



MALE ENGAGEMENT APPROACH: AN IMPROVED MASCULINE BEHAVIOR FOR GENDER EQUALITY NORMS

SPIR-DFSA project gender equality strategies

The SPIR-DFSA gender analysis study findings highlighted gender disparities in decision making, access and control over productive resources, division of labour, and community leadership in the project area. The gender dynamics favoured men while women and girls faced discrimination due to harmful social and gender norms that restrict women and girls. SPIR-DFSA synchronized women's empowerment and men engagement interventions to support women's empowerment and ensure gender equality. The interventions were guided by the gender equality and the male engagement complementary

Investing in male masculine behavior is equally important as investing in women's agency for household gender transformation.

SPIR-DFSA synchronized women's empowerment & men engagement interventions to support women's empowerment

Men who symbolize more equitable household relations and adopt new behaviours were recognized as men's champions



frameworks which enabled address the three dimensions (Increased Agency, Changed Relations, Transformed Structures) to women empowerment and gender equality.

This learning brief reflects findings from Gender Progress Marker Outcome Monitoring - Male engagement and its main purpose is to show outcomes (changes in behaviour) achieved in gender equality analysis and disseminate learnings from the implemented male's engagement strategy. The brief focuses on the male engagement approach that the SPIR-DFSA employed to capacitate men as allies to become part of the solution and bring about gender equality and multiply the impact of food and nutrition security.

SPIR project male engagement approach

The SPIR-DFSA's project male engagement approach was strategically embedded within multiple platforms and approaches. A group of 15-20 men were brought together to form male engagement groups and these groups held 8 different sessions facilitated by 'male advocates' recruited from the group. The topics for each session focused on

gender dynamics, traditional norms, and how they influence childcare, decision making, household division of labour, early marriage, and GBV.



Figure 1. Male Engagement Synchronization Model

Men who symbolize more equitable household relations and adopt new behaviours were recognized as men's champions in public campaigns and at community events. The male engagement approach was instrumental in promoting gender equality at the individual, household as well as at community levels.

Learning from male engagement approach

The male engagement approach has brought forth positive shift and changes on men's behaviour around the five change domains of gender equality: decision making, division of labour, access and control over productive resources, women's voice and participation in leadership and Gender norms and beliefs around GBV.

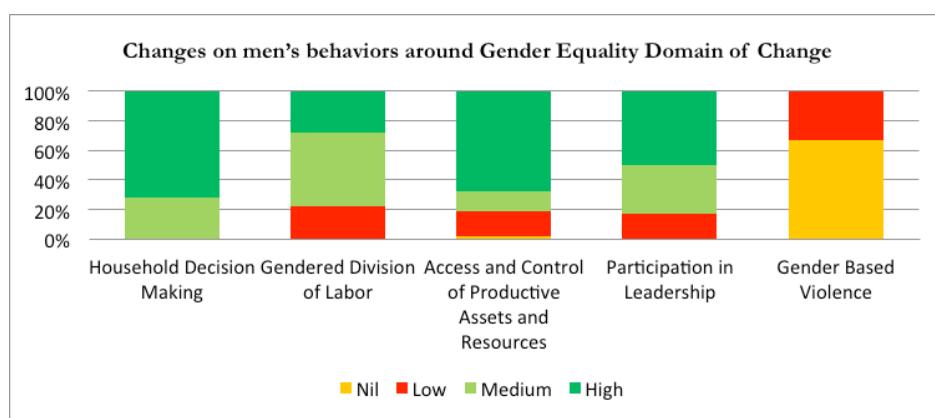


Figure 2. Gender Equality Domain of Changes

Improved masculine behaviour impacted the changes at individual (Agency), household(relations) and community (structure)levels towards gender equality at as described below:

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Masculine behaviors positively shifted supporting women inclusive decision, gender equitable division of labor and non-violent actions Women's behaviors encouraging men to participate in household chores has improved

HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

Household culture for open discussion on gender equality positively shifted Women inclusive decision making have been realized Household nutrition and family relation have improved

COMMUNITY LEVEL

The male engagement participants positively impacted neighbors, demonstrating gender equitable norms at their household Men started to influence their fellow men's behaviors on gender equality

Individual level changes:

Men's engagement in re-thinking their masculine behaviours improved women's participation in decision making. The outcome monitoring from May, 2021, indicated improved gender inclusive decision making (72% high) which means that almost all of the FGD participants practiced positive behaviours which enabled women's equal participation in decision-making.

