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## **Quarterly Bulletin of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family**

June 2015, No. 94  
Deadline for contributions: 1.8. 2015

### **Vienna NGO Committee on the Family**

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Dear Readers of Families International,

This issue focuses on the United Nations International Day of Families (IDF) May 15<sup>th</sup> 2015. The theme chosen this year is: Men in Charge? Gender Equality and Children's Rights in Contemporary Families. Included is the Message of the United Nations Secretary General and a background note on the above theme.

As mentioned in the previous issue of Families International, the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family is organising an International Forum entitled: Thirty Years Vienna NGO Committee on the Family – Outlook to the Future – on Monday June 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, at the United Nations Vienna International Centre. The updated draft programme for the International Forum, which is being held within a Full Committee Meeting of the Committee, is also included in this issue. Readers of Families International are welcome to participate in the International Forum.

Further included in this issue are texts submitted by member organisations of the Committee, as well as recent and upcoming events.

With kind regards,

Peter Crowley Ph.D.  
Editor

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**From the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family**



VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY



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UNITED NATIONS  
VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

**FULL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Monday June 1<sup>st</sup> 2015**

CONFERENCE ROOM 6 on the 7<sup>th</sup> Floor

**INTERNATIONAL FORUM**

**THIRTY YEARS VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY  
- OUTLOOK TO THE FUTURE -**

Invited: Ms. Renata Kaczmarek, United Nations Focal Point on the Family New York\*, The Ministries of the Family in Austria,\* Czech Republic and Germany, Dr. Sabine Diabaté, & Dr. Detlev Lück, German Federal Institute for Population Research,\* Mag. Christine Leopold, Kolping International\* (\*confirmed)

10:00 – 11:30 Keynote Speech, Panel Presentations & Discussion

"Social Policies and the United Nations post-2015 Development Agenda : Gender Equality and Children's Rights in Contemporary Families" (Renata Kaczmarek)

"Demographic Development of Families - an International Retrospective over the last 70 Years" (Detlev Lück)

"Cultural Approach on Family, Demography and Policy Making - Status Quo and Outlook to the Future" (Sabine Diabaté)

11.30 – 12:00 Coffee Break

12.00 – 12.30: General Discussion

12.30 – 14.00: Lunch Break

### **INTERNATIONAL FORUM: Part II**

The International Forum will also observe: The International Day of Families 2015 & The Global Day of Parents 2015

14.00 – 16:00: Panel Presentations by Member Organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family and other Families-Oriented Civil Society Organisations on their Outlook to the Future.

[Each organisation will have seven minutes to make their presentation. Organisations which would like to participate are requested to contact the Committee at the above Email address so that presentations can be coordinated and leave time for questions & discussion]

Those wishing to attend and who do not have current accreditation with the United Nations in Vienna, should contact the Committee at the above Email address, at the latest by Friday May 15<sup>th</sup> 2015.

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*From the United Nations*

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES

15 May 2015

The theme of this year's International Day of Families – “Men in Charge?” – highlights the importance of gender equality and children's rights in contemporary families.

Around the world, more women are becoming recognized as the equal partners and decision-makers in families that they should be, thus helping to ensure a conducive environment for the full and harmonious development of children.

Yet in too many countries, discrimination against women and disregard for children's rights remain built into family laws and Government policies, and prevailing social norms often condone and justify many discriminatory practices.

The social and economic costs are felt by all. Discrimination and neglect often lead to violence, threatening women's and children's health and limiting their chances to complete education and fulfil their potential. The cycle tends to continue into the next generation, as children experiencing violence are more likely to resort to violence in their adult lives.

Equitable social and economic development depends on fair legal frameworks and social norms that support the rights of women and children. Discriminatory laws and practices that do not give equal rights to all, and that suppress women's and children's rights, have no place in contemporary families, communities, societies and nations.

On this International Day, let us resolve to change legal and social norms that support male control over women, reinforce discrimination and prevent the elimination of violence against vulnerable family members. As we shape a new sustainable development agenda and strive for a world of dignity for all, let us stand united for women's and children's rights in families and societies at large.



United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Division for Social Policy and Development



INTERNATIONAL  
DAY OF FAMILIES  
15 MAY 2015

## International Day of Families 2015 Observance

### Men in Charge? Gender Equality and Children's Rights in Con- temporary Families

#### Background Note

#### ***Gender equality and children's rights in family laws***

Fair legal frameworks to ensure gender equality and fulfil children's rights within families and beyond form basis of just societies and are indispensable for the achievement of development goals.

Family laws govern family relations and seek to protect the vulnerable family members, including women, children and older persons. Fair family law frameworks are especially vital to ensure gender equality and tackle various forms of violence in families.

Nevertheless, in some regions, discrimination against women, often perpetuated at the family level, is built into legal frameworks and government policies. Family laws may actually codify discrimination against women and girls and place them in a subordinate position to men in families, replicated at the community and society level.

Societal customs, often reflected in existing laws may condone practices reinforcing inequality and violate children's rights, such as dowry or early, enforced and child marriage, leading to various forms of gender inequality and injustice. Gender inequality

within families may also be perpetuated for economic reasons and due to social norms such as the desire for sons, who have filial obligations to care for their ageing parents or dowry-related financial reasons. What's more, family relations are often regarded as a private domain with family laws lacking specific provisions of intervention by the State.

A growing number of countries have outlawed gender discrimination and made better provisions to protect children within families but urgent family law reforms and policy initiatives are still needed to ensure better protection of women and children from various forms of violence and abuse. Custody and inheritance laws, in particular, are in need of urgent reform.

Importantly, national family laws should comply with international standards and ensure the rights of all family members. Yet, "despite progress in reforming laws, discrimination against women in the law remains pervasive in several areas, particularly in the area of family law."<sup>1</sup> For instance, in 26 out of 143 countries, statutory inheritance laws differentiate between women and men. In 27 countries, women cannot confer their nationality to their children and/or foreign spouses on equal basis with men. Discrimination entrenched in family law is especially challenging in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. In many countries, multiple legal systems with discriminatory customary and religious laws and practice prevail.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Violence in the family***

Family violence is defined as any violent act inflicted by one family member on another. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women, *Summary Report: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20*, p. 36, New York, March 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

refers to violence occurring in the family and covers three types of violence: physical, sexual and psychological, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, nonspousal violence and violence related to exploitation (Article 2(a)).

