

# **National Fatherhood Program in Viet Nam**

## **Needs Assessment Report**

**White Ribbon Canada**

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## **Acknowledgements**

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*“The most interesting part of fatherhood, is just being a dad. When we got married, we welcomed our own children and we now have a clear goal and objective in our lives.”* - Participant, Fathers Group, Hai Duong

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## Introduction

There has been great momentum in Viet Nam to more effectively respond to and prevent gender-based violence (GBV) at the national level. With the development of the National Strategy on Gender Equality (2011-2020), and the enactment of the Gender Equality Law (2006) and the Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control (2007), the Government of Viet Nam has clearly shown its commitment to policy reform. While it is well known that male engagement is necessary to accelerate GBV prevention efforts<sup>1</sup>, there exists a gap in the implementation of these policies.<sup>2</sup> Broadly, within GBV prevention there is a lack of intentionality in working with fathers in a systematic manner which can effectively address the root causes of gender-based violence. More specifically, the promotion of healthy masculinities attitudes and behaviours such as equal sharing of household chore, caregiving work and parenting duties can lead to increased gender equality and respect for female partners. It is essential that a sense of responsibility and accountability to prevent gender-based violence, and promote healthy and equitable relationships is fostered with men.

While there is growing research on masculinities in the South-East Asian context and Viet Nam specifically<sup>3</sup>, less is known on how men conceptualize their roles as fathers, and how they promote gender equality in their everyday lives. In addition, there is little research to date on women's perspectives as mothers on conceptualizing engaged fatherhood. A recent risk and protective factor analysis conducted with 4,838 Vietnamese women found that they are more likely to experience violence if their husbands practice controlling, harmful or violent forms of masculinity or if they or their husbands experienced violence during their childhood.<sup>4</sup> This needs assessment intentionally focused on positive aspects of fatherhood, and encouraged fathers to think about their parenting in relation to promoting gender equality, ending all forms of GBV, including sexual violence. As UNFPA Viet Nam enters into its next strategic plan, Country Programme 9, there is a greater focus on policy advocacy, and upstream policy implementation.

In July 2015, at the request of UNFPA Viet Nam, White Ribbon hosted a study visit of high level Government of Viet Nam representatives, UN Agencies, and Civil Society to explore gender-based violence response and prevention models in Canada. Upon completion of the

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<sup>1</sup> Minerson, Todd, H. Carolo, T. Dinner, C. Jones. Issue Brief: Engaging Men and Boys to Reduce and Prevent Gender-Based Violence. Status of Women Canada, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Results from the National Study on Domestic Violence in Viet Nam (2010). United Nations.

<sup>3</sup> Partners for Prevention, UNFPA Viet Nam (2012). 'Teach the wife when she first arrives': Trajectories and pathways into violent and non-violent masculinities in Hue City and Phu Xuyen district, Viet Nam.

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization (2010). *Violence prevention: the evidence*. Retrieved December 4, 2016 from Violence Prevention Alliance:

<http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/publications/en/index.html>

study visit, a report was submitted profiling a summary of the visit and key points for consideration in developing a National Gender-Based Violence Plan. White Ribbon was subsequently selected in 2016 to conduct a Needs Assessment in Viet Nam to inform the development of a National Fatherhood Program. The needs assessment builds off this relationship and commitment of UNFPA and its strategic partners in Viet Nam to primary prevention and gender equality from the lens of engaged fatherhood.

This needs assessment was conducted in November 2016 in Hai Duong and Ha Noi to identify the needs, gaps, challenges and opportunities to promote engaged fatherhood, ultimately to prevent GBV. This report highlights entry points for preventing GBV through engaged fatherhood, and identifies potential implementation partners for consideration. The needs assessment intentionally focused on positive aspects of fatherhood, and encouraged fathers to think about their parenting in relation to promoting gender equality and ending all forms of GBV, including sexual violence.

Men's journey into fatherhood and their subsequent parenting experiences *becoming* and *being* fathers are significant entry points for male engagement towards gender equality. Gaps, needs, opportunities and challenges in engaging men as fathers in promoting gender equality and preventing GBV will be articulated in this report.

The following principles guided all aspects of the needs assessment:

#### Principles

- Utilizing strength-based and positive messaging with fathers and mothers to explore engaged fatherhood;
- The illustration of gender equality in parenting practices, ultimately towards gender-based violence prevention;
- Honouring lived experiences and fostering trust with all participants;
- Positioning focus group discussions as a unique opportunity to participate in shaping a national engaged fatherhood program;
- Well-informed of existing local research and statistics, heavily based on detailed project outlines provided by UNFPA, without making assumptions about current knowledge and awareness levels of mothers and fathers;
- Igniting and building off fathers' interest, enthusiasm and curiosity about their role in the family;
- Employing flexibility and adaptability to changing needs from participants and stakeholders;
- Apply an intersectional analysis of gender, culture and human rights throughout (consistent with UNFPA model).

## **Methodology: Overview and Important Considerations for Findings**

The needs assessment was carried out in three phases comprised of a desk review (see Appendix 1 for listing of documentation), consultations and field research. Consultations took place in Ha Noi with wide ranging stakeholder including: UNFPA Viet Nam, UN GBV Working Group, Government agencies, NGOs and researchers. Field research took place in Hai Duong Province and Ha Noi. A final debrief meeting took place to share preliminary insights and reflections from the needs assessment.

The needs assessment methodology is based on the success of White Ribbon's experience facilitating focus groups with fathers to explore engaged fatherhood, gender equality and GBV prevention. With the exception of the orientation and debrief meetings with UNFPA, the selection of a semi-structured focus group methodology was employed with all key stakeholder groups. That methodology allowed for the following:

- Greater number of participants were engaged (versus individual interviews);
- Focus group discussions were adapted based on emerging trends and topics arising from previous focus groups;
- Greater sense of community, story-telling and knowledge sharing between members of each key stakeholder group.

### **Consultative Process: Strategic Positioning of the Needs Assessment and Fatherhood Program, and Understanding Local Capacity**

This phase was instrumental in further positioning both the needs assessment and strategy in broader UNFPA strategic priorities. Current approaches, father engagement programs, and critical contextual factors were discussed and potential roles for implementation were identified. Focus group discussions began with introductions, background to the needs assessment, and questions from participants. Additional relevant research, and publications were shared during the stakeholder consultations (Appendix 1: Background Documentation).



*UNFPA and White Ribbon Canada, November 2016*

### **Field Research in Hai Duong and Ha Noi**

Due to the inherent personal nature of the topic of engaged fatherhood, this was an area which mothers and fathers were keen to explore. Stories emerged organically throughout the focus groups, as participants shared practical examples of how they are promoting gender equality in the home and in their community. The discussion sought to identify gender equitable attitudes and practices, and shifting ideas regarding masculinity, which challenge the dominant notion of power over women and girls, and ultimately contributes to eliminating gender-based violence.

### **Process-related Considerations**

All focus group discussions were recorded and took place in both formal and informal settings, including: The People's Commune, local cafes in Hai Duong and Ha Noi, and a school. Facilitating the focus groups in more informal areas where men, and women already congregate is an effective tool to firmly root the research in local communities, and can provide comfort and familiarity of surroundings to engage in discussions. All focus groups with mothers and fathers began with relaying key elements in the consent form for participants to be aware of their rights as participants.

An introductory meeting took place with the UNFPA for a briefing on demographical and contextual considerations within Hai Duong Province and their current work on gender-based violence prevention. During the Fathers' Group in Hai Duong city, it was noted that some men participated in only half of the discussion, while new participants emerged half way through the focus group discussion. This was not considered to hamper the findings of the focus groups, as research methods should be flexible to meet changing needs of participants. A more informal methodology was used to accommodate participants' time commitments and therefore increase accessibility for their participation in the discussions.





## Limitations

Responses from fathers on their role in promoting gender equality in the household solely reflects their attitude, and links to actual behaviour may not be consistent. Findings from fathers' groups should be considered as such, as there is research which indicates men and fathers can overestimate their contributions in the household<sup>5</sup>. A comparative study could be considered to shed light on potential discrepancies in reporting, by engaging both partners separately in focus groups and by comparing and contrasting roles and responsibilities in the family.

