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Quarterly Bulletin of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

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Vienna NGO Committee on the Family
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Dear Readers of 'Families International',

In this 129th issue of the quarterly bulletin "Families International" (FI), you will first find the 2023 annual report of the committee, detailing its projects and activities throughout the year. This is followed by an article from Dr. Roman Hoffmann, who presented on the relationship between climate change and migration at the International Forum in November 2023.

Also included are three statements to the Commission for Social Development (UNCSD) from member organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family.

Additionally, you can find a contribution from Make Mothers Matter (MMM).

As always, a list of current and upcoming events is included at the end of the 129th issue of "Families International".

Sincerely,

Hannah Prüwasser
Executive Editor

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From the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family



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ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Since its inception in 1985 projects of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family have been supported by:

- ❖ Austrian Federal Government
- ❖ Bank Austria Creditanstalt
- ❖ Berndorf Group
- ❖ Country Women's Association in Lower Austria
- ❖ E.F.T. Transportagency GmbH
- ❖ European Commission
- ❖ Government of Germany
- ❖ Government of Liechtenstein
- ❖ Government of Luxembourg
- ❖ Government of Spain, Catalonia and the Balearic Islands
- ❖ International Non-Governmental Organisations
- ❖ Lower Austrian State Government
- ❖ Lower Austrian Insurance AG
- ❖ OMV Energy Group
- ❖ Rotary International
- ❖ Schoeller-Bleckmann Oilfield Equipment AG
- ❖ Shell Austria AG
- ❖ Siemens
- ❖ United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities



Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES 2023

At a Full Committee Meeting, which was held as a Zoom video conference, representatives of the 41 International Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), who are members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, and 22 associate member organisations, discussed various institution-building projects and activities. The Board of the Committee had worked out a schedule for their implementation, which was realised in co-operation with the support of the member organisations of the Committee and their representatives. The worldwide network of civil society organisations, research and university institutions, government agencies and individuals, continues to be, not only a beneficiary of interactive exchange, but is in many cases, directly involved in the work of the Committee. The Vienna Committee on the Family, understands itself, as a non-political non-denominational umbrella organisation, with a global focus on the well-being of families worldwide, providing a bridge between families-oriented Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), The United Nations, Governments of Member States of the United Nations and Academia, as well as between CSOs themselves, through the various digital-networks set up and maintained by the Committee.

The following projects were realised in 2023

1. Families International (FI)

Issues, Nos. 125-128 of the Quarterly Bulletin of the Committee, were published online in 2023 at www.viennafamilycommittee.org The Editorial Committee consists of the Editors, Julia Birner B.A., Christin Kohler, M.A., Karin Kuzmanov M.Sc., Hannah Pruewasser, B.A., and the Deputy- Editor, Peter Crowley, Ph.D., who had been the Editor from 2009 to 2020.

Special features in FI in 2023 included: Issues relating to Families at the 61th United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSD) 2023, Migration & Families, Gender Equality from a global perspective, United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime (UNODC) Global Report on Trafficking in Person & the UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants, as well as Climate Change on Human Mobility & Displacement, Each issue of Families International also included texts submitted by member organizations of the Committee, as well as other relevant texts from United Nations agencies.

Ca. 700 readers of 'Families International' are informed, by the Secretariat of the Committee by E-Mail, when each issue is published and available to download free of cost.

2. International Forum: May 15th 2023

The Committee organised and scheduled an International Forum, during a Full Committee Meeting, at the United Nations Vienna International Centre (UNVIC) for Monday May 15th 2023, to observe the United International Day of Families (UNIDF) 2023, at the United Nations Vienna International Centre. It was also held as a Zoom conference and entitled: 'Climate Change Migration - Impact on: Families, Presentation of Latest Research', by Dr. Claire Healy of the United Nations Organisation on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Report 2022, on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling with a Focus on Children as well as a presentation by Prof. Dr. Czaika, from Krems University, Austria, on Climate Change; Migration - Impact on Families; Presentation of Latest Research

3. International Forum Nov. 6th 2023

The Committee further organised and held a second International Forum, during a Full Committee Meeting, on Monday Nov. 2023 at the United Nations Vienna International Centre, with Prof. Roman Hoffmann, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), Austria, entitled: "Climate Change, Environmental Stress and Human Migration: Evidence and Policy Lessons".

Cooperation with the United Nations Focal Point on the Family in New York

The Board of the Committee keeps its various networks informed with documents of United Nations Resolutions and Reports of the United Nations Secretary-General pertaining to family issues, and organised the abovementioned International Forum to observe the United Nations International Day of Families in May 2023.

The 62th United Nations Commission for Social Development (UNCSD) scheduled for February 2024, has as its **Priority Theme: ‘Fostering social development & social justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication.’**

The Committee Coordinator for the UNCSD, Franziska Reichel, drafted a statement for the Committee on this theme, and it was signed by a number of member organisations of the Committee, and subsequently submitted timely in 2023 to the UNCSD by the Committee, and has since become an official document of the UNCSD in 2024.

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N23/358/25/PDF/N2335825.pdf?OpenElement>

An eighty page report, of a study update entitled: **‘Documenting Contributions of Civil Society Organisations to the Well-Being of Families’** by Peter Crowley Ph.D. Secretary of the Committee, in cooperation with the United Nations Focal Point on the Family, which was presented by the author, at the United Nations in New York, to observe the 20th Anniversary of the United Nations International Year of the Family in 2014, is available to download, on the United Nations website:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/international-day-of-families/2014-3.html>

The Report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the General Assembly on November 22nd 2023, (A/79/61-E/2024/48) on page 14, which relates to activities of the Committee on the Family in 2023, brings to bear the appreciation of the highest office of the United Nations for the endeavours of our Committee, the Member Organisations and their representatives, for the well-being of families worldwide: “The Vienna non governmental organisation Committee on the Family organized an international forum to observe the International Day of Families with presentations on the theme: ‘Climate change. Migration: impact on families’ where the latest research by the United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime on human trafficking and migrant smuggling, with a focus on children was presented. The Committee also included migration as a theme in its quarterly bulletin “Families International” to highlight the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in 2024.” The website address of the Committee was included in the footnotes.

4. Website of the Committee

www.viennafamilycommittee.org

This website, which was set up in 2000 is, amongst others, the main vehicle to publish our online quarterly bulletin ‘Families International’. Issues Nos.125 to 128, which were published in 2023, may be downloaded from our website without cost to the reader. A button e.g. entitled ‘Families Online’ is available on the homepage with a direct link to the proceedings of three International Forums organised by the Committee, between 2017 and 2021, dealing with families and digital media usage.

5. The Three Digital Networks of the Committee **[203 CSOs Networked - 92 in Sub-Saharan Africa]**

Laura Mysliwicz and Sebastian ‘Oberreiter, kindly accepted the invitation of the Committee, in 2022, to become the ‘Committee Digital-Networks Coordinators’ updating the networks & websites.

A so-called **‘Digital Divide’** exists between those connected and not connected to the Internet. Statistics from the United Nations International Telecommunications Union based in Geneva, for 2023, show that 2.6 billion or ca. 67% of the world’s population is using the Internet, but only about 37% of the African population is online. 42% of African males, as against 32% of females, were using

the Internet in 2023. Worldwide 70% of men are using the Internet compared with 65% of women. 81% of those living in urban areas in 2023 were using the Internet, while in rural areas this figure was 50%.

