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Quarterly Bulletin of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

June 2016, No. 98
Deadline for contributions: 31.08. 2016

Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

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Dear Readers of Families International,

This issue focuses on the observance of the United Nations International Day of Families (IDF) on May 15th 2016. It includes a background note of the United Nations Focal Point on the Family, on this year's theme: 'Families, healthy lives and sustainable future.' Issue No. 98 further includes the Message of the United Nations Secretary-General on the occasion of IDF 2016. A link to the video of an expert panel held at the United Nations in New York, to mark IDF 2016, is also available below.

The Vienna NGO Committee on the Family organised an International Forum on May 23rd 2016, at the United Nations Vienna International Centre to observe IDF 2016. The proceedings of the Forum will be published in an upcoming issue of 'Families International'.

Also included in this issue are texts from Member Organisations of the Committee, dealing with, amongst others, issues such as, mothers & health, or mothers being empowered to be agents of change in their communities, and to be 'transformers', and not just 'conformers'. Further texts deal with the principle of shared responsibility in family policies, as well as successful aging and the role of grandparents. In conclusion a number of recent and upcoming events are listed.

Sincerely,

Peter Crowley Ph.D.

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From the United Nations



INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF FAMILIES
15 MAY 2016

International Day of Families 2016 Observance

Families, healthy lives and sustainable future

Background Note

The central goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focus on ending poverty, promoting shared economic prosperity, social development and people's well-being while protecting the environment.

Families remain at the centre of social life ensuring the wellbeing of their members, educating and socializing children and youth and caring for young and old. From a policy perspective, taking families into account in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals has a potential to speed up the achievements of many targets relating to individuals' well-being.

A number of family policies, such as those supporting the caregiving role of families, work-family balance for parents, empowering families to support their individual members' health, education and well-being, have been found to contribute to overall development goals. Still, a broad range of family policies enacted at national levels and relating to different facets of family life have an often untapped potential to further contribute to the achievement of many national development goals.

In particular, family-oriented policies can contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1 to 5 relating to doing away with poverty and hunger; ensuring healthy lives and promoting of

well-being for all ages; ensuring educational opportunities throughout the lifespan and achieving gender equality.

The theme of this year's observance of the International Day of Families focuses on Sustainable Development Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Families have a unique role in ensuring health and well-being of children. Parents can improve children's health outcomes by providing emotional support, ensuring preventive and sick healthcare visits, including timely immunizations and proper treatment in times of illness. In turn, a number of policies and programmes, can effectively assist parents in ensuring proper care and thus better health outcomes for their children.

Policies and programmes that increase family financial resources or improve caregiving behaviours also have the potential to positively influence child health and wellbeing, particularly for vulnerable families. For instance, cash or in-kind transfers, such as child allowances, or conditional cash transfers requiring parents to ensure their children's preventive healthcare and school attendance go a long way in to promoting children's health and education outcomes.

In addition, family policies for work-family balance impact health outcomes of all family members, especially the new-borns. Paid parental leaves promote children's well-being. For instance, maternity leave enables mothers initiate and sustain breastfeeding, which results in lower risk of a number of illnesses for infants and mothers themselves. Paternity leaves help fathers establish strong bonds with their children and promotes men's involvement in household responsibilities.

A number of work-family balance policies, such as flexible work schedules boost parent's capacity to

be available for their children and ensure proper care. Policies and programmes promoting safe and stable family environments and positive parenting also contribute to emotional and physical well-being of children and youth.

Moreover, appropriate policies are also needed to help families care for older adults, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable family members. Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages necessitates improvements in care provisions for older persons, be it at home or in care facilities, in line with older adults' preferences. In this respect, an area still largely ignored by policymakers is the extension of parental leave to include care for older persons. In rapidly ageing societies this issue is bound to grow in importance in the years to come.

This year's observance of the International Day of Families is to raise awareness of the role of families and family policies in promoting healthy lives for sustainable future. Academics and practitioners will address issues relating to family environments and work-family balance to improve health outcomes for all family members. Discussions will also focus on the role of parents in youth and children's well-being, with particular attention to the role of men, as well as intergenerational transfers and the well-being of older adults.

References:

"Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", United Nations, 2015 (A/RES/70/1)

Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes, United Nations, 19 November 2015 (A/71/61-E/2016/7)

Observance of the 2016 International Day of Families:

Families, healthy lives and sustainable future



INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF FAMILIES
15 MAY 2016

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Moderator & Introductory remarks

Dominic Richardson

“Families, family policies and Sustainable Development Goals”

Presentations:

Daryl Higgins

“Safe and supportive family environments and children’s well-being”

Zitha Mokomane

“Work-family balance and health outcomes”

Scott Behson

“The effects of involved fatherhood on families & how fathers can be supported both at the work-places and in the home”

Rosario Esteinou

“Families, parents and youth well-being”

Wendy Wang

“Families, intergenerational transfers and well-being of older adults”

Roundtable discussion with audience participation

Watch the Video of the Panel Discussion UNIDF 2016

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaIzDFMYjn0&feature=youtu.be>

United Nations Secretary-General's Message for 2016

International Day of Families

This year's International Day of Families falls at a time of upheaval and tragedy for families around the world. The rise of violent extremism, the effects of forced displacement, extreme weather events and other challenges are taking a heavy toll on the health and integrity of families in crisis situations. Even in relatively stable societies, families still struggle with violence, discrimination and poverty.

Families are on the frontlines of our global efforts to realize the bold and inclusive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They are particularly essential to achieving SDG3, in which all United Nations Member States committed to promoting healthy lives and wellbeing for all at all ages.

Children thrive when they receive love as well as healthcare, education and other basics. During the sensitive time of adolescence, young people need emotional support along with reproductive health information and services. Young lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people suffer much higher suicide rates than the general population, making their safety and acceptance a matter of public health.

In many societies, women and girls experience discrimination and violence within the family, which can have serious and lifelong effects on their health and wellbeing. Family life is also crucial to the health of older people, who stay active and healthy when their contributions are appreciated in the family and community.

Governments must support the crucial role of families in all their diverse forms. They should provide access to reproductive health services so that parents can decide on the timing and size of their families. Maternal healthcare and paternal leave are also vital to enable parents to give their newborns the best possible start in life.

I call on governments, businesses, institutions and other partners to recognize that caregiving is an essential part of family life. Everyone needs care from

family members at some point in their lives – and all should be able to provide that care when the need arises.

