UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES
Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
Division for Social Policy and Development

Aide Mémoire

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

I. BACKGROUND

Family policy in the UN context

The Focal Point on the Family in the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social affairs (UNDESA) is organizing an Expert Group Meeting on good practices in family policy making to be held 15-17 May 2012 in New York. The theme of the meeting is "Good Practices in Family Policy Making: Family Policy Development, Monitoring and Implementation: Lessons Learnt". The meeting is convened as part of the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2014.

The meeting is taking place in response to several General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions on the follow-up to the International Year of the Family (IYF), 1994. One of the objectives of the IYF and it follow-up processes is a sustained, long-term effort to strengthen national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families.

The General Assembly has encouraged Governments to continue to make every possible effort to integrate a family perspective into national policymaking and recommended that the United Nations agencies and bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental institutions, research and academic institutions and the private sector play a supportive role in promoting the objectives of the International Year and contribute to developing strategies and programmes aimed at strengthening national capacities. (A/RES/62/129, A/RES/60/133 of 2007 and 2005 respectively)

The recent resolution of the Economic and Social Council on the "Preparations for an observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family" noted the importance of designing, implementing and monitoring family-oriented policies, especially in the areas of poverty eradication, full employment and decent work, work family balance, social integration and intergenerational solidarity. The resolution further encouraged Member States to continue their efforts to develop appropriate policies to address family poverty, social exclusion and work-family balance and share good practices in those areas. (ECOSOC Resolution 2011/29 of 2011)

Further, in 2011, the General Assembly invited governments and regional intergovernmental entities to identify and ensure support for constructive family policy development, including exchange of information on good policies and practices. (A/RES/66/126) In addition, in 2012, the Commission for Social Development invited relevant stakeholders to provide information on their activities in support of the objectives of and preparations for, the twentieth anniversary of the IYF and share good practices and data on family policy development to be included in relevant reports of the Secretary-General. (E/CN.5/2012/L.3)

According, the Expert Group Meeting aims to explore good practices in family policy making in the areas of poverty and social exclusion, work-family balance, social integration and intergenerational solidarity and offer recommendations for further action.

Family oriented policies and good practices for poverty reduction and social inclusion

Family-oriented policies are gradually gaining ground in overall development efforts. Aiming at preventing the intergenerational transfer of poverty, family-focused social transfer programmes are being institutionalized, with Government agencies responsible for their delivery. Among them, cash transfers reduce families' vulnerability, improve child nutrition, health and educational outcomes and reduce child labour.

Social security benefits, such as old-age and disability pensions reduce poverty risks of vulnerable family members. Non-contributory pensions in some regions helped reduce overall poverty and hunger rates. In other regions, in-kind transfers and food subsidies are often used to help poor families and public work-programmes offer parents supplementary employment opportunities. Income and in-kind support for families, however, are not sufficient if they are not accompanied by access to social services, including health, education, housing, water and sanitation.

The very success of poverty alleviation programmes depends on the extent to which they focus on families and incorporate internal family dynamics while encouraging specific activities for individual family members and taking into account their different needs and motivation mechanisms.

Family oriented policies and programmes for work family balance

Policies and programmes promoting work-family balance vary across the regions. They may range from parental leave to child benefits and access to quality and affordable childcare.

Parental leave policies, including maternity and paternity leave upon the birth of a child and parental leave to care for a young child, differing in length and coverage, have become a norm in the majority of developed countries. In developing countries, however, few countries provide benefits in accordance with the ILO standards.

Maternity leave provisions have a great impact on family life and have been associated with reduction in infant mortality and morbidity and higher rates of breastfeeding. Paternal leave taking has the potential to boost fathers' practical and emotional investment in infant care and has been linked to higher level of father involvement in family responsibilities later on.

Flexible working arrangements result in better health outcomes for parents. At a company level, they have also been associated with employee productivity, organizational commitment, retention, moral, job satisfaction and reductions in absenteeism.

Investments in early childhood education and care are another form of support for parents with young children to help them remain engaged in paid work. In addition, other policy objectives such as gender equality and fair distribution of family responsibilities between both parents help achieve work-life balance for all family members. Good practices in promoting professional support and advice and efforts to create a more family-friendly culture in the workplace are equally important.

