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Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

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Dear Readers of Families International,

This issue features a Report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the General Assembly entitled: 'Implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes', in conclusion of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF+20). The Report of the Secretary-General highlights initiatives world-wide of governments of Member States of the United Nations, as well as various Departments of the United Nations system. It also focuses on Family trends and further development of family policy in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while drawing our attention to achievements of the International Year of the Family and its observances in the follow-up process.

This issue also includes the Yearly Report 2015 of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, which observed the thirtieth anniversary of its inception in 1985.

Further included in this issue are texts from Member Organisations of the Committee as well as a number of recent and upcoming events.

Sincerely,

Peter Crowley Ph.D.
Editor

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From the United Nations

United Nations

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**General Assembly
Seventy-first session**

**Social development: social development, including
questions relating to the world social situation and to
youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family**

**Economic and Social Council
2016 session**

**24 July 2015-27 July 2016
Social and human rights questions:
social development**

**Implementation of the objectives of the International Year
of the Family and its follow-up processes**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/144. The report highlights recent initiatives aimed at the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes at the national and international levels and focuses on the further development of family policy in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 69/144, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its seventy-first session, through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes. The resolution also encouraged Member States to continue providing information on their activities in support of the objectives of the Year and its follow-up processes to be included in the report.

2. The present report is the sixth report pertaining to the follow-up to the International Year of the Family and its twentieth anniversary. Section II of the report gives an overview of initiatives in support of the objectives of the Year process at the national and international levels. Section III focuses on the development of family policy in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The final two sections of the report contain several conclusions and recommendations.

3. The country-level information presented in section II of the report is based on the responses of Member States to the note verbale transmitted by the Secretariat in May 2015 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/144.

II. Follow-up to the International Year of the Family

A. The objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes

4. The objectives of the International Year of the Family, 1994, were to stimulate local, national and international actions as part of a sustained long-term effort to attain a number of goals related to family policy. Among them was the aim to promote knowledge of the economic, social and demographic processes affecting families and their members, with attention given to the rights and responsibilities of all family members.

5. Another objective of the Year has been to strengthen national institutions to formulate,

implement and monitor policies in respect of families and to stimulate efforts to respond to problems affecting families. In addition, the objectives of the Year were to build upon the results of international activities concerning women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities (see [A/44/407](#) and General Assembly resolution 46/92).

6. For the tenth anniversary observance of the Year, it was recommended undertaking reviews and assessments of the situation and needs of families (see [E/CN.5/2001/4](#) and General Assembly resolution 56/113). The objectives of the twentieth anniversary of the Year were to encourage Member States to make concrete efforts to improve family well-being through the implementation of effective national policies, strategies and programmes, especially in the areas of poverty eradication, confronting family poverty and social exclusion, full employment and decent work, ensuring a work-family balance, social integration, advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity.

B. National-level initiatives

7. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/144, the Secretariat issued a note verbale to Member States to ascertain national-level initiatives implemented in support of the objectives of the Year. Eleven responses were received, from the Governments of Bulgaria, Colombia, Hungary, Malta, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Spain and the United Arab Emirates.

8. Some Member States described continued efforts to implement the objectives of the Year and its follow-up processes within the framework of their national family plans.

9. The National System for Integral Family Development in Mexico is focused on violence prevention and peaceful conflict resolution in families. The national plan for strengthening families (*Plan Nacional de Fortalecimiento de las Familias*

2015-2021) in Peru is designed to support the educational, social, caregiving and economic protection roles of families. The comprehensive plan of support to the family (*Plan Integral de Apoyo a la Familia 2015-2017*) in Spain is aimed at advancing the social, legal and eco-

conomic protection of families, promoting inter-generational solidarity and addressing demographic challenges relating to low fertility and rapid ageing.

10. In some countries, national priorities with regard to families are also part of their overall national development strategies. The 2030 National Vision in Qatar includes a family-oriented expansion of social safety nets and increased support for families in special circumstances. In addition, the 2030 National Vision also comprises a number of measures aimed at preventing domestic violence, as well as provisions for marriage and family counselling. Vision 2021 in the United Arab Emirates is aimed at strengthening family capacities through parental education programmes and advancing the rights of the child.

11. In line with the objective of the Year, some Member States have also established or strengthened coordination mechanisms to ensure the integration of a family perspective into their overall public policy agenda.

12. In Hungary, the Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs coordinates with both the Ministry for National Economy in the areas of taxation, housing, job creation and day care and the Ministry of Human Capacities in promoting child protection and combating family poverty. In Malta, the committee for strengthening the family, set up in 2014 by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, is tasked with studying the impact of all legislation on the family and, if necessary, proposing new legislation. The committee also examines the effects of economic changes on families and monitors the provision of social welfare, fiscal and other benefits, services or policies to ensure that they strengthen the family unit. In Qatar, the Department of Family Development is in charge of implementing national plans, strategies and policies relating to families, women and children.

13. Some countries have expanded family-oriented policies for poverty reduction, work-family balance and intergenerational solidarity, in line with the priority themes of the twentieth anniversary of the Year.

14. Conditional cash transfers to poor households with young children have been introduced or expanded in a number of countries. In Colombia, such programmes include *Más Familias en Acción* (More Families in Action), which is aimed at promoting the health and education of children, and the *Red de Seguridad Alimentaria* (Food Security Network), which is aimed at reducing poverty and improving access to nutrition for poor families. In the Philippines, pregnant women are required to use prenatal and postnatal care services and delivery services by skilled health professionals in order to qualify for cash benefits, while parents are required to attend family development education programmes and participate in community activities to receive financial grants.

15. Given that families with children are more exposed to the risk of poverty, special measures such as child allowances, assistance to large families, family tax benefits or credits and housing subsidies are offered in a number of countries, including Hungary and Poland. In several European countries, including Poland and Spain, discount programmes are aimed at ensuring that large families, with three or more children, have access to cultural, recreational and transportation services.

16. In Bulgaria and the Philippines, employment, training or retraining for unemployed or underemployed parents is part of family poverty reduction strategies. In Hungary, a job protection action plan offers incentives to businesses to employ women, in particular mothers with young children, as well as individuals younger than 25 years of age and those above age 55. The new Labour Code in Hungary obliges employers, should the parents so require, to continue to employ parents part-time until their children reach 3 years of age. In the Philippines, self-employment assistance is provided to individuals and families to engage in income-generating projects.

17. Many European countries focus mainly on family policies aimed at reversing low fertility trends. Surveys in Europe indicate that, while the desired number of children per family is two, families are unable to fulfil this desire,

owing in part to financial insecurity and the lack of a work-family balance. To remedy this situation, Governments have invested in a number of measures that promote a work-family balance, including parental leave, flexible working arrangements and childcare services.

18. Extensions to parental leave provisions, including paternity leave, were enacted in Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta and Poland. In Malta, parents employed in the public sector have the option of part-time work and telecommuting, as well as leave entitlement. In 2015, Poland extended parental benefits, in the form of a monthly stipend for the first 12 months following childbirth, to the unemployed and those working under civil law contracts, as well as to students and farmers.

