

**Jamaica Coalition for a Healthy Society & the Lawyers
Christian Fellowship, Jamaica**

**International Conference on Human Rights:
International Law and the Welfare of the Family
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IMPACT OF FATHERLESSNESS

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- 2014-UN International Year of the Family
- Healthy Families now recognized as key to National development in many countries (improved social, health and economic indicators).

The impact of parenting on public health

“Parenting is probably the most important public health issue facing our society. It is the single largest variable implicated in childhood illnesses and accidents; teenage pregnancy and substance misuse; truancy, school disruption, and underachievement; child abuse; unemployability; juvenile crime; and mental illness. These are serious in themselves but are even more important as precursors of problems in adulthood and the next generation....”

**[Masud Hoghghi](#), Consultant clinical psychologist
BMJ 1998.**

In many countries, developed and developing, a key factor contributing to a breakdown of the family and poor parenting is the absence or uninvolvement of FATHERS (Fatherlessness).

Borne out by research.

Sources

Dr. David Popenoe, noted sociologist and one of the pioneers of the relatively young field of research into fathers and fatherhood.

The US Department of Justice and the US Census Bureau.

National Fatherhood Initiative (US).

CIVITAS (Institute for the study of civil society-UK think tank).

The Registrar General's Department.

NB. Jamaican Researchers – Prof Samms-Vaughn, Prof Barry Chevannes (Fathers Inc), Dr. Herbert Gayle.

Impact of fatherlessness at a glance (early childhood/adolescents).

- **Overall well-being of children.**
- **Mental and Physical Health.**
- **Behavioral disorders.**
- **Teen suicide.**
- **Chemical Abuse.**
- **Maternal and Child Health.**
- **Childhood accidents.**
- **Childhood obesity.**
- **Early involvement in sexual activity (STI's etc).**
- **Teen pregnancy.**
- **Increased risk of sexual abuse (Mom's consort, etc).**

- **Increased risk of dysfunctional relationships, broken marriages.**
- **Increased tendency to violent behavior.**
- **Poor performance in school.**
- **Truancy.**
- **Increased tendency to run away from home.**
- **Juvenile Crime.**
- **Incarceration.**
- **Gang membership.**
- **Poor work ethics and unemployability.**
- **MORE**

Supported by research in all areas.

SELECTED RESEARCH FINDINGS

- **90% OF HOMELESS RUNAWAY CHILDREN ARE FROM FATHERLESS HOMES. WITHIN 72 HOURS THE MAJORITY EITHER BECOME PERPETRATORS OR VICTIMS OF A CRIME.**
- **63% OF YOUTH SUICIDES ARE FROM FATHERLESS HOMES. CHILDREN WHO GREW UP WITH INVOLVED FATHERS HAVE HIGHER SELF ESTEEM.**
- **85% OF CHILDREN WHO EXHIBIT BEHAVIOURAL DISORDERS COME FROM FATHERLESS HOMES. CHILDREN WHO GROW UP WITH INVOLVED FATHERS PERFORM BETTER IN SCHOOLS.**

- **80% OF ADOLESCENTS IN MENTAL HEALTH HOSPITALS ARE FROM FATHERLESS HOMES.**
- **77% OF TEENAGERS AND KIDS IN CHEMICAL ABUSE REHAB CENTERS COME FROM FATHERLESS HOMES.**
- **71% OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS ARE FROM FATHERLESS HOMES. PUT ANOTHER WAY, FATHERLESS CHILDREN ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL THAN THOSE CLASSMATES WITH TWO PARENTS.**

• 71% OF TEENAGE PREGNANCIES ARE TO CHILDREN FROM FATHERLESS HOMES – PERPETUATING THE CYCLE. GIRLS WHO GROW UP WITH INVOLVED, LOVING FATHERS, HAVE HEALTHIER RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX.

• GIRLS WHO ARE RAISED IN A FATHERLESS HOME ARE 164% MORE LIKELY TO BECOME PREGNANT BEFORE MARRIAGE AND 92% MORE LIKELY TO DISSOLVE THEIR MARRIAGE WHEN THEY GET MARRIED.

• THE ABSENCE OF BIOLOGICAL FATHERS INCREASES BY 900% A DAUGHTER'S VULNERABILITY TO RAPE AND SEXUAL ABUSE.

- **85% OF ALL YOUTHS (75% OF TEENAGERS) IN PRISONS GREW UP IN A FATHERLESS HOME. CHILDREN WHO GROW UP WITH INVOLVED FATHERS, HAVE LESS TROUBLE WITH THE LAW.**
- **72% OF ALL TEENAGE MURDERERS GREW UP WITHOUT FATHERS.**
- **85% OF RAPISTS COME FROM FATHERLESS HOMES.**
- **FATHERLESS CHILDREN ARE 11 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO EXHIBIT VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR THAN CHILDREN WITH TWO PARENTS IN A HOME.**

• 90% OF ALL GANG MEMBERS GREW UP IN A FATHERLESS HOME – GANG VIOLENCE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ROUGHLY HALF OF ALL HOMICIDES.

• THE MOST RELIABLE PREDICTOR OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR IS THE ABSENCE OF A FATHER IN THE HOME.

• 50% OF JAMAICAN CHILDREN ARE BORN TO UNREGISTERED FATHERS. 85% TO UNMARRIED FEMALES.

The way forward

Elevate this National Developmental Issue (Family and elements thereof), to the level of focus and visibility commensurate with its established importance.

Do a comprehensive National Inventory of all current entities (over 20) and research to date related to the family or elements thereof.

Interventions to strengthen marriage and the nuclear family (as defined by the Bible and the Jamaican Constitution), as the ideal environment, from evidence, to nurture and protect young lives.

Multi-stakeholder National Fatherhood/Male Mentorship Initiative building on what already exists?

- Educational material on being good dads.**
- workshops aimed at equipping fathers and fathers to be, on effective strategies in promoting healthy lifestyle practices, good mental health, values and attitudes during early childhood (emphasis on modeling).**

A National, sustained media campaign to raise awareness and impact the practices of our men/fathers.

Applying a similar approach to that taken in managing Public Health Emergencies.

Messages for such a media campaign.

- The importance of father in the formative years.**
- The importance of validating your children. No cost.**
- Hugging your sons and daughters.**
- The family table.**
- The importance of modeling/mentoring.**
- Visibly loving their children's mom.**
- TIME, TIME, TIME – Spending quality time with children.**

Thank you.