

EMPATHWAYS TOOL

Drawing upon Empathy to Improve Family Planning Service Delivery

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BACKGROUND

Context

Empathways is a card deck activity developed by the Breakthrough ACTION (BA) project to address mistrust between **young clients and family planning (FP) providers**. The West Africa Breakthrough ACTION (WABA) project adapted the cards to facilitate similar dialogues between **youth and adult community members** to increase general support for youth contraceptive access in Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Niger, and Burkina Faso.

METHODOLOGY & OBJECTIVES

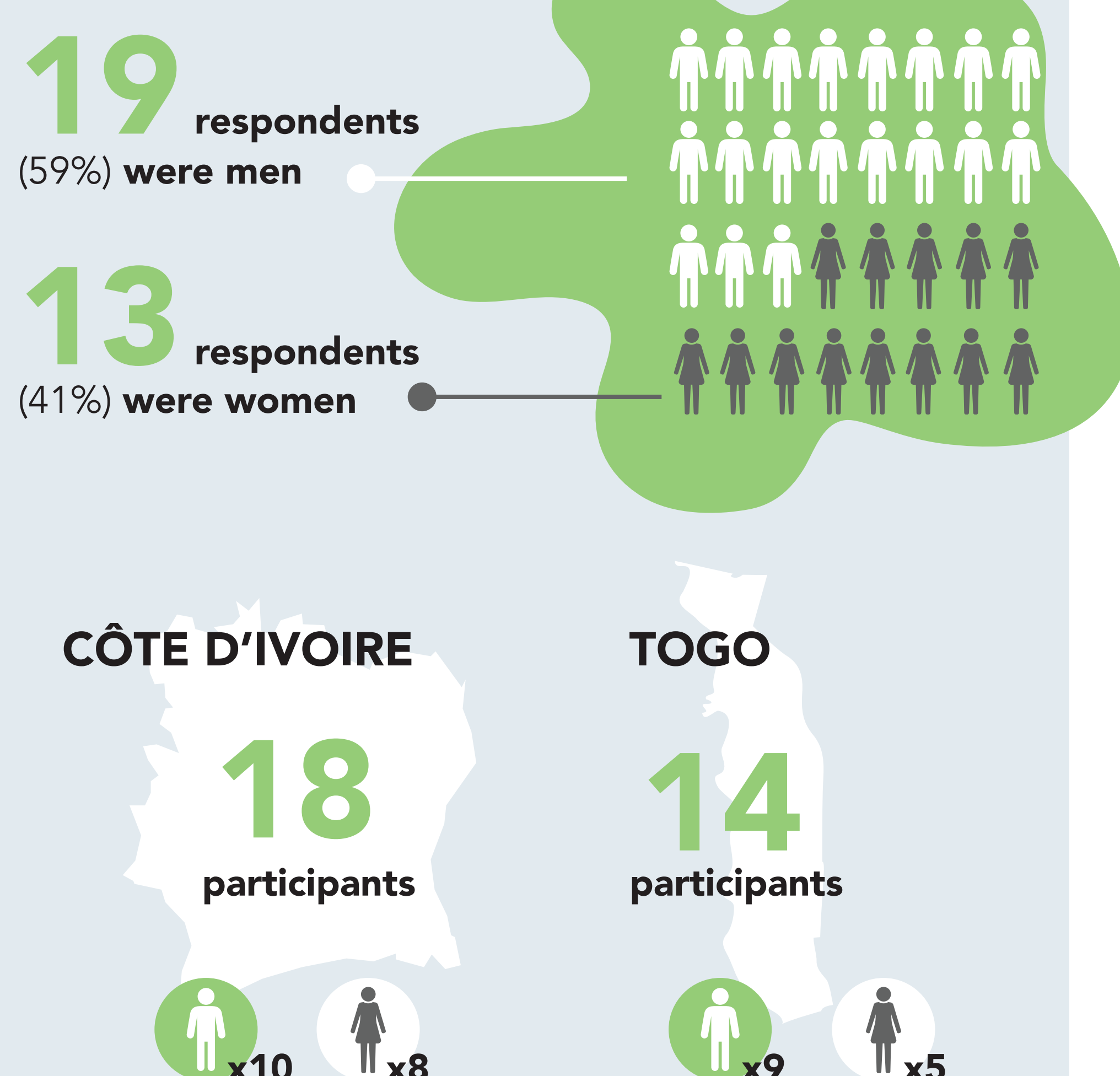
Both the **provider** and the **community** version of Empathways foster candid, intergenerational exchange about youth contraceptive needs through icebreakers, discussion prompts, and a final commitment to take action to **improve FP services**, or **support youth contraceptive access**.

