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## Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
## United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

# International Capacity-building Workshop on National Family Policies

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**A) Background**

1.      During the last several decades, the family has undergone profound transformations. Average family size has decreased all over the world; young people marry at later ages; the average age of mothers at first birth continues to increase; infant mortality rates have declined; and couples are having fewer children. The traditional, extended family is being replaced by the nuclear family, even as grandparents are living longer and several family generations interact, sometimes living side by side and sometimes separated by long distances.

2.      Alternative forms of union have grown more common, such as unmarried cohabitation, or long-distance marriages, particularly among migrant workers.  Divorce has increased, accompanied by remarriage, with more and more children living in families with step-parents.  Significant numbers of both single-parent families and single-person households have emerged, including a rising number of older persons living alone. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is wreaking havoc on families, often depriving children of their parents while leaving grandparents to care for children.

3.      Policymakers and practitioners in developed and developing countries alike recognize the need to cope with many new family situations, as well as with family-related community and social challenges. Family issues have become a major social, economic and political concern in countries all over the world.

4.      The United Nations has recognized the family as the basic unit of society and that the family is entitled to protection by society and the state. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs received requests for technical assistance to formulate and implement comprehensive family policies that address the improved functioning of all families as well as concerns relating to family vulnerabilities. UNDESA has assisted the Government of the Republic of Maldives, at its request, in the process of drafting a national family policy. The Governments of Moldova and of Armenia have also sought assistance in conducting assessments of national socio-economic policies that have a bearing on families, with a view to preparing family policies.

5.      UNDESA advisory missions to a number of developing countries and countries in transition have highlighted common challenges for family policy.  These include a scarcity of family-focused data and information; lack of specific, comprehensive policies addressing the needs of families; lack of resources; and difficulties in formulating family policies that include and address the needs of specific groups with particular or pronounced vulnerabilities, such as children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, single parents, ethnic minorities and indigenous populations.

6.      Many countries have created a series of policies and programmes to support families and to further enable them to play their crucial role in raising and educating children and providing emotional and financial support to family members, whether or not these form part of a comprehensive national family policy.  An emerging approach highlights support to families among overall national development priorities and provides a framework for the implementation of measures designed to better meet the changing needs of families; the provision of integrated social services that incorporate a family perspective; and other programmes and actions to ensure the well being of families and improve the quality of life of all their members.

7.      In this light, UNESCAP developed a policy framework for strengthening the family through enhanced social services policies.  The framework was adopted at a regional seminar in October 2008 in Macau.   The framework was presented at the workshop and policy-makers and practitioners were invited to determine the extent to which it could be used as a tool for reviewing existing policies and programmes from a family perspective and for integrating family concerns in social services policy making.

**B) The Workshop**

8.      The workshop was jointly organized by UNDESA and UNESCAP, in collaboration with the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN), Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development of the Government of Malaysia.  It brought together representatives of Governments and non-governmental organizations, primarily from countries of Southeast Asia to:

- review current situations and trends affecting family;
- consider existing family policies;

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- share experiences and good practices;
- increase capacities to gather information, using participatory methodologies;
- strengthen abilities to formulate, implement and monitor policies and programmes;
- propose a framework for the elaboration of family policies;
- develop stronger networking and partnerships among all stakeholders.

9.      The workshop agenda was guided by the objectives of the 1994 International Year of the Family (IYF), which were reaffirmed by the General Assembly at the tenth anniversary of IYF in 2004, and by resolutions of the General Assembly on family.  The agenda was divided into three general segments: presentation of country experience by the participants; presentations made by consultants on pertinent issues and the introduction of the UNESCAP framework; and training components presented and led by UNDESA.  Each segment also facilitated general discussion and an exchange of experience and views. The workshop also utilized the experiences of participants in various aspects of social and family policy, including data collection, evidence-based policy development and implementation strategies.

10.     Participants at the workshop reviewed existing family policies and their impact, and examined institutional barriers that hinder the harmonization of diverse family policies and programmes. The workshop considered ways to integrate a family perspective in overall policymaking to reinforce a holistic approach, including consideration of how families are affected, either directly or indirectly, by policies and programmes in other areas.  The Workshop facilitated dialogue between government and civil society representatives, promoting exchange of experience in formulating, implementing and evaluating family policies.

**C) Objectives**

11.     The overall objective of the workshop was to enhance the capacities of participants to formulate, implement and monitor national policies on family using existing international instruments and utilizing participatory methodology.  Specific objectives of the workshop were to increase the capacities of participants to assess, formulate and monitor national family policies and programmes and to integrate them into national social development plans.

12.     The objectives were achieved at the workshop through:
   i)      review of policy approaches to family in participating countries;

   ii)     review of the activities of the UN system, bilateral donors and international/national NGOs in addressing the issue of family;

   iii)    introduction of the draft framework for strengthening the family via enhanced social inclusion policies;

   iv)    elaboration of bottom-up participatory and evidence-based approaches in formulating, implementing and monitoring policies;

<ol type="a" start="5">
<li value="5">assistance to countries to establish practical approaches to family policy implementation;</li>
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      vi)     increased capacities to harmonize and synchronize policies that impact family within national plans and development strategies.

      vii)    identification of further capacity-building needs and knowledge gaps for follow-up activities.

