DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

FATHERHOOD STRATEGY

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REFERENCE

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- The National Family service forums and officials of the Department of Social Development at National and Provincial level for their contributions, leadership and continuous support of the process to develop this Strategy.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

CSG	**Child support grant**
DSD	**National Department of Social Development**
FATHERHOOD	**The state/responsibility of being a father**
HSRC	**Human Sciences Research Council**
MTM	**Men-Transforming-Men**
SA	**South Africa**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The White Paper emerged out of a deep concern from a cross section of the South African society, which was based on the understanding that the family is in deep crisis and that the situation needs immediate remedying. Indeed many families in South Africa are faced with a number of challenges which impact negatively on their ability to sustain themselves. Such challenges are partly related to poverty, unemployment, lack of integrated basic services and poor infrastructure, and can, to a large extent be attributed to the legacy of apartheid laws which violated the rights of the majority of the population. This violation of rights and the relegation of some members of society to low status has aggravated problems such as the spread of the HIV and AIDS; abuse of alcohol and other substance; abuse within the family especially against children, women and older person; fatherlessness as well as the general trend of moral decay in our communities.

Against this background, the main aim of the White Paper is to promote family life and family strengthening through a comprehensive, coordinated and synchronized approach to social service delivery for families. It endeavours to place the family at the centre of national development efforts whilst making it the focal point of intervention of both the Government and civil society organizations. One of the key intervention strategies in the White Paper addresses the challenge of fatherlessness within families and the importance of addressing the critical role of men in families.

The growing interest in the role of men in the family has been triggered by diverse demographic, socio-economic and cultural transformations that have occurred over the past several decades, impacting on the formation, stability and overall well-being of families. Profound changes have been occurring in the perceptions of the role of women and men in families. As women enter the

labour market in growing numbers, men have been newly confronted with demands that they became more engaged in performing family responsibilities

Despite an increasing worldwide focus on the role of men in families and research documenting men's contribution to gender equality, the importance of their engagement for work-family balance, and numerous positive paternal contributions to children's development, policy-makers have been slow to recognize the need for effective public policy that is supportive of men's involvement in their families.

South Africa has a high rate of absent fathers, with only one –third of pre-school children living at home with both their parents (Statistics South Africa 2011). Reasons for father absenteeism include migrant labour and female autonomy. Young black African men's involvement in their children's lives is also hampered by cultural expectations. In the case of an unmarried couple, a father is required to make damage payments to the family of the mother of his child. This may frighten off a young father from claiming paternity, especially if he is unemployed.

Being an active, involved father and taking responsibility is not easy, however, many young men reported on the various financial, cultural and relational obstacles they have experienced in relation to fatherhood. Being able to take responsibility and financially support a child are often regarded as synonymous with financial provision, which often overshadows other aspects of fatherhood, such as contact time, physical care and emotional support.

This is particularly problematic for young fathers in contexts of poverty as they tend to have limited access to finances due to their continuing education and

absence of income. Young men are sometimes rejected by the mother's families if they are unable to contribute financially, naturally, this stops these young fathers from assuming the other roles of fatherhood.

Against this backdrop, the DSD, through the Directorate: Families, embarked on the process of developing the Fatherhood Strategy, flowing from the White Paper on Families. The development of the strategy will provide an opportunity for the DSD to take its rightful place in rendering services to all members of the family, including men, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders sharing the same objectives. The Strategy will also enable provinces and Civil Society organizations to address challenges facing fathers in South Africa.

SECTION 1:　　　INTRODUCTION

1.1.　　Background

In 1995, the World Summit for Social Development acknowledged the importance of providing help to families so as to enable them to perform their supporting, educating and nurturing roles. Such support involves enacting social policies and programmes designed to meet the needs of families and their individual members, including those promoting equal partnership between women and men in the family and ensuring opportunities for family members to understand and meet their social obligations.

The growing interest in the role of men in the family has been triggered by diverse demographic, socio-economic and cultural transformations that have occurred over the past several decades, impacting on the formation, stability and overall well-being of families. Profound changes have been occurring in the perceptions of the role of women and men in families. As women enter the labour market in growing numbers, men have been newly confronted with demands that they become more engaged in performing family responsibilities (United Nations, 2011: 1).

Despite an increasing worldwide focus on the role of men in families and research documenting men's contribution to gender equality, the importance of their engagement for work-family balance, and numerous positive paternal contributions to children's development, policy-makers have been slow to recognize the need for effective public policy that is supportive of men's involvement in their families.

