




[www.viennafamilycommittee.org](http://www.viennafamilycommittee.org)  
Digital Networks:  
[www.10yearsIYF.org](http://www.10yearsIYF.org)  
[www.civilsocietynetworks.org](http://www.civilsocietynetworks.org)  
[www.20yearsIYF.org](http://www.20yearsIYF.org)

## *Quarterly Bulletin of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family*

March 2020, No.113  
Deadline for contributions: 15.05.2020

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Dear Readers of Families International,

This 113th issue focuses on the 58th Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSD) of the United Nations, which took place from 10<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at the United Nations in New York. The priority theme of the session was 'Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness'. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have the opportunity to submit written statements, which become part of the official documentation of the CSD.

Included in this issue is a selection of written statements from seven international NGOs, submitted to the CSD 2020, including the International Federation for Family Development, the International Federation for Home Economics and Make Mothers Matter, which are member organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family.

The Annual Report of the Committee for 2019 is also included in this issue. Further included is the programme for the International Forum to observe the International Day of Families 2020 at the United Nations Vienna International Centre on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2020. Finally, this issue also contains a list of recent and upcoming events.

Sincerely,

Christin Kohler, M.A.

Deputy Editor

## Table of Contents

### From the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

International Forum, United Nations Vienna International Centre – Programme  
(May 11<sup>th</sup> 2020) 3

Annual Report 2019 5

### From the United Nations Commission for Social Development 2020

#### Statements from the following non-governmental organisations:

C-FAM 10

Doha International Family Institute 12

FEMM Foundation 15

International Federation for Family Development 18

International Federation for Home Economics 21

International Federation of Social Workers 24

Make Mothers Matter (MMM) 27

### From the Member Organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

#### Make Mothers Matter (MMM)

Written Statement for the UN Commission on Social Development draws attention to  
single mothers specific vulnerability to poverty and homelessness – and the  
impact on children 30

Oral Statement at the high-level panel to celebrate the International Day of Education 34

**Recent & Upcoming Events 37**

**Impressum 38**

**From the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family**



VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY



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**FULL COMMITTEE MEETING**

UNITED NATIONS  
VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

**Monday May 11<sup>th</sup> 2020**

UNITED NATIONS  
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES 2020

**INTERNATIONAL FORUM**

13.00 – 15.00

[Including Discussion with Presenter & Participants]

**“STATUS of FOOD & NUTRITION in EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA -  
CHALLENGES and ACTIONS”**

**Mary Kenny M.A.**

Mary Kenny is a Food Safety and Consumer Protection Officer at the Food and Agricultural Office of the United Nations Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) in Budapest, and has extensive experience in working with countries to strengthen national food control programmes and related food safety capacities. Mary also manages FAO's work in the region on agri-food trade and market integration, including work on nutrition and sustainable food systems. Mary has a Degree in Environmental Health Officer and a Masters in Food Science and Technology.

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**Board Officers:**

Chairperson: Wolfgang Engelmaier M.A., Kolping International,  
Secretary: Dr. Peter Crowley, International Council of Psychologists,  
Treasurer: Alexandra Lugert M.A., European Union of Women.

**Board Members:**

Julia Birner, Families International,  
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Karin Kuzmanov B.A., Families International,  
Oscar McConkie, Latter Day Saints Charities,  
Isabella Nening M.A., Families International,  
Dr. Eleonora Reis Teixeira da Costa-Rossoll,  
Federation of Catholic Family Associations,  
Dr. Maria Riehl, Women's Federation for World Peace International.



## VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY



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The presentation will highlight a regional perspective of Europe and Central Asia on food and nutrition security, where there are still pockets of malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies and growing levels of obesity. In addition to an update on the status, some of the causes and potential solutions, and links to food systems, including the role of women, men, families, communities, will be discussed. Different nutritional needs of family members will also be highlighted.

**Following the International Forum there will be an  
Administrative Session of the  
Full Committee Meeting  
15.30 - 17.00**

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## ***ANNUAL REPORT 2019***

Since its inception in 1985 projects of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family  
have been supported by:

- ❖ Austrian Federal Government
- ❖ Bank Austria Creditanstalt
- ❖ Berndorf Group
- ❖ Country Womens Association in Lower Austria
- ❖ E.F.T. Transportagency GmbH
- ❖ European Commission
- ❖ Government of Germany
- ❖ Government of Liechtenstein
- ❖ Government of Luxembourg
- ❖ Government of Spain, Catalonia and the Balearic Islands
- ❖ International Non-Governmental Organisations
- ❖ Lower Austrian State Government
- ❖ Lower Austrian Insurance AG
- ❖ OMV Energy Group
- ❖ Rotary International
- ❖ Schoeller-Bleckmann Oilfield Equipment AG
- ❖ Shell Austria AG
- ❖ Siemens
- ❖ United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities



### **Vienna NGO Committee on the Family**

The following quotation, from the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General, to the General Assembly, on November 26th 2019 (A/75/61-E/2020/4) on page fifteen, documents the appreciation of the highest office of the United Nations, for the endeavours of our Committee, the Member Organisations and their representatives, for the well-being of families worldwide. "The Vienna NGO Committee on the Family organized two international forums in 2019. One forum, held in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime, was focused on the global effort to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030, in the light of Sustainable Development Goal 3. The other, which was focused on child and youth media protection, from the perspective of parents, was the third of in a series of three forums dealing with families and digital media usage, organized in cooperation with the University of Salzburg. The Committee also published its online quarterly bulletin, "Families international", incorporating forum proceedings, with a focus on endeavours to eliminate the practice of child marriage." <http://undocs.org/A/75/61>

### ***PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES 2019***

In two Full Committee Meetings, representatives of the 42 International Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), who are members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, and 22 associate member organisations, discussed various institution-building projects and activities and approved the Plan of Action for 2019. The Board of the Committee worked out a schedule for its implementation, which was realised in co-operation with the support of the member organisations of the Committee and their representatives. The worldwide network of civil society organisations, research and university institutions, government agencies and individuals, continues to be, not only a beneficiary of interactive exchange, but is in many cases, directly involved in the work of the Committee. The Vienna Committee on the Family, understands itself as a non-political, non- denominational umbrella organisation, and continues to put a global focus on the well-being of families worldwide, providing a bridge between families-oriented Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), The United Nations, Governments of Member States of the United Nations and Academia, as well as between CSOs themselves, through the various digital networks set up and maintained by the Committee.

### ***The following projects were realised in 2019***

#### **1. Families International (FI)**

The Editorial Committee Deputy Editors, Karin Kuzmanov B.A. & Isabella Nening, M.A., Assistant Editor, Christin Kohler, M.A. and Editor, Peter Crowley, Ph.D. were joined on the Editorial Committee of FI in 2019, by Assistant Editor Julia Birner, augmenting, inter alia, the research capacities of the Bulletin. Issues, Nos. 109 - 112 of the Quarterly Bulletin of the Committee were published online in 2019 at [www.viennafamilycommittee.org](http://www.viennafamilycommittee.org)

Special features in FI included: 'Issues relating to families at the 57th United Nations Commission for Social Development 2019'; The proceedings of an International Forum organized by the Committee, held on May 6th 2019 at the United Nations Vienna International Centre entitled: "The Fight against HIV/AIDS" – What we have achieved and what still needs to be done, with Dr Ehab Salah, Advisor, HIV/AIDS Section, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); Endeavours to End Child Marriage in Light of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All women and Girls; The proceedings on an International Forum entitled: 'Child & youth Media Protection from the Perspective of Parents' with Christin Kohler M.A.

Each issue of Families International also included texts submitted by member organizations of the Committee as well as relevant texts from United Nations agencies.

Over four hundred and fifty readers of 'Families International' are informed by the Secretariat of the Committee by e-mail, when the latest issue is available to download.

## **2. International Forum - May 6<sup>th</sup> 2019:**

The Committee organised an International Forum, which was held during a Full Committee Meeting, at the United Nations Vienna International Centre on Monday May 6<sup>th</sup> 2019, to observe the United International Day of Families 2019, entitled: "The Fight Against HIV/AIDS – What we have achieved and what still needs to be done." with a presentation by Dr Ehab Salah, Advisor, HIV/AIDS Section, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The presentation discussed the global efforts to end the AIDS epidemic, in light of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages, and its target 3.3 to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030, along with other communicable diseases. The presentation also highlighted the UNAIDS 2016-2021 strategy on the Fast-Track to end AIDS, aiming to reach people being left behind, to close the testing gap and protect the health of the millions of people living with HIV who are still not accessing treatment.

While significant progress in ending the AIDS epidemic has been made in recent decades, the presentation discussed persisting gaps and shortcomings of the response to HIV/AIDS, especially with regard to HIV key populations. Dr. Salah provided presentation material for inclusion in FI No. 110.

## **3. International Forum – November 4<sup>th</sup> 2019:**

The Committee organised a second International Forum, which was held during a Full Committee Meeting at the United Nations Vienna International Centre, on Monday November 4<sup>th</sup> 2019, with Christin Kohler M.A., who studied Communication Science at the University of Bamberg (B.A.) in Germany and at the University of Salzburg (M.A.) in Austria. During her studies, Christin continuously dealt with the topic of children and media, as well as media use in families. The research focus of her master thesis was on child and youth media protection, from the perspective of parents. The presentation was based on the research and the results of the master thesis. Christin Kohler M.A. provided a text based on her presentation for inclusion in Families International No. 112.

