



**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



INTERNATIONAL  
DAY OF FAMILIES  
15 MAY 2022

## *Families and Urbanization*

**Online Webinar in Observance of the**

**2022 International Day of Families**

**Friday, 13 May, 10:00-11:15 AM (New York time)**

### ***Background Note***

Continuing preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2024 (IYF+30) have been centering on megatrends and their impact on families. The focus on selected megatrends, including technological change, migration, urbanization, demographic as well as climate change, is to facilitate the analysis of their impacts on family life and recommend responsive family-oriented policies to harness the positive aspects of those trends and counteract their negative facets.<sup>1</sup>

Urbanization is one of the most important megatrends shaping our world and the life and wellbeing of families worldwide. Sustainable urbanization is related to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, such as SDG1 (Poverty eradication) SDG 3, (Good health and well-being); SDG 11

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<sup>1</sup> See Report of the Secretary General on the Implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes, A/76/61-E/2021/4.

(Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), SDG10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries. All the above SDGs and targets depend on how well urbanization is managed to benefit families and enhance the well-being of all generations living in the cities.

Although affordable housing is a key component of promoting healthy family life in urban areas, access to affordable housing is rapidly shrinking around the world with low-income and middle-income families being affected the most.

Urban design often lags behind too, despite the importance of public spaces where urban dwellers are able to walk, cycle and participate in active recreation and interact with neighbours. Well-designed public spaces enable city inhabitants to access services and opportunities. This is especially important for marginalized residents and at-risk or vulnerable populations, such as persons with disabilities, women, and older persons. Good infrastructure, including affordable and inclusive public transportation is also key.

It is then important not only to provide better access to affordable housing but make cities truly livable. Urban planning should focus on infrastructure and prioritize family issues, rights, and concerns through formal and informal efforts by Governments in cooperation with the private sector. It is also important to identify and implement grassroots efforts and initiatives that are locally sustainable.

Keeping an intergenerational perspective is of particular importance. Children and youth need safe and secure urban environments to go to school safely and access age-appropriate play and recreation facilities. Older generations need accessible means of transportation and mobility, and social protection programmes that allow them to age with dignity and respect. Intergenerational housing initiatives, including intergenerational living arrangements are cost-effective, help bridge the need for service provision and deserve more attention from policymakers.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic cities need to build back better. Sustainable, inclusive and green recovery is needed which means “dealing with the existing challenges of how cities are planned, managed and financed, and ensuring their development is compatible with the goal of net zero emissions by 2050.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> World Cities Report (2020) quoting Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

The 2022 International Day of Families observance is to raise awareness of the importance of sustainable and family-friendly urban policies. The panel discussion will include presentations from academics, civil society and urban authorities. The event will include the launch of the background paper as well as presentation of civil society initiatives such as Venice Declaration and Civil Society Declaration for IYF+30.

### **Launch of the Background Paper on “*Migration, Urbanization, and the Family Dimension*”<sup>3</sup>**

A major research paper is to be launched at the observance as part of the preparations for IYF+30. The keynote address by the author will mainly examine current urbanization trends from a family perspective.

The paper on “*Migration, Urbanization, and the Family Dimension*” focuses on the impact of urbanization and migration on families. The paper addresses recent urbanization trends impacting families; gender and urbanization; urbanization and family life, in particular the importance of affordable safe housing, child and youth developments and intergenerational issues; urbanization and globalization; urbanization and green spaces; promoting civic life and participation in urban areas, social cohesion and social stability.






In its recommendations the paper emphasizes that “*Individuals and families need affordable, safe housing and the many issues that come with sprawling slums and informal urban settlements need to be addressed. This can be accomplished by states partnering with private housing contractors in order to create safe, affordable housing at a rapid enough pace. This is specifically the case in developing countries that have enormous housing shortfalls.*” It further recommends “*providing safe and easily accessible public spaces that are accessible to all residents of urban areas including vulnerable populations*”. Moreover, the paper states that “*Urbanization and financial partnerships need to be promoted.*”

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<sup>3</sup> Bahira Trask “*Migration, Urbanization, and the Family Dimension*”, UNDESA, 2022, forthcoming.

*Urbanization needs to be planned and managed with sustained financing. This requires coordination between local and state governments. A well-planned effort also requires a focus on rural areas so that they do not fall behind leading to exponential out-migration”.<sup>4</sup>*

**The objectives of the 2022 observance of the International Day of Families “Families and New Technologies” are as follows:**

-  present research on current urbanization trends;**
-  highlight linkages between urbanization and migration;**
-  demonstrate the importance of family-oriented policies and programmes to effectively respond to the challenges posed by rapid urbanization;**
-  share good practices in sustainable and family-friendly urbanization, including the implementation of the Venice Declaration**
-  present the current state of preparations for the IYF+30, including the Civil Society Declaration**

## References

Bahira Sherif Trask *“Migration, Urbanization, and the Family Dimension”*, UNDESA, 2022, forthcoming

World Cities Reports (2020), (2022), UN Habitat, Nairobi, Kenya

Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Year of the Family and its Follow-up Processes, A/76/61-E/2021/4, United Nations, New York

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.