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CHILD, FAMILY, AND STATE

The Relationship Between Family Policy and Social Protection Policy

INTRODUCTION

Children are the largest age group in the world's population and the most vulnerable group economically, socially, and physically. Given the extensive demographic and social changes in recent years, there is a search for new policy strategies for protecting children and promoting child and family well-being. Even when there is economic growth and political commitment to children, and as essential as these are, more is needed. In particular, knowledge regarding which policy strategies are most effective is essential, if the goal is to do better by children..

Family policy, a holistic approach to evaluating social policies affecting children and their families usually regardless of income, is one such strategy. (Kamerman, 2009; Kamerman & Kahn, 1987 and 1978)⁵ Social protection, government actions that protect individuals, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, against defined social risks, is a second such strategy⁶. Together they constitute two different yet related and complementary approaches to designing social policies. How they differ, what they constitute, and what values they maximize are the focus of this brief paper. The paper begins with a discussion of family policy, followed by a parallel discussion of social protection policy, which in turn highlights where the two interact. The paper concludes with a reminder of why both approaches are needed.

FAMILY POLICY

Definition

The term "family policy" was used first in European social policy discussions to describe what government does to and for children and their families. The term was used, in particular, to describe those public policies — such as laws, regulations, administrative policies —

¹ This discussion draws on S.B. Kamerman, "Families and Family Policies: Developing a Holistic Policy Agenda", Hong Kong Journal of Paediatrics, 2009

² This section draws on various papers prepared for Unicef.

that are designed to affect the situation of families with children — or individuals in their family roles - and those that have clear, though possibly unintended, consequences for such families. Characteristic of family policy internationally is first, concern for all children and their families, not just poor families or families with problems, although these and other family types may receive special attention; and second, an acknowledgment that doing better by children requires help for

parents and the family unit as well.

The increased attention to family policy during the last 30 years derives from the developments that either threaten this role of the family or are believed to do so. Demographic and social trends suggesting changes in the family as an institution and changes in the roles of family members have been the primary catalysts in generating support for family policies. Noteworthy among these are: increased longevity and the proportion of aged in the population, deferred age of marriage, lower fertility, increased divorce, increased out-of-wedlock births and lone mother families, declining availability of extended families, and rising rates of female labor force participation.

As I have noted elsewhere (Kamerman & Kahn, 1978; Kamerman and Kahn, 1997; Kamerman, 2009), family policies may be explicit or implicit. Explicit family policy includes those policies and programs deliberately designed to achieve specific objectives regarding children, individuals in their family roles or the family unit as a whole. (This does not necessarily mean general agreement as to the objective, but only that the actions are directed toward the family; various actors may have different goals in mind.). Nor does it require agreement on the definition of “family”. Indeed, greater progress can often be made by not getting caught up in issues of definition — and instead, acknowledging that there are many different definitions and they vary across countries and cultures. Explicit family policies may include population policies (pro-or anti-natalist), income security policies designed to assure families with children a certain standard of living (cash or tax benefits), employment-related benefits for working parents, maternal and child health policies, child care policies, leave policies, and so forth. Implicit family policy includes actions taken in other policy domains, for non-family related reasons, which have important consequences for children and their families as well. For example, policies regarding immigration -- or HIV/AIDS — may have major consequences for children and their families, yet not directly target them.

Family policy is a sub-category of social policy and as such, can be viewed as a policy field or domain, a policy instrument, or as a criterion by which all social policies can be assessed as to their consequences for family and child well-being.

The family policy field includes those laws that are clearly directed at families, such as family law; child or family allowances; social assistance benefits contingent on the presence of children; maternity and parenting benefits; tax benefits for dependants; and child care or early childhood care and education services.

Family policy can also be an instrument to achieve other objectives in other social policy domains. For example, family policy may be used to achieve labor market objectives, encouraging more women to enter (or to leave) the workforce. Family policies may be designed to encourage

parents to bear more ~ or fewer ~ children and thus achieve a country's population goals. Thus, in family policy, the family may be both object and vehicle of social policy — both agent and target of social policy.

Family policy as 'perspective' assumes that sensitivity to effects and consequences for families informs the public debate about all social policies. Finally, family policy as perspective is concerned with monitoring a broad range of actions in terms of their potential or actual impact on children and their families. Viewing family policies from this vantage point is particularly important in those countries that do not have explicit family policies but rather a series of categorical policy initiatives directed toward different aspects of child and family functioning and designed to achieve different and sometimes contradictory objectives.