In the three Digital Networks, set up and maintained by the Committee, 92 CSOs or 45.3% of the total of 203 CSOs, are based in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is particularly affected by the 'Digital Divide'. These 92 CSOs offer important knowledge resources for the well-being of families, especially in the first 1000 days of a child's life, which are so important for its future development, as UNESCO already pointed out in 2014. These digital knowledge networks expand the concept of Civil Society being an advocacy and discourse entity, to also being a resource entity, especially of knowledge.

www.10yearsIYF.org

This website continues to experience interest, as a digital network, and also as a resource archive for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF) in 2004, with many relevant links to other sources. It resulted out of the participation of the then Chairperson, and present Secretary of the Committee in a consultative meeting of twenty international and regional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) set up by the United Nations Secretariat in New York, in 2002, to implement a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly to observe the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF) in 2004. There it was agreed to prepare a study, under the Chairmanship of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family entitled: 'Contributions of Civil Society Organisations to the Well-Being of Families' since 1994. The original study, in which thirty two CSOs, from eighteen countries in five continents participated, was also published in book form with the financial support of the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities in 1994, under the title: 'Documenting Contributions of Civil Society Organisations to the Well-Being of Families' and edited by the then Chairperson and present Secretary Peter Crowley, who presented the study at a meeting of the United Nations in New York, to observe the United Nations International Day of Families on May 15th 2004. The book was also submitted to the members of the special session of the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations on Dec. 6th 2004, to observe the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

The United Nations Secretary General referred to the above publication in his Report to the 59th Session of the General Assembly (A/59/176, 2004). The contents of the book, which also includes a comparative perspective of international, national, and local families-oriented civil society organisations enhancing social justice, are also available to download at www.10yearsIYF.org

www.20yearsIYF.org

To facilitate the implementation of an update of the above-mentioned study, originally carried out at www.10yearsIYF.org, a further website was setup by the Committee at: www.20yearsIYF.org to gather data entered by the twenty-eight participating CSOs, from seventeen countries in four continents. This network continues to offer knowledge resources on family issues for visitors to the website, by creating a so-called 'Cyber Street' of websites of families-oriented CSOs, which deal with the eight categories of the study relevant for families: 'Children; Economic-Financial; Education; Gender; Health Issues; Organisation; Parents; and Subsistence-Services.' This website is also a further digital network and includes a series of links, inter alia, to the United Nations Focal Point on the Family in New York.

www.civilsocietynetworks.org

An Interactive-Internet-Forum for civil society organisations world-wide, including local, national and international CSOs, as well as academic and research institutions, was set up at the request of many organisations from around the globe, and online in 2004 at www.civilsocietynetworks.org. This Network had 143 member organisations from 25 countries in 2023 having incorporated the Interactive-Forums the Committee had originally set up with civil society organisations in Eastern African and in Central and Eastern European Countries, between 2000 and 2004, and was then extended and opened up, as a further digital network, to worldwide

membership in 2004. Civil Society Organisations worldwide can join, and participate in this Forum, free of cost, by contacting the Committee at: contact@viennafamilycommittee.org

Each organisation receives an individual User-Identity and Password and is able to enter and change data as necessary. The Forum also includes a discussion board, internal e-mail and online conference facilities, as well as a newsletter function, for each individual member organisation of the network.

The above outlined facts and figures, reflect perhaps, the ever-increasing interest generated by issues relating to families and also speak for themselves, with regard to the continued and increasing endeavours worldwide of the Committee, which observed in 2023 the 38th Anniversary of its inception in 1985.

7. The Board of the Committee for 2022 - 2025

Board Officers:

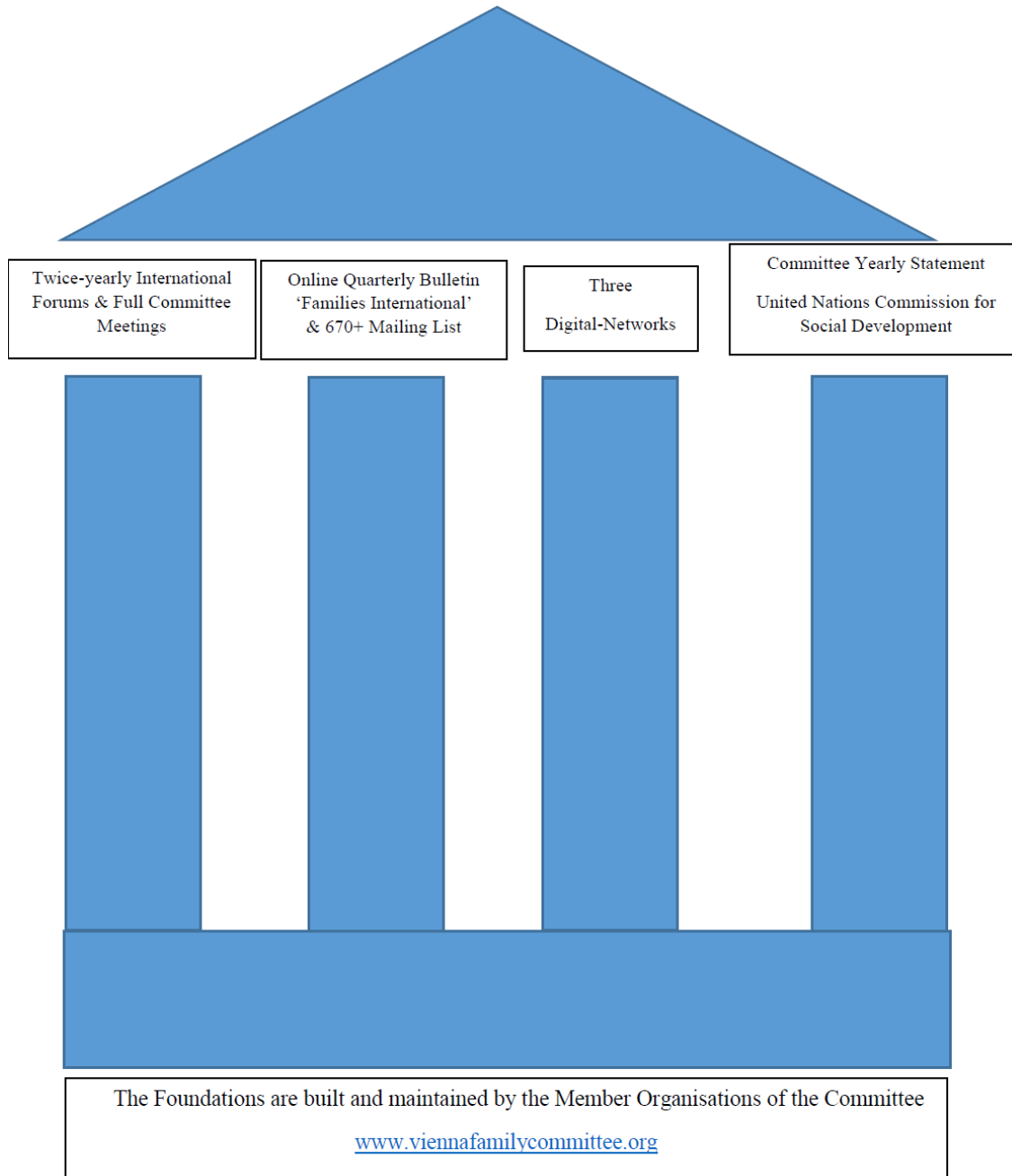
Chairperson: Valeria Foglar-Deinhardstein, M.Sc. European Union of Women
Deputy Chairperson: Wolfgang Engelmaier, M.A. Kolping International,
Secretary: Peter Crowley, Ph.D., International Council of Psychologists,
Deputy Secretary: Katharina Muegler, Kolping International,
Treasurer: Julia Zacharenkova, European Union of Women

Board Members:

Julia Birner B.A., Families International,
Christin Kohler M.A., Families International,
Karin Kuzmanov M.Sc., Families International,
Isabella Nening M.A., Families International,
Hannah Prüwasser B.A., Families International
Franziska Reichel, Committee Coordinator,
United Nations Commission for Social Development,
Dr. Eleonora Teixeira Da Costa Rossoll,
Federation of Catholic Family Associations.
Dr. Maria Riehl, Women's Federation for World Peace,

THE FOUR-PILLAR STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY

The Roof is built and maintained by the Board of the Committee



Vienna NGO Committee on the Family
www.viennafamilycommittee.org
Chairperson: Valeria Foglar-Deinhardstein, M.Sc.