## D) Summary of discussions

### 1. The Context

13.    The workshop was launched by a number of introductory remarks that established the *context* for the discussions that followed.  Participants were reminded that each one of them belongs to a family, and each of them had his or her own very personal understanding of what a family is.  There was no single, universally accepted definition of family and therefore when discussing family policy issues it may be preferable to think about what a family does rather than what a family is: the caring, support and nurturing which families provide for their members.  A family enjoys a sense of identity, responsibility and affiliation, even when its individual members may not be living together.  As individuals we need to receive this support, and we need to provide it to other members of our families.

14.    Family networks have been a pillar of societies for centuries.  Family in the traditional sense was never described as "nuclear" or "extended". It was simply family.  Adults provided care to children who in turn provided care to them in their old age. The system ensured that the needs of individuals were catered for within the family network. Nobody would starve when other family members had plenty. No children would live alone even if their parents and grandparents had died.  In a continent as large and diverse as Asia there are variations to this scenario, but by and large this was the situation most people knew.

15.    Over the years, families in Asia and around the world have faced a great deal of pressure and experienced numerous changes.  Mainly because of economic factors, family members – often males, but also increasingly females –migrated to places of employment, leaving their wives, their husbands, their children and parents at home. Worker remittances proved to be a very important survival strategy for family members at home, although with the passage of time a person's connection to the family network may have weakened.  In recent decades, migration has become increasingly international, and today many Asian families have members living in other countries on the continent or overseas, and it may be expected that family ties will weaken further as a result of the great distances between family members and the amount of time they spend apart.

16.    Economic development, increased urbanization and increased opportunities for women have encouraged smaller families, as marriages and childbearing are delayed, levels of education improve, access to family planning service increases and more women work outside the home.

17.     Through all of these changes, families have proved highly resilient, able to blend traditional and modern values and practices in order to ensure the survival and development of their members.  Yet there was little question that families need additional support – from communities, from civil society, perhaps even from the private sector, and most of all, from Governments, to continue to serve as the basic unit of societies.  For this reason, many countries are increasingly interested in considering how all their policies affect and influence families – both positively and negatively – and some are developing and implementing national family policies.

18.     National family policies are not just remedial, designed to help families in need.  They also seek to promote and channel the strengths and capacities of families for community and national development.  The observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004 led to greater awareness of what families contribute to economic development and social progress.  This "family perspective" became an important factor for development, and is increasingly reflected in national development plans and in programmes of economic and technical cooperation.

19.     The formulation of family policies must take place within the framework of overall socio-economic development strategies but, just as important, those development strategies must also take into consideration the very vital role played by families.  It is very important for policy makers to undertake a diagnosis of the situation and needs of families as they elaborate national developmental policies, national family policies and specific family programmes.

20.     The family, by virtue of its function as the basic unit of society, is not marginal to any person's life.  The family may be undergoing change and facing pressures to fulfill its care-giving functions, but it is crucial for individuals and society at large.  Sometimes, the centrality of family may escape the attention of policymakers, and they should be encouraged to give greater thought to the contributions families make to the well being of their members, and greater consideration to how policies affect families' ability to continue to do so.  Policies and programmes that fail to consider families are not likely to offer the vital support families need.  One solution is to ensure that policy makers take into account the needs of families and consider how their actions will assist families or hinder them from meeting their needs.

21.     Ensuring the integration of a family perspective is not a way to make the family issue disappear.  Integrating family is not an alternative to, or substitute for, a programme of advocacy and technical support.  It is important to continue to provide expertise and appropriate technical support on family issues.  Any efforts at integration must be accompanied by continued advocacy of family issues, leading to a two-tier strategy that combines integration with continued support.

22.     Families, in whatever form people choose to consider them, will continue to be essential for human well being.  Policies and programmes will increasingly recognize this role and seek to support it.  A successful family programme, whether at the local, national

or international level, will require both integration of a family perspective and advocacy of family issues.

### 2. The major issues: Country experience and policy formulation

23. Participants received a series of questions in advance of the workshop, in order to guide them in preparing for their participation. The list is contained in Annex II. Each team made a brief presentation of the major issues and responses to family in its country. This was followed by questions and general discussion of the issues raised. The discussions that ensued during the first day of the workshop are summarized below and provide a glimpse of the rich interaction among participants. Participants particularly appreciated the opportunity to exchange experiences and to learn from other countries.

24. Many countries in the Southeast Asia region and around the world have experienced phenomenal economic growth in recent years, but this economic success has brought about increased pressure on families. Issues currently affecting the abilities of families to perform their traditional functions are related to migration from rural to urban areas, changes in who in the household is considered the "bread-winner", child abuse, domestic violence, teenagers heading their own families, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, unemployment and social exclusion. In this context, policies must be responsive, inclusive and integrative. Their objectives should be:
a) meeting the needs of the individual
b) continuous development and empowerment of the individual
c) strengthening the social support system and provision of social services
The simultaneous pursuit of these three objectives should generate multi-sectoral synergy.

25. In Asia and the Pacific, the institution of the family has received a lot of academic and political attention and, today, concern for family well being pervades the region. In highlighting the main challenges facing the family, participants focused on the traditional functions of the family. As there is no universal definition of family, the presentations and ensuing discussions did not focus on what constitutes a family, but more on the support that families offer to their members, and thus to communities and to society as a whole. Because the ability of many families to perform traditional functions has changed, family policies are needed to support and promote the family's capacity to fulfill its desired roles and meet its objectives.

26. While there may be no single definition of "family", there are nevertheless certain "universal" concepts embedded in national cultural, religious and historical experiences, and these may be reflected in national policies. Participants agreed that this was a matter for national, and sometimes sub-national, discussion. The formulation of family policy in any country should thus be underpinned by "universals" and by the context of developments taking place in that country.

