**General Assembly
Economic and Social Council**

General Assembly **Seventy-first session** **Social development: social development, including** **questions relating to the world social situation and to** **youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family**	**Economic and Social Council** **2016 session** 24 July 2015-27 July 2016 **Social and human rights questions:** **social development**

Implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

> The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/144. The report highlights recent initiatives aimed at the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes at the national and international levels and focuses on the further development of family policy in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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I. Introduction

1.   In its resolution 69/144, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its seventy-first session, through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes. The resolution also encouraged Member States to continue providing information on their activities in support of the objectives of the Year and its follow-up processes to be included in the report.

2.   The present report is the sixth report pertaining to the follow-up to the International Year of the Family and its twentieth anniversary. Section II of the report gives an overview of initiatives in support of the objectives of the Year process at the national and international levels. Section III focuses on the development of family policy in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The final two sections of the report contain several conclusions and recommendations.

3.   The country-level information presented in section II of the report is based on the responses of Member States to the note verbale transmitted by the Secretariat in May 2015 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/144.

II. Follow-up to the International Year of the Family

A. The objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes

4.   The objectives of the International Year of the Family, 1994, were to stimulate local, national and international actions as part of a sustained long-term effort to attain a number of goals related to family policy. Among them was the aim to promote knowledge of the economic, social and demographic processes affecting families and their members, with attention given to the rights and responsibilities of all family members.

5.   Another objective of the Year has been to strengthen national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families and to stimulate efforts to respond to problems affecting families. In addition, the objectives of the Year were to build upon the results of international activities concerning women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities (see A/44/407 and General Assembly resolution 46/92).

6.   For the tenth anniversary observance of the Year, it was recommended undertaking reviews and assessments of the situation and needs of families (see E/CN.5/2001/4 and General Assembly resolution 56/113). The objectives of the twentieth anniversary of the Year were to encourage Member States to make concrete efforts to improve family well-being through the implementation of effective national policies, strategies and programmes, especially in the areas of poverty eradication, confronting family poverty and social exclusion, full employment and decent work, ensuring a work-family balance, social integration, advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity.[1]

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[1] See A/66/62-E/2011/4, which was endorsed by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and Economic and Social Council resolution 2014/8.

B. National-level initiatives

7.   Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/144, the Secretariat issued a note verbale to Member States to ascertain national-level initiatives implemented in support of the objectives of the Year. Eleven responses were received, from the Governments of Bulgaria, Colombia, Hungary, Malta, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Spain and the United Arab Emirates.

8.   Some Member States described continued efforts to implement the objectives of the Year and its follow-up processes within the framework of their national family plans.

9.   The National System for Integral Family Development in Mexico is focused on violence prevention and peaceful conflict resolution in families. The national plan for strengthening families (*Plan Nacional de Fortalecimiento de las Familias 2015-2021*) in Peru is designed to support the educational, social, caregiving and economic protection roles of families. The comprehensive plan of support to the family (*Plan Integral de Apoyo a la Familia 2015-2017*) in Spain is aimed at advancing the social, legal and economic protection of families, promoting intergenerational solidarity and addressing demographic challenges relating to low fertility and rapid ageing.

10.   In some countries, national priorities with regard to families are also part of their overall national development strategies. The 2030 National Vision in Qatar includes a family-oriented expansion of social safety nets and increased support for families in special circumstances. In addition, the 2030 National Vision also comprises a number of measures aimed at preventing domestic violence, as well as provisions for marriage and family counselling. Vision 2021 in the United Arab Emirates is aimed at strengthening family capacities through parental education programmes and advancing the rights of the child.

11.   In line with the objective of the Year, some Member States have also established or strengthened coordination mechanisms to ensure the integration of a family perspective into their overall public policy agenda.

12.   In Hungary, the Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs coordinates with both the Ministry for National Economy in the areas of taxation, housing, job creation and day care and the Ministry of Human Capacities in promoting child protection and combating family poverty. In Malta, the committee for strengthening the family, set up in 2014 by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, is tasked with studying the impact of all legislation on the family and, if necessary, proposing new legislation. The committee also examines the effects of economic changes on families and monitors the provision of social welfare, fiscal and other benefits, services or policies to ensure that they strengthen the family unit. In Qatar, the Department of Family Development is in charge of implementing national plans, strategies and policies relating to families, women and children.

13.   Some countries have expanded family-oriented policies for poverty reduction, work-family balance and intergenerational solidarity, in line with the priority themes of the twentieth anniversary of the Year.

