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Engaging Fathers: A Point of Entry in Promoting a Culture of Peace

"The supreme test of any civilization is whether it can socialize men by teaching them to be fathers."

—Margaret Meade

Introduction

While the changes and status of women's roles have been broadly debated over the last decades, research and discussion of men's roles and their positions have received little attention. Even less attention has been devoted to the consideration of the fathering roles within families. These changing roles can assist in achieving gender equality and the raising of children in ways that emphasize the qualities needed in building a culture of peace. A culture of peace is defined by values such as respect, equality, caring, empathy and cooperation. As such, a culture of peace is best viewed as a process rather than a condition requiring learning and "unlearning" certain values, attitudes, roles and behaviours.

The need to include and involve men as a means to achieving several important development objectives was highlighted in two United Nations conferences in Cairo (1994) and Beijing (1996). The Cairo Conference reported that, "... the objectives are to promote gender equality in all spheres of life, including family and community life, and to encourage and enable men to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour and their social and family roles" (paragraph 4.25).

With the end of the twentieth century, social changes are forcing adjustments in both popular and scholarly conceptualizations of masculine and feminine gender and social roles defined by sex, specifically the father and mother roles. The dramatic movement into the work force by women; the softening of sexual stereotypes generated by the women's movement, and the

expressed longing among men for deeper relationships in their lives than those provided by the workplace have all conspired to change the way men relate with their children (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradely, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000; Pruett, 1993). Consequently, we have seen the ideal image of fathers shifted from the colonial father, to the distant breadwinner, to the modern dad, to the father as co-parent (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Traditional households with the father as provider and the mother as nurturer and caregiver are increasingly giving way to less conventional, but increasingly modern households with more diverse roles and relationships within the family.

In recent years, a growing body of research is pointing to the benefits of a positive and nurturing father-child relationship (Minton & Pasley, 1996; Collins & Russel, 1991; Pruett, 1989; Lamb, 1987). Studies have found that a nurturing father can positively contribute to his child's ego and moral development (Schenega, 1983), academic performance (McLanahan & Booth, 1989), sex-role and prosocial behaviour (Jeong & Choi, 1997), and communication (Ginsberg, 1995). Moreover, research has revealed that children raised with a nurturing father have decreased stereotypical attitudes (Miller, 1997; Grbich, 1995), greater internal locus of control (Williams & Radin, 1999), and less youth problems with alcohol, marijuana and sexual activity (Stern, Northman & Van Styck, 1986). Also, strikingly, young boys raised by caring involved fathers appear to have a healthier flexibility in their socialized gender role identity (Pruett, 1989; quoted in Betcher & Pollack, 1993).

Nurturant fathering is not only a salient factor in the healthy development of young boys and girls but an important curative or transforming factor in the mental health of adult men (Pollack, 1995; Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992; Grief, 1992; Levant, 1990). Contrary to traditionally held beliefs, fatherhood is equally significant to many men as career achievement. Fatherhood appears to have a reverberating impact on men's emotional capacities for balance, mental health and even physical well being (Barnett *et al.*, 1992).

However, some authors have argued that many of the changes in the culture of fathering have remained in the realm of ideal rather than substance or behaviour (Gearing, 1998; Lelièvre, 1998). External pressures, such as feminist theory and the entry of women into the workplace, have catalysed the creation of the image of a 'new father' and modifications in the role of the father. The point of concern is that this discussion and the images generated will evolve without men, creating an image of the ideal father in which men may not have participated and to which they may not be able or want to relate. In the absence of such involvement, the myth of the "new father" can be de-motivational as it is not based on the daily experience of fathers and men (Lelièvre, 1998). This situation is closely linked to men's lack of words and opportunities to discuss and add their value to the new meaning of fatherhood. Men have identified a need and desire to come out of isolation and speak of the place of the father. A central obstacle is how to bridge these positions.