Homicide, (including 'honour' killings) and female genital mutilation are among the worst forms of violence perpetrated against women, often within their families. The 2013 *Global Study on Homicide* indicates that nearly half of all homicide victims are killed by their intimate partner or family members.<sup>3</sup> UNICEF estimates that more than 125 million girls and women have undergone some form of female genital mutilation in 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East in 2013 with 31 million girls at risk of being cut in the next decade.<sup>4</sup>

Early, child and enforced marriage remains prevalent in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa and to some extent in Latin American countries. Girls tend to marry older men and become mothers long before they are physically or emotionally ready. Girls stop going to school, are often subject to violence and risk dangerous pregnancies. UNICEF estimates that over 700 million of women alive in 2014 were married before 18.<sup>5</sup>

Violence in the family often leading to physical and mental problems has grave consequences for the wellbeing of individuals, families and societies. There are high

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide*, Vienna, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Statistical Overview and Exploration of the Dynamics of Change* (New York, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects*, New York, 2014.

economic costs associated with domestic violence.<sup>6</sup> Violence against children often results in behavioural problems and poor school performance. Experiencing violence in childhood may also lead to perpetuation of violent behaviour later in life.

Prohibition of various forms of violence in the family must be part of family law. Strategies to address violence in the family, however, go beyond legal frameworks and need to change prevailing norms and attitudes that allow violence to take place within families and communities in the first place. Such strategies may involve educational programme to change attitudes and beliefs, supporting safe environments for children and targeted community responses towards perpetrators and their victims.

Future family policy development depends on a favourable family law framework ensuring gender equality and equal participation of men and women in all spheres of life. Law professionals and advocates alike emphasize that law reforms must be accompanied by education and media campaigns.

Programme interventions focusing on men and boys contribute to violence prevention. Such programmes are especially effective if they are part of fair justice system, when they are connected to community and accompanied by adequate support and protection of women survivors of violence. In addition, community approaches to hold men accountable for gender-based violence help

with changing community norms and help communities and victims recover from violence.

### ***Family policy development in the context of the post-2015 development agenda***

The design, development, implementation and monitoring of family-oriented policies and programmes are essential for the success in achieving several goals of the draft post-2015 development agenda, such as ensuring healthy lives and promoting of well-being for all ages; achieving of gender equality, empowering all women and girls as well as providing of access to justice for all.

It is important to demonstrate how reforming discriminatory family laws; challenging of social norms that support male control over women and justify or condone violence against women or other vulnerable family members and eliminating violence against children and children's exposure to various types of family violence may contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

As prevailing discriminatory attitudes and social norms permit violence, strategies must also aim at changing such attitudes and norms and a variety of interventions have to take place at family and community level.

Prevention is seen as the most cost effective strategy to address different forms of violence in the family. Prevention of violence in families would contribute to gender equality and better outcomes for children, contributing to the achievement of development goals.

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<sup>6</sup> The annual cost of intimate partner violence have been calculated at USD 5.8 billion in the United States in 2003 according to National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003, *Cost of intimate partner Violence Against Women in the United States*, p. 2, *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, cited in "In-depth Study on All Forms of violence Against Women: Report of the Secretary-General," A/61/122/Add.1, p. 137, New York.



United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Division for Social Policy and Development



INTERNATIONAL  
DAY OF FAMILIES  
15 MAY 2015

***Men in Charge?  
Gender Equality and Children's Rights in Contem-  
porary Families***

Panel Discussion  
Friday, 15 May, 2015, 1:15-2:45  
UN HQ New York  
Conference Room 12

**Draft Programme**

**Moderator:**

Patrick Parkinson, Professor of Law, University of Sydney, Australia

**Presentations:**

Frank Furstenberg, Zellerbach Family Professor of Sociology, University of Pennsylvania,

*"Changing families around the world: The American family in a global context"*

Marwa Sharafaldin, Women's rights activist & Board Member, Musawah (The Global Movement for Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family) International Advisory Group

*"Gender and equality in Muslim family law"*

Fareeda Banda, Professor of Law, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London

*"Gender equality and children's rights in family laws: An African perspective"*

Srimati Basu, Associate Professor, Gender and Women's Studies, University of Kentucky

*"Family violence prevention in South Asia with a focus on India"*

**Discussion**

**From Member Organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family**



**MMM NEWS – SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS**

**MMM Panel Event at CSW59 in New York on Reconciliation between Family and Professional Life as Key to Women’s Economic Empowerment**

MMM sees work and family reconciliation as an essential element to achieve the gender equality and women empowerment goals from the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action as they can support women’s employment, alleviate poverty and foster women’s economic independence.

In addition to the [MMM written statement submitted to CSW59](#) making recommendations for governments and other stakeholders on the imperative to address the “motherhood penalty” and to make work and family life reconciliation a reality, MMM held a panel side-event during the [59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW\)](#) in New York that took place on 11 March 2015 and focussed on “Reconciliation between family and professional life: key to women’s economic empowerment and a society that cares”.

The main objectives of the Panel were (1) to bring the issues of family care responsibilities and reconciliation of work and family life into the centre of the debate on gender equality and women’s economic empowerment in the context of the Beijing+20 review, and (2) to present concrete examples of good practices by MMM member organizations for a better work life balance and a better redistribution of care between men and women, a crucial factor in advancing equality between men and women and fostering women’s economic empowerment.

Read more on the MMM website at [MMM Panel Event at CSW59](#). There you can also find the presentation “The reality of mothers” by Anne-Claire de

Liedekerke, President of Make Mothers Matter (included below).

**MMM at UN Geneva: 28th Session of Human Rights Council – Side Event on Child Early and Forced Marriage**

Action on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (ACE&FM)\*, World YWCA and MMM jointly hosted a side event to the 28th Session of the Human Rights Council that took place on 18 March 2015 and was dedicated to “Child, Early and Forced Marriage: Turning recommendations into actions”.

Worldwide, an estimated 15 million girls under 18 are married every year. Child early and forced marriage (CEFM) mostly happens in the developing world, where one in 9 girls is even married before 15, some as young as 8 or 9. However, CEFM also happens in developed countries in migrant communities, for example in the UK.

Girl brides are neither physically nor emotionally ready to become wives and mothers, and they are at a far greater risk of experiencing dangerous complications in pregnancy and childbirth, becoming infected with HIV/AIDS and suffering domestic violence. They are also usually withdrawn from school, which limits their future prospects for economic opportunities and results in increased risk of living in poverty.

The Panel discussed the recommendations on preventing CEFM set out in the June 2014 report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as best practices and challenges in their implementation.

For more information visit the MMM website at [Side Event at 28th HRC Session](#).

## MMM Launching Campaign to save EU Maternity Leave Directive Review

In April 2015 MMM launched a campaign to save the EU maternity leave directive review as the European Commission announced that it would withdraw it from the EU agenda if there were no advancements in Council negotiations by 25 May.

MMM has asked its member associations and NGOs defending mothers' rights in countries that are opposing the start of the negotiations to send a letter to their Ministers responsible for this directive asking them to reconsider their position and engage in negotiations. These countries are Germany, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Hungary, Slovakia, Latvia, Denmark, Cyprus and Slovenia. To countries that are not opposing, MMM has also sent a letter asking for their support to convince opposing countries.