14.   Conditional cash transfers to poor households with young children have been introduced or expanded in a number of countries. In Colombia, such programmes include *Más Familias en Acción* (More Families in Action), which is aimed at

promoting the health and education of children, and the *Red de Seguridad Alimentaria* (Food Security Network), which is aimed at reducing poverty and improving access to nutrition for poor families. In the Philippines, pregnant women are required to use prenatal and postnatal care services and delivery services by skilled health professionals in order to qualify for cash benefits, while parents are required to attend family development education programmes and participate in community activities to receive financial grants.

15. Given that families with children are more exposed to the risk of poverty, special measures such as child allowances, assistance to large families, family tax benefits or credits and housing subsidies are offered in a number of countries, including Hungary and Poland. In several European countries, including Poland and Spain, discount programmes are aimed at ensuring that large families, with three or more children, have access to cultural, recreational and transportation services.

16. In Bulgaria and the Philippines, employment, training or retraining for unemployed or underemployed parents is part of family poverty reduction strategies. In Hungary, a job protection action plan offers incentives to businesses to employ women, in particular mothers with young children, as well as individuals younger than 25 years of age and those above age 55. The new Labour Code in Hungary obliges employers, should the parents so require, to continue to employ parents part-time until their children reach 3 years of age. In the Philippines, self-employment assistance is provided to individuals and families to engage in income-generating projects.

17. Many European countries focus mainly on family policies aimed at reversing low fertility trends. Surveys in Europe indicate that, while the desired number of children per family is two, families are unable to fulfil this desire, owing in part to financial insecurity and the lack of a work-family balance. To remedy this situation, Governments have invested in a number of measures that promote a work-family balance, including parental leave, flexible working arrangements and childcare services.

18. Extensions to parental leave provisions, including paternity leave, were enacted in Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta and Poland. In Malta, parents employed in the public sector have the option of part-time work and telecommuting, as well as leave entitlement. In 2015, Poland extended parental benefits, in the form of a monthly stipend for the first 12 months following childbirth, to the unemployed and those working under civil law contracts, as well as to students and farmers.

19. Investment in early child development as a means of preventing social exclusion is high on the agenda of several Member States. In Hungary, day-care facilities have been improved and employer grants have been established to encourage businesses to employ women with young children. Malta has introduced and consolidated several childcare provisions, introducing free childcare to dual-earner families and employed single parents, as well as income tax deductions for parents whose children attend childcare centres that charge fees.

20. Governments also took special measures to promote responsible parenting and children's rights in families. Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta, and Poland focused on deinstitutionalizing care arrangements for children in orphanages and other care institutions and ensuring family or family-like settings for them through adoption, care by extended family members and foster care. Similarly, changes in the care

model for children with disabilities have taken place in countries such as Bulgaria, with the overall objective of moving away from placement in specialized institutions by providing services in support of family and community care.

21. Assistance to young families has also been a priority for some Member States. In Hungary, a housing subsidy is provided to young couples planning to have children and to families with children. Similarly, a programme of housing for the young in Poland offers down payment subsidies for purchasing an apartment or a house, as well as subsidized mortgages to young couples.

22. Services for promoting family household environments have also been established in some countries. The Philippines expanded its responsible parenthood programme and special programmes for fathers and made provisions for social services for single parents. It also established drug and substance abuse prevention programmes and expanded relationship counselling for engaged couples, newly-wed couples and married couples. Malta and Spain initiated positive parenting programmes that offer support for and guidance to parents.

23. Among those countries implementing or expanding initiatives focused on intergenerational solidarity, Qatar organized educational programmes on the importance of intergenerational family ties. As part of its National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing, Malta further implemented a number of measures in support of independent living and community care for older persons, including an allowance for older persons living in their own home or with their family and exemption from the national insurance contribution if they continue to live in their own home and employ a live-in carer. In Hungary, a number of events advocating for intergenerational cooperation, including the Week and Day of Generations and "Generations at School", were organized.

24. As part of the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the Year, a number of initiatives were undertaken to raise awareness of family issues and promote knowledge of economic, social and demographic changes affecting families.

25. The national family observatory in Colombia collects, analyses and disseminates quantitative and qualitative information on families, with a view to contributing to the formulation of better public family policies and programmes. The National Institute for Family, Youth and Population Policy in Hungary supports research, compiles surveys, carries out studies and organizes conferences and workshops on family policy issues. The Department of Family Studies at the University of Malta promotes national and international research on all aspects of family life and offers courses and degrees in family studies, as well as advisory services on family-related matters. The Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics in Qatar has completed a number of household surveys on income, expenditure, living conditions and time use.