No self-identifying members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community participated in the research. Given the broader stigmatization of this community in Viet Nam, this was identified as a significant gap in the research. In addition, despite the existence of 53 minority groups in Viet Nam, the majority of participants were members of the Kinh community. Future research methods should engage from an intersectional lens, and ensure a diversity of identities, and include greater collaboration with representative organizations and groups. In addition, it was noted that no single parent participated in the focus groups. This was identified as a rare demographic during introductory meetings, however accessibility barriers such as lack of child care, lack of time to participate in extra-curricular activities, and social stigma of being a single parent could also explain this gap in participation.

Focus groups ranged from 1.5 to 2.5 hours depending on the needs and availability of participants. Additional time could have been used to further explore the positive roles fathers can plan in GBV prevention specifically. A deeper exploration of why fathers may shy away from engaging in this topic is an important consideration for future primary prevention efforts.

The needs assessment not only allowed for greater understanding of the gaps, needs, challenges and opportunities, but initiated positive relationships and early buy-in with all key stakeholder groups. While focus group discussions were initially envisioned for Ho Chi Minh City, this was not possible due to lack of clearance at the local level. Urban perspectives from mothers and fathers were still obtained through coordination of focus group discussions in Ha Noi City. The demographics of needs assessment participants point to an over-representation of women in the initial stakeholder consultation process. The under-representation of male practitioners in this area of work reflects that gender equality and gender-based violence prevention is still largely considered to be a woman's issue. This further reflects in a significant gender imbalance among individuals choosing to work in social services.

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<sup>5</sup> Men Do More at Home, but Not as Much as They Think. New York Times (Nov. 12, 2015).

Total Number of Men and Women Engaged (per stakeholder group):

Group	Number Women and Men
UNFPA, UN Women, UNICEF	6 women
Government	4 women
Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	7 women, 1 man
Researchers	5 women
Unions (Farmers and Commune Leaders)	9 men, 3 women (rural)
Fathers	21 men (rural), 5 (urban)
Mothers	17 women (rural), 5 (urban)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47 women and 36 men</b>

Eighty-three individuals, including 47 women and 36 men participated in the needs assessment in Hai Duong and Ha Noi.

### Demographics

As per specifications in the Needs Assessment Technical Plan, the following demographic breakdown was suggested for participants of the focus groups (based on a group of 10 individuals); 1 single parent, 1 young parent, 2 expecting parents, 1 newcomer parent (from a rural area, city, or country), 2 parents with children younger than 12 years of age, 2 parents with children between the ages of 13 and 18, and 1 grandparent. An age range of 19-70 years of age was suggested for participants. A total of 12 focus groups were facilitated (not including the orientation and debriefing meeting with UNFPA). Stakeholders included the UN GBV Working Group, Government Agencies, INGOs, Researchers, District Farmers' Union, Commune Leaders, Fathers' and Mothers' Groups. A list of participants is included in Appendix 2.

### Contextual Factors

The following contextual factors emerged in the initial consultative process and in focus groups with mothers and fathers.

- **The role of Confucianism ideology** contributes to the sustenance of rigid gender norms<sup>6</sup> and “toxic” aspects of masculinity which in turn fuel gender-based violence. The power of this ideology should not be under-estimated in shaping men’s attitudes and behaviours towards gender equality, fatherhood and roles to prevent GBV. Similarly, and equally important is the “happy family” ideology, which is so prevalent in Viet Nam (but not unique to its culture) and focuses on the need for women to “maintain harmony” in the family, enduring multiple forms of violence, through reconciliation. However, in some focus groups, some women encouraged other women to challenge and break this silence.
- **Exploring the prospective role of the local People’s Committees and Women’s Union in the Fatherhood Program** is crucial given their high visibility, and current role in responding to GBV. Authors Waibel and Gluck (2014) found the “Women’s Union fails to challenge traditional gender norms, actually emphasizing women’s responsibilities in maintaining a ‘happy family’.”<sup>7</sup> This was re-iterated numerous times in discussions, on training women to avoid conflict and maintain harmony within their relationship. The Women’s Union shared examples that reinforced reconciliation processes within relationships where domestic violence is present.
- **The prevalent discrimination against LGBTI groups, and the right to raise a family** is critically important to address. Other studies also indicate that GBV is common against LGBTI adolescents and adolescents who deviate from accepted gender practices in Viet Nam. Homosexuality is neither permitted nor prohibited under Vietnamese law although, by not explicitly mentioning it, the Vietnamese Law on Marriage and Family puts forward heterosexuality as the social norm.<sup>8</sup>
- **While there is increasing presence and visibility of male allies in Viet Nam to respond and prevent GBV, high rates of violence persist.** Close to 58% of ever-married women aged 18-60 reported in a 2010 national study that they had experienced some form of violence at least once in their lifetime by their husbands or intimate partners, while 87% of them never sought help from formal services or authorities.<sup>9</sup>

## Hai Duong Province

Hai Duong Province is situated in the Red River Delta with a total area of 1,662 Km<sup>2</sup>; including 10 districts, one town and one provincially-administered city with 265 communes, 1,432 hamlets and a total population of 1,723,578 (DPO Report, 2012). There were 313 cases of domestic violence across the province, of which 35 victims were seniors, 23 victims were

<sup>6</sup> Viet Nam Gender Briefing Kit (2016). p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> G. Waibel, S. Gluck (2014). More than 13 million: mass mobilisation and gender politics in the Viet Nam Women’s Union. Gender and Development. Vol (21), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Proud to be Different Proposal to UN. (2014)

<sup>9</sup> Results from the National Study on Domestic Violence in Viet Nam (2010). United Nations.

children and 255 were women. Furthermore, 10 cases of physical violence, 280 cases of emotional violence and 20 cases of economic violence were registered (DOCST, 2011). A hotline number has been established and is currently operating, providing counseling, support and responses to domestic violence cases. Given that 58% of women in Viet Nam have experienced physical violence by their partner at some point in their lifetime<sup>10</sup>, under-reporting of domestic violence in Hai Duong remains a significant challenge, and shows the need to enhance survivors' trust in reporting and support mechanisms.

To promote awareness on the Domestic Violence Law, communication and mobilization has been spearheaded in Hai Duong Province. This includes initiatives such as contests on interpretations of the Domestic Violence Law; cultural performance and festivals; media programmes such as television, radio programmes and local newspapers (Project Annual Report, 2016). Hai Duong has also shown innovation by spearheading family clubs, and counseling and reconciliation groups in Ky Son commune, in the Tu Ky district. The family clubs have attracted wide-ranging participation from couples, youth, men, women, and seniors.

According to the DPO Report (2012), the sex ratio at birth (SRB) imbalance in Hai Duong remains a prevalent challenge. According to the result of the Population Census (2009), the SRB of the country is 110.8, while that of Hai Duong is 120.3, which makes it the second province with the highest SRB in the country. This was illustrated through focus group discussions with both mothers and fathers, reporting with higher frequency having two sons, as oppose to two daughters. More information is required from the Local District Farmers' Union, MOLISA, Women's Union and Commune Leaders in Hai Duong, to gage whether their existing community group models can be incorporated into the Fatherhood Program.

### **Exploring the Demand, Gaps, Needs, Challenges and Opportunities**

The following section identifies the demand, core gaps, needs, challenges and opportunities in developing and implementing a Fatherhood Program. Numerous findings below were presented as preliminary insights during the final Needs Assessment debrief meeting with UNFPA.

