Summary Report

Background and objectives

1.   The United Nations Programme on the Family and the United Nations Programme on Youth, of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) organized, in cooperation with the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD), an Expert Group Meeting on Dialogue and Mutual Understanding across Generations, on 8-9 March 2011 in Doha, Qatar.

2.   Experts dealing with various aspects of social development were invited from a broad geographical distribution to participate in the meeting in their personal capacities. The Experts included youth delegates, to reflect the theme of the Meeting and promote the participation of young people in line with the objectives of the International Year of Youth.

3.   Experts were asked to present a paper, participate in group discussions and provide specific policy recommendations on the topics under discussion, as well as in other areas they consider relevant to the main theme of the EGM. They were also asked to provide examples of good policies/practices and to give their professional opinion on policy recommendations for strengthening dialogue and mutual understanding across the generations. This was done in the context of examining: the role young people play in advancing dialogue and mutual understanding; the role of the family in providing a space for intergenerational dialogue; the challenges and opportunities for dialogue across generations; and the examination of existing regional frameworks and mechanisms for intergenerational dialogue and mutual understanding. This report is a summary of expert discussions and reflects varied inputs from the meeting.

1. The International Year of Youth and Youth Participation

The International Year of Youth

4.   Young people, aged 15 to 24, comprise more than 18 per cent of the world's population, the largest proportion of youth in history. With increased recognition of the importance of investing in youth, the United Nations declared 2010-2011 as the International Year of Youth under the theme: "Dialogue and Mutual Understanding". The United Nations system's approach for the Year aims to provide a concrete framework for

collective efforts during the Year. The approach focuses on the three key areas outlined below. In each of these areas, collaborative partnerships with young people are fundamental. The progress achieved during this Year in each of these areas will lay the foundation for further work in youth development, including the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

1. **Create Awareness (increase commitment and investment in youth)**
    - o Increase recognition of youth development as a smart investment by the public and private sectors
    - o Advocate for the recognition of young people's contributions to national and community development and to achieving the MDGs
    - o Promote understanding of inequalities amongst youth and how to effectively address the needs of the most disadvantaged
    - o Foster research and knowledge building on youth to better inform youth policies and programmes

2. **Mobilize and engage (increase youth participation and partnerships)**
    - o Institutionalize mechanisms for youth participation in decision-making processes
    - o Support youth-led organizations and initiatives to enhance their contribution to society
    - o Strengthen networks and partnerships among Governments, youth-led organizations, academia, civil society organizations, the private sector, the media and the UN system, to enhance commitment and support for holistic youth development

3. **Connect and build bridges (increase intercultural understanding among youth)**
    - o Promote youth interactions, networks and partnerships across cultures
    - o Empower and support youth as agents of social inclusion and peace

5.   Although the International Year of Youth provides an opportunity to further bring youth issues to national and international agendas the Year is not without its challenges. The 2010-2011 International Year of Youth was declared merely 8 months prior to the start, at a time when the budgets and priorities of both youth organizations and national governments/bodies had already been set for the course of the year. The short time frame between the announcement of the Year and its celebration has potentially limited the number of activities and initiatives being undertaken throughout the Year. Despite this,

the International Year of Youth has provided an opportunity to highlight the powerful role and capacities of young people to participate in all aspects of society, and the various youth led events and activities throughout the Year are testament to the powerful voice of youth.

Promotion of Youth Participation and Civic Engagement

6.   The promotion of full and effective youth participation is central to the International Year of Youth and is a priority area of the UN agenda on youth. Through active participation young people are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities, helping them to learn vital life skills, develop knowledge on human rights and citizenship and promote positive civic action.[1] The involvement of young people in all phases of policy development, from preparation to implementation and monitoring, ensures that policy and programme responses reflect the needs and situation of youth. To participate effectively, young people must be given the proper tools, such as education about and access to their civil rights.

7.   A strong commitment to youth participation at the national and international levels, is a pre-requisite to ensuring young people's civic engagement. Investment in youth participation through the support of programmes for young people's civic engagement initiatives, networks and organizations is necessary for effective youth participation and inclusive societies.

