



Photo by Eric Miller

MENCARE IN MATZIKAMA:

SONKE AND THE MATZIKAMA MEN AND BOYS NETWORK
TRANSFORM A RURAL COMMUNITY'S NORMS AROUND
GENDER, SEX, AND FAMILY

Case study



Norad Men Care

A GLOBAL FATHERHOOD CAMPAIGN



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HIV/AIDS, Gender Equality, Human Rights

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The poster with a man fixing his baby's bottle reads:

**"Jy Help My Om Gesond Te Bly. Jy Is My Pa."
(You Help Me Stay Healthy. You Are My Father.)**



Rodney Fortuin, Sonke's Western Cape Community Education and Mobilization Manager leading a workshop in Matzikama

In the northern areas of the Western Cape governed by the Matzikama municipality, almost half of the population is jobless. Liquor stores in the towns provide a predictable outlet for people's boredom and frustrations--and contribute to a range of social problems: fighting and aggression, substance abuse, domestic and sexual violence, child abuse and absent parenting. Lenie Januarie, acting supervisor for the Children and Families Programme at the Department of Social Development (DSD), cites parental neglect as a major problem and says that cases of child abuse constitute the highest intake for her office. Assault is the most common crime in Vredendal, one of the biggest cities in the rural area, and there are many cases of sexual and domestic violence each year.

Januarie says she has been living in this area for 30 years. She represents DSD in the Matzikama Men and Boys Network - a partnership between Sonke Gender Justice (Sonke), Gender Transformation Network and DSD. It's a new initiative in the area and the first of its kind.

The network aims to promote gender equality and to encourage men and boys to

play a positive role in their families and communities. "We have set a platform for capacitating men and boys and families [and] redirecting their vision in terms of their own lifestyle and how to go about their everyday living," explains Andrew Julies, a local councillor, pastor and chairperson of the Matzikama Men and Boys Network steering committee. Leigh Kordom, a youth coach at a local school, says the network is encouraging men and boys to play an active role in promoting gender equality: "It gives them a platform to stand up as men because the men in the community are mostly the ones that [get] talked about badly."



Since it was created in August 2012, the network has been actively implementing Sonke's MenCare campaign, a campaign Sonke co-chairs together with the Brazilian NGO Instituto Promundo and other global partners. The MenCare Campaign recognises that nearly 80% of all men will be fathers in their lifetime and aims to increase men's

involvement in non-violent, equitable parenting. This is important work in South Africa, where studies show that 48% of children have living but absent fathers, a number that was on the upward trend when MenCare was launched.

MenCare seeks to engage men meaningfully in the lives of their families, and specifically works to encourage men to be active and involved fathers. The programme works through media, programme development, policy advocacy, and community trainings to involve men in fathers' groups and as advocates for participatory fatherhood. From logos on t-shirts resembling construction signs saying "Men At Work", and showing a man changing a nappy, to billboards and posters showing active fathers, the MenCare project works to change how everyone sees men, including how they see themselves.



Across Matzikama, people now wear MenCare t-shirts which spark conversation and

contribute to gradual shifts in social norms.



MenCare's *My Dad Can* programme uses media to promote positive local role models as examples of good, involved fathers. And MenCare fatherhood groups create safe and supportive spaces for men to explore the role of their own fathers in their lives and to reflect upon how they can be involved fathers in the lives of their own children. Reflecting on the personal impact the training has had on his life, Johannes Cyster, a barber from Vanrhynsdorp says, "Becoming a father was difficult for me because I didn't have a father in my life, so I must learn it for myself. In Vanrhynsdorp, it is difficult because some of the fathers don't take fatherhood very seriously; people don't know how to be a father. They only know 'I have a baby, now I'm a father,' but they don't act

like fathers."



Other participants echoed similar sentiments, and the sessions are proving to be valuable even to those without children. "It gave me an advantage because we don't have children and we can start now already, and plan the future and put away money," Kordom says.

Rodney Fortuin, Sonke's Western Cape Community Education and Mobilization Manager, who runs the Matzikama Men and Boys Network, says that the MenCare posters that the network produced were received enthusiastically by the community. He stated that part of the success was due to the beautifully engaging photos and messages in the language predominantly spoken in the area, Afrikaans - both which connected with the people of the Matzikama municipality.

The posters show a man kissing his child, another man with his hand on his pregnant wife's stomach, a family playing cards, a man reading to his

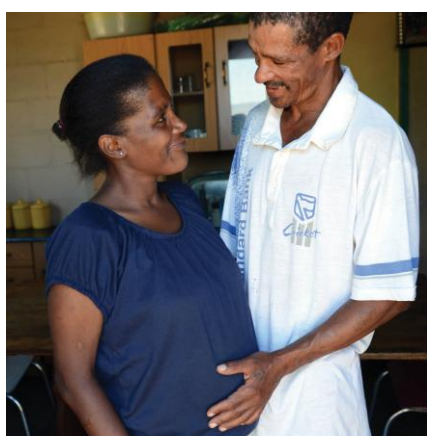
children - all people from the Matzikama community. The poster with a man fixing his baby's bottle reads "Jy Help My Om Gesond Te Bly. Jy is My Pa." - "You Help Me Stay Healthy. You are My Father."

Fortuin says Januarie even ran away crying during the poster launch, and when asked why she was crying, she said was shedding "tears of joy" because she was so touched that local community members were positively involved with their families and were featured in these posters. Januarie says seeing the community's reaction to these posters has

been one of her best moments working for the network so far. Even though she's one of the lead organizers, she says she's learning as well. Januarie, a trained social worker, says she is changing her attitude and opening up her mind around LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) issues: "You see we was traditional, old fashioned on the roles of men..."

While the steering committee and the network have been busy, the consensus is that there's still much more to do. "You can never take for granted that the little

resources that are poured into rural communities make a huge difference to people's lives. People within this community have shown a hunger and a desire to bring about change within their community," says Fortuin, noting that there is an immense sense of gratitude regularly expressed by the community in the workshops and events. He says they are eager to see what development opportunities will come next and how they can participate.



**JY HET NOG NOOIT 'N VOORGEBOORTE
BESOEK GEMIS NIE.
JY IS MY PA.**

Jy begin die avontuur van 'n leeftyd. Jy word benodig om te leer, betrokke te wees, om verantwoordelik te wees en die Ma te ondersteun.

Vir meer inligting oor vaderskap, gaan na www.Men-Care.org

Jy Het Nog Nooit 'N Voorgeboorte Besoek Gemis Nie. Jy Is My Pa.

**You Never Miss An Antenatal Visit.
You Are My Dad.**



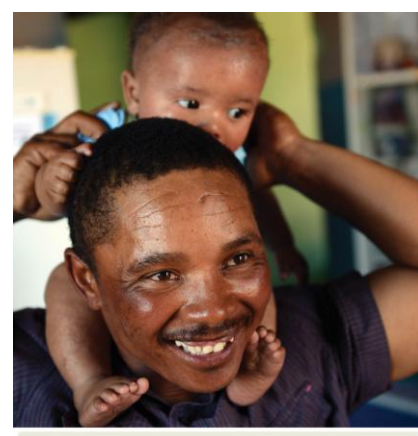
**JY VERTEL MY DIE WONDERLIJKSTE STORIES.
JY IS MY PA.**

Opvoeding stop nie wanneer die skooldag eindig nie - wanneer jy by die huis vir jou kinders lees en hulle met hul skoolwerk help, stel jy 'n platform vir lewenslange opvoeding. Jy sal ook verbaas wees wat jy van jou kinders kan leer.

Vir meer inligting oor vaderskap, gaan na www.Men-Care.org

**Jy Vertel My Die Wonderlikste Stories.
Jy Is My Pa.**

**You Tell Me Wonderful Stories.
You Are My Dad.**



**JY IS TROTS VIR WIE JY IS.
JY IS MY PA.**

Jy vat die kans om 'n Pa te wees wat ernstig omgee vir hulle familie en gemeenskap en wat die moed het om dit te kan doen.

Vir meer inligting oor vaderskap, gaan na www.Men-Care.org

**Jy Is Trots Vir Wie Jy Is.
Jy Is My Pa.**

**You Are Proud Of Who You Are.
You Are My Dad.**



**JY HELP MY OM GESOND TE BLY.
JY IS MY PA.**

Jy kan seker maak dat jou kinders gesond opgroei... en help hulle om die dokters besoeke makliker te maak.

Vir meer inligting oor vaderskap, gaan na www.Men-Care.org

MenCare + MGBAIC

**Jy Help My Om Gesond Te Bly.
Jy Is My Pa.**

**You Help Me To Stay Healthy.
You Are My Dad.**



**JY BLY IN KONTAK.
JY IS MY PA.**

Maak tyd om in kontak te bly en te praat met jou kinders. Jou familie het jou emosionele sowel as finansiële ondersteuning nodig.

Vir meer inligting oor vaderskap, gaan na www.Men-Care.org

MenCare + MGBAIC

**Jy Bly In Kontak.
Jy Is My Pa.**

**You Stay In Contact.
You Are My Dad.**

Churches are now an integral part of the network and are effectively mobilising people to attend workshops. Matzikama is a deeply religious community and, as such, the churches have an important role to play in making gender equality a reality there. Julies speaks of how his work with the network has influenced his life as a pastor. "I've talked over three or four Sundays about families in the church because people come into church...with family issues." He says he has to deal with the issues there and then, or else his parishioners go back home, the issues unresolved.

Jonathan Matthews, a pastor at the New Apostolic Church, who is also studying Community Development, says the network is breaking all sorts of gender and sex-related taboos. "I brought my wife and my mother-in-law with. My mother-in-law is 63, and after the one session that we had when we came home they can't stop talking about it. I mean someone of 63 didn't know about gender and gender equality and about sex and the different sex you get... Before this she wouldn't talk about it because it would be taboo ... It just goes to show that through the network they start feeling free to talk about stuff. So in that sense, the Men and Boys

Network makes a great change ... because my mother-in-law goes to where she is with the seniors and she talks about it there with the seniors."

Teen pregnancy and young parenting is also a major issue in Matzikama. The MenCare workshops provide young fathers with the skills they need to be involved, equitable parents. Students also appreciate the open nature of the discussions afforded by the 'Teenage Gender, Sex and Sexuality' training session that the network held with high school students. Teenage pregnancy is an issue which affects both boys and girls, and the training addressed male and female sexuality. "I got the opportunity to explore more in terms of what a boy needs to know in terms of sexuality so when I get to the point where I have to say 'yes' or 'no', I will know what to do," says local student Jeremy Matthews. The students also expressed a desire for this type of education to be rolled out to the community and for it to be offered to students in the lower grades so they have all the necessary information before they start having sex.

Both organizers and participants say that because of their involvement, they have

to pay attention to what kind of role models they are. "They know 'Oh, these are the guys that are on that programme - manhood and fatherhood' so they are watching us. Are we doing what we are supposed to be doing?," says Cyster. Julies concurs: "I can't be a part of this network, attending the programmes, then going out there and doing negative stuff. It keeps me in line for myself personally ... People look at me and they must see, this is the example. And I want to follow this example."



As the Matzikama Men and Boys Network promotes gender equality, it also promotes human rights for all. Some of Matzikama's faith communities have come out in support of gay rights and gender equality since the network was established.

Franklen Ludick, a member of the Flame and Fire Prayer Warriors shared openly that his

opinions on gender, sexuality and fatherhood have changed because of the network's work: "Mine [mindset] changed a lot. I didn't know that your opinion is yours and my opinion is mine. I was like this, when I see this board is green I persuade you this board is green. You must say with me 'this board is green'. But here I learn that you have your own opinion, I have my own opinion."



There seems to be a recognition among those involved that having a healthy and functional family will lead to a healthy and functional community, and that there is no community without families. In an area with decades of father absenteeism, targeting men and boys to play their part in making gender equality a reality is vital to turning this phenomenon around. The need for this work is abundantly clear, and with the tangible excitement and enthusiasm

around it from everyone involved, 2014 promises to offer opportunities for expansion for the Matzikama Men and Boys Network. Plans are already underway for more events and training sessions, and to include more local organizations into the network.

By engaging with men, and creating positive male role models, the transformational shift in how this community perceives gender and behaves both in families and in the community can be massive.



Ludick says there are no organizations doing similar work in the area. "When there's work on social issues here, it's not sustainable and people come and go. Sonke have acted on their word and it gives me motivation to continue."

Contributing Reporter: Colin Adam Young



JY ONDERSTEUN MY. JY IS MY PA.

Jy weet hoe kragtig 'n omhelsing kan wees. Jy kan dit gebruik om te wys dat jy omgee. Jy kan dit selfs saggies gebruik wanneer hulle stout is. Dit is ware krag sonder geweld. Jy kan 'n vredsamese lewe skep, soms neem dit net eenvoudig om, om te gee.

Vir meer Inligting oor vaderskap, gaan na
www.Men-Care.org

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