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**Families in development:
Assessing progress, challenges
and emerging issues
Focus on modalities for IYF+30 &
parenting education**

REPORT OF THE MEETING

The Expert Group Meeting, organized by the Focal Point on the Family, Division for Inclusive Social Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, discussed recent progress in family policy development. The meeting identified challenges and emerging issues, focusing on mega trends and their consequences for families, the impacts of COVID-19, several aspects of parenting and parenting education, as well as the modalities for the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the family, IYF+30.

The Expert Group discussed how understanding global families, family trends and policies and family education contributes to evidence-informed decisions, evidence-based policies and programmes, evidence-inspired innovation in countries, communities, and organizations around the world.

The Expert Group recognized that a) member states are distinct and all families are unique; b) access to services vary across jurisdictions and between rural, suburban, and urban neighborhoods; c) families are complex and family relationships are dynamic; and d) COVID-19 has highlighted how we are part of a global community, how family systems are critical for the successful implementation of public health measures to mitigate the spread of the virus, and how the strengths and weaknesses of family systems around the world have been illuminated as member states respond and families adapt to our collective vulnerability to the disease.

The Expert Group shared information and insights and made detailed recommendations framed around research and data collection, mega trends, parenting education, prevention of corporal punishment, men in families, intergenerational issues, responses to COVID-19, as well as the preparations for IYF+30.

Summary of the proceedings

Mega trends and families

Demographic trends

1. From a global demographic perspective, almost 40 per cent of households are composed of couples with children. Over 26 per cent of families are extended families. Lone parent households are on the rise and most of those are headed by women. This trend is referred to as feminization of households. Often such households are subject to poverty, stigma and discrimination.
2. The age of marriage has been rising except for sub-Saharan Africa and areas of Central and South Asia. Child marriage continues to be an enormous challenge with 21 per cent of all girls still married off below the age of 18 and 5 per cent below the age of 15. This has grave consequences for women as they enter childbearing too soon, lose autonomy and are not able to pursue education. The notion of 'romantic love' is spreading and parental control is lessening (also in terms of partner choice). Cohabitation is rising across the spectrum. Young, middle aged and even older persons are increasingly cohabiting. Although divorce rates are going up, it is not the case everywhere.
3. Global fertility is going down but mostly in high income countries. It has fallen from 3.2 births per woman in 1990 to 2.5 in 2019 and is expected to drop to 2.2 births per woman by 2050. However, in Sub-Saharan Africa the population is expected to double by 2050.
4. In general, life expectancy is going up. It has increased from 64.2 years in 1990 to 72.6 in 2020. By 2050 it is expected to increase to 77.1. In 2050 1 in 5 people around the world will be above the age of 65. Moreover, the largest growing population is people above the age of 80 and it's projected to triple by 2050.
5. These demographic trends raise the issue of care and long-term care. Decrease in support ratios will put more pressure on labour markets in many societies. As an illustration, in China, 35 million of children are not cared for by their parents who work in urban areas while the children stay in rural areas with the grandparents who work in agriculture. On the other hand, as we have fewer children, families invest more in different ways, e.g. in their

formal education. At the same time, parents tend to use their wealth to control their children. For instance, as housing becomes less and less affordable, children rely on their parent's financial assistance which often comes with conditions sometimes resulting in intergenerational conflict. Moreover, the norms about care and care provision have been changing.

Migration and urbanization

6. In terms of migration around 3.5 per cent of population is on the move representing 272 million individuals living in a country where they were not born. Main receiving countries are the United States and Germany. Main sending countries include India, Mexico and China. Push/pull migration factors have to do with economics, violence and conflict, as well as climate change, which is growing in importance. As more people want to migrate, many Governments restrict immigration. A lot of families depend on remittances sent by their family members. Communication becomes easier with new technologies. There are gendered effects in migration as women take on new roles in host societies. For instance, taking on employment by women may change their marital relations. On one hand women may gain more autonomy and independence, on the other hand, their higher family status as bread winners may lead to an increase in domestic conflict and violence. Moreover, women who migrate and send home remittances are often ostracized as they are perceived as not fulfilling their appropriate gender roles. This phenomenon referred to as 'transnational motherhood' has elicited academic and public policy interest as it highlights the gendered discourses around economics and familial roles and obligations.
7. Today, 3.5 billion people live in urban areas with projections of an increase of 1.5 billion people over the next 2 decades. Urbanization is very multidimensional. In the West, unmarried couples without children tend to live in cities, which results in so called 'kiddie deserts. This is not necessarily the case in non-Western countries where cities are populated by migrants from rural areas. Nevertheless, the needs of migrants are often not considered in urban settings with negative effects on children and older persons. Some research also indicates that cities are often dangerous from a gender perspective with large numbers of women facing harassment in public spaces.

Climate change

8. In terms of climate change, the temperature niche for humans in the next 50 years will change more and will become hotter than in the past 6000 years.

One third of the population of the earth will experience extreme heat, currently found on only 0.8 per cent of the land, mostly on the Sahara. Hotter and longer dry season are expected with shorter wet seasons. Such changes have been already impacting certain sectors of agriculture in some areas, e.g. coffee growers in Central America. As areas of hot weather will be increasing, people will migrate from those areas. We already see that ‘climate migrants’ are often ostracized and lose not only livelihoods but also social connections.

9. The solution recommended by many scientists is to mitigate the effects of climate change and help the inhabitants of hotter areas as migration may not be the best solution. There is a gendered dimension of ‘climate migration’, with both child marriage and sexual violence likely to increase in migrant shelters.

Technological changes

10. Technological changes affect our lives in terms of longevity, well-being, reproduction and communications. High longevity results in several generations living at the same time which may lead to increased bonding but may also result in worsening of intergenerational conflict. Care provision is also affected by those trends. As for reproductive technologies, the focus has changed from contraception (in the 1960s) to fertility (in the 1980s). There are enormous economic and social divides in this area with the rich having access to assisted reproductive technologies. On the other hand, poor people are often stigmatized for having too many children. The phenomenon of fertility tourism, where couples would go to lower income parts of the world to hire women either as egg donors or surrogates to carry the baby, is growing. It raises a lot of ethical issues that have not been dealt with. It also leads to new forms of middle age with post-menopausal women now able to have children.
11. Increased telecommuting (especially during COVID-19 pandemic) revolutionizes learning, work, social life and impacts family relations. Assisted technology has been especially beneficial for families with members with disabilities as virtual communities have been created to share resources, blogs and networks which also helps with removing the stigma associated with disability. The boundaries between school, home and community have become very fluid, impacting our life course. Some predictions in this area indicate that poorer people may rely more on technology for schooling, etc. while personal attention will become the providence of the wealthy.