The Characteristics of Family Policy

Family policy therefore, in the sense discussed here, suggests:

- A view of the family as a central institution in the society;
- A definition of "family" that allows for drawing distinctions while encompassing a variety of types, structures, roles, and relationships, usually involving at least one adult and one child
- A definition of "policy" that assumes a diversity and multiplicity of policies rather than a single, monolithic, comprehensive legislative act;
- A definition of "family policy" that, therefore, encompasses different types of families and policies and includes both the policy field and child and family well-being (or family impact) as a criterion for assessing the outcomes of relevant governmental and non-governmental policies. Family policy instruments include cash and tax benefits; services; laws; and administrative directives. The major instruments are ~ and here I highlight eight-
- Income transfers including child and family allowances, social insurance, social assistance, and tax policies, among others;
- Policies assuring time for parenting, including paid and job protected leaves from employment following childbirth or adoption, and during children's illnesses or school transitions;
- Early childhood care and education policies (ECEC), both services and various forms of cash and tax subsidies to extend access to ECEC services;
- The laws of inheritance, adoption, guardianship, child protection, foster care, marriage, separation, divorce, custody, and child support;
- Family planning and related contraceptive services
- Personal social service programs;
- Housing allowances and policies;
- Maternal or family and child health services.

The roots of family policy (or families and policies) are found in Europe. The major

developments occurred there first, and then the conceptual discussion moved to include other western countries as well. Among those countries with an explicit family policy today are the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden), France and Germany. Implicit family policy can be derived from any country's social policies affecting children.

Family Policy as a Global Concept

Today the concept of family policy is a global one. It is used in both developed and developing countries, increasing over time, from a UN expert group in the 1980s, a European Union Observatory on Family Policies in the 1990s, to a conference in Hong Kong at the end of 2008 on “Strengthening Families” and UN expert meeting held in Doha, Qatar in 2009 on “Family Policy in a Changing World”. The key criterion is the presence of a child and the willingness (and capacity) for the society to invest in children.

There is no country that does not recognize the centrality of the family in both short and long term societal developments - and as part of economic as well as social development. Families fulfill an essential societal role in reproduction, in socialization, in early education, in the promotion of good health, in preparing the next generation for adulthood. But families are changing — in composition and in structure — with women taking on new tasks in addition to their traditional caring roles. And the need for caring services is increasing as there are more elderly, and they are living longer in many countries. Family Policies have played a significant role in achieving countries' desired objectives, whether fertility-related, employment-related, facilitating poverty reduction, helping to reconcile work and family life, or linked to enhancing child well being. For families to carry out their traditional roles as well as new ones, they require help and support and sometimes supplementation ~ and that is the role of government and of the various non-governmental organizations.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Definition

“Social protection” is a term used interchangeably in the literature with social policy, social welfare and/or social security, but seems increasingly to be used as a generic term that includes the other terms. It is a term that includes those governmental actions or interventions (laws, regulations, funding) that provide individuals and/or families with a defined or minimum standard of living (cash or tax-benefit income and/or goods and services) regardless of the normal market pattern of distribution, often as a matter of legal right. It is designed to protect individuals against defined social risks including loss of income as a consequence of old age, death of a breadwinner, disability, sickness, unemployment, maternity, excessive costs of child rearing. It incorporates statutory as well as non-statutory measures and universal as well as selective or targeted measures. Social protection benefits and services are provided on the basis of non-market criteria such as need, contribution, employment status, age, or citizenship. The concept has emerged as a policy

framework for dealing with poverty and vulnerability in developing as well as developed countries. A major issue has to do with the effectiveness of different social protection strategies.

In contrast to the emphasis on children, families with children, and universalism in family policies, social protection policies focus on a wider range of social risks and needs and on the vulnerable, the poor and disadvantaged. They are not limited to any particular age group or category and they emphasize means-testing as a primary strategy, and targeted policies.

The link between family policies and social protection lies with child-conditioned social protection or social protection policies affecting children. These latter policies include those interventions that are contingent on the presence of children, include attention to “new social risks”, such as trafficking and HIV/AIDS and with, special attention to the poor and needy. Unicef defines child-conditioned social protection as a basic human right, meaning that governments have an obligation to provide both economic and social support to the most vulnerable segments of their population, in particular children;. Social protection strategies encompass cash and tax transfers (eg social insurance, social assistance, child-related demogrants) and economic support directed at the family or at the individual child, and social services (eg family and community support, child protection, alternative care).

Child poverty is clearly at the forefront of concern in the developing countries despite variations across countries, and following this are the issues of access to health care, to education, and to adequate nutrition. (Minujin, Forthcoming; Kamerman, Phipps, and Ben-Arieh, Forthcoming). A Unicef report (UNDP, 2005) stated that “human development and poverty reduction are pre-requisites” to achieving its key goals for child well-being: child survival, poverty and inequality reduction, social inclusion, elimination of hunger, increased access to education and health care, gender equality and empowerment, maternity health, safe water, and reduced incidence and impact of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. These concerns and problems are shared by the poorest countries, and largely affect the most vulnerable groups within the society. Children constitute the largest vulnerable group in most of these countries yet social protection for children remains far less developed than for certain other groups..

My objective here, would be to find evidence regarding what happened to children as a result of these social protection interventions.? Did they avoid negative outcomes as a result? Increase positive outcomes? What aspects of the interventions made a difference? What factors strengthened countries’ capacities for implementing interventions most effectively?