Society and the media have also influenced the ideal father-image, but very

few concrete and realistic models of committed and competent fathers are presented. A majority of present-day fathers, as shown by statistics, grew up with a physically or emotionally absent father, so they lacked the appropriate model to learn how to be a father (Lelièvre, 1998; Pollack, 1995). Regarding family expectations, there is also a significant gap between expectation and reality. Men are expected to be “involved fathers,” but how does this translate into reality? Before birth, the perception that fathers have of their role is full of positive images nurtured by the social image of the “new father.” These images dissipate quickly over the two years following birth, as the practical steps, knowledge and demands of “being there” is not presently readily available to men.

It is argued here that this gradual disengagement is the result of a number of individual and systemic obstacles that preclude positive involvement of fathers in the lives of their children, limiting their ability to access necessary services and supports in the community. Fathering programs,¹ practitioners, and community leaders must be able to come in contact with these men, and reach out to them. The redefinition of fatherhood must take root in contact with fathers and mothers, and with the reappraisal of manhood. There is need for programs and services that connect with men and provide them with the forums to discuss, share and enhance their understanding of the meaning and importance of their role as fathers.

Fathers’ place in the promotion of a culture of peace: Redefining masculinity

The first step in developing a culture of peace is to identify and implement the underlying conditions that would promote such a goal. A culture of peace is mainly a result of interaction between human beings, and the concept of peace to a large extent connotes egalitarian relationships. Therefore, gender balance and redefinition of gender identities based on respect, equality and mutuality are crucial precursors to promotion of a sustainable culture of peace. The linking of male identity to traditional and stereotyped expectations of masculinity that involves dominance, control, authority, force and aggressiveness pose a significant challenge to engendering a culture of peace in families and society in general (UNESCO, 1997).

Clearly there are multiple causes of violence including dispossession, poverty, nationalism, racism, the concept of “honour” and diverse other situations in which violence develops. Nonetheless, there are persistent connections with masculine traits and behaviours: (a) boys’ peer group life and mass media often promote a direct link between being a “real man” and the practice of dominance and violence; (b) when men feel entitled to power and status, especially with respect to women, they may be angered when they cannot achieve these “entitlements.” Reactions to a sense of powerlessness may include violence against women and children; thereby potentially restoring feelings of control; and (c) extremist movements often express a “demand for dominance”

which is centered on the figure of the man, with woman cast as supporter and mother-of-warriors (UNESCO, 1997). Aggressive and dominating expressions of masculinity may be a direct source of violence. In many cases, gender ideologies may serve as the means by which other causes of conflict are converted into violent conduct. When violent masculinities are created, men and boys' recruitment may prolong or intensify armed conflicts (UNESCO, 1997). In a majority of situations the efforts to re-define manhood is a relevant strategy for peace.

From a gendered perspective, a culture of peace requires a re-definition of the masculine identity to emphasize and include greater nurturing, caregiving, emotional responsiveness and communication skills. Shifts from traditional male gender roles will have enormous implications for well being and peace in the family. It has been alluded that male violence is restrained principally by paternal investment in children, achieved through a reproductive and generative alliance with the mother in the family environment. "Fatherhood bends maleness, in particular male aggression, toward pro-social purposes" (Blankenhorn, 1996).

There is an emerging recognition that positive fathering can play a role in the reduction and prevention of domestic violence. For example, participating in the daily physical care of a child may prevent later abuse of parent-child intimacy. A man's involvement in the care of a child prior to the age of three, whether the child is his own or someone else's, significantly reduces the probability that the man will be involved later in the sexual abuse of any child (Pruett, 1993). Moreover, normalized male-child contact generated by men's participation in child rearing has also been identified an important factor in reducing male violence against women (Pruett, 1996, UNICEF, 1997). Men's self-image as nurturing people who can care for children, and spouses, is increasingly connected to the reduction of violence in the home.

