



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
1 December 2016

Original: English

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-fifth session

1-10 February 2017

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to
achieve sustainable development for all**

Statement submitted by Doha International Family Institute, 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

Eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development goals: It begins and ends with family

“We need to create a shift in how the family is perceived – from an impediment to social progress and development to a driving force behind it. We need to invest in strengthening society through supporting and empowering its fundamental unit — the family.” — Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development and the Founder of the Doha International Family Institute.

Introduction

The Social Summit Declaration correctly identifies the need to “recognise the family as the basic unit of society and acknowledge that it plays a key role in social development and as such should be strengthened, with attention to the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of its members” (26-h). This understanding should receive significantly more focus as international bodies move forward in the implementation of the post 2015 development agenda. In addition, the 2030 Agenda itself, in Paragraph 11, reaffirms the Social Summit Declaration.

A Family Perspective into Poverty Alleviation

A growing body of research shows that the family is indispensable to the welfare of society and to the individuals that comprise it. Even in situations of dire poverty, the most important factor influencing outcomes for individuals is whether they are members of strong, stable families (Strengthening the Family: Implications for International Development, UN University Press 1995, page 1.)

Poverty is a human problem. It is a hydra-headed social plague that paralyses families and keeps them from fulfilling their normal functions and roles in the care and nurturing of their members, especially women and children. Considerable evidence indicates that families are trapped by circumstances, often lack the willpower to resist, and easily become prey to social drift, which can lead to addiction, violence, mental illness, corruption, theft, and even suicide. Such a cause-and-effect phenomenon is cyclic, takes its toll on human life, wastes human resources, and impedes any form of development.

Evidence has shown that children enter poverty by virtue of their families’ socio-economic circumstances. Children of economically deprived parents are more likely to experience social and health conditions that place them at risk for later academic, employment, and behavioural problems. Older persons, on the other hand, have an increased likelihood of becoming and remaining poor because old age brings with it a reduced capacity to work as well as difficulties in accessing health care and other essential services. Therefore, a family perspective is needed in formulating poverty alleviation policy at national, regional, and international levels to achieve sustainable development goals.

Family-Focused Social Protection

We believe that one of the best policy approaches for ending family and child poverty, ending insecurity and exclusion, and building up resilience is establishing or strengthening family-focused social protection systems. In both our advocacy efforts aimed at promoting family focused social protection and projects we carry out at the Arab regional level, Doha International Family Institute approaches family-focused social protection schemes as investments rather than as costs. We believe that universal family-focused social protection systems contribute to the eradication of poverty, enhance human capital, and help to reduce inequalities. We strive to increase the awareness of a family perspective in social protection systems and its roles in poverty alleviation to achieve sustainable development goals, engaging in dialogue at both the government and civil-society levels.

Family-focused social protection includes adequate cash transfers for all families who need them, especially families with children; benefits and support for people of working age in the case of maternity, family caregivers of people with disabilities, older persons, work injury, or those without jobs. Doha International Family Institute believes that access to social protection, including basic income security and essential health care, should be guaranteed to every family who needs such protection, taking into account specific national priorities and constraints. Achieving an integrated and sustainable social protection system that strengthens families and promotes children's welfare will be maximised through a strong partnership among civil society and the public and private sectors. Such a partnership has the potential to bring together sector-specific strengths in a structured manner to develop evidence-based programming that strengthens families and improves outcomes for children.

Conclusion

"As basic and essential building blocks of societies, families have a crucial role in social development. They bear the primary responsibility for the education and socialization of children as well as instilling values of citizenship and belonging in the society" (The Report of the Secretary General on the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, [A/66/62-E/2011/4](#)). Strong families are key to effective poverty eradication to achieve sustainable development goals.

We need to be determined to end family poverty, in all of its forms and dimensions, and to ensure that families and all of their members can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.

Finally, the family, as the fundamental and basic unit of society, requires conscious recognition and inclusion by United Nations agencies and other governmental entities. Because the strength of the family is the strength of nations, our challenge is to integrate the family perspective into sustainable development goals to guide us now and in the future, to respond to the vital needs of all human beings.

As the delegates to the 2017 Commission for Social Development undertake their important work, we believe that the challenges presented can effectively be addressed by, in the words of the Secretary-General, focusing on the family. The

family truly is the driving force behind development and is the very key to poverty eradication to achieve sustainable development goals.

To this end, we encourage a commitment:

(a) To focus poverty alleviation policy on the family as a unit; acknowledge that family breakdown can be both a root cause and an effect of poverty; consider its prevention as a priority; and promote the well-being of families and their individual members by addressing all of their functions, including family formation, economic support, women's empowerment, reconciling work and family responsibilities, and child-rearing and child development, to make sure that no one family will be left behind.

(b) To be determined to take the bold and transformative steps, which are urgently needed to alleviate family poverty by achieving integrated and sustainable social protection system that strengthens families to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path.

(c) To mobilize the means required to implement a revitalized global effective partnership for family poverty alleviation, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused particularly on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable families and their members with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders, and all people.

(d) To empower families by promoting the integration of a family perspective into poverty alleviation policy at the national, regional, and international levels; by removing social, political, legal, and economic barriers to their active participation in society; by enabling them to assert greater control over their resources and life choices, especially including decisions on investments in health, housing, and education; and by providing instruments for recognizing the time, effort, and money that committed families invest in their children.

(e) To ensure that family poverty alleviation policy recognizes generational interdependence and promotes intergenerational interaction and healthy intra-family relationships.