## **4. Cooperation with the United Nations Focal Point on the Family in New York**

Further to the opening quotation above from the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General, the Board of the Committee keeps its various networks informed with documents of United Nations Resolutions and Reports of the United Nations Secretary-General pertaining to family issues, as well as texts of United Nations Agencies, relevant for families.

A background note, entitled; 'Families and Climate Action: Focus on SDG 13' was prepared by the Focal Point on the Family, of the Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD), at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), of the United Nations Secretariat. This theme was chosen for the United Nations, International Day of Families 2019.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2019/04/idf-2019-backgroundnote.pdf> & <https://www.un.org/en/events/familyday/>

An eighty page report, of a study update entitled: 'Documenting Contributions of Civil Society Organisation to the Well-Being of Families' by Dr. Peter Crowley, Secretary of the Committee, in cooperation with the United Nations Focal Point on the Family, which was presented by the author, at the United Nations in New York, to observe the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations



International Year of the Family in 2014, is available to download, on the United Nations website:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/international-day-of-families/2014-3.html>

## **5. Website of the Committee**

[www.viennafamilycommittee.org](http://www.viennafamilycommittee.org)

This website, which was set up in 2000 is, amongst others, the main vehicle to publish our quarterly bulletin 'Families International'. Issues Nos.109 to 112, which were published in 2019, may be downloaded from our website without cost to the reader. A new button entitled 'Families Online' was added to the above homepage, with a direct link to the proceedings of three International Forums organised by the Committee, dealing with families and digital media usage from 2017 to 2019.

## **6. The Three Digital Networks of the Committee**

### 203 CSOs Networked - 92 CSOs in Sub-Saharan Africa

A so-called 'Digital Divide' exists between those connected and not connected to the Internet. Statistics from the United Nations International Telecommunications Union (ITU) based in Geneva, for 2019, show that only 53.6% or an estimated 4.1 billion of the World's present population of 7.6 billion are connected to the world wide web, leaving 46.4%, or close to half the world's population, not connected. In the continent of Africa alone, 71.8% were offline, with only 19% online in least developed countries. (ITU, 2019)

<https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/FactsFigures2019.pdf>

92 CSOs, or 45.3% of the total, of 203 CSOs in the three Digital Networks, set up and maintained by the Committee, are based in Sub-Saharan Africa, which, as just mentioned, is particularly affected by the 'Digital Divide'. These 92 CSOs, which are online, offer important knowledge resources for the well-being of families, especially in the first 1000 days of a child's life, from conception to a child's second birthday, which are so important for its future development, as UNESCO pointed out in 2014. These digital knowledge networks expand the concept of Civil Society being an advocacy and discourse entity, to also being a resource entity, especially of knowledge.

[www.10yearsIYF.org](http://www.10yearsIYF.org)

This website continues to experience regular interest, as a digital network, and also as a resource archive for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF) in 2004, with many relevant links to other sources. It resulted out of the participation of the then Chairperson of the Committee in a consultative meeting of international and regional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) set up by the United Nations Secretariat in New York, in 2002, to implement a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly to observe the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF) in 2004. There it was agreed to prepare a study, under the chairmanship of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family on: 'Contributions of Civil Society Organisations to the Well-Being of Families' since 1994. This original study, in which thirty two CSOs, from eighteen countries in five continents participated, was also published in book form with the financial support of the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities in 2004, under the title: 'Documenting Contributions of Civil Society Organisations to the Well-Being of Families' and edited by the Secretary of the Committee Peter Crowley. The book was submitted to the members of the special session of the 59<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> 2004, to officially observe the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The United Nations Secretary General referred to the above publication in his Report to the 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly <https://undocs.org/A/59/176>. The contents of the book, which also includes a comparative perspective of international, national, and local families-oriented civil society organisations enhancing social justice, are also available to download at [www.10yearsIYF.org](http://www.10yearsIYF.org)



[www.20yearsIYF.org](http://www.20yearsIYF.org)

To facilitate the implementation of an update of the above-mentioned study, originally carried out at [www.10yearsIYF.org](http://www.10yearsIYF.org) a further website was set up by the Committee at [www.20yearsIYF.org](http://www.20yearsIYF.org) to gather data entered by the twenty-eight participating CSOs, from seventeen countries in four continents. This network now further offers a knowledge resource on family issues for visitors to the website, by creating a so-called 'Cyber Street' of websites of families-oriented CSOs, which deal with eight categories relevant for families: 'Children; Economic-Financial; Education; Gender; Health Issues; Organisation; Parents; and Subsistence-Services.' This website is also a further digital network of CSOs and includes a series of links, inter alia, to the United Nations Focal Point on the Family in New York. The full 80 page report of this study update is also available at [www.20yearsIYF.org](http://www.20yearsIYF.org)

[www.civilsocietynetworks.org](http://www.civilsocietynetworks.org)

An Interactive-Internet-Forum for civil society organisations world-wide, including local, national and international CSOs, as well as academic and research institutions, was set up at the request of many organisations from around the globe, and went online in August 2004 at [www.civilsocietynetworks.org](http://www.civilsocietynetworks.org). This Network had 143 member organisations from 25 countries in 2019 having incorporated the Interactive-Forums the Committee had originally set up with civil society organisations in Eastern African and in Central and Eastern European Countries, between 2000 and 2004, and then extended and opened up, as a further digital network, to worldwide membership in 2004. Civil Society Organisations worldwide can join, and participate in this Forum, free of cost, as a number have done since 2004 by contacting the Committee at: [contact@viennafamilycommittee.org](mailto:contact@viennafamilycommittee.org)

Each organisation receives an individual User-Identity and Password and is able to enter and change data as necessary. The Forum also includes a discussion board, internal e-mail and online conference facilities, as well as a newsletter function, for each individual member organisation of the network.

The above outlined facts and figures, reflect perhaps, the ever-increasing interest generated by issues relating to families and also speak for themselves, with regard to the continued and increasing endeavours worldwide of the Committee, which observed in 2019 the 34th Anniversary of its inception in 1985.

## **7. The Members of the Board of the Committee for 2019 - 2022**

The following is the composition of the Board of the Committee, as a result of an election during the Full Committee Meeting on November 4<sup>th</sup> 2019 and the resultant initial Board Meeting:

### **Board Officers:**

Chairperson: Wolfgang Engelmaier M.A., Kolping International,  
Secretary: Dr. Peter Crowley, International Council of Psychologists,  
Treasurer: Alexandra Lugert, M.A., European Union of Women

### **Board Members:**

Julia Birner, Families International (co-opted)  
Christin Kohler M.A., Families International (co-opted)  
Karin Kuzmanov B.A., Families International (co-opted)  
Oskar McConkie, Latter Day Saints Charities  
Isabella Nening M.A., Families International (co-opted)  
Dr. Eleonora Reis Teixeira Da Costa Rossoll, Federation of Catholic Family Associations  
Dr. Maria Riehl, Women's Federation for WorldPeace.

**Vienna NGO Committee on the Family**

**January 2020**

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**From the United Nations Commission for Social Development 2020**

United Nations E/CN.5/2020/NGO/61



## **Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General  
29 November 2019  
English only

Commission for Social Development  
Fifty-eighth session  
10–19 February 2020

Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority Theme: Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness

### **Statement submitted by C-Fam, Inc., 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.

#### **Statement**

Strategies and programs to address homelessness cannot be effective without addressing family breakdown and instability.

Surveys across many countries have consistently found that one of the most commonly cited causes of homelessness is the break-down of the family. This will not come as a surprise to those familiar with the overwhelming social science research that shows the financial and economic benefit of marriage and family stability for individuals and their families.

When the family breaks down or when men and women are unable to exercise their fundamental human right to marry and found a family because of social, economic, or legal factors persons become more vulnerable to financial insecurity, poverty, and ultimately homelessness.

The urgency of protecting and strengthening the family is underlined by the magnitude of the importance of the family as the sole social safety net for five billion people around the world. According to the International Labor Organization, only twenty-nine percent of the global population enjoys comprehensive social security. That leaves over seventy percent of the world's population with either an inadequate patchwork of social security protections or no public social assistance at

all. For these more than five billion people the family is the only recourse when they become vulnerable to homelessness.

As the General Assembly has already recognized, it is essential to develop laws and policies to aid family formation and to make particular efforts to protect children and youth by promoting family stability and supporting families in providing mutual support, including in their role as nurturers and educators of children.

This can be achieved first and foremost by protecting the rights of the family already enshrined in human rights law, and by fulfilling already existing political commitments to strengthen and protect the family. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and binding international instruments reserve singular protections for the family in recognition of the family's irreplaceable role as "natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children." Empowering and protecting the family is not just smart policy. It is a human rights imperative.

It is not accurate to say that international law does not define the family. Article 16 Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines the family as "the natural and fundamental group unit of society" and declares that it is "entitled to protection by society and the State." These words are repeated across several widely ratified

human rights treaties as well as the laws and constitutions of a majority of member states. International law further predicates the complementarity and equal rights of women and men in the context of marriage and family formation.