Fathering is one of men's greatest opportunities for personal transformation. Men's capacity to achieve a gender-sensitive empathic form of fathering provides the opportunity for personal transformation for two reasons (Pollack, 1995). First, men can recognize the positive impact their emotional commitment has upon the well being of their children, both girls and boys. They are able to give to their children, what they themselves did not have. This altruistic transformation can often enhance men's self-esteem. This often requires identifying with and internalizing their wives' care-taking capacities and learning how to nurture. In this process, men can internalize a positive sense of nurturance that can go a long way toward de-constructing earlier lessons of socialization that diminished all things feminine and maternal.

Men wanting to impart a positive re-definition of masculinity for their sons must first find value and integrity for themselves in new roles in the family. When fathers as role models increasingly begin to perform domestic chores, assist in childcare, and provide nurture, love and guidance absent of violence to all family members, their children, and particularly sons, will begin to embody

a new image of masculinity and fatherhood. As provider and protector, fathers can help sons gain constructive survival skills in the home (Chevannes, 1995).

Given the physical and mental health costs of male violence against women and children, it is not surprising that research on the destructive consequences of male behavior is having high visibility on feminist research agenda (Goodman, Koss, & Russo, 1993). However, it is only recently that feminist theory and research has begun to address the ways in which the ideology of fatherhood has contributed to inter-locking inequalities for women in both the work place and family life (Russo, 1996; Silverstein, 1996). Feminist theorists and increasingly male clinicians and researchers agree that the re-definition of fathering to emphasize nurturing as well as providing roles will place attachment and connection at the center of gender socialization for men. This emphasis on father as nurturer has been argued as being the next essential step in the transformation of patriarchal culture.

The time has come to ask ourselves how do we move beyond documenting destructive consequences to preventing destructive behaviors in the first place? How do we support and guide men as fathers as they make necessary identity and role transitions? And finally, how do we expand our paradigm to include strengths and positive influences of fatherhood vis-à-vis a culture of respect, cooperation and peace?"

Existing obstacles to engaging fathers in the developmental experience

In recent years, many men have been striving to redefine the traditional, emotionally distant, authoritarian fathering approach with a more connected, involved and nurturing style. Yet, there are several factors that present a challenge to this transformation and perpetuate the traditional lack of attention to involved fathering practices.

Lessons gained from research and implementation programs, like fatherhood programs, suggest that major barriers to men's involvement include poverty and unemployment, father's lack of contact with their children and gender role identity (Bonney, Kelley & Levant, 1999; UNICEF, 1990). Other macro-level barriers are related to the culture of a society and its dominant ideology, services and organizations in the community.

Individual level barriers

(I) Poverty and unemployment

In many parts of the world, men view the provider role as an essential component to what manhood and fatherhood means to them (Barker & Lowenstein, 1996; Hunter & Davis, 1994; Cazanave, 1984; Brown, 1983). Supporting one's family economically is valued universally as a mark of masculinity (Brown, 1995; Bruce, Lloyd & Leonard, 1995). Studies have also suggested that the father's ability to provide financially may have a substantial influence on his involvement with his children. The provider role frequently

remains central to personal definition of fatherhood, poor and unemployed men may experience a great deal of emotional stress about their inability to fulfill their role, in addition to a loss of prestige and power in the “eyes of the world.” The resulting internal conflict, combined with a perceived loss of authority and power may lead men to react by retreating and playing a marginal role in the family or no role at all, or revert to violence (Wade 1994; Taylor, 1981; Penn, 1994).

Economic circumstances do not invariably dictate paternal involvement. Many fathers who are unable to provide substantially for the material needs of their children do maintain a positive influence in their lives (McAdoo & McAdoo, 1994). Nevertheless, the experience of clinicians in community fathering programs have echoed other helping professions working with fathers and families in that they must be sensitive to the detrimental effects of socioeconomic forces on men in order to help these fathers overcome the psychological barriers that affect their ability to nurture and care for their children.

