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www.civilsocietynetworks.org
www.20yearsIYF.org

Quarterly Bulletin of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family

Mar. 2023, No.125
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Dear Readers of Families International,

Issue No. 125 includes a Statement by the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family to the United Nations Commission for Social Development (UNCSD) in Feb. 2023. Two other Statements, by Soroptimist International and C-Fam, are also included. Further included is the Annual Report of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family for 2022.

No. 125 also contains an article by UNICEF about the impact of heatwaves, and how to protect children from the consequences. This issue further contains two texts from member organisations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family: One is from Make Mothers Matter (MMM) on Childhood Care and Education, and the second from the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD), which gives a brief look into future parenting, combined with technologies.

Finally Issue No. 125 is completed by a list of upcoming events.

Sincerely,

Julia Birner B.A.,

Executive Editor

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VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY



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Digital-Networks:

www.10yearsIYF.org

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ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES 2022

At a Full Committee Meeting, which was held as a Zoom video conference, representatives of the 41 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. The Board of the Committee had worked out a schedule for their 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, with 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 2022

1. Families International (FI)

Issues, Nos. 121-124 of the Quarterly Bulletin of the Committee, were published online in 2022 at www.viennafamilycommittee.org The Editorial Committee consists of the Editors, Julia Birner B.A., Christin Kohler, M.A., Karin Kuzmanov M.Sc., Isabella Nening, M.A., and the Deputy-Editor, Peter Crowley, Ph.D., who had been the Editor from 2009 to 2020.

Special features in FI in 2022 included: Issues relating to Families at the 60th United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSD) 2022, Gender Equality from a global perspective, The Plight of Children in 2022 and Gender Equality particularly in Families. Each issue of Families International also included texts submitted by member organizations of the Committee, as well as other relevant texts from United Nations agencies.

Over 700 readers of 'Families International' are informed by the Secretariat of the Committee by E-Mail, when the latest issue is published and available to download free of cost.

2. International Forum: Gender Equality: Why is it important and what can we do to achieve it?

The Committee organised and scheduled an International Forum, during a Full Committee Meeting, at the United Nations Vienna International Centre (UNVIC) for Monday May 9th 2022, to observe the United International Day of Families (UNIDF) 2022. However due to the continued Covid Pandemic it was held as a Zoom conference and entitled: Gender equality: Why is it important and what can we do to achieve it? with Prof. Zoe Lefkofridi who holds the first Professorship for Gender Studies at the Paris-Lodron University Salzburg (PLUS) and Nadine Zwiener-Collins, a postdoctoral researcher in Politics and Gender Diversity and Equality, at the Department of Political Science, at the University of Salzburg, who gave the presentation. Prof. Lefkofridi & Dr. Nadine Zwiener-Collins have since provided their text, which was published in issue Nr. 122 of Families International. Cf. www.viennafamilycommittee.org

3. International Forum:

'Two Steps Forward, two Steps Back. Challenges in Gender Equality Research, and their Policy Implications.'

The Committee further organised and held an International Forum, during a Full Committee Meeting, during which a new Board of the Committee was elected cf. below, at the United Nations Vienna

International Centre (UNVIC) for Monday Nov.7th 2022 with Prof. Vanessa Gash, City, University of London entitled: 'Two Steps Forward, Two Steps Back. Challenges in Gender Equality Research, and their Policy Implications.' Prof. Vanessa Gash is an empirical and interdisciplinary social scientist based at the School of Policy and Global Affairs at City, University London and has specialised in comparative labour market research of precarious employment and has expertise in both panel and cross-national data structures. Her work focuses on gendered differences in employment and precarious contracts and has recently published a series of reports for the UK Government on the Gender Pay Gap. Prof. Gash also provided her text which was published in issue Nr. 124 of Families International. Cf. www.viennafamilycommittee.org

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

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, and organised the above mentioned International Forum to observe the United Nations International Day of Families in May 2022.

The 60th United Nations Commission for Social Development (UNCSD) scheduled for February 2022, had as its Priority Theme: 'Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda.'

The Committee Coordinator for the UNCSD, Franziska Reichel, drafted a statement for the Committee on this theme, and it was also signed by a number of member organisations of the Committee, and subsequently submitted to the UNCSD by the Committee, and has since become an official document of the UNCSD in 2022. <https://undocs.org/E/CN.5/2022/NGO/3>

The 61th United Nations Commission for Social Development (UNCSD) scheduled for February 2023, has as its Priority Theme: 'Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. Franziska Reichel, also drafted a statement for the Committee on this theme, and it was also signed by a number of member organisations of the Committee, and subsequently submitted to the UNCSD by the Committee, and has since become an official document of the UNCSD in 2023. <https://undocs.org/E/CN.5/2023/NGO/6>

An eighty page report, of a study update entitled: '**Documenting Contributions of Civil Society Organisation to the Well-Being of Families**' by Peter Crowley Ph.D. 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 20th Anniversary of the United Nations International Year of the Family, is available to download, on the United Nations website:

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

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) which relates to activities of the Committee going back to 2019, brings to bear 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. 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>

5. Website of the Committee

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.121 to 124, which were published in 2022, may be downloaded from our website without cost to the reader. A button e.g. entitled 'Families Online' is available on the homepage with a direct link to the proceedings of three International Forums organised by the Committee, between 2017 and 2021, dealing with families and digital media usage.

6. The Three Digital Networks of the Committee [203 CSOs Networked - 92 in Sub-Saharan Africa]

Laura Mysliwiec and Sebastian 'Oberreiter, kindly accepted the invitation of the Committee, in 2022, to become the 'Committee Digital-Networks Coordinators' updating the networks & websites.

A so-called '**Digital Divide**' exists between those connected and not connected to the Internet. Statistics from the United Nations International Telecommunications Union based in Geneva, for 2022, show that 5.3 billion or ca. two thirds of the world's population is using the Internet, but only about 40% of the African population is online. 45% of African males, as against 34% of females, were using the Internet in 2022. Worldwide 82% of those living in urban areas in 2022 were using the Internet, while in rural areas this figure was 46%.

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 is particularly affected by the 'Digital Divide'. These 92 CSOs offer important knowledge resources for the well-being of families, especially in the first 1000 days of a child's life, 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

This website continues to experience 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 twenty 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 10th 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. The 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 1994, under the title: 'Documenting Contributions of Civil Society Organisations to the Well-Being of Families' and edited by P. Crowley, who presented the study at a meeting of the United Nations in New York, to observe the United Nations International Day of Families on May 15th 2004. The book was also submitted to the members of the special session of the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations on Dec. 6th 2004, to observe the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

The United Nations Secretary General referred to the above publication in his Report to the 59th Session of the General Assembly (A/59/176, 2004). 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

www.20yearsIYF.org

To facilitate the implementation of an update of the above-mentioned study, originally carried out at www.10yearsIYF.org a further website was set up by the Committee at 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 and includes a series of links, inter alia, to the United Nations Focal Point on the Family in New York.

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 then went online in August 2004 at www.civilsocietynetworks.org. This Network had 143 member organisations from 25 countries in 2022 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, by contacting the Committee at: 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 2022 the 37th Anniversary of its inception in 1985.

