
SITE VISIT: Jamaica—Fathers Incorporated

By Janet Brown. Excerpted from the Coordinators' Notebook No. 16, "Gender Relations and Conflicts in Fathering," November 1995.

Fathers, Incorporated began in 1991 in Jamaica. It was the outgrowth of the Caribbean Child Development Centre's (CCDC) first parenting symposium, held in that same year. One workshop was held for fathers only and 17 men attended. Their common denominator was a sense that women stereotype them unfairly as irresponsible fathers. Under the leadership of facilitator Dr. Barry Chevannes, the group evolved, and a core group of approximately ten men began meeting weekly, calling themselves *Fathers Only*,

A year later when CCDC held a second parenting symposium, this time for men only, the *Fathers Only* group assisted during the day of workshops. As the culminating activity of that day, they officially launched their group and began a recruitment drive. On this occasion they officially changed the group's name to *Fathers, Incorporated*.

The group has become involved in a range of activities—from providing volunteer work in children's residences to sponsoring a workshop on *Violence, Self and the Young Male* held in Jamaica in August, 1993. Another activity has been to form teams to spread messages about responsible fathering more widely throughout Kingston communities. At present, most of the members (numbering about 70) are from Kingston.

While there was considerable public attention focused on the group when it first began, the men involved resisted being caught up in the publicity. The group worked over time to define itself and develop a sense of direction.

UNICEF was a major funder for the first two years of the group's operation. At this point the group lacks a full-time organizer, and suffers from a lack of funding. All the work is being done on a volunteer basis, and for most members earning a living has to take priority over *Fathers, Inc.* programs. Thus *Fathers, Inc.* has begun to lose some of its initial momentum. In response the group has decided to seek funding to pay a professional staff member. They believe this will help solidify the group and provide it with some stability. Says Chevannes, "We're still fledgling, but we have the potential to mushroom into something big."

For more information on *Fathers, Inc.* contact: Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica.

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Early Childhood Counts: Programming Resources for Early Childhood Care and Development.
CD-ROM. The Consultative Group on ECCD. Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1999.