



IFFD Briefing 2019

Tuesday, February 12th, 2018

1.15-2.30 pm – Conference Room 12 – United Nations Headquarters – New York, NY

Presentation by

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Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As president of IFFD, let me first thank

the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations,

the Permanent Mission of Hungary to the United Nations,

the United Nations Division for Inclusive Social Development

and the Doha International Family Institute,

for their partnership in organizing this event, and especially to

Her Excellency Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani,

and Her Excellency Ambassador Katalin Annamária Bogay

for honoring us today with their presence here and their insightful remarks.

I also want to thank

Sharifa Noaman Al Emadi

for her presence here, as well as congratulate her for her new position as

Executive Director of the Doha International Family Institute

Also,

Mr. Alberto Padova,

not only for being here today and accepting our offering to moderate this event, but also for his constant effort to achieve these objectives.

And I want to take this opportunity to confirm once more our commitment to help the whole United Nations system in this task, with the collaboration of our more than 250 Family Enrichment Centres and more than 8,000 volunteers in 70 countries.

The International Federation for Family Development has been holding the IFFD Briefing at the UN Headquarters in New York, during the Session of the Commission for Social Development, since 2013. When we started, side events on family topics were much fewer than these last years. We consider this as a significant sign that shows how family is every day more present in the development agenda and we welcome it with joy. After all, this is the only objective of our presence in the United Nations — to show how important a family perspective is for the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

One of the most important goals is number 5,

‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’.

Among its targets, one is particularly related to our work with parents. It deals with the recognition of unpaid care and domestic work and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family. As many other studies and statistics, our experience shows that women do more of such work than men. This unequal distribution of unpaid care work between women and men represents an infringement of women’s rights and also a brake on their economic empowerment. Time is a limited resource, which is divided between labor and leisure, productive and reproductive activities, paid and unpaid work. Every minute more that a woman spends on unpaid care work represents one minute less that she could be potentially spending on market-related activities or investing in her educational and vocational skills. This creates a ‘double burden’ of work for women, that can become even a ‘triple burden’ if we consider the care of children.

Let me speak now as an architect who works in the private sector running an architect's office in a big city like Mexico and has to deal with a full staff made from different jobs and tasks. I totally agree with a recent Harvard study that the so-called 'Working Parent Problem' should be at the top of employers' priority list, if we don't want to miss those brilliant talents who go through the overwhelming challenge of trying to earn a living and build a career while also parenting well. For organizations and people in positions of leadership, it refers to the challenge of effectively employing and fully unleashing the potential of the folks who are trying to navigate the demands of work and family.

In the current economic and cultural landscape, what I prefer to call the 'Working Parent Challenge' has moved up to the forefront of leadership concerns, and it's going to stay there. Ignored, it can become a powerful and insidious threat to your team and organization's success.

Why focusing on working parents is so important?

First, because the demographic issue is huge... If you're having serious trouble finding the talent you need already, it's probably time to start paying attention to ways you can attract this huge pool of working mothers and fathers, retain them, and ensure they deliver at work.

Second, because those men and women carry much heavier loads than previous generations have. Today's working parents are three times more likely, on average, to be part of dual-career couples or to be single than they are to spouses at home full-time. That means the majority of committed, working-parent employees have no slack in their system: no one to whom they can hand off the school pickup or pediatrician visit or 10 pm feeding. And as wonderful as many technological changes are, some have also made working parenthood harder: iPhone in hand, there's no reason, or excuse, to ever be "off" of work, even during the parent-teacher conference or family dinner.

That is why I totally agree with the Founder and CEO of Workparent, Daisy Wademan Dowling, when she proposes this set of recommendations:

1. Demonstrate personal support for working-parent employees, in a highly visible way.
2. Define your organization's working-parent challenge from the front-line employee perspective, through both a quantitative and qualitative lens.

3. Engage allies within and outside of the Human Resources team to identify and execute on solutions.
4. Take a comprehensive approach rather than relying on 'silver bullet' solutions.
5. Support — and help to shape — grassroots, employee-led solutions, such as peer-to-peer working-parent mentoring programs or family enrichment courses, as the ones IFFD organizes.
6. Out-communicate the competition when it comes to working-parent matters.

Every leader and organization will find different ways to solve the 'Working Parent Challenge', according to the social and legal situation. But, as with any challenge, acknowledging its reality, size, and nature is always the right place to start.

And I sincerely hope we are contributing to it with this Briefing today.

Thank you very much!