27. In shaping the direction and components of a family policy, policy makers should pay attention to the need to understand how particular families function and the

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challenges they face.  This requires grassroots understanding of the internal and external processes and influences that shape the structure and contemporary functions of the Asian family.  To know how families are coping, it is essential that policy makers engage them directly.  Some participants stated it in order to do that it was first necessary to promote greater empowerment of families at the community level, through means such as focus group research and consultations.  Some greater level of empowerment was considered essential because it would facilitate the participation of those families that are traditionally excluded and most vulnerable.  Bottom-up, participatory development approaches were seen as necessary and practical in promoting empowerment.

28.      Engaging civil society and community organizations is important.  In Asia, civil society groups strengthen relationships among individuals, families, communities and institutions that form communities of practice and help to mediate the relationship between these groups and the State, with the ultimate aim being to improve peoples' lives. In these circumstances, civil society helps to sustain and maintain poor individuals and families.  Not surprisingly perhaps, civil society in Asia often acts as a safety net or "means of last resort".  Thus, one of the aims of policy and policy-making should be to facilitate its vital work and allocate more resources to this essential sector.  This point was supported by several participants and one speaker recalled that there is international consensus on the need for a strong social perspective in achieving the MDGs and achieving social justice.

29.      Throughout the discussion, participants stressed that policy, to be effective overall, requires efficient implementation mechanisms. Implementation mechanisms can be multi-tiered.  In Malaysia, for example, the national social policy implementation mechanism comprises three components. At the federal level, responsibility for social issues is entrusted to the National Social Council (NSC), which includes religious authorities; the National Committee for Social Development; and the National Working Committee for Social Development, which sets the direction of social development, monitors its implementation and evaluates policy performance.  At the state level, the mechanism consists of similar institutions: the State Action Council, the State Working Action Committee, and the District Working Action Committee. These three institutions perform similar functions to those carried out at the national level.  The third component consists of cross-agency mechanisms to facilitate communication between the federal and state governments and with civil society groups in carrying out social welfare programmes.  The concept of "smart partnerships" was pioneered – the notion that projects can be better implemented with active participation of a wide range of stakeholders.

30.      One of the best attributes of Malaysia's social policy mechanism is that it champions and mainstreams social issues in national development policies.  Consideration for strengthening this mechanism centres on how its impact could be enhanced through higher levels of communication and increased, targeted funding.  The "default" approach to policy is inherently top-down and normative, and implementation tends to be inflexible.  As such, some groups may be ignored or deliberately left out.  Hence, in certain areas, community-development approaches were better suited because

they target individuals who remain outside the reach of mainstream programmes and activities.

31.     In this respect, programme design should be participatory. In Maldives, the Government pursues broad consultative processes for social policy development, even though the process is more time-consuming and complicated, and challenges arise in reconciling divergent views and objectives.

32.     Some countries have put – or are looking to put – social policy at the top of their domestic political agenda.  Maldives and Vietnam have adopted a family perspective in their national social policies, seeking to do more to strengthen the family as an institution. The new outlook is translated into actions promoting self-reliance and creating relationships that foster community resilience and cohesion.

33.     In dealing with human development challenges, participants noted that it is often not the lack of political will that hinders social policy development but the lack of capacity and inadequate information and data that stand in the way of progress.  With regard to policy initiatives, the participants discussed the role of social indicators and social impact assessments, which they felt could help ensure that "social development policy starts on the right note".

34.     One participant asked how social issues were addressed by policy in different countries.  Malaysia, because of its ethnic and cultural diversity, addresses social policy in 18 different social sub-sectors, all of which aim to improve family quality of life.  These include areas essential to human development, such as health, education and ICT, disability, child care services, day care centres, income security and social safety nets, capacity building, income tax relief, health services, culture and parenting courses, and older person and youth development programmes.

35.     A question was raised about the effectiveness of targeted programmes for the poor in Mexico. The reply indicated that, indeed, these programmes helped to lift many people out of poverty but programmes might achieve more by responding more directly to the root causes of deprivation, including intergenerational transmission of poverty.  A proactive approach is encouraged by the Government.  Human capital development through conditional cash transfers that require a certain commitment (such as making payments to families dependent upon the school attendance of their children) have been implemented, as have programmes that encourage group- and community-based initiatives for productive activities.

     3.  The major issues: Evidence-based policy

36.     Many countries face persistent challenges in formulating national social policy based on international norms and standards, such as the Commitments of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action).  Among these are the multitude of stakeholders concerned with policy development and implementation.  Just managing the process can be difficult.  In spite of the challenges,

countries can still take effective steps and measures.  It was suggested that starting small and building momentum could prove effective.  Steps could be taken to strengthen access to information and data, to promote knowledge sharing and to increase cooperation among different Government ministries and agencies to improve efficiency.

37.     Although there is often a gap between social research and policy development, Governments are increasingly incorporating scientific ideas and insights in their understanding of social questions, especially in dealing with problems that families confront.  However, some participants recalled that the incorporation of the findings of social research into policy formation is not a straightforward process; it remains complex, sometimes highly subjective, and subject to competing goals.  This is mainly because of the interplay between academic priorities, political ideologies, cultural values and group interests.  Perceptions of what can be considered "valid knowledge" can influence the extent to which social research is considered useful in policy formation.

