

The Pilot of Program P-ECD in Lebanon:

Evaluation Results and Lessons Learned





Introduction

Findings from a recent landmark study, the International Men and Gender Equality Survey – Middle East and North Africa (IMAGES MENA)¹, revealed that one of the largest gender inequalities between men and women is the gap in time spent on unpaid care work. According to the findings, women surveyed carry out the vast majority of daily care for children and other household tasks. Just one-tenth to one-third of men reported recently carrying out a more conventionally female task in their home such as cleaning or bathing children. There is also evidence of the intergenerational transmission of caregiving: men who were taught to do unpaid care work as children and who saw their own fathers participate in traditionally feminine household work were more likely to do so in their own families. In Lebanon, men play a greater-than-average role in caregiving in times of war due to their inability to play the role of provider or when women are less able to undertake this work because of pregnancy, illness, or injury.

IMAGES MENA also explored dynamics of violence against women and children and found contextualized examples of the intergenerational transmission of violence; men who witnessed their fathers using violence against their mothers and men who experienced some form of violence at home as children were significantly more likely to report perpetrating intimate partner violence in their adult relationships. There was also substantial reported violence perpetrated against children, with as many as 50 percent of men and 80 percent of women reporting using some form of physical punishment or other forms of violence against their children.

Men's involvement as fathers matters for women, whose pathways to empowerment are strengthened when unpaid care work is shared and there is more peace in the home. Fathers also matter for children's emotional and intellectual development; for example, playful and affectionate interaction with fathers can predict children's positive social-emotional involvement with others, particularly with peers, while harsh discipline by fathers is sometimes associated with later behavioral problems for children.²

In 2018, Promundo and ABAAD - Resource Center for Gender Equality, funded by UN Women and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led an effort to pilot Program P-ECD among Lebanese and Syrian couples in Lebanon. Program P-ECD is a gender-transformative curriculum that engages men and their partners in nonviolent, equitable parenting for early childhood development (ECD).

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¹ El Feki, S., Heilman, B. and Barker, G., Eds. (2017) *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa*. Cairo and Washington, D.C.: UN Women and Promundo-US.

² Burgess, A. (2006). *The costs and benefits of active fatherhood: Evidence and insights to inform the development of policy and practice*. London, UK: Fathers Direct; Lamb, M., & Lewis, C. (2013). Father-child relationships. In N. J. Cabrera & C. S. Tamis-LeMonda (Eds.), *Handbook of father involvement: Multidisciplinary perspectives* (2nd ed., pp. 119-134). New York, NY: Routledge.; Leidy, M. S., Schofield, T. J., & Parke R. D. (2013). Fathers' contributions to children's social development. In N. J. Cabrera & C. S. Tamis-LeMonda (Eds.), *Handbook of father involvement: Multidisciplinary perspectives* (2nd ed., pp. 151-167). New York, NY: Routledge.

The Context

Since its independence in 1943, Lebanon has faced several obstacles to gender equality rooted in its legislative, political, and social structures. Legal, religious, and political institutions, as well as social structures, dictate gender norms in both the public and private spheres, some of which perpetuate gender-based violence. Economic and social crises persist, which can often shift these gender norms, affecting every member of the family, including children.³

Among the driving factors for shifts in social and political structures is the Syrian crisis that began in 2011. This crisis is one of the key issues facing both host and refugee communities in Lebanon. Since the onset of the crisis, more than 5 million refugees have fled Syria. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1.5 million Syrian refugees currently live in Lebanon⁴, meaning the country has one of the world's highest per capita proportions of refugees. While Lebanese families also face economic hardship, Syrians are barred from most types of employment, with the exception of manual labor, and often work in the informal economy under harsh conditions.

It is under these circumstances that Lebanese and Syrians are mothers, fathers, and children. In 2018, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that 1 million Syrian children had been born as refugees since the start of the war in 2011 – a number that continues to grow – and half of all refugees are children.⁵ These children's lives are shaped by the violence and instability that they and their parents have experienced. Given that the first three years of life contain the most rapid period of brain development, it is important to provide a safe, nurturing environment for children in these early years and to equip parents and caregivers with the necessary contextualized knowledge and skills to lay the foundation for their children's lifelong learning, abilities, and outcomes.

In short, men and women's dynamics – as well as those with their children – are often affected by the larger sociopolitical structures in Lebanon, as well as by the shifting environment caused by the Syrian crisis. In this context, and with the data from IMAGES MENA, Promundo and ABAAD adapted the evaluated Program P to become Program P-ECD in an effort to promote men's involvement as equitable, nonviolent caregivers in ECD and in preventing violence against women in order to achieve family well-being and gender equality for Lebanese and Syrian mothers, fathers, and children.

About Program P-ECD

Program P is named after padre and pai, the words for “father” in Spanish and Portuguese, respectively. Originating in Latin America and adapted in more than ten countries around the world, it is a direct and targeted response to the need for concrete strategies to engage men in active fatherhood from prenatal care to delivery, childbirth, and their children's early years. In 2017, Promundo and ABAAD adapted Program P for implementation with Lebanese and Syrian fathers and couples in Lebanon, with a greater focus on ECD and preventing violence against women.

Program P-ECD uses a gender-transformative approach, meaning that it seeks to challenge and transform harmful notions of masculinity associated with fatherhood. These rigid norms underpin many aspects of gender inequality, including absent fatherhood, intimate partner violence, corporal punishment, and women's unequal burden of unpaid care work. In addition to reducing intimate partner violence and violence against children, the Program P-ECD curriculum adapted for Lebanon has a strengthened focus on ECD, aiming to increase men's involvement in ECD for children aged zero to three.

³ Harvey, C., Garwood, R., & El-Masri, R. (2013). *Shifting sands: Changing gender roles among refugees in Lebanon*. Oxfam International.