Governments need to stop debating what counts as a family and start protecting the family as it has always been understood in international law. International law establishes that the family is formed when a man and a woman exercise their right to freely “marry and found a family.” States may extend social protections to other types of bonds between individuals, such as friendships or even sentimental attachments between persons of the same sex or other relations. But only the family is “entitled” by international law to protection by society and the state. In this sense, the family is unique, no doubt because of its role and status as “natural and fundamental group unit of society.”

Indeed, the family is a proper subject of human rights and a bearer of rights. The Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, for example, referred to the “rights of families.” Similarly, the Programme of Action of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development recognized that the family is “entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support.”

When it comes to social and economic rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights does not merely “entitle” the family to generic social and economic protection and assistance, like other international human rights treaties, but requires states to provide the family with the “widest possible” protection and assistance. This must be applied in the field of housing and urban planning in particular, and to other structural causes of homelessness. And it must be understood as part of the right to an adequate standard of living, which international law predicates not just for the individual, but for the individual “and his family.”

It is not at all accurate to claim that the treatment of the family in international law is an exclusive western construct as if single-parent families or multi-generational families were not understood to come under

its protection. The singular protections reserved for the family under international law should not be understood in an exclusive sense. Far from it, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly states that motherhood deserves “special protections” and that children are entitled to the same protections regardless of whether they are born in and out of wedlock.

That is why in the General Assembly and at the Copenhagen Social Summit governments explicitly committed to improving the condition of the single parent in society and ensuring that single-parent families and female-headed or female-maintained households receive the social support they need, including support for adequate housing, child-care, and recognition.

Let’s face it, comprehensive social protection for all by 2030 is not going to happen without policies to protect and strengthen the family. Nor is it realistic to expect it by 2050. Several demographic factors, combined with the rapid pace of urbanization make the protection of the family an urgent priority.

Fiscal projections for both developed and developing countries are dire because of low fertility worldwide. Social security systems premised on inter-generational transfers of wealth are slowly but surely collapsing. Some demographers project social and economic strife as a result. Workforces in some developed and developing countries are already shrinking. And demographers warn that migration is a short term stop-gap that cannot work in the long run.

There is evidence that laws and social policies to empower and protect the family, through baby bonuses, eliminating marriage tax penalties, promoting work-family balance, recognition of unpaid care, helping families with adequate housing, promoting and improving family stability, and other such policies are successful in supporting families. These policies would also help defuse social tensions by strengthening inter-generational family bonds.

In a world where the family is the most important social safety net, and where social protection systems are at the breaking point, the international community and governments have to make sure it is the focus of social

protection policies. The family is the last and best hope for too many people around the world for the international community to continue to ignore it.

United Nations E/CN.5/2020/NGO/31



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
15 November 2019  
English only

Commission for Social Development  
Fifty-eighth session  
10-19 February 2020

Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority Theme: Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness

### **Statement submitted by Doha International Family Institute, 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**

Investing in affordable housing and social protection systems towards sustainable families and societies.

#### **Introduction**

By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States underscore the importance of addressing the shortage of adequate and affordable housing as a challenge towards achieving sustainable development for all, which is highlighted under SDG target 11.1, which aims to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and to upgrade slums by 2030.

Affordable housing represents a key challenge for youth and families alike. Lack of affordable housing is affecting the transition to adulthood around the world. The delay in this transition is linked to that of marriage and family formation, which represents the main pathway towards the creation and formation of nuclear families, allowing youth to take on adult roles, such as child rearing and independent living. This transition, also termed ‘wait adulthood’ or ‘waithood’, denoting multiple reasons for the delay in family formation, including marriage and parental dependence, is

conditioned by a number of economic settings; including securing adequate and affordable housing. Evidence shows that the objective of family formation is constrained by the readiness of men to secure acceptable housing and work, signaling their economic stability. Research also shows that as youth seek the transition towards family formation, the lack of affordable housing, compounded by the lack of job opportunities, delays marriage and consequently their transition to adulthood. Moreover, the increased cost of housing has a positive impact on family dissolution.

All humans are entitled to the right of housing. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, proclaims that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control”. Yet, the human right to a house and a home to raise families is becoming difficult to attain due to the financialization of housing, which has significant impact on the cost of housing, eventually affecting family formation and dissolution as well. In fact, the housing market faces a substantial disparity between



supply and demand. On one end of the spectrum, there is an over-supply of expensive and non-affordable housing, and on the other a stark shortage of affordable housing, resulting in the deprivation of youth as well as low-income households of home ownership. This issue is causing youth to continue living with their parents for increasingly longer duration, which in turn affects their decision to form families.

Social protection policies play an important role in addressing family formation and dissolution as well as tackling the lack of adequate and affordable housing structures. Such policies have the untapped potential to contribute to the achievement of development goals at the national, regional, and global levels. Research shows that youth are met with social exclusion as a result of the lack of job opportunities and access to affordable housing, where housing policies that address their specific needs are non-existent. Family-sensitive social protection policies can impact family stability and sustainability, by providing access to affordable housing units.

Governmental contributions are essential for the development and sustainability of affordable housing. There are various ways to tackle the lack of affordable housing,

such as the allocation of land and paving the way for the creation of housing for low-income households. Governments could also control the planning and building regulations, for example by showcasing housing costs that are increased by the high standard of living as well as specific building regulations. Controlling these regulations could allow for the expansion in the amount of affordable housing. Finally, partnerships

between the public and private sector are crucial, where engagement of both sides will increase the supply by offering more homes while addressing the demand side through financing.

## Recommendations

To this end, we recommend:

1. Adopting housing policies that fit the family as a unit and acknowledging that lack of affordable housing is a root cause of delayed marriage and family formation.
2. Strengthening social policies such that families may access affordable housing and social protection systems and policies, and re-examining the housing welfare system with the aim of adopting a framework that enables and facilitates the strengthening of the family and the engagement of youth.
3. Developing and adopting national laws and policies that assure affordable family-sized housing and support.
4. Adopting and/strengthening social protection policies and systems that provide coverage for all, with a specific focus on vulnerable families.
5. Involving youth in the development of policy interventions and research agendas while considering the political, social and economic dynamics of the region.
6. Promoting public-private partnerships towards the innovation, development and scale-up of affordable and adequate housing units.

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## Economic and Social Council

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Commission for Social Development  
Fifty-eighth session  
10–19 February 2020

Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority Theme: Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness

### **Statement submitted by FEMM Foundation, 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**

##### **FEMM Foundation**

The FEMM Foundation is a knowledge-based health program for women inspired by women's right to be informed participants in their own healthcare and to make voluntary decisions based on options, information, and understanding. The Foundation is dedicated to health education, medical research, and improving reproductive health care to advance women's health. FEMM's work includes health education for women, medical training for doctors, and reproductive health research which undergirds all of our work.

International law recognizes a right to the "highest attainable standard of health." The Sustainable Development Goals reflect this in their commitment to health in Goal 3. Good health empowers achievement in education and work; in contrast, poor health can lead to missing school, lost days at work, and lower income. By ensuring quality healthcare for all, we enable everyone's participation in the social and economic life of their communities. This participation closes gaps in equality and animates social inclusion and makes good fiscal and wage policies more likely to reach as many as possible. For women and girls, who often face inequality and are not fully included,

reproductive health (target 3.7) is a key part in this equation.

Women and girls comprise approximately half the population of the world but remain more vulnerable to health problems due to both biological and social reasons such as homelessness, poor social protection systems, and lack of security. Women and girls migrating and those who are homeless often have little or no access to doctors nor clinics and may not have the financial ability to get the care they need. Health can help or hinder women and girls' education and participation in the social and economic life of their communities and in the world. By implementing good healthcare for homeless women and girls who are often unable to acquire and maintain regular, safe and secure adequate housing due to lack of an unsteady income we can edge closer to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2 and 3, meeting their basic needs.

Understanding one's own body is essential for good health and empowers women and girls to be informed participants in their care. Women also often accept as normal symptoms such as irregular bleeding, pain, depression, mood swings, and weight gain, nor realizing that these are often signs of



underlying hormonal imbalances and abnormalities. Even when women do seek medical care, most health care providers and programs struggle to diagnose them and often can only treat the symptoms.

These underlying conditions can affect women and girls' long-term overall health, sometimes irreversibly. They can also affect women and girls' ability to complete their education, engage in work, and plan their families, and other aspects of their lives. Poor health hurts equality by undermining women and girls' ability to realize their potential and drive development in their communities. Women and girls who have untreated medical conditions can be empowered through both knowledge and good medical treatment.

A woman who understands how her body works can monitor her health and seek help when needed. Even women who have not completed schooling can learn to monitor their signs of health. Understanding women's bodies will also combat stigma and myths associated with normal biological processes such as menstruation that can keep women and girls from educational and career opportunities.

FEMM has developed an app to help women take control of their health. The FEMM App is available free of charge and is now available in English and Spanish on both iPhone and Android systems. Women who use the FEMM App can track their observations and symptoms to better understand their bodies and health. Just as each woman is different, so are her observations and experiences, which is why the App is completely customizable. Women can track as much or as little as they like and add symptoms and observations. It also provides insights into what a woman is experiencing in her cycle and can flag potential health concerns and connect women with medical professionals for treatment.

