



NIGERIA: FATHERS CLUBS STUDY FINDINGS

ENGAGING MEN IN THE MNCH/SRHR CONTINUUM OF CARE

Strengthening Health Outcomes for Women and Children (SHOW) Project

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the gender-transformative, multi-country Strengthening Health Outcomes for Women and Children (SHOW) Project, Plan International implemented a male-engagement strategy in Bangladesh, Ghana, Haiti, Nigeria, and Senegal from 2017-19 to promote positive masculinities and engage men in the continuum of Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) care and in Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). In Nigeria, Plan International established 244 Fathers Clubs and engaged 4,148 fathers in twenty reflective sessions to broaden their understanding on gender equality, enable them to question what it means to be a man and a father and to promote their equitable involvement at the household level, and provide them with safe space where men can identify and reflect on challenges related to MNCH/SRH and develop solutions within the group.

This brief presents the results of Plan International's 2019 qualitative study on the effects of Fathers Clubs intervention among the targeted men in Nigeria. The study findings revealed positive change among Fathers Clubs participants who began to demonstrate more engagement in the continuum of care and positive masculinities supportive of women and girls' empowerment. Reports of changed attitudes, new communication styles, uptake of new, non-traditional household care activities, and abandonment of some harmful behaviours were all documented by women, adolescent girls and boys, community leaders, and by Fathers Clubs participants themselves.

In Nigeria, positive changes included male engagement in household work and childcare, particularly to provide relief for pregnant women. Men demonstrated positive attitudes

towards playing a more active role in the care and household work, though there were indications that some roles were regarded as belonging to women and that men considered their involvement as "help". While gender-based violence was not discussed directly by participants, there were reports by women of reduced arguments between intimate partners, combined with improved communication between spouses. Most notably, participants described an increase in male support for maternal, infant, and child health, with support for women's access to medical care during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum. All respondents discussed improved family dynamics, including greater physical presence and engagement, with reports of, improved harmony, bonding, and love within the household, between men and women, and between fathers and their children.

Relationships between fathers and daughters notably improved, with reports of more men enrolling their daughters into school. Almost all participants believed these behaviours would be lasting, with some women hoping and praying that they would, introducing a sense of some precarity. Community and family resistance to this shift in gender roles in the form of stigma was remarked upon, although participants widely reported their motivation to continue to see the rewards of this change far outweighed this deterrent, and participants of all categories spoke of the social diffusion of these positive practices among community members and between fathers and children. Men, women, adolescent girls and boys and community members all directly attributed these changes to Fathers Clubs and to the importance of sustained groups and networks for continuing to spread this way of living based on gender equality.

1. INTRODUCTION

Under its gender-transformative Strengthening Health Outcomes for Women and Children (SHOW) Project, Plan International implemented a male-engagement strategy in Nigeria from 2017–19. The project aimed to promote positive masculinities and engage men in the continuum of Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (MNCH) care and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). This innovative approach consists of 20 reflective sessions facilitated by trained local male facilitators, supporting groups of husbands and male partners to transform attitudes and behaviors that harm women and children and promote gender-equitable relationships between couples. In January 2019, Plan International led a qualitative study to gauge the impact of the Fathers Clubs interventions. The study found positive change among Fathers Club participants who began to demonstrate more engaged and positive masculinities supportive of women's and girls' empowerment. This document presents the overall theory of change and gender equality strategy for the SHOW Project, a synopsis of the Fathers Clubs approach, as well as the main findings of the qualitative study.

1.1. SHOW PROJECT

Strengthening Health Outcomes for Women and Children (SHOW) is a CAD 65 million multi-country², multi-year (Jan 2016–Sept 2020) gender-transformative project funded by Global Affairs Canada. It is aligned with the UN's Every Woman Every Child global strategy to help drive progress towards reaching Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 5. SHOW's ultimate objective is to contribute to the reduction of maternal and child mortality amongst vulnerable women and children, including adolescent girls, in targeted remote, underserved regions of Bangladesh, Ghana, Haiti, Nigeria, and Senegal. In Nigeria, the project is implemented in all 23 Local Government Authorities of Sokoto State.

1.2. THEORY OF CHANGE

The SHOW project uses a three-pronged gender-transformative theory of change to improve the demand, supply, and accountability of MNCH/SRHR² services.

DEMAND

Improves the use of essential health services by women of reproductive age, adolescent girls, newborns and children under 5

Addresses the root causes of low demand for MNCH/SRHR services based on socio-economic and gender-related barriers

SUPPLY

Improves the knowledge and skills of health workers in MNCH/SRHR to make services gender responsive and adolescent-friendly

To strengthening health governance through gender equitable and inclusive health management committees, and safe and affordable referrals

ACCOUNTABILITY

Reliable, timely and quality including sex and age disaggregated health information based on better skills and an evidence-based culture that promotes informed, transparent decision-making and increased efficiency of clinic management and MNCH / SRH budgets

1.3. GENDER ANALYSIS – NIGERIA

Rigid gender norms are strongly rooted among the communities in Sokoto, Nigeria. There is a very strict patriarchal hierarchy in the household, whereby the husband/father is the master and ultimate-decision maker. There is a stark division of labor along gender lines where men are expected to have the role in earning a livelihood for the family and women destined to take care of the household under the authority of her husband. Women/wives are responsible for reproductive tasks such as cooking, housekeeping, and

1. Bangladesh, Ghana, Haiti, Nigeria, and Senegal

2. Maternal, New born and Child Health (MNCH) and Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (SRHR)

child care, as well as some productive tasks like milling grain, while men are responsible for farming and feeding the family. Some tasks are performed jointly by husbands and wives, such as some child care or rice milling. The girls work with their mothers at their chores, while the boys help their fathers with farming and other chores such as fetching firewood. Polygamy is commonly practiced, with the hierarchy of senior/junior wives and their children. Girls tend to be married off by their parents at a very early age, where fathers and fathers' brothers control the final choice of the husband. Women's mobility is restricted, and they need their husband's permission, for example, to go to the hospital, and are almost always accompanied by their husband or, in case of an adolescent girl, parents. Early marriage of girls and adolescent pregnancies are the norm in these communities. Women mostly do not participate in community-level bodies and they have little or no decision-making power at the household and community levels. The patriarchal norms determine that decision making in most domains, including MNCH, is controlled by the husband. These communities also report widespread domestic violence but have responses and services available through family or community channels³.



