

Info-note

Expert Group Meeting on the Family Wellbeing Index

Organized by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) and the Doha International Family Institute (DIFI)

Date and time:
16-17 July 2026

Location:
SESRIC

1. Background

As the Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) marks its twentieth anniversary, it is advancing toward the formal launch of the Family Wellbeing Index (FWI) at its milestone conference, "Family Wellbeing: Measuring what Matters" (Doha, 11–12 October 2026). The FWI represents DIFI's most significant institutional contribution to date, a policy-oriented measurement framework co-developed in strategic partnership with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), designed to enable governments to diagnose family needs, guide investment priorities, and evaluate the impact of family-focused policies in a culturally responsive and analytically rigorous manner.

Structured around four interrelated pillars, Objective Wellbeing, Subjective Wellbeing, Relational Wellbeing, and Cultural Wellbeing, the FWI integrates dimensions frequently overlooked by conventional indices, with sensitivity to the values, structures, and lived realities of Arab and Muslim-majority societies. At the same time, the index is designed as a replicable and adaptable framework for any society seeking to place family wellbeing at the center of public policy.

Ahead of the October conference, an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) is convened as an essential preparatory step. The EGM serves as the primary technical validation and co-development mechanism for the draft FWI, bringing together a focused group of regional and international experts to conduct a rigorous review of the index across its conceptual framework, indicator selection, data pathways, and governance architecture. The outcomes of the EGM will directly

inform the finalized FWI presented at the conference, ensuring it is scientifically rigorous, institutionally viable, and credible across the diversity of OIC member states.

2. Objectives

The EGM is structured around three primary objectives:

- 1) **Validate the FWI Framework:** Conduct a detailed expert review of all four FWI pillars, assessing the conceptual coherence, cultural responsiveness, and analytical rigor of each.
- 2) **Refine Indicators and Data Pathways:** Select policy-relevant indicators, assess data availability across OIC member states, and agree on governance and reporting arrangements.
- 3) **Build Technical Consensus:** Generate shared expert understanding and commitment that anchors the FWI's credibility at the October 2026 conference and beyond.

3. Overview of the Family Wellbeing Index (FWI)

The FWI is a robust, survey-centered framework developed to provide an evidence-based roadmap for social policy. Rather than relying solely on economic indicators, the FWI evaluates the holistic ecosystem of the family unit, ensuring that public investments and social policies are aligned with actual grassroots needs.

Why the FWI Matters

While conventional national indices typically measure individual or macroeconomic progress, they frequently overlook the family as a cohesive unit. The FWI bridges this gap by acting as a diagnostic policy tool. It enables governments and institutional stakeholders to:

- Identify and diagnose hidden vulnerabilities within modern families.
- Guide national investment priorities and optimize resource allocation.
- Evaluate the concrete, long-term impacts of family-focused legislation and social protection systems.

The Four Pillars of the Framework

To capture the complete reality of family life, the FWI assesses well-being across a balanced matrix of four distinct pillars, which will undergo rigorous review during this EGM:

- **Objective Wellbeing:** Examines the physical and material foundations of the household, including food and material security, economic stability, housing quality, health status, and direct access to essential public utilities, education, and social protection systems.
- **Subjective Wellbeing:** Measures the internal, psychological outlook of the family, focusing on life evaluation, emotional affect (stress and happiness), resilience, future orientation, hope, and perceived social support networks.
- **Relational Wellbeing:** Evaluates the dynamics within the household and its immediate environment, including couple communication, parenting warmth, discipline climates, structural family stability, neighbor relations, and community trust.
- **Cultural Wellbeing:** Tailored with specific sensitivity to the values and traditions of Arab and Muslim-majority societies, this pillar assesses community and family belonging, intergenerational cultural continuity, and shared religious practices.

4. EGM Outcomes

As a critical preparatory milestone ahead of the flagship October conference, this EGM is tasked with shifting the FWI from a conceptual framework into an operationally viable, internationally standardized tool. The expert panel's insights will directly define:

- **Methodological Validation:** Confirming that the index design is analytically sound, cross-nationally comparable, and culturally responsive.
- **Data Pathways & Metrics:** Finalizing the shortlist of policy-relevant indicators and mapping out data availability across diverse OIC member states.
- **Implementation & Governance Roadmap:** Establishing the operational protocols, reporting standards, and governance structures required for the FWI's upcoming regional piloting phase.

