

FATHERS MATTER

Involved fathers change the lives of children



Save the Children



Save the Children knows that involving fathers will change the lives of children. Therefore the organisation is encouraging a more active, equal, and non-violent involvement of fathers and other male caregivers in the lives of children. In this leaflet you can read about how we can make our efforts more effective, conscious, evidence-based, systematic and integrated throughout our programmes, inclusive of clearer advocacy goals, and capable of going to scale in partnership with other agencies.

Save the Children can play a role in emerging international efforts to transform fathers' relationships with children in order to better protect and meet the needs of children.

Promoting active fatherhood could play an important role for achieving Save the Children's breakthroughs for children.

The change is already happening – fathers are getting more involved in the care of children. Save the Children has a unique position to encourage this change.

Throughout this leaflet, "fathers" refers both to biological and adoptive fathers and, in some cases, more broadly to other social fathers such as uncles, older brothers, and grandfathers who are playing an important and active caregiving role. Save the Children promotes gender equal parenting by all men and women, regardless of whether or not there is a biological relationship between parent and child. We also recognize the importance of kinship groups and social parenting in many communities.

ABOUT SAVETHE CHILDREN

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Save the Children is the world's leading independent organisation for children. We work in around 120 countries. We save children's lives; we fight for their rights; we help them fulfil their potential.

We work to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives. Across all of our work, we pursue several core values: accountability, ambition, collaboration, creativity and integrity. Last year we once again touched the lives of over 125 million children worldwide and directly reached 45 million children.

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WHAT SAVE THE CHILDREN ALREADY HAS DONE AND IS DOING

In October 2005, Save the Children Sweden and the Regional Office for South and Central Asia organised (together with UNIFEM and Instituto Promundo) a regional capacity building workshop on men, caring and fatherhood. Several publications and projects in the region followed on this workshop.

Save the Children is a founding partner of the MenEngage network (menengage.org) and has collaborated with the MenCare campaign in developing a manual for father inclusive practices by public health practitioners and for running fathers' groups. Furthermore, it has contributed to develop MenCare content relating to child protection.

Save the Children in Nepal implemented a pilot project called "Promises" that targeted parents, especially fathers, to make public commitments in favour of girl child education and stopping domestic violence against their intimate partners.

In the Asia, African, Middle East and Europe Regions, Save the Children has been organising capacity development initiatives and programmes on positive discipline in everyday parenting. These experiences are enhanced to sensitize fathers on caregiving and gender sensitive parenting.

In Ethiopia, through Hiwot Ethiopia and other partners, Save the Children mobilized fathers through radio programme and leaflets, supported father's group education and conversations (including celebrating Father's Day and giving awards to fathers who have played a positive role in child care).

Save the Children publications increasingly use images of men and boys as caregivers.

FATHERHOOD IS AN EMERGING ISSUE

Fatherhood and fathers' role as caregivers is a rapidly emerging issue around the world – that is, it represents a changing reality in the lives of children.

The world is seeing the beginning of dramatic changes in the roles, expectations, and practices of fathers and male caregivers – a shift that promises to have a dramatic impact on the lives of children. In some countries the changes are already obvious, from great advances in the Nordic countries to lesser but pronounced changes in much of Europe and North America. Among young men, there is an emerging consensus that as fathers, they will be much more involved than their own fathers and certainly their grandfathers, only in part because of women's high labour-force participation and work-migration. More men are prioritizing family over careers. There is increasing pressure for more extensive parental leave for fathers and more flexible work time for both parents.

Some benefits of involving fathers:

- As fathers get more involved and share the care and domestic work burden, women's economic empowerment advances.
- As fathers get involved, maternal health-related outcomes improve.
- As fathers get more involved from the start, there are better child development outcomes.
- As caregiving goes up, violence against women and children goes down.
- As caregiving goes up, men's mental and physical health improves.

In some countries of the Global South (especially in Latin America), we are seeing strong beginnings of change while in much of Africa and Asia, the changes are still marginal. At the same time as talking about these changes, it is important to recognize that in at least some indigenous cultures around the world, men play a strong caregiving role; and in many others there is a strong sense of community responsibility for children.

Encouraging and supporting these changes has the long-term potential of making a major contribution to ensuring that all children are protected from violence,

abuse, exploitation and neglect, and that all children enjoy their right to protection, survival, education, development and participation. These changes will also make a major contribution to promoting women's equality and lives free of violence as well as having a positive impact for fathers themselves.

