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LEARNING BRIEF

DECEMBER 2022

Social and Gender Dynamics of Youth Clubs in Budikadidi:

A MIXED-METHODS MICRONARRATIVE STUDY

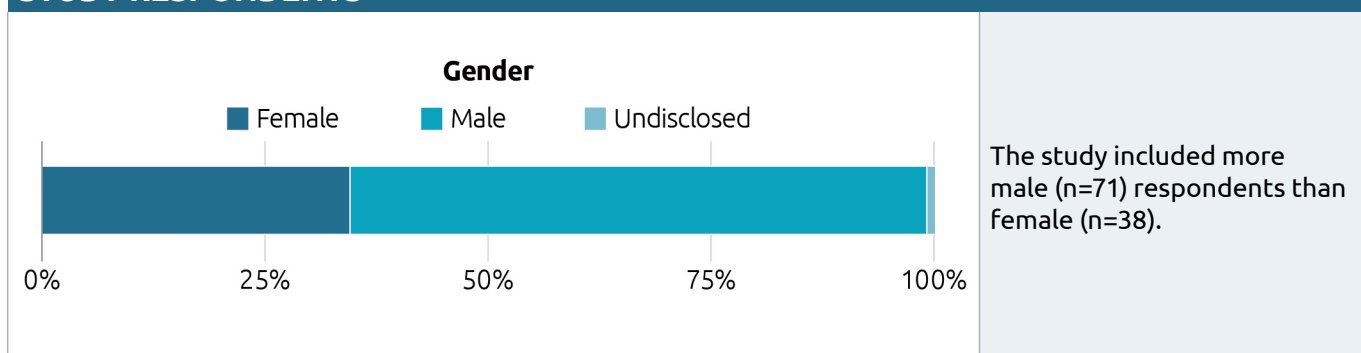


BACKGROUND	
Project background	<p>The Budikadidi (“Self-Reliance”) Development Food Security Activity improves nutrition for pregnant and nursing mothers and children under the age of two, using a crosscutting gender transformative approach. The seven-year activity is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). It is implemented by a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) led consortium of six national and international agencies: Caritas, National Cooperative Business Association–Cooperative League of the United States of America (NCBA-CLUSA), Network of Congolese Youth Associations (RACOF), Women’s Development Network (REFED), and Sun Mountain, in collaboration with the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Over 470 communities in central DRC participate in project interventions, including introduction of fortified foods and value chain strengthening and improving childcare and feeding practices in Kasai Oriental Province. Interventions also strengthen local governance systems, build social cohesion between communities, increase access to savings and lending services, improve water and sanitation using private sector-focused approaches, and combat harmful gender norms.</p> <p>Integral to the strategy, Budikadidi has been working through youth clubs to promote confidence and capacity for young people in the communities of focus. These clubs have aimed to (a) raise awareness of early marriage; (b) increase confidence and capacity for income generation and entrepreneurship; and (c) support improvements in water and sanitation in the villages.</p>
Study partner	<p>PRO-WASH (Practices, Research and Operations in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) is a five-year project led by Save the Children and funded by the USAID/BHA. PRO-WASH works with partners to strengthen the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) and Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) practices in USAID/BHA-funded development and emergency food security activities. This includes providing one-on-one support to USAID/BHA funded Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSAs), developing and delivering remote and in-person training sessions, writing technical guides, carrying out applied research activities, and supporting knowledge generation and capture through learning briefs, webinars, and technical knowledge sharing events.</p>
Study background	<p>This study was a partnership between Budikadidi and PRO-WASH using tools found in the online qualKit—a toolkit of qualitative assessment tools for projects exploring gender equality, age, and social inclusion (GASI) in WASH interventions.</p> <p>This study is one of six collaborative coaching partnerships between USAID-funded activities and PRO-WASH focused on assessments of GASI and WASH in programs and strengthening confidence in conducting qualitative assessments.</p>
Study approach	<p>This study collected micronarratives (207 in total) from 109 members of youth clubs, aged 14-33, in rural DRC using short semi-structured interviews. The study included more men/boys (n=71) than women/girls (n=38), representing the existing gender-diversity in youth clubs.</p>
Study objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the breadth of participant experiences within youth clubs. • To understand the social and gender dynamics within the youth clubs <p>The study was conducted to support project activities to boost leadership and communication skills of women/girls for the final year of the program.</p>

