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United Nations Expert Group Meeting

**“Assessing Family Policies: Confronting Family Poverty and Social Exclusion and Ensuring
Work-Family Balance”**

**ASSESSING FAMILY POLICIES AROUND THE WORLD:
A FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE**

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Family Policies in Eastern Europe



- Developing and revising explicit family policies - at the forefront of the policy making agenda of the Governments in the region
 - Eastern European countries - heterogeneous, and while some common trends emerge, the general policy recommendations need to be adjusted specifically by each country
- A review of family policies in Eastern Europe and recommendations (Robila, 2009) - at the 2009 UN Expert Group Meeting on “Family Policy in a Changing World: Promoting Social Protection and Intergenerational Solidarity” organized by UNDESA and the Doha International Institute for Family Studies in Doha, Qatar
- *The goal of this presentations*
- *- to discuss family policies in Eastern Europe with a focus on those targeting poverty and work-family balance*
- *- underline the importance of developing a comprehensive system of assessing family policies in general and in Eastern Europe in particular*



Family Policies



- The central role of families in society - the need for effective family policies
- Although - universal recognition of the importance of the family, there is a wide variation among countries in terms of developing explicit family policy frameworks, implementing and evaluating them
- The central role that families play in society - recognized at the institutional levels, by *strengthening national institutional mechanisms that specifically address family issues*
- Countries - choose appropriate and effective arrangements which can influence socio-economic policy design, budget allocation, better data collection, and evidence based evaluation (UN EGM Report, 2009)



Family Policies



- Evidence-based policy - helps decision makers develop policies by putting the evidence at the center of the policymaking process (Segone, 2008)
- Evidence - information obtained from research, good practices, and evaluation
- The policymaking process – political; public policies - developed through the use of power
- Policymaking and implementation - the context of limited resources; understand not only what works, but what works at what costs and with what results
 - Information on cost-effectiveness and cost-benefits of different policy proposals



Family Policies in Eastern Europe



- Eastern European countries - significant socio-political and economic changes during the post-communist transition, which shaped the social policies impacting families
- The fall of the totalitarian political systems - autonomy and determined a widening variation in the economic and social reforms in the region (Robila, 2004)
 - Wide differences in the Gross Domestic Product per capita - \$18,800 in Poland, \$11,500 in Romania to \$6,400 in Ukraine, \$6,300 in Bosnia-Herzegovina or \$2,300 in Moldova (U.S. GDP per capita: \$45,800) (CIA, 2011).
- Eastern European countries and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) - significant economic growth after 1990s, surpassing the significant economic challenges of the transition
- The distribution of economic growth – unequal; children benefiting less than the adults (UNICEF, 2006)



Family Policies in Eastern Europe



- These economic and social changes - implications at the family level: reduction of fertility rate or increase in international migration across the area
- Total fertility rate (children born/woman)
 - low -1.24 in Lithuania, 1.25 in Czech Republic, 1.26 in Bosnia/Herzegovina, 1.58 in Macedonia, 1.43 in Estonia (CIA 2010)
- International migration
 - about 25% of Moldova's population left the country in search of work; 30% children living without one or both parents
 - Romania - about 20% of the children between 10 and 15 years old have one or both parents working abroad
 - Stimulating economic growth in the region is necessary by creating job opportunities and broad economic growth in all sectors
 - While remittances - economic growth in the short term, they cannot support sustainable and equitable development (UNICEF, 2006)
 - Policies and support programs - immigrant families need to be developed (Robila, 2011)



Confronting Family Poverty



- A system of explicit and institutionalized family policy - legal recognition of the family as a social institution (Zimmerman 2001)
- *Financial Support: Combating Family and Child Poverty*
- The policies supporting families' financial function - at the center of family policies frameworks
 - Increase in the international focus on poverty reduction due to the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals
- Most of the countries in Eastern Europe developed *Poverty Reduction Strategies* - medium-term macro frameworks within which policies to reduce poverty
 - Romania and Bulgaria formulated national plans to combat poverty and social exclusion as part of their integration process into European Union in 2007



Confronting Family Poverty



- Family policies - the impact of social policies on *all the family members*
 - specific attention - impact of policies on children and the need for children to be more visible in the social policy arena
- Within the Poverty Reduction Strategies developed by the Governments in the region - policies to reduce poverty among children
 - prioritize policy measures and to reach all age groups, including *children*
- One in four children is living in absolute poverty (below the poverty threshold of \$2.15/day)
- Wide disparities in children wellbeing across the region, between and within countries
 - Within countries - differences between households of different sizes and structures (large / small families, single /two-parent families), and urban / rural
 - Russia - poverty rate for households with two adults and one child - 9%, for two adults and three or more children - 34%
- The recent economic growth in the region - a real opportunity for States to develop appropriate measure to tackle child poverty (UNICEF, 2006)



