

A close-up photograph of a smiling man with a mustache, wearing a blue patterned shirt, holding a baby. The baby is wearing a white shirt with a colorful floral pattern. They are in a rustic setting with wooden beams and a thatched roof.

HAITI: 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 Haiti, the Plan International established 29 Fathers Clubs and engaged about 300 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 Haiti. 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's and girls' empowerment. Reports of changed attitudes, cordial spousal communication, uptake of new, non-traditional household care activities, and abandonment of harmful behaviours among men were reported by women, adolescent girls and boys, community leaders, and by Fathers Clubs participants themselves. 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.

In Haiti, positive changes included male engagement in household work and childcare, increased attention to the maternal and child health, including support for women during pregnancy, birth and post-partum, reports of reduced verbal and physical violence towards intimate partners and children, combined with improved emotional control and communication and relationships with spouses and children, and explicit focus on being a positive role model. Women and adolescent girls and boys overwhelmingly expressed the positive changes and knock-on effects of more engaged fathers and husbands. Barriers to male involvement included economic responsibilities outside the home. Men demonstrated positive attitudes towards playing a more active role in the care and household work, though there were indications that these roles still fundamentally belong to women and that their support is considered "help". Comments by some women registered the need for further progress. At the same time, community and family resistance to this shift in gender roles was remarked upon especially in the beginning, although participants widely reported their motivation to continue to see the rewards of this change far outweighed this deterrent.

1. INTRODUCTION

Under its gender-transformative Strengthening Health Outcomes for Women and Children (SHOW) Project, Plan International implemented a male-engagement strategy in Haiti from 2017–19 to promote positive masculinities and engage men in the continuum of Maternal, Newborn and Child (MNCH) care and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). This innovative approach consists of 20 reflective sessions facilitated by a trained local male and female facilitators, supporting groups of husbands and male partners to transform attitudes and behaviours that harm women and children and to promote gender-equitable relationships between couples. In January and February 2019, Plan International led a qualitative study to assess the outcomes of the Fathers Clubs interventions. The study found positive change among Fathers Clubs 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 multi-country¹, multi-year (Jan 2016–Sept 2020) gender-transformative project, with a value of CAD 65 million. 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 Haiti, the project is implemented in the communes of Fort-Liberté, Ouanaminthe, and Capotille, considered among the most vulnerable in the North-East Department according to the latest Mortality, Morbidity, and Utilization Survey (EMMUS).

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/SRHR services.

DEMAND

Improves the use of essential health services by women of childbearing 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

Strengthens health governance through gender equitable and inclusive health management committees, and safe and affordable referrals.

ACCOUNTABILITY

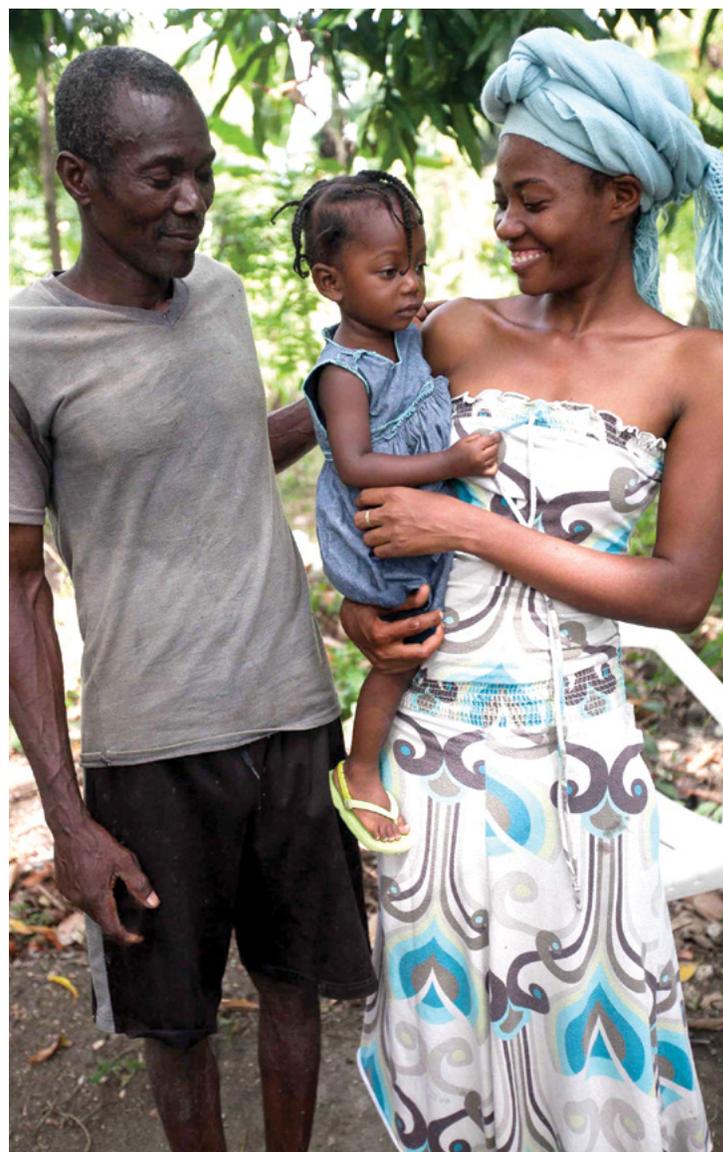
Reliable, timely and quality, sex and age disaggregated, health information based on better skills and an evidence-based culture that promotes informed, transparent decision-making and increased efficiency of clinic management and MNCH / SRHR budgets.