8.   Youth organizations are important forums for young people to develop the necessary skills for youth participation, and to promote dialogue, understanding and cooperation. Participation in independent youth led organizations and youth structures helps promote young people's civic engagement. In addition, Youth Leadership, Youth Mentoring and Youth Cultural Exchange programmes provide valuable tools in preparing young people for civic engagement, intercultural dialogue and in strengthening their capacities for participation

9.   To ensure youth participation is inclusive, equitable and gender sensitive, social, economic and cultural barriers affecting young women must be removed. In addition, barriers affecting vulnerable and marginalized youth, such as indigenous youth or youth with disabilities, must be dealt with. Youth from marginalized backgrounds require additional support through education and vocational training so as to be properly equipped for full participation in society.

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[1] United Nations International Year of Youth Fact Sheet on Youth Participation, 2010

Investment in Youth

10.   Designated funding for youth policy and mechanisms for youth participation in national budgets as well as a strong political commitment to youth are central to youth development. Within the United Nations there is a need for additional designation of resources on youth related work in promoting and supporting youth development. Likewise, enhanced involvement of young people in the processes of the United Nations, such as the UN Inter Agency Network on Youth Development, is central to ensuring that the United Nations consults in a meaningful way with youth and youth organizations.

11.   Many experts emphasize that to function effectively, youth organizations need increased support and funding so that they can promote and engage effectively in participatory processes. The funding of youth organizations and youth work is crucial and in particular, experts drew emphasis on the importance of maintaining not only project based but operational funding so as to ensure the long term sustainability of youth organizations and their work.

2. The World Programme of Action for Youth

12.   The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), adopted in 1995, sets a policy framework and guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people. The WPAY focuses on ways to strengthen national capacities in regard to youth and to increase the opportunities available to young people for full, effective and constructive participation in society.[2] The WPAY, detailing 15 priority areas, looks in-depth at the nature of the challenges facing youth. Since its adoption, the WPAY has guided the formulation of national youth policies in many countries. Experts spoke about the priority areas of Intergenerational Dialogue, Education, Employment and Girls and Young Women as they related to the WPAY, as well as progress in its implementation.

Intergenerational Dialogue

13.   Among its 15 priority areas, WPAY highlights the importance of strengthening intergenerational solidarity.[3] In particular it recommends '*increased attention be given to the socio-economic impact of ageing societies*' and the promotion of '*a two-pronged approach: first, investing in individual life courses, which includes age-adjusted policies and programmes that encourage workplace flexibility, lifelong learning and healthy*

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[2] World Program of Action for Youth, United Nations, 1995, Preface
[3] WPAY Priority 'O' Intergenerational Issues, adopted as a priority issue in 2005 at the 10 year review of the WPAY

lifestyles, especially during transitional periods, such as youth to adulthood, family formation, or midlife to later years; and second, strengthening the social environment of family, neighbourhood and community.' [4]

14.   The family can provide a valuable space for intergenerational dialogue, bringing together both younger and older generations. Parenting which allows for open communication between the generations and active youth participation is central to promoting young people's active participation in society more generally. Ensuring resources are available for intergenerational work is critical in meeting the goals of the WPAY. Likewise, the recognition of the roles of both older and younger people in their societies and how they can mutually contribute and benefit from the process of intergenerational dialogue is a necessity.

Education

15.   The WPAY recognises access to and quality of education as being a key priority for young people. Experts observed that the improvement of educational opportunities for young people from minority and vulnerable backgrounds, for girls and young women, and those with lack of access to quality education is particularly essential to youth development. Lack of education limits the potential of young people to participate actively in society, does not allow them to develop the skills and resources necessary for effective participation and limits the opportunity for young people to interact with their peers. In the long run, lack of educational opportunities restricts the potential of youth to secure decent employment opportunities and makes young people, particularly young girls, more susceptible to entering into precarious forms of employment.

