

M5

MODULE 5

BARBERSHOP TOOLKIT

ESTD

2025



FATHERHOOD
& CARE WORK



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FATHERHOOD & CARE WORK

→ Why This Module Matter?

Across cultures, caregiving has historically been undervalued, feminized, and seen as secondary to paid labor or public leadership. Patriarchal and authoritarian systems often devalue caregiving, associating real leadership with control and emotional distance. By reclaiming emotional and domestic care, we offer a radical counter-narrative to this trend.

Yet caregiving—whether emotional, physical, or domestic—is the foundation of healthy families and communities. While conversations on gender equality often focus on women’s burden of unpaid care work, men’s engagement as caregivers is equally transformative.

This module helps men reflect on their roles as fathers, sons, brothers, mentors, and colleagues—not just in terms of authority, but in terms of nurturing, emotional labor, and domestic responsibility. Reframing caregiving as a form of masculine strength opens the door to greater gender equity at home and in public policy.

→ Learning Objectives

- + **By the end of this session, participants will:**
- + Recognize caregiving as a central expression of healthy masculinity and leadership.
- + Reflect on how caregiving was modeled (or not) in their families, workplaces, and communities.
- + Identify gendered norms and workplace structures that limit men’s involvement in care work.
- + Develop strategies to increase personal, relational, and policy-level support for men’s caregiving.
- + Commit to practical steps to share the load at home and advocate for equitable policies in their spheres of influence.

→ Who This Module Is For

- + Fathers and expecting fathers
- + Male caregivers of children, elderly, or disabled family members
- + Men in heterosexual partnerships navigating care distribution
- + Employers and HR leaders developing family-friendly policies
- + Community or religious leaders advocating for family engagement

TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT

1. LIFE TIMELINE REFLECTION

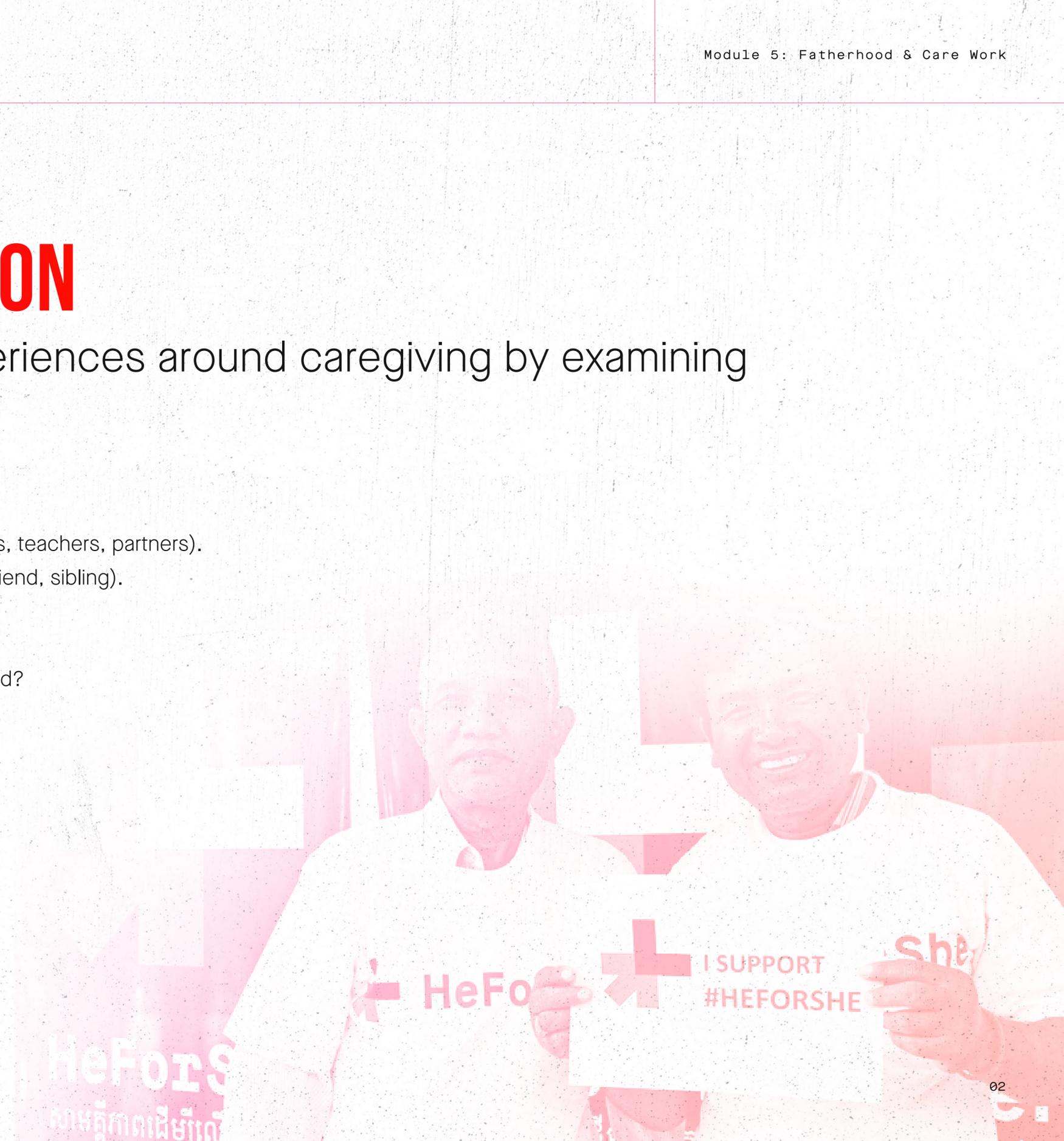
➔ **Goal:** Surface personal beliefs and experiences around caregiving by examining role models and turning points.