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

1.3. GENDER ANALYSIS – HAITI

The gender analysis conducted at the outset of the SHOW Project described elements of the patriarchal context in the communities of intervention in Haiti that impinge upon MNCH/SRHR outcomes for women and girls. Core issues included a clear gender division of labor within households where men engage in productive tasks (farming, fieldwork, livestock) while women's primary role is reproductive (child care, household work) often along with productive work. Women's burden of work and resulting time poverty was found to reduce their ability to access health care, to reinforce their financial dependence upon men, and consequently to restrict their ability to make critical decisions regarding their health and more specifically their sexual and reproductive health rights. There were mixed views on male involvement in MNCH/SRHR which cut across informant categories² – one end of the spectrum reported relatively high levels of male involvement including accompanying women on clinic visits, providing money, and transportation and sharing decision-making. The other end of the spectrum depicted widespread low levels of physical, emotional, and financial support from men. Barriers to male involvement named during the gender analysis study included tradition and taboos, infidelity, neglect, the instability of some unions, and lack of financial means to support their wives/partners. Male support for MNCH/SRHR was also found to be lower for pregnant adolescent girls than for wives/partners and post-natal care. Spousal abuse was regarded as a common occurrence.

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 interventions in Haiti, 38.1 percent of adolescent girls, 54.7 percent of adult women, and 37 percent of men reported that the level of support provided to the women had been very good. The percentage of that rating support as very good was lowest for PNC within two days of delivery, as only 11.3 percent of adolescent girls, 14.5 percent of adult women, and 24.8 percent of men confirmed such male support during PNC. For support in accessing family planning methods, 34 percent of adolescent girls, 25.3 percent of adult women, and 37.1 percent of men responded that the male support provided to the women was very good. The numbers supporting women's participation in community and household decision-making, in contrast, were very high, including 94.8 percent of adolescent girls, 95.7 percent of adult women, and 97.9 percent of men. However, 27 percent in Haiti mentioned women's opinions are disregarded as the reason behind women's not getting any opportunity



to participate in community-level decision making. It is apparent that for Haiti, the lowest level of male support was for PNC visits³.

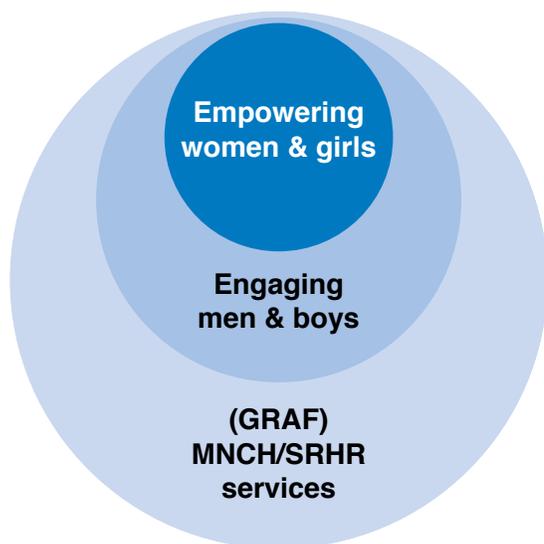
1.4. GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

From the outset of SHOW, there has been strong government collaboration, specifically with the Ministry of Public Health (MSP), which upholds maternal health as a priority, and the Ministry of the Status of Women (MCF), which promotes the integration of women's rights and gender-responsive policy. Male engagement in gender equality has not been part of government policy, but the positive early results of the approach have generated government support and interest in developing their internal capacity to implement the Fathers Clubs methodology.

2. Informant categories included women, men and community leaders

3. SHOW Baseline Report, July 2016

Based on the socio-ecological model, the SHOW Project's comprehensive Gender Equality Strategy has three inter-connected pillars targeting the structural and systemic norms upholding gender inequality. These were contextualized to address the country-Haiti specific issues identified in the gender assessment. As a gender-transformative project, SHOW integrates gender equality considerations into every aspect of its implementation as well as takes targeted gender-specific actions to address unequal 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 Haiti's socio-cultural specificities, aimed to mutually reinforce each other are briefly described on the below.



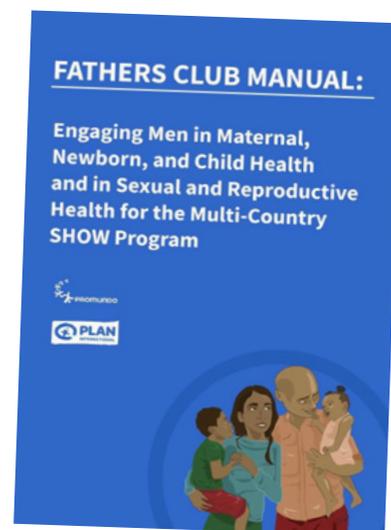
- **Strategy 1: Empowering women & girls**
Strengthening the individual and collective agency of women and adolescent girls by increasing their knowledge of their rights, about gender equality, MNCH/SRHR, building their leadership roles and capacities, networks, and support structures, strengthening 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/SRH 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"⁴. 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.