Promoting supportive family environments and positive parenting through policies and laws can help families raise healthy, happy children who can grow into valued, productive adults.

Leaving no one behind means leaving no family behind.

On this International Day of Families, let us resolve to advance sustainable development by creating a supportive environment where all family members of all ages can realize their potential to contribute to our world.

Ban Ki-moon

United Nations



General Assembly

A/HRC/29/L.25

Distr.: Limited
1 July 2015

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Twenty-ninth session

Agenda item 3

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Algeria (on behalf of the Group of African States), Bahrain,* Bangladesh, Belarus,* Bosnia and Herzegovina,* Botswana, Burkina Faso,* China, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti,* Egypt,* El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea*, Jordan,* Kuwait,* Lebanon, Malaysia,* Maldives, Mauritania,* Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan (on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation)**, Tunisia* (on behalf of the Group of Arab States), Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka,* Tunisia,* Zimbabwe:* draft resolution

* Non-member State of the Human Rights Council.

** With the exception of Albania.

29/... Protection of the family: contribution of the family to the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living for its members, particularly through its role in poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Reaffirming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme

of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and recalling the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other relevant human rights instruments, including

the Declaration on the Right to Development,

Recalling Human Rights Council resolution 26/11 of 26 June 2014 entitled “Protection of the family”,

Recalling also General Assembly resolutions 44/82 of 8 December 1989, 47/237 of 20 September 1993, 50/142 of 21 December 1995, 52/81 of 12 December 1997, 54/124 of 17 December 1999, 56/113 of 19 December 2001, 57/164 of 18 December 2002, 58/15 of 3 December 2003, 59/111 of 6 December 2004, 59/147 of 20 December 2004, 60/133 of 16 December 2005, 62/129 of 18 December 2007, 64/133 of 18 December 2009, 66/126 of 19 December 2011, 67/142 of 20 December 2012, 68/136 of 18 December 2013 and 69/144 of 18 December 2014, concerning the proclamation of, preparations for, observance and commemoration of the International Year of the Family and its tenth and twentieth anniversaries,

Recognizing that the preparations for and observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family provide a unique opportunity to draw further attention to the objectives of the International Year for increasing cooperation at all levels on family issues and for undertaking concerted actions to strengthen family-centred policies and programmes as part of an integrated comprehensive approach to the advancement of human rights and development,

Reaffirming that States have the primary responsibility to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all human beings,

Recognizing that the family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children and that children, for the full and harmonious development of their personality, should grow up in a family environment and in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding,

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural

environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community,

Reaffirming that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State,

Notes with concern that the contribution of the family in society and in the achievement of development goals continues to be largely overlooked and underemphasized, and recognizing the potential of the family to contribute to national development and to the achievement of major objectives of every society and of the United Nations, including the eradication of poverty and the creation of just, stable and secure societies,

Conscious that the majority of the internationally agreed development goals, especially those relating to the reduction of poverty, education of children and the reduction of maternal mortality, would be difficult to attain unless the strategies to achieve them focus on the family, which can contribute positively to, inter alia, eradicating poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases,

1. *Welcomes* the holding of the panel discussion on the protection of the family and its members by the Human Rights Council on 15 September 2014, during its twenty-seventh session, and takes note of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the summary of the panel discussion;¹

2. *Also welcomes* the holding of a plenary meeting during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, in December 2014, on the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in order to discuss the role of family-oriented policies in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda, and acknowledges all other international and regional initiatives in the context of celebrating that anniversary;

3. *Acknowledges* the efforts made by Governments, the United Nations system and civil society to fulfil the objectives guiding the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year at the national, regional and international levels, and urges States to continue to make every possible effort to realize the objectives of the International Year and its follow-up processes, and to develop strategies and programmes aimed at strengthening national capacities to address national priorities relating to family issues;

4. *Reaffirms* that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State;

5. *Also reaffirms* that States have the primary responsibility to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all human beings, and stresses the fundamental importance of full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all family members;

6. *Recognizes* that the family, while respect for the rights of its members is ensured, is a strong force for social cohesion and integration, intergenerational solidarity and social development, and that the family plays a crucial role in the preservation of cultural identity, traditions, morals, heritage and the values system of society;

7. *Conscious* that families are sensitive to strain caused by social and economic changes, and expresses deep concern that conditions have worsened for many families owing to economic and financial crises, lack of job security, temporary employment and lack of regular income and gainful employment, as well as measures taken by Governments seeking to balance their budget by reducing social expenditure;

8. *Recognizes* that the family unit is facing increasing vulnerabilities;

9. *Urges* Member States to create a conducive environment to strengthen and support all families, recognizing that equality between women and men and respect for all the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all family members are essential to family

well-being and to society at large, noting the importance of reconciliation of work and family life and recognizing the principle of shared parental responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child;

10. *Underlines* that the family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children from infancy to adolescence, that the introduction of children to the culture, values and norms of their society begins in the family, and that in order to better ensure the full and harmonious development of their personality, children should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding, and, accordingly, all institutions of society should respect and support the efforts of parents and other caregivers to nurture and care for children in a family environment;

11. *Urges* States to take appropriate measures to ensure that a child is not separated from his or her parents against his or her will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such a separation is necessary for the best interests of the child, and also to ensure that in no case shall a child be separated from his or her parents on the basis of a disability of either the child or one or both of the parents;

12. *Reaffirms* the right of the child to education and that education should be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential, the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values; the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin; and also reaffirms that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education to be given to their children and have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child, while also bearing in mind that the best interests of the child

should be the guiding principle of those responsible for the child's education and guidance;

13. *Highlights* the role of family members, especially parents and other legal guardians, in strengthening the self-image, self-esteem and status of girls and in protecting their health and well-being;

14. *Stresses* that equality between women and men, women's equal participation in employment and shared parental responsibility are essential elements of a policy on the family;

15. *Regrets* that women's social and economic contributions to the welfare of the family and the social significance of maternity and paternity continue to be inadequately addressed and that women continue on many occasions to bear a disproportionate share of household responsibilities and the care of children, the sick and elderly, and in this regard emphasizes the need to consistently address such imbalances and to ensure that maternity, motherhood, parenting and the role of women in procreation is not a basis for discrimination nor for restricting the full participation of women in society;

16. *Notes* that single-headed households, child-headed households and intergenerational households are particularly vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion;

17. *Resolves* to pay particular attention to family units headed by women and children, while bearing in mind that a considerable proportion of households worldwide are headed by women and many other households are dependent on female income, and that female-maintained households are very often among the poorest because of wage discrimination, occupational segregation patterns in the labour market and other gender-based barriers;