➔ How To Facilitate

- + Ask participants to draw a horizontal timeline of their life.
- + On the top of the line: moments when they received care (e.g., from parents, teachers, partners).
- + On the bottom of the line: moments when they gave care (e.g., to a child, friend, sibling).
- + Then, reflect in pairs or small groups:
 - ➔ Who were your caregivers growing up? What gender were they?
 - ➔ How were those moments of care perceived—praised, ignored, criticized?
 - ➔ How has that shaped your view of your role today?

➔ Debrief Questions

- + Was caregiving associated with power or with sacrifice in your early life?
- + How have your views on caregiving evolved?



TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT

2. CARE CHALLENGE: THE UNPAID LABOR LOG

➔ **Goal:** Make invisible care work visible—especially among participants in heterosexual or patriarchal households or workplaces.

➔ How To Facilitate

+ Ask participants to write down all caregiving or domestic tasks they did in the last 7 days.

Examples: cooking, cleaning, waking up early with a child, checking in on aging parents, mentoring a colleague, emotional support to a partner.

+ Encourage reflection: What surprised you? What did you overlook at first? What would your partner or household members list?

➔ Group Activity

+ Discuss imbalances, and where gendered assumptions might exist (e.g., “I don’t clean because I’m not good at it”).

➔ Debrief Questions

+ How does caring—at home, at work, or in the community, challenge the strongman ideal?

+ What work do I do without being asked? What work do I expect others to do without thanks?

+ How can I initiate a more equitable conversation about labor in my home or team?



TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT

3. PARENTAL LEAVE ROLE-PLAY

➔ **Goal:** Build empathy and practice negotiating shared caregiving responsibilities, especially around formal structures like leave policies

➔ How To Facilitate

- + In pairs, role-play two parents discussing how to divide parental leave after a child's birth or adoption.
- + One participant plays a partner who expects the other to take the bulk of leave. Switch roles.
- + Introduce a layer of complexity (e.g., pressure from employers, cultural stigma, financial constraints, visa/tenure clocks, lack of paid leave, or caregiver health needs).

➔ Follow-Up Discussion

- + What assumptions came up in the negotiation (about income, career trajectories, “who's better with babies,” or what managers will accept)?
- + What could make this conversation easier or more equitable in real life (e.g., written team plans, equal paid leave for all parents, manager training, clear coverage plans, or committing to a 50/50 “own-define-deliver” split for specific care domains)?

TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT

4. POLICY MAPPING (OPTIONAL FOR ADVANCED GROUPS)

➔ **Goal:** Explore how policies (or lack of them) support or undermine men's involvement in care.

➔ How To Facilitate

- + Ask participants to brainstorm what policies exist in their workplace or country: paternity leave, caregiving leave, flexible work, etc.
- + Compare with best practices globally (e.g., Iceland's equal parental leave, Sweden's "use-it-or-lose-it" dad quota).
- + Identify gaps, and ask: What policy change could make care work more equal where you are?



TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT

5. THE THIRD SHIFT

➔ **Goal:** Help men recognize the unseen “third shift” (cognitive/emotional load of planning, coordinating, remembering) and agree on concrete, fair redistributions and system supports that sustain shared care, not one-off help.