⁴ UNHCR. (2019). *2018 year-end report: Operation: Lebanon*. Retrieved from <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/pdfsummaries/GR2018-Lebanon-eng.pdf>

⁵ Dunmore, C. (2018). Syrian refugee aid plan launched as births in exile hit 1 million. *UNHCR*. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2018/12/5c0f976b4/syrian-refugee-aid-plan-launched-births-exile-hit-1-million.html>

About the Pilot

Prior to the pilot, the Program P-ECD manual was validated with an Expert Review Committee composed of gender and ECD experts in Lebanon and the United States. The sessions were also tested with Lebanese and Syrian couples in the Bekaa Valley. Promundo and ABAAD made revisions after each round of feedback. ABAAD then trained its staff working at the Women and Girls Safe Spaces, as well as members of the MenEngage Alliance Lebanon Network, who would carry out the pilot once the manual was finalized.

The pilot program took place between June and November 2018. Participants were men and their female partners; all participants were married and had at least one small child between the ages of zero and five. The program was implemented through 13 cycles at 11 sites with 316 male and female participants.

Table 1. Number of participants by site

Site	Start date of program cycle	End date of program cycle	Number of participants	Lebanese participants (% of total)	Syrian participants (% of total)
Jbeil – Mount Lebanon	1-Aug-18	5-Sep-18	8	100%	0%
Zahle – Bekaa	6-Aug-18	26-Sep-18	30	0%	100%
Bebnine – North	6-Aug-18	1-Oct-18	26	100%	0%
	8-Aug-18	3-Oct-18	30	47%	53%
Bint Jbeil – South	10-Aug-18	5-Oct-18	24	0%	100%
	31-Aug-18	12-Oct-18	24	0%	100%
Almarj – Bekaa	17-Sep-18	12-Nov-18	30	0%	100%
Ghobayre – Mount Lebanon	18-Sep-18	5-Dec-18	24	53%	47%
Quobbah – North	5-Oct-18	23-Nov-18	20	20%	80%
Baysariyi – South	15-Oct-18	3-Dec-18	22	100%	0%
Msaytbeh – Beirut	1-Nov-18	6-Dec-18	22	18%	82%
Cheyeh – Mount Lebanon	6-Nov-18	10-Dec-18	26	0%	100%
Choweifat – Mount Lebanon	12-Nov-18	10-Dec-18	30	0%	100%
Total			316	29%	71%

Main Results

This brief describes results deduced from qualitative and quantitative data collected between January and December 2018. Participants at eight sites completed a survey on key attitudinal and behavioral outcomes before and after participating in the intervention (n = 121 men at baseline and endline; n = 76 women at baseline and n = 71 at endline). Only 62 percent of participants filled out the baseline and endline surveys due to enrolling after the first session, declining to fill out the tools (a common occurrence particularly among women), and/or answering fewer than six questions. (Some participants' surveys were excluded from the analysis because they only answered a small number of questions.)

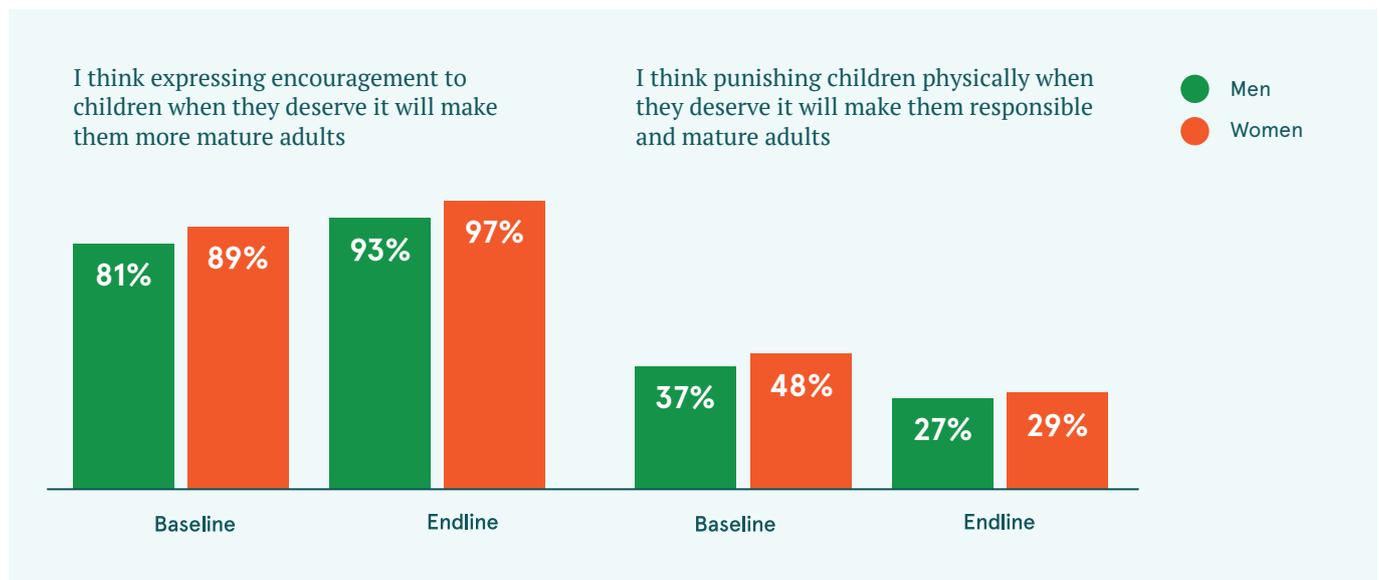
Additionally, focus group discussions (three with men and three with women) and in-depth one-on-one interviews (12 with men and 12 with women) were conducted to deepen understanding of implementation aspects and dynamics that might explain or contextualize the outcome results.

1. Positive Discipline

Among both men and women, the specific child discipline skills were seen as the most useful and relevant content in Program P-ECD. Survey results show more support for positive discipline (i.e., using encouragement as a reward) at endline than baseline for men but not for women ($\text{Chi}^2 = 6.9$, $p = 0.008$ for men). This may be because attitudes reported by women at baseline were already quite supportive of these nonviolent parenting techniques (89 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the relevant statement; see Figure 1).