FEMM also enables women to make informed choices about family planning. There is a right to adequate family planning and information about reproductive and sexual health that is accurate and respects cultural, religious, and ethical beliefs. Programs focused on providing commodities often fail to ensure that women have the education needed to understand their bodies and what they are using and may not

always respect values.

Information-based health education and medical care is uniquely well suited to meet these needs while respecting individual choices and values. FEMM offers reproductive and hormonal education and helps women to understand the way various family planning methods work and their potential side effects. It educates women about the science of their bodies, how to identify when they are fertile, and how to achieve or avoid pregnancy. It also can demystify how women and girls' bodies work, combating stigma and promoting understanding and respect.

FEMM's researchers have rethought women's health. They have found that a woman's hormonal health is intrinsically linked with her overall health. They have developed better diagnostic criteria to identify conditions that are currently treated mainly at the symptomatic level and treat them at the roots. They are even discovering links with conditions not typically considered related to reproductive health. FEMM is rethinking the health of contemporary women in ways that will help them to take charge of their health and thrive in their communities.

Women and girls also need good healthcare to meet their needs when they do identify health concerns. FEMM's Medical Management program trains doctors to diagnose and treat reproductive health problems, with a holistic view of a woman's body that incorporates recent research on the complex hormonal interactions between different body systems. This interaction, and the delicacy of the hormonal activity in a woman's body, is essential to the experience of health in the entire female body. FEMM has developed innovative protocols that allow doctors to identify underlying problems with precision and treat them effectively. This medical support provides treatments that help women to live healthy lives.

FEMM is low-cost and meets the underlying needs of women. Comprehensive health care for women can now be provided through basic health delivery systems, making this approach to women's health more effective, cheaper to deliver, and providing stronger health outcomes for women. Even women who have not completed schooling can learn to monitor

their signs of health. Understanding women's bodies will also combat stigma and myths associated with normal biological processes such as menstruation.

Women's full participation in society requires the investment in women's health and health education. Women's healthcare has often failed to meet women's needs. We know that informed decisions lead to healthier decisions, and that women play a key role in family and community health outcomes. Through FEMM's innovative programs, women will be empowered to take charge of their healthcare, and health systems will be

able to meet their needs.

FEMM's programs are ready to be incorporated into the health aspects of social protection programs and FEMM is ready to assist in implementing them. The knowledge gained through FEMM can allow women to identify underlying health concerns and to achieve or avoid pregnancy. When people attain the highest level of health they can, they are able to thrive and partake in their communities, ensuring social inclusion and equality for women and girls. FEMM is prepared to assist the Commission and Member States to meet this goal.

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### **Commission for Social Development**

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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: Affordable housing and social  
protection systems for all to address homelessness**

### **Statement submitted by International Federation for Family Development, 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**

##### **Inclusive Housing and Sustainable Families**

Urban settlements are a growing challenge for social inclusion and development. With its rapid growth and increasing challenges, innovative solutions are needed to ensure social inclusion and development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Conference on Housing (Habitat III) have set global standards to make cities sustainable by creating career and business opportunities, safe and affordable housing, and building resilient societies and economies. Some of the proposals involve investment in public transport, creating green public spaces, and improving urban planning and management in participatory and inclusive ways. Strategies that have proven to be effective and measurable need to be taken to ensure that no one is left behind. Modern cities should aim to be resilient and constantly diagnosed of their urban strength. A holistic approach of the numerous urban variables can manage to give a complete picture of the city's vigor.

A dialogue among stakeholders is equally important; any effort aimed at facilitating it among government, civil society, residents, and the private sector about risks and the performance of urban systems is a worthwhile cause. With an accurate diagnosis, priority actions and investments can be identified, as well as strengthening resilience for planned or

aspirational projects.

The family unit has proven to be one of the main agents for development within societies and thus a cornerstone for inclusive cities. Therefore, its area of action must be of great concern in order to facilitate its role in generations to come. If families are these crucial development agents, an adequate environment is needed to facilitate their role. The Inclusive Cities for Sustainable Families project is a worldwide alliance promoted by the International Federation for Family Development that aims to be inclusive of sustainable families by being responsive to their needs in the following ten issues, based on the 2030 Agenda and Habitat III and under the leadership of the Veneto Region in Italy: Housing, New Technologies, Education, Healthcare, Safety, Clean Air, Transportation, Affordability, Leisure and Tourism, and Vulnerable Families. The commitment of the members consists on presenting once a year the results on those topics and attending an annual Conference organized to share good practices.

##### **Intergenerational Urban Arrangements**

The first of the topics of the project mentioned above is Housing. The design of cities should include all family situations and social groups, flexible urban and environmentally sustainable

planning, and social services to meet every need. Almost 1 billion people of the world's urban population live in inadequate housing conditions in slums and at least 2 million people in the world are forcibly evicted every year, while millions are threatened with forced evictions. Adequate housing is critical to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals because it creates acceptable conditions for an adequate standard of living, water and sanitation, health, good, quality education, freedom of expression, privacy and family, and employment.

Despite the typologies of different families, flexible-housing units should be promoted. Usually, the life cycle of housing units can last between 50 and 70 years. However, families respond differently to a wide variety of scenarios, whether as a single person, a couple, families with children, adolescents, students out for education, youth in transition to the labour market, parents living alone after youth emancipation, grandchildren, older persons leaving alone, etc.

It is clear that housing cannot be static. It should be adaptable to different stages of family formation and transformation. It should consider flexibility to reconfigure, adapt or even change size. Dwelling units could be modular, with the possibility of interchange rooms, or having common spaces for the community, like offices or extra rooms for visitants in ground floors or rooftops. Regarding urban design and management in cities and regions, public policies should allow housing interchange depending the different realities, especially for low-income families that are more vulnerable to changes in prices, family situations and resource availability.

### **Youth Transitions: Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle of Poverty**

In order to tackle social exclusion and ensure inclusive housing some countries have developed and implemented policies to support the transition of young persons from education to the labour market. For example, Nordic countries are known to have a strong commitment on education combined with a variety of social aid. The Nordic countries stand apart from the other countries through more widespread and diverse state aid. In this regard, housing aid is more widespread in Finland, Denmark and in Iceland, particularly for young unemployed people having left the education system and the parental home. The

proportion of young people covered by the housing benefit in Sweden and Norway is lower and the number receiving such benefits is closer to the average. Above all, major differences exist concerning the number of NEETs receiving no aid at all. This rate is among the lowest in Finland and Iceland and below average in Denmark and Norway, while Sweden has one of the highest rates of young people receiving no aid at all. That said, the proportion of 20-29-year-olds considered as in employment is similar between Nordic countries and comparatively high: the employment rate of 20-24-year-olds is 63.7% in Denmark, 58.1% in Sweden and 66.8% in Norway. Meanwhile, the employment rate of 25-29-year-olds is 80% in Norway, 74.8% in Finland and 77.2% in Sweden. Denmark and Iceland stand out from other Nordic countries through their high percentages of students in employment during their school year, whether or not the job is part of their training. This rate is 32% in Denmark and 26% in Iceland compared with an average 13%.

Young people in the Nordic countries also receive more social aid than those in the other countries, although coverage is more varied. Young people leaving their parental home more frequently receive housing aid and also more frequently receive compensation as job seekers in Denmark and Finland. Aid supporting the entry into adult life and aid for education are more developed in these countries, enabling young adults to move into their own home while completing their education or starting out their professional careers. This aid is less widespread in Sweden, and the proportion of young people without jobs having left the education system covered by no aid is extremely high. Denmark and Finland rather than Sweden or Norway have the state more strongly committed to making both access to tertiary education and the possibility of leaving the parental home not entirely dependent on family resources. With nearly one-third of students working a job during their school year, Denmark is, together with Iceland, one of the countries that most favours professional integration during education rather than entirely separating the two life periods. As such, young people leave their parental home at a much later age than in other countries, and in Denmark and Finland the departure is associated with a strong increase in the risk of poverty (Aassve et al., 2006). Nevertheless, the system is geared



towards encouraging young people to take on that risk through support for those leaving the parental home before finding stable employment. In France, leaving the parental home is accompanied by housing aid and the familiarization of financial aid, somewhat similar to the Nordic countries, which sets it apart from the other “continental” countries in a number of respects. The proportion of young adults living with their families (49%) is significantly higher than the average (34%), and the average age of departure from the parental home (23.5 years old) is lower than the average (26.7). The share of young adults as a whole receiving housing benefit is much higher than the average (36% compared with under 9% on average for young people leaving education), with a particularly strong difference for young people neither in education nor employment, 43% of them receiving housing benefit.

Leaving the parental home is accompanied by broad access to housing benefits, while access to other forms of aid is much more limited. The social aid system covers a larger fraction of the young adult population than in most other systems in Continental Europe and provides an important safety net for the most vulnerable having left the education system but without having found a job.

### Recommendations

- Implement measures on housing with a disaggregated and adapted approach, to each of the different situations within the family: young couples, single parents, older persons living alone, persons with disabilities, widows, etc.
- Take into account the changing needs of urban settlements; future houses should include the design for all family situations. Furthermore, housing with common settlements allowing older persons, youth, children, persons with disabilities, to cohabit facilitate integration and the generational transfers. Intergenerational urban arrangements should be promoted among public and private sector investment.
- Consider housing strategies that focus on city challenges and growth with a family perspective in every decision so it can be flexible and adaptable to its changing needs.
- Safeguard cultural heritage and physical landscape, in order to protect all

the characteristics of citizens that are part of the family.