January 2024
contact@viennafamilycommittee.org
Secretary: Peter Crowley, Ph.D.

Dr. Roman Hoffmann,

International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)

Climate change and migration: Insights on a complex relationship

Migration is a topic that is very present in today's political discourses and media. The prevailing narratives often paint a simplistic picture, suggesting that migration is mainly determined by economic push and pull factors. The reality, however, is more complex than that. Migration is to a large extent shaped by personal motives, aspirations, and capabilities. People migrate for various reasons, including to get an education, to follow family, a partner, or friends, to find a better job, or to discover new opportunities, cultures, and perspectives.

Whether a person is able to migrate and decides to do so depends on a number of interrelated factors and drivers. Some of these drivers are beyond the personal locus of control of individuals or households, and pertain to changes in local conditions, such as economic crises, political developments, or environmental factors. These include also impacts due to climate change which affects populations throughout the world in the form of more frequent and intense extreme weather events, increased heat stress, rising sea levels, and the gradual degradation of ecosystems and biodiversity (1). These can also have implications for human mobility through their influence on human livelihoods, security, health, and well-being (2–4).

The question of whether climate change will lead to increased migration has received major public attention in the past decades. Studies have shown that climatic hazards can result in displacement and contribute to increased migration in different parts of the world (5–10). At the same time, there is no automatism at play: The occurrence of a climatic event in an area does not deterministically lead to increases in human mobility. Migration is a multi-causal phenomenon which is influenced by different, interrelated drivers. Aside from environmental factors, social, political, demographic, and economic factors are relevant and can influence whether a household decides, or is forced, to become mobile when exposed to a climatic hazard (11, 12).

Indeed, previous meta-analyses and review studies have shown a large heterogeneity in migration responses to climatic stress and have highlighted major differences between regions, demographic groups, and socioeconomic strata (13–17). Climatic impacts do not equally affect all population groups and their mobility (18, 19). While some may be willing and able to leave, others may prefer or be forced to stay, resulting in differential mobility patterns within a larger population (20–22).

Importantly, some population groups may lack resources needed to migrate or may face other constraints in their mobility. This can lead to an entrapment during situations of distress, causing heightened vulnerability and a potential exacerbation of encountered losses and damages (23, 24). The large variations in migration responses underpin the importance of considering both mobility and immobility in the context of climatic risks and impacts and differences in migration across population groups (23, 25–29).

Climate change has the potential to impact various aspects of human mobility. Existing research commonly differentiates among displacement, relocations, and migration. Displacement refers to involuntary mobility, often prompted by abrupt and unforeseen events. This type of movement is typically brief and covers shorter distances, with many affected households eventually returning to their original locations once the immediate threat subsides. Coordinated forms of movement, which are facilitated by local or national authorities, are

described as planned relocations or evacuations (30–32). Migration is characterized as any temporary or more long-term/permanent relocation of a person or household from their usual place of residence, either within a country or across borders (33). Notably, migration can arise from initial displacement if the displaced individuals don't return to their original locations or from a planned relocation, emphasizing the interconnected nature of these concepts.

The act of relocating away from inhabitable and perilous regions has been a survival strategy throughout human history. The rise and fall of civilizations have frequently been intricately tied to the availability and sustainability of resources, compelling communities to migrate in pursuit of conditions conducive to life and prosperity (34). Anthropogenic climate change has accelerated and exacerbated environmental change processes worldwide, imposing heightened pressures on affected populations. With the ongoing trend of global warming, there is a heightened risk that unprecedented threats may become more prevalent, resulting in increases in human mobility. The increasingly severe impacts of climate change may exceed 'limits to adaptation' (35–37) and 'habitability thresholds' (38, 39), which describe boundaries beyond which local adaptation to external stressors and survival are no longer feasible or are under threat, compelling individuals to either migrate or endure precarious and hazardous environments while remaining immobile.

The World Bank's Groundswell Report warns that, in a pessimistic scenario without concrete climate and supportive development action, 216 million people may be compelled to migrate within their countries by 2050. According to the report, up to 86 million people may be forced to migrate in sub-Saharan Africa, 40 million in South Asia, 49 million in East Asia and the Pacific, 19 million in North Africa, and 17 million in Latin America (countries in Western Europe and North America were not considered in the report). While these figures are based on scenarios and estimates, they underscore the global significance of the issue, emphasizing the urgency for action (40, 41).

In a recent survey conducted by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, and the UN Population Division among demographers and population experts, nearly 50% of the interviewed experts (n=237) agreed that climate change may influence mobility patterns in the future. Concurrently, 21% of them concurred that resource constraints caused by climate change might impact the ability to migrate, potentially leading to reduced mobility and heightened vulnerability for affected populations (42).

Studies have shown that if climatic changes and related hazards induce migration, they typically lead to internal or regional migration over shorter distances as opposed to longer distance or international migration (2, 43). Various factors contribute to these patterns: firstly, legal and political regulations may impose restrictions on cross-border mobility; secondly, strong place attachment and existing social ties often motivate individuals to stay in closer proximity to their original location; and thirdly, households may lack the necessary financial and non-financial resources required for longer-distance moves, both within and outside a country. This also encompasses intangible knowledge resources, such as language skills, which enable migrants to integrate more seamlessly into new environments (44).

Also forms of seasonal mobility are common in the context of environmental change, particularly in areas heavily reliant on agriculture. This encompasses temporary migrations to different regions within a country. For instance, in Africa, communities facing vulnerability in Northern Ghana have a longstanding tradition of

seasonal migration to Southern Ghana, primarily undertaken by young men seeking opportunities in farm or off-farm wage labor (45, 46). Similar patterns have been observed in other parts of Africa as well as South and Southeastern Asia. Highly mobile communities relying on herding and transhumance have also been found to alter their mobility patterns and routes in response to changing environmental conditions across various contexts (47, 48).

Even though the impacts are generally weaker, climatic factors can also influence longer-term and international migration, as shown in a number of studies (49–54). The empirical evidence of these studies points to a nuanced picture with local economic, demographic, and political conditions playing an important role in moderating the relationships (15, 55).

It is typically a subset of household members who embark on journeys away from their homes in pursuit of enhanced opportunities. Even post-departure, many maintain strong connections to their original location through translocal networks (Sakdapolrak et al., 2016), manifesting in frequent exchanges and the sending of remittances. Remittance flows serve as an important means for migrants to assist their families, bolster local livelihoods, and enhance resilience of their home communities (56, 57).