Confronting Family Poverty



- Bringing *child poverty* on the policy agenda is recommended
 - challenging the assumption that adult and child poverty are the same (UNICEF, 2006)
 - Major differences between adult and child poverty - specific policy provisions; the impact of poverty on children has a longitudinal effect - risk of being poor as adults
 - Children - not able to improve their situation as they rely their wellbeing on the actions of their families / societies
- While provisions of direct income support to households with children are common throughout the region - the level of expenditure is low and as such children are not taken out of poverty
- The public spending on education and health remain low in Eastern Europe
 - countries need to spend more resources on children - to narrow the disparities prioritizing the financial allotments to ensure that children receive a fair amount of resources



Confronting Family Poverty



- Poverty - *child abandonment and institutionalization* - persists in Eastern Europe
- States - encourage families to keep the child by providing financial assistance to families at risk and education and social support through social services
 - Armenia - 48% of families with infants are living in extreme poverty: there is an alarming growing trend of parents placing them in institutions (Annual Statistics, Armenian National Statistic Agency, 2004)
- Education and information on the consequences of child abandonment and consequences of growing up in orphanages
- Strategies for reforming the residential system in the region are in full process and the number of deinstitutionalized children has decreased
- Moldova (2002) - the regulations for the Family-Type Houses for Children without parental care; Regulations for the Professional Parental Care (2007)
 - A monitoring system for the quality of care needs to be developed



Confronting Family Poverty



- *Policies Supporting Childrearing*
- One of the main concerns in Eastern Europe - *very low fertility rates* (e.g., 1.2 in Moldova, Belarus; 1.4. in Croatia; CIA, 2010)
- In most of these countries, the long-term effect - negative implications on economic growth and on the social protection system
- Many governments in Eastern Europe - dissatisfaction with the current demographic trends in their countries, some referring to it as - “demographic crisis”, “demographic security crisis” (Lutz, 2010)
- Important for these countries to spend more on children and families as an important investment in economic development
 - Belarus - National Program on Demographic Security (Newport, 2010)
- Maternal benefits are paid - but most of them are usually linked to formal employment, and as such are not received by mothers who are unemployed
 - Benefits supporting mothers with young children should be universal
- Having a second child increases the risk of household of being poor - countries have to develop policies that would prevent these families fall in poverty



Confronting Family Poverty



- *Housing* - major concern in Eastern Europe
- - shortages of housing; very high and unaffordable costs for young families
 - Armenia the legislation regarding the right to housing has gaps (Armenian National Statistic Agency, 2004)
 - Belarus most of the married young couples do not have their own homes. In a survey of newlyweds in Minsk, more than half of them were living with their parents, one third in dorms, some of them were renting apartments and only 3% had their own housing (Nikiforovna, 2008)
- There are some provisions for large families for loans to allow them to buy apartments
- One of the most important factors in determining quality of family life is availability of housing
 - housing problem interferes with family functioning, discouraging married couples to have children
 - Governments need to develop programs to assure affordable housing to young couples



Family Policy Assessment



- As family policies develop, a system of evaluation needs to be in place in order to assure effectiveness
- Monitoring and evaluation is necessary in achieving evidence-based policymaking (Mackay, 2008)
- As part of policy making, national planning focus on government priorities among competing demands; monitoring and evaluation support their deliberation by providing evidence of the most effective strategies and activities
- This assessment enhances transparency and supports accountability by showing the extent to which governments achieve desired objectives (Mackay, 2008)



Family Policy Assessment



- Transition from traditional implementation-based approaches toward results-based approaches, examining not only the governments capacity to implement policies but also the effectiveness of these policies and whether they produced the intended results (Kusek & Rist, 2008)
- This results–based monitoring and evaluation system assesses whether and how the goals are achieved over time
 - Monitoring - measuring the progress toward short, intermediate and long-term goals, providing feedback on the progress made towards achieving the result
 - Evaluation - examines why results (translated in indicators) were achieved (or not)



Monitoring and Evaluation System



- Kusek and Rist (2008) - ten-step model to building a results monitoring and evaluation system:
- 1. Conducting a readiness assessment (determining the capacity and willingness of the government to construct a results-based monitoring and evaluation system)
- 2. Agreeing on outcomes to monitor and evaluate
- 3. Developing key indicators to monitor outcomes (indicator development is a central activity and drives all subsequent data collection, analysis and reporting)
- 4. Gathering baseline data on indicators (the first measurement of the indicators)
- 5. Planning for improvements: setting realistic targets (most outcomes are long term and complex and therefore it is helpful to have interim targets)