- Evaluate the impact of city design in all members of the family unit and especially for the children, older persons and persons with disabilities as the most vulnerable to changes.
- Invest in sustainable housing urban development policy that minimizes the gap between high-income families and low-income families. This policy must pay special attention the most vulnerable and in risk of social exclusion in order to achieve a lasting improvement in their liveability and sustainability. In this context, public co-housing projects aimed at disadvantaged people and families and marginal segments of the population can be developed without overloading the use of land and without increasing energy needs. It is key to establish a strong multidimensional and multidisciplinary network of social services.
- Develop indicator is the link between life and environmental sustainability: not only as a limit to defend the ecology, but also to include new models of life and social organization: mobility, air quality, energy efficiency, the prevention of earthquakes or the fight against waste.
- Ensure access to housing, both from an architectural and economical point of view. An important aspect of access to housing is its affordability, cost of housing, settlements quality, its relationship with health, safety, etc. In this case, an important element is represented by the percentage of income that is dedicated to housing, evaluating the income levels. If the percentage destined to housing is high, other vital benefits will be lost (food, education, etc.).
- Promote the connectivity with ICT and the digital world as a gateway for the services people need (access to health rights, family allowances; home care or other assignments going through on-line procedures). It is necessary to evaluate which are the one left behind in the use of digital technologies and address the gap.
- Ensure social integration and the fight against loneliness and isolation specifically for older persons living alone, in a context allowing them to establish social relations in order to overcome the terrible feeling of loneliness, death or separation.

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### Commission for Social Development

Fifty-eighth session

10–19 February 2020

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority Theme: Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness**

### **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**

Many women in the Global South require international economic policy intervention as a social protection measure to mitigate feminized homelessness from dispossession.

The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE), the only global organisation for Home Economics and related fields, maintains that homes are environments where individuals reach their full potential, live a life of dignity, and develop and express their global interdependence. The right to land upon which a home may be sustained is a fundamental human right and essential to human flourishing.

The most significant inequalities and pressing challenges to addressing homelessness and ensuring social protection for all manifest in one of the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations, women in Asia, Africa and Latin America, referred to hereafter as the Global South. Due to economic shifts toward multinational industrialization and state privatization of customary land the international community must respond collectively to achieve many of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. The major drivers, gaps, and priority areas

presented in this statement are informed by

research from diverse scholars whose work span three continents, dozens of countries, and several states. The social protection measures put forward by the International Federation for Home Economics are primarily targeted at economic policy reform and intervention.

The major drivers of women's homelessness through dispossession in the Global South are national economic shifts toward state industrialization of agricultural and aquaculture land and resources in partnership with transnational corporations and creditors. Economic agreements between governments and international investors denationalize and privatize land historically controlled by customary law in which women had shared use of property and natural resources for the respective purposes of building basic homes and subsistence livelihoods. Large-scale corporate land deals realized through state acquisitions, grants, licenses, and up to 95-year leases are justified on the premise of public good; however, in many cases such arrangements have resulted in devastating outcomes for women, in particular, homelessness through loss of assets and

income. The social obligations and communal arrangements under customary tenure have been particularly important for women who are more dependent upon them in order to use the land and control assets such as livestock and crops to generate income. The various forms of land privatization and encroachments disproportionately hurt women because of pre-existing patriarchal family and state structures. Newly privately titled land is registered to family heads who are usually male. Customary inheritance provisions for widows or daughters are altered or eliminated resulting in loss of usufructuary economic assets and means of income generation. Women are excluded from decisions about mortgage terms, credit amounts, and trade agreements, yet they labour to meet financial obligations. In the event of the death of a father or husband, women cannot negotiate the means to remain in their homes or acquire desirable assets such as machinery, vehicles, or cold storage because credit is linked to collateral and income. Women's ineligibility for title rights and related sources of income combined with their exclusion from negotiations for resettlement further depletes their limited, customary economic status and feminizes homelessness in the Global South.

Priority areas for intervention can be established through the identification of existing gaps and the isolation of destructive politico legal, health, education, and family effects. One of the most exacerbating factors mitigating social development coincident to economic growth are long term, outstanding legal claims and delayed court rulings over unfulfilled promises. Resettlement, rehabilitation, restitution, and resolution agreements between corporations, investors, creditors, governments, and local people have not uniformly been honoured. Increasingly difficult relations and orders of eviction initiate violence and military responses. Temporary settlements, legal and illegal slums are in poor condition without infrastructure, schools, or hospitals. To overcome the impacts of losing a father or husband, some women generate income through the sex trade, exposing themselves and others to HIV/AIDS; others acquire a home through child, early, or forced marriages. In some instances, women resort to scavenging or illegal trade for which they are harassed, violated or imprisoned. Education is another contributor to feminized

homelessness because women do not always possess necessary literacy levels to negotiate, keep records, or, to take legal action. Unfulfilled promises in the industrialization of natural resources and the privatization of land has had a significant effect on families. Adequate housing provides a source of protection, security and connection for women and their children and feminized homelessness or excessively gendered tenure puts women in a position in which they cannot adequately care for or fight for their children.

The International Federation for Home Economics proposes two, specific, concrete, evidence-based policy recommendations to address feminized homelessness in the Global South. First, providing a voice to homeless women through qualitative inquiry. Second, introducing or expanding existing international economic policies to explicitly include resettlement, rehabilitation, restitution, and resolution requirements for investors participating in and enjoying the benefits of United Nations-affiliated credentials for sustainable asset management.

Due to the patriarchal nature of both family and state structures, women are often excluded from local, state, and international discussions and decisions about their homes and livelihoods. Concealing their voices softens oppositional consciousness and perpetuates the status quo. Women engage in rich forms of knowledge production about their experiences in the social and material world. They alleviate exclusion and seek solace by acting, thinking, writing, singing, dancing, storytelling, and engaging in ritual practices. The International Federation for Home Economics urges the United Nations Development Programme, under its focus to accelerate structural transformations for sustainable development, to specifically target qualitative inquiry into women's personal and collective knowledge in order to include their perspectives in public forums and to foster spaces for listening and change.

There is a critical role for policy action by investment and financial groups committed to social sustainability. Economic development presents opportunities for constitutional reform, education, employment, reduced domestic burdens, ancillary benefits, or, true social transformation when agreements are fair, democratic, an upheld. The United



Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative works with over two hundred financial institutions and a range of partner organisations in order to implement sustainability in all levels of financial institution operations. The United Nations Global Compact is a policy platform for 7,000 corporate signatories in 135 countries. Principles for Responsible Investment is supported by the United Nations through the two preceding organizations. All three groups are in a position to take corrective action. The International Federation for Home Economics urges the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative, the United Nations Global Compact, and the Principles for Responsible Investment to immediately initiate a review and process for revision of their minimum requirements of signatories, including governance, audits, quality assurance, validation and adjudication in credibility of reported data; and, in addition to signatory self-reporting the introduction of a complaint procedure through which specific, evidence-based reports of non-compliance can be investigated. We emphasize to the three aforementioned organizations the importance of delisting any signatories whose portfolios, assets under management, or corporate practices promote, effect, or tolerate feminized homelessness through dispossession, in any of its forms, in the Global South.

The International Federation for Home Economics offers this statement in the context of and with the hope for the attainment of the following Sustainable Development Goals and several of their targets: Gender Equality, Reduced Inequality, Peace and Strong Institutions, and Partnerships to Achieve the Goal. We sincerely thank the Commission for Social Development for the opportunity to work toward the realization of our mutual aims of universal peace and larger freedom for our entire human family.

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#### **Fifty-eighth session**

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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social  
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**priority Theme: Affordable housing and social  
protection systems for all to address homelessness**

### **Statement submitted by International Federation of Social Workers, 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**

This statement is submitted by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. IFSW is an organization that supports and promotes the social work profession through a social justice and human rights lens and best practice models. Representing 3 million social workers in 128 countries (IFSW, 2019) and professional associations in 120 nations, IFSW supports the theme of “Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness” session of the 58th Session Commission for Social Development. The aims of the IFSW are to promote social work as a profession, establish national social work associations, and support social worker involvement in planning, policy, and training all within a sustainable framework (IFSW, 2006).

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), along with its social work partners, the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Council on Social Welfare developed the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development to address a number of issues related to social development and to the

social work profession. The Global Agenda represents a commitment to promote social and economic equalities, promote the dignity and worth of peoples’, work toward environmental sustainability, and strengthen recognition of the importance of human relationships (The Global Agenda, 2012). The values of the IFSW are in congruence with all Sustainable Development Goals.

The role of social workers is to mediate between state services and family community systems to achieve outcomes that reinforce the capacity of family and community in sustainable self-care and the ability to access social protection systems when necessary. Social workers use their knowledge, experience and skills to advocate within services to ensure that people who use services are treated with dignity and are able to make decisions with respect to the care that they receive. Social workers are advocates for the development of accessible, affordable and transparent social protection systems that are embedded within communities and engage communities in the development of services.

## Homelessness

It is estimated that 150 million people worldwide are homeless and one in four people, 1.6 billion, live in harmful conditions of inadequate housing that weaken their health, safety and prosperity. UNICEF estimates that there are 100 million homeless children without parents or families growing up on the streets in major cities around the world. Homeless Street children suffer from food (SDG #2), health (SDG # 3) and education (SDG#4) deprivation. Girls, and boys to a lesser extent, risk sexual exploitation and trafficking.