In many cases it is the younger, working age population as well as those with more promising employment prospects (e.g., individuals with higher education) who show a higher likelihood of migrating. Migration is frequently a complex household decision, with only a subset of household members opting to migrate. The migration of single household members allows families to diversify income sources, reducing susceptibility to environmental and other shocks affecting their communities. In this context, gender plays a crucial role in shaping different aspects of migration. It affects how individuals perceive and navigate climatic risks, influences their aspirations and constraints related to migration, impacts the risks they may face during the migration process, and determines the opportunities available to them in destination areas. Migration and the impacts of climatic factors on it can only be understood against the backdrop of the local socioeconomic, cultural, and political dynamics. These contextual factors play a pivotal role in shaping the motivations, challenges, and outcomes associated with migration, highlighting the need for a comprehensive understanding that goes beyond individual factors.

Many migrants to move towards urban centers, contributing to the observed 'natural' urban growth in various regions. Contrary to the common association of climate-related mobility with rural areas, the topic is gaining relevance in urban contexts. Cities are becoming major hotspots for climate-induced displacements due to a high population concentration, vulnerability of residents, proximity to hazard-prone environments, and a lack of climate-resilient planning. Migrants and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are particularly at risk as they often reside in marginalized, informal neighborhoods with inadequate infrastructure, basic services, housing quality, and limited protection (58, 59).

There is a need for a holistic approach for understanding the interplay between climatic, social, political, and economic forces and the multifaceted nature of migration in the context of climate change (60). Acknowledging that climatic factors can differentially impact various segments of the population and that not everyone affected will migrate is essential for developing effective and nuanced policies that address the intricate challenges posed by climate change. In particular, it is crucial to broaden the focus to better understand who will migrate, under what conditions, and where to. This also involves considering prospective

destinations of major migration flows, including urban areas in the Global South. Forward-looking planning and inclusive strategies are essential for developing solutions that effectively support migrant populations as well as their origin and destination communities. Policy efforts should also concentrate on mitigating factors driving involuntary migration, empowering individuals to remain in their existing communities or leave if they choose to (20).

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Statements to the Commission for Social Development (UNCSD)

United Nations

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Statement submitted by Soroptimist International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Soroptimist International and the signatories of this statement recognise the dire rates of poverty globally and that women and girls are disproportionately impacted by poverty, with an estimated 388 million women and girls living in extreme poverty in 2022, according to UN Women.

We challenge Member States to focus on three key areas to achieve social justice, and ultimately, to eradicate poverty globally: education, decent work, and social protection. We must recognise that effective and comprehensive social protection is not only essential to achieve social justice and decent work, but it is vital for creating a sustainable and resilient future. The meaningful inclusion of all women and girls in all aspects of public life has been statistically proven to advance economies, realise social cohesion, and contribute to sustainable and peaceful communities.

1. Education

Education is a transformative tool to achieve social justice, especially for women and girls, and has been proven to reduce gender inequality.

Education is a universal human right that must be upheld, and Member States must abide by their commitment to it. Basic literacy rates are still the lowest among women and girls, particularly older and rural women, which highlights the need for access to lifelong quality education. Lifelong learning equips people with essential skills that are necessary to increasing access to the labour force, and in turn, contributing to economic growth. Education is also essential for delaying marriage and keeping girls in school, with child, early and forced marriage and unions often resulting from and further driving girls' lack of educational opportunities.

For millions of women and girls around the world access to education, a fundamental human right, has been impeded by various barriers – cultural, economic, and political. Therefore, each time women and girls are excluded from education, opportunities for entire generations and potential solutions to the world's problems are lost. It is therefore in the interest of Member States to fully commit to and invest in quality education that is accessible to all. This requires investing in human capital, including skilled teachers, as well as investments in safe and accessible schools, technology, and high-quality teaching materials.

COVID-19 resulted in changes to the way we work. Access to digital technology is now a necessity and Member States should commit to financing digital literacy training, affordable internet access, and internet safety measures. Fully funded gender-transformative programmes must be implemented to expand women and girls' participation in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) to reach gender parity and equal opportunities to work in the field.

2. Decent work

Wealth and income inequalities have continued to increase both within and between countries, disproportionately affecting women and girls in all their diversity. Decent work and productive employment in safe environments are key elements to eradicating poverty and ensuring that all women and girls can contribute meaningfully to society, including at the highest level. The International Labour Organisation Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) must be ratified by all States, and this includes the implementation of strict zero tolerance policies in the workplace. States must recognise that, given their unique lived experiences, women have the

potential to propel societies towards social justice as much as men – but this can only happen if they feel safe at work.

Equal pay for work of equal value must be implemented without reservation. The gender pay gap remains a reality and continues to unfairly impact women. Bridging this persistent gap is essential to tackling deeply rooted gender inequalities in the workplace and widespread, systemic misogyny.

Unpaid care work remains a significant challenge for women and girls who continue to act as primary caregivers of children and families. The persisting care crisis is a gender crisis that hampers positive social development and any progress towards gender equality. States must adopt inclusive strategies to recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work. They must allocate resources to respond to the growing need for childcare and care for older persons. In addition, care work must be viewed as a shared role for caregivers in every context. Gendered patterns of women's inability to access pensions often stems from their exclusion from waged work throughout their life course, including unpaid care work. Inclusive parenting policies, such as paid parental leave for both parents, is an essential first step to tackling the care crisis.

3. Social Protection

Social protection systems, according to the United Nations, include social assistance, social insurance, and labour market programmes. They have the effect of empowering women and girls in all their diversity by enabling their access to quality education and work. Social protection floors, as nationally defined, serve to guarantee the most basic needs and income security.

States should recognise and implement existing social protection agreements. To be protected is a right stated in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reaffirmed by the Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202) of the International Labour Conference in 2012. The implementation of universal social protection system floors is an essential step to alleviating poverty by ensuring that the most basic human rights are fulfilled. Despite progress in the extension of social protection particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the right to social security is not yet a reality for most of the world's population; and expanded social protection packages have been uneven, which has deepened existing inequalities. According to the International Labour Organisation, only 47 per cent of the global population is effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit, while the remaining 53 per cent – 4.1 billion people – remain completely unprotected.

In addition, investments in universal healthcare, including access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, adequate and affordable housing, and low-cost nutritious food are essential to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Such investments, alongside access to quality education, can put women and girls on a positive footing to empower and enable them to work towards a self-sustaining future.

Key Asks

Crucially, none of this can take effect if we do not act on the alarming climate crisis that continues to destroy and negatively impact entire communities. It has been well documented that the climate crisis disproportionately impacts and severely compromises the overall wellbeing of women and girls.

Soroptimist International and all signatories of this statement recognise that education, decent work and social protection are key factors to accelerating progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty globally. Women and

girls, while among the most impacted by poverty, can play a key role in working to eradicate the issue. It is only through the implementation of lifelong educational opportunities and social protection systems that gender parity and social inclusion can be fully guaranteed.

We are faced with a poly-crisis which clearly illustrates that the time for inclusive, gender-sensitive and human-rights driven policies and decision-making is now. As a global community, we must embrace our humanity to educate, empower, and enable one another, because we can effect positive change when we are given the necessary resources and opportunities. The rights of all women and girls must be at the forefront of these decisions and policies: social justice can never be achieved if women and girls, who account for 49.7 per cent of the global population are left behind. Multilateral cooperation is needed now more than ever to achieve social justice and sustainable social development.