The SHOW baseline survey in the intervention areas asked about support from male family members during pregnancy, and during and after delivery, in terms of accessing family planning services, and breastfeeding. In the intervention areas in Nigeria, 53.5 percent of adolescent girls, 58 percent of adult women, and 52.3 percent of men reported that the level of support provided to the women had been very good. When asked about the level of male support in terms of delivery at the facility, 33.4 percent of adolescent girls, 32.3 percent of adult women, and 39.5 percent of men reported that the level of support was very good. 29 percent of adolescent girls, 23.7 percent of adult women, and 33.2 percent of men reported that a very good level of male support was received by the women in terms of receiving PNC service within two days of delivery. For support in accessing family planning methods, 4.2 percent of adolescent girls, 6.4 percent of adult women, and 5.3 percent of men responded that the support provided to the women was very good. The level of support was very good in the case of breastfeeding mothers, as responded by 54 percent of adolescent girls, 52.5 percent of adult women, and 54.3 percent of men. It is apparent that for Nigeria, the lowest level of male support was for family planning.⁴

1.4. GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

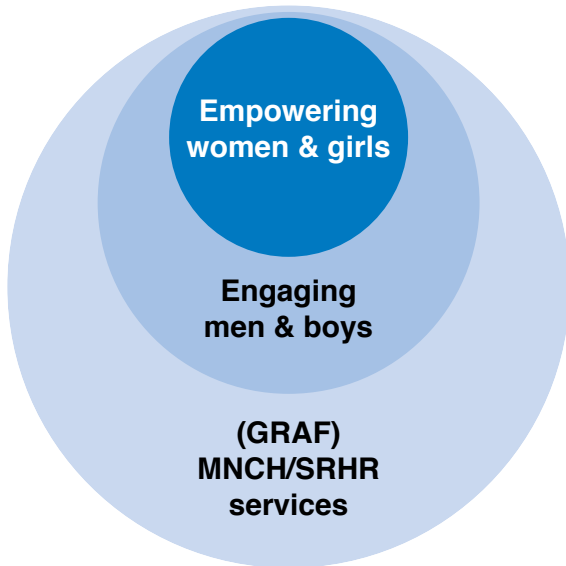
From the outset, the SHOW project is implemented through strategic partnerships with the Government of Nigeria's Ministry of Health and Ministry of Women Affairs and the Sokoto State Government. The project formed a deeper collaboration with the Sokoto State Ministry of Health, Sokoto State Ministry of Women Affairs, and State Primary Health Care Development Agency (SPHCDA) to roll out several interventions. Male engagement in gender equality has not been very pronounced in the government's MNCH/SRHR programs, but the positive early results of the approach have generated Sokoto state government support and interest in developing their internal capacity on male engagement through collaboration with the SHOW project.

Based on the socio-ecological model, the SHOW Project's comprehensive Gender Equality Strategy has three interconnected pillars targeting the structural and systemic norms upholding the gender inequalities. These pillars were further contextualized to address specific gender barriers, as identified in Nigeria's gender assessment. As a gender-transformative project, SHOW integrates gender equality across every aspect of its implementation as well as takes targeted gender-specific actions to address the unequal

3. Gender Equality Assessment Report 2016 – SHOW Sokoto Nigeria

4. SHOW Baseline Report, July 2016

power relationships and the root causes of inequalities in the target localities to improve the social status and condition of women and girls. The project's three intersecting gender-transformative strategies, tailored to Nigeria's socio-cultural specificities, aimed to mutually reinforce each other are briefly described below:



- **Strategy 1: Empowering women & girls**
Strengthening the individual and collective agency of women and adolescent girls by increasing their knowledge of their rights, about gender equality, MNCH/SRHR, building their leadership roles and capacities, networks, and support structures, strengthening their economic capacities and decision-making power within and outside the family for the improved use of MNCH/SRHR services.
- **Strategy 2: Engaging men & boys**
Increasing the engagement of men and boys in MNCH/SRHR by fostering positive masculinities through targeted male family members' engagement in reflective dialogues and action Social Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) related interventions, and engagement of male and female community influencers such as traditional and religious leaders.
- **Strategy 3: MNCH/SRH services**
Strengthening the delivery of Gender Responsive and Adolescent Friendly (GRAF) MNCH/SRH services through health system strengthening and capacity building of community and facility-based health providers.

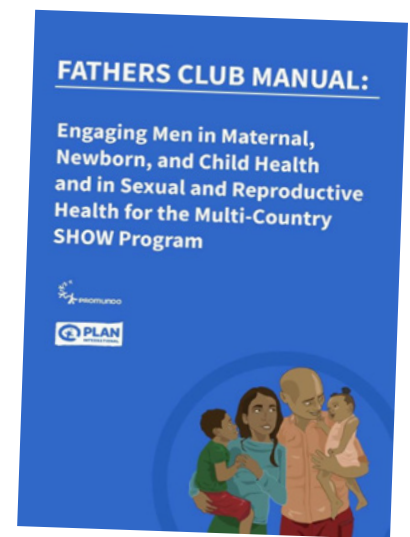
The robust male engagement approach, under the gender equality strategy, was designed to address the root causes of gender inequalities and transform unequal gender power relations that act as barriers for women and adolescent girls to access MNCH/SRHR services. Engaging men is one of the essential components for improving women's and girls' access to and use of MNCH/SRH services. Plan International defines 'men's engagement' in MNCH/SRHR as "the active participation of men in protecting and promoting the health and well-being of their partners and children."⁵ This definition is based on a vision of lasting change in attitudes, behavior, and relationships. Therefore, recognizing the vital role of men in the health of women and children, the SHOW project's male-engagement approach aims to promote and increase the active participation of men and adolescent boys along the MNCH/SRHR continuum of care as partners and beneficiaries of gender equality.

2. THE FATHERS CLUBS APPROACH

The SHOW Project's Fathers Clubs approach was jointly conceptualized by Plan International Canada and Promundo US⁵. It enables groups of men to undergo a gender transformative and extended reflective journey of unlearning harmful gender norms and adopting positive masculinities. This approach comprised of the following three components: a) Development of the Fathers Clubs Manual, b) Training/mentoring of community-based male facilitators, and c) Recruitment of self-selected male groups that are willing to undergo all sessions.