38.     Some participants suggested that countries that don't have a robust family policy should try to drive the effort to use social research to understand the impact of policy-activities that were intended for the family.  Policy development would benefit from greater integration and use of research findings and other data that provide empirical evidence of existing conditions and needs.  In some countries, national family surveys already inform policy making, monitoring and evaluation.  The Family Dynamics Survey in Mexico, which received responses from 24,000 families, offers a very good example.

39.     The survey found that the situation of many Mexican families differed from the prevailing assumptions.  Before the survey, Mexico measured income and health levels for households but not for families.  Families generally exceeded the size of the household.  Recognizing the distinction led academic researchers and NGO practitioners to ask families how they defined themselves, rather than relying on the household as the unit of measurement.  In some instances, family members may have lived apart and might not have seen one another in years, but maintained regular contact and considered themselves family.  Sometimes, family members living away from each other provided financial support to others, which supported needier members but may have also created dependency and increased consumerism.  Information received also revealed that the population was ageing faster than had been previously thought.

40.     Family surveys found that the family as an institution was fraught with challenges and uncertainties, including high rates of divorce and drug addiction.  They also showed that families tended to stay together in the face of adversity, however.  How families responded to problems often actually increased family bonding and solidarity, which contributed to providing solutions. Mexican families have strong cultural and religious values and a very high level of solidarity, especially during difficult times.  Even families that had little day-to-day interaction tended to unite in order to respond to difficulties faced by individual members.  Further, the survey showed that families have grown bigger in time as a survival strategy to cope with socio-economic difficulties.

41.     The survey located the main problems faced by Mexican families in three areas. Income was by far the biggest concern (about 20 % of respondents said they didn't have enough money). Communication problems were second (18%), and authority issues within the family were third. All three issues combined to have an influence on family breakdown or separation. In response, the Government identified correlations between the trends and patterns and created a programme of counseling and advice to assist families to stay together and work through issues. Classes were established to teach parents to communicate more effectively with their children. Materials were prepared for non-Spanish speaking populations to facilitate intergenerational communication. The Government is currently drafting a bill on the family based on the findings of the survey. The survey has increased awareness of the value of social research to inform policy-making and political discourse.

42.     In many Asian countries, family policy is currently drawn from social life experiences. The experience of the Mexican government in social transfer provisions for families might benefit other countries. One participant asked, "What are the real issues confronting families today?" and answered his own question by saying that it was "relationships and values: domestic violence, lack of support, abandoned older persons, and deteriorating service provision, lack of access to resources and poverty". The surveys show that poor people do not need promises and resolutions. They need interventions that work. They need: "food security, health, education, housing, potable water and sanitation". In Mexico, the *Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia* is implementing programmes that provide such essentials, including cash allowances, on conditional bases. For example, assistance is provided to the poor on the proviso that they send their children to school and encourage them to consume nutritious foods. These programmes have shown positive results.

      4.   The major issues: Families and migration

43.     The fact that domestic (rural-urban) and international migration remains strong indicates the need for increased support to families left behind. There is a need to create greater employment opportunities in rural areas, to prepare migrant workers with accurate information about the "reality of foreign countries", and to support community caring activities for those family members remaining behind. The feminization of migration has been linked with child and youth delinquency and disengagement from education; sometimes children of migrant women may suffer exclusion from school and end up on the street, with all its attendant risks. Civil society groups have proved highly effective and influential in reaching out to families and communities with information, consultation and advice.

      5.   The major issues: Changing roles and perceptions

44.     Weakening family ties are a major social concern in several countries. There is a need for increased "family life" education, including information and advice on parenting, "pre-marriage education", in-marriage education and counseling, domestic violence and abuse awareness, money management, and advice on managing stress and

conflict. Efforts were also aimed at encouraging greater involvement of fathers in child rearing. Families in general are encouraged to accord more attention to their children. Such support is deemed crucial for keeping families together. Vietnam developed a National Strategy on Building the Family, but currently faces challenges in implementation, including lack of sufficient resources. The lack of data about family situations contributes to existing challenges. Inter-agency cooperation and financial assistance were required to help the country address the situation.

45.    A question was raised about the extent to which "men are portrayed in society as providers and nurturers and how far policy can explore the boundaries of gender-based roles." In much of the region, fathers continue to concern themselves primarily with the material, non-emotional aspects of their children's lives. Mothers are expected to provide care, advice and guidance related to issues of a more emotional and personal nature. Questions about traditional – yet changing – cultural norms and their impact on families, as well as how successful policy could be in seeking to preserve traditions in the face of rapid social change, were raised. In Malaysia, the National Population and Family Development Board (LPKKN), with the help of experts in the field, introduced courses for men at the workplace on parenting skills and "men-as-nurturers" to promote shared family care giving.

46.    Finally, concern was expressed that political responses to some social and family issues may produce unintended results. In responding to emerging issues, new legislation or policies might weaken existing protections. This was the case in one country, where a proposal was made to reduce the legal age of marriage. In an effort to cope with increases in out-of-wedlock relationships, pre-marital sexual relations and early pregnancies, pending legislation would allow legal marriage at the age of 14 or 15 years. Participants agreed that this approach was not likely to resolve the underlying issues and could, indeed, make the situation worse.

### E) Presentations

1. "Social services and protection for Malaysian Families in the Context of Socio-demographic Change" (Presentation by UNESCAP consultant, Prof. Jamilah Ariffin)

47.    In her presentation on the impact of socio-economic development on family well-being, Prof. Jamilah stated that the situation of the family in Malaysia must be viewed in terms of ethnic and cultural diversity. Evidence from a broad range of studies showed that in moving from an agrarian economy to industrialization and then to a knowledge-based economy since the 1960s, the country witnessed rapid socio-economic development but experienced ethnic disparities as social life became more complex. These complexities created changes in family structures which affected the cultural activities of families in the country.