18. *Emphasizes* that States should ensure that children with disabilities have equal rights with respect to family life with a view to realizing these rights, and to prevent concealment, abandonment, neglect and segregation of children with disabilities, and that States should take measures to provide early and comprehensive information, services

and support to children with disabilities and their families;

19. *Stresses* that persons with disabilities and their family members should receive the necessary protection and assistance to enable families to contribute towards the full and equal enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities, and that States should, where the immediate family is unable to care for a child with disabilities, make every effort to provide alternative care within the wider family, and failing that, within the community in a family setting;

20. *Recognizes* the positive impact that policies and measures to protect the family can have on protecting and promoting the human rights of its members and can contribute to, inter alia, decreasing drop-out rates from educational institutions, achieving equality between women and men and girls and boys, empowering women and girls and enhancing the protection against violence, abuses, sexual exploitation, harmful practices and the worst forms of child labour, while bearing in mind that violations and abuses of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of family members adversely affect families and have a negative impact on efforts aimed at protecting the family;

21. *Underlines* the importance of strengthening intergenerational partnerships and solidarity among generations, and calls upon States in this regard to promote opportunities for voluntary, constructive and regular interaction between young people and older generations in the family, in the workplace and in society at large;

22. *Recognizes* that stable, supportive and nurturing family relationships, supported by communities and, where available, professional services, can provide a vital shield against substance abuse, particularly among minors;

23. *Urges* States, in accordance with their respective obligations under international human rights law, to provide the family, as the natural and fundamental group unit of the society, with effective protection and assistance, and encourages States in this regard to take, as appropriate and to the maximum

of their available resources, measures including:

1. *Creating* family-friendly policies to support the family, and assessing such policies and programmes for their impact on family well-being;

2. *Designing*, implementing and promoting family-sensitive policies in the field of housing, work, health, social security and education in order to create an environment supportive of the family, including affordable, accessible and quality care services for children and other dependants, parental and other leave schemes, campaigns to sensitize public opinion and other relevant actors on equal sharing of employment and family responsibilities between women and men;

3. *Analysing* policies and programmes, including those relating to macroeconomic stability, structural adjustment programmes, taxation, investments, employment, markets and all relevant sectors of the economy with respect to their impact on family well-being and conditions;

4. *Supporting* research and developing comprehensive strategies to enhance the ability of families and communities to care for older family members and to reinforce the role of grandparents in raising grandchildren;

5. *Addressing* the causes and mitigating the consequences of family disintegration;

6. *Facilitating*, as appropriate, the integration of families into society, and their reunification, preservation and protection, including by providing adequate shelter, access to basic services and a sustainable livelihood;

7. *Working* towards reducing poverty by, inter alia, granting assistance to families in difficult life situations and increasing the earning power of all adult members of economically deprived families;

8. *Providing* and promoting means to facilitate compatibility between labour force participation and parental responsibilities, especially for single-parent households with young children, and paying special attention to the needs of widows and orphans through means including health insurance and social

security, cash and in-kind transfer programmes, day-care centres and facilities for breastfeeding mothers within the work premises, kindergartens, part-time jobs, paid parental leave, paid maternity leave, flexible work schedules and reproductive and child health-care services;

9. *Strengthening* or, if necessary, establishing relevant national agencies or governmental bodies responsible for the implementation and monitoring of family policies;

24. *Calls upon* States and encourages non-governmental organizations and community organizations concerned to develop innovative ways to provide more effective assistance to families and the individuals within them who may be affected by specific problems, such as extreme poverty, chronic unemployment, illness, domestic and sexual violence, dowry payments, drug or alcohol dependence, incest, child abuse, neglect or abandonment;

25. *Recognizes* the important role of civil society, including research institutes and academia, in advocacy, promotion, research and policymaking and, as appropriate, evaluation of family policy development and capacity-building;

26. *Also recognizes* that the family plays a key role in social development, and as such should be strengthened and attention paid to the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of its members, and invites States, the organizations of the United Nations system and all other relevant stakeholders to take into account the role of the family, as a contributor to sustainable development, and the need to strengthen family policy development in their ongoing efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals;

27. *Encourages* States to give due consideration to the role and status of the family in the context of the ongoing negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, and invites States to consider mainstreaming the promotion of family-oriented policies as a cross-cutting issue in the proposed goals and targets of the post-2015 agenda;

28. *Invites* States to consider mainstreaming the promotion of family-oriented policies as a cross-cutting issue in national development plans and programmes;

29. *Highlights* the need for continued inter-agency and regional cooperation on family issues in order to generate greater awareness of this subject among the governing bodies of the United Nations system;

30. *Encourages* States to support the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities;

31. *Invites* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the treaty bodies, relevant special procedure mandate holders and other relevant international and regional human rights mechanisms, within their respective mandates and competence, to pay due attention in their work to the implementation by States of their obligations under relevant provisions of international human rights law to provide protection and support to the family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society;

32. *Requests* the High Commissioner to prepare a report on the impact of the implementation by States of their obligations under relevant provisions of international human rights law with regard to the protection of the family, on the contribution of families in realizing the right to an adequate standard of living for their members, particularly through their role in poverty eradication and in achieving sustainable development, while giving due consideration to the status of the family in the developments related to the ongoing work on the future sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, and to present it to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-first session;

33. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

From the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family



VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY

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FULL COMMITTEE MEETING

UNITED NATIONS
VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

Monday May 23th 2016

CONFERENCE ROOM C6 on the 7th Floor

UNITED NATIONS
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES 2016
INTERNATIONAL FORUM
10.00 – 12.30

Conditions of Reproduction – Lessons from China and Japan

**Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Mazal
University of Vienna**

Coffee Break
11.00 – 11.30

Discussion with Presenter & Participants
11.30 – 12.30

[The Proceedings of the International Forum will be published later in Families International]

Introduction by the Catalonia Platform for the Family New Associate Member of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family Full Committee Meeting May 23rd 2016

Presentation Vienna NGO

I feel honored for having the opportunity to present the candidacy of the UN Catalonia Platform for the Family (PFC-ONU) to become an “associate member” of the Vienna NGO Committee, according to the number 2, letter E) of the rules of procedure.

What is the UN Catalonia Platform for the Family?

It's a non-governmental, non-for-profit organization that brings together more than thirty (30) entities on family, social issues, education and care. Our aim is to support families, defend family as a social institution and promote its values.