7. The Board of the Committee for 2022 - 2025

Board Officers:

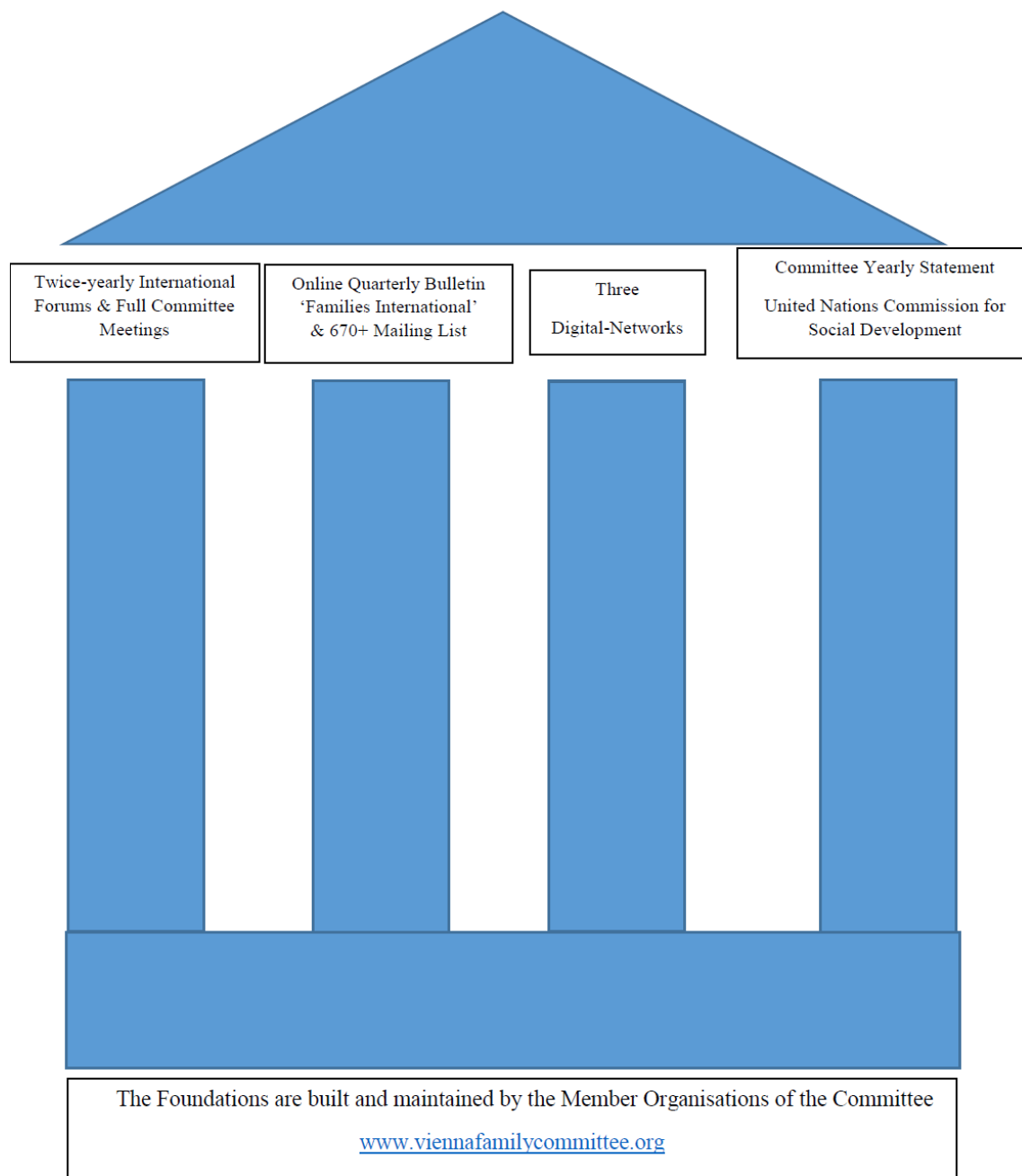
Chairperson: Valeria Foglar-Deinhardstein, M.Sc. European Union of Women
Deputy Chairperson: Wolfgang Engelmaier, M.A. Kolping International,
Secretary: Peter Crowley, Ph.D., International Council of Psychologists,
Deputy Secretary: Katharina Muegler, Kolping International,
Treasurer: Julia Zacharenkova, European Union of Women

Board Members:

Julia Birner B.A., Families International,
Christin Kohler M.A., Families International,
Karin Kuzmanov M.Sc., Families International,
Isabella Nening M.A., Families International,
Franziska Reichel, Committee Coordinator,
United Nations Commission for Social Development,
Dr. Eleonora Teixeira Da Costa Rossoll,
Federation of Catholic Family Associations.
Dr. Maria Riehl, Women's Federation for World Peace,

THE FOUR-PILLAR STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY

The Roof is built and maintained by the Board of the Committee



United Nations

E/CN.5/2023/NGO/6



Economic and Social Council

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Commission for Social Development

Sixty-first session

6–15 February 2023

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

**Priority Theme: Creating full and productive employment
and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities
to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development**

Statement submitted by Vienna NGO Committee on the Family International, 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

We the undersigned international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, recognize that several current events require both short and long-term reactions and actions to improve, in particular, the situation with regard to social inequalities, employment, access to key resources and climate change, in several communities worldwide.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations offer several possibilities to eradicate on-going inequalities and offer well-being and employment for all. SDGs 8 and 10 are especially relevant with regard to this statement, as they aim to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all genders, including young people and persons with disabilities, as well as reducing inequality within, and among countries.

We recognize that especially countries, that were already experiencing high and continually rising inequalities, had already had, added aggravated pre-existing socio-economic inequalities, affecting people's well-being, but above all, the poorest and most vulnerable. Prevention measures, taken during the pandemic have also exposed inherent growing economic insecurity that people are facing, highlighting existing gaps in social systems and deficiencies in health and education systems that, in turn, could also lead to further structural inequalities.

The undersigned international non-governmental organizations are further aware of the multiple impacts on different socio-demographic groups, such as young people, women, persons with disabilities, as well as low-paid and low-skilled workers, who have been particularly affected by the impacts of the pandemic, and hence have less potential to recover quickly. As a consequence, they could face a higher risk of less income, long-term unemployment and, of being left behind by the labor market. We are also aware from research of United Nations Agencies, that women have not seldom experienced a higher risk of financial insecurity, unpaid family and caregiving work, as well as gender-based violence.

To ensure truly sustainable Social Development, a holistic and strategic approach is needed especially enabling developing countries to escape from poverty, and become empowered to build up a social system, enriched by equality for every single being, regardless of their social status or gender, as well as providing, full and productive employment and decent work for everyone.

Further actions are also required to limit such effects of climate change, as droughts, floods and wildfires, affecting often, in particular, the least developed countries. Strategies, with a genuine prospect of success, are necessary to enable affected countries to attain sustainable dignity and well-being for all, by implementing the Agenda for Sustainable Development. The eradication of poverty further requires access to basic social services, such as health care, vaccinations, safe water supply and sanitation measures.

The undersigned organizations are aware of current incidents such as armed conflicts, the Covid-19 pandemic and climatic changes that endanger the achievement of the SDGs of the United Nations. Hence, a sustainable holistic approach is especially necessary, to protect minorities and underprivileged families, to ensure genuine inclusive sustainable social development, as well as to overcome inequalities, and provide a safe environment for all.

Statement submitted by non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and member organizations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family:

- European Union of Women
 - International Council of Psychologists
 - International Council of Women
 - Kolping International
-

United Nations
Economic and Social Council

E/CN.5/2023/NGO/9

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Commission for Social Development

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

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* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



E/CN.5/2023/NGO/9

Statement

This statement is presented by Soroptimist International on behalf of its members committed to improving the lives of women and girls in all their diversity in 122 countries and supporting organizations.

Women were by far the most impacted by job losses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Too many in society and business still ascribe to the antiquated concept that men are the family breadwinners, so women's work is more expendable. Countless women were also removed from the workforce because of the increased burdens and disruptions to their multiple roles in the family, increased care-taking responsibilities, and schools transitioning to remote learning.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, women regularly experienced precarity in the workplace, which included gender-based violence, and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The impacts of these were compounded or exacerbated by the pandemic, but they are not new. For there to be a gender-transformative recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is vital that the discrimination women experience in the world of work be eradicated. To address full and decent employment for women, free of gender-based discrimination and violence in the workplace, actions must be taken in education and training and by governments, businesses and societies.