2.1. CONTENT

The Fathers Clubs Manual sets out 20 one-hour interactive gender-transformative sessions that take fathers through a six-unit journey (see below). Fathers gradually gain an understanding of how gender-inequitable norms negatively impact



5. Comrie-Thomson L, Mavhu W, Makungu C, Nahar Q, Khan R, Davis J, Luchters S, Hamdani S, and Stillo E. (2015) *Men Matter: Engaging Men in MNCH Outcomes*. Toronto, Canada: Plan Canada. Page 10

MNCH/SRHR outcomes for women and children, as well as men themselves. Groups become safe spaces where men can reflect and learn from their experiences and the experiences of others and begin to test out gender equitable behaviours and solutions to improve MNCH/SRHR. The goal of Fathers Clubs is to promote the equitable and non-violent participation of men as partners in MNCH/SRHR. Clubs target adult men with female partners of reproductive-age. These 20 sessions are grouped under six broad themes as presented below:

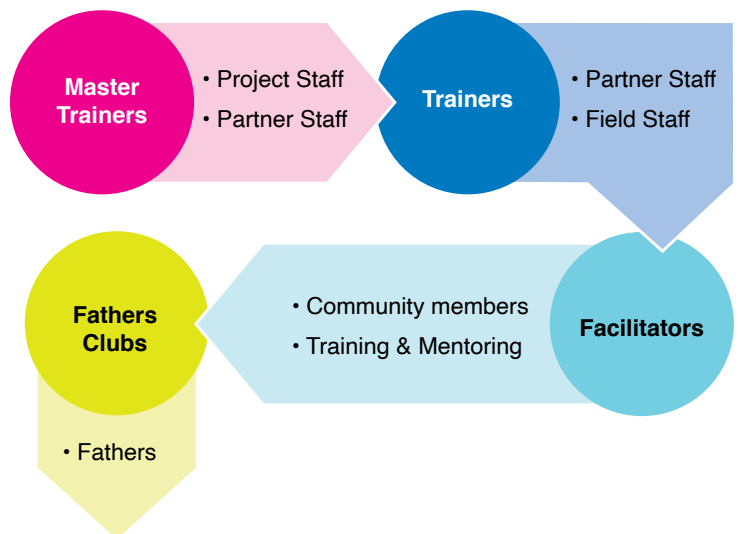
<p>I. WELCOME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Agreement • Values Clarifications 	<p>IV. PREGNANCY, DELIVERY & BEYOND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Pregnant Partner • Delivery Room Role • Pain Alleviation • Fathers & PNC • Importance of Breastfeeding
<p>II. UNPAID CARE WORK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours in a day • Who does care work? 	<p>V. RELATIONSHIPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who makes decisions • What is Violence • Healthy Relationships
<p>III. MEN, GENDER & POWER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man Box • Gender Stereotypes • Persons & Things 	<p>VI. PLANNING FUTURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents by accident or choice • Your Child's Future • Carlota Story • Closing Circle

The program takes a gender transformative approach by encouraging participants to question what it means to be a man or a woman in their society, and what it means to be a father in the context of MNCH/SRHR highlighting their roles

in pregnancy, delivery and beyond. The purpose of these discussions is to motivate men to challenge inequitable gender norms and power imbalances in their personal lives, and ultimately to promote sustained change in gender relations and power dynamics to improve men's relationships with partners and children, and to promote their involvement in SRHR, including MNCH and FP, well beyond the continuum of care period. The sessions are interactive, promoting self-reflection, along with homework assignments to encourage discussions with partners, family members, and peers.

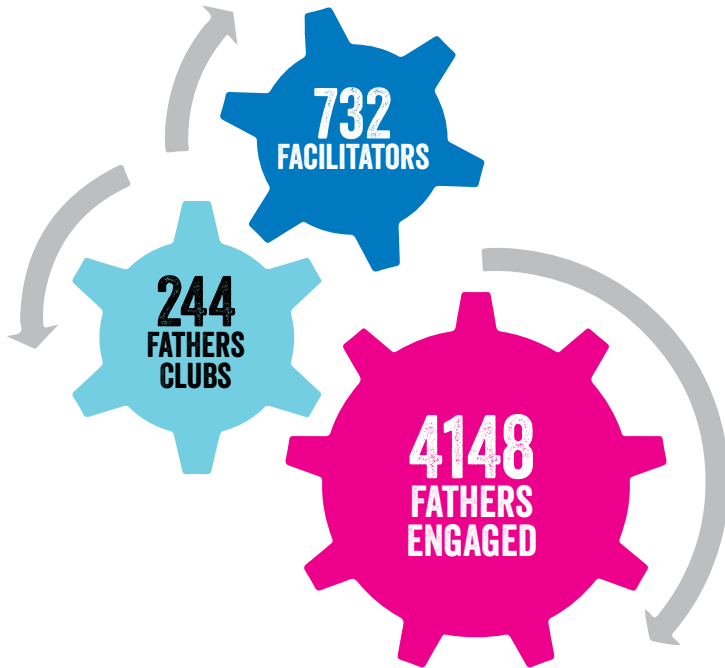
2.2. NIGERIA TRAINING AND ROLL OUT

In Nigeria, like other countries, training to deliver the Fathers Clubs content was cascaded from master trainers to trainers, to community-based facilitators, and ultimately to the fathers in the target community self-selected to engage in the sessions (see infographic below). The session focused on unlearning one's gender stereotypes, how to create a safe reflective space, and how to engage participants in actively questioning and challenging inequitable gender norms and power imbalances.



These sessions were organized at a public venue where men usually gather in the target communities – in Nigeria, these were often held in a market place, near a health facility, or place provided by a community leader. The frequency of each Fathers Clubs' delivery of individual sessions was determined based on the time availability of the participating fathers and held at a convenient public venue for men. These one-hour sessions were delivered weekly/bi-weekly, with a check-in to help participants recall the previous session and a check-out to assign a take-home assignment. Facilitators were trained to use various techniques such as role-playing, group discussions, debates, homework, and more to appeal to a diversity of men and different learning styles.

SHOW Nigeria followed a phased approach for the establishment of Fathers Clubs and the preparation of facilitators. Training used teach-back methodologies for trainers to strengthen facilitation skills and developed a deeper understanding of the curriculum content and the process, eventually. The project trained 732 Male Champions as community facilitators in 23 Local Government Authorities (LGA). The project formed a total of 244 Fathers' Clubs, averaging 17 men per club, in Sokoto State that were run by 732 community based male champions/facilitators. The project succeeded in reaching out to a total of 4,148 men, who self-selected themselves for Fathers Clubs sessions and received full curriculum.



3. FATHERS CLUBS STUDY IN NIGERIA

Plan International Canada, in collaboration with Plan International country offices and partners, conducted a study to examine stakeholders' experiences of and perspectives on changes in fathers' household caregiving and activities in SHOW intervention communities. This qualitative study was conducted in February 2019 in four SHOW program countries, including in Nigeria.