Numerous researches have been conducted worldwide and in South Africa on vulnerable fathers, male carers and fathers in vulnerable family contexts. Some of these research studies chart a range of problematic family environments facing contemporary men and related father figures in the lives of children. A major issue for men across the world is separation from their children, through either the relatively common breakdown of relationships or paternal imprisonment. Despite relationship fragility or discord, more fathers are attempting to sustain relationships with their non-residential children and may need support when they are met with difficulty in fulfilling their aspirations in this regard (Men-transforming-men, 2011).

Obstacles to fathering have not been well documented especially with regard to young fathers who became parents while still at school or college. Alongside older fathers, young fathers have frequently been portrayed in media as unwilling to take responsibility for their children. In contrast, a recent Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) research study shows that many young fathers want to be active parents and have strong senses of responsibility towards their children. They are however confronted with numerous barriers to fulfilling their parenting roles. The development of this Strategy is therefore timeous and will provide an opportunity for provinces and Civil Society organizations to address challenges facing fathers in South Africa.

1.2. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

According to research conducted by an organisation called Men transforming men (MTM) in Australia, many men are feeling increasingly disconnected these days-disconnected from themselves, from their families and friends. In an international research study commissioned by the UN Economic & Social Affairs (2011: 11), Barker & Pawlak stated that one of the core enduring symptoms of gender inequality globally is the unequal work-life divide-stemming from the fact that men are generally expected to be providers and breadwinners (who work mostly outside the home) and women and girls are generally expected to provide care or to be chiefly responsible for reproductive aspects of family life.

Although women have begun working to make increased contribution to household income and as their roles have changed in households and political life, men's participation in care work has not kept pace with the women's and their work outside the home.

However, change is occurring-more slowly in some settings, more quickly in others. Men's roles as fathers and caregivers are becoming more visible. Policies in some countries are slowly recognizing men's roles as fathers and caregivers and encouraging greater participation by men in family life.

While trends vary by region and country, the emergence of several tendencies can be affirmed, namely, slight increase in men's time allocation to care activities in some contexts, increased rates of marital

dissolution and growing rates of female-headed households in some contexts. This has implications for men's participation in families, such as the increased participation by some men in the lives of their children.

Despite the emerging trends around the engagement of men in families, simplistic assumptions or generalizations about men's participation in care work should not be made. There is a need for caution when making generalizations about household behaviour in cases where men or fathers are absent or in cases of divorce or separation. It is important to realize that the fact that men devote more time to care work does not mean that they fully embrace or support gender equality.

According to Barker & Pawlak (2011: 20-21) another aspect to be noted is the whole concept of adult masculinity which is defined universally, by societies, institutions and public policies in terms of the role of provider, breadwinner or working man. The underlying syllogism is as follows: *If adult manhood equals work, not having work means not being socially recognized as an adult man*. For many men not having work results in shame, depression, stress and lack of social identity.

Critical questions that need to be considered in this topic are: If men globally derive their identities and chief social function from their role as providers, what happens when men are without work or do not have sufficient income to meet the social expectations placed on them as providers? Specifically, what happens under such conditions in terms

of men's participation in family life, involvement with their children and family formation?

The history of South Africa and the country's political economy continue to mould the quality of life of most families in significant ways. The industrialization of South Africa in the late 19th century and the resultant urbanization are inextricably bound to the past and contemporary erosion of the family. The migrant labour system led to the manifestation of various social problems in the country that had a direct bearing on family life. One such problem was the absence of able-bodied men in African villages. South Africa has a high rate of absent fathers, with only one –third of pre-school children living at home with both their parents (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

Being an active, involved father and taking responsibility is not easy, however, in the HSRC research study among young fathers, they reported on the various financial, cultural and relational obstacles they have experienced in relation to fatherhood. Being able to take responsibility and financially support a child are often regarded as synonymous with financial provision, which often overshadows other aspects of fatherhood, such as contact time, physical care and emotional support (Swartz and Bhana, 2009).

This is particularly problematic for young fathers in contexts of poverty as they tend to have limited access to finances due to their continuing education and absence of income. The study reported that young men sometimes were rejected by the mother's families if they were unable to

contribute financially naturally, this stops these young fathers from assuming the other roles of fatherhood.

Due to the nuptiality patterns and prevalence of female-headed households, absent living fathers is another common and increasing phenomenon affecting families in contemporary South Africa. Statistics South Africa highlighted the fact that the statistics for fatherless homes are shocking. Nine (9) million children grow up without fathers in South Africa. Sixty three percent (63%) of youth suicides are from fatherless homes, more than a third of the country's' prisoners are aged 18-25.

