



INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF FAMILIES
15 MAY 2018

**International Day of Families
2018 Observance**

Families and Inclusive Societies

Background Note

The 2018 observance of the International day of Families focuses on Sustainable Development Goal 16 relating to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

Families play an important role in creating and sustaining peaceful and inclusive societies indispensable for sustainable and inclusive development. Children growing up in stable and supportive families develop positive cognitive, emotional and social characters thus becoming stable and peaceful adults.

There are several important aspects of stable family environments ensuring children's well-being and early socialization, such as secure attachment and the process of the transmission and acquisition of values.

Research demonstrates that children who developed secure attachment relationships in their families are more self-reliant and empathetic adults. They are more likely to be civically engaged and involved in community work and have good problem-solving skills. Moreover, longitudinal studies show that securely attached children are more likely to develop strong relationships and lead stable family lives.

As initial socialization in families, linked to the transmission of values, impacts attitudes and sensitivities to violence and conflict, positive socialization experience contributes to the development of a sense of self and belonging in community and in broader society.

SDG16 aiming at promoting peaceful and inclusive societies also implies that individuals influence the decisions affecting themselves, their families, communities and society at large. Moreover, SDG16 relating to the promotion of justice and accountable institutions at all levels is especially relevant to families and the status of vulnerable family members within their respective families. Here stronger laws giving rights and protection to all family members, especially women are directly related to their status within families.

Although inclusive societies must ensure legal protection and rights of women, they should not only be linked to women's roles as mothers and caregivers in their families. Governments must ensure that women have equal access to economic resources, ownership of land and other property as well as work providing decent living wage to sustain themselves and their families. Similarly, children have the right to adequate nutrition and shelter and to grow up in the atmosphere of love and harmony.

It is useful to point out that research in OECD countries indicates that in countries where women do not have right to own land, there are 60 per cent more malnourished children than in places

where women have some access to land. It is an established fact that land ownership empowers women to make decisions about health and nutrition of their children and children of women who own land are less likely to be malnourished and underweight.

Access to justice to all family members also involves the achievement of target 16.9 under SDG16, referring to the provision of legal identity for all, including birth registration for children.

Establishing legal identity and ensuring birth registration for all remains a challenge in many countries with the World Bank estimating that 625 million children up to the age of 14 remain unregistered.

The importance of having a legal identity cannot be overstated. Without it, the access to basic social services can be severely restricted. The lack of legal identity hinders the ability of women and marginalized groups to exercise their civil and political rights to vote. Unregistered individuals cannot secure the socio-economic benefits from the state. What's more 'administrative hurdles, poverty, limited awareness, and discriminatory legal provisions bar unregistered women and vulnerable, marginalized groups everywhere from securing their citizenship or registering their marriage or child's birth.' (Trask, 2018)

A number of family-oriented policies, especially those targeting vulnerable families in indigenous communities, or those with family members with disabilities have a potential to contribute to the achievement of above mentioned target under SDG16. For instance, awareness raising campaigns focusing on the importance of birth registration in remote communities have resulted in higher registration of births even in some countries.

Expanding social protection programmes reaching out to vulnerable families and ensuring the coverage of all family members, including children and older persons have contributed to creating more inclusive societies which secure rights to basic social and economic rights for vulnerable family members.

The approaches to family policies for inclusive societies vary around the world. In some regions emphasis is placed on social inclusion of various types of families and/or individuals such as migrant or indigenous families, ethnic minorities or families with persons with disabilities.

In some regions primary emphasis is placed on social protection for vulnerable families to facilitate their full inclusion in the mainstream of society. Inclusive education for all, especially children from ethnic minorities or those with disabilities is also considered essential for social inclusion.

As approaches vary, this year's observance of the International Day of Families is to raise awareness of the role of families and family policies in achieving more inclusive societies from regional perspectives.

In particular, the discussion will focus on the importance of ensuring equal justice to all family members, especially women. It will also address the efforts at universal birth registration and legal identity for all, especially targeting vulnerable families. The importance of social protection for social inclusion and other aspects of socially inclusive and family-oriented policies will be addressed as well.

References:

“Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, United Nations, 2015 (A/RES/70/1)

United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Family Policies for Inclusive Societies: Concept Note, New York, 15-16 May.

Bahira Sherif Trask, *“Ensuring Social Rights for All Families: Legal Frameworks, Legal Identity and the Right to Participation, Housing, and Public Green Spaces in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs”* Background paper for Expert Group Meeting on Family Policies for Inclusive Societies, New York, 15 - 16 May 2018 (forthcoming)