MMM has also sent a letter to the Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans in charge of the directive together with the largest social EU organizations asking him to keep the maternity leave directive in the EU agenda.

In addition, MMM has signed the petition launched by the European Women's Lobby for the same purpose and encourages others to sign it via social media (Facebook and Twitter).

For more information please go to  
[www.mmmeurope.org](http://www.mmmeurope.org)

Learn more about recent MMM activities around the world in the latest [Make Mothers Matter Newsletter 01/2015](#).

Compiled by Irina Pálffy-Daun-Seiler, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, on behalf of MMM

United Nations

E/CN.6/2015/NGO/66



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-ninth session

9-20 March 2015

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled  
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for  
the twenty-first century”

### 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.

## **Statement**

### **Women and the economy — women and poverty — education and training of women**

#### **Make Mothers Matter recommendations**

Make Mothers Matter welcomes the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to review the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the opportunity to contribute to the integration of the specific perspectives of women who are mothers in the post-2015 development agenda.

Progress has been achieved towards gender equality in some critical areas of concern and Make Mothers Matter welcomes the efforts made by all nations. However, there is still room for improvement. We would like to focus our recommendations on the women and poverty, women and the economy, and education and training of women sections.

Voicing concerns of mothers from all around the world, Make Mothers Matter would like to emphasize chapter II, paragraph 29, of the Beijing Platform for Action regarding maternity:

The social significance of maternity, motherhood and the role of parents in the family and in the upbringing of children should be acknowledged. The upbringing of children requires shared responsibility of parents, women and men and society as a whole. Maternity, motherhood, parenting and the role of women in procreation must not be a basis for discrimination nor restrict the full participation of women in society. Recognition should also be given to the important role often played by women in many countries in caring for other members of their family.

In order to fully acknowledge and support the role of women who are mothers, concrete actions should be taken to reconcile work and family life. The actions are essential to achieve the gender equality and women empowerment goals from the Beijing Platform for Action as they can support women's employment, alleviate poverty and foster economic independence.

Conciliation between work and family life is a major issue, in particular for mothers. But it concerns us all: individuals, parents, children, older people, companies, public authorities and therefore urgent action should be taken at all levels.

Given the general trend towards a rising life expectancy, the traditional life course and career path must be reconsidered. Instead of the "rush-hour" period of intense work and career coupled with having children and starting a young family, this stretched working life could benefit from more flexibility with a long-term vision.

In the workplace, mothers encounter systematic disadvantages in pay, perceived competencies, and benefits compared to childless women. Specifically, they may suffer a per-child wage penalty (on average a reduction of 12 per cent of their salary per child), resulting in a pay gap between non-mothers and mothers that

is larger than the gap between men and women (this gap increases in old age: in Europe, the pension gap between men and women is 39 per cent).

Make Mothers Matter would like to make the following recommendations in this respect. They mainly derive from the results of an online survey that Make Mothers Matter conducted in 2011 in 16 European countries, targeting women who are mothers, with more than 11,000 respondents.

In this survey, called “What mothers in Europe want”, mothers gave as their primary concerns: the lack of time for their children, the lack of recognition for their role as mothers and the absence of choices when it comes to balancing their work and family lives.

They also expressed their desire to be present in the labour market and spend time educating their children, giving priority to one or another depending on the ages and number of children.

#### **Recommendations for Governments**

(a) Provide accessible, affordable and high-quality public services and infrastructures, in particular in the most disadvantaged and remote areas, with a focus on addressing the issue of women’s “time poverty”. Water, electricity, energy, information and communications technology, transportation, accessible childcare and health care are all necessary to significantly reduce the time spent on unpaid family care work, mostly supported by women, and thus make time for remunerated activities;

(b) Make unpaid family care work visible to policymakers and society at large by conducting time-use surveys which reflect real time spent in order to assess its monetary value as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP), estimated to be between 10 and 50 per cent of GDP, according to the October 2013 report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona; and include unpaid family care work in alternative economic and social indicators currently under consideration to measure well-being (e.g. Beyond GDP, genuine progress indicator);

(c) Build on the resolution adopted at the International Conference of Labour Statisticians of the International Labour Organization, to legally recognize unpaid family care work as a being a particular category of labour that produces rights (e.g. access to social security, education and training, a voice in the democratic system, etc.);

(d) In particular, recognize the periods dedicated to unpaid family care work in the calculation of pension rights (“care credits”), as these periods are essential to societies’ well-being. This must not be seen as a cost, but as an investment in childhood and human capital, with a positive impact in other areas: recognition of the social and educational role of parents, prevention of women’s poverty, prevention of social and health problems linked to burnout and stress, prevention of violence and the dropping out of school, higher fertility rates, etc.

**Recommendations for Governments, the private sector and other stakeholders,  
as appropriate**

(a) Facilitate discontinuous rather than linear career paths, allowing men and women to leave the labour market partially or completely to educate and care for their children or dependent relatives, and then re-enter it without being heavily penalized;

(b) Promote the regulation of quality part-time work and job-sharing schemes allowing men and women to adjust their workload to their family responsibilities, and eliminate any type of discrimination against part-time workers (i.e. mainly mothers) regarding career advancement, pay level, social security, pension rights, etc.;

(c) Address the “motherhood penalty” and the growing inequality and discrimination between parents and non-parents by recognizing and validating the competencies and skills acquired and developed while performing unpaid family care work to facilitate re-entry into the labour market after a career break;

(d) Facilitate access to lifelong education in order to ensure that women of all ages can acquire and develop the knowledge, capacities, aptitudes and skills needed to fully participate in the paid labour market;

(e) Promote and support equal sharing of care responsibilities between men and women (e.g. through paternity leave, parental leave, awareness-raising and education, etc.). This will allow men to take care of their children from the beginning, which will make it more likely that they will continue doing so during the whole of childhood;

(f) Change current legislation and practices to enable women’s right to full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance, ownership of land and other property, access to credit, etc.

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59<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women  
Make Mothers Matter parallel event  
11 March 2015

Women and the Economy  
“Reconciliation of work and family life:  
Key for womens’ economic empowerment and a society that cares”

“The Reality of Mothers”

Anne-Claire de Liedekerke  
President Make Mothers Matter

### Women’s unpaid care work

**Women are subsidizing the economy** by performing a huge amount of unpaid care work. Most of them are mothers. Without mothers, our economies would simply not work.

And yet, one of the structural causes of gender inequality is **motherhood** and the women’s overwhelming responsibility for unpaid care work performed in homes all over the world.

This work is invisible in national accounts, is taken for granted, is not even regarded as “work”. Worse than that: it has negative consequences on the mothers’ life. There is a **motherhood penalty** that women, who are taking care of their children and their family are paying, when they should be rewarded, valued and recognized for it.

