

NOBO JATRA - NEW BEGINNING

USAID's Development Food Security Activity

Sustained Impact of Male Engagement in southwest Bangladesh

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.




Male engagement for gender equality

Goal

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



 **9 months**

 **12 sessions (interactive, participatory)**



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.



"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



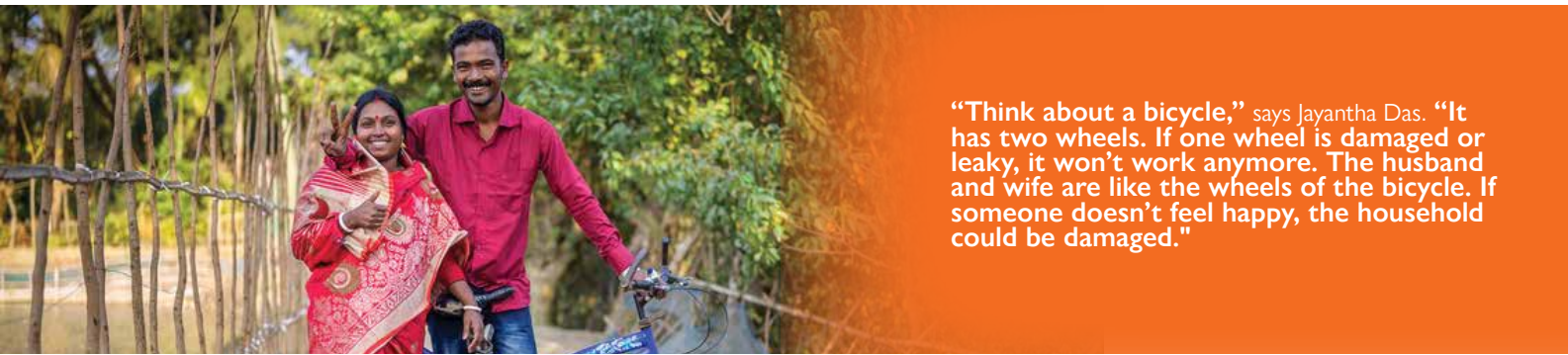
PEACE IN THE FAMILY

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



GRADUATION

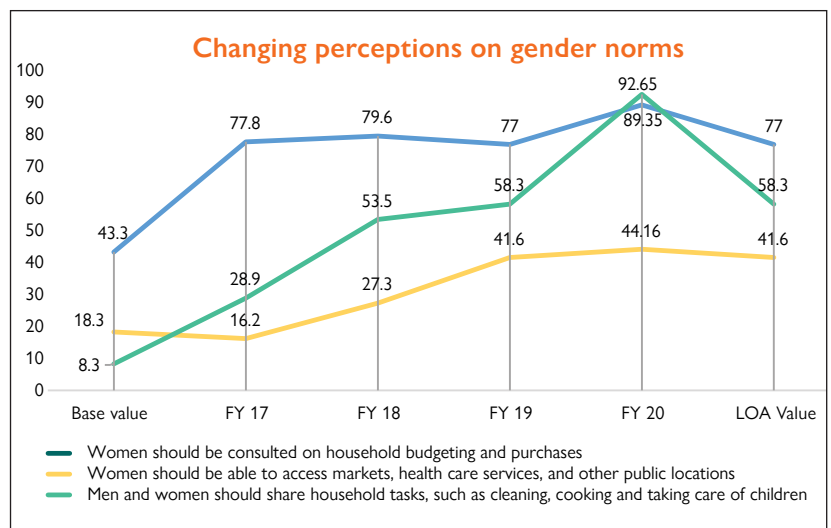
celebration, recognition, acknowledgement



“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.”**

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. 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

Women's Mobility and Participation

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. This is a significant improvement from baseline.** Remarkably, the study also shows that women's participation and mobility have increased in specific areas; **39.2% of women are able to go and buy groceries without permission** and **65.1% are able to go shopping for household goods.**

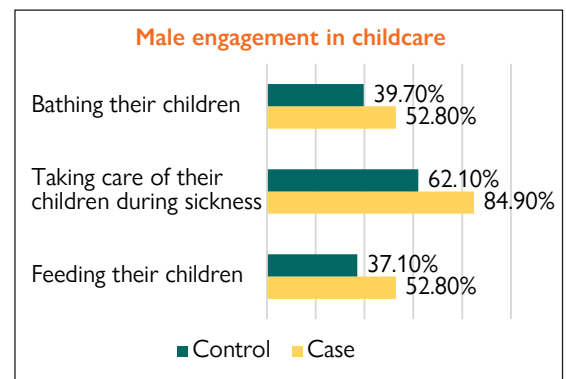
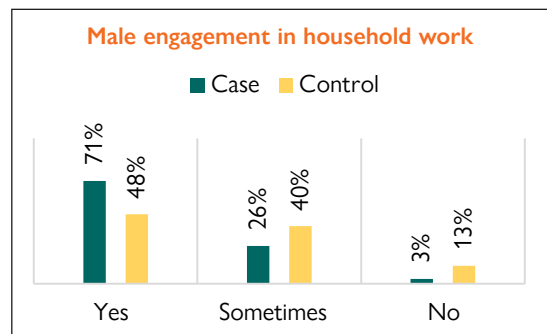
In the case group, **71% of men are doing household work** all the time and 26% sometimes. At **baseline, only 38.2%** of husbands supported women with household tasks.

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.

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. All these figures indicate much higher values in comparison to the men covered under 'control' criteria.



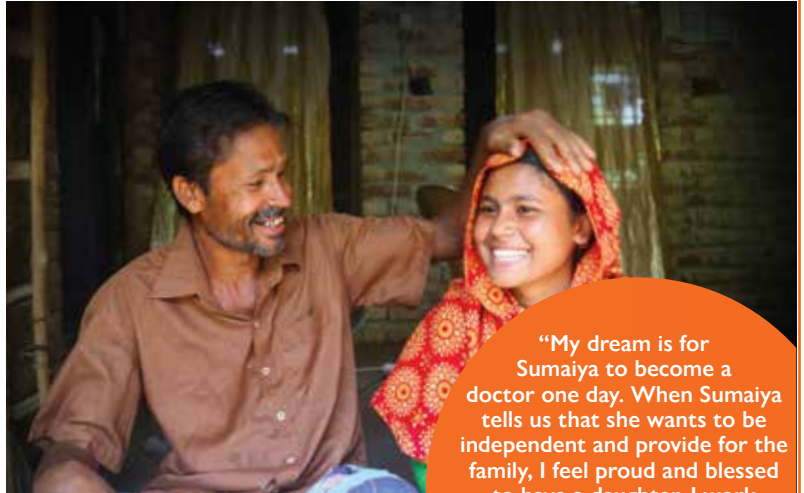
Findings

• Gender Based Violence and child marriage

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.

Almost all the participants (male 98.1% and female 94.7%) agreed that child marriage is harmful for adolescent girls. Almost all participants know that child marriage is a punishable offence by law. Participants mentioned that awareness on child marriage was something that they have understood through participation in a cross section of Nobo Jatra activities during which the messages on the risks of child marriage are emphasized.

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. This has contributed to reduce gender-based domestic violence and conflicts. 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.



“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

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 (NCTB)
- Divisional, District & Sub-district administration
- Union Parishad



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