

REPORT

2nd pan-African Conference on Parenting

2013

Hosted by YONECO & Parenting in Africa Network:

THEME: Adolescents (boys and girls) with Parenting Responsibilities

16 - 17 October, 2013, Sunbird Nkopola Lodge, Mangochi, Malawi



Figure 1: Delegates from 11 countries



Figure 2: PAN Secretariat staff, strategic partners and Governance team 2013

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**2nd pan-African Conference on Parenting 2013; 16 - 17 October, 2013; Sunbird Nkopola Lodge, Mangochi, Malawi
Report prepared by PAN Secretariat & YONECO**

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INTRODUCTION

PAN is passionate about strengthening families across the African continent, as we anticipate an Africa where children are empowered to reach their full potential. In partnership with YONECO (Youth Net and Counselling), who lead the Malawi PAN Country Chapter, PAN hosted the 2nd pan African conference on parenting, themed *Understanding realities of teenage parenting: A special focus on adolescents (girls and boys) with parenting responsibilities*. Held on 16th – 17th October, at Sunbird Nkopola Lodge, in Mangochi, Malawi, the conference saw over **69 delegates** represented (see list in appendix), from **11 counties**, namely: *Botswana, Canada, Ethiopia, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, USA, Zimbabwe and Kenya*.

Among them were experts, representatives of national, regional and international organizations, government officials and partners committed to strengthening families to exchange ideas and hence inform policy and practice on parenting with skill in Africa.

Justification

It is estimated that adolescents make up a significant one fifth (20%) of the world's population¹; and

¹ **Broadening the Horizon:** Balancing Protection and Risk for Adolescents, WHO, Department of adolescent Health and Development, 2002

they contribute significantly to the well-being of their families, communities and countries. This being the period of rapid development and investment in their development, families are keen to provide the best possible care and support for them. Adolescents have significant potential to influence the future population and socio-economic trends of their respective countries. They have the right to health and protection, as provided for in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UN-CRC). Moreover they constitute *a large proportion of pregnant women*: Globally, about 16 million women aged between 15 and 19 years, give birth each year, representing approximately 11% of all births worldwide. The proportion of births that take place during adolescence is about 2% in China, 18% in Latin America and the Caribbean and more than **50% in Sub-Saharan Africa**².

Notably, adolescent pregnancy is dangerous for both the mother and the child, contributing to high maternal and neonatal mortalities.

The realities of adolescent parents and the reasons for becoming parents at an early age are multiple and a thoughtful approach to the issue is required to listen and understand, with respect to their specific situations. For many adolescents, the responsibility of raising children at a tender age is an obstacle to their educational and professional attainment. In addition, there are health risks due to their tender stage of development. Furthermore, Africa bears a large burden of teenage marriages, propagated by various cultural and traditional practices. The likelihood of young girls, and sometimes boys becoming single parents is very high. It cannot be further emphasized that adolescents are a very important factor in the quest to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly those related to: efforts with regard to the eradication of HIV-AIDS and STI's; the reduction of child and maternal mortalities; the elimination of child abuse and neglect; and improving educational achievement.

Hence a focus on teenage parenting is necessary to understand the realities and challenges that those adolescents with parenting responsibilities face in raising children, whilst attempting to achieve their goals and aspirations. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the challenges that the parents and families of teenagers struggle with as they attempt to ensure that their adolescents achieve their goals and aspirations as well as steer clear of risks inherent in this developmental stage.

Conference Objectives

- Create a forum to highlight the realities of adolescent girls and boys with parenting responsibilities which addresses the causes of teenage pregnancies; their parenting challenges and successes.
- Provide an opportunity to share evidence-based knowledge and information to inform advocacy for actions for family and youth friendly services and policies in favour of this special category of caregivers.

² **Fact sheet:** Why is giving attention to adolescents important for achieving MDG 5?, WHO, 2008

- Bring about a clear understanding on what parents need to know while raising teenagers, in order to enhance their potential to realize their aspirations.
- Collate evidence on efforts and action points to strengthen family relationships in Africa for the wellbeing of children.

African society at large, governments and organizations need to acknowledge the benefits of supporting and equipping parents and all who care for children with the necessary skills, which would enable them to perform their roles with love, diligence, and effectiveness.

- The parent is the first protective structure that a child gets into contact with, and hence, shapes their general world view.
- The family and community provide the environment, within which children interact as they grow. From these, they learn both the necessary norms and values which build their characters, and life skills, as well as grow their self esteem.
- It is within the family and community environment that many children experience violence and abuse which has the potential to hence mar their development.

N.B: Taking an initiative to understand realities of adolescent girls and boys caring for children does not mean an encouragement or condoning of adolescent pregnancy and parenthood. Rather, it means creating conditions so that parenthood at this tender age is not an impediment to the development and wellbeing of adolescent parents or their children.

Parenting in Africa Network (PAN) intends to build knowledge, information and fact-based advocacy on issues affecting adolescent girls and boys carrying the responsibility for child care. It is expected that the information generated from this conference will not only provide facts for advocacy in response to supportive actions but also reveal the fears, trauma and difficulties experienced so that family strengthening is regarded as a priority in overall child wellbeing.

DAY 1 – 16th October 2013

OPENING SESSIONS: INTRODUCTION AND SCENE SETTING

Session Chair: MacBain Mkandawire, Executive Director – YONECO, Malawi

Welcome Address: YONECO Board Chairperson: Prof. Dixie Maluwa Banda (Professor in Psychology and Education; Lecturer, University of Malawi)

Mr. Banda welcomed all international and local delegates to the conference. Followed by an opening prayer, He reiterated the Malawi Government's full support, adding that their representative, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, Dr. Mary Shaba, would officiate the conference, later in the day.

He added that YONECO's Child Protection efforts included parenting skills enhancement, especially because parents have the potential to be primary abusers of children. Many parents in Malawi, further lack knowledge on Child care and development: he gave the analogy that it is common for many parents, not knowing about Right of a child to play, often restrict children from play, for fear that they would get their clothes dirty. Consequently stakeholders need to concert their efforts in the area of parenting. Each should urge their respective Governments to allocate more resources for parenting.

Introductions/ Remarks: PAN Steering Committee Chairperson: Ms. Julia Starck, Teen Parenting Program Manager: The Parent Centre; Cape Town South Africa.

Ms. Starck appreciated the PS for committing to come to the opening, despite her busy schedule. She further welcomed all delegates to the second conference, and led each in introducing themselves: who they were, country they represented and where they worked.

She also presented the profile and milestones of PAN from 2008 to the present day.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT (MALAWI): Speech by Director of Child Development, By Mr. Kalanda

Mr. Kalanda thanked all international delegates for coming to the parenting conference. He appreciated the role YONECO has played in organizing the conference. Thanking the PS for her presence, he further highlighted that Malawi Government had a parenting handbook, but which

needed revising and updating, to facilitate intensification of Family strengthening programs for locals.

Legal issues: He started by emphasizing that Malawian's need to reflect on their legal framework. The Malawi Government must prioritise birth registration and harmonize all the laws, so that are not contradictory. Further, there was need for reinforcing the laws, promoting access to contraception for youth (SRH) and Training in SRH.

Policy issues: Mr. Kalanda also highlighted that policy harmonization was also crucial; for example, the marriage age in Malawi being 15, with consent from parents, was contradictory to other laws and child rights. Interdependence of policies being key, along with capacity building on SRH for parents; awareness on parenting skills and rights were emphasized as important in strengthening the family unit. The way information is passed from service providers to children is not complete. Children need complete information.

He further added that the Ministry of Gender had inadequate funding which deprives allocations for other essential services. Whereas social issues, cultural issues, economic issues were government roles, they cannot work alone, and needed to collaborate with stakeholders, especially CSO's.

He added that the capacity and skills of people involved in developing the policies was critical; for example, he questioned whether chiefs had adequate capacity required to make bylaws as well as designing related interventions.

He also addressed the issue of implementation of the policies. He asked all to reflect on policy development, since enacting a policy alone cannot help to solve a problem. There was need to identify the root-causes and then come up with a policy that would address the issues.

Further, that the Government of Malawi needed to give children a voice, by increasing the age for marriage. Although many advocated for marriageable age for girls to be 18, he cautioned that most African girls, at this age, were not mature enough for marriage, as they would still be schooling!

