



**WORKING WITH CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS: BREAKING DECOLONIALITY AND
INDEGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND PRACTICE IN AFRICA: SWAZILAND
EXPERIENCE**

10TH OCTOBER 2017

***Vierah T. Hlatshwayo
Principal Social Welfare Officer
Deputy Prime Minister's Office
Swaziland***



COUNTRY CONTEXT





INTRODUCTION

- All children, globally deserve to be cared for and protected from harm and to grow up in a safe environment in which their rights and needs are respected.
- Unfortunately , not all children are properly cared for or protected due to the fact that, sometimes the environments in which they live are harmful to their development and wellbeing.
- Every adult has a role in ensuring that our children live safely and can reach their full potential.
- Parents, whether living with their children or not, have the most important role to play and other family members have a duty to contribute greatly to a child's wellbeing.



BACKGROUND

- PRIOR TO COLONIZATION, THERE WERE TRADITIONAL STRUCTURES IN PLACE WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR ADDRESSING ISSUES PERTAINING WRONGDOING WITHIN THE SOCIETY. INDIVIDUAL FOUND TO HAVE BREACHED THE NORMS AND VALUES WERE MADE TO COMPENSATE IN AN AMICABLE WAY. SERIOUS OFFENDERS WERE DISCIPLINED IN A TRADITIONAL WAY BEARING IN MIND THE WELFARE OF THEIR CHILDREN. COLONIZATION CAME WITH ESTABLISHMENT OF PRISONS/CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES WHICH WE PRESENTLY REFER TO AS CORRECTIONAL CENTERS/FACILITIES.
- **CORRECTIONAL CENTERS**
- SWAZILAND HAS A TOTAL OF **TWELVE** CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES, WITH **FIVE** ACCOMMODATING WOMEN, **FOUR** ACCOMMODATES THOSE AWAITING TRIAL AND **ONE** ACCOMMODATES BOTH CONVICTS AND AWAITING TRIAL CALLED **MAWELAWELA**.
- **FACILITIES**
 - ✓ BIG BEND
 - ✓ MAWELAWELA
 - ✓ MBABANE
 - ✓ NHLANGANO
 - ✓ PIGG'S PEAK



INCARCERATION OF PARENTS

- THE NUMBER OF INCARCERATED PARENTS CONTINUES TO GROW, STAKEHOLDERS IN SOCIETY SHOULD IDENTIFY WAYS TO AMELIORATE THE IMPACT OF INCARCERATION ON PARENTS AND FAMILIES.
- PRESENTLY THE CONTINENT HAS MILLIONS MOTHERS INCARCERATED OTHERS WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND OTHERS WITHOUT THEIR CHILDREN.
- AS PARENTS ARE INCARCERATED, CHILDREN REMAIN WITH SERIOUS QUESTIONS AND THE EFFECTS RENDER SOME IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES AS WELL AS LEAVES THEM IN NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION.
- CHILDREN ARE ONLY ACCOMMODATED UP TO THE AGE OF 3 WITHIN THE FACILITIES AFTER THE AGE OF THREE THEY ARE REMOVED FROM THEIR MOTHERS.



EFFECTS

- Overall effects of parental incarceration differ based on whether a mother or father is incarcerated and this includes sentencing length and placement of children.
- There is an increased likelihood of criminal behavior by children physical and mental problems such as difficulty sleeping, concentrating and depression.
- May include difficulty with academic subjects and behavior at school as well as a large number of the children are likely to experience mental and physical health problems and
- Exhibit a range of problems such as aggressive behavior, tantrums, and frequent crying. (Johnston 1992)



EFFECTS CONT.

- SOME OF THE CHILDREN EXPERIENCE SCHOOL PROBLEMS INCLUDING INATTENTION AND LEARNING DISABILITIES.
- THE SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PROBLEMS AMONG MOTHERS BEFORE INCARCERATION, INCLUDING DRUG ABUSE, PERSONALITY DYSREGULATION, AND MENTAL ILLNESS, CAN LEAD TO POOR OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN.
- AT RISK DUE TO SEPARATION, OR AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR OR WITHDRAWAL. EXPERIENCE NEW STRESS WITH MATERNAL INCARCERATION.
- THE CUMULATIVE RISKS AND STRESSORS INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF CONTINUED EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS THAT MAY LEAD TO THE CHILD'S OWN EVENTUAL INCARCERATION.



EFFECTS CONT.