5. Participants

The EGM will convene a group of experts from the region including DIFI and SESRIC participants, along with experts from different backgrounds specialized in the above-mentioned 4 pillars of the FWI.

6. Agenda and Work Program

Day One: Conceptual Validation & Core Well-being Dimensions

- **09:00 – 09:30 | Opening Session & Framing**
 - **Opening Remarks:**
 - Dr. Zehra Zümrüt Selçuk, Director General, SESRIC
 - Dr. Sharifa Al Emadi, Executive Director, DIFI
 - **Strategic Overview of the FWI:** Dr. Ahmed Aref, Director of Family Research and Policies, DIFI.
 - *Session Focus:* Framing the institutional vision of the FWI as an evidence-based diagnostic policy tool ahead of the October 2026 launch.
- **09:30 – 11:00 | Session 1: Pillar I – Objective Wellbeing**
 - *Technical Focus:* Expert review of the material, physical, and structural foundations of family life. Deliberations will focus on the indicator shortlists for Food and Material Security, Economic Stability, Housing Adequacy, Infrastructure, Health Status, Healthcare Access, and Social Protection. Assessing how to effectively balance resource access with service quality in the survey design.

- **11:00 – 11:30 | Coffee Break**
- **11:30 – 13:00 | Session 2: Pillar II – Subjective Wellbeing**
 - *Technical Focus:* Evaluating the psychological, emotional, and cognitive ecosystem of the family unit. This session reviews indicators tracking Life Evaluation, Positive/Negative Affect, Future Orientation, Resilience, Meaning, and Perceived Family Support. Standardizing the measurement of emotional affect, hope, and subjective financial stress to ensure cross-national comparability across culturally diverse OIC member states.
- **13:00 – 13:30 | Day One Reflection & Synthesis**
 - *Session Focus:* A facilitator-led session to consolidate expert input across Pillars I and II. The panel will document immediate areas of technical consensus, register recommended revisions to the indicators, and isolate unresolved conceptual questions for the drafting committee.
- **13:30 – 02:30 Lunch**

Day Two: Relational Dynamics, Cultural Continuity & Operational Governance

- **09:00 – 09:30 | Morning Recap & Agenda Orientation**
 - *Session Focus:* Brief synthesis of Day One outputs. The facilitator will orient the panel as the work program transitions from individual well-being dimensions toward household relationships, cultural alignment, and international reporting structures.
- **09:30 – 11:00 | Session 3: Pillar III – Relational Wellbeing**
 - *Technical Focus:* Rigorous review of internal family dynamics and community integration. Review of subdimensions including Couple Communication, Conflict Strain, Parenting Warmth, Discipline Climate, Family Functioning, and Neighborhood Trust. Evaluating the sensitivity and structural integrity of family functioning metrics, including the use of indirect proxies for relationship strain and the classification of household discipline practices.
- **11:00 – 11:30 | Coffee Break**
- **11:30 – 13:00 | Session 4: Pillar IV – Cultural Wellbeing**
 - *Technical Focus:* Reviewing a pillar uniquely sensitive to the values, traditions, and lived realities of Arab and Muslim-majority societies. Examination of metrics regarding Cultural Identity, Community/Family Belonging, Intergenerational Continuity, and Religious Practice. Defining parameters for measuring shared family traditions and religious practice to ensure an objective, respectful, and policy-relevant baseline for cultural continuity.

- **13:00 – 14:00 Closing Session: Reflections, Commitments, and Next Steps**

- *Technical Focus:* Shifting from architectural concepts to institutional implementation. This session focuses on data-collection protocols, rules for handling household non-applicability (e.g., single or childless households), and the logistics of aggregating data from household metrics to national levels. Reviewing the operational implementation roadmap, identifying data-sharing pathways among member states, and defining long-term reporting standards for the piloting phase.
- *Session Conclusion:* Finalization of the EGM's technical outputs. Experts will formally adopt the recommended revisions for the index framework and establish the timeline for the final technical report ahead of the flagship conference in Doha.

- **14:00 – 15:00 | Lunch**

Logistical Arrangements

- Confirmed Experts will receive the FWI Draft in advance to be ready for EGM discussions.
- Venue: Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), Ankara
- EGM Language: English