

LEARNING BRIEF

Action Learning from application of the ENGAGE Programme's

MALE CAREGIVERS TOOL



The '**Male Caregivers' Tool** is part of Norwegian Church Aid's (NCA) holistic programme, called **ENGAGE** – *Enhancing Girl's Agency and Gender Equality*, that aims for preventing, mitigating, and responding to child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

The '**Male caregivers' Tool** with a total of 31 male caregiver participants engaging in the programme. Evaluations were conducted with both facilitators and beneficiaries after each of the 22 sessions. Additionally Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were facilitated with the staff and participants at the end of the programme.

Significant findings on how well the tool was working, include:

WHAT WORKED?



- Male caregivers reported high satisfaction with the skills and knowledge of the facilitators, variety of sessions in the programme, relevance of topics to their community and the ability to actively participate in discussion.
- Most useful topics, in accordance with the male caregivers' feedback, included Session 7: Communicating with Adolescent Girls and Boys about their Aspirations, Session 8: Parenting for Equality and Session 12: Planning the Family Budget. Two of these sessions (7 and 12) are joint sessions, highlighting the benefit of this approach.
- Male caregivers stated that the information provided was simple to understand and easy to relate to, so can be shared effectively within male networks in the community.

In accordance with the facilitators' feedback, the most effective and successful sessions included:

- Session 5a and 5b: Exploring our Relationships with Adolescent Girls and Boys – improved caregivers' communication skills and encouraged involvement of adolescents in decision making.
- Session 7: Communicating with adolescent girls and boys about their aspirations – male caregivers understood their responsibilities related to developing a healthy relationship with their daughters. This session was challenging for adolescent girls as they felt shy in front of male caregivers, however overall was useful in strengthening communication skills and relationships.



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- Session 18: Supporting Adolescent Girls – male caregivers learnt crucial information about sexual and reproductive health that they hadn't had access to before. They now understand the benefit of adolescent girls receiving this information.
- Session 19: Change Begins with Us – caregivers brought together the information learnt throughout the programme and were motivated to create joint action plans to enhance gender equality and prevent CEFM in their community. This included sharing information with other community members; including daughters in decision-making and including wives in family budgeting process.



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WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED?



**MALE
CAREGIVERS**

- Male caregivers requested an additional session on how to manage negative external influences on boys and girls, such as misinformation from social media
- The caregivers mentioned that it was challenging to attend 22 sessions due to work commitments. The suggestions were to either facilitate sessions on the weekend, or reduce the number of sessions in the curriculum.
- Male caregivers shared that conversations around adolescent boys and girls having sexual relationships are not acceptable and could cause violence in the community (Somalia).
- The participants stressed that the criteria for attendance was too strict, as only male caregivers of adolescent girls participating in **ENGAGE** life skills programme could join. This excluded other male community caregivers who wanted to attend but were not eligible.

The facilitators shared:

- Session 15: Family Honour – Male caregivers didn't want to discuss honour or virginity because these topics are viewed as culturally inappropriate (Iraq).
- Session 7: Communicating with Adolescent Girls and Boys about their Aspirations – Male caregivers were asked to bring their children to the session, however failed to do so (Iraq)
- Although the participating male caregivers highlighted the Session 12: Planning the Family Budget, as a useful one, it was challenging to facilitate the session, as male caregivers were reluctant to bring female partners into the budget related discussions, saying that women do not have a role in this.
- Male caregivers were difficult to mobilise given work or other commitments. It was difficult to find time that worked for everybody. There were too many sessions and they were too long in time.
- Physical activities and games were not appropriate for the target group, as male caregivers prefer more serious discussion approaches.
- Initially caregivers expected incentives (Somalia)



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⚠ NOTE: As the tool was finalised, participants' and facilitators' observations were considered, and further adjustments were done to various sessions, as well as to the activities used in the curriculum, to better serve the participants' needs.

IMPACT



- Male caregivers reported that they shared the lessons from every topic with their peer networks. The negative impacts of CEFM, especially the potential abuse that their daughters would face if married early was most shared.
- Participants gained a new understanding of the importance of preventing violence against women and girls, to benefit the family and community as a whole.
- Priority is now given within the families of participating caregivers to supporting girls to continue their education and have dreams for their future.
- Previously fathers assumed communication with adolescent girls was only the role of the female caregivers. However, now male caregivers feel confident and well equipped to ask their daughters about their needs and wants and engage in constructive communication with them.
- Adolescent girls are now encouraged to participate in decision making in the household and have more say on matters related to them.
- The programme has been recommended to other male caregivers in the community, recognising the importance of improving relationships with daughters, supporting continued education and playing a positive role in delaying of marriage until after the age of 18.

“I’ve applied everything I’ve learnt through the ENGAGE programme to support my family, particularly my wife and daughters. I have involved my daughters at the decision-making table, I can now talk to my daughters about their life with confidence, and they are happier than ever.” – Male Caregiver from Somalia.

“I feel like I am now well informed, because I believe I was in the dark before, where I thought marrying a young girl was normal. I had no idea about the consequences and the trauma these girls undergo.” – Male Caregiver from Iraq.

- Male caregivers have great influence in their communities, so equipping them with new skills and knowledge has been very beneficial. They are now able to share this information effectively with other male caregivers and challenge harmful social norms within their communities.
- Majority of the information was new to the caregivers. Before participating in **ENGAGE** programme, they did not understand the importance of women and girls’ participation, how to communicate with their daughters, or the harmful impacts of CEFM. Understanding this information will bring positive change in their relationships within their household and in wider community.
- The caregivers finished the programme with a commitment and a public declaration to include females in family budgeting, to campaign against violence against girls and women and to ensure all girls remain engaged in education.



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