

THE ROLE OF FAMILIES IN THE FUTURE WE WANT

Family as a School of Equality

Distinguished guests, dear participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank to all organizers and the International Federation for Family Development for giving me the opportunity to speak on “Family as a School of Equality” while we are entering a new era, which is very important at least for the following 15 years. Today, I will focus on this issue under the umbrella of the panel, which is promoting the empowerment of families in the Sustainable Development Goals.

As the only NGO from Turkey holding the General Consultative Status at ECOSOC, the Journalists and Writers Foundation and its Women’s Platform, follow closely the United Nations’ active role in enhancing international cooperation in family related issues and in Post-2015 Development Agenda.

On the proposal of the Open Working group for the SDGs¹, the role of lifelong learning and quality education, gender equality and empowering all women and girls are identified as crucial for the Agenda. In addition, the proposal is also emphasizing today’s children, youth and future generations without distinction of any kind such as age, sex, disability, culture, race, ethnicity, origin, migratory status, religion, economic or other status.

As stated in the ECOSOC Resolution adopted in June 2014², family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society. It is all known that family unit has to be protected and empowered in the lights of universal values and basic human rights. For that aim, family policies have to be nourished by the good examples that could be seen all around the world. We should deeply understand the impact of family on children and the role of it in the society, before the discussion on recommendations.

“Socialization refers to preparing newcomers to become members of an existing group and to think, feel, and act in ways the group considers appropriate. Viewed from the group's point of

¹ Open Working Group Proposal for the Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, 2014)

² 2014 Session Item 17b of the Provisional Agenda (UN ECOSOC, 8 August 2014)

view, it is a process of member replacement.”³ Besides this, “as time went on, however, socialization came to be seen more and more as the end result-- that is, as internalization. Internalization means taking social norms, roles, and values into one's own mind. Society was seen as the primary factor responsible for how individuals learned to think and behave.”⁴ It could be said that “socialization occurs within biological, psychological, and social contexts.”

The emphasis of these contexts could be explained further but to summarize, it could be mentioned that the participants or the sources of socialization are the family, day care, schools, peers, community and country and also mass media. Obviously, according to Hodges⁵, parents and the immediate family of infants are important to children's early care and development. It is seen that major changes in the family are increasing the importance of other caregivers as well. For example, teachers and schools transmit formal skills and knowledge, to social values and norms. As infants mature, they establish an interpersonal contact with other children at their age, called peers. Inevitably, children are affected by the community and nation in which they are reared. Also the children, in some countries, mostly spend a great deal of time with the mass media.

However; all these other factors that contribute to the socialization process of children do not diminish the power or the impact of the family on children. This way, we could conclude that gender equality and gender stereotypes are learned in the family like many other values or norms. To illustrate, if there is an inequality at the division of labor at home, the child could normalize the inequality. All these issues somehow are interlinked to each other as you all know.

That makes the family crucial and pivotal for the Post-2015 because we know that family may be the most important source of socialization. What it means for the “future generations” - this term is used at the SDG Report- or “child” is that family has a very much importance like other sources as schools.

³ Caroline Hodges Persell, *Becoming a Member of Society Through Socialization* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers Inc, 1990): 98-107

⁴ Caroline Hodges Persell, *Becoming a Member of Society Through Socialization* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers Inc, 1990): 98-107

⁵ *Ibid.*

At the Proposal for the SDGs:

Goal 4 is “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” With its targets, this goal emphasizes quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education as well as quality primary and secondary education for both girls and boys and also it mentions the equal access all levels of education. It does not differ for the child whether you have a world-standard university or school if he/she has no chance to access. For example, although we have a legal system in Turkey that protects the right of education regardless of gender, in some cases we see that fathers do not allow their daughters to go to school in a different city due to cultural restrictions. And this is not specific to Turkey at all: Despite all the positive work of states and the UN bodies to create opportunities for universal access to education, there still needs to be self-motivation starting within the families, which can be fostered by the active inclusion of local CSOs. In that way, a closer cooperation between local and international, public and private bodies can ensure access to education for all, towards the creation of a better world for “future generations.”