Achieving Gender Equality in the Workplace

To achieve gender equality in the workplace and full, decent employment for women, policies and laws must reflect the realities of peoples' lives and require action to close the gender gap, including the gender pay gap. For years, there has been an assumption that the world of work will slowly correct for the impacts of gender inequality; however, we can no longer wait for these slow, incremental changes. Immediate action must be taken by states to influence the creation of non-discriminatory workplaces by the enacting laws and implementing policies.

Specific and targeted efforts must be made to make workforces more gender equal. All avenues should be explored to achieve workplace gender equality, including the use of quotas. Social protection and floors must also be amended to reflect the fact that many women work in the informal sector or in precarious employment situations without the same guarantees of security or financial resources as men. Women should not be placed at increased risk of poverty because of the type of work that it is more socially acceptable or accessible for them to pursue.

The Gender Pay Gap

Gender Pay Gap: the principle of equal pay for work of equal value has been established in ILO conventions and recommendations and is part of the concept of decent work. And yet, the gender pay gap is still a reality. In addition, unpaid care work needs to be defined, valued and compensated. Women's pensions are affected by not only by gender pay discrimination, but also by their time off work due to their care and domestic responsibilities. This has long-term consequences with older women who are more likely to be poorer than men because of a lifetime of economic disadvantage.

The unequal distribution of caring, family and household tasks creates a significant barrier to women participating equally in the workforce. Men have a responsibility to contribute to the redistribution of household work and caring activities, and governments have a fundamental role to play as well. Improving parental leave so that fathers and co-parents can take more time off work alongside

mothers and partners establishes a more equal distribution of caring responsibilities. It also prevents a motherhood penalty, which covers the motherhood wage gap, as well as all the discriminations that mothers suffer in the workplace, in recruitment, and in career advancement when they become mothers. Governments and workplaces must do more to provide childcare facilities and low-cost childcare which are a mounting barrier to women returning to work after bearing and caring for children.

Transition from Informal to Formal Jobs

Women are overrepresented in the informal economy for many reasons: economic, stereotypical role distribution, time spent in their childbearing and care responsibilities, lower levels of education, etc. However, informal jobs generate income and contribute to economic growth, so formalization can eliminate the negative aspects of informal jobs by offering social protection, without hindering job creation and/or resulting in job losses.

Informal jobs are those not protected by formal arrangements such as contracts, and therefore workers are not protected by rights under the law. Formalization of informal jobs is therefore essential for worker protection.

In addition, work in the informal economy is often characterized by unsafe workplaces and unhealthy working conditions, low levels of skills and productivity, low or irregular incomes, long working hours and lack of access to information, markets, finance, training and technology. All these factors create barriers to women reaching economic empowerment.

Universal Social Protection

Social Protection for all and establishing a minimum wage is a direct way of flattening the playing field and reducing inequalities. Universal Social Protection includes cash transfers for women and children, benefits, support for working women on maternity leave, disability or job loss, and pensions for older women. Social protection is thus the best way to prevent poverty and to end the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Social Protection provides guarantees of security for the unemployed or those transitioning to new jobs. Universal social protection and universal access to essential services allow women to seize opportunities to escape not only poverty and hunger but also social exclusion and discrimination. Social Protection can be provided through an expanded tax system, social insurance, tax- funded social benefits, social assistance services, and other schemes providing income security.

Eliminating Gender-based Violence and Harassment at Work

For years women in all their diversity have reported harassment and violence at work. Women in high-profile positions, public roles and politics are particularly targeted. The internet has made it easy to harass women while remaining anonymous. This abuse, violence and harassment often cause women to leave their jobs and stops women from taking up positions of leadership.

In many workplaces, gender-based violence at work is not treated seriously. In many cases, members of management or leadership themselves may be involved and women have no one to appeal to for support. In other cases, women have not been believed or the harassment has been considered an inevitable part of the job. This is not acceptable. Workplaces must scale-up policies to eliminate violence in the workplace and provide support to victims of gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination.

International instruments exist to support the eradication of workplace gender-based violence, including ILO Convention 190 (2019). These international instruments should be used as templates for national mechanisms and must be fully implemented at the national levels to ensure women can freely enter and participate in the world of work free from violence.

Education and Training

Girls and women in all their diversity suffered severe setbacks in education and training during COVID-19. UNESCO data shows 11 million girls may not return to school after the COVID-19 pandemic, setting back years of global progress. This will reduce their future earnings, career prospects and skills development. For women who have left jobs, they may need to retrain to adapt to new technology and employment conditions.

To prepare women and girls to re-enter the workforce, they must be provided with high-quality education and training to prepare them for changing employment needs. Steps must be taken to ensure more women and girls participate in science, technology, engineering and math education. Given there is a global shortage of skilled trades workers, there should also be a renewed emphasis on vocational training as it will provide access to high paying jobs. Women must also be given the opportunity to obtain jobs in STEM fields.

Specific attention must be paid to those at risk of being left behind, including rural and Indigenous women and girls, those living through conflict, refugees and internally displaced persons and women and girls in care and state institutions. Older women and women currently out of work should be given enhanced access to educational programmes to learn new skills to increase their employability as it has become necessary to work longer.

Sustainable Futures

To recover sustainably from COVID-19 in a way that supports people and planet it is vital to bring about an economic transformation. Unprecedented weather patterns, heat waves and natural disasters are increasing, and countries must do more to reduce emissions to prevent climate change. We must shift away from a growth-based economic model, recognising that economies must work for people, rather than people working for economies. When taking steps to support women re-entering the world of work, policies and programmes should approach achieving gender equality and combatting climate change as mutually reinforcing aims. Women and girls must be able to access education and training to participate in the discussion and work on the solutions to save our planet.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To promote full and productive employment and decent work that supports the achievement of gender equality and overcomes the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination experienced by women and girls as part of recovery processes from COVID-19, Soroptimist International recommends the following actions are taken by states and relevant stakeholders:

- States must ratify the ILO Convention 190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work so that workplaces are safe and secure for all.
- Ensure equal pay for work of equal value is enforced.
- Extend social protection and workers' rights to all workers, including those in the informal sector.

- Promote job creation, access to financial services and lifelong education for women and girls.
- Increase investments in education and lifelong learning, and create specific, targeted programmes, including on digital technology and literacy, and STEM subjects and careers, focused on getting women and girls back to work, education, and vocational training.
- Ensure women are equally represented in leadership positions including the use of quotas.
- Expand paid parental leave policies and requirements, so that both parents can take leave that supports gender equality in the workplace and at home.
- Develop data sources and indicators on gender equality and sustainable development which include both quantitative and qualitative sources of data.
- Partner with and provide funding for CSOs who are implementing projects to end discrimination and violence in the world of work.

Co-sponsors:

Arab Centre for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession
 Associated Country Women of the World
 Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer
 Generation United
 Graduate Women International
 Hunger Project
 International Alliance of Women
 International Association of Applied Psychology
 International Association of Counselling
 International Association of Democratic Lawyers
 International Cancer Expert Corps Inc.
 International Council of Jewish Women
 International Council of Women
 International Federation of Associations of the Elderly
 International Health Awareness Network
 International Union of Psychological Science
 JACE (Japan Asia Cultural Exchanges)
 Making Mothers Matter
 Maryknoll Sisters
 National Alliance of Women's Organizations
 NGO Committee on Sustainable Development-NY
 Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association
 Red Dot Foundation
 Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary

Servas International
Simply Help, Inc.
Sisters of Charity Federation
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
Sovereign Military Order of of the Temple of Jerusalem Teresian Association
Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund
Vivat International
Widows Rights International
Women's Board Educational Cooperation Society Women for Water Partnership
Women's International Zionist Organisation
World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitations
World Circle of the Consensus:Self-sustaining People, Orgnizations and Communities
World Union for Progressive Judaism Zonta International

United Nations
Economic and Social Council

E/CN.5/2023/NGO/11

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Commission for Social Development

Sixty-first session

6–15 February 2023

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

E/CN.5/2023/NGO/11

Statement

When world leaders gathered at United Nations Headquarters for the adoption of Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development they made an uncompromising commitment to protection of the family in the context of improving the lives of women. Sustainable Development Target 5.4 commits governments to “recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.”