Soroptimist International and all signatories of this statement call on all Member States and stakeholders to:

- Apply a gender-sensitive and human-rights based approach to all policies, legislations, discussions, and decisions related to all aspects of social development;
- Implement opportunities for quality, safe, gender-transformative lifelong education, including access to all levels of education and including for all girls and women;
- Invest in human and social capital which underpin quality education fit for purpose in the 21st century, including digital learning;
- Ratify International Labour Organisation Convention 190 on the elimination of violence in the world of work, to promote women's and girls' access to education, training and careers;
- Bridge the gender pay gap by providing equal pay for work of equal value between men and women and establishing non-discriminatory liveable wages throughout the life course;
- Recognise care as a societal responsibility and adopt inclusive strategies to shift resources to respond to the growing need for childcare and care for older persons;
- Measure and prioritise the wellbeing of women and girls beyond GDP by deploying multidimensional indicators to ensure quality, disaggregated data collection;
- Implement universal social protection system floors to alleviate poverty by ensuring that human rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled; and
- Invest in specific, long-term and gender-sensitive training programmes and partnerships to enable women and girls to actively contribute to societies.

As a global community, we are at a turning point and remain far from achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. States must place the highest priority on empowering and enabling all women and girls to contribute to sustainable development actively and meaningfully via education, decent work, and universal social protection systems.

Co-signs:

Associated Country Women of the World
Catholic International Education Office
Centrs Marta
Congregation of the Mission
Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas
Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage
Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Loreto Generalate International
Council of Women
International Federation of Business and Professional Women
International Health Awareness Network
International Presentation Association
Make Mothers Matter
Mothers Legacy Project
National Alliance of Women's Organizations
National Council of Women of Canada
Passionists International
Red Dot Foundation
Regards de Femmes
Servas International
Sikh Human Rights Group Sisters
of Charity Federation
Society for the Advancement of Global Understanding
Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Limited
Soroptimist International South East Asia Pacific
Sveriges Kvinnolobby
United for Equity and Ending Racism Virginia
Gildersleeve International Fund, Inc.
Women's Federation for World Peace International
Women's International Zionist Organization
Worldwide Network Nigeria: Women in Development and Environment
Zonta International

United Nations



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Statement submitted by Make Mothers Matter, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Investing in mothers to foster social development, social justice and eradicate poverty

Mothers should be at the heart of social policies: the care and education they provide for their children, plus their particular skills and long-term vision, makes them essential partners for the implementation of SDGs. If adequately recognized, educated and supported, mothers can be a powerful force for good as changemakers – and positively contribute to the realization of the 2030 development agenda.

The struggle of mothers and the motherhood penalty

Unfortunately, motherhood has a price: due to the disproportionate share of child care and educational responsibilities they have to shoulder, mothers end up juggling their unpaid care and domestic work with income generating activities or are unable to do paid work altogether.

Mothers face barriers in accessing decent work, especially when they have young children. According to UN Women, women living with children aged 0-5 have the lowest employment rates, compared to fathers and non-parents. And when they are employed, mothers often work part-time, in lower-paid jobs, and suffer discriminations in wage and promotion: the ‘motherhood penalty’.

As a result, too many mothers struggle financially, an economic injustice which not only results in mother and child poverty, but also impacts the mother’s mental health.

Single mothers are particularly vulnerable in this respect and are over- represented in poverty statistics. Indeed, a single mother does not have much choice: she has to assume full responsibility for both the unpaid work of running the house and raising children, and the necessary paid work to generate an income. A recent Gallup study shows that in the past year, almost half of all single mothers worldwide (44%) struggled to afford food. And if all this was not enough, in many societies single mothers are also socially excluded and stigmatized for being single -mothers, and de-facto excluded from their community and the labour market.

In every country for which statistics exist and are comparable (mostly high and upper middle-income countries), single-mother households with young children have higher rates of poverty when compared to dual-parent households with young children. Rates and magnitude of this difference in poverty rates varies substantially: Luxembourg stands out with a 50.4% difference, followed by Czechoslovakia (42.4), Canada (40.0) and the United States (37.2).

In the United States, the official poverty rate for families with children headed by single mothers is 31.3%, much higher than for families headed by a single man (15.5%) and for married couples with children (5.4%). A staggering 37% of single working mothers cannot go one week without pay and meet their family’s financial needs, while 70% cannot go more than one month.

In turn, single mothers’ poverty affects their children, putting them at higher risk of poor academic performance and social-behavioural problems, and perpetuating the vicious cycle of poverty. For example, in the United States, the rate of poverty of children living with a single parent (most of them being mothers) is 34.9% compared with 9.5% for children with two parents.

Single mothers are also more likely to struggle with mental health issues, making it still harder to find long-term strategies and escape poverty.

The importance of statistics to drive social policy: making mothers' lion's share of unpaid care and domestic work visible and counting lone mothers

In spite of SDG 5/target 5.4, whose indicator requires Member States to measure unpaid care and domestic work, too many countries have yet to conduct the necessary Time-Use surveys. Current surveys also often fail to disaggregate data along household composition and motherhood. When they do, surveys shows that it is women in households with children – i.e., mothers, who really bear the brunt of unpaid care and domestic work, in particular when children are below 5.

While the Covid-19 Pandemic did put the spotlight on mothers' disproportionate share of the unpaid work of caring and educating children and the negative impact this has on their professional lives and finances, regular measurement is needed in order to drive policy making to better support and redress these inequities.

Another important step in the area of statistics would be get more realistic numbers of lone mothers, which are on the rise in many countries. According to UN Women, globally nearly 8% of all households are headed by a single parent and 84% of single-parent households are headed by mothers. In absolute numbers, this represents 101.3 million mothers living alone with their children. However, these figures hide important disparities across regions: it is much higher in particular in sub-Saharan Africa (32%) and in Latin America (24%). What's more, these figures do not tell the whole story: many lone mothers live in extended households, which means that they are not counted – and mostly invisible to policy makers. UN Women estimates put a more realistic number of single mothers at twice that figure.

Social policies to empower all mothers

Whether raising their children with a partner or not, parents need support from governments and the wider society to do the vital work of caring and educating the next generation of workers and citizens, in particular during early childhood.

The '3R Framework' – Recognize. Reduce. Redistribute, which is embodied in Target 5.4 of the 2030 Agenda, provides useful guidance for policymakers to address the issue of the inequitable distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, which is at the root of gender inequalities and economic injustice and hardship for women, in particular when they are mothers.

It is imperative to recognize that unpaid care work is fundamental to ensure the sustainability of life, and that it is work – time-consuming yet vital work - that must be done and benefits everyone. It must therefore be adequately supported and more equitably distributed across society with every stakeholder, including the private sector, taking their share of responsibility and costs.

Concretely, such support and redistribution can be provided through:

- time (paid maternity and parental leaves)
- money (social transfers to families with children, pension credits to parents who care full time for their children)
- and services (high-quality care services for children and older persons, health centres, parenting education, mothers/family centres, educational and professional training facilities, etc.)

In particular, investing in quality childcare has a proven track-record: a 2017 study led by James J. Heckman, a Nobel laureate economist at the University of Chicago, found that high-quality care during the earliest years can influence whether both mothers and children born into disadvantage lead more successful lives.

Such concrete policy changes would also shape public views and contribute to give visibility and recognition to unpaid care work. Disconnecting basic social protection from formal employment and making it universal would be another concrete way to recognise unpaid work.

In addition to providing training, mothers' access to employment after a maternity break can be supported by recognizing the skills they develop through the work of caring and raising their children, including organisational and life skills which are very much in demand in the world of work. Recognizing these skills would help address the motherhood penalty.