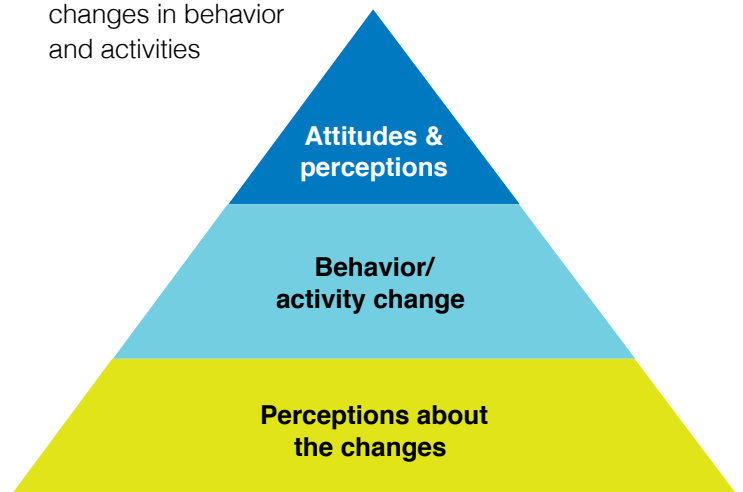
3.1. OBJECTIVES

This impact study has one overall objective:

- To examine stakeholders' experiences of and perspectives on changes in fathers' household caregiving.

The research explored three domains of inquiry:

- Attitudes and perceptions on the distribution of roles and responsibilities between women and men of household work and caregiving
- Behavior/activity change of male participants in SHOW fathers clubs
- Perceptions about the changes in behavior and activities



3.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology, adapting tools based on the IMAGES survey⁶ and Helping Dads Care survey⁷, was developed to survey Fathers Clubs participants (Fathers), their family members (women, adolescent children), as well

6. International Men and Gender Equality Survey, Promundo (<https://promundoglobal.org/programs/international-men-and-gender-equality-survey-images/>)

7. Helping Dads Care, Promundo (https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Promundo-DMC-Helping-Men-Care-Report_FINAL.pdf)

as community members (e.g., religious leaders, community health workers, etc.). In-depth Interviews (IDI) were conducted with male members of the Fathers Clubs and community leaders to capture a deeper understanding of changes, if any, among men and allow greater privacy and confidentiality to improve the accuracy of collected data. Focus Group Discussion Guides (FGD) were developed for women, adolescent girls and boys to get broader views from respondents and capture shifts, if any, in attitudes, behavior, and perception around masculinities in the community, and to triangulate data. Case Studies were also collected. The training of the field researchers was carried out on 7–9 February 2019. The training also included Gender Equality concepts, including the integration of Gender Equality and Child and Youth Safeguarding into the research methodology. Analysis of the data was deductive and participatory to test and align responses to the theory of change of the Fathers Clubs.

3.3. SAMPLE

This study used purposive sampling to identify and reach participants from the target groups. The following table presents the disaggregation of the respondents who were reached in five rural locations, namely Mabera, Mmabera Mujaya, Bado Kasarawa, Kalmalo, and Dagawa, during February 11–14, 2019 in the Sokoto State of Nigeria.

NIGERIA SAMPLE SIZE	
Groups	Number of participants
Fathers Clubs members	15
Female partners	66
Adolescent girls	24
Adolescent boys	33
Community leaders	12
Total	150

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS – EFFECTS OF FATHERS CLUBS

This section presents the changes in male behavior as reported by male participants of the Fathers Clubs and observed by women, adolescent girls/boys, and community leaders in Sokoto. The analysis explored any shift in male behavior towards positive masculinity while making relevant contrasts with attitudes among their female partners. It also examined what triggered change among men, community reactions to any observed adoption of positive masculine attitude and behaviour changes among men, and the perceived sustainability of these changes.

4.1. CHANGES AMONG MEN – POSITIVE MASCULINITIES

4.1.1. HOUSEHOLD WORK AND CHILDCARE

Women reported a positive shift in men's attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions in Sokoto, as they have started to participate in household chores and to take care of children. All women expressed that their husbands have increasingly helped them manage several household chores, as one woman indicated, "my husband bathes the children and dresses them for school and washes clothes. I mostly do the cooking." Women also agreed that the care from their husbands has positively impacted their families, and has made children happy, too. At the same time, the shift in men's participation in household chores seems situation dependent. The male support comes, for example, when the husband has free time, or wife is pregnant, as reported by another woman, "my husband helps with a lot of housework like sweeping and washing dishes, especially when (I) am pregnant and on weekends. I bathe the children and cook." With regards to specific chores, men are observed to be more engaged in preparing hot water, helping children prepare for school, as well as sweeping and washing; but very few women reported men doing the cooking. Male respondents perceive this shift in men's behaviors to stem from their love and sympathy for their wives; this notion of love and compassion leads men only to 'help' their wives rather than consider household chores as truly 'shared' responsibilities.

Men's views around gender roles have begun to shift as they have started taking part in household chores. Male respondents shared the view that household chores are not only a woman's task, and that men can and should help in the workload. One man said, "there is nothing that woman does

in the house and the man cannot assist with or do”; another man shared, “nothing stops a man from doing house chores, even cooking is not forbidden according to the religion.” All men reported taking active participation in household chores, taking care of children and/or helped in the livestock. One man, while discussing changed gender roles, shared, “My wife and I engage and share house chores because it’s not only meant for women. Besides, I feed the animals and fetch water.” Another man said, “I changed a lot. I help my wife by buying domestic animals for her. I now assist her in bathing the children and preparing them for school, which I didn’t usually do before.” Many men spoke about the division of labor and the importance of ‘helping’ wives with household chores, though broadly on stereotypical gender lines. It was clear that men were comfortable with taking on responsibilities such as walking children to school, arranging hot water, and preparing children for school. However, men consistently maintained that some chores, like cooking, are a woman’s job. Although, all men want to continue and do more household chores, interestingly, several respondents wanted to hire domestic help to alleviate the housework burden on wives.

Adolescent girls have also confirmed positive shifts among fathers away from stereotypical gender roles. One girl shared that she “likes the way he [father] helps our mother with house chores.” Some girls reported that their fathers take pride in doing the household chores and are very open about it. “Our father does the sweeping, he doesn’t allow us to help him with that. He proudly does the sweeping and [even] wants others to see him doing it”, shared another adolescent girl. Nonetheless, several girls reported mothers taking care of household chores like cleaning, cooking, and preparing children for school. They also maintained that the father’s role is to provide money and food for the family.

