

My journey from renowned community fighter to a father and friend of my children

The Esanyu Mu Maka parenting program aimed at helping us learn how to relate well with our children. Before this program, I did not know how to raise a child in a positive and supportive manner. I was a renowned fighter throughout the entire village and everyone knew me for solving conflicts in a violent way. At home it was the same, I would use the stick a lot because I was raised by a father who used to beat us, so I grew up thinking it was always the solution to disciplining.

This changed when I joined the parenting program. Several sessions in the program open one's eyes and mind to recognize the adverse effects of the humiliation, loneliness and anger suffered by children when they are beaten and shouted at. This makes them withdraw. It is worse if they have been staying in a child care institution like my 11year old twins who were taken to the institution at 3years and returned 9years later when they are 11.

It takes concern to appreciate that they have unique needs. That is where the parenting support by TPO Uganda was invaluable. I had never taken time to sit with Ssali and Katumba (11year twins) since they returned from the institution to understand what changes they were undergoing. The parenting program challenged me as a father to find time to bond with all my children and have as a result learnt a lot from their openness.

Now every time Katumba comes home, he wants me to check on his work from school. This always gives us a special moment to talk and praise each other as taught in the parenting program. He is free and talks to me about what happens in his life which was not the case before. Before I did not have time for my children but now I create the time to sit and chat and he can now tell me anything freely. The EMM parenting facilitator taught my wife and I to praise each other too which has increased happiness and respect in my household.

**Testimony by Joel Kabugo
Beneficiary of the Essanyu Mu Maka parenting program**