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Human Sciences
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Families and Inclusive Societies in Africa

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Introduction

- ❑ Inclusive societies may be regarded as the bedrock of the other objectives and targets of the Sustainable and Development Goal16
- ❑ Inclusive society encompasses:
 - Peace, justice and strong social institutions.

Background

- ❑ Family is a fundamental social institution, “where the building of a society begins”.
- ❑ Thus, African charters recognize the family institution as the foundation of society.
- ❑ Family is more than one among many institutions, as sometimes suggested.

Background (contd.)

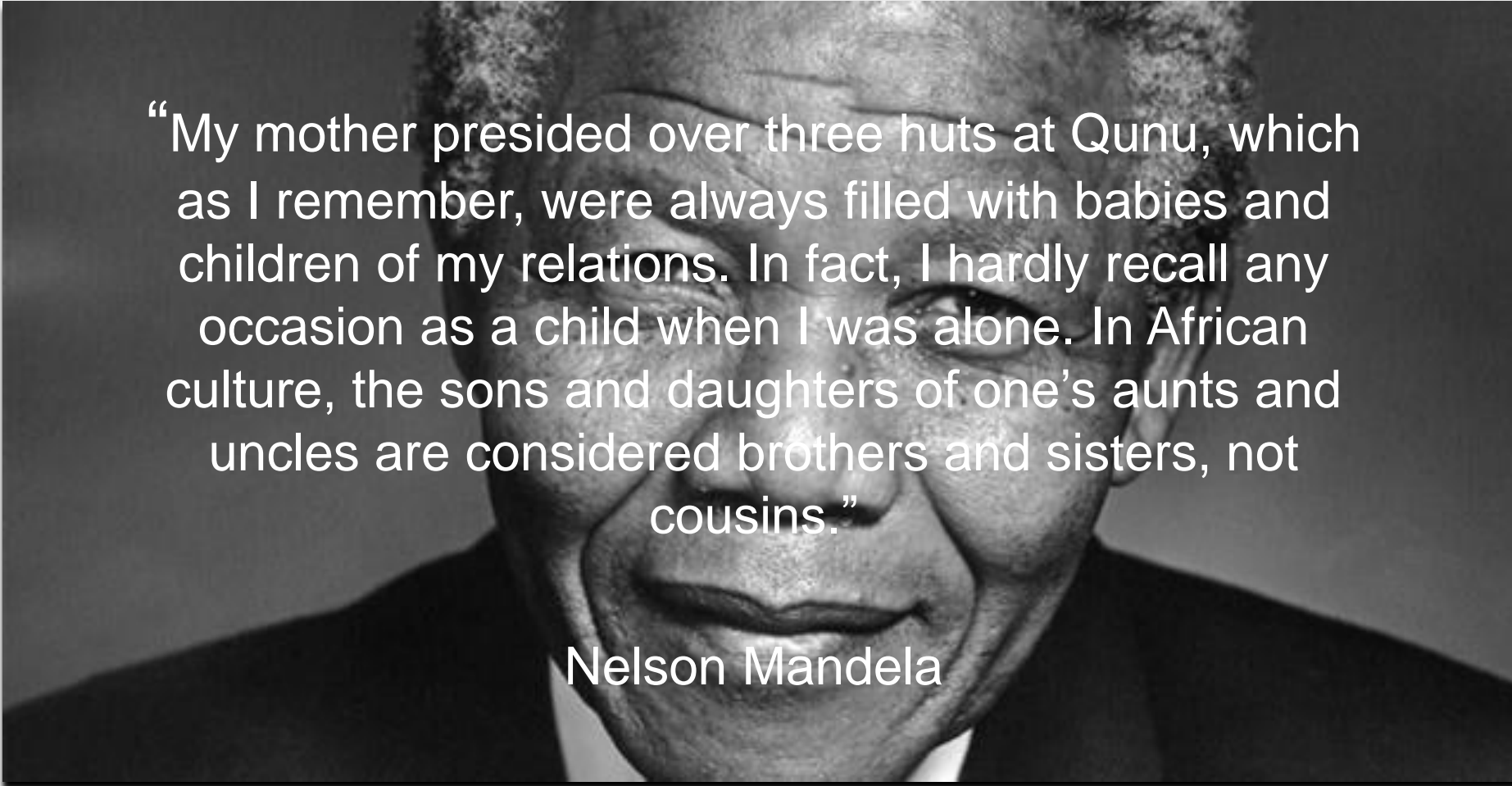
- ❑ African charters recognize the traditional African family
- ❑ “Family” in Africa refers to what in other parts of the world is called “extended family”
- ❑ These include aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents and other relatives
- ❑ These relatives form a unit that functions in unison
- ❑ Charters also acknowledge and affirm diversification of family structures in Africa.

African families



- ❑ “Family” and “household” do not connote the same thing.
- ❑ Lineages are not only biological but also sociological
- ❑ Lineage and kinship are sometimes edited
- ❑ Lineages cut across a number of generations include both the living and the dead
- ❑ Connects relatives far and near; sometimes distributed across vast

African family



“My mother presided over three huts at Qunu, which as I remember, were always filled with babies and children of my relations. In fact, I hardly recall any occasion as a child when I was alone. In African culture, the sons and daughters of one’s aunts and uncles are considered brothers and sisters, not cousins.”

Nelson Mandela

The role of families during crises

- ❑ One million Ghanaian migrants who were deported from Nigeria in the 1980s, who, while western aids agencies planned intervention, were reintegrated into their families and communities within two weeks.
- ❑ Millions of AIDS orphan are cared for by families



- ❑ Remittances support the destitute

Family and mobility

- ❑ Social strife, spatial inequalities results in constant movements in the continent
- ❑ Movements are often gender biased
- ❑ Many straddle places of work and places of origin

Difficulty with connections

- ❑ African borders were drawn during colonial times
- ❑ Borders typically divide families and linguistic groups
- ❑ Increasing restrictions in physical movements across political borders
- ❑ Problem with high cost of living in the city

Movements

- ❑ Obligation to send remittances to places of origin
- ❑ While acknowledging the role played by mobile phones, the cost of communication remains high
- ❑ Mobile data costs are high in Africa
- ❑ Poor or nonexistent road and rail infrastructure (Many die on African roads)

Relevance of African families to the SDG16 Agenda

- ❑ Family remains the basic,
natural unit of African societies
- ❑ *Ubuntu*, “I am, because we
are”

Policy Options

- ❑ Family institution must continue to be seen as a foundation of society.
- ❑ Acknowledgement and affirmation of complexities and diversification of families.
- ❑ The acknowledgement of the extended family must be reflected in policies and programmes
- ❑ Promotion of positive family values, which include the value of *Ubuntu*.

Connecting family across Geographical space

- ☐ More affordable mobile phone data
- ☐ Better transport systems
- ☐ Easier movements of family members across political borders

Thank you