



Responsible Relationships

Australian Red Cross

Throughout May and June 2014, the Vanuatu National U17 Boys Cricket team will participate in a pilot four week Respectful Relationships program that ultimately seeks to prevent violence against women (VAW). This program has been developed by Live and Learn Vanuatu (LLV) in partnership with the Australian Volunteers for International Development program and a grant from Australian Red Cross. While there are many programs that aim to promote the inclusion and empowerment in the Ni-Vanuatu context, few have worked with boys and men specifically, particularly in the prevention of violence against women (VAW) Respectful Relationships is a four-week pilot program that seeks to challenge the attitudes and behaviours that contribute to, perpetuate, or cause VAW.

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Background

Recent years have seen a shift in the focus of violence prevention from women and girls as victims and survivors, to men and boys, not simply as potential perpetrators but also as potential active bystanders and change makers. It is commonly accepted that the causes of VAW are gender inequality and traditional notions of masculinity. It follows, then, that any program that seeks to reduce or prevent VAW must promote gender equality and provide alternate and broader concepts of masculinity. Throughout May and June In 2011, the Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) conducted a survey exploring the prevalence of violence against women in Vanuatu. It found that 60% of the women surveyed had experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a partner at some point in their lives, while 45% had experienced physical and/or sexual violence within the previous 12 months. Of those women who had experienced violence, 90% experienced 'severe' violence, such as being punched, kicked, choked, burnt or hit with a hard object. As with all physical violence, it was accompanied by significant levels of emotional abuse and control. 41% of the women surveyed have been injured at least three times in their life as a result of physical or sexual violence from their partner. Moreover, 48% had lost consciousness at least once, and 21% now have a permanent disability. Significant rates of non-partner violence were also recorded in this survey, with 28% of women having experienced physical violence, and 33% having experienced sexual violence at the hands of a non-partner. There was no significant difference in violence rates between rural and urban areas.

Innovation

The Respectful Relationships program was developed through two key phases. The first was an extensive consultation phase that included the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), UN Women, Oxfam, CARE International, and the State Prosecutor's Office. The second phase was a review of similar programs and resources that have been implemented elsewhere. This included the Live and Learn Solomon Islands 'Men against Violence against Women' program, the 'Rugby League against Violence' program in Papua New Guinea, the East Timor Justice Sector Support Facility 'Working with Men Pilot Program' and many of the Partners for Prevention online resources. These two phases ensured that the program was context specific, best practice and was supported by the key agencies throughout Vanuatu. Previous attempts to work with men and boys to prevent VAW, however, have shown that there is benefit to not introducing concepts of violence from the beginning, as an attempt to avoid defensiveness from the participants. Therefore, the first two weeks do not speak about violence at all, but rather focus on issues that relate specifically to the participants, such as decision-making, roles and expectations in the community and household, and what it means to be a man. The following two sessions then explore sexual relationships and consent, sexual and reproductive health, and family violence, all of which link back to the concept of a 'good man'. Vanuatu context, few have worked with boys and men specifically, particularly in the prevention of VAW.

Partnerships

Luke Ablett is in Vanuatu through the Australian Volunteers for International Development program, an Australian Government initiative. His assignment is supported by Australian Red Cross. He played 133 games with the Sydney Swans Football Club, including the 2005 Premiership, and previously worked on the AFL's Respect and Responsibility program, working with men in Australian Football to prevent violence against women.

Sustainability

The program is discussion and activity based, with no PowerPoint or audio/visual equipment required. Each of the four sessions will run for approximately one hour. The program will be delivered by two staff members, one male and one female, from Wan Smol Bag (WSB), a theatre, youth and sports centre, based in Port Vila.