19. Investment in early child development as a means of preventing social exclusion is high on the agenda of several Member States. In Hungary, day-care facilities have been improved and employer grants have been established to encourage businesses to employ women with young children. Malta has introduced and consolidated several childcare provisions, introducing free childcare to dual-earner families and employed single parents, as well as income tax deductions for parents whose children attend childcare centres that charge fees.

20. Governments also took special measures to promote responsible parenting and children's rights in families. Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta, and Poland focused on deinstitutionalizing care arrangements for children in orphanages and other care institutions and ensuring family or family-like settings for them through adoption, care by extended family members and foster care. Similarly, changes in the care model for children with disabilities have taken place in countries such as Bulgaria, with the overall objective of moving away from placement in specialized institutions by providing services in support of family and community care.

21. Assistance to young families has also been a priority for some Member States. In Hungary, a housing subsidy is provided to young couples

planning to have children and to families with children. Similarly, a programme of housing for the young in Poland offers down payment subsidies for purchasing an apartment or a house, as well as subsidized mortgages to young couples.

22. Services for promoting family household environments have also been established in some countries. The Philippines expanded its responsible parenthood programme and special programmes for fathers and made provisions for social services for single parents. It also established drug and substance abuse prevention programmes and expanded relationship counselling for engaged couples, newly-wed couples and married couples. Malta and Spain initiated positive parenting programmes that offer support for and guidance to parents.

23. Among those countries implementing or expanding initiatives focused on intergenerational solidarity, Qatar organized educational programmes on the importance of intergenerational family ties. As part of its National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing, Malta further implemented a number of measures in support of independent living and community care for older persons, including an allowance for older persons living in their own home or with their family and exemption from the national insurance contribution if they continue to live in their own home and employ a live-in carer. In Hungary, a number of events advocating for intergenerational cooperation, including the Week and Day of Generations and "Generations at School", were organized.

24. As part of the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the Year, a number of initiatives were undertaken to raise awareness of family issues and promote knowledge of economic, social and demographic changes affecting families.

25. The national family observatory in Colombia collects, analyses and disseminates quantitative and qualitative information on families, with a view to contributing to the formulation of better public family policies and programmes. The National Institute for

Family, Youth and Population Policy in Hungary supports research, compiles surveys, carries out studies and organizes conferences and workshops on family policy issues. The Department of Family Studies at the University of Malta promotes national and international research on all aspects of family life and offers courses and degrees in family studies, as well as advisory services on family-related matters. The Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics in Qatar has completed a number of household surveys on income, expenditure, living conditions and time use.

26. Other awareness-raising initiatives, such as media campaigns, as well as academic seminars and conferences on issues ranging from domestic violence, positive parenting, anti-discrimination and gender equality were pursued in Colombia, Hungary and Malta. Colombia developed a communication campaign on “new masculinities” as part of its gender equality and family violence prevention agenda. Hungary is promoting family-friendly public thinking through training programmes for young people, relationship courses and communication campaigns encouraging intergenerational cooperation, conflict management and healthy lifestyles.

27. National days of families are popular in many countries, including in Colombia, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Poland and Spain. In observance of the twentieth anniversary of the Year, Spain organized positive parenting seminars and published a guide on social assistance for families.

28. Member States made a number of recommendations to advance family development as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Malta suggested mainstreaming family matters across different policy areas and conducting family impact assessments in order to help to ensure that all policies respond to the needs of families. More qualitative and quantitative research on changing family structures and dynamics is needed to better assess and address the changing needs and challenges of families. The research should also help to identify emerging trends and

evaluate the impact of implemented policy measures on families.

29. Hungary noted that Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) and Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) are the most explicit in terms of family policy. The Philippines noted the need to promote family well-being and protection, while Spain asserted that the United Nations could advocate integrating family policies, especially those relating to children, into overall development strategies and social development policies. Spain also recommended focusing on gender-based violence and the diversity of family forms, as well as family planning and child labour. Peru noted the importance of focusing on policies supporting the social, caregiving and economic protection roles played by families. Colombia recommended treating families as agents of development and focusing on intergenerational exchanges. It also suggested recognizing the family as a collective subject of rights. Further research on families at national and international levels was recommended by Malta, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

C.General Assembly

30. Over the years, the General Assembly has recognized the role of family-oriented policies and programmes for the achievement of development goals. At the official observance of the twentieth anniversary of the Year, held at the 63rd plenary meeting of the General Assembly in December 2014, Member States noted that the role of the family was essential in promoting social stability, economic development and healthier lives. Governments emphasized that safeguarding the rights of women and gender equality within families was key to the 2030 Agenda and that a more integrated approach to the family could help to combat violence and discrimination against women and girls.²

31. While Governments agreed that families deserved more legal and material support and that the 2030 Agenda should place the family at its policy nexus, there was no agreement on the definition of the family. Several Member States noted that recognizing different types of families would ensure better protection of the human rights of all family members. Others noted the lack of consensus on family definitions and warned that the imposition of notions of gender identity and sexual orientation in resolutions dealing with family and children were counterproductive and not universally acceptable. As noted in previous reports, from a family policy perspective, a protracted debate over family definitions impedes progress towards the inclusion of pragmatic references to families as an integral part of the development agenda at international forums (see [A/70/61-E/2015/3](#)).

D. Department of Economic and Social Affairs

32. In line with the Year and its follow-up objectives, the Focal Point on the Family for the Social Policy and Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs continued to promote knowledge of social, economic, demographic and legal trends affecting families and the growing relevance of family-oriented policies for social and economic development. The Department organized a number of expert group meetings and awareness-raising events that provided a venue for the sharing of good practices in family policy. Experts offered specific recommendations on ways to improve existing family policies and develop new policies in the light of recent socioeconomic trends.

33. The expert group meeting on “Family policy development: achievements and challenges”, held in New York in May 2015, focused on changing families, regional trends and policy implications, as well as family laws and their impact on family policy development, family well-being and individual rights. The experts offered regional perspectives on family law

frameworks and their importance for family policy development.

34. The theme for the observance of the 2015 International Day of Families, “Men in charge? Gender equality and children’s rights in contemporary families”, raised awareness of the persistence of patriarchal family structures around the world and the need for family law reforms to ensure the rights of women and children within families, including better access to justice through fairer family laws.

III. Family trends and further development of family policy in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

A. Recent family trends

35. Over the past decades, families have undergone dramatic changes in many parts of the world in response to economic and social developments, as well as changing values, norms, and gender attitudes. Marriage occurs later in life and marriage rates have been declining throughout the Western countries, Eastern Europe and parts of Asia. Some argue that marriage has been “de-institutionalized”; others posit that it is merely being “reinstitutionalized” under a new set of arrangements.⁵ Some maintain that higher divorce rates reflect a lack of commitment and a decline of moral character. Others see marriage as an institution that has evolved to better respect individual autonomy, especially for women.