Monitoring and Evaluation System



- Kusek and Rist (2008) - ten-step model to building a results monitoring and evaluation system:
- 6. Monitoring for results (data collection, analysis and reporting; establishing the tasks, who will be responsible for what activities, the timeline, the costs)
- 7. Evaluative information to support decision making (process evaluation, outcome and impact evaluation)
- 8. Analyzing and reporting findings (the format, the audience)
- 9. Using the findings (increases accountability, transparency and resource allocation)
- 10. Sustaining the monitoring and evaluation system within Government (ensuring utility)



Family Policy Assessment in Eastern Europe



- This ten-step model could be used by Eastern European policymakers to design sound and comprehensive assessment of family policy
- Detecting the most effective approaches and policies is tremendously important in a region where significant economic struggles persist
- Identifying the most successful programs and prioritizing the resources will allow Governments to make progress to more equitable societies and happier families



Family Policy Assessment in Eastern Europe



- The World Bank and other donors - support developing countries to measure their performance, especially as they prepare Poverty Reduction Strategies working to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other policy objectives
- It is important for countries to measure the progress that they are achieving using specific indicators
- Most of the governments in developing countries need technical and financial assistance for this (Mackay, 2008)
- Developing monitoring and evaluation system of policymaking requires a demand from the governments, a culture that values them in order to successfully institutionalize these mechanisms
 - World Bank and the International Monetary Fund allow for debt relief of developing countries if they show commitment towards reforms especially those that promote poverty reduction outlined in the Poverty Strategy Papers (Kusek & Rist, 2008)
- Eastern European countries need to indicate this commitment and to adequately monitor and evaluate their policies.



Family Policy Assessment in Eastern Europe



- Country-led evaluation reflects the importance of a country's assessment of its own development (Adrien, & Jobin, 2008)
 - Recipient country ownership of evaluation - more effective, by increasing the use of evaluation information to improve performance
- The challenges - are the lack of financial resources to institute it by the developing countries, lack of consistent national monitoring and evaluation frameworks and methods, and very few specialists
- In Eastern Europe - a weak evaluation culture due to the political system and historical institutional framework and therefore developing local monitoring and evaluation capacity is essential (Adrien, & Jobin, 2008)
- Governments need to be open in disseminating the evaluation results to promote credibility and transparency
- Wide variation among the countries - evaluation capacity, with the EU member states having better structures and capabilities than the ones which are aspiring to EU membership



Family Policy Assessment in Eastern Europe



- Despite the significant resources devoted to policy and program evaluation and its importance, the utilization of evaluation results is low
 - the problem: the available evaluation information is not organized and communicated effectively, or not disseminated at all to users and stakeholders (Bamberger, 2008)
- Follow up after the evaluation and examine how the evaluation findings and recommendations are used by policymakers and how they influence decisions and actions
- Need of evaluation capacity building in Eastern Europe
 - requires strengthening the technical capacity of evaluators to conduct evaluations and also the capacity of stakeholders to interpret and use the findings of the evaluation
- For the recommendations to have practical utility – need of an action plan with specific timeline, responsibilities and procedures



Policy Recommendations



- Eastern European countries - develop explicit family policy frameworks
- Develop evidence-based family policies
- Given that in Eastern Europe policymaking and implementation occurs within a context of limited resources, is important to understand what works, at what costs and with what results
- Stimulating economic growth in the region - necessary so that people can find employment
- Increase awareness of the impact of social policies on all family members, prioritize policy measures and reach all age groups, including children
- While provisions of direct income support to families with children are common throughout the region, the level of expenditure is low and should be increased
- Provision of more generous and better targeted child benefits and an increase in the material support provided to families with children, and investment in children's human capital
- Prevent child abandonment - encourage families to keep the child by providing financial assistance to families at risk and education and social support through social services.



Policy Recommendations



- Governments - develop programs to assist young couples with having independent housing
- Policies and support programs - immigrant families
- Besides good frameworks and formulations of family policies, a comprehensive system of their assessment is necessary
- Family policies monitoring and evaluation - to identify the most effective use of available resources and identify the practices that are not performing
- Results-based approaches - to examine not only the governments' capacity to implement policies but also the effectiveness of these policies and whether they produced the intended results
- Governments - open in disseminating the evaluation results to promote credibility and transparency
- Follow up after the evaluation and examine how the evaluation findings and recommendations are used by policymakers and how they influence decisions and actions