(II) Lack of contact with children

According to Blankenhorn (1996), in the United States the number of children living with their biological father has moved down from 82.4% in 1960 to 61.7% in 1990. One can estimate that with the increase number of children born out of traditional wedlock and the existing rate of divorce, up to 60% of today’s children will live part of their childhood apart from their biological father. In Canada, a single mother leads one in five families. In cases where men are not custodial parents after divorce or separation, it is estimated that 30%-70% of these fathers disappear from their children’s lives, seeing them once a year or less (Dowd, 1997; Carey, 1996).

Similarly, there has been a drastic increase in female-headed households in many other parts of the world (Dowd, 1997). Also, war, disease, environmental degradation, economic marginalization and political unrest have conspired to drive families apart (Dreze, 1992; Lloyd & Desai, 1992; Lloyd & Gage-Brandon, 1993). Furthermore, the lack of economic opportunities has led many men to migrate away from their homes in search of work, and even abandon their families (Bruce, Lloyd & Leonard, 1995).

(III) Lack of paternal confidence

Another obstacle to father’s involvement is a lack of confidence men often have with regards to child rearing and domestic activities. The more men feel supported in the parent role by their wives, friends, community and society at large, the more they tend to stay involved in the care of their young children. Some have suggested that a kind of circle has developed in which men are presumed incompetent, and they accept that verdict and neither seek nor are given a chance to overcome their presumed incompetence (Bonney, Kelley & Levant, 1999; Bruce, *et al.*, 1995). Another perspective notes that men have

been directly and indirectly undermined in their efforts.

In China, for example, men and women believe that fathers are inherently incapable of handling infants. Consequently, men tend to avoid getting close to children. This observation is further corroborated by studies looking at mothers' attitudes and their influence on fathers' behaviour (Fagan, Newash, & Schloesser, 2000; De Luccie, 1996). A study on Italian fathers showed that the degree of a father's involvement with his children and his level of satisfaction as a parent were highly correlated with the extent of his wife's encouragement (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; UNICEF, 1997). Clearly, changes in the man's role in the family imply changes in the woman's role, and these need to be discussed and explored at the same time.

Personal gender ideologies

Gender role ideology and involvement

Role theory suggests that the father role is based on a man's internalized concept of appropriate paternal behaviours (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). This internal concept is influenced both by culturally defined norms or behaviour and by individual beliefs. How fathers define their roles influences the quality and quantity of their behaviour with their children (Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley & Buehler, 1993). Research findings suggest that men's involvement in child rearing is more self-determined than often believed (Bonney, Kelley & Levant, 1999, Aldous, Mulligan & Bjarnason, 1998; Beitel & Parke, 1998). Specifically, fathers who report more liberal gender role ideology, hold more progressive views of the father's role as nurturer and caregiver. In turn progressive views of fathering are related to father involvement in care giving activities. These findings support the centrality of fathers' gender role ideology and aspects of personality as important for active participation in caregiving.

Help seeking

The process of reaching out for help often occurs after long deliberation and perhaps some anxious trepidation. Frequently, these fears and concerns whether real or perceived frustrate entry to and participation in programs designed to support men. Fathering programs need to recognize that for program implementation to be successful social service agencies must attempt to identify and remove obstacles that impede men's ability to seek help.

Again, a man's gender role identity and his conceptions of masculinity play a part in the decision to approach service providers for help in fulfilling their fathering role. Traditional male role identity is manifested in the difficulty in perceiving and acknowledging problems and their symptoms, a difficulty to disclose negative aspects of the personality, difficulty in self-disclosure and a fear of intimacy for fear of rejection by peers (Dulac, 1997; Pollack, 1995; Pleck, 1981).