48.    The impact of economic growth on the family structure is distinguished by the divergence in incomes and purchasing power among households. Income rose dramatically and the material well-being of the population improved substantially over

the last 30 years. However, ethnic and rural-urban differentials in income remained large. To close the gap, the Government targeted specific programmes to poor households, which reduced the incidence of poverty from 49.3 per cent in 1970 to 5.7 per cent in 2004 (8.3 per cent among Bumiputera, 0.6 per cent among Chinese and 2.9 per cent among Indians). Poverty remains highest among Malay households and among other indigenous groups.

49.    Despite pockets of poverty, progress in social development has been remarkable. Education is universal. In 2005, enrolment in primary and secondary schools was 95 per cent. Today, more women pursue higher education than men, with far-reaching implications for marriage and family formation, as the norm for women is to marry men of the same educational level. Life expectancy increased from 63.5 years for males and 68.2 years for females in 1970 to 70.6 and 76.4 respectively in 2005. Fertility declines resulted in substantial ageing of the population structure and an increased old-age dependency ratio, particularly as more people are required to retire upon reaching 55 or 56 years of age.

50.    Economic transformation also changed employment structures, as significant gains were made in the manufacturing, construction and service sectors of the economy. This led to increased mobility, as workers moved in search of better economic opportunities in urban centres. Although opportunities for women increased significantly with education and training, female labour participation rates remain low because of the lack of child care facilities and family social support systems, requiring women to stay out of the labour market. Out-migration is also linked to a shift toward smaller households. The proportion of nuclear families among all families increased from 20 per cent in 1980 to 28 per cent in 2000. Single- or unrelated-member households are on the rise as well. The proportion of heads of household aged above 40 is on the rise. In 2000, 52.4 per cent of female household heads were aged 50 and above. Divorced female household heads also far outnumbered males. It was said that while the traditional element is still observed in the family role and function, women increasingly reject mediocre marriages. As a result, divorce rates today are higher than the rates of marriages.

51.    In commenting on the presentation, some participants raised the issue of Government use of affirmative action policies to support specific groups. Despite their success, such policies may also create challenges, as sections of some communities show evidence of a "dependency syndrome" – a constellation of attitudes, behaviours, and lifestyles that undermine development and self-reliance. Society was also grappling with several gender issues. The culturally-based expectation that young people must marry to achieve social acceptance can lead to income and health problems, a theme that emerged from studies of issues of particular interest to women's well-being. Women today are working and delaying marriage and making hard choices between motherhood and work. A gender equality gap still exists, even though "at least women now have options compared to their mothers' generation". "They no longer need to suffer in silence. They just need more [social] support". But the working environment remains rigid, making it difficult for women to work and raise a family. The positive personal qualities related to

their traditional roles, such as being accommodating, mediating, adapting, and soothing family members – qualities known as nurturing – are being eroded due in large part to the rigid requirement of market participation.

52.     Major social trends in Malaysia were summarized as follows: delayed marriage and increasing non-marriage, rising divorce and separation rates (rates for non-Muslims were lower than for Muslims), widowhood remains a stronger reason for marital dissolution than divorce, fertility declines occurred in all age groups and within all ethnic groups, child- and elder- care is fragmented, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse and HIV & AIDS are emerging social issues, and gender-based violence is gaining attention. Demographic and socio-economic changes challenge the family today and thus policy responses need to be reconceived to meet the needs of family members in changing circumstances.

53.     Social policies are an integral part of the country's five-year development plan. Since the announcement of **Vision 2020** in 1991, the Government was concerned with developing a progressive society and creating opportunities for all people to develop their potential so that families become more resilient and better equipped to meet their needs, thus helping to reduce social inequalities. A core policy objective since 2003 was to ensure that the basic necessities are provided, people are empowered, social support systems and services are further consolidated and developed, and multi-sector synergies are generated.

54.     Policy and policy-making should cater to the changing demands of family life. Governments should provide social security measures, introduce supporting legislation for families, counteract practices that exploit migrant workers, support the work of NGOs, facilitate microfinance and the acquisition of loans, and develop programmes for young children, including intergenerational activities.

55.     In summarizing the policies and programmes that exist and the provisions that were introduced to improve quality of life in Malaysia, Prof. Jamilah described Malaysia's social security scheme as consisting of two strands: a welfare approach and a residual approach.

56.     Pension systems were considered problematic: "when you retire you lose your allowances and you go home with half of your last salary". Most pensioners will not be able to maintain their lifestyles on their income and so they would depend on their children.

57.     It was important to "match thinking with reality." Expressing a feeling shared by others in the workshop, the Prof. Jamilah asked: "Can private sector philanthropists work more effectively with the Government and NGOs in smart-partnership welfare projects?" In this context, it was suggested that the community had to play a bigger role in ensuring the inclusion of its members and constructing social support services that minimized demands on the environment.

58.     Overall, despite the abundance of good social services programmes in Malaysia, effective implementation of policies reaching the poor remained challenging.

59.     **Summary of the day's discussions**: Discussions focused on the impact of economic activities on social relations, especially as they affect the family.  Participants considered the concept of the family and how it was evolving as a result of economic and social development.  They considered what countries were doing in terms of policy and programmes and shared experiences and best practices.  This discussion would form the basis for the workshop to consider how policy is developed. Culture, religion, and geography are all fundamental and each country should define its own situation and develop its own policy but there are some methods and tools that can be used commonly by all Governments in the construction and implementation of social policy.