Govt commends parenting programme

ORAMA
CHINAMULUNGU
STAFF WRITER

Government says it is the duty of both authorities and parents to ensure quality upbringing of children with to stimulate sustainable development in the country.

Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social welfare Mary Shawa said this on Wednesday when she opened the 2013 parenting conference in Mangochi under the theme 'Understanding Realities of Teenage Parenting: A special Focus on Adolescent Girls and Boys with Parenting Responsibilities'.

Shaba said government has passed a number of legislations to ensure children are protected.

She said parents must contribute towards the welfare of children by providing parental care,



Maluwa (C) delivering his speech

guidance and being open to the children on issues of sexuality.

"If children are not given correct information on issues of sexuality, they get misled by their peers and end up falling into problems of early parenthood," she said.

Speaking earlier, Youth Net and Counselling (Yoneco) board chairperson, Professor

Dixie Maluwa said the conference was set to strengthen focus on parenting issues.

"Every family with its habits, practices and routines is a child's first classroom. In most cases, for better or for worse parents are often a child's most influential and important teachers," said Maluwa.

The two-day long

conference was organised by Yoneco jointly with Parenting Network Africa (PAN).

This comes after the organisation sensitised parents in Mangochi and Machinga to parenting issues.

The delegates came from Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia, Botswana and Britain. ■

KEY NOTE ADDRESS: SECURING THE FUTURE OF THE NEXT GENERATION - THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS IN AFRICA

Remarks by the principle
secretary, Malawi
Dr. Mary Shaba, PS, Ministry of

Gender, Children and Social Welfare, Malawi Government reiterated that the 2nd pan-African conference has been organized at a time when Malawi is facing a lot of parenting skills-related challenges.

Children need to be told the truth about sex and their sexuality. Granted, her Ministry would revisit their parenting materials and revive the important programme. Gender issues would also be mainstreamed in the parenting programme as gender stereo-typing was engrained in many related platforms in Malawi.

As a result, misconceptions about sex, growth and development, pregnancy, drug abuse and sexuality would be demystified and clarified for all children in Malawi. Chiefs, being very influential in the Malawi context, were urged to assist in eliminating all harmful cultural practices which impeded

the development of children, and affected parenting skills' enhancement.

Figure 3: Feature story, By Nation Publications Limited, Malawi - (From R) Dr. Mary Shaba, PS, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, YONECO Board Chairperson: Prof. Dixie Maluwa Banda (Professor in Psychology and Education; Lecturer at The University of Malawi) and Director of Child Development, Mr. Kalanda.

Dr. Shaba further emphasized that the Government of Malawi, being

keen on issues of Youth and Children, had put in place, a Child Care Protection and Justice Act, Gender Act, OVC policy, ECD Policy and a Gender Policy. She however reiterated that there was need for affirmative action, and engagement of a reputable person to be the Chief Champion for children's issues.

She thanked all for participation, YONECO for hosting the conference, wishing all international delegates a safe stay in Malawi.

UNDERSTANDING THE REALITIES OF ADOLESCENTS WITH PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES: Session Chair: Trevor Davies, Executive Director, Africa Fatherhood Initiative, Zimbabwe

A summary of PAN Country Chapter activities on conference theme: Josephine Gitonga, PAN secretariat Program Manager, Kenya

Why the focus

- Adolescents consist of a significant %age of Africa's population
- Adolescent pregnancy is dangerous for both the mother and the child, contributing to high maternal and neonatal mortalities.
- Their development being at stake, potential to influence the future population and socio-economic trends of their respective countries is also at stake.
- Attainment of key MDG's depends on how well children and young people are able to access basic services for their development

Current PAN Country chapters

1. Uganda
2. Kenya

3. Tanzania
4. Ethiopia
5. Malawi
6. South Africa
7. Zimbabwe

Issues and Concerns

- The teenage pregnancy is a high risk factor for neonatal and maternal deaths
- Access to immediate/friendly services that would be critical for the wellbeing for both parent and child
- Extreme stigma that the teenage parents experience causing stress and related health concerns
- Return to school opportunity, access to reproductive health services and information largely not available to a majority.
- Breakdown of family ties, family attachment, many parents are not taking time to mould their children positively.
- High rates of backstreet abortions - obvious health risks
- Little or no mention of support for the wellbeing of their children-parenting skills
- Clear policy framework that supports families and provision of reproductive health information.
- Few, if any, positive mentors that they could identify with; Few young parents have successfully succeeded, despite being young parents.

Programs Available

- Mentorship programme: targeting children in child-headed households
- Livelihoods skills development, Social and financial empowerment programmes for the teenagers (Aflatoun & Aflateen).
- Peer support groups for young moms to socialise and build self-esteem: (online counselling service provided by Mom's support SA.)
- Life Skills programs aimed at building their self esteem and responsible decision making (In school life skills/outreach programs initiated by children - Firm Feet Foundation-Uganda)
- Counselling and reconciliation: teen mothers and their families-reunification and building relations after pregnancy.
- Teen Parent Programme: intervention programme to help them understand their responsibilities as parents, understand their children's developmental stages and making sure that they grow as responsible parents.

Main beneficiaries of the programs

Beneficiaries	% of organizations targeting the beneficiaries* ³
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediate family members of the teenagers with parenting responsibilities 	53%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teen (biological) mothers only 	27%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teen (biological) fathers only 	13%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teen (biological) fathers and mothers 	73%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Others: teens and young adults facing unplanned pregnancy, peers of the teenage mothers, sometimes the teenage fathers, Teachers especially in non-formal schools, Secondary caregivers. 	47%

Possible areas for focus

- Effective support to adolescents with parenting responsibilities must include country-specific social protection measures to strengthen community systems and safety nets.
- Focus on entire families not just youth/teen parent.
- Promotion of life and livelihood skills to young mothers and fathers especially those in the rural areas.
- Aggressive campaign on father /mother responsibility in parenting
- Care for babies when mothers and fathers are in schooling- social support systems
- Crisis response for immediate care when pregnant girls are rejected by family or without family; dire need for refuge/counselling and health support.
- Positive stories of successful young parents who have beaten the odds to be successful, despite teen pregnancy.

PLENARY

Question - Senior Chief Lukwa: How can we convince communities on the need for parenting skills?

Answer - Josephine Gitonga: PAN works with community leaders. PAN enhances information sharing, distributes materials and resources for orientating and broader capacity building of members, which promotes parenting skills' enhancement, and assisting in breaking harmful cultural practices. Chiefs should be trained in parenting skills, along with parents in Malawi. She reiterated the need to promote the positive African cultures which are currently being documented by PAN's Secretariat, to

³ *Organizations targeting more than one beneficiary

reinforce parenting skills. The presenter emphasized that this is a shared responsibility between the secretariat and its members who are organizations and individuals working with children and families.

Question – How can we advocate for Teen Parenting programs further in our communities? Is PAN enabling access to RHR (reproductive health) for teens with disabilities?

Answer - Josephine Gitonga: PAN Membership members are the ears on the ground... On RHR, We have no way forward yet...but there are pockets of programs among partners, although the issue persists!

Question: Actions to prevent teenage parenting?

Answer: Support from government, the 2013 pan-African conference; and PAN's 2013 the theme which is already having many highlight the issue. Positive family advocacy is also enabling prevention as parents parent more creatively; among PAN members as well as their government.

STRENGTHENING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS: Prof Dixie Maluwa - Banda, Board Chairperson, YONECO, Malawi

There are many ways to define a family, but they all have one common idea: caring. Whether a particular family is a nuclear family, a stepfamily, a single-parent family, or an empty-nest family, it usually consists of related people who care about each other. Regardless of type, all families also need to be nurtured and strengthened from time to time.

What Makes a Family Strong and Successful? There are at least five "L's" which contribute to strong family relationships.

1. **Learning:** Families are where we learn values, skills, and behavior. Strong families manage and control their learning experiences. They establish a pattern of home life. They select appropriate television programs. They guide their children into the world outside the home. They do not let social forces rule their family life.
2. **Loyalty:** Strong families have a sense of loyalty and devotion toward family members.
3. **Love:** Love is at the heart of the family.
4. **Leadership** is essential. Family members, usually the adults, must assume responsibility for leading the family.
5. **Laughter** is good family medicine. Humor is an escape valve for family tension. Through laughter we learn to see ourselves honestly and objectively.