36. Fertility is very low and/or declining, particularly in Eastern and Southern Europe and South East Asia, with parenthood being entered into at later ages. In Western countries, fertility and childrearing outside of marriage are on the rise. Intentional childlessness is also on the rise, a trend that has been interpreted by some as illustrating the challenge to conciliate the value of personal freedom with that of the family. The transition to adulthood takes longer than in the past, owing in part to extended education, youth unemployment and work-family life conflict. As a result, a considerable financial burden is placed on families with

young adults who cannot or are unwilling to live independently and who are supported by their ageing parents, often at the risk of jeopardizing their retirement savings.

37. Divorce rates have been increasing globally, with most countries relaxing restrictions formerly limiting access to divorce. In Western countries, the rate of divorce has stabilized as couples increasingly choose to cohabit rather than marry. As dissolutions of informal unions go unrecorded, the validity of divorce as a measure of family instability is becoming questionable. What is clear, however, is the growing unwillingness of individuals to enter into and stay in relationships, be it marriage or cohabitation.

38. Currently, same-sex marriages are recognized in twenty-two countries, with even wider recognition of civic unions between same-sex partners. Commenting on the recent decision of the Supreme Court of the United States of America to legalize same-sex marriage, the Secretary-General noted: "Denying couples legal recognition of their relationship opens the door to widespread discrimination. This ruling will help close that door and marks a great step forward for human rights in the United States." Similarly, as Ireland became the first country to grant same-sex marital rights through a national referendum, the Secretary-General acknowledged it as step towards equality, fairness and human dignity. In keeping with this evolution, the personal family status of United Nations staff members is determined by reference to the law of the staff member's country of nationality.

39. Changing family forms and structures challenge existing legal and policy systems, with family laws having the difficult task of reconciling a number of sometimes competing objectives, such as ensuring the custody rights of both parents, safeguarding the best interests of children and preventing gender discrimination and violence.

B. Access to justice through fair family laws

40. Family laws assign great responsibilities to families, but little is done to facilitate the fulfilment of these obligations. While the State

intervenes in matters of marriage or divorce, it offers families limited support in terms of economic security or care responsibilities. Women are still presumed to be the main caregivers for both young children and other vulnerable family members. Yet, slow progress has been made in terms of reforming labour laws so as to allow families to fulfil their care responsibilities in most regions.

41. Despite some progress, discrimination against women in the law persists, ranging from unfair inheritance laws to custody rights. Discrimination entrenched in family law is especially challenging in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, where multiple legal systems with discriminatory customary and religious laws and practices prevail.

42. Ending all forms of discrimination against all women and asserting women's rights is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. Yet, many family law systems are inherently patriarchal, with women subordinated to men in terms of rights as partners and parents. Moreover, research suggests a strong association between patriarchal views of women's roles and gendered violence.

43. Marriage is often framed in a succession of unequal steps for women, with divorce and inheritance laws limiting their options, trapping them in violent and abusive marriages or propelling many into poverty once a marriage falls apart. Intimate partner violence remains one of the most pervasive forms of violence in families, often accounting for the majority of a women's experience of violence. As violence in families is often accepted, women may be reluctant to seek help. In the majority of countries, less than 40 per cent of the women who experienced violence sought help, with less than 10 per cent seeking help from the police.

44. Several factors increase the risk of violence against women and girls, among them, witnessing or experiencing violence in childhood, limited economic opportunities, substance abuse, attitudes that tolerate violence and limited legislative frameworks for preventing and responding to violence. Alt-

though at least 119 countries have passed laws on domestic violence and 52 have laws on marital rape, the legislation is not always implemented in a way that supports victims and does not discriminate against them.

45. Recent legislation in Latin America and the Caribbean has expanded the scope of State action from a limited focus on family and domestic violence to a broader one that encompasses all forms of violence against women. However, the effective implementation of such laws is lagging in the absence of measures to address the underlying social and economic dimensions of gender violence. Moreover, these laws usually focus on punishment of offenders without tackling the factors that enable the continuum of violence or addressing the lack of comprehensive measures to change the culture of violence.

46. Addressing family violence and, in particular, intimate partner violence requires awareness-raising, educational and prevention activities in addition to health, legal and social services. Improved follow-up on reported cases in order for women to feel free from physical injury and fear is also needed. Changing cultural and social norms relating to the use of violence is also necessary to prevent violence in families. In some regions of the world, family violence is linked to religious beliefs and practices and viewing marriage and other family relationships as private. Such attitudes do not allow women to leave abusive relationships and they offer little help when violence occurs.

47. Moreover, while some family laws are derived from religious sources, this is no justification for inequality and injustice in the family. Given that egalitarian and gender-sensitive provisions can be found in religious texts, reforms to family law to ensure gender equality can be advanced further by having open and inclusive public debates on the issues. Researchers and gender advocates in Muslim countries point out that human rights standards should also be promoted as complementary to Islamic teachings in order to better ensure gender equality and non-discrimination.

48. In the World Health Organization European Region, member States have adopted a strategy aimed at reducing child and adolescent maltreatment, which endorses a shift in the societal approach to violence from criminal justice to public health provisions of preventive and therapeutic services. Another violence prevention strategy could be one of revisiting or reintroducing family life education programmes in primary and secondary schools. Such programmes may serve as a platform for examining family violence by addressing family formation, structures, norms and challenges.

C. Family policy and the Sustainable Development Goals

49. The objectives of the Year process, especially those relating to family policy in the areas of poverty, work-family balance and intergenerational issues, are linked closely to achieving several of the Sustainable Development Goals, starting with Goals 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere) and 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture). The long-term success in these two areas depends, to a large extent, on policies targeting families with children and aimed at eliminating the intergenerational transmission of poverty, such as increasing family resources through cash or in-kind transfers, child allowances and tax credits.

50. Family-oriented policies have much to contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3, ensuring healthy lives and promoting of well-being for all ages. Families influence their children's health through their own health behaviour and care. Children in families with better resources and better parental care tend to be healthier. Thus, public policies assisting parents with more resources or helping parents to provide better care improve children's health outcomes.

51. Public policy in support of work-family balance has an impact on children's health and well-being. Paid maternity leave enables mothers to initiate and sustain breastfeeding, which is associated with a reduced risk of a

number of health problems and of overall infant mortality. A longitudinal study examining data from 16 European countries found that paid parental leave policies were associated with lower infant and child mortality after taking into account per capita income, health services and other factors linked to child health. A 10-week paid maternity leave was associated with a reduction in infant mortality rates of 1 to 2 per cent, a 20-week leave with a 2 to 4 per cent reduction and a 30-week leave with a 7 to 9 per cent reduction.

52. Ensuring a healthy life and promoting well-being at all ages will require better care provisions for older persons at home and in formal care facilities. It also calls for extending parental care leave to include care for older relatives and those with disabilities. This is an aspect of care responsibilities still largely ignored by policymakers, which will only grow in importance.