As shown in Table 1 below, the proportion of fathers who are absent but living increased from 41.6% to 47.4% between 1996 and 2010. Conversely, the proportion of fathers present decreased from 49.2% to 36.5% over the same time period. A racial dimension is clear from these figures for 2010: African children have the lowest proportion (31.3%) of present fathers, while Indian children have the highest (83.0%), with White children following closely behind at 80.8%. For Colored children the proportion is 54.2%.

Table 1.   **Percentage of children with/without fathers by race, South Africa 1996-2010**

Race	Presence of father	1996[b]	2002[c]	2009[c]	2010[c]
African	Deceased father	10.0	12.8	18.4	18.1
	Absent (living) father	45.5	50.2	51.5	50.6
	Father present	44.5	37.0	30.1	**31.3**
Coloured	Deceased father	7.3	7.4	6.1	7.1
	Absent (living) father	34.3	37.2	40.8	38.7
	Father present	58.4	55.4	53.1	**54.2**
Indian	Deceased father	4.8	5.0	2.4	3.6
	Absent (living) father	16.6	8.4	12.2	13.4
	Father present	78.6	86.6	85.4	**83.0**
White	Deceased father	3.4	2.4	1.7	2.3
	Absent (living) father	12.8	10.9	15.0	16.9
	Father present	83.8	86.7	83.3	**80.8**
Total	*Deceased father*	*9.2*	*11.5*	*16.1*	*16.1*
	Absent (living) father	*41.6*	*45.8*	*48.0*	*47.4*
	Father present	*49.2*	*38.7*	*35.9*	*36.5*

Source: Holborn, L. & Eddy, G. (2011). *First Steps to Healing the South African Family.* Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations. Notes: For the 1996 and 2002 data, 'children' refer to persons aged 0-15 years. For the 2009 data, 'children' refers to persons aged 0-17 years.

While poverty, high rates of unemployment, and financial constraints may contribute to large numbers of fathers failing to take responsibility for their children, this trend is a cause for concern given the significant body of

evidence showing the positive effect of the presence and active involvement of a father in terms of a child's life opportunities; academic performance; and social, emotional and cognitive functioning (Holborn, et al, 2011).

For young black African men, involvement in their children's lives is also hampered by cultural expectations. In the case of an unmarried couple, a father is required to make damage payments to the family of the mother of his child. This may frighten off a young father from the claiming paternity, especially if he is unemployed. Many young fathers or mother do not have long standing romantic relationships with co-parents of their children. A poor relationship with the child's mother also reduces a young father's ability and desire to play a fathering role.

South Africa has many single-parent households. Although HIV/AIDS has had a profound effect on the number of single parent households, there is another worrying trend – the increase in the number and proportion of absent, living fathers. Existing literature on fatherhood makes it clear that fatherhood goes beyond the biological fathering of a child. Fatherhood is generally understood as "the social role that men undertake to care for their children" It refers to physical and emotional presence in the child's life (Richter & Morrel, 2006:18).

Father absence has two meanings. The first meaning has to do with physical absence caused by factors such as "situations of divorce, domestic instability, work, and social dislocations, including wars". However, fatherhood goes beyond mere father physical presence because "a father might well be physically present, but emotionally absent, or physically absent but emotionally supportive". Besides, father presence can be characterized by abusive conduct towards his child or her wife. The second meaning of absent

fatherhood thus refers to a father's emotional disengagement from one's child life regardless of whether he is physically present or distant (Richter & Morrel, 2006:18).

Morrel in (Richter & Morrel, 2006:18) notes two problems associated with the absent father argument. The first problem is that "it is difficult to show that physical absence of the biological father is as serious for the child as is often argued" as father presence can also be negative in some cases. The second problem stems from the fact "men have used the argument that children need their (biological) father to pursue anti-feminist campaigns designed to return women to their dependence on men or to reduce their autonomy" .

Some scholars attribute father absence or neglect to poverty and unemployment. It is argued that in a South African context where fathers are still primarily represented as providers, men that are unable to provide for their families "are more likely to deny or flee the fatherhood roles" (Morrel, 2006). One also finds in the literature reference to other factors that may be at play in the prevalence and rise of the phenomenon of father absence and neglect. These include lack of skills on parenthood; lack of fatherhood role models; advances in the struggle of the liberation of women which challenge the notion of men as heads of families; negative experiences of fatherhood, and a social attitude that there is no responsibility upon persons to support their dependents (Richter & Morrel, 2006).

1.3. **The impact of the mother-father relationship on child's development**

When mothers are supportive of their spouse's parenting, i.e. they view them as competent parents, provide encouragement, expect and believe parenting

is a joint venture, men are more likely to be involved with, and be responsible for their children. Mothers can serve as gatekeepers to the father-child relationship. The father's level of involvement in the child's life is therefore, partly determined by the extent to which mothers permit participation. The co-parental relationship indirectly affects the parent-child relationship. When fathers are supportive and encouraging, mothers can be more competent parents. This can also enhance the quality of the mother-child relationship and thus facilitates positive developmental outcomes for their children.