Life Patterns of Strong Families

In studies conducted around the world several characteristics of strong families were found. These qualities are:

- **Commitment.** Members of strong families are devoted to the well-being and happiness of the other members. They value family unity.
- **Appreciation.** Members of strong families show and talk about their appreciation for one another. Why we work so hard in life is not so much motivation by money, power, or position; but the desire to feel appreciated.
- **Communication.** Members of strong families work at developing good communication skills and spend a lot of time talking with each other. They talk about the small, trivial things as well as the deep, important issues of life.
- **Time together.** Strong families spend time – quality time in large quantities –with each other. Some families may say, "We don't spend much time together as a whole family, but what little time we are together is quality time."
- **Spiritual wellness.** Whether they attend formal religious services or ceremonies or not, strong family members have a sense of a greater good or power in life, and that belief gives them strength and purpose.
- **Coping ability.** Members of strong families are able to view stress or crisis as an opportunity to grow and learn. They have good coping skills.

Conclusion

- Although each of the six characteristics of strong families is important in and of itself; All six qualities have to interact, overlap, connect, and reinforce each other in complex ways that form a net of strength in families.
- **Every family, with its habits, practices and routines, is every child's first classroom.** Mothers and fathers are every child's first teachers.
- In most cases, for better or for worse, parents are often a child's most important and most influential teachers.

Plenary

Delegates thanked the presenter for a good presentation especially on the 6 steps of effective parenting. In response, Professor Banda emphasized that if all parents followed the 6 steps, they would continually improve their parenting skills. Delegates appreciated his analogies too, which can be useful to parents, reiterating that children need care, love, affection, communication and attention, consistently, regardless of whether the parent is tired, or too busy.

Context from a rural set up: Early marriages, Teenage parents (Issues and concerns): Mary Makhoha, Executive Director, REEP (Rural Economic Empowerment Program), Kenya.



Experiences from Rural (Western Kenya) Setting

Factors that lead to children becoming parents

- * Orphan hood.
- * Child pregnancy
- * Puberty
- * Experimenting sex
- * Lack of information on protection and prevention.
- * Trans generational sex
- * Sex with many partners
- * Peer pressure.
- * Socialization.
- * Cultural factors.
- * Child Marriage
- * Compensation of dead or barren wives.
- * Forced marriages to offset financial obligations.
- * Forced marriages after girls get pregnant either to the responsible men or to widowers or to polygamous men.
- * Poverty.

Factors leading to early fatherhood

- * Male circumcision
- * Construction of the boy's house- ISIMBA
- * Peer pressure
- * Heroism associated with many girlfriends.
- * Boys are socialized to be aggressive
- * Girls are socialized to be passive.
- * Cultural pressure/expectation

CHALLENGES:

- * Cultural factors are hard to break.
- * Child to child pregnancies and marriages are rampant.
- * Parents/adults are sometimes in support of child marriages.
- * The magnitude of the problem is too high compared to resources.
- * Sometimes victims disappear with no trace.

Successes due to REEP's Intervention

- * Over 2000 girls rescued from child marriages.
- * Over 300 people trained in skillful parenting.
- * 62 girls taken back to school after being rescued from marriage.
- * 107 girls go back to school after child birth.
- * 6 teachers sacked for impregnating pupils.
- * 34 child rights clubs formed in primary schools.
- * Four documentaries on child pregnancies and marriages published.

Mary reiterated that in rural western Kenya (located at the Kenya-Uganda border), her target communities predisposed to borderline issues including trafficking, Child prostitution by truck drivers, and intergenerational sex.

As boys from the Luhya community are initiated, a part of the traditional male circumcision process, the rite of passage prompts them to experiment with multiple sexual partners to explore their manhood – a harmful tradition which may expose the boy-child to HIV/AIDS and sexual abuse by older women. Among the Luhya, a boy who has undergone medical circumcision is viewed as weak, and is often ridiculed.

The presenter further added Western Kenya is in dire need for SRH awareness, culture blinds many: they neither use protection (condom) despite having multiple sexual partners; nor use family planning methods. Further, traditionally, after male circumcision, there was a belief that the men have permanent condoms; thus the communities are facing an increase in HIV/AIDS and cervical cancer. REEP is advocating for family planning and safe sex practices in the community.

Further, Mary explained that despite men and boys being culprits and perpetrators of sexual violence, girls and women in her target communities are not socialised to be in charge of their sexuality. Consequently, girls are easily raped, and forced into early marriage.

The presenter added that chiefs, in Western Kenya who are part of the local administration, are often also the perpetrators of child abuse. However, with the ongoing capacity building, there is positive change. The presenter explained that even religious leaders abuse children.

Plenary

Question: Does Kenya have legislations which protect children?

Answer: Mary Makhoha explained that although Kenya has a Child Right Act, Sexual Offences Act and has ratified other related international instruments, there is little enforcement, especially in rural areas. The laws define the age of marriage, to protect the girl child in Kenya? These are good laws, but whose implementation is lax.

Question: What is the role of the church? How have you involved the church or spiritual leaders?

Answer: Mary Makhoha explained that the Church has, for far too long, shied away from “talking to children”, on sexuality, and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), hence do not direct young people to be responsible and chaste. Many suggest anointing them instead, hoping to transform them into responsible adults, by proxy. Consequently, Mary added, even child abuse is ‘condoned’, as they preach forgiveness, with perpetrators not being taken to court. She added that REEP are encouraging the church leaders to go deeper, to help prevent the youths’ hormones from raging all over. REEP is also training, on child protection, pastors, Sunday school teachers and all influential leaders in the church.

Question: A Malawian delegate: How does the Kenyan Government help rehabilitate or shelter the girls since in Malawi there is no centre to house and rehabilitate children and it becomes very challenging to handle cases of teen pregnancy and parenting?

Answer: Government is not supportive. In Western Kenya, there is only one rehabilitation centre, which is very far and many in the community have not heard of it. Thus, rehabilitating the girls is still quite a challenge.

Question: Are there rescue structures for REEP to protect the rescued children of the teen parents?

Answer: Mary responded by emphasizing that for REEP it had been very hard to rescue the teen parents; But that in response, REEP has just developed a rescue centre.

Question: How do you reconcile pregnant teens in the society or immediate family?

Answer: Talking about it and sharing. Sometimes REEP hosts them in their own homes (though illegal) or involve their parents to help.

Question: How is REEP changing negative culture or challenging it?

Answer: Among the Marachi council of elders, for example, there has never been a woman represented. Mary has challenged the norm over the years, and is now a member, alongside several other women, where they are influencing the cultural norms, protecting girls and women.

DAY 2 – 17th October 2013

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RECAP OF DAY 1 PROCEEDINGS: Nellie Masamba – Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, Malawi

Nellie led the meeting and plenary followed thereafter.

Programs and services in response and support of families, experiences from African initiatives: Session Chair - Ronnie Anika - Area Programme Manager; (UPACLED)

Experiences from the Teen parenting program: Julia Starck; Teen parenting program manager; The Parent Centre, South Africa

Aims

- To prevent child abuse and neglect
- To teach effective, positive parenting skills
- To model supportive parent-child relationships

The Teen Parenting Programme: For whom is the programme run?



- Teenage Biological mothers and fathers
- Teenage Care-givers
- 23 years' olds and younger
- Voluntary inclusion
- Committed to completing the programme

Where is the programme run?

- In community-based venues for teenagers who have left school as a result of pregnancy
- In schools for learners who are biological parents and care-givers

How do we recruit participants?

- Liaison with clinics and clinic talks
- Community events



N:B - Input sessions cover both parenting skills and life skills.

What do WORKSHOP sessions look like?

- Facilitators arrive well-prepared
- Experiential learning through participation in ice-breakers, exercises, and games
- Sharing of experiences, ideas, issues, challenges and solutions through small, and large group discussions.
- Opportunities for building healthy supportive relationships through peer and facilitator support
- Opportunities for modelling positive parent-child relationships based on the facilitator-participant relationship
- Refreshments are served!
- Certificate Presentation

2009/2010 External Evaluation

Better understanding of baby/ children's needs and feelings

"What helped me most about this course, is that I know better how to look after my own child. I know what to do when my child cries, I can now handle that more easily. I will talk to her and ask her why she is crying. Before, I used to hit my child if she cried out of the blue, if I did not see a reason why she was crying."

Respect for self and others

"I personally didn't have respect for others at home, but now I do understand and have more respect for the older people. We can discuss these things with full respect."