This important commitment to the family and women in the 2030 Agenda is too often ignored or misunderstood. Employment and fiscal policies have come a long way to ensure women have access to the same opportunities as men and there are many employment sectors where women have thrived and surpassed men. But despite these gains, women who decide to play a more active role within their families continue to face discrimination and social and economic marginalization as their important unpaid care and domestic work remains undervalued and unrecognized. What is worse, many women who are fully invested in the workforce feel forced to into their social and economic situation by forces beyond their control.

Many governments now provide incentives for women to enter and remain in the workforce full-time. The motivation for these policies may at times be to help women achieve their preferred work-life balance, but at other times the motivation may be less benevolent and can rise even to a form of coercion. International development banks, for example, openly promote policies to incentivize women’s participation in the workforce as an easy way for governments to achieve rapid economic growth. On the other hand, governments are hesitant to extend the same generous social and employment protections to mothers who choose not to be fully invested in the workforce. This leads to discrimination against mothers both overtly and covertly.

This kind of social arrangement prioritizes Gross Domestic Product over the individual choices and personal freedom of women who prefer to spend more time with their families. Survey data consistently shows that women around the world would like to spend more time with their families but feel unable to because of economic constraints.

When policies to incentivize women to enter the workforce are not accompanied by equal or greater protection for motherhood and recognition and social protection for unpaid care and domestic work they turn into obstacles to women’s preferred work-family arrangements, and they can even result in a form of political and economic coercion. This can in turn generate a social dilemma known as the two - income trap. As more and more women and men feel compelled to work to achieve social benefits and an adequate standard of living it results in higher prices for housing, goods, and services. This in turn makes it harder for men and women to choose to invest more of their time with their families.

The only way for families to escape the two-income trap is for governments to fully commit to realizing Sustainable Development Target 5.4. Unless women are empowered to choose how to best arrange work-family balance on their own terms and according to their personal choices, mothers who opt to invest in their families will always be subject to discrimination and economic and social marginalization. This is both a bad outcome for women’s empowerment as well as protection of the family.

The family is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the natural and fundamental group unit of society and entitled to protection by society and the State. Moreover, the motherhood is entitled to special protection by the same. All efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must necessarily emphasize the role of the family because of its essential function as primary educator, economic driver, and social safety net.

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. For this reason, many international consensus agreements have called on governments to support the family and to fully value the important role of women in the family, which too often goes unrecognized.

Target 5.4 helpfully distinguishes "the family" from "the household", highlighting the exceptional status of the family in international law and policy as a status not shared by other social and legal arrangements. The implication of this target is that while the family is entitled to protection under international law, countries may at the national level extend protections to other households as they deem fit, even if they are not equivalent or analogous to the family.

The exceptional status of the family in international law and policy is not too narrow to also include situations where the family is not intact, or where children deprived of their biological family are adopted by a putative family. Indeed, international cooperation policy should provide for adoptive, single-parent, and multi-generational families, and similar household arrangements in so far as they seek to preserve the natural bonds of the family and the blood ties between children and their guardians or try to reconstitute the nuclear family for a child deprived of his or her intact family in the absence of blood ties. On the other hand, relations between individuals of the same sex and other social and legal arrangements that are neither equivalent nor analogous to the family are not entitled to be recognized as families in international cooperation policies and programmes.

Family stability is an essential component of social stability and social protection. In many developing countries the family is the only form of social protection. In developed countries the breakdown of the family is causing new and unforeseen challenges to social protection. Even in the context of employment policy, the topic of family stability is an essential consideration to be borne in mind when designing employment regulation.

Governments have an obligation under international law to adopt laws and policies that, as much as possible, provide conditions conducive to family formation and stability. Governments must help individuals exercise their right to marry and found a family as well as provide social protection for the family. When the family breaks down the consequences for men, women, and especially children, are far reaching and dramatic. And repercussions are felt throughout society. Governments must, as much as possible, help strengthen families to achieve the best possible level of social protection.

In addition to family stability governments must also ensure that families have an opportunity to thrive economically. The family is the most important source of social protection for over half of the people on the planet. According to the International Labour Organization less than half of all human beings have access to comprehensive social protection. This means that the family is the sole source of comprehensive social support for most people living on the planet. Unless governments prioritize protection of the family, they can never effectively design employment policies.

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This is not just important from the standpoint of policy; it is also a human rights obligation. It should be borne in mind in this context that the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 7 and 11, establishes an obligation on state parties to that convention to provide the widest possible protection and assistance to the family, and that the right to an adequate standard of living extends not only to individuals but to individuals and their families. The treaty does not merely entitle the family to generic social and economic protection and assistance, as other human rights treaties, but requires states to provide the family with the widest possible protection and assistance.

In the context of sustainable development and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, governments should bear this obligation in mind. In addition to social and fiscal policies that may hamper the family, as in the case of the two-income trap, excessive new regulations, including economic, environmental, or social regulations may hamper the ability of individuals to realize an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families by limiting employment opportunities or by making it harder for entrepreneurs to start productive businesses. When regulations hinder the ability of individuals to provide for their families they may undermine and even violate the right to an adequate standard of living.

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for every child

The coldest year of the rest of their lives

Protecting children from
the escalating impacts
of heatwaves

Executive summary



The coldest year of the rest of their lives

Protecting children from the escalating impacts of heatwaves

Executive summary

The climate crisis is rapidly accelerating and with it, heatwaves are becoming longer, stronger, more widespread and more frequent. Already, around **559 million children** are exposed to high heatwave frequency and around **624 million children** are exposed to one of three other high heat measures

- high heatwave duration, high heatwave severity or extreme high temperatures.

This report provides yet more evidence that children are on the front lines of the climate crisis.

By 2050, virtually every child on earth – **over 2 billion children** – is forecast to face more frequent heatwaves, regardless of whether the world achieves a ‘low greenhouse gas emission scenario’ with an estimated 1.7 degrees of warming in 2050 or a ‘very high greenhouse gas emission scenario’ with an estimated 2.4 degrees of warming in 2050. These findings underscore the urgent need to adapt the services children rely on as unavoidable impacts of global heating unfold. It also makes a case for more substantial emissions reduction, to prevent the worst impacts of the other high heat measures. Millions more children will be exposed to high heatwave severity and extreme high temperatures depending on the degree of global heating reached. Children in northern regions will face the most dramatic increases in high heatwave severity while by 2050, nearly half of all children in Africa and Asia will face sustained exposure to extreme high temperatures.

Heat is especially damaging to children’s health and affects their education and future livelihoods. Almost every country is experiencing changing heatwaves. What each government does now will determine the survival of those least responsible for this crisis – our children and young people.



Main findings include:

Extreme high temperatures: In 2020, around 740 million children (1 in 3 children globally) lived in countries with 83.54 or more days per year exceeding 35°C. By 2050 under a very high emission scenario with 2.4 degrees of warming, this figure would rise to approximately 816 million (2 in 5 children).