12. In view of the above trends families and conversation around families will become more important. A systemic perspective that highlights how various factors and trends intersect and interact with one another, which is key to create appropriate responses, is needed. Strengthening of family supports is key as it leads to improvements in economic and social capital of individuals and communities.
13. The analysis of mega trends noted above and their impact on families could serve as a useful framework in preparations for the IYF+30. A unique, family perspective may result in improving existing public policies aiming at advancing the well-being of families.

The impacts of COVID-19

14. The COVID-19 pandemic brought into sharp focus the importance of families in peoples' lives and in national economies at large. This can be contrasted with often pronounced assertion that families have been losing their importance, especially in Western contexts. In fact, the erosion of the family as an institution, predicted two decades ago has never materialized.
15. COVID-19 crisis started as a health crisis but then expanded to other spheres and can be seen as economic crisis and food crisis with future implications for poverty. As of the time of the meeting there were 8 million COVID-19 cases with 250,000 deaths globally. The disaggregated data has been scarce but the largest gender gaps have been found for people 60-74 years old which in turn affects the provision of care by older women.
16. According to the ILO, 305 million jobs were likely to be lost, especially in the informal sector (where 90 per cent of jobs are by women). The crisis has had huge implications for education. According to UNESCO, 1.6 billion students have been impacted with school closures. This has had an impact on gender digital divide, as those who have better resources have better access to digital technology and are better equipped.
17. Low income families have been affected by food insecurity. The COVID-19 crisis is likely to cause over 160 million people to fall into extreme poverty.
18. This crisis is quite different from other crisis, such as the 2008 financial crisis, or health crisis of Ebola and Zika earlier as it has affected economic sectors with large share of female employment, such as retail, food and hospitality. For instance, the food and accommodation businesses suffered from closures affecting 144 million workers with over half of them women.

19. Women have also been at the forefront of the COVID-19 response as healthcare workers. There are 96 million women or 70.4 per cent of total workforce in health/social work sectors. The share of women among all workers in health and social work in 2020 differs among regions and countries. In 23 countries, including Eastern Europe, Finland, Portugal and Mongolia, the share is 81 to 90 per cent. In 60 countries, including the US, Canada, Australia, Western Europe, Russia and several Latin American countries the percentage is 71 to 80.
20. The **unpaid care work** accounts for 40 per cent of GDP. Women dedicate on average, 3.2 times more hours to unpaid care work than men. Grandmothers spend over 5 hours on care work daily.
21. No country has achieved equal share of unpaid care work and progress in reducing the unpaid care gap has been slow. On a positive side, men are more involved in unpaid work than ever but mainly in household activities such as shopping, or house repairs rather than care work itself. Over the last 15 years, women's time in unpaid care work decreased by only 10 minutes a day while men's unpaid care work increased by 13 minutes a day. In terms of the average hours per day spent on unpaid care work, by gender and race/ethnicity in the US, women in Hispanic and Asian couples spend more in care activities.
22. In terms of the impact of COVID-19 on unpaid care work, there has been a persistent trend to re-traditionalize care. Studies documenting this trend have been limited to Western countries and we should treat them with caution as little data is available. For instance, in the United States, United Kingdom and Germany during the lockdown, women spend significantly more time caring for children. Moreover, homeschooling has emerged as a new domestic task for many families with some surveys indicating that it has been mostly mothers' responsibility to create educational content for children out of school. Importantly, in lockdown situation working mothers spend less time on paid work but more on household work. Even when working mothers earn more, they do more childcare than working fathers.
23. There have also been some positive instances of more egalitarian care arrangements. For instance, in the US, share of families with equal sharing of unpaid work increased – due to fathers spending more time on domestic work. In Spain, men increased their participation in household tasks, such as grocery shopping, while in the UK, gender childcare gap narrowed from 30.5 to 27.2 per cent due to men's availability to participate in childcare. Fathers also doubled their time on childcare when they lost their jobs in UK.

24. In terms of key factors in redistribution of unpaid care work, fathers who work from home or lost their jobs have more availability for unpaid care while mothers continue to do more unpaid care and domestic work regardless of employment and working conditions. The above also depends on the level of flexibility of working arrangements and the type of work performed by mother, whether she is in essential services or no.
25. Examples of Governments' response to COVID-19 with a gender lens include supporting of working parents' care work during school and childcare closures through parental leaves. However, interventions here are mostly limited to mature economies. In the US, for the first time, the paid family care leave has been provided (for 12 weeks). Norway doubled childcare leave to 20 days while Ireland introduced flexible work for public sector employees.
26. In terms of care services, care support for essential service workers has been offered in some countries. For instance, in Austria, France and the Netherlands, childcare facilities for essential workers remained opened. In Australia, childcare fee relief was introduced while in Iran new nursing homes opened.
27. In terms of financial support, income support for parents, such as cash for care has been offered in some countries. In Japan subsidies were offered to companies with paid-leave systems. In addition, utility support through free or subsidized household utility bills have been provided. In Colombia, water services were offered free of charge for low income families while in India, free cooking gas was provided to women in rural areas.
28. Vanier Institute in Canada conducted research on COVID-19 impact on families via surveys starting 11 March. Findings indicate that during the pandemic, family strengths have been magnified and families have been spending more time together, communicating, playing or eating meals. Six in 10 parents reported talking to their children more often than before the lockdown began. In some cases, tensions increased, mostly in families where tensions had been present prior to the pandemic, with 10 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men indicating that they were very or extremely concerned about the possibility of violence in the home. Fewer than 2 in 10 adults in committed relationships noted that they had been arguing more since the start of the pandemic. The stresses are particularly high for parents with young children, especially those with children with special needs like autism.

