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**Effective ECD Programs that can be scaled up**

**Parallel Session C-2**

**Getting the Child ready for  
School: Working with Families  
and Communities**

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**Fatherhood and Men's role  
in Early Childhood Development**

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*by Alex MASHIANE*

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# Fatherhood and Men's role in Early Childhood Development

*by*

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*on behalf of*

**The Fatherhood Project**

**Human Sciences Research Council**

*www.hsrc.ac.za/fatherhood*



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# Background



## *Rationale:*

- father-absence in the lives of children in SA
- exclusion of men from policy & programmes
- abuse of children perpetrated by men
- increase in maternal orphans due to AIDS



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# Demographics of father-absence

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% of children with absent (living) fathers

- 1996: 41.6% (October Household Survey)
- 2002: 45.8% (Generalized Household Survey)



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# Demographics of father-absence

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**% of children with fathers deceased**

- **1996: 9.2% (October Household Survey)**
- **1998: 9.5% (October Household Survey)**
- **2002: 11.5% (Generalized Household Survey)**



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# Fatherhood trends by population group

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% of fathers of children aged 15 yrs & younger  
(Generalized Household Survey data: 2002)

*Africans*

- Deceased fathers: 12.8%
- Absent (living) fathers: 50.2%



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# Fatherhood trends by population group

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% of fathers of children aged 15 yrs & younger  
(Generalized Household Survey data: 2002)

*Coloureds*

- Deceased fathers: 7.4%
- Absent (living) fathers: 37.2%



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# Fatherhood trends by population group

+

% of fathers of children aged 15 yrs & younger  
(Generalized Household Survey data: 2002)

*Indians*

- Deceased fathers: 5%
- Absent (living) fathers: 8.4%



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# Fatherhood trends by population group

+

% of fathers of children aged 15 yrs & younger  
(Generalized Household Survey data: 2002)

*Whites*

- Deceased fathers: 2.4%
- Absent (living) fathers: 10.9%



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# Father-absence effects on children

**+**  
**-**

## **a) Emotional stress**

- **Deviant behaviour**

## **b) Psychological stress**

- **Poor performance at school**
- **Low self-esteem**
- **Depression**

## **c) Cultural disorientation**

- **Culture shapes families & moulds society**



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# Importance of Fatherhood

**+**

## **a) Protection**

- Gives children a sense of security

## **b) Caring**

- Boosts the esteem of children

## **c) Guidance**

- Gives children a sense of direction & identity

## **d) Discipline**

- Monitors & moulds the behaviour of children



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# Children's expectations – Interviews in Durban schools

## NOTE 2

- My father works too much and goes to much meetings and hardly spends time with us he is never available. I would like him to stop putting work before us and start spending time together”
- And whenever I ask him why he's drunk he just tells me that he's not and makes an excuse saying that he's tired and has had a long day and I don't like it when he lies to me



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# Children's expectations – Interviews in Durban schools

- My father hurt me in the back and I feel UNHAPPY and he eat meat but we don't eat meat every day....I very very very worried of him and he do not want us to vist other place and I don't want to do wrong thing and my father hurt us and we feel unhappy and we started to stay away from him, and I feel so very very sad and I started to cry and I play quietly every day and I go to sleep. And he do not buy me toys.



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# Children's expectations – Interviews in Durban schools

- My ... has ... many children, he don't know what is his children or where. My father have 17 children, he not give that children money..... He sleep with all moms that's why I say he is not a true father to the children. I live with my mother, he don't know where I am now. I don't like to be that father



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# Children's expectations – Interviews in Durban schools

I call him uncle because he is not married to my mother, yet he is a father to me in all respect. He is a nice person to my family. Though he lives in town he supports our family in every possible way. He buys food for us and also gives my mother our transport money. He buys us proper school uniforms. He plays a very important role in my family. When my mother is not okay we just wish father could come. When he comes we can see my mother smiling face. He is a loving person. When he comes home he hugs and kisses us but not the way he kisses mom, he holds her for a long time. I can see that they are in love. He is a responsible man. He cleans the yard when he is at home he makes sure that I am there to see how it is done. He teaches me how to say a prayer every night. He helps me with my homework he is my best friend I talk I play I laugh with him. I will be happy if he marries my mother then build the house to accommodate the whole family. He is my hero.



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