

Policies and Programmes Supporting Intergenerational Relations

**Background paper prepared by:
Donna M. Butts, Leng Leng Thang & Alan Hatton Yeo**

***The web of mutual obligations between
generations is essential for a civilized society.***

Thomas Jefferson

The authors

Donna Butts is the Executive Director of Generations United, a position she has held since 1997. The mission of Generations United is to improve the lives of children, youth and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit for all. For more than 35 years, Donna has worked tirelessly to promote the well-being of children, youth and older adults through nonprofit organizations across the country and around the world. In 2004, Donna was honored with the National Council on Aging's Jack Ossofsky Award for Leadership, Creativity, and Innovation in Programs and Services for Older Persons. She served as a 2005 delegate to the White House Conference on Aging. An internationally known speaker, commentator and advocate, she has written countless articles, chapters and publications regarding the welfare of children, youth and older adults and the imperative of intergenerational solidarity. She is a former chair of the International Consortium of Intergenerational Programmes (ICIP) and serves on the board of the Journal of Intergenerational Relationships. Donna was invited by the United Nations to sit on three expert panels most recently on intergenerational dialogue in Doha, Qatar in 2011.

Leng Leng Thang is Associate Professor at Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore. As a socio-cultural anthropologist working mainly on Japan, she published the first ethnographic study of an age-integration institution in Asia titled, "Generations in Touch: Linking the young and old in a Tokyo Neighborhood." Most recently, she co-edited "Experiencing Grandparenthood: an Asian perspective" focusing on intergenerational relationships in Asian families. She is associate editor of "Journal of Intergenerational Relationships" (Taylor and Francies) and vice Chair of the International Consortium for Intergenerational Programmes (ICIP). Leng Leng is known for her efforts to promote intergenerational programmes particularly in Singapore and the region; she has organized several international conferences and workshops on intergenerational programmes and relationships in the country and provides consultancy on issues relating to generational solidarity to the state and various organizations and agencies. Leng Leng serves as Chairperson of Singapore Fei Yue Family Service Centre, a non-profit organization active in ageing, family and intergenerational programmes among others.

Alan Hatton-Yeo worked in the field of special education for seventeen years with roles including College Principal and Principal Education Advisor of the then Spastics Society for England and Wales. Following a period working with the British Red Cross, he joined the Beth Johnson Foundation as Chief Executive in March 1998. The Foundation was established in 1972 to develop new approaches to ageing that link practice, policy and research. Currently its work includes specialist work around advocacy for people with dementia, health promotion for older people, mid life, volunteering, engagement and participation and intergenerational work. Alan has an international reputation for his work in the field of intergenerational practice and his current roles include: Director of the Centre for Intergenerational Practice, Chair of the International Consortium for Intergenerational Programmes, Member Steering Committee for Age Action Alliance, Member UK Advisory Forum on Ageing, Honorary Research Fellow University of Keele and Associate Editor of the Journal of Intergenerational Relationships

With the belief that intergenerational cohesion is essential to healthy societies, the authors have taken the lead, in their respective parts of the world, to promote awareness, policies and practices to enhance bonding among generations. We believe investments across the lifespan benefit people of all ages. Governments and other leaders will better serve when they unite rather than separate the generations for the greatest social and financial impact. The increased recognition of the mutual interdependence of strong families and strong communities in Europe and other regions reflects the significance of intergenerational solidarity in these times of uncertainty and economic challenge. We firmly believe we are stronger together.

Note

This paper has been issued without formal editing.

The views expressed in the present publication are those of the authors and do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations, particularly concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The assignment of countries or areas to specific groupings is for analytical convenience and does not imply any assumption regarding political or other affiliation of countries or territories by the United Nations. The designations “developed” and “developing” are intended for statistical and analytical convenience and do not necessarily express a judgment about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process.

Introduction

Sound intergenerational relationships are critical to cohesive, healthy families and societies. Generations have always been interdependent in order to survive and thrive. Throughout the life course people receive and give care while collecting, managing and passing on resources. Such a compact between generations ensures a higher level of basic survival but also contributes to the ability of human beings to flourish and make richer contributions at every stage of the life cycle. Families and community invest in the next generation convinced that this is how society progresses. The next generation in turn will reciprocate and be better prepared to care for younger and older generations while advancing the well-being of societies (Butts, 2010).

Family has been defined in many ways and differently in various regions of the world. In 1948, the United Nations declared: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State" (United Nations, 1948). Yet the definition of family is expanding rapidly around the globe. Numerous factors influence this evolution including but not limited to increased longevity, growing number of blended families and co-habiting, unmarried couples, single heads of households, childless couples and changing views on gay marriages. Despite these changes, families, consisting of "people related through affection, obligation, dependence or cooperation" (Rothausen, 1999), remain an essential social unit in all societies. As Kofi Annan reiterated in his opening statement on the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, "Families themselves play a vital role in our work for development and peace" (United Nations, 2004).

Intergenerational solidarity is critical for families and societies. Families are units where values are learned, culture is transmitted, and children learn relationship skills (Mitts, N. 2003). As such, they are the foundation of our global society. Intergenerational solidarity has been defined as bonding between and among individuals in multigenerational family networks and among different age cohorts in the larger community (Bengtson and Oyama, 2010). In recent times where the organization of our social and institutional structures has been increasingly along age-specific divisions which segregate one generation from another (e.g. schools are for the young, adults concentrate in work places, and seniors congregate in retirement communities), family is noted as probably the only 'truly age integrated' institution (Hagestad and Uhlenberg, 2005, 2006). While intergenerational relationships within the family are key, they are also fundamental to the well-being of the larger community and societies at large.

Policies and programmes promoting sound intergenerational relations and intergenerational solidarity play an important role in contributing to effective public policy by promoting social cohesion, national unity and shared responsibility (Hatton-Yeo, 2002). Intergenerational programmes also play a key role in supporting positive relations between generations. They provide a platform for developing positive relationships across age groups and have been shown to strengthen the quality of ties between family members (Thang, 2006).

Unfortunately the structure of many policies, programmes and services is often age-based. This age-graded approach is not always conducive to intergenerational harmony and generational integration. Such policy approaches are also reflected in the training of professional groups which is normally age segmented rather than life-course based, which creates further dislocation between the planning and delivery of services for people of different ages.

In a similar vein, family policy is often narrowly focused on families with children. With the advent of nuclear families, it also often narrowly restricts its scope to parents and children only. These policies seek to strengthen the family but in reality have weakened the extended family by excluding grandparents and other relatives. In an ageing society, governments and civil society are challenged to broaden the scope of policies to reflect longer life spans and changing roles and demands on each generation of a family.

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing states that solidarity between generations at all levels – in families, communities and nations - is fundamental for the achievement of a society for all ages, yet, policies related to ageing stand alone in many countries and in general have not integrated other family members' needs and concerns, with but a few exceptions.

Policies can provide support or punishment. The values of a society can be upheld and encouraged through acknowledgment and incentives such as Singapore's intergenerational bonding efforts. On the other hand, policies can be enacted to enforce a way of life that is being threatened such as India's support of parent's act requiring family members to look after older relatives or face harsh penalties.

Every generation plays a vital role supporting intergenerational relations. For example, children can be unifiers when families have been separated by divorce, distance or death. Grandparents, uncles and aunts become parents again when children need rearing and parents are not available, sometimes even providing full time care. Extended kin networks can also step in to help parents with child care when they face long work and commuting hours.

Developed and developing countries grapple with demographic changes that threaten the intergenerational social compact. Industrialized regions face dramatically increasing older populations and ageing societies as a result of sustained lower birth rates, and later age of mothers at childbirth. Better health care, higher quality diets and safer work environments have all added to a longevity dividend that should be celebrated. Instead, it is often overshadowed by concerns about how developed countries will absorb and sustain larger elderly populations. As families grow to include more living generations than ever before, governments are revisiting promises made in the past when life expectancy was shorter. At the same time older adults in these countries have watched markets plunge, their savings diminish and, in some cases, their housing values decline dramatically. Escalating debates about pensions, social security and health care create an environment of fear for older people and concern for families worried about how they can support the needs of an older generation while still caring for their children.

Developing countries, on the other hand, generally have large younger populations though this is beginning to change. Regions, such as Latin America, are following the trend of developed countries, witnessing a reduction in family size. It is estimated that the number of people per household in Latin America will fall by 18 per cent by the year 2020¹. Still recent tumultuous times in the Middle East brought world-wide attention to youth populations restless for change and opportunity. In some countries this has led to out-migration or a loss of their more highly educated, marketable citizens leaving behind older adults.

While the magnitude varies, young people in developed countries are also concerned about their future. In the United States and some European countries the unemployment rate among young adults is up to 44.3 per cent². For the United States, this is the highest unemployment rate among this age group in over half a century. Lacking opportunities, younger generations face a longer period of dependency on their parents and families which can further stress family resources. Some predict this will also lead to a growing competition among generations as they may be in danger of fighting over jobs and resources in a time young people expect to have poorer pensions and less wealth than their predecessors.