This is true for developing and developed countries.

**In developing countries**, unpaid care work compensates for the lack of infrastructures and it prevents women from engaging in income generating activities, and has a direct link with the feminization of poverty. And when mothers are poor, children are poor. Even women’s participation in paid work is not in it self empowering, if they are working “second shift” at home after their paid work day.

The fact is that even in **developed countries**, where most households have access to public infrastructure and services as well as time saving technologies, mothers suffer from time poverty, juggling between paid work, their family and household chores.

### **Balance between work and family life**

This reality is confirmed by a survey conducted by the European delegation of MMM, entitled “What matters to mothers in Europe”, where a majority of European mothers expressed their desire for more time for their children.

When asked to address a message to policy makers the three main issues put forward by our respondent mothers all over Europe: time, choice and recognition.

Mothers know that care is not only about material needs, but it also answers developmental and emotional needs. It is of central importance to societal and human wellbeing, and to the formation of the next generation.

**The emotional nurturing and the transmission of values provided by parents, are too often overlooked, and need to be better recognized and supported.**

This calls for more and better measures to reconcile work and family life and I will now put forward a few good practices that are helping mothers and fathers to balance work and family responsibilities.

### **Good practices**

Good practices, helping to suppress barriers to women employment, is important for human rights, but it is also indispensable for sustainable development and has economic return.

### **France: a variety of choices**

Make Mothers Matter France was invited to present French best practices in work life balance at an experts’ meeting at the UN in May 2012. France has indeed been a leading example in the field, because of a diversity of measures and their stability throughout many governments.

For example, France has developed a diversity of childcare options, including external day cares for working parents as well as financial benefits and leave policies, allowing parents to care for their own children.

The results of such policies have been that:

France is one of the European countries with the highest fertility rate.  
Women’s employment in France is one of the highest in Europe. The access of women in senior positions has doubled in 30 years.

I won't develop all this in details but the good practice I wanted to tackle here, is the fact that the French government has been accompanying the diversity of parents' choices rather than coercing them in one direction set by the state.

**The findings of MMM survey had showed that, if given a choice mothers want both to work and take care of their children, giving priority to one or the other depending on the number and age of her children.**

### **Chile grows with you**

If there is to be a choice, quality and affordable day care has to be available to support mothers at work.

Chile has seen remarkable progress in the number of children covered by childcare services in the last 10 years. Thank to a government program "Chile crece contigo" introduced in 2007, the number of public crèches and places for children under one year of age, has increased from 700 in 2006 to 85.000 in 2010. Following the Action Aid report, early evaluations indicate that accessing childcare could increase Chilean mothers' employment by 15%.

### **Great Britain: right to request flexible working**

Employers should considered requests in a reasonable manner and can only refuse them if there is a business reasons for doing so.

### **Mercredi c papa**

You might have heard of the **he for she** campaign launched by the UN, with Emma Watson, that aims at including men in the pursuing of gender equality.

That's exactly what Mercredi c papa, member of Make Mothers Matter, is doing. The idea is the following: if reconciling work and family life is a struggle for many **women** today, men are also trapped in the stereotype of professional success, sometimes at the cost of their family life.

Women are trapped under the glass ceiling preventing them to develop their full professional potential, and men are trapped on the glass floor, preventing them to develop their private life.

Mercredi c papa created "Happy men" with the idea that if men in the work place take steps to better balance their private and professional life, it will help women to do so as well. So, Happy Men accompanies men and helps them with small, very concrete steps, realistic aims and commitments in the workplace and in the family.

MMM believes with Mercredi- c- papa that gender equality is about giving men and women equal possibilities to find fulfillment in the workplace AND in their family, helping them to strike out the right balance for themselves.

Dealing with this issue in partnership with men is a key to enable innovative changes in the workplace and in the family that will benefit all stakeholders: women, men, children and businesses.

### **Mas familia: EFR certificate**

A Spanish electricity company of 9,000 employees decided in 2008 with its employees to concentrate the work day from 7:15 am to 2:50 p.m. with 45 minutes flexibility. Six years later and after an impact assessment, the company had improved the balance between work and family life of its employees and also its productivity. Absenteeism was reduced by 20% and industrial accidents by 15%.

This company possessed the EFR certificate created by the Mas familia Foundation, Spanish member of MMM. It is a tool for assessing the “family friendliness” of an organization. An external party yearly assesses how the organization performs in relation with **up to 50 indicators**. Companies with the EFR certificate are continuously improving. If they don't comply with a minimum of 5 indicators they are denied the certificate. As of today 420 companies worldwide are certified, benefiting 250.000 employees and their families.

### **Female entrepreneurship**

In developing countries the amount of unpaid care responsibilities are narrowing the type of jobs women can have with sometimes a positive incentive to start businesses on their own. Philip told us about the microfinance in Bangladesh, allowing women who live in extreme poverty to start and maintain a business.

In many countries associations of “mompreneurs” were founded to federate and support young mothers to start their own business, giving them the flexibility to care for their children as well as generate an income.

Female entrepreneurship is booming, creative and should be supported by gendered policies to support entrepreneurship.

### **MMM recommendations**

I will give you now a list of MMM recommendations, you can find them in extend at the end of this meeting.

I ask each of you, when listening, to identify recommendations upon which you can act, wherever you are, whatever your responsibilities are.

1. **Provide accessible, affordable and high-quality public services and infrastructures**, in particular in the most disadvantaged and remote areas such as rural areas. Easy access to water, electricity, Information and Communication Technologies, transportation, proximity childcare and healthcare, all that can significantly reduce the time spent on unpaid family care work, thus liberate time for children care and paid activities.
2. Building on the resolution adopted in October 2013 at the ILO Conference, **legally recognizing unpaid family care work as a being a particular category of labor, that brings rights**: access to social security, access to education & training, voice in the democratic system...
3. **Recognize the periods dedicated to unpaid family care work in the calculation of pension rights** (“care credits”) as these periods not only “contribute” but are essential to societies’ wellbeing. This must not be seen as a cost but as an investment in childhood and human capital.
4. **Make unpaid family care work visible**, both to policy makers and society at large, by **assessing its monetary value as a percentage of GDP or by developing a new indicator on wellbeing including unpaid care work**. The report from Special UN rapporteur on poverty and human rights, Magdalena Sepulveda, says that estimates on unpaid care work would constitute between 10 and 50% of GDP, if it were assigned a monetary value.
5. Promote **flexibility in the work place**, the regulation of **quality part-time work and job sharing schemes**, allowing men and women to adjust their working hours and workload to their family responsibilities. Any type of discrimination against part-time workers, mainly mothers, has to be eliminated, regarding career advancement, pay level, social security, pension rights, etc.
6. **Facilitate discontinuous career paths** rather than linear, allowing men and women to leave the labor market partially or completely to care for their children or dependent relatives, and then re-enter it without being heavily penalized as if they had done nothing!
7. **Recognize and validate the skills** acquired and developed while performing unpaid family care work, such as soft skills as well as organizational and management skills, in order to facilitate the re-entry into the labour market after a career break.
8. Promote and support **equal sharing of care responsibilities between men and women**, in a life course perspective.