53. Family-oriented policies play an important role in ensuring better education outcomes for children. Boys and girls of involved and supportive parents have better school attendance records, better attitudes towards school and homework, achieve better grades and aspire to higher career goals. Thus, programmes promoting positive parenting have an untapped potential to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4, in particular in terms of child and youth school success and lifelong learning.

54. A family focus is also needed to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, and to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage. Despite the ratification of international human rights instruments and the adoption of national legal frameworks stipulating that 18 should be the minimum age of marriage, 15 million girls under 18 are still married each year.

55. Clearly, legal provisions such as criminalizing and annulling early and forced marriage are part of the solution to ending child, early and

forced marriage. Yet ending child marriage requires a holistic approach to challenge the spectrum of reasons that compel parents to marry off their children at a young age, including the search for economic security for their daughters. Some successful strategies include grants to parents to keep their daughters in school and offering employment and access to resources, including land, for women so that they can ensure their own livelihoods.

56. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 also rests on the recognition and valuing of unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate. This requires building incentives to encourage greater participation of men in family tasks, be it in labour market policies, family law, and the provision of health and social services, as well as education.

57. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 will not be possible without repealing family laws that openly discriminate against women. Realizing Goal 5 is therefore closely linked to an aspect of Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels), namely, ensuring access to justice for all, given that family laws in several countries provide some of the worst instances of discrimination against women.

IV. Conclusions

58. The follow-up framework to the Year can be credited with attaining its immediate goals of increasing awareness among policymakers and the public at large of the positive roles that families play in development and the need to adopt effective family policies.

59. At the national level, adopting a family policy focus has advanced efforts by Member States to reduce poverty while contributing to promoting the rights of women and children, including through better work-

family balance and intergenerational solidarity, as documented in previous reports.

60. Family policies and programmes have the additional potential to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in terms of achieving the eradication of poverty and hunger and ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages. Policies promoting children's health must involve families as primary caregivers responsible for their development. Such policies should promote safe and stable family environments and positive parenting.

61. Achieving the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls starts in families with the equal treatment of boys and girls, the fair sharing of care and other household responsibilities and the valuing of unpaid work, which is overwhelmingly done by women. Gender equality must be secured in access to justice through fair family laws,

including a fair recognition of shared parenting rights and responsibilities.

V. Recommendations

62. Member States and other stakeholders are encouraged to consider the following recommendations:

(a) Continue their efforts to implement the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes;

(b) Consider implementing family-oriented policies and programmes as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular in support of ending poverty and hunger, promoting well-being for all at all ages, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all and achieving gender equality;

(c) Revise family laws as nationally appropriate to ensure equal access to justice for women.

From the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family



VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY



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ANNUAL REPORT 2015

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

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PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

In two Full Committee Meetings representatives of the 42 International Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), who are members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, and 23 associate member organisations, discussed various institution-building projects and activities and approved the Plan of Action for 2015. The Board of the Committee worked out a schedule for its implementation, which was realised in co-operation with the support of the member organisations of the Committee and their representatives. The world-wide network of civil society organisations, research and university institutes, 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 Committee understands itself as 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 networks created by the Committee, as outlined below.

The following projects were realised in 2015

1. Families International

Issues, Nos. 93 - 96 of the Quarterly Bulletin of the Committee were published online at www.viennafamilycommittee.org Special features included were: The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations for 2030; 'The United Nations International Day of Families 2015'; Proceedings of an International Forum 'Thirty Years Vienna NGO Committee on the Family – Outlook to the Future'; and 'The Future of Family Science and Family Policy.' Over three hundred readers of 'Families International' are informed by the Secretariat of the Committee by e-mail, when the latest issue is available to download.

2. International Forum: 'Thirty Years Vienna NGO Committee on the Family – Outlook to the Future'

The Committee organised an International Forum, which was held during a Full Committee Meeting, at the United Nations Vienna International Centre on June 1st 2015, with the theme: 'Thirty Years Vienna NGO Committee on the Family – Outlook to the Future' also to observe 'The International Day of Families 2015' as well as the Global Day of Parents 2015. The International Forum included detailed presentations on: "Demographic Development of Families - an International Retrospective over the last 70 Years" by Dr. Detlev Lueck, German Federal Institute for Population Research; "Cultural Approach on Family, Demography and Policy Making - Status Quo and Outlook to the Future" by Dr. Sabine Diabaté, also from the German Federal Institute for Population Research; "Social Policies and the United Nations post - 2015 Development Agenda: Gender Equality and Children's Rights in Contemporary Families" by Renata Kaczmarek, Focal Point on the Family, Division for Social Policy and Development, (DSPD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the Unit-

ed Nations Secretariat in New York; “Social Policies for the Future” by SC Ingrid Nemeč, Austrian Federal Ministry for Families and Youth; and “Families of the Future”, by Mag. Christine Leopold International Kolping Society.

Further presentations were made, amongst others, on “The Three Functions of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family” by Dr. Peter Crowley, as well as by Irina Pálffy-Daun-Seiler on behalf of the International Organisation ‘Make Mothers Matter’, by Dr. Gertraud Pichler, International Federation for Home Economics, and by Ignacio Socias, International Federation for Family Development, all member organisations of the Committee.

The Vienna Committee subsequently published the proceedings of the International Forum in its online quarterly bulletin ‘Families International’ Issue No. 95 at www.viennafamilycommittee.org

3. International Forum: ‘The Future of Family Science and Family Policy.’

The Committee organised a further International Forum, which was held during a Full Committee Meeting, at the United Nations Vienna International Centre on November 9th 2015. A presentation was made by Olaf Kappela, from the Austrian Institute for Family Studies, University of Vienna, on the theme: ‘The Future of Family Science and Family Policy’. The text of this presentation has also been published in ‘Families International’ Issue Nr. 96.

4. Co-operation with the United Nations Organisation

The Board of the Committee circulated the Message of the United Nations Secretary-General on the occasion of the International Day of Families (IDF) on May 15th 2015, to the various networks of the Committee and kept these networks informed with documents of United Nations Resolutions and Reports of the United Nations Secretary-General pertaining to family issues. A background note prepared by the Focal Point on the Family, Division for Social Policy and Development, (DSPD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the United Nations Secretariat entitled: ‘Men in Charge? Gender Equality and Children’s Rights in Contemporary Families’, which was the theme chosen by the United Nations for IDF 2015, as well as the programme of a panel discussion on the theme, held at the United Nations in New York, were also included in Families International.

The Committee hosted, Renata Kaczmarek, Focal Point on the Family, Division for Social Policy and Development, (DSPD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the United Nations Secretariat, during the above mentioned International Forum, ‘Thirty Years Vienna NGO Committee on the Family – Outlook to the Future’. Renata Kaczmarek made a presentation at the International Forum, the text of which is also included in issue Nr. 95 of Families International.