All adolescent boys stated that their fathers now perform many more household chores than before. Boys also indicated that fathers now take more care to support their spouse and children with health and education-related matters. One boy shared, “my father now assists our mum at home to wash dishes, play with kids, sweeping and other things unlike before.” Children are, clearly, pleased with their fathers’ new interest in taking part in household chores. Nonetheless, it is evident that the fathers’ role is to “assist” or “support” the mothers as opposed to considering household

chores as a joint responsibility – reinforcing the assumption that household chores are primarily women’s responsibility.

Community leaders, though still holding on to stereotypical gender norms, also maintained that men should ‘help’ their wives in taking care of household responsibilities and taking care of children’s education. One religious leader shared, “I think men should help because they are more powerful and have more strength than women, and I think if the housework is too much, it can be dangerous to expecting mothers. They [woman] need to be assisted.” Nonetheless, several community leaders have reported that they have witnessed changes among men in the community and they are ‘helping’ their wives in household chores. One community leader shared, “the fathers’ attitudes and change towards doing household chores has impacted positively on the children and their spouse. There is more spousal affection, and children are now beginning to see them as stars.”



**WOMAN,
KALMALO**

“When we are pregnant they assist with washing of plates and sweeping unlike before.”

**ADOLESCENT GIRL,
MABERA**

“He (father) now does house chores like sweeping.”

**FATHER,
DAGAWA**

“I now assist my wife at home with chores which I usually don’t do before.”

**COMMUNITY LEADER,
DAGWA**

“Yes there have been changes in the community. Both parties are involved in child upbringing.”

FATHER, DAGAWA

“Even going to hospital, if she is to see doctor I usually accompany her myself. I want people in the community to learn from me.”

WOMAN, BADO KASARAWA

“Now he takes me to the hospital (for ANC) and bring me back. I also have permission to go to the hospital when he is not around and my in-laws don't stop me.”

WOMAN, KALMALO

“He (husband) now goes with me to the hospital for ANC and even during delivery and stays with me until he's sure I am OK. And also take part in house chores.”

4.1.2. ACCESSING MNCH SERVICES

Another area of significant change identified was the substantial increase of male engagement around maternity and family health, as reported by all groups of men, women, adolescent children, and community leaders. Men frequently mentioned doing household chores to take off domestic work burden from their pregnant wives. One man from the Dagawa community shared his example with pride, “during her pregnancy, I was the one who took all her responsibilities like cooking, pounding and virtually everything, and to my children is just like teaching them right things.” Most fathers mentioned their increased awareness and support for the health of their wives and children. One man from the Dagawa community revealed, “I changed my habits towards my family. Now, my children are healthy, as we were taught to take them and their mother to the hospital when necessary. Unlike before, when we leave them at home (during sickness).” Most men mainly shared that they have started to accompany their wives to health clinics. Another man from Kalmaolo community sharing his responsible behavior towards his wife said, “now I do take my wife to hospital unlike before when I cared less about taking my family to the hospital.”

All women respondents mentioned increased husbands' attention to health issues, especially related to pregnancy, attendance to ANC, and assisted childbirth at the health facility. Women in Bado Kasarawa shared that initially, men did not help their wives nor took them to the hospital when they were about to give birth, but all that has now changed. One woman summed it, “now immediately labor starts they (husbands) take them (wives) to the hospital because of what they were taught (in Fathers Clubs).” Another woman from the Kalmalo community said, “before when a woman is in labour they (husband) don't take her to the hospital but now they do.” Women also reported husbands now have a better understanding of health issues and provide the necessary support. One woman in Maberu community shared, “they (husband) now gave us permission to go for the ANC visit even in their absence, and also ensure that we do (visit)” suggesting a slight loosening in strict mobility control of women. Husbands now reportedly have a better understanding of women's nutritional needs during pregnancy as well, as one woman in the Maberu community shared, “when a woman is pregnant now, the husband tries to provide her with good food that will make her healthy.”

Adolescent children have also reported their fathers have changed and are taking a responsible attitude towards family health and maternity-related matters. Adolescent boys from the Maberu community said, “He (father) now allows our mother to attend ANC and visit the hospital when necessary unlike before.” Similarly, an adolescent girl from Maberu shared, “my father now insists that anybody that is sick should be taken to the hospital and no traditional treatment,” as other girls in the group endorsed her view. Community leaders have also confirmed men are now taking an interest in the health of children and wives, especially during pregnancy. One community leader said, “yes, there is a lot of change among fathers as many are now encouraging their wives to attend ANC; our clinical attendance has increased.”

ADOLESCENT BOY, KALMALO

“Before when we would get sick, he just go to local vendors and get drugs. But now, he takes us to the hospital himself.”

ADOLESCENT BOY, DAGAWA

“He (father) now takes her (mother) to hospital when necessary and care for her health unlike before.”

4.1.3. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

All groups did not directly talk about gender-based violence or a decrease in any such incidence. However, many groups confirmed less quarreling among couples. Generally, men did not discuss the issues of gender-based violence; however, few suggested a reduction in fighting with their wives. One man from the Bado Kasarawa community said, “We used to quarrel. In the Fathers Clubs, I have learned about the needs of a pregnant woman. Therefore, I did not disturb her when she was pregnant.” Adolescent boys also chose not to say anything about the incidence of gender-based violence at home. Community leaders also did not talk about gender-based violence- suggesting a code of silence around the issue as being a very private matter.

Similarly, women did not discuss the issue of gender-based violence; however, indirectly referred to less quarreling, stress,

and suffering at home and talked about more care and love from their husbands. One woman from Bado Kasarawa, while indicating less stress at home, said, “before you always hear husbands and wives quarreling but now you see them doing things together happily.” Another woman from the Bado Kasarawa community said, “I don’t suffer now, unlike the way I suffered before with too much housework, because now he does everything for me.” A woman from the Kalmalo community shared similar thoughts, “he is now more caring towards my children and me and more helpful.” Similarly, adolescent girls talked about less quarreling among parents without referring to domestic violence. One adolescent girl from the Bado Kasarawa community shared, “before he (father) quarrels over anything that was not done. But, now that he goes for the meeting (at Fathers Club) and has become enlightened, he does a lot of things that he was not doing before.”

One adolescent group talked indirectly about the quarreling among parents and how sad such an event used to make them, but things have changed since the introduction of the Fathers Clubs. One adolescent girl from the Bado Kasarawa community shared, “before we are always scared and not comfortable with the relationship among our parents because they were always fighting, which made us very sad. But now that there have changed, and we are happy and comfortable. Even it has improved our studies.”

4.1.4. DECISION MAKING

Discussion around joint decision-making did not come out directly, yet several men talked about increased cooperation among husbands and wives, as one man from the Dagawa community shared, “there is real cooperation between us now, and we do deliberate on every issue with my wife.”