Skilful parenting: Supporting adolescent parent awareness of new value based possibilities that shape future choices and actions towards their wellbeing and those of their children; Beatrice Ogutu, Regional Program Manager ICS Investing in Children and their Societies) Africa Regional Program

About ICS

www.icsafrica.org

Vision: People around the world are capable and willing to ensure the wellbeing of all children and to drive their own change.

Three programmatic cornerstones: Social business; Skilful parenting and Child protection systems

Adolescence in perspective

- Defined as the period between childhood and maturity extending from 14-25 years in males and 12-21 years in females.
- A period of active physical, social, sexual and emotional growth and development
- Relationships between parents and adolescents/teenagers can be rewarding, exhausting, fun, embarrassing, volatile e.t.c
- Many parents less understand this “tough period” as adolescents occasionally behave in impulsive, irrational and dangerous behaviour and most of the time it seems that the adolescents do not fully understand/consider the consequences of their actions.

- The *part of the brain that controls reasoning and helps us think before we act in still under development in adolescents* - this explains why at some point they may act on impulse, misread/misinterpret situations, engage in risky behavior and less likely to think before action or consider the consequences of actions
- Adolescents have a good antenna of knowing whether you are judging, looking down upon them e.t.c
- Adolescents differ from adults in the way they behave, solve problems and make decisions
- Many at times they are characterized by stream thinking when a problem occurs
- Adolescents have a different view of the world...

Issues taken into account in the Skilful parenting programme

- Unplanned pregnancies: Many don't plan to get pregnant, but they do
- Parenting (although rewarding) also poses challenges to adult parents, how much more therefore for adolescents...
- Common reactions include anger, denial and guilt (to the girl and her family, and mostly to the father and his family if he is also young).
- In some cases, they may not want their babies.
- Adolescents with parenting responsibilities are usually shunned, ridiculed and therefore they tend to shy away from others and supportive services
- They are depressed, anxious and fear what the future holds
- May resort into abortion
- Low self esteem
- Children born are susceptible to child abuse and neglect
- In some cases, they may see it as an achievement and not recognise the responsibilities of parenthood
- If nothing is done, another pregnancy may soon follow
- Lack of friendly and accessible health and maternal care services
- Usually less focus and blame to the man/boy responsible

ICS' skilful parenting approach

- ICS believes that parents need to feel the 'power to parent' to change the future of their children in a positive way. By working with them on how to strengthen their parenting role, the skilful parenting programme adds to prevent child abuse, neglect and family disintegration.
- The programme is build upon the evidence based understanding that changes in parenting can be only achieved through planned behaviour change

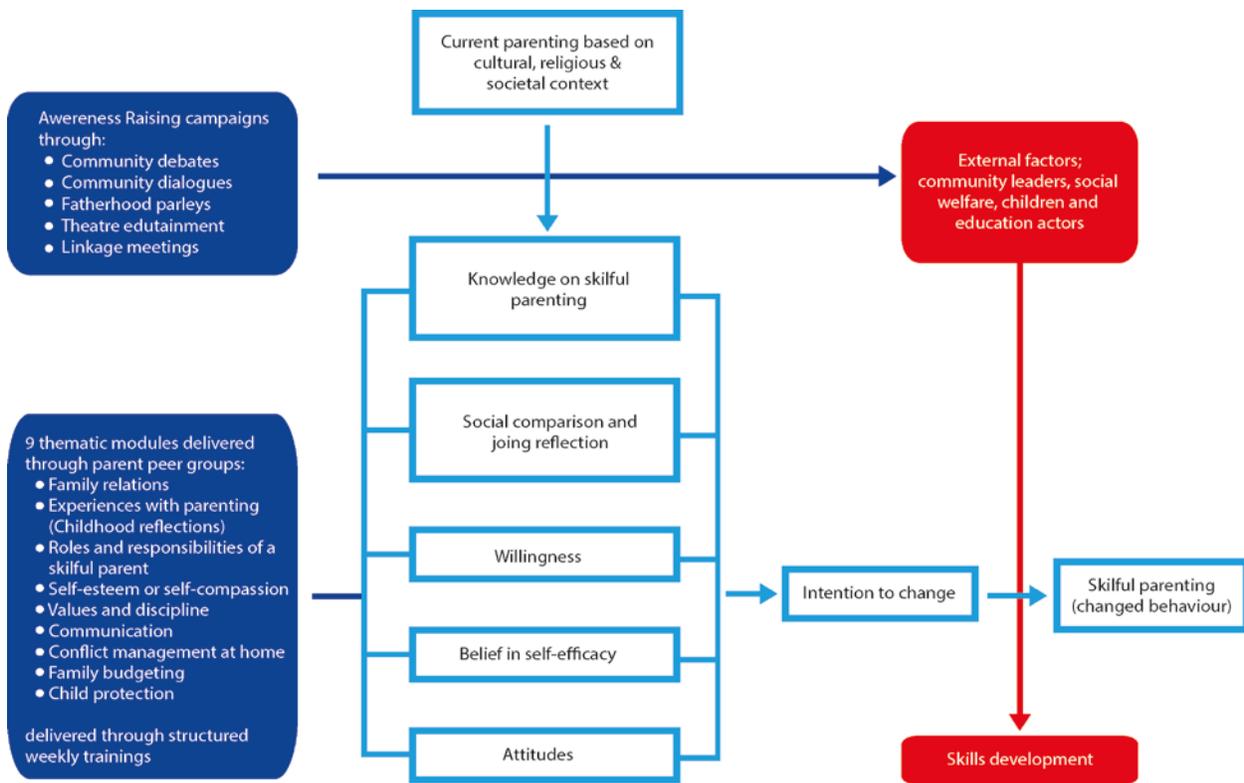


figure 1

Strengthening families through reproductive health initiatives –Experience from various Families Matter programs; Roy Meoly; Manager HIV & AIDS Programs; International Rescue Committee (IRC)



Families Matter! Program (FMP) Implementation

- Adaptation of 'Parents Matter' to FMP.
- Target group & recruitment strategies
- Aim: Enhance protective parenting skills and practices including effective parent-child communication about sexuality and sexual risk reduction.
- Objectives of FMP.

FMP Sessions

- Session 1: Getting to know you and steps to understanding your child
Session 2: Effective Parenting
Session 3: Parents role in Sexuality Education
Session 4: Information to increase comfort and skills in discussing Sexuality issues
Session 5: Understanding Child Sexual Abuse (new)
Session 6: Discussing Sexuality and Handling Peer Pressure

Addressing Teenage Parenting

- Increased knowledge for both parents and adolescents.
- Effective parenting skills and enhanced parent – child communication on sexuality and sexual risks.
- Delaying sexual debut, promoting abstinence and Discussions on safer sex options including use of condoms
- Enhanced Refusal & Negotiation skills

Successes to date

- Positive community acceptance and goodwill of the EBI's especially FMP
- 11,603 parents and 13,004 children reached with FMP
- 14,024 youth reached with the HCBF Program
- IRC's participation in the 2012 national review of the HC & FMP curricula.

Challenges

- High beneficiaries expectations
- Youth mobilization and recruitment
- Implementation Costs

Lessons learnt

- Proper Community entry & Mobilization.
- Staffing is the key to EBI Implementation. Training, capacity building & cross – training of facilitators.
- Biomedical services integration
- Trendy interventions are popular e.g. SHUGA, a popular TV series.

PLENARY

IRC

- Back to school policy for teen mothers should be encouraged across the board by IRC, in the counties they operate. The Family Matter! programme has further improved relationship among the father, mother and children.
- To encourage the teen parents to go back to school the organization provides: school materials and counseling.
- There is SHUGA episodes, which youths watch.
- There is mobilization

Clarification on Challenges (IRC)

- Slow uptake by the Government.
- The programme is structured hence requires a lot of resource like the training of facilitators lasts for 7 weeks and the facilitators has to be a pair (male and female).
- The parenting facilitators need to be motivated.
- Need for more capacity building.
- The evaluation of the programme was done with positive results.

Question: How are older teens and teen mothers being targeted, to prevent or stop teen pregnancies?

Response: Teen mothers face a lot of challenges like stigma and thus, need a lot of encouragement. Many other players in the society are ONLY concentrating on making sure that girls DON'T get pregnant; but there is also need to focus on *reaching out to girls who already have children*.

Question: Are girls with disabilities involved during parenting training?

Response: The programmes have not really looked at girls with disabilities per se. The interventions incorporate them in groups of other young people who are not physically challenged.