26. Other awareness-raising initiatives, such as media campaigns, as well as academic seminars and conferences on issues ranging from domestic violence, positive parenting, anti-discrimination and gender equality were pursued in Colombia, Hungary and Malta. Colombia developed a communication campaign on "new masculinities" as part of its gender equality and family violence prevention agenda. Hungary is promoting family-friendly public thinking through training programmes for young people, relationship courses and communication campaigns encouraging intergenerational cooperation, conflict management and healthy lifestyles.

27. National days of families are popular in many countries, including in Colombia, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Poland and Spain. In observance of the twentieth anniversary of the Year, Spain organized positive parenting seminars and published a guide on social assistance for families.

28. Member States made a number of recommendations to advance family development as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Malta suggested mainstreaming family matters across different policy areas and conducting family impact assessments in order to help to ensure that all policies respond to the needs of families. More qualitative and quantitative research on changing family structures and dynamics is needed to better assess and address the changing needs and challenges of families. The research should also help to identify emerging trends and evaluate the impact of implemented policy measures on families.

29. Hungary noted that Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) and Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) are the most explicit in terms of family policy. The Philippines noted the need to promote family well-being and protection, while Spain asserted that the United Nations could advocate integrating family policies, especially those relating to children, into overall development strategies and social development policies. Spain also recommended focusing on gender-based violence and the diversity of family forms, as well as family planning and child labour. Peru noted the importance of focusing on policies supporting the social, caregiving and economic protection roles played by families. Colombia recommended treating families as agents of development and focusing on intergenerational exchanges. It also suggested recognizing the family as a collective subject of rights. Further research on families at national and international levels was recommended by Malta, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

C. General Assembly

30. Over the years, the General Assembly has recognized the role of family-oriented policies and programmes for the achievement of development goals. At the official observance of the twentieth anniversary of the Year, held at the 63rd plenary meeting of the General Assembly in December 2014, Member States noted that the role of the family was essential in promoting social stability, economic development and healthier lives. Governments emphasized that safeguarding the rights of women and gender equality within families was key to the 2030 Agenda and that a more integrated approach to the family could help to combat violence and discrimination against women and girls.[2]

31. While Governments agreed that families deserved more legal and material support and that the 2030 Agenda should place the family at its policy nexus, there was no agreement on the definition of the family. Several Member States noted that recognizing different types of families would ensure better protection of the human rights of all family members. Others noted the lack of consensus on family definitions and warned that the imposition of notions of gender identity and sexual orientation in resolutions dealing with family and children were counterproductive

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[2] See A/69/PV.63.

and not universally acceptable.[2] As noted in previous reports, from a family policy perspective, a protracted debate over family definitions impedes progress towards the inclusion of pragmatic references to families as an integral part of the development agenda at international forums (see A/70/61-E/2015/3).

D. Department of Economic and Social Affairs

32. In line with the Year and its follow-up objectives, the Focal Point on the Family for the Social Policy and Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs continued to promote knowledge of social, economic, demographic and legal trends affecting families and the growing relevance of family-oriented policies for social and economic development. The Department organized a number of expert group meetings and awareness-raising events that provided a venue for the sharing of good practices in family policy. Experts offered specific recommendations on ways to improve existing family policies and develop new policies in the light of recent socioeconomic trends.

33. The expert group meeting on "Family policy development: achievements and challenges", held in New York in May 2015, focused on changing families, regional trends and policy implications, as well as family laws and their impact on family policy development, family well-being and individual rights. The experts offered regional perspectives on family law frameworks and their importance for family policy development.[3]

34. The theme for the observance of the 2015 International Day of Families, "Men in charge? Gender equality and children's rights in contemporary families", raised awareness of the persistence of patriarchal family structures around the world and the need for family law reforms to ensure the rights of women and children within families, including better access to justice through fairer family laws.[4]

III. Family trends and further development of family policy in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

A. Recent family trends

35. Over the past decades, families have undergone dramatic changes in many parts of the world in response to economic and social developments, as well as changing values, norms, and gender attitudes. Marriage occurs later in life and marriage rates have been declining throughout the Western countries, Eastern Europe and parts of Asia. Some argue that marriage has been "de-institutionalized"; others posit that it is merely being "reinstitutionalized" under a new set of arrangements.[5] Some maintain that higher divorce rates reflect a lack of

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[3] Materials from the expert group meeting are available from: http://undesadspd.org/Family/MeetingsEvents/EGMonFamilyPolicyDevelopment.aspx.