Social policies specifically targeting lone mothers

Governments and civil society need to adopt specific policies and establish programs providing the necessary assistance, support, and opportunities to single parents to ensure that their children are not penalized or disadvantaged but can lead lives that allow them to develop successfully to their full potential, and thereby contribute meaningfully to overall future societal wellbeing.

As most single mothers cannot work their way out of poverty without the right kinds of supplemental support, MMM believes in the importance of social investment targeted to help single mothers as an important investment in human capital.

Here are the steps to support their efforts:

- **Developing employment opportunities for single mothers and facilitating their access to decent work:** beside policies to stimulate employment such as fiscal and monetary policies, anti-poverty programs should also focus on increasing fundings for sectoral training and apprenticeship programs, and opening more local job centres for career guidance and job opening data.
- **Promoting single mothers' access to Education by developing skills training programs or increasing financial aid to mothers themselves and organizations focusing on single-mothers education.** In particular, it is important to target young single-mothers who drop out of school and university when they become pregnant; with 50% of their income going on housing expenses, $\frac{1}{3}$ for the education of their children, the rest for food, there is not much left for their own education.
- **Investing in more accessible and flexible high-quality childcare facilities for every parent:** a recent World Bank's report highlights the transformative potential of investments in childcare to 'increase women's employment and productivity, create new jobs, improve child outcomes, drive economic growth and support a more resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic'.

Still, mothers should be offered choices and not necessarily pushed into fulltime jobs to the detriment of quality time with their children. Recognizing that caring for one's own children is vital work, and financially supporting parents to do so is investing in Human Capital. Providing diverse childcare options is also important to address the diverse needs of parents, especially single mothers.

- **Providing targeted social welfare through minimum wage, access to health care or access to housing and food stamps:** as most countries have limited resources to dedicate to social protection policies, it is important to prioritize populations most in need, beginning with single mothers – although universal social protection systems should remain the ultimate goal.

In the past decades, political and public attitude toward welfare recipients including single mothers with young children, has changed, as they are encouraged to find a job. It is, however, difficult to increase the labour force participation of

single mothers as they have to combine work and childcare, and often for them, the financial incentives to go to work are not very strong.

Working simultaneously on the three fronts – Employment, Education and Childcare – and adding some welfare to start would help single-mothers to ensure a more stable situation for their children.

In conclusion

Investing in mothers means investing in gender equality and thriving children – both of which are investments with high returns. And because of their particular vulnerability to poverty, single mothers must be particularly targeted.

More generally, mothers play a central and indispensable role in the functioning of society and the economy. Their contributions go beyond traditional caregiving responsibilities and encompass various aspects of human well-being and social cohesion.

We at MMM are convinced that when adequately recognized, educated, and supported, mothers are key levers for change and can be instrumental in the realization of the SDGs.

We are therefore calling on Member States to prioritize Target 5.4 of the Development Agenda and put mothers – and their unpaid work of caring – at the heart of all policy making.



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Statement submitted by European Union of Women, International Council of Women, Kolping International, Soroptimist International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and member organizations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

We the undersigned international non-governmental organizations, in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and member organizations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, recognize that several current events require both short and long-term reactions and actions to eradicate poverty in all its forms, as well as providing support to groups of people affected by inequality including widespread poverty in families throughout the world. Further new, along with existing strategies, need to be endorsed, and re-endorsed, to set up partnerships that enable the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals to offer well-being and dignity for all, including families worldwide, in particular in support of the observance of this year's 30th anniversary of the United Nations International Year of The Family in 1994.

To ensure truly sustainable Social Development, a holistic and strategic approach is necessary. We recognize that especially countries, that were already experiencing high and continually rising inequalities, had already added aggravated pre-existing socio-economic inequalities, affecting people's well-being, but above all, the poorest and most vulnerable. Prevention measures, taken during the recent Covid-19 pandemic, have also intensified structural and systemic discrimination especially in health and education systems.

We recognize that further ecologic, economic and societal changes are necessary to achieve stability and well-being for all. This includes the eradication of gender inequality and social groups, including those based on age, race, ethnicity, migrant status and disability.

Further actions are also required to support the poorest and most vulnerable in emerging and developing countries, since they are not seldom affected, by both political and armed conflicts, as well as by the effects of climate change. To ensure truly Sustainable Development, a holistic and strategic approach is needed especially enabling developing countries to escape from poverty, and become empowered to build up a social system, enriched by equality for every single being, regardless of their social status or gender, as well as providing, full and productive employment and decent work for everyone.

To achieve further improvement in the eradication of poverty, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, national and international partnerships are required to ensure social and economic enhancement. Developing and industrial countries are in urgent need to connect, and to form new partnerships, as well as improving existing agreements to overcome poverty and inequalities in all its aspects.

In a globalized and interconnected world, governments and societies need to develop a holistic approach to ensure well-being and dignity for everyone, as true social development should lead to the growth of all individuals, and their experience of freedom. This would additionally support the acquirement of capabilities, containing knowledge, skills, and competencies, to build up sustainable societies, and enable economic and environmental changes, leading to better living standards and environments, for all individuals, including those of families worldwide.

From Member Organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family



Make
Mothers
Matter

February 2024

**MMM ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE
MOTHERS' ROLE AND RIGHTS**

**MMM@CSocD62: Investing in Mothers to Foster Social
Development and Justice**

In its written statement to the 62nd session of the UN Commission on Social Development held in February 2024, Make Mothers Matter makes the case for investing in mothers, highlighting the high returns in terms of both gender equality and child rights, and ultimately the SDGs. Empowering mothers means addressing their specific vulnerability to poverty and the “motherhood penalty” – especially when they are single. It also means recognizing and supporting their unpaid work of caring to raise and educate the next generation of workers and citizens, which is indispensable for social and economic development.

The full text of MMM's statement (E/CN.5/2024/NGO/46) including references can be downloaded [here](#).

Mothers should be at the heart of social policies: the care and education they provide for their children, plus their particular skills and long-term vision, makes them essential partners for the implementation of the SDGs. If adequately recognized, educated and supported, mothers can be a powerful force for good as changemakers – and positively contribute to the realization of the 2030 Development Agenda.

The struggle of mothers and the motherhood penalty

Unfortunately, motherhood has a price: due to the disproportionate share of childcare and educational responsibilities they have to shoulder, mothers end up juggling their unpaid care and domestic work with income generating activities, or are unable to do paid work altogether.

Mothers face barriers in accessing decent work, especially when they have young children. According to UN Women, women living with children aged 0–5 have the lowest employment rates, compared to fathers and non-parents. And when they are employed, mothers often work part-time, in lower-paid jobs, and suffer discriminations in wage and promotion: the “motherhood penalty”.

As a result, too many mothers struggle financially, an economic injustice which not only results in mother and child poverty, but also impacts the mother's mental health.

Single mothers are particularly vulnerable in this respect and are overrepresented in poverty statistics. Indeed, a single mother does not have much choice: she has to assume full responsibility for both the unpaid work of running the house and raising children, and the necessary paid work to generate an income. A recent Gallup study shows that in the past year, almost half of all single mothers worldwide (44%) struggled to afford food. And if all this was not enough, in many societies single mothers are also socially excluded and stigmatized for being single mothers, and de facto excluded from their community and the labour market.