Technology has also impacted the family. While some find it easier to stay connected with family members as they fulfill work, school and other responsibilities, others report the increase in time spent watching television, playing electronic games and communicating with others via social media which has increased the isolation of family members and diminished relationships.

The demographic changes and challenges noted above impact families and can strain the cohesion among family members as new roles emerge to meet the arising challenges. Importantly, however, despite these changes that could adversely affect intergenerational solidarity within families and broader society, the majority of people in all cultures maintain close relationships with members of their family throughout their lives.

Some countries are making a concerted effort to support and protect intergenerational solidarity creating mechanisms that act to protect family cohesion amid changing demographics and economic turbulence. They are investing in the development and implementation of policies and programmes to strengthen intergenerational relations within family and larger community. Areas of the globe that are rich with intentional intergenerational programmes have experienced positive results. Studies in Singapore and Europe found younger people engaged in intergenerational programmes show more interest in the older members of their own families. Polls in Europe and the United States found that respondents believed governments could and should do more to encourage intergenerational interactions (EU poll, 2009 and Generations United, 2010).

¹ Latin American Herald <http://laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=347561&CategoryId=12394>

² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/jobs/8564500/Interactive-graphic-Youth-unemployment-in-Europe.html>

While much has been written about supporting strong, resilient families, only recently have some researchers begun to look at the role of intergenerational programmes and policies in strengthening families. This paper will focus on elements essential to supporting relationships within families emphasizing the value of extended family and non-familial intergenerational interventions in strengthening familial ties. The authors will discuss intergenerational relations in various regions of the world highlighting efforts in both developed and developing countries. Policies and programmes that encourage positive intergenerational relations such as caregiving and child care, formal and community education, pensions and financial transfers, housing and community supports will be examined. The concluding section will offer recommendations for governments, civil society and other stakeholders in the areas of policy development and implementation.

Examination of Intergenerational Relations Trends in Developed and Developing Countries

Demographics are changing worldwide. In general, developed countries are growing older and developing countries are trending towards larger youth populations, but in many parts of the developing world populations are growing older at a fast pace. Many factors influence these trends, including fertility patterns, migration trends, gender equality and other issues. Countries need to design proper responses to face these challenges. For example, a region can capitalize on an upcoming youth bulge by investing in education and job training to better prepare a larger, younger population for future contribution to society. A region faced with a growing ageing population can benefit by implementing policies and programmes that call on older adults to continue to be active in communities through paid or volunteer positions. Retirement and pension schemes can also be re-evaluated as demographics shift and lifetimes expand.

North America and Europe

The United States is still in a recession marked by the housing bubble burst, economic downturn and high and extended unemployment. Research indicates that children, parents, and grandparents are coming back together and living in the same home, dependent on each other for financial support and caregiving. These multigenerational households, consisting of three or more generations, have increased to 5.1 million in 2010, a 30 per cent increase from the 3.9 million reported in 2000. In a recent national survey of multigenerational families, 75 per cent said the arrangement made caregiving easier, 82 per cent said living together enhanced family bonds but 78 per cent also acknowledged the multigenerational household can contribute to stress among family members (Generations United, 2011).

The debate about debt and deficit reduction have led some to question long standing social insurance programmes, such as Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare in the United States, that in fact benefit multiple generations. There is a growing concern that current and projected conditions threaten the fundamental American value that the next generation will have greater opportunities than the one that preceded it.

Despite the fact that some politicians and news commentators conclude that conflict between the generations is inevitable, the general public in the United States seems to disagree and consistently favours an intergenerational framework for effective public policy making. According to a 2010 poll, 76 per cent of respondents believed publically funded programmes targeted to a specific age group such as kindergarten through 12 grade education or Social Security are not burdensome responsibilities to certain age groups but investments that benefit all generations. Furthermore, 83 per cent of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that politicians pit one generation against another in order to limit public support for government funded child care, health care, Social Security, or other programmes (Generations United, 2010).

Currently, 20 per cent of the population in the United States is under the age of 15 and 13 per cent or 39.6 million people are over the age of 65. By 2030 the over 65 population will grow to be 19 per cent or 72.1 million (AoA, 2011). This ageing of society is taking place within the context of several other factors that influence family and family supports. The United States continues to hold the highest divorce rate in the world at 4.9 per 1000 marriages. At the same time, there are more single, never married women than ever before living in the United States, which, for many, eliminates the first line of defense in old age, the family. Marriage between same sex couples is hotly debated with a few states including New York and California legalizing these unions. Even while Americans express an expansive definition of what constitutes a family, 76 per cent of adults report that their family is the most important element of their life (Pew Research Center, 2010).

In Canada, marriages or common law marriages have remained relatively stable over the last several decades at 84.1 per cent. However, 2006 marked the first time more adults were unmarried than married (47.5 per cent). Childless couples now outnumber couples with children (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2010). Canada is experiencing the same low fertility rates and longer life expectancy as many developed countries. From 1981 to 2005 the over 65 population increased from 9.6 per cent to 13.1 per cent. From 2005 to 2036 it is expected to increase from 13.2 per cent to 24.5 per cent (Turcotte, M. & Schellenberg, G. 2007). While NGOs such as the Legacy Project promote intergenerational approaches in Canada, the government has done little to spur intergenerational solidarity.

In Europe one in every five inhabitants is over 65 and there are 6 million more over-65s than under-14s. In 1980 there were 36 million more children than elderly individuals, by 2007 there were 6 million (5,966,400) more over-65s than under-14s. The under-14 population in the EU25 has decreased from 94 million in 1980 to only 74 million in 2007, which represents a decrease of 20 million young people. By contrast, the over-65 population in the EU25 has increased from 57 million in 1980 to 80 million in 2007, which represents an increase of almost 23 million elderly people.

Almost a million fewer babies are born in Europe annually than in 1980. In 2007, almost one million (920,089) fewer babies were born in the EU27 than in 1982. Over this period (1982-2007) the population increased by almost 37 million largely due to inward migration. In addition, people are starting families later in life and the average age of

maternity is now almost 30. There has also been a significant fall in the marriage rate in Europe with 737,752 fewer marriages than in 1980. In countries such as Bulgaria, Slovenia and Hungary, the fall in marriage rate has been around 50 per cent, i.e. for every two marriages that took place in 1980, now there is only one.

One out of every 3 children (33.9 per cent) is born outside marriage in the EU27. Marital breakdown has increased by 55 per cent in 26 years (1980-2006). Spain, with an increase of 290 per cent, is the EU country with the highest increase in marital breakdown over the last 10 years (1996-2006). Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain are the EU27 countries with the highest rate of marital breakdown. For every three marriages entered into, two end in divorce. Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Spain are the EU27 countries with the highest number of divorces.

The size of European households is decreasing with an average of only 2.4 members per household. European households are also becoming more solitary. One out of every 4 households in Europe has a single dweller (27.7 per cent of European households have only 1 person) and more than 54 million Europeans live alone.

While there is a growing awareness of the problems faced by families in the European Union, there is no organization which is in charge of family policy, nor is there currently a Family Observatory, or a Green Paper on the Family. Although there are five Vice-presidencies and 21 Committees within the European Commission, none of them covers the family, which is dealt with by the Committee on Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The Observatory on Family Policies was created in 1989 and closed in 2004, when it was replaced by the Observatory on Demography and the Social Situation. Of the 95 Green Papers written since 1984, none has been on the family.

Of every €13 Europe sets aside for social expenditure (which represents 28 per cent of GDP) only one euro is set aside for support to the family through benefits such as child allowance. Within individual countries, there are significant differences. Some countries target families as a priority for assistance, providing levels far higher than the European average. Denmark, Luxembourg, Germany, Sweden, Finland and Austria set aside above three per cent of GDP for families, 40 per cent more than the European average (2.1 per cent of GDP). Denmark (3.8 per cent of GDP) and Luxembourg (3.6 per cent of GDP) are the EU27 countries that offer most assistance to families. However, other countries do not prioritize families for assistance. Poland, Malta, Spain, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Italy, and Portugal set aside less than 1.2 per cent of GDP for the family, which is far below the European average (2.1 per cent of GDP).

This leads to significant differences for families in each country. A family with two children, without income-related restrictions, would receive 471€/month in Luxembourg, in Germany 308€/month, in Ireland 300€/month and in Belgium 274€/month. By contrast, the same family in Poland would receive 32 €/month (and with strict income related restrictions), 25 €/month in Latvia and 23 €/month in Bulgaria.

The trend in North America and Europe will continue for smaller families and it will become increasingly important to increase the support to individuals and the family from strong multigenerational community networks that can help share support, assistance and skills.

Asia

One of the much discussed topics in Asia today is its rapid pace of ageing as Asian countries experience a fast rise in life expectancy, accompanied by a sharp fall in the total fertility rate. Nonetheless, as a large continent with diverse levels of socio-economic developments and cultural characteristics, the extent and pace of the trend toward ageing differ among Asia's societies, as does their impact on families and intergenerational relations. While countries in East Asia such as Japan which boasts the world's highest life expectancy, South Korea, Singapore and China are facing a rapid rate of ageing and extremely low birth rate, other countries and South and Southeast Asia, such as India, Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Thailand, although experiencing a rapid increase in the number of older persons, have a relatively high birth rate in comparison with East Asian societies. For countries such as Laos and Cambodia, as well as most countries in South-central and Western Asia, they are projected in 2025 still to have a youthful population with the proportion of people aged 65+ only at 5 to 8 per cent.