The full 80 page report of the update of a study entitled: ‘Documenting Contributions of Civil Society Organisation to the Well-Being of Families’ by Dr. Peter Crowley, Secretary of the Committee, in cooperation with the United Nations Focal Point on the Family, is available on the United Nations website at:

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

5. Websites of the Committee

www.viennafamilycommittee.org

The homepage of the Committee had 39.280 visitors in 2015. This website is, amongst others, the main vehicle to publish our quarterly bulletin 'Families International'. Issues Nos. 37 to 96 may be downloaded from our website without cost to the reader or to the Commi

www.10yearsIYF.org

This website continues to experience interest and was visited 52.000 times in 2015. www.10yearsIYF.org is a resource archive for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF) in 2004, with many relevant links to other sources, and resulted out of the participation of the then Chairperson of the Committee in a consultative meeting of 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, where it was agreed to prepare a study, under the chairmanship of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family on: 'Contributions of Civil Society Organisations to the Well-Being of Families' since 1994. The original study was 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', edited by P. Crowley and submitted to the members of the special session of the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations on Dec. 6th 2004, to officially 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 family-oriented civil society organisations enhancing social justice, are also available online at: www.10yearsIYF.org

www.20yearsIYF.org

To facilitate the implementation of an update of the study originally carried out at www.10yearsIYF.org a further website was set up at www.20yearsIYF.org to gather data entered by the participating CSOs in the study-update, from seventeen countries in four continents. This website was visited 13.358 times in 2015. The website further offers a knowledge resource of family issues for visitors to the website, by creating a so-called 'Cyber Street' of websites of families-oriented CSOs which deal with eight categories relevant for families: 'Children; Economic-Financial; Education; Gender; Health Issues; Organisation; Parents and Subsistence-Services.' This website also includes a series of links, inter alia, to the United Nations Focal Point on the Family.

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 went online in August 2004 at www.civilsocietynetworks.org. This Forum had 140 member organisations from 25 countries in 2015. The network originally incorporated the Interactive-Forums the Committee had already set up with civil society organisations in Eastern African and in Central and Easter European Countries, and which was then extended and opened to a world-wide membership. Civil Society Organisations can join 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. The website also includes a newsletter function for each individual member organisation of the forum. The website was visited 6.823 times in 2015.

6. Total Number of Visitors to the four Websites maintained by the Committee

The four websites maintained by the Committee had an increasing total of 111.461 visitors in 2015, compared to 110.801 visitors in 2014. That corresponds to an average of over 305 visitors per day to one of the above four websites.

These figures reflect perhaps the momentum created by the observance of the 20th anniversary of the United Nations International Year of the Family in 2014, as well as the ever increasing interest generated by issues related to families. These figures also speak for themselves, with regard to the continued, and ever increasing, interest in the work of the Committee, which as outlined above, observed in 2015, the 30th Anniversary of its inception in 1985.

January 2016

Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS OF THE VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY



International Federation for Family Development:
Papers No.49

Towards an age-friendly Europe
The Covenant on Demographic Change

1. January 2016

Prevention, rehabilitation, improvement of care delivery, empowerment of people to remain active and independent for longer are the main areas to be invested in to support everyone's equal and meaningful participation in the social and economic life of their community. This can be done through the creation of what we call age-friendly environments, i.e. the adaptation of our physical and social environments to the various needs of all generations.

Promoting age-friendly environments is the goal of AFE-INNOVNET, a network funded by the European Union and gathering local and regional authorities as well as other stakeholders committed to work to make Europe more age-friendly.

According to the World Health Organization, the physical and social environments are key determinants of whether people can remain healthy, independent and autonomous long into their old age.

A city, or any local or regional authority, is age-friendly when it enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities, treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age, and protects the most vulnerable ones.

The World Health Organization has published in 2007 a guide which defines the relevant areas to work on to become age-friendly. It looks at 8 domains of citizens' lives which have an impact on how people age. These domains are: housing,

transportation, urban spaces and built environment, social participation, civic participation and employment, respect and social inclusion, access to community support and health services, and communication and information.

By gathering older persons' needs and views, local and regional authorities will be able to identify end-users' needs in each of these 8 domains. Older persons themselves are indeed the best placed to say how the city can become a better place for its ageing population. It is also important to consult all age groups to ensure that local and regional authorities take into account needs of all generations.

1. Housing

Good quality, affordable, well-designed housing is a key element to older persons' health and quality of life and whether they are able to age independently and actively in their community.

Its adequacy and its proximity to community and social services allow older residents to live comfortably and safely, while housing affordability gives them peace of mind, a feeling of stability, and contribute to their social inclusion.

Housing also carries a vital meaning to people's social identity, status and place in the society.

2. Social participation

Social dynamics and relationships greatly contribute to quality of life, both in terms of practical and emotional

support. Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities fosters seniors' integration within society and helps them stay engaged, informed and motivated to take part in activities in which they are valued and needed.

Seniors' participation in social activities helps preventing social isolation, and intergenerational activities are mutually enriching and fulfilling for all ages: older people passing on knowledge, traditions and experience and the younger ones may help seniors with for example new technologies.

3. Respect and Social inclusion

Negative preconceptions of ageing still exist. Public attitudes, behaviours and representations of older age may marginalise and exclude older people, and by doing so contribute to older people's isolation. It prevents older persons from feeling valuable and the society from benefiting from the participation and the experience and knowledge of older persons.

Moreover, we often witness a lack of involvement of older persons on decisions that concern them. If we want to develop relevant and adequate products and services for older persons, they have to be consulted throughout the thinking, the designing and the development processes.

4. Civic participation and employment

The domain of civic participation and employment recognises older persons' contribution to the socio and economic life of their community, e.g. through employment, volunteering or citizenship. Older people can gain fulfilment from active involvement in voluntary activities or work, as it provides satisfaction, increases their health and well-being and keeps them socially engaged while making the society benefit from their knowledge and experience, strengthening the intergenerational relationships in the population and offering lifelong learning opportunities.

There have been reports of age discrimination in the workplace. Building up employers' positive attitude towards retaining and recruiting older workers would help ensure equal employment opportunities for seniors and knowledge transfer opportunities benefiting younger workers.

5. Communication and Information

Staying connected with family, friends, events, news and activities with timely, accessible and practical

information is a key part of active ageing. Communication and information in all its different forms supports an on-going connection with the world, through e.g. access to services, leisure and social participation, advocacy and practical advices.

Technology may however contribute to social exclusion. Affordable access to computers for seniors in community facilities and computer training adapted to senior's needs can help improve digital literacy, including a good understanding of the benefits of new technologies.

6. Community support and health services

Accessible and affordable community and social and health services are crucial to keep seniors healthy, independent and active. This involves an appropriate supply of care and social services that are conveniently located to where older people live, and of adequately trained health and social workers to provide these services.

A range of services along the continuum of care, such as preventive care, geriatric clinics, hospitals, adult day centres, respite care, rehabilitation, residential nursing home care, home care and palliative care, are needed to meet older persons' diverse needs.

7. Outdoor spaces and built environment

Outdoor spaces and built environment are a key element of whether a place support, or hinder, physical activity, health, and wellbeing. They indeed have a major impact on the mobility, access to resources and services, social participation, independence, and in fine quality of life of older people as they go about their daily lives beyond the comfort of their homes.