Based in Barcelona, the UN Catalonia Platform for the Family is the biggest organization in Catalonia on the field. It is registered as a collaborative body in the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

How was the Platform created?

The UN Catalonia Platform for the Family was created in 2012 in response to the declaration of 2014 as the International Year of the family by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The initial plan was to develop its activity only during 2014, but we decided to continue afterwards, following the guidelines of the United Nations.

Does the platform have any precedent?

In spite of having a short life –only four years since 2012– the platform follows on the activities of previous organizations which were also inspired by the United Nations initiatives.

In particular, the UN declared 1994 as the first International Year of the Family. The previous year, a small group of people based in Barcelona and already working in family education had decided to start up a set of activities related to the family.

In order to do so, we created the Grup d'Entitats Catalanes de la Família (GEC) which coordinated the activity of many existing organizations that worked in the field. GEC embraced the work of diverse groups such as Alzheimer Families' Associations, Large Families' Organizations or Disabled Families, Family and work balance... GEC worked

for 20 years and now the UN Platform is the heir of that project.

It's also worth mentioning that some of the members of the boards in the associations of the Platform have been working in the social and family world for more than forty (40) years.

What are the Platform's objectives? What's our mission?

Following the UN guidelines for the 2014 year, the platform worked on three main areas:

- Poverty and social exclusion
- Cross generation solidarity
- Work and family, with special focus on the work-family balance.

For the current year, the UN Program for the Family has issued a call for “Families, healthy lives and sustainable development”, which goes down to three specific topics:

- Family, Work and Health
- Families, children and youth well-being
- Better quality of life for older adults

The Platform has launched several activities related to these areas taking place during all the year 2016.

Is the Platform working in other areas?

Certainly. The platform does not only work in the previously mentioned fields, but also tackles many other issues regarding the family and the society in relation to the family.

In particular we work on:

- The low birth rates, the demographics Winter and its impact in the future of society
- Family policies in Europe (comparative studies between countries)
- Training programs aimed to develop humanistic and ethical values among parents and other family members.

- Activities to defend needed families, older people and kids.

During her visit to Spain, Mrs. Renata Kaczkmarska, **responsible** for the UN Family Program, expressed her satisfaction and support **for** the amount and quality of activities developed by the Platform.

What's our public presence?

The Platform has no political or **economic** connections to any party or private group. However, one of our main goals is to make the family present in the public scene and to set the family agenda in the public institutions.

We have presented dozens of proposals to governments, policy makers and political parties. We participate in media debates and we work actively in social media.

How we collaborate with other organizations

The Platform **collaborates** with many organizations. Firstly, with the different associations, integrated in the Platform, but also with third parties **with** specific activities or initiatives.

What's the scope of the Platform?

We work at a regional level, having Catalonia as a natural base of 7,5 (seven point five) **million** people. However, this is not an obstacle to work in **collaboration** with other organizations **at** Spanish, European or Worldwide level.

What's our relationship with Public Institutions?

The Platform maintains a fluent relationship with all the political and social institutions in Barcelona, Catalonia and Spain.

Why do we want to become members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family?

It's our aim to broaden our contact and relationship with other **worldwide** family organizations, so that we can better contribute to defend the family and at the same time exchange information and best practices with them.

Given the **idiosyncrasy** of the Platform and our scope -not being yet international-, it's our understanding that we can join **the Vienna NGO Committee** on the Family as an associate member.

For all these reasons and with the will of becoming an active member we ask for admission in the Committee.

Thank you very much for your attention.

FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS OF THE VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY



THE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL OF MOTHERS IN HEALTH AND POLICY

Make Mothers Matter celebrated International Women's Day 2016 by organising an international conference on "Mothers and Health" on the 7th and 8th of March at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels. Nearly 150 participants from the European Union institutions, UN agencies, academia and NGOs from all over the world gathered to discuss the challenges and good practices.

It was agreed by all stakeholders that mothers can be empowered to be agents of change in their communities, to be transformers, not conformers. Innovative practices were presented showing that when mothers are informed, trained and supported they are part of the solution to promote sustainable health, for both themselves and their children.

Dr. Marleen Temmerman, Chair of the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology at Aga Khan University in Nairobi and former WHO Director, highlighted in her keynote presentation the remaining challenges for maternal and child health in Africa.

In addition, maternal health is not just an issue in the Global South. In 2013, there were 1,900 maternal deaths in Europe and 1 out of 10 women do not have access to prenatal care. In some countries, such as the US, maternal deaths are even increasing, justifying the need to rethink maternal health as an equal right for everyone.

Therefore, many speakers underlined the urgent necessity of access to quality, essential health-care services for all women.

As shown in the program below, the presentations and discussions covered a wide range of other issues including nutrition, HIV, health literacy, and

innovative practices to promote women and children's physical and mental health.

For more information, including the [conference report](#), the [presentations](#), the [press release](#) and a selection of [pictures](#), please visit www.makemothersmatter.org.

You can also follow the discussion on Twitter with [#MMM4Health](#).

Contact: info@makemothersmatter.org

Programme of the MMM 7-8 March 2016 Conference

Monday 7 March: Mothers and their Health

13:00 Welcome and introduction

- Anne-Claire de Liedekerke, President of MMM
- Madi Sharma, Member of the EESC and Social Entrepreneur

13:20 Keynote Speakers, followed by a debate

- Prof. Dr. Marleen Temmerman, Chair, Dept. Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Aga Khan University East-Africa and former WHO Director, Department of Reproductive Health and Research: "From Millenium to Sustainable Development Goals: Global Strategy for Women's, Children's & Adolescents' Health 2016-2030"
- Irene Nkosi, mothers2mothers (South Africa): "From victim to survivor"

15:00 Good practices and testimonies from field's actors, followed by a debate

- Memisa (Belgium), Medical association present in the Democratic Republic of Congo, India and Burundi, promoting primary healthcare for all
- Mame Pentru Mame (Romania), NGO supporting natural birth and mother and children rights
- Otitsara (Madagascar), NGO supporting women's personal development at home and in the workplace
- Aide à la Jeunesse Africaine Défavorisée – AJAD (Ivory Coast), NGO supporting young and vulnerable mothers
- Rural Reconstruction Foundation (Bangladesh), NGO facilitating access to dignity & self-generating activities for vulnerable and poor populations.
- AIMS (Ireland), NGO focused on advocacy for mothers' support during pregnancy

- Women Initiative for Peace and Good Governance – WIPGG (Nigeria), NGO which aims at empowering women and strengthening care to the benefit of children affected by HIV
- Enfance sans Drogue (France), preventing drug abuse with the support of the family
- Mama Cafe (Netherlands), network of meeting places for mothers to exchange their experiences about children's health and education

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

Concluding remarks by Héléne Bonhomme, entrepreneur and founder of the blog "Fabuleuses au foyer".

