



**African Population and
Health Research Center**

Male involvement in childcare activities



Studies

1. An evaluation of the effectiveness of a community-led parenting empowerment program to improve nurturing care of young children in Kenya and Zambia
2. Evaluation of the feasibility and effectiveness of a health facility-based combined with home-based early childhood development (ECD) intervention in Siaya County, Kenya
3. The feasibility of incorporating parental support for nurturing care into the Baby-Friendly Community Initiative (BFCI) package in a rural African context

Background

- Children may fail to achieve developmental potential partly due to gender inequality and discrimination
- Girls disadvantaged in opportunities for play and access to resources
- Girls and boys learn gendered attitudes during early childhood
- Internalizing negative stereotypes impacts outcomes, especially for girls

Background

- Common perception is that early childhood care is 'women's work' and is therefore natural for women
- "Fathers have long been the forgotten contributors to child development" – Adrienne Burgess



Significance

- Social benefits for both boys and girls with males as role models
- Having both males and females participate in EC care can broaden children's gender-stereotyped perceptions
- Males can contribute to development of children's social competences
- Having more males in EC care could enhance parental involvement by making fathers feel more comfortable

We want to move from here...



...to here



Gender roles

"Like me being the father of the children, I have to look for fruits ... should be given to the children and they develop immunity in the body." FGD Fathers

- Fathers perceived themselves as providers and protectors
- Fathers indicated that greater responsibility of taking care of children lies with mother

Gender roles

Mothers perceived role of father as ... provider and head of family. They felt that fathers should be able provide food, health care, school fees, clothing, shelter and protection and ensure general wellbeing of child

The push for male involvement

- CHVs encourage fathers to:
 - be close to their pregnant wives
 - assist them around the home
 - support their breastfeeding wives so that they can get good flow of milk
- CHVs sensitize fathers to stop perceiving their involvement in childcare as shameful

The push for male involvement

"...we tell them the importance of all the parents to be committed to their children that a child does not belong to the mother alone ..." KII, ECD provider

"We have to help our wives with house responsibilities because they are not slaves or house helps..." FGD, male caregivers

The push for male involvement

Involvement of males remains a problem

“Men also fall into peer influence. They fear being seen by their peers, accompanying their wives to the hospital, because they might be seen as weaklings who are governed by their wives.”

FGD with fathers

...in the cases where fathers accompany their wives, they would wait for them at clinic gates

Some recommendations

- Involve fathers in home-based sensitization sessions on childcare and development
- Special seminars to sensitize men on importance of their involvement in child growth and development
- Male caregivers suggested that they be involved in taking care of young children. They felt that sometimes they were sidelined...