International Conference
Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Equality: the role of family policies and exchange of good practices
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The importance of family policy for achieving Sustainable Development Goals

Renata Kaczmarska
UN Focal Point on the Family, DSPD/DESA
The role of family policies

- Support positive family functioning as an efficient way to achieve desired social policy goals
- Support family functions
- Focus on family units as changing & dynamic entities
- Promote child and youth well-being as well as healthy & reciprocal intergenerational relations
- Promote access to justice for families
- Promote gender equality and children’s rights in families & society
- Aim at achieving long-term solutions to persistent development problems such as intergenerational transfer of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, lack of access to basic services & gender inequality.
Family policy outcomes

Family-oriented policies supporting family functions should contribute to:

• Self-sufficient, wealthy & resilient families
• Healthy & educated children
• Improved access to decent work
• Better work-family balance
• Gender equality
• Stronger intergenerational bonds....

all part of sustainable development agenda & the future we want
Family policy and 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

• Governments enact a broad range of family policies and programmes. They relate to different aspects of the life of families and individual family members, including couples, parents, children and older persons. Such policies have an often untapped potential to contribute to the achievement of many national development goals.

• The design, development, implementation and monitoring of family-oriented policies and programmes are essential for the success in achieving several goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

• Several SDGs are closely related to family policies. Ending poverty in all its forms and ensuring food security and improved nutrition tops the agenda, followed by healthy lives and educational goals as well as gender equality goals.
On September 25th, 2015 countries adopted a set of global goals to **end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all** as part of a **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years.
SDGs closely related to family policy

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Reduced Inequalities
7. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day.

1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.
Family policies & poverty reduction

Strategies at family level are important to do away with the intergenerational transfer of poverty. Family-targeted interventions for poverty reductions have already been successful for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals.

Increasing family resources through cash or in-kind transfers, child allowances and tax credits are important for better child outcomes and helped with doing away with poverty in the next generation.
2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.
Family policy & food security

Good nutrition early in life leads to better outcomes for children in other areas such as education.

Parents should be empowered to ensure children’s nutrition and well-being.

Helping families to meet the nutritional needs of their members is also essential to achieve other SDGs, especially SDG 3.
3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.

3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.
Family policies & health

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.
Public policies assisting parents with more resources or helping parents to provide better care improve children’s health outcomes.
Public policy in support of work-family balance impacts children’s health and well-being. There is growing evidence that the *quantity* of work (hours and lack of fit with personal preferences) has a negative impact on workers’ well-being but that the *quality* of work (demands of the job, personal autonomy) is also highly important.

Paid maternity leave enables mothers initiate and sustain breast feeding associated with lower risk of a number of health problems as well as overall infant mortality. A longitudinal study examining data from sixteen 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 ten-week paid maternity leave was associated with a reduction in infant mortality rates of 1-2 percent, a twenty-week leave, with a 2-4 percent reduction; and a thirty-week leave, with a 7-9 percent reduction.

Learning from MDGs: 
work-family balance is closely related to gender equality

‘More family-friendly policies are needed to support greater women’s participation in the job market’

• The time-related underemployment rate for women is higher than for men, which calls for more family-friendly policies encouraging not only better work-family balance, ‘but also enhance the quality of part-time jobs and improve overall business productivity. The policies include legislation on flexible time, parental leave, codes of conduct and new working practices. As well as childcare and elderly-care facilities’ (Ibid)
Work-family balance & intergenerational issues

- The two inter-related areas bound to gradually grow in importance also in the context of sustainable development are work-family balance and intergenerational issues.
- Recent trends, such as rapidly falling fertility rates in developed countries, family instability, growing divorce rates as well as mounting difficulties in family formation encountered by young people necessitate urgent action especially in the area of work-family balance and sustainable livelihoods.
- Similarly, changing family structures, urbanization and mobility as well as rapid ageing and challenges of ensuring human rights and dignity for older persons require a serious look at policies supporting healthy and reciprocal intergenerational interactions so that generations are not perceived as competing against one another.
- Both issues are not sufficiently addressed at the international forum despite their growing implications for issues such as the future of women’s labour participation and ageing.
4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
Family policy & children’s education

Families are first educators and influence children’s education outcomes.