29. From mental health perspective, crowdsourcing participants reported either very good, excellent or good mental health (46 and 31 per cent respectively). Nearly half noted that their mental health was about the same or even better than prior to the pandemic as the stress of commuting, and other time-consuming activities related to work was reduced. Women were considerably more likely than men to report experiencing anxiety or nervousness, sadness, irritability or difficulty sleeping during the pandemic.
30. In terms of Government support, Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) has offered \$2,000 every four weeks to workers who have lost their income as a result of the pandemic. Additional \$300 per child was added to the benefit as of May 2020. Other benefits include mortgage payment deferrals, goods and services tax credit, temporary wage top-up for low-income essential workers, emergency Relief Support Fund for Parents of Children with Special Needs and more.
31. The impacts of COVID-19 will have serious consequences for work-family balance, educational and health systems and national economies at large. The impacts of the pandemic on work-life balance future deserves to be further researched also in the context of IYF+30 preparations.

Parenting

32. Globally, four types of **parenting practice/styles** have been identified: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and uninvolved.
33. Authoritarian style is based on strict parental authority, firm control practices, focusing on obedience with little communication and directive orders and punishments. In contrast, authoritative style gives autonomy encouraging children to be self-governing and leaving them space for independence, encouraging autonomy and monitoring progress.
34. Permissive parenting expresses warmth, avoids confrontation, has low enforcement of rules and high acceptance with almost no punishment. On the opposing end, uninvolved parenting encompasses rejecting-neglecting practices when parents neglect children's needs and display little communication and minimal interactions with children.
35. Importantly, parenting styles have been somewhat coitized in literature as there may be mixed styles. Cultural traditions and economic conditions vary among countries and may dictate different practices as well.

36. **Positive parenting** is mostly associated with authoritative parenting practice. Positive parenting must be sensitive, consistent and nonviolent as well as affective, emotionally secure and warm. Positive parenting sets boundaries and rewards accomplishments and shows empathy. Most importantly, it must be embedded in unconditional love and recognition of the positive. When children find at home unconditional love and recognition of the positive, they are empowered from that trust to develop and to learn.
37. In terms of positive discipline, positive parenting stems from kindness, promotes sense of connection, teaches life skills, builds positive relationships and negates permissiveness and punitive measures. Other components of positive parenting recognize that families who are perceived as kind, but firm tend to thrive. Secure attachment theory confirms that children have better outcomes when parents respond to their needs in a sensitive and loving way. Behaviorist theory focusing on consequences of actions and using positive reinforcement is also applicable to positive discipline. Knowledge of child development is also necessary for positive parenting.
38. A lot of research points to encouraging consequences of positive parenting, linked to authoritative parenting style (as opposed to permissive and authoritarian styles, noted earlier) pointing that children are less likely to engage in socially risky behaviour and have better emotional health. Moreover, children of parents who are both supportive and demanding tend to have better academic performance and display better emotional resilience and social skills.

Corporal punishment

39. Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), has been nearly universally ratified across the globe, the work on preventing **violence against children, including corporal punishment**, continues. With reference to SDG16, it is expressed in target 16.2. In terms of physical abuse and corporal punishment it is sometimes a hard distinction depending on perceptions in different cultures. Actions intended as corporal punishment may lead to physical abuse and something intended as physical abuse may be incorrectly referred to as corporal punishment if it doesn't lead to major bodily harm.
40. Physical abuse can be defined as harming of a child on purpose including beating, biting, kicking, striking or any action that leads to the physical injury of the child. Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical

force, no matter how intense with the intent for the child to experience bodily pain as a form of a discipline for the child's behaviour.

41. The two definitions provide a challenging distinction because a parent could plan to use corporal punishment but go beyond what was intended which could lead to physical abuse. Consequently, there is no doubt that corporal punishment is a form of violence against children. You can make an argument that it won't have as negative outcome as physical abuse, but we come from the premise that all forms physical harm are unacceptable.
42. There is a lot of evidence on negative consequences of corporal punishment, including worse relations between parents and children, worse childhood mental health, including internalizing problems like anxiety and depression and externalizing issues like aggression and antisocial behavior. Children have lower self-esteem, perform worse in school and on standardized cognitive ability tests. Later on, in adulthood, individuals who had experienced corporal punishment report greater levels of depression, aggression and antisocial behaviours.
43. Some have argued that these effects of corporal punishments are confounded as it is difficult to distinguish whether children experienced only corporal punishment, or they were exposed to broader physical abuse as well. It is important to discern here that children who experience corporal punishment are at a greater risk of physical abuse. It sets a model that violence is an acceptable disciplinary strategy and an acceptable way to solve problems. Recent meta-analysis indicates that parents using only spanking found similar long terms effects on childhood and adulthood proving that corporal punishment has harmful effects.
44. Cultural normative hypothesis states that in cultures where corporal punishment is widely used, its effects are less harmful (as it is extensively accepted and practiced). In the late 1990s and early 2000 there was some research supporting this premise but even in those studies there were no positives associated with corporal punishment and longer studies following the initial studies children reported more negative outcomes as compared to those who did not experience corporal punishment.
45. The rates of prevalence of corporal punishment around the world range from the low of 45 per cent to the high of 95 per cent. It is estimated that around 80 per cent of children around the world have experienced at least one instance of corporal punishment. Its prevalence does not depend on gender or income.

