

L'ENGAGÉ

A BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER ON HEALTHY MASCULINITY PROMOTION EFFORTS IN NIGER AND MALI

Issue# 001 - December 2012

Dear Readers,

We are very pleased to be able to share with you the first issue of *L'Engagé* (French for 'committed'). *L'Engagé* is a newsletter that aims to share interesting and useful information on healthy masculinity promotion efforts led by CARE Mali and CARE Niger. Following a workshop on masculinities and gender in August 2012 in Niamey, participants from Niger and Mali expressed the need for a medium through which to continue sharing and learning around the important work that each of the teams is completing for the promotion of male engagement. And so the idea for a newsletter was born. We have chosen to focus this first issue on Niger and Mali but we hope to include stories from other missions in the WARMU region in future issues. The newsletter will be published twice a year and will include one story of personal transformation, as well as programmatic and institutional information on male engagement. We hope that you will find the stories and information shared in this first issue inspiring and useful.

Happy reading! The Editorial and Coordination Team

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION STORY

Moctar Djibo Zakari: Cogitations on Healthy Masculinity

Story reported by Niandou Ibrahim

My name is Moctar DJIBO ZAKARI. I am an Assistant Human Resources Manager at CARE Niger. I am 31 years old, I am married and I am the father of a 2 year old girl. I have been employed at CARE Niger since May 2009. Last August, I participated in a reflection workshop on masculinity and gender facilitated by 2 consultants from the American consulting firm Men's Resources International (MRI). The workshop gathered teams from CARE Niger and CARE Mali in Niamey. As a member of CARE Niger's GED Working Group I had already participated in reflections on gender issues. This workshop, however, proved to be very different.

During the five days of the workshop, we were asked to apply the active listening skills taught to us by the facilitators to our personal lives. So once I returned home, I began paying more attention to everything my wife wanted to say to me. I feel that I've initiated a change process but I have done so at my own rhythm. I questioned many of the convictions I held regarding my identity as a man. **I invite the others to follow in my footsteps because it's worth it!** The willingness to have relationships based on mutual respect and consideration motivates me because dominant tradition and culture expect a man to show that

he is always the boss. Unfortunately, this only leads to a state of stasis and a lack of understanding of the other, which in turn lead to conflict in the household, absenting oneself from the home, constant tension, and mutual distrust. The first blockage for me was psychological. During my participation in the training, I felt some resistance within myself and I asked myself many questions because I had so many doubts. **The second area of blockage was the fear of losing all of the power and privilege that my status as a man offers me.**

For the time being, I haven't received any feedback from my family. As for my friends, they have noticed that I do not attend the 'fada' (informal social gathering of friends) meetings as often. If I stop to greet them, they call me a 'woman's man' who spends all of his time at home. As far as my work colleagues, I think that they see me as a defender of the cause of women, and they are all anxious to discover what is behind this notion of positive masculinity. The most important thing I've become aware of is the violence to which I have subjected the women in my life by wanting to demonstrate my masculinity. Now, I measure the impacts of my actions and words on others (be they men or women) in order to avoid being violent towards them.

I want to share this message with men: **a man needs a woman just as a woman needs a man in order for her to be happy.** So we need to set our ego aside and start to build relationships based on complementarity, and particularly on listening and dialogue in order to better understand each other. After the MRI workshop a colleague and I, spurred on by the Country Director, prepared and facilitated a workshop on masculinity for thirty CARE Niger staff. Also, during our program meetings I give presentations on healthy masculinity in order to disseminate what I have learned to CARE Niger staff and partners.

I am optimistic about my future and that of my family. The skills I gained from the reflection sessions on masculinity will allow me to behave better and, especially, to serve as a role model for my children. In my opinion, it is easy for men to understand if you show them that by wanting to express their masculinity they could be exercising violence on the people around them. But the major challenge for men is the willingness to move toward a positive situation by renouncing violence as a form of expression. My main fear is that the men to whom I speak will not be able to become aware of the trap of dominant masculinity that chains them and to which they have been taught to subscribe first as boys and then as men. Most are fatalistic and express resistance; but you have to deal with it because change is a long process. As for me, I am looking to deepen my knowledge on the topic and especially to allow as many of the people around me (family, friends, and work colleagues) as possible to benefit from my knowledge. By nature, men are good; we can capitalize on this potential for change as a means of deconstructing dominant masculinity so that a positive masculinity may emerge.



Moctar Djibo

INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAMMATIC NEWS

CARE MALI LEADS THE WAY FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF 'MALIAN MASCULINITY'

CARE Mali's Men Engage Initiative just completed the collection and analysis of preliminary data from a pilot study on masculinities in Mali. The research was led in collaboration with UN Women and the National Institute for Statistics (INSTAT). Promundo, an international organization that aims to promote non-violent and gender-sensitive masculinities, was contracted by CARE Mali to complete this research. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) developed by Promundo was adapted to the context of Mali. The survey has already been used in several countries to collect information on matters such as intimate partner violence committed by men, men and care giving, and men's reactions to global gender programs on gender, to state a few examples. The Mali data are now part of a global database of comparable data on attitudes and behaviors related to masculinity. The survey was administered to 1,000 men and 500 women in 3 regions in Mali.

In November, CARE Mali facilitated a national validation workshop attended by national and international organizations, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Gender. While the research report has not yet been finalized, preliminary analyses reveal some interesting findings: women in polygamous unions may be more vulnerable to psychological violence compared to women in monogamous unions; men ages 18 to 35 years may possess more gender equitable attitudes compared to men ages 36 to 59; men who have experienced some form of violence during their childhood (either as victims or as witnesses) may be more likely to commit acts of violence against their intimate partner as adults, compared to men did not experienced any form of violence during their childhood.