The ability to acknowledge a problem and ask for help has often been viewed by men as a contradiction to the masculine image of self-reliance and

dominance. Men's socialization and definition of their roles often devalue expressions of inner life, while implying competence, success, self-reliance, competition, mistrust of others, aggressiveness, boldness, rashness and independence rather than interdependence (Dulac, 1997; Pleck, 1981). Male patterns of socialization can shame boys and men into suppressing any expression of sadness, depression and vulnerability. Because of their process of socialization based on performance and on competition, men find it hard to admit their vulnerability and to express requests for help as this may be viewed as sign of failure, dependence and immasculinity. In this context, some authors have gone as far as suggesting that men live their lives as "emotional illiterates," directing their emotions towards two main modes of expressions: anger or violent action (Dulac, 1997). Although this is contrary to the clinical observations in some fathering programs, this concept unfortunately still remains accepted by some.

Experience shows that male qualities of care, sacrifice, giving and empathy exist, and that they could form the nexus of a positive, nurturing, respectful and proactive sense of masculinity (Pollack, 1995). However, many men need support and guidance to negotiate and foster these qualities in action.

Organizational obstacles

Lack of sensitivity to needs of fathers in health and welfare organizations

Many programs and practices within social and human service agencies, consciously or unconsciously, tend to ignore and undervalue the role of fathers. This needs to change. Misconceptions about the importance of the fathering role in healthy child development, namely a belief that only mothers are capable of a nurturing and positive relationship with children, creates a situation where fathers are painted out of the picture. Fathers, like mothers, can effectively raise an emotionally well developed and healthy child (Gearing and Campbell, 2000; Dowd, 1997).

In practice and research, men's roles and issues are usually examined from the perspective of a deficit, viewing men as barriers rather than potential resource in developing a sustainable and supportive condition for woman and children (Barker, 1996). Social service agencies have a historical tendency to focus on work with mothers and to ignore fathers (Jaffe, 1983). Many fathering programs have started to successfully challenge this historical systemic obstacle. For example, given their responsibilities for case planning and service delivery on behalf of children and their families, child welfare caseworkers are key actors in determining fathers' involvement in services. Fathers are rarely involved by caseworkers in case assessments, case planning or receipt of services (O'Donnell, 1999). Furthermore, this research has shown that caseworkers usually do not pursue paternal involvement or identify lack of participation as a professional concern. Practitioners in these contexts tend to know more about fathers' problems than their strengths.

Frequently, it is difficult for practitioners working with men to detect

masculine signals that are requests for help (Dulac, 1997). For example, virile expressions of a request for help are often interpreted as aggressive behaviour or an abuse of power, rather than as a cry for help (Lelièvre, 1998).

Fathering programs in local communities need to be cognizant that men may have problems recognizing and communicating critical situations. By defining a request for help as with many communications regarding a problem or an anxiety-producing event, is an attempt to obtain support, advice or assistance in a time of distress. Some authors plainly establish the difficulties that await the promotion and implementation of programs for father involvement (Gearing, 1998). Also, it is recognised that the difficulties and obstacles, externally and internally effecting men's involvement and help-seeking behaviour, need to be openly addressed, anticipated, and minimised by the service providing programs.

Therefore, the critical questions that social service agencies need to ask in order to better engage fathers are: How can practitioners build with men the trust needed to establish the bonds of co-operation and interdependence necessary to discuss and experience the inherent difficulties of fatherhood? What type of helping environment is needed to accomplish these without awakening feelings of helplessness, loss of control, blame, guilt and failure that result from a socialization process that is performance and competition-oriented? Also, how can we move from a deficit orientation that focuses on pathologies, human difficulties, crises and inadequacies to one that uses programs in a preventative, rather than a reactive fashion?

Strategies to overcome barriers to father involvement

Organizational capacity building and training of practitioners

A new consciousness and increased capacity among agencies and practitioners constitute a pre-requisite for any successful programming initiative to positively engage fathers (Gearing, 1998; Lelièvre, 1998; UNICEF, 1997). It is necessary to foster, at the level of practitioners as well as in the general population, a wide movement of sensitization that will allow the birth of a culture of fatherhood (Gearing, 1998; Lelièvre, 1998).