46. Legal prevalence of protection of children extends to 54 countries which have prohibited corporal punishment. Currently, it is prohibited in schools in 118 countries. On a positive note, the rate of adoption has increased over the years. Sweden was the first country to outlaw corporal punishment of children in 1979 and by 1996 only 5 countries have established this law, by 2004, 15 have, by 2008 – 28, by 2012 -34 had, and then we see a big jump from 34 to 54 as of 2018, indicating that the pace is accelerating. Despite this positive trend, still only 10 per cent of children live in a country which prohibits corporal punishment.
47. The example of Finland illustrates the effect of legislation introduction with the rates dropping after the law was enacted. This shows that rates of corporal punishment may not diminish based on changing attitudes and legal action is required. At the same time different methods to influence parents to change behavior have been introduced, e.g. through the provision of educational materials, motivational interviews where parents spoke with an interviewer for an hour with a goal to influence their perception of use and ‘benefits’ of corporal punishment. All those interventions of one hour or less resulted in a short-term decrease of positive attitude toward corporal punishment, which proves the point that short interventions can be very helpful.
48. It should be kept in mind that legislative changes are essential but changing laws may also be a long and bureaucratic process. In the meantime, awareness raising campaigns are necessary. Although many campaigns to eliminate physical and sexual abuse of children have been conducted, they are mostly not seen by parents as linked in any way to corporal punishment. Establishing public service announcements emphasizing the harms of corporal punishment based on research and recommending short interventions and then assess if the programme results in change of attitude and reduction in corporal punishment are then vital. However, some studies indicate that such programmes changes attitudes but not necessarily behaviour.
49. The issues of violence in the family is linked to shared norms about male dominance in the family, ideas of men needing to be in control. An important phenomenon of hypermasculinity is a prevalent problem around the world and an obstacle to corporal punishment elimination. It is largely connected to a fear of losing paternal authority.
50. We need to challenge the beliefs of what it means to be a real man. In designing parenting education programmes we need to address parents’

expectations and tailor them to parents' needs as they may be facing many challenges.

51. In Latin America outlawing of corporal punishment (in 10 countries) did not lead to a decrease in corporal punishment which points to the fact that law enforcement although very necessary is not sufficient. Changing attitudes, values and norms is essential as well. It's also worth noting that the issue is further complicated by political rivalries defending specific positions.

Regional perspectives on parenting

52. Although violent discipline is a common but concerning practice in **Latin America and the Caribbean**, strong, positive beliefs and confidence towards parents and family are also common. They include affectionate and emotional support, communication, comprehension and solidarity, especially with mothers. Parental control and parental support are the main features of parenting.
53. Using physical violence is a common feature of parenting in the region. Available data in Latin American and Caribbean countries (LAC) is incomplete and children of different social sectors are under-represented. Physical and emotional abuse by caregivers is widespread across all ages in children. Physical violence is most common against 2-3 years old (50-60 per cent) declining as the age increases. The most systematic and comparable data comes from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) gathered by UNICEF (2019) concerning violent discipline at home. In LAC, 14 countries report higher levels than 50 per cent and only 3 report lower levels.
54. Similar finding on prevalence of violence against children in household settings were found in **Asia**. Both Latin American and Asian societies can be characterized as collectivist in contrast to Western societies. Individualistic societies tend to develop an independent self, linked to individual self, independent decision making and achievement of personal goals and emphasize the importance of individual accomplishment based on personal goals and preferences. In contrast, the collectivist societies emphasize the development of interdependent self-based on the values of cooperation, harmonious relations, and the prevalence of group interest over the individual.
55. Research on styles parenting behaviours and attitudes is more prevalent in **North America and Western Europe**. However, collectivist features of

‘interdependent self’ generally defined, have not been sufficiently informed by studies. One Western conceptual tradition identifies authoritative parenting as the best-balanced parenting style, which may include ‘mild’ or ‘moderate’ use of aversive methods. However, the difficulty and ambiguity to determine ‘mild’ or ‘moderate’ leaves room for corporal punishment as a disciplinary method. For instance, spanking may be considered permissible in the context of warm, understanding relationship. Hence, both this Western conceptual tradition and LAC parenting include and allow the use of violent discipline as a disciplinary method.

56. Authoritarian parenting includes high level of control allowing for physical and emotional punishment with negative consequence on child development. The authoritative style resolves challenges as well by its understanding and accepting of corporal punishment as a discipline method. ‘Mild’ forms of punishment thus become part of acceptable disciplining methods. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has addressed this issue by postulating that no form of violence is acceptable.
57. So far, 10 countries in Latin America have fully banned corporal punishment and 9 more are committed to full prohibition. Overall, countries which have banned the practice still report high rates of corporal punishment indicating low levels of enforcement. What’s more, civil codes and legislations in countries committed to ban it still include wording such as: parents’ ‘right to correct’ or to ‘sanction’ their children and the use of ‘moderate’ or ‘reasonable’ punishment.
58. Parenting in **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)** is placed in a variety of contrasting settings. They vary from high income Gulf Council countries (GCC) to least developed countries (LDCs) and countries confronting conflict and humanitarian emergencies. Maghreb and LDCs suffer from economic hardship, high unemployment and lack of appropriate policy response with a fragmented social protection systems. In terms of access to early childhood education, 80 per cent of children are covered in GCC countries like Kuwait, while under 5 per cent are covered in countries like Yemen or Mauritania.
59. Such conditions have implications for parenting practices. In fact, parenting practices cannot be understood without poverty, unemployment and lack of effective social protection policies in mind, as well as the impact of wars and conflicts, which forces millions to refuge and become internally displaced. Of the 60 million displaced people, both refugees and people displaced within their home countries worldwide, close to 40 per cent originates from the MENA region.

60. Authoritarian parenting style is most common in the region, affected by patriarchal concepts of conservative societies. The second style is authoritative style, mostly associated with the middle class. However, the lack of social mobility and the shrinking of middle class is a growing phenomenon in the region having negative impacts on parenting practices.

Men in families

61. Fathers have a profound and lasting impact on their children's development, including the early childhood. Nevertheless, nowhere in the world are men equally sharing caregiving with women. It is not only the question of asking men to participate more. It is also about engaging men more as supportive caregivers and recognizing fully their contribution. This requires intentional effort at the policy level and programmes interacting with families. Action is needed to change the restrictive social norms and transforming gender relations and institutional practices. Fatherhood is a critical juncture in men's lives to adopt practices that contribute to gender equality or restrictive notions that prevent it.

62. Children's home environments fundamentally shape their health, well-being, and development throughout their lives. Children's opportunities to thrive are impacted by a range of experiences influenced by interactions with and between their parents. There is a body of evidence indicating the importance of both residential and non-residential fathers for child development both directly and indirectly. Fathers positively impact children's cognitive development and educational achievement through direct stimulation, nurturing and interactions. Children with involved fathers have higher self-esteem, lower rates of depression, criminality and substance abuse. They also display fewer behavioural problems (boys) and less psychological problems (girls). The positive impact on the quality of relationships, through modelling of equitable co-parenting and participating in household responsibilities has been observed. Men also have an indispensable role in violence prevention (both inter-personal and against children).