High heatwave frequency: By 2050, under both low and very high emission scenarios, virtually every child on earth will be exposed to high heatwave frequency (i.e., living in areas where the average yearly number of heatwaves is equal to or above 4.5), rising from only 1 in 4 children in 2020.



High heatwave duration: While about 1 in 4 children live in areas where the average heatwave event lasts 4.7 days or longer as of 2020, by 2050, this percentage will rise dramatically to over 3 in 4 children under a low emission scenario of 1.7 degrees of warming. At 2.4 degrees of warming, 94 per cent of children will be exposed.



High heatwave severity: Under a low emission scenario with 1.7 degrees of warming, the number of children in areas where the average exceedance of a heatwave event is equal to or above 2°C will almost quadruple (from around 28 to 100 million) and see an almost eight-fold increase under a very high emission scenario with 2.4 degrees of warming (from around 28 to 212 million).

WE MUST ACT NOW: PROTECT, PREPARE, PRIORITIZE, PREVENT

The climate crisis is rapidly getting worse. Children and young people face changes on a scale we are only now starting to experience. Heatwaves are just one manifestation.

How deadly and damaging the impact of climate hazards become for children and young people is dependent on the action taken now to prepare for and adapt to climate impacts and to limit global heating to 1.5°C. UNICEF urges leaders and governments to take immediate action to:

PROTECT children from climate devastation by adapting social services

Children and young people are the most vulnerable to climate shocks including heatwaves.

- Every country must **adapt critical social services** - WASH, health, education, nutrition, social protection and child protection – to protect children and young people.

- **Food and social protection systems** made fragile by climate change, environmental crises and conflict must be strengthened to withstand hazards and ensure continued access to healthy diets. Increased investments must be made in the early prevention, detection and treatment of severe malnutrition in children, mothers and vulnerable populations.

- **Health systems** must be resilient to climate events and must be equipped to treat children and pregnant and breastfeeding women facing the impacts of heatwaves and other climate hazards.

- **WASH services** must be adapted to withstand climate-related disasters and weather variability to protect against contamination and shortages of drinking water supply. Risk assessments, early warning systems, and innovative technologies to monitor water supply and safety must be implemented to protect against water scarcity and contamination.

- **At COP27**, children and their rights must be prioritized in decisions on adaptation.

PREPARE children to live in a climate-changed world

Children and young people have a unique stake in the climate agenda, as a direct threat to their rights and future prospects.

- Every country must provide children and young people with **climate change education, disaster risk reduction education, green skills training** and opportunities to meaningfully participate and influence climate policy-making.
- **COP27** must see countries strengthen the focus on children's climate education and empowerment in the ACE action plan, adopt it, and implement previous commitments to build youth capacity.

PRIORITIZE children and young people in climate finance and resources

Protecting and preparing children and young people requires urgent funding and resources.

- Developed countries must deliver on their COP26 agreement to **double adaptation funding to \$40bn per year by 2025** at a minimum, as a step to delivering at least \$300bn per year for adaptation by 2030.

- **Adaptation funding** must make up half of all climate finance.

- **COP27** must unlock progress on loss and damage, placing the resilience of children and their communities at the center of discussions on action and support.

PREVENT a climate catastrophe by drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions and keep 1.5°C alive.

- Emissions are projected to rise by 14 per cent this decade, putting us on a path to catastrophic global heating.
- All governments must revisit their national climate plans and policies to increase ambition and action. They **must cut emissions by at least 45 per cent by 2030** to keep heating to no more than 1.5°C.
- **G20 countries** – emitters of 80 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions - must take the lead, yet all countries must act.

The world must accelerate the transition to renewable energy production, all fossil fuel subsidies must end, windfall profits from fossil fuel producers must be taxed and redirected to the vulnerable, as urged by the United Nations Secretary General.

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Towards 2024

Parenting Education and New Technologies

1 January 2023



Photo by Julia M Cameron

The latest resolution on the family was introduced by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and welcomed the International Year of the Family as an opportunity to raise awareness and take action to strengthen development. [1]

The preparations for the 30th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family are following a framework set by the mega-trends proposed by the Secretary-General in 2019 that focus on new technologies, demographic shifts, urbanization and international migration, and climate change.

For this year and following up on the report of the Secretary-General [2], the resolution underscored the importance of digital literacy, and evidence based research on the effects of technology and artificial intelligence on family balance and parenting education.

The draft resolution introduced to the Third Committee Session was approved without a vote with the European Union delegation highlighting the importance of addressing cyberbullying and bridging the gender digital divide; the impact of the megatrends on the functioning and well-

The Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly approved without a vote on November 17th, 2022 the draft resolution titled 'Preparations for and observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family'.

By its terms, the Assembly calls on Member States to offer support to working parents through, inter alia, expanded child and family benefits and paid family leave and sick leave. It also calls on Member States and United Nations bodies to provide information on their activities, including good practices at the national level.

Seventy-seventh Session of the United Nations' General Assembly, Third Committee, 17 November 2022.

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Strategic Partnerships Coordinator and United Nations Representative.
International Federation for family Development.

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being of the family; the references to social protection systems and public services. At the same time, other delegations stressed the importance of recognizing the value of intergenerational interaction and cooperation, adding that policies must be inclusive and responsive to the changing needs and expectations of families.

We reproduce in this paper the approved text [3], highlighting some of the paragraphs strongly related to the New Technologies megatrend and the preparations for the 30th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024:

Investing in parenting education

The resolution links some recurrent family policies to new technologies and highlights the importance of investment in parenting education in the digital era. For instance, operative paragraph 3 (OP3) "calls upon Member States, United Nations entities, within their respective mandates, and other relevant stakeholders, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, to offer support to family members, including working parents, and provide access to full and productive employment and decent work, as well as effective, inclusive, resilient and gender-responsive social protection systems and public services, expanded child and family benefits, paid parental leave and sick leave, improved flexibility of working arrangements and investments in parenting education".

In OP7 and OP11 respectively, "to promote work-family balance in the digital world, grant workers with family responsibilities flexibility in work schedules to enable them to meet the needs of work and family and invest in reliable technology support and education"; "expanding flexible working arrangements, including through the use of new information and communications technologies".

Lastly, OP17 "encourages Member States to invest in parenting education as a tool to enhance children's well-being and prevent all forms of violence against children, including through promoting non-violent forms of discipline, and to ensure that parenting education programs are inclusive of parents, grandparents and, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the children, maintaining a gender perspective throughout."

The report informs in many ways the resolution and refers to parents when it suggests that by equipping

them with the appropriate tools, parenting education has been deemed to have great potential to help parents achieve better parenting in general and to navigate new technologies in particular. As globally the approach to parenting education is highly fragmented and decentralized, with no guidelines or work requirements specific to technology competence in parenting education, investments in parenting education **utilizing** new technologies are needed. While direct supports such as parenting education with technology integration are necessary, they must be accompanied by indirect supports such as parenting educator preparation and support within the macro context of Internet equity, online safety and digital rights.

Parenting education is also a useful tool for achieving SDGs 3 & 4. It has been identified as a means of reducing health problems and learning deficits in children. Progress over decades in the implementation of parenting education has resulted in high-quality, well-tested programs yielding positive results.

Parenting education has policy implications: it should rightly be perceived as a useful strategy for enabling parents to improve their skills in further support of their family's and children's needs. Further, parenting education constitutes a strategy for preventing negative behaviors, such as corporal punishment, and should be an integral component of a set of strategies for the creation of an infrastructure for parents. [4]

Parenting and new technologies

The resolution in OP6 "invites Member States and relevant stakeholders, as part of the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, within the area of technological change and its impact on families, to bridge the digital divide, including between developed and developing countries, as well as the gender digital divide, to enable equal access to risk-informed information, knowledge and communications, by taking concrete measures to promote equal access for all to digital training, capacity-building, through equal access to information and communications technologies, mobile devices and the Internet, so as to promote their empowerment and digital literacy, and to improve access to the Internet, higher-speed Internet and digital devices for families, especially those in vulnerable situations, invest in the digital literacy skills of all family members, invest in parenting education, including through the use of technology, as a valuable preventive strategy against cyberbullying and violence against children in digital

contexts and for reducing child neglect, and support the healthy development of children, as part of child-focused policies and as a component of wider family-oriented policies and programmes.”

