

How you can help.....



Prayer

Please pray for the Mothers' Union Worldwide Parenting Programme and for all those involved in supporting and empowering parents to create a better future for themselves and their families.

Giving

The Mothers' Union Overseas Development Fund supports vital Mothers' Union work around the world, including the full cost of the Worldwide Parenting Programme. This work is only possible through the continued enthusiasm, prayer and financial support of our members and friends around the world.

By making a donation to the Overseas Development Fund you can make a real difference to the lives of families worldwide.

For further information on the Mothers' Union Worldwide Parenting Programme please contact:

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Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

WORLDWIDE PARENTING PROGRAMME

Parenting has often been described as the most important job you will ever do in your life. It can also be quite a daunting and isolating task especially with all the things that life in the 21st Century can bring. Promoting the importance of parenting and its impact on family life is a common goal for Mothers' Union members worldwide.

The Mothers' Union Parenting Programme started in the UK and Ireland in 2000 as Mothers' Union recognised that although for all parents there are many times when being a parent is fulfilling and enjoyable – for many parents the responsibility for caring for their children is very daunting, and there are often times when they feel isolated and under pressure as they try to work through problems or difficult situations.



News of the success of the UK and Ireland programme spread to our members worldwide, and their feedback was that the programme was much needed in their communities too as many of the parenting issues were the same. In 2005 the Programme was introduced into a further six countries: Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad.

Through the programme, locally run parenting groups aim to allow communities to extend their parenting skills, build relationships and contribute to the stability of family life. Through these newfound skills, more united families are able to tackle issues together and contribute to a better family life in the wider community.

We have 10 Mothers' Union Parenting Trainers who train local volunteers as Parenting Group Facilitators. Once trained these Facilitators hold Parenting Groups within their local communities for up to 16 people at a time over a period of 10-12 weeks. These sessions not only equip individuals with valuable parenting skills, they also allow people to share their thoughts, concerns and issues relating to children and family life. A close bond is often formed between the group members and many continue to meet even when they have reached the end of the sessional course as they so value the time they spend together.

The programme is open to those from all faiths or none and welcomes individuals with varying backgrounds and beliefs. It has been adapted in each region to take into consideration local needs and available resources. Specifically tailored resources guide the groups through sessions covering the highs and lows of parenting, the parent-child relationship and discussing sensitive issues.

In many cultures, issues such as sex, HIV/AIDS, early marriage, child abuse and incest are deemed inappropriate to discuss or even taboo within society. Yet these are real issues that are facing families in many countries around the world today.



"What have you done to our wives?" The husbands of these Maasai women in Kenya have been astounded at the positive impact that the programme has had on their family.

In all areas parenting groups are discussing these issues and are working together to understand the causes and ways in which they can be resolved.

The parenting group facilitators therefore must work hard to break down the barriers and traditional beliefs that may be harmful to children, within families and communities. Facilitators have to ensure that each individual is comfortable talking about personal relationships with those around them.

Perhaps one of the biggest transformations has been seen in the men - with many more men coming to the programme than initially expected. In many

cultures parenting children is a role that is seen as the sole responsibility for mothers and other female family members. In traditional patriarchal societies, women and children have been a sidelined minority group. Men do not see the importance of being involved in parenting their children or the potential negative impact being distant might have on them.

Some men come to the programme with their wives and attend the same group. Others prefer to be in a group with other men and there has been such a demand that many men-only groups have been formed.



Some of the men in Georgetown, Guyana bring their children with them to the parenting group and play a game of football or table tennis with them before the men all then sit down together and talk about the issues together. The same men that would have been in the rum shop on a Saturday now come together instead and sit discussing parenting. The groups have been so popular that they are now attracting men who are not even parents yet but are thinking of having children in the next few years.

Worldwide Parenting Programme Statistics

By the end of 2007:

- The programme is continuing to run in 6 countries
- 411 facilitators have been trained in total
- Approximately 4,110 direct 'parent' beneficiaries (*an average of 10 people in a parenting group*).
- Reached approximately 45,000 people indirectly

"I get a lot of satisfaction out of just listening to the people talk about the way their family life has changed for the better since experiencing a parenting group. To feel a part of this worldwide plan to equip communities to extend their parenting skills, build relationships and contribute to the stability of family life in society is just awesome because I don't have to wait a hundred years to see the changes; it is happening before my very eyes!"

Sheran Harper, Mothers' Union Parenting Trainer, Guyana