4. 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

5. Promundo is a global leader in advancing gender equality and preventing violence by engaging men and boys.

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 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:

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. HAITI TRAINING AND ROLL OUT

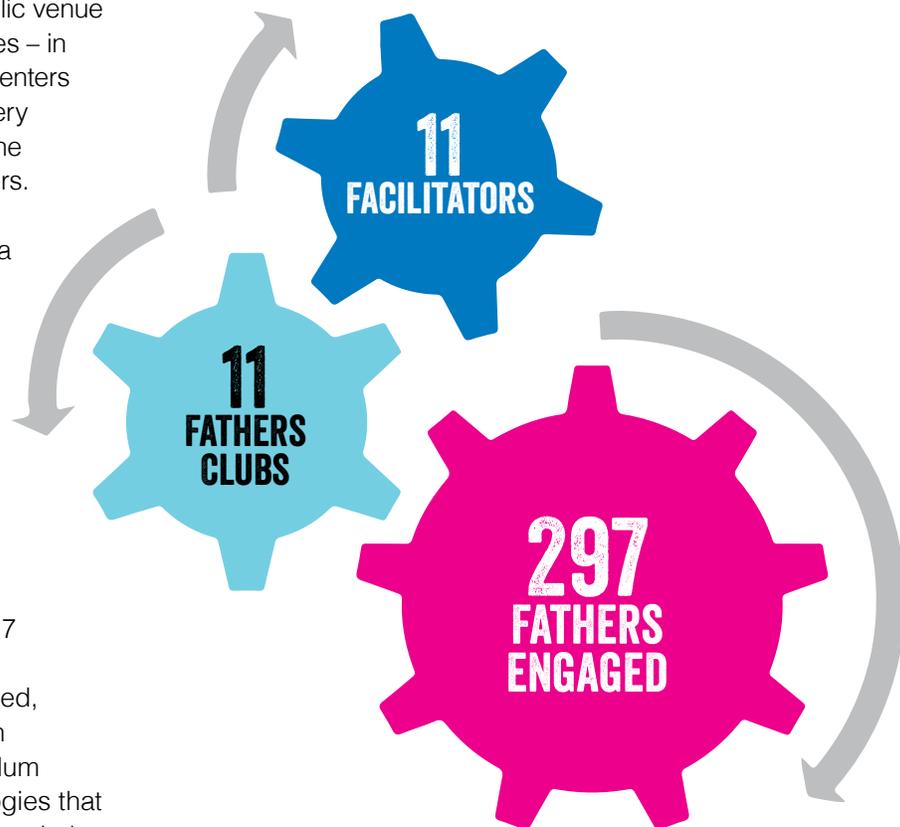
Each country program including Haiti adopted a cascaded training approach. Training to deliver the Fathers Clubs content was cascaded from trainers for the benefit of the staff of Plan International Haiti, the Centre for Development and Health, the Ministry for the Status of Women, the Directorate of Health Promotion and Environmental Protection/Ministry of Public Health and Population, the North-East Health Department and the 11 health sites supported by the SHOW project.

This was followed by training of community health workers (ASCP) as facilitators and ultimately the creation of Fathers Clubs in the communities targeted by SHOW. These fathers were selected according to criteria (such as having a child or a pregnant partner, aged 20 to 49, and being a role model within the community) to participate in the sessions. The sessions 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 common public venue where men usually gather in the target communities – in Haiti, these were often held in community health centers and churches. The frequency of each club’s delivery of individual sessions was determined based on the ease and time availability of the participating fathers. Typically, these one-hour sessions were delivered either weekly or bi-weekly, and each session had 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 Haiti followed a phased approach for the establishment of Fathers Clubs and the preparation of facilitators. On the 24–28 April 2017 in Cap-Haitien, 33 master facilitators (11M; 22F), including community health officers, were identified, based on their ability to act as trainers, and given extensive training on facilitation skills and curriculum content through extensive teach-back methodologies that helped build familiarity with the process. In a second phase, 27 community health workers (ASCPs) (10M, 17F) and 5 supervisors (5F) participated in a training of facilitators which took place in Fort-Liberté on December 4–15 2017. Eleven Fathers Clubs were established – one in each of the communes. This followed a process involving community dialogue with women and men, and self-selection of fathers. The project succeeded in reaching out a total of 297 fathers, who self-selected themselves for Fathers Clubs sessions and received full curriculum.



Communities were sensitized to the content of discussions and to the importance of ensuring the retention of participants for the entire duration of the 20 sessions. Simple, contextualized, Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials developed with the input of trained facilitators were used for this purpose. Facilitators were also supported to develop simple formats for recording session information, including attendance, level of participation, and types of questions and concerns raised by participants.

3. FATHERS CLUBS STUDY IN HAITI

Plan International Canada in collaboration with Plan country offices and partners conducted a study to examine stakeholders’⁶ experiences 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, namely Haiti, Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh⁷.

