

Sustained Impact of Male Engagement for Gender Equality

NOBO JATRA - NEW BEGINNING

USAID's Resilience Food Security Activity

Introduction

Bangladesh has made notable progress around key indicators such as poverty reduction, economic growth and improvements around maternal and neonatal health. However, this growth does not always translate into gains for both women and men. The 2017-18 Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey found that 59% of women aged 20–24 were married before age 18. One-third (31%) of women aged 20–49 reported that they had married at age 15.



It is in this context that USAID's 'Nobo Jatra – new beginning' project, implemented by World Vision Bangladesh seeks to improve gender equitable food security, nutrition and resilience in southwest Bangladesh. Nobo Jatra is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) of the Government of Bangladesh. The project has reached over 216,377 households including pregnant and lactating women, children under two, youth, adolescents, husbands and fathers with multi sector interventions.



World Vision Bangladesh - MenCare Approach

World Vision Bangladesh has integrated the MenCare approach as an inter sectional theme across programming in health, nutrition and livelihoods 23 Area Programmes and grants projects. The MenCare approach is a group based learning process to promote men's involvement in caregiving for gender equality. The MenCare approach promotes sharing household work and joint decision making between couples to facilitate transformation of traditional gender based inequalities. The approach paves the way for women to participate in decision-making and economic activities. The MenCare approach has resulted in positive outcomes for gender equality. Husbands and wives make joint decisions on incomes, expenditure and assets. Men are sharing household and care giving work with their spouses and women are participating in household decision-making processes. Men are also recognizing women's unpaid work and couples are equipped with the skills to resolve conflicts, communicate and create a peaceful environment for the welling of the family.

In addition to the Nobo Jatra project, World Vision Bangladesh (WVB) has leveraged and integrated the MenCare approach as an inter sectional theme across health, nutrition and livelihoods activities in 23 area programs and other grants projects. WVB's MenCare approach is a group based learning process to promote men's involvement in caregiving for gender equality. The MenCare approach mainly targets husbands and wives to promote sharing household work and joint decision making between couples to facilitate transformation of traditional gender based inequalities. WVB is also intentional to include poor and extreme poor households, persons with disability and youth in the MenCare intervention. The approach paves the way for women to participate in decision-making and economic activities. The MenCare approach has resulted in positive outcomes for gender equality as seen through a snapshot WVB programming:



“Think about a bicycle,” says Jayantha Das. “It has two wheels. If one wheel is damaged or leaky, it won't work anymore. The husband and wife are like the wheels of the bicycle. If someone doesn't feel happy, the household could be damaged.”

Project: Nutrition Sensitive Value Chains for Smallholder Farmers (NSVC) Project



1 September 2017
to 30 June 2023



Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)-Department
of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

Result:

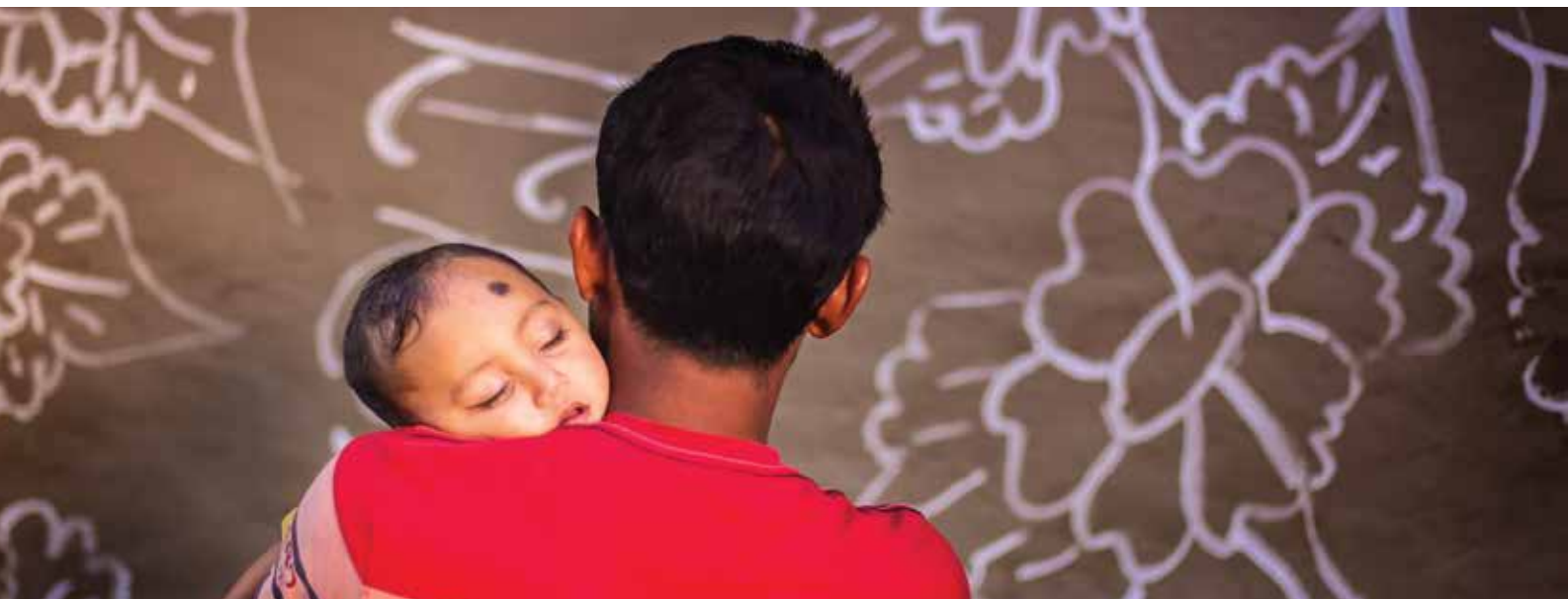
The NSVC project has implemented the Changemaker Families' (MenCare) 14 weeks package as gender-transformative educational program reaching 354 couples in three sub-districts (Jamalpur sadar, Islampur and Dewangonj) under Jamalpur district.

- **Increased participation of men in domestic activities:**

Overall 64.5% male and 54.7% female respondents reported increased male participation in domestic activities: such as men being more attentive in child caring activities (feeding, bathing, and schooling) and assisting wives in household chores, post-harvest agricultural work. **As a result women are getting surplus time for leisure and involving in economic activities like homestead gardening, agro-based micro business etc.**

	Males	Females
% of participants reported decision-making power over non-income generating activities related expenditure	59.7% (baseline 23.5%)	56.2% (baseline 14.0%)
% of participants reported high decision-making power over income generating activities	56.7% (baseline 23.5%)	39.3% (baseline 9.6%)

- 74.1% HHs perceived an increase in **overall income**. Approximately 75% of women earned an estimated \$11.9 - \$59 from vegetables sales (each season) after family consumption with the help of their husbands.
- **Perception on frequency of occurrence of domestic violence in the community:** Overall frequency ("Often") of incidence of domestic violence has reduced from 12.1% at baseline to 9.2% during the mid-term evaluation.



Project: SHOMOTA – Strengthening Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in WASH in Bangladesh



5 Years (June 2018
to December 2022)



Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
through Water for Women Fund

Result:

- 36 MenCare groups in 6 sub districts under 3 districts. 360 couples (720 participants) including 10% persons with disability trained on MenCare.

Project: Enhancing Nutrition Services to Improve Maternal and Child Health (ENRICH) Project



March 2016 to March 2021

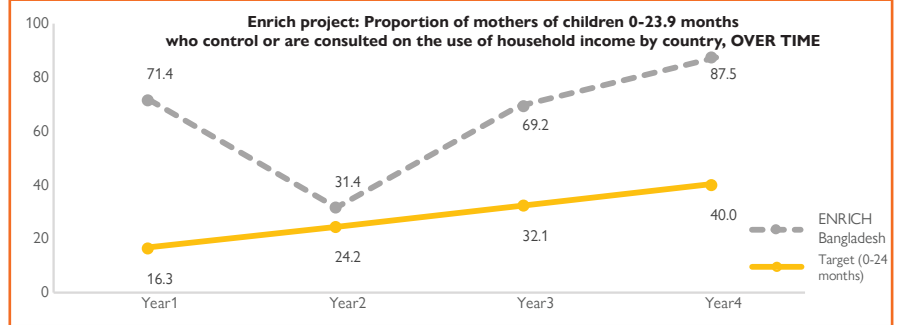
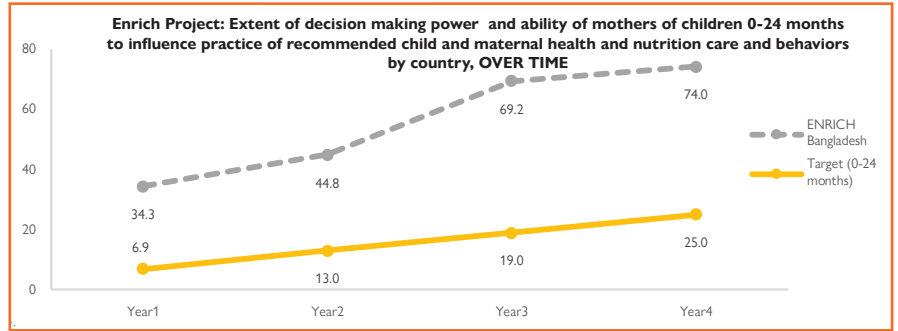