#### **Demand**

#### **Research Area #1: Fatherhood Program: Hopes and Concerns**

Overall, there were high hopes and expectations for the Fatherhood Program. The Fatherhood Program Strategy will specify clear objectives, principles, activities, and key

<sup>10</sup> General Statistics Office (2010). Results from the National Study on Domestic Violence against Women in Viet Nam: Keeping silent is dying.



results. It will identify potential partners and include a broader roadmap for implementation. Clear outcomes towards the prevention of multiple forms of violence against women and girls will be identified. A UN Women representative articulated the importance of enhancing the representation of men as positive role models, and increase their visibility at all levels, ultimately reshaping the traditional gender narrative and transforming social norms. The empowerment of women and girls needs to be a central outcome in the Fatherhood Program Strategy. Utilizing the expertise of fatherhood programming within UNICEF is an important consideration for future planning. The importance of messaging was also highlighted, to ensure the strategy does not embody patronizing messaging - for example, men needing to “protect” women and girls whilst devaluing their autonomy and voice. Hope for creative and arts-based engagement was specified, similar to the [Swedish Embassy Photo Contest](#) implemented in Viet Nam. The digital storytelling component of White Ribbon's [It Starts With You](#) social marketing campaign could be a similar approach in the implementation of a Fatherhood Program in Viet Nam.

Civil society representatives shared their hope for the Program to be sustainable, ensuring that necessary and sufficient resources and capacity are dedicated to help achieve the needed impact and scope. A CSO representative stated that there is a “need to focus on rural and ethnic minorities, [they] have little awareness. Need for different models in rural and urban areas.”

Stakeholders also recommended a diverse focus, beyond just young fathers, in order to maximize reach. Similar to CSOs, Government Agencies shared great excitement and hopes for the Fatherhood Program. Government agencies encouraged a specification of age group for the Fatherhood Program. The Youth Union expressed strong interest in participating, however spoke of limited resources and funding.

Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) expressed their excitement and expressed concern of limited geographic areas being targeted in the needs assessment towards shaping a national strategy. In addition, there was a hope to integrate the Fatherhood Program into educational institutions, curriculum, and vocational training. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism was not able to participate in the Needs Assessment. Government agencies pushed for an articulation of engaged fatherhood criteria within the strategy. This idea was further explored and validated with the Research Stakeholder Group. The Farmers’ Union expressed interest in incorporating the Fatherhood Program into their 2015-20 project plan. A member of the Farmers Union expressed that “we [the Farmers Union] can play a strong role in fatherhood programme implementation.”

## Gaps

The need to develop stronger fatherhood skills, particularly in the early childhood development stage (0-5 years), was identified as a major gap by focus group participants.



*“There are so many good things to being a father, but we still lack the skills to take care of children, particularly very small babies. We are not trained or provided with the skills, so this will impact our ability to contribute to the development of the child.” – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi*

A participant reflects on the importance of their family in learning about fatherhood:

*“We haven’t been taught formally. Normally we get advice from parents, relatives, brothers and sisters. They don’t provide us with specific skills, but share their experiences.” – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi*

The involvement of fathers before, during, and after the birth of a child has been shown to have positive effects on maternal health behaviors, women’s use of maternal and newborn health services, and fathers’ longer-term support and involvement in the lives of their children.<sup>11</sup> However within the Vietnamese context there appears to be a lack of knowledge and awareness.

*“My opinion, is that many young men become fathers without any preparation. They get married, are very unprepared, and have little knowledge.” – Participant, Commune Leader, Hai Duong*

A Father from Ha Noi shared that he is now thinking critically about the relevance of advice from older generations, and perhaps the need for more progressive and equity focused guidance.

*“The situation is changing though. We are not sure their experience can be applied to our generation.” – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi*

Through discussions with Government Agencies, CSOs and Unions, it became apparent that there is a great deal of stigmatization against same sex parents, and very little resources available to them. The issue of gay fathers was met with a sense of uncertainty, and was communicated that only recently, gay fathers could have a surrogate. The issue of stigmatization of the LGBTI community requires consideration in the Fatherhood Program to start addressing the discrimination faced by this community. Also, single fathers were seen as an anomaly in the Vietnamese context.

In discussions with mothers and fathers, there was an awareness and knowledge gap in sharing how gender equality is promoted, versus preventing GBV. Stories were easily told about sharing household chores and responsibilities, however fathers’ commitment to preventing GBV was very rarely communicated. It becomes clear that the Fatherhood Program should promote intentional and positive roles of fathers across the life cycle in preventing all forms of gender-based violence. Fostering a healthy and non-violent

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<sup>11</sup> [State of the World’s Fathers: Executive Summary \(2015\). P. 10.](#)

relationship between spouses through enhanced conflict resolution skills, and exploring the issue of consent with both sons and daughters emerged as a significant gap.

While the Fatherhood Program will be based in a primary prevention model, it's critical that more effective survivor-centric responses to GBV be promoted in Viet Nam.

One participant illustrated financial penalties for reporting:

*"Domestic violence, when it happens, we encourage to report it the People's Committee. But the perpetrator will have to pay a fine and then the woman also loses as it is her money too. So women do not report and keep it secret."* – Participant, Commune Leaders Group, Hai Duong

Any prevention model, requires a robust and effective response system to ensure the safety and well-being of survivors of violence. Fathers can also promote awareness with their daughters (and sons) of community resources and support they can access if they have experienced trauma or violence.

## Needs

Formal and structured opportunities for fathers to share their experiences and gain new parenting skills emerged as another significant set of needs. Despite not having a formal place to discuss fatherhood, fathers are still finding ways to network with each other and find information about parenthood.

*"I talked to people, read books, magazines, went online, and talked to previous generations - my father and uncles."* – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi

*"Yes we share lots with close friends and colleagues. For example, I ask about handling sick children and advice on health and education of children."* – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi

Many fathers and mothers relied on their parents, extended family, and friends to discuss parenting. While family members can provide important parenting insights, there was great interest in developing Fathers Clubs, and/or integrating fatherhood into existing models and activities. There was a desire for understanding basic parenting skills (i.e. bathing, feeding, sleeping, playing) and hearing from guest speakers and experts on these issues. In addition to more basic parenting skills, exploring gender equality approaches across the life cycle can be mainstreamed into the Fatherhood Program.

There is also a need for increased research on the links between engaged fatherhood, masculinities and GBV prevention in the South-East Asia and Viet Nam context. Collaborating with local researchers on the monitoring and evaluation of the Program can enhance the

evidence-base, and shed new insights on how masculinities evolve with the journey into fatherhood, and can ultimately prevent gender-based violence.

The need to engage with mothers, in addition to fathers on their roles in promoting gender equality and preventing GBV is critical. At times, mothers expressed their own inequitable views towards son preference. While others may not have expressed it, it's possible they did not feel comfortable sharing this. Fatherhood does not happen in a vacuum, so the need to work with mothers to support their partners in embracing non-traditional roles is critical. While many fathers spoke of the need to be the provider in the family, some discussed the importance of play and spending time with their children. There does seem to be a need for fathers to play more engaged and authentic roles towards enhanced quality of relationships with their children (not solely as “provider”).

### Role of Mothers and Fathers in Preventing GBV

It was difficult to assess the extent to which fathers were taking a role in preventing gender-based violence. Focus group discussions were geared more on broader gender equality contributions, and fathers' role in the primary prevention of GBV was more theoretical. It may simply have been the case that many fathers had not considered this within the context of their daily experiences. This is an area that deserves additional research, and more intentional exploration within the fatherhood program.

*“Yes, it’s very important [to teach about respect for women and girls]. I teach them daily and regularly. I encourage them to use social media, get information on their friends on the internet. Sometimes I bring gender equality magazines and newspapers home for my sons to read. We talk about child safety as well. I bring that education home too. Regular and gradual conversations on gender equality are important, not just once!” – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi*

*“I have two sons and I tell them that they should treat other women like they treat me. During meals, I talk to them [about respect]. For example, I tell them that when they are looking for partners, you have to treat women in ways that are respectful.” – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong*

Participants also shared examples of men being positive bystanders and role models in the community:

*“In my village there are some families where there are quarrels and fathers who beat their children. Men from the village go visit that man. They talk to him and advise him to not be like that.” – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong*

*“In my village, I know a man that works in the commune. I think he’s a very good man. He shares everything with his wife. We are neighbours and I have never witnessed him shouting or being angry. He is very patient and a good husband.” – Participant,*



Mothers Group, Hai Duong

*These examples demonstrate the need to profile these positive examples within fatherhood programming, ultimately creating a new narrative on fatherhood which is rooted in gender equality.*

### **Exploring the Concept of a Good Father**

Both mothers and fathers expressed the need for a father to be a good role model. The importance of fathers not engaging in “social evils” (mainly tied to substance abuse) and being a good provider for the family emerged consistently during discussions. This being said, other fathers challenged the traditional breadwinner role. Mothers were far less likely to express pressure to provide economically towards the financial future of their family. In addition, mirroring gender equality in marriage and providing support to children were also identified as desirable traits for a good father.

