

African family and child welfare: Tradition in transition

Suda, Collette

Date: 1999

Abstract:

Many aspects of African traditional family patterns and child-rearing practices are increasingly being challenged by news pressures, reevaluated against emerging values and replaced by new arrangements as part of a continuing transition in the social and cultural ecology of African family life. All the interlocking forces of change discussed in this paper have put added stress on the family's capacity to secure sustainable well-being. Although the changes affect everyone, women and children from the poorest families who already suffer different kinds of deprivation in many aspects of their lives are usually the worst affected. At the crossroads of family tradition and transition is the issue of sustainable child welfare. New and innovative strategies are required to strengthen the capabilities of individuals, families and communities to share care-giving responsibilities within the framework of reciprocity and partnerships to facilitate sustainable social relationships in and outside the family. This may require building alliances beyond the family and community to open a wider range of opportunities for men, women and children and a change in the overall perception of parenting to make the unique role of women in childcare meaningful, viable and sustainable