Intergenerational relationships may be said to remain more stable and 'traditional' – where mutual support of the old and young is strong in the familial context in the less developed and less urban areas of Asia. Moreover, the expectations of children to provide for their parents expressed in concepts such as filial piety in Chinese culture still remain a culturally perceived ideal in many Asian societies at large. As Croll (2008) states, such reliance on the family instead of the state to care for older persons in Asian countries is often regarded as the essence of Asian values which lay the foundation of not only the family, but also state policies on aged care.

However, although intergenerational relations and support may tend to focus on upward flow from adult children to ageing parents, it has also been increasingly noted that older persons as grandparents and parents are significant source of downward support to their children and grandchildren in the family, serving as household help and caregivers of the young, among others (Hemalin, 1997; Teo et.al., 2006). Similar to the experiences of grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren in the absence of the middle generation in North America and Africa, grandparents, especially those from rural areas are often the main caregiver to their grandchildren when the middle generation migrated to urban areas for employment (Kamnuansilpa and Wongthanasvasu, 2005; Silverstein, 2005). With more dual working couples in modernized Asian societies, grandparents are expected to continue to play important roles in caring for the children and their families. Besides the family, better health and education among older people in urbanized Asia have also led to more intergenerational activities in the extra familial context (Thang and Mehta, 2012).

Africa

In Africa, the concept of Ubuntu, originally a Zulu term meaning unity, is fundamental to understanding intergenerational solidarity. It basically states that I am a person because you are a person. We are all related, interconnected and responsible for each other. Archbishop Desmond Tutu further explained Ubuntu in 2008. "One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu – the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality – Ubuntu – you are known for your generosity." Yet the changes threatening solidarity in other countries are affecting Africa as well.

Africa is a demographically young continent. In 2004, 44 per cent of its population was below age 15, compared to Europe, where the population under the age 15 stood at 15 per cent. Southern and North Africa are experiencing a decline in fertility ahead of other regions in Africa. The rest of Africa is expected to experience a youth bulge two decades later. However, few people believe that Africa will take advantage of the economic window that the youth bulge will present. This is mainly due to the failure of African governments to implement universal, quality education and the inability of African economies to absorb the bulk of its population into the formal economy. The burdens of disease, particularly HIV/AIDS, as well as unemployment and other factors are generally thought to keep young people from contributing economically to their communities (Makiwane, 2011).

In sub-Saharan Africa, Africa's informal family and community based care systems are being threatened by globalization, urbanization and socioeconomic challenges (Oduaran, 2010). Disease and poverty have threatened the traditional web of support and resulted in a reliance on grandparents, in particular grandmothers, raising a second generation of children.

The African Union has worked with other stakeholders to increase social protections in national development plans among member states. Some countries such as Zambia have included a social protection strategy in part of their national development plans. These social protection strategies need to align with family policy in the areas of education, health, housing and food security (Mutangadura, 2009).

Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean have a history of intergenerational solidarity among family members but this tradition is threatened by several demographic changes taking place in the midst of low GDP and high social and income inequalities. The changes result from a combination of lower child mortality, higher life expectancy at birth, wider adoption of contraception practices and out migration. In 2010, 27.3 per cent of the population was under the age of 14 and 8.3 per cent was 65 or older. By 2040 17.8 per cent of the population is expected to be under the age of 14 and 19 per cent is projected to be 65 or older (ECLAC, 2011).

A long range development strategy created for the region calls for a focus on the life cycle and in particular the situation of the population aged 0 to 29 and the ties these young people today have to other age groups (ECLAC, 2010). While 40 per cent of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean is under the age of 30, better educated and healthier than older adults, they also suffer from organized violence and high unemployment or underemployment. It is estimated that one-third to one-half of all youth are unemployed, double the number of adults (IADB, 2011). At the same time, high out migration in countries such as El Salvador and Peru lead to a higher dependency ratio (Cruz-Saco, 2010). In addition, nearly one quarter of the women aged 15 to 25 are mothers before the age of 20 thereby increasing their chances of living in and continuing the cycle of poverty.

Pensions and social security in Latin America are affected by a significant drop in birth rates and a large informal labour market. It is estimated that 43 per cent of salaried workers are not covered by pension systems. In Mexico, for example, there are 22 million salaried workers but only 14 million are part of the social security system (IADB, 2011). It is estimated that by 2025, 77 per cent of persons over the age of 65 will not have pensions and will need to be supported by families (Cruz-Saco, 2010).

Policies and Programmes Supporting Families and Intergenerational Relations

Intergenerational perspectives in policy and programme development can hinder or support intergenerational solidarity in families by creating artificial barriers or providing easy to navigate pathways. In the United States, Generations United advises policy makers to use an inclusive framework when crafting legislation. Recently the group issued four principles for policy makers to consider when reviewing policy:

- Make lifetime well-being for all the highest priority.
- Consider the impact of every action on each generation.
- Unite rather than divide the generations for the greatest social and financial impact.
- Recognize and support every generation's ability to contribute to the well-being of their families and communities (Generations United, 2011).

Policies that are intrinsically intergenerational and supportive of family cohesion include but aren't limited to child care and support, education, paid family leave, pensions and social protection, and housing. This section will review various policies and programmes supporting intergenerational relations and solidarity within families and communities in different regions and countries.

Childcare Support and Caregiving

The so called grandparent advantage describes how grandparents were able to care for and educate the young, deepen the cultural transmission of knowledge back into its young (Hawkes, 2004). This recycling of human understanding, experience, and culture

from elders back to children, generation after generation, was what established a culture of caring across generations, gave us human capital and our ability to innovate and bring into existence the laws and institutions that undergird modern economies (Generations United, 2010). Tax benefits and policies supporting intergenerational care, such as allowances for grandparents to care for their grandchildren, have the potential to contribute to the strengthening of this process.

In the United States, grandparents play an increasingly important role in raising their grandchildren and provide the largest percentage of child care for young children. More than 6.7 million children live in families headed by grandparents or other relatives, and 2.5 million grandparents report that they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009). The reasons for the increase are as varied as the families themselves but include parental substance abuse, military deployment, death of a parent and poverty. Grandparents and other relatives raising children, also known as grandfamilies, play an invaluable role helping to raise stronger children the second or even third time around while saving tax payers more than 6.5 billion dollars a year by keeping children out of the government funded foster care system (Generations United, 2011).

While many public policies focus on single age groups, there are exceptions including, in the United States, the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP). Signed into law as part of the Older American's Act in 2001, the NFCSP was designed to provide funding for ageing services to ensure support for families caring for older relatives. Advocates successfully expanded the scope of the programme through the inclusion of grandparents and other older relatives caring for related children. By including older adults as caregivers, the law acknowledges the increasingly important role these family members are playing in supporting the rearing of children.

Both the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) and the Lifespan Respite Act were voted into law with the intent of supporting caregiving across the lifespan. Originally designed to provide supportive services to adult children caring for ageing parents, policy makers broadened the NFCSP to honor the fact that while older adults may be the receivers of care, they are also often the givers of care. Therefore up to 10 per cent of the funds can be used to support grandparents and other older relatives who are the primary caregivers of children living under their roof. The Lifespan Respite Act provides funding to state governments to implement respite programmes for caregivers of people of any age. More recently, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 includes several provisions to support grandfamilies and assist grandparents in more easily caring for the children they take in to raise.

In Europe as in other parts of the world, families have long been responsible for the care of children, grandchildren, disabled, dependent and/or elderly relatives. However, this was very often at the expense of gender equality as women were expected to bear the sole responsibility for caring for their relatives, a contribution which is still undervalued and unrecognized. The objectives of equality between women and men and increased female labour market participation together with changes in family structures and demographic challenges, mean that this vision needs to be challenged

and responsibilities for dependent persons have to be better shared with the rest of the community through public funded schemes. Families can no longer be left alone with the duty to care for their dependent relatives and special attention needs to be paid to families who face additional challenges such as lone parents and large families who are at a higher risk of poverty.

Family policies are still unevenly developed across the European Union and are often limited to policies supporting parents with young children, when in fact they should encompass a much broader vision of families, and address the needs of families with dependent elderly and intergenerational issues as a whole. Leaving family carers to provide all the care for dependent elderly people undermines their social inclusion (poverty risk), health (physical and/or mental exhaustion) and gender equality (most family carers are still women). There is also a trend to 'outsource' care to migrant carers – primarily women, which is causing inequalities among women and families of lower socio-economic income.