Fathers are half of the world's parents. Although this is stating the obvious, it will be difficult to significantly improve the lives of children without addressing and involving half of the world's parents.

INVOLVING FATHERS IS KEY

REDUCING VIOLENCE

Involving fathers as equal caregivers is a straightforward way of reducing violence against children. A huge number of studies point to the connection between higher father involvement in care work and a range of positive outcomes for children and mothers, as well as for the fathers themselves.

Creating a world of non-violent, equality-minded, nurturing fathers is critical to meeting the needs of children. It is securing the rights of the child, supporting maternal health, reducing gender-based and other forms of violence, and transforming the lives of boys and men.

Studies show that fathers' involvement is generally beneficial for children's cognitive and social development, mental and physical health, and for developing gender equitable attitudes.

Working with fatherhood issues is the simplest and most powerful way to engage men as allies in the promotion of non-violence and equality for girls and women, not simply in theory, but grounded in the home and daily life of communities. It is the most powerful way to involve men, along with women, in rethinking how we raise boys to be gender sensitive, non-violent and caring men. It is the critical way for men to be in touch with the lives of girls and to equally prioritize their needs to those of boys. It is the easiest way to enlist boys and men to support and sustain initiatives promoting the needs and rights of children.



AUSTRALIA: DEADLY BLOKES AND KIDS

“Deadly Blokes (Aboriginal slang for a cool guy) and Kids” is a community-based programme working with male parents and caregivers in various parts of Australia. These programmes are locally designed in order to be culturally relevant. The programmes aim to build strong relationships between male caregivers and their children, through the creation of safe places to connect with their children and young people.

The programmes feature cultural, artistic and musical media, outdoor activities, cooking and play. They also aim to create respectful and peaceful relationships by modelling non-violent behaviour.

Save the Children Australia also supports the Future Parents Program, an initiative for teenage girls and boys to develop practical childcare skills and increase knowledge about children’s needs.

NEPAL: A CURRICULUM FOR CHALLENGING GENDER NORMS

Created specifically for boys and girls aged 10-14 years, the CHOICES curriculum helps young people to examine and discuss their ideas about respect, communication and fairness and their dreams for the future. The goal is to empower young people to challenge the accepted gender norms in their community.

CHOICES was piloted in Nepal in 2010 and is now being implemented in a number of other countries.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13552074.2013.767520>

REDUCING MATERNAL AND CHILD MORTALITY

A great majority of men (78-92% globally) attends at least one pre-natal visit with their partner. Including men in sexual and reproductive health and maternal and child health increases women’s chances of attending more pre- and post-natal visits, which benefits both the mother’s and child’s health.

When men are involved, women report calmer birth experiences. Men’s presence at birth leads to greater father involvement in the long run. The presence of men during labour has been shown to have an important effect on women in Global North and South settings, assuming their presence is wanted/agreed to by the mother.

A good example is a study from Nepal which showed that including men in reproductive health education increased women’s chances of making birth preparations, attending more prenatal visits, delivering in health institutions or having skilled providers at birth, when compared to women who participated in the classes alone.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS AND EXPERIENCE

Save the Children’s work on fatherhood is breaking new ground around the world, developing father-inclusive practices, and promoting fathers’ roles in ensuring child rights.

Starting to work with fathers is not about launching a new programme area, but rather recognising it as a cross-cutting issue that will enhance existing programmes. For example: when promoting children’s health, Save the Children includes the engagement of fathers in promoting maternal and child health; when developing programmes for child protection, Save the Children is thinking about how to directly engage fathers as non-violent care-givers who can play an important role in ending violence against children and their mothers.

READY FOR FATHERHOOD PROGRAMMING

Fatherhood is a cross-cutting issue that needs adequate preparation to programme in. Save the Children recognizes that internal training and training of partners must be a key part of developing work around fatherhood and care-giving. Training should be structured so it includes discussion of concrete initiatives within existing programmes, including, for example, in positive discipline capacity building and child survival programs.

Collaboration and linkages are important and Save the Children is in an advantageous position since relationships with a set of partners like MenEngage Network and MenCare Campaign are already established.

Save the Children brings its unique strengths and capacities to worldwide work with fathers. Save the Children can play a pivotal leadership role in ensuring that programmes and policies to engage fathers not only include, but are built around, a strong focus on meeting the rights of children, and securing their survival and protection.

