

STORIES OF CHANGE

Generating caring, equitable and non-violent fatherhoods and masculinity models

Paraguay



Through the FFFV project, CEPEP and Equimundo promoted men's positive involvement as fathers in maternal and child health and in care of their children. The Paraguayan adaptation led to naming the program as **"Che ru"** – Expression in Guaraní language that means "My dad".

*Name and personal details have been changed to protect privacy and confidentiality of the person

Working with men as fathers is a key entry point to discussing sensitive subjects around traditional gender norms, and the way in which these norms negatively impact communities.

Through discussion guides, role plays, and hands-on activities (such as learning how to change diapers), men and their partners are encouraged to discuss and challenge traditional masculine and inequitable gender norms and to practice more positive social behaviors in their families and communities.

Female participants as Emma*, have identified improvements in the couple relationship, including communication, decision-making, and distribution of unpaid care work.

She has stated that before,

“ ... I didn't like that (my partner) just decided things, that when he decided later he came to tell me, but after he solved everything... I practically didn't say (anything) to him so as not to fight... I kept quiet a lot... (On the other hand, my partner) didn't do (housework) for me... he told me before that it wasn't his job, that he arrives tired and that I didn't do anything at home, (he wondered) how I could be tired... (Also) before (my partner) didn't leave me the card. We only have one account. Before I had to ask him (for the card)... And sometimes he forgot to leave me. There were days when I asked him and he didn't pay attention to me... (I wanted to separate) because I wanted to tell him the things I didn't like and he didn't accept me.”

After participating in the Che Ru Program Emma affirms

“ I learned to be more mature, to tell my partner the things I didn't like. I learned to be more courageous, I learned that the couple has to help each other at home, that if the wife works and the husband also works, both have to help each other. I also learned to be understanding, to listen more, that was very difficult for me. I was right and I didn't agree with him, and sometimes he was right and he didn't agree with me. I learned that children... (my daughter) has to help me around the house... it was difficult for me to give him work... before (my partner) said that it was my obligation to bring her from school, now I don't... (now to my partner) I tell him everything I don't like, (and) he accepts, because he didn't accept me before, it was easier for him to separate than to accept... (Now) we share together... we are more united... he is more helpful also now... he doesn't say 'no' to me anymore... after about three sessions (of the Che Ru Program) that we were, he became more involved... he fulfills what he says... (we know) to solve the problem between the two... When there is a problem, it has to be solved, but not by shouting... (In addition) my husband began to help inside the house, clean the yard... now he lets me know if the girl has activity, he asks me what activity of the girl there is this week... he became more involved these times... when I am indisposed my husband cooks, washes the cutlery... (even my daughter) then began to tell me, “Mom, how can I help you?... my daughter picks up the garbage, my daughter fixes her room... I don't ask her for anything else, she is already alone: ‘Mom if you need, let me know’... I (now) don't fix his piece.”

While male facilitators as Daniel* have identified greater commitment to care work and improvements in the father-daughter relationship.

Daniel says that before the program

“There were sessions that touched me, for example <<my father’s legacy>> and that really touched me a lot because my father had passed away two years ago... The Paraguayan loves a person but he does not show it... so I never told him ‘Mom, Dad, I love you, I love you, I hug you’... That session, for example, I will not forget... I got a lot.. also the participants because most of them are in my situation. He never told his father that he loved him, he loved him, hugged... We do not have sharing with the father. Because the father was the one who works... When the sun rises... it is a reality for everyone... After I went to (training) it also changed a lot because I didn’t tell my (14-year-old) daughter ‘daughter I love you, I love you’... Previously for me it was work, everything was work. I practically spent the day working from 7 to 13 in my (health) unit, going out there I looked for another job... so that my mother, my partner, my daughter would not lack anything so much, and I would leave her a little aside. On Saturdays I would take a trip with some friends to do business... so I left my daughter aside.”

After participating in the facilitator training and facilitating the Che Ru Program

“Now I put weekends aside more and I’m more with my daughter. I’m more with her and not just on the weekend. On days off I call him and he comes home, I go to look for him. For example, we never did the walk in the square. We left, we were talking like this... He tells me ‘how good daddy... You give me more of my place, I thank you for being like that with me.’”

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This program provides concrete strategies and activities, based on evidence and a decade of adaptations in different settings, to engage men with their female partners in caring, equitable and non-violent fatherhood from their partner’s pregnancies through their children’s early years.

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