Fathers who actively play with their children appear to reinforce the notion of emotional self-control in their children and help them to learn to recognize the emotional cues of others (Ladd, 2000:1). Young children whose fathers were involved in their lives tended to make better, longer lasting friendships across their lifespan. Children raised with responsible fathers tended to get along better with their peers, be academically successful, stay in school longer, and use drugs and alcohol less frequently and didn't become pregnant or get someone else pregnant.

1.4. The impact of fathers on cognitive ability and educational achievements of children

Research has determined that active fathers have children who score higher on tests of verbal skills, in problem –solving tasks and in social situations. Some researchers also found that active fathers' involvement has positive effect on their child's math skills.

In a study from the University of Guelph, it was found that infant of highly involved fathers were more cognitively competent. They continue to be

competent and better problem solvers as toddlers and higher IQs by age three. These children performed better at school with higher grades. Children of involved fathers are more likely to enjoy school, have better attitudes towards school, and participate in extracurricular activities and graduate (Allen and Daly, 20002: 1-2).

It is clear that men in their role as fathers can have both direct and indirect effect on their child's development and adjustment. Some studies found that, in some instances, not only are men better paid than women and can bring more income into household; they may also be able to access more resources for children in the community because of their prestige and status as men.

1.5. The impact of fathers on psychological and social behaviour

Sarah Allen and Kelly Daly, from the University of Guelph, found that infants whose fathers are involved in their care are more likely to be securely attached to them, be better able to handle strange situations, be more resilient in the face of stressful situations. Furthermore they are prone to be more curious and eager to explore the environment and relate maturely to strangers.

Young adults who had nurturing and available fathers while growing up are more likely to score high on self-acceptance, personal and social adjustment. They see themselves as dependable, trusting, practical and friendly. The variable that is most consistently associated with positive life outcomes is the quality of the father child relationship.

International research echoed by the HSRC on the effect fathers have on their children's development suggests that the presence of a father can contribute to cognitive development, intellectual functioning, and school achievement. Children growing up without fathers are more likely to experience emotional disturbances and depression.

Girls who grow up with their fathers are more likely to have higher self-esteem, lower levels of risky sexual behaviour, and fewer difficulties in forming and maintaining romantic relationships later in life. They have less likelihood of having an early pregnancy, bearing children outside marriage, marrying early, or getting divorced. Boys growing up in absent father households are more likely to display 'hypermasculine' behaviour, including aggression.

According to international studies, "the engagement or presence of a father or father figure in the life of a child is said to positively affect the child's life prospects, academic achievement, physical and emotional health and linguistic, literary and cognitive development". Men's participation as parents can also be positive for the health and well-being of women as research in Central America shows that "women with children are more vulnerable to poverty if fathers neglect their financial responsibilities".

SECTION 2: CURRENT LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

This proposed strategy draws its mandate from both International and national legislation framework. South Africa has become a signatory to a number of international legislation frameworks, which impact on the role of fathers within families.

2.1. Global and regional commitments

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights-**

  This is the foundation of international human rights law, the first universal statement on the basic principles of inalienable human rights and a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. This piece of legislation recognises the inherent dignity, equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as a foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

  This Convention stipulates that the recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. The UN proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance. The family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and wellbeing of all its members, particularly children, should be protected and assisted to fully assume its responsibilities. Children should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of love and understanding.

- **The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (AC)**

  The Charter stipulates that recognizing that the child occupies a unique and privileged position in the African society and that for the full and harmonious development of his personality the child should grow up in a family environment. The child should grow in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Furthermore, the child, due to the needs of his physical and mental development requires particular care with regard to health, physical, mental, moral and social development, and requires legal protection in conditions of freedom, dignity and security.

- **Copenhagen Declaration of 1995**

  This Declaration acknowledged the importance of helping families to enable them to perform their supportive, educating and nurturing roles. Programmes to assist families should include those that promote equal partnership between women and men in the family in their role to meet their social obligation.