60.     The second day of the workshop introduced aspects of policy development.  It was launched with a presentation of the UNESCAP Regional Framework, which can form a basis for national family policy development.

> 2.  "Regional Framework for Strengthening the family through enhanced social protection and social service policies" (ESCAP consultant, Michael Chai)

61.     The regional framework was constructed and adopted during a previous seminar held in Macau, China, in mid-2008.  In introducing the framework, Mr. Chai recalled the United Nations General Assembly resolution that requested all United Nations entities (such as ESCAP) to promote the integration of family perspectives in policy making.  A broad range of social studies have consistently documented the absence of family perspectives in social protection policy making.  Policy goals and objectives are rarely stated in terms of their impact on family well-being (i.e., outcomes).  ESCAP's framework was constructed to address this shortcoming.

62.     The framework was introduced as a guideline that takes into account new social issues.  The key objective of the framework is to incorporate the family perspective into social policy.  It looks at national level issues but also regional and international issues in terms of financing, cooperation, development aid, and regional financial compacts.  The framework also identifies avenues for research activities, as it draws on the findings of previous family-focused research in a number of countries in the region.  A country may be concerned about changes of its family structure, wondering whether or not different approaches were effective to safeguard its well-being.  Policy-makers could use the framework to provide general guidance in drafting policies and programmes.  The process should also involve important stakeholders.

63.     The framework is divided into four parts. Part one looks at how to ensure income and basic social security.  Part two examines ways to enhance education and training opportunities.  Part three focuses on how to increase access to health care services, and part four explores ways to assist families in emergency situations.

64.     It was hoped that the participants at the workshop would provide comments and suggestions on the regional framework, on the basis of their own experience. Participants were invited to examine the framework, and to take into account the situation of families in their own country and the motivation for policy development.  In the course of policy formulation, they might find the framework helpful in raising issues or relevant questions.  It would also encourage them to approach related issues in a way that could satisfy requirements for parliamentary or governmental policy adoption.

65.     In considering ways to provide social care services for families with special needs, the framework incorporates a rights-based entitlement approach which addresses needs in the context of crisis intervention, youth related issues, domestic violence and elder abuse, among other social problems.  It was stressed that policies and programmes to address these issues needed to be strengthened, giving special emphasis to family development.  The framework also addresses the problem of social exclusion, an ongoing theme of the discussion, by encouraging policy makers to understand why some families and or individual are excluded.

66.     Some participants voiced a strong concern that policies by themselves will not be effective without ensuring that implementation mechanisms are put in place.  Some felt that Governments needed to pay more attention to implementation mechanisms which required financing and south-south cooperation. This view contrasted with those who felt that the family in Asia remained the sole provider of social protection. A participant explained that the family is being challenged but it remains the main pillar of informal support, and hence a family perspective is crucial in developing social services. In this sense, part four of the framework is useful because it looks at how regional and international cooperation can be promoted in terms of technical assistance to develop or strengthen family and social services.

67.     Several participants agreed that there are certain ideas and policies that apply to all families regardless of their situation.  There is also a need for supplementary programmes that will apply to specific family situations and groups.  A question was raised about how family is reflected in national development strategies. Advocacy and awareness raising are required.  Experience from many developed countries is that Governments are reducing their provision of services because they are no longer sustainable.  For example, because of ageing and the requirements of social security in old age, many countries are realizing that the institutional mechanisms they created to care for older persons are not affordable and are not even desirable.  A shift in policy toward the promotion of "ageing in place" is observed.  Ageing in place is more desirable than institutionalization and it is more cost effective.  Much of the research in the social sector is focusing today on how families utilize their resources to increase their support opportunities and as such, it is imperative for policy today to facilitate the realization of these opportunities.

68.     One participant asked about ESCAP's intention for the framework. It was stated that the framework was adopted in Macau, China, earlier in the year and it would be presented for intergovernmental consideration by ESCAP at a later stage.  Because it

takes into account local factors, which are influential in reproducing existing norms and practices, it was hoped that Governments would find the framework helpful and would seek to utilize it as appropriate to their national contexts.

69.     Several Malaysian participants said that their family policy, as stipulated in the **Nine Malaysia Policy,** which is comprehensive and inclusive, is aligned with the framework's concepts and provisions. Appreciation was particularly noted for the framework's underlying concepts, such as the rights-based approach, the human development approach, and the lifespan and life-cycle perspectives. Perceptions of local applicability were significant in the discussion.  Some participants felt that their governments had constructed family-friendly initiatives while others said that the framework would have to be tailored to meet individual country needs.   Most agreed that their Government's task is to translate this document and ask what makes sense and what can be drawn upon.

70.     A critique of the framework cautioned that some might interpret the framework as a document that called for more Government provision of welfare rather than self-reliance.  Some governments were concerned to overcome the "culture of poverty" among marginalized groups.  It was also suggested that in some countries in Asia issues related to social justice and stigmatization must be tackled not only by constructing opportunities for social mobility, but also by addressing the root cause of social inequalities, which acted as obstacles for the advancement of disadvantaged and minority groups.

71.     One participant asked if "life work-balance" was included in the framework and also agreed with others that its human rights and gender approaches could serve as vital tools for empowering women and vulnerable groups, if the framework were effectively implemented by Governments and other stakeholders.