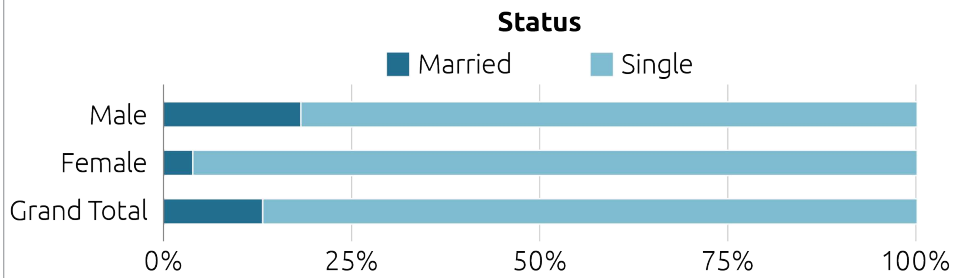
APPROACH

<p>Methodology</p>	<p>Micronarratives, also known as micro-stories or participatory vignettes, are a collection of short stories written by participants around a particular focus area. Micronarratives help programs understand the breadth of experiences from participants. Micronarratives have been used to explore gender-based violence in DRC (Bartels et al. 2021) and Lebanon (Bartels et al. 2019). Bakhache et al. (2017) discuss the strengths and challenges of using micronarratives with youth and in gender-based studies.</p> <p>In October 2022, Budikadidi WASH promoters collected micronarratives in French using the Kobo Toolbox Platform. Program leadership reviewed the interview guides which were tested with a subset of respondents prior to use.</p> <p>Analysis was done in a mixed-methods approach and responses were translated from French to English using DeepL.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive statistics and charts were created in Google Sheets to summarize aspects related to youth club participation and disaggregated by respondent gender. • The micronarrative stories were coded in <i>Airtable</i> thematically. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » For story 1 - Three rounds of iterative coding were used to cluster and group stories thematically. » For story 2 - Self-signification clustering was used, which relies on respondent identifying codes, helping to amplify the voices of participants and decrease the requirement for external coding.
<p>Limitations and challenges</p>	<p>Although the sample size for these results is relatively large, these results are not intended to be generalizable to all of Budikadidi as the sampling was not conducted systematically. Rather, the study serves as a starting point for the program to continue to refine the youth club support modalities by identifying key themes and insights.</p> <p>Additionally, the sample size was not balanced between women/girls and men/boys' respondents, representing the gender-balance of the youth clubs. However, future studies could over-sample female respondents to amplify their voices.</p> <p>Although the story prompts focused on personal experiences and gendered-interactions, some stories focused less on gender-dynamics and more on project outcomes; however, this led to a valuable evaluation and grounded assessment of the program's impact.</p>
<p>Micronarrative prompts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt 1: Please share a personal experience from this club that made you feel excited or disappointed. (109 responses) • Prompt 2: Thinking about your involvement in this youth club, please describe a personal interaction with club members of the opposite gender. It could be a positive or a negative interaction. (98 responses)

STUDY RESPONDENTS



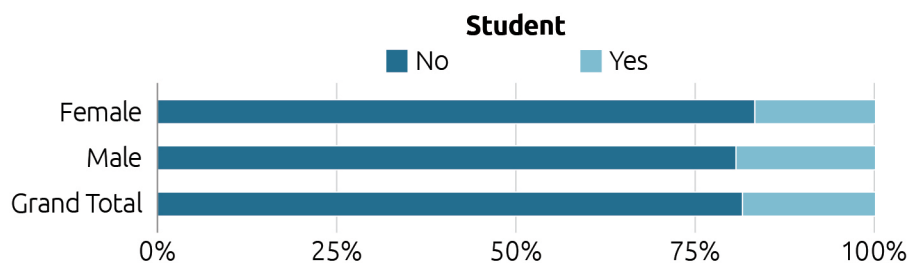
STUDY RESPONDENTS



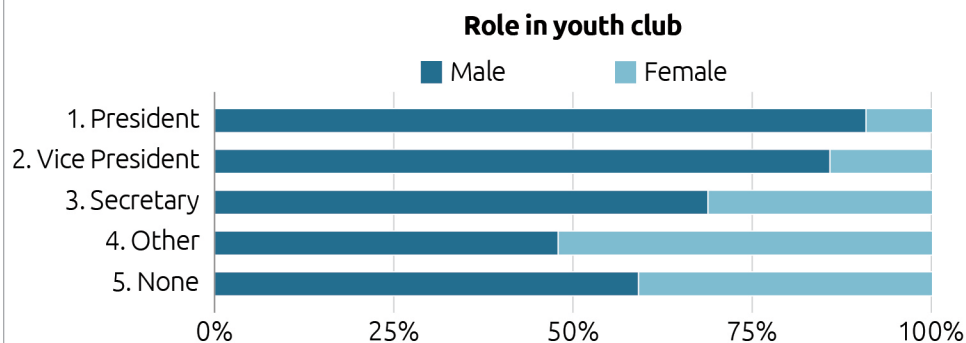
On average, male respondents were 20.7 years old (14-33 range), and female respondents 18.9 (14-25) years old.

