

## **Report on Doha Briefing, DIFI Side-event and Presentations at the 56th Commission for Social Development (CSocD56)**

**New York, 29 January- 7 February 2018**

**Theme: Strategies for Eradicating Poverty to  
Achieve Sustainable Development for All**

## **Doha International Family Institute**

Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) is a global policy and advocacy institute working to advance knowledge on Arab families through research and promote evidence-based policies at the national, regional, and international levels. DIFI was established in 2006 with the mandate of supporting the aims of the 2004 Doha Declaration on the Family.

DIFI is a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, a private non-profit organization founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Emir of Qatar. The Institute has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

To know more about DIFI, please visit [www.difi.org.qa](http://www.difi.org.qa).

To know more about QF, please visit [www.qf.org.qa](http://www.qf.org.qa).

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## Introduction

The Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) participated in the 56th Session on the Commission for Social Development (CSocD56) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York between 29 January and 7 February 2018. DIFI's participation included, organizing the Doha Briefing, one side-event and a participation at a High Level Panel, as well as attending side events and meetings.

The Doha Briefing on *Focusing on Families to Support the Implementation of the SDGs*, in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the UN and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Social Policy and Development.

The Doha Briefing aimed to:

- Present the findings of the International Expert Group Meeting held in Doha in November 2017 on “Integrating a Family Perspective during the localization of SDGs in the Arab World: Challenges and Aspirations” in collaboration with UNFPA
- Explore how the EGM's findings and recommendations are relevant NGOs working at the regional and international levels.
- Discuss the value of investing in family policies that focus on youth and why this is important in the Arab world.

The side event on *Supporting Families Affected by Wars and Conflicts: Experiences of NGOs in Qatar*, in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the UN, Qatar Charity, Red Crescent and Education Above All.

The side event aimed to highlight and present the experiences of NGOs in Qatar in providing support to populations affected by wars and conflicts.

The Executive Director of the Doha International Family Institute (DIFI), Noor Al Malki Al Jehani participated as panelist at the UN High Level Panel on the theme of *Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies: Innovation and Inter-connectivity for Social Development*. Ms. Noor Al Malki presented on “*Interconnectivity for Resilient Societies: A Special Focus on the Arab World*”.

The details of the aforementioned Doha Briefing, side-event and presentations, including their objectives, key messages, and suggested recommendations can be viewed below.

## **Doha Briefing**

### ***“Focusing on Families to Support the Implementation of the SDGs”***

**Date/time:** Monday, 29 January 2018 / 1.15-2.30pm.

**Event title:** Doha Briefing on Focusing on Families to Support the Implementation of the SDGs

**Number of attendees:** 50

**Moderator:**

- **Ms. Noor Al Malki Al Jehani**, Executive Director of Doha International Family Institute

**Speakers:**

- **H.E. Sheikha Alya Al-Thani**, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations
- **Ms. Noor Al Malki Al Jehani**, Executive Director of Doha International Family Institute
- **Ms. Renata Kaczmarek**, Focal Point, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Social Policy and Development
- **Dr. Anis B. Brik**, Family Policy Director, Doha International Family Institute

**Member States Sponsorship:**

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

**Member States in attendance:**

Qatar

**Objective(s) of the event:**

The Doha Briefing organized by Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the UN and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Social Policy and Development during the 56th session of the Commission on Social Development aims to:

- Present the findings of the International Expert Group Meeting held in Doha in November 2017 on “Integrating a Family Perspective during the localization of SDGs in the Arab World: Challenges and Aspirations” in collaboration with UNFPA
- Explore how the EGM’s findings and recommendations are relevant NGOs working at the regional and international levels.
- Discuss the value of investing in family policies that focus on youth and why this is important in the Arab world.

## **Key messages:**

The key messages provided during the Doha Briefing included an examination of the following issues:

H.E. Sheikha Alya Al-Thani:

- The State of Qatar has a strong belief in the pivotal role of family in social development. The State of Qatar implemented a variety of family-oriented policies and programs that have positively affected Qatar's people and society. Driven by this strong belief, the State of Qatar took a leading role in facilitating the consultations on the resolution on the "International Year of the Family" presented each year by the group of 77 and China.