TOOL PRESETS & RESULTS

The **provider Empathways** was pretested in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in February 2021 with 15 providers and 15 young people (n=30). Both youth and providers reported finding the tool unique, relevant, and effective in increasing empathy for youth's RH/FP experiences and needs. Some providers asked to take decks back to their health center.

In April 2021, the **community Empathways** was pretested with 22 youth and 22 adult community members (n=44) in Togo. Pretest participants from each shared their feedback via a written survey. Participants reported liking the tool, finding the content appropriate, and being comfortable discussing the topics addressed on the cards.

Empathways community version monitoring sample size



FURTHER USE & MONITORING RESULTS

The **provider Empathways** tool was piloted in Summer 2022 in Liberia and Kenya (results forthcoming) and currently in Ethiopia.

The **community Empathways** has been used to facilitate

+165 discussions in WABA countries.

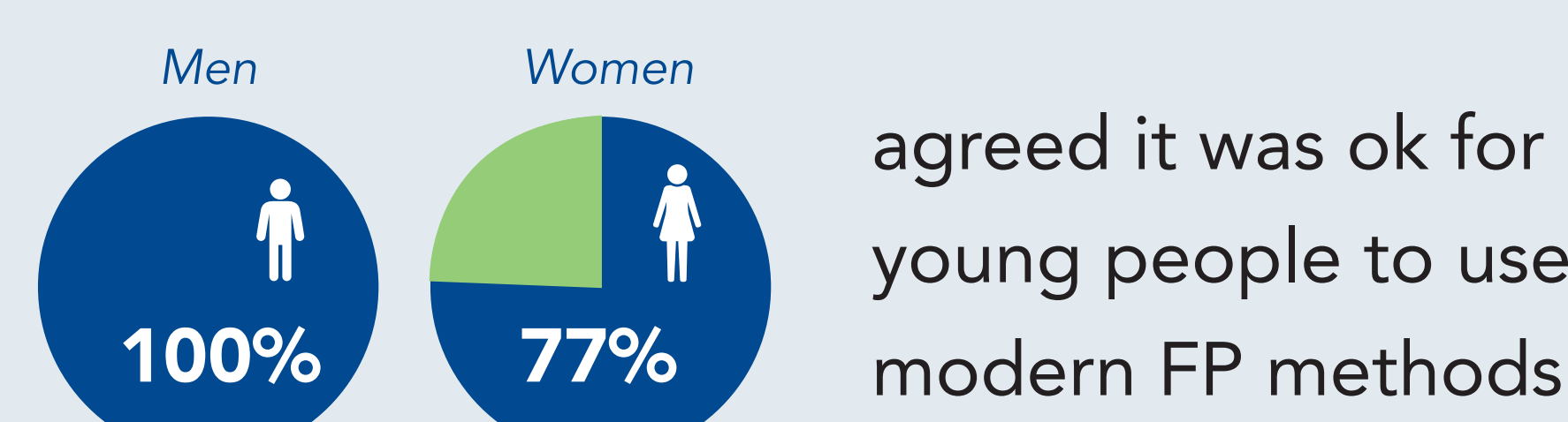
WABA administered phone surveys to a sample of adults in Côte d'Ivoire and Togo to gauge how their attitudes and behaviors changed approximately one month after using the tool.



(n=32)

July-September 2022

After engaging with the **community Empathways**:



agreed it was ok for young people to use modern FP methods

100%

Of men and women

wanted to help a young person(s) access and/or understand FP methods and FP information and agreed

they could talk to a young person about FP methods after participating in a discussion directed by **Empathways**

100%

of interviewees

talked to at least one person about the importance of FP

73%

of participants from Côte d'Ivoire

talked to more than six people about the importance of FP

84% of men and **69%** of women realized the goal they had set for themselves after engaging with **Empathways** at the time of the interview. The majority of both men (63%) and women (77%) made the commitment to communicate with and encourage family members and young people to talk about family planning and reproductive health.

Respondents also reported that **Empathways**:

- ★ Helped them acquire knowledge about family planning and reproductive health in a way they feel they are able to start a discussion with another person without the Empathways cards
- ★ Made them want to talk about family planning with young people in their family and in their communities
- ★ Created a unique dialogue that is typically considered taboo
- ★ Allowed them to learn and reflect on their own lives in relation to family planning

DISCUSSION

Empathways fills a programmatic gap and social need. Feedback and monitoring efforts to date highlight **Empathways'** potential to positively shift individual attitudes and behaviors to be more supportive of youth contraceptive access. By engaging directly with community members and community leaders, there is also a potential for the changes affected by Empathways to gain a level of "social contagion" among relevant reference groups, key to shifting norms.



TOOL ACCESS

To access the tool, visit :



<https://breakthroughactionandresearch.org/empathways/>
<https://breakthroughactionandresearch.org/empathways-adaptations/>



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