In recent years, the provision of cash benefits has become a key social protection strategy in developing countries, not just in the developed countries. One big difference has been the growing stress on linking cash benefits to particular behaviors, specifically, attendance at health clinics and

enrollment and attendance at school.(Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2007). These “conditional” Cash Transfers (CCTs) were launched initially in Latin America but have been copied increasingly in Asia, Africa, and the CEE countries. A debate has emerged regarding whether conditionality is essential or whether non-conditional benefits (as in South Africa, for example) at a decent level would not be as effective. In addition to an adequate benefit, reasonable conditions, and appropriate targeting, the major factors linked to a successful CCT program are an adequate supply of schools and health care centers; a social infrastructure adequate to cope with the administration and delivery of a categorical, cross-sector, means-tested benefit; and an identification of what the conditionality adds to the value of the cash benefit.

Other issues include: how vulnerability is defined apart from low income, the importance of, making the mother the beneficiary of the benefit, which promotes gender equity as well, making “carers” (grandparents, other relatives) eligible to receive the benefits when no parent is in the home, thus helping to support AIDS orphans and child-headed households, (Subbarao and Cotry, 2004) CCTs are not a magic bullet but may be an important component in a country’s social protection package (World Bank, 2009.).CCTs have also been used to reduce child labor..

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude: I want to stress seven points:

1. The child problems/social risks are shared globally and there is beginning to be a global response but the major developments are regional. The primary intervention, the use of cash transfers, is not sufficient by itself to solve all the problems. Cash transfers are a component of a policy package but neither the full package, nor an alternative to other interventions, nor a panacea. There needs to be a more holistic approach to policies and programs that confront poverty and social exclusion including the reduction of income poverty along with ensuring access to health care, education, food aid, and social services.
2. The child conditioned social protection literature is dominated by the experiences and use of cash transfers, especially CCTs, and there is a significant gap with regard to the inclusion of social services interventions —protective services and supportive services including ECD/ ECEC.
3. A large gap has to do with the lack of systematic data on child well-being including data on the policy responses and where possible, their effects, not just on the problems/risks.
4. Another gap has to do with the lack of comparable comparative data on social expenditures, especially child-conditioned social expenditures.
5. Still a third gap has to do with the lack of attention to the politics that facilitate or impede policy developments. What factors led to the rapid and widespread establishment of CCT policies and programs, for example, and what would be needed to broaden that response to make for a holistic package.? What factors led the European countries to enact parental leave policies, not just maternity policies?

7. And, finally, there is little discussion of children's rights and their entitlement to social protection.

As we approach the next anniversary of the International Year of the Family we will want to learn more about the changes that families are experiencing in different parts of the world, the problems they are confronting in their everyday lives, the ways that they are coping, and the innovative and creative responses of governments and other institutions in the society. Hopefully, in the intervening years between now and then we can agree on the major tasks for social protection and family policy attention and begin to address them, accumulating knowledge about the different experiences in different countries, Family policy, with its particular attention to a holistic policy approach to children and families with children, and social protection, with its emphasis on protecting against defined social risks for individuals,, especially adults, are both needed.

There is no one model for either family policy or social protection although there are templates for each (as can be seen in the Appendix) The policy regimes vary across regions and countries. Nonetheless there are commonalities and there is lesson learning.

Maybe then, by the next anniversary, we will have learned more about what is happening to families — how governments are responding — what are the consequences for families ~ as agents, targets and beneficiaries of family policies ~ and which family policies may make a difference. That is a very full agenda, but we have to start someplace, so why not here, and now.

APPENDIX 1

The most extensive child-oriented data base is Unicef's annual State of the World's Children covering about 190 countries.

See also, Unicef: An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries. Florence, Italy Unicef Innocenti Research Center and related background paper by Bradshaw, J., Hoelscher, P. and Richardson, D., covering 21 countries, and The EU Index of Child Well-Being, covering 8 clusters:

- Material Situation
- Child Health
- Education
- Housing and Environment
- Children's Relationships
- Children's Subjective Well-Being
- Risk and Safety
- Civic Participation

The most significant family data base is the OECD Family Data Base, first launched in 2006 and now updated to 2008, covering its current 30 member countries, and including 37 indicators. The structure of the Family Data Base does not include indicators that cover issues related to the position (and care needs) of elderly family members (eg). pensions or health care (a separate policy domain), or long term care of the aged. The indicators, which continue to be increased, are organized under four constructs:

1. The Structure of the Family
 - Families and Children
 - Fertility indicators
 - Marital and partnership status
2. - The Labor Market Position of Families
 - Families, Children and Employment status
 - Workplace Hours and Time for Caring
3. Public Policies for Families and Children
 - Tax and Cash Benefits
 - Child related leaves
 - ECEC
4. Child Outcomes
 - Child Health
 - Child poverty
 - Education

The most significant social protection data base is the ESSPROS data base in the 27 country EU provides this classification of benefits in Europe: The benefits included are:

- Sickness and health care including maternity
- Disability
- Old age
- Survivors
- Families and children
- Unemployment
- Housing
- Social exclusion.

The Family-Children benefits include those that: provide financial support to households for bringing up children, financial assistance to people who support relatives, and provide social services specially designed to assist and protect the family, particularly children. They include cash benefits such as family or child allowances and tax benefits, maternity and parental leave benefits,

and benefits in kind such as ECEC, Home helps, and housing benefits.

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