

# Families, Family Policy and the Sustainable Development Goals

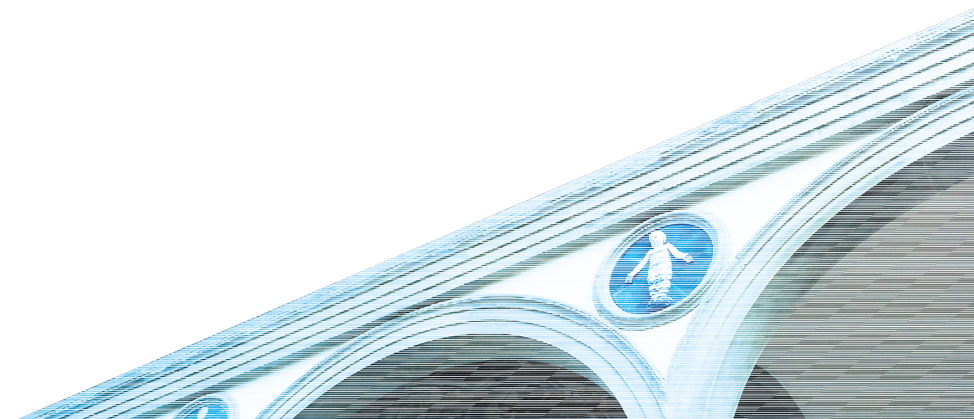
*Observance of the International Day of Families, 15 May, 2020*

Dominic Richardson  
UNICEF Innocenti



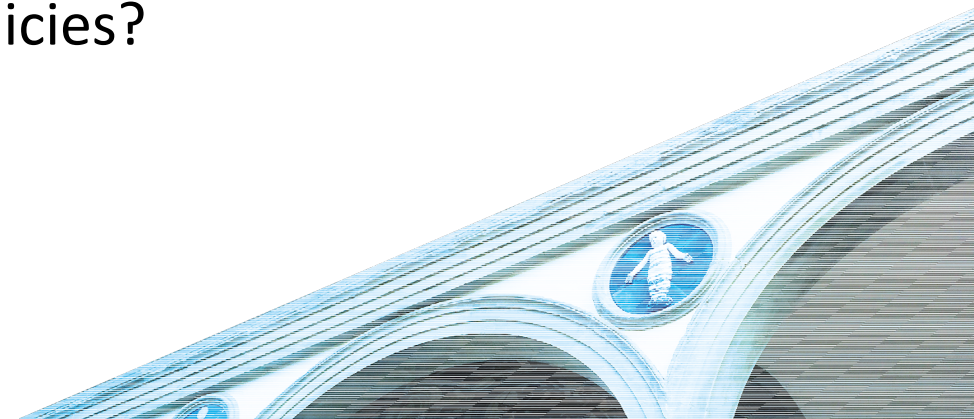
# Key messages

- Innovation in, and global coverage of, family policies continue to expand – they must take a role in SDG ambitions
- Plenty of quality evidence of cross-sectoral effects of family policy
  - A family policy portfolio is needed: designed for purpose, complementary with other social sectors
- Family-focused delivery, and tailored service support, strengthen standard interventions (health and cash benefits)
- Still, evidence points to both positive and negative design effects – trade-offs
- COVID-19 adds complexity and opportunity



# Why study family policies and the SDGs?

- Families are considered to be the cornerstone of society, most common social unit in all countries
- Innovation in, and global coverage of family policies continue to expand, as does the role of families as delivery points for social support (e.g. in comparison to schools).
- This study asked:
  - How do family policies affect the different goals?
  - How do family attributes impact on effective policies?
  - How can family policies be mobilized?



