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Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)  
Division for Social Policy and Development

**Recommendations**

United Nations Expert Group Meeting,  
New York  
15 – 17 May 2012

**“Good Practices in Family Policy Making:  
Family Policy Development, Monitoring and Implementation: Lessons Learnt”**

Convened as part of the preparations for the  
twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2014

**Preamble**

Family policies and programmes should be consistent with existing international standards, including Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as relevant International Labour Organization’s Convention.

Family-friendly policies should be based on the principles of gender equity, non-discrimination and best interest of the child and other family members. They should take into account family diversity and family conditions.

All member states have a responsibility to invest in families and develop sound policies and programmes that support families and benefit society.

Promoting good practices in family policy making is an opportunity to make informed and sound decisions about policies and programmes that support families, intergenerational relations and benefit society.

With the family as the basis of society, all member states have a responsibility to invest in families by conducting research on them, teaching about them at different educational levels and developing sound family policies.

All relevant stakeholders such as Governments, civil society, private sector and academic institutions should contribute to multidisciplinary teamwork in family policy development, provision of comprehensive and integrated social services and programmes as part of policy implementation, and conduct thorough family policy assessments.

Countries already implementing family policies should be encouraged to provide support to other countries in developing effective explicit family policies and in applying a family perspective when designing, implementing and assessing social policies.

Activities in support of issues noted above would promote the well-being of families, which in turn would contribute to fostering democratic, stable and cohesive societies.

### ***Family policy development and good practice promotion***

- Develop family policy on the basis of sound, comprehensive empirical research on families.
- Ensure that family policies have clearly stated goals and evaluation schedules.
- Conduct longitudinal assessments of family policies, their implementation and their impact using multiple methods (quantitative, qualitative) and multiple respondents (e.g., parents, grandparents, children).
- Improve data collection, monitoring, research and analysis on family forms and living standards, especially on populations missing from traditional surveys. At the local level, examine the complexities of domestic situations in poor families in order to design effective policies and render assistance before any punitive measures against parents might be applied.
- Develop appropriate indicators and practical methodologies for assessing the direct and indirect effects of family-focused policies and programmes on overall family well-being.
- Introduce transparent and effective mechanisms to ensure public accountability for family policies at national level.
- Improve partnerships between relevant stakeholders, including Governments, academia and civil society in family policy development, implementation and evaluation.
- Promote regional networks for research and information exchange on policy and programme options, as well as on experiences and good practices to assist in developing national contextualized family policies aimed at addressing family well-being in general, and family poverty and social exclusion in particular.

- Report on family policy developments, implementation and assessments in the international arena, so that policymakers can learn from different experiences.
- Share knowledge of good practices from different regions of the world to facilitate the development of guidelines for effective extension and delivery of family-focused programmes and services.
- Ensure the participation of families from diverse sections of society in designing, monitoring and evaluating family-focused policies through appropriate mechanisms.

### ***Family law***

- Further family law to expand women's rights, promote fair custody rights in the best interest of the child and ensure that access to resources is gender neutral.
- Educate women and men about their rights and obligations under family law through national campaigns and literacy training.
- Ensure family law enforcement at the national level through training of judges and monitoring of court decisions especially in rural and underprivileged urban areas.
- Strengthen the social as opposed to legal contract (e.g. providing supports when neglect is due to lack of means or other social constraints.)
- Ensure that immigration policies do not separate or endanger families.
- Promote family reunification and prevent family break-ups by eliminating discrimination on the basis of disability in immigration and refugee legislation and policy.

### ***Family-oriented policies and programmes***

#### ***Work-family balance***

##### ***Public policy relevant to working families***

- Extend maternity leave, paternity leave, and parental leave, with financing and eligibility mechanisms that reduce gender disparities and maximize coverage. Develop mechanisms to extend the coverage of these regulations to informal employment sectors. Ensure that leave is of adequate duration and with adequate income replacement.

- Ensure that leave is available to meet the health and educational needs of children and youth, and the health and care needs of older adults. Ensure maximum of consideration for the needs of family members with disabilities or other special needs.
- Promote family-friendly work hours, including special attention to evening, night, and rotating shifts, in the public and private sectors in order to accommodate household and family needs. Generate mechanisms that facilitate the implementation of work-family balance measures in small and medium-sized companies.
- Ensure workplace protection for working families in the informal economy and in precarious work situations such as casual, temporary, and part-time employment contracts, through which workers commonly earn less and have access to fewer workplace protections.
- Prioritize social investment in care services for children, adults in need and older persons. Promote initiatives for the extension of the school day when beneficial to the child and/ or provision of out-of-school activities, as well as the extension of high-quality early childhood care and education (ECCE). Expand the supply of high-quality care for under-three year olds. Provide high-quality, affordable, appropriate, and accessible care options for older persons.
- Provide care in intergenerational settings, when possible, to ease the burden on families caring for children, older persons and those with special needs or disability.
- Increase collaboration across government ministries on work-family balance policies (e.g. between Ministries of Health, Labour, Gender Equity, Finance, Children, Social Justice, Education, etc.) and across government, employers, unions and community organizations.
- Include work-family issues in major relevant United Nations initiatives such as global social protection floor, Global Compact, relevant family provisions of conventions, etc.
- Examine and implement the best practices in portfolio of legal obligations and incentives to encourage the development of more effective and improved work-family policies.