63. Importantly, children witnessing and/or experiencing violence have diminished capacity to partner and parent without violence. When we look at individual, family, community and society levels, attitudes that condone violence, gender inequality, male dominance in the family, are the key drivers of sustaining violence in the family. Gender-transformative approach is then key to address these risk factors. Still, many parenting

programmes do not address such dimensions. Gender transformative approach is key to address risk factors and prevent the reproduction of gender inequitable relations that sustain violence. The approach examines and challenges restrictive gender norms and power imbalances between men and women and groups based on race, socio-economic status and other factors. It actively seeks to change harmful gender norms and power imbalances through the adoption of equitable, non-violent attitudes and behaviors.

64. The important aspects of fathers' positive engagement include:

- Actively participating in protecting and promoting the health, wellbeing and development of their partners and children
- Being emotionally connected with their children and partners
- Taking joint responsibility with their partner for the workload
- Fostering a respectful and caring co-parent or/and couple relationship if living together
- Supporting their partner's autonomous decision-making, agency and health
- Resolving conflicts in a peaceful way and working to prevent violence by promoting caring and respectful relationship in the family

65. Importantly, there are some barriers to men's involvement, including the restrictive gender norms and expectations driving inequities in the division of work within the household. Moreover, parenting support intervention and policies are mostly designed and targeted to mothers/women caregivers. In addition, rigid socialization and lack of exposure of boys to childrearing and nurturing behaviors and lack of enabling institutional culture and supportive work environment continue to create a barrier to men's full involvement with their families. There is still insufficient and low coverage of parental leave for fathers, and even when they are provided, men often do not avail themselves of them due to work culture not recognizing the role of men in families.

66. There is some emerging evidence of effective interventions to engage fathers which resulted in improved father-child relationship; increased in men's time spent in caregiving and household work; reduction in men's use of violent discipline methods against children; reduction in men's perpetration of intimate partner violence as well as more equitable relationships among parents. Some of the successful programmes in the Global South include Program P in Rwanda and Bolivia, REAL Fathers and

Parenting for Responsibility in Uganda and Safe at Home in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar.

67. Gender transformative interventions should be integrated into public health services to be more accessible and effective. They should also be accompanied by social and behavioural change communication campaigns. An example of such campaign is MENCARE, a global platform to promote research exchange, evidence based programme development and tools for advocacy. It counts with 100+ partners in 55+ countries.

Intergenerational relations & grandparenting

68. Over one in five families in Asia live with grandparents. Three generation families account for 21.2 per cent of the total households. Skip-generation families of grandparents residing with their grandchildren account for 1.3 per cent of the total number of households. Globally, Asia has the highest prevalence of extended families. In these settings grandparental care, meal preparation and cultural transmission are more likely to occur. This is a corollary of the tradition and culture, value commitment to one's family, parents' labour migration due to rapid economic development, as well as weak social protection systems.
69. The prevalence of intergenerational households varies by country and region with Iran, Israel, Japan, republic of Korea and the State of Palestine showing the lowest prevalence of below 6 per cent ranging through mean of 23 per cent in Indonesia, Yemen and Iraq with the highest prevalence of over 30 per cent in Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Maldives and the highest of over 45 per cent in Tajikistan. They are most common in Central Asia and least common in East Asia. Skipped generation families are more prevalent in South East Asia. Lower income countries have more intergenerational households.
70. Grandparenting is estimated to take place in 1 in 4 households in Asia but it does not include grandparents not residing with their grandchildren. In Asia, grandmothers on the father's side, on average 62 years old with less than primary education, living in rural areas are more likely to provide grandchild care with 31 per cent of those providing care in full time work.
71. There is no data on the amount of care provided. Limited data indicates that grandparents care for children under 5 years of age, with 50 per cent under the age of 2. Research indicates that the effects of grandparenting can be both positive and negative. On the positive side, grandparenting is

associated with less depressive symptoms, good self-rated health, higher mobility and greater life satisfaction. For the grandchild, grandparenting is associated with healthy development, good mental health, greater resilience and social skills as well as prosocial behavior. On the other hand, grandparenting can be accompanied by exhaustion, physical and psychological stress and lower social well-being. Some children who receive grandparental care are more likely to be obese, have behavioural problems and delayed non-verbal skills.

72. In terms of effective parenting for intergenerational solidarity, the relationship between grandparents and parents is likely to be promoted through co-parenting arrangements, closeness, parenting support, clear division of labour and less exposure of child to conflict. In terms of risk factors, discipline methods and use of physical punishment and tension between in-laws can be seen. The relationships between the grandchild and grandparent is strong when there is emotional closeness, financial assistance, long-term caregiving duration with frequent contact after the caregiving spell. When there are economic tensions, there is more chance of worsening of grandparent – grandchild relation.
73. All in all, findings from literature show that managing potential stress and conflict and enhancing emotional closeness are vital for effective grandparenting. Similarly, parenting education focusing on greater emotional closeness during grandparenting could contribute to stronger intergenerational solidarity.
74. The programmes should consider the characteristics of grandparents (such as their age, mobility and overall well-being) and caregiving, with special attention to those in skip-generation families.

Parenting education

75. Parenting education is an integral part of family life education. Parenting education and support impacts the quality of childrearing and child well-being and quality of life in general. Rapid increase in technological advances have impacted development of parenting education programmes. For instance, the use of artificial intelligence increased the understanding of family functioning and improved data management in social services and many of them are focused on parenting. We have also witnessed the technological impact during the pandemic. In this new environment it's important to have explicit policies to support parenting and parenting education in order to increase funding and implementation.

