

**Alcohol misuse, Fatherhood and its impact on families and children in
Buganda and Busoga**

Presented by

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Background

- Alcohol misuse is often intertwined with cultural and social norms that can perpetuate cycles of harm within families by mostly weakening fatherhood role.
- Drinking is normalized and even celebrated, with social gatherings frequently centering around alcohol consumption.
- Families affected by alcohol dependence often experience increased conflict, emotional distress, and financial instability, which can strain relationships and diminish parental support.
- Children in these environments may face neglect, exposure to domestic violence, or emotional trauma, leading to long-term psychological effects and challenges in their own social development.

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- REAL Fathers program is a community-driven, mentoring that seeks to;
- equip early fathers with ability to increase use of positive parenting techniques.
- Develop healthy gender-equitable r/ships in families.
- Stop IPV



Methodology

- Under the REAL Fathers mentoring program, social norms exploration exercise was conducted using qualitative approach in Kamuli and Buikwe districts.
- The participants were young fathers, their wives and Reference groups/influencers that included mothers and fathers of young fathers, maternal uncles, paternal grandmothers, older brothers and health workers.

Findings: Social norms around alcohol misuse

- Alcohol is often integral to cultural and social celebrations, such as weddings, funerals, and community gatherings.
- It is seen as a means of fostering community bonds and hospitality, making it a common feature of social interactions.
- Heavy drinking is associated with masculinity. Most men may feel societal pressure to drink to demonstrate strength or resilience, which can lead to patterns of excessive consumption that are normalized within the community.
- There is also stigma associated with seeking help for alcohol-related problems. Individuals struggling with alcohol misuse may be reluctant to seek support due to fears of judgment or loss of status within the community.
- Elders often set examples for younger generations regarding alcohol use. Their drinking behaviours and attitudes can influence norms, leading to either irresponsible consumption or the normalization of heavy drinking.

Findings: Impact of alcohol misuse on families and children

- Husbands return home when they are drunk and irresponsibly demand for sex from their wives under the influence of alcohol leading to sexual, emotional and sexual violence.
- Most men misuse family income and other resources, and become violent when they are asked for money to buy family needs.
- Violence mostly occurs during harvest time; this is because men sell off family produce to meet alcoholic needs.
- Heavy alcohol consumption is also linked to multiple sexual partnering with its associated effects such as sexually transmitted infections/diseases and divorce.
- Most fathers come back home very late due to delays in drinking joints and leave home very early in the morning when their children are sleeping thus have no time to engage in the care.
- In a situation of couple separation, children left behind are mistreated by their step mothers, because fathers are absent

Conclusions

- Cultural and social norms often frame alcohol use as a symbol of male bonding and stress relief, creating a culture where alcohol consumption is normalised among fathers.
- Frequent alcohol consumption impairs a father's ability to engage in responsible parenting, leading to absenteeism, emotional unavailability, and increased risk of domestic violence.
- The instability caused by alcohol misuse disrupts family dynamics, weakens emotional bonds, and perpetuates cycles of poverty and dysfunction.
- there is a pressing need to challenge and reshape these harmful social norms.
- By promoting responsible fatherhood and addressing alcohol's negative impacts, we can foster healthier family environments, ensure the well-being of children, and break the cycle of harm for future generations.

Recommendations

- Community and cultural dialogue focusing on transforming negative social norms that perpetuate alcohol misuse.
- Creative multi-media campaign to shift norms with members of the reference group (community radio, Art murals and posters with norms change messages).
- Work with LGs, cultural and religious institutions to transform negative norms that promote alcohol misuse.
- Mentorship program for young people