Tuesday 8 March: Mothers and their children's health

9:00 Keynote speakers, followed by a debate

- Mrs. Laurence Bosteels, President of MMM Belgium: "Findings of the EU research project DORIAN on the lifelong impact on children of obesity during pregnancy"
- Dr. Evelyn Depoortere, Research Programme Officer in Public Health Sector, DG Research, European Commission
- Mr. Octavian Bivol, Deputy Director EU office, UNICEF
- Dr. Marie-Laure Frélut, Pediatrician, founding member and former President of ECOG (European Childhood Obesity Group)

10:45 Good practices and testimonies from field's actors, followed by a debate

- Vivons en forme (France), NGO promoting health prevention and training of health professionals
- "1001 critical days" campaign (UK), to ensure a healthy first 1000 days for mothers and children everywhere



International Federation for Family Development:
Papers No. 52
Work-family balance, from rights to duties
The principle of 'shared responsibility' in family policies
1. April 2016

At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, more than 150 world leaders adopted the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations Development Programme will support governments around the world in tackling the new agenda and taking it forward over the next 15 years. [1]

This Agenda calls for effective – and therefore evidence-based – policy decisions. Previous decades have proved how inefficient laws, policies and programs are when they are guided by ideologies.

There is, of course, a great difference in the concept of the role of the State around the world. Different countries will require different practical solutions, but regarding family issues, in my opinion, the best solution is not to replace families' social functions, either via the State or other institutions, but to try to support and empower families to carry out these functions in their own right.

Although the 2030 agenda is people-centered and promises to improve the livelihood of all individuals, it does not highlight the importance of empowering the family unit to achieve the sustainable development goals.

Only target 5.4 states that one important goal of the new directives is the recognition and "value [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."

Ignacio Socias, Director of International Relations at the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD).

Selected contents of his intervention at the Panel Discussion on 'Work-Family Balance, Social Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Implementation of Culturally Specific Policies', organized by the Doha International Family Institute and the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations (UN Headquarters, 9 February 2016).

What does it mean to found a family?

Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be the starting point for any consideration of family-related issues if we want to build consensus on any progress we can make. The original French of it says: "1. A partir de l'âge nubile, l'homme et la femme, sans aucune restriction quant à la race, la nationalité ou la religion, ont le droit de se marier et de fonder une famille. Ils ont des droits égaux au regard du mariage, durant le mariage, et lors de sa dissolution. 2. Le mariage ne peut être conclu qu'avec le libre et plein consentement des futurs époux. 3. La famille est l'élément naturel et fondamental de la société et a droit à la protection de la société et de l'Etat." [2]

It is interesting to note that the word "free" ("libre") was only added at the end of the negotiation process, and that the phrase that calls for the family's protection "by society and the State" ("protection de la société et de l'Etat") is the only place in the Declaration where the power of the state is invoked as a protective device.

This protection is vital for the 'genetics' of the family. The choice of founding a family and having children is private, but the consequences are public: society needs people in order to keep going. Therefore, the time, effort and money that families invest in their children should receive some form of social and economic return, because these children will eventually become the professionals needed to ensure that society continues to function and, in many cases that the fiscal system remains balanced. If we are to survive, we need doctors, teachers and judges, we need people, human beings... Even if robots can replace humans in some cases, it is only the existence of men and women that justifies having them.

So, family can only have a future if there is any future at all. But in order to respect the human right to found a family, the rest of society and the rest of the world need to acknowledge and respect it, because the whole society and the whole world benefits from it.

About the definition of family

A study by the Pew Research Center in 2011 asked 2,691 randomly chosen adults whether seven trends were "good, bad or of no consequence to society." The trends were: "more unmarried couples raising children; more gay and lesbian couples raising children; more single women having children without a male partner to help raise them; more people living together without getting married; more mothers of young children working outside the home; more people of different races marrying each other; and more women not ever having children." [3]

What does really define a family? Biological links? The presence of a mother and a father? Intergenerational links? In reality, none of these, because some families have adopted children, or only one parent is left, or there is only one generation present. Yet not every social group is a family, of course.

The fact is that, although there is a universal recognition of the importance of the family, there is no formal consensus on its definition, which has been a real obstacle for progress in the effective design and implementation of family policy. It is therefore more productive to focus on family functions and to assess the impact of policies from a family-focused perspective. Following that suggestion, I would propose this 'definition' of family:

"Family is basically where life begins and love never ends." Not just one or the other, but both.

Some recent resolutions of the UN General Assembly say precisely this — "the family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children, and that children, for the full and harmonious development of their personality, should grow up in a family environment and in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding." [4] In other words, a family is not only where children are born, but also where they are raised, brought up and educated. Human beings take longer than any other species to do this, because they need to be mature not only physically, but also mentally.

I recently came across this wonderful quote: "No one falls in love by choice, it is by chance. No one stays in love by chance, it is by work. And no one falls out of love by chance, it is by choice." [5] So you can't choose who you feel attracted to, but you can definitely choose who you stay with.

In other words, romantic love can't lead to a family by itself; it needs to be followed by commitment. Both include a basic role not only for mothers, but also for fathers. This is what Target 5.4 of the new 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda calls "shared responsibility", both "within the household and the family", as "nationally appropriate." [6]

From freedom to responsibility, from rights to duties

Commitment is about freedom, not just luck or destiny. And there should also be responsibility. Maybe, as well as being "nationally appropriate", the type of commitment should also always be "personally appropriate."

It is clear by now that the role of the father is as important as the role of the mother. If family is about having children and raising them, the commitment to do this should involve both parties, not just one. Different experts have pointed out the importance of emphasizing duties and not only rights or, in other words, the rights of the children and not only the rights of the parents, as the Convention on the Rights of the Child does when prioritizing "the best interests of the child."

This emphasis on human obligations is necessary for several reasons. Of course, this idea is new only to some regions of the world; many societies have traditionally conceived of human relations in terms of obligations rather than rights. This is true, in general terms, for instance, for much of Eastern thought. While traditionally in the West, at least since the 17th Century age of enlightenment, the concepts of freedom and individuality have been emphasized, in the East, notions of responsibility and community have prevailed.