In Europe, the situation is complex reflecting the diversity of different countries. In Southern Europe countries, the extended family with a strong traditional role for the grandparents is still the norm, while in Northern Europe there is a significant trend for grandparents to take on a more defined caring role either because of family breakdown or to enable the parents to be economically active. The rise of both parents working has led to a variety of state responses. In the UK, the development of a network of 3500 Children's Centres across England was to make sure that all children got the best possible start in life. An unforeseen consequence of this strong state intervention was to weaken the extended family and it is only in recent years that there has been a renewed focus on the role of grandparents and older kin.³

However, the situation is not static and we are seeing a rapid change in families in both Eastern Europe and countries such as Spain and Portugal where incidences of family breakdown, social mobility and lower birth rates are all changing the nature of familial relationships and this has been accompanied by a growing interest in, and incidence of, intergenerational programmes. Spain in particular has been at the forefront of innovative developments in intergenerational programmes and this good practice has extended across to parts of South America.

In Australia, it has also been noted that social trends such as the increase in marital breakdowns and the rise of single parent families have resulted in the need for more grandparents to play a substantial role in grandchildren caring. Although the situation of grandparents raising grandchildren is not explicitly covered in the constitution, they may claim various benefits to support their role based on their living circumstances, such as access to, government pensions, child endowment, pharmaceutical, sickness and hospital benefits, medical and dental services and family allowances under Section 51 (xxii), (xxiii) and (xxiiiA) of the Constitution (Shepley and Dann, 2006). When a grandparent is granted foster parent status and given custody of the grandchildren, they will be provided support by the State. However, for those not under this status, the

³ www.grandparentsplus.org.uk

support tends to be inconsistent depending on legislations in each state. Western Australia, for example, has a predominantly government-funded programme delivered by not-for profit organizations called the “Grandcare” programme which offers grandparent support and programmes to better connect grandparents with grandchildren (Orb and Davey, 2005). Even when policy support is available, grandparents in need may not necessarily access these services and support.

In Asia, grandparents are often sought for in caring for the young as part of a family system based on mutual support. Grandparents can be day care carers, taking care of children when their parents are at work, or near-custodial grandparents, where grandchildren live with them during the week and only return to live with their parents on the weekends, in this case, parents become “week-end” parents only (e.g. Singapore (Teo et al., 2006) and Malaysia (Rahima, 2007)).

Skipped-generation households are not uncommon especially in rural areas of Asia (such as Thailand, China, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia) where better job prospects in the urban areas and even overseas have necessitated the able-bodied parents to leave behind their children in custodial care of the ageing grandparents for better earnings. Silverstein, Cong & Li (2006) found that as high as 20 per cent of elders may provide full custody of grandchildren in a rural area in China with high migration rate. The norm in migrant-worker parents have resulted in a large number of *liushou ertong* (or children left behind) in rural China in 2010. The estimated 58 million left-behind children have led to concerns about the psychological and educational problems they may face growing up without parental guidance (Stack, 2010). Since 2004, the Chinese Ministry of Education has begun efforts to improve educational facilities and care systems for these children⁴. In Anhui province where incidence of children left behind is high, measures include training for grandparents to help them assist their grandchildren in school work⁵. Despite expectations for grandparents to serve as primary carers in absent parent families, public policy support for custodial grandparents is absent in China and most of Asia.

In Singapore, where intergenerational support is actively promoted by the state, the advent of ageing society has prompted the Government to extend the intergenerational support beyond immediate generation. Besides tax relief for parents, taxpayers are now eligible to receive tax relief for their grandparents and great grandparents if they are supporting them financially. Moreover, the state passed the Maintenance of Parents Act in 1995 to ensure that children will provide financial support for their aged parents.

⁴CCTV.com 2/12/2011, accessed from <http://news.sohu.com/20111203/n327744952.shtml> Accessed 5 December 2011

⁵ The New York Times. “The Children left behind: Children in rural China left in the care of relatives by their migrant-worker parents”. April 8, 2009. Accessed at <http://schott.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/08/the-children-left-behind/> on 5 Dec. 2011.

In recognition of grandparents' support in the family, Grandparent Caregiver Tax Relief is provided for working mothers whose child is being cared for by his or her grandparents. However, as the benefit is provided only to the middle generation, and only applies to working mothers of Singapore citizens' children aged 12 years and below, the extent of its policy support to grandparents is questioned (Teo et al., 2006).

In Africa, where HIV/AIDS has in some areas decimated the parenting generation, grandparents are the life line for many children. In Uganda, Action for Children began Grand Parent Support to strengthen the capacity of grandparents to provide care to children under the age of eight. At its core is a family preservation and empowerment programme (Oduaran, 2010).

The Circles of Care project was designed in South Africa in 1998 in direct response to concern about the growing number of orphans resulting from the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Focused on creating a community of support to vulnerable children, the project engaged family, local government and civil society organizations in helping to meet the basic needs of the young, threatened by disease and poverty.

In Latin America, differences in policy design have important implications in terms of the opportunities the programmes are able to create for women and children from low-income families and the prospects for mitigating—or reinforcing—existing gender and class inequalities. Across the region, continuing challenges include enhancing the reach, guaranteeing equity in access to quality services, ensuring their sustainability and improving working conditions and wages of childcare workers. State-sponsored childcare programmes such as those in Chile and Mexico have two principal objectives: to promote child development and to enable female participation in the workforce. Though both countries have responded with an overall expansion of services, their approaches vary considerably. Mexico's Federal Daycare Programme for Working Mothers essentially subsidizes community- and home-based daycare to facilitate the employment of low-income mothers. The programme targets poor women rather than children and does not pursue explicit educational aims. Meanwhile, female employment occupies a secondary place in the Chilean government's programme objectives, although it has been encouraged and the expansion of childcare has been perceived as crucial to achieve it. It has primarily been a strategy to invest in the capabilities and equalize the opportunities for children from low-income families (Razavi and Staab, 2011). In Uruguay the government has developed plans for an integrated national care system which includes plans for expanding childcare and preschool services, enhancing family allowances and introducing parental leaves.

Paid family leave, tax credits & benefits, public child care supports

Family care leave in Europe is widely available to working parents through maternity and paternity leave and to some extent through work-family balance work arrangements. Child-care facilities are widely available in Western Europe, with specific targets established for increasing their numbers and quality. Focus, however is on assisting parents with young children, without taking into account the role of grandparents in care provision.

The United States is one of five countries that does not guarantee pay to new mothers. Employers are not required to provide some form of paid sick leave. However, companies that employ 50 or more workers are required to provide up to 12 weeks unpaid leave through the Family and Medical Leave Act which was enacted in 1993 (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2002). Some employers also provide care through short term disability insurance when having a baby is considered a qualifying condition. Only two U.S. states, California and New Jersey, have public paid leave insurance programmes.⁶ This is slowly changing. The U.S. Census Bureau found that 51 per cent of working women who had their first child between 2006 and 2008 received paid leave, which can include sick days and vacation time, compared with 42 per cent between 1996 and 2000. Those totals are up from just 37 per cent between 1981 and 1985.⁷

The Child and Dependent Care Credit is available to families who work or are looking for work and have a dependent child 12 years of age or younger. They may qualify for up to 35 per cent or \$3000 for one child and \$6000 for two or more children.⁸ In addition, the Child Tax Credit may be claimed for each qualifying child. This is a nonrefundable credit of up to \$1000 per child.⁹ Grandparents raising grandchildren may qualify for these tax credits as well as the Earned Income Tax Credit (Children's Defense Fund, 2004).

In Canada, the federal government takes responsibility for maternity benefits for working mothers and parents. Canada's Employment Insurance gives paid maternity leave for 15 weeks. To qualify, a woman is required to have worked for 600 hours in the last 52 weeks or since her last claim and she must sign a statement declaring the expected due or actual date of birth. If the baby is hospitalized, the 17 week limit can be extended for every week the child is in the hospital up to 52 weeks. The country also provides parental benefits which are payable either to biological or adoptive parents while they are caring for a new-born or an adopted child, up to a maximum of 35 weeks.¹⁰

Family care leave is still relatively new in Asia. In Singapore, parent-care leave has just been introduced in the public sector to take effect from 2012, where civil servants are entitled to take a maximum of two days of parent-care leave a year. In Japan, the revised child care and family care leave law in 1999 (under the New Angel Plan)

⁶ Inc 16/2/2007 U.S. Policies on Maternity Leave "Among the Worst" accessed at <http://www.inc.com/news/articles/200702/family.html> on 16/12/11

⁷ CNN Money 10/11/11 accessed at http://money.cnn.com/2011/11/10/news/economy/maternity_leave_study/index.htm on 16/12/11

⁸ Internal Revenue Service Ten Things to Know About the Child and Dependent Care Credit accessed at <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=106189,00.html> on 16/12/11

⁹ Internal Revenue Service Child Tax Credit accessed at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p3961sp.pdf> on 16/12/11

¹⁰ Canada Immigrant Jobs Issues accessed at <http://www.canadaimmigrants.com/maternity.asp> on 16/12/11

enhances family support in various ways, such as to encourage more fathers to take childcare leave, to assist their wives in childcare and housework. In terms of supporting intergenerational relations in the family, the revised plan allows workers to take short-term family care leave to care for their family members, including taking them to hospitals or providing caregiving for up to 5 days a year, or 10 days /year if there are two or more requiring care.