13% participants did not provide an age.

More male respondents (18%) than female respondents (4%) in the clubs were married. This could be due to husbands restricting their wives' participation – however further research is required.



The majority (82%) of respondents were not currently students or studying.

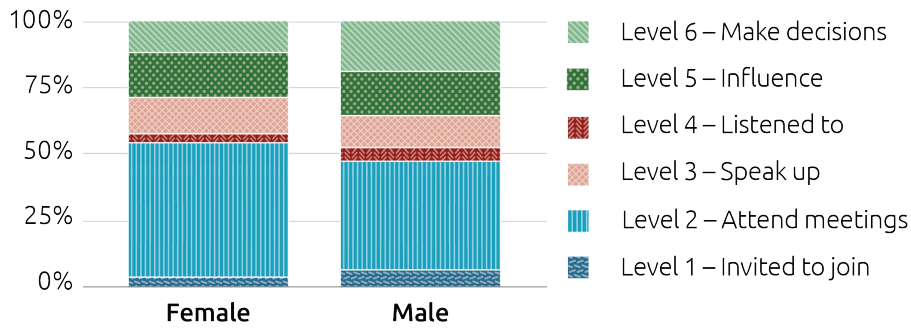


Leadership roles were primarily held by male respondents, and only two out of 22 clubs had girl presidents.

Key findings

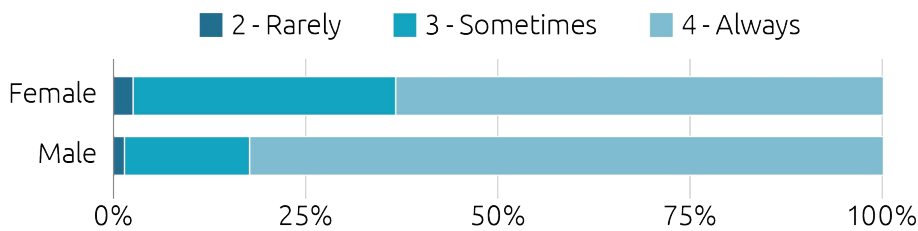
- The social and power dynamics of the clubs are just as complex as the gender dynamics. This includes the diversity of educational status, age, and access to resources.
- Based on the story responses, the assessed youth clubs have been effective in many of their outcome objectives: 1) raising awareness of early marriage; 2) increasing confidence and capacity for income generation and entrepreneurship; and 3) supporting improvements in water and sanitation in the villages.
- Overall, the study shows that inter-gender interactions have been broadly positive and related to collaboration and mutual learning.
- However, conflicts and disagreements about money and resources remain complex and gendered. This is because women and girls are primarily responsible for financial positions in the clubs, putting them at risk of backlash and conflict.

CLUB PARTICIPATION



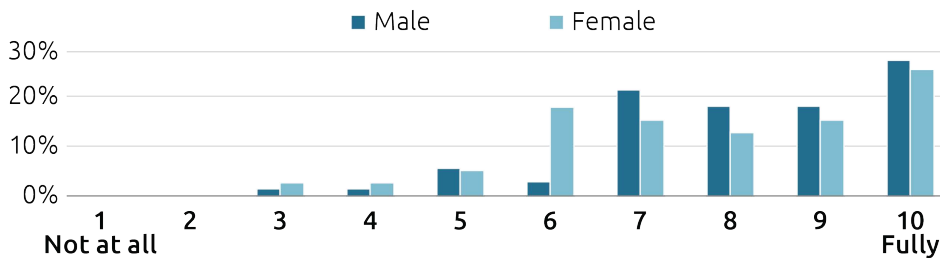
More female respondents (51%) than male respondents (41%) described only attending meetings and not playing leadership roles.

How often do you participate in this club?



Female respondents were less likely to 'always' participate in the youth club. But several male respondents 'rarely' participate.

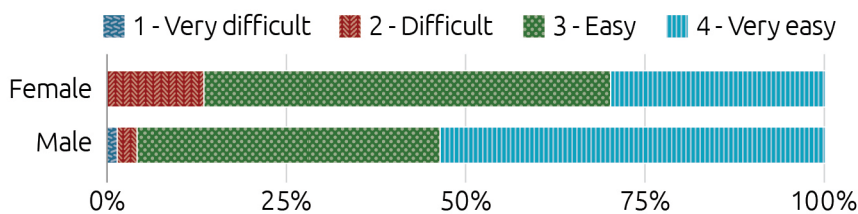
How much do you feel respected in this club? (Scale of 1-10)



On average, female respondents felt less respected in the clubs than male respondents.