*“A good father is the one who is willing to share with his children. He is a friend who the children can talk to. He is someone who is not involved in social evils. If he gets involved in social evils, he will be a bad influence for his children. A good father earns income and can support the family economically. He can create happiness in the family. If the father uses drugs, how can he prevent his children from using drugs? A good father is one who is absolutely free from social evils.”* – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong

*“When we were young women growing up, we learned from our father, boyfriends, and male friends. We understand what a good man is, how to care for women and everyone. Someone who does a good job in his responsibilities.”* – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong

Characteristics of a “good” father can be strongly linked to gender equitable attitudes and behaviours and shifting gender stereotypes. Both mothers and fathers shared their reflections on this topic.

*“When I was pregnant, my husband was the one who researched information and who helped me with pre-natal care and parenting skills. He researched information on the different stages of pregnancy and shared it with me.”* – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong

*“Before having a child, I believed in old gender stereotypes, that a man should be strong and active, but after having a child I changed my thinking. My expectation depends on their own individual capacity and characteristics. For example, I need to change my expectation if my son doesn’t live up to gender norms.”* – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi

Women expressed diverse experiences growing up. These two mothers reflected on their experiences with their fathers:

*“When I chose my partner, it was very much based on the personality of my father. My father influenced me in choosing my partner, because my husband is similar to my father. The only thing I am not happy about is that he is a smoker and my father is not. I travel a lot and am away from home for five days and my husband is the one who cares for the children.”* – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong

*“I have always thought that a good father is close to his children, can be trusted, and share their stories. However, my father was very patriarchal. He beat my mom... I don’t have a very good father. I think a good father loves his children. I was beaten by him. Not a nice memory at all. I have three siblings. My mom worked so hard. Whenever my dad came home he was patriarchal. He was the most important. He insulted my mom. I felt scared.”* – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong

Providing opportunities for story-telling and critical reflection of what it means to be a good father is an important consideration for the fatherhood program. Story-telling will allow for greater community-building amongst fathers, and can result in shared learning to promote healthy masculinities and gender equality within the family.

## Challenges

The impact of internal migration towards cities emerged from the discussions in Hai Duong. Participants indicated that men return only a few times a year back to rural areas. This would undoubtedly compound men’s participation in a fatherhood program in rural areas.

*“Many men in this village have limited education levels and only come back to the commune once or twice a year. Migration is a large issue to contend with. Many men work in Hanoi, and they only come back [to the commune] once or twice a year.”* – Participant, Commune Leaders Group, Hai Duong

Alternately we heard one father, Commune Leader in Hai Duong reflect on his role as a primary caregiver:

*“I have two kids, and my wife is overseas. I take care of everything – wash clothes; make her hair neat every day; help with her clothes. I play the role of the mother. My daughter misses her mom.”* – Participant, Commune Leaders Group, Hai Duong

Son preference continues to pervade mindsets, as one mother in Hai Duong reflected:

*“I would prefer having two sons over two daughters. If I have a son, they would stay with us. His wife would come and live with us. One more reason is that my husband’s opinion might change later on. Then I would be at risk of losing him. In my case, our*

*economic conditions limit how many children we have.” – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong*

Both mothers and fathers expressed pressure in shielding their children from “social evils”.  
*Parents are using fear-based messaging with their children.*

*“If a father uses drugs, how can he prevent his children from using drugs? A good father is absolutely free from all social evils.” – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong*

Participants experience strong pressures to conform to gender stereotypes when raising boys, relative to girls. Gender stereotypes play a significant role in gender inequality and the use of gender-based violence.

*“I’m very much concerned about the thinking, attitudes and behaviours of my son, to make sure he is a “real men” and fits in his gender and age group. For example, I expect my sons will socialize with other boys. They will play sports that require athleticism, not be shy, and use a clear voice. I would be worried if he was shy like girls. I would help him to ‘correct’ it. – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi*

*“My daughter is so little, but when she’s older, I will tell her about gender equality. However, it depends on individual capacity of children. Girls can’t necessarily do everything boys do, and boys can’t do everything girls do. Second point, through my observation, both parents in rural and urban settings share information on gender equality and they encourage girls to do what boys do. Less talk about getting boys to do stereotypical “girl” activities or traits.” – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi*

Another key challenge lies in government oversight of gender equality laws and policies. While it is encouraging to have both a Gender Equality Law and Domestic Violence Prevention Law, they are both overseen by different government agencies: MOLISA, and the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism, respectively. This can be challenging for accountability and streamlining objectives and implementation. Given MOLISA’s national scope and accountability for the GE law, it may be most beneficial for this agency to oversee the National Fatherhood Program.

## **Challenges and Enabling Factors to Promote Engaged Fatherhood, Gender Equality, and GBV Prevention**

Key barriers were identified in engaging men as fathers for gender equality and GBV prevention. Firstly, as identified by the Farmers Union, men do not want to criticize one another, or hold each other accountable for incidents of violence. To overcome this barrier, the program must include a strength-based and positive approach to encourage behavioural change. There exists an opportunity with the Farmers’ Union to articulate stronger links between effective farming, access to finances and credit, and the benefits of gender equality in the family and broader community. Secondly, both CSOs and Government Agencies spoke



of the pressure many men face to be the breadwinner and provider for the family. To address this pressure, the Farmers' Union requires farmers to participate in gender equality discussions, to access loans and credit. A challenge arises here on intention and authenticity of how men are engaging in these discussions, and whether the learning is translating to behavioural change, however does redress the financial pressure faced by farmers.

The Viet Nam Women's Union pointed to a gap in addressing male accountability in domestic violence, as the organization focuses solely on reconciliation. This approach can promote victim-blaming (i.e. how to avoid conflict, and maintain harmony in the family). It poses key challenges in adopting more survivor-centric approaches and encouraging fathers to take greater ownership in the prevention of GBV. Compounding women's responsibility to "avoid" domestic violence, is the limited portrayal of women maintaining the "happy family" in various media outlets. This was also seen as a significant barrier.

*"Stereotypes are rampant in Vietnamese media. We need to train media [to promote gender equality]. A woman is defined only as a good mother and their domestic roles."*  
– Participant, CSO Group

*"First we need to focus on the media to change gender norms, and we must reach large groups of men."* – Participant, CSO Group

Lastly, the issue of funding was raised by CSOs as a key challenge to initiate and sustain engagement with men as fathers to prevent GBV. Funding support would have to be considered to solidify the role of CSOs in the implementation of a Fatherhood Program as in-kind contributions are likely not possible.

### **Exploring gender equality in the household**

There were varied responses about the extent to which men are contributing to household chores and child care work.

*"In our village the majority of men share the housework with their wife. Very few do not do that."* – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong

Another participant shares a similar opinion of changing gender roles of mothers and fathers:

*"The breadwinner identity is not suitable anymore in today's context. I don't agree if my husband says that he is too busy."* – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong

Another mother speaks about how gender equality is illustrated in her home:

*"Gender equality means that there should be more sharing of work between men and women. I cook food and he washes dishes. When I teach children to study, he does something else like housework. In the past, we valued men more than women in Viet Nam. I think men as breadwinners is in the past but now it is equal. So before, for big*



*purchases it was the man, but now it is both men and women who make purchases together.” – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong*

Communicating the importance of equal work in the household was strongly illustrated by both mothers and fathers:

*“My husband is the youngest son in the family, he didn’t have to do a lot. But after getting married, I talk about my workload to demonstrate how much is on my plate, and now he can contribute more.” – Participant, Mothers Group, Ha Noi*

*“To teach sons to do housework, cooking, cleaning, doing the dishes - I think this shows gender equality in the family.” – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi*

*“In my family, my wife is the only woman in the household. I ask my sons to do housework with me and cook the food with me. I teach them that every member should share household chores.” – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi*

The prevalence of experiences of shared household chores is encouraging, and should be strengthened within the fatherhood program as it is linked to possessing gender equitable attitudes and behaviours which counter toxic masculinity and act to redress root causes of gender-based violence.