By 2030, UN-Habitat estimates that 3 billion people, about 40 percent of the world's population, will need access to adequate housing. This translates into a demand for 96,000 new affordable and accessible housing units every day.

## Drivers of Homelessness

The drivers of homelessness include lack of affordable housing, unemployment and poverty, migration, ill-health (ILO, 2019). Natural disasters also impact housing and contribute to temporary and permanent homelessness, especially to marginalized and vulnerable populations. These events represent a specific but unpredictable challenge when considering the issue of homelessness. Personal risk factors also contribute to vulnerability, which then can have a direct impact on becoming homeless. These include: mental illness, substance misuse, family violence, incarceration, insecure employment and foster care. Finally, a major underlying driver of homelessness is the lack of social protections that prevent against homelessness, unemployment, poverty, and ill-health.

## Challenges

Compounding the challenges of homelessness is the criminalization of homelessness – the increasing number of laws, policies and regulations that force a growing portion of communities into precarious social, economic and legal existence (IFSW, 2012). When homelessness is criminalized homeless people are punished both by the penal system for being homeless and excluded from diminishing social aid programs for being criminals (IFSW). IFSW supports

campaigns against the criminalization of homelessness such as the campaign by Housing Rights Watch and European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA); the campaign targets criminalization policies and practices and promotes homeless people getting access to appropriate housing (IFSW, 2012). These campaigns address SDG #16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and SDG #11, Safe and Sustainable Communities.

## Effective housing programs and policies to address homelessness in the context of the SDGs

Social workers also address homelessness through programs such as Housing First. The Housing First Model provides housing with no conditions and supportive services provided by social workers and other helpers. This program addresses SDG #3 Good Health and Well-being. A second organization that addresses inadequate housing for slum dwellers is SlumDwellers International. This is a network of community-based organizations of the urban poor in 32 countries and hundreds of cities and towns across Africa, Asia and Latin America. Affiliate organizations that come together at community, city and national level to form federations of the urban poor that come together to advocate for slum upgrading via the improvement of infrastructure—water, toilets, electricity gathering community driven data on slums in order to advocate with city officials to improve conditions. This addresses SDG#9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.

## Promoting Social and Economic Equalities

As recognized by the Global Agenda, the International Federation of Social Workers is committed to collaborating with other non-governmental and governmental groups to create a vibrant economy that serves people from all communities regardless of their social status or nationalities. IFSW (2019) recommends the economy of wellbeing which encompasses a long-term approach that; (1) looks at the impact of decisions and policies on people's lives, (2) is based on a participatory governance structure, (3) ensures socioeconomic and environmental justice for all. Healthy social development for all people requires the realization of the

Sustainable Development Goals through healthy, environmentally sustainable economies, that honour the dignity and worth of all through decent work, accessible education, access to health services and safe and affordable housing.

Social Protection Systems are key to reducing vulnerabilities associated with homelessness and inadequate housing. It is shown that there is a threefold return to the economy when there are functioning social protection systems. The Federation advocates for a regulated global economic system that is devoid of trade imbalances and that which is rooted in concern for building social capital that includes protecting and enhancing social justice, human rights and sustainable development.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

The role of social workers in social protection systems is to facilitate community solidarity and engagement in the development of systems that will be inclusive for all people and treat them with dignity and respect and ensuring human rights and social justice. Social workers will bring their skills, knowledge and expertise not only of individuals who are marginalized and excluded, but also of groups and communities to advocate that systems positively address structural, social and cultural barriers. IFSW makes the following recommendations:

1. Access to housing is a precondition for access to employment, education, health, and social services. In order to address the current housing challenges, all levels of government should put housing at the centre of urban policies by placing people and human rights at the forefront of urban sustainable development.
2. The impact of environmental disasters, disease and other environmental concerns need to be prioritized through a focus on better city design and planning.

3. Governments need to remain involved in activities and conventions that promote dignity and worth of all people and include them in participatory governance structures. This includes promoting ratification and working towards implementation of conventions, as well as implementation of the associated ideals at each organizational level starting with communities.

4. The provision of social services needs to be strengthened to support individuals and families and assist in mitigating the personal risks that could exacerbate one's stability and housing capacity. Community centres should be implemented in all parts of cities and rural areas to provide local assistance and counseling where people can be empowered at a community level.

5. Special attention should be given to the plight of homeless children, including specific services to aid in their having adequate housing but also to address policy and structural issues that cause children to become homeless.

United Nations E/CN.5/2020/NGO/12



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission for Social Development

### Fifty-eighth session

10–19 February 2020

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development  
and the twenty-fourth special session of the General  
Assembly:**

**priority Theme: Affordable housing and social  
protection systems for all to address homelessness**

## Statement submitted by Make Mothers Matter, 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

Single mothers' specific vulnerability to homelessness

On the occasion of the 58th Session of the UN Commission on Social Development, Make Mothers Matter (MMM) would like to draw attention to single mothers, who are particularly vulnerable to poverty and homelessness, and for whom affordable housing and social protection are especially important.

Homeless single mothers tend to be categorised as a developing country's problem, but the reality is that countless families with children, including single mothers, experience this harsh reality in many developed countries.

In the UK for example, according to estimates by Shelter Charities reported in a BBC article, one in every 55 single-parent families became homeless in 2017–18. In 92% of these 26,610 cases, the homeless parent was a single mother. The same source states that homelessness has increased by 169% since 2010, and that parents and their children were eight times more likely to become homeless than couples with children – with again the “vast majority” being single mothers.

Similarly, a 2018 report by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

indicates that families in homeless situations represent one-third of the homeless population. Among these, 60% were headed by single women with children, representing 21% of the total homeless population - and nearly half were African Americans (49%). Of the 184,661 homeless people accounted for, 109,719 (i.e. 59%) were children.

Such shocking figures are simply not acceptable.

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control”. Not only is homelessness a clear Human Rights violation in itself, but it is also the result of other basic Human Rights violations, starting with the Right to security.

The increasing number of single-mother families

According to the 2019 UN-Women flagship report, “Families in a changing world”, globally,



lone-parent families represent 8% of all households, 84.3% of that being lone mother families.

The number of single-parent families is on the rise, especially in high-income countries, due to increased rates of divorce and separation. E.g. in North America and Europe, the percentage of divorced/separated women rose from 7.4% in 1980 to 13.1% in 2010. As a result, in a country like the US, 27 percent of children under 21 live in a single-parent family (and 80.4% of these are single-mother families).

Single-motherhood can have many causes: widowhood, divorce or separation from a partner or spouse, fleeing domestic violence, unintended pregnancies, as well as armed conflicts, natural disasters, displacement and migration, which can separate families. Although an increasing number of women do choose to have children on their own, especially in developed countries, they remain a minority. In the majority of cases, women do not become single mothers by choice.

According to the UN-Women Report, globally, half of the lone mothers reside in extended households in order to save on housing, and also to get support for childcare from other family members – a form of ‘hidden’ homelessness? The other half is on its own and is particularly vulnerable to poverty and homelessness.

The specific vulnerability of single mothers and their children to poverty and homelessness

Generally speaking, women’s specific vulnerability to poverty is well recognized, albeit not necessarily addressed. According to the 2013 Report that Magdalena Sepulveda, then UN Special Rapporteur on Poverty, presented at the UN General Assembly, “heavy and unequal care responsibilities are a major barrier to gender equality and to women’s equal enjoyment of human rights, and, in many cases, condemn women to poverty”.

Not only do women generally earn less than men (both because of the Gender Pay Gap and occupational segregation), but their inequitable share of unpaid domestic and family care work constraints their time and ability to perform paid work, thus further limiting their income. Caring, feeding, educating children does require time, especially during the critical period of Early

Childhood.

This issue is exacerbated in environments with limited public infrastructure and services, and even more so in the case of single-parent families where the lone parent must take sole responsibility for unpaid domestic and care work.

As a result, single mothers are among the most at risk of falling into poverty. In France for example, 35% of more than 1.5 million single mothers live below the poverty line.

Limited income makes it difficult, sometimes impossible to find adequate housing, especially in contexts where affordable housing is increasingly scarce, which is the case in many cities. And all too often, the housing or child allowances that single mothers sometimes receive are not considered as “income” when they apply to rent a flat.

Even when they have enough personal income to pay for rent, single mothers face discrimination in accessing housing, as landlords often perceive them as risky tenants. The same applies to banks when single mothers seek access to credit to buy a property.

Impact on children and long-term costs for society

The impact of homelessness on children cannot be overstated. Homeless children are at a greater risk of physical and mental health problems, developmental delays, poor academic achievement, dropping out, abuse, neglect, behavioural issues, socio-emotional problems, etc. – with potentially huge costs for society in the longer term.

Getting out of the street or shelters isn’t the end of the nightmare. Experiencing homelessness leaves permanent scars on both mothers and children, and often leads to a pattern of violence and struggles. Many homeless adults have experienced homelessness as a child.

Preventing single-mothers homelessness

Addressing the shortage of housing options for poor families is the first and obvious answer.

