

Empowering Families: A Pathway to Development

Panel Discussion on “Confronting Family Poverty”

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Focus of Discussion

- Developing countries, specifically Africa where:
 - Extended family is the dominant system,
 - All members have specific roles to play to ensure sustenance of the family:
 - **Father:** traditional head of family; responsible for socio-cultural economic wellbeing of family
 - **Mother:** overall household management; provision of psychosocial caregiving for all family members
 - **Children:** continuation of family lineage; older care
 - **Grandparents:** childcare & provision of intergenerational support
 - **Other relatives** (e.g. uncles, aunts, cousins etc.): important during childrearing years and various rite to passage rituals

Family Roles & Poverty Alleviation

- Overall as a functional unit, extended family plays major in poverty alleviation and economic empowerment of all members.
 - Fathers' and mothers' roles ensure stability and security through the provision of basic resources such as food, clothing & shelter to enhance the family's development and physical survival
 - The provision of childcare support by grandparents and other family members is invaluable in facilitating parents' participation in the labour market and eventual economic empowerment

Socio-economic changes and family poverty

- Over years witnessed family breakdown and instability that can exacerbate family poverty:
 - **Rural urban migration**
 - Expands the pool of young urban job seekers & worsens urban unemployment
 - Reduces the pressure on employers to offer competitive incomes
 - Many urban migrants face low-wage employment, unemployment, underemployment, & poverty
 - Implications for families who came along and families left behind
 - Separates families and weakens traditional kinship support for care roles

Socio-economic changes and family poverty (cont'd)

- **Changing nuptiality patterns**
 - Marriage now less universal & late
 - Marriage dissolution through divorce and separation increasingly becoming common
 - Marriage still crucial for women to secure land, capital, housing etc., thus increasing number of unmarried and single women unable to secure or gain access to income and wealth-generating resources
- **Increasing proportions of FHHS**
 - Single-parent households now a common phenomenon
 - Women increasingly sole caregivers and economic supporters of their children and families
 - FHHs generally disadvantaged in terms of access to land, livestock, credit, education, healthcare and extension services

Socio-economic changes and family poverty (cont'd)

HIV and AIDS

- Household improvised as they:
 - take care of sick members
 - take in additional extended family members, specifically orphans
- Home-based care reduces the time that carers (mostly women) can:
 - Spend on income-generating activities to secure financial resources to meet essential needs.
 - spend with their children and on securing the

Impacts of changes on families

Changes have important impacts on parents and children:

Hardship and stress (for parents)

- With inadequate income people have difficulties in meeting basic needs
- Increased stress & alienation associated with:
 - having very low income
 - the continual juggling of finances
 - financial uncertainty

Isolation and exclusion (for children)

- Due to lack of parents' attention as poverty blocks the ways of parents to perform the role of good parenting.
- Poorer school performance and low school retention rates.
- Child labour and exposure to many risks, such as sexual and physical abuse.

Way Forward

- Focus on two assets of the family: **Family capital** and **family resilience**
- Develop and effectively implement comprehensive social protection programmes that are:
 - Family-focused
 - Gender-sensitive
 - Child-oriented
- Provide overall family-friendly policies for workers with child and other family-related care responsibilities.
- Adopt the family lens in all policy development



THANK YOU!