Male respondents had an average respect score of 8.1, female respondents 7.7. Future research could explore reasons for these divergent feelings of respect.

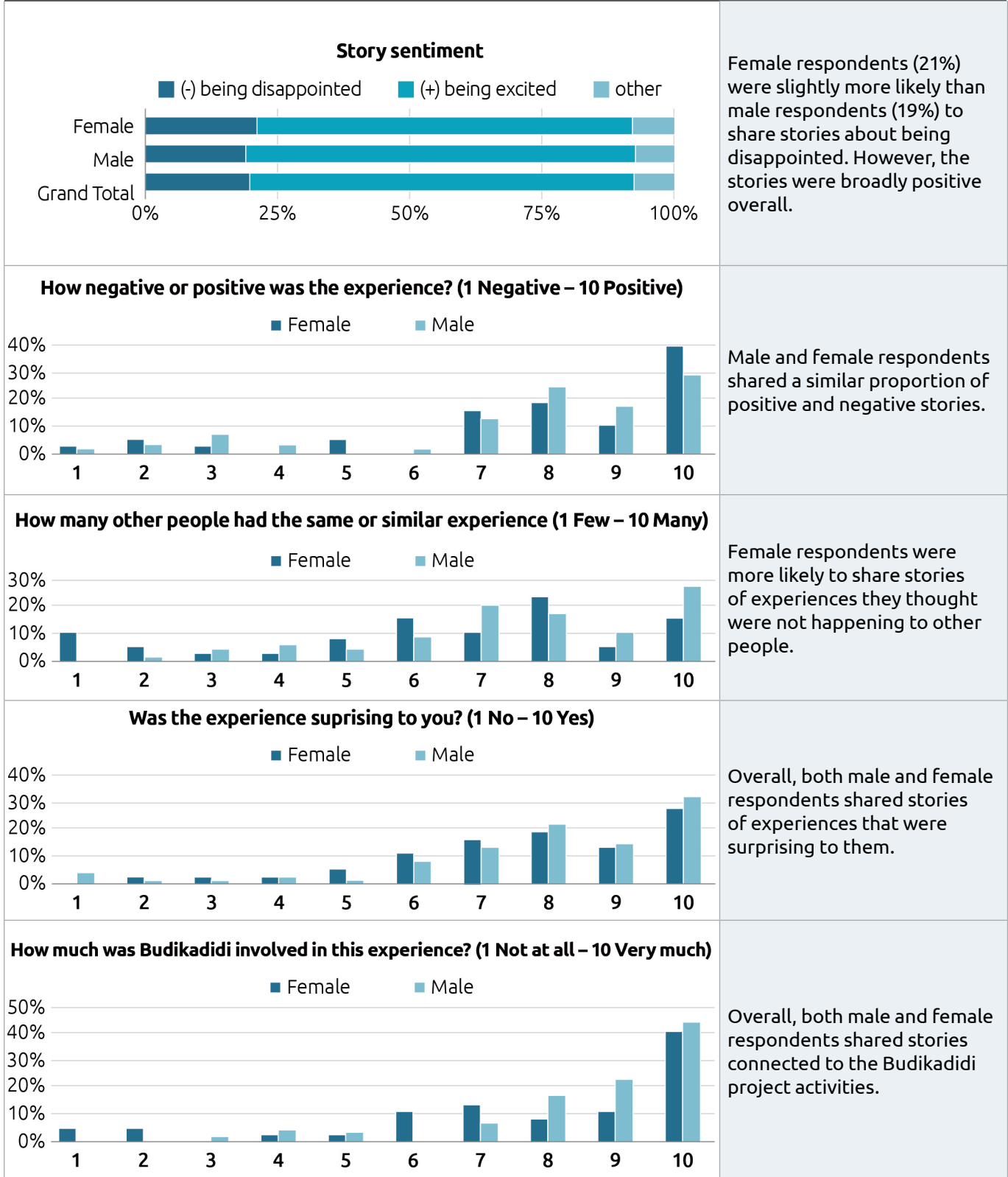
How easy is it for you to find out information about the club?



