

## CASE STUDY

### USAID Women’s Economic and Social Empowerment Program Camps Engage Men for Gender Equality

#### “Why do you address women only?”

This was a question often asked by men in the workplace, revealing their genuine interest and eagerness to be involved in the USAID Women’s Economic and Social Empowerment Program’s interventions. Though the Program’s name might suggest a focus solely on women, achieving true gender equality requires men’s active participation. Understanding that lasting change in gender dynamics requires the buy-in and involvement of everyone, the Program made a conscious effort to engage men.

One way the Program did this was through specialized camps designed to educate men on the importance of gender equality and positive masculinity; help men reflect on their attitudes and behaviors; encourage them to foster a more supportive and respectful environment at work and at home; and support them to examine their role in preventing violence against women (VAW). Building on the momentum generated by anti-VAW training for women within private-sector firms, and in response to growing interest in interventions focused on men, these camps helped reshape and improve participating organizations’ workplace environments.



Men who are religious leaders attend a training camp. Photo: Pathfinder Egypt

The camps gather a group of workers outside their workplace for a three-day retreat involving interactive team activities, competitions, awareness sessions, and group discussions.

The immersive setting fosters a sense of intimacy and safety, allowing participants to openly share their feelings, experiences, and insights.

To date, 529 men from 19 companies have attended 25 camps. Their testimonials and reflections reveal shifts in attitudes and increased self-awareness, particularly around topics of masculinity, gender roles and responsibilities, and parenting.

Participants’ feedback reflects a profound transformation in their perceptions of their relationships with women—whether as wives, daughters, or colleagues—and a genuine commitment to challenge entrenched norms that can be harmful to women.



Men attend a camp in Rajul. Credit: Pathfinder Egypt

One participant stated, "Society is what embedded in us the wrong definition of manhood," stressing that this was his first exposure to new ideas about gender.

Another participant called the camp "an eye-opening experience," sharing a realization that many of his past behaviors toward girls in his family had been inappropriate.

"Once I go back," he said, "I will try to change my behavior towards raising my children from wrong behavior to a good one."

Many participants expressed a genuine desire to reshape their relationships with their wives to show greater respect, abandon the use of violence, spend more time with their families, and provide emotional support to their daughters through kind words and thoughtful actions.

The impact of the camps extended beyond the participants to their workplaces. The CEO of Blue Nile Company praised the innovative approach, describing it as beneficial and creative. He noted that the offsite camp provided employees with a valuable opportunity to relax, de-stress, and return to work with enhanced productivity. Although he was abroad when the camp took place, he reported that upon his return, the positive buzz among employees was unmistakable, with many eagerly asking about the next camp. "This enthusiasm for another camp clearly speaks volumes," he added.

*Rajul training camp. Photo: Pathfinder Egypt*



*Blue Nile Community. Photo: Pathfinder Egypt*

A participant noted, "For the first time, I realized how poorly I treat the people in my household. It made me see the profound impact of this intervention. It sparked an immediate desire to change my behavior toward my family, realizing I hadn't truly built a relationship with them."

The camps foster a sense of belonging and pride among employees, and their engaging activities promote social interaction and cultural awareness. Aside from transforming participating men's views of gender, these initiatives help employees feel more connected to their workplace.

This contributes to increased job satisfaction, loyalty, and overall wellbeing. When employees see their employers investing in their communities, they are more likely to feel valued and motivated, contributing to higher productivity and reduced turnover rates.

A representative from Fathallah Stores shared, "It was impressive to see how the Rajul camps addressed men's mindsets, focusing not just on the symptoms but on the root causes of the issue. As we progressed with the program, we received overwhelmingly positive feedback."