



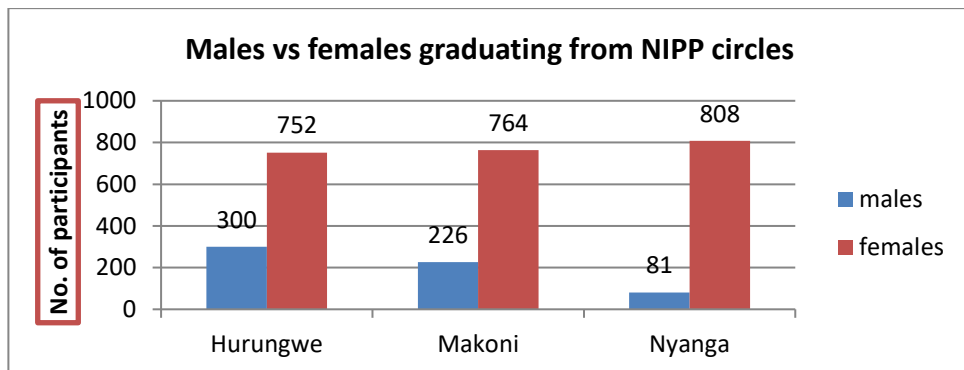
1. Introduction

Male engagement hasn't been too easy during all 4 cycles that have been completed to date; furthermore it has varied across the 6 health facilities per district and has also varied across the 3 districts Hurungwe, Makoni and Nyanga, but despite all this the project has witnessed a relatively good level of engagement and retention success.

2. Reflections from data

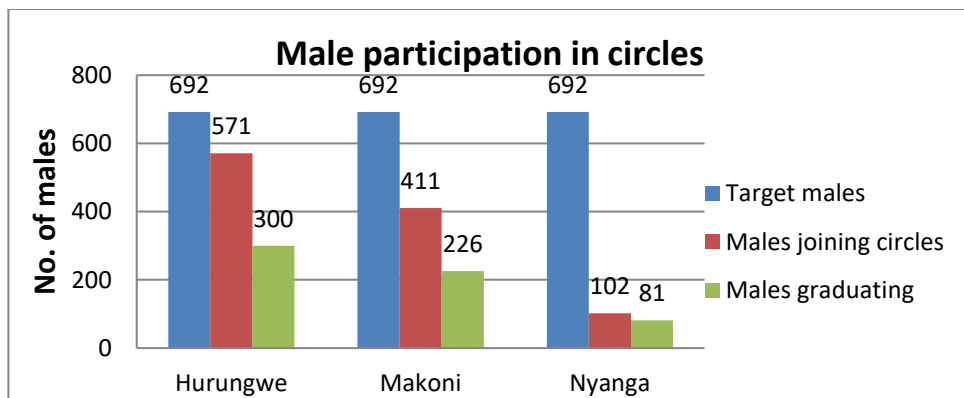
The graph below shows an analysis of number of males versus females graduating from the NIPP circles and to date less than 40% of males have been graduating against the females.

Figure 1: Graph on males versus females graduating from circles



Nevertheless a certain number of them have been engaged into NIPP circles. The graph below summarises the story on male participation across the 3 districts.

Figure 2: Male participation in the circles



In all the three districts we have not achieved the target of 692 males graduating cumulatively in the last 4 cycles that have been completed. However, as a project we are celebrating successes in Hurungwe and Makoni district where the data above shows that that at joining/start of the circles stage a good number of males are joining and participating in circles with Hurungwe being the best. However an analysis of males joining circles versus those graduating shows that around 50% defaulted along the way. With Nyanga district data on the other hand depicting that, the males have even been reluctant to even join the circles.

3. Contributing factors to their participation

Below are some of the factors that have contributed to relatively good level of male engagement and retention success.