Family oriented strategies supporting social integration and intergenerational solidarity

Strategies promoting social integration and intergenerational solidarity are critical for families and societies. They promote social cohesion and shared responsibility and contribute to developing positive relationships across age groups and have been shown to strengthen the quality of ties between family members. In times of economic crises, intergenerational ties grow in importance, with family members shielding one another from the consequences of the loss of employment or housing.

Strategies promoting social integration and intergenerational solidarity include family focused child and older care support; variety of care benefits and tax credits; old age pensions; appropriate housing laws; investing in cross-generational community centres and volunteering programmes for the young and the old alike. Initiatives in schools and in the workplace, such as mentoring programmes also improve interactions between generations.

A growing body of research indicates that intergenerational programmes contribute to healthy development of older adults, children and youth. Older adults in intergenerational programmes reported health benefits; children had higher personal and social development scores; youth showed increases in school attendance, attitudes and behaviours relating to substance use as well as improvement in related life skills.

The importance of family policy design, development, implementation and monitoring and sharing of good practices

The design, development, implementation and monitoring of family-focused policies are indispensable to do away with family poverty, ensure work-family balance and support intergenerational solidarity. It is then important to exchange information on regional, national and local efforts undertaken around the world to that effect. It is expected that the exchange of good practices in family policy making will contribute to a wider development of family-oriented programmes and strategies for the benefit of families world-wide.

II. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The primary objective of the Meeting is to provide Member States and other stakeholders with expert opinion and recommendations regarding good practices in family policy making in the areas of family poverty and social exclusion; ensuring work-family balance and promoting intergenerational solidarity.

Experts dealing with various aspects of family policy and good practice are invited from a broad geographical distribution to participate in the meeting in their personal capacities. Experts will be asked to provide a paper, participate in group discussions and give their expert opinion and policy recommendations on family policy development, monitoring and implementation in the areas mentioned above. The experts are also expected to provide specific examples of good practices in family policy making and offer detailed recommendations on further development of policies, programmes and strategies supporting families in the areas noted above.

The expected outcomes of the Meeting are:

a) 7-10 page paper (single-spaced, excluding references and statistical tables) prepared by each expert on issues in the annotated agenda and including policy recommendations

b) Report containing the summary of discussion and policy recommendations

Papers by experts will focus on issues identified in the agenda below, explain their relevance, provide quantitative and qualitative evidence, analyze the roles of social institutions, give examples of good practices, summarize conclusions and provide policy

recommendations. In as much as possible, an emphasis will be placed on policy actions and good practices at the local, national, regional and international levels. The report, recommendations and experts' papers will be posted on the website of the division for Social Policy and Development/Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The final report of the expert group meeting as well as expert papers will be used as inputs to the 2012 Report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for and observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF). This report will be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

The meeting will be convened at United Nations Headquarters in New York in conference room 6 (North Lawn Building). Conference room DC2-1337, 2 UN Plaza, will serve as a back up room.

The total number of participants will be approximately 25, including 12 experts participating in their personal capacity. These experts will be identified and invited by the Division for Social Policy and Development. Representatives from international organizations, United Nations offices and agencies as well as civil society organizations will also be invited. Participants are expected to arrive on 14 May and stay through the duration of the meeting, through the end of the day on 17 May.

Only introductory remarks and brief presentations are envisioned. The preparatory process, including advance preparation of written inputs by the experts is seen as very important. The participants should submit their papers to the UN Secretariat by 30 April 2012. The list of issues to explore is given below, it should be read in conjunction with the annotated agenda provided to all participants, where experts are identified as moderators and providers of introductory remarks.

The participants will meet in 11 working sessions

- Each session will have brief introductory remarks or presentation/s by expert/s which will introduce the topic and provide context for ensuing discussion
- A moderator for each session will lead the group discussion and will be responsible for compiling the recommendations from each session
- Discussions and brainstorming will be the preferred method of work and no formal conference style presentations are envisioned, except session II.
- The working language of the meeting will be English. There will be no interpretation provided. All submissions should be made available to the Secretariat in English.