**Conclusion**

If we all came to NY for this important commission on the status of women is because we know that change will also come from each of us.

Our will has to be so strong that it induces political will. Our world is not caring for those who care.

Mothers and all women have continuously shown their strength and their resilience. I have heard many presenters here at this CSW, talking about what they owe to their mother.

So many mothers are heroes!

Mothers need to be recognized.

What is good for mothers, is good for children. What is good for children brings about a better future for all.

Thank you.



Mr Frans Timmermans Vice-President of the European Commission  
European Commission  
B- 1049 Brussels  
Cc: Commissioner Vera Jourova

Brussels, 27 April 2015

**Re: Call to maintain the “Maternity leave Directive” on the table**

Dear Commissioner Timmermans,

The European Women’s Lobby (EWL), the European delegation of Make Mothers Matter (MMM), ILGA Europe, the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), Social Platform, the European Youth Forum, the European Federation of Nurses (EFN) the European Disability Forum (EDF), the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE) and SOLIDAR, representing millions of women and men throughout Europe are deeply concerned about the negative impact the withdrawal of the proposal to strengthen the Maternity Leave, would have on women throughout Europe.

We cannot understand that, in the name of “better regulation”, this particular piece of legislation that would strengthen women’s rights is under attack at a time when Europe needs women to have more children while not being penalised on the labour market.

**We therefore call on you to reconsider your position and maintain the proposal on the table beyond June 2015 to give more time to the Council to resume negotiations with the European Parliament.**

Considering the fact that the current Maternity Leave directive is from 1992, and that the labour market has changed substantially since then, a legislative revision is urgently needed to promote the participation of women in the workforce while allowing them to reconcile work and family life. We understand that an alternative proposal from the Commission would not provide a legislative framework and we believe it will not guarantee women's rights, if this is the case.

While austerity measures have been cited as a reason to withdraw this directive, it should be seen as an investment, ensuring basic physical and emotional needs of children in Europe while keeping mothers on the labour market.

Women represent 60% of graduates in higher education and can be a key lever for inclusive growth. However, only 63% of women in the EU are working, although the Europe 2020 strategy target employment rate is at 75%. The revision of this directive is crucial to achieve this target and ensure the health and safety of women who continue to be discriminated on the labour market due to pregnancy and childbirth. At a time when a lack of trust currently exists between Europe's citizens and the European institutions, if Europe is to reconnect with its citizens it needs to demonstrate that it is able to ensure rights, equality and justice for all. Adopting a stronger Maternity Directive would send a positive message to European citizens, especially women and show that European institutions are able to reach consensus on issues that matter to them in their daily lives.

For all these reasons, we urge you to keep the Maternity Leave Directive on the table in order to ensure mandatory minimum European standards to improve the health and safety of women before, during and after childbirth.

We believe this will show a genuine willingness to reconsider a very important issue for the millions of European citizens, who currently see their social rights weakening.

Yours sincerely,

The European Women's Lobby  
The European delegation of Make Mothers Matter  
ILGA Europe  
The European Anti-Poverty Network  
Social Platform  
The European Youth Forum  
The European Federation of Nurses  
The European Disability Forum  
The Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union  
SOLIDAR

International Federation for Family Development:  
Papers No.41

## Authoritarian and authoritative parenting The real problem behind the so-called 'helicopter parents'

1 April 2015

It recently happened to an American couple that tried to allow their children to walk the one mile from a local park to their home.<sup>1</sup> They were charged by child protective services with “unsubstantiated” child neglect —itself a near-oxymoronic and self-canceling term— which means their case will be held on file for five years. As the editor of a popular magazine puts it, “it’s hard to think of a safer time and a better place than the United States of 2015 to raise children — but we act as though the opposite were true.”<sup>2</sup>

To understand what is happening, we should go back to four years ago. In 2011, a book titled ‘Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother,’ written by Amy Chua, hit the shelves of American bookshops.<sup>3</sup> The book is essentially a memoir of her experience raising her daughters and exposes the many differences in the styles of parenting found in different cultures.

It created no small amount of controversy, where most parents were shocked to read about her ‘extreme’ methods. She never allowed her children to have or attend a sleepover. Her children were not allowed any extracurricular activities other than learning an instrument.

Then another book brought up a similar controversy in the realm of parenting, only this time it

points out the difference for French mothers and fathers. Pamela Druckerman, author of ‘Bringing up Bébé,’ is an American who moved to France and noticed a drastic difference in the behavior of her child and the children who had grown up in France.<sup>4</sup>

In her book she highlights that French children don’t make terrible messes in public, don’t throw tantrums, don’t have extreme meltdowns over being told ‘no’, and that they are somewhat more self-sufficient than American children. She also notes that French parents, while concerned about the health and safety of their child, do not overtly concern themselves with the well being of their child’s immediate happiness. They do not feel a need to make their child ‘happy’ all the time but acknowledge that in order to raise an independent adult a child will need to understand that the rules do not revolve around them.

***„We should also keep in mind that unstable balance is the fundamental truth of parenting, as it is so very often in life.”***

American parents are big believers in raising a child with high self-esteem. They believe inspiration will encourage a child to reach their goals. Should they learn from the Chinese and become the ‘security guard’ of their children or would it be better to follow the French system and allow them to grow by themselves, even if

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<sup>1</sup> ABC News, ‘Free-Range Parenting Debate: Should Kids Be Allowed to Roam Unsupervised?’ (30 January 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Senior, ‘We live in an age of irrational parenting’, NY Mag (13 March 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Amy Chua, ‘Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother Paperback’, Penguin Books (2011).

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<sup>4</sup> Pamela Druckerman, ‘Bringing Up Bébé’, Penguin Books (2011).

it implies facing risks and making mistakes? ‘Helicopter parenting’ or ‘free-range parenting’? <sup>5</sup> The answer is probably both, depending on the circumstances and provided it means involvement of both parents in the process of education.

