

# Gender Equality, caregiving, and maternal health: baseline findings from RCT of Bandebereho Couples' Group Education in Rwanda

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In collaboration with Rwandan Ministry of Health

# Overview

Increased attention to gender inequality as a barrier to MNCH

Fatherhood as an entry point to:

- Transform inequitable attitudes and increase men's caregiving
- Promote couples' communication about & use of contraceptives
- Increase men's involvement in maternal, newborn & child health
- Prevent intimate partner violence



# Background

MenCare+: 4-country integrated approach to engage men as caring, non-violent, equitable partners & fathers in SRHR & MNCH

- Coordinated by Rutgers and Promundo
- Funded by the Dutch SRHR Fund
- Rwanda: Implemented by the Rwanda Men's Resource Center in partnership with Ministry of Health
- Study funded by Dutch SRHR Fund & MacArthur Foundation

# MenCare

active in approximately 35 countries.

For more information about the campaign and its  
partners,

visit MenCare

[www.men-care.org](http://www.men-care.org)



Rutgers

For sexual and  
reproductive health  
and rights



Save the Children



HIWAZO • GENDER EQUALITY • HUMAN RIGHTS



MenEngage  
boys and men for gender equality

# Intervention Description: Couples' group education

Gender transformative curriculum with 15 weekly sessions adapted from *Program P*

Targeting new parents and expectant couples ages 21-35

15 weekly sessions for men (8 with their partners) led by trained community facilitators



# Study Design

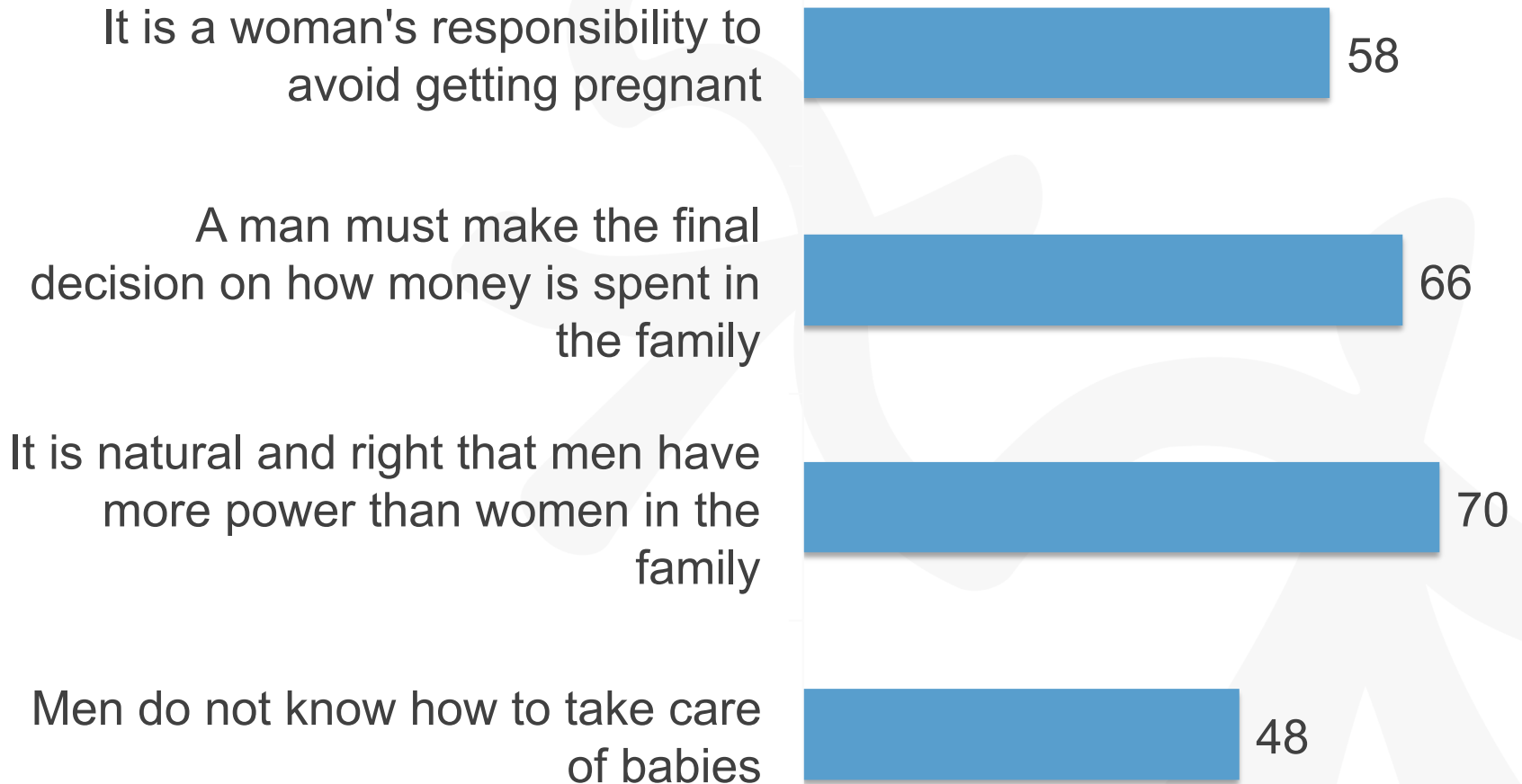
- 2 arm randomized controlled trial
- Sites: 4 districts of Rwanda (16 sectors)
- Eligible men identified by community health workers & local authorities, then recruited by group facilitators
- Sample size: n=1200 men, 600 in each arm
  - Women & men at midline
- Study protocol approved by: RNEC, NHRC, NISR

# Sample Description

- Men's Age: 19-47, mean= 28.7
  - Partner: 18-44, mean = 26.6
- Education: 63% had not completed primary education
- Children: 65% currently expecting a child, ~75% already had one or more children
- SES: 39% can never or only sometimes afford basic household needs (food & shelter)

# Attitudes: Gender Roles and Power

% agree or strongly agree:





## Couple/Relationship factors:

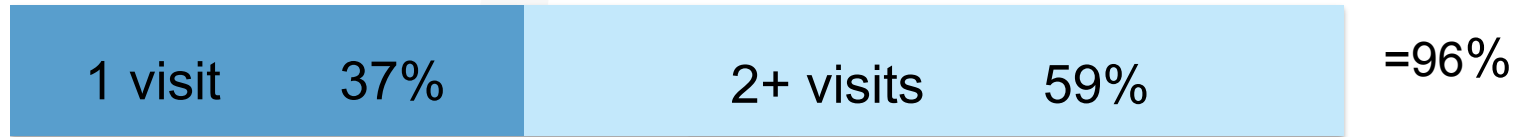
- 69% of men report often discussing how many children to have or the spacing of children.
- 43% of men said they had the final say.
- 33% reported using physical violence

## Participation in Caregiving:

- 93% agree that a father should be just as involved in the care of a baby than the mother
- Yet 78% say that their partner is usually or always responsible for the daily care of their child

# Participation in ANC

- Most men report attending ANC visits



- Of these, 43% did not actually participate in the visit
- Only 32% had been told about signs of pregnancy complications
- Men who reported attending 2+ ANC visits were nearly twice as likely to participate equally in the daily care of the child

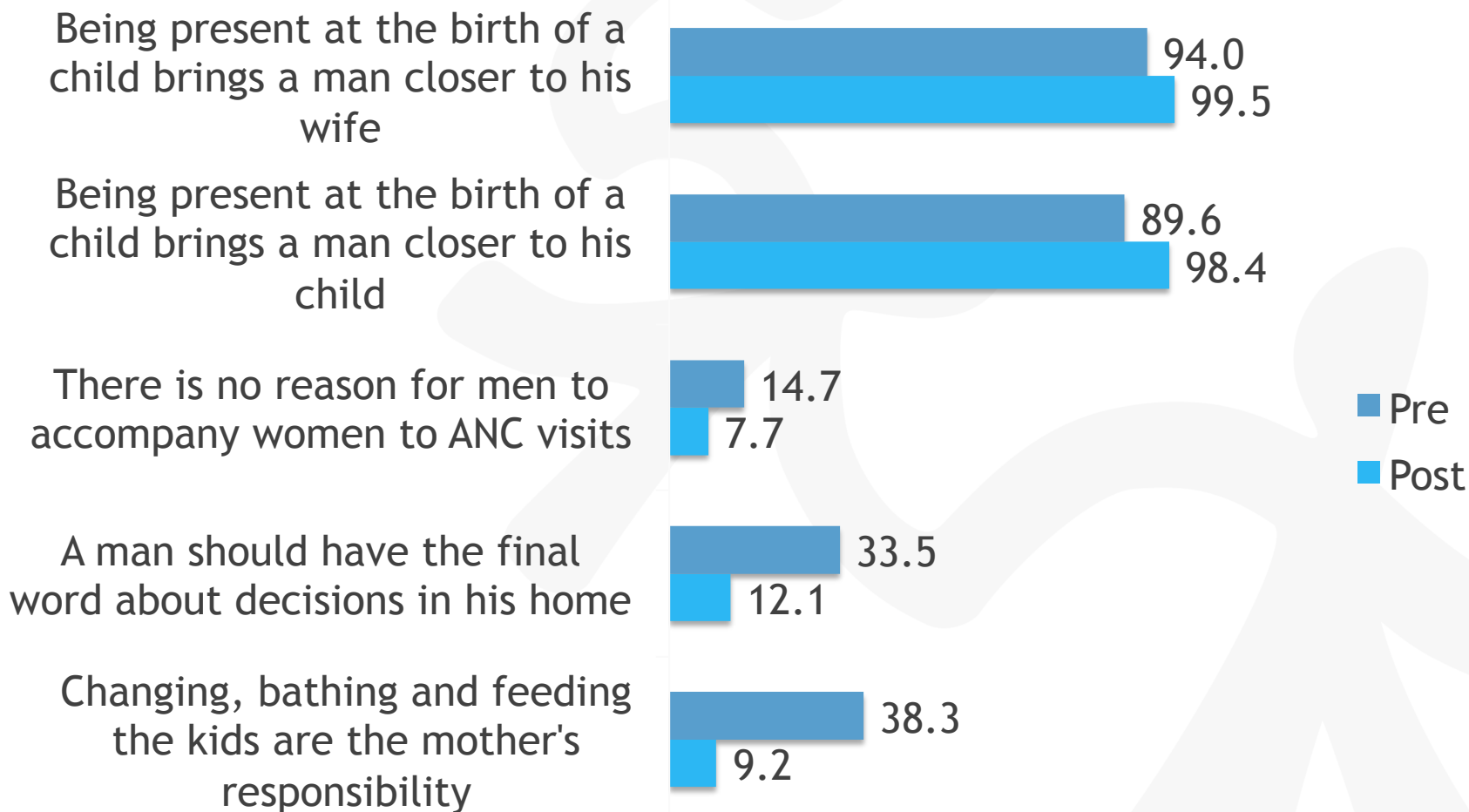
# Working with the Health System

“We reached the hospital and before entering the waiting room, the nurse shouted at me. I told her that I have the right (to be there). She gave me two choices: stay outside, or enter and pay a fine.”

34% of fathers who were not present at the birth of their last child reported that **health staff said they were not allowed**

Work within the health system - providers, facilities, policies - to transform norms so that men are seen as partners, not barriers, to quality MNC health care

# Health Provider Attitudes



# Preliminary Conclusions

- Baseline findings support need and focus of the intervention
- Fatherhood can be a successful entry point for promoting men's greater involvement in care work and MNCH
- Efforts to engage men in MNCH must confront underlying social norms, and work with men in ways that transform unequal power relations within and outside the home
- Scale-up is needed to embed this work in institutions and systems and remove structural barriers



# THANK YOU!

**Promundo**

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Washington, DC, USA

Coimbra, Portugal

Kigali, Rwanda

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