## Opportunities

Consistent with findings from the State of the World’s Fathers (2015), men want to spend more time with their children.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, participating fathers spoke passionately about their desire to do this, and shared examples of ways they promote gender equality in their family. There is great opportunity to draw from positive experiences of fathers in how they spend time spent with family. These stories can be shared among men to inspire further change.

What then do fathers want to gain from a fatherhood program? Male participants, in the focus group with Commune Leaders in Hai Duong, shared concrete suggestions for a Fatherhood Program:

*“For example, we should have training on being a father for soon-to-be dads, and explore what you can expect through workshops. I want to explore how to dialogue between children and fathers, wife and husband, and be clear about expectations. Several topics can be covered. I also want to share that there is an alarming effect of increasing divorce. Many couples are ill-equipped before marriage. We need to*

<sup>12</sup> MenCare Advocacy Publication (2015) State of the World’s Fathers: Executive Summary.



*prevent divorce, otherwise the children will have hard lives later.” – Participant, Commune Leader Group, Hai Duong*

*“We should provide knowledge on “family-building” for young married couples, and in the club sessions we should explore parenting skills and gender equality. Skills are needed for both women and men to maintain a happy family.” – Participant, Commune Leaders group, Hai Duong*

The topic of predominantly fathers being responsible for their children’s education, provides an opportunity for a reframe in the Fatherhood Program. As oppose to the parent always being the “educator,” great learning can come from listening and asking about children’s experiences (i.e. asking how they are feeling, listening to their concerns and pressures, etc.). One mother in Hai Duong Province expressed concern about the decreasing role of the father in the education of their children, with the rise of internet platforms.

*“For younger generation of fathers it’s harder. The society is developing and changing very quickly. In my time, mass media wasn’t prevalent. The younger generation are now exposed to the internet, meaning the role of the father in education diminishes.” – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong*

Utilizing the power of social media and online communications in promoting engaged fatherhood has enormous potential. Fathers expressed a desire for an online platform to explore parenting skills and enhance their awareness and understanding.

The Government of Viet Nam, Unions, CSOs, and UNFPA are at a unique moment to spearhead and implement a Fatherhood Program. This readiness should not be overlooked as a key factor which can propel and fuel the success of the program. The desire for such a program was palatable and will be instrumental moving forward. Consistent with the evidence base and promising practices in engaging men, the use of fathers as positive role models emerged as important throughout the discussions. MC Phan Anh, a celebrated actor in Viet Nam, was identified with enthusiasm by multiple key stakeholders as a compelling role model to promote engaged fatherhood. Caution should always be exerted when engaging high profile individuals as role models, however, as they can possess undeclared inequitable or violent behaviours or engage in future problematic behaviours. Proper vetting throughout their engagement is necessary. Additional desk research should be conducted to identify high profile fathers in Viet Nam. CSOs also identified numerous male champions which have emerged through their respective GBV prevention programming. It is recommended that a mapping exercise be conducted with CSOs to identify current programs with fathers, and potential male allies (who are fathers) to engage in the Fatherhood Program as representatives.

The Farmers’ Union shared their experience in organizing 200 meetings with Fathers, relaying the personal stories and experiences of women participants as wives and mothers. The feedback they have received has been very positive and impactful. This strategy should be considered in the development of the Fatherhood Program. This approach can help build accountability with women, ensuring their voices and experience are represented. It also

helps build empathy and allyship among men towards women. Within the CSO stakeholder group, there are examples of current approaches which can be considered in developing the Fatherhood Program:

*“We have a “responsible men” program, including 14 lessons over seven months, where we explore new alternatives for fatherhood. How do men spend time? How do they show their love to their wife? We encourage small actions, like holding hands, or small gifts to show love to their wife. It’s a practice they have to learn.” – Participant, CSO Group*

Working across the life cycle, including educating young boys on the meaning of a good father, also emerged as a critical factor. Recommended elements for effective programming included contests and competitions, and ensuring programming is highly engaging and enjoyable. In addition, communicating the benefits of engaged fatherhood will be important to the success of the Fatherhood Program. This emerged across numerous stakeholder groups and focus group discussion.

#### **Benefits of Engaged Fatherhood in the Family:**

- The ability to leave a strong and inspired legacy for the next generation in their family;
- Children growing up having fond memories of their bonds with their father; sons learning from the positive, peaceful, gender equitable examples of their fathers and applying those lessons in their adult lives;
- Daughters growing up with strong male and female gender equitable role models and therefore being empowered to expect healthy, equitable, peaceful treatment from future partners, co-workers, etc;
- Enhanced quality and health of relationship between partners (equal decision-making, mutual respect, supportive);
- Given the cyclical nature of domestic violence, parents can have a positive impact in the healthy development of future generations and therefore help to break that cycle of violence.



The benefits of engaged fatherhood are far-reaching, including improvements in the following areas: economic empowerment of women; maternal-health related outcomes; child development outcomes; reduction in GBV; and men's mental and physical health.<sup>13</sup>

## Exploring Lived Experiences of Becoming Parents

Participants of the Fathers and Mothers Groups expressed great pride in discussing their children, and their journey into parenthood. Since having children, a significant number of mothers and fathers spoke about having very little time for socializing. They also shared an enhanced sense of responsibility in their family. Mothers were more likely to discuss household chores and expectations, while fathers were more likely to mention economic and financial pressures to provide for the family.

*"In the family, I was closer to whom was gentler. My mom helped me and taught me to do housework, or do girly things, but for life lessons or career, that comes from my father. My mom taught me short term lessons, but my father taught me big skills, and to be a good citizen. He provided orientation for my future development."* – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong

*"My mother took care of me every day. I can say that my mother looked after me more than my father. My father was responsible for the income of the family. They were different but equally important in my development."* – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong

Alternately, a father shared the pressure he felt financially in raising a family:

*"I got married at 26, and at that time it was very difficult in Viet Nam. After I got married, things got more difficult economically. In Viet Nam in particular, having a house is very important. You need to buy a house after you get married! After that, we need to make sure we have savings for education. My first child was born in 1991, and then nine years later we had our second child. The reason was to save money, and work on our livelihoods. In Viet Nam, the husband is considered the breadwinner - I was the main person to earn income. In such a difficult situation, we had arguments and quarrels that's the way it is. And now our economy is much better than before, our children are mature and now we have less burdens than before."* – Participant, Fathers Group, Hai Duong

In exploring how parenthood changes the lives of both men and women, there is commonality in feeling enhanced responsibility, and the need to prepare:

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<sup>13</sup> [MenCare: What Fathers Have to Do With It: Engaging Men as Caregivers. \(nd\)](#). Promundo, Sonke Gender Justice, Men Care.



*“Life seems to be reversed! Before getting married you do whatever, and now it’s different! I feel more responsible, and life is more purposeful.” – Participant, Mothers Group, Ha Noi*

*“A couple years ago, I was a competitive table tennis player. I travelled a lot for table tennis across different provinces in Viet Nam. Now I stay in Hai Duong and train others. Also, I will be a father very soon. We need to prepare for this, to ensure enough income. I’ve reduced my social life. Our baby is arriving in 3 months!” – Participant, Fathers Group, Hai Duong*



*Focus Group Discussion with Mothers in Hai Duong Province*

After the birth of their children, fathers spoke more often about the economic pressures facing the family, with one participant mentioning “spiritual aspects”:

*“It’s a new experience - economic situation - so many expenses! Powder milk, clothes. Expenses will increase for her education. The second is the impact on my time - lots of time to take care of my daughter. Time for myself to enjoy outdoor activities is reduced. Time to enjoy sports and talk with my friends is reduced. Time to spend on training and work is impacted. Once having a daughter - there’s so much to do and conflict between the couple increases. However, having a daughter brings lots of happiness to our family.” – Participant, Fathers Group, Ha Noi*

*“It’s a father who can take care of the family in economic and spiritual aspects, and a good father can orient their children on their future in a way that can help children to become citizens.” – Participant, Farmers’ Union*

*“I think the general situation of all fathers is making sure the family is in good economic condition.” – Participant, Fathers Group, Hai Duong*

*“[There have been] a lot of changes since I’ve become a father! In terms of daily activities, time, work, socializing with friends. I’m a policeman, and am very busy. Becoming a father, I have to spend more time with the baby, and reduce my working*



*time. I have to ask my supervisor for more time off. So, as a policeman I have to work 10 night shifts per month. However, we have case by case work, but now that can be flexible for me. When I was single, I had more opportunities for parties, and go to bars, but now it doesn't happen. I feel happier coming home from work, holding the baby in my arms. I feel so happy. Sometimes the baby keeps crying at night, many times we don't know what to do."* – Participant, Fathers Group, Hai Duong

*[What has changed since starting a family?] "My lifestyle. I have more worries, responsibilities, and my social relationships have been affected. Once I became a mother, my social relationships were reduced, my family takes more of my time. It's difficult to explain. Most of the time, I think about meals for my children and the well-being of my family. Every day of mine is focused on my family."* – Participant, Mothers Group, Hai Duong

These quotes illustrate the changing lives of fathers and mothers in Viet Nam. Many fathers spoke at length about the reduction of various social activities with their friends and dwindling personal time, more so than mothers. Fathers expressed feeling a greater degree of loss in that sense relative to mothers. There lies immense opportunity to leverage the existing interest of fathers to play more active and supportive roles in the family. Indeed, a "sense of responsibility" emerged strongly with both mothers and fathers.

## **Roles of Diverse Stakeholders in the Fatherhood Program**

### **UNFPA**

UNFPA mandate is focused on "delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled." The fatherhood program has immense potential to advance progress across all elements of this mandate. It is recommended UNFPA Viet Nam play a strong role in providing technical support of the implementation of the Fatherhood Program throughout. This includes expertise to inform the curriculum, participation in the advisory committee, pilot test, monitoring and evaluation etc.

### **Civil Society Organizations**

CSOs expressed interest in engaging in the Program, however this was tempered by the current lack of resources. CSOs could provide technical assistance in the following areas: gender equality technical assistance, implementation, action research, training, and curriculum development. To mitigate potential competition between CSOs as implementing partners, a consortium of partners could be considered. A Community of Practice can also be utilized to promote knowledge sharing and learning between CSOs throughout the Fatherhood Program cycle. However, expertise in men and masculinities approaches,



engaged fatherhood, and capacity-building is currently lacking among CSOs pointing to the need to strengthen capacity in this area through training.

## **Researchers**

Researchers showed great interest and enthusiasm in playing a role in the implementation of a Fatherhood Program. The following were identified as potential roles: share current research and findings related to fatherhood, GBV prevention, and masculinities in Viet Nam; conduct baseline research; support the development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks; work with Local Authorities to obtain population-based data for a large-scale study; act as spokespeople for the Fatherhood Program; conduct media analysis and cultural assessment pre-and post-program.

## **Role of Government**

Given the multi-sectoral approach which will be required in the Fatherhood Program, the Government of Viet Nam's role as Lead Coordinator should be strongly considered. This ownership can also allow for effective national scale-up and replication. Given the ultimate goal of the fatherhood program is the reduction and prevention of gender-based violence, it is advised the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism which is responsible for the Domestic Violence Prevention Law be accountable for the oversight. This Ministry should work in close collaboration with MOLISA to share lessons learned, and progress towards key indicators and outcomes which are related to the Gender Equality Law. It is recommended consultations be carried out to assess capacity within each ministry, as it may be beneficial to have joint responsibility and accountability across ministries. Additional government partners will be identified to support implementation of the fatherhood program.

## **Unions**

Given the level of engagement and commitment from the Farmers' Union, there exists great opportunity to highly engage this Union in Program implementation. The Farmers' Union expressed a strong desire to play an implementing role, however they would first need to understand the approach, methods, and the implementation plan. There was strong interest in mainstreaming the Fatherhood Program approaches and engagement tools into existing models and clubs.

The Youth Union and Women's Union also expressed great interest in the Program. Particularly, the Youth Union could provide support in the engagement of young fathers. With the Women's Union significant reach, boasting a membership of approximately 15 million women, it's hard to not envision a role in the Fatherhood Program. In learning more about the Women's Union, there are key challenges as the focus is on sustaining a "happy family", and not addressing root causes of GBV. There could be strong ideological differences which may hamper their willingness and openness in participating in a gender transformative program which engages fathers. This is a key area for exploration to be further discussed with UNFPA, as consultations were limited to two or three representatives. Commune Leaders expressed interest in establishing fathers' clubs in villages (engaging members of the

Farmers Union). Membership fees were suggested as a prerequisite to participate in the fathers club. Given the tremendous work to mainstream gender across various Union activities and models, a review should be carried out to assess feasibility in integrating the Fatherhood Program into existing models, specifically to engage expecting fathers, and fathers of young children.



*Meeting with Farmers' Union, November 2016*

## White Ribbon Canada

As a global leader in gender-based violence prevention and male engagement, White Ribbon can provide technical expertise to implement and advance the goals of the Fatherhood Program. White Ribbon can provide technical assistance in the following areas: men and masculinities; engaged fatherhood; strength-based and gender transformative programming; attitudinal research; capacity building and training; campaign development; social marketing; monitoring and evaluation; communities of practice, and much more. White Ribbon brings compelling program models for potential adaptation, such as the It Starts With You social marketing campaign; the Men's Gender-based Violence Attitudinal and Behaviour Survey; the [Give Love Get Love](#) research engagement model; and the National Community of Practice initiative focused on knowledge sharing of GBV prevention models. White Ribbon has recently launched a national [Gender-based Violence Prevention Toolkit](#), and [gender equality, masculinities and sport resource](#). White Ribbon remains open to new ideas and opportunities as they emerge, and is strongly committed to support the realization of the National Fatherhood Program in Viet Nam.

## Summary

There is great interest, commitment, and support from all stakeholders to participate in the Fatherhood Program. It is recommended that the Government of Viet Nam assume the Lead Coordinator Role. UNFPA and White Ribbon could work closely with the Farmers' Union at all levels, and provide technical expertise across the project life cycle. Given MOLISA's significant

role to undertake state management of gender equality nationwide, and implement the Law on Gender Equality, their engagement in the National Fatherhood Program should also be strongly considered. It is recommended an Independent Advisory Committee be established, consisting of experts and practitioners in the field of fatherhood and GBV prevention. The committee could include participating stakeholders from the needs assessment, research community, and from other relevant organizations.

### Future Research Directions

The following areas can be considered for future research to advance the knowledge and evidence base linking engaged fatherhood, gender equality and GBV prevention.

- Further understanding of the importance of GBV prevention in parenting; role of fathers in preventing GBV; transmission of gender equality values across generations and impact on future fathers and families.
- Explore why the issues of GBV prevention is important to fathers, and gage rationale from the perspective of fathers.
- Explore men's perceptions of the concrete, positive roles they can play in ending violence against women, and girls.
- Gage whether men's own fathers were vocal on the issue of gender equality and GBV prevention, and identify links to current parenting practices.
- Explore engaged fatherhood through an intersectional lens, including fathers with disabilities, fathers from ethnic minority groups, gay fathers, and identifying their unique challenges and needs.
- Obtain clarity on the impacts and outcomes arising from the significant gender mainstreaming work that has occurred across numerous union activities and community models in Viet Nam.

These areas would be fruitful in advancing the evidence-base, and could potentially shape evaluation planning for the National Fatherhood Program in assessing impacts pre and post implementation of the Program.

### Recommendations

- Given the commitment and current level of engagement from the Farmers Union in Hai Duong, the program should be piloted in this Province. The needs assessment was unable to engage other Provinces, so the findings most accurately demonstrate this region, and therefore would be most relevant to pilot in this area. Given the high

rates of GBV, and persistent imbalanced sex ratio at birth, the need in Hai Duong Province is great. Findings from Ha Noi focus groups have also illustrated great demand and interest for fatherhood programming (expressed by both mothers and fathers).

- Expecting fathers possess a keen desire to learn and explore their role in parenting. Clearly articulating their roles and responsibilities to prevent gender-based violence across their children's lifecycle is critical. Particularly relevant for fathers with pre-teen and teen children, the issue of consent is critically important. Setting clear expectations and inspiring expecting fathers to embrace this responsibility, and not fear it, will be an important focus area in the Fatherhood Program.
- The Program should feature concrete skills-building, but should also be steeped in personal stories (both positive and negative) and inspiring experiences of fathers promoting gender equality and preventing GBV at home, in their community and workplaces. The benefits arising from participation should be clear and compelling.
- The Program should be rooted in transforming unequal power relations as it relates to the Confucianism ideology, and the roles and responsibilities of fathers to promote gender equality and prevent all forms of gender-based violence.
- A broader analysis should be conducted across Viet Nam's provinces and communes on the positive roles of fathers to prevent GBV and promote gender equality. The Program should promote adaptation and flexibility, as a one-size-fits all model may not be appropriate for the diverse contexts in Viet Nam.
- A strength-based and gender transformative approach needs to be adopted to redefine rigid fatherhood gender norms and stereotypes. A primary prevention model will address root causes of gender-based violence, and encourage fathers to embrace their responsibility in preventing it.
- Given the extent to which the internet was raised as an increasing influence in the lives of families, particularly as a source to learn about fatherhood and parenting, a robust knowledge and skill-based social marketing campaign should be developed to inspire fathers to play more active and gender equitable roles in the lives of their families, in the broader community, and in the workplace.
- Given the wide reach of the Women's Union (30 million), it can be argued that women, and mothers in Viet Nam have mobilized more effectively than men, pointing to key lessons which can be adopted for prospective fathers' clubs and groups.

## Conclusion

The current enthusiasm and support in Viet Nam at local and national levels for a Fatherhood Program is remarkable. While gains have been made in the past decade to address gender-based violence, particularly the Gender Equality Law and the Domestic Violence Prevention Law, there is little focus on the positive roles that fathers can play to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence. This needs assessment brought clarity to the significance that fatherhood holds, and identified an overwhelming desire from fathers to address a “fatherhood skill gap”, particularly in the early years of child-rearing. This is a significant entry point and a not-to-be-missed opportunity to infuse knowledge and skills for fathers on gender equality and gender-based violence.

A total of 83 participants across Government Agencies, CSOs, Unions, Academics, UN agencies, Mothers and Fathers Groups, contributed to the findings of this needs assessment. There exists tremendous opportunity to strategically engage each stakeholder group in the implementation of the Fatherhood Program. Formal workshops, capacity-building, training, use of celebrities as fatherhood role models, competitions, arts-based methods, and online mediums were explored as key awareness-raising strategies. While it is encouraging to hear the ways in which fathers are adopting gender equitable attitudes and behaviours, this lies in stark contrast to the high rates of gender-based violence in Viet Nam. More needs to be done. It is hoped the Fatherhood Program will inspire more active, engaged and gender equitable fatherhood, impacting the next generation from the first years of life and beyond, ultimately to prevent gender-based violence.





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## Appendix 1: Background Documentation

- The Detailed Project Outlines (DPO) between UNFPA and its Government partners which are DPOs of Ministry of Health (MOH), the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MOCST), Social Organizations (SOs), Hai Duong and Ben Tre provinces
- UN-Government One Plan 2017-2021 (draft)
- The Country Program Document (CPD) and Strategic Direction Paper (SDP) 2017-2021
- Quick Assessment on Situation of Population and Development in Viet Nam (ASPD)
- Evaluation report of the UNFPA 8th Country Programme of Assistance (CP8) to the Government of Viet Nam (2012-2016)
- UNFPA's strategy brief on GBV and other relevant documents and materials; UN Publications
- Results from the National Study on DV against Women in Viet Nam 2010
- Teach the wife when she first arrives: Trajectories and pathways into violent and non-violent masculinities in Hue city and Phu Xuyen district, Viet Nam
- UN Policy kit on Gender Based Violence
- Report on Results of the analysis of risk factors for violence by husbands
- From domestic violence to gender-based violence: Connecting the Dots in Viet Nam - A UN discussion paper
- Proud to be Different (Proposal, 2012)
- Briefing Notes on Promoting GE and GBV interventions of UNFPA in Viet Nam (2015)
- Hien, Phan Thi Thu (2008) 'Sexual coercion within marriage in Quang Tri, Viet Nam', Culture, Health & Sexuality, 10:1, S177 — S187.
- UN Women- Concept Note (nd): Male Advocacy Program in Da Nang, Viet Nam
- Viet Nam Gender Briefing Kit (2016)

## Appendix 2: List of Participants and Key Stakeholders

### Orientation Meeting

Name	Title	Organization
Phan Thu Hien	Gender Specialist, Gender Team Leader	UNFPA Viet Nam
Ritsu Macken	UNFPA Representative	UNFPA Viet Nam

### Meeting with UN GBV Working Group

Name	Title	Organization
Ms. Miho Watanabe	Program Officer	UN Women
Ms. Vu Thi Le Thanh	Program Officer	UNICEF

### Meeting with Government Agencies

Name	Title	Organization
Ms. Nguyen Hoang Anh	Vice Director, Family and Social Affairs Department	Viet Nam Women's Union
Ms. Nguyen Thi Van Anh	Department of Gender Equality	MOLISA (Ministry of Labour, Invalids and social affairs)
Ms. Doan Thi Thuy	Official	Viet Nam Youth Union



Ms. Pham Thu Huong	Vice Director of Population, Family and Social Affairs Department	Viet Nam Farmers' Union
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#### Meeting with INGOs/CSOs

Name	Title	Organization
Mr. Tran Minh Quang	Gender Specialist	Plan International
Ms. Nguyen Van Anh	Director	Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender – Family – Women and Adolescent (CSAGA)
Ms. Hoang Thien Trang	Project officer	Research Centre for Family Support and Community Development (CFSCD)
Ms. Le Thi Yen	Project officer	Research Centre for Family Support and Community Development (CFSCD)
Ms. Ngac Linh Chi	Public Outreach Officer	Hagar International (Viet Nam office)
Ms. Nguyen Thi Huong	SMP Team Leader	CARE International in Viet Nam
Ms. Nguyen Thi My Linh	Program Officer	CARE International in Viet Nam
Ms. Hoang Tu Anh	Director - Founder	Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP)



### Meeting with Researchers and Academic Institutions

Name	Title	Organization
Ms. Nguyen Thuy Hanh	Lecturer	Hanoi Medical University
Ms. Tran Tho Nhi	Lecturer	Hanoi Medical University
Ms. Nguyen Hoang Van Huong	Researcher	Hanoi Medical University
Ms. Vu Phuong Thao	Deputy Director	Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE)
Ms. Khuat Thu Hong	Director	Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS)

### Debrief Meeting with UNFPA

Name	Title	Organization
Phan Thu Hien	Gender Specialist, Gender Team Leader	UNFPA Viet Nam
Ritsu Macken	UNFPA Representative	UNFPA Viet Nam
Astrid Bant	UNFPA Representative	UNFPA Viet Nam

### **Appendix 3: Focus Group Discussion Questions (All Stakeholder Groups)**

#### **Questions for Government Agencies**

- Can you share any hopes and concerns related to the needs assessment White Ribbon will be conducting in the next week?
- Can you share any hopes and concerns related to the Fatherhood Strategy?
- Why do you believe an Engaged Fatherhood Strategy is important?
- What are the biggest barriers to promoting engaged fatherhood?
- What are the biggest barriers to engaging men and boys in GBV prevention?
- What are the enabling factors to engage fathers in Viet Nam to adopt gender equality and healthy masculinities, ultimately in preventing GBV?
- Can you reflect on how your government agency can support the goals of this project, and creation of the Fatherhood Strategy? What role could your agency have in its implementation? How does it align with your agency's priorities?

#### **Questions for Civil Society Organizations**

- Can you share any hopes and concerns related to the Fatherhood Strategy?
- Why do you believe an Engaged Fatherhood Strategy is important?
- From your perspective, what are the biggest barriers to promoting engaged fatherhood?
- From your perspective, what are the biggest barriers to engaging men and boys in GBV prevention?
- What are the enabling factors to engaging fathers in Viet Nam to adopt gender equality and healthy masculinities, ultimately in preventing GBV? Examples to profile from your CSO?
- Can you reflect on how your CSO can support the goals of this project, and the creation of the Fatherhood Strategy?
- What role do you see your CSO having during the implementation of the Fatherhood Strategy?
- Can you reflect on 3-4 key factors to consider in the development context which are important in developing a Fatherhood Strategy?

### Questions for Researchers and Local Experts

- Why do you believe an Engaged Fatherhood Strategy is important?
- Have conceptions of masculinities and fatherhood changed in Viet Nam? If so, how have they changed? If not, why not?
- How can feminist principles, and intersectionality inform our understanding of masculinities and fatherhood in the Viet Nam context? For example, how do issues of class, age, sexualities, ethnic group, rural vs urban life, abilities etc. impact men's ideas of fatherhood and masculinity?
- What are the biggest barriers to promoting engaged fatherhood?
- What are the enabling factors to engaging fathers in Viet Nam to adopt gender equality and healthy masculinities, ultimately in preventing GBV? Examples to profile from your research?
- What is the role of local researchers and experts in rolling out an Engaged Fatherhood Strategy?

#### Supplementary Questions (time permitting):

- Can you propose research methodologies which would be useful in assessing the impact of a national fatherhood program?
- Can you reflect on 3-4 key contextual factors to consider which are important in developing a Fatherhood Strategy?
- Are there innovations and promising practices in GBV prevention and engaged fatherhood programs specific to the Vietnamese context which are crucial to consider?

### Questions for Farmers' Union

- Can you share any hopes and concerns related to the needs assessment White Ribbon will be conducting in the next week?
- Can you share any hopes and concerns related to the Fatherhood Strategy?
- Why do you believe an Engaged Fatherhood Strategy is important?
- What are the biggest barriers to encouraging men to play more active and positive roles as fathers?

- How can fathers become engaged on the issue of preventing violence? Are there things that can be done to enhance their interest and/or ability to become engaged?
- Can you reflect on how the Farmers' Union can support the goals of this project, and creation of the Fatherhood Strategy? What role does the Farmers' Union have in its implementation?
- Can you identify any links between your current activities in the Farmers' Union, and encouraging men to play equitable and positive roles as fathers?

### **Questions for Commune Leaders**

- Can you share a bit about your experience as commune leaders, what is your role in the community?
- Do you believe gender-based violence is a problem in your community? What do you believe are the root causes?
- Why do you believe a program to involve fathers in promoting gender equality is important?
- As Commune leader, do you believe the majority of men in your community are active and positive role models as fathers (ie. Do not use violence, are encouraging/loving etc.)?
- What are the biggest barriers to encouraging men to play more active and positive roles as fathers?
- As Commune Leader, how can we address some of these barriers?
- What are the enabling factors to engage fathers in Viet Nam to adopt gender equality and healthy masculinities, ultimately in preventing GBV?
- Reflecting on your role as a Commune Leader, which roles can you play to encourage fathers to adopt gender equality and prevent gender-based violence? More broadly, what is the role of Commune Leaders in a National Engaged Fatherhood Strategy?

### **Questions for Fathers Group (Hai Duong and Ha Noi)**

- How has being a father influenced your life? What do you appreciate the most? What is the most challenging part?

- Has your idea of “being a man” changed since becoming a father?
- Have you ever discussed the issue of respect for women and treating women as equals with your son and/or daughters? If so, can you share examples (probe for healthy relationships, consent, etc.)?
- How do you promote gender equality and healthy relationships in your own life (probe for family, community, workplace, etc.)?
- What support do you have from other fathers? Do you meet regularly with other fathers? (If so, where?)
- What do you need in your community to play a more active and engaged role as a father?
- Do you have recommendations for new kinds of programs or awareness campaigns for fathers to help them promote gender equality, and prevent gender-based violence? Where and how should these be delivered?

### **Questions for Mothers Group (Hai Duong and Ha Noi)**

- How has being a mother influenced your life? What do you appreciate the most? What is the most challenging?
- Growing up, what messages did you receive about the role of the father (both positive and negative)? Where did these messages come from?
- What does being a “good father” mean to you?
- Can you reflect on positive examples of men in your life who have demonstrate these traits?
- Have you ever discussed the issue of respect for women and treating women as equals with your son and/or daughters? If so, can you share how you discussed this?
- How would you work with men in your community to promote gender equality and play supportive and positive roles as fathers?
- Do you have recommendations for new kinds of programs or awareness-campaigns for fathers to help them promote gender equality, and prevent gender-based violence? Where do you think these programs should be offered in your community?





## **Appendix 4: Consent Form**

### **NEEDS ASSESSMENT: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE**

#### **Title of Project: Exploring Engaged Fatherhood in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence Needs Assessment (Ha Noi, Hai Duong)**

##### **PURPOSE OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The purpose of the needs assessment is to explore the role of fatherhood and healthy masculinities to prevent gender-based violence. White Ribbon, and UNFPA are conducting an eight day needs assessment in Ha Noi, Hai Duong and Ho Chi Minh City. A series of focus groups will be conducted with UN agencies, CSOs, Unions, Academics and Research Institutions, Commune Leaders, Mothers and Fathers Groups. Ultimately the findings will be used to develop a National Engaged Fatherhood Strategy.

##### **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this needs assessment, you will be invited to attend a focus group in either the UNFPA office, or in specific community venues. The focus groups will last approximately 90 minutes to 2 hours in length. These discussions will be audio recorded. During this focus group you will be asked about your perspectives on the role of fathers to prevent GBV prevention, and delve further into your experience and local community.

##### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The risks associated with this study are minimal. During the course of participating in an interview, you may be asked, or hear about issues that may be upsetting for you. If this occurs, the facilitators will provide you with the name of a local counselling agency that will be able to offer you assistance.

##### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Your input will help us to understand the positive role of fathers in promoting gender equality and ending violence against women in all forms.

We also hope that this needs assessment will assist communities in the development of a great continuum of services for fathers.

##### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this needs assessment and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

During the writing of the report, we may use quotations from the focus group members. You will not be identified by your quotation. All paper and electronic data will be destroyed two years after the completion of the study.



We are bound by the obligation to report concerns related to the risk of child abuse. If during the course of the interview with you we believe that there is a risk of harm to a child we have a legal obligation and will report this to the local child welfare agency.

Results will be shared with participants in the needs assessment, UNFPA and White Ribbon.  
PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to participate or not. If you volunteer to be in this needs assessment, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the needs assessment. You may withdraw your data at any point in a one-year period following the initial consent to participate by contacting White Ribbon.

#### RIGHTS OF PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. Participating in the needs assessment may be helpful in letting you express your thoughts and feelings. However, if you find any of the questions or discussion upsetting and need someone to talk to, you are encouraged to contact (insert name of local counselling agency).

#### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

White Ribbon Team signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### CONSENT TO USE OF QUOTATIONS

I agree to the use of quotations I provide, and I understand that I will have the option to refuse the use of my quotation in a particular context. I understand that I can participate in the needs assessment without consenting to the use of my quotations.

-

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

White Ribbon Team signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_