3.1. OBJECTIVES

This impact study has one overall objective:

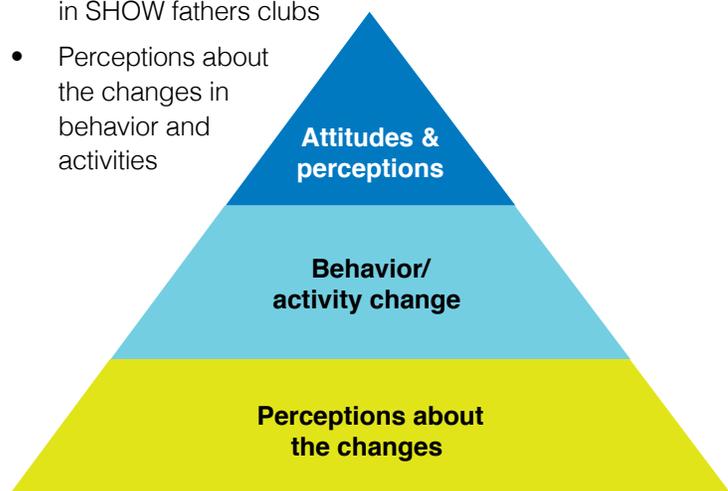
- To examine stakeholders’ experiences of and perspectives on changes in fathers’ household caregiving .

6. Men participating in the Fathers Clubs sessions, their wives/partners, their adolescent children, and community leaders.

7. At the time of study only four SHOW countries have at least one batch that has completed full Fathers Clubs training.

The research explored three domains of inquiry as follows:

- 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 IMAGES⁸ and Helping Dads Care⁹ surveys were developed to reach out to the Fathers Clubs participants (fathers), their family members (wives/partners, adolescent children) as well as community members (e.g., religious leaders, community health workers, etc.). Field research was conducted in February 2019, wherein data collection methods include In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions. In-depth Interviews (IDI) were carried out 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. The Focus Group Discussion Guides (FGD) were developed for women, adolescent girls and boys to get broader views from respondents and capture any shifts around attitudes, behaviour, and perception around masculinities in the community, and to triangulate data. The training of the field researchers was carried out on 5–7 February 2019. The training included key concepts on gender equality, child safeguarding, and integration of Gender Equality and Child and Youth Safeguarding into the research methodology.



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 through both FGDs and KIIs in the three rural communities of Lamine in Capotille, Acul Samedi in Fort Liberté, and Gens de Nantes in Ouanaminthe during 8–10 February 2019 in Haiti.

HAITI SAMPLE SIZE						
Groups	Fathers Clubs members	Female partners	Adolescent girls	Adolescent boys	Community leaders	Total
Number of participants	14	42	21	23	11	112

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

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



4. RESEARCH FINDINGS – EFFECTS OF FATHERS CLUBS

This section presents evidence of the behavioural changes in men that were observed by women, adolescent girls/boys, community leaders, and the Fathers Clubs participants themselves. The analysis explored any shifts in men’s attitudes underlying these demonstrations of positive masculinity as well as areas where respondents feel more progress on the part of men is needed. Community support and resistance to manifestations of positive masculinity, and the factors most perceived to affect the sustainability of the positive changes observed, are also discussed.

4.1. CHANGES AMONG MEN – POSITIVE MASCULINITIES

The women, adolescent girls, and adolescent boys consulted all observed many behavioral changes among men (participants of Fathers Clubs sessions) in their respective homes, notably: a heightened commitment to playing a positive role in housework and childcare, family health, and a reduction in violence.

4.1.1. HOUSEHOLD WORK AND CHILDCARE

The Fathers Clubs sessions dedicated about 40% of the time – eight sessions – focusing on gender roles, norms, and values who do care work, deconstructing notions of masculinity, and gender stereotypes. These sessions focused on helping fathers to realize the negative effects of unequal gender roles and responsibilities, make efforts to change themselves, and embrace positive masculinities.

The majority of wives/partners of men participating in Fathers Clubs who were consulted observed that men are now more involved in housework and childcare, including doing laundry, preparing meals, cleaning the house, and becoming more engaged in food preparation and discussion on nutrition, though a few women in Acul Samedi did not notice such changes in their husbands. Both male and female adolescent children of men in the Fathers Clubs, across the three communities, confirmed that their fathers now spend more time at home helping with household chores, such as preparing meals, cleaning the house, making beds, fetching water, and doing laundry.

ADOLESCENT GIRL

“Before, my father spent all his time in the streets in domino games, but since his participation in the Fathers Clubs, he started working in the garden to help mom meet our needs.”

WOMAN

“My partner’s participation in the club has made him more attentive when it comes to household work and taking care of children.”

WOMAN

Paraphrased: Among the men there are many changes in the activities of fathers in the household. They participate in food preparation, laundry, childcare and cleaning the home.

ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Pharaphrased: Fathers/ men now take part in household activities like participation in cleaning the house and meal preparation, and even taking care of children.

FATHER

“Working as a team allows each of us (husband & wife) to feel happy and useful.”

ADOLESCENT BOY

“Sometimes our mothers do the laundry and on the other side our fathers prepare something to eat.”