But preventing single-mothers’ homelessness is also more about addressing the barriers to women’s economic empowerment – beginning with the issue of the inequitable distribution of unpaid care work and the challenges of combining paid and unpaid

work – which are particularly acute for single mothers.

Important requirements for single mothers are:

- Adequate social protection, beginning with a social protection floor that guarantees a minimum of income (through child and or housing allowances), as well as access to essential health care, including maternity care (SDG 1, Target 1.3)
- Public infrastructure and services that include quality and accessible childcare services (SDG 5, Target 5.4)
- Social and psychological support services to prevent burn-out and mental illnesses linked to being a lone mother (SD3, Target 3.4)
- Decent work and Family-life reconciliation policies, including the right to request a flexible working arrangement (SDG 8)
- Policies that address the “motherhood penalty” in the world of work (SDG 8)

### **In conclusion**

Single mothers’ specific vulnerability to poverty and homelessness needs an inclusive approach, both acknowledging the difficulties of their situation AND the importance of their caring work and educational responsibilities. This essential work fully justifies generous child allowances (and if needed housing allowances) and targeted public services. Single mothers need support, not stigmatization.

### **About us:**

Make Mothers Matter believes in the power of mothers to make the world a better place, advocating for their recognition and support as changemakers. Created in 1947, MMM is an international NGO with no political or religious affiliations, transparently voicing the concerns of mothers at the highest level: the European Union, UNESCO and the United Nations (general consultative status).



From Member Organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family



**MMMACTIVITIESTOPROMOTE MOTHERS' ROLE AND RIGHTS**  
**Feb 2020**

**MMM Written Statement for the UN Commission on Social Development draws attention to single mothers' specific vulnerability to poverty and homelessness – and the impact on children.**

Homeless single mothers tend to be categorised as a developing country's problem but the reality is that countless families with children, including single mothers, experience this harsh reality in many developed countries.

In the UK for example, according to estimates by Shelter Charities reported in a BBC article, one in every 55 single-parent families became homeless in 2017–18. In 92% of these 26,610 cases, the homeless parent was a single mother. The same source states that homelessness has increased by 169% since 2010, and that single parents and their children were eight times more likely to become homeless than couples with children – with again the “vast majority” being single mothers.

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The increasing number of single-mother families

According to the 2019 UN Women flagship report, “Families in a changing world”, globally, lone-parent families represent 8% of all households, 84.3% of that being lone mother families.

Single-motherhood can have many causes: widowhood, divorce or separation from a partner or spouse, fleeing domestic violence, unintended pregnancies, as well as armed conflicts, natural disasters, displacement and

migration, which can separate families. Although an increasing number of women do choose to have children on their own, especially in developed countries, they remain a minority. In the majority of cases, women do not become single mothers by choice.

The number of single-parent families is on the rise, especially in high-income countries, due to increased rates of divorce and separation. E.g. in North America and Europe, the percentage of divorced/separated women rose from 7.4% in 1980 to 13.1% in 2010. As a result, in a country like the US, 27% of children under 21 live in a single-parent family (and 80.4% of these are single-mother families). According to the UN Women Report, globally, half of the lone-mothers reside in extended households in order to save on housing, and also to get support for childcare from other family members – a form of “hidden” homelessness? The other half is on its own and is particularly vulnerable to poverty and homelessness.

The specific vulnerability of single mothers and their children to poverty and homelessness

Generally speaking, women's specific vulnerability to poverty is well recognised, albeit not necessarily addressed. Not only do women generally earn less than men (both because of the Gender Pay Gap and occupational segregation), but their inequitable share of unpaid domestic and family care work constraints their time and ability to perform paid work, thus further limiting their income.

This issue is exacerbated in environments with limited public infrastructure and services, and even more so in the case of single-parent families where the lone parent must take sole responsibility for unpaid domestic and care work.

As a result, single mothers are among the most at risk of falling into poverty. In France for

example, 35% of the more than 1.5 million single mothers live below the poverty line.

Limited income makes it difficult, sometimes impossible to find adequate housing, especially in contexts where affordable housing is increasingly scarce, which is the case in many cities. And all too often, the housing or child allowances that single mothers sometimes receive are not considered as “income” when they apply to rent a flat.

Even when they have enough personal income to pay for rent, single mothers face discrimination in accessing housing, as landlords often perceive them as risky tenants. The same applies to banks when single mothers seek access to credit to buy property.

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The impact of homelessness on children cannot be overstated. Homeless children are at a greater risk of physical and mental health problems, developmental delays, poor academic achievement, dropping out, abuse, neglect, behavioural issues, socio-emotional problems, etc. – with potentially huge costs for society in the longer term.

Getting out of the street or shelters isn’t the end of the nightmare. Experiencing homelessness leaves permanent scars on both mothers and children, and often leads to a pattern of violence and struggles. Many homeless adults have experienced homelessness as a child.

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- Policies that address the “motherhood penalty” in the world of work (SDG 8)

Single mothers’ specific vulnerability to poverty and homelessness needs an inclusive approach, both acknowledging the difficulties of their situation and the importance of their caring work and educational responsibilities. This essential work fully justifies generous child allowances and, if needed, housing allowances, as well as targeted public services. Single mothers need support, not stigmatisation.

See the full statement on

<https://makemothersmatter.org/single-mothers-need-support-not-stigmatization/>

MMM will also hold a side event to the Commission on that topic, Single Mothers’ vulnerability to homelessness and its impact on children, which will take place on 18 February 2020 at the UN Headquarters in New York.

More information on

<https://makemothersmatter.org/invitation-csod58-side-event-on-single-mothers-and-homelessness/>

**MMM France, the MMM Delegation of Make Mothers Matter in France, actively participates in the discussions on the pension reforms there, as well as the French Government’s plan around the first 1000 days of life**

On 10 December 2019, representatives of MMM France were heard by members of the Parliamentary Agreement for the Family at the National Assembly. Concrete proposals were put forward to

- address the issues raised by the proposed pension reform that further penalises mothers;
- allow new parents to spend time with their child during the early years and support them in this challenging and critical period of child development; and
- improve paternal involvement and the reconciliation of professional and personal life.

Read the details of these proposals on <https://makemotherismatter.org/mmm-france-interviewed-by-parliamentarians/>

### **MMM partner with MenCare for its Global Meeting in Rabat, Morocco**

How to involve men as equitable, non-violent fathers and caregivers for the wellbeing and health of families and gender equality? Make Mothers Matter thinks it is important to Make Fathers Matter too...

MenCare is a global fatherhood campaign coordinated by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice. Its mission is to promote men's involvement as equitable, nonviolent fathers and caregivers, in order to achieve family wellbeing, gender equality, and better health for mothers, fathers, and children.

Speaking at the opening session, MMM President Anne-Claire de Liedekerke, reminded the audience that all over the world, women – mostly mothers – are the ones doing the unpaid work of caring for others. This work is indispensable in supporting the world economy. Yet, it remains unaccounted for, invisible in national accounts, is taken for granted, and is not even regarded as “work”. Whether performed by women or men, by mothers or fathers, care work is not valued. She called for the legal recognition of unpaid family care work as a particular category of work. It should bring rights – especially access to social security, access to education and training and a voice in democratic systems.

“What MenCare is pursuing will not only have a profound personal and family impact but also a global impact, for both gender equality and peacebuilding” [...].

“The truth is that in most instances, all over the world, mothers need fathers and fathers need mothers. That is why this collaboration between Make Mothers Matter and Promundo is so natural and necessary... if only to sometimes convince mothers to allow fathers to participate in the care.”

### **The challenges of sharing the care**

No country in the world has reached gender parity in the distribution of unpaid care work. For Gary Barker, President of Promundo, there is a need to develop a “culture of care”, not only care of people but also care of the planet. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) should also be about supporting families, adapting to their needs, accepting flexibility and career breaks without penalising those who care.

The challenges for progressing towards a more equitable sharing of care responsibilities between men and women are many and diverse. Parental leave in itself is not enough to change mentalities.

Some figures and testimonials shared during the meeting showed the diversity of those challenges:

In Morocco, 2/3 of men still think that a woman's place is at home.

In the Czech Republic, men enjoy one of the most generous parental leave provisions, but women still consider that a real man's role is to provide for his family – not to care.

In Sweden, 30% of parental leave is taken by fathers, but for many men being a stay-at-home father can be a challenge and even lead to depression.

In Lebanon, how to involve men in fatherhood responsibilities in the context of refugee camps where families struggle and where men feel they have lost their dignity as providers?

“We also see a trend to externalise and professionalise Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), but the nurturing part cannot be externalised and remains the responsibility of parents” – reminded Anne-Claire de Liedekerke.

Valerie Bichelmeier, Head of the MMM UN Delegation, participated in the plenary panel “Deconstructing Patriarchy, Power, and

Privilege: Rooting Our Work in Feminist Ideals”. In her presentation she reaffirmed MMM as a feminist organisation, convinced that

- women’s rights and gender equality need the involvement of men to progress;
- further progress in the public sphere calls for more equity in the private sphere; and that
- the work of caring for others, “women’s work”, must be valued and recognised for what it is: an essential work.

Ultimately, deconstructing patriarchy is about

choosing a different societal model, a model where men would take their share of unpaid domestic and care work – and, just like women, combine their paid work and care responsibilities. It is about making this model the norm for everyone, men as well as women.

