussed the day's topics amongst themselves and with the youth workers as noted by one of the youth workers.

- "I saw some change... especially when they get themselves into their own discussions, especially on the bus. You can tell what they were not aware of and what they learned from us. We achieved what we did in discussions...they tried to ensure each understood...checking each other."

**Other benefits of participating in the Strength2Strength project that Tier 2 participants highlighted included:**

**Building friendships and connections:**

Most Tier 2 participants repeatedly spoke about the opportunity that the project provided for interactions with peers from other cultural groups.

- "I met new people [through the program], it's not scary... [before] it used to be I'd only talk to people that my friends talked to."



Another added that one of the things that had changed since joining the Strength2Strength project was that he had formed friendships with boys of non-Arabic backgrounds. Feedback further suggested creation of bonds within the group whereby they perceived each other as brothers despite cultural differences. At the same time, other Tier 2 participants found it easier to express themselves because of the presence of peers from their own cultural and religious backgrounds. Mothers of Tier 2 participants emphasized the boys intermingling with peers from different cultures as one of the aspects they appreciated about the project.

### **Increased self-confidence:**

Over the project period, increased self-confidence among the boys was reported by the youth workers, the boys and their mothers.

- "...the boys are growing in trust and self-confidence, they can speak now, they used to be quiet when we asked thoughts, now they link with Gosnells youth service." (Youth worker).
- "At first my son did not want to participate. He was very shy. But later he said that he enjoyed attending all the sessions. He has become more confident." (Tier 2 mum).
- "The boys loved the program. They have become more confident. The boys are taking leadership. You know in a home it's important for them to learn to take leadership in the home. The boys are developing." (Tier 2 mum).
- "At first not many people talked to me but as soon as I started talking, I had some company." (Tier 2 participant).
- "This program helped me a lot in my personal life because we come here, we talk to others, we play games, we have discussions – like my communication skills were very down, in my country I didn't do anything I just watched videos. Here I get to speak to different people, they are human they have heart, they make their own choices, they are also very friendly." (Tier 2 participant)

### **Exposing CaLD boys to recreation and sporting opportunities:**

A large proportion of activities with Tier 2 participants involved sports and outdoor activities. Some key highlights included:

- Attending a Perth Wildcat's basketball game
- Soccer game with players from the Perth Glory women's team
- Excursions to a high ropes course
- Rock-climbing, ice-skating, in-house art and drumming sessions
- A special trip to country for cultural sharing with a Nyoongar staff member from StC partner agency SNAICC at a local national park

These activities boosted the boys' participation in the program and addressed the difficulty that CaLD boys experience accessing sporting activities; an issue that is recognised by the WA Department of Sport and Recreation and the Office of Multicultural Interests. All Tier 2 participants were supported to access the City of Gosnells' services for young people and were introduced in the months leading up to the program conclusion to the services and facilities in the area.

### **Linking CaLD young people to youth services:**

Strength2Strength staff worked hard to provide opportunities for integration between the S2S program participants and the community/youth programs available through the City. Staff partnered with the City of Gosnells Youth Services to hold a joint holiday activity on the 10th of July and provided a follow up visit on the 18th of July to inform participants about another program to consider attending. On 27 and 28 November, Youth Services staff provided Strength2Strength participants with information about two other programs and another youth space. Following this visit several of the participants attended a Youth Services program of their own volition due to links established the week before.

## Lessons learnt from working with boys and young people

### ***Valuable lessons also emerged from working with CaLD boys and young people including:***

- **Flexibility in project design is essential when engaging with CaLD boys in order to adapt to emerging needs:** Weekly feedback sessions assessing successes and challenges from the previous week's session allowed project staff to refine and adapt content according to the participants' needs. For example, it had become clear that supporting the boys through the difficult period of adolescence was a good way to encourage the development of healthy attitudes towards women, as it provided the space for reflection on what it meant to be a man. As the project progressed, the content was further broadened to include positive masculinity and what it means to be a leader in their community and guest speakers were invited for specific content. Some of the most engaging and successful sessions were on debates about relationship ethics and free flowing "men's business" discussions. Consequently, focus shifted away from "teaching" and more towards "teachable moments", where the boys were engaged in stimulating activities that provided the space for reflection. By adapting the program to emerging needs, participants can not only engage with the content but think critically about complex issues and apply them to their lives.
- **A rigorous process during recruitment is important:** reliance on existing networks and relationships worked well as a strategy for recruiting CaLD boys into the program. However, some of the participants put forward were not ready to be involved or receive information about DV/VAW as they were still experiencing trauma from events in their home country and as part of the refugee journey to Australia. It would be important for future projects to utilize a more rigorous, trauma-informed screening process during recruitment to ensure participants' suitability and readiness for involvement in a DV /VAW prevention project.
- **Working with CaLD male facilitators:** our experience suggests that working with a male facilitator of a similar cultural background as the young people would provide a useful frame of reference for them and enhance the extent that they relate with program content.