In every country for which statistics exist and are comparable, i.e. mostly high and upper middle-income countries, single-mother households with young children have higher rates of poverty when compared to dual-parent households with young children. Rates and magnitude of this difference in poverty rates vary substantially: Luxembourg stands out with a 50.4% difference, followed by the Czech Republic (42.4), Canada (40.0) and the United States (37.2).

In the United States, the official poverty rate for families with children headed by single mothers is

31.3%, i.e. much higher than for families headed by a single man (15.5%) and for married couples with children (5.4%). A staggering 37% of single working mothers cannot go one week without pay and meet their family's financial needs, while 70% cannot go more than one month.

In turn, single mothers' poverty affects their children, putting them at higher risk of poor academic performance and social-behavioural problems, and perpetuating the vicious cycle of poverty. For example, in the US, the rate of poverty for children living with a single parent (most of them being mothers) is 34.9% compared to 9.5% for children with two parents.

Single mothers are also more likely to struggle with mental health issues, making it even harder to find long-term strategies to help them escape poverty.

The importance of statistics to drive social policy: making mothers' lion's share of unpaid care and domestic work visible and counting lone mothers

In spite of SDG 5/Target 5.4, whose indicator requires Member States to measure unpaid care and domestic work, too many countries have yet to conduct the necessary time-use surveys. Current surveys also often fail to disaggregate data along household composition and motherhood. When they do, surveys show that it is women in households with children – i.e. mothers, who really bear the brunt of unpaid care and domestic work, in particular when children are below 5.

While the COVID-19 pandemic did put the spotlight on mothers' disproportionate share of the unpaid work of caring for and educating children and the negative impact this has on their professional lives and finances, regular measurements are needed in order to drive policy-making to better support and redress these inequities.

Another important step in the area of statistics would be to get more realistic numbers of lone mothers, which are on the rise in many countries. According to UN Women, globally, nearly 8% of all households are headed by a single parent and 84% of single-parent households are headed by mothers. In absolute numbers, this represents 101.3 million mothers living alone with their children. However, these figures hide important disparities across regions: the percentage is much higher particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (32%) and in Latin America (24%). What's more, these figures do not tell the whole story: many lone mothers live in extended households, which means that they are not counted – and mostly invisible to policy-makers. UN Women estimates put a more realistic number of single mothers at twice that figure.

Social policies to empower all mothers

Whether raising their children with a partner or not, parents need support from governments and the wider society to do the vital work of caring for and educating the next generation of workers and citizens, in particular during early childhood.

The "3R Framework" – Recognize. Reduce. Redistribute, which is embodied in Target 5.4 of the 2030 Agenda, provides useful guidance for policy-makers to address the issue of the inequitable distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, which is at the root of gender inequalities and economic injustice and hardship for women, in particular when they are mothers.

It is imperative to recognize that unpaid care work is fundamental to ensure the sustainability of life, and that it is work – time-consuming yet vital work – that must be done and benefits everyone. It must therefore be adequately supported and more equitably distributed across society with every stakeholder, including the private sector, taking their share of responsibility and costs.

Concretely, such support and redistribution can be provided through:

- time (paid maternity, paternity and parental leaves);
- money (social transfers to families with children, pension credits to parents who care full time for their children);
- and services (high-quality care services for children and older persons, health centres, parenting education, mothers/family centres, educational and professional training facilities, etc.).

In particular, investing in quality childcare has a proven track record: a 2017 study led by James J. Heckman, a Nobel laureate economist at the University of Chicago, found that high-quality care during the earliest years can influence whether both mothers and children born into disadvantage lead more successful lives.

Such concrete policy changes would also shape public views and contribute to giving visibility and recognition to unpaid care work. Disconnecting basic social protection from formal employment and making it universal would be another way to recognize unpaid work.

In addition to providing training, mothers' access to employment after a maternity break can be supported by recognizing the skills they develop through the work of caring for and raising their children, including organizational and life skills which are very much in demand in the world of work. Recognizing these skills would help address the motherhood penalty.

Social policies specifically targeting lone mothers

Governments and civil society need to adopt specific policies and establish programmes providing the necessary assistance, support and opportunities to single parents to ensure that their children are not penalized or disadvantaged, but can lead lives that allow them to develop successfully to their full potential, and thereby contribute meaningfully to overall future societal well-being.

As most single mothers cannot work their way out of poverty without the right kinds of supplemental support, MMM believes in the importance of social investment targeted to help single mothers as an important investment in human capital.

Here are some steps to support these efforts:

- Developing employment opportunities for single mothers and facilitating their access to decent work: besides policies to stimulate employment (fiscal and monetary), anti-poverty programmes should also focus on increasing funding for sectoral training and apprenticeship programmes, and opening more local job centres for career guidance and easier access to job opening information.
- Promoting single mothers' access to education by developing skills training programmes or increasing financial aid to the mothers themselves as well as organizations focusing on single mothers' education. In particular, it is important to target young single mothers who drop out of school and university when they become pregnant; with 50% of their income spent on housing expenses, one third on the education of their children and the rest on food, there is not much left for their own education.
- Investing in more accessible and flexible high-quality childcare facilities for every parent: a recent World Bank report highlights the transformative potential of investments in childcare to "increase women's employment and productivity, create new jobs, improve child outcomes, drive economic growth and support a more resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic".
- Still, mothers should be offered choices and not necessarily be pushed into full time jobs to the detriment of quality time with their children. Recognizing that caring for one's own child is vital work, and financially supporting parents to do so is investing in human capital. Providing diverse childcare options is also important to address the diverse needs of parents, especially single mothers.
- Providing targeted social welfare through minimum wage, access to health care or access to housing and food stamps: as most countries have limited resources to dedicate to social protection policies, it is important to prioritize populations most in need, beginning with single mothers – although universal social protection systems should remain the ultimate goal.

In the past decades, political and public attitude towards welfare recipients including single mothers with young children has evolved, as they are encouraged to find a job. It is, however, difficult to increase the labour force participation of single mothers as they have to combine work and childcare, and often for them, the financial incentives to go to work are not very strong.

Working simultaneously on the three fronts –**employment, education and childcare** – and adding

some welfare as a starter would help single mothers ensure a more stable situation for their children.

In conclusion

Investing in mothers means investing in gender equality and thriving children – both of which are investments with high returns. And because of their particular vulnerability to poverty, single mothers must be targeted in particular.

More generally, mothers play a central and indispensable role in the functioning of society and the economy. Their contributions go beyond traditional caregiving responsibilities and encompass various aspects of human well-being and social cohesion.

We at MMM are convinced that when adequately recognized, educated and supported, mothers are key levers for change and can be instrumental in the realization of the SDGs.

We are therefore calling on Member States to prioritize Target 5.4 of the Development Agenda and put mothers – and their unpaid work of caring – at the heart of all policy-making.

MMM@NGO-UNESCO FORUM: Transforming Mentalities, Building Change and Women’s Empowerment

Organized by the [NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee](#), the [15th International Forum of NGOs in Official Partnership with UNESCO](#) took place on 24 and 25 January 2024 at [UNESCO](#) headquarters in Paris. Its aim was to “gather examples of good practices in challenging stagnant discriminations and inequalities within societies and build concrete recommendations for action at various levels”.

MMM President Anne-Claire de Liedekerke took part in the session “Building Change” and delivered some key messages:

- If we want to change the world and transform mentalities, we have to care for the next generations, for our children.
- And it’s worth remembering that parents – mothers and fathers – are children’s first educators.
- Then, we need to support mothers and recognize their invaluable contribution to our social and economic systems: throughout the world, women – the majority being mothers – perform more than 76% of the care work (16 billion hours a day). In our GDP-centric economic system, this unpaid work is unmeasured, unrecognized and invisible.
- When mothers are unrecognized and discriminated against, children suffer too. How can we pretend to change mentalities if we don’t support mothers, the guardians of future generations?