2.2. <u>NATIONAL POLICIES</u>

- **White paper on families**

The White Paper, which was approved by the South African Cabinet in July 2013, emerged out of a deep concern from a cross section of the South Africa society, which was based on the understanding that the family is in deep crisis and that the situation needs immediate remedying. Indeed many families in South Africa are faced with a number of challenges which impact negatively

on their ability to sustain themselves. Such challenges are partly related to poverty, unemployment, lack of integrated basic services and poor infrastructure, and can, to a large extent be attributed to the legacy of apartheid laws which violated the rights of the majority of the population. This violation of rights and the relegation of some members of society to low status have aggravated problems such as the spread of the HIV and AIDS; abuse of alcohol and other substance; abuse within the family especially against children, women and older person; fatherlessness as well as the general trend of moral decay in our communities.

Against this background, the main aim of the White Paper is to promote family life and family strengthening through a comprehensive, coordinated and synchronized approach to social service delivery for families. It endeavours to place the family at the centre of national development efforts whilst making it the focal point of intervention of both the Government and civil society organizations.

- **National development plan 2030**

  The National Development Plan is a step in the process of charting a new path for SA. By 2030, it seeks to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. The plan also aims at changing the life chances of millions of South Africans, especially the youth. The national plan has to attack the blight of poverty and exclusion, and nurture economic growth at the same time; creating a virtuous cycle of expanding opportunities; building capabilities, reducing poverty, involving communities in their own development, all leading to rising living standards.

- **The Constitution of South Africa**

  The Constitution of SA is the supreme law of the land which lays foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people. It emphasises that every citizen is equally protected by law. The Constitution embodies the Bill of Rights in chapter two. The Bill of Rights is the cornerstone of democracy in SA. It enshrines the rights of all people and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.

- **Maintenance Act, 99 of 1988**

  It establishes that the biological father of a child, married or not, must maintain or support his child in proportion to his means. The downside of this Act in its current form is that for low-income or unemployed fathers, compliance with the maintenance rulings is a challenge. This law provides limited support to fathers in their role as caregivers.

- **Children's Act, 38 of 2005**-it provides that fathers who demonstrate involvement in their children's lives acquire full parental rights and responsibilities, and the default for custody in divorce is now shared custody.

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- **Basic Conditions of Employment, 75 of 1997**- provides for three days paid leave per year for family responsibility for men to be used at the time of the birth of a child or sickness or death of a family member. The downside of this directive is that it fosters the entrenchment of the notions of women as primary caregivers and too often fails to support efforts to increase men's involvement in care work.

- **Social Assistance Act, 2004**

  This Act provides the main legislative framework for the provision of social assistance grants, such as the child support grant (CSG) and Foster care grant. The regulations for this Act were published in December 2009 by the DSD and came into effect on 1 January 2010. The regulations relate to eligibility for the Child Support Grant (CSG). The amendments state that caregivers of children born on or 31 December 1993, are eligible for the CSG and shall continue to receive the grant until the child turns 18.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

3.1. Vision

Well-functioning families which are loving, peaceful, safe, stable, and economically self-sustaining, that also provides care, physical, emotional, psychological, financial, spiritual, and intellectual support for their members.

3.2. Mission

The mission of the DSD is ensure the provision of comprehensive social services which protect the poor and vulnerable within the framework of the South African Constitution and subsequent legislation create an enabling environment and deliver integrated sustained and quality services in partnership with all those committed to building a caring society.

3.3. Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is to capacitate service providers at grassroots to address the issue of fatherhood within families, and to empower fathers to take responsibility in the lives of their children. Furthermore, the Fatherhood Strategy will be utilized as a platform for service providers to craft specific programmes targeted at various contexts of fatherhood and to introduce services to men within the DSD service points.

3.4. Guiding principles

The following are regarded as key principles for a developmental approach relevant to the South African context and should be observed and complied with in the implementation of this strategy:

- **Accountability**- anyone who intervenes with fathers, their children and families should be held responsible for delivering appropriate and quality service.

- **Empowerment**- by promoting the resourcefulness of men, children and families. Enabling this target group to act on their own capacity, choices, support networks and sense of responsibility.

- **Participation**- all parties to participate in all the stages of the intervention process.

- **Family centred**- services should be provided within the context of a family. Support and capacity building to fathers and families should be provided through regular developmental assessment and programmes which strengthen the family's development.

- **Community centred**- services should be contextualised within the community environment. Support and capacity building to communities should be provided through developmental assessment and programmes which strengthen the community's development.

- **Integration**- Service to fathers, children and families should be holistic, inter-sectoral and delivered by an appropriate multi-disciplinary team wherever possible. Taking cognizance of the fact that there numerous initiatives from the Civil Society Sector with similar objectives.

- **Continuity of care and development**- Changes in social, emotional, physical, cognitive and cultural needs of fathers, children and families

should be recognised and addressed throughout the intervention process. Links with continuing support networks and resources, when necessary, should be encouraged after disengagement from the system. Service providers need to be knowledgeable about such networks.