Women have been drawn into mimicking men and gained a lot in the workplace. Now it’s time for a model where the economic world adapts to women and families, not the other way round.

More on  
<https://makemothersmatter.org/towards-a-culture-of-care/>

## **MMMACTIVITIESTOPROMOTE MOTHERS' ROLE AND RIGHTS**

### **Feb 2020**

#### **MMM Statement on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women calls for an end to obstetric violence**

MMM Oral Statement at the high-level panel organised at UN Headquarters to celebrate the International Day of Education reaffirms the essential role of parents in children's education and calls for policies to support them in this increasingly challenging responsibility, including through parent education

Our rapidly changing world is leading to major transformations in societies and in family structures. From urbanisation to family configuration to income and gender inequalities to work-family life imbalances, these changes have health consequences, with new risks of illness, increased drug addiction or mental health problems linked to daily stress. Furthermore, technology impacts relationships and behaviours.

As traditional structures disappear, new parenting challenges emerge, requiring concerted parental support efforts. As the UNESCO publication on the State of the World's Early Childhood Care and Education indicates, global trends show that more than half of young children are at risk of being deprived of quality parental care in areas identified as essential. There is an urgent need to analyse and examine the reasons why some parents are not engaged in or unable to fulfil their parental child-rearing responsibilities.

Social and family policies play a key role in parenting practices and family functioning, but more needs to be done to provide parents with access to education and support programs, including pre-parenting education. These programs exist, and their evaluation must take into account not only the child's cognitive development but also his or her physical and social development.

Parent education benefits not only children and families, but society as a whole. It is therefore an essential challenge, which we hope to address together.

Read the full statement on  
<https://makemothersmatter.org/parent-education-a-major-challenge/>

Obstetric violence refers to the mistreatment and violence mothers suffer in pregnancy and childbirth. Includes physical and verbal abuse, as well as a lack of medical support from health care professionals during childbirth, unconsented medical procedures and the refusal to provide pain relief.

Harmful for the mothers, these practices also have an impact on the mother-child relationship and therefore on the child's development and wellbeing: we know how toxic stress and violence can negatively impact early childhood development and jeopardise a child's future

Therefore, it is crucial to promote respectful maternity care and the involvement of women and women's groups in decisions concerning childbirth policies and practices in full compliance with the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations on positive pregnancy and birth.

In October 2019, Ms. Simonović, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, presented her report, "A human rights-based approach to mistreatment and violence against women in reproductive

health services with a focus on childbirth and obstetric violence", to the UN General Assembly. This report is a significant step in recognising and giving visibility to this hidden issue, as it is the first report exposing obstetric violence at the international level. The evidence provided not only depicts the widespread reality of obstetric violence, but also how legislation, policies and healthcare providers can bring an end to such a detrimental epidemic.



Make Mothers Matter calls upon policymakers, health professionals and all actors involved to create an adequate framework including preventive measures to put an end to obstetric violence as well as putting in place a system that provides reparation and compensation to victims.

Read the full Statement on

<https://makemothersmatter.org/systemic-change-a-must-for-ending-obstetric-violence/>

### Care gap – a major cause of gender inequality?

The EU Delegation of Make Mothers Matter submitted its feedback to the Road Map<sup>1</sup> of the European Commission on the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2024. This initiative calls for a new policy framework so the Commission can continue tackling gender inequality in the EU and beyond. It will focus on:

- violence against women
- pay transparency/gender paygap
- gender balance on company boards
- work-life balance
- gender issues related to climate change and artificial intelligence.

Make Mothers Matter considers that despite the efforts of the European Commission, gender equality is progressing at a “snail’s pace”. Indeed, EU legislation and policies have only had a limited impact and the gender pay gap and the pension gap are persisting. Moreover, the EU Gender Equality score has increased by only 5.4 points since 2005 (+ 1.2 points since 2015). (EIGE)<sup>2</sup>

The main issue is a lack of understanding of what the root causes of gender inequality are. Those include:

- Unequal share of unpaid care work (“care gap”)
- Gender stereotypes and discrimination

- Inadequate EU and national legislation that encompass the realities of the 21st century, an economy where women also perform paid work. Employment legislation is rigid and dates back to the industrial era when women performed the care work and career breaks were not needed.

Make Mothers Matter strongly believes that gender equality will never be achieved until the “care gap” is recognised and care work is redistributed. The amount of time dedicated by women to care activities is much higher than by men.

In the European Union, the lack of recognition of the value of such activities and the absence of measures to adjust the sharing of them is a major obstacle to gender equality. Women still perform the majority of unpaid care work, such as household work and caring for children, as well as disabled, older or frail persons. This inequality is difficult to prove because recent and reliable data of the share of unpaid care work in European households is not available. Only some estimates exist and what is not counted “does not count”.

This impacts women’s availability on the labour market, forcing women to reduce their paid working hours. As a consequence, this not only reduces their overall income, but also their career progression, time for Training or retraining, and also affects their hourly-wage and pension income. In addition, there is the perception that women with children are less available, competent and are therefore discriminated in terms of promotions, access to training, more senior positions, etc. The result is a “motherhood penalty” that raises concerns not only about the gender pay gap, but also regarding the capacity of societies to manage a sustainable balance between economic and social aspects.

<sup>1</sup> EU mechanism where Citizens and stakeholders, in particular, are invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of a problem and possible solutions

<sup>2</sup> Gender Equality Index 2019

There is an urgent need for the European Commission to set clear targets and indicators, including impact assessments, instead of the actual strategic engagement specifically addressing the domain of time. It would also be important to include a subdomain that compares women without children and mothers, in pay gap calculations. Comparing families with children and families without children hides the fact that in many cases, men compensate the loss of income (extra hours, etc.) and the real gender gap is not shown. According to the ILO report<sup>3</sup>, the motherhood gap increases with the number of children the mother has. In many European countries the gap is lower with one child but increases significantly with three.

We usually speak about equal pay or gender pay gap. The real pay gap is not gender-based but care-based. There is a “care gap” as it is the person providing the care that gets discriminated and penalised in pay, career promotion and pensions. Therefore, this should be acknowledged in the gender pay gap debate and solutions discussed such as the recognition of unpaid care work in providing “care credits” in the calculation on pensions as an assimilated period.

Women need support when returning to the labour market after a career break due to caring responsibilities, by validating their informal skills acquired working at home and giving them access to training in order to maintain their pay level and seniority.

Make Mothers Matter advocates for the care gap to be recognised, and unpaid care work redistributed while also urging authorities to take the necessary measures to meet the essential needs of the European mothers to eliminate the discriminatory consequences of having children. These needs are drawn from the results of the survey we conducted with 12,000 mothers in Europe on their priorities<sup>4</sup>, observed best practices and other research results and can be reduced to five principles: time, choice, services, resources and recognition.

If policies and societies tackle only the gender pay gap and there are no figures that show that mothers are penalised, society will not attain the capacity of supporting the costs of rearing children and a better distribution of child rearing. Knowing that the economy in general will also profit from such redistribution.

### About Make Mothers Matter – MMM

Make Mothers Matter believes in the power of mothers to make the world a better place, advocating for their recognition and support as changemakers.

Created in 1947, MMM is an international NGO with no political or religious affiliations, transparently voicing the concerns of mothers at the highest level: the European Union, UNESCO and the United Nations (general consultative status).

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<sup>3</sup> The motherhood pay gap: A review of the issues, theory and international evidence, Geneva, 2015 <sup>4</sup> What Matters to Mothers in Europe, Survey of Mothers in Europe, 2011 results: <https://makemothersmatter.org/delegations/europe/what-matters-to-mothers-in-europe/>

Compiled by Irina Pálffy-Daun-Seiler, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, with input from Valérie Bichelmeier, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Olalla Michelena, Secretary General of the European Delegation of MMM, and Johanna Schima, Head of the European Delegation of MMM.



## Recent & Upcoming Events

### 2020

#### April

- Apr 27-May 2: Big Sandy April Family Conference (Texas, USA)  
<https://familyconferences.org/events/family-conference/bigsandy20/>
- April 6-7: ICFS 2020: 14. International Conference on Family and Society (Cancun, Mexico)  
<https://waset.org/family-and-society-conference-in-april-2020-in-cancun>

#### May

- May 27-30: FCEI 2020: Deaf Children, Families and Services: Embracing Diversity for Brighter Futures (Bad Ischl, Austria)  
<http://www.fcei.at/unit/fcei/congress>
- May 28-31: NTSAD's 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Family Conference (Denver, CO)  
<https://www.ntsad.org>

#### June

- June 1-5: Northwoods June Family Conference (Watersmeet, MI, USA)  
<https://familyconferences.org/events/family-conference/northwoods20/>
- June 25-26: ICFSM 2020: 14. International Conference on Family Studies and Marriage (Oslo, Norway)  
<https://waset.org/family-studies-and-marriage-conference-in-june-2020-in-oslo>
- June 25-26: ICFSS 2020: 14. International Conference on Family, Society and Sociology (Paris, France)  
<https://waset.org/family-society-and-sociology-conference-in-june-2020-in-paris>

#### July

- July 9-10: ICCFS 2020: 14. International Conference on Comparative Family Studies (Prague, Czechia)  
<https://waset.org/comparative-family-studies-conference-in-july-2020-in-prague>

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