ADOLESCENT BOY

“Our father now does the laundry and dishes, prepares the food and gives money to the children.”

While all men from the Fathers Clubs who were consulted in the study reported positive behavioral changes in themselves, several men from Lamine and Acul Samedi noted these changes among neighborhood and community men as well. Across all areas, men themselves said they are now doing more housework and more to take care of children since participating in Fathers Clubs, including preparing food, doing laundry, cleaning the house, caring for children, fetching water, preparing children for school, drop off and pick up of children from school, and going to the market, as one father said, “Yes, there is change. I am happy to take my responsibilities properly by sharing household chores, in past years I never made the bed, done laundry, nor ironed clothes.” The community leaders consulted also corroborated these changes.

Economic barriers to engaging in more care work were noted. When asked about the barriers preventing men from playing a greater role in household work and childcare, women, adolescent girls, and adolescent boys explained how large amounts of time men spend farming in the fields and caring for livestock reduce the time they can devote to domestic responsibilities. Roughly a quarter of female

respondents said gardening prevents their husbands from being more involved in caregiving. Men themselves and community leaders discussed farming and the pressure to earn a living as a challenge to finding the time to adequately play their domestic role. Men in Lamine and Gens de Nantes mentioned barriers related to agriculture and animal husbandry, whereas men across all other areas talked about the economic imperative to provide for the family, and the need to spend time away from home to find the money.

Other responses suggest a continued adherence of some men to the traditional gendered division of labour. A woman from Lamine said in her experience the ideal task division among husband and wives is more likely when a woman is pregnant or near delivery, as was the case in her marriage.

Barriers to uptake of domestic responsibilities also relate to male power and expectations of sexual gratification. There was one example of this, from a man from Savane au Lait who stated his reluctance to support housework if his wife refuses sexual relations with him: “What could prevent me from contributing to childcare and housework is only if my wife refuses to sleep with me.”

FATHER

“I do not have enough economic means to take care of my family, which sometimes makes me neglect my responsibilities at home.”

WOMEN

Paraphrased: The men spend most of their time doing field work, which prevents them from increasing their contribution at home.

ADOLESCENT BOYS

Paraphrased: What prevents their fathers from contributing to the care of children and housework is economic needs and time.

4.1.2. ACCESSING MNCH SERVICES

The Fathers Clubs curriculum has two dedicated themes with 40% of the total learning time among eight interrelated sessions focused on building men’s knowledge around MNCH and SRHR, specifically around decision-making around care during MNCH including family planning and family planning.

The changes frequently reported by Fathers Clubs participants from across the three communities include their commitment to health, including their health and that of their partners and children. Men’s self-reported health changes include reduced alcohol consumption, and about family health, several explained that they now understand the responsibility of supporting their pregnant women and accompanying them for prenatal visits, childbirth, and postnatal visits.

FATHER

“Before I did not know if my wife was pregnant, I should go with her to the antenatal appointment. Now, thanks to the Fathers Clubs, I know how to do it.”

FATHERS

Paraphrased: self-reported changes included health focus, now accompanies wife to health facility, reduced alcohol consumption.

ADOLESCENT BOYS

Paraphrased: For some, their fathers participate in household chores including food preparation doing the laundry, taking care of the children and vaccinating the children.

WOMEN

Paraphrased: Some men are also now more involved in nutrition, and discuss with their partners what their children should be eating.

4.1.3. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Another theme Fathers Clubs members reflected on was relationships, and 15% of the time was dedicated to themes around decision making, negative effects of violence, and the importance of healthy relationships. It is notable in Haiti that in open-ended questioning, the issue of violence reduction was raised by research participants.

Violence reduction was readily discussed by women, adolescent girls and boys, and male community leaders but not by Fathers Clubs participants themselves. According to some women, reductions in conflict and violence were a noticeable change in the behavior of their husbands/ partners, one noting that in her neighborhood of Gens de Nantes, couples who habitually argued had ceased to do so. One woman in FGD stated, “In my neighborhood, there are couples that used to fight all the time, but since the men started participating in the Fathers Clubs, everything has changed, they do not fight anymore.” Women also indicated that men are now calmer, more understanding, and collaborative than before.

Adolescent girls and boys shared in their focus group discussions that their fathers have reduced or stopped outrightly being violent towards them and their mothers and that the conflicts between their parents have reduced. Besides, they also noted a decrease in aggressive attitudes on the part of their fathers. One girl shared, “my father stopped whipping me”, and one boy remarked that his father was now able to “manage his emotions” – all changes that were attributed to the men's participation in Fathers Clubs. These changes had a noted positive impact on the children themselves, who expressed that they were happy because of the changes in their fathers' behaviors.

On the other hand, some women also noted that men's efforts need to improve and that further behavioral changes are desired. A few women indicated that their spouses are still violent and that they would like these behaviours to be changed, as one woman in Gens de Nantes said, “I would like my husband to be less violent and more understanding towards me.” Other women have expressed the desire for open communication, as one woman in Savane au Lait said, “I would like my husband to say where he is going when he goes out.”

ADOLESCENT GIRL

“Before (they) quarreled very often. Several times I watched my father slap my mother. But since my father's participation in the club they have not quarreled anymore. They become very in love and that makes me happy.”