New technologies bring forth opportunities and challenges for all family members, especially parents and caregivers. While parents influence their children's access to and use of technology to a large extent, surveys indicate that they are finding parenting more difficult, attributing this to the presence of technology in their children's lives. Moreover, faced with new technology trends and increased usage of technology by children ever younger, parents often do not feel confident in their parenting skills.

The tools of parenting education focus on the provision of information relevant to children's areas of development and age stages to help parents to understand children's capabilities and responsibilities as they manage their online presence and navigate digital platforms, while facing potential threats and amassing creative and collaborative skills.

Parenting education can offer information on how to achieve a healthy use of media which promotes child and adolescent learning and creativity. A growing number of guides for parents exist and encourage reflection on parenting style and offer guidance on safeguards against cyberbullying and misinformation; online privacy; and other issues, with a view to promoting the safe use of media. These tools are useful for addressing issues related to children and media and enable parents to keep abreast of the status of their children's education.

New technologies have a dual importance for parenting education. The information offered by new information and communications technologies helps parents and families to learn how to use technology to benefit their children. [5]

There is a growing number of online resources that provide parenting education and offer parenting educator networking worldwide for those seeking access to scholarship and professional development. Notable in this regard is the digital congresses offered by IFFD. [6]

Assessing the impact of New Technologies

“The resolution also encourages Member States and other relevant stakeholders to expand evidence-based research on the impacts of new technologies, including information and communications technologies and artificial intelligence, on families, work-family balance

and parenting education design, delivery and implementation, including through the integration of technology, in order to develop adequate policies to support workers with family responsibilities (...).” [OP8]

Among the various studies conducted with parents worldwide, there is a constant appeal to better support them while facing the digital era. This support can come in many ways as improved protection from online content, knowledge of widespread use of smartphones might be harmful to their children's socio-emotional learning, concerns about the issues of exposure to online predators, sexually explicit content and violent content, as well as cyberbullying.

Although research on technology integration in parenting education is in its early stages, adapting and testing new modes of communication has generated valuable information on costs and benefits from both the educator's and the learner's perspective. The establishment of the professional standards needed to guide the process of preparing parenting educators for practice remains an issue to be addressed. [7]

Preparations for the 30th Anniversary

In OP5 the resolution “invites relevant stakeholders, as part of the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, to support research, awareness-raising activities at the national, regional and international levels on the impact of technological (...) trends on families.”

At the international level, our federation has been part of a joint effort of a group of transnational and regional organizations to work on a Civil Society Declaration for the 30th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024. It aims to start a substantial and enriching discussion to bring the role of the family unit and policies toward social development into reality. The Declaration is meant to be an effective instrument to foster all the support possible among a broad spectrum of partners. The voices of the families that integrate the Declaration, together with the substantial contributions from experts, are key to addressing the challenges of many families. [8]

Another example of international activity is the Focus Group on New Technologies conveyed in January 2021. It was meant to better understand all the different implications of the topic and produced recommendations validated by experts and confirmed by our family enrichment centers and with other global NGOs. In this regard, one of the key messages

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suggested that education and child-related professionals should promote open communication between parents and children about digital technology, including discussions about online risks and benefits. [9]

A group of young professionals in 34 countries also made some recommendations on new technologies during the annual International Advocacy Workshop organized by IFFD. Among the various key messages, they recommended that “when making public policies about new technologies, it should be taken into consideration that between North and South there are complex and different realities that give each country different capacities.” [10]

During the United Nation’s Commission on Social Development, IFFD organized the annual briefing on Parenting in the digital age: Policymakers’ perspective. Experts from our Federation, the UN System and the Academia elaborated on how policymakers can deal with the right conditions for families to access the Internet, how telework has contributed to work-family balance, the way to improve education from the remote learning experience of COVID-19, which specific policies can help to bridge the intergenerational digital divide, what instruments should be developed to ban child abuse materials online, and what is the best tool parents can use to prevent online abuse of their children. [11]

Additionally, regional activities such as the Expert Group Meeting on Technological Change and the Family in the Arab Region in June 2022 highlighted the growing concern of parents towards digital parenting and the impact of new technologies on parenting styles and child development. [12]

Recommendations

Following up on the Civil Society Declaration when referring to New Technologies [13], we can suggest:

- *Address the intergenerational digital gap* among all family members in order to design and implement policies and programs to strengthen solidarity, recognize interdependence, ensure equal educational access, build mentorship schemes among generations and promote positive interactions and intra-family relations.
- *Promote the use of new technologies* in flexible work arrangements such as teleworking, through the provision of public and private services, infrastructure and social protection policies to enable families to fulfill their care responsibilities. Efforts should be made to help families to strike a work-family balance and make the best possible use of new technology to fulfill their roles in the family and workplace.
- *Ensure accessible technology* to all family members, considering it as an investment to develop educational programs, new services, jobs and forms of cooperation. In an effort to achieve equity and reduce the digital divide, work towards universal access to proper underlying infrastructure, devices, skills and protection from abuse and harmful practices.
- *Encourage and assist open communication* between parents and children, fostering resilience and good use of technology, including awareness about online risks.

- [1] Seventy-seventh Session, 17 November 2022. <https://press.un.org/en/2022/gashc4370.doc.htm>
- [2] Implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes. Report of the Secretary-General, www.undocs.org/A/77/61
- [3] Preparations for and observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, www.undocs.org/A/C.3/77/L.15/Rev.1
- [4] www.undocs.org/A/77/61, paragraphs 63, 32, 47.
- [5] www.undocs.org/A/77/61, paragraphs 33, 38, 46, 45.
- [6] Love Talks: IFFD, <https://iffd.org/love-talks-sexuality-and-affectivity/>
- [7] www.undocs.org/A/77/61, paragraph 34, 46.

- [8] Civil Society Declaration for the 30th Anniversary of the International, www.shorturl.at/lorvJ
- [9] Focus Group on Families and New Technologies – Outcome Publication, <https://familyperspective.org/2021/04/27/focus-group-families-and-new-technologies/>
- [10] International Advocacy Workshop 2021, <https://familyperspective.org/2021/09/05/iaw2021/>
- [11] IFFD Briefing 2021, <https://familyperspective.org/2021/02/06/iffd-briefing-10-february-2021/>
- [12] Expert Group Meeting (Cairo, 2-5 June 2022). <https://familyperspective.org/2022/06/12/expert-group-meeting-doha-11-12-december-2018/>
- [13] Civil Society Declaration for 30th Anniv. of the International Year of the Family, www.shorturl.at/lorvJ


 Make
Mothers
Matter

MMM ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE MOTHERS' ROLE AND RIGHTS

Children at the heart of World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education

Following the UN [Transforming Education Summit](#) (TES) held in New York in September 2022, the the [UNESCO World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education](#) (WCECCE) was launched on 14 November in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Make Mothers Matter participated in this global four-day event by organising a panel discussion with partners active in the field of early childhood development.

UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education Stefania Giannini, speaking at the pre-conference session, stressed the importance of putting children at the heart of policies:

"If we are to achieve the SDGs, we must put children at the core of our policies. This is our responsibility. To address the learning crisis, we don't have a second chance, and we'll require much deeper collaboration between all stakeholders ... we must all be champions. (...) 2022 is very important for education. We have a momentum to build. And early childhood care and education is the first brick."¹

The WCECCE, represented by over 140 countries and more than 2,600 people, was an opportunity for UNESCO Member States, civil society (NGOs, researchers, donors, educators ...) and many other ECCE leaders **to reaffirm the right of every young child to inclusive quality and equitable early childhood care and education.**

While the international community unanimously recognises the benefits of ECCE, **half of the world's young children, at least 175 million, are not enrolled in pre-primary programmes.**

During the Conference, about twenty sessions and 16 side events were held to highlight ECCE challenges; share knowledge, innovations, good practices and recall the importance of multi-sectoral partnerships.

MMM co-organised a side event initiated by Suna Hanöz-Penney and Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı from [AÇEV](#). The panel discussion was called "Gender transformative parenting – why it matters for our future". The event was also supported by the [Early Childhood Peace Consortium](#) (ECPC), [Plan International](#), the [International Step by Step Association](#) (ISSA), and the global fatherhood campaign [MenCare](#), all of them key ECD actors.

The panel highlighted how the involvement of fathers, alongside mothers, with their children from the earliest age onwards, is crucial for the children's proper development and the achievement of their full potential.

The Conference ended with the adoption of the [Tashkent Declaration](#), a commitment from State members to ensure the implementation of concrete actions, solutions, and partnerships to achieve the goals of SDG 4.2 (ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education), through:

- ensuring quality and inclusive ECCE services for all children by allocating at least 10% of education expenditures to pre-primary education;
- strengthening the education and training systems of ECCE personnel;
- transforming ECCE practices by putting innovation at the heart of the practices and by relying on neuroscientific discoveries;

¹ Quote as taken by the MMM UNESCO team during Ms. Stefania Giannini's live presentation at the WCECCE's pre-session on 13 November 2023

<https://makemothersmatter.org/children-at-the-heart-of-world-conference-on-early-childhood-care-education/>

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Make
Mothers
Matter

MMM ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE MOTHERS' ROLE AND RIGHTS

- ensuring a whole-of-government, multi-sectorial and integrated approach to ECCE policy;
- increasing financing to ECCE, given the fact that it has been chronically underfunded.

The Declaration also emphasises the importance of engaging and supporting parents and families in their children's education.

Next steps include:

- the launch by UNESCO and its partners of an Early Childhood Care and Education report in November 2023;
- the publication by UNESCO of a report on ECCE every two years with the support of the World Bank to assess progress and remaining challenges.

In her closing speech, UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay underlined UNESCO's commitment to ensuring that pre-primary education is considered a fundamental right. She also linked early childhood care and education to the gender equality issue:

*"ECCE is a powerful tool to promote gender equality. A strong signal to women and mothers, who must be supported; so that having children should not interrupt their career, if they choose to have one."*²

At MMM, we are calling on all parties to act together to make the Tashkent Declaration a transformative lever for early childhood. We believe this is a great opportunity to make a definitive change benefitting all children no matter where they are.

[More information on MMM's WCECCE side event](#)

Making the case for gender-equal parenting: vital for early childhood development and a transformative tomorrow

MMM believes that sharing the invisible work of caring and educating children more equitably is a quadruple win: essential for early child development (ECD), beneficial for both men and women, as well as foundational for peaceful societies and global economies.

Parents and other home-based caregivers are the first and most important providers of the nurturing care that children need to thrive and develop – care that encompasses health, nutrition, safety, security, and early learning and responsive caregiving.

However, the unpaid work of caring for children in the home, although very intensive during the early years and crucial to ensure that a child develops to their full potential, is not properly recognised as such, nor valued for what it is: foundational.

This critical caregiving work is also inequitably distributed: mothers are usually the primary caregivers and principle influencers in their child's physical, cognitive and emotional development, with fathers often playing a peripheral role. This inequitable responsibility is at the root of gender inequality: the resulting time poverty restricts women's opportunities for education, participation in economic and public life, as well as their personal and professional aspirations.

² Quote as taken by the MMM UNESCO team during Ms. Audrey Azoulay's live presentation at the WCECCE's closing session on 16 November 2023

<https://makemothersmatter.org/children-at-the-heart-of-world-conference-on-early-childhood-care-education/>

February 2023



MMM ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE MOTHERS' ROLE AND RIGHTS

Gender equality begins in the home: when men and women, fathers and mothers share the domestic and care work more equitably, women's lives are transformed: not only do they have more time to participate in the labour force or engage in income-generating activities, which promotes their financial independence, but it improves their self-confidence and respect from people around them. In turn, this leads to better maternal mental and physical health, and improved maternal-child interactions, positively impacting the child's neurodevelopment.

Sharing the care within the family also directly benefits children and men.

Research over several decades has consistently shown that a young child's environment deeply affects their physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. There is increasing evidence of the positive impact of promoting men and women's shared childcare for children's physical and mental health and well-being, learning and development, and their interpersonal relationships later on as adults.

According to the global fatherhood campaign [MenCare](#), sharing unpaid family care work and engaging men as involved fathers can also lead to stronger and more equitable partner relations, as well as a reduction in violence against women and children. A harmonious, secure and violence-free home environment is essential for early child development – and ultimately for building a more caring and peaceful society.

With the support of some of its key ECD partners, MMM aims to make the case for gender-equal parenting as being vital for our future, such as at the [World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education](#) (WCECE) in Tashkent in November 2022.

MMM's goal is to promote gender-equal parenting as a key strategy to:

1. transform gender norms and achieve gender equality for the benefit of both men and women;
2. fulfil children's rights to receive nurturing care and education, and to thrive in a secure and loving environment;
3. improve family relations, reduce violence and ultimately build peace.

Visit the MMM website for the [online version](#).

Valuing and supporting care work is key to progressing the right to development

From 31 October to 2 November 2022, the [6th session of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development](#), part of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, was held at the United Nations in Geneva, where Make Mothers Matter contributed an oral statement to the discussion on the draft study on [Inequality and social protection systems in operationalizing the right to development](#), which took place during the last meeting.

In its statement, MMM highlighted the importance of taking the particular needs of women into account. Women can only enjoy the right to development, including the right to participation, if the issue of unpaid family care work is recognised and addressed. Social protection systems are key to adequately support the foundational yet unpaid work of caring, which ultimately benefits everyone.

It is increasingly recognised that to ensure equality of opportunity for women and their full and effective participation in economic and social development, we must address the **inequitable distribution of unpaid**

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care work. This issue is at the root of gender inequalities and a main cause of reduced or even lost opportunities for women and girls.

In particular, it is time to:

1. establish that the unpaid work of caring for others IS work, essential work that must be recognised and supported for what it is: foundational to our society and our economy;
2. recognise that this work is mostly done by women and girls, who are heavily penalised for assuming this responsibility, in particular when they are mothers;
3. establish that unpaid care work should be a collective responsibility, and that it must be more equitably shared between men and women, but also across society, including through the provision of supportive infrastructure and social protection systems.

These necessary steps are in line with the UN Secretary General's recommendation in "[Our Common Agenda](#)" to measure and value what matters for people and the planet – beginning with unpaid carework.

The work of caring is inherently human, and it is at the centre of both human and environmental well-being. In MMM's view, valuing and supporting care work should be at the heart of policy-making to implement the right to development.

Disconnecting social protection from formal employment and embracing the principle of universal coverage and social protection floors is a critical first step in this direction, and it is especially important in the current context of economic crisis and the looming threat of austerity. But more needs to be done.

To quote the UN Secretary-General: "The pandemic has shown us who is doing the work that really matters: nurses, teachers, care workers. As we recover, we need to remember this. It is time to end the inequities of unpaid care work and create new economic models that work for everyone."

