EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
QUALITATIVE ENDLINE STUDY OF THE MALE ADVOCATE CLUB

Findings from the qualitative endline study found that the Male Advocate Club project improved perception and understanding of violence against women and girls, challenged gender roles and norms, improved family relationships and parenting skills and encouraged volunteerism.

BACKGROUND

The Male Advocate Club project was implemented in Da Nang City, Viet Nam from August 2015 to November 2016 by the Da Nang Women’s Union and UN Women Viet Nam, with the support of Partners for Prevention (P4P), a regional joint programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Volunteer Programme (UNV), working for the prevention of violence against women and girls in Asia and the Pacific.

The project aimed to work with men to change social norms and address harmful masculinities through building the capacity of local facilitators, running year-long participatory workshops, and promoting volunteerism to sustain the project’s results. This intervention was implemented as part of a broader violence against women and girls prevention programme that was supported by UN Women.

It was designed in response to regional and national research into the causes of violence against women and girls. The UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence led by P4P revealed that, on average, 45.6 per cent of men had ever perpetrated physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence; 53.2 per cent had perpetrated emotional intimate partner violence; and 34 per cent had perpetrated economic intimate partner violence violence (Fulu et al. 2013). In addition, 10.9 per cent of men reported perpetrating non-partner rape in their lifetime (Fulu et al. 2013). These findings indicate the high levels of the perpetration of intimate partner violence in the region.

The National Study on Domestic Violence against Women in Viet Nam showed that 32 per cent of ever-partnered women had experienced physical intimate partner violence and 10 per cent reported experiencing sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. The study also found that 54 per cent of women had experienced emotional abuse by an intimate partner and 9 per cent had experienced economic abuse.

In Viet Nam, P4P supported a qualitative study to explore and understand violent and non-violent masculinities given the importance of this construct in the perpetration of violence against women and girls, as outlined in the findings of the multi-country study described above (Dao et al. 2012). The findings of the research indicate that:

• Early experiences of violence during childhood, such as corporal punishment at home and school, build an association between violence and discipline.
• Men in the study commonly described their use of violence in the family as a tool for disciplining and maintaining authority.
• Outside of the home, violence among peers was used as a tool to establish hierarchies according to the relative strength and dominance among boys or men.
• Childhood experiences appeared to be particularly influential in the development of either violent or non-violent masculinities among men.
• While public physical violence was frowned upon, violence in private against wives was generally considered acceptable or even necessary.
• Men’s use of violence was generally prompted by a desire to defend or demonstrate their masculinity.
METHODS

This qualitative endline study sought to investigate and document the changes and transformation effected by the pilot of the Male Advocate Club. It also sought to collect recommendations to strengthen this intervention from groups directly involved in its implementation either by facilitating the groups or participating in them. Data was collected from 16 facilitators through 4 focus group discussions – 2 in each of the 2 communities where the intervention was conducted. Individual, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 intervention participants from 2 communities where the intervention was conducted.

FINDINGS

Four main themes and transformation that took place within these themes emerged from feedback from male advocate facilitators and club members.

Perception and understanding of violence against women and girls

Participants’ reflections illustrate important shifts in their views on violence against women and girls. Specifically, the intervention broadened their understanding of violence against women and girls to recognize its multiple forms. There was also evidence of behavioural transformation in reported reductions in coercive sex within marriage, improved communication and conflict resolution skills, and some advancement in how to handle cases of domestic violence. These changes are largely positive and encouraging; however, there are some indications that some participants continue to hold on to problematic ideas and practices related to violence against women and girls, such as being conciliatory to men in cases of domestic violence.

“Before I used to be hot-tempered. Now I can control myself, I’m less impulsive. If I disagree with someone [in a discussion], if that person wants to impose his opinion on me, which could lead to friction, I just let it go, or respond in a mild manner.”

Facilitator, factory worker, aged 27, focus group discussion

“Before I just forced her [to have sex]. Since I was young and inconsiderate, I was ‘a bit too much’ to my wife. Whenever I return home from drinking bouts, I think if I want it my wife has to do it. Now I have changed, I would ask my wife whether she would like it or not. I realize that her attitude is different. I feel happier.”