One of the barriers to father's involvement in the developmental experience is organizations' inability to respond to and reach out to men. It is essential to sensitize practitioners and community leaders on the values, attitudes and prejudices held by our communities regarding men and fatherhood. Training directed at the creation of services that are favourable to men and proactive in the promotion of father involvement should be provided and has been shown to be practical and successful within community fathering programs. Practitioner training will in part catalyze a reflection on their intervention style and on their values regarding parental roles. Such training will also increase empathic understanding of men's burdens of masculinity and developmental dilemmas among those in the helping professions (Pollack, 1995; Rako & Mazer, 1980).

At the organizational level, the role of men in families should be a part of all situation analysis, as women and children's are at present. Since the roles of men in families may vary among cultural, religious, kinship or class groups and throughout the lifespan, it is essential to understand the actual situation before making programming decisions. All programming decisions should be based on knowledge, derived from qualitative and quantitative data of the local situation of men and women in families.

Program considerations

Integrating men-focused strategies

Social programs and human services need to be re-oriented to include the role of men in families to ensure more effective outcomes for child health and gender equality. Programs can assist families to adapt to alternative roles and responsibilities and achieve a new social dynamic where roles are redefined to place value on nurturing, caretaking and compassion. Roles and responsibilities in the family may be based on need, rather than on predetermined gender-based expectations, systemic obstacles or stereotypes. The interests of a child are best served when men and women can create a positive partnership based on mutual respect within a supportive social fabric of family and community. Human service agencies can find numerous entry points by exploring ways that male identity and their role in the family can impact on welfare outcomes within their own areas of program focus.

Strategies for involving men can be achieved by linking them with on going program activities. By integrating men-focused strategies in existing programs, agencies may not need to develop large new vertical programs. Opportunities should be explored to include men in programs dealing with child welfare and development (i.e.: child welfare services, breast feeding, pre-natal programs, etc.), employment and job training, and programs working to stop sexual exploitation and violence against women. Therefore, while such strategies demand a new consciousness and awareness for program planners and implementers, positive men's involvement can be achieved in the context of ongoing interventions and not necessarily separate initiatives.

Support and encouragement for role changes

Men's roles in families change over their lifetime; thus a life cycle perspective can be particularly useful in transforming the traditional culture regarding masculinity, power and partnership. Creative strategies to address socialization processes throughout the life cycle are proving more and more useful. Programmatic attention has begun to focus on developing life skills for boys and facilitating adaptation to changing family structures and roles for fathers (Brown, 1995; Brown & Broomfield, 1994). Working with different age groups may also speed the process of positive change.

Programs and policy initiatives are needed to support and encourage fathers as they re-negotiate their roles, recognizing that there is no one formula

for facilitating these changes, nor one image of masculinity that will be acceptable everywhere. Such initiatives therefore need be developed locally and with both gender and cultural sensitivity.

Maintaining identity as roles evolve is a crucial factor in achieving sustainable change toward constructive and positive masculinity (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). If men feel sharing the provider role and taking on domestic responsibilities is emasculating them, they are likely to resist the changes needed for a healthy role transition. In contrast, if men begin to appreciate and value their own contribution in the household, the transition could be easier. The community and social agencies have a significant role to play in recognizing and valuing the roles by the messages they give to men in society.

Positive male models

Men's self-image as nurturing people who can care for children should be enhanced in any way possible. More equitable partnerships between men and women needs to be promoted within families and in this respect a more active role for father in child rearing must be fostered (Jolly, 1993). A vehicle for achieving such an objective is developing programs and forums for men to come together to share and discuss challenges, experiences and meanings of fatherhood. Men and women need help to re-frame participation in the household realm and child rearing as positive expression of masculinity, and not as a sign of deficit or weakness of a man.