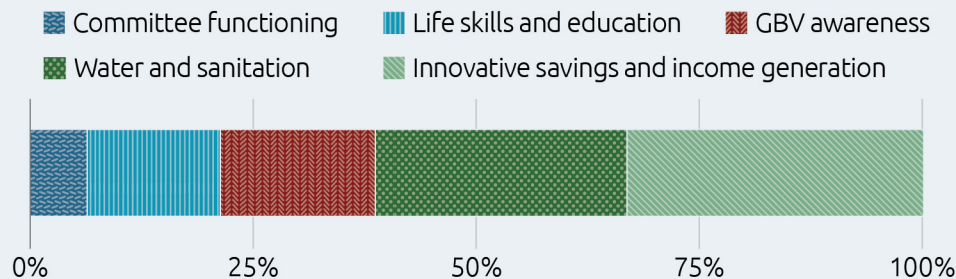
Overall, male respondents had an easier time accessing information about the club than female respondents.

PROMPT 1

Please share a personal experience from this club that made you feel excited or disappointed. (109 responses)



PROMPT 1: Stories of happiness



The 78 stories of excitement (as described by the participants) focused on a range of activities including farming and livestock and WASH activities. Additionally, 13 stories focused on how the committee was able to raise awareness about early forced marriage and teen pregnancies.

Innovative savings and income generation

- *"After being taught by Budikadidi about entrepreneurship, the club members contributed weekly. The money received was used to pay for the rabbit that gave birth to 10 young rabbits that were then sold. This money was used to have a cornfield that helped the members to prosper. The whole group had the same vision and we were united. In the end, we got the rabbits and the field."* (Boy, 29)
- *"Our club had a field and we sold our field and put the money in the fund that will allow us to find other seeds next season."* (Girl, age not provided)

Improving water and sanitation

- *"We fixed our water source and the community was happy with us."* (Boy, 20)
- *"We made our water source clean and we consume clean water that prevents us from diseases. The chief of the village saw that what we did was important and sensitized the community to do the same. I chose this experience because...it made us known in the village, they take us as a model."* (Boy, 23)
- *"Previously, many households did not have sanitary toilets and the roads were dirty. Now, households are starting to build sanitary toilets... It is good for our village, people are starting to change."* (Girl, 18)

Strengthening awareness on gender-based violence and early marriage

- *"One of the girls in our club talked to us about the consequences of forced and early marriage."* (Girl, 18)
- *"A member...wanted to drop out of school to get married because her friends got married even though they are older than her. The girl regained consciousness and continued with her studies."* (Boy, 21)

Fostering community solidarity

- *"I have come to appreciate the cooperation and solidarity that exists in our club. We took out a large sum of money from our fund to pay for the medical care of a widow in our village. In the end, the care was paid and the life of the woman was saved. I chose this experience because it is a sign of solidarity and mutual help."* (Girl, 21)

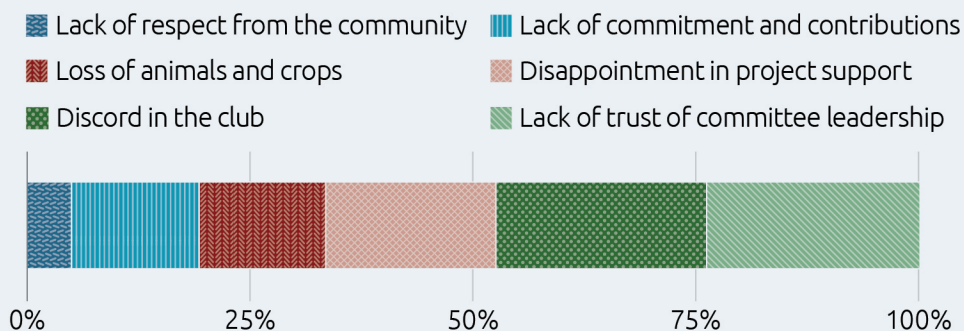
Building life skills and education

- *"In the mentoring training, we learned 11 life skills, so I am able to create my job. In the end, we had a change of behavior in our way of behaving in society."* (Boy, 28)
- *"When I was trained as a mentor in the past years and club management, it really pushed me to have the taste of being in a youth club and sensitize other young people. In the end...we decided to create our youth club for the development of our village."* (Boy, 31)
- *"Before I joined the club, I was always told that girls are not capable of making decisions and managing boys. But since I joined the club, I have challenged this belief by getting elected as president. I've been managing our club for two years now, and I'm happy to have achieved my dream of proving that girls can manage as well as boys. I chose this experience because I am happy and I want to share my happiness of having achieved what I wanted."* (Girl, 19)

Committee function

- *"I had a disagreement with one of the members of our club, but we resolved the conflict peacefully and the people involved are now getting along well. I chose this experience because conflicts between young people are a big barrier to interpersonal relationships."* (Girl, age not provided)

PROMPT 1: Stories of disappointment



The 21 stories of disappointment (as described by the participants) focused on a lack of trust in leadership and discord in the club (five stories each). Examples for each type of story are provided below.

