

DIFI DISCUSSES GENDER-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION AT UNITED NATIONS

Panel held as part of 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Doha, Qatar, March 19, 2019: The Doha International Family Institute (DIFI), a member of Qatar Foundation (QF), has hosted a panel titled ‘Gender-Responsive Social Protection for Adolescent Girls to Enable Aspirations and Reach the SDGs in the Arab Region’ on the sidelines of the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which is currently taking place at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York.

The panel – held in partnership with the Qatar Permanent Mission at the UN, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the Arab Institute for Women at the Lebanese American University – was a continuation of DIFI’s study on ‘Family Sensitive Social Protection (FSSP)’ and DIFI’s expert meeting held in Doha last year.

It aimed to further the discussion on current models of welfare and protection systems in the Arab region with specific focus on adolescent girls, shedding light on protection systems in terms of the extent to which they respond to adolescent girls’ practical and strategic needs and tackle issues related limited autonomy, lack of voice, and agency.

Dr. Sharifa Noaman Al-Emadi, Executive Director, DIFI, said: “Evidence shows that social protection programs can strengthen the capacity of families to care for their adolescent girls in an optimal manner if provided with the needed means and resources. Therefore, fostering knowledge on Arab families and advancing family policies and programs through evidence-based policies, research, and advocacy are the main objectives of DIFI.

“Social protection systems are at the heart of our work at DIFI. The UN side-event continues this discussion through focusing on adolescent girls and the challenges they confront during this vital phase of their life, exploring how social protection systems can support them in reaching their potential and realizing their aspirations.”

“I am very optimistic that the themes and issues addressed by this session will be the start of greater projects and initiatives that will assist us in creating recommendations for the problems faced by adolescent girls in the Arab region.”

Mr. Arthur van Diesen, UNICEF Regional Social Policy Adviser for MENA, said: “UNICEF is actively supporting governments in the MENA region to reform their social protection

systems, to make them more responsive to children’s needs. Much more needs to be done to ensure that social protection systems support adolescent girls to have a good education, protect them from harmful practices, and prepare them for entry into the labor market.

“We are excited about the opportunity offered by this side event to discuss good practices from the region and beyond that may unlock the reforms that are needed in MENA.”

The opening of the event included introductory remarks from Her Excellency Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al Thani, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, and Mr. Omar Abdi, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF. Panelists included Mr. Atif Khurshid, Policy Specialist, Social Protection, Social Policy and Inclusion, UNICEF; Dr. Lina Abirafeh, Executive Director, the Arab Institute for Women, Lebanese American University; and Dr. Hala Al Ahmadi, Senior Policy Analyst, DIFI.

Dr. Abirafeh said: “Addressing social protection focusing on adolescent girls is a critical undertaking and one that the Arab Institute for Women addresses. This collaboration is critical because it ensures that we build a common base of understanding among key partners in order to provide the best possible support to adolescent girls in the region.”

DIFI’s side-event focused on the role of protection systems in advancing adolescent girls’ education and promoting the psychosocial health of adolescent girls in a changing world and environments. It also proposed a model of gender responsive protection policies and programs to empower adolescent girls, as well as recommendations for a social protection system.

DIFI is a global policy and advocacy institute working to advance knowledge on Arab families through research and promote evidence-based policies at a national, regional, and international level. The institute has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

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About Doha International Family Institute (DIFI)

The Doha International Family Institute (DIFI), a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), was established in 2006. The Institute works to strengthen the family through the development and dissemination of high-quality research on Arab families, encouraging knowledge exchange on issues relevant to the family and making

the family a priority to policy-makers through advocacy and outreach at the national, regional and international levels. Among the Institute's most important initiatives is the Annual Conference on the Family; and the OSRA Research Grant in collaboration with the Qatar National Research Fund, an annual research grant which encourages research related to the Arab family and family policy. The Institute has special consultative status with United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) is a non-profit organization that supports Qatar on its journey to becoming a diversified and sustainable economy. QF strives to serve the people of Qatar and beyond by providing specialized programs across its innovation-focused ecosystem of education, research and development, and community development.

QF was founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, who shared the vision to provide Qatar with quality education. Today, QF's world-class education system offers lifelong learning opportunities to community members as young as six months through to doctoral level, enabling graduates to thrive in a global environment and contribute to the nation's development.

QF is also creating a multidisciplinary innovation hub in Qatar, where homegrown researchers are working to address local and global challenges. By promoting a culture of lifelong learning and fostering social engagement through programs that embody Qatari culture, QF is committed to empowering the local community and contributing to a better world for all.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, please visit: www.qf.org.qa

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