Ms. Noor Al Malki Al Jehani:

- There is no dispute over the role of families in development but there are different opinions about the extent of that role, and whether in the context of the SDGs, this contribution is limited to the first five goals. There is a need to emphasize the importance of family policies and their effect(s) on wellbeing.
- A bottom up approach is more effective for the achievement of the SDG goals and targets than a top down approach and the emphasis in national plans should be on prioritizing national realities and issues.
- There is a need to create a database that documents the best practices that are regionally and culturally relevant in policy-making.
- Assisting youth in their development is critical to the achievement of SDGs.

Ms. Renata Kaczmarek:

- Families are mentioned indirectly many times in the SDGs, such as in terms of healthy lives and promoting wellbeing. Families are important to the achievement of the SDGs, especially in fighting exclusion.
- Due to the constantly changing definitions of the "family," there is a need to focus on actions rather than on its definition. The advantages of family policies depend on how well issues of family policies are integrated in the planning of policies at the national level.

Dr. Anis B. Brik and Dr. Nader Kabbani:

- The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is facing unprecedented challenges including the social-economic exclusion of youth, the social-economic exclusion of females, the lack of integration of migrant workers and refugees, and a large unregulated informal economy. These challenges are adversely affecting family formation and cohesion, and influencing progress in terms of regional sustainable development.
- Supporting youth is indispensable to the achievement of SDGs. National policies that promote youth employment must include family policies before and after marriage, and they must target education systems, the public sector and the private sector.

**Strategies/social policy recommendations/commitments/initiatives suggested:**

Recommendations made during the Doha International Family Institute's (DIFI) EGM on "Integrating a Family Perspective during the localization of SDGs in the Arab World: Challenges and Aspirations":

**(a) On Family Policies and SDGs:**

Policies should be designed to empower families and give them more choices in line with the SDGs framework.

Development of family policies that lead to:

- self-sufficient and resilient families
- healthy and educated children
- improved access to decent work for family bread-winners, men and women alike
- better work-family balance
- gender equality
- family stability
- fulfillment of children's rights
- stronger intergenerational bonds

Promoting an inclusive social protection system that allows individuals to exit poverty reduction programs without forfeiting their rights to social protection.

**(b) On Children and Parenting:**

The provision of policies supporting parental education to contribute to the achievement of SDGs

Family support programs are indispensable tools for promoting children's development, reducing family poverty, and preventing intergenerational transfers of income and welfare ingredients

Extending the use of couples' counseling to children and young people's mental health services

Family-work balance policies are important to helping achieve a fairer distribution of household duties and child-care responsibilities

Supporting affordable daycare and preschool

Promoting family' involvement in quality and inclusive education

Acknowledging the role of grandparents in parenting

**(c) On Women and Youth:**

Enhancing gender-sensitive family policies by alleviating legal barriers to gender equality and investing in education and training to ensure sustainable human development for all, by focusing on the youth, women and girls, rural dwellers, and those living in conflict-affected areas

Overcome region-specific gender stereotypes

Family policies need to ensure safe transition to adulthood

Improve access to affordable housing

Reduce barriers to female employment



## **DIFI Side Event**

### ***“Supporting Families Affected by Wars and Conflicts: Experiences of NGOs in Qatar”***

**Date/time:** Friday, 3 February 2018 / 3:00-4:30pm.

**Event title:** Supporting Families Affected by Wars and Conflicts: Experiences of NGOs in Qatar

**Number of attendees:** 50

**Moderator:**

- **Ms. Noor Al Malki Al Jehani**, Executive Director of Doha International Family Institute

**Speakers:**

- **Mr. Mohammad Bin Ali Al-Ghamdi**, Executive Director, Qatar Charity

- **Ms. Najat Al Abdulla**, Head of the Family Affairs Department, Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs

- **Ms. Salwa Al Mannai**, Head of Policy and Research, Education Above All

- **Dr. Anis B. Brik**, Family Policy Director, Doha International Family Institute

**Member States Sponsorship:**

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

**Member States in attendance:**

Qatar

**Objective(s) of the event:**

Evidence shows that the cumulative impact of wars and violent conflict aggravates economies and weakens the ability of the State, local authorities or private sector in providing services and opportunities of livelihood for families and their members. The role of non-governmental organizations is thus critical in providing the necessary support and assistance to families and their members affected by wars and conflicts. The panel discussion aims to highlight and present the experiences of NGOs in Qatar in providing support to populations affected by wars and conflicts.