## Conclusion

The Strength2Strength project made important contributions towards addressing DV/VAW with CaLD communities. The Strength2Strength project successfully secured participation of men and boys in a DV/VAW prevention initiative while assessment of project impacts showed increased knowledge and awareness and notable changes in beliefs, attitudes and perceptions associated with DV/VAW across the three levels of implementation. Responses to survey questions with boys and young people further provide useful data about progress made so far to address community attitudes that support violence against women. It is encouraging, for example, that all Tier 2 participants rejected the perception that “sharing of pictures, videos and texts online to embarrass or scare women and girls is acceptable”, given that 1 in 5 Australians suffer image-based abuse (RMIT University, 2017).

The impacts of the project as discussed in this report demonstrate that influencing attitudinal change regarding violence against women and their children is possible through meaningful community engagement and leadership building. Further, the learnings generated during implementation have the potential to inform scaling up and replication of the project in other contexts.

***In addition to the key learnings presented in the report for each level of implementation, future replication efforts should consider the following:***

- **Planning and developing DV/VAW content in consultation with the community is essential:** The design of the Strength2Strength project was informed by the local context and prior experience working with the targeted groups. Through the bicultural workers, the program continually engaged with the families about content and activities for the young people. Engagement with the families ensured that cultural considerations, the Muslim faith of the majority of participants, and the refugee experience were considered in the design of the content and development of activities and that messages were clear and delivered in a culturally sensitive way which facilitated the success of the project.
- **Consultations and relationships building takes time:** Immigrant and refugee communities need to be consulted widely, and their voices and range of perspectives adequately acknowledged and considered in the design of DV/VAW prevention initiatives. Undertaking such meaningful consultations with the communities takes time. Although Save the Children’s long-term presence in the South East corridor provided the community with a sense of cultural safety, it was still difficult to secure participation from some of the targeted groups. Thus, building a strong relationship of trust with the communities may require significant effort and additional time depending on internal dynamics, histories and existing relationships between the organization and the communities. Consequently, it would be desirable that an element of relationship-building and consultations be built into the design and duration of a similar project to set the foundation for participation, content development in conjunction with the target populations and for recruitment of appropriate program participants.
- **Involving men and boys in primary prevention can serve multiple needs for CaLD communities:** The Strength2Strength project provided an opportunity for the boys to learn the Australian way life, interact with people outside their own culture, and participate in sports. For the men, the program was also identified as a culturally safe space for them to reflect, express their views, share their experiences as migrants and to get together as men in a way that they had not done. Both groups repeatedly spoke about their fellow participants as a “family”. Therefore, while the primary objective of the Strength2Strength project was to address prevention of violence against women, the value of the project for the participants extended beyond the intended objective to address needs such as exclusion and social isolation. It would thus be ideal to build activities into a primary prevention project that potentially support and address other needs experienced by CaLD communities as a to meaningfully and thoughtfully engage them in DV/VAW prevention.
- **Boys and young people as a priority in DV/VAW prevention in CaLD communities:** The achievements made with Tier 2 and 3 participants suggest that given the reality of funding limitations for most organizations, intensifying focus on boys and young people would achieve the greatest impacts in the long term. The boys and young people involved in the project exhibited openness and keenness to adapt to their new world and to challenge attitudes towards the gendered drivers among themselves.

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# Appendix

This Appendix provides project documents and documents directly used in the assessment of achievements and project impacts and does not include the wide range of documents developed over the project period.

The documents presented in the appendix are:

- a) Recruitment flyers for Tier 2 and 3.
- b) Survey questionnaires.
- c) Post-implementation interview and focus group discussion guides.





# Strength2Strength



**Save the Children**

**A new project supporting boys, young men and community leaders from diverse cultural backgrounds to lead the way in the City of Gosnells**

## **We're looking for boys and young men to build on the strength and pride in their communities.**

Save the Children is leading a 12-month strategic project aimed at supporting boys, young men and community leaders from Afghan, Arabic-speaking and Burundian backgrounds to develop and strengthen positive attitudes towards manhood, masculinity and healthy relationships.

We are looking for boys and young men from these communities, aged 11 to 16 and living in the City of Gosnells, to participate in a weekly after-school program that will challenge, support, engage and encourage them through a variety of activities including sports, music, digital media and community cultural practices.