She ended with a quote from a book by Jean Birnbaum (director of Le Monde des livres), whose title “Seuls les enfants changent le monde” (Only children change the world) sums up what’s at stake at the Forum:

“Every political promise is addressed to children, every genuine commitment requires confronting the challenge of transmission. From a spiritual, metaphysical and human point of view, we can’t invent a new world without newborn babies.”

Read her full speech [here](#).

European Forum on Family Support

The EU Cost Action [EurofamNet](#), of which Make Mothers Matter is a member, hosted its final conference entitled “**European Forum on Family Support. Creating an Agenda for 2030**” together

with the Spanish Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030 and the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) in Madrid (Spain) last year.

During the conference, the Action's main advances were introduced and the long-term projections of [EurofamNet](#) were presented, aiming to promote the dissemination of EurofamNet results at policy, practice and research levels, to create a conversation-around-sustainability impulse for the network, and to consolidate it as a reference at the European level. The Forum brought together researchers, policy members, NGOs, practitioners, and the voices of children and their families.

Make Mothers Matter participated in the session **“The future of family support workforce skills”** as respondent to the paper by working group 4 of the project. In its intervention, MMM highlighted the importance of this topic (the skills required for the practice of family support in different professions and social sectors), as it concerns the well-being of families and children.

MMM stated that different families live in different ecosystems and require support and attention in a precise, articulate, effective, safe and adequate way; either in a specific period in time or for longer spells. In both cases, families and their individual members, have the right to be able to count on quality support. They need to be **able to trust the services they are in contact with and know that these are reliable services that can accompany them as long as they need them.**

This framework will **help promote consistency and standardization in family support services, ensuring that families receive consistent and equitable support regardless of their location or the specific practitioner they engage with.** It will eliminate variations in the quality of service delivery and foster a sense of trust and reliability in the family support system.

Make Mothers Matter further highlighted the fact that a framework on skills qualification **empowers families by enabling them to make informed decisions about the support they seek.** This empowerment allows families to actively participate in their own support journey.

MMM called for these services to be made **available to all families independent of their economic status.**

MMM believes that by prioritizing the development of this framework, we can strengthen the **well-being and resilience of families, ultimately creating a healthier and more supportive society.**

Access the full article [here](#).

EU Parliament Recognizes Need to Include Parents in Combating Child Poverty: a Milestone for MMM and Partners

In a significant stride towards prioritizing family welfare, the EU Parliament recently released a comprehensive report (“Children first – strengthening the Child Guarantee, two years on from its adoption”) that not only acknowledges the impact of child poverty but also addresses a crucial, often overlooked aspect – the need to support and include parents. We at MMM are pleased to announce that our persistent advocacy for the inclusion of parents in the fight against child poverty has borne fruit, as reflected in this report.

We want to acknowledge the work and leadership of MEP Dragoş Pîslaru and the strong commitment and support of MEP Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová towards the eradication of child poverty.

The current report includes **three of our main demands:**

- The **explicit inclusion of parents in the Child Guarantee (CG) scheme.** One of the key successful outcomes is that the Child Guarantee, aiming to ensure that every child in the European Union has access to free healthcare, education, and adequate nutrition, has now expanded its scope to recognize the integral role parents play in a child's well-being and that they also need to be

supported. The recognition demonstrates a commitment to actively involve them in the strategies and actions undertaken to combat child poverty.

The report goes further by urging Member States to actively support families during the implementation of the Child Guarantee at the national level via the National Action Plans (NAP) that almost all Member States have submitted to the EU Commission. This call for support extends beyond the child-centric focus, recognizing that **families as a whole play a pivotal role in shaping a child's environment and opportunities**. By emphasizing the importance of parental involvement, the EU Parliament is sending a clear message to Member States about the need for holistic and inclusive measures when addressing child poverty – throughout the text of the resolution, children and families are considered together.

Another noteworthy aspect of the report is the consistent emphasis on the **consideration of children within the context of their families** throughout its text. The recognition that children do not exist in isolation, but are part of a broader familial unit, is a fundamental shift in perspective. By acknowledging the interdependence of children and families, the report encourages a more comprehensive approach to combating child poverty – one that recognizes and addresses the multifaceted challenges faced by families.

- A **second key outcome** is the call on Member States to include access to **maternal and newborn health** in the Child Guarantee's NAPs. The significance of this expansion cannot be overstated, especially considering that previously, the scheme's scope was limited to child health, and maternal health, both physical and mental, was regrettably overlooked. At MMM, we have consistently emphasized that the health of mothers has a profound and proven impact on the well-being and health of their children.

Maternal health, encompassing both physical and mental well-being, is a cornerstone of a child's health journey.

By recognizing the importance of maternal health, the scheme is now better equipped to address the comprehensive needs of families, ensuring a healthier start for both mothers and their newborns.

- A **third successful outcome** is the call on Member States to establish **one-stop shops** within existing local and regional structures. On different occasions, MMM has advocated the importance of including these support systems for children and families. These dedicated hubs aim to streamline and enhance access to vital information on early detection and early childhood intervention.

The envisioned one-stop shops serve as comprehensive resource centres, extending beyond the mere provision of information to offer targeted support for accessing social security and assistance.

Some other important points addressed by the EU Parliament's resolution are the lack of attention and focus of the NAPs on vulnerable families in particular, such as single-parent families, low-income families and large families facing additional difficulties, as well as the urgent need to increase the funding for the European Child Guarantee, the need to lift administrative burdens to ensure direct, adequate and easily accessible funding at both regional and local levels, and the call for establishing a European authority for children.

While we celebrate this clear and strong resolution, we continue to advocate for the inclusion in the NAPs of comprehensive national policies and initiatives that prioritize the well-being of both children and their families, ensuring that all children and their families in Europe are lifted out of poverty without further delay.

Access the full article [here](#).

Compiled by Irina Pálffy-Daun-Seiler, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, with input from Valérie Bichelmeier, Vice-President and Head of MMM UN Delegation, and Johanna Schima, Vice-President and Head of MMM European Delegation.

Recent & Upcoming Events

March

04. – 05.: 18. International Conference on Psychology of Family (Taipei, Taiwan);
<https://waset.org/psychology-of-family-conference-in-march-2024-in-taipei>

25. – 26.: 18. International Conference on Gender, Sex and Healthcare (Singapore, Singapore); <https://waset.org/gender-sex-and-healthcare-conference-in-march-2024-in-singapore>

April

25. – 26.: 18. International Conference on Contemporary Family and Gender (Nicosia, Cyprus); <https://waset.org/contemporary-family-and-gender-conference-in-april-2024-in-nicosia>

May

15.: 2024 International Day Of Families On 'Families & Climate Change: International Year Of The Family + 30' (New York);
<https://social.desa.un.org/issues/family/events/2024-international-day-of-families>

20. – 21.: 18. International Conference on Domestic and Sexual Violence (Belgrade, Serbia); <https://waset.org/domestic-and-sexual-violence-conference-in-may-2024-in-belgrade>

23. – 24.: 18. International Conference on Marriage and Family (Tokyo, Japan);
<https://waset.org/marriage-and-family-conference-in-may-2024-in-tokyo>

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