[4] More information about the 2015 observance of the International Day of Families is available from: http://undesadspd.org/Family/InternationalObservances/InternationalDayofFamilies/2015.aspx.

[5] Frank Furstenberg, "Changing families around the world: the American family in a global context", paper prepared for the expert group meeting on "Family policy development: achievements and challenges", held in New York on 14 and 15 May 2015, available from: http://undesadspd.org/Family/MeetingsEvents/EGMonFamilyPolicyDevelopment.aspx.

commitment and a decline of moral character. Others see marriage as an institution that has evolved to better respect individual autonomy, especially for women.[6]

36. Fertility is very low and/or declining, particularly in Eastern and Southern Europe and South East Asia, with parenthood being entered into at later ages. In Western countries, fertility and childrearing outside of marriage are on the rise. Intentional childlessness is also on the rise, a trend that has been interpreted by some as illustrating the challenge to conciliate the value of personal freedom with that of the family.[7] The transition to adulthood takes longer than in the past, owing in part to extended education, youth unemployment and work-family life conflict. As a result, a considerable financial burden is placed on families with young adults who cannot or are unwilling to live independently and who are supported by their ageing parents, often at the risk of jeopardizing their retirement savings.

37. Divorce rates have been increasing globally, with most countries relaxing restrictions formerly limiting access to divorce. In Western countries, the rate of divorce has stabilized as couples increasingly choose to cohabit rather than marry. As dissolutions of informal unions go unrecorded, the validity of divorce as a measure of family instability is becoming questionable. What is clear, however, is the growing unwillingness of individuals to enter into and stay in relationships, be it marriage or cohabitation.

38. Currently, same-sex marriages are recognized in twenty-two countries, with even wider recognition of civic unions between same-sex partners.[8] Commenting on the recent decision of the Supreme Court of the United States of America to legalize same-sex marriage, the Secretary-General noted: "Denying couples legal recognition of their relationship opens the door to widespread discrimination. This ruling will help close that door and marks a great step forward for human rights in the United States."[9] Similarly, as Ireland became the first country to grant same-sex marital rights through a national referendum, the Secretary-General acknowledged it as step towards equality, fairness and human dignity.[10] In keeping with this evolution, the personal family status of United Nations staff members is determined by reference to the law of the staff member's country of nationality.

39. Changing family forms and structures challenge existing legal and policy systems, with family laws having the difficult task of reconciling a number of sometimes competing objectives, such as ensuring the custody rights of both parents, safeguarding the best interests of children and preventing gender discrimination and violence.[11]

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[6] Eli J. Finkel, "The all-or-nothing-marriage", *New York Times*, 14 February 2014.

[7] See Charlotte Debest, Magali Mazuy and the Fecond survey team, "Childlessness: a life choice that goes against the norm", *Population and Societies*, No. 508 (February 2014).

[8] Pew Research Center, "Gay marriage around the world", 26 June 2015. Available from: http://www.pewforum.org/2015/06/26/gay-marriage-around-the-world-2013/.

[9] United Nations News Centre, "Ban welcomes US Supreme Court ruling guaranteeing right to same-sex marriage", 26 June 2015. Available from: www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51267.

[10] Statement, Secretary-General's Iveagh lecture at Dublin Castle, Dublin, 25 May 2015. Available from: www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=8667.

[11] Patrick Parkinson, "Family laws and access to justice", paper prepared for the expert group meeting on "Family policy development: achievements and challenges", held in New York on 14 and 15 May 2015, available from: http://undesadspd.org/Family/MeetingsEvents/ EGMonFamilyPolicyDevelopment.aspx.

B. Access to justice through fair family laws

40.   Family laws assign great responsibilities to families, but little is done to facilitate the fulfilment of these obligations. While the State intervenes in matters of marriage or divorce, it offers families limited support in terms of economic security or care responsibilities. Women are still presumed to be the main caregivers for both young children and other vulnerable family members. Yet, slow progress has been made in terms of reforming labour laws so as to allow families to fulfil their care responsibilities in most regions.

41.   Despite some progress, discrimination against women in the law persists, ranging from unfair inheritance laws to custody rights. Discrimination entrenched in family law is especially challenging in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, where multiple legal systems with discriminatory customary and religious laws and practices prevail.[12]

42.   Ending all forms of discrimination against all women and asserting women's rights is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. Yet, many family law systems are inherently patriarchal, with women subordinated to men in terms of rights as partners and parents. Moreover, research suggests a strong association between patriarchal views of women's roles and gendered violence.