Question: Cite the impact, challenges and the lessons learnt from parenting programmes.

Response: *Impact:*

- Improved relationships between spouses;
- improved commitment at household level
- In Kenya, all evaluations were positive
- Improved communication

Lessons

- Youths of today need interesting and attractive training sessions.
- Some teens are learning of the difficulties of parenting from their fellow teens who have children.
- Need to rely on staff and invest in them

Challenges

- Evidence-based interventions take a lot of time.
- Evidence-based interventions also need a lot of resources.

***PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN RESPONSE AND SUPPORT OF FAMILIES:
Session chair, Tewodros Belay, Director, OVC Net Ethiopia***

**Supporting Teen Mothers to Cope in Schools - Experience from Botswana
School: Christina Hambira, Botswana**

Teens Talk is a club concerned with pregnant teenagers and teenage parents in schools. The club was incepted to address the gap created by orphan-hood due to HIV/AIDS and other socio-economic challenges as contributory factors to teen-parenthood. It creates a learning environment that is conducive for girls and boys by empowering them with life skills, and parenting. Also, the club:

- Promotes gender equality and empowers the girl-child in order to eliminate disparity in primary and secondary schools.
- Helps teenage mothers in schools to cope with challenges they face during their schooling
- Has grown to accommodate girls who are not affected, but are interested.
- The club is bringing boys on board. Boys are classmates, fathers, brothers or even neighbours, thus, they need to know the challenges faced by these girls and help fight stigmatization, creating a healthy learning environment for them.
- Other stakeholders such as social workers, nurses and parents are expected to be part of this club. The chair-person of the PTA is a member at a club.

Ms. Hambira highlighted that statistics in their school, in 2012, showed that they had about 20 known cases of teenage mothers, while in 2013, they so far have 35. This is a clear sign that teen pregnancy is a “pandemic”, and that the school is therefore trying to address its root-causes through the Teens Talk club.

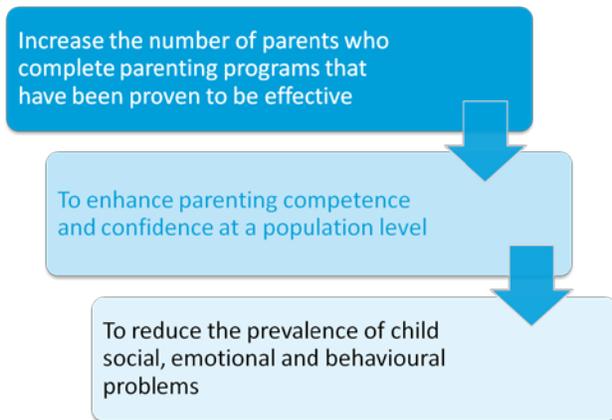
She highlighted the Challenges that they are facing as

- Low funding
- Low enrolment into the programme
- Need to have programme in all the schools
- Need for more capacity building.
- It is hard for lactating and pregnant mothers to attend classes as their peers laugh at them

**Strengthening Families through Family Based Interventions: Jacquie Brown,
Implementation Specialist; Triple P International, Canada**

The Triple P System: Flexible system of parenting and family support; that is Evidence-based. It's a Prevention / early intervention approach, with five intervention levels of increasing intensity. Further uses the Principle of minimal sufficiency and has a Multidisciplinary focus.

The Challenge



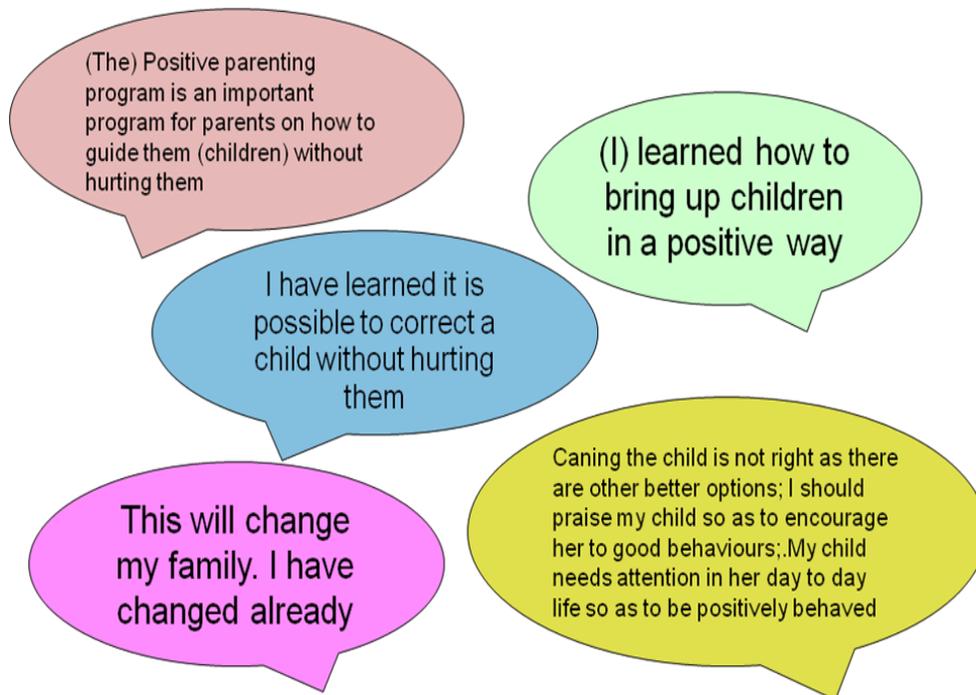
What makes Triple P different?

- A population health model of parenting intervention
 - Suite of evidence based programs not a single program from infancy through to adolescence
- 5 levels, 4 delivery modalities
- Blends universal and targeted programs
 - Uses self regulatory framework

Project Structure – a model for Majority World

- Cultural Acceptability Study of strategies
- Level 4 Group Triple P delivered to at least 2 cohorts of parents
- Train local practitioners to deliver the programme to additional groups of parents
- Support the development of a Parenting Education Advisory Network to promote advocacy, planning and sustainability
- *For consideration: Engage PhD students to conduct an RCT with the groups provided by the local practitioners*

What Kenyan parents said about Group Triple P



The Challenge of Teen Parenthood: An Exploration of Causes, Challenges and Impacts on Mother and Child: Dr Roy Hauya, Executive Director, National Examinations Board (MANEB)

Concentration on the girl-child only, and not the boy, is counteractive. The boys are also negatively affected. The presentation is not really a narrative but an outline of comments from experts, and statistics on how girls are affected as a result of early motherhood.

Dr. Hauya's presentation quoted various people tackling the following issues:

- How appropriate are parenting programmes?
- The economic, social and cultural forces
- Information on growth and development
- Parental pressure
- Are we responding to the data?
- How do we understand our children
- Insecurity and lack of protection
- Who makes the girls pregnant? And are these people targeted?
- Is there support? What is the attitude like?
- What are we doing with fathers?

Impact

- Social, economic, education and health.
- There are girls who pass with good grades as high as 9 points but are not selected to join the University. What supportive mechanisms can be put in place for such girls? Dr. Hauya explained that the girls need holistic interventions such as linking them with various organisations.
- A parent needs to teach a child what s/he is supposed to do, with reasons.
- In modern times, children should be handled with skill, when there is a lot of information exposed to them through various media such as the internet and television. Parents to provide adequate information; build good relationships and address the questions and needs of children.

PLENARY: Questions to Christina Hambira, Jacquie Brown and Dr. Roy Hauya

Question: What mechanisms could be put in place to prevent teen mothers from falling pregnant again?

Responses:

- Involve all people in the community.
- Refer the girls to institutions that can help them, depending on their needs or problem, or issue they have. Although organizations should focus on the issues they specify in, they ought to stop thinking that an individual organization can have all the solutions, but rather collaborate with other players who are part of the solution.

Question: How can parents cope with the global village where there are so many alternative and sometimes very negative sources of information?

Responses:

- Build a parent-child relationship where they can talk. Clear away tension, and help children trust their parents.
- Parents need to be interested in what their children are interested in. That is how best, parents can help their children effectively.
- Children need to be told in advance about the risks of mass media such as the TV: They should develop a strong identity that can be a self-regulatory mechanism in future.

Question: What are the mechanisms that you put in place to prevent teens from getting pregnant?

