

being migrants to have work.

Caring for the family, not being aggressive, such as beating children, and guiding children towards acceptable behaviour and setting an example, were also aspects of fathering mentioned by men as important.

But what about men without the financial means to support children? The many men who can't find work, or who can't find consistent work to provide for their families. Fathers are expected to be successful providers without the opportunity to earn a living. Mamphela Ramphela suggests that many men flee responsibilities for their children because of their shame at not being able to support their family. They escape into alcohol or drug abuse, they neglect their children, or they abandon their family to live elsewhere.

But what we learnt from children is that some men without work or other financial resources continue to give their children and their families support, love and guidance. "My father's name is Mlungwane.

He is not working. It is only my mother who is working. My father stays at home and he does house chores every day. He cleans the house. He cooks the food and washes clothes. My mother doesn't have to come back from work and do the house. He is a caring father, when we come back from school he checks our exercise books and he helps us with our homework. At school we were asked to collect kiwi polish tins. He helped me to collect kiwi polish tins. I remember when my mother was sick she was admitted in the hospital. My father used to wake up in the morning and prepare our lunch boxes and he checked if we were clean. When we go to school he helps us combing our hair. My father is a very good teacher. He teaches us to be faithful to others. He said that we must not steal other people's things. He teaches me to pray and to respect other people. I love him so much."

For children, "being there" is important, as is doing things with their father and their father's

interest in them and their activities. Of course, provision for their needs is important, but this can come also from people other than their father.

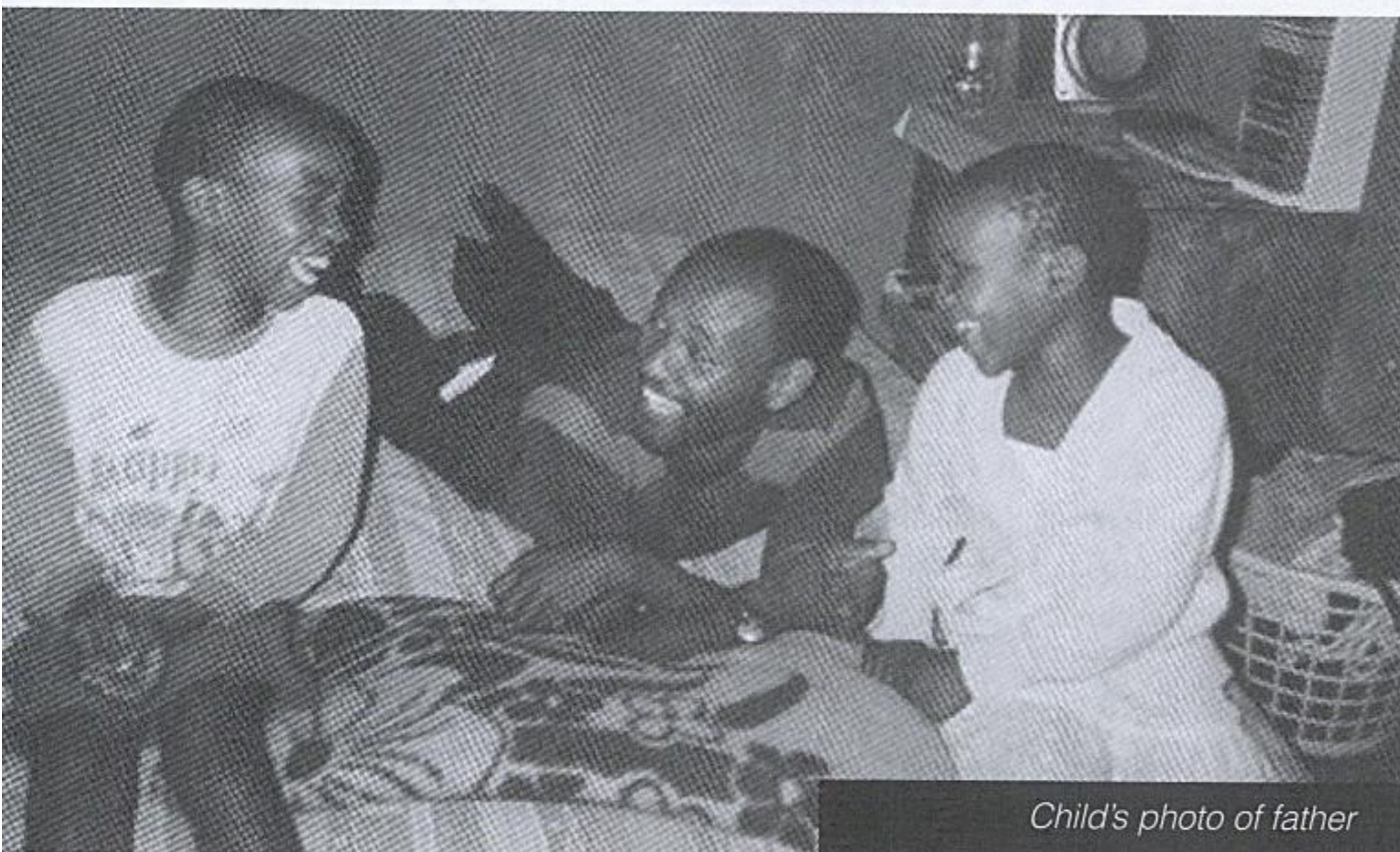
Social factors, such as high unemployment, the casualisation of work, the increase of women in the labour force, as well as men's desire to spend more time with their family and children, are changing social norms and expectations of men. 'New' fathers are men who are involved with their children and spend time with them. They support family life and help out in the home.

#### WHAT IS IT ABOUT A FATHER?

Research from most parts of the world shows that fathers are very beneficial for children.

For one, households with men are better off than those without, mainly because of men's higher wages and also because men tend to have wider networks of support when it is needed. Some South African research suggests that children may be safer when a man is in the household. According to one study, children without a father figure, are vulnerable to sexual and other exploitation by men in the surrounding community.

But children who have a father figure tend to do better at school than children who don't. There are several reasons for this. For example, men usually control resources in households, and therefore children are dependent on men's decisions to support them in school. Also, because of men's social status in a largely patriarchal society, children value what men regard as important. If a father helps with homework or shows interest in a child's schooling, children take their work more



Child's photo of father