Club member, farmer, aged 52, in-depth interview

“Obviously I have changed myself, though up to now I have never used violence, I have never beaten anyone. But I often felt anger when I thought of something [that did not go my way], not realizing this can be seen as a form of bạo lực tinh thần [emotional abuse].”

Club member, retired, aged 57, in-depth interview
Gender roles and norms

Participants’ ability to recognize patriarchal gender norms in their daily lives (especially within their families) improved over the course of the intervention. Several participants also reported finding these norms and expectations on women to be unjust and also a risk for increasing violence against women and girls. This understanding led men to have more respect and appreciation for and less impatience with women and the work – especially the unpaid work within families – that they do. These ideas were translated into practice by men who reported being less demanding and helping more around the home.

“I used to go drinking heavily after work, now I cut this down. Before if I got home and dinner was not ready, I got irritated. Now I do housework myself, taking care of the children, doing the laundry. I used to think women’s work is confined to the kitchen, now I realize their true value [valuing women and the work that women do].”

Club member, farmer, aged 60, in-depth interview

“I help my mother with daily chores, like cooking. I cheer her up when things get rough. Before I was indifferent, didn’t care, kept things to myself. [Now] I treat my female colleagues at the workplace with more consideration… no teasing, no [outbursts of] short temper.”

Club member, professional, aged 28, in-depth interview

Family relationships and parenting skills

Family relationships and the home were typically the first places in which participants implemented some of the changes that came about as a result of what they learned in the intervention. Specifically, these men came to see the value of their families and the importance of being positive role models to influence their children’s attitudes and ideas about relationships, and they reported engaging in a range of positive parenting practices including emotional engagement and demonstrating love and care, less harsh discipline, and improved communication and conflict resolution.

“He used to swear at my children. If my wife or my children did something I didn’t like, I got into a rage. Now I don’t get angry, we have a happy family.”

Club member, retired, aged 63, in-depth interview
Volunteerism

Participants realized the potential for them to be agents of change through role modelling in their families and communities through their own changed attitudes and behaviours, as well as actively encouraging others to think about and try to do things differently. Through addressing violence against women and girls in the community, participants put their learning into action in volunteerism efforts to help community members. Several participants reported finding volunteerism to be personally rewarding.

“When you know about it, you explain it, your neighbors will listen, they pass it on to their children. That’s why I see this programme fits well with a progressive society. Life is peaceful now in our neighborhood. At home, there is no quarreling, no swearing among family members.”

Club member, retired, aged 61, in-depth interview

In addition to these positive results, the study collected feedback from club members and facilitators on the project strategy and implementation.

- **Acceptability:** Overall, study participants reported that the intervention was both enjoyable and interesting, as well as useful and necessary, even though it required a lot of their time.

- **Participatory learning methodology:** Facilitators appreciated the participatory learning methodology of the intervention sessions, which created a favourable environment which allowed group members to exchange ideas and share experiences.

- **Facilitator manual:** Due to a generational gap, some male senior citizens tended to be uneasy when dealing with “delicate” subjects such as sexual relations and sexual and reproductive health. Participants recommended not to remove these subjects because they clearly prompted important changes among participants (e.g. reduction in coercive sex in marital relationships). However, the older age group needs more time to discuss these topics with a slow and gradual approach.

- **Mobilisation & recruitment:** Informing communities about the intervention, getting their buy-in and getting eligible people to commit to participating in the intervention is essential. The intervention capitalized on existing mechanisms to implement the project and deliver the sessions directly through core cadres in the community. Even so, these people had to be motivated and encouraged to join the project.

- **Management and planning:** As the coordinating agency, DNWU was able to engage the active participation of the local authorities at various levels in developing and implementing the project, in particular local officials who were also representatives of the Da Nang Committee for the Advancement of Women.

- **Transformation takes time:** All study participants shared a view that the process of change is complex and a product of many influences. All realized that changing perceptions toward gender equality is the key to eliminate violence against women and girls.

This Male Advocate Club project intervention inspired important transformations among club members and facilitators with regard to their perceptions, attitudes and practices of gender equality and strengthening understanding and non-acceptance of different forms of violence against women and girls and how to prevent it. Furthermore, there is evidence that participants implemented changes, in their families through improved relationships with their wives and children, as well as in their communities through various forms of volunteerism.