# SDGs covered: and how they were selected

- Group consultation led to a selection of focal goals:



- And 2 targets within each (e.g. SDG 1: No Poverty)
  - **1.1** By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere
  - **1.2** Reduce at least by half, % of people living in poverty in all its dimensions





# SDGs covered: and how they were selected

- This selection does not mean to say there is not a role for family policy in the other goal areas! But...
- Some goals family is not the main benefit unit or point of delivery
  - Trans-national efforts and agreements (e.g. environments, climate change, eco-systems, water, sanitation)
  - Society / community level interventions may be necessary (e.g. infrastructure and industrialisation, city planning, global governance, sustainable consumption)
- Nonetheless, families will be affected, and family involvement and action, as part of communities and societies, is important



# How we undertook the research

- A global team of academics, and advisors
- Data review of global indicator series by target
  - Sources: SDG indicators database, World Development Indicators, etc.
  - Each indicators was mapped by category from published data, assessed for compatibility (e.g. evidence of validity tests), most recent data was used
  - Appropriate cautions raised (e.g. expected underreporting, poor coverage, old data)
- Literature review was standardized:
  - Selected databases (institutional databases, Google Scholar, etc.) using key words, and following-up citations, and date ranges
  - Focus on experiments, evaluations, and meta studies / reviews
- Review meetings, presentation of progress (Barcelona, San Jose, New York)



# How we selected studies to include?

Three step quality assurance process:

- **Conceptually coherent:** Do the data used to represent the family outcomes and policies of interest?
- **Methodologically valid:** Does the author use an appropriate methodology and method to test associations?
- **Scientifically valid:** Are the results of statistical/empirical tests fully and correctly interpreted?

Each author mapped: Study method, benefit or program type and delivery method, where the intervention was undertaken?, for who?, what were the results?

120 studies met the criteria (<70% of total reviewed), most were health studies, fewest were youth employment studies



# Main findings by SDG

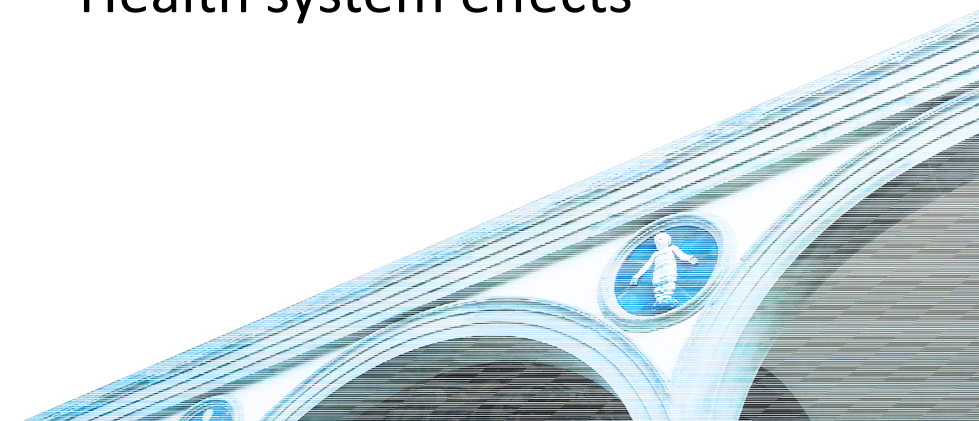
- There is no silver bullet:
  - But family cash benefits consistently reduce poverty and deprivation – can effectively promote employment and gender equality
  - Family focused health approaches are effective – behavioral interventions need family therapists too
  - Parental factors are key to education success, family policies work for school access – less so learning
  - Family policies need to be gender neutral in outcomes
  - Youth employment effects are under-informed
  - Violence preventions means conditions and education (NFP)





Effects on >>>	1 NO POVERTY	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
Policies and programming for						
1 NO POVERTY		e.g. Access to health in multiple countries, and health outcomes				
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING						
4 QUALITY EDUCATION						
5 GENDER EQUALITY						
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH						
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS						

- Observed SDGs connections via family focused policy and programming
- Strong spillover effects found in the majority of cases
- Yet to cover:
  - Health system effects



# Global Recommendations

- Practitioners working with families can take note of the important role played by family professionals, early interventions, and family involvement
- At a global level, more data work on the family is needed
- Evidence is needed support the use of effective family policy, innovation in cross-sectoral integration, and implementation strategies.
- Evidence on scalability and transfer of family policies needed



# COVID-19 considerations

- The SDGs commitment remains
- COVID-19 crisis is unique with multiple routes to affecting family life
- A complex multifaceted situation requires careful response
  - Public policy for families? The role of stimulus and austerity?
- A story of inequality before, during and after (poverty, gender inequality)
- A focus on family is more relevant than ever –
- Opportunity for resetting the public policy discourse



# Thank you

Email: [drichardson@unicef.org](mailto:drichardson@unicef.org)