Save the Children has the knowledge and experience to ensure that children's voices are heard within the design and delivery of work with fathers.

Since Save the Children already works with families, it brings to the table a large number of fathers and mothers who are already reached in education, health and child protection programmes.

UGANDA: REAL FATHERS INITIATIVE

“REAL (Responsible, Engaged and Loving) Fathers” is a just-beginning programme for 18-25 year old fathers who have young children. Its aim is to develop and test an intervention to reduce intimate partner violence and physical and humiliating punishment of children in post-conflict northern Uganda.

Mentors are being trained to work in various communities. Even the process of pretesting the concepts for community posters produced changes among young fathers, including fathers reporting that they were already more involved in child care and spending more time playing with and talking with their children. Some reported communicating more with their wives and helping more with household chores.

As one father said, “This makes my child happy, so it makes me happy. I feel closer to my child.”

http://irh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/REAL_Fathers_FactSheet_2_page.pdf

In Northern Uganda, the GREAT (Gender Roles, Equality and Transformation) project included a specific toolkit for working with married/parenting adolescents.



INDIA AND NEPAL: FATHERS' GROUPS

In Nepal, Save the Children will focus on work with fathers for the prevention of gender-based violence and positive parenting.

There will be groups of existing fathers; fathers-to-be; and boys who may one day be fathers.

The first months will take men through a curriculum allowing them to reflect on their own socialization as men and experiences as boys. The idea is that through self-reflection help them develop a more child-focused view of the world and of their own children. This will lead into an examination of children's development and a focus, respectively, on childhood and maternal health, and on violence against women and children.

The second year will focus on interaction with mothers to explore parenting issues, gender socialization and relationships, and also point to the importance of men taking a public stand in terms of involved and caring fatherhood and act as change agents within their communities.

NIGER: MEN AS COMMUNITY ADVOCATES FOR ASSISTED BIRTHING

Écoles des Maris (Husbands' Schools) in Niger is a UNFPA-funded project to involve men in maternal health promotion and community-level behavioral change. The project began with 11 pilot Écoles in 2008, and by 2011 there were 130 schools in the Zinder region, and 45 under development in the Maradi region.

The selected men meet twice a month to discuss and analyse reproductive health topics, potential risks and complications in birth and pregnancies, so that they may create action plans and serve as ambassadors to encourage women to give birth with clinical assistance.

The Écoles have proven successful in raising the rate of assisted births; in one district (Guigidir) the work of the Écoles has seen the rate of attended childbirth rise from 15% to 74% of births.

RESOURCES FOR WORK WITH FATHERS

There might be a concern from some donors that work with fathers and other male caregivers could be a drain on resources that should be spent on programmes aimed at mothers who currently play the major role in the lives of children. Save the Children takes such concerns seriously.

We know that engaging fathers will bring a range of benefits to programming and policies for mothers and their children. For example, since men still control the budgets of governments and agencies, engaging men as stakeholders through appealing to them as fathers increases the chance that more funding will be forthcoming for child protection and child health.

It is not only a matter of directing resources, but of achieving results. More funding for programming with fathers might increase the money spent "on" men, but if done well, it will service the goal of meeting the lasting needs and rights of children.

Men are often the gatekeepers of a status quo – governments, religions, economic institutions, educational systems – that currently isn't meeting the needs of children and their mothers. Thus, if we don't engage men, we increase the possibility men will thwart or simply ignore our efforts to meet children's needs. If we do engage men as biological and social fathers, it is more likely they will support policy and attitudinal changes that will bring direct benefits to children and women.

Although women have been a primary target in work to protect, care for and nurture children, Save the Children looks to the potential of transforming the relations of reproduction so that all childcare tasks, caregiving, and responsibilities (with the obvious exceptions of pregnancy and breastfeeding) are equally shared between women and men.

WHERE TO START WORKING

FATHERS' GROUPS

With the child's best interests in focus, Fathers' Groups (also called Papa Schools) are offering men preparation for active parenting and a more equal relationship with their partner.

Separate Fathers' Groups sessions can be offered to interested men with the antenatal care-visits as an entry-point. Father's Groups are specifically directed to first-time fathers.

According to experience from fathering programmes, Fathers' Groups are preferably led by ordinary fathers who have been sufficiently trained for the purpose, and continuously guided and supported, and not by professionals. Fathers groups usually meet 4-6 times before the child is born and 1-2 times after the birth, and the topics discussed, amongst others, are: pregnancy, delivery, the relationship (two becomes three), life puzzle, breast feeding, child care and safety, raising children without corporal punishment and household tasks.