This new short term family care leave system is established to respond to the difficulties facing workers in an ageing society. From 2002 to 2006, about 500,000 workers are found to have left or change their jobs due to the need to provide family care, while others had to take paid or unpaid leave to take day-to-day care of family members needing care (MHLW, 2011). The definition of family includes a spouse (including a partner in a common-law marriage; the same applies hereinafter), parents, children, parents of a spouse; grandparents, siblings and grandchildren who are the worker's dependents and living in the same household.

A recent study (Heymann and Earle, 2009) reported that Latin America is performing well, compared to the rest of the world in providing paid leave for new mothers and paid sick leave, however, it is doing less well in funding parental leave for new fathers and paid leave for providers of care. No Latin American countries provide more than two weeks paid leave for new fathers and only two countries in Latin America, El Salvador and Nicaragua, provide paid leave for adult caring responsibilities.

Countries in Latin America are making strides in providing early care and education which is now showing up in public policies and develop frameworks. However there is still unequal access to programmes and services based on socio-economic status, place of residence, and cultural identity, and under development of policies and strategies for children with special educational needs, those with HIV/AIDS, migrant children and children in emergency situations. In addition the programmes and qualifications of staff are often of poor quality (UNESCO, 2010).

Pensions, Financial Transfers and their Implications for all Generations

Pensions for older adults not only provide income for their intended beneficiaries but also increase the likelihood of transfers from the older generation to the next. For instance in the United States, 22 per cent of grandparent-headed households live in poverty. Without social security benefits the poverty rate would be closer to 60 per cent. It is estimated that more than 6.5 million children in the United States receive all or part of their family income from social security benefits targeted at their grandparents (Generations United, 2010).

Moreover, pensions also provide a base of support for older adults enabling them to contribute to the next generation to a greater degree. In the United States, baby boomers report that they want to volunteer and have a purpose in retirement. The majority hope to invest this time working with children and youth. This extra investment in younger generations results in a dividend for all members of the family. In addition,

pension plans provide relief for middle generations allowing parents to focus their financial resources on their children rather than diverting them to meet the basic needs of their parents.

While some regions rely on social insurance programmes, others are enacting punitive legislation requiring children to care for their ageing parents and grandparents. In Singapore, the maintenance of Parents Act has been in effect since 1995, where elderly parents may approach a legal tribunal if their children fail to support them financially. The Act was amended in 2010 to focus more on conciliation-first approach. While there are debates on the effectiveness of such an Act and fear of quantifying financial care of elderly parents, the state emphasizes that the legal act is meant to deter children who can afford to care for their parents to shrink from their responsibilities. Similarly, in 2007, India enacted the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act which punishes people found guilty of not caring for older family members. The punishment calls for imprisonment lasting up to three months or a fine of up to 5,000R or both.

In China, the filial responsibility law serves similar purposes of protecting the rights and benefits of older persons by stipulating that family members have the responsibility and duty to take care of their elderly parents. However, as only general principles are provided, it is not considered effective in protecting the elderly parents' rights (Ting and Woo, 2009). More recently in 2011, a new law has been passed in China legislating children to be responsible for their parents' wellbeing by ordering children to make regular visits to their parents. This reflects the growing concerns that the elderly parents may be neglected as a result of rapid social and economic changes in China. Likewise, in Taiwan, Province of China, efforts to ensure support of elderly parents are shown through proposed legislation change to prohibit children from inheriting their parents' property if the children do not provide support for their parents or if they abandon their parents before their parents' death. (Ting and Elder, 2009).

Non-contributory social pensions are gradually being introduced in sub-Saharan Africa. In the early 1990s the benefits and coverage of the South African social pension programme were expanded for the black population. In 1993 the benefits were about twice the median per capita income in rural areas. More than a quarter of black South African children under age five live with a pension recipient. Estimates suggest that the cash transfers received by women had a large impact on the anthropometric status (weight for height and height for age) of girls but little effect on that of boys. No similar effect is found for pensions received by men. It is then suggested that the efficiency of public transfer programmes may depend on the gender of the recipient (Dufol, 2003).

Pensions have also been linked to better nutrition of children within families. In addition, girls are significantly more likely to be enrolled in school if they are living with a pensioner, an effect that is driven entirely by living with a female pensioner. The researchers' findings are consistent with a model in which pensioners have a greater say in household functioning once they begin to receive their pensions. They concluded

that a programme targeted toward the elderly plays a significant role in children's health and development. (Case & Menendez, 2007)

Conditional Cash Transfer programmes provide cash payments to poor households that meet certain behavioral requirements, generally related to children's health care and education. Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes are a fast growing part of the safety net with more than 30 countries having some form of the programme (World Bank, 2009). They began in middle income countries in Latin America where they benefit 20 per cent of families with children and youth at a high poverty rate. The World Bank has suggested these programmes are efficient short term tools for reducing poverty measured by income and support the long term development of human capital by maintaining children in school which disrupts the poverty in the region (Goldani, 2011).

PROGRESA (Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación) is one of the major programmes of the Mexican government aimed at developing the human capital of poor households. Targeting its benefits directly to the population in extreme poverty in rural areas, PROGRESA aims to alleviate current and future poverty levels through cash transfers to mothers in households. An evaluation of the programme indicates that antipoverty strategies that combine education, health, and nutrition interventions in one package can be quite successful in improving the capacity of families to pull themselves out of poverty that often ensnares generations. The study found that PROGRESA students are entering school at earlier ages, experiencing less grade repetition, and better grade progression. PROGRESA students have lower drop-out rates and higher school re-entry rates among those who had dropped out. The programme is especially effective in reducing drop-out rates during the transition from primary to secondary school (IFPRI, 2001). When effectively targeting the interventions to such disadvantaged groups as the daughters of poor mothers who start having children at an early age, there appears to be a strong linkage between secondary school enrollment and delaying childbearing. The transfers that benefit the daughters of early childbearers appear to be an exceptionally effective way to reduce the intergenerational transmission of poverty through early childbearing (Merrick and Greene, 2007).

Financial and in-kind Support

Transfers between generations take many forms. Tangible transfers include financial resources, housing, child care, and pension schemes. Intangible transfers include those relating to history, art, language and practical skills all passed down between generations.

Some supports are mandated by law such as custody and child support. Custody laws still focus on the parents and more on women though fathers are included through joint custody on a more frequent basis. In the United States, family law favours biological parents over grandparents or other relatives even in cases where the parent has demonstrated their lack of capacity to parent. Even after years of living with a grandparent, a parent can reclaim a child. Several grassroots grandparent groups have emerged as a result of this. In some countries, like Japan, the law is inadequate in this

area and one party could abduct the child and refuse visitation rights to other family members.

Singapore increased its tax relief recently to strengthen filial support. 'Parent/handicapped parent relief' is an aid to promote filial piety and provide recognition to individuals supporting their parents, including parents with disabilities, in Singapore and it can be claimed if one has provided support to one's own or spouse's parents, grandparents and great grandparents. However, there are various conditions that must be met, including the dependent's age, type of disability and income restrictions.

In Australia, family and child tax benefits and other programmes have resulted in the government spending approximately 2.1 billion dollars on child care benefits to assist families with the cost of child care in the financial year ending 30 June 2011.

In Hong Kong, the Financial Secretary proposed to raise the allowance for maintaining dependent parents/grandparents by 20 per cent. This would increase the allowance for maintaining dependent parents/grandparents aged 60 or above from the present \$30,000 to \$36,000, while the additional allowance for taxpayers residing with these parents/grandparents throughout the year will also be increased from \$30,000 to \$36,000. The allowance for maintaining dependent parents/grandparents aged 55 to 59 will be increased from the current \$15,000 to \$18,000. The same increase applies to the additional allowance for taxpayers residing with these parents/grandparents throughout the year. In addition, the Financial Secretary also proposed to raise both the child allowance and the additional one-off child allowance in the year of birth by 20 per cent from \$50,000 to \$60,000 respectively for each child. It is estimated that this measure will benefit about 300 000 taxpayers, costing the government \$650 million a year.

Supports are also a matter of choice. In the United States a survey by the MetLife Mature Market Institute found that two thirds of grandparents were providing an estimated \$370 billion in financial support to grandchildren over a five year period. This averaged out to \$8661 per grandparent household. This did not take into consideration financial support they may have been providing their adult children as well.

Education

Access to quality education across the life-span results in productive citizens and stronger global competition. Educational institutions, often thought of as the domain of the young, can establish programmes that engage older adults as volunteers and are open to older, lifelong learners. The use of educational facilities by multiple generations will for the most part mean greater use of a community's physical assets and prepare each generation to contribute or continue contributing to their families and society.

Education expenditures vary by country and region. A 2003 Report on Worldwide Education and Library Spending found that in 2001, 29 countries spent approximately \$1.1 trillion dollars on education or roughly 4.1 per cent of their collective gross domestic product. The United States spent the most on education in 2001 at roughly

\$500 billion, followed by Japan, Germany and France at \$139 billion, \$89 billion and \$82 billion respectively. While the United States spent the most in absolute dollars, it ranked tenth in education spending as a percent of GDP at 4.8 per cent. Saudi Arabia ranked first investing 9.5 percent of GDP in education. The top five include Norway, Malaysia, France and South Africa. All five countries spent in excess of 5 per cent of GDP on education. (OCLC, 2003).