Employment

16.   Experts noted with concern that increasing levels of youth unemployment globally, particularly as a result of the continuing impacts of the 2008 financial crisis, has changed the nature of youth life stage transitions. Experts discussed the issue of 'waithood': the time young people wait after graduating from school to find a secure job and establish their own families. In many countries the time young people spend transitioning between life stages is lengthening, due in part to the economic crisis and the increasing instability of jobs. This has prompted many young people to emigrate in search of employment opportunities. Challenges associated with economic migration further impact and delay the transition phases of young people. Support to young economic migrants as well as unemployed youth is essential in ensuring that they remain active and engaged citizens. Unemployment can bring on negative effects such as

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[4] World Program of Action for Youth, United Nations, 1995, Section 0– Intergenerational Issues - point 42

depression, idleness, isolation, and anger. Protests arising in the Arab world in spring 2011, have resulted from a demand for better opportunities for young people, especially labour market opportunities, education and democratic participation. These protests have highlighted the importance of better investing in youth and involving young people in democratic and policy making processes.

Girls and young women

17.   Young people are not a homogenous group. Young people's needs vary widely both within and across countries. The ability of a young person to participate in youth structures or civil society processes can depend heavily upon their social and economic status, gender, disability, and ethnic and religious backgrounds. Developing processes and structures which support the participation of young people from all backgrounds, as well as enhancing opportunities for young people with limited education and employment opportunities, and those suffering from poverty or disability is fundamental to ensuring that policy development is reflective of the needs of all of society's young people.

18.   Enhancing the participation of girls and young women in society is particularly essential in creating an equitable society and in meeting the demands of the WPAY. Cultural and legal impediments to the participation of girls and young women in society can severely undermine the development of youth. Developing mechanisms to improve the access to participation for young women is therefore a key priority of the WPAY and the UN system and indispensable for meaningful intergenerational dialogue.

Implementation of the World Program of Action for Youth

19.   WPAY is recognised as the primary guiding document on youth issues at the international level and as an effective tool in promoting youth participation and youth engagement. WPAY provides a framework for the development of national youth policies and the support of youth development, youth organizations and youth participation at the national, regional and international levels.

20.   The implementation of the WPAY has been piecemeal and limited in many countries and regions. For example, in the Arab region only 5 out of the 14 UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)[5] countries have implemented any form of national youth policy. Even in cases where a national youth policy had been established, these were often not backed up by finances, monitoring or evaluation.

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[5] ESCWA member states: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

21.   The development of national youth policies and frameworks are essential in the recognition of youth rights and youth development and provide a tool for ensuring support, recognition and funding to youth organisations and youth projects. National youth policies must be tailored to suit the situation of the country and to raise awareness of the importance of youth development and engagement.

22.   To help better support the development of national youth policies, ESCWA provides workshops and trainings on the implementation of the WPAY for member states in the region particularly on how to make the WPAY relevant to the realities of youth at the country level. Although national youth policies should be country specific, regional coordination of their development, through bodies such as ESCWA, can provide an impetus for countries to develop strong, transparent and rights based policies.

3. Youth and Family at the Regional Level

23.   Several experts drew attention to the fact that many countries and regions are experiencing what is known as a 'Youth Bulge', that is, a sharp rise in the youth population resulting in an inability of a country to meet the demand for greater employment opportunities and service provision. This, in turn, leads to a situation of social unrest with youth demanding better opportunities, as witnessed recently in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Bahrain and Yemen. These social changes demonstrate the ability and motivation of young people to mobilize and actively pursue their rights. This report provides an overview of youth policy at the regional level, paying particular attention to the situation in the Arab world.

Arab Region

24.   Within the ESCWA region youth engagement in political life is quite limited with the minimum voting age being set at age 25. In addition to the disenfranchisement of young people, there are often very few fora for youth to actively participate and contribute to democratic processes.

25.   In countries in the region which have been affected by ongoing conflict and violence there has been a noted impact on youth development and intergenerational relations. Violence and conflict can serve to break up families and communities, and cause suspicion and tension between generations on political ideals and aspirations. Ensuring young people's involvement in their communities is fundamental in preventing them from resorting to violent measures to meet their needs in conflict torn areas and in promoting conflict resolution.