The language of women in all FGDs indicated the male possessiveness and dominance in decision making, that is, a husband ‘allows’ his wife to go to the ANC, a husband ‘gives permission’ – language that is indicative of persistent traditional gender norms in these communities. Not many women’s groups mentioned increased shared decisions though some did talk about changes among men in discussing matters with their wives. One woman in the Dagawa community shared, and others agreed, “we have seen positive changes. Before, men don’t take advice from their wives, but now, we sit and discuss and agree on

what needs to be done collectively. Men are also happy because of the way we advise them.” Some women in other groups also mentioned increased consultation and shared decision making between husbands and wives, as another woman in Kalamalo said: “husband and wife now seek each other’s advice when things come up and the best advice is considered.” Similarly, most girls did not mention joint decision making among parents except one.

4.2. EFFECTS OF POSITIVE MASCULINITIES

All respondents gave consistent positive feedback on improved spousal and family relationships, stemming from changed behaviours of male heads of households that open space for communication, involvement, and closeness.

4.2.1. SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIPS

All men and women have widely reported improvement in the marital relationship as an outcome of their changed communication and behaviour. All men reported a definite improvement in the relationship with their wives and children with higher levels of affection. Some men even mentioned increased physical intimacy with their wives, while others also talked about spending increased time with their children. Men have also reported a harmonious relationship with their wives, as one man in Dagawa revealed, “there are real cooperation and the superb relationship between my wife and me.”

Men were also aware of the positive effects of improved relationships in their homes evident in the examples they were stating, “My children learn from what we do in the house,” another man in Bado Kawarawa shared, “My wife and I now have a better understanding, and our relationship has improved.” Another man in Bado Kawarawa community also repeated the same, “she [wife] is delighted, and it has improved our relationship. Even my children enjoy my company and care now, unlike before, when I leave the house early and return home late without assisting or monitoring what happens in the house.”

All women’s groups also reported much better spousal relationships, bonding, love, humor, as well as husband spending more time in the house or coming home on time.

MAN, DAGAWA

“My relationship with my wife is cordial I now feel like hugging her all the time.”

WOMAN, BADO KASARAWA

“Now I even call him (husband) darling when I come back home and find he has cooked.”

MAN, KALMALO

“Now my wife loves me very much and even my children now do appreciate and love me much due to the love I show to their mother.”

Altogether, this has improved the overall quality of their lives. All women were very enthusiastic about changes, do not want things to go back to the way they were. A woman in the Kalmalo community, shared, “it has helped increase love and bond between us. When we are working together, we do laugh.” At the same time, other women in the group also laughed and agreed with her. Another woman shared, “my husband and I have bonded even more, he now doesn’t want to see anything going wrong with my children or me.” Similarly, a woman in the Bado Kaeerawa community shared, “now there is more understanding between husband and wife. They sit and joke with one another, and children are happy when they see that.”

There also seems to a commonality among men’s and woman’s views regarding how wives will use any spare time. Most men said that she would use the extra time to rest and relax, while several noting this is much deserved, and there are few opportunities for her to rest. While others also indicated that she would use the time to read or engage in studies, and few indicated, she will use the time to engage in petty work/trade like sewing or tailoring. On the other hand, all women respondents said such spare time would be used for resting and relaxing, and in two groups, women also talked about doing some economic activity like sewing, selling cold drinks, tailoring, and farming. Several women also suggested such spare time will also be used in reading the Quran.



4.2.2. FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

All respondent categories reported a new-found positive relationship between fathers and their adolescent children. Both adolescent girls and boys reported increased father-child love and affection. The adolescents also reported that the positive relationship has emerged due to fathers’ increased interest in their families as they spend more time home and take interest and participate in their activities.

Men also spoke about the importance of education, both secular and religious, in the upbringing of their children. Most men said that in child upbringing there was no difference between the need for equal discipline and access to education for girls and boys. However, when probed further, some very clear gender differences emerged about the expectations men hold for their girls and boys as well as in a discriminating parenting approach. One man in the Kalmalo community divulged, “it is good to engage boys in a work that can help them in future while girls should be trained at home since they will be given out for marriage in future, they need to know how to take care of the house.” Another man in the Maberera community said, “boys’ socialization should be observed very well by watching their friends and girls’ socialization as well [lest they adopt bad company].”

Women shared that good fathers should take responsibility for children, their behavior, education, and good upbringing. All women confirmed the emergence of positive relationships between fathers and their children. In the Mmabera Mujaya community, one woman, while reporting her husband’s help in doing household chores, said, “children are also happy because the workload has reduced for them.” A woman said, and other women in the group agreed, “They (children) now concentrate more on their studies now.” Yet another woman, shared her joy, “They (children) are pleased to see the way their parents are relating now with each other.” Those men who had earlier not enrolled their daughters in school have now changed. One woman in the Bado Kasarawa community shared, “initially they (husbands) don’t allow women and girls to go to school, but now they do.”

Both adolescent girls and boys have a sound understanding of what fathers should do for the good upbringing of their children. One adolescent girl in the Dagawa community said, “They (girls and boys) should be treated equally because they are all equal,” and unanimously endorsed by all girls in the group. From the Kalmalo community, one adolescent girl said, “a good father wants to see his children with a good upbringing, so he scolds and advises any child who displays a bad character or does something wrong.” Similarly, one adolescent boy said, “a father is supposed to give his children good upbringing and ensure child desist from bad behaviour.” Another boy in the Maberera community shared, “he (father) should give children equal attention and upbringing.” Some

adolescent boys said fathers need to teach their children gender roles. One boy in the Kalmalo community after talking about education for both boys and girls said, “(father should) tell the girls to assist the mother in the kitchen and take boys along to farm and teach them a trade so they can be independent in the future.”

Adolescent girls in all groups confirmed that their fathers have positively changed and now engaged in the lives of their children, which was absent earlier. One girl from the Dagawa community shared, “he (father) is now concerned about our education both western and Islamic education, and he also takes care of us and provides what we need equally among his children without segregating.” Girls now feel encouraged to have communication with their fathers, as one girl from the Bado Kasarawa community said, “before we were not free with father to discuss our worries, needs and even seek his advice. But now, I can freely share everything with him and get both his advice and support.”

Adolescent boys in all groups reported that their fathers now support their children in their health matters and education. They also reported fathers to spend more time with their children in different activities, including praying, helping with school, preparing for school, among others. One adolescent boy in Kalmalo community said, “I love and enjoy what is going on presently and don’t hope he returns back to his old ways.”