43.   Marriage is often framed in a succession of unequal steps for women, with divorce and inheritance laws limiting their options, trapping them in violent and abusive marriages or propelling many into poverty once a marriage falls apart. Intimate partner violence remains one of the most pervasive forms of violence in families, often accounting for the majority of a women's experience of violence. As violence in families is often accepted, women may be reluctant to seek help.[13] In the majority of countries, less than 40 per cent of the women who experienced violence sought help, with less than 10 per cent seeking help from the police.[14]

44.   Several factors increase the risk of violence against women and girls, among them, witnessing or experiencing violence in childhood, limited economic opportunities, substance abuse, attitudes that tolerate violence and limited legislative frameworks for preventing and responding to violence. Although at least 119 countries have passed laws on domestic violence and 52 have laws on marital rape, the legislation is not always implemented in a way that supports victims and does not discriminate against them.[14]

45.   Recent legislation in Latin America and the Caribbean has expanded the scope of State action from a limited focus on family and domestic violence to a broader one that encompasses all forms of violence against women. However, the effective implementation of such laws is lagging in the absence of measures to address the

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[12] See United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20: summary report* (New York, March 2015).

[13] For example, wife-beating is considered justified in certain circumstances in some countries by both men and women.

[14] *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8).

underlying social and economic dimensions of gender violence.[15] Moreover, these laws usually focus on punishment of offenders without tackling the factors that enable the continuum of violence or addressing the lack of comprehensive measures to change the culture of violence.[16]

46. Addressing family violence and, in particular, intimate partner violence requires awareness-raising, educational and prevention activities in addition to health, legal and social services. Improved follow-up on reported cases in order for women to feel free from physical injury and fear is also needed.[17] Changing cultural and social norms relating to the use of violence is also necessary to prevent violence in families. In some regions of the world, family violence is linked to religious beliefs and practices and viewing marriage and other family relationships as private. Such attitudes do not allow women to leave abusive relationships and they offer little help when violence occurs.[18]

47. Moreover, while some family laws are derived from religious sources, this is no justification for inequality and injustice in the family. Given that egalitarian and gender-sensitive provisions can be found in religious texts, reforms to family law to ensure gender equality can be advanced further by having open and inclusive public debates on the issues.[19] Researchers and gender advocates in Muslim countries point out that human rights standards should also be promoted as complementary to Islamic teachings in order to better ensure gender equality and non-discrimination.

48. In the World Health Organization European Region, member States have adopted a strategy aimed at reducing child and adolescent maltreatment, which endorses a shift in the societal approach to violence from criminal justice to public health provisions of preventive and therapeutic services.[20] Another violence prevention strategy could be one of revisiting or reintroducing family life education programmes in primary and secondary schools. Such programmes may serve as a platform for examining family violence by addressing family formation, structures, norms and challenges.

C. Family policy and the Sustainable Development Goals

49. The objectives of the Year process, especially those relating to family policy in the areas of poverty, work-family balance and intergenerational issues, are linked closely to achieving several of the Sustainable Development Goals, starting with Goals 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere) and 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture). The long-term

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[15] See Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Confronting violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean: annual report 2013-2014*. Available from: http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/37271/S1500498_en.pdf?sequence=4.

[16] Ibid.

[17] See *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics*.

[18] Sylvia M. Assay and others, eds., *Family Violence from a Global Perspective: A Strengths-based Approach* (Los Angeles, Sage Publications, 2014).

[19] Marwa Sharafeldin, "Gender equality in Muslim family law", paper prepared for the expert group meeting on "Family policy development: achievements and challenges", held in New York on 14 and 15 May 2015, available from: http://undesadspd.org/Family/MeetingsEvents/EGMonFamilyPolicyDevelopment.aspx.

[20] See World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, *Investing in children: the European child and adolescent health strategy 2015-2020* (Copenhagen, 2014).

success in these two areas depends, to a large extent, on policies targeting families with children and aimed at eliminating the intergenerational transmission of poverty, such as increasing family resources through cash or in-kind transfers, child allowances and tax credits.