➔ How To Facilitate

- + Explain “third shift” as the ongoing mental project management behind family life and relationships (anticipating needs, deciding, reminding, monitoring), which disproportionately falls on women. Invite curiosity, not defensiveness.
- + Each participant lists 10–15 recurring third-shift tasks in their context. Examples: remembering birthdays and gifts; tracking school forms and trip checklists; managing after-school activities; planning lunch boxes; coordinating eldercare logistics; packing for trips; managing household supplies, etc.
- + Next to each task, mark who does what today using EDCM: E = who is the Executor, D = who Decides, C = who Communicates/reminds, M = who Monitors/follows up. This separates “doing” from “owning the mental project.”
- + In pairs, compare lists and identify three tasks where mental ownership and doing are misaligned or unfairly concentrated.
- + For each of the three tasks, decide one change for the next 30 days using the “Own–Define–Deliver” rule: one person fully owns the task (no hidden manager), defines “done” (quality/time), and delivers on time without reminders.
- + As a group, pick 2–3 tools or norms that reduce cognitive load: a weekly 15-minute logistics huddle; shared digital calendar with alerts; a visible “family kanban” (To Plan/Doing/Done); split “domains” (e.g., one person fully owns school/activities, the other fully owned health/appointments); monthly swap to avoid invisible expertise hoarding.
- + Each participant sets a check-in date and a nudge mechanism (calendar invite, WhatsApp reminder) and names a buddy for follow-up.

➔ Group Activity (Small groups of 4–6)

- + **Wall mapping:** On sticky notes, each person posts 5 third-shift tasks. Cluster similar tasks (health, school, social, household admin, eldercare). Draw two axes on a flip chart: X = “visible to others” (low to high), Y = “mental load intensity” (low to high). Place clusters on the grid. Circle the top three “high load + low visibility” clusters. For each circled cluster, the group drafts:
 - ➔ A redistribution plan (who will Own–Define–Deliver for 30 days).
 - ➔ A system change (e.g., recurring logistics huddle, domain ownership, automation via subscriptions/reminders).
 - ➔ A “no-nag” norm (the owner self-reminds; non-owner does not manage by proxy).

➔ Debrief Questions

- + Where did “ownership” differ from “execution,” and how did that create hidden work?
- + Which tasks were most invisible until named, and what made them invisible (habit, stereotypes, “I’m just better at it,” time-sensitivity)?
- + What feelings came up when shifting ownership (relief, anxiety, loss of control)? How will the group support the new owner without slipping back into reminders?
- + How will fairness be reviewed (a 10-minute monthly retro; swapping domains quarterly; adding/removing tasks as life changes)?

FACILITATOR GUIDE FOR NEW OR INEXPERIENCED TRAINERS

➔ Core Concepts to Know

- + **Care work** includes physical labor (feeding, cleaning), emotional labor (listening, comforting), and mental load (planning, organizing).
- + **Unpaid care work** disproportionately falls on women globally, reinforcing gender gaps in pay, leadership, and time poverty.
- + **Engaged fatherhood and caregiving** challenge stereotypes and create healthier environments for children, partners, and men themselves.
- + **Third Shift** refers to the largely invisible cognitive and emotional labor of planning, coordinating, anticipating, reminding, and monitoring that keeps family and social life running - distinct from the first shift (paid work) and second shift (unpaid domestic tasks).

➔ Suggested Session Flow (90-100 Minutes)

Time	Activity
00:00 - 00:10	Welcome & Framing: "What Is Care, and Why Does It Matter?"
00:10 - 00:30	Life Timeline Reflection + Pair Sharing
00:30 - 00:50	Care Challenge: Unpaid Labor Log + Group Reflection
00:50 - 01:10	Parental Leave Role-Play or Policy Mapping
01:10 - 01:20	Closing Round: "One Thing I'll Do to Share Care More Equitably"

➔ Before The Session

- + Print timeline worksheets or provide blank paper.
- + Prepare a short list of caregiving examples (domestic, emotional, invisible labor).
- + Review basic global data on care work if you want to introduce a data point or two.
- + **Optional:** Bring local policies or news articles to discuss in the Policy Mapping activity.

- + Reviews find that father-inclusive parenting interventions improve maternal, paternal, and couple outcomes, with positive effects on child development across contexts. (ScienceDirect, 2023)
- + Greater father engagement is associated with higher early cognitive, language, motor, and socioemotional scores in LMIC settings; multidimensional involvement matters (care, play, chores, early learning). (NLM, 2024)
- + Women still shoulder the majority of unpaid care- often multiple times men's time, limiting paid work and well-being; in Georgia, women spend about five times men's time on unpaid care. (UN Women, 2022)
- + Involved fatherhood is linked to greater happiness, better mental and physical health, lower substance misuse, and longer life expectancy compared with disengaged fathers, based on multi-study syntheses presented to UN expert meetings. (UN, 2016)

FACILITATOR GUIDE FOR NEW OR INEXPERIENCED TRAINERS

→ Sample Script Openers

- + “What we value, we protect. Why, then, is care so undervalued in our systems?”
- + “Being a provider is important. But being a caregiver might be even more powerful.”
- + “What kind of men do our children need? What kind of care do we model?”