One community leader from the Kalmalo community, while reflecting on changed views of fathers shared, “they’ve realized that child upbringing is not the mother’s job only, both parties must contribute. The children now go to school rather than hawk in the street.”

4.3. TRIGGERS OF CHANGE AMONG MEN

All respondents universally indicated positive changes among men are because they participate in the Fathers Clubs. Men did not identify anything else except their participation in the Fathers Club that motivated them to bring changes in their behavior at home.

Women have also unanimously identified Fathers Clubs sessions as the chief reason for the positive changes among the behavior of men. However, one group also noted such changes are also associated with the passage of time, education, and awareness, as one woman shared, “time changes. In the old days, our grandparents didn’t put our parents in school, i.e., western education, and didn’t pay attention even to Islamic education. But now everybody goes to school, and there are more awareness and enlightenment.” Another woman shared, “honestly, when educated people practice this, and there are positive changes, the uneducated ones too will emulate them and change their ways.”

All adolescent children also agree that positive changes among fathers are a direct result of their participation in the Fathers Clubs. One adolescent boy said, “Joining the Fathers Clubs is the reason he changed.” The same views were expressed by adolescent girls, as one girl from the Mabera community summed it, “honestly it is because of the Fathers Clubs that there are awareness and enlightenment (among Fathers).”

Community leaders also shared similar views and identified engagement of men under the Fathers Clubs for positive changes among them and their health engagement with their families. One community leader from Kalmalo said, “due to their (men) engagement as members of the Fathers Clubs and the discussions that take takes place there, men are now motivated to do household work and childcare.”

<p>ADOLESCENT GIRL, DAGAWA</p>	<p>ADOLESCENT GIRL, KALMALO</p>
<p>“Honestly we are very happy about these changes.”</p>	<p>“Initially I only see him in the morning, but now I can even talk to him and tell him my needs and if he sees that they are important he addresses them if it is something that is not good he explains to me and advises me not to be upset because he said no.”</p>

Both girls and boys reported that they appreciate the positive changes among their fathers, as one boy said, “I like it very much, and I don’t want him to go to his previous ways and stop.” The same was reflected by a girl from the Mabera community, “We are glad about that (changes in father)” as other group members fully endorsed her views. Another adolescent boy from the Kalmalo community, while talking about the effect of changes in his father, said, “It has improved because we can now sit down and discuss together which we didn’t do before.”

Community leaders have also reported that fathers are taking increased interest in their children’s education and upbringing.

<p>FATHER, KALMALO</p>	<p>WOMAN, MABERA</p>
<p>“If I hadn’t participated in the Fathers Club, I wouldn’t have changed my previous behavior on my family.”</p>	<p>“Fathers Club has created awareness and enlightenment (among men) and we are thankful.”</p>

ADOLESCENT BOY, BADO KASARAWA

“The group (Father Club) teaches them about caring for the family and developing their relationship.”

ADOLESCENT GIRL, BADO KASARAWA

“Because of the enlightenment they get from attending the meeting of the Fathers Club and they realized its beneficial to them.”

COMMUNITY LEADER, MABERA

“Learnings from Fathers Club have really influenced changes in men’s behaviour.”

4.4. SOCIAL SUPPORT AND STIGMA

Respondents identified social stigma as one of the significant barriers that men had to overcome to adopt positive masculinities and implement their learnings from the Fathers Clubs sessions. Women’s and girls’ groups almost unanimously confirmed men successfully overcame the social stigma stemming from their extended family members and the community at large.

Similarly, all men indicated how stigma could not prevent them from making positive changes in their lives. Some men even expressed their sense of pride to resist social stigma questioning or to ridicule their positive masculine behaviors and roles at homes. One man from the Dagawa community, while revealing how he dealt with social stigma, shared, “Stigma can’t hinder me in any way.” Another man from the Bado Kasarawa community articulated the same views: “I don’t bother about what people say or do, I just do the right thing.” It seems that the Fathers Clubs provided both a safe space for collective reflection and also served as a support network for men to withstand social stigma.

Almost half of the male respondents noted experiencing persistent resistance and stigma from within their respective communities as a reaction to the positive changes in their behavior. One man from the Kalmalo community said, “they (neighbors) stigmatize us and make jest of us in the society, but I am less concerned, and I believe they will later understand.” Another man from the Maera community shared mixed community reactions by stating, “honestly, some people support me while some frown at my changes.” Other respondents spoke about waning stigma, as one man from the Mabera community shared, “before they realized its importance, there was a negative perception of it. But now that they understand it better, I gained their general support.” At the same time, most men reported having been able to gain the support of their friends and neighbors. While some men are also reportedly spreading their new knowledge of positive masculinities among their peers and acting as role models for other men in their respective communities.

The women’s groups, noted the social stigma or shame, mainly coming from in-laws, was the only barrier for men adopting positive masculinities. “Some say its *‘harkar turawa’*



(western culture) and feel it’s not their way to help women with housework. They always say it is not a man’s place to be seen doing women’s work; it affects their pride and ego,” shared by one woman and agreed by other women in the group from the Kalmalo community. Another woman talked about how new male behavior perceived as challenging prevalent patriarchal norms where man supposed to have the ‘control’. “Some don’t want to be called *“mijin me tace”* (a man being controlled by his wife) or even be insulted for doing house chores.” Another woman from the Kalmalo community shared, “there is a lack of approval of what he does by his parents due to their old beliefs and customs. Whenever they see him helping, they scold him. But gradually, some of them have begun to understand its benefit and are now accepting it.”

Yet, women also spoke about some community support for their husbands’ new positive behaviors. One woman in Kalmalo shared, “there are some who respect them (men) and also some that insult them for helping us at home. But still, others appreciate what they are doing. Mostly it is their (husbands) relatives that stigmatize them.”

Adolescent girls identified the men’s lack of love and sympathy for their wives as factors that generally prevent them from adopting positive behavior towards their wives and

families. One adolescent girl from Dagawa communities said, “it is usually lack of positive thinking and care and sympathy towards his wife.” Most adolescent boys, while talking about their fathers, showed confidence that they would not go back to previous ways of things. One boy, from the Maberera community, said, “nothing will make him (father) change, not even stigma.” While some boys still identified stigma could push their fathers back to old ways, as one boy from the Bado Kasarawa community said, “discouragement and stigma from those who don’t know, those who believe in some conspiracy theories may convince them to change.”