72.     Overall, the framework was well received by the participants (some even said it should be required reading for members of parliaments). They also acknowledged that utilization of the framework to inform national policy development could provide a strong bridge linking family and social policy and services with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other human rights conventions.  As such, its application would no doubt improve the *de facto* situation of families.

73.     Participants were able to exchange national experiences and debate various provisions of the framework.  They felt that many of the recommendation in the framework stem from the practices in the region and commended ESCAP for its development. A participant from the Philippines added that the framework reflected the sort of programmes that are being carried out in her country and what it offered was a "parameter for our work".  It also offered a "checklist of what to do".  "We need to increase our advocacy activities so as to increase a sense of ownership and avoid defensive postures", added another participant.

   **F) Training Component**

74.    In fulfillment of the objectives of the workshop, and in accordance with the agenda adopted for it, a series of training activities were conducted by staff of UNDESA. The activities covered during four training modules over the course of two days included major areas of interest for the development and implementation of family policies and programmes: a) a framework for family policy; b) information and data collection for policy development; c) a participatory training exercise; and d) the logical framework approach.  The content of the training activities, in summary form is outlined below:

## I.  A Framework for Family Policy

The World Summit for Social Development:

- Chapter Four of the Copenhagen Programme of Action, entitled "Social Integration" emphasized that the family should be helped in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles in contributing to social integration.   This involves:
- (a) encouraging social and economic policies that are designed to meet the needs of families and their individual members;
- (b) ensuring opportunities for family members to understand and meet their social responsibilities;
- (c) promoting mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation within the family and within society; and
- (d) promoting equal partnership between women and men in the family.

  Structure
    - Background and basis for policy
      - Policy statement
      - Policy foundation
      - Policy principles, aims and objectives

    - Policy action framework
      - What are the necessary components of family policy?
      - What priorities were identified?
      - How are the issues previously identified to be addressed by policy?

    - Family policy by itself is not sufficient
    - The need for mainstreaming:
      - What is the concept about?
      - How is it applied to family issues and policies?
      - How does it affect the development of family policy and programmes?

  "Mainstreaming a (family) perspective is the process of assessing the implications for (families) of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and all levels.  It is a strategy for making (families') concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation,

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monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that (families) benefit equally …"    (Economic and Social Council, Agreed conclusions 1997/2)

■ Mainstreaming is NOT simply:

- Adding the word "families" in various parts of policy documents with no corresponding activities or budget allocation
- Inserting a family component in one place in a policy or programme
- Handing over responsibility for policy or programme implementation to other actors (ministries, NGOs, etc)
- Reducing the visibility of families

Logical Framework (Logframe)
   ■ What is the concept about?
   ■ How is it applied to a policy document?
   ■ How does it affect the development of family policy and programmes?

■ Summary
   - Background and basis for policy
     -- our essential message, circumstances and identified priorities, and what we are trying to achieve
   - Policy action framework
     -- what we intend to do
   - Logframe
     -- how we intend to do it


## II. Information and Data Collection for Policy Development

■ Often called a "needs assessment"
■ Consider types of information
   -- quantitative
   -- qualitative
■ Define objective(s)
■ Identify information at hand
■ Identify additional sources of information

■ Undertake a desk analysis of existing information and data
   – Major development documents that establish national priorities and goals
   – Opportunities for mainstreaming?
   – Whether family is considered in national legislation and policy

- How is family considered in national legislation and policy documents? ("family" vs. "household")

■ Identify gaps in existing information and data
  - What does the information tell you and what does it leave out?
  - What critical areas and priorities for policy does the information suggest?
  - What more do you need to know
  - Who else might provide the information you need?

■ Example of Mexican "Family Diagnostic"
  -- 4-pronged approach
      -- Commission of Compilation
          statistics, quantitative data from various sources
      -- Commission of Legal Framework
          laws and legislation
      -- Commission of Public Policies
          impact of other policies on families
      -- Commission of Family Dynamics
          qualitative information

■ Consider stakeholder analysis
  - who or what is a stakeholder?
  - what is the relevance of stakeholder analysis?
  - what are the levels of stakeholders?

Recently, DSPD supported qualitative analysis of the situation of older persons in a country. The analysis included a series of focus group discussions to ascertain the views and concerns of stakeholders regarding specific issues affecting older persons. Before arranging the focus group discussions, organizers established the following framework to assist them:

1/ Problem definition
2/ Recruitment
3/ Contact with respondents
4/ Incentives
5/ Place
6/ Number of respondents
7/ Guidelines for discussion
8/ Moderator
9/ Conduct of the discussion (timeframe, how information recorded)
10/ Analysis and validation

■ Analyzing results
  - major challenge
  - important for policy relevance
  - helps to build support

- leads to evidence-based policy
- ties into cycle of monitoring, evaluation and policy renewal

■ Summary
- Needs assessment
- Include both quantitative and qualitative information
- Identify information that is available and what else is required
- Identify sources of additional information and expertise or skills
- Undertake desk review of existing information
- Identify gaps in information
- Consider stakeholder analysis
- Collect additional information (often qualitative) using participatory approach
- "Distil" and analyze results
- Feed policy process