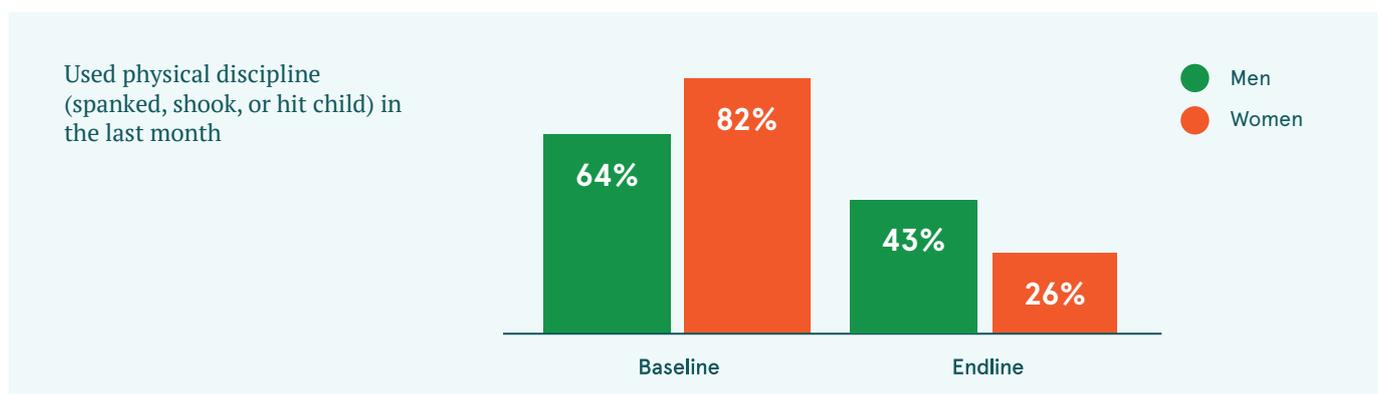
Interestingly, reductions were observed in the endorsement of child physical punishment among both men and women, although only women's change from before to after the intervention was statistically significant ($\text{Chi}^2 = 4.7$, $p = 0.03$; see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with attitudes around positive and harsh parenting techniques



Both men's and women's reported use of harsh physical discipline with children declined significantly – particularly among women. When asked if they had spanked, shaken, or hit their children in the previous month, the number of men declined by 21 percentage points and number of women by 56 percentage points from baseline to endline ($\text{Chi}^2 = 8.2$, $p = 0.004$ for men; $\text{Chi}^2 = 36.8$, $p < 0.001$ for women; see Figure 2). Furthermore, in a logistic regression controlling for implementation site, sex, age, education, national origin, and employment status in the previous week, the odds of reporting using harsh physical punishment in the previous month declined 72 percent at endline compared to baseline ($\text{OR} = 0.28$; $p < 0.001$). The qualitative interviews supported these findings, with one 33-year-old Syrian man saying, “Using violence with my children will not solve the problem and they will not know what they have done wrong.”

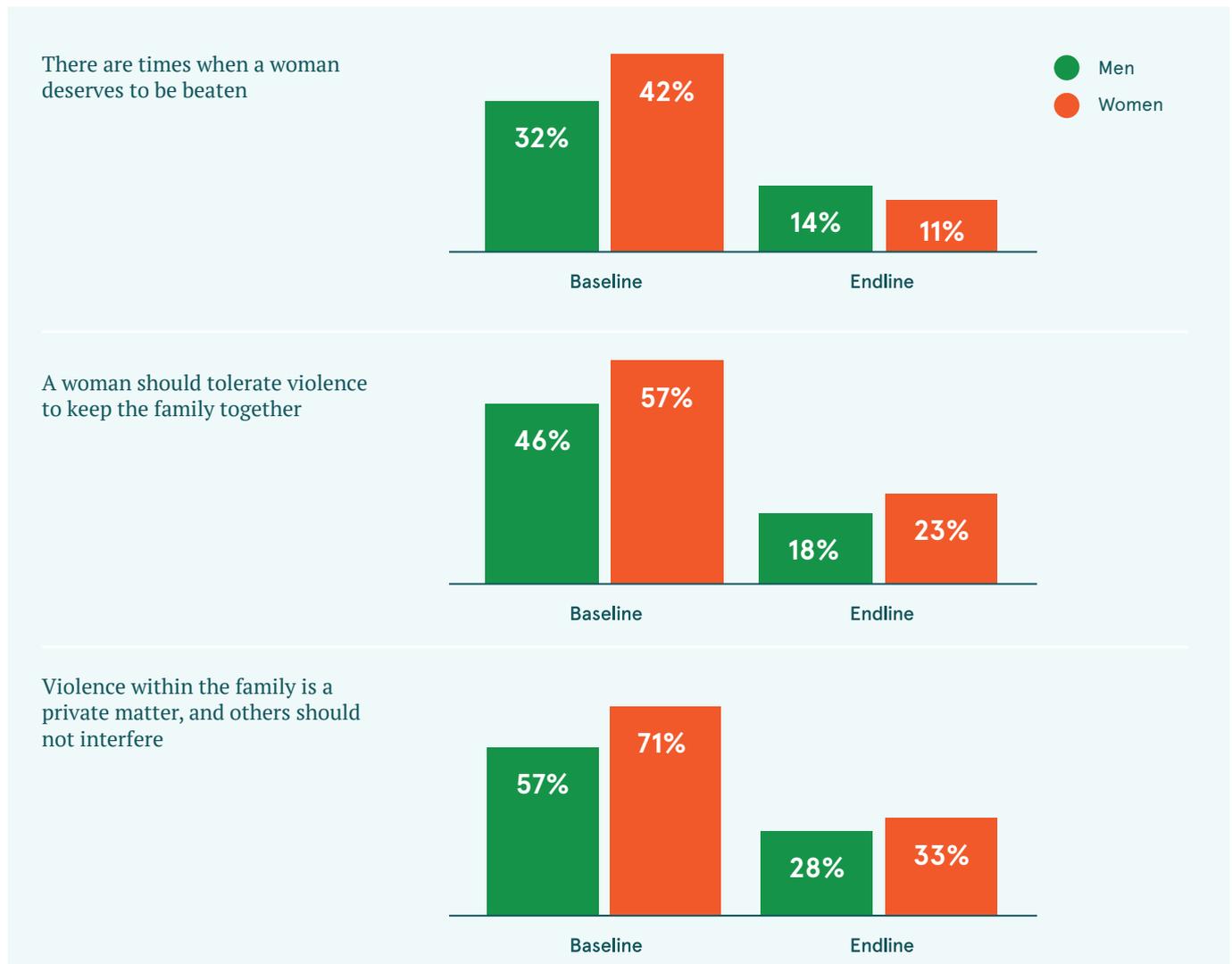
Figure 2. Percentage of respondents who reported using physical discipline (spanking, shaking, or hitting) with their young children in the previous month