Responses:

- In Botswana, abstinence and issues of sexuality are taught to girls (who are not mothers) in established clubs, and the teen girls learn a lot from the clubs, and are well-prepared to behave responsibly.
- Parents need to be in charge. Children need to know, from a tender age, that there are things their parents can allow and cannot. However, the children also need to know the reasons why.
- Parents are supposed to strike a balance between being permissive and authoritative in their parenting approaches.

Question: What are the roles that have been put in place to protect girls and their babies, and make the fathers take responsibility?

- In Kenya, the *back to school policy* facilitates procedures for pregnant girls to follow before they leave school and upon returning to school, after delivery. There is however, need to bring on board players in the society, to corporately fully understand and address the challenge.

MenCare as a Global Fatherhood Campaign: Jean Mari, Mencare, South Africa

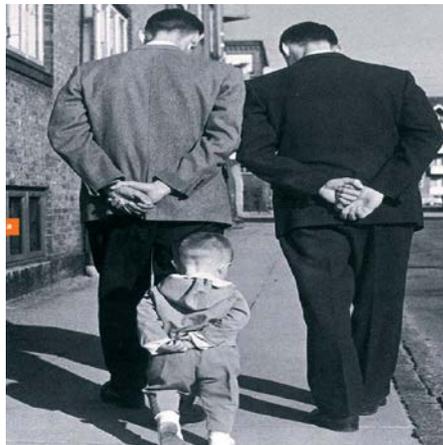


MenCare, a Global Fatherhood Campaign, is coordinated by Promundo, Sonke Gender Justice (Sonke) and the MenEngage Alliance (MenEngage); it is an effort to promote men's involvement as fathers and caregivers.

Approximately four out of five men will be fathers at some point in their lives; and nearly all men have some connection to children as stepfathers, brothers, uncles, grandfathers, teachers, mentors, coaches or simply as friends.

An overwhelming amount of evidence confirms that engaged, responsive fatherhood and men's participation in their children's lives have positive effects for women, children and the men themselves; these benefits include, among others, gender equality, women's empowerment and non-violence.

We often hear of the intergenerational transfer of violence, where perpetrators of violence are likely to have witnessed violence as a child. It is less often that we hear of the intergenerational transfer of caring behaviors.



The 3 P's of fatherhood

PRESENCE:

Be Involved from the Start
Provide an Education.
At Home and at School.
Show it, Be Proud
Get Involved in Your Child's Health

PARTNER SUPPORT

Share the Care Work, and Get Good at It
Teach Equality and Respect.
Support and Respect the Child's Mother

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

Raise Without Violence.
Play. Laugh.
Be Brave. Show Affection.

Father's Groups: When a father is expecting a child, he is more open to change. Connection during infancy = Connection for life. There can never be a substitute for a biological parent. Children are mostly left with their caregivers, especially for the situation of working mothers; there is need to intervene in such cases. Adoption should also be considered, where children are being abused by their caregivers.

Advocacy for Responsible Fatherhood - Engaging Teen Fathers: Trevor Davies, African Fatherhood Initiative

Responsible fathering means:

- establishing paternity;
- being present in the child's life (even if divorced or unmarried);
- sharing economic support; and
- being personally involved in the child's life in collaboration with the mother.

(HSRC Fatherhood Project 2007)

Adolescent pregnancy is dangerous for the mother and child

Although adolescents aged 10-19 years account for 11% of all births worldwide, they account for 23% of the overall burden of disease (disability- adjusted life years) due to pregnancy and childbirth. Stillbirths and death in the first week of life are 50% higher among babies born to mothers younger than 20 years than among babies born to mothers 20-29 years old.

Deaths during the first month of life are 50-100% more frequent if the mother is an adolescent versus older, and the younger the mother, the higher the risk.

Adolescent pregnancy adversely affects communities: Many girls who become pregnant have to leave school. This has long-term implications for them as individuals, their families and communities. Studies have shown that delaying adolescent births could significantly lower population growth rates, potentially generating broad economic and social benefits, in addition to improving the health of adolescents.

Society's Views of Teenage Fathers: Society frequently sees teenage fathers in a negative light, labelling them as irresponsible, immature and delinquent. However, in as much as some fathers

endeavour to be involved in the lives of their children, they cite a variety of challenges that hinder their transition to responsible fatherhood. These include lack of economic support, low educational attainment, unemployment, and immaturity.

The situation of teenage/child caregivers in child headed families. David Mugawe, Executive Director, The Africhild Centre

- The number of teenage/child headed households is on the increase...in some countries it is over 30%.
- The teenage/child headed households are no longer categorized as an emerging form of family; but it is a sad reality today.
- Whereas in the 1990s and the early 2000s there was an increased concern for child headed households; in the recent past interventions to mitigate the plight of child headed households have reduced.

Major Causes:

- a. HIV and AIDS
- b. Conflict and Civil War

Status of teenage/child headed households in Africa

- Teenage/child headed households are absent from most policy documents in the majority of African countries.
- Often they are mentioned in passing or categorised as Orphans and Vulnerable Children.
- Whereas that is justifiable, it eludes strategic interventions to address the plight of child headed households.

What is their plight?

- Children/teenagers are becoming caregivers and playing the role of parents at an age when they themselves are in need of care and protection.
- At this tender, the children/teenagers are not emotionally ready to play this role.
- Whereas some children/teenagers are resilient, this comes at the expense of them enjoying their childhood.
- These children have been denied the actualization of their life's dream.
- These children are often not in a position to adequately provide for the livelihood of their siblings. Therefore their survival and social-economic situation of these families is dire.
- Whereas there have been efforts from "Good Samaritans" these have been one off and not sustained interventions.
- Protection still remains a major issue. These children are vulnerable to all forms of abuse and violence; including sexual, physical and psychological.
- The plight of child headed households is often worsened when the caregivers get married. This is more so for the girls. These are often married off at an early age.
- There is need for a clear and comprehensive policy and legal framework that addresses and caters for the social-economic and protection needs of care givers as well as the children.
- Early marriage: In addition to being a form of abuse and violation of the children's rights it takes away their right to childhood
- Due to the pressure of care giving some of the teen caregivers have abandoned their siblings because they cannot cope

- Some have ended up being vulnerable to risky behaviour, such as drugs, alcohol, early marriage, sex, life on the streets, etc.
- Consequences of early marriage...fistula, birth complications, lack of parenting skills.

Recommendations

- Legal and Policy Framework (Protects)
- Livelihood Skills (Equips)
- Social Welfare System (Provides)

The Role of Fathers in Family Strengthening: Tawanda Makusha, Human Science Research Council South Africa

Teenage fatherhood: Enabling factors and barriers

- Negative consequences associated with early parenting well documented
- Research primarily focusing on teenage mothers
- Studies often neglect young fathers
- The need for engaging young fathers is essential
- Father absence in South Africa very high
 - Consequences on household poverty
 - Poor child outcomes
 - Lack of positive male role models
- Criminal involvement amongst young men

Interventions for young fathers

- Appreciate the barriers to young fathers' involvement
- Create opportunities for young father-child contact and communication
- Address structural and societal factors that prevent young men from being involved in their children's lives
- Government and civil society organisations to introduce programmes encouraging and enabling more young father involvement
- Young fathers need to be educated, trained and employed
- Choice of continuing with school or finding employment?
- Young fathers need to have a secure livelihood, as well as retain jobs
- Education and earning ability, especially in low socio-economic settings will open doors for young fathers to be involved in their children's lives
- Arrangements that encourage father-child co-residency need to be put in place even if it is occasionally

Plenary

There are many migrants in South Africa. Although most men migrate to cities, they still take their fatherhood roles seriously. There are also male role models who take over the role of fathering, when biological fathers are not around.

Question: With same sex marriages, is adoption allowed?

Response: Yes, some are the biological fathers hence they are trained in parenting skills. Research

has shown that it is not always that children from these families end up being homosexuals themselves.

Question: What is the implication of focusing on couples?

Response: Nowadays, practitioners ought to include absentee mothers, and not absent fathers only. Mencare South Africa conducts parenting sessions for pregnant women when they are pregnant and they also contact their spouses. The challenge is that some men go to work throughout the week. They also conduct other sessions for the couple, after delivery of the child. Fathers, as well as mothers, need to share the responsibility of parenting their children.

Question: Why do parenting programmes in South Africa mainly centre on community instead of focusing on households?

Response: A child belongs to a community as they are supported by uncles, aunts, teachers, community leaders, among others. Further, high rates of divorce and some fathers moving away to work, necessitates that other men assume the role of advising children on behalf of their fathers.