In order to break the isolation of fathers and allow networking, the community must validate and support the efforts made by fathers. Community models of fathers who are involved and competent must be emphasized, in order to avoid the negative impact of a guilt-inducing approach. To support and encourage such changes, practitioners need to work in communities to identify positive role models and community leaders who are culturally and socially attractive for fathers, and to determine effective ways to nurture and promote them in the community.

Social marketing of programs

Before men get involved with a program or service, it is important for some to get approval from their spouse, an authority figure and/or the community (Bonney, Kelley & Levant, 1999; Lelièvre, 1998). Social marketing of programs and positive fathering images can bring acceptance to father involvement and to programs that support this involvement. Efforts toward social acceptance will address fathers but also services, community organizations, work environments, partners and mothers.

Presentations of the role of men in families as depicted in media and mobilization materials need to be examined for gender balance and to include positive views and images of nurturing fathering practices. In areas from which men have been inappropriately excluded, promotional materials (e.g. breast feeding posters, etc.) could be adopted to include them.

Experience from the developing countries shows that men's motivation to engage in programs tends to increase when appeals are made on the best interest of the child and the community (UNICEF, 1997; Engle, 1995). Programs targeting men's issues with a focus on positive fathering and gender equality in the home are beginning to see some success where such programs are able to appropriately pinpoint male motivation factors such as greater well-being for their children, or supporting stronger communities (Engle, 1995). People will rethink community values when there is demonstrable benefit to the family. Approaches can be effective in building constructive partnership between men and women, promoting child well being and developing a supportive culture of peace and cooperation within the family.

Community partnerships

Community and institutional partnerships as demonstrated with community fathering programs are crucial in any programming strategy to engage men in the developmental experience. From our experience such partnerships need to develop at a variety of levels. Potential partners may include: (a) existing men's networks (social groups, sports clubs, support groups, etc); (b) parent associations and parenting groups (e.g. pre- and post-natal classes); (c) education systems and religious organizations; (d) education and employment programs; (e) mass media for social marketing and promotion of new positive gender images; (f) other non-governmental (NGO) and community-based (CBO) organizations with an interest in improving health and welfare of women and children.

Conclusion

In the context of demographic and social transformation, the opportunity is ripe to help men and women to adapt to the changing roles and changing needs within their families and communities. Men are critical to this process, as both fathers and mothers create the most important environment in which the child will be socialized. A balancing of power within the family that is free from violence and supportive of both parents is needed to achieve a culture of peace and equality. Men are also waiting for support to become more engaged and involved in this process.

To achieve lasting change for a culture of peace and cooperation within the family and society, new socialization processes are needed. Learning and developing behaviours and attitudes that foster a culture of peace begins with the creation of a long lasting supportive environment for children through positive socialization. A life cycle approach to achieving gender equality begins with parents. There must be expectations and acceptance that men and women share child rearing as well as the provider role. Social change will be necessary for ensuring more equitable roles for men and women, and a more involved and nurturing role for men in the family as the norm. Achieving such change will require interventions with all age groups with appropriate entry

points throughout the life cycle.

To be sustainable, such transformation needs to happen beyond the family, in communities and institutions as well, since education, laws, policies and the media are all powerful socializing agents. Efforts in social marketing/promotion of positive images of fatherhood and forging strong community and institutional partnerships are essential in engaging men in the dialogue vis-à-vis gender role transformation.

Finally, in order to impart a positive re-definition of manhood for their sons, men must first find value and integrity for themselves in their new roles as caretakers and nurturers in the family. These values need to be recognized and assimilated by other systems such as the school, religious organizations, work environments, mass media and finally social service organizations. There clearly is a need to address organizational and agency level capacity gaps to create programs that involve fathers in the helping paradigm. Training and sensitization of practitioners and program planner should be central in this process.

¹In all references to “fathering programs” the authors have incorporated data and observations from their clinical research on The Re: Membering Fatherhood Program. The Re: Membering Fatherhood Program is a group program designed to help fathers improve and enhance their emotional bond with their children.

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