A clean city with well-maintained recreational areas, ample rest areas, safe pedestrian routes and accessible building infrastructure provides an ideal living environment for seniors to age-in-place. This can encourage to older persons to better use the city's spaces and help them participate and interact with other residents.

8. Transportation

As people age, their mobility patterns change, in particular in later life. Accessible and affordable public

transport is a key to ensure that older persons are able to age actively and remain engaged with their community and can access services such as medical care or shopping centres, in a word stay connected with the 'real' world.

Transportation facilities are key to enable older persons to live independently and to prevent isolation.

Driving conditions and parking facilities should also keep older drivers in mind considering private cars

can be the only solution for older people living in rural areas.

Why should Local and Regional Authorities become more Age-Friendly?

Within many Member States, regional and local governments are the ones competent for policy areas related to social services, healthcare, education and training, entrepreneurship, labour market, infrastructure and transport, etc. Their action is thus crucial to allow seniors to participate in the community's life, prevent isolation and make goods and services more accessible to their citizens.

Investing in age-friendly environments helps focus on prevention and empower people to live independently for longer, which lowers the pressure put on family carers, formal care facilities and public budgets. It also supports people to actively contribute to the socio and economic life of their community, notably through consumption of goods and services, employment and volunteering.

Beyond economic benefits, age-friendly environments are also a mean to ensure that the rights of older persons are protected, regardless of their age and abilities. It indeed guarantees them to benefit from equal opportunities to participate in the society and to age in dignity. Moreover, age-friendly environments benefit not only older persons but all generations, for example better accessibility of outdoor spaces and transport is useful for families with pushchairs or travellers with heavy luggage.

Last but not least, creating age-friendly environments is also a great way to bring different partners together and make cities and regions more inclusive and dynamic through the participation of all citizens regardless of their age, as local and regional authorities have a key role to play in influencing and encouraging these partnerships.

International Federation for Family Development:
Papers No.51

Harmony between school and family
Parental involvement in the education of the child in Nigeria

1. March 2016

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with a population of about 170million people, with diverse ethnic, cultural, religious and socio-economic life; all of which impact on the family and the education of the child.

About 12% or 20million Nigerians live in Lagos State; the nation's commercial capital. This city state, notorious for long commutes and long work hours, more often than not, constrain parents from their critical role, as the first educators and advocate for their child; in both public and private schools. Likemost other countries, Nigeria has significant disparity in the quality of education, depending often on household income.

Parental involvement in education in Lagos

Parental involvement in education was taken for granted as the norm, when parents and/or guardians as the first teachers took responsibility, as part of child upbringing, to monitor and follow-up on the child's activities in school, ensuring homework are done, collaborating with the school to ensure good behavior and learning habits are inculcated in the child. Then teachers took time to brief parents on the activities of their child, and in the rural areas, even visited parents at home to agree on strategies for the right outcome.

However, this natural and age long practice in Nigeria was challenged during themilitary intervention in governance. These periods of our national history witnessed the suppression of individual rights and parental rights to the education of their child, the destruction of national values, contradictory socio-economic behaviors of leaders, in government and at home, and the emergence of cult culture and vices in schools.

Today, fifty years hence, after the firstMilitary intervention, Nigeria unfortunately has one of the largest number of out-of-school children in the-world, estimated at about 10.5million primary school children, according to the 2012 UN special report on education. Furthermore, the children of that era are now parents, and education, instead

of being a mutual collaboration between families and the schools, haswitnessed significant 'outsourcing'and delegation of parental responsibilities, with limited involvement of families.

Impact on the education of the child

Against this background, the IWFI entered a partnership agreement with the Lagos Business School of the Pan Atlantic University, to establish a research team, headed by Dr. EugeneOhu, and supported by the University of Houston.With the approval of the Lagos State government, the team gathered data frompublic and private secondary schools across different areas in the state, essentially covering the different income levels; high - Victoria Island and Lekki, middle - Surulere, and low - Ajegunle. The overall research objective was to understand amongst others, the impact of work-family conflict on the child's education and recommend strategies for improving family wellbeing and the education of the child.

Their findings revealed that 73%of families in the engaged schools are dual income families. Furthermore it revealed that stress occasioned by work-family conflicts relates negatively (and quite strongly) on child performance. It also reported that these children were more likely to be in poorer health, on the average when compared with their peers. Finally, it shows that children with less parental involvement weremore likely to have behavioral problems.

Intervention Programs for Parental Involvement

The IWFI, has over the years, engaged with schools, in their efforts to ensure greater parental involvement in their child's education. Accordingly these schools, usually adopt a three-pronged approach:

1. First is the family orientation program. The IWFI working with theNational Association for Family Advancement (NAFAD, amember of IFFD)

has trained the trainers who facilitate the family orientation program which is compulsory for the parents, of every intending student in the respective schools. This program enables parents to understand their role as the first teachers and responsibility in ensuring the right outcome.

2. The schools encourage the parents to participate in the family leadership or enrichment programs, which trains parents as trainers to be able to train their children in virtues, and complement the school's efforts in training the students in virtues, which is, training the will. Thus they can choose the good, they want all the time.

3. To prepare the teachers, to better engage the parents in a collaborative way in the education of their child, the IWFI offers the family advisory program, a certificate course on collaborative education and management of adolescent tendencies.

Despite the traffic and long work hour constraints, this approach has been very successful as the family orientation program has recorded 100% parental participation, (i.e. Father and mother attendance) with over 90% participation in the Family Enrichment Program. Similarly, the participating schools have ensured that all teachers attend a family advisory program in addition to participating in the practical and peer review sessions for enhanced teacher's performance.

While the child is the focus of the school, these programs have also been of significant benefits to the families, helping them to give due priorities to their child in their hierarchy of values, while growing in virtues, as they learn and teach their child at home.

With these approach and programs, the child effectively has a conducive atmosphere for learning and development, as the school and the family collaborate and complement the efforts of each other. Furthermore, with the leadership program, parents and the child bond. This strengthens the self-confidence and self-determination of the child, an attribute for life-long learning.

Performance result from WAEC SSS Examination

The impact of parental involvement in child education becomes more graphic when one takes a cursory look at the published performance results by the West African Examination Council for the Senior Secondary Schools examinations over the last ten (10) years, that is, between 2006 and 2015.

As shown in the figure above, on the average, only about 25.63% of participating candidates in the examinations, achieve the minimum results for graduation; that is five credits, including English and Mathematics.

A further analysis shows that this is a significant improvement from below 10% success recorded in 2006 and 2007. The improvement is attributed to the return of schools, confiscated under the military era, to their owners, and the advent of privately owned secondary schools in the country.

However, when compared with the results from schools with significant programs for parental involvement in child education in Lekki Area of Lagos State, we see significantly better results with an average graduation rate, of about 92% amongst participating students in the same Senior Secondary School examinations, as shown in the figure below, with at least five credits, including Mathematics and English.