## III. Participatory Training Exercise

▪ A participatory approach helps to:
- include all social groups and recognize diversity
- ensure greater relevance of social policies and programmes
- engender commitment and ownership
- increase transparency and accountability
▪ Participatory social assessment activities ensure that the perspectives of all stakeholders are incorporated at all stages of the policy process, from design through implementation to evaluation
▪ Five main purposes of social assessment:
- needs assessment
- impact assessment
- planning and design of social policies and programmes
- implementation and monitoring of social policies and programmes
- evaluation of social policies and programmes
▪ The design of a social assessment or participatory exercise must contain:
- a participatory process that is inclusive
- a social analysis that is qualitative: "the why behind the behaviour"
- an operational element that translates findings into policy relevant recommendations and action

▪ Step 1: Identify the broad social development issues

- Collection of information about the issue
    - provides a general overview
    - identifies gaps in knowledge
    - determines the overall goals and specific objectives
    - establish main objectives for research

- Step 2: Identify key stakeholders and establish a framework for
  their participation

  - Determine their importance and level of influence
    - Primary
    - Secondary
    - Tertiary

- Step 3: Design an information and communication strategy

  - Establish systems to:
    - Ensure participation of all stakeholders
    - Share findings of the Social Assessment
    - Receive and disseminate stakeholder feedback

- Step 4: Design the Social Assessment
  - Criteria for selecting research methods and tools:
    - social issue or sector being investigated
    - objectives to be achieved
    - type of data required
    - cultural, institutional and political contexts
    - categories of stakeholders involved
    - time, cost and human resource constraints
    - tools and methods to use:
    - focus group discussions
    - semi-structured interviews
    - convenience interviews
    - direct observation
    - case studies
    - participatory learning and action (PLA) tools

    - PLA tools:
      - transect walk
      - social mapping
      - problem trees
      - venn or roti diagrams
      - listing and ranking

    - Create a logistical plan to provide operational guidelines for conducting
    the activity
      - timetable
      - who will do it
      - where it will be done
      - how it will be done

- Step 5: Conduct the social assessment

  - Adopt a flexible approach and recognize that it may need to be modified according to circumstances
  - Agree the methods of data recording
  - Ensure the integrity and validity of qualitative data
  - Triangulation is an effective method to ensure accuracy
    - Use multiple research tools
    - Consult different groups of stakeholders
    - Use different sources of data
    - Use different researchers in the field

- Step 6: Analyze and discuss the findings
  - continuous discussion and processing of data – an iterative process
  - identify and address emerging issues and adjust as necessary
  - build in time to look at results of each day's work
  - Use a navigation board, containing key issue, key finding and key recommendation
  - Review draft report with stakeholders
  - give them opportunity to discuss findings before they are made public
  - build consensus
  - correct errors and misunderstandings
  - make suggestions to strengthen recommendations
  - Public validation of findings
    - with stakeholders, government officials, community groups, media
    - opportunity to garner public support
    - publicly recognize stakeholders

- Step 7: Operationalize the findings
  - Use clear, simple language in report
  - Present key findings according to key issues
  - Pair conclusions with policy relevant recommendations
  - Identify organizations and persons responsible for implementation
  - Give timeline for each recommendation
  - Establish system to track progress

## IV. The Logical Framework Approach

Setting Objectives

1.    The Ultimate Objective (long-term)

What is the reason for the Plan of Action - the broader goal towards which the efforts of the Plan are directed?  What are we ultimately trying to achieve?

Example:  To contribute towards improving the quality of life in old age through fulfillment of basic needs

.2.      The immediate objectives

What specific effects will the plan/policy achieve?

Example: Improved social security and social welfare measures

- What kinds and how many outputs will be needed to meet the immediate objectives?

Example: Formal social security systems established targeting vulnerable older persons through the National Health Insurance Fund branches

- What activities need to be undertaken to produce the outputs?

Examples: Set up pressure groups (including older persons) to hold talks with policy makers and programme planners at the National Social Health Insurance Fund

Establish objectively verifiable indicators:  (Specific) number of groups established (by a set date) and talks held (by a set date)

Establish means of verification: How do we know whether we are making progress towards our immediate objective?  What tools or methods are available to verify?

Identify assumptions: What has to be in place or what has to happen in order for us to meet our immediate objective

Identify other factors: Inputs:
        - What money, personnel, materials are necessary to conduct activities?
        - Who is responsible for the input and activity? Which is the lead agency?
        - In what timeframe will the activities be accomplished?

Exercise
- Ultimate objective: strengthen and support the role of parents and the community in developing healthy and thriving children and youth
- Immediate objective: Increase parents' caring and nurturing skills
- Outputs/results: System established for parents' education
- Activities:
    1.
    2.
    3.

- Objectively verifiable indicators:
  1.
  2.
  3.

- Means of verification:
  1.
  2.
  3.

- Assumptions
  1.
  2.
  3.

- Other factors
  1.
  2.
  3.

# Annex I    List of Participants

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# Annex II     Plenary Session on National Family Policy Mechanisms

Questions to prepare for session


What do you think are the 3 or 4 major issues confronting families in your country?

Which Ministry or office has primary responsibility for family issues in your country?

Has your country adopted a national family policy?
    If yes, what major areas does the policy cover?
    How was the policy developed (the process)?
    What guidance was used in developing the policy? (documentation, data, expert
        advice, etc.)

    If no, how are family-related issues and concerns addressed by your Government?
    Has the Government considered developing a family policy?
    What guidance would be helpful in developing the policy?

What is your experience in implementing family policies (where they exist) or other programmes for the family?  What has worked well?  What areas need improvement?

Have you received any assistance from the United Nations (UN Country Team, UNESCAP, UNDESA or others) in your work on family issues?  Are you aware of any sources of information, materials or assistance you could draw upon?  What sort of support would you like to receive?