

# COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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## Concept Note

### The impact of COVID19 Pandemic on Families and Children: Global Evidence and Policy Implications

11 February 2021

10 – 11:15 am (EST, New York time)

Online Side Event organized by the Division for Inclusive Social Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, DISD/UNDESA in collaboration with College of Public Policy at Hamad Bin Khalifa University; Wheatley Institution, Brigham Young University, USA; Institute of the Family, University of La Sabana, Colombia; European Large Families Confederation and Focus on the Family Asia

## Introduction

The Coronavirus pandemic affected every aspect of life, from shuttering schools, closing shops, and halting everyday life in nearly every corner of the globe. While the political and economic consequences are stark, the effect of the pandemic on family life is much less clear studied, though certainly as important.

Family, the basic building block of society, merits special attention during these times, especially using a comparative lens. While some families may have sufficient resources to enjoy closer relations during lockdowns (some version of which was imposed at some point in nearly every country), other families experienced job loss, social isolation, depression, and an ambiguity about the future that will likely not be resolved for many years. Consequently, it is crucial to examine how family life changed during the pandemic and explore how these changes will likely influence future government policy and programming.

*The Impact of the Pandemic on Family Life Across Cultures* is an international research study led by Dr. Anis Ben Brik, distinguished and acknowledged expert in Social Policy and Sustainable Development, LSE alumnus, now Associate Professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University College of Public Policy in Qatar explores the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on family life across cultures.

The aims of the study are wide-reaching and of great potential value to all families and agencies concerned with their thriving: to track the pattern of the symptoms, causes and risk factors of mental health in parents; to understand the experiences, coping skills and mechanisms of parents under pandemic conditions; to identify parents' needs, and to use this evidence to inform the design of policy and support for families in the future. Such aims reveal a strong understanding and recognition of the foundational role of parents in providing secure, stable and healthy home environments for their children.

The project team have collected data from 72 countries from North

America, South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, Oceania, and the Middle East. These data provide a unique window into the commonalities and differences in how families both shaped and were shaped by the Coronavirus pandemic on every continent, across all income and education levels, and for all age groups. Topics range from child health and anxieties to routines and social interactions.

## **Objectives**

The goal of the side event is to bring together civil society organizations, academia and UN entities to discuss the results of the global study on the impact of COVID 19 pandemic on family life across cultures. The meeting will provide an opportunity to highlight the important role of the family in achieving sustainable and inclusive societies. It will also allow to facilitate exchanges and collaboration amongst various stakeholders, identify and discuss challenges and family policies amid the pandemic.