While recognizing the significantly above average facilities in these schools, one cannot but attribute the nearly four-fold, in the graduation rate in these schools, to parental involvement. This conclusion is corroborated by a number of scientific studies on the impact of parental involvement in education of the child and lifelong learning.

For example the study by Steinberg, 1996, concludes: "When parents are engaged in their children's schooling, students get better grades, score higher on standardized tests, have better attendance records, drop out less often, have higher career aspirations, and hold more positive attitudes toward school and homework."

These conclusions are consistent with the character traits and attributes of the students observed in the schools with parental involvement in the Lagos study. Interviews with principals of these schools affirms that most of their graduates, gain admission into the best universities in the country and around the world; indeed a number of them win scholarships to Ivy League universities.

Conclusion and recommendations

1. The implication of the current educational realities in Nigeria are ominous. With about 75% of secondary school leavers failing the WAEC Senior Secondary School Examination annually, Nigeria's chances of achieving a sustaining optimal economic development may be jeopardized as these youths have no qualifications to pursue further

studies, nor participate in lifelong learning. Furthermore, these youths unless managed and engaged in economic activities, may become easy candidates for crime, terrorism, etc.

2. Evidence confirms that parental involvement in education has very positive effect on child's education and lifelong learning. The three-pronged approach highlighted above have been most effective as it creates harmony between school and family, the two critical environment for the child's education and socialization. The program enables better families, better educated children, who are better prepared for business and society.

3. Involving parents in child education if adopted, will re-enact our national values and inculcate virtues in the child and thus, stamp out corruption from the root, positioning the nation for a meaningful socioeconomic development.

4. Thus it is recommended that Government should take urgent necessary actions to design policies that will encourage parental involvement in the education of their child. Such policy should include provisions for the training of teachers and equip them to collaborate with parents, who are the first teachers in the education of their child.



MMM'S ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE MOTHERS' RIGHTS

MMM'S ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE MOTHERS' RIGHTS

MMM delivers oral statement at 31st session of Human Rights Council in Geneva

At the 31st Human Rights Council session (29 Feb. – 24 March 2016) MMM delivered the following oral statement in the context of the OHCHR report on the realization of the right to work (Item 3, HC / OHCHR / SG Reports):

Make Mothers Matter (MMM) welcomes the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the **realization of the right to work**. The report rightly highlights that “the right of women to equal access to work is pivotal to the full enjoyment of all their human rights”. It also rightly points out that violence, women’s disproportionate share of the most precarious working conditions, gender pay gap and other gender discriminations, many linked to pregnancy and motherhood must all be addressed as part of the realization of women’s right to decent work.

However, the report fails to acknowledge a major obstacle to the realization of women’s right to work: **the unequal distribution of unpaid family care and domestic work between men and women**, which is fuelled by discriminatory gender stereotypes about men and women’s roles in society and in the family.

The connection between unpaid care work and women’s right to paid work was highlighted by Magdalena Sepúlveda, the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights in her 2013 report to the General Assembly¹. In her own words: “Women’s right to paid decent work is obstructed

in many ways by unpaid care. Heavy unpaid care responsibilities can stop women from working at all, but also make it more likely they will be forced to accept low-paying informal jobs, blocking their right to decent work. When pregnant women or mothers lose their jobs as a result of discriminatory assumptions about their caring roles, this is a direct violation of the right to work.”²

Therefore, including unpaid care work as part of the realization of “the right to work” is essential. Unpaid care work, because it is ignored, cast aside or minimised, currently robs women of the necessary time to fully engage in income generating activities and keeps them in low status jobs and vulnerable positions, not to mention subordination.

The development of public infrastructure and services supporting the **reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work** (e.g. water, energy, transportation & ICT infrastructure and services, childcare and other care services) is a necessary condition for the realization of women’s right to decent work, especially for women living in poverty. And this should be a priority for all governments. Implementing work and family life reconciliation policies including flexible working conditions, as well as promoting equal sharing of family care responsibilities and domestic work between men and women, are also crucial in achieving women’s right to paid work.

¹ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/422/71/PDF/N1342271.pdf?OpenElement>

² <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14234&LangID=E#sthash.FzlZFn3.dpuf>

Unpaid care work sustains economic growth, social development and wellbeing. MMM calls on States to **recognize** its economic and social value, and to **MMM statement at 60th CSW: Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development**

On the occasion of the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women held from 14 to 24 March 2016 at the United Nations in New York, MMM submitted the following written statement on unpaid family care work:

Addressing unpaid care work for women's empowerment and sustainable development

It is now widely recognized that sustainable development and Women's empowerment are intrinsically linked. However, women empowerment, especially mothers' empowerment, cannot happen as long as the issue of unpaid family care work is not seriously addressed; that is as long as this essential work of caring for children and other dependents is not **Recognized, Reduced and Redistributed** (following the **"3 Rs" framework** introduced by Professor Diane Elson of Essex University).

Unpaid family care work includes both the production of goods for self-consumption, notably subsistence farming, fetching water and collecting firewood, and the provision of services for self-consumption such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for children and other dependent persons. According to a 2013 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty³, its monetary value is estimated between 10 and over 50 per cent of GDP. But despite its huge value, unpaid care and domestic work is not included in the calculation of GDP and other economic statistics. It therefore remains undervalued in society and largely invisible to policy-makers and politicians.

Unpaid care work has the greatest impact on poorest women for whom additional time and income can make a big difference. But even in developed countries where a lot has already been achieved, unpaid family care work remains one of the main obstacles towards substantive gender

³ Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Ms. Maria Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona on unpaid care work and women's human rights presented at the UN General Assembly in October 2013 – ref. A/68/293

implement **reduction** and **redistribution** policies, for the realization of woman's right to work.

equality. The EIGE 2015 Gender Equality index Report shows that time is the issue: "This domain [of time] highlights the core of the division between women and men in the EU: the wide gender gap in activities related to care. Throughout all [EU] Member States, it is women that perform the bulk of these caring activities, with extremely wide gender gaps between the time spent on caring and educating children and grandchildren, as well as time spent on cooking and housework."⁴

Recognition

Unpaid care work must be recognized as a vital contribution to the economy: without it, our economies would simply not function. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action urged States to "conduct regular time-use studies to measure, in quantitative terms, unremunerated work", which could be used as a basis for its economic valuation as a percentage of GDP or in so-called Satellite Accounts, and make it visible. However, not only relatively few countries have actually implemented this recommendation, especially in developing countries, but the resulting data has not been much used in gender-sensitive policy-making.

Unpaid care work is "work", a fact which is clearly recognized by the milestone resolution of the 2013 International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS)⁵, where governments have agreed on important changes on how work and employment are defined. As a result unpaid care and domestic work will statistically be categorized as work, which is a key step towards recognition.

Giving stay-at-home caregivers, especially parents caring for children or other dependent, a worker's status and its related rights, including access to social protection, care credit in pension calculation, access to training, etc., should logically follow this resolution and would also support recognition.