ADOLESCENT GIRL & ADOLESCENT BOY

“My father has ceased whipping me since he started participation the Fathers Clubs.”

– Adolescent girl

“My father now manages his emotions.”

– Adolescent boy

4.2. EFFECTS OF POSITIVE MASCULINITIES AMONG WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Women consulted noted changes in the attitudes of their husbands/partners and commented substantially on improved intimate partner relationships. They noted that men are calmer, more understanding and cooperative than they were before the Fathers Clubs sessions, and that these changes made their lives and those of their children easier and improved the overall well-being of the family. They spoke of better communication, joy, respect, love, and harmony in the family, and the happiness of children, in their homes because of the behaviour changes among their husbands/partners.”

Adolescent girls and boys also expressed their happiness at the behavioral changes of their fathers. Both reported feeling more comfortable with their fathers and in the family. Some girls said they enjoy better communication and improved relationships with their fathers, and some boys shared their happiness that their fathers are kinder toward their mothers and that they are talking more with their fathers and planning together, as one girl in Acul Samedi said, “before, my father was very brutal to me, but now he treats me very gently. I have noticed this since he participated in the Fathers Clubs.” Adolescent boys also expressed happiness about positive changes in the behaviour of their fathers, one boy in Lamine shared, “before, we did not like the way our fathers talked to our mothers. Now we have assessed some positive changes.”

Men themselves expressed a positive ripple effect since participating in the Fathers Clubs due to their behaviour changes which helped their families to progress. They attributed to these changes a newfound harmony in the home, a feeling of ease, and closer bonds to their family members. Many indicated that they enjoy positive relationships with their partners, and spoke of joy, improved communication and trust, and open demonstrations of love, as one man in Lamine said: “my wife loves me more

every day”. Some men shared that they have also found confidence in their new abilities to manage conflict in a non-violent way, as well as in new knowledge of how to support household chores and childcare.



Fathers have been encouraging their adolescent boys to adopt positive behaviours at home and enjoying the positive effects of improvement in family relations. In some focus groups with adolescent boys, respondents noted that their fathers encourage them to adopt these new behaviors for themselves. One boy in Lamine indicated, “my father told me when I can have a wife, that I have to protect my wife by helping her with housework.” Men have said that their children love them more and that they are proud to model these new behaviors for them, as one man in Gens de Nantes shared, “I refuse to return to my old bad habits, I must provide a good example to my children.” Another man in Acul Samedi while describing the effects of his positive behavior said, “We get along well and there is a good relationship between us (family members). The children are more at ease and we work and collaborate well together.”

FATHER

“There was a lot of jealousy in the past, but because of the Fathers Clubs, I know how to manage tense situations [at home].”

FATHER

“Before, I did not know that I should participate in domestic chores and childcare, and I did not know how. Because of the Fathers Clubs, I now know how to go about it.”

4.3. EFFECTS ON ATTITUDES OF MALE MEMBERS OF FATHERS CLUBS

There has been a notable shift in the way men define their engagement in family life as a spouse and father. For example, all the male respondents recognized the importance of the equal division of housework between men and women. Not one of the fathers consulted advocated for traditional unequal gender roles and division of housework; rather, all indicated that men have an important role to play in housework and child care. Also evident was a change of sentiment towards positive masculinity, no longer rejected by these men, as one man said, “I now help my wife to supply the house with water and also prepare her children before they go to school. Before, I did not want to support my wife doing the chores and the care of her children,” and another man shared, “Everything gets done faster when working together – there is strength in union.”

At the same time, the frequent use of the word “help” by men, women, adolescent boys, and community leaders to describe male engagement in domestic activities suggests that despite increased male involvement, household work is still widely considered by many to fall within the domain of female responsibility – rather than a joint responsibility to be shared equally in the planning and execution. Deep-rooted belief in the gendered division of labour is also illustrated by comments suggesting that male support in this female realm should be rewarded, with a comment from a women’s FGD in Gens de Nantes that women “should appreciate” male support, while one Fathers Clubs member from Acul Samedi

explained his motivation was recompense: “I would like to have other attitudes to be more rewarded by my wife.”

It seems their key responsibility for earning a livelihood has been in play while respondents describe male engagement in household chores as ‘helping wife’ then ‘sharing the joint responsibility.’ Moreover, some responses indicate that men’s domestic work appears more legitimate when there is an absence of a woman who can do it. A participant in a women’s focus group echoed this gendered division of labour linking the father’s responsibility to her absence stating that “A good father should take care of the children when the mother is not at home.” While men recognized the need for women to be relieved of their gender burden, as one father said, “she (wife) would be less tired and would feel relieved that someone is taking care of the children when she goes to the market if she is sick or has a problem she needs to tend to.”

When asked, the role of a good father included caring for children, seeing to their education, assisting them with their homework, providing moral counsel, discussing with them, being friends with them, taking them to the hospital, and on outings. Mothers added that a good father loves and respects his children and protects them from violence. Adolescent girls said a good father should educate his children, demonstrate affection and meet their material needs, and adolescent boys added a good father should teach him a trade, and prepare his children for the future, should play and be a friend.

