

Evaluation Summary: Changing Gender Norms Among Young Men, and Reducing Violence, in Chongqing, China

Inequitable gender norms can negatively influence the health and well-being of both men and women, including contributing to gender-based violence.¹ Examples of common norms include support for men to be the dominant decision-makers in a household, to seek and maintain multiple sexual partners, and to justify physical violence against a partner. These gender norms—or expectations regarding appropriate behaviors, roles, and responsibilities for men as compared with women—are internalized from childhood.² Gender inequity leads to women having less control over various behaviors, such as the ability to travel and work outside the home, or negotiate condom use, and to society condoning inequitable treatment towards women.

In China, there is a long history of political support for equality between men and women. Yet, evidence also suggests that key challenges to gender equity in China include the feminization of poverty in both rural and urban areas, increasing inequality in the labor market (e.g., income gaps and discrimination in hiring and firing), and the lower social status of women and girls.³ *China's Gender Equality and Women's Development Report 1995-2005* indicated that 30 percent of the country's 270 million families encountered some form of domestic violence.⁴ Further, adherence to “traditional” gender roles has been associated with a woman's likelihood to report intimate partner violence.⁵

In addressing some of these gender dynamics, PATH, with support from the Nike Foundation, partnered with the national-level China Family Planning Association (FPA) and the regional-level Chongqing FPA to implement and evaluate an intervention focused on promoting gender equity among young men. Objectives of the project included critically examining gender-related attitudes and norms, in order to reduce harmful behaviors (e.g., partner violence and sexual harassment) and support the equitable treatment of girls and women. The project partners worked closely with a large, multinational consumer electronics and home appliances company to implement the intervention in their factories, and with associated vocational schools. The main intervention audience was male vocational school students and factory workers between the ages of 15 and 24.

Intervention

Project methodologies were adapted from existing gender-focused interventions (Project H and Men as Partners), as well as life-skills trainings developed by PATH. Project staff trained facilitators to lead participatory educational programs which fostered more positive gender norms, as well as provided information on and supported the development of skills for HIV/sexually transmitted infection and violence prevention. For the student-focused component, PATH trained teachers to conduct education sessions during their ongoing classes. In factories, FPA staff trained by PATH facilitated sessions with groups of male workers. The workers were able to join different groups at different times, to accommodate their unpredictable schedules. The eight sessions covered topics related to gender, sexuality, relationships, and violence. The intervention period was about six months in length. After a formative research period to determine the appropriate reward to suggest success in achieving a more gender-equitable status, participants received a statue representing the “Real Man, Confident Man” as an award for completing the education sessions.

Methodology

Baseline and endline evaluation data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Six hundred and six students completed the baseline survey and 496 completed the endline survey, with a loss to follow-up of 18 percent. Results shown below are from the group that completed both the baseline and endline surveys ($n = 496$), to maximize comparability of the groups. A total of 549 factory workers completed the baseline survey. Due to high turnover rates at the factories, many of these workers were no longer available by the time of the endline survey. Therefore, workers who were part of the intervention but did not complete the baseline survey were added to the endline sample. The endline survey was completed by 466 workers; 219 completed both the baseline and endline surveys. The analysis for workers utilized data from (1) the subsample of workers who replied to both the baseline and endline surveys, and (2) the full endline sample. The socio-demographic profiles of both students and workers lost to follow-up were similar to those who responded to both surveys. In addition, eight focus group discussions (with four to nine participants each) were conducted at endline to explore lessons learned about the intervention strategies. Participants included male students and workers, female students and workers (to validate the experiences from an external perspective), factory managers, teachers, and FPA staff.



Gender education session among workers in Jiangbei district. Photo: PATH

The main evaluation outcomes were views towards gender norms and gender-based violence, including partner violence and sexual harassment. Support for (in)equitable gender norms was measured using a version of the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale specifically adapted for the Chinese context.⁶ This 28-item scale addressed views towards norms on key topics such as violence, sexuality, and relationships. Any additional effect related to providing an award to program participants—representing ‘gender equity’—was also explored, such as the motivation for participating in the activities.