- OTHER CAREGIVERS AND FAMILIES WHO HAVE CUSTODY OF AN INCARCERATED PARENT'S CHILD OR CHILDREN MAY BE RELUCTANT OR UNABLE TO VISIT A PARENT FOR SEVERAL REASONS.
 - FIRSTLY, GIVEN THAT A PARENT IS LIKELY TO BE HOUSED MORE THAN 100 KILOMETERS FROM THEIR PRIMARY RESIDENCE.
 - COSTS MAY BE ONE IMPEDIMENT TO COLLECT CALLS FROM PRISON AND IN-PERSON VISITS.
 - A FAMILY MEMBER MAY ALSO BE RELUCTANT TO BRING A CHILD TO SEE A PARENT FOR A HOST OF DIFFERENT REASONS.
- THE REASONS MAY INCLUDE:**
- ✓ What the guardian perceives will be the impact on the child.
 - ✓ Lack of family-friendly accommodation.
 - ✓ Security provisions that are required of visitors.
 - ✓ Anger directed at the incarcerated parent.
 - ✓ Lack of information on their rights,
(Harston 1998)



PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

- SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE SHOULD FACILITATE TREATMENT PROCESSES NOT ONLY TO AID THE CLIENT CARE BUT ALSO TO SERVE AS AN INTERFACE BETWEEN THE CLIENT, A VARIETY OF CAREGIVERS AND CRITICAL COMMUNITY-BASED PARTNERS IN CARE.
- INFORMATION COLLECTED SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:
 - ❖ NATURE AND SEVERITY OF THE EXPERIENCE
 - ❖ CONCERNS REGARDING IMMEDIATE POST-TRAUMATIC CIRCUMSTANCE AND ANY ONGOING THREAT
 - ❖ SEPARATION FROM OR CONCERNS ABOUT THE SAFETY OF LOVED ONES
 - ❖ PHYSICAL ILLNESS, MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS, NEED FOR MEDICATIONS.
 - ❖ EXTREME FEELINGS OF GUILT OR SHAME
 - ❖ THOUGHTS ABOUT CAUSING HARM TO SELF OR OTHERS.



INTERVENTIONS CONT.

- SOCIAL WORK ASSISTANCE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES TO FAMILIES OF INCARCERATED PARENTS SHOULD ENSURE CONNECTION TO OTHER COMMUNITY RESOURCES, AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS WHICH MAY BE ABLE TO HELP THE FAMILIES AND ENHANCE THEIR PARENTING SKILLS.
- DECOLONIZING SOCIAL WORK TRAINING AND PRACTICE IS THUS ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE RELEVANT REFERRALS FOR OUTSIDE PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES, THROUGH UNITING WITH OTHER COMMUNITY AGENCIES, BUILDING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE VARIOUS SERVICE PROVIDERS AND THE FAMILY OF THE INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS.
- **TRAUMAGENIC DYNAMICS (FINKELFOR AND BROWNE)**
- **RAPE TRAUMA SYNDROME**
- ❖ **TRAUMATIC SEXUALIZATION: SEXUALITY DEVELOPED AND SHAPED INAPPROPRIATELY AND DYSFUNCTIONALLY**
 - EFFECTS:
 - MASTURBATION
 - COMPULSIVE SEX PLAY
 - ORAL GENITAL CONTACT
 - PROMISCUITY



INTERVENTIONS CONT.

- ❖ **BETRAYAL: DISCOVERY THAT SOMEONE VITALLY DEPENDENT CAUSED THE HARM; UNABLE AND UNWILLING TO PROTECT**
- **EFFECTS:**
- FEELINGS OF DEEP DISILLUSSIONMENT
- DISENCHANTMENT
- TRUST AND SECURITY
- EXTREME DEPENDENCY
- CLINGING



CONT.

- ❖ **POWERLESSNESS: CHILD'S WILL, DESIRES AND SENSE EFFICACY CONTINUALLY CONTRAVENED. TERRITORY AND BODY SPACE REPEATEDLY INVADED WITHOUT CONSENT.**
- **EFFECTS:**
- FEAR AND ANXIETY
- NIGHTMARES
- PHOBIAS
- HYPERVIGILANCE
- CLINGING BEHAVIOUR
- SOMATIC COMPLAINTS - STOMACH ACHES AND HEADACHES
- LEARNING PROBLEMS AND RUNNING AWAY
- DEPRESSION , AGGRESSIVE, CONTROL OR DOMINATE
- SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR



CONT.

- ❖ **STIGMATIZATION: NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS COMMUNICATED DURING ABUSIVE EXPERIENCES AND STIGMATISED BY PEOPLE IN ENVIRONMENT AS WELL AS LABELED “*SPOILED GOODS*” OR IN RELATION TO THE CRIME COMMITTED BY THE PARENT.**
- **EFFECTS:**
- FEELING ISOLATED
- DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE
- SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR
- SUICIDAL TENDENCIES
- GUILT AND SHAME
- LOW SELF-ESTEEM
- DISORTED SELF-IMAGE



CONCLUSION

- LONG-TERM RAMIFICATIONS OF PARENTAL INCARCERATION NEED TO BE INTERROGATED FURTHER TO ENSURE A PARADIGM SHIFT IN SOCIAL WORK TRAINING AND SERVICE PROVISION.
- SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND PRACTICE SHOULD BE ADAPTED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF SPECIFIC SURVIVORS.
- IN ORDER TO PROVIDE TAILORED INTERVENTIONS, SPECIFIC INFORMATION MUST BE GATHERED.



*THANK YOU,
SIYABONGA*