### **Involvement and over-parenting**

A study published recently found that there is an important line to draw between parental involvement and over-parenting. “While parental involvement might be the extra boost that students need to build their own confidence and abilities, over-parenting appears to do the converse in creating a sense that one cannot accomplish things socially or in general on one’s own.”<sup>6</sup>

In this sense, we shouldn’t underestimate the vast importance of fathers in children’s lives, not only because children ‘need and love their dads’, but also because of the significant impact that fathers have on the social, cognitive, emotional and physical well-being of children from infancy to adolescence and with lasting influences into their adult life. “Involved fathers bring positive benefits to their children that no other person is as likely to bring.”<sup>7</sup>

And we should also keep in mind that unstable balance is the fundamental truth of parenting, as it is so very often in life. “We want them to have self-esteem, but not pride. To master friendship, but thrive in solitude. To learn respect, but not blind obedience. To trust, but question. Be comfortable in their skin, but not preening. Be healthy, but also indulgent. Be

independent, but still a part of us. And that explains why so many moments feel like there are no answers —because there are always two answers, or more. With each added child, the possibilities multiply exponentially.”<sup>8</sup>

Maybe going through what Katie Roiphe has called the ‘myths’ of helicopter parenting can help to understand how to manage that balance better.<sup>9</sup> First, the belief that we can control our children on a very high level and somehow program or train or condition them for a successful life however we define it is extremely prevalent and takes many forms. Ironically, parents today want their kids spending time on things that can bring them success, but they’ve stopped doing one thing that’s actually been a proven predictor of success—and that’s household chores.

Giving children household chores at an early age helps to build a lasting sense of mastery, responsibility and self-reliance, according to research by Marty Rossmann, professor emeritus at the University of Minnesota. In 2002, Dr. Rossmann analyzed data from a longitudinal study that followed 84 children across four periods in their lives—in preschool, around ages 10 and 15, and in their mid-20s. She found that young adults who began chores at ages 3 and 4 were more likely to have good relationships with family and friends, to achieve academic and early career success and to be self-sufficient, as compared with those who didn’t have chores or who started them as teens.<sup>10</sup>

Chores also teach children how to be empathetic and responsive to others’ needs, notes psychologist Richard Weissbourd of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. In research published in 2014, he and his team surveyed

<sup>5</sup> Jessica Hammonds, ‘American vs. French vs. Chinese: Which Style Is “Best”?’, *Examiner*, (10 February 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Jill C. Bradley-Geist and Julie B. Olson-Buchanan, ‘Helicopter parents: An Examination of the Correlates of Over-parenting of College Students’, *California State University Fresno* (2014).

<sup>7</sup> L. Wood y E. Lambin, ‘How fathers can shape child health and wellbeing’, *The Univ. of Western Australia* (2013).

<sup>8</sup> Lisa Belkin, ‘The Only Parenting “Philosophy” You Really Need’, *The Huffington Post* (10 April 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Katie Roiphe, ‘The Seven Myths of Helicopter Parenting’, *Slate* (31 July 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Jennifer Breheny Wallace, ‘Why children need chores’, *Wall Street Journal* (13 March 2015).

10,000 middle- and high-school students and asked them to rank what they valued more: achievement, happiness or caring for others.<sup>11</sup>

### The ‘frustration tolerance’

Helicoptering is also a natural outcome of our increasingly competitive society. The problem is that if you are anxiously trying to make your child into a successful adult, you are most likely communicating anxiety — and not success— to them. Common triggers are fear of dire consequences —when many of those consequences are great teachers for kids; feelings of anxiety — worries about the economy, the job market, and the world in general; overcompensation of adults who felt unloved, neglected, or ignored as children; and peer pressure from other parents —feeling that if we don’t immerse ourselves in our children’s lives, we are bad parents. The main point is probably that we don’t want our children to fall, so instead of letting them experience adversity, we clear the path. We remove obstacles to make their life easy. But adversity is a part of life, and only by facing it can our children build life-coping skills they’ll need down the road. So while it seems like we’re doing them a favor, we’re really stunting their growth. We’re putting short-term payoffs over long-term well-being.<sup>12</sup>

The era of instant gratification has led to a decrease in what therapists call ‘frustration tolerance.’ This is how we handle upsetting situations, allow for ambiguity, and learn to navigate the normal life circumstances of breakups, bad grades, and layoffs. When we lack ‘frustration tolerance,’ moderate sadness may lead to suicidality in the self-soothingly challenged.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Weissbourd, ‘Making Caring Common’, Harvard Graduate School of Education (2014).

<sup>12</sup> Kari Kubiszyn Kampakis, ‘10 common mistakes parents today make (me included)’, The Huffington Post (3 March 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Brooke Donatone, ‘Why millennials can’t grow up’, Slate (2 January 2014).

The idea that you can turn your child into a creative person is another equally pernicious form of helicoptering. It is somehow connected to the frequency with which people talk about their children as ‘gifted’ and the need for bright children to be geniuses, the pumping up of ordinary kid stuff into art. As Levine puts it in one of her elegant deadpan moments, “Being special takes hard work and can’t be trusted to children.”<sup>14</sup>

New parents are also burdened by the way our society romanticizes early parenthood, especially motherhood. Played out in media imagery, this contributes to perceptions of instant bonding, instinctive breastfeeding and ‘perfect babies’ being cared for by ‘perfect mothers.’<sup>15</sup>

### Good intentions gone awry

Helicopter parenting is about too much presence, but it’s also about the wrong kind of presence. In fact, it can be reasonably read by children as absence, as not caring about what is really going on with them, as ignoring the specifics of them for some idealized cultural script of how they should be. It is the imposition of the parents’ fantasy of how they want their children’s lives to be. It’s the appearance of being busy and enjoying a rich or full life. As Levine points out, it is “the confusion of over-involvement with stability.”<sup>16</sup>

While you think you’re giving your kids everything, they often think you are bored, pushy, and completely oblivious to their real needs. But let’s look at this very simply: if you’re willing to give up your own life and identity, what is the

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<sup>14</sup> Madeline Levine, ‘Teach Your Children Well: Parenting for Authentic Success’, HarperCollins (2012).

<sup>15</sup> Madeline Levine, ‘Teach Your Children Well: Parenting for Authentic Success’, HarperCollins (2012).

<sup>16</sup> Madeline Levine, ‘Teach Your Children Well: Parenting for Authentic Success’, HarperCollins (2012).

message you have sent your kid about the value of other people, mothers in particular?

Some people think that helicopter parents are bad or pathetic people with deranged values, but that is never the case. Actually, as both Warner and Levine point out, helicoptering, even in its more gruesome and dire forms, is generally the product of love and concern.

It is not necessarily a sign of parents who are ridiculous or unhappy or nastily controlling. It can be a product of good intentions gone awry, the play of culture on natural parental fears.<sup>17</sup>

### **An odd way to 'help'**

Now, the novel phenomenon of American upper-middle-class helicopter-parenting, in which kids are scheduled, monitored, and supervised for their 'enrichment' at all times, is now being enforced on others, as the case mentioned at the beginning shows.