Lack of respect from the community

- *“While we sensitized on the sanitation of the environment in the household, a person in charge of the household had slapped me, saying to me that I should not make it at home because I was small compared to him...In the end, the president of the CAC came to give peace by explaining to this person in charge the merits of the different activities carried out by our club in the village. I chose this experience because I was too touched by this gesture.” (Girl, 17)*

Lack of commitment and contributions from committee members

- *“Some of our members do not want to join us in cleaning up our environment. This weakens the group and discourages members who are motivated...Because some members find it tedious to clean up our environment and rely on the efforts of local authorities only.” (Boy, 16)*
- *“We had an agreement in the club that every time we got together we had to contribute some money to our fund. There were others who did not contribute, and I was a little disappointed.” (Boy, age not provided)*

Loss of animals and crops

- *“We had raised our rabbits together but a member (of the committee) managed to hijack our rabbits.” (Boy, 17)*
- *“The president told us that the produce from our fields was looted by people in bad faith.” (Girl, 18)*

Discord in the club

- *“I am disappointed by the behavior of some members of the group who do not let us have a chance to express ourselves. My colleague is President of the Club because he does not want the girls to also express themselves in spite of the lessons learned on its positive masculinity. We argued about the running of the club’s activities. I chose this experience because we are supposed to live in cohesion thanks to our teachers.” (Girl, 19)*

Disappointment in project support

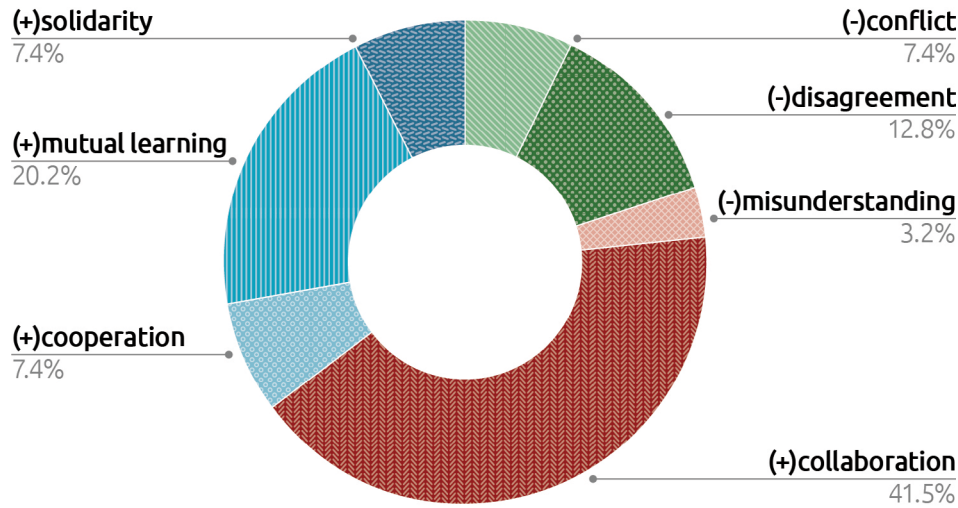
- *“The CAC in my village does not listen to my opinions as a youth representative. The members of our club’s management committee did not listen to my opinions because I suggested that youth be consulted on all WASH-related issues. This happened in January of this year in my central village. As a result, youth are no longer participating in community development activities as they used to. I chose this experience because I want to change that.” (Girl, 19)*
- *“Some of our members left the group because of an unfulfilled project promise. For example, one expected the club to subsidize seeds, but it didn’t. In the end, the members rejoined the group.” (Girl, 16)*