The program kicks off at the beginning of Term II (1 and 2 May 2018) and includes a bus pick-up and drop-off service. Participants must be willing to commit to regular weekly attendance. Places are limited so get in quick!

**Tuesdays 4–5.30pm: ages 11–13**  
The Castle Youth Space  
21 Discovery Drive Thornlie (bus provided)

**Wednesdays 4–5.30pm: ages 14–16**  
Thornlie Community Centre  
14 Glenbrook Rd Thornlie (bus provided)

### **Why join this program?**

Participants will engage in a range of fun, challenging and stimulating activities, supported by a fantastic team of culturally competent staff who will encourage them to explore who they are, who they want to become, and the roles they can play in their communities. They'll learn to be leaders for change on important social issues in the City of Gosnells.

### **Know someone who'd be great for this program?**

To find out more or to enrol a participant, contact Laura Florisson, Senior Youth Worker, on 0419 641 539 or email [laura.florisson@savethechildren.org.au](mailto:laura.florisson@savethechildren.org.au) for a referral form.

Save the Children respectfully acknowledges that this project is delivered for and with the people of Gosnells, on the land of the Whadjuk Noongar people, and would not be possible without the support of:



[savethechildren.org.au](http://savethechildren.org.au)



# Strength2Strength



**Schools-Based  
workshops**

## Does your school want to lead the way on gender equality and respectful relationships?

As part of the Strength2Strength project, Save the Children is offering a series of FREE workshops to schools in the City of Gosnells that will build knowledge and skills around the importance of respectful relationships.

Delivered by two highly-skilled and engaging youth workers, the Strength2Strength Schools-Based Workshops will challenge students to examine, understand and challenge assumptions about gender, identity, power and control. They will encourage lively discussion, reference social issues and dynamics that will resonate with young people, and equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to be part of social change.

These workshops are specifically designed to be suitable for delivery in a culturally diverse school environment.

### Why the Strength2Strength Workshops?

- Tailored approach to workshops to suit the needs and dynamics at your school
- Peer to peer education
- Culturally competent, trauma-informed facilitation
- Culturally sensitive and inclusive workshop materials
- Recognition of the role culture can play in framing gender and relationships
- A strengths-based, empowerment approach to supporting education to reduce violence against women
- Diverse media and tools for facilitating engagement that respond to a range of learning styles

### Want this program to be delivered at your school?

To find out more or to book a workshop series, contact Laura Florisson on 0419 641 539 or email [laura.florisson@savethechildren.org.au](mailto:laura.florisson@savethechildren.org.au)

Save the Children respectfully acknowledges that the Strength2Strength project is delivered for and with the people of Gosnells, on the land of the Whadjuk Noongar people, and would not be possible without the support of:



Save the Children respectfully acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we work, and pays its respects to Elders past and present.



## Survey documents

### Strength2Strength Tier 2 survey

Age:	
Suburb:	Cultural background:

Perceptions of masculinity	
Q1	Do you think it's important for boys and men to have friends to talk about their problems? (GEMS)
	a) Yes, I definitely agree
	b) Yes, I mostly agree
	c) No, I mostly disagree
	d) No, I definitely disagree
	e) I'm not sure
Q2	If someone insulted you, would defend your reputation, with force if you felt it was necessary? (GEMS)
	a) Yes, I definitely would
	b) Yes, I mostly would
	c) No, I probably wouldn't
	d) No, I definitely wouldn't
	e) I'm not sure
Q3	Do you think that you need to be tough to be a man? (GEMS)
	a) Yes, I definitely agree
	b) Yes, I mostly agree
	c) No, I mostly disagree
	d) No, I definitely disagree
	e) I'm not sure
Q4	Do you think it's ok for boys and men to feel sad, to talk about their feelings and to cry?
	a) Yes, It's definitely ok
	b) Yes, it's mostly ok
	c) No, it's mostly not ok
	d) No, it's definitely not ok
	e) I'm not sure

Q5	Do you think that fighting between boys or between men (for example, at school, outside nightclubs, in sporting clubs or on sporting fields) is normal and just "what men do" or "what boys do"
	a) Yes, I definitely agree
	b) Yes, I mostly agree
	c) No, I mostly disagree
	d) No, I definitely don't agree
	e) I don't know/not sure
<b>Role of women and girls</b>	
Q6	Do you think that a woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook? (GEMS)
	a) Yes, I definitely agree
	b) Yes, I mostly agree
	c) No, I mostly disagree
	d) No, I definitely disagree
	e) I'm not sure
Q7	Do you think that changing nappies, giving children a bath and feeding children are the mother's responsibility? (GEMS)
	a) Yes, I definitely agree
	b) Yes, I mostly agree
	c) No, I mostly disagree
	d) No, I definitely disagree
Q8	Do you think a man should have the final say about decisions in the home? (GEMS)
	a) Yes, I definitely agree
	b) Yes, I mostly agree
	c) No, I mostly disagree
	d) No, I definitely disagree
	e) I'm not sure
Q9	Do you think the participation of the father is important in raising children? (GEMS)
	a) Yes, I definitely agree
	b) Yes, I mostly agree
	c) No, I mostly disagree
	d) No, I definitely disagree
	e) I'm not sure