So here are the questions raised by MMM:

- Could the right to development framework help address this issue of the inequitable distribution of unpaid care work?
- To go further along this line, could we recognise care as a human right – the right to care and the right to be cared for – a new right that supports the right to development?
- How could the right to development framework support the creation of a new economic model that works for everyone and helps us move away from the GDP growth mantra?

[Visit the MMM website](#) to read the [full statement](#).

Single mothers within the European Union

Despite the growing number of families headed by a single parent, single parents remain one of the most vulnerable groups when it comes to poverty, housing and energy deficits, and health challenges.

In order to develop an understanding of the needs of single mothers in the European Union, Make Mothers Matter interviewed representatives from six organisations that support single parents in EU Member States:

Gengle in Italy, the Isadora Duncan Foundation in Spain, LET/FLIGHT in Croatia, Aperio in the Czech Republic, Egyszülős Központ in Hungary, and Pienperheydistys ry in Finland. They not only have insights into the needs of single mothers in their country, but also actively work to support them.

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In Italy, the organisation **Gengle** primarily helps single mothers. They seek to create networks for mothers to connect with one another, reassure mothers that being single is accepted, and identify the needs of mothers in the community.

The **Isadora Duncan Foundation** in Spain helps single mothers with a wide variety of needs, including financial and energy insecurity. They hold workshops to help single mothers find jobs, balance their budget, and use energy efficiently.

For **LET/FLIGHT** in Croatia, alimony is a major concern for single parents, who often do not receive this money or are not recognised as divorced. **LET/FLIGHT** also releases publications on the needs of single parents and organises support groups for them.

In the Czech Republic, **Aperio** addresses the mental health needs of single parents through their "Single, but Strong" programme. This initiative combines group meetings, online learning, and possible counselling in order to support single parents' well-being and growth.

Egyszülős Központ, the only single parent organisation in Hungary, supports single parents in seven fields: crises, labour market, community building, parenting workshops, children's programmes, prevention of single parenting, and lobbying.

Although single parenthood is not heavily stigmatised in Finland, **Pienperheydistys ry** finds that single parents seek out peer support and the connection with other single parents. To support single parents' needs, **Pienperheydistys ry** organises peer activities, engages in volunteer work, and acts as an advocate for their voice on a political level.

Ultimately, MMM found that single parents often require support in terms of financial help, housing and energy access, and health care. However, these needs are often overlooked. Raising awareness is vital to meeting these needs.

Read the [MMM Summary](#) and [Policy Paper](#)

Ensuring universal access to maternal healthcare in the European Union MMM presents joint policy paper with European Public Health Alliance to EU Parliament

The European Child Guarantee and universal maternal healthcare in Europe: the essential role of maternal health in the first 1,000 days of child development

Make Mothers Matter produced a joint policy paper with the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) on ensuring universal access to maternal healthcare in the EU, which was presented on 29 November 2022 at an event hosted by Eurochild and ISSA, co-leaders of the "First Years First Priority" campaign organised at the European Parliament in Brussels. The European campaign advocates the prioritisation of early childhood development in public policies, with a focus on children from birth to age six who are most vulnerable: children with disabilities, migrant, refugee children, and those living in extreme poverty.

As part of the campaign, this paper aims to inform EU policy-makers and raise their awareness of the importance of maternal healthcare in early childhood and during the first 1,000 days of life within the context of the European Child Guarantee.

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The Child Guarantee is part of the EU's new policy framework which aims, along with the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, to ensure that the rights of all children are protected and that vulnerable children in particular have access to basic services. The Child Guarantee's objective is to combat social exclusion by guaranteeing that all children have access to key services, including education, nutrition, housing and healthcare. In this policy paper, MMM argues that the Child Guarantee should include universal access to maternal healthcare, as the **health of the mother and the health of the child are intrinsically linked**.

As stated in the paper, the first 1,000 days of a child's life are crucial for their development. This development begins before a child is born and depends largely on the health of the mother. A child's first 1,000 days sets a foundation for their mental and emotional health in addition to their physical, cognitive and social development. To ensure a healthy development, support for children and access to quality healthcare during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period are crucial. Therefore, universal access to maternal healthcare is not only necessary for the health of the mother, but also essential so that all people can start life with the healthcare they need for healthy childhood development.

This means that, as the European Union, Member States and their National Child Guarantee Coordinators must work towards improving childhood development and also address the importance of maternal health for women, children and their families. The paper outlines the following recommendations and ways forward:

EU Member States must:

- include universal access to maternal, newborn and child healthcare and parent-friendly care provisions in their Child Guarantee Action Plans;
- strive to achieve and provide universal health coverage to all, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), guaranteeing pre- and post-natal care for all women and children and education and care services for children under the age of three;
- provide accurate and clear maternal health information, with a special focus on the needs of migrant, Roma and other women in vulnerable situations;
- guarantee privacy of information about the migration status of pregnant women and ensure that the immigration status is not a barrier to accessing healthcare services;
- prioritise investment in easily accessible medical facilities, maternal support programmes, and training of health professionals based on best practices;
- invest in maternal mental health services, including prevention, screening and support.

Additionally, the paper examines the **barriers in access to pre- and post-natal care**. Currently, those who have the most difficulty accessing healthcare in the Member States include mainly the rural population, the elderly, the less mobile, women in vulnerable situations, migrants, refugees and those who are undocumented. The current barriers to maternal healthcare at the EU level include **affordability of maternal care, lack of information and linguistic barriers, fear of deportation, geographical distance, and de-prioritisation of maternal mental health**. A child's health is largely determined by the mother's health, so it is crucial to give all mothers the care they need, both for her and for her child's sake.

Read the [full Policy Paper](#)

Compiled by Irina Pálffy-Daun-Seiler, MMM Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, with input from Valérie Bichelmeier, Vice-President and Head of MMM UN Delegation, and Johanna Schima, Vice-President and Head of MMM European Delegation.

Upcoming Events

All events will be possible to attend digitally.

March

- March 20. - 21.; Madrid, Spain: 17. International Conference on Depression in Children
<https://waset.org/depression-in-children-conference-in-march-2023-in-madrid>

April

- April 13. – 14.; Paris, France: 17. International Conference on Children and Sports
<https://waset.org/children-and-sports-conference-in-april-2023-in-paris>
- April 24. - 25.; New York, United States: 17. International Conference on Obesity in Children
<https://waset.org/obesity-in-children-conference-in-april-2023-in-new-york>

May

- May 11. -12.; Berlin, Germany: 17. International Conference on Depression and Anxiety in Children
<https://waset.org/depression-and-anxiety-in-children-conference-in-may-2023-in-berlin>
- May 15. -16.; London, United Kingdom: 17. International Conference on Attachment in Children
<https://waset.org/attachment-in-children-conference-in-may-2023-in-london>
- May 15. -16.; Montreal, Canada: 17. International Conference on Therapeutic Foods and Children
<https://waset.org/therapeutic-foods-and-children-conference-in-may-2023-in-montreal>
- May 22. – 23.; Tokyo, Japan: 17. International Conference on Aggression in Children
<https://waset.org/aggression-in-children-conference-in-may-2023-in-tokyo>

June

- June 15. -16.; Copenhagen, Denmark: 17. International Conference on The Role of Families in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
<https://waset.org/the-role-of-families-in-preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-conference-in-june-2023-in-copenhagen>
- June 22. – 23.; London, United Kingdom: 17. International Conference on Family Law and Children's Rights
<https://waset.org/family-law-and-childrens-rights-conference-in-june-2023-in-london>

July

- July 22. - 23.; Berlin, Germany: 18. International Conference on Mass Media and Families
<https://waset.org/mass-media-and-families-conference-in-july-2024-in-berlin>
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