



RESPONSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR FAMILY DEVELOPMENT TO QUESTIONS ON THE FUTURE ROLE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

1.- Given that the Commission is the only intergovernmental forum focused on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in the United Nations, how can we improve its work to better assist Member States and the international community at large in advancing the ICPD agenda while contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

The International Federation for Family Development is present in 70 countries of all continents and is a General Consultative Status non-governmental organization. Our main activity at a local level is centered at parenting education with skill-building programmes to help societies to face the tremendous changes that have affected families in many ways. Even though the married couple with one or two children is the most common family form, children nowadays are raised in many different family settings. There are families with a larger number of children growing up together, many children raised by cohabiting parents, while others grow up with only one of their parents or their parents share physical custody over them, and even by their grandparents. The number of children growing up in reconstituted families has increased as well.

All these societal realities pose various challenges at a population level that need to be tackled with a holistic approach and considering all members of the family. For this reason, the International Federation for Family Development has been constructively engaging with the Commission on Population and Development with various events and statements to enrich the discussion and help in building consensus. Our Federation's main advocacy strategy is to promote a family perspective in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of policies impacting the family,

as the basic unit of society entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support¹.

Among our global projects, the Families, Family Policy and the Sustainable Development Goals Report in partnership with UNICEF has been the most prominent². The report shows evidence that family environments can be the cause of and solution to negative social outcomes. Advise practitioners working with families that they should be conscious of the important role played by family professionals, early interventions, and family involvement in physical and mental health treatment. The study highlights the importance of working for families, and with families, in order to meet the SDGs. Efficiencies in complementary goals show that even single-purpose policies can achieve multiple goals. As an elementary social unit, the progress of families will inevitably influence the progress of the societies in which they are part. Those seeking to meet the SDGs should not underestimate the role of strong families as enabling agents for achieving the SDGs.

2.- Population and development issues and trends, including drivers and impacts, have important implications for the further implementation of the Programme of Action and the achievement of the SDGs. What role can the Commission play in guiding Member States and the international community in responding to these issues and trends?

The Commission is meant to be a constructive space to share perspectives and good practices of how to better implement the ICPD Programme of Action. For instance, our most recent reports, presented among the few side events organized on the sidelines of late editions of the Commission, **have found common grounds and perspectives to build consensus about parenting education**. We are convinced that a constructive and evidence-based discussion can help governments to formulate family-sensitive policies in the field of housing, work, health, social security and education in order to create an environment supportive of the family, taking into account its various forms and functions, and should support educational **programmes concerning parental roles, parental skills and child development**. In this regard, our last year event addressed intergenerational relations, child well-being and youth transitions with parenting education at the core of a constructive discussion³.

¹ ICPD Programme of Action, A/CONF.171/13, 5.1.

² Families, Family Policy and the Sustainable Development Goals, <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Families%20of%20family%20policy%20and%20the%20SDGs.pdf>

³ CPD Programme of Action, A/CONF.171/13, 5.9.

The role of parents to ensure wellbeing for future generations is crucial, as recent General Assembly Resolution mentions, encouraging Member States to invest in family policies and programmes that enhance strong intergenerational interactions, such as intergenerational living arrangements, parenting education and support for grandparents, including grandparents who are primary caregivers, in an effort to promote inclusive urbanization, intergenerational solidarity and social cohesion“initiatives to promote involved and positive parenting have been found to be beneficial in advancing social integration and solidarity between generations, as well as in promoting and protecting the human rights of all family members.”⁴

In this regard, parenting education is a key component for the cohesion, sustainability and inclusion of every family unit. It helps to improve early childhood development, empowers children to acquire the necessary skills in order to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and improves the position of the youth in the labor market when they enter adulthood. A cost-efficient way of contributing with families in vulnerable situations or in situations of vulnerability is through preventive measures as of parenting education.

We suggest therefore parenting education as one of the issues to contribute to a unifying way to move forward and have constructive discussion on the role of parents in how population challenges can be addressed and common grounds can be found.

3.- In order to address the above questions and issues, would it be desirable or feasible for the Commission to adjust its methods of work (organizational aspects, substantive elements, outcome)? If so, could the practices and experiences of other subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) provide any guidance?

Up to now, civil society is constrained for organizing activities on its own during the Commission. We consider that NGOs in consultative status should be allowed to organize side events during the Commission, regardless of their sponsorship of Member States or agencies. This is how it is done during the Commission for Social Development under the coordination of the Division of Inclusive Social Development allowing a better and more inclusive participation.

⁴ Follow-up to the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond, A/C.3/73/L.19/Rev.1, OP6.