2. Intimate Partner Violence

Both men and women showed statistically significant attitudinal changes around justifying violence against women. Before participating in Program P-ECD, 32 percent of male participants believed “there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten” compared to 14 percent after the intervention (see Figure 3). Sharp decreases of almost 30 percentage points were also detected around beliefs that “a woman should tolerate violence to keep the family together” and that “violence within the family is a private matter, and others should not interfere.” Bivariate tests of association found differences between baseline and endline for all three statements to be significant for both men and women ($p < 0.002$ for all differences).

Figure 3. Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with attitudes around violence



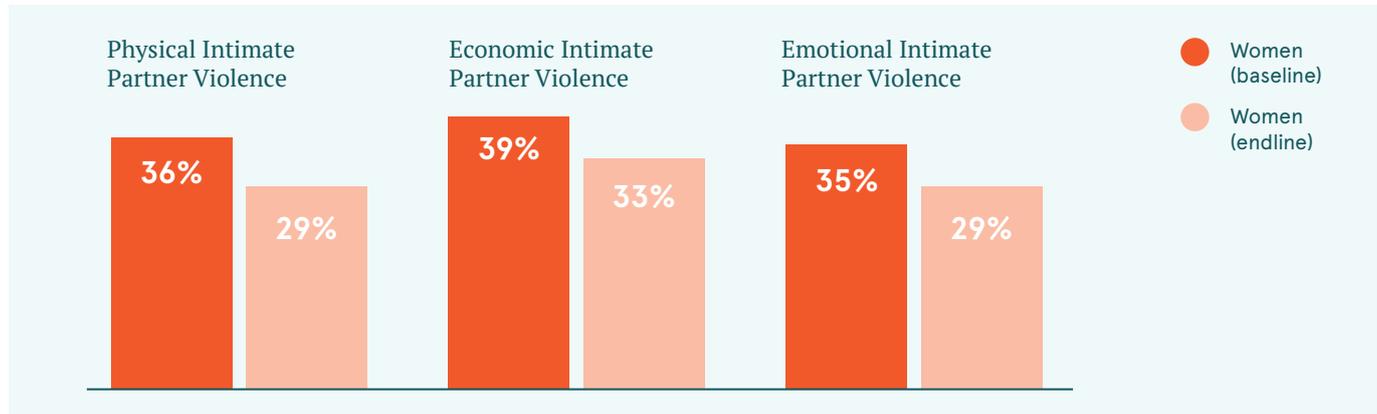
Additionally, multivariate analyses controlling for implementation site, sex, age, education, and national origin found the odds of agreeing with any one of these statements to be 70 to 75 percent lower after the intervention (ORs = 0.30–0.35, $p < 0.004$). The qualitative data support these findings; as one 31-year-old Syrian woman reported in an in-depth interview,

“My husband is now apologizing for the things that he did without feeling that he is losing his masculinity. He is taking my opinion in everything, and I am sharing with him all the responsibilities in the household. He used to think that violence can be justified when I was not doing my duties properly, but this changed since he took part in the program.”

Similar to other countries’ IMAGES findings, women at baseline tended to hold more inequitable views than men about the acceptability of violence against women, highlighting the importance of transforming not only men’s but also women’s attitudes on this subject.

The survey also asked women about various personal experiences of physical, emotional, and economic violence in their intimate partnership over the previous month (see Figure 4). Reports of experiencing any form of intimate partner violence over the previous month decreased somewhat from baseline to endline, though this was not statistically significant. Physical violence at baseline was reported by 36 percent of women compared to 29 percent at endline; economic violence declined from 39 percent to 33 percent and emotional violence from 35 percent to 29 percent.

Figure 4. Percentage of women who reported experiencing an act of physical, emotional, or economic intimate partner violence at least once in the previous month

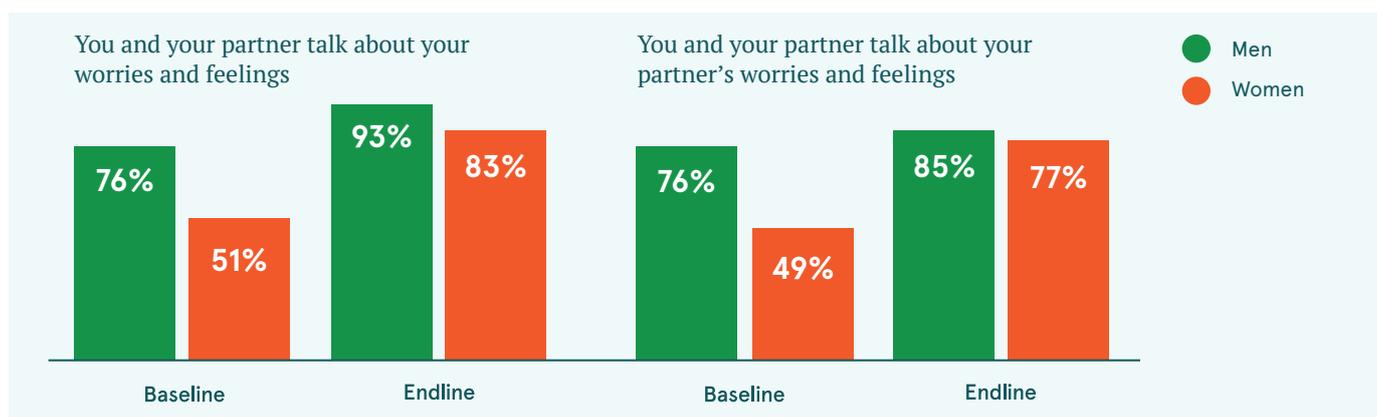


It is worth noting that the proportion of missing values for these questions was particularly high (ranging from 10 to 12 percent). ABAAD also reported significant difficulties around the administration of these questions. This mirrors previous difficulties encountered by Promundo in trying to measure the prevalence of intimate partner violence in Lebanon for the IMAGES MENA study in 2017, as well as highlights the importance of finding other innovative approaches to reliably collect this sensitive data.