## **Key messages:**

The key messages provided during the side event included an examination of the following issues:

- a) The State of Qatar and non-governmental organizations based in Qatar are committed to the provision of aid. They are committed to cooperating and participating in humanitarian efforts that aim for long term and sustainable solutions. Qatar commends the work of non-governmental organizations and respects the privacy of their work. Qatar is also willing to provide support to them when requested.
- b) Families and their members are forced into dealing with unexpected circumstances such as fleeing their homes, living in the midst of war zones, among other circumstances, which renders them vulnerable, changes their relations and alters their structure and composition.
- c) Education is particularly important in times of armed conflict because it can provide a sense of normalcy in an environment of chaos, and has the potential to instill new values, skills and behaviors to reduce economic, social and ethnic polarization. Moreover, education must be provided at the beginning of a humanitarian crisis to mitigate the negative consequences and effects of conflict such as child soldiers and radicalization.
- d) Wars and conflicts negatively impact the economic situation of families and increases their chances of poverty. In order to respond to this challenge, a livelihood approach must be adopted which aims to invest in human capital, physical capital, social capital, financial capital and natural capital of families.

## **Strategies/ social policy recommendations/ commitments/ initiatives suggested:**

### Recommendations by Doha International Family Institute (DIFI):

- (a) Ensuring broader and more consistent application of the approaches that have proven to be successful to support families and their members by providing alternative care, protection, access to education, health, sanitation, housing and socio-economic infrastructure in fragile situations;
- (b) Focusing poverty alleviation strategies on the family as a unit and acknowledge that family breakdown can be both a root cause and an effect of poverty and its prevention is a priority during and following wars and conflicts;
- (c) Adopting an integrated approach to understand the impact of conflict on family, children and women's poverty by using a rights framework; effective livelihood, resilience-based and gender sensitive programming in pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict situations;

(d) Protecting refugee families and their members against violence and exploitation, guaranteeing the right of all refugee children to education and expanding efforts to incorporate human rights and peace and environmental awareness into that education;

(e) Scaling up, multi-sector support for families and their members to convert the policy shifts made by refugee - hosting countries into support for families through social protection systems;

(f) Eliminating all factors preventing children from going to school including by making schools safe and improving teaching and learning; ensuring pathways back into school for those who have dropped out; recognition of school certificates; and provision of support for children who have experienced war related trauma;

(g) Improving information gathering, data collection, research and analysis on families, children and women in conflict situations in order to improve programs implementation and policy.

#### Recommendations by Education Above All (EAA):

(a) Increase domestic and international funding for education. In EAA's project in Haiti, the community and parents came together to build schools that were destroyed after hurricane Matthew. When resources are available, the family and community can become effective agents in development.

(b) Education was adopted as one of the priority sectors in humanitarian events during the World Humanitarian Summit. Yet, education has repeatedly received less than 2% of all humanitarian funding – and remains among the least funded areas in the Rohingya response according to the International Rescue Committee. EAA calls for the follow-up on implementation and monitoring efforts to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development efforts referenced in the outcome document of the World Humanitarian Summit.

(c) In an effort to advance the implementation of SDG17, EAA calls for further collaboration with other NGOs concerned with other SDGs, such as SDG1: zero hunger, SDG2: No poverty, and SDG6: Clean water and sanitation, to work with EAA in a multi-sectorial approach to address some barriers to education.

Recommendations by Qatar Charity (QC):

Improvement occurs through cooperation between civil society, national machineries and non-governmental organizations, with the aim of supporting the stability of the family unit during wars and conflicts. The family is considered to be the main socialization unit in any society and the main productive economic unit that provides for its needs. Specific recommendations include:

- (a) Reestablishing a stable social fabric;
- (b) Protecting families in crisis from breakdown;
- (c) Including education and career development services within humanitarian response;
- (d) Supporting the family as a cohesive and productive unit.



## UN High-level panel discussion on emerging issues

### *“Towards sustainable and resilient societies: Innovation and inter- connectivity for social development”*

**Date/time:** Monday, 30 January 2018 / 3-6pm.

**Event title:** Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies: Innovation and Inter-connectivity for Social Development

**Number of attendees:** 300

**Moderator:**

- **Mr. Jeremy Millard**, Chief Policy Advisor, Danish Technological Institute, Denmark, Research Fellow at Bradford University, United Kingdom and Special Advisor to DG CONNECT, European Commission on public sector innovation, e-government and public services

**Presenters:**

- **Dr. Sen Gong**, Research Fellow of the Development Research Centre of the State Council, Executive Vice-President of the China Centre for International Knowledge on Development.