- **Normalisation**- Fathers should be exposed to activities and opportunities, which promote participation and development.

- **Effectiveness and efficiency**- services and programmes to engage fathers should be delivered in the most effective and efficient manner.

- **Person centred**- positive developmental experiences support and capacity building should be ensured through regular developmental assessment and programmes which strengthen fathers.

- **Rights-** the rights of all South Africans (including fathers) as established in the South African Constitution and various international conventions shall be protected.

- **Appropriateness** –services to fathers should be the most appropriate for the individual, the family and the community.

- **Cultural competence**- services to fathers should be culturally sensitive to accommodate beliefs systems, norms and values of a particular community.

3.5.   <u>Key strategic priorities</u>

The White Paper on Families, from which this Fatherhood Strategy flows, outlines three strategic priorities and accompanying envisaged actions to address challenges faced by families. One strategic priority titled "Promotion of healthy family life" outlines the following priorities which relate to issues of fatherhood:

Encourage fathers' involvement in their children's upbringing.

The envisaged actions that are outlined under this strategic priority are:

- Revision of current laws and social policies that restrict fathers from being involved in their children's lives and replace them with those that create an environment where fathers have the opportunity to care for, engage with, and support their children and families. This includes considering the introduction of paternity leave at national level.
- Usage of the formal education system and informal information sources such as the media to construct and maintain social norms and positive attitudes regarding the roles of fathers in the lives of children;
- Ensuring more effective enforcement of maintenance payments by absent fathers;
- Ensuring that fathers are treated equally by the courts in custody decisions (which the law provides for but which anecdotal evidence suggests does not always happen);
- To the extent that unemployment is likely to be playing a major role in the absence of fathers from families—either because they have migrated to other areas in search of scarce jobs, or because a lack of income puts men off taking responsibility for the children they

father—there is need to intensify the creation of employment opportunities;

- Improving the availability and accessibility of 'family-type' housing in cities, and intensifying efforts to reduce the high crime levels in urban areas as these two are some of the key factors that cause men to leave their families behind in rural areas;
- Commissioning and funding robust and nationally representative studies to illuminate the key factors that fuel the phenomenon of absentee fathers and to provide workable recommendations to effectively address the problem.

3.5.2. Encourage responsible parenting

- Encourage responsible co-parenting by both mothers and fathers;
- Enhance parents' ability and capacity to protect children from exposure to, and participate in activities that may be detrimental to their physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual and sexual well-being.

Furthermore the Fatherhood Strategy advocates for the following eight priorities:

- **Fostering a positive relationship with the child's mother**

One of the most important ways men can be good fathers is by treating the mother of their children with affection, respect and consideration to set an important example for the children. Children who witness affectionate, respectful and sacrificial behaviour on the part of their father are more likely to treat their own, future spouses in a similar fashion. Just as child maltreatment and domestic abuse can be passed on from one generation to the next, so

can respect, caring and kindness. Such children are more likely to be happy and well-adjusted.

But children who witness their father's anger or contempt for their mother are more at risk for depression, aggression and poor health. Having said that, it should be noted that on the other end of the scale, fathers who did not have good role models for how men can and ought to relate to their spouse or partner in a positive fashion may battle to display this kind of affection, caring and kind attitude that is critical for the child's development. Research also emphasizes the fact that the way a man treats and interact with the women in his life is frequently connected to how he views himself as a man.

Another point is that of conflict resolution. Fathers or husbands/partners need to be able to deal with conflict with their partners in a constructive manner. Conflict is not bad in a relationship, it is often necessary to resolve issues, grievances or injustices in a relationship. Couples who raise issues with one another constructively, compromise and forgive one another have happier relationships and happier children.

Men should try to avoid two pitfalls in a relationship: criticism and stonewalling. Criticism is about attacking the partner's personality or character as opposed to addressing a specific concern about her behaviour. Stonewalling means that one partner disengages from the relationship when conflict arises, either by failing to speak, being emotionally distant or by physically leaving the scene. Fathers who can keep calm in the midst of conflict, who can speak non-defensively, validate their partner's concerns and attempt to respond to legitimate issues raised by their partner are much more likely to have a strong and happy relationship with their partner and children.

- **Spending time with children**

The importance of time spent by fathers with their children is three-fold:

➢ It enables the father to get to know and to be known by his child- a father can best discover his child's virtues and vices, hopes and fears, aspirations and ideals by spending time with the child;
➢ It offers the father an opportunity to be better at caring-a father gets a chance to be more sensitive to his child's needs for love, attention, direction and discipline;
➢ Children see time as an indicator of a parent's love for them.