- **The integrated approach with other livelihood interventions**

In Makoni district some of the communities have already been pre-actively engaged in developmental programs, especially those of GOAL so they have gained trust and confidence in our work so much that during sensitisation and registration they are not hesitant. These people comprise those who naturally have keenness to learning and trying out new things, and those who remain hopeful that more is yet to come (farming inputs or hand-outs), therefore they would not desire to be left behind.

- **Full engagement of community leadership during sensitisation meetings**

The process of sensitisation initially with the village leadership has been vital too because it is the village head who went back and explained the program to their own understanding and acceptance, having been convinced that there is a problem that needs to be addressed to allow for the future development of their area, requiring both males and females.

Once the village heads managed to mobilise their communities for the screening and registration process, it has been highly effective to clearly disaggregate the roles of female and males in the implementation of the program.

- **Participation of community/village leaders in NIPP trainings and joining NIPP circles**

In addition and particularly in Hurungwe district which has excelled better than others, the reason for high male participation is primarily because of the involvement of village leadership in the male circles. Where the village head and the male village committee members are active participants in the circles, it has been observed that a significantly higher number of males participate in the circles. Village leaders also attended the two week NIPP volunteer trainings. This helped them to understand the importance of nutrition circle sessions so they were in a better positioned to persuade men to participate.

- **Volunteer selection Process**

The process of volunteer selection has been noted as a critical enabling factor for keeping the males engaged. Where the male volunteer is highly liked and widely interactive with his fellow community members, and furthermore, he develops a deep appreciation and eagerness for the program during the training, it has been possible that the volunteer keeps his participants highly motivated. Areas where such strong volunteers have been trained, over 75% of the registered go on to successfully complete the program. Thus during the process of volunteer selection, the project team resorted to selection of these volunteers by getting the gathered community members to vote for their most desired candidate. If a highly influential or community engaged volunteer is trained, consistent attendance of males can be made possible through follow up visits by the volunteer on male participants who miss a session with no reason conveyed.

- **Co-facilitation by male NIPP volunteer and government extension workers**

Another strategy for keeping the males engaged is inviting the ward based Agritex or Environmental health or nutrition government extension workers to co-facilitate some of the topics. The males are resultantly provided with a platform to inquire and learn about other agriculture or health topics of interest that are outside the NIPP program, that contribute to their livelihoods and food security. These government extension workers also then cease the opportunity for giving advice or information using other parallel platforms but use the NIPP circles to deliver extension services to the community.

- **Persuasion by the female counterparts**

Female participants have also proved effective, in some areas, in convincing and encouraging their male counterparts to join and attend circle sessions.

- **Relaxing the criteria for selection of males into circles**
The selection criteria that only males with female counterparts participating in the circles are the ones who can join the male group was relaxed. This allowed for males who are interested to be able to also join leaving their female counterparts at home attending to other chores.
- **Discussion of other topics outside the NIPP sessions guide**
Discussions are not limited to the session guide but also including different life skills topics that might come up during the discussions.

4. Lessons learnt and recommendations for increased male engagement:

- In Nyanga district the joining and formation of male NIPP circles has been a challenge as the majority of the men are engaging in a negative coping strategy of gold panning as a source of livelihood, they are away from their homes for a lengthy period of time, thus the NIPP circles had to have a better incentive that pulls the males from the negative coping strategy.
- In this sense, it has been noted that males are mostly interested in activities that bring food and income i.e. livelihood and food security programs. Therefore if NIPP could be mainstreamed into other livelihood programs to do with their livestock and crops, this could greatly help then men can be fully engaged may be integrating only the BCC component. At the same time, it is difficult to mainstream livelihood topics into the NIPP approach because the content is just too vast to be consolidated into again into the 10 day NIPP training and produce a competent male NIPP volunteer who can facilitate livestock topics and or topics on crop production.
- **Nutrition-sensitive agriculture- production, consumption, post-harvest management and market linkages; should be the approach used with males.** This will provide us with a good platform for mainstreaming some of the NIPP topics with the males, leaving the normal NIPP approach to be implemented with the female participants.