50. Family-oriented policies have much to contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3, ensuring healthy lives and promoting of well-being for all ages. Families influence their children's health through their own health behaviour and care. Children in families with better resources and better parental care tend to be healthier. Thus, public policies assisting parents with more resources or helping parents to provide better care improve children's health outcomes.[21]

51. Public policy in support of work-family balance has an impact on children's health and well-being. Paid maternity leave enables mothers to initiate and sustain breastfeeding, which is associated with a reduced risk of a number of health problems and of overall infant mortality.[22] A longitudinal study examining data from 16 European countries found that paid parental leave policies were associated with lower infant and child mortality after taking into account per capita income, health services and other factors linked to child health. A 10-week paid maternity leave was associated with a reduction in infant mortality rates of 1 to 2 per cent, a 20-week leave with a 2 to 4 per cent reduction and a 30-week leave with a 7 to 9 per cent reduction.[23]

52. Ensuring a healthy life and promoting well-being at all ages will require better care provisions for older persons at home and in formal care facilities. It also calls for extending parental care leave to include care for older relatives and those with disabilities. This is an aspect of care responsibilities still largely ignored by policymakers, which will only grow in importance.[24]

53. Family-oriented policies play an important role in ensuring better education outcomes for children. Boys and girls of involved and supportive parents have better school attendance records, better attitudes towards school and homework, achieve better grades and aspire to higher career goals. Thus, programmes promoting positive parenting have an untapped potential to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4, in particular in terms of child and youth school success and lifelong learning.

54. A family focus is also needed to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, and to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage. Despite the ratification of international human rights instruments and the adoption of national legal

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[21] Lawrence M. Berger and Sarah A. Font, "The role of the family and family-centered programs and policies in policies", *The Future of Children*, vol. 25, No. 1 (Spring 2015).

[22] Alison Earle, Zitha Mokomane and Jody Heyman, "International perspectives on work-family policies: lessons from the world's most competitive economies", *The Future of Children*, vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall 2011).

[23] Christopher J. Ruhm, "Parental leave and child health", *Journal of Health Economics*, vol. 19, No. 6 (November 2000).

[24] Livia Sz. Olah, "Changing families in the European Union: trends and policy implications", paper prepared for the expert group meeting on "Family policy development: achievements and challenges", held in New York on 14 and 15 May 2015, available from: http://undesadspd.org/Family/MeetingsEvents/EGMonFamilyPolicyDevelopment.aspx.

frameworks stipulating that 18 should be the minimum age of marriage, 15 million girls under 18 are still married each year.

55. Clearly, legal provisions such as criminalizing and annulling early and forced marriage are part of the solution to ending child, early and forced marriage. Yet ending child marriage requires a holistic approach to challenge the spectrum of reasons that compel parents to marry off their children at a young age, including the search for economic security for their daughters. Some successful strategies include grants to parents to keep their daughters in school and offering employment and access to resources, including land, for women so that they can ensure their own livelihoods.

56. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 also rests on the recognition and valuing of 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 requires building incentives to encourage greater participation of men in family tasks, be it in labour market policies, family law, and the provision of health and social services, as well as education.[25]

57. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 will not be possible without repealing family laws that openly discriminate against women. Realizing Goal 5 is therefore closely linked to an aspect of Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels), namely, ensuring access to justice for all, given that family laws in several countries provide some of the worst instances of discrimination against women.[26]

IV. Conclusions

58. The follow-up framework to the Year can be credited with attaining its immediate goals of increasing awareness among policymakers and the public at large of the positive roles that families play in development and the need to adopt effective family policies.

59. At the national level, adopting a family policy focus has advanced efforts by Member States to reduce poverty while contributing to promoting the rights of women and children, including through better work-family balance and intergenerational solidarity, as documented in previous reports.

60. Family policies and programmes have the additional potential to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in terms of achieving the eradication of poverty and hunger and ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages. Policies promoting children's health must involve families as primary caregivers responsible for their development. Such policies should promote safe and stable family environments and positive parenting.

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[25] See *Men in Families and Family Policy in a Changing World* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.IV.1).

[26] For example, 24 States still uphold reservations to article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on equality in marriage and family life, citing conflict with religious laws or cultural norms. See UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (New York, 2015).

61. Achieving the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls starts in families with the equal treatment of boys and girls, the fair sharing of care and other household responsibilities and the valuing of unpaid work, which is overwhelmingly done by women. Gender equality must be secured in access to justice through fair family laws, including a fair recognition of shared parenting rights and responsibilities.

V. Recommendations

62. **Member States and other stakeholders are encouraged to consider the following recommendations:**

(a) **Continue their efforts to implement the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes;**

(b) **Consider implementing family-oriented policies and programmes as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular in support of ending poverty and hunger, promoting well-being for all at all ages, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all and achieving gender equality;**

(c) **Revise family laws as nationally appropriate to ensure equal access to justice for women.**