3. Couple Communication and Joint Household Decision-Making

Participating men and women were asked how often they talk about their own and their partner's concerns and feelings. Both men and women reported an increase in this type of couple communication from baseline to endline, although more women reported observing a noticeable difference than men. Bivariate analyses show that men perceived a statistically significant increase in communication with their partner about their own feelings but not around discussing their partner's feelings. Women perceived a significant increase in communication about both their own and their partner's feelings (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Percentage of participants reporting on couple communication*



*All differences between baseline and endline were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, except for men's reports on the frequency of discussing their partner's worries and feelings, which did not significantly change from before to after the intervention.

The focus group discussions supported these findings, with male participants reporting greater changes in couple communication than women did. Men said they are sharing their emotions with their wives more and not holding them in. Women reported a change in their husbands opening up, although it is gradual, with many saying, “Change takes time.” Women also reported feeling more comfortable sharing their feelings with their husbands. In general, according to these respondents, there is greater joint household decision-making among couples.

“It is amazing. My husband is specifying a time at night to communicate with me about our family and the problems and conflicts that we have.”

—37-year-old Lebanese woman

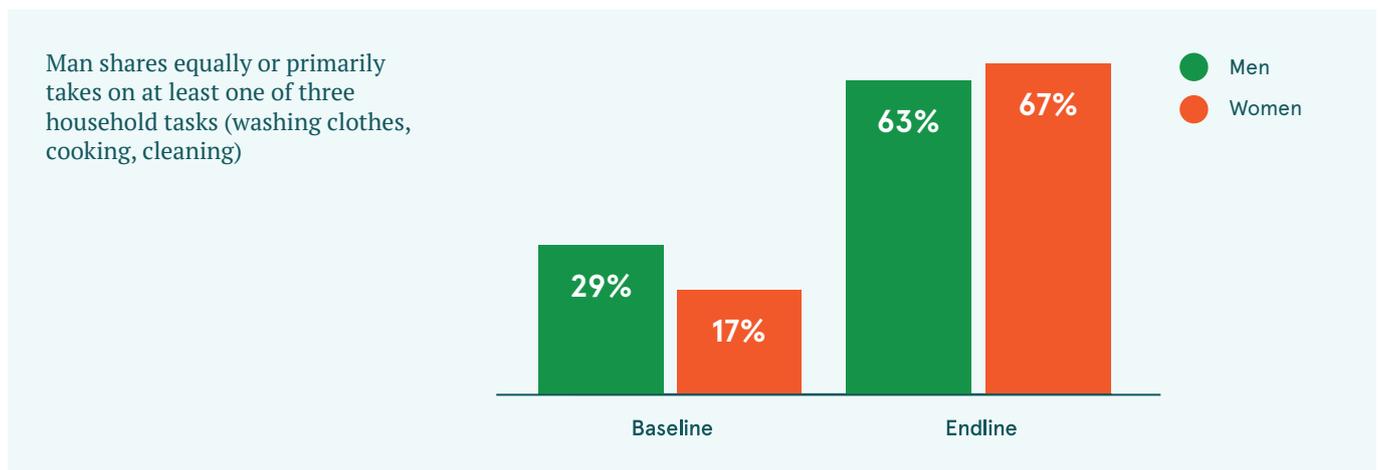
4. Unpaid Care Work

Respondents were asked to report on how they and their partner divided several housework and caregiving tasks (related to their youngest child only) in the previous month. They reported on whether the tasks were completed almost always by them, usually by them, shared equally or done together, usually by their partner, or almost always by their partner. Tasks included washing clothes, cleaning the house, cooking for the household, providing daily routine childcare, and feeding or bathing the child.

Generally, both men and women reported significant increases in men’s participation in both housework and caregiving tasks after participating in the program. At baseline, 29 percent of men reported participating equally or taking on the bulk of at least one of three household tasks typically considered “women’s work” – washing clothes, cooking, and cleaning – while a smaller proportion of women (17 percent) reported the same about their partners (see Figure 6). At endline, around two-thirds of both men (63 percent) and women (67 percent) reported that men were participating in these ways (Chi2 = 26.95, $p < 0.001$ for men; chi2 34.9, $p < 0.001$ for women).

Multivariate analyses controlling for implementation site, age, education, and employment status in the previous week find the odds of men’s participation to be five times higher at endline compared to baseline.

Figure 6. Proportion of participants reporting that men engaged in at least one of three household tasks equally or more often than their female partners in the previous month*

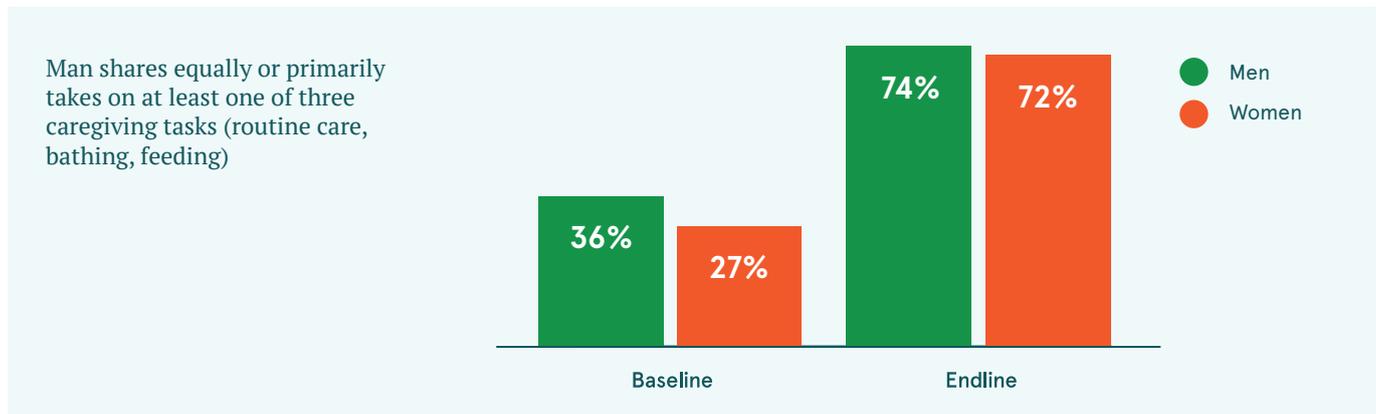


*Differences between baseline and endline are significant at the $p < 0.001$ level.