The fact that a Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted instead of a Universal Declaration of Human Duties undoubtedly reflects the philosophical and cultural background of the document's drafters who, as we know, represented the Western powers who emerged victorious from the Second World War.

The concept of human duties serves to balance the notions of freedom and responsibility: while rights relate more to freedom, duties are associated with responsibility. Despite this distinction, freedom and responsibility are interdependent. Responsibility, as a moral quality, serves as a natural, voluntary check for freedom. In any society, freedom can never be exercised without limits. Thus, the more freedom we enjoy, the greater the responsibility we bear, towards others as well as ourselves. The more talents we possess, the bigger the responsibility we have to develop them to their fullest capacity. We must move away from the freedom of indifference towards the freedom of involvement.

The opposite is also true: as we develop our sense of responsibility, we increase our internal freedom by fortifying our moral character. When freedom presents us with different possibilities for action, including the choice to do right or wrong, a responsible moral character will ensure that the former will prevail.

Sadly, this relationship between freedom and responsibility is not always clearly understood. Some ideologies have placed greater importance on the concept of individual freedom, while others concentrate on an unquestioning commitment to the social group.

Without a proper balance, unrestricted freedom is as dangerous as imposed social responsibility. Great social injustices have resulted from extreme economic freedom and capitalist greed,

while at the same time cruel oppression of people's basic liberties has been justified in the name of society's interests or communist ideals.

Either extreme is undesirable. At present, with the disappearance of the East-West conflict and the end of the Cold War, humankind seems closer to the desired balance between freedom and responsibility. We have struggled for freedom and rights. It is now time to foster responsibility and human obligation.

OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality

The 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life promotes a government-wide strategy for gender equality reform, sound mechanisms to ensure accountability and sustainability of gender initiatives, and tools and evidence to inform inclusive policy decisions. It also promotes a 'whole-of-society' approach to reducing gender stereotypes, encouraging women to participate in politics and removing implicit and explicit barriers to gender equality.

This Recommendation is unique, as it provides not only governments, but also parliaments and judiciaries, with clear, timely and actionable guidelines for effectively implementing gender equality and gender mainstreaming initiatives, and for improving equal access to public leadership for women and men from diverse backgrounds.

The Recommendation looks to achieve gender equality in the public sector through three main channels, policy, as a role model for the private sector and through its own employment practices.

The goals of the Recommendation are to:

- mainstream gender equality in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of relevant public policies and budgets.

- strengthen accountability and oversight mechanisms for gender equality and mainstreaming initiatives across and within government bodies.

- achieve gender balanced representation in decision making positions in public life by encouraging greater participation of women in government at all levels, as well as in parliaments, judiciaries and other public institutions.

- take adequate measures to improve the gender equality in public employment.

- strengthen international co-operation through continuously sharing knowledge, lessons learned and good practices on gender equality and mainstreaming initiatives in public institutions.

The Recommendation was officially launched at the event 'Women's access to leadership: what works?' on International Women's Day, 8 March 2016.

Equal opportunities and egalitarianism

The principle of 'shared responsibility' has a lot to do, in consequence, with the real participation of the father in the distribution of duties. It implies what is usually referred to as 'gender equality', but in my opinion this term is not always well understood. Some understand it as equal opportunities for both parents, but many others tend to confuse it with egalitarianism.

Equality means equal opportunities, not just 50%. This is not just against discrimination of women, but also about complementarity. An effective design of a family project should take into account the abilities, skills and preferences of both parties.

There is discrimination of women when they are forced to accept a labour market designed by men for men, under the 'old' concept of men who don't participate in the household tasks and in raising their children. Only women actually give birth to children, but both educate them, and therefore both should have that flexibility. It is interesting to consider that the only countries where the birth rate is increasing are those in which more women are in the labour market, not the other way round. [7] Why? Because there is flexibility.

In other words, just as parenting has become a verb in the 20th century, 'fathering' should be a new addition to our vocabulary, together with 'mothering'. A common effort is required to achieve this – by the State, the public sector and the private sector. An important role should be given to employers, both in the public and private sector, because the possibility of achieving the goals of family design can only become a reality if

both parents can reconcile their jobs with their family lives.

This change can be promoted in different ways: for example, through external awards (like the Italian Audit project [8]) or certification for those who do (like the Spanish Family-Friendly certification [9]); through private initiatives in the companies themselves (like the employer's clubs in some South American countries [10]); or, more generally, through supporting part-time working arrangements according to parental choice by ensuring non-discriminatory practices towards all parents in the labour market.

The effort that has been made for so long to protect human rights, focusing primarily on women and young people, could be improved even further by adding the family as a political priority, particularly in matters such as investment in health, housing and education. This step would also help women and young people – who, naturally, form part of the family –, given that family break-ups have contributed to the feminization of poverty. And, indirectly, this would also help to promote the role of fathers and the correct consideration of women by employers.

Therefore, dialogue and partnerships between social policy makers and relevant stakeholders, including families, family associations, the business sector, trade unions and employers should be enhanced to develop and improve family-friendly policies and practices in the workplace. This should include both housework and care, because, in reality, both are a form of care, housework having important implications for the well-being of all members of the family.

How can this be achieved? My proposal includes three very clear recommendations: policies to promote education about freedom and rights; information and advice regarding responsibility and duties; and legislation on both these areas.

International Federation for Family Development:
Papers No.54

**Living longer or living better?
Successful ageing and the role of grandparents**

1 June 2016

Unlike most of the changes that societies will experience during the next 50 years, population trends are largely predictable. We know that the demographic transition to older populations will occur, and we can plan to make the most of it.

The changes that constitute and influence ageing are complex. At a biological level, ageing is associated with the gradual accumulation of a wide variety of molecular and cellular damage. Over time, this damage leads to a gradual decrease in physiological reserves, an increased risk of many diseases, and a general decline in the capacity of the individual. Ultimately, it will result in death.

But these changes are neither linear nor consistent, and they are only loosely associated with age in years. Thus, while some 70-year-olds may enjoy good physical and mental functioning, others may be frail or require significant support to meet their basic needs. In part, this is because many of the mechanisms of ageing are random. But it is also because these changes are strongly influenced by the environment and behaviours of the individual.

Beyond these biological losses, older age frequently involves other significant changes. In response, older adults tend to select fewer and more meaningful goals and activities, optimize their existing abilities through practise and the use of new technologies, and compensate for the losses of some abilities by finding other ways to accomplish tasks.