Q10	Do you think that for a girl or a woman to have respect from men, she has to behave, dress or act in a certain way?
	a) Yes, I definitely agree
	b) Yes, I mostly agree
	c) No, I mostly disagree
	d) No, I definitely disagree
	e) I'm not sure
<b>Treatment of women and girls</b>	
Q11	Do you think it's ok for a boy or man to share pictures, videos or texts online about a woman or girl that would embarrass or scare her?
	a) Yes, it's always ok
	b) Yes, sometimes it is ok
	c) No, it is mostly not ok
	d) No, it is never ok
	e) I don't know
Q12	Do you think it is ok for a boy or man to treat a girl or woman in an aggressive way (for example, pushing, hitting or yelling at her) if he is angry with her?
	a) Yes, it's always ok
	b) Yes, sometimes it is ok
	c) No, it is mostly not ok
	d) No, it is never ok
	e) I don't know
Q13	Do you think it's ok for a boy or man to treat a girl or woman in an aggressive or possessive way if he thinks he has a reason for it (like "I was really angry", or "she was asking for it", or "she has to do what I say")?
	a) Yes, it's always ok
	b) Yes, sometimes it is ok
	c) No, it is mostly not ok
	d) No, it is never ok
	e) I don't know
Q14	Do you think it's ok for a boy or man to treat a girl or woman in an aggressive or possessive way if he thinks it is part of his culture?
	a) Yes, it's always ok
	b) Yes, sometimes it is ok

	c) No, it is mostly not ok
	d) No, it is never ok
	e) I don't know
Q15	Do you think you should respect the girls and women in your life (like your mother, sisters, female friends)?
	a) Yes, I definitely agree
	b) Yes, I mostly agree
	c) No, I mostly disagree
	d) No, I definitely disagree
	e) I don't know
<b>Agent for change</b>	
Q16	Do you think that laws protecting girls and women in Australia are more important than individual family or cultural traditions?
	a) Yes, the law is definitely the most important thing to consider
	b) Yes, the law is usually the most important thing to consider
	c) No, the law isn't usually the most important thing to consider
	d) No, the law definitely isn't the most important thing to consider
	e) I don't know
Q17	Do you think it's important for girls and women to be able to make important decisions about their own lives without having to get permission from a man?
	a) Yes, I definitely agree
	b) Yes, I mostly agree
	c) No, I mostly disagree
	d) No, I definitely disagree
	e) I don't know
Q18	Do you think it's important for boys and men to be part of efforts to stop violence against women and girls?
	a) Yes, I definitely agree
	b) Yes, I mostly agree
	c) No, I mostly disagree
	d) No, I definitely disagree
	e) I don't know
Q19	If you saw a friend be violent to a woman or a girl, do you think you would question or challenge his actions?
	a) Yes, I definitely would

	b) Yes, I might
	c) No, don't think I would
	d) No, I definitely would not
	e) I don't know
Q20	Are you interesting in participating in activities and events that will promote equality and freedom from violence for women and girls in the Gosnells community?
	a) Yes, I'm very interested
	b) Yes, I'm a bit interested
	c) No, I'm not that interested
	d) No, I'm definitely not interested
	e) I don't know

## Strength2Strength Workshop 1 survey

Participant gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Age:
Suburb:	Cultural background:

1. Different messages about gender in the media (TV, magazines, advertising etc) can influence how boys and girls act.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
2. Boys are naturally good at science and math, but girls are better suited to other school subjects.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
3. Boys and girls should have the same value in society and should have the same opportunities.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
4. Gender stereotypes can limit and restrict how we feel we can live our lives.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
5. True strength is being able to handle your problems alone and not ever having to ask for help.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
6. Women should be able to make their own decisions about how they want to live their life.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
6. Who can you contact if you are concerned about an unhealthy relationship involving you or someone you know?  

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(questions for final survey)

What is something you learnt from today's workshop?

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What did you enjoy about today's workshop?