Participants also reported a significant increase in men’s involvement in childcare between baseline and endline. As with household tasks, both men and women reported men’s increased participation in at least one of three key childcare tasks (routine care, feeding, and bathing) in terms of either sharing equally/doing them together with women or primarily taking them on themselves (see Figure 7). While 36 percent of men and 27 percent of women said that men participated in these ways at baseline, almost three-quarters of both men and women reported men doing so at endline (Chi2 = 32.73, $p < 0.001$ for men; Chi2 = 27.12, $p < 0.001$ for women).

Multivariate analyses controlling for implementation site, age, education, and employment status in the previous week find the odds of men's participation to be five times higher at endline than baseline. In this multivariate model, being an older man was also associated with lower odds of involvement in caregiving, highlighting the potential challenges in shifting deeply entrenched gendered habits among older generations.

Figure 7. Proportion of participants reporting that men engaged in at least one of three caregiving tasks equally or more often than their female partners in the previous month*



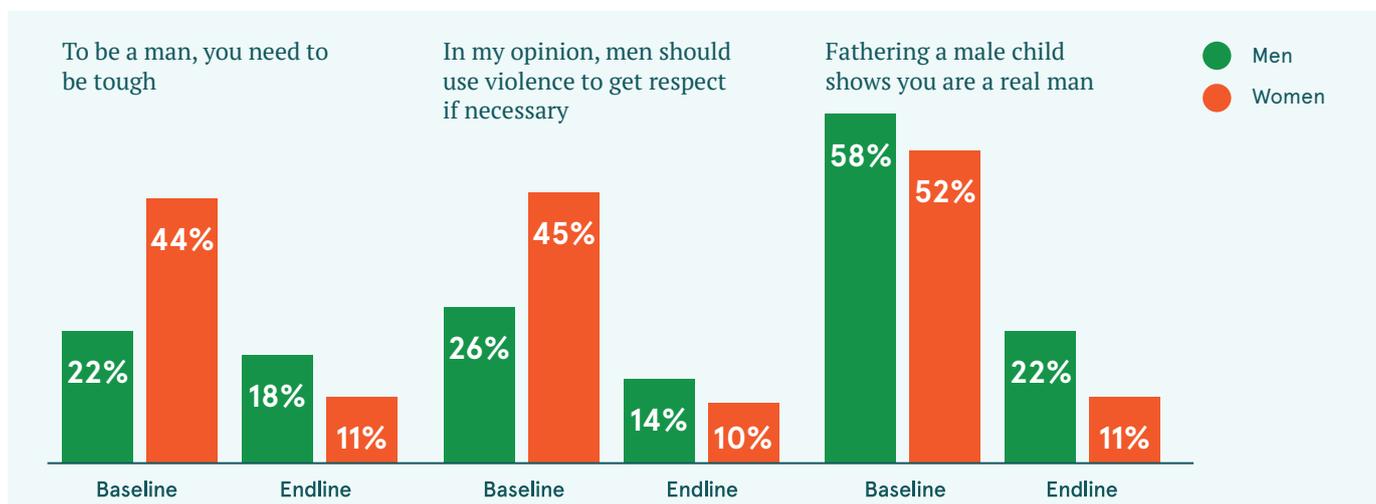
*Differences between baseline and endline are significant at the $p < 0.001$ level.

Qualitatively, men reported greater partnership and collaboration with their wives in raising the children, although many respondents continued to frame men's participation as "helping" rather than viewing household labor and childcare as mutual responsibilities. For example, one 30-year-old Syrian woman said, "He is helping me raise my children"; a 56-year-old Syrian woman said of a specific change in the household, "I am asking my husband to help me in the parenting."

5. Changes in Perceptions of Masculinity and Gender Roles

Attitudes around what it means to be a man also showed some improvement from baseline to endline. Compared to baseline, both male and female participants (but particularly the latter) endorsed less rigid and violent versions of masculinity (see Figure 8). For example, 45 percent of women believed before the program that men should use violence to get respect if necessary, whereas only 10 percent believed the same afterward (difference significant at $p < 0.001$).

Figure 8. Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with attitudes around masculinity*



*All differences between baseline and endline were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, except for men's agreement with "To be a man, you need to be tough," which did not significantly change.

In the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, men and women reported changes in perceptions of masculinity: men no longer feel like they need to be physically strong or violent to “be a man,” and women feel that “being a man” now includes helping raise the children, helping with household tasks, sharing power, and respecting women. For example, one 33-year-old Syrian man said, “Communicating and respecting my wife and my children means that I am a good man.”

Change was also observed in attitudes around gender roles that confine women to taking care of the home and children and that designate men as the primary decision-makers in the home. Both men and women had less supportive attitudes towards gender inequity after participating in the program, a statistically significant decline ($p < 0.001$ for all differences; see Figure 9). Multivariate analyses controlling for implementation site, sex, age, education, and national origin found the odds of agreeing with any one of these statements to be 80 to 85 percent lower after the intervention compared to before (ORs = 0.20–0.15, $p < 0.001$).