Regional perspectives on parenting education

76. In the **European Union**, the 2006 European Council Directive to promote positive parenting encouraged Governments to take direct action through financial, legislative, and programmatic investments to develop family support interventions. Several European countries took on board those recommendations. For instance, Estonia developed a strategy for families and children including parenting support (2012-2020). In Sweden, the National Strategy for Parental Support has been developed (2009). In Hungary, Child Protection Act secured family counselling.
77. Data collection on family relations is not systematic. WHO has done some research on child well-being and parenting practices. Some indicators used are taking meals together in family, as they give an opportunity to share information and provide support. Other indicators include high life satisfaction by young people, high quality of family communication, the easiness of talking to father and mothers and the overall support coming from family members (not only mothers and fathers).
78. In terms of parenting support programmes, Evidence-Based Parenting support programmes (EBP) have been found most successful. As an illustration, the metanalysis of the Incredible Years Programme focusing on parent-child relationship for children up to 12 years of age, indicated reduction in child conduct problems, improved parental communication and better use of discipline. It was used successfully in Sweden, Portugal, United Kingdom and Estonia. Its nation-wide implementation in Norway resulted in the reduction in harsh discipline and increased positive parenting. The programme is also being implemented in Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Russian Federation.
79. Similarly, Positive Parenting Programme (Triple – P) originally developed in Australia, offers multilevel parenting support strategy to reduce children’s behavioural and emotional problems. There are several levels of intervention: population universal media campaigns to intensify parent training and family interventions programmes for children at risk for severe behavioural problems (individual and face to face group training, has been adopted in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK).
80. The Generation PMTO (Parent Management Training), originally developed in Oregon is based on social learning model where professionals work with parents to reduce coercive parenting behaviours. The training aims at increasing positive practices by working with individual families

served at home, agencies and web-based groups. The training was successfully implemented in Iceland, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway. Other examples of successful programmes include Systemic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) and Parenting for Life-long Health; both programmes are group-based interventions. Many programmes on parenting education in Europe are linked to hospitals and schools. Civil society is also active in parenting education through family guidance centers, especially for vulnerable families. Counselling is also provided through child protection units.

81. In **Latin America**, parenting education programmes are scarce and mostly focused on campaigns and support to women and children, victims of domestic violence. In some countries, including Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay and Cuba, early childhood education (ECE) programmes with a broader view of parenting are present. They work on changing behaviours and promote positive parenting and family dynamics rather than focusing solely on health and nutrition.
82. There are several limits and challenges to Early Childhood Education programmes in Latin America. They mostly do not engage parents or raise awareness. They also tend to keep a traditional relationship between parents and schools and programmes, providing information but failing to engage parents. Moreover, very few impact evaluations have been made regarding such programmes. Ninety-eight per cent of studies on promising interventions come from Western societies with 95 per cent of all evaluations relating to only 12 per cent of global population. Data is scarce and efforts are needed to build systematic statistics and qualitative information in all regions. Social policy must focus on prevention of violence in society at large, rather than focusing only on targeted vulnerable groups. It is important to promote positive parenting and other preventive measures that address risk factors as they are more effective in the long run and cover whole populations.
83. Parenting education approaches in the **Middle East and North Africa** have been recently analysed in the Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) study *“Parenting Programs in the Arab Region”*. There are many gaps in the 108 programmes reviewed. They relate to the lack of evaluations of the programmes; lack of set criteria governing programmes and poor documentation. Most documented information comes from programmes in high-income settings. There is also an inadequate use of the internet, media and written bulletins in the programmes as well as poor coordination among service providers, resulting in programme duplication. What’s more, there is incoherence of the theoretical grounding of programmes and a challenge

in promoting positive parenting practices in vulnerable contexts. There are also issues with long term funding and lack of programmes for families living with disabilities as well as for imprisoned populations.

84. Evaluation of several programmes indicates that the majority of participants are women which is consistent with the stereotype of gender roles in the MENA region, perceiving fathers as breadwinners and mothers as caregivers.
85. Enrollment in the programmes is driven by parental desire to learn parenting techniques in order to deal with children's behavioural issues, understand the risks of technologies and resolving family conflicts. Among the positive outcomes identified are development of children's personalities; eliminating negative behaviours; managing time and communicating with children better; learning self-control and finding out how to identify abilities and talents. As for negative outcomes, they have been mostly related to the absence of adolescence and youth aspects in the programmes. There is also a general lack of participatory approach with mostly lecture structure and no time for discussion.
86. The need to frame parenting education as an investment needs to be addressed. It starts with why positive parenting matters and what the programmes could accomplish to fulfill the ultimate goal beyond child well-being, which empowers future generations. While parenting in some MENA contexts is characterized by authoritarian styles, at the same time, permissive and neglecting styles have been reported in high-income countries. Moreover, parenting in the region faces exacerbated challenges when it comes to national settings of poverty, unemployment, conflicts and displacement.
87. Evidence from impact assessment studies proves that authoritative parenting style is the most constructive practice with associated positive impact on child well-being. Yet, it remains a challenge to implement this model in the region. Parenting programmes should help in building parents' capacities to parent. Nevertheless, mapping the parenting programmes in MENA demonstrates that they are fragmented with a lack of evidence-based approach, and do not respond to the parents' needs. The evaluation of the programmes is very limited due to the lack of impact assessment studies. Moreover, the programmes do not cover the most vulnerable.
88. In view of the prevailing trends in corporal punishment, parenting programmes should focus on violence prevention and educating parents about the negative consequences of corporal punishment must be included

in such programmes. Moreover, assessing parenting styles and parenting needs is essential in the design of parenting programme.

89. Targeting schools for group parenting education programmes is a good approach as children are in the same age and socio-economic group and benefits extend to school performance. Another entry point for parenting programmes could be health institutions.
90. Programmes on fathers in both regions are fragmented. In Europe, a lot of programmes targets both parents as the notion of co-responsibility is becoming a norm in Western countries. Different countries have different views but values of gender equality are driving the care agenda. In Latin America there are some programmes linked to gender equality and care, promoting sharing of housework and care responsibilities as well.