26.   It was noted by Experts that the 2011 youth driven upheavals occurring in the Arab region[6] provided an insight into the issues and concerns facing young people within the region. In particular, high unemployment rates and lack of opportunities amongst youth were deemed as some of the primary concerns leading to the protests. Despite this, it was stressed that the events were not solely youth specific but rather arose from a demand for change to historical structures which have served to limit the quality of life of the country's populace, such as undemocratic and corrupt governance, censorship, and discrimination. However, due to the utilization of newer technologies, such as Facebook and Twitter, youth quickly became the 'face' of the changes taking place in many of the Arab countries. The use of social media acted as a platform for young people to mobilize, engage and have their ideas and voices heard in the region, as well as to garner global support and recognition. This shift in communication and mobilization has provoked a global debate on how to better engage with youth and social media.

Europe

27.   Many European countries have made big strides in job creation for young people over the past 20 years. Youth is high on the agenda of many European countries and of the institutions of the European Union. National Youth Councils work effectively in many European countries and operate along side a plethora of youth led organizations. Participatory processes have been established in many countries as a means of involving young people in the democratic process and inputting into national and EU policy development. At the regional level, the European Youth Forum operates as an umbrella organization for over 100 national youth councils and youth organizations, representing youth towards the European Institutions and other international bodies. The European Institutions and many EU member states provide funding to youth work and youth organizations and their development. For youth organizations to exist and operate on a long term basis, they need to have sustainable operational funding. In recent years there has been a trend to funding opportunities to move from operational to project based funding threatening the sustainability of youth organizations and limiting their ability to develop strategic plans.

28.   The development of national and regional youth policies are not only important in setting policy guidelines for youth work and youth related issues, but provide a valuable process through which youth can actively participate in designing policies that concern them.

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[6] Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Bahrain

Latin America

29.   Many young people in Latin America continue to experience poverty and social exclusion which has been closely associated with increased rates of violence, particularly in larger towns and cities. In addition, despite progress in youth literacy and access to education, Latin America too suffers from a Youth Bulge, with a lack of decent jobs and opportunities for personal development. This has resulted in many young people turning to illicit ways of making an income, such as organized and violent crime. The issue of violence in the region is one which needs to be addressed by policy makers taking into account the perspective and input of youth.

30.   In Latin America progress is being made to better include youth rights on national agendas and to develop a regional coordination of youth policy. The Ibero-American Convention on Young People's Rights, which entered into force in 2008 and was ratified by Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Spain, and Costa Rica, proves that growing importance is being placed on youth rights in Latin America. The Convention provides a valuable framework for the development of youth policies at the national level in Latin America and a framework through which youth led organizations can better operate.

31.   The UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has developed four broad areas of focus for its work in the region related to youth: building youth capacity, through increasing primary and secondary level education; creating opportunities in vocational training and youth entrepreneurship; risk prevention through focusing on reduction of sexually transmitted diseases, drug use and risky behaviours; increasing the sense of belonging of marginalized youth. In doing so, it hopes to better educate and engage young people in developing their skills and capacities to be able to better meet the needs of their communities and labour markets.

Africa

32.   Sixty per cent of Africa's population are youth. Poverty remains a dominant problem in many African countries, and impacts highly on the role of the family, family structures and intergenerational relations. Lack of adequate education and access to education continues to impact upon the lives of young people in Africa, particularly young women and those from vulnerable or marginalized backgrounds. Such a situation perpetuates a cycle of poverty, which is closely associated with lower levels of participation of youth and civic engagement.

33.   In addition, in 2007, an estimated 3.2 million young people were living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa alone, with HIV/AIDS accounting for over 53 per cent of deaths

among Africa's youth. The AIDS epidemic has left generational gaps in many African countries, with many young people being raised by their grandparents as a result of their birth parents dying of AIDS and AIDS related illnesses prematurely. This situation has impacted significantly the family structure in Africa and has highlighted the important role that grandparents often take in assuming responsibility as primary caregivers to grandchildren.

34.   Youth issues are a key concern for many African countries. The African Youth Charter, established in 2006, sets out a legally binding framework for governments to develop policies and programmes for young people and provides a platform for young people to exercise their rights and actively contribute to development in the region. The ratification, implementation and recognition of the Charter will be central in ensuring that young people are placed high on the development agenda in Africa. Initiatives such as the creation of youth parliaments, youth committees and support to youth organizations in some African countries showcase the increased recognition youth participation is receiving across the continent.