Both male and female adolescent focus groups talked mainly about praise their fathers have received for changing their behavior at home and engaging with their wives and children. One adolescent girl in the Kalmalo community shared how her fatherly gradually won community praise said, “honestly, some of them see it as a good thing while others don’t because that is not how they treat their wives. When people see my father doing such things (in the house), they admire it saying it is good that he is taking care of his family.” Adolescent boys also indicated how their fathers are now more respected in their respective communities for helping their wives in domestic chores and loving his family. One boy from the Dagawa community said, “they praise him, and it’s making them love him (father) more,” and another boy said, “it has improved his relationship with others, people now like him.”

Community leaders indicated reactions had been mixed for men who adopted new positive behaviours in the household, as these men experienced both social stigma and praise. A community leader in Maberera shared, “some people in the community reacted negatively to this change by calling these men names like ‘woman wrapper’ or ‘slave’ just because they chose to assist their wife in the housework. But for those who understand the concept, they praise them.” Community leaders mostly felt that nothing would prevent men from adopting positive behavior of being engaged in their homes and ‘helping’ their wives in house chores and having cordial spousal relationships. One community leader from Dagawa said stigmatization could prevent men from making changes as, “name-calling like ‘woman slave’ just because you are helping your wife!” .

4.5. SUSTAINABILITY OF CHANGE

All categories of respondents were unanimous that learning from the Fathers Clubs will last because men themselves have witnessed its positive impact on their household. All men confirmed that they have seen the benefit of these changes and will not revert to former behaviours. “It will surely last even if Plan International is no longer here because we will continue to practice what we are taught and improve our lives and achieve more,” shared by a man from the Bado Kasarawa community. Another man, while expressing the effects of the sessions, said, “it will last by Allah’s will because it’s something that is well planned and even my children will grow up to emulate my actions” Nonetheless, it would be pertinent to revisit these communications after the project intervention to determine if Fathers Clubs learning has created long terms effects.

All women groups talked about the fact that men have internalized the Fathers Clubs leaning, and the new-found knowledge will not go away, because of the happiness it has brought men themselves, and because of its intergenerational potential. One woman from Kalmalo community, shared, “they (men) are doing it wholeheartedly with joy now, and even if the Fathers Clubs is stopped, they will continue since its (the learning) is now part of them.” Another woman from the Dagawa community talked about the effect of these men’s learning to their next generation. She said, “our children are learning from the way they see us relating now, and we hope they also take it to their future homes when they grow up. Earlier, men did not spend time with their daughters and hear their needs, but now, they have even become closer.” At the same time, there was some evidence of feelings of precarity, with several women in different groups expressing that they hope and prayed that men would continue with their new changed positive practices at home.

Both adolescent girls’ and boys’ groups also expressed confidence that their fathers will sustain and continue with their new-found positive changes. One adolescent girl from the Kalmalo community shared, “with what I have seen, I believe that he will continue with what he is doing till the end of time.” The same views were also expressed across

FATHER, DAGAWA

“Firstly, as I told you I am literate that makes people not to stigmatize me since am wise enough. I care for others health why not my family. I don’t face such challenges.”

FATHER, DAGAWA

“If not that our marriage has been long, people would have called me women servant, but now nobody has a mouth to stigmatize me. They even support me as I usually educate them on these things.”

WOMEN, KALMALO

“There is lack of approval of what he does by his parents due to their old beliefs and customs. Whenever they see him helping they scold him.”

COMMUNITY LEADER

“Some people are ignorant, and they mock men who support their wives, calling them names.”

adolescent boys' groups, as one adolescent boy from the Mabera community shared, "it will last by the will of Allah because the things they do are not just randomly but with knowledge and evidence base."

Similarly, community leaders were confident that men's positive changes in their attitude and behavior would also transcend to the next generation of men. One community leader from Dagawa talked about the ripple effects of the Fathers Clubs sessions in the community. He shared, "yes, it will last because members of the men's club (Fathers Club) are excelling in creating awareness (on their learnings) in the mosques, in ceremonies like wedding ceremonies and men's groups within the community."



5. CONCLUSIONS

The positive effects of the Fathers Clubs sessions on men's attitudes, behavior, and practices have been confirmed by participating men and endorsed by their wives, adolescent children, and community leaders. This positive shift among men in the conservative Sokoto state with rigid patriarchal norms is already a significant leap forward for men to start breaking gender norms, roles, and responsibilities taking on household chores, including taking care of children.

Another area of significant change identified was the substantial increase in male engagement around maternity and family health matters. The men's increased knowledge around the MNCH continuum of care resulted in breaking several stereotypical gender norms, as men started accompanying their wives during the ANC consultations, permitting their wives to visit health center even in their absence.

At the same time, male participation in household chores seems situationally dependent, for example, upon his wife's pregnancy or the husband's available time. Moreover,

reports that male involvement appears to be linked to their love and sympathy for their wives suggests an underlying belief that domestic and care work belongs to women, and that male involvement constitutes 'help' rather than a 'sharing' of household responsibilities that belong to both men and women.

None of the men and adolescent boys discussed either the issue of gender-based violence or joint decision making among husbands and wives. However, several women and adolescent girls reported a reduction in quarreling between husbands and wives. Although, it is difficult to draw a conclusive inference about the impact of the Fathers Clubs sessions on the reduction in the GBV, in several instances both women and adolescent girls reported there is increased love and peace in the house. Moreover, barring few reported instances of increased cooperation among husbands and wives from discussing different domestic matters, women and girls did not report joint decision-making practices at the household. At the same time, women's language revealed the continued existence of a male hierarchy and deep-rooted patriarchal norms that manifest in household decision-making.

Spousal relationships have improved, as men reportedly discovered family affection and love by spending more time with their wives and children. It has improved the overall quality of life as women reported better bonding, love, and humor in relationships with their husbands. Similarly, relationships between fathers and their adolescent children have substantially improved, due to fathers' increased interest in their families as they spend more time at home and take an interest in children's education and upbringing. The increased school enrollment of girls by some fathers was presented as evidence of improved father-daughter relationships and valuing of girls in general.

Men endured social stigma and ridicule from their extended family members and community for adopting roles and responsibilities around household chores hitherto considered in the women's domain. However, with continued resilience, disregarding stigmatization, and even championing through personal examples, the men have succeeded in breaking stereotypical gender, and that resulted in gradual acceptance and praise from community members. It can also be inferred, though not reported, that the Fathers Clubs might have also provided a useful support mechanism for men to endure social stigma. Moreover, as reported by all categories of respondents, it appears that men have internalized the Fathers Clubs' sessions. Men, women, and community leaders have expressed that the learning is trickling down to the next generation, and gender equality messages are creating a ripple effect in the community.



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