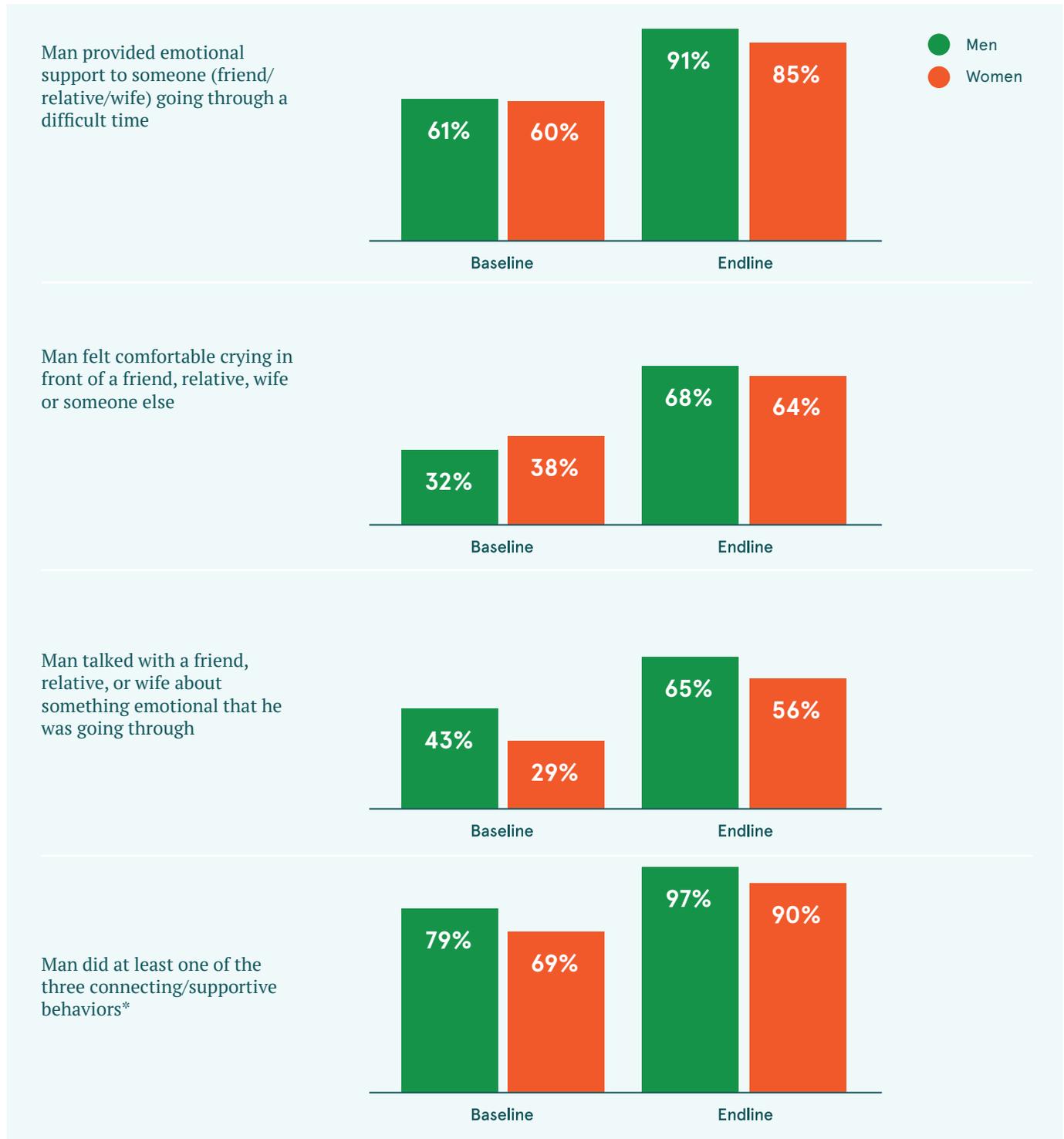
Figure 9. Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with attitudes around gender roles



6. Men's Emotional Connectedness and Anger

Men were asked about their emotional connectedness with and support for others in their lives, and women were asked about their partner's. Both men and women reported that men's emotional connection with others significantly improved after participating in the program (see Figure 10). While 79 percent of men and 69 percent of women reported that men engaged in at least one of three emotionally supportive or help-seeking behaviors at baseline, 97 percent of men and 90 percent of women said this was the case after the intervention ($\text{Chi}^2 = 17.42, p < 0.001$ for men; $\text{Chi}^2 = 8.40, p = 0.004$ for women).

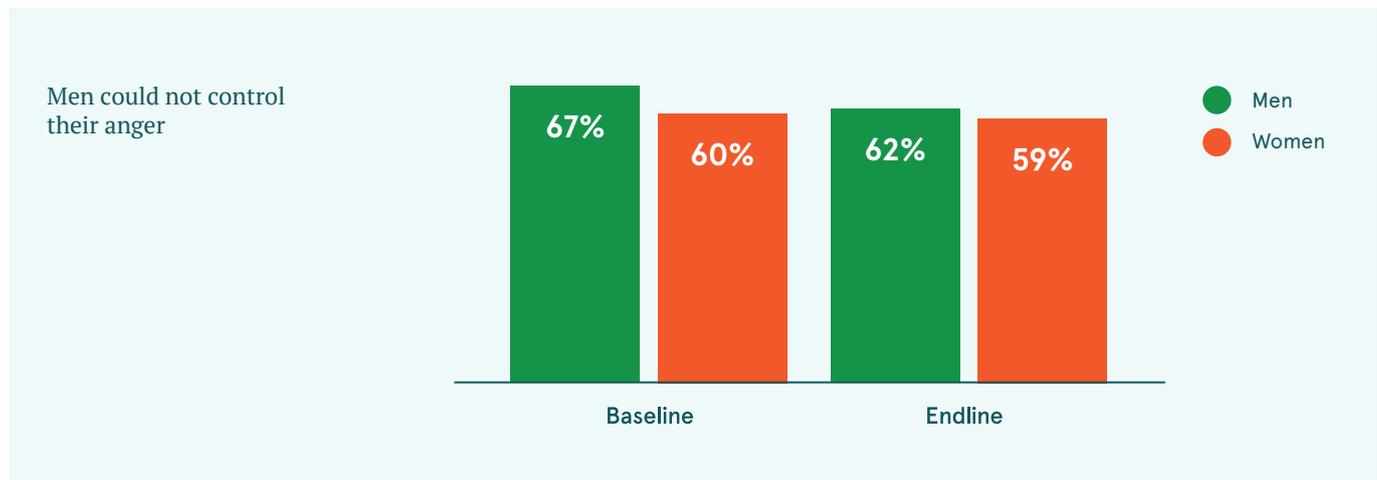
Figure 10. Percentage of participants reporting men engaged in specific supportive/connecting behaviors sometimes or often in the previous month



*Differences between baseline and endline were statistically significant at $p < 0.005$ level

In fact, multivariate regression analysis adjusted for age, sex, education level, implementation site, and national origin showed an almost nine-fold increase in the odds of men engaging in emotionally connected or supportive behavior (OR = 8.85; $p < 0.001$). However, when asked how often men had difficulty controlling their anger in the previous month, neither men nor women reported significant changes from baseline to endline (see Figure 11). Further research is necessary to explore this finding.

