

Parenting, Family Health & COVID-19: Global Day of Parents 2020

The critical role of parents in rearing children, is commemorated on the Global Day of Parents, annually on 1st June. The day also recognizes that the family is the primary responsible nucleus for nurturing and enhancing the wellbeing of children and adolescents. A family environment, established by parents (or guardians and caregivers), which is characterized by dignity, understanding, harmonious communication and love; is fundamental to cultivating healthy well-balanced children who grow into productive citizens of society.

SAFAIDS, RIATT-ESA and their networks, observe today as an opportunity to appreciate all parents (biological or not) for their sacrifices, selflessness and persevering commitment to children. This year, we recognize that many parents, as anchors of families across the SADC region, bear immense burdens due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. Parents are carrying multiplex responsibility of protecting their families from harm, sustaining their family's nourishment and health, giving hope to their families, educating their out-of-school children and adolescents, and for some also simultaneously working. A large proportion of parents, in our regional context, are also responsible for extended families, often including their own parents and aging relatives. Parents who have dependents living with disabilities or with chronic illnesses, may undergo additional trials in coping with restricted spaces, limited or lack of access to services, and in many cases challenged access to medicines and supplies. Where parents have been generating household income through informal work, or formal work which has halted due to lockdowns, their economic and livelihood security has been threatened.

We must recognise that these, and other complicated strains due to COVID-19, can compromise parents' mental and physical health. This would consequently cascade to the psychosocial health of their families. We further recognise that without parents dedication and commitment during lockdown; children's and adolescent's health, education and emotional well-being is at risk. In designing support for parents and families, a homogenous approach cannot be employed. Parents have diverse demographics, single parents, pregnant parents, unemployed parents, migrant parents and so forth. All bearing their own unique strains as they pursue the noble mandate of parenthood. .

COVID-19 is teaching us that 'making light' of formal family-friendly policy and practice within workplaces, promoted by Governments, is no longer viable to both worker (Employee and Employer) and societal health and productivity. *"A working parent whose family-work balance has been achieved, is a healthier and happier parent. A healthier and happier parent is more invested and productive at work, more creative and attentive at home, more able to nurture a healthy family and exert resilience in crisis or uncertainty - such as posed by COVID-19"*. Rouzeh Eghtessadi, SAFAIDS.

"The restrictions put in place in many countries as a measure to curb the further spread of COVID-19, and the call to stay home to minimize person-to-person contact, serve to reaffirm the all-important role that family as an institution plays in society. Additional pressure is exerted on parenting as parents and guardians take on new and unprecedented roles to facilitate learning in the new normal" Anock Kapira, RIATT-ESA Programme Manager



This year, we urge companies and organisations to introduce family-friendly policies. In countries where these have been instituted, they have reaped good practice and enabled higher quality performance and efficiency, and less absenteeism and lethargy.

In addition to value add for the world of work; there will be far-reaching progressive impact on safety, health and development of children of working parents. And a greater probability of growing a future population of well-balanced and healthy citizens.

Investing in parents and families is investing in society and sustainable development.

This is ultimately a development issue, not just a social issue.

#ProtectParents

#HealthyParentsHealthySociety

#BeKind

#BeSafe