It's an odd way to 'help' a child who is unsupervised for five minutes to potentially inflict years of stress, hours of court appearances, and potential legal fees and fines on their parents. Children who experience discreet instances of suboptimal parenting aren't always aided by threatening their parents with stiff, potentially family-jeopardizing legal penalties. The risk of five or even 10 minutes in a temperate, locked car while mom shops is still a lot better than years in group homes and foster systems.<sup>18</sup>

That attitude seems to forget that "parenting is like being in a triathlon: You feel like you are

winning at times. You excel in one way, but always have a weaker leg of the race. You prepare, but you never know what the weather will be like that day. It could be cold and windy or really freakin' hot. You could buy the fanciest bike and the most expensive shoes, but in the end, you are all the same. Together, you are all trying your best and looking for strength within. Some may look like they have it easier, but you can't use that as an excuse. You signed up for the damn thing and it's not even about winning, but finishing the race. You see beautiful scenes, but often, you're going so fast, you forget to notice until you get towards the end. You get worn out. You want to quit, but really, you just want to hit pause and you can't."<sup>19</sup>

What our children need more than anything is love. We cannot love our children too much. We can give them too many things and not enough discipline, but it is impossible to give them too much love. Raising children is a challenge because they are here to be their own people. When they come into our lives, they are a blank cell with no definitive direction. Our job as parents is to provide them the right environment, guidance and sustenance so they can find their unique purpose. Our love is the nutrition guiding them in learning to love and define themselves as separate and significant people. Truly loving them means love with no strings attached. This means our children don't have to be or do anything in particular to earn our love because "our love is a given, not a reward system."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Madeline Levine, 'Teach Your Children Well: Parenting for Authentic Success', HarperCollins (2012).

<sup>18</sup> Michael Brendan Dougherty, 'Stop helicopter-parenting other people's kids', The Week (6 June 2014).

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<sup>19</sup> Jenny G. Perry, 'Parenting is sometimes like a Triathlon', The Huffington Post (26 January 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Sherrie Campbell, 'Love your children: Easier said than done?', The Huffington Post (1 May 2014).

International Federation for Family Development:  
Papers No.42

**Demographic evidence base**

**The need for a consensus on fertility and development**

1 May 2015

The Commission of Population and Development (CPD) of the United Nations held recently its annual meeting in New York from 13th to 17th of April. Representatives and experts from UN Member States, other UN entities, such as United Nations Development Fund, United Nations Population Fund and civil society organizations were invited to a joint session aiming to integrate population issues into sustainable development, an inevitable task if new goals are to be achieved.

The Population Division of DESA prepared the opening of the 48th session of CPD with different media focusing '10 key facts and points for action' for the 15 years' period of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the fastest population growth in low-income and lower-middle income countries –while some others will see a decline–, the population ageing, the increasing concentration in urban areas and of international migration.

Unfortunately, there was no agreement on its final resolution. This seems to confirm that we need to overcome confrontation among the different areas of a changing world, where population issues and trends are diverse and complex.

The main issue to be carefully studied if we want to base consensus on reality is the interaction between fertility and development. Up to now, we have admitted that a decrease in fertility rates is necessary to promo-

te development, but this is not always the case.

The emergence of a new narrative

“The first decade of the 21st century has witnessed the emergence of a new narrative regarding the relationship between living standards and fertility outcomes. It was Myrskylä, Kohler, and Billari (2009) who made the strongest, most explicit case for this regime change hypothesis, showing how the historically negative correlation between development and fertility becomes positive after countries exceed a certain threshold of human development.”<sup>1</sup> This conclusion was supported by a series of papers published in the early and mid-2000s that showed that the correlation between women’s labor force participation and fertility rates across countries had also reversed, and that countries with a higher number of women in the labor force also presented higher fertility rates.<sup>2</sup>

Their main hypothesis is that “a fundamental reversal of the traditional fertility-development relationship has occurred in highly developed countries so that further socioeconomic development is no longer associated with decrea-

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<sup>1</sup> Ciganda 2015: 'Unstable work histories and fertility in France: An adaptation of sequence complexity measures to employment trajectories'.

<sup>2</sup> Ahn and Mira 2001; Adsera 2004; Kohler, Billari, and Ortega 2002.

sing fertility, but with increasing fertility.”<sup>3</sup> To test it they analyzed data from 1975 upto 2008 from over 100 countries.

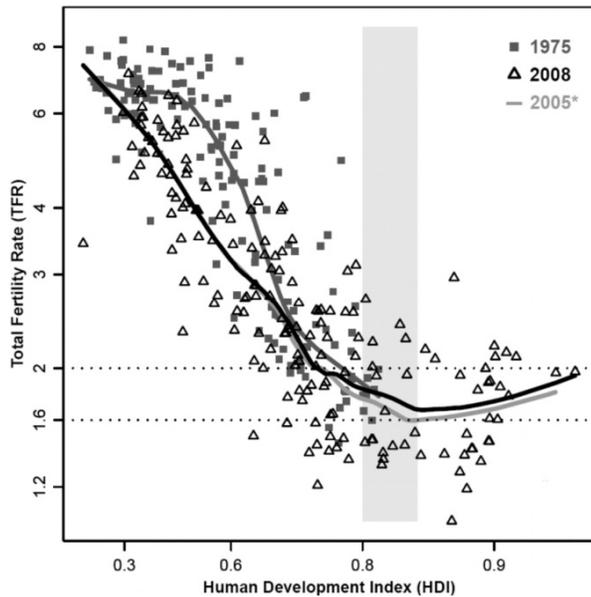


Figure 1\*. Cross-country relationship between the total fertility rate (TFR) and the Human Development Index (HDI); years 1975, 2005 and 2008: Data points and a lowess curve. To prevent the graph from cluttering only the lowess curve is shown for the year 2005.

\* Mikko Myrskylä, Hans-Peter Kohler and Francesco C. Billari 2011: 'High development and fertility: Fertility at older reproductive ages and gender equality explain the positive link.'

They found that there is a reverse in fertility trend, explain by older reproductive ages. This way, in the path to development two processes happen simultaneously: lower fertility rates and higher reproductive rates. But the first process has its limitations: when countries reach to certain levels of development, fertility rates start to grow again.

These new fertility rates have different characteristics that the typical 'baby boom': it hap-

pens only in high developed countries, at older reproductive ages (over 30s) and in places with a cultural and legal system that has developed gender equality uses and costumes. This study makes us highlight the importance of family-work balance as a crucial way to address gender equality issues, population trends and sustainable development. "Countries ranking high in development as measured by health, income, and education, but low in gender equality continue to experience declining fertility." <sup>4</sup> There are different explanations for this fact.