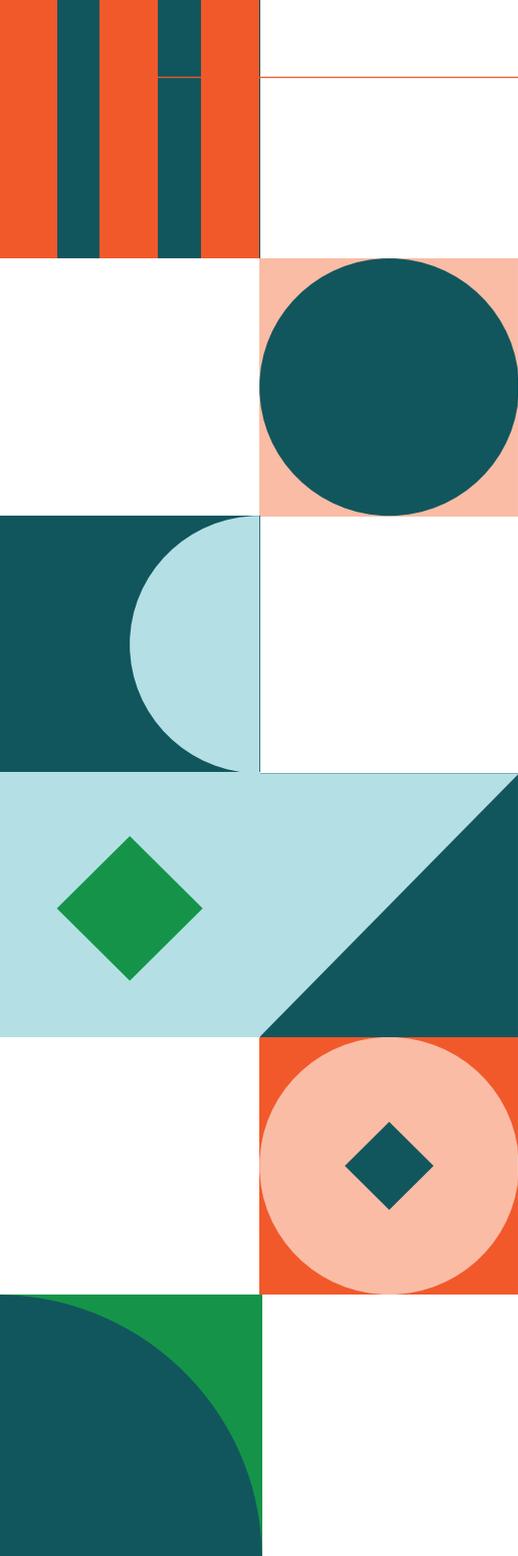
Figure 11. Participants' reporting of men's difficulty controlling their anger "sometimes" or "often" in the previous month



Implementation Challenges and Lessons Learned

Qualitative and quantitative data collection uncovered several challenges and lessons learned from the pilot, which could inform future iterations of the program.

- Recruitment in Beirut was more problematic than in rural areas, as most men in Beirut work during the day. Recruitment and implementation were higher in the South and the North to maintain target numbers.
- Staff workload was also a challenge. It was difficult to hold sessions in areas where men are not available during working hours. Therefore, staff had to facilitate the sessions after hours to implement the program when men are available.
- Men and women were satisfied with the sessions taking place at a time when men did not have work and when older children were in school.
- Both men and women appreciated participating in sessions together, where they were able to communicate and share their views and opinions, sometimes for the first time.
- Within the groups, participants also reported the desire to learn more methods of child discipline in addition to what was taught in the groups.
- The monitoring and evaluation tools, used as baseline and endline questionnaires to measure attitudinal and knowledge change, were lengthy and caused fatigue. In some cases, participants did not have the literacy level required to understand the questions. These challenges were reflected in the lower response rates to some questions toward the end of some surveys. In the next phase, the questionnaire will be shortened, and visual aids will be introduced to the survey to account for populations with low literacy.



Future Considerations

Several recommendations have come out of this pilot for future iterations of Program P-ECD. Low literacy must be considered not only for pre-/post-tests but also for program session content; more audiovisuals and other low-literacy tools should be developed to incorporate the same content. Additionally, the program should consider other male family members, such as uncles and grandfathers, who may live in the home and have frequent contact and close relationships with the children.

Finally, participants expressed a desire to share what they have learned with their friends, family, and community members – an opportunity for continued engagement, such as through a community campaign or advocacy, would be an important consideration in future iterations of the program.

Conclusion

Program P-ECD, an adaptation of a globally implemented and evaluated gender-transformative program, is an intervention to engage men and their partners in active, nonviolent, gender-equitable caregiving. The pilot implemented with 316 participants in 2018 shows promising results in decreasing intimate partner violence and violence against children and in increasing equitable household decision-making, shared caregiving, and changed attitudes around gender norms and roles.

Working with men as fathers is a key entry point to discussing sensitive topics around traditional gender norms and how these norms negatively impact their families and communities. Lebanese and Syrian men in Lebanon are clearly eager to work together with their partners to learn positive parenting techniques; to talk about manhood, emotions, relationships, and violence; and to become better fathers and husbands. These changes help to improve the lives of women and girls; reports from women confirm that this program has had positive benefits.

Future plans for Program P-ECD include finding additional resources to do a more rigorous evaluation of the program with a larger number of participants to be able to say with greater confidence that this program has an impact on the outcomes of interest. Promundo and ABAAD are now developing a strategy to scale up Program P-ECD in Lebanon, including probing potential entry points in the public health, education, and social affairs sectors that serve vulnerable populations.