

**Expert Group Meeting on  
Integrating a Family Perspective in the SDGs in the Arab countries:  
Aspirations and Challenges  
Doha, 29-30 November 2017**

**Alberto Padova, Chief, Social Integration Branch, Division for Social Policy and  
Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDESA**

**Panel discussion 2: Addressing Sustainable Development from a Family Lens  
in response to guiding questions:**

**(1) How to highlight the importance of the family and family policies at the center of sustainable development goals?**

- Highlighting the importance of family and family policies at the center of sustainable development goals is one of the objectives of our work within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. We do that, among others, by providing the analytical background for Member States deliberations on the topic of the family (3<sup>rd</sup> C; CSocD); by raising the profile of family related issues through a variety of events, some of which we have organized in partnership with the Doha International Family Institute, as well as raising awareness among stakeholders, including through the use of social media; and by convening expert meetings like this one, to exchange best practices, information and the results of the latest research.
- For example, in the Report of the Secretary-General on family issues published last July, we emphasized that to fight poverty and achieve SDG1, it is vital to create sound policy frameworks at all levels based on pro-poor, pro-children and gender-sensitive development strategies. In particular, policies aimed at the provision of social protection and access to basic services have had the largest impact on family poverty reduction. Similarly, non-contributory old-age pensions helped to reduce poverty.
- In general, universal cash transfers are important here but targeted transfers are also indispensable and additional targeted benefits should be offered to the most vulnerable families to reduce inequalities. Childcare provision is also essential so that women can engage in employment as well.

**(2) How can the SDGs be transformative for families?**

- The SDG framework helps to prioritize specific areas of development. In this regard, I should note that the SDG framework makes several advances compared to the MDGs. First, with its emphasis on inclusion and leaving no one behind; second, being universal, meaning the goals apply to all countries, not just developing countries, like for the MDGs; third, introducing a goal on reducing inequality (Goal 10); fourth, by emphasizing the importance of quality

education, not just school enrollment, and including secondary, not just primary education;

- Some governments have started to identify and track SDG specific budget expenditure, which helps inform the development of evidence based SDG policies. For example, UN Women has developed a handbook tracking budget allocations and spending through a gender lens. Several countries have been implementing gender budgeting, starting with Austria, Spain and Sweden, Australia, South Africa, Korea, Japan, Tanzania, Mexico and Ecuador, just to name a few.
- Unicef has started to track an increasing number of governments making deliberate efforts to measure and monitor their public investments in children, starting in Latin America with Argentina, followed by Mexico, Ecuador, El Salvador, Peru, Egypt, Yemen in the Arab region, as well as India, and Uganda, among others. Moreover, greater transparency and accountability allow citizens to understand and influence decisions on how public money is spent.
- The SDGs and the overall 2030 Development Agenda require full engagement of all stakeholders, Governments, private sector, civil society, communities and families themselves. A transparent and inclusive budget process is increasingly seen as essential to facilitating investment, ensuring efficient outcomes, and holding government accountable for managing public resources.
- Once families are seen as active agents of development and not just its beneficiaries, policies should be designed to empower them, give them more choices in line with the SDG framework.

### **(3) What aspects of family policies can support 'win-wins' for family and sustainable development in the context of Agenda 2030?**

- There are many win-win scenarios for family and sustainable development. Most importantly, families should be contributing to development. They should be empowered to be able to provide economically to their dependents through decent jobs. At the same time family members are not just bread winners, they also provide emotional and psychological support to the young and the old alike.
- To be able to do that, we need accommodating work-family balance policies. Therefore, employers should be informed of research which clearly demonstrates that flexible working arrangements are not only appreciated by employees, they make employees more productive and loyal, staying in the job longer when good work-family policies are in place.
- In the latest report on the Implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes, we offered several examples of good practices in family policy making. Several Member States shared their experience in promoting development efforts through different family policies and programmes.

- From Malta's National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion, to cash transfer programmes in Brazil or the Philippines, or the flexible work arrangements in Denmark and the Netherlands, just to mention a few. We think that sharing of such good practices is essential so that they are made more visible and different stakeholders can learn from one another.

**(4) How to address Youth within the context of family policies to enhance the Demographic Dividend and its contribution to attaining the SDGs?**

- Youth policies can be more effective when approached through a family lens. For instance, our Expert Group Meeting held last year dealt with several youth-family related issues: mental health and HIV/AIDS. The research presented demonstrated that mental health interventions among youth are much more effective when their families are included. Similarly involving families in decisions on prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDSs was more effective than treating of individuals.
- In some regions youth-oriented programmes had mixed success and some researchers link it to the lack of efforts in addressing youth-parent or family relationships. Instead most programmes focus on individuals and young people are seen as adults with no family bonds but only social bonds relating to work, education or civic activities. In sum, their rights perspective focuses on strengthening various relationships such as school and civic interaction but it does not consider the importance of family relations.
- Research in Latin America demonstrated that programmes focusing on rearing and parenting have shown promising results in impacting behavioural development of children and youth. For instance, many programmes in Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Jamaica have been found to contribute to long term positive outcomes in children, such as higher IQs, better school performance, better mental health and less violent behavior.
- We can to some extent conclude that both a family lens and an intergenerational lens are needed when designing and implementing youth policies and programmes.