The adherence to traditional gender roles also relates to the actual economic activities of men, which was seen in



comments that affirmed one of the primary identities of fathers as breadwinners. Men, community leaders, women, and adolescent girls and boys all underscored the earning of a livelihood, including farm products, which is one of a father's key responsibilities. This was reflected in a statement by a community leader that "A good father should give his children everything they need despite economic circumstances (food, education, clothing, healthcare)."

The disconnect in the perceptions of women's disproportionate energy expenditures and what they need most was revealed by their diverging responses to the question of how the woman would use a few hours without work: while men and male community leaders talked about activities such as petty trading, gardening, and participation in the labour market and in community life as well as rest, the women themselves spoke exclusively of non-work-related activities, especially time for rest and sleep, and spending more time building relationships with their partners and children.

4.4. COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND RESISTANCE TO MANIFESTATIONS OF POSITIVE MASCULINITY

Above all, men, women, and adolescent boys and girls equally reported that they generally notice that the community's reactions to the behaviours being modeled are positive and that people are happy with and enjoy these changes in the behaviors of the men. Men themselves feel encouraged, and women have noted that positive effects encourage others to want to participate in Fathers Clubs themselves. One man while describing community appreciation, shared, "many people in the community, even in the neighborhood, congratulate me for my new (positive) changes." A woman while describing the reaction of community among changes in her husband said, "many people in my community have noticed the (positive) changes (in my husband) and are very happy because of these changes."

Community leaders have expressed that most people in the communities understand the importance of these changes, but that despite this, some did not support these changes and who strongly believe that only women should do housework. Women have also witnessed negative reactions, as one woman shared, "when my husband helps me to bring back goods from the market, people from the neighborhood make fun of him." Both women and men have observed complaints that club participants are not real men, that they are domesticated, that they are slaves to women, and that they act like children. Men testify to being stigmatized or mocked by their peers who do not agree, and one man said, "people in the community say that my wife is doing magic to force me to participate in housework."

The community leaders reported both negative and positive community views about conforming men, as one religious leader shared, "on the one hand, people see these men who do domestic work and say 'they are the slaves of women, they are effeminate men.' On the other, the majority of people congratulate the collaboration of men in their homes, because they help their wives to do housework."

However, men expressed not being discouraged by these negative reactions, with some being motivated by their critics to share what they have learned in clubs with those who tease them. A father in Lamine reported, "despite the stereotypes about me I'm not disturbed, and I continue to support my wife in housework and childcare."

4.5. TRIGGERS OF CHANGE AMONG MEN

According to all categories of participants in the study, the most important factor for triggering positive change is participation in the Fathers Clubs. Fathers explained that their participation helped them to develop new positive attitudes, to create new habits, and try out new behaviors at home. One father in Lamine said, "I participated actively during all of the 20 sessions. I asked questions in every session and participated in the exercises on the man box. Because of the club, I have been able to understand the importance of breastfeeding and understand different forms of violence. My wife is very proud of my participation." Some even spoke of specific activities in the Fathers Clubs curriculum that impacted them, as one father in Acul Samedi shared how he has put into practice his learning from the club, "I learned how to live with my wife and get involved in housework. I am very imbued with the issue of gender and sex. I made a lot of effort not to stay in the man box." Most interviewees expressed a desire for these changes to continue and felt that this would be more likely if the Fathers Clubs continue. Women and adolescent girls from across the study corroborated the primacy of the Fathers Clubs as a factor influencing the positive changes observed.

4.6. SUSTAINABILITY OF CHANGE

The fathers interviewed indicated that they believe that the changes will last and become permanent, because of their intentions to continue the new learned attitudes and behaviors of positive masculinities. Besides, men report having better abilities to maintain good relationships with their families, and some male participants also indicated their interest in sharing what they have learned with other men in their community, which promotes sustainability. Some participants expressed being motivated by their children, and that the new presence of harmony and peace in their homes has encouraged them to continue. Many explained that they think the changes will last their whole lives, or "until death."

Women, adolescent children, and community leaders all indicated that the changes will continue as long as men continue to see the positive impacts. Also, leaders suggest that as men practice new behaviors, this will become commonplace. Only women have noted that they have a role to play, that they must continue to expressly appreciate

the behavior of their husbands, which seems to suggest that women have a role in promoting gender-equitable behaviours in men on the one hand and on the other that they see household and care work primarily as their own, worthy of appreciation when carried out by men.

FATHER

“I think the changes will last forever, because my kids are happy now with my behaviors. My children asked me to stay as I am now.”

WOMEN

Paraphrased: these changes will last long if the clubs continue to function.

ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Paraphrased: these changes will last because of the improvements they bring to the heart of the household.

COMMUNITY LEADER

“The changes will last because fathers testified their desire to continue with their new behaviours.”