Goals, motivational priorities and preferences also appear to change, with some suggesting that older age may even be the stimulus for a shift from materialistic perspectives to more transcendent ones. Although some of these changes may be driven by adaptations to loss, others reflect ongoing psychological development in older age that may be associated with the development of new roles, viewpoints and

many interrelated social contexts. These psychosocial changes may explain why in many settings older age can be a period of heightened subjective well-being.

Today, for the first time in history most people can expect to live into their 60s and beyond. In low- and middle-income countries, this is largely the result of large reductions in mortality at younger ages, particularly during childhood and childbirth, and from infectious diseases. In high-income countries, continuing increases in life expectancy are now mainly due to declining mortality among those who are older.

Related to quality of life in old age are the concepts of 'ageing well' represented by the qualifiers such as 'active', 'positive', or 'healthy' used with 'ageing', but 'successful ageing' is the most frequently used term. The widely accepted definition of 'successful ageing' contains three components: low risk of disease and disability; high mental and physical function; and active engagement with life.

Based on selected contents from the 'World report on ageing and health' (World Health Organization, 2015).

Grandparents in the family

Remarks by Ed Ryan, Senior Legislative Advocate Appointed Volunteer for AARP Pennsylvania, during the event organized by the Universal Peace Federation in New York on the occasion of the International Day of Families (19 May 2016).

It is a joy to raise a family, and even better to see the birth of babies by your grown children. It's a rebirth for parents to experience development, and even more so for grandparents to observe the wide-eyed innocence of an infant and share the sense of wonder, and the delight of new discoveries as simple as the clouds and grass, as the children grow.

We don't realize the elation of feelings we may have lost, in our fast-paced adult world. But, young children re-install those emotions and as they grow, we grow even further. In the US alone, there are an estimated 70 million grandparents and millions of grandparent-headed households. A grandparent organization I visited in this city last week says every time a baby is born, a grandparent is too. They also say "Grand is great!" I am reminded of the Greek proverb that says, "The heart that loves is forever young."

However, raising a family is also very challenging. As parents provide and protect their young, there are constant threats to their security and harmonious relationships. The level of danger depends on where we live. In the urbanized US, city gangs can bully and recruit to sell narcotics, leading to the spread of criminal activity and massive incarceration, adding to the terrible trap of poverty.

For older generations the impact is magnified, especially for the 7 million grandparents whose grandchildren under age 18 live with them and the huge financial burden for them, and society.

Many Americans cannot grasp what extreme poverty is actually like in developing countries, with the challenges of civil wars or disease and lack of water and sanitation or no rule of law. Many hear on television about the plight of 16 million refugees in the world, but may not pay much attention. Unfortunately, some I have met complain about the expense of foreign aid or new grants of asylum, not realizing the world we have and the world we need, are very far apart.

Grandparents globally seem to have a common core of challenges, whether by choice or chance, as they are thrust into guardianship. Family health and well-being suffer without help. A lot of support is needed from governments and non-governmental organizations.

Good people can do good things, but can achieve very little alone. This is a lesson learned that must be passed along to succeeding generations. For centuries, we have relied on the wisdom of village elders. They simply have seen more changes in their extra years of life and if nothing else can help younger people to avoid mistakes.

A new world for a new generation

Not only can an older person today expect to live much longer than previously, but the world around them has changed. For example, the past 50 years have seen a massive demographic shift from rural to urban living. Now, for the first time, the majority of the world's population lives in cities. The world has also become much wealthier through almost global socioeconomic development, although in many places this has been associated with increasing disparity, much of which is avoidable. Advances in transportation and communications have seen rapid globalization of economic and cultural activities, with increased migration, the deregulation of labour markets and the shifting of jobs from those traditionally filled by many now-ageing people to new sectors of the economy.

For some older people, particularly those with desirable knowledge, skills and financial flexibility, these changes create new opportunities. For others, they can remove social safety nets that might otherwise have been available. For example, while globalization and global connectivity may make it easier for younger generations to migrate to areas of growth, this may result in older family members being left in poor rural areas without the traditional family structures they could have otherwise turned to for support.

But broader trends are also underway. As life expectancy increases, so do the odds of different generations within a family being alive at the same time.

However, although the number of surviving generations in a family may have increased, today these generations are more likely than in the past to live separately. Indeed, in many countries the proportion of older people living alone is rising dramatically. For example, in some European countries, more than 40% of women aged 65 and older now live alone.

In societies with strong traditions of older parents living with children, such as in Japan, traditional, multi-generational living arrangements are also becoming less common. Even in India, a country where strong family ties have often been assumed to continue, only 20% of households include people living in joint or extended families.

Falling family size may be associated with less opportunity to enjoy reciprocal care arrangements or to share the goods that may typically be available in a larger household, and this may also increase the risk of poverty. Older people living alone may be at increased risk of isolation and suicide. However, many older people still prefer to live in their own home and community for as long as possible.

These changes in family structure are reinforced by two other significant trends. Dramatic falls in fertility in many parts of the world mean that the relative number of younger people in a family is much lower than it used to be. At the same time, there have been major changes in gender norms and opportunities for women. In the past, one key role for women was often that of caregiver, both for children and for older relatives.

Major religions of the world all provide foundations for living with worthy values. Hindus teach behavior by self-control, truth, charity and compassion, Islam points to dignity and conscience to guide behavior. Jewish basics also see confidence and gratitude, while Buddhism focuses on a clear mind and generosity and kindness. Christianity also urges love and support for others. They all convey messages of higher power that each generation seems to carry forth. Parents are busy providing basic comforts, so the grandparents become vital messengers.

Children with busy parents or no parents also need to know intangibles and practical behaviors like communication skills, cooking skills, coping skills, interview skills and appreciation of what we have been given. Community elders should convey them.

Because we have been blessed with 30 years of longer life during the last century, we must take time to communicate and teach the young.

Remember, the flame on top of our candle is not depleted when we extend it to light the candle for others.

My lifelong experiences have definitely been influenced in a positive way by intergenerational relationships, including with some people in this room and they have inspired me to serve others. We are renewed constantly as we grow, and now brain maps prepared from MRIs can confirm those changes. As Native Americans say, "You cannot step into the same river twice."