The study mentions some hypothesis, such as McDonald's theory (2000). It suggests that low fertility rates are due to the lack of gender equality: "the asymmetric roles of women and men within households" and in labor market, as other spaces. "Esping-Andersen (2009) has argued that very low fertility is the byproduct of the incomplete transition from an 'old' gender-unequal system based on the male breadwinner to a 'new' gender-equal system in which housework, childrearing responsibilities and labor market participation (or earnings) are more gender-equally distributed within households." [5] On the other side, is hard to explain high levels of development without women in the labor market. But the transition is hard, while a more gender equality society is developed. This way gender equality, the balance of work-family life, and women in the labor market are clue issues to consider.

The relevance of work-family balance

"In many OECD countries, policy makers are increasingly concerned about adults being

<sup>3</sup> Mikko Myrskylä, Hans-Peter Kohler and Francesco C. Billari 2011: 'High development and fertility: Fertility at older reproductive ages and gender equality explain the positive link.'

<sup>4</sup> Mikko Myrskylä, Hans-Peter Kohler and Francesco C. Billari 2011: 'High development and fertility: Fertility at older reproductive ages and gender equality explain the positive link.'

able to have as many children as they desire. Fertility behavior can be constrained for different reasons: the perceived inability to match work and care commitments because of inflexible labor markets and/or the lack of public supports, the financial costs of raising children, and the difficulty for prospective parents in finding affordable housing to establish a family of their own.”<sup>5</sup>

“In most countries, the TFR (Total Fertility Rate) has increased from the troughs observed when the HDI (Human Development Index) was in the range 0.80-0.85.” The exceptions are countries as Brunei, Japan and Switzerland. The results “shows that the fertility levels of the Scandinavian countries and of the majority of 20 Western European countries follow an increasing path after the reference year, while several East Asian, Middle Eastern, and Central European countries have continued to experience fertility declines, despite further increases in development.”<sup>6</sup>

Work-family balance is the explanation for these differences. Countries that are better off in gender equality index have higher fertility rates: the cost of having kids is lower, as women can go back to work, and parents spend more time with their children.

While dealing with economic recession, the authors argue that “if trends in socioeconomic development

***“In many OECD countries, policy makers are increasingly concerned about adults being able to have as many children as they desire.”***

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<sup>5</sup> OECD 2011: ‘Doing Better for Families’.

<sup>6</sup> Mikko Myrskylä, Hans-Peter Kohler and Francesco C. Billari 2011: ‘High development and fertility: Fertility at older reproductive ages and gender equality explain the positive link.’

stall or become negative—as they have in countries such as Italy, Greece, Slovenia, and Ireland during the most recent recession—our results suggest that these countries could experience fertility declines.”<sup>7</sup> This could make ageing population a bigger issue, especially for Europe. Post Development agenda should consider this information when drafting post 2015 goals.

Immigration is another issue to be taken into account. “Sobotka (2008) finds that while immigrants contribute to the total number of births and their share has increased in the last decade, the net effect on the TFR (Total Fertility Rate) in most European countries has been small.”<sup>8</sup> Other studies have similar data, explaining that there is no significant difference in the fertility rate between migrant and national population. This means that meanwhile immigrants can be a short term strategy to keep the welfare state services, in high developed countries, they won’t change significantly the fertility rates.

#### Possible solutions

“All governments should support families and give parents more choice in their work and family decisions.”<sup>9</sup> However, countries differ considerably in the types and intensity of support provided. These differences are rooted in countries’ histories, their attitudes towards families, the role of government and the relative weight given to the various underlying family policy objectives, such as: reconciling work and

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<sup>7</sup> Mikko Myrskylä, Hans-Peter Kohler and Francesco C. Billari 2011: ‘High development and fertility: Fertility at older reproductive ages and gender equality explain the positive link.’

<sup>8</sup> Mikko Myrskylä, Hans-Peter Kohler and Francesco C. Billari 2011: ‘High development and fertility: Fertility at older reproductive ages and gender equality explain the positive link.’

<sup>9</sup> OECD 2011: ‘Doing Better for Families’.

family responsibilities, helping parents to have the number of children they desire, mobilizing female labor supply, promoting gender equality, combating child and family poverty, promoting child development and generally enhancing child well-being from an early age.

Policy that helps parents to have their desired number of children has to be sustained over time and help combine family and working life. “Introducing or increasing cash support can have a temporary positive effect on birth rates, but investment in formal childcare services as part of a range of supports seems to be more effective.”<sup>10</sup>

Considering this information, it seems that two family solutions could contribute to build a consensual document in the future. On one side, there is a real need for improving family-work balance: women are essential in labor market and fathers should be involved in their children’s life. If we really aim to gender equality, it should include male and female, not only at work and separately, but with all their aptitudes. Parents are the first teachers of our next generation.

On the other hand, child poverty addressed from a family perspective can be a better tool to break intergenerational poverty, especially in developing countries where there is much work to do. Post-2015 agenda should focus on the best policies we have to provide goods and services for the new and old generations that this new world will hold.

That way the proposed theme for next year’s Commission could also be better served: “Monitoring the post-2015 development agenda: strengthening the demographic evidence base.”

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<sup>10</sup> OECD 2011: ‘Doing Better for Families’.

### Recent and Forthcoming events

#### 2015

- Seventieth Anniversary of the United Nations Organization
- World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995: Beijing +20 Campaign  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women>
- World Summit on Social Development-Copenhagen+20  
<http://undesadspd.org/CalendarofEvents.aspx>

#### May 2015

- 4-7: International Conference on Sociology <http://www.atiner.gr/sociology.htm> (Athens, Greece)
- 18- 19 Child Aware Conference <http://www.childawareconference.org.au> (Melbourne, Vic)
- 19-22 World Education Forum 2015 (WEF) (Incheon, South Korea)  
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/world-education-forum-2015/>

#### July 2015

- 4-7 ERPA International Congresses on Education 2015 <http://www.erpacongress.com> (Athens, Greece)
- 14-15: Children and Childhoods Conference 2015, Ipswich, UK <http://www.ucs.ac.uk/Faculties-and-Centres/Faculty-of-Arts,-Business-and-Applied-Social-Science/iSEED/Children-and-Childhoods-Conference-2015.aspx>
- 13-16: Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)
- High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Third Session (Geneva, Switzerland)

#### September 2015

- 2-4: 5th Conference of the International Society for Child Indicators, South Africa , Cape Town  
<http://isc2015.org/>
- 24-25: II International Conference on Family and Society, Barcelona  
<http://www.fsconference.org/>
- 19-20: European Federation of Associations of Families of People with Mental Illness, Sofia  
<http://www.eufami.org/news/72-eufami-major-family-congress-2015>

#### October 2015

- 16-18: XIX International Family Congress, Mexico <http://iffdcongressmexico.com/>
- 19-21, 2015: World Congress on Education (WCE-2015) Dublin, Ireland  
<http://www.worldconedu.org/>
- 27-30: World Congress of Families IX, Salt Lake City <http://wcf9.org/>

## Impressum

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