Global Affairs Canada

Result:

The NSVC project has implemented the Changemaker Families' (MenCare) 14 weeks package as gender-transformative educational program reaching 354 couples in three sub-districts (Jamalpur sadar, Islampur and Dewangonj) under Jamalpur district.

- 210 MenCare members trained and advocating for gender equity in communities reaching 13,270 men.



Project: Bangladesh Initiatives to Enhance Nutrition Security and Governance (BIENGS) Project



September 1, 2018 to February 28, 2023 (54 months)



European Union

Result:

- 6,445 couples and 4,100 mother in laws trained on the MenCare approach.



Male engagement for gender equality

Goal

Increase practice of gender equitable norms and reduce gender based violence.



Target groups:
Husbands and wives



9 months



12 sessions



Building on the success of male involvement in changing attitudes and reducing violence against women, Nobo Jatra developed and implemented a deeply contextualized Male Engagement for Gender Equality module. Through the male engagement sessions, Nobo Jatra targets both **husbands and wives** to promote inclusive change and transformational shifts in gender norms and covers key concepts such as shared decision making, division of domestic and care giving responsibilities and addresses the pervasive practice of child marriage.

Nobo Jatra targets poor and extreme poor households and is intentional to layer and sequence a range of activities at the household level. For example, male engagement couples are also participants in other Nobo Jatra activities in Water Sanitation and Hygiene, nutrition social safety nets or Ultra Poor Graduation.



“I didn’t have confidence to talk to my husband before, we had an understanding gap. Now we understand each other very well. We are more friendly than ever.”
says Tumpa, male engagement participant.

Male engagement module



LET'S BEGIN

Introduction, pre-test on attitudes and information



THE MAN I AM IN THE FAMILY

social and biological differences, ‘masculinity’ and its impact, attitudes and behaviors related to equality at home



MAXIMIZING FAMILY WELLBEING AND PROSPERITY

importance of men’s support and share decision making at home, sense of contribution and ownership, skills to build gender equitable relationships



PEACE IN THE FAMILY

targets men as partners in ending violence/child marriage, skills for healthy relationships at home, measure attitudinal changes and identify future actions