***Data, monitoring and evaluation of work-family policies and programmes***

- United Nations agencies in collaboration with other international organizations should collect and make readily available information on Government and private sector progress in work and family issues.

- These transparent measurements would provide information for accountability purposes and for countries and companies seeking to improve work-family balance and (a) measure the existence and implementation of country-wide relevant laws and policies and (b) collect and assess company-level information on work-family balance policies and practices.
- The international community, national governments and research/academic bodies should generate and share information that examines the social and economic benefits of work-family balance schemes. A collaborative effort of United Nations agencies, other international organizations academic institutions, and civil society actors can also make a difference by creating a readily accessible policy tool kit, including the compilation and dissemination of information on work-family policy measures among countries and corporations (good practices, legislation, economic cases, and implementation results).

### ***Employers***

- Endeavour to make workplace culture more family-friendly so workers can utilize different options available to them.
- Take account of and respect employees' family needs to build up an effective profile and assess priority areas for support in their workplace.
- Use imaginative and effective ways to lead and model workplace cultural change towards improved work-family balance, in particular by Chief Executive Officers and supervisors.
- Formulate creative methods to communicate written formal and informal work-family practices and policies within the workplace, including podcasts, blogs, tweets as well as traditional manual and notice-board methods.
- Invest in team skills training of managers involved in work-family implementation.

### ***Family poverty and social exclusion***

- In efforts to alleviate family poverty, focus on the family as a unit, taking into account that the interdependence between family members and proper investment in children is necessary to improve living standards, bolster human development and break intergenerational transfer of poverty.

- Ensure that family-oriented social policies are gender-sensitive, given that gender inequality and associated labour market and educational disadvantages play a major role in causing and perpetuating poverty.
- Ensure that families, especially the most vulnerable, have access to social services and social protection for which they are eligible.
- Invest in children in the early years and throughout childhood to promote human development, and avoid personal and social costs later in life.
- Ensure that child support systems have straightforward payment procedures, and maximize coverage so that absent parents enjoy their rights and undertake the responsibilities required of them.
- Detailed data collection, measurement and evaluation are necessary to capture the needs of all family members to improve anti-poverty policy, including for those groups often missing from standard survey data collection (e.g. children with disabilities or grandparents raising grandchildren).
- Provide information and guidance to help families to exercise choice over, and make decisions about, the benefits and services for all family members.
- Ensure respect for the legal capacity of adults who have a disability and the right to make their own decisions about the benefits they receive.
- When relevant, combine public works programmes with skills training and information to workers to aid their search for employment and/or to promote self-employment at the end of such programmes.
- Prioritize social policies that promote access to good quality and stable employment as well as complementary services, such as tax-based initiatives, conditional cash transfers or in-kind services depending on national priorities.
- Encourage all employers to offer part-time employment opportunities and flexible working hours while keeping equivalent labour standards of full-time jobs in place. This would contribute to making employment opportunities accessible to all families, including those with young children or sole parents.

- Provide a range of social policies and programmes for families with persons with disabilities after consultation with persons with disabilities, their families and their representative organizations. Ensure that receipt of these benefits does not disqualify families from other benefits for which they would normally be eligible.
- Maximize coverage and quality of all-inclusive, affordable childcare, early childhood education, and health services for children.
- Improve housing conditions and infrastructure services for families with children.

### *Intergenerational issues*

- Given the importance of intergenerational perspectives in family policy design, Governments are encouraged to integrate intergenerational aspects into their policies and programmes.
- Create or strengthen ministries or ombudspersons at the national level responsible for using an intergenerational lens to review policies and practices, in order to ensure that they are designed so that all generations are viewed and engaged as resources for and deserving of support from families, communities and each other.
- Initiate or improve supports and services for parents, grandparents, and other adults caring for older persons and family members with disabilities.
- Encourage the allocation of public and private funds towards more intergenerational programmes, shared sites or centers and educational opportunities for people of all ages.
- Ensure that academic institutions provide programmes in gerontology and the study of the life conditions of older persons in different life situations.
- Assess the impact of socio-economic policies on intergenerational solidarity as an essential element of policy design and implementation.
- Raise awareness of the importance of intergenerational solidarity through celebrations, festivals, and holidays while increasing opportunities for intergenerational collaboration.

- Recognize grandparents as caregivers and care recipients, given the extended life span in most world regions.
- Educate across the lifespan to raise awareness of intergenerational issues.
- Invest in parents during each stage of their children's development (this includes but is not limited to investment in parenting education), and in parallel invest in direct services for parents.
- Promote parenting education and research on parenting, especially on parent's relationships, the role of fathers and co-parenting (within policy settings, academic institutions, civil society, etc.) as well as research and education on caregiving for older persons and family members with disabilities.
- Ensure there is an adequate supply of affordable housing designed for multigenerational households, including grandparents and other relatives raising children, as well as older persons and family members with disabilities in need of care themselves.