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## Strength2Strength Workshop 2 survey

Participant gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Age:
Suburb:	Cultural background:

1. Everyone in a relationship has the right to feel loved, safe, and able to make their own decisions.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
2. In a relationship it's fine if your partner tells you who you can and can't spend time with.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
3. In a relationship it doesn't matter if your partner respects your views and opinions.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
4. It's okay if your partner feels scared because of the way you communicate with them.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
5. You can ask for what you want or need in a relationship and still treat the other person with respect.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
7. Who can you contact if you are concerned about an unhealthy relationship involving you or someone you know?

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(questions for final survey)

What is something you learnt from today's workshop?

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What did you enjoy about today's workshop?

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## Strength2Strength Workshop 3 survey

Participant gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Age:
Suburb:	Cultural background:

1. Being stopped from seeing your family and friends by your partner is a form of abuse.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
2. In a relationship, one person controlling all of the money can be a sign of abuse.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
3. Relationship abuse is always physical.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
4. Women are more likely than men to experience domestic violence and sexual assault.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
5. There is never a good reason for violence against women.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
6. Violence against women only affects the women being abused and doesn't impact on anyone else.  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know
7. If I know there is violence against women going on in my community or with someone I know, it's none of my business and there is nothing I can do about it. .  
 True  
 False  
 I don't know

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(questions for final survey)

What is something you learnt from today's workshop?

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What did you enjoy about today's workshop?

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## Post-implementation review

### Focus group discussion guide for Tier 1 (men)

#### Introduction

Thank you again for agreeing to this interview. This interview will take approximately 1hr. Please note that all your responses will be kept confidential. I shall be taking notes during the interview. We shall not include your name in our report unless you wish for us to do so. Your participation is voluntary and if you feel uncomfortable or distressed at any point in this interview, we can stop, and you won't experience any penalty for stopping. If you experience any distress regarding any of the topics we discuss and would like to see someone about that, I can provide you with contacts details of organizations that can offer you support. Do you have any questions?

#### Background

- How would you summarise your understanding of the Strength2Strength project?
- What motivated you to participate in the program?
- How many sessions did you participate in? (probe for reasons why they did not participate in all the sessions)
- how did you feel about the group discussions?
- what did you think about the facilitation of the group?
- what did you like about the group discussions?
- What could have been improved?
- Did you feel you could speak freely?
- Did you find all the sessions easy to understand?
- Were there any topics that you disagreed with?
- In your view what worked well about the project?
- What could have worked better about the project?

#### Engaging men in the prevention of violence against women

- What have the results/effects of attending the sessions been for you? (Have you utilized the knowledge and skills from the program in any way? In what ways?)
- How would you describe your level of understanding of DV prevention– would you say you had a basic, medium or advanced understanding of DV prevention?
- Did your participation in the program change your views and attitudes about domestic violence? (Probe for what the attitudes were before the start of the program).
  - Did it change your view of the role of men in relation to violence against women? In what way?
  - Did it change your view of how men can help prevent violence?
- What do you think about the way the issue of domestic violence is addressed in Australia?
  - Is it different back home?
  - Can you share any stories about how violence is discussed or prevented back home?
- I heard that settlement experiences were discussed often in the group sessions, was that so?
  - How do you think these settlement experiences affect the role men can play in the prevention of violence?
- How would you suggest that we involve your community in DV prevention in future?
- Are there any resources that would be useful for community leaders in helping to prevent DV?
- Do you think engaging religious communities to help prevent DV would be a good way to address the issue?
- Do you have any further information you'd like to share?

## Post-implementation review for Tier 2 participants - discussion guide

### **Tier 2 participants**

Date - 9th October 2019

#### **Questions**

- What was the strength2Strength program about?
- Before Joining the Strength2Strength project, what did you know about:
  - masculinity
  - gender equality
  - treatment of women and girls
  - role of women and girls
- What did you learn from the Strength2Strength project?
- what would you tell your peers who did not participate about the program?
- How else was the Strength2Strength project important to you?

### **Mothers**

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> October

#### **Questions**

- In your knowledge what was the Strength2Strength about?
- What questions did you have when you heard about the program? Were your questions adequately addressed?
- What did your son/sons say about the program?
- What have been the results of your son's attendance of the program? Do you think your son is utilizing the knowledge from the program? In what way?
- What worked well? What would have been done better?
- Do you have any further information you would like to share?





**Save the Children**

**33 Lincoln Square South, Carlton, VIC 3053  
1800 76 00 11 | [info@savethechildren.org.au](mailto:info@savethechildren.org.au)**

**[SAVETHECHILDREN.ORG.AU](http://SAVETHECHILDREN.ORG.AU)**