Fathers need to spend considerable time with their children playing and having fun as this has a unique role in the child's development, teaching how to explore the world and how to keep aggressive impulses in check. Fathers should also maintain the active, physical and playful style of fathering as their children age. Active pursuits are more valuable than spending time in passive activities such as watching television, for their relationship and the child's emotional wellbeing, social development and physical fitness.

Fathers also need to engage in productive activities with their children such as household chores as these shared activities promote a sense of responsibility and significance in children that is linked to greater self-esteem, academic and occupational achievement. Spending time with children also fosters the child's intellectual growth.

- **Nurturing children**

Nurturing by a father serves four important purposes:

- ➢ Helps fathers build close relationships with their children;
- ➢ Fosters psychological well-being and self-worth in their children;
- ➢ Provides children with a healthy model of masculinity;
- ➢ Helps protect girls from permanently seeking the romantic and sexual attention of men.

Fathers, with infants, need to be responsive to the babies' cries, hold and hug them often and participate in their basic care. Throughout the rest of early childhood, including adolescents, fathers should praise their children when they behave well or accomplish something, comfort them when they are sad or scared.

Therefore, fathers exercise a critical role in providing their children with a mental map of how to respond to difficult situations. This is why they have to learn the art of self-control as they interact with their children.

- **Positive discipline**

Discipline is becoming an increasing problem for parents. Parents are hesitant to spank the child, yet they do not know how to properly discipline the child. They consequently tend to do nothing. A child needs the safety and security of boundaries to grow up in. He needs to trust his parents to guide him within the limits of these boundaries. Rules should be clearly set, defined and

consistently applied. Children also need to know the consequences of breaking these rules.

Discipline is the way in which a parent teaches and educates a child. It is the parent's responsibility. The parent must lead the child in the process of "I was not aware" to "I now understand." Parents must remember that this is a process with a view to behaviour change (The Institute for Conscious Parenting. 2003:113).

The role that fathers play as disciplinarians cannot be underestimated. The way this role is understood and implemented within the individual family can have an enormous impact on how the family responds to efforts to prevent further child maltreatment. One advantage of having two parents rather than one is that two parents can share the load of parenting. Discipline often is difficult and frustration, hence fathers can make raising children easier for all in the family by taking up a substantial share of child discipline.

A father must control his emotions, his body language and his hands when he disciplines his children. Fathers who scream at their children, who pound tables or who strike their children are destined to fail as disciplinarians because they are modelling bad behaviour and they lose the children's respect when they let their emotions take hold of them.

The following differentiation on concepts entailed within discipline is crucial for parents to know:

➢ **Reprimand (positive):** this is the method that parents use to ensure that learning and behaviour change takes place. It is not necessarily

the result of disobedience and is not something parents do to children. It is something parents do for the child; it is just as important for the character development of the child as the positive role modelling of the parent.

➢ **Punishment (negative)**: this refers to rebuke with severity. It creates fear and/ or rebellion and no behaviour change takes place. Here a child listens because he is scared of the parent not because positive values were transferred to him. A child does not learn respect from punishment and it also damages the parent-child relationship. It suppresses negative behaviour but does not stamp it out (The Institute for Conscious Parenting. 2003:113-114).

The MenCare Campaign, by Promundo, emphasises the fact that many boys and girls experience physical violence from peers or teachers, corporal punishment from fathers and mothers. This teaches fear; engenders anger and resentment and produces on going cycles of violence. Educating through dialogue, setting limits without using violence and teaching fathers and mothers non-violent child rearing skills are key to breaking the cycle of family violence-including preventing men's violence against women.

- **Serving as a guide to the outside world**

Fathers serve as guides to the world outside the home for the children. When children are in preschool, fathers can best prepare their children for the outside world by engaging in vigorous, physical play and encouraging small steps in the direction of autonomy. As children begin school, fathers can tell their children of their own experiences in school and encourage them to study

hard, teach them about money management or teach them a sport that will help their children learn about teamwork.

Suggestions for fathers of adolescents are that:

- They should incorporate discussions of their core beliefs and life experiences into ordinary conversations with their teens;
- Have meals with their children on regular basis;
- Include their children in some of their work or community activities so as to give them a taste of their lives outside the home;
- Talk to the teens about peer pressure, dangers of substance abuse, early sexual activities and violence;
- They should take the lead in giving their adolescents a little more freedom as they grow older, as long as the freedom is coupled with the occasional word of encouragement and advice, along with consequences for abuses of that freedom.

Generally, fathers need to be preparing their children for the challenges and opportunities of adulthood by gradually giving them more opportunities to act independently and to make good use of their independence.