“...Nothing will happen in the household without the consultation and consent of the wives. For example, my wife and I discussed and sold onion and sheep for 2000 Birr and bought fertilizer with the sales money. As we started making decisions together, we have become financially stronger.”

A voice of FGD participant in Abdikom Kebele, Walda Woreda

The male engagement consecutive sessions have positively impacted men and women's behaviours on their perception of gender-stereotyped roles. The men's session on "gender role in society" enabled men to realize the unfair burden on their wives and their roles to bring about the desired change. The outcome monitoring results indicated that over half of the men in the male engagement groups have shown a medium and high level of behavioural change that is 50% medium (approximately half of the participants practiced the behaviour) and 28% high (almost all of the participants practiced the behaviour) on a gender-equitable division of labour.

“ I was shocked when he gave me a hand for the first time in grinding coffee which we do manually. I got confused because it was unthinkable for men to do domestic chores in our community.”

Aberash Bamuda-VESA member from Siraro Woreda

Additionally, men's beliefs regarding women's access to and control over productive resources was reported to have tangible improvement. Consistently, 89% of Men from outcome monitoring FGD groups attested to that almost all of the men in their groups involve women fully in buying and selling of big assets and use of money from sales. The change is confirmed by women 78% high (almost all of the participants practiced the behaviour) and most of them have control over their resources and are able to decide on its usage.

Learnings

- The approach of male engagement targeting men and influencing their masculine behaviours is a powerful entry point for positive changes in gendered social norms.

- Effects of positive masculine behaviours go beyond individual level and impact change on household power dynamics and community perceptions on gender equality.
- Investing in male masculine behaviour is equally important as investing in women's agency for household gender transformation.

Household level changes

Participation in male engagement groups positively shifted households' culture of open discussion on gender equality and brought balance in the intra-household power dynamics. The male engagement dialogues on sessions particularly "masculinity and the role of men as a father, my father's legacy and power and early marriage", have been reported to contribute to a decrease in men's violent behaviours and increase in respectful and consensual dispute resolutions. These progressive individual and household level changes resulted in high reduction of the prevalence of GBV as shown in fig 2.



“ I often used to beat my children badly even for minor offences. I don't even remember the time I fed, wash or hold my kids before I joined the Men's Engagement group. I was very distant from my kids, physically and emotionally. The more I cared for my family, the more I felt connected. ”

Bamuda Wako-Male Champion from Siraro Woreda.

Learnings

- Linking male engagement sessions with household dialogue have brought about powerful and positive shifts in households' intra power dynamics.
- Male group discussion on household nutrition is effective entry point for household dialogue on gender equality with family members.

Community level changes

The men found it easy to learn changes in positive masculine behaviour from other fellow men. Identifying, recruiting and promoting male role models and empowering them to influence neighbours and the wider community was found an efficient strategy to canalize change. Linking male engagement groups with community activities and events demonstrating changed behaviours increased male alliances and solidarity for masculine behaviour changes towards gender equality. The engagement of community influential leaders in the male engagement groups was highly influential to deconstruct gendered social norms.

On the other hand, women's participation in public leadership has shown some improvement as men's perception of female leaders as well as acceptance by the community improved. Despite the effort, the shift to gender equitable participation in the PSNP decision making structures requires collective effort and collaboration.



Figure 3. Male Engagement Community Campaign

Learnings

Linking male engagement groups and the role models with community events and advocacy activities increased the number of male alliances.

Engaging with norm holders and influential leaders including mother-in-Laws facilitated tangible and sustainable changes in men's masculine behaviours.

CONCLUSION:

Critical reflection and dialogue on male masculine behaviours is very crucial for challenging and transforming gendered social norms and beliefs. The male engagement approach is proven effective for enabling equitable household decision-making, household workload sharing, access to and control over productive resources, participation in leadership and GBV mitigation. Overall, supporting women's empowerment and gender equality is possible if projects follow the synchronization model and put equal emphasis on male engagement and women's empowerment.

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