IV. PROPOSED AGENDA

Tuesday, 15 May 2012

Welcome and introduction
Objectives and expected outcomes

Session I: Defining good practice in explicit family policy making

Demographic, social and economic trends affecting families and the need for adequate policy response
Benefits of focusing on families in policy design
Family-oriented socio-economic policies
Good practice in family policy making: criteria & implementation
Types of good practices in family policies
Good practice data collection & dissemination
Challenges to effective family-oriented policies and good practice sharing

Session II: Ensuring work-family balance

Trends impacting work-family balance
Impact of work pressures on family life
Benefits of work-family balance for adults and children
The importance of quality childcare
Family-oriented responses to ensure work-family balance
Types of policies and programmes
Examples of good practices

Session III: Good practices in work-family balance: types of policies in existence, examples & a way forward

Types of policies and programmes supporting work-family balance and examples of good practices and innovative approaches:
Family leave: maternity, paternity, parental & special leaves
Efforts to increase uptake of parental leave by fathers
Flexible working arrangements
Early childhood education and care
Care for older children, including after-school care
Child care arrangements in the workplace
Statutory support for informal/kin care
Gender equality and greater participation of men in family responsibilities
Caring arrangement for children, older persons, persons with disabilities, including at home care

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

Session IV: Policy response to recent trends in family poverty and social exclusion

Dimensions of poverty and social exclusion
Factors associated with family poverty in developed and developing countries
Families in poverty and at risk of poverty
Intergenerational transfer of poverty
The role of formal and informal education and employment for poverty reduction
Gender inequality in families and societies as an obstacle to poverty eradication
Reproductive and health issues
Current focus of policy response to issues above

Session V: Types of good practices focusing on family poverty reduction and social exclusion

Good policy and practice in the following areas:
Social security provisions
Cash transfers
Provision of basic social services
Food subsidies
Child benefits
Access to employment
Public works programmes

Session VI: Good practices in anti-poverty family-focused policies and programmes in developing countries: examples and lessons learnt

Regional, national & local family-focused responses
Examples of good practices in Africa, Asia & South America
Assessment of good practices, their successes and limitations

Session VII: Good practices in anti-poverty family-focused policies and programmes in developed countries: examples and lessons learnt

Regional, national & local family-focused responses
Examples of good practices in Europe, North America and Australia
What is the impact of good practice on the well-being of families?
Policy and programme evaluation

Thursday, 17 May 2011

Session VIII: Social integration and intergenerational solidarity: issues of concern

Demographic & social trends impacting intergenerational relations
Grandparents – parents – children nexus, how interdependent are we?

What is the current focus of strategies supporting intergenerational relations?

Session IX: Good practices in social integration and intergenerational solidarity: types of strategies, examples and lessons learnt

Types of policies and programmes supporting intergenerational relations, examples of good practices and innovative approaches:
Family focused childcare and older care support and provision
Care benefits and tax credits
Social protection, including pensions
Intergenerational transfers: financial and in-kind support
Formal and informal education
Parenting education
Housing laws supporting intergenerational relations
Cross-generational community centres
Young and older persons volunteering programmes
Initiatives in the workplace: mentoring, job sharing
Expenditure for benefits for the young vs older persons

Session X: Good practices in poverty eradication, work-family balance and social integration & intergenerational solidarity: the role of stakeholders

Communicating the benefits of family-oriented policies
Role of Governments, civil society, private sector, educational institutions, academics and the UN system in good practice development and implementation
Collection of information on and exchange of good practices in family policy making: lessons learnt and the way forward

Session XI: Distillation of findings and finalization of recommendations

V. OTHER ARRANGEMENTS

Passports, visas and travel arrangements

Participants will be expected to make necessary arrangements to have up-to-date passports. An official invitation letter should be used to obtain visa. An information note will be sent out to participants to assist with travel arrangement to New York.

The United Nations assumes that experts invited to participate in meetings are in good health, and that they will inform the Organization of illness or disability that could prevent travel to or participation in the meeting.

All relevant correspondence should be addressed to **Ms. Renata Kaczmarska (kaczmarska@un.org)**, telephone: (212) 963-4596 with copy to **Ms. Guillerma Dumalag (dumalag@un.org),** telephone: (212) 963-2395; fax (212) 963-0111; mailing address: Ms. Renata Kaczmarska, Focal Point on the Family, Room DC2-1360, 2 United Nations Plaza, New York, New York, 10017.

Sources:

Butts, Donna, L. L. Thang and A. Hatton Yeo (2012). *Policies and Programmes Supporting Intergenerational Relations.* Background paper. UNDESA, New York.

Mokomane, Zitha (2012). *Anti-Poverty Family Focused Policies in Developing Countries.* Background paper. UNDESA, New York.

O'Brien, Margaret (2012). *Work-Family Balance Policies*. Background paper. UNDESA, New York.

United Nations (2011). *Report of the Secretary-General on the Preparations for and Observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014*, New York.