When children are raised by others, other than biological parents, busy parents should make sure children are growing up in a positive environment; especially in situations where the care giving is entrusted in the hands of nannies or house-helpers. Monitoring on how adopted children are being raised is very minimal, and thus should be addressed.

Question: What are the barriers to children being raised up by men?

- Men should come out of their 'closets'; shying away, they only support their partners when inside their homes. This is mainly rooted in the way men are brought up in African societies.
- Policies need to focus on issues like family breakdown.
- Expectations of fatherhood by the society have been quite low. Each Africa society ought to raise the bar accordingly.

A Regional Review of Existing Policies and Programmes that support for Adolescents with Parenting Responsibilities: Dr. Teresa Bitengo, Kenyatta University, Kenya

Desk review of literature was the main method used to gather information on policies, programs, services and research findings from institutions, organizations and Governments of targeted countries. The Literature review has a PAN regional perspective focusing on: Kenya, Namibia, Ethiopia, Malawi, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Current estimates show that people aged 24 years old or younger make up nearly half of the world's 7 billion population with 1.2 billion of them aged between 10 and 19 years⁴. These numbers are still rapidly growing especially in developing countries with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for the largest proportion of the adolescent youth.

Challenges Adolescents with Parenting Responsibilities Face

Adolescent parenthood is closely associated with low educational achievements, increased dependence on governmental support by the adolescent parent, increased infant mortality and low

⁴ UNFPA 2011 pg 10

birth weight. Such outcomes often lead to increased societal expenditure and a major cause of perpetual cycle of poverty. The adolescent parent therefore experiences challenges related to family, community and school as outlined below:

Challenges related to the community

- Being looked down upon by members of their communities as girls who are immoral especially when they become pregnant.
- Other parents discourage the girl's parents not to waste resources in taking a girl who has given birth back to school.
- Other parents discourage their daughters not to relate to a girl who has given birth. Thus forcing adolescent mothers to lead isolated lives.

Challenges related to the family

- Adolescent girls after giving birth sometimes do not get a person to take care of their babies in order to go back to school. Since their mothers may be busy in vending for their families.
- Other girls drop out of school after becoming pregnant.
- Some parents marry off their daughters once they become pregnant/after giving birth to avoid the shame to their families.

Challenges related to school

- Some students make fun of adolescent mothers when they return back to school.
- Other girls avoid the company of adolescent mothers while in school.
- Some teachers make negative comments with regard to adolescent mothers.

Recommendations

Recommendations on Re-admission to School of Adolescents with Parenting Responsibilities

- Despite implementation of the re-admission policy for teenage mothers across many African countries, no follow up studies have been conducted to examine whether re-admitted students successfully complete their studies. Further, there are no documented challenges that learners readmitted face after resuming their studies. Little effort has been made to examine the impact of the re-entry policies on curbing the problem of teenage pregnancy especially at school level. There is therefore need for a study to examine, the effectiveness of the readmission policy, establish whether after readmission students complete their studies successfully, the challenges experienced by readmitted adolescent parents and measures put in place to ensure future pregnancies are prevented.
- The different stakeholders in education need to sensitize the general public on the importance of allowing adolescents who drop out of school a second chance in education by supporting the school re-entry legislations. This should also include sensitizing the public against stigmatizing adolescent girls who drop out of school due to pregnancies. This therefore calls for programs that can sensitize children in schools and community members to accept adolescents who become parents at a tender age.

Recommendation on Psychosocial Support for Adolescents with Parenting Responsibilities

- Literature revealed that adolescents who assume parenting responsibilities when their parents are terminally ill or when they die receive psychosocial support. However, this is not the case for adolescents who are parents for their own children. There is need therefore for programs that provide psychosocial support services for adolescent parents in the different countries.

Recommendation on Child Care Skill for Adolescents with Parenting Responsibilities

- The World Health Organization (WHO) advocates for maternal care to be extended to child care skills, this was found to be missing especially for adolescent parents who give birth at a tender age. In almost all the countries under review, there were no support services for adolescents with parenting responsibilities with regard to support on child care skills. There is need therefore to have programs that target providing child care skills for adolescents with parenting responsibilities especially adolescent mothers.
- Investing on training adolescents with parental responsibilities with child care skills is essential in promoting the general welfare and survival of children in their custody. Hence, governments and nongovernmental organizations should target training adolescents with parental responsibilities with child care skills.

Recommendation on Policies on Health Care for Adolescents with Parenting Responsibilities

- Although policies on adolescents' reproductive health exist, there are no specific references made with regard to adolescents with parenting responsibilities' health. There is need therefore to have policy guidelines that address the health needs for adolescents with parenting responsibilities.
- There is need for a research to establish the level of implementation of health care services targeting adolescents with parenting responsibilities with a view of ascertaining if hard to reach adolescents are benefitting from the services. The study should also establish the extent to which adolescents with parenting responsibilities are satisfied with the health services provided. Given the stigma associated with adolescent parenthood, it would be essential to examine the extent to which the adolescent parents are free to seek medical assistance from health care institutions. In order to improve adolescent and youth reproductive policies to make them responsive to the challenges faced by adolescents, it is essential to examine the specific health challenges faced by adolescents with parenting responsibilities.

Recommendations for programming for Adolescents with Parenting Responsibilities

- For effective programming for this group of the youth, there is need to document the statistics of adolescents with parental responsibilities in each country. Programs focusing on adolescents with parental responsibilities should include adolescent boys with parenting responsibilities as they have been left out in most of the available programs.

PENARY

- Programming for teens with parenting responsibilities should include issues of disabilities. Teens living with disabilities, who have parenting responsibilities, also need to be considered in the review.

WAY FORWARD

Sum Up of Issues by Dr David Mugawe, ED, Africhild Centre

- Limited documentation on parenting in Africa. There is need for empirical-based data.
- Parenting programmes need to go beyond the mother and include fathers, children and young adults; preparing them for the parenting role.

- Mentorship - Children lack distinguished role models.
- Give children a voice so that they can help solve their problems, and at the same time build their self-esteem.
- Some cultures and religious practices are bad for children
- There is need for parenting education
- Poverty also affects children, those who are born in needy families end up begging in the streets. Thus, there is need for proper welfare structures to support them.
- Gender stereotypes, aspirations culture and religion affect parenting.
- Need to make use of the cultural and religious leaders to promote parenting.
- Need to have social welfare programmes which will address parenting issues.
- Parents need to be equipped with knowledge and skills on how to handle delinquent children.
- Child protection, legal and social protection is key as a lot of children are abused either at school or at home. Parents to be a major source of protection. Parents to communicate to their children. Champions of parenting and child protection.
- Need to have harmonized laws on children/ child rights.
- Enforce Birth Registration.
- Children with disabilities should always be considered.

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**2nd pan-African Conference on Parenting 2013; 16 - 17 October, 2013; Sunbird Nkopola Lodge, Mangochi, Malawi
Report prepared by PAN Secretariat & YONECO**

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2nd pan-African Conference on Parenting 2013; 16 - 17 October, 2013; Sunbird Nkopola Lodge, Mangochi, Malawi
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MANGOCHI DECLARATION AND PLAN OF ACTION

MANGOCHI DECLARATION AND PLAN OF ACTION

David Mugawe (The AfriChild Centre)
and Naitore Gituma (SOS CV KENYA)

October 2013

At the *2nd Parenting in Africa Conference on Parenting*, held in Mangochi, Malawi at the Sunbird Nkopola Lodge on the 16th - 17th October 2013 by various actors in the field of Child rights amongst them Child Rights Advocates, Government Representatives, Human rights activists, Academia, Researchers Civil Society Organizations and the General membership of Parenting in Africa Network (PAN).



The AfriChild Centre



PREAMBLE

TAKING NOTE of our mandate drawn from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) to advocate for the rights of children by focusing on specific issues that affect African families.

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the PAN vision of “*A society where Children are Parented and Empowered to reach their Full Potential*”

ACKNOWLEDGING the realities of the increasing rate of teenage parenting in our communities and noting the need to get involved in remedial and counteractive measures.

BEARING IN MIND that teenage parents are children and the need to understand and support their rights and responsibilities is of paramount importance.