Lack of trust in committee leadership

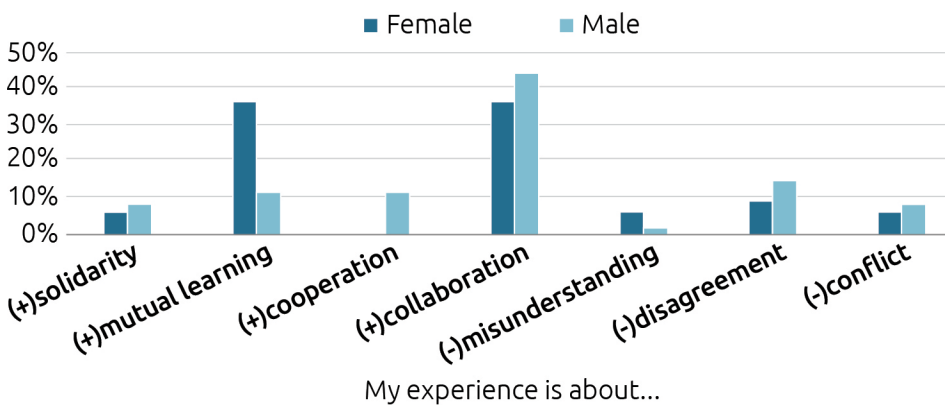
- *“My club president and his committee, 21 years old and a boy, were discouraged from participating in the club’s activities because we saw that things in the club were not well managed...The members no longer come to the meeting and we hope to have the seeds of the project to put in our club field.” (Boy, 16)*
- *“Since the new committee was replaced, meetings are no longer held regularly and activities are at a standstill.” (Girl, 15)*

PROMPT 2

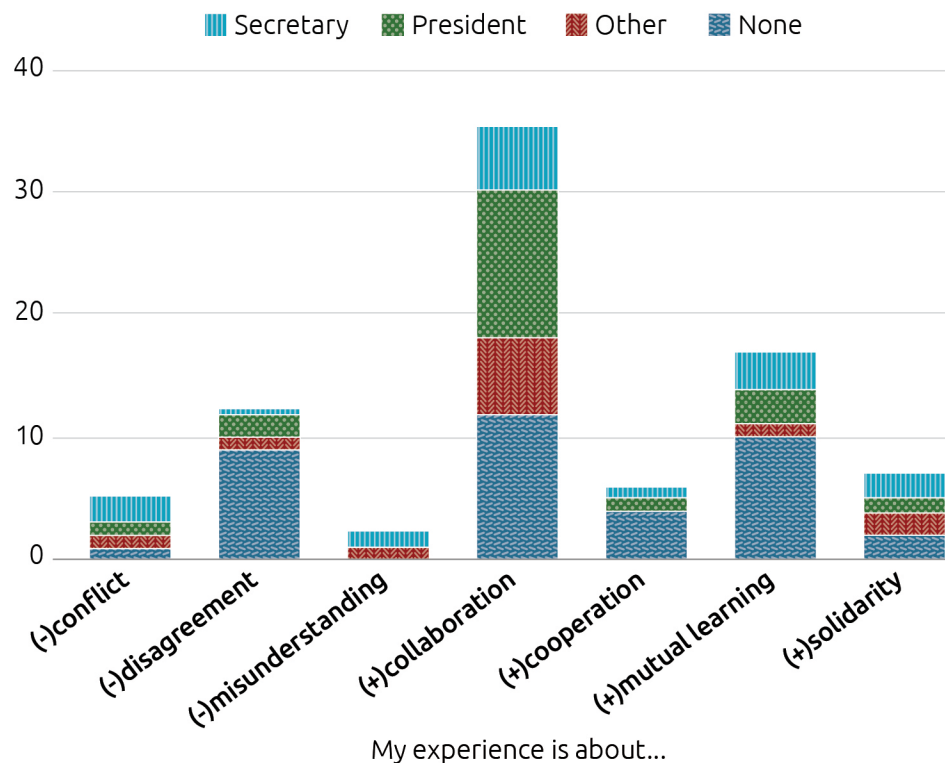
Thinking about your involvement in this youth club, please describe a personal interaction with club members of the opposite gender. It could be a positive or a negative interaction. (98 responses)



Stories were broadly positive, with the majority focused on collaboration.



Female respondents were more likely to share stories about mutual learning, while male respondents shared stories of collaboration.



Presidents most frequently reported that their experience was about collaboration. Secretaries disproportionately shared stories of conflict. These were related to the money challenges of the club.

PROMPT 2: Stories of positive experiences

Collaboration

- *“With the mentoring training, I collaborated well with members of the opposite sex. The field agents who trained us in mentoring did so because the youth needed guidance. I chose this experience because the lessons I learned in mentoring allowed me to help other young people avoid early and forced marriage in our community.”* (Boy, 21)
- *“Through my collaboration, I helped one member of the group master the technique of traditional soap making. I chose this experience because it shows how a team with a vision can flourish.”* (Girl, 25)
- *“I asked a boy member of the club to help me with his experience in raising chickens at home and it worked. In the end, my chickens are growing well. I chose this experience because it is not necessary to have limits to collaborate with young people of the opposite sex.”* (Girl, age not provided)

