



SDGs & Families

RESULTS OF THE GLOBAL RESEARCH PROJECT

Wednesday, 16 May 2018 - United Nations Headquarters - New York, NY

OPENING REMARKS

Thank you very much, Mr. Padova, for your kind presentation and the acceptance of our offer to moderate this panel. We feel honored to have you here today.

And I also thank to everyone present here today, especially to the distinguished delegates from Member states; our colleagues representatives of NGOs, and especially SOS Children's Villages, for co-sponsoring this event; and the the experts attending the Expert Group Meeting celebrated during these days here at the UN Headquarters on "Family policies for inclusive societies".

When the journey to define the '2030 Sustainable Development Agenda' began in 2012 (what was then called 'Post-2015 Development Agenda'), I had the chance to discuss with different members of the High-Level Panel of advisers appointed by the UN Secretary General, especially HE Amina Mohammed, now Deputy Secretary General. They all agreed that, much more than devoting one of the goals to the family, the reality was that development is very much linked to the way families fulfill their social role, especially regarding poverty, health, education, equality and peace. The Secretary General himself stated in one of his reports how the empowerment of families is a necessary requirement for the development goals to be achieved (A/66/62-E/2011/4).

This was the origin and the spirit of the project we have been working on for the past three years. With the aim to show how family policies can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, we have tried to reflect pragmatic processes and procedures to assess:

- how family policies work to affect different social progress goals (as defined in the SDGs) in different parts of the world;
- how the actions of non-government actors working in support of families contribute to the issue;
- and how family attributes at household or national level impact on the effectiveness of the previously identified family interventions.

To say it with the words of the General Assembly in one of its resolutions, it is necessary “to create a conducive environment to strengthen and support all families, recognizing that equality between women and men and respect for all the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all family members are essential to family well-being and to society at large, noting the importance of reconciliation of work and family life and recognizing the principle of shared parental responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child” (A/RES/67/142).

Today, we are glad to present the results of all this work. The synthesis report summarizes evidence across the six SDGs that cover poverty, health, education, gender equality, youth unemployment, and ending violence, highlighting important issues that policymakers may wish to consider when making future policies work for families, and family policies work for the future.

But the most enriching part of this project has been the contribution of such renowned and dedicated professionals who have collaborated to develop this work.

In the first place, to Dominic Richardson (from UNICEF, Office of Research - Innocenti), academic co-ordinator of the project.

To the authors of the chapters prepared as part of the Project: Esuna Dugarova (Policy Specialist at the United Nations Development Programme) and Mihaela Robila (Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at Queens College of the City University of New York), both present here.

And to those who are joining us from the distance today: Daryl Higgins (Director of the Institute of Child Protection Studies at the Australian Catholic University); Keiko Hirao (Professor on Family and Social Sustainability at the Sophia University Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies in Tokyo); Zitha Mokomane (Associate Professor of the Department of Sociology at the University of Pretoria in South Africa).

Also to those who have managed with myself the coordination of the Project: Alex Vazquez (Project Manager, permanent representative to the United Nations of the International Federation for Family Development in New York); and Irma Rognoni

And to those who contributed with their reviews, comments and input at various stages: Sarah Cook (from the UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti); Jonathan Bradshaw (Emeritus Prof. University of York, U.K); Renata Kaczmarek (UN Focal Point on the Family at the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs); and Rosario Esteinou (Research Professor at the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social in Mexico).

Thanks also go to those entities that hosted the project meetings: UNICEF House in New York; the Municipality of San Jose in Costa Rica; and the Fundació Bancaria La Caixa, Barcelona. And to UNICEF for providing the editing and publishing of the synthesis report.

Lastly, this work would not have been possible without the financial support of our main sponsors: Fundació Bancaria La Caixa (Barcelona); and Stiftung Maienburg (Switzerland).

We hope to bring to lawmakers, academics, the private sector and civil society representatives with this tool and the full publication of the outcomes some tools that will allow them to discern what really works to help families in their social role, without trying to replace them or to leave them alone when they deserve that help.

We all see today how some changes society has experimented in the last decades (the massive incorporation of women to the labor market and, more generally, the wider range of personal choices in life) have brought very positive consequences, like less inequality and more freedom. But, at the same time, there are some 'side effects' that families have to bear with, as the greater need for care due. Some children, sick, older people and other vulnerable groups are left behind precisely because there is freedom, and only strong families are able to cover their needs, because that is precisely what having a family is about. Only strong families can make societies be really inclusive, only strong families can make it possible to ensure that no-one is left behind, and that is precisely the main aim of the 2030 Agenda.

That is why families deserve support through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies. Those will empower them to be able to fulfill their social role, and the whole society will benefit from it.

Let me finish by asking you to help us to disseminate this results in your own countries, as a way to accomplish the call of the last General Assembly resolution on family issues, when it "encourages Member States to invest in family policies and programmes that promote strong intergenerational interactions, such as intergenerational living arrangements and parenting education, in an effort to promote inclusive urbanization, intergenerational solidarity and social cohesion" (A/RES/72/145). We hope to be able to reach as many environments as possible, so that, just as the context of the development of this project has been global, lawmakers, academics and civil society representatives will benefit globally from it.

Thank you very much.