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the Plan International study show that Fathers Clubs are an effective approach to transforming unequal gender norms and behaviours. Following their participation in Fathers Clubs, the men of the communes of Capotille, Ouanaminthe, and Fort-Liberté had gained new attitudes towards their role as men, spouses, and fathers in the domestic sphere, especially concerning housework and childcare. Their participation in clubs facilitated the adoption of more equitable attitudes between men and women. The men, women, and children consulted expressed that domestic chores and childcare are responsibilities that should be shared equally between men and women, fathers and mothers, suggesting that their knowledge and understanding of gender equality was high, and possibly enhanced by mutually reinforcing SHOW activities, including community communication and outreach on gender equality by community leaders. Some women expressed the potential for men to make further progress in providing physical and emotional support. Additionally, some comments suggest that social norms about the gendered division of labour are still fundamentally present, with many women as well as men appearing to view domestic work and childcare as essentially a female role, and their increased workload sharing is an offer of help. Meanwhile, men, women, and adolescent girls and boys, and community leaders all highlighted the key role of the fathers to earn the livelihood for the family as a major factor reinforcing the gendered division of labour in households.

Nonetheless, positive attitudinal and behavioral changes in men were widely corroborated by the women partners and the children, girls, and boys of the participating men, as well as by community leaders. Besides, the wives, girls, and boys

of fathers emphasized the multiplier effects of these positive behaviours, yielding benefits for the lives of women and children, including improved relations between men and their wives/partners, and between men and their children, and a reduction in domestic violence.

The consultations also revealed that all participants recognize the important role fathers play in the development of their children by providing stable, non-violent, and loving relationships, and by helping to meet the social, emotional and health needs of their children. Furthermore, in terms of the effects on adolescent boys, engaged fathers appear to have a potential inter-generational impact by modeling equitable attitudes and behaviours and actively educating their sons to follow this path.

Study participants generally demonstrated optimism that these positive changes are sustainable. The men consulted indicated that they were motivated to continue practicing these new habits and to pass them on to their children and peers. On the other hand, some important barriers to the sustainability of the effects of Fathers Clubs have been noted, including poverty and schedules of men already burdened by working outside the home, and to a lesser extent the negative reactions of other members of the community. Despite these barriers, the men consulted indicated that they were motivated to continue the new behaviors because the positive effects were significant in their lives. The depth of norms assigning the ultimate responsibility for caretaking to women, and the provision for the family to men, also appear to some extent to be intertwined, with these roles acting to some extent as a barrier to men's further involvement in caretaking roles.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are a few general recommendations:

- For better message understanding among the participating fathers having low or no literacy, a pictorial version of Fathers Clubs manual can further improve men's learning.
- A dedicated session is required to enable men to better deal with social stigma for adopting positive masculine behaviour.
- Women should also be offered training on content similar to the Fathers Clubs for sustainable effect within the community.

6.1. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

The following operational recommendations are for the development partners:

- The success of this methodology rests upon the quality of facilitation and the ability to provide a safe environment in clubs where men can share their thoughts and fears about behaviour change and the transformation towards relations based on gender equality. It requires facilitators: learn well the content and the training methodology, can practice and refine their facilitation skills, internalize the values of gender equality and positive masculinity being communicated in their personal lives, and master knowledge on the MNCH/SRHR continuum of care. Investment in the in-depth training and capacity development of community facilitators, including ongoing support and mentoring after the initial training and opportunities to come together and discuss facilitation challenges and achievements is essential. Ensure also that each club is led by a team of two facilitators to provide mutual support. Create a safe space where men can build the relationships and confidence necessary to hold difficult discussions by managing group size.
- Amplify the benefits of the Fathers Clubs methodology by linking them to Mothers/Partners Clubs and creating opportunities for spouses to hold independent reflections with members of their sex, and for the groups to interact and discuss the negotiation power of their relationships, to test new behaviours in a safe space.
- Integrate messages on gender equality and men's engagement in awareness campaigns, to normalize positive masculinity and minimize risk to men who initiate new positive behaviors.



6.2. GOVERNMENT

Following operational recommendations are for the relevant Ministries, including the Ministry of Health:

- Invest in in-depth training of community health officers workers (ASCPs) as described above for the 'Development Partners' to ensure they become skilled facilitators and change agents who are linked to a wider community of practice where they can continue to improve their skills.
- Ensure ASCP facilitators plan with fathers in mind, accommodating the scheduling of Fathers Clubs sessions at times that are suitable for the fathers of the community in question. Orient health providers to ensure that all men, including fathers who become involved in MNCH/SRHR as a result of their participation in the club, will be expected and appropriately received in health facilities.
- Adapt the Mothers Club curriculum and training approach to complement that of the Fathers Clubs, to ensure a holistic sharing of messages across the men and women of the communities.
- If clubs choose of their own accord to continue beyond 20 sessions, this is possible, and men can continue to come together and support the sustainability of changes in behavior and attitudes. Furthermore, the clubs can also become peer to peer models as one group graduates by forming another. However, if clubs are very popular and ASCPs have difficulty managing the number of members that want to join, offering the course at different times could help manage.

6.3. FACILITATORS

Following operational recommendations are for the facilitators beyond the project:

- Support the continued life of clubs as meeting places for men to meet and discuss issues that arise around the redistribution of power and the role of men in supporting a transformation towards gender equality in their personal lives and their community. Assist this process by providing a structure for ongoing discussions through the application of your facilitation skills.
- Continue to meet regularly with other facilitators and to provide peer support to negotiate challenges as they arise, and to learn from and celebrate successes.





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