Cooperation

- *“I intervened to plead for our classmate in a club meeting when I heard the news that he was in danger of missing the exams because he had no money at the time of the exams to pay. In the end, he passed the exams... I chose this experience because young people must remain united and help each other.”* (Boy, age not provided)
- *“My club is made up of mostly boys and the girls assumed that they couldn't participate because they felt that they didn't have the strength to make bricks. In the end, the girls realized that they could play an administrative role or fetch water. I chose this experience because girls tend not to get involved in activities.”* (Boy, 19)

Mutual learning

- *“When I went to the teaching internship, one of my colleagues from the club helped me not only with the preparation of the lessons to be given to the students but also with the reference books. This helped me to shine in the internship and I did well. I chose this experience because thanks to the support of this member, I was able to pass my internships without any difficulties.”* (Girl, 21)
- *“We followed a lesson on the importance of a hygienic latrine, and I went to build a new latrine at home and my dad was very happy.”* (Boy, 17)

Solidarity

- *“I participated in encouraging giving custody of the club's resources to the girls at our various meetings in which we make contributions. In the end, we managed to mobilize 15,000 CFA francs thanks to the contributions of 200 CFA francs from each member at the meetings. I chose this experience because through the support of BUDIKADIDI, we got together as a group and we are working to produce good results.”* (Boy, 19)
- *“I was involved in the process of developing a business plan, operating account, market study and SWOT analysis of our business and that along with the other youth we succeeded. At the end, we have our functional pharmacy. I chose this experience because the other clubs launch themselves also in entrepreneurship.”* (Boy, age not provided)

PROMPT 2: Stories of challenging experiences

Conflict

- *"I intervened in a dispute between two club members over the bad behavior of one of them. In the end, things calmed down and the conflicting members are now getting along well. I chose this experience because it is important to help young people manage interpersonal relationships well."* (Girl, age not provided)

Disagreement

- *"I was accused of embezzling the money by a male member of the group who thought the figure I said was wrong, and another male member of the group who supported him from the second cycle of orientation because he thought the money was mismanaged. In the end, the secretary had his cash book that we compared with mine, and it was real, the amount I have, and the two friends apologized."* (Boy, 21)
- *"The treasurer had used the cash box for his private problems without notifying the group. No one knew about it because the money was lying around in his hands without being in a closed box. In the end, the group members met with the treasurer's parents and handed over the money. I chose this experience because it offended my friends and taught me a lesson about respecting common property."* (Boy, 16)
- *"My clubmate sided with those who were reluctant to join the group in sanitation because some members felt that environmental sanitation was someone else's business."* (Boy, 16)

Misunderstanding

- *"A misunderstanding between club members led to a fight."* (Boy, 17)
- *"I had learned that a member of our group criticized me for embezzling money from the sale of the group's field products."* (Girl, 19)
- *"When you have a small problem with your fund, there are those who think the money is mismanaged and others who think it is well managed. We discussed it to avoid misunderstanding with the facilitator and gender office. Other members of the club thought that I used the money of the club for my own purposes. In the end, we all understood that the money was well kept in the cash register after having taken out all the proofs or justifications."* (Girl, 20)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct follow-up training for club treasurers and other interested members on financial management and accounting best practices.
- Conduct further assessments to explore if these findings hold in other regions and clubs within the project.
- Consider rebranding the club's organizational structure to give each member a substantive role and rotate meeting chair positions. This will help to reduce the power nodes of the president and vice-president. This also could address challenges in the running of meetings and meeting expectations.
- Explore opportunities to conduct gender awareness training to address toxic masculinity that has crept into some of the clubs.
- Provide sensitization to community members on the role of youth clubs and encourage youth club members to be invited and participate in community forums.

Conceptualization, analysis and reporting by Rafaramalal Volanarisoa and Jess MacArthur.

Micronarrative collection by Francis Tshisuyi, Patrick Kambaja, Jonathan Ngeleka, Solange Musawu, Patrick Tshimbaya, Victor Mwamba, Jean Fort Mbolela, Constatin Kabula, Martin Mbuembue, Samuel Kasendwe, Augustin Yangoy, Yanick Kamunga, Théodore Yakalo, Théo Kazadi, and Alex Kahia (Supervisor).

ABOUT PRO-WASH

PRO-WASH (Practices, Research and Operations in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) is an initiative funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and led by Save the Children. PRO-WASH aims to improve the quality of activities, strengthen the capacity and skills of BHA implementing partners in WASH, and improve the level of knowledge and practices around WASH.

RECOMMENDED CITATION

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CONTACT INFORMATION

prowash@savechildren.org

www.fsnnetwork.org/PRO-WASH

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