Children of involved and supportive parents have better school attendance records and better attitudes towards school and homework, achieve better grades and aspire to higher career goals.

Parental support and encouragement is linked to children’s future success in life.

Programmes promoting positive parenting have a potential to boost child and youth school success and lifelong learning.
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

5.4 Recognize and value 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.
Violence against women is an extreme manifestation of gender inequality in a society and a serious violation of fundamental human rights.

Children experiencing violence in the family are more likely to be perpetrators later in life.

Violence in the family is reflected in violence in a broader society.

Legal measures are not sufficient to eliminate violence in families.

Engagement with family members, communities & civil society are essential.
Elimination of harmful practices

As child marriage is a family decision, ending this practise requires addressing the reasons which compel parents to marry off their children at a young age such as the search for economic security for their daughters.

Some successful strategies include grants for parents to keep their daughters in schools and offering employment and access to resources, including land, for women so that they can ensure their own livelihoods.

To prevent FGM, educational campaigns on harmful effects of the practise as well as replacing it with (‘harmless’) coming of age ceremonies have been helpful in preventing and doing away with this practise.
Unpaid work

Achieving 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 families, be it in labour market policies, family law, and the provision of health and social services in addition to education.
10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.
There is a complex relationship between family structure and inequality. Unstable family structure may have a negative impact on children’s educational attainment, behaviour and even future employment. In some countries unstable family relations are more predominant in populations of lower economic and educational backgrounds which tends to be reproduced in next generations and thus can result in transfer of disadvantage and inequality.
16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.

16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.
Access to justice through fair family laws

Family laws govern family relations and seek to protect the vulnerable family members, including women, children and older persons.

In 26 out of 143 countries, statutory inheritance laws differentiate between women and men. In 27 countries, women cannot confer their nationality to their children and/or foreign spouses on equal basis with men. Discrimination entrenched in family law is especially challenging in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. In many countries, multiple legal systems with discriminatory customary and religious laws and practice prevail. A growing number of countries have outlawed gender discrimination and made better provisions to protect children within families but urgent family law reforms and policy initiatives are still needed to ensure better protection of women and children from various forms of violence and abuse. Custody and inheritance laws, in particular, are in need of urgent reform.

Importantly, national family laws should comply with international standards and ensure the rights of all family members.
Conclusions

• Family policies contribute to the achievement of development goals & impact decision-making at family level.

• The design, development, implementation and monitoring of family-oriented policies and programmes are essential for the success in achieving several goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, such as ensuring healthy lives and promoting of well-being for all ages; achieving of gender equality, empowering all women and girls as well as providing of access to justice for all.

• In addition, reforming of discriminatory family laws in indispensable for the achievement of several SDGs.

• Continuous exchange of good practises in family policy making can help spread knowledge of policies that work and inspire policy makers in other countries and regions.
Upcoming UN activities on family issues

• The Focal Point on the Family in the Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the Department of Economic and Social affairs (UNDESA) is organizing an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “Family policies and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda” to be held 12-13 May 2016 at UN Headquarters in New York. The EGM will focus on a number of family policies and their contribution to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1 to 4 as well as several cross cutting issues pertinent to SDG5.

• The objective of the EGM is to provide Member States and other stakeholders with expert analysis regarding a number of issues impacting recent family policy developments. The participants will offer expert opinion on the contribution of family policies and programmes to the achievement of several targets under Sustainable Development Goals 1-4. The meeting will conclude with recommendations for advancing several family policy areas relating to SDGs 1-4, such as ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages; ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and enacting family policies with a gender perspective.

• COFACE will be represented at this expert meeting and we count on your recommendations and involvement.
Families, healthy lives and sustainable future

The focus of 2016 International Day of Families is on SDG3. The day can help raise awareness of the role of families & family policies for the achievement of specific SDGs.

Focus on health and well-being for all ages necessarily brings closer attention to extended families encompassing parents, children and older persons. The health of all generations is at stake.
Thank you!

For more information contact:
Renata Kaczmarska, Focal Point on the Family, DSPD/DESA
kaczmarska@un.org
Website:
https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/