TAKING COGNIZANCE of the existence of International, Regional and National judicial and non-judicial mechanisms for individual and collective, symbolic, and the enormous challenges of catering for all aspects of adolescents with parenting responsibilities

CONCERNED that initiatives and strategies at the local, national, regional and international levels to ensure lessened teenage parenthood have not been effective from the perspectives of stakeholders involved and more needs to be done.

WE COMMIT ourselves to hereby address the priorities of Teenage parenting, children and other vulnerable groups in all points in the agenda of the Parenting in Africa theme and to ensure that there is due regard given to the teenagers in accordance to the Convention of the Rights of the Child as well as Principles of effective parenting, child growth and development.

WE ARDENTLY APPEAL to Governments, Stakeholders, Civil Society and International community to appropriately take charge of the issues of teenage parenting and accord budgets and resources for their implementation.

BEARING IN MIND that it is our sole responsibility to care for, guide and protect our children.

WE HERE BY OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING:

1) Research and Communication

- There is limited research on parenting programmes in Africa. What programmes exist, what have been the successes and what gaps exist. How do we respond to these gaps in the event that we were to effectively engage with the key stakeholders?
- There is limited dissemination of information concerning Parenting. It is limited in scope and also in languages. Whereas there is some information and knowledge available, this has not been widely disseminated. In light of this, parents are not informed or aware of lessons learnt with regards to parenting. We therefore need to develop strategic mechanisms for communication and dissemination of this information.
- Moreover, there is limitation on the scope and empirically evidence data. Thus more empirically evidence-based data is required for policy and advocacy.
- We need programmes that target young people and their teachers to educate them about the realities and risks in life. Prepare and expose the children on realities that are in existence.

2) Good Practices of Good parenting (positive parenting)

- It is evident that there are good practices that exist within our communities, countries, in Africa and globally. But these have not been widely shared and PAN comes in as a network to provide a platform for dialogue and information sharing. The question therefore posed is how are we contributing to PAN, and to ensuring that we create more forums for dialogue and strengthen existing networks and partnerships?

3) Mentorship

- Children lack constructive/distinguished role models from whom to get guidance from. Moreover the available role models are not positively and constructively building and helping our children. Therefore, we need to build a team of adults who can be role models to our children. This further reinforces the need for Parenting programmes and volunteers who can be models for our young people.
- We need to impart positive discipline within our children and adolescents, in addition to problem solving skills, building relationships, assertiveness (self-esteem), managing money among others.
- The influence of peer pressure was recognized and the need to empower the children and adolescents to deal with peer pressure and its effects was brought out.
- There is a need to train mentors and equip them further on their role as effective mentors.
- It was further asserted that parents should consider themselves as the principal mentors for their children. So parents are implored to aim to be the suitable and appropriate mentors for their children.

4) Participation (Child & Adolescents)

- Children and adolescents have the right to voice their views and perspectives. They have a major contribution to make. They experience the issues and problems and therefore are better placed to voice their concerns. Let us give room to listen and act on the views and concerns of children and adolescents.
- We need to understand children's and adolescent's behavior and how to respond to it. How do we parent each child in their individual right? Children and adolescents have a very good understanding of their issues and how these can be addressed.
- The need for self-worth and esteem of the children and adolescents was reaffirmed during deliberations of this meeting.

5) Role of Culture, Religion and Traditions

- The positive contribution of culture, religion and traditions was reaffirmed. This was observed as rich and the foundation of child upbringing and avenues for planting values in children. These are major institutions in socialization and key in conveying values and good behaviour.
- However, it was observed that these same institutions that are positioned to protect the children are at times avenues and environments for abuse, violence, neglect and risky behaviour to the children. The need to advocate for an environment that protects children, provides for their needs, and ensured their wellbeing to us as a parenting network.
- Some cultures and religious practices are harmful to children and us as parents often promote these practices either consciously or unconsciously. As responsible parents we need to be aware and protect

our children.

- Initiatives like the Parenting Handbook developed by Malawi should be promoted and shared as a best practice to other countries to develop theirs.

6) Parent Education

- Parenthood is about learning. No one is born a parent and no school qualifies parents. Therefore we need an environment where parents learn how best to parent and understand their children. We need to impart parenting skills to parents and also expose parents to the changing environment and how best to act in the best interest of their children.
- This can be done through parenting workshops, seminars, focus groups, e-media, structure programmes, publications, e.t.c.
- The family is the classroom and we as the parents and caregivers are the teachers.

7) Poverty

- Poverty is a major stress factor in parenting. It leads to abuse and neglect of children and adolescents by parents. It creates emotional stress and in search of livelihood and survival fathers and mothers are absent to parent.
- To the children and adolescents – because of lack and need they are exposed to risky behaviour.

8) Gender Issues

- We need to address issues of stereotypes. There is preference on the boy-child in a number of our societies. This cuts across culture, religion and families. Unconsciously this background affects our parenting ways and attitudes. It is unfortunate that from conception the girl child is vulnerable and faces exclusion. Throughout the process of socialization the girl child plays a secondary role. We need to promote equality and equity across the gender paradigm.

9) Risky Behaviour

- Children and Adolescents are vulnerable to numerous behaviours and habits. They are in a phase in life where they are learning and adopting behaviours and habits out of peer pressure. Such risky behaviours include: drugs, alcohol, unprotected and early sex, smoking among others
- Often parents shy away from counseling and providing guidance to their children. Parents should aim at having one-to-ones with their children to guide them from risky behaviours.

10) Child Protection

- The importance of legal and social protection of children and adolescents was emphasized. There is need for a protective environment. The existing child protection systems need to be strengthened. This calls for greater awareness among the government officials and policy makers.
- We need to have champions for child protection and good parenting. These are leading opinion leaders who can advance the attainment of child protection and wellbeing.

- The need to harmonize laws concerning children in each country was emphasized. Whereas a number of countries have reasonable laws and policies in place, enforcement of these laws has been lacking. A call was also made that governments should ensure effective enforcement of the laws and policies.

WE HEREBY DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. That we as parents and family focused organizations and research institutions will urge and equip our adolescents regarding responsible relationship with the opposite gender, discouraging active sexual behaviour as well as acting as role models to the youth and teenagers.
2. That we as organizations will work that towards ensuring that the vice of early sexual debut or marriage is not practiced in our communities by promoting best practices in parenting through policies, laws, parent education and other interventions.
3. That we will strive to advocate and promote policies, strategies, social health (government) and public services that enhance the control of increase in Teenage pregnancy and children with Parental responsibilities.
4. That we will incorporate in our programs, activities that provide teenage parents and adolescents with reproductive health services and counselling support and make sure that they know that these services are available.
5. That we as individuals and organizations will STEP UP on the prevention of teenage pregnancy and teenage fatherhood efforts by providing young children with appropriate, reliable and comprehensive information related to reproductive rights and responsibilities. Train health workers and teachers on how to teach about these subjects.
6. That we will provide support to pregnant teenage mothers and fathers and help them find ways to continue their education. Make sure girls and boys have equal access to education, health care, and financial aid programs; and that the teenage fathers are actively involved in their fatherhood roles.
7. That we will work with adolescents and their parents and/or caregivers to understand the health problems they face and to advocate for health policies and programmes in and out of schools.
8. That we will strive to disseminate information on positive parenting to the local community to create a pool of informed communities as well as publicize information to potential donors, development partners and supporters in furtherance of resource mobilization
9. That we will work to ensure that the principles of Child protection and child rights are incorporated, entrenched and embraced in our activities as an avenue of promoting the rights of the children born by the young parents as well as ensure respect of the rights of, the young fathers and mothers who also fall under the class of children.
10. That effort to steer research, learning and documentation on teenagers with parental responsibilities will be put in place in our respective organizations to ensure that best practices are disseminated and used as avenues of referencing.
11. That we will be keen on promoting the rights of children and teenagers with disabilities as well as support their needs in view of the fact that they are a special group that needs care.
12. That we as organizations and individuals will strive towards the promotion of the harmonization of laws on child protection as well as lobby for the inclusion of missing links and gaps in these laws.

13. That we will be keen to ensure that the perpetrators and promoters of teenage pregnancies and teenage fatherhood will be taken through the due process of law as retribution to violation of child rights.
14. That Inclusion of children in teenage and adolescent project implementation activities will be included in the quest to ensure promotion of child participation.
15. That we will strive to disseminate the provisions of this declaration to stakeholders to government, communities, parents and children in order to create a pool of informed communities.

Draft Declaration

Signed and sealed this date of 2013

For and on Behalf of