Key findings

Participants perceived encouraging project effects

Nearly all participants (92 percent of students and 98 percent of workers) felt that the program was useful. In addition, 82 percent of students and 68 percent of workers felt their participation in the program led to a change in their opinions and behaviors concerning the session topics. The most commonly identified change—reported by 81 percent of students and 56 percent of workers—related to respecting women more. Qualitative focus groups also solicited examples of the participants’ perceived effects of the program. They included:

- “I was a playboy who did not have a monogamous [relationship], but now I think I should change that. If I have a girlfriend again, I will be more caring towards her.” –Male student
- “Before the training, I looked down on females at work. Now I realize that women are worthy of respect for many things in society.” –Male worker



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- “I now know we should ‘protect’ one another when having a sexual relationship, after receiving the information on pregnancy and HIV.” –Male worker

Gender-related attitudes as measured by the GEM Scale significantly improved

Views towards gender norms also became significantly more gender equitable when comparing the baseline and endline survey responses. Many responses to individual items of the GEM Scale significantly changed among both students and workers (see Table 1 for examples of some of the items). When the items were combined in the full 28-item GEM Scale, responses again showed significant change. Specifically, median GEM Scale scores increased from baseline to endline among both students and workers.

Table 1: Examples of gender-related attitudes measured

Item	Students				Workers			
	Baseline		Endline		Baseline		Endline	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Men need sex more than women do	29.4	70.6	18.1	81.9	71.7	28.3	51.1	48.9
A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together*	6.5	93.6	5.7	94.4	41.6	58.5	17.8	82.2
Women should get paid less than men for doing the same work	36.7	63.3	16.9	83.1	69.4	30.6	49.3	50.7

Agree and partially agree answers combined.

Some violent or harassing attitudes and behaviors improved

For both students and workers, attitudes and behaviors towards some key issues related to gender-based violence improved. For example, those who disagreed with the statement that “women who dress in a ‘sexy’ manner are ‘asking’ to be harassed” increased from 69 to 88 percent among students and 32 to 60 percent among workers. At endline, both students and workers reported some significant decreases in violence towards their female partners. For example, the proportion of students who reported perpetrating emotional or physical violence against their partners in the past three months decreased from 11 percent to 3 percent, and the proportion of workers who reported perpetration of emotional violence against their partners in the past three months decreased from 12 percent to 2 percent (no significant change was found for physical violence).

Female workers and students validated changes in male counterparts’ attitudes and behaviors

Changes reported by male workers and students were also confirmed by fellow students and workers who were female. As reported during focus group discussions, themes emerged related to positive changes in attitudes and behaviors concerning gender equity, HIV prevention, and sexual harassment. Examples included the following:

- “Boys become mature, judging from their words and behaviors, and do not quarrel and fight noisily with girls like before.” –Female student
- “After the training, my boyfriend said that when he starts to lose his temper, he will count from one to ten in order to calm down and not use violence.” –Female worker



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The ‘Real Man, Confident Man’ award had a positive influence on participation

Based on survey responses, receiving an award at the end of the education program was an important incentive. About 42 percent of the workers felt that the award influenced their interest and participation in the program, and almost half of the students reported the same. However, the award was not the main reason for participation. The main reason for joining the program was interest in the topics of HIV/AIDS and the gender roles of men and women, as reported by students; and the topic of HIV/AIDS, as report by workers.



Vocational students at a promotional event.
Photo: PATH

Stakeholders offered suggestions for future programming

Both participants and program staff frequently suggested that female workers and students also be exposed to project information. One factory supervisor stated that “*women and men could join the training together, and have more interactive activities, [which would] provide a platform for women and men to exchange.*” Several topics were mentioned as potential add-ons to the intervention, including mental health, interpersonal communication, legal issues related to gender equity and violence, and conflict resolution. One female student suggested teaching “*knowledge on how to deal with problems occurring in family life and the workplace, including relationships...between parents and children.*” Facilitators of the education sessions (i.e., teachers and FPA staff) suggested working with younger age groups. They felt that it was important to begin a dialogue about sex, reproductive health, and gender norms at an early age, before students have begun having sexual or romantic relationships. One teacher commented: “*Start at primary school age.*”

Conclusions

This project resulted in a successful partnership between PATH, the China Family Planning Association, Haier Group factories, and the vocational schools. Thousands of young men were reached with activities, and evaluation findings indicated that the program resulted in positive changes in gender-related attitudes and behaviors. Qualitative findings reinforced the statistically significant changes, and highlighted rich examples of specific changes. Female workers and students also validated the changes reported by the male participants. The ‘Real Man, Confident Man’ award provided an additional incentive for participation, and would be worthwhile to include as a component in similar programs. Findings indicated that it is in fact possible to shift views towards gender norms—and related behaviors—in both workplace and school settings through interactive group education interventions.

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