

Putting Families First
Safe sustainable families in urban and rural areas of Tajikistan
Sarchashma, Hayyot dar Oila, Iroda, and HealthProm in association
with UNICEF

How we have approached gender equality and what value addressing gender equality has made for our innovation.

Our overriding approach is one of promoting inclusion and this takes different forms.

First, most people who present to our services seeking help are mothers and young children together whose needs are closely intertwined. They are often poor and marginalised, both from family and society. We address their needs by offering practical support with social protection, support access to welfare benefits, as well as promoting parenting skills particularly where a child has a disability. By increasing the mothers' skills, resources, networks of support and knowledge, we counter the effects of exclusion and improve child development.

Second, we work directly with men in order to include them in childcare practices. We have started two parenting groups within the Mellow Parenting programme, called Mellow Dads. Each group has up to 8 men and lasts for 14 weeks. The programme helps men to engage with their children and take part in childcare.

We found through network mapping with separate groups of women and men that the key differences are about power and networks of support. We found that women tend to have greater networks of support but are more excluded from the power associated with money and position. We found that men are more empowered financially and by their positions in society but are less included in networks of social childcare support.

Our approach indicates a need to 'empower' women, and 'strengthen men's networks of social care. This challenges established gender role models and we are becoming increasingly aware of gender diversity, both in terms of self-identity and social roles, as a force for development. Further analysis of our Netmapping will help us formulate this question in more detail and guide our continuing work.