→ Cautions & Tips

- + Avoid reinforcing stereotypes (e.g., “real men don’t babysit”). Use “parenting” and “caregiving” equally for all genders.
- + Validate care work in all its forms—not just parenting. Many men are caregivers to elders, friends, coworkers, and communities.
- + Be mindful of cultural, religious, and policy differences across countries and households.

→ Key Takeaways

- + Caregiving is leadership. It builds trust, responsibility, and empathy.
- + Masculinity must expand to include emotional labor, not reject it.
- + Systems and institutions must adapt—not just individual behavior—for care to be shared fairly.

→ Reflect On

- + **My Care Practices:** What caregiving responsibilities do I currently have? Where might I be relying on others (especially women) for emotional, domestic, or childcare labor? How do I value care work in my own life?
- + **Defensive Reactions:** How do I respond to discussions about unpaid labor and the gendered division of household work? What defensiveness might arise when participants share examples of inequitable care arrangements?
- + **Privilege and Access:** What privileges (financial, familial, professional) have allowed me to engage or avoid caregiving responsibilities? How might participants with different circumstances experience these discussions?
- + **Care and Authority:** How do I model caregiving behaviors in my facilitation? Do I attend to group dynamics, emotional needs, and inclusive participation in ways that demonstrate care as leadership?

USEFUL RESOURCES

- 1 UN Women. (2023). A Toolkit on Paid and Unpaid Care Work: From 3Rs to 5Rs. Retrieved from:
<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/A-toolkit-on-paid-and-unpaid-care-work-en.pdf>
- 2 UN Women. (2021). Engaged Fatherhood and Paternity Leave, Key to Socio-Economic Development. Retrieved from:
<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/06/engaged-fatherhood-and-paternity-leave>
- 3 UN Women. (2021). Involved Fathers Mean Happier Families. Retrieved from:
<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/06/feature-story-involved-fathers-mean-happier-families>
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<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/3/resource-package-on-engaging-men-during-pregnancy-and-childbirth>
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https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2019/04/Men%20Women%20GE%20-%20Updated/Promote%20Men%20Caregiving%20to%20Advance%20GE/Understanding%20How%20to%20Promote%20Mens%20Caregiving%20to%20Advance%20Gender%20Equality_Final_Web.pdf
- 6 UN Women. (2023). Survey Shows High Support for Paternity Leave Across North Africa and the Middle East. Retrieved from:
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/09/survey-shows-high-support-for-paternity-leave-across-north-africa-and-middle-east>
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<https://albania.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2025/05/redefining-fatherhood-from-traditional-roles-to-shared-responsibility>
- 8 UN Women. (2025). Take Five: “To Achieve Equal Opportunities in Life and Work, Care Responsibilities Must Be Shared Fairly Between Women and Men”. Retrieved from:
<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/stories/take-five/2025/02/take-five-to-achieve-equal-opportunities-in-life-and-work-care-responsibilities-must-be-shared-fairly-between-women-and-men>
- 9 UN Women. (2016). The Work That Makes Work Possible. Retrieved from:
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/4/op-ed-the-work-that-makes-work-possible>
- 10 UN Women. (2015). UN Women's Work with Men and Boys. Retrieved from:
<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/UN%20Womens%20Work%20With%20Men%20and%20Boys.pdf>
- 11 UN Women. (2020). When Fathers Share the Care. Retrieved from:
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/6/feature-when-fathers-share-the-care>
- 12 UN Women – Arab States. (n.d.). Because I Am a Man Campaign. Retrieved from:
<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/because-i-am-a-man-campaign>

SEE OTHER BARBERSHOP 2.0 MODULES

M1
MODULE 1
**ACCOUNTABILITY
& POWER
SHARING**
>>>

M2
MODULE 2
**BYSTANDER
INTERVENTION &
ALLYSHIP**
>>>

M3
MODULE 3
**DIGITAL
MASCULINITIES &
ONLINE BEHAVIOR**
>>>

M4
MODULE 4
**MENTAL HEALTH
& EMOTIONAL
EXPRESSION**
>>>

M5
MODULE 5
**FATHERHOOD
&
CARE WORK**
>>>

M6
MODULE 6
**CLIMATE JUSTICE
&
GENDER**
>>>

M7
MODULE 7
**INTERSECTIONALITY
& INCLUSIVE
MASCULINITIES**
>>>

M8
MODULE 8
**MENSTRUAL
EQUITY &
SRHR**
>>>

M9
MODULE 9
**GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE
(GBV)**
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M10
MODULE 10
**GENDER EQUALITY
IN THE
WORKPLACE**
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