Parenting education and civil society

91. Parenting education courses around the world include different perspectives. Many mainly focus on child development. There are also many programmes focusing on parents in vulnerable situations, including situations of substance abuse, humanitarian crisis responses or assistance to single parents. Community focus is also prevalent in parenting education courses as is focus on fatherhood. Methods used differ as well. For instance, International Federation for Family Development (IFFD) uses business case method for their parenting education programmes.
92. It is important to capitalize on the findings of experts on parenting education and for overall formalization of the informal perspective on parenting education used so far. This can be achieved by supporting families through comprehensive education, training, promoting positive parenting and enabling safe environments. Promoting research on the impact of parenting education and its significance for social development is also vital as is advocating for recognition of civil society perspective enriching global policy reports; building skills for parent-child relationships improving child behaviours and preventing maltreatment.
93. In terms of progress in addressing the issue of parenting education, several milestones can be seen starting in 2011 with UNDESA publication “*Men in Families*” and Strengthening Families initiative by Save the Children. In 2014, as part of IYF+20 preparations, parenting education was mentioned in the context of intergenerational solidarity. In 2015 parenting education was tackled by UNICEF regional offices and more research was done by Eurofund and Save the Children. In 2016 SOS children committed more

funds to research and the interest grew at national level with Kenya developing national framework in 2017 and EU through its Families and Societies project as well as at the international level through UN Resolution on the Right so the Child culminating in the GA resolution mentioning positive parenting in 2018.

94. It is important to protect these landmark achievements and secure the gains made in raising the issue of parenting education. Agreed language, contained in General Assembly resolution should be evidence-based and enriched by solid content. Examples of enriching that language can be seen in several initiative such as Conferences on Parenting and Child wellbeing (UNICEF and DIFI) culminating in Civil Society Statement on Parenting (2018). The momentum generated by this EGM should be maintained.
95. In terms of stakeholders interested in supporting the parenting education issues, several can be identified at the international level, including UNDESA, UNICEF (through is Parenting Hub), UNESCO, HABITAT, UN Women. OECD and EU are active in following up on family policies, including design, implementation and evaluation and data collection. Within academia renewed interest can be seen, e.g. though new family studies at US universities. Within media, Common Sense Media is a major stakeholder educating parents about the media content and its appropriateness for children and teenagers. In some newspapers, such as The New York Times, a new Parenting section has been established. New interest in parenting has been also recently raised due to COVID-19, when the importance of parenting during the pandemic has been widely recognized.

IYF+30 preparations

96. Based on responses to Note Verbale sent to Member States and United Nations entities, the topics of interest for research and awareness raising include family relationships and the role of family in health promotion. These topics can be grouped under SDG16 in terms of the broad role of families in social cohesion. Another broad area here relates to violence reduction and prevention. Under SDG3, the role of families in the promotion of health and well-being has been noted while under SDG5 issues of gender equality in families can be discerned.
97. United Nations entities focused on the issues of children's rights and children's voice in families. Best interest of children and violence prevention featured prominently here. Families and agriculture were also highlighted especially in relation to the current UN Decade for Family

Farming. Social protection under SDG1 was raised as well as issues relating to inequality under SDG10.

98. Responses from civil society indicate interest in following-up on family related issues vis-a-vis SDGs 5, 3, and 1. Demographic trends invoked most interest from civil society, followed by urbanization and migration and the impact of technology. In addition, all entities pointed to the need to access the impact of COVID-19 on families. Detailed expert recommendations on research topics for the IYF+30 preparations are enumerated below.
99. The meeting concluded that the way forward for action on issues under discussion should focus on evaluation and follow-up through data collection, literature review and evidence-based recommendations. Momentum should be kept on focusing on positive parenting and its importance for child well-being and youth transitions. Going forward more focus is needed on unpaid care and redesigned workplace as well as gender equality and violence prevention. Sharing of good practices on parenting education is essential to improve outcomes as well. Detailed recommendations have been offered on all issues on the agenda.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research & data collection

Facilitate and emphasize data collection. Data constraints limit policy makers in designing and modifying appropriate programs and policies that can support diverse households and families. Research teams need to formulate methods that encompass both qualitative and quantitative measures that take into consideration gender specific criteria and cultural variations.

Invest in the collection of systematic, longitudinal family-level data using multiple informants (e.g., mothers, fathers, children, grandparents) so that comprehensive statistical analysis could be conducted, and the process of change examined.

Promote research on families and parenting, programmes evaluations and impact assessments of parenting policies and programmes, so that the role of parents and grandparents and their contribution to children's wellbeing and social development can be better understood and supported by all stakeholders; importantly, policy-design and evaluation should be informed by children's views and perception about parenting practices.

Mega trends

Encourage data collection on the varied impacts of the interaction between families and **new technologies**, including reproductive and communications technologies and their impact on family relationships and family life.

Promote stakeholder participation in the formation of effective work-family policies with an emphasis on **remote work** in order to understand which policies are the most effective for various constituencies.

Create databases of good practices of policies and programmes, that have proven to be successful in various regions as well as effective local initiatives of **the use of technology** to assist families with members who have a disability, long-term illnesses, and /or older persons.

Taking into account **demographic trends**, increase investments in quality early learning and childcare, as the ability to reconcile labor force participation and childbearing leads to increased fertility for low fertility settings. Encourage state supported tax incentives for multi-generational households including health benefits and housing and care supplements.

Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular **migration**; give priority to family reunification; facilitate transfer of remittances; invest in skills development and facilitate cross-national recognition of skills, qualifications and competencies of **migrants** and their family members; create public media campaigns to eliminate all forms of discrimination against migrants and their families.

Encourage development programs to take **climate change** and its impacts on the livelihoods of local populations into account with special attention to vulnerable families and older persons.

COVID-19 Response

Design comprehensive care systems from a gender, intersectional and human rights perspective that foster co-responsibility between men and women, the state, the market, families and the community, and include joined up policies on time, services, resources and infrastructure, and universal, good-quality public services to meet the different care needs of the population, as part of social protection systems.

As part of national care systems: (i) enhance support to working parents and grandparents with childcare options by expanding access to paid family leave and paid sick leave, introducing paid reductions in working time/work-sharing for workers with care responsibilities and making work regulation more flexible

to allow remote work when possible; (ii) improve gender responsive services to reduce care burdens, including through the provision of care for older persons, persons with disabilities and those who recover from COVID-19; (iii) increase financial support by expanding the reach and levels of family and care benefits; introducing new cash transfers, including for women with care responsibilities; and providing additional bonuses, subsidies and vouchers to hire child services for working parents; (iv) prioritize investments in infrastructure, including in rural areas, to ensure adequate access to water, sanitation, energy and broadband.