Asia and Pacific region

35.   It was noted that in the Pacific region there has been a more coordinated approach to the development of youth policy in recent years, with countries in the region sharing best practices and developing policy within a regional framework. An expert from the region indicated that there had been increased efforts at all levels to increase youth participation, particularly within the context of the family, where young people were increasingly being recognized as active partners in dialogue and family and community life.

Developing youth policies at national and regional levels

36.   Several experts emphasized that there has been a paradigm shift in how youth policy has been regarded in many regions. Whereas youth organizations and youth work once, for most part, involved the participation of students, it has broadened to mean the active participation of civil society youth from all backgrounds and in all spheres of life. This shift has also been characterized by a move from project to movement based youth work, where youth organizations not only develop projects to respond to specific needs in the community but work as movements with specific ideals and missions.

37.   A number of countries in the Arab region are in the process of developing national youth policies. However, problems and barriers to their development exist including no or little practice or knowledge sharing on youth policy development between countries in the region, resulting in a wide variety of approaches to their

development, from programme based and cross cutting, to project based and non cross cutting. A lack of youth mainstreaming and coordination across ministries and bodies at the national and regional levels results in the development of non coherent youth policies unreflective of the needs and aspirations of young people it is trying to target.

38.   With big variations in the development and implementation of youth policy in the region, coordination for young people across these countries becomes more difficult. As such, there is a need to develop a more streamlined and common approach to youth policy development at the regional level, characterized by knowledge and skill sharing, so as to allow for better transfer of knowledge and ideas amongst youth and to enhance cooperation. Regional organizations are noted as having value in providing a template for countries within a region to develop national youth policies and to share skills and knowledge within the region. Regional commissions, such as ESCWA in the Arab region, can also act as a bridge to connect countries internationally and provide a space for countries to develop policies related to youth in a coordinated way.

39.   A lack of institutional capacity of governments and ministries to implement youth policies, as well as a lack of awareness of the value of youth participation, has meant that in many cases youth policy is developed without partnering with youth. For youth policies to be reflective of the needs and realities of young people, youth should be included in all stages of the development process. Experts noted the importance of developing youth based policies from the ground up and reflective of a country's individual needs and situation. Prescribing a 'one size fits all' policy is not effective and focusing on developing policies and programmes concerning youth at the local level, with a strong focus on young people's participation in their development is critical.

40.   Experts identified National Youth Councils as being valuable entities for the development of youth policy and youth participation. National Youth Councils provide the opportunity for youth organizations to strategize and prioritize together, helping to ensure further opportunities for young people's participation while providing them with a platform to turn to when seeking out participation opportunities. In many Arab countries no laws supporting youth led organizations exist and this severely hinders the possibility for their creation and sustainability, due to lack of recognition and funding. Appropriate funding for both the development for youth policy and the support of youth organizations and processes is essential in ensuring full and effective youth development at the regional level.

4. Intergenerational Relations

41.   "Solidarity between generations at all levels – families, communities and nations- is fundamental for the achievement of a society for all ages." [7]

42.   Intergenerational dialogue is of great importance to society and can be valuable at the family and community levels as well as national and regional levels. Not only can generations learn from each other by sharing knowledge and experience, they also need each other in order to meet the growing care needs of older people. Intergenerational relationships generate mutual benefits; older persons contribute to the education and care of younger generations in an economic, physical and emotional way. Correspondingly, young people provide significant assistance to the wellbeing of the older people[8], for example through care giving in older age, assisted living arrangements and monetary assistance.

43.   Although, as a result of demographic and socio-economic changes, intergenerational relations have been placed under increasing pressure, through intergenerational dialogue and understanding, reciprocity and solidarity between generations can be strengthened and supported.[9] Intergenerational dialogue is characterized by knowledge sharing, cultural norms and traditions as well as mutual care, maintenance and resource exchange.[10] Intergenerational dialogue is essential to the functioning of society as a whole. Although culturally and geographically dependent, most people attach great value to the maintenance of relations between older and younger generations. Despite difference in family values across regions and countries, basic family values of support and nurturing are common across most societies.

44.   When discussing the notion of the family, it is important to keep in mind its changing nature and new family types, for example, single parent families, step parent families, transnational families, whose members live in different countries, same sex partners and other family types. The changing nature of family has meant family structures and roles have been shