



## Use of the Health COMPass in Guatemala strengthens health providers' and community workers' capacity to work in the areas of gender and masculinity.

Located in Central America, Guatemala is one of the most biologically diverse places on the planet. At the same time, it is extremely vulnerable to the impact of its climate. Guatemala possesses the highest chronic malnutrition rates in Latin America. Maternal health indicators are poor, with the modern contraceptive prevalence rate holding at 18.8 percent among the indigenous population and a total fertility rate of 3.6 nationally and 4.2 in the Altiplano.

*“We do not have tools to teach us how to work with men, nor are there materials adapted for men. Through this workshop, we have learned what activities we can use to engage men, and, above all, the alliances we can form with partners and other actors to join forces in this important topic.”*

In addition to institutional and service quality barriers, social, religious and cultural norms—including deeply entrenched machismo—create an environment that is unfriendly toward the adoption of family planning (FP) methods. If health providers were empowered with knowledge and skills surrounding gender and masculinity, improved quality of services, including FP provision, and culturally sensitive communication, little by little, they could effect behavior changes that would contribute to improved sexual and reproductive health for women and men, and eventually, improved quality of life for community members.

To meet both needs of involving men in gender and sexual and reproductive health matters, and supporting women in their right to quality FP services, the Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3) provided support to the USAID|PlanFam project through its electronic platform, Health COMPass. The PlanFam team searched the Health COMPass for tools that would help them address their need and identified “Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality and

Health” (PROMUNDO) as a valuable tool that would help them build the capacity of health providers, educators and community facilitators in the themes of gender and masculinity.

Once the tool was identified, PlanFam organized three regional workshops lasting 1.5 days each for 41 health providers, educators and facilitators from the Ministry of Health that work in the Altiplano and Alta Verapaz regions. During the workshops, participants explored the tool through experiential, participatory gender and male involvement activities:

- “Act like a man, Act like a woman” activity: addresses the challenges men and women face in trying to fulfill societal expectations of gender roles, conveying that it is possible to change. Touches on masculinity from the patriarchal model, gender, sex, gender roles and masculinity.
- “Persons and things” activity: the existence of power in relationships. What is your relationship with the identity of being a man? What is your relationship with the identity of being a woman? What are the implications of machismo for health?
- “The clothesline of violence” activity: relationship between masculinity and violence. What is violence against women? What is the cycle of violence? Classification and manifestations of violence in the medical consult.



- “Door-to-door visits” and “focus group discussions” activity: importance of skills to perform door-to-door visits in communities. How can we involve men?
  - Importance of approaches and models for male-friendly services. Why should we change the traditional model? Identification of partners and key partnerships. “Identification of partners” activity.
  - Proposal for gender-friendly services. “Checklist for gender-friendly health services” activity.
3. Desire among participants to stay in contact and self-perception as leaders in a new, extremely necessary area of work within the health services field;
  4. Development of a network of health providers, educators and facilitators committed to replicating the methodologies used during the training to work with men in their communities; and
  5. Commitment as individuals and a group to keep gender and masculinity active in their work.

The objective of the training was to promote the new focus of involving men in sexual and reproductive health, from the perspective of new masculinity, using participatory and experiential methods. This was achieved by exposing participants to basic gender content, encouraging reflection on the new masculinity from the perspective of gender and health and the implications for women’s health, and proposing approaches to working with men and youth in health services.



The PlanFam project will follow up and stay in contact with a network of participants to support them as they start to work with men in communities. In this way, PlanFam, along with HC3 and the Health COMpass, provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Health to strengthen their capacities and enable them to replicate the same processes in the field.

The positive response from participants indicates that the important concepts shared during the training were well received. Each participant received an electronic kit and printed documents from the tool “Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality and Health” translated into Spanish with the support of HC3.

USAID|PlanFam supports the Ministry of Public Health to improve access to quality FP services in priority geographic areas. Family planning supports the development of people, communities and society!

The primary results of the workshop were:

1. Motivation to identify partnerships with local organizations in the theme of gender and masculinity;
2. Emergence of possible “champions” across various levels;

*“Our health services are not equipped with materials or physical spaces to allow us to work with men. In this workshop we learned what we can do to work with youth and adult men, and how our health services ought to be.”*