The participants in the Fathers' Groups often become role-models, and they often help enrol more fathers. Some of them are later trained as facilitators.

Fathers' Groups have been implemented in various countries, for example Russia, Vietnam, Sweden and Ethiopia, and have brought positive changes for men, women and children in all contexts. Fathers that have participated in the Fathers' Groups have shown greater commitments towards their children and wives, and show a greater responsibility economically and in household-work in the family.

WORK WITH SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS AND HEALTH CARE WORKERS

To work with social service agencies, health care providers, and educators is a critical component of a broader strategy to engage fathers. Helping professionals develop awareness about the importance of involved fathers and the practical skills to engage them is important. One thing that will be critical for Save the Children and its partners will be to work with agencies and institutions to help them develop the systems, practices, and interventions to be father inclusive.



MENCARE

MenCare is a global fatherhood campaign which promotes men's involvement as equitable, non-violent fathers and caregivers in order to achieve family well-being and gender equality.

Internationally and nationally through its partners, it is developing efforts to directly reach fathers, for example through fathers' groups and the development of a manual for fatherhood groups and health care providers. It uses conventional media including a series of videos and, in at least one country, billboards and social media to spread its messages.

MenCare conducts advocacy campaigns, focused on ending corporal punishment, enhancing paternal leave, more flexible workplaces, as well as other issues.

Save the Children, as a founding member of the MenEngage Network, is collaborating closely with the MenCare campaign, lead by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice.

You can find more information at:
www.men-care.org

MenCare short videos on caring fathers:
www.men-care.org/Media/MenCare-Films.aspx

POLICY, ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING

Shifting long-standing social norms that excuse men from taking responsibility for direct and daily care of children or for prioritizing the needs and rights of children, as well as ending social norms that permit physical and humiliating punishment, is our overarching challenge.

Save the Children can contribute to such changes through advocacy for policy changes and public campaigning to promote the ideals of engaged, non-violent, equitable fatherhood.

Campaigns, such as the MenCare campaign, allow us to popularize images of engaged and nurturing fatherhood.

Neither work with individual men, nor services providers, nor public awareness and social norms campaigns will accomplish their goals without change in the fundamental underpinnings of our current relations of reproduction which form the basic environment for children's lives. This is where policy advocacy comes into the picture. Advocacy work on our own and with our partners can take the form of advocacy campaigns and lobbying aimed at national lawmakers, work within institutions, and outreach to the media.



FURTHER READING

There now exists a huge body of research and literature in many languages on fatherhood. Here are some suggestions of useful places to start:

The Costs and Benefits of Active Fatherhood: Evidence and insights to inform the development of policy and practice. The Fatherhood Institute, UK. <http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/uploads/publications/247.pdf>

Men in Families and family policies in a changing world, UN. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/docs/men-in-families.pdf>

What men have to do with it: Public Policies to Promote Gender Equality, ICRW 2010. <http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/What-Men-Have-to-Do-With-It.pdf>

Fathers and Health outcomes in Europe, WHO 2007. http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/69011/E91129.pdf

Fatherhood: Parenting Programmes and Policy. A Critical Review of Best Practices, 2012. Men Care, Fatherhood Institute, Instituto Promundo, Bernard van Leer Foundation. http://www.engagingmen.net/files/resources/2012/Promundo/Parenting_Programmes_and_Policy_Critical_Review_Fomatted_V1.1_150812_FINAL.pdf

A Manual for Engaging Men in Fatherhood, Caregiving, and Maternal and Child Health, MenCare. Redmas [Nicaragua], Promundo [Brazil/US], EME [Chile], Program P: http://men-care.org/data/Program%20P_Beta.pdf

Men in Families and Family Policy in a Changing World, Sales No. E.11.IV.1 2011, United Nations. <http://men-care.org/data/men-in-families.pdf>

Men Who Care:
<http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/men-who-care-multi-country-qualitative-study-men-non-traditional-caregiving-roles>

How Save the Children Can Transform the Role of Fathers and Improve the Lives of Children - A Report to Save the Children, August 2013, Michael Kaufman. <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/how-save-children-can-transform-role-fathers-and-improve-lives-children-report-save-children>

This leaflet is a mapping of Save the Children's role and work in promoting the engagement of fathers. If you want to know more about how to work actively with fatherhood contact Save the Children.

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