While some try to compare expenditures on education with expenditures on older persons, it is generally counter-productive and inconclusive. Comparisons on expenditure on children and older people are difficult to make in an absolute fashion because many older people rather than being consumers are actually net contributors to their families, wider society and the economy. In the United Kingdom, a recent report by the WRVS calculated that the net contribution of people over 65 in the country was 40 billion pounds.¹¹ In the United States, education spending is largely state based whereas programmes supporting elders are federally funded.

Community Education and Support Programmes Encouraging Intergenerational Solidarity

Public policies in education play an important role in encouraging intergenerational relations. Educational curricula focusing on interdependence between generations are especially important to engage young people in support of older persons. Recent education policy in the United States, “The Race to the Top”, has been designed to increase not only the overall educational outcomes but encourage the engagement of older adults in helping the country obtain its educational goals. School districts were challenged to address how they would engage family members and other older adults in their effort to meet educational goals in their written plans. These grants were only recently awarded so the outcomes are yet to be measured.

One well-evaluated programme in the United States is Experience Corps a national programme which engages people over 55 in improving early reading and literacy skills. Experience Corps has recruited over 2,000 members to tutor and mentor elementary school students, help teachers in the classroom, and lead after-school enrichment activities. Research conducted by Washington University in St. Louis and Johns Hopkins University, shows that Experience Corps boosts student academic performance, helps schools and youth-serving organizations become more successful, and enhances the well-being of older adults in the process. Recently, Experience Corps merged into AARP, the country’s largest membership organization for people over the age of 50, and is now known as AARP’s Experience Corps. The intent is to aggressively grow the programme, refining the model to engage the interests and abilities of an increased number of older adults in order to serve thousands of additional children.

Service learning is another vehicle to enhance learning. These programmes provide a forum for experiential learning while benefitting the community through service. Many

¹¹ www.goldagepensioners.com/uploads/pdf/main-report.pdf

schools in the United States require students to perform volunteer service in order to graduate. Service learning takes that requirement and enhances it with an educational component. Some students participate in intergenerational service learning working with older adults and at the same time studying ageing. Research has shown that service-learning programmes can have positive impacts on youth in three general areas: academic engagement and achievement; civic attitudes and behaviors; and social and personal skills (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007).

Community celebrations also support intergenerational relations. In the United States these include National Grandparent's Day which is celebrated in September each year and Intergeneration Day and Activities week celebrated in October.

In the European Union, 2012 has been designated as the European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity with the overall aim of achieving a Europe friendly to all ages by 2020¹². This builds on the recommendations of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing and an aspiration, driven by concern over demographic change, to enable people to age as actively and well as possible. Networks such as EAGLE¹³ and EMIL, the European Map of Intergenerational Learning¹⁴ have extensive libraries of case studies and background information that reflect the increasing amount of pan-national exchange taking place. The EU has also funded a number of intergenerational learning programmes through its Life Long Learning programmes (MATES, 2008).

Many of these programmes create connection between people of different ages to recreate the supports they might have traditionally got from within the family. For example, Manchester Adult Education Service have run a very successful programme where older learners have mentored young mothers in parenting skills and provided the emotional support their family was unable or not prepared to provide.¹⁵ This project was part of a major Government funded initiative in England called Generations Together that aspired to strategically embed intergenerational work in twelve Local Authorities across the country.¹⁶

Government support in the form of funding and programme support are important to strengthen intergenerational relationships. In Asia, despite the cultural norm of respect for elders and filial piety, various societies have witnessed a deterioration of these traditional values with rapid social changes, thus recognizing the need for programmes and activities to promote intergenerational relationships and support. To commemorate the contribution of grandparents and promote respect of the elders, some societies have stipulated an annual Grandparents Day where various activities focusing on fostering respect of the elders, filial piety and intergenerational connections are organized (since

¹² ec.europa.eu/social/ey2012.jsp?langId=en

¹³ www.eagle-project.eu

¹⁴ www.emil-network.eu

¹⁵ www.manchester.gov.uk/download/4393/generations_together_final_report_intergen_buddy_exchange

¹⁶ www.centreforip.org.uk/england/generations-together

2003 in Singapore and since 2010 in Taiwan, Province of China). In Singapore, the state gives out Grandparent of the Year Award to recognize outstanding grandparents who have contributed to the family and community. In Taiwan, Province of China, a new idea in the 2011 Grandparent's Day is the introduction of "grandparents cookies" that come in three colours to represent three generations (Radio Taiwan International, 5 August 2011).

It is most common to promote support of intergenerational relationships through educational efforts, conceptualized as intergenerational lifelong learning activities. In Taiwan, Province of China, the Family Education Division of Ministry of Education has, since 2009, organized competitions for creative ideas to promote intergenerational lifelong learning in pre-schools, primary and secondary schools. These competitions have resulted in various interesting projects focusing on promoting intergenerational interactions within the family.

In Singapore, to provide a platform for both generations, the Council for Third Age has piloted two intergenerational learning programmes in 2011, where seniors attended classes with teenage students and were mentored by the younger generation in information technology skills or health and nutrition.¹⁷

In Japan, educational involvement of older generations with the younger generations is found in various schools which invite elderly residents in the community to teach children about traditional cultures, history, art and craft, or join with them in various school activities, such as having lunches together and joining in school sports days. With persistent low birth rates in Japan, schools there are experiencing lower enrolment, and some of them have creatively invited older persons in the community into the vacant classrooms converted for senior activities.

As a developed Asian society, Japan has faced the problem of generational segregation earlier than other Asian societies with nuclearization of families. As a result, various intergenerational initiatives have flourished to strengthen intergenerational connections in the community. For example, initiative such as the "multigenerational living" concept have been promoted at some welfare institutions since the 1980s, resulting in age-integrated facilities combining child-care services with senior-care services, reminiscing the traditional three-generational setting in the past.

Older persons play an important role in the provision of intergenerational support in Japan, for example the Family Support Centers initiated by the Ministry of Welfare and Labour providing support for working mothers in childrearing are now receiving much support from middle-age and older adults who offer to provide care for children of working mothers (Higuchi, 2006).

¹⁷ <http://www.c3a.org.sg/story/lifelong-learning-programme-build-intergenerational-bonds-between-young-and-old.html>). Accessed 3 December 2011.

Such initiatives can be found in many countries as well. For instance Australia has intergenerational learning programmes to introduce lifespan education in primary school and university teacher education programmes (Seedsman and Feldman, 2008).

Over the past 50 years, the concept of intentionally bringing generations together to serve as resources to each other and to their communities has become increasingly popular as a vehicle for addressing critical societal needs and strengthening cross-age relationships. Beginning with the Foster Grandparent and RSVP programmes in the United States in the 1960's, early intergenerational programmes focused primarily on dispelling age-related stereotypes, fostering cross-age understanding, reducing social isolation, and providing financial support for low-income elders (Kaplan, Henkin & Kusano, 2002).

Among entrepreneurs, municipalities and some private funders, there has been an increased interest in intergenerational shared sites or centers, resulting in the creation of innovative models across the country including, but not limited to, adult/child care centers, senior centers within schools, and Head Start programmes in nursing homes. By definition, these programmes share space and include two or more generations that take part in planned activities and unplanned interaction. Some facilities share administration, staff, equipment, meals and programmes, all of which usually result in cost savings and positive outcomes for participants, greater family satisfaction and higher staff retention.

Intergenerational practices also use resources judiciously and can encourage a thriving economy. They represent "economies of scope" wherein a single intervention or programme helps or positively affects multiple issues and populations. For example, a shared child and adult day care site relieves stress on a middle generation of caregivers by providing quality care in one location, eliminating the time needed for multiple trips to various care facilities supporting greater productivity in the workforce. An intergenerational shared site in South Dakota reports an 80 per cent staff retention rate and attributes their success to staff members using the on-site child and elder care programmes.

A growing body of research underpins the belief that intergenerational programmes contribute to healthy development of children, youth, older adults and families. In the United States, experts look to positive youth development principles and guidelines to suggest important elements needed to improve outcomes for children and youth - such as caring adults, safe places, healthy starts, education for marketable skills and opportunities to give back (Generations United, 2010). Increasingly, older adults are becoming recognized as resources ready to help children and youth gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. Their efforts have shown the following positive impacts:

- Children in intergenerational programmes had higher personal/social developmental scores (by 11 months) than children in non-intergenerational programmes (Rosebrook, 2006).
- Youth involved in intergenerational mentoring relationships showed increases in school attendance, positive changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours

regarding substance use, as well as improvement in related life skills (LoSciuto, L., and others, 1996).

- Over a single school year, students with older adult tutors made over 60 per cent more progress in learning two critical reading skills – sounding out new words and reading comprehension – than similar students without the tutors (Morrow-Howell, N., and others, 2009).

