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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: rethinking and strengthening social
development in the contemporary world**

Statement submitted by International Federation for Home Economics, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world, from the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE), a Home Economics perspective

From a Home Economics perspective social development must be the overarching goal of the Sustainable Development Goals and of all government and stakeholder strategies, because the people who suffer from poverty, unemployment and social exclusions are individuals, families and communities.

Improving social development is fundamental to the well-being of families. This statement addresses the context and demands for innovative actions and strategies for social development with a focus on wellbeing for individuals, families and communities. It also focusses on the significance of Home Economics competencies that can enable individuals, families and communities to manage everyday as well as critical household situations.

Context of Social development from a Home Economics perspective

Home Economics is a field of study and a profession, situated in the human sciences that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities. In the 21st century, Home Economics extended its context from home and household to the wider living environment, because the capacities, choices and priorities of individuals and families impact at all levels, ranging from the individual household, to the local and global communities.

Household members are the first to be affected by social, economic and ecological developments in their living environments and to suffer from armed conflicts, economic crises, disasters etc. From a Home Economics perspective, poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, which are widespread in many countries of the world, pulls economic and social resources from each household, and reduces the opportunities essential for developing human growth potential and human necessities and for everyday basic needs to be met.¹

IFHE advocates for individuals, families and communities to achieve empowerment and wellbeing, to utilise transformative practices, in order to facilitate sustainable futures.

Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society (UNESCO 2003). Home Economics literacy enables people to improve their lives even in critical living surroundings.

Contribution of Home Economics to Poverty Eradication

Home Economists are concerned that poverty affects mostly women, children, the elderly and indigenous peoples, which increases their challenges to survive

¹ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/564/47/PDF/N1356447.pdf?OpenElement>.

especially in poorer communities. The IFHE advocates for fundamental rights for all, especially those living in poverty.²

The full participation of people living in poverty, in the decisions that affect their lives and communities, must be at the centre of policies and strategies of governments and decision makers to enable them to build a sustainable future.

In addition to the general implementation requirements — listed in the “Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights” — to eradicate poverty, the IFHE, demands Home Economics education for all; to empower individuals, families and communities to develop sustainable lifestyles; to qualify them to manage their household resources effectively, produce healthy and secure food and improve their health; generate income and to contribute to the decisions for social development.

Home Economics Competencies Support Full Employment

Full employment enables most individuals and families desirable options for income generation as the basis for household management and to fulfil the needs of household members.

IFHE demands that people, who for different personal or social circumstances (such as age, retirement, disability, chronic diseases, underage orphans) are not in a position to generate income from employment receive adequate financial support from social security systems to secure their life. From a Home Economics perspective, full employment must be accompanied by international labour standards to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity including for women and disabled people.³

In addition, results from entrepreneurial projects conducted in many countries revealed and verified that Home Economics skills and household management experiences were valuable for establishing small or medium businesses.

Family Life and social aspects of household management are the nucleus for social integration: The Social Exclusion Knowledge Network (SEK) indicates that:

“Exclusion consists of dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four main dimensions — economic, political, social and cultural — and at different levels including individual, household, group, community, country and global levels. It results in a continuum of inclusion/exclusion characterised by unequal access to resources, capabilities and rights which leads to health inequalities.”⁴

² https://www.ifhe.org/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&g=0&t=1446905688&hash=e2fece3a34a2785882d45cd330d2dfef13beb0ea&file=fileadmin/user_upload/redaktion/Publications/Poverty_paper.pdf; https://www.ifhe.org/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&g=0&t=1446905688&hash=076739f9c2eb98715b3cb66f1d1454ca771d4389&file=fileadmin/user_upload/redaktion/Publications/Brochure_Position_Statements_2011.pdf <http://he.ifhe.org/802/>; http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/social/meetings/egm6_social_integration/documents/Jeanotte_Concepts.pdf.

³ IFHE Statement related to the World Food Day 2015 <https://www.ifhe.org/ifhe-statements/> <http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/introduction-to-international-labour-standards/lang--en/index.htm>.

⁴ http://www.who.int/social_determinants/knowledge_networks/final_reports/sekn_final%20report_042008.pdf?ua=1.

Social inclusion must be both multidimensional and transformative

A household always means living together with different persons, who might be old, young, disabled, unemployed, divorced and/or overweight. All household members have to accept and tolerate the values, attitudes, beliefs, habits, experiences and cultural understanding of each family or household member. Home Economical research and Home Economics education focus on this aspect to empower individuals, families and communities to promote social inclusion and avoid discrimination.

Home Economics education for sustainable lifestyles

Improving the quality of life for families is what Home Economics is all about. Home Economics competencies enable individuals, households and communities for example to obtain good nutrition, to take care of their health or to make best use of their income for the good of their family. The Home Economics profession will continue to contribute to support social integration and intergenerational solidarity through research, addressing both aspects in relation to families and households, providing education to improve the capabilities of young and old including outreach supporting families and communities to contribute to social integration and intergenerational solidarity.

Home Economics literacy supports sustainable production and consumption at the household level. Around the world Home Economics educated women and men demonstrate that their acquired competencies enable individuals, families and communities to overcome poverty and hunger and to improve family well-being and contribute to sustainable development.

IFHE points out that Home Economics competencies based on Home Economics education and experiences in household management are valuable for many allied professional fields such as those that serve private and institutional households, those in the food and other services related to households, individuals or families and are not restricted to developing countries.

IFHE in its over 100 year history has supported home economics research and education in countless projects, implemented and conducted by Home Economists, supported social development especially in the fight to eliminate poverty and hunger. IFHE has continuously advocated for families and family well-being. IFHE initiated the dialogue that resulted in the International Year for Family (IYF), which was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 44/82 of 9 December 1989 and realised in 1994.

The theme of the IYF was “Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world”. Its motto: “Building the Smallest Democracy at the Heart of Society”.⁵

This example demonstrates that Home Economics has the potential to be influential in all sectors of society by intervening and transforming political, social, cultural, ecological, economic and technological systems, at “glocal” levels. This is driven by the ethics of the profession, based on the values of caring, sharing, justice, responsibility, communicating, reflection and visionary foresight.

⁵ <https://www.ifhe.org/epaper-family-2014/>.

The Home Economics Education basis for improvement of well-being

With regards to the current diverse social, economic and environmental developments globally, IFHE promotes integrated, coordinated and coherent strategies at all family focussed groups and individuals aimed at social development and to secure the well-being of families. IFHE will strengthen its efforts to provide Home Economics education for all, because society needs what home economics offers. This need becomes obvious after reflecting on the issues listed frequently on the front page of newspapers: homelessness, obesity, chronic lifestyle diseases, negative social behaviour at home, the workplace and the community, divorce rates, needs of children in deprived single parent families and in under supported institutions, aging and elder care, and financial vulnerability of families.

Future Proofing

To be successful in the dimensions of Home Economics practice means that the profession must constantly evolve, and there will always be new ways of performing. This is an important characteristic of the profession, linking with the twenty-first century requirement for all people to be “expert novices”, that is, good at learning new things, given that society is constantly and rapidly changing with new issues and challenges.

IFHE is committed to the evolution of its work and focus to continue to prepare families to meet the demands for a sustainable lifestyle.