The proposal continues with the following goal:

Goal 5 is “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. It talks about ending all forms of discrimination and other types of exploitation against all women and girls everywhere; fighting with child, early and forced marriage; recognizing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate. Also it emphasizes ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life and giving women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance . The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls at all levels has a great importance for that goal. So we see a direct desire of the Agenda for the gender quality. Beside many other factors effecting the socialization of the child, family is the first hand where the notion of equality be formed by the child.

As the Journalists and Writers Foundation and its Women's Platform, we organized series of side events on the girls education in Afghanistan first in during CSW58 in New York and second during the 26th Human Rights Council in Geneva. We sponsored a field research on girls education in Afghanistan regarding the impact of Turkish private schools that has been operating in the country for the last fifteen years. The research was conducted by Semiha Topal from Fatih University, who concluded that in the case of education in Afghanistan, specifically, the opposition to women's education is more about the structure of schooling in mixed-gendered settings, and the requirement of commuting to the school, which causes a security threat for the girls and their families. This reminds us that "the implementation of the sustainable development goals will depend on a global partnership for sustainable development with the active engagement of Governments, as well as civil society, the private sector and the United Nations system."⁶

Lastly, I want to talk about our recommendations as a civil society organization. As the Journalists and Writers Foundation and its Women's Platform, we are organizing International Family Conferences in every two- years. It is an academic gathering to stimulate interdisciplinary and cross-national collaboration and approach to various family issues. As our current recommendations on family issues and family-policies for the Post-2015 Agenda, I want to share the Final Declaration of the Conference. Bold bullet points are directly related to my topic "Family as a school of equality":

FAMILY CONFERENCE III – INTERNATIONAL FAMILY POLICIES

29-30 November 2014, Istanbul

FINAL DECLARATION

On the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family designated by the United Nations, the Journalists and Writers Foundation Women's Platform organised the International Family Conference III –International Family Policies on 29-30 November 2014, with contributions of 17 speakers from 13 different countries, which dealt with family and law, family and work, family and poverty through regional practices, underlined by the presentations.

Recognizing the family as a natural and fundamental group unit of societies (E/RES/2014/8), we welcome all the preparations and celebrations happening around the world for this Anniversary. With the spirit of being part of it,

Stressing that equality between men and women, especially women's equal participation in employment, shared parental responsibility and respect to the rights of children should be the essentials of family policies,

⁶ Open Working Group Proposal for the Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, 2014)

Acknowledging the evidence that family policies and laws are more effective when targeting the family unit rather than each one of its members; that balancing work and family life helps parents to be co-responsible in their tasks; and that empowering families is essential to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty,

Convinced that civil society has a significant role in promoting human rights, assessing family policies and supporting families, we urge governments to consider these recommendations:

- 1. Family policies should always take into consideration the empowerment of women within the family, especially in their integration to the labour market.*
- 2. Make sure that the law always respects the rights of every member of the family to be part of the decision process within the family.*
- 3. Respect every nation's peculiarities as long as they don't violate the international conventions and treaties; and promote mutual understanding between different societies.*
- 4. Make sure that reproductive technologies do not violate the basic rights of all parts involved.*
- 5. Never force women to make a choice between work and family commitments; therefore consider the cost of maternal leave and in-kind services and tax benefits as investment for the society.*
- 6. Build a legal framework in which the private sector doesn't get extra cost when their staff receives maternal leave, and the woman has the guarantee to keeping her job.*
- 7. Ensure the universal accessibility and quality of early child education.*
- 8. Ensure that young generations get the skills to find a way to integrate into society and start a family through a proper job.*
- 9. Ensure that families are not replaced in their duties, but supported and made accountable for the help they get from society.*
- 10. Mainstream the family in the sustainable development agenda, and take into account that the achievement of the new Development Goals depends on how well families are empowered to contribute to their achievement.⁷*

To sum up, mainstreaming and promoting the empowerment of families for the new Agenda is very much related to understand the importance of family on the child and the impact of it to the whole society. Recognizing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all family members should be taking into consideration by families and should be the cornerstones of family-oriented policies. It could be said that equality between men and women, women's equal participation in employment and shared parental responsibility are

⁷International Family Conference III - International Family Policies (Journalists and Writers Foundation, 2014)

also the essentials of learning of equality in the family so governments should promote family policies within this line. Not only designing, but also implementing and monitoring these policies require a common intent at national, regional and international level including state participation and civil society for a more effective Sustainable Development Agenda.