The benefits for older adults are ripe as well. In their book, *Successful Aging*, John W. Rowe, M.D. and Robert L Kahn, Ph.D., stated that people with strong social connections and a sense of purpose live longer and are better able to maintain good mental and physical health (Rowe, J.W., and Kahn, R.L., 1998). As people age and face a new stage of life, many are seeking opportunities to learn new things and give back to their communities. Rather than move to the adult only communities, most say they want to continue to live in the age-integrated towns in which they have worked, raised families and played (Butts, 2003). Intergenerational programmes offer older adults a venue to do what many believe their role has traditionally been - to help families grow the next generation. This investment by older adults in children and youth pays dividends forward and backward. Research shows:

- Older adults who regularly volunteer with children burned 20 per cent more calories per week, experienced fewer falls, were less reliant on canes and performed better on memory tests than their peers (Fried, Linda P., and others, 2004).
- Older adults with dementia or other cognitive impairments experience more positive affect during interactions with children than they did during non-intergenerational activities (Jarrott, S.E. and Bruno, K., 2003).
- Older people in shared sites who previously would not participate in activities came out of their rooms when children arrived and kept better track of time in order to know when the children would be arriving. Older participants also had more energy and ate better when they shared their meals with children (Lewis, L., 2002).

Leeds City Council in the UK launched “Bringing Generations Together: Leeds’ Intergenerational Approach” and released a document by the same name.¹⁸ Their stated hope is that the document will raise the profile of the effectiveness of intergenerational approaches, providing examples that identify how intergenerational practice can meet key existing objectives, targets and priorities for both local and national, and highlight the benefits of intergenerational work across Leeds. Both the Scottish and Welsh Governments have funded intergenerational work as a core part of their ageing policy. In 2008 the Welsh Assembly Government launched their national intergenerational strategy¹⁹ which promotes an integrated approach to working across

¹⁸ www.leedsinitiative.org/generations/

¹⁹ wales.gov.uk/topics/olderpeople/publications/intergenerational/?skip=1&lang=en

all the ages and includes recognition of the importance of community based schools and family learning across all the generations.

Housing Laws that Promote Intergenerational Relations

Housing policy can encourage or discourage intergenerational relations within families. In the United States for example, senior-only housing age restrictions, whether in federal law or local incorporation documents, prohibit intergenerational interactions. In public housing code, some federal dollars are restricted to building and maintaining housing for people over the age of 60 or 65. Younger generations are also banned from sharing senior housing in many private senior only retirement communities. Often they are limited to short visits lasting up to two weeks (Freedman, 1999).

Other laws are designed specifically to support intergenerational families. In the United States, the American Dream Downpayment Act included provisions supporting the development of housing for grandparents raising grandchildren. Money was appropriated for a competitive bid to build grandparent housing. In 2009, two grantees received funding to build this specialized housing. Both developments are now open and recently began accepting families. Some communities have also allowed their residents to build backyard cottages, known as accessory dwelling units, for elderly family members or younger members returning home.

In Canada, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation actively encourages multigenerational living through its Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). It offers financial assistance for homeowners to create living spaces for seniors meeting income and disability criteria. Construction loans do not have to be repaid as long as the homeowner continues to adhere to RRAP programme criteria.

In Singapore, with more than 80 per cent of the population living in public housing, policies to support intergenerational interaction and mutual help is most effectively implemented through public housing policies. For example, the Multi-Generation Living Scheme encourages intergenerational co-residence by giving priority allocation for public housing to extended-families. Such priority schemes are applicable also for generations living near each other. Housing Grant is also available to married first-time applicants if they buy a resale flat from the open market near their parents' house, defined as within the same town or within a distance of 2 kilometers.

Policies encouraging generations to live together or in close proximity to each other appear to be effective. A survey from the Housing Development Board (HDB) in Singapore has shown that more HDB residents age 55 and above have been living with their married children in 2008 as compared to 2003 (MCYS, 2009).

Policies Supporting Intergenerational Relations in the Workplace

Overall policies supporting intergenerational relationships in the workplace are still relatively underdeveloped. They mainly focus on mentoring programmes and job sharing to promote productivity, reduce generational tension and enhance work satisfaction.

In Europe, in recent years the main focus has been driven by people's concerns for the well-being of young people who have find it increasingly difficult to enter the labour market. For example, in France retired older workers have been undertaking coaching to support graduates. In Germany, there are a number of examples of workshops being created where older craftsman can teach young people engineering and other skills to increase their employability. In addition, there is now a German pilot programme where older workers approaching retirement work alongside a young person to train them to take their job when they leave.

In 2009, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Intergenerational Relationships at the UK Parliament conducted a yearlong enquiry²⁰ into the intergenerational workplace and made a series of recommendations on how it could be developed and strengthened. One of the key issues is to understand the different values and life practices of age cohorts' reflection of their own experience of society as they grew up. The exchange of technological skills and interpersonal skills between the generations also created a stronger, more cohesive and effective workforce. Chartered Institute for Personnel Development produced the report "GenUp – How the Four Generations Work" which explored this idea from a Human Resources perspective that highlighted that the sharing of the different skill sets of the generations had potential for improved productivity and greater depth of skills. The multigenerational workplace is also important in producing an age friendly environment which enables people to stay productive and in the workplace longer, and this approach has become increasingly prevalent in Northern European Countries.

In the United States, the multigenerational workforce has garnered the attention of employers, the media and entrepreneurs seeking to fill a need working with companies as they adjust to three or more generations in the workforce. The MetLife Mature Market Institute took a unique approach and created a multigenerational workplace toolkit that includes a workbook designed to facilitate developing an intergenerational workforce versus a workforce of various generations working separately. The premise is each generation has skills and talents that can complement one another and leverage an engage workforce leading to higher productivity and a competitive advantage (MetLife Mature Market Institute, 2009).

In Singapore, multigenerational workplace is a new area of attention due to the fact that there is an extension of employment for reemployment at 62 that will come into force in 2012, resulting in a higher number of older workers. Consequently, the Tripartite Alliance of Faire Employment Practices produced a report on "Harnessing the potential of Singapore's multigenerational workforce" to encourage employers to better cope with the multigenerational workforce for productivity and work harmony (TAEFP, 2010).

Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, governments cite low productivity and poor-quality jobs as the key workplace challenges. They host larger informal workforces that are not connected to existing services or systems. They also have a tendency to exclude youth, older workers and women. A few programmes have been deemed

²⁰ www.centreforip.org.uk/resources/publications?r=0&q=all+party

helpful including those that work with developing young people's basic skills instead of focusing on vocational training. For example, Chile Joven is designed to provide poor, unemployed and out of school youths, between 16 and 30 years of age, with intensive training to develop their technical and social or life skills to ensure their labour placement. An evaluation of the programme found that graduation from the course increased a young person's likelihood of finding a higher quality job in the formal rather than informal workforce and increased their social integration and earnings.²¹

While the World Bank found the impact of active labour market programmes to be minimal, they suggested that these programmes be one tool included in a developing countries' response to the economic and social problems associated with unemployment and poverty in the labour force. The few successful strategies focusing on retraining workers following a mass layoff typically include a comprehensive package of employment services to accompany the retraining. However, these programmes are generally expensive. It was found that for youth training, the programmes were rarely successful and it would be better to invest earlier in the education system to reduce drop-out rates and other schooling problems instead. Evaluations in Latin America did find positive impacts for programmes that integrate training with remedial education, job search assistance, and social services. (Betcherman, G., Olivas, K., and Dar, A. 2004)

Policy Implications

As indicated by numerous examples described above, the idea of using government policy to support intergenerational interdependence is not new. In fact, there are many examples from which to garner successful strategies. To begin with, policy makers need to agree that the family, nuclear and extended with all its generations, is the foundation of a society. This demonstrates the need to take into consideration each generation and its ability to contribute and its need for support at all stages of the life course, rather than developing single-age policies that lead to fragmentation and disenfranchisement. For example, when a child's parents are unable to care for the child whether due to death, migration, poverty or other circumstances, every effort should be made to facilitate placing the child with a grandparent or other relative. At the same time, providing a safety net to support the family may be needed as they take in a new member. Access to child care and adequate housing and/or a financial subsidy may be essential to facilitate such a transition as well.

Countries that have appointed high level government officials to oversee intergenerational relations and families appear to be better prepared and more advanced in their planning. Singapore's Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports has helped guide the development of intergenerational bonding programmes, annual grandparent celebrations, and has consistently promoted intergenerational solidarity. With the support of the government, in 2010, the Council of Third Age and National University of Singapore hosted the Fourth International Conference of the International Consortium for Intergenerational Programmes, bringing a comprehensive

²¹ <http://www.youth-employment-inventory.org/inventory/view/75/> accessed on 16/12/11

scope to issues around intergenerational solidarity by focusing not only on the community and family, but also the workplace. The conference brought experts from around the world to share cutting edge practices with representatives of civil society organizations, academia and business; it ignited ideas towards more innovative ways in Singapore to foster intergenerational learning, exchanges and ways towards a harmonious intergenerational workforce.