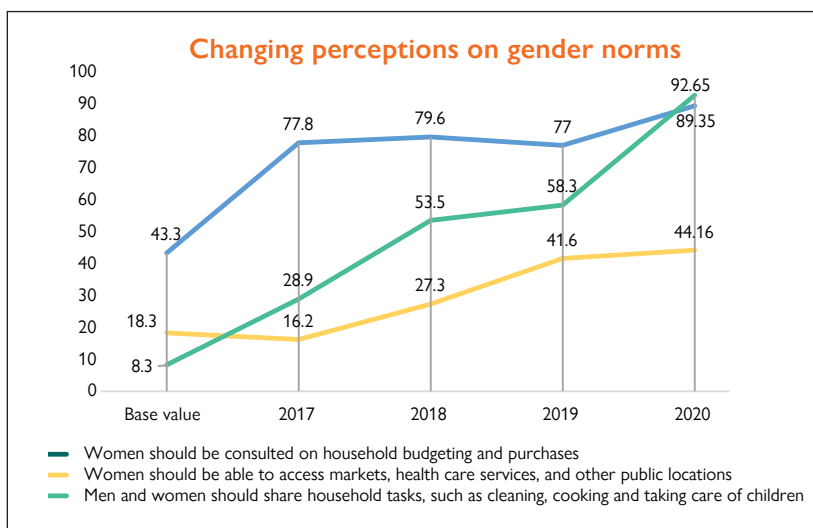


GRADUATION

celebration, recognition, acknowledgement

9,814 couples (husbands and wives) have graduated through male engagement for gender equality sessions. Couples become catalysts, sharing their knowledge with others in the area and setting a good example to their own children. Facilitators have reported that layering and sequencing of the male engagement activity has also helped to minimize any unintended impacts of women participating in Nobo Jatra activities that increases incomes, assets, confidence and skills such as Ultra Poor Graduation or nutrition safety nets. When Nobo Jatra first started implementing in 2015, only 8.3 percent of men thought that they should share household and childcare tasks. Today, over 92 percent of men say that husbands and wives should work together on household chores and care giving for children. Participation in male engagement sessions has shown positive changes in perceptions related to gender equitable practices at the household level:

Indicators	Baseline (2015)	2020
Men said that men and women should share household chores, including childcare	8.3%	92.65%
Men think women should be consulted on household budgeting and purchases	43.30%	89.35%
Men think women should be able to access markets, health care services, and other public spaces without restrictions	18.30%	44.16%



Study: 'Male engagement for gender equality - sustained impact and changes in south west Bangladesh'

Objectives

- To understand impact of male engagement intervention in improving gender equity in a household, and enhance the effectiveness and quality of male engagement
- To develop a plan on how the male engagement approach could sustain with regard to changes in perception, knowledge, attitude and practice of men and boys.

Methodology

A mixed method using quantitative as well as qualitative research components was applied. The study used a participant based sampling survey, which is a descriptive two-stage cluster design. The first stage is the male engagement groups and second stage is the sample couple from the group.

Quantitative data: 210 couples under case groups, 70 couples under control groups.

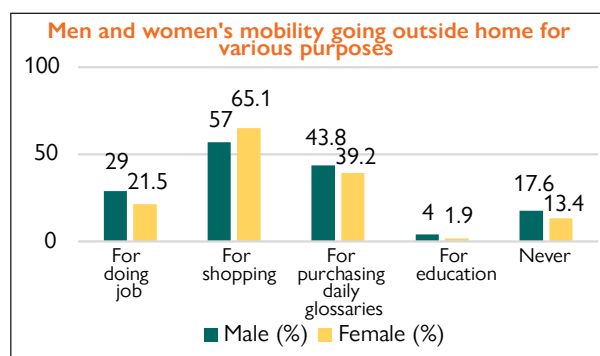
Qualitative data: FGDs (10), Key Informants Interviews (25), case stories (3) and consultations (10). Interviews with: standing committees and Union Parishad members, local government institutions, civil society actors at local and national level, academic, and representatives of development agencies.

Findings

Access

Women's mobility outside the home has increased significantly. Women can now participate in events outside the home, work and also go to markets for shopping. Baseline data in 2015 showed that 80.9% women below 30 and 66.3% women above 30 needed to seek permission to visit certain locales. The study (2019) found that 50.5% (case women) aged below 30 years need male permission to move around.

39.2% of women are able to go and buy groceries without permission and 65.1% are able to go shopping for household goods; 21.5% women go outside to work.



Findings

● Decision making

Couples have acknowledged that they jointly take decisions on many issues, which were previously decided by husbands alone. For small expenditures such as food, clothing, healthcare, household appliances, both husbands and wives took 77% of decisions. Equally, for larger investments such as buying assets, or land, livestock, agriculture and fisheries, 78% of decisions were taken by the couples jointly. 83.8% couples decided together on when to invite or visit friends and family members, 74.1% jointly decided on children's education and 87.3% took health and treatment decisions together.

● Participation

Women are attending courtyard meetings at village level and meetings at union parishad (tier of local Government) level; thus women are taking part in the community affairs. 2,181 women participants in male engagement sessions are also participating in Nobo Jatra's Ultra-Poor Graduation activity which involves literacy training, income generating activities and participation in savings groups. This has not had any unintended consequences – rather, husbands have been supportive of their wives – in many cases, supporting their wives with income generating activities such as making bamboo products or paper boxes.