As part of labour market policies: (i) promote active labour market policies that support (re)integration and progress of unpaid carers into the labour force; (ii) improve flexible work arrangements, including the option of home-based work; (iii) legislate to protect the rights of all carers in both formal and informal sectors, and secure living wages for paid care workers.

Parenting & parenting education

Expand family life education, including relationship maintenance and communication, conflict resolution, parenting, and issues of gender equity.

Ensure adequate investment in the design and execution of parenting education programmes as a tool to enhance children's well-being and prevent all forms of violence against children, including through promoting non-violent forms of discipline. In the design, consider parenting styles and needs.

Promote national campaigns and parenting education to raise awareness about the importance of using non-violent discipline methods and eliminate harsh discipline including corporal punishment, through the positive discipline model and strengthening parent knowledge about how their actions affect child development.

Encourage Government institutions and civil society to invest in introducing, developing and evaluating parenting education programmes to ensure they are inclusive of grandparents and other relatives raising children. Examinations of their effectiveness should be established through rigorous testing such as randomized control trials.

Focus parenting education programmes on all developmental stages: early childhood, childhood, adolescence and youth. Focus on developing parental skills for children's healthy development and school performance. Specific parenting programs should be tailored for parents/caregivers of children-at-risk.

Prevent punitive or permissive behaviour through the positive discipline model by investing in strengthening parents' knowledge about how their actions affect child development.

Ensure that parenting education programs address a variety of parenting practices, including child-parent communication (with both mothers and fathers), support, spending quality time together (such as sharing meals).

Ensure that parenting education programmes consider the abuse of authority by parents and a variety of strategies supporting parents.

Corporal punishment

Outlaw corporal punishment and stop differentiating between corporal punishment and physical abuse and recognize that these are all forms of violence against children. Enact policies and legislations banning harsh forms of discipline including corporal punishment in all spheres of life.

Increase the use of public service announcements and short-term interventions and expand research on the effectiveness of these interventions (both short and long term) on changing parental attitudes and integrate them into parenting programmes.

Promote positive (rather than negative) reinforcement as the best parental technique/management style and method.

Men in families

Invest in conducting action-oriented research to understand barriers to fathers' engagement and positive entry points to catalyze their active involvement.

Support the development of a repository and open sourcing of evidence and knowledge on the roles and impact of fathers to inform policy development.

Design, implement and evaluate gender transformative parenting programs that can be taken to scale in a sustainable way. Ensure programs and interventions that engage men are designed and delivered in ways that respond to women's needs, choices and priorities.

Support transforming social norms around care provision by incentivizing men's contribution to unpaid care and domestic work, including through paid paternity leave, equal parental leave, and awareness raising campaigns.

Integrate strategies to actively engage fathers and male caregivers in ongoing key services and programs directed to families seeking to promote children and adolescent development that reach large sectors of the population. Policies related to early child development, social welfare, childcare, newborn and child health, nutrition, education, and youth development should encourage fathers'

positive engagement with children, while recognizing the realities of different types of families and fathers, including non-residential fathers.

Intergenerational relations & grandparenting

Recognize the valuable contribution of grandparents and other next of kin to parenting and invest in family policies and programs that promote strong intergenerational interactions, such as intergenerational living arrangements and parenting education to promote inclusive urbanization, intergenerational solidarity and social cohesion. Consider older persons as asset rather than burden.

Given the absence of public policies for grandparenting, parenting education for grandparents who provide care could effectively address the challenges they face during the caregiving spell. The programs could aim at building emotional closeness, managing stress and conflict among the generations, adjusting co-parenting for those grandparents, or promoting healthy lifestyles. For skip-generation families, parenting skills training could be added.

When parenting education programs are designed, the characteristics of grandparents (i.e. age, education level, employment) and caregiving (i.e. age of the grandchild, primary activities, frequency, and time) should be taken into account. For instance, materials should be suitable for grandparents and tailored to the care needs appropriate to the grandchild's developmental stage. Any in-person courses need to account for the mobility, technology skills and age-related conditions of the attendees.

Grandparents in skip-generation families in rural areas might have greater needs for grandparenting support than three-generation families in urban areas as more significant childcare commitment will be required as a primary caregiver. Therefore, the anticipated program should also consider the rural-urban gap in resources and infrastructure, and family composition.

IYF+30 Preparations

The focus themes for IYF+30 arise from the culmination of the unique perspectives from academia, civil society, and public sector. Rooted in research, leading and emerging policies, programmes and practices that can have a great impact on families and family members are interconnected, interdependent and intersect. Thus, advocacy work for the use of family lens to the concept of family and individual well-being should form part of the preparations. Focus on families in adverse circumstances and situations and those with special needs is needed. It is also essential to promote research and evaluation of gender-transformative programmes that can be taken to scale in a sustainable way.

Moreover, it is vital to develop a communication strategy for IYF+30 and engage various stakeholders, especially policymakers. **Research and awareness raising activities should focus on the following topics:**

Family well-being & Megatrends

Demographic challenges

- The impacts of fertility declines
- In the context of demographic changes, focus on older adults both as care recipients and providers & overall intergenerational care opportunities

Urbanization and migration

- Family-friendly urban spaces
- Family reunification and remittances

Climate change

- Impact of climate changes on families, including older persons
- The role of parents and educational institutions in educating children about climate change

New technologies

- The impact of new technologies, digitalization and digital divide on families, work-family balance and intergenerational relations (including the impact of COVID-19)

Emerging issues

Parenting education and support

- Investing in parenting education at all stages of children's lives
- Focusing on the role of fathers, mothers, grandparents and other relatives
- Cooperating on development of a core curriculum for parenting education
- Emphasizing positive parenting and the use of positive discipline
- Working on norms, values and laws as well as raising awareness of harms of corporal punishment

New aspects of work-family balance & unpaid work

- Enhancing understanding of intersection between market economy and care economy
- Taking into consideration mental health issues of caregivers and care recipients

COVID-19

- Focusing on various aspects of social consequences of the crisis for families (rather than economic concerns only)