Caregiving issues are receiving increased attention as society ages; more and more women enter labour force; family structures change and parents in developing countries are lost to conflict and disease such as HIV/AIDS. Programmes that provide caregiver relief have proven effective whether in the form of short term respite or support groups. Flexible workplace policies reduce the stress on working age parents and adult children as they seek to balance work and family responsibilities. Dependent care tax deductions make it more likely for families to afford outside care on a full or part time basis.

Pension and social security schemes are a part of sound social policy that supports the family. First, elders receive income, usually from a system they have contributed to, and do not need to rely on their adult children for financial support so parents can contribute more to their children rather than their parents. Second, when families are dependent on one another such as in a multigenerational household or grandfamily (grandparents and other relatives raising children) the resources are combined and support the entire family. Moreover, grandparents who receive financial assistance are highly likely to invest that money in the children in their care leading to healthier, better educated children. These arrangements are generally far more cost effective while studies have shown the children in relatives' care have better outcomes than children raised in institutional settings.

New policies, currently under implementation in several countries that require a financial maintenance of parents or limit the inheritance adult children can receive if they are unable or unwilling to support their parents raise concerns. It should be kept in mind that the volatile global economy has put stress on families who may be struggling to meet their day to day needs leaving them with few resources to pass on to older relatives. Additionally these laws generally require parents to file a complaint or claim against their children. Many older parents are unwilling to do this fearing that family relations may be further strained.

In Europe, there has been a growth of policy that encourages mentoring, support and exchange between non-familial connected elders and young parents to make up for a deficit in their own family structures. Such interventions are highly effective leading to strong and resilient families.

Conclusions

Families are the foundation of our communities and our global society. Governments, civil societies and other stakeholders need to build and support stronger connections across generations in order to improve the well-being and quality of life of all generations. Three fundamental notions about intergenerational relations have been identified and offer useful principles as each sector of civil society examines the role it can play in supporting families. Firstly, intergenerational solidarity and exchange continue to be the primary foundation for personal and social security as well as human bonding. Secondly, social networks of care develop when policies and programmes reinforce the interconnectivity of the generations. Thirdly, societies need to facilitate human contact and interactions in order to expand intergenerational solidarity (Cruz-Saco & Zelenev, 2010). Supporting the relationships between and among generations in families and societies becomes even more important as global populations and economies shift.

Most families wish to take on their responsibilities, but they cannot fulfill that role alone. They need support through integrated, holistic and sustainable family policies based on the three main elements that all families need - resources, time, and services. Family policies ought to support all generations: children, youth, parents and older persons, taking due account of the gender dimension and specific role that women play within families. They should also specifically support families of persons with disabilities.

Public authorities at all levels should design and implement family-friendly policies and programmes that recognize the changing nature and diversity of family structures and forms, and geographical distances that prevent families from providing care and support to their dependent relatives. Better measures enabling reconciliation of work life and family life are crucial, in an integrated approach combining accessible, affordable, high quality child and elder care services and fully-paid and non-transferable family care leave.

Policymakers and other leaders can better support families by viewing policies and decisions through an intergenerational interdependency lens that promotes and enhances intergenerational relations. The following specific recommendations are put forward for discussion and review.

Recommendations for Governments, Civil Society and other Stakeholders

1. Framework and Public Policy

- At a national level, ensure there is an entity, such as a Ministry, charged with the accountability for reviewing national policies to ensure that they provide adequate assistance to families and take into account the needs of all their members and ensure that people of all generations are viewed and engaged as resources within their families and communities.
- Review existing policies from an intergenerational perspective to ensure that they support family-based approaches and do not isolate individual members such as children or the growing population of older adults.

- Acknowledge the family as the foundation of society taking into consideration each generation and commit to using an all generations approach when developing family policy. This means addressing the needs and potential of all family members and not just parents and their children. The definition of family policy should be broadened to encompass ageing policy and integrate not only the needs but also the strengths of each generation. At the same time, ageing policy must be expanded to include family and family supports. One way of doing this could be to develop and use generational impact statements that use an intergenerational lens when considering new policies. In public policies, governments can look to existing impact analysis to develop criteria such as Bhutan's measurement of Gross National Happiness and the US Environmental Impact Statements.
- Consider developing Gross Generational Interdependence Product (GGIP) which would create a set of measures to monitor and evaluate intergenerational solidarity. The GGIP could provide a framework for releasing a regularly scheduled report on the state of intergenerational understanding and interdependence in a country or a region. An annual release of this report could be timed to coincide with a national family, intergenerational solidarity or bonding day.

2. Financial Supports

- Create or strengthen social protection and antipoverty programmes such as pensions, social security, conditional cash transfers, subsidized guardianships and dependent care credits. Such programmes have demonstrated their ability to alleviate financial stress on families and allowed them to invest in the health and development of other family members and education of their children.
- Encourage financial transfers between generations through positive incentives such as tax credits.
- Ensure there is an adequate supply of affordable housing designed for multigenerational households and grandparents and other relatives raising children.

3. Increase Awareness

- Use the United Nations International Year of the Family follow-up process to promote intergenerational solidarity in all regions of the world calling for the promotion of intergenerational dialogue and mutual understanding. The twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family offers an opportunity to educate people around the globe about the importance of family for the well-being of societies as well as the complex challenges families face today. Intergenerational dialogues properly planned and executed can increase understanding across age groups and result in commitments to strengthen those bonds.

- Create celebrations and festivals focused on the family and the importance of intergenerational relations following the examples of the 2012 European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between the Generations, the European Day of Solidarity between the Generations and Grandparent's Day in Taiwan, Province of China as well as intergenerational bonding initiatives. International Days of Families as well as national observances of family days should focus on the importance of intergenerational solidarity within families and communities.

4. Community Centers & Programmes

- Actively encourage community centers to become hubs of opportunity for intergenerational programmes and interactions. These intergenerational shared sites and activities should be planned by age diverse community members and funded by the community blending funding sources traditionally targeted to serve only one age group.
- Provide cross training for staff that work with the community or provide services to children, youth or older adults to educate and enable them to develop quality intergenerational programmes that enhance intergenerational relations.
- Promote and encourage the engagement of extended family and community members in supporting families by providing pathways and support for volunteering and service learning opportunities for all ages but in particular those designed to capitalize on the demographic dividend created by a longer, healthier life span. Consider incentives such as discounts in course fees for families and extended families learning together.

5. Schools and Education

- Encourage schools and educational facilities to open their doors to older adults as tutors, mentors and students. Consider providing incentives to older adults who commit to contributing significant time to improve the school attendance and educational outcomes of children and youth.
- Require courses on understanding across the life course in school and university curricula so as to increase awareness of the need for generational understanding and bonding among generations.
- Enhance teacher's knowledge on connecting different generations by incorporating an intergenerational perspective in teacher's training and ensure that programmes to promote active citizenship include the opportunity to engage in intergenerational activities.

6. Caregiver Supports & Parenting

- It is essential to challenge assumptions that women should be primary caregivers and ensure that family leave policies apply equally to both Men and Women to encourage greater equality in support giving.
- Improve supports and services for caregivers by developing family caregiver support programmes, lifespan respite care, and financial support such as refundable tax credits, stipends, housing allowances and others. Encourage employers to provide onsite child and elder care, information and referral services and employee assistance and counseling services.
- Initiate or improve family leave policies that offer informal caregivers reasonable time off rights and more generous paid-leave options. In countries that do not have universal health care, extend employer offered health care coverage to the children and elders dependent on family caregivers.
- Provide options for skill exchanges or time banks in which older adults could mentor young parents who may not have grandparents close by and in return they would receive assistance with chores or tasks enabling them to remain independent and in their own homes.
- Childcare centres should be encouraged to provide spaces for grandparents. This will require deconstruction of the formal/informal care dichotomy to provide opportunities for various flexible arrangements to be possible such as setting up child care/infant centers in the lower levels of studio apartment blocks built for older residents, allowing for mutual support of formal and informal care for the children.

7. Workplace

- Promote flexible work place policies throughout the working life to allow people to enter and exit the workforce with more ease to further enhance education and skills, fulfill caregiving responsibilities, begin their work life and retire with security. Job sharing, time banks, up and down mentoring and intergenerational project teams are among the strategies that can be employed to increase engagement and flexibility.

8. Overarching

- Provide basic necessities to support a decent life standard and good health throughout the life course including access to age appropriate health care, clean water, nutritious food, exercise and safe housing.
- Promote national and international research on the patterns of intergenerational transfers, both public and private, focusing on the implications of these transfers

for individuals, families and societies and using this analysis in the design of national development plans. (United Nations, 2009)

- Build new alliances between ageing, children and youth sectors to support intergenerational solidarity in families and communities and to promote integrated, efficient and responsive support and opportunities for all.
- Positive action should be taken to encourage and enable existing experienced international expert organisations (such as Generations United and the Beth Johnson Foundation) to collaborate in sharing learning, resources and expertise as part of a UN coordinated approach to building an international evidence and resource base to support future development in the promotion of intergenerational solidarity.

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