



# ME, HER, THEM Program – CORE Community Services



Dads and kids on the bus home from the zoo excursion

## When and how did it start? Who attends the program?

The *Me, Her and Them* (MHT) program is a seven-week program for Arabic-speaking fathers and their families. The program was an initiative of the Safer Relationships Project which was formulated in 2016.

The aim of the project was to address issues of domestic violence in the Fairfield Local Government Area (LGA) in a new and innovative way, specifically by challenging the attitudes that are directly linked to domestic violence. It set out to do this in a culturally appropriate and gentle manner with the aim of increasing gender equitable relations in the homes and reducing the use of violent and controlling behaviour.

The program aims to prevent the use of domestic violence through challenging gender norms and encouraging men to play a more active role in the caretaking of their children and other household responsibilities. The program allows men to meet in a safe space to learn and



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share their views. The program consists of male-only educational workshops which include experiential activities that allow them to see things from the perspective of their wives and partners, an excursion for the men and their children to give them an opportunity to bond, a parenting session for the participants and their wives and a barbeque for the men, their wives and children. *Me, Her and Them* is not a program for perpetrators.

## What do fathers and their children gain from the program?

A series of activities were designed to be interactive and educational, with no lectures or prescriptive content. A safe place was created so men could talk openly and honestly. The activities allowed the participants to visualise and experience gender inequality, putting themselves in the shoes of women and children, question their current attitudes towards women and men and their roles in the family and in society.



Participants sing together whenever they get the chance



# **ME, HER, THEM**

## **Program – CORE**

### **Community**

### **Services**

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## **Considerations to be had when preparing a program like Me, Her, Them**

### **Support and reporting**

The *Me, Her and Them* program might bring back memories of painful experiences for some participants. Facilitators must know about available support services to refer participants to those services if needed. If a participant discloses information that the facilitator feels is a risk of harm to anyone, it is important to explain to the person that disclosed that they are legally obligated to report the issue to appropriate authorities. This may include situations in which a facilitator is told of abuse by the perpetrator, or when abuse or neglect is suspected. While *Me, Her and Them* is not a program for perpetrators, it is possible that perpetrators may be in attendance. Facilitators need to be observant and talk to the Program Coordinator if they have any concerns.

### **Relevance**

It is important that participants see how the *Me, Her and Them* program is relevant to their lives. If they don't, they are unlikely to remain motivated to participate and will not learn from the program. It is helpful to explain the relevance of activities as they are happening. It is also a good idea to create opportunities for feedback from participants about the relevance of what they are learning.

### **Energy**

It is important to pay attention to and keep up the energy levels during the program. If energy is low, participants are less likely to engage and will not learn from the activities. They may be bored and decide not to continue to attend the program. Facilitators should use energizer games if the energy drops.

### **Learning by doing**

Research has shown that we remember 20% of what we hear, 40% of what we see, and 80% of what we do. People learn best when they are active in their own learning. This is why all the activities of this program are interactive and require people to actively participate rather than just sit back and listen.



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Daughter helps her dad do archery

## What has core learnt about engaging with dads from migrant and refugee backgrounds by running the program?

*Me, Her and Them* (MHT) was successful in terms of participants holding more gender equitable attitudes following the program. Attendance levels and the high level of passionate interaction tell us that the program was well liked by the participants. All the participants of MHT said they would like more sessions that explore other topics. A number of men continued to attend subsequent MHT programs.



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## **What recommendations do you have for service providers/facilitators when planning programs for men?**

1. To better measure the outcomes, future programs should include a follow up with participants three months after the program to complete the survey one last time. This will demonstrate whether the attitudinal change lasts.
2. Funding can perhaps be allocated to training for bilingual facilitators in parenting strategies rather than hiring a guest speaker to do this part of the project. This means the content can be adapted specifically to the group and their needs.



Participants doing the Privilege Walk