It is important to take notice of the collaborative approach used by CARE Mali to carry out this pilot study. Indeed, in 2011 the team initiated the *Réseau Malien pour la Promotion de l'Engagement des Hommes et des Garçons* (Malian Network for the Promotion of Men's and Boys' Engagement). The network meets regularly each month and is made up of national and international NGOs working on the promotion of gender equality in Mali. The network played a central role in the research process and will serve as a platform for national advocacy activities on male engagement that will follow the publication of the study results in January 2013.

CARE MALI AND THE COMMUNITY PROMOTION OF MALE ENGAGEMENT

At the community level, CARE Mali's Men Engage Initiative implements several program strategies for the promotion of male engagement including, couple dialogue and forums with men on gender and social norms. The Manager of the initiative noted that the forums in particular have served as springboards for the implementation of all of the other male engagement strategies: "The communities really liked the process which consisted of listening to them, promoting self-reflection on male engagement issues. They feel the process is participatory and that it promotes self-responsibility." He also mentions, however, the "slow evolution of mentalities"; despite change being slow, he observed that an "internal dynamic" of change has been initiated at the level of NGOs and community based organizations.

CARE NIGER: AIMING TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND COUPLE DYNAMICS

CARE Niger's Engaging Men Initiative is focused on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and has contributed to several achievements in terms of increased rates of assisted deliveries and contraceptive prevalence. Although these achievements are focused on SRH, they point to important social changes in terms of men's attitudes related to women's sexual and reproductive health rights. Indeed, through the use of behavior change groups and GED platforms, the Engaging Men Initiative contributes to improvements in intra-household dialogue. In this regard, the team points to significant changes in terms of men's attitudes related to decisions linked to the management of pregnancies and deliveries. The changes observed among men are even more noteworthy considering that Niger's socio-cultural context is one in which—as is also the case in so many other contexts around the world—discussions between women and men on sexual issues is still taboo. As a result of its social transformation strategies, the initiative has also resulted in improvements in intra-household dialogue on SRH issues.

The initiative has also resulted in a certain level of awareness on the part of men that is translated by their willingness to reduce gender inequities. The initiative manager made the following observation: "We are seeing men who are committed to reducing the difficulty of tasks completed by women by taking on some of the tasks or by completing them themselves." As an example, he tells the story of the Garin Algo village. During one of the gender platforms, women's transportation of millet from the field to their homes was identified as a painful task for women. Traditionally, in this part of Niger the family granary is located in the field at a distance of at least 3 to 5 km from the village. In order to meet the daily needs of the household women must transport an average of 30 kg of millet on their own.

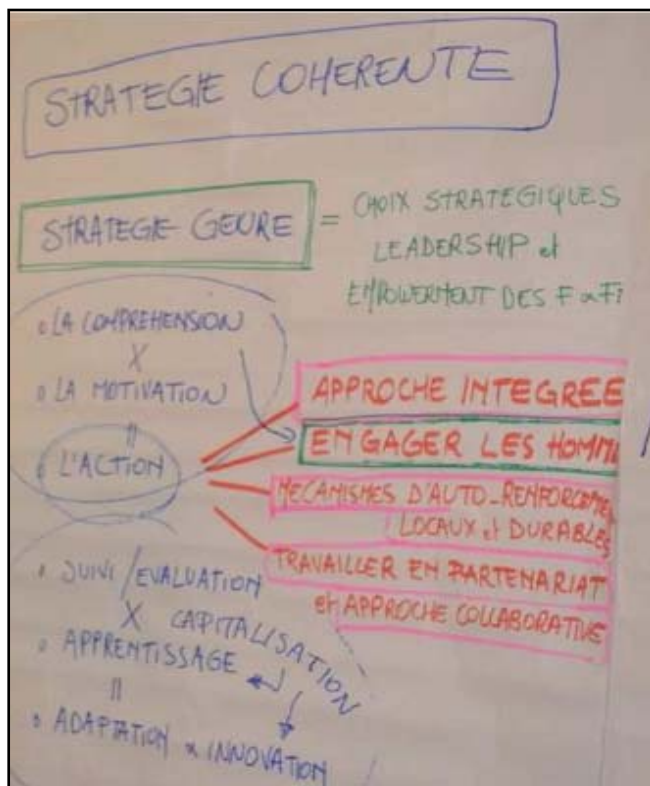
During the gender platform, participants decided to initiate advocacy and awareness-raising activities which led the men in the village to replace women in the transportation of millet from the field to the village. The men set up a space in the village for the pounding of millet; they called this space 'Wakahi' (which means 'exclamation' in Hausa). The transportation by men of millet from the field to the village has become a rule that all of the husbands in the village of Garin Algo must respect!

INSTITUTIONAL EFFORTS FOR THE PROMOTION OF MALE ENGAGEMENT AT CARE NIGER

In October, the CARE Niger team facilitated a 3-day staff reflection workshop on healthy masculinity. During the workshop, participants were introduced to the concepts of masculinity and health masculinity. The workshop used the 'Man Box' exercise to encourage participants to think about the social construction of masculinity, and the consequences to men and women of upholding the box.

A training workshop on masculinities is planned in Niamey January 28th to February 1st 2013. The workshop will be facilitated by Men's Resources International and will be aimed at equipping CARE Niger and CARE Mali staff with the skills required to facilitate reflection on masculinity.

Keep L'ENGAGÉ alive. Send your submissions to aliou.bah@co.care.org
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Photos (clockwise from top left): CARE Niger gender strategy diagram; sketch on the management of intra-household decisions related to girls' education in the region of Tahoua (Niger); small group discussions on the impacts of GBV in Ou Gina (Mali); CARE Niger's Engaging Men team (including CARE and partner NGO staff); Participatory analysis forum at community level in Mali