The most important factors in people relationships may be understanding and love, whether with family or friends, or with those we have not yet met. As Heller Keller, an American blind and deaf woman was quoted,

when asked how she perceived the concept of 'love', she responded that she can feel an invisible thread between one spirit and another. Pope Francis in Philadelphia last year said the most beautiful creation ever, is the family! It is "The workshop of hope."

There are challenges in life for each of us, but we must help others decide which path to take for a good life. Grandparents everywhere must share their wisdom and experience to show the way. Every day is significant. A doctor who has passed away told me, "What I do today is important because I am paying a day of my life for it. What I achieve today must be worthwhile because the price is high."

Healthy and happy generations build harmonious communities, and they can multiply and eventually spread to states and nations. As the Chinese say, "One generation plants the tree, the next one gets the shade."

Healthy ageing

The term 'healthy ageing' is widely used in academic and policy circles, yet there is surprisingly little consensus on what this might comprise or how it might be defined or measured. Furthermore, it is often used to identify a positive disease-free state that distinguishes between healthy and unhealthy individuals. This is problematic in older age because many individuals may have one or more health conditions that are well controlled and have little influence on their ability to function.

Therefore, in framing the goal for a public-health strategy on ageing, the World Health Organization (WHO) considers Healthy Ageing in a more holistic sense. It is defined as "the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age."

Ageism

The elderly are peculiarly vulnerable due to declining physical and mental capabilities; exit from labour market with greater dependence on pensions; break down of extended families; and isolation due to death of contemporaries, especially that of spouse or partner. Ageism is the stereotyping of and discrimination against individuals or groups based on their age. Ageism can take many forms, including prejudicial attitudes, discriminatory practices, or institutional policies and practices that perpetuate stereotypical beliefs.

Negative ageist attitudes are widely held across societies and not confined to one social or ethnic group. Negative ageist attitudes are often seen as humorous and based in some degree of fact; thus, the humour is often mistakenly assumed to counteract any negative effects on the older person.

Yet ageism has been shown to cause lowered levels of self-efficacy, decreased productivity, and cardiovascular stress. And these stereotypes can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, reinforcing the inaction and deficits that result from their internalization.

These negative attitudes are also widely present even within the health and social-care settings where older adults are at their most vulnerable. Some of this prejudice arises from observable biological declines. This so-called objective starting point for the stereotype of older age may be distorted by awareness of disorders such as dementia, which may be mistakenly thought to reflect normal ageing.

Furthermore, because ageism is assumed to be based on these presumed physiological and psychological facts, little or no account is taken of the less obvious adaptations made by older people to minimize the effects of age-related loss, nor the positive aspects of ageing, the personal growth that can occur during this period and the contributions made by older people. This socially ingrained ageism can become self-fulfilling by promoting in older people stereotypes of social isolation, physical and cognitive decline, lack of physical activity and economic burden.

The rights of older people

There are many justifications for devoting public resources to improving the health of older populations. The first is the human right that older people have to the highest attainable standard of health. Yet people often experience stigma and discrimination, and violations of their rights at individual, community and institutional levels simply as a result of their age. A rights-based approach to healthy ageing can help address the legal, social and structural barriers to good health for older people, and clarify the legal obligations of state and non-state actors to respect, protect and fulfil these rights.

A human rights-based approach to health states that the right to health “embraces a wide range of socioeconomic factors that promote conditions in which people can lead a healthy life, and extends to the underlying determinants of health, such as food and nutrition, housing, access to safe and potable water and adequate sanitation, safe and healthy working conditions, and a healthy environment”. A wide range of laws, policies and actions is therefore required to help create the appropriate conditions to ensure that older people can enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. Indeed, under the right to health, states are obligated to deliver, without discrimination of any kind, health facilities, goods and services that are available, accessible, acceptable and of good quality.

Availability refers to having a sufficient quantity of effective public-health and healthcare facilities, goods and services, as well as programmes. In the context of ageing, availability implies considering the extent to which health facilities, goods and services meet the specific health needs of older people. The accessibility of health facilities, goods and services has four sub-dimensions: nondiscrimination, physical accessibility, economic accessibility (or affordability), and the accessibility of information. All are particularly relevant to older people who may face aged-based rationing of services, physical limitations that make access particularly difficult, financial insecurity as a result of their age, and information barriers ranging from literacy to the ability to use web-based material, a form with which they may not be familiar or have access to.

Older people’s right to health also upholds the element of the acceptability of health facilities, goods and services, in keeping with the standards of medical ethics and the use of gender-responsive and culturally appropriate approaches. In some low-income countries, services may be available but require queuing for many hours, which may be difficult for some older people due to physical limitations or the need to frequently use the toilet. Some countries have taken steps to address these needs by setting aside certain times to see only older people, providing chairs to sit on and ensuring that older people can use the toilet without losing their place in a queue.

The fourth element of the right to health underlines the importance of good-quality facilities, goods and services. When services are restructured to better meet older people's needs, systems must ensure these improvements continue to be delivered. More broadly, the right to non-discrimination encompasses the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of age. Not only does this mean that older people have the same rights as everyone else but also that states have an obligation to make particular efforts to reach any groups of older people who are disadvantaged or vulnerable, and to target resources towards these groups in an effort to promote equality.

Central to a human rights-based approach is the idea that older people participate actively and make informed decisions about their health and well-being; this is also a core element of the person-centred public-health approach. Policies and programmes should empower older people to contribute to, and remain active members of, their communities for as long as possible, according to their capacity. However, ensuring meaningful participation and continuing community leadership require adequate financial and technical support. Ensuring that attention is paid to human rights also adds value to efforts to improve ageing and health by recognizing the importance of accountability.

Accountability for health can be enhanced through the use of multiple mechanisms, including human rights mechanisms at the international, regional and national levels, as well as by developing national committees on ageing, or other monitoring, complaint and redress processes. These may help to unearth hidden issues, such as violence against older people.

Recent and Forthcoming events

2016

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)

October 2016

- 5-7: European FGC Network Meeting – Family is asked to make a plan first (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) <http://www.fgcnetwork.eu/en/annual-meeting/>

November 2016

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

2017

June 2017

- 5-7: 7th World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights (Dublin, Ireland) <http://www.world-congress.co/dublin-2017/>

Impressum

Projects of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family are supported by:

- ❖ Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Bäuerinnen in Niederösterreich
- ❖ Austrian Federal Government
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- ❖ Siemens
- ❖ United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities

'Families International' is published by:

Vienna NGO Committee on the Family:

Office of the Chairperson:

DR. MICHAEL SCHWARZ
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Layout: Theresa Schwarz