- **Noor Al Malki Al Jehani**, Executive Director, Doha International Family Institute (DIFI)

- **Prof. Walter Valdivia**, Senior Fellow to CSPO, a science policy think tank at Arizona State University, and Adjunct Faculty at Johns Hopkins, and a Senior Policy Editor for the Mercatus Center at George Mason University.

- **Prof. Maria Garrido**, Research Assistant Professor and Principal Research Scientist at the Technology and Social Change Group, University of Washington

- **Ms. Donna Scheeder**, President 2015-2017, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

- **Member States Sponsorship:**

N/A

**Member States in attendance:**

All

## **Objective(s) of the event:**

The panel aims to:

- 1) Identify opportunities and challenges that innovation and inter-connectivity can bring to societies, and examine the role of social policy to create conditions under which they can be useful tool for advancing social progress and achieving the 2030 Agenda and SDGs;
- 2) Exchange information, knowledge, and good policies and practices at the national, regional and international levels, where innovation, new technologies help advance social development, with particular attention to the most marginalized/vulnerable;
- 3) Explore how the international community/the Commission could play an important role to leverage technological advances for achieving sustainable development for all.

## **Key messages:**

The key messages provided by **Noor Al Malki Al Jehani** on *Interconnectivity for Resilient Societies: A Special Focus on the Arab World* included an examination of the following issues:

- (a) The definition of resilience is the ability to anticipate risk, limit impact, recover and bounce back from difficulties and crisis and continue to function and grow. This definition applies to individuals, families and societies.
- (b) The Arab region is on the verge of a massive digital disruption. In the past decade, the cross-border data flow connecting the Region to the world has increased by more than 150-fold.
- (c) The benefits that inter-connectivity could bring to families include: the maintenance of family relations despite geographical distance, improved communication between family members, improved parental engagement, improved engagement with children's learning, and improved capacity to support children's education.
- (d) The disadvantages that inter-connectivity could bring to families include: ICT has different impacts on family life according to the specific stage of the family life cycle, technology could contribute to reducing family communication and cohesion in the Arab region, individuals have less direct contact with their families and friends, and social media has been cited in a DIFI study as a threat to family relations.
- (e) Inter-connectivity also poses benefits and challenges specifically to children, Arab youth, women, social protection, and education.
- (f) Interconnectivity has accelerated social progress in Qatar. For example, the E-government portal provides more than 1380 digital services. Some 690 of them can be accessed and executed by companies, citizens, residents and visitors. They cover multiple sectors such as health, education and business.

The user-friendly portal has enhanced search functions and can also be accessed by PWD. It also includes a special page for migrant workers in five languages. In addition, services in Qatar include Assistive Technology Centre (Mada), Accessible Qatar, AmanTech Digital Safety by Vodafone, and Ta3mal by Silatech.

**Strategies/social policy recommendations/ commitments/ initiatives suggested:**

Recommendations made by **Noor Al Malki Al Jehani**:

- (a) Focus on building family and social capital to enhance societal resilience by developing policies and programs that support relationships building, emphasize trust, reciprocity and community engagement and adopt measures to address internet and social media addiction.
- (b) Strengthen the resilience of society by promoting inclusiveness and overcoming social exclusion and inequalities and engaging people in decision making.
- (c) Raise awareness of the benefits and potential risks interconnectivity could bring to individuals, families and communities, enhance parental ICTs skills and build capacity among professionals on e-safety to protect children and young people.
- (d) Integrate gender in national ICTs strategies and policies and build awareness and capacity of e-government officials on gender issues.
- (e) Increase investments in education, prioritize spending on most marginalized groups and focus on increasing equity, inclusion and support the most marginalized groups and disadvantaged children by promoting innovative forms of education.
- (f) Support the integration of ICTs in the social protection sector and emphasize that its achievement results in coordination and political will, rather than a technical 'fix'.
- (g) Build national capacity on the enabling role of innovation and ICTs in social and sustainable development and placing innovation and ICTs at the center of national and regional social policies.
- (h) Promote reporting on efforts at the national and regional levels related to innovation and ICTs and SDGs and the facilitation of further UN reporting on innovation and ICTs for SDGs.