In order to fully acknowledge and support the role of women who are mothers, concrete actions

⁴ <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/gender-equality-index/2012/domain/time>

⁵ "Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization" adopted at the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in October 2013

should also be taken to reconcile work and family life. In addition to the recognition aspect, reconciliation policies are essential to achieve gender equality and women empowerment as they can support women's employment, foster economic independence and alleviate poverty.

Reduction

The development of basic public infrastructure and services, i.e. water and sanitation, electricity or other forms of energy, but also transportation, ICTs, proximity healthcare and childcare services, are key to reduce unpaid care work, especially such drudgery work as fetching water or collecting firewood.

Women empowerment and sustainable development cannot happen if women continue to spend so much time compensating for the lack of public infrastructure and services: according to UN DESA, "Research in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that women and girls in low-income countries spend 40 billion hours a year collecting water – the equivalent of a year's worth of labour by the entire workforce in France"⁶, a huge amount of time that could be better used in income generating activities and education.

Building such infrastructure should have the highest priority in developing countries and women should be involved in all the stages of their design and planning in order to best serve their needs.

Civil Society can also play a key role in this respect, as exemplified by the partnership established between UNESCO, the government of Côte d'Ivoire and a newly established network of NGOs chaired by Aide à la Jeunesse Africaine Défavorisée – AJAD, an MMM member organization. Following the NGO Forum organized in July 2014 by the UNESCO NGO Liaison Committee in Yamassoukro (Cote d'Ivoire), the new partners will jointly work to devise and implement water access policies.⁷

⁶ Water for life decade 2005-2015 – Factsheet Water and Gender <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/gender.shtml>

⁷ More information on <http://www.makemothersmatter.org/en/unesco/453-1409-forum-yamoussoukro-en-partenariat-avec-l-unesco-acces-a-l-eau-pour-tous-2>

Redistribution

Redistributing unpaid care work is about sharing care responsibilities, first and foremost between men and women, especially fathers and mothers, but also between households and others stakeholders (the State, the private sector or civil society initiatives) that can provide care services.

Redistributing unpaid care work between men and women is probably the most challenging task, as it means changing stereotypes and cultural norms where care and domestic work are considered as sole feminine responsibilities, including by women themselves.

It is worth noting that, Involving fathers, and more generally men, in caregiving and domestic work, has a positive impact on the other "Rs": in addition to creating a virtuous cycle of changing norms and stereotypes, it shows that this work is valuable and deserves Recognition. Involving men could also foster Reduction when committed fathers and husbands are involved in the development of public infrastructure and services, and to innovation in time saving technologies.

However, as noted in the 2015 State of the World's Fathers report, "achieving equality in care and domestic work is not simply an issue of individual men doing more. Employment and livelihood policies; childcare, tax, and benefits systems; and health, education, and social services have not kept up with the changes taking place in families around the world, and this creates substantial barriers to families who try to operate in a more egalitarian approach."⁸

Paternity leave alone will not do the job: it is the whole system that needs to be adapted to this new reality.

MMM Recommendations

1. 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, ICTs, transportation, proximity childcare and healthcare

⁸ State of the world's fathers, a MenCare advocacy publication, 2015 – <http://swof.men-care.org>

are all necessary to significantly reduce the time spent on unpaid family care work, mostly performed by women, and thus free up time for remunerated activities.

2. **Make unpaid family care work visible** to policy makers and society at large by regularly conducting good quality time use surveys, which inform policy makers with relevant data and allow **assessing its monetary value as a percentage of GDP**. Include unpaid family care work in alternate economic and social indicators currently under consideration to measure wellbeing (e.g. Beyond GDP, Genuine Progress Indicator).

3. Building on the resolution adopted at the 2013 ICLS, **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.).

4. 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 society wellbeing and contribute to the economy. 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 poverty, prevention of social and health problems linked to burn out and stress, prevention of violence and school drop-out, higher fertility rates, etc.

5. Take a **lifecycle perspective** and **facilitate discontinuous career paths** rather than linear ones, allowing men and women to withdraw from work partially or completely to educate and care for their children or dependent relatives, and then re-enter the labour market without being heavily penalized.

6. 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.

7. Address the “motherhood penalty” and the growing inequality and discrimination between parents and non-parents by **recognizing and validating the competences and skills** acquired and developed while performing unpaid family care work to facilitate labour market re-entry after a career break.

8. Facilitate **access to lifelong education** in order to ensure that women and men of all ages can acquire and develop the knowledge, capacities, aptitudes and skills needed to fully participate in the paid labour market.

9. Promote and support **equal sharing of care responsibilities between men and women, between mothers and fathers** (e.g. through paid paternity leaves, parental leaves, awareness raising and education, etc.). Men caring for their children from the beginning will be more likely to continue during the whole childhood, which will benefit children, the mothers and the fathers themselves.

EU Consultation: a new start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents

In February 2016, the EU Delegation to Make Mothers Matter participated in the public consultation launched by the European Commission regarding a new initiative to gather opinions on possible measures to support working parents or caregivers to reconcile work and family life.

MMM asked to include the **right to request flexible working conditions**: this refers to the right of employees to ask the employer to arrange their working conditions to make them more flexible (flextime, telework, condensed hours, etc). The employer has to duly consider the request and any rejection must be justified by reasons specifically listed in the law. In view of its success, the initiative adopted in 2003 in the UK for parents of children under 17 or those caring for an adult, was extended to all employees in 2014. MMM believes that it will be very positive to include it in European legislation allowing employees to better reconcile private and professional life, and thus improve family wellbeing. The Commission is planning to launch this new initiative on work-life

balance at the end of 2016. For more information visit www.mmmeurope.org.

Learn more about recent MMM activities around the world in the latest [Make Mothers Matter Newsletter 01/2016](#) and the [MMM Activity Report for 2015](#) available on our website.

Compiled by Irina Pálffy-Daun-Seiler, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, with input from Valérie Bichelmeier, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, and Olalla Michelena, Secretary General of the European Delegation of MMM.

Recent and Forthcoming events

2016

April 2016

- 4-5: Europe Conference 2016 – Advising the International Family in the new Africa (Waterfront, Cape Town) <http://www.step.org/sa2016>
- 7-10: 38th Annual Family Conference (Orlando, Florida, USA) - <https://www.ntsad.org/index.php/event-listings/family-conference/2016-family-conference>

May 2016

- 16-18: World Congress on Families X () –(Tbilisi, Georgia) http://worldcongress.org/files/1914/4803/1950/WCF10_Flyer.pdf
- 23: International Forum and Full Committee Meeting, Vienna NGO Committee on the Family United Nations Vienna International Centre contact@viennafamilycommittee.org

July 2016

- 6-8: AIFS Conference – The Australian Institute of Family Studies (Melbourne, Australia) <http://www.aifconference2016.com/>
- 20-23 : International Family Conference (Orlando, Florida, USA)

November 2016

- 2-5: Families and Human Rights: Promise and Vulnerability in the 21st Century (Minneapolis, USA) <https://www.ncfr.org/future-conferences>

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