89.35% of men think that women should be consulted on household budgeting and purchases in comparison to a baseline value of 43.30%. 44.16% of men think that women should be able to access markets, health care services, and other public locations without restrictions or prior consultation in comparison to a baseline value of 18.30%. When Nobo Jatra first started implementing in 2015, only 8.3 percent of men thought that they should share household and childcare tasks. Today, over 92 percent of men say that husbands and wives should work together on household chores and care giving for children.



In 2020, over 92 percent of men say that husbands and wives should work together on household chores and care giving for children (in comparison to 8.3 percent in 2015).

● Equal systems

95.2% male and 96.7% female among case couples consider educating their daughters as an important investment. It's a way forward for equal systems. 98.1% male and 94.7% female agreed that child marriage is harmful for adolescent girls and that it is a punishable offence. 93.6% men and 93.3% women in case couples know where to report incidences of child marriage. 95.5% participants in the project areas know that the laws for violence against children.

● Well-being and Gender Based Violence

Prior to participation in male engagement sessions, women did not perceive domestic violence as a form of violence or as a violation of rights. The male engagement approach challenged this norm by developing understanding between the partners, creating an openness to share burdens and by promoting improved communication between the couples. Open communication between husband and wife has helped to reduce violence and family conflicts. Some men are giving more emphasis on family bonding and mutual respect.

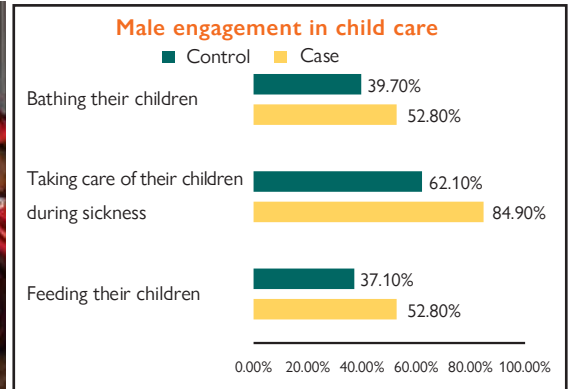
A major outcome of male engagement has been the increased communications between husbands and wives when it comes to conflict resolution. 97% (male) and 96.7% (female) of case couples said they were taking joint decisions to solve family disputes. Improved division of labour is evident as 71% of men are doing housework in comparison to 38.2% at baseline. 80% women and 85.5% men among programme participants discuss about their problems with partner on monthly basis and resolve that.

The male engagement approach also helped participants build skills on positive communication, emphasized mutual respect and developed skills to manage anger or outbursts of emotion. Another reason for decreasing domestic violence against women is that couples are spending more time together, sharing their personal problems, trying to find solutions together peacefully, which reduces misunderstanding, and increases respect.

Findings

Household chores and caregiving

In case groups, 52.8% men were feeding their children, 84.9% men were taking care of their children during sickness, and 52.8% men were bathing their children.



Recommendations

- 1 The male engagement approach or certain key sessions/messages can be embedded in existing Government structures (steering/ protection committees) at Union Parishad, Upazila, and District level; and in the existing programs of the Department of Women Affairs. The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs are important allies and local stakeholders who can actualize these recommendations.
- 2 A simplified version of the male engagement module could be adapted by the Union Parishad Standing Committees particularly those working for women empowerment, gender issues and combating child marriage.
- 3 Government structures such as Youth Clubs could also be important entry points to spread messages on gender equality. An abridged version of the male engagement module could also be shared and adapted in Youth Club strategies.
- 4 Couples who have graduated through male engagement can serve as important community based advocates on the subject. Couples can be invited to join in relevant meetings and events led by the Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad and divisional level structures.
- 5 Further advocacy is essential for inclusion of "male engagement approach" in articles/ section of The National Women's Development Policy 2011, education and child protection policies.

Key Stakeholders to Sustain Male Engagement Impact

- Ministry of Women and Children Affairs,
- Ministry of Primary and Mass Education ,
- Ministry of Education,
- Ministry of Youth and Sports
- National School Text Book & Board
- Divisional, District & Sub-district administration
- Union Parishad



"My dream is for Sumaiya to become a doctor one day. When Sumaiya tells us that she wants to be independent and provide for the family, I feel proud and blessed to have a daughter. I work doubly as hard so that I can invest in my children's education – because that way I am investing in the future."
Jaharul, male engagement graduate



www.wvb-nobojatra.org



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