- **Protector-Provider**

The role of father as protector and provider has changed over the years. Historically, fathers were viewed as chief financial provider for and protector of their children. These roles have changed over the years, especially when it comes to who is the breadwinner. But the ability to provide and protect is still

very much tied up with the average man's sense of self and the sense of manhood.

For many men, feelings of inadequacy in the role of protector and provider can translate into frustration and anger, which may not be managed appropriately. Men who are under –or unemployed may feel powerless within the family.

Fathers also are still expected to provide protection in addition to providing for their family financially. From childproofing a home when the child is very young to making sure their children are not threatened by other children or adults, fathers play an important role in making sure their children are safe. Fathers can protect their children by monitoring their social environment; by keeping track of their whereabouts and activities and to collaborate with other parents in making sure that their children are behaving in ways they approve.

Of critical importance, especially with teenagers, is that fathers should pay close attention to the type of peers with whom their children are spending time.

- **Being a role model**

Fathers exercise a strong influence on their children through the type of life they live in and outside the home. It is very important that the father examine what sort of role model he is presenting to his children. If he is the perpetrator of maltreatment, then he is providing a very poor role model. Children look to adults in the household for emotional sustenance, including how to respond

and behave. It is at such times of familial stress that the role model provided by the father is of utmost importance.

Being a role model is not a simple or easy task. In the way that fathers treat other people, spend their time and money and handle the joys and stresses of life, they provide a template of living for their children that often proves critical in guiding the behaviour of their children, for better or worse. A father's treatment of the opposite sex, his ability to control his own emotions and his approach to work all play a formative role in shaping his sons' and daughters' approach to romantic relationships, school and work.

The following are suggested guiding points for fathers as they explore the kind of role model they want to be:

➢ Fathers should promote the mission of their families, e.g. families that believe their children must learn the benefits of hard work raise children who recognize and can embrace the virtues of working hard and applying one's self to a goal.

➢ Fathers should abide by the spirit and the letter of the rules that govern the family, e.g. if a curfew is set for a teenagers, fathers should make an effort of being home at a decent hour.

➢ Fathers should acknowledge their mistakes to their children, where appropriate they must be willing to seek forgiveness from their children. This is not a sign of weakness but the father's capability of acknowledge their own mistakes and the impact these have on the children.

3.6. Critical factors on building a successful fatherhood programme

- Have strong male leadership, use men to market, recruit for and facilitate the programme;
- Build programmes around the standard needs of the men in the programme;
- Leadership skills, building group norm, etc;
- Respect the culture of the men involved, geographic area, socio-economic, ethnicity and race;
- Provide resources, education and information;
- Laugh, have fun through social activities (for both men and their families);
- Have developmentally appropriate father-child activities (boot camps);
- Never let money get in the way of father involvement ;
- Be flexible in scheduling, find places and times that is conducive for men to attend sessions;
- Know that number alone have little to do with programme success;
- Always spend time celebrating success as men need unlimited opportunities to "shine" about their children and the value they have on their children's lives;
- Emphasize assets of fathers, not their deficits;
- The environment of the programme should clearly indicate that men are welcome;
- Emphasize father-child bond;
- Hands on learning experiences are components of many activities;
- Marketing of the programme should invite many faces of fathers and promote their full involvement;

- Paternal and maternal parenting are recognized and respected;
- Recognize and reduce barriers that limit fathers involvement;
- Understand the wide range of fathers' physical and mental health issues;
- Values that promote gender reconciliation are emphasized.

SECTION 4: COORDINATION, IMPLEMETATION AND MONITORING STRUCTURES

4.1. Coordination and implementation

The elaborate implementation plan will be crafted in partnership with provinces during the capacity building workshops to ensure that provinces address specific fatherhood issues based on this proposed Strategy.

- **National**

  The national office will be responsible for rolling out training in all provinces on the Fatherhood Strategy to facilitate the process of implementation at grassroots. Furthermore, the national office will assist provinces in crafting their province specific programmes to address manifesting challenges around issues of fatherhood. The review of the Strategy will be done at this level including support to provinces in capacitating regions and districts.

- **Province**

  Provinces are expected to roll out the Fatherhood Strategy by developing their provincial specific fatherhood programmes flowing from the Strategy. The provinces will be responsible for capacitating regions and districts and ensuring that the Strategy is implemented.

- **Regions/Districts**

  At this level the Strategy will be implemented to empower fathers, children and families at grassroots and ensure that the critical role of fathers within families is promoted.

4.2. Monitoring and evaluation

Reports from provinces on the implementation of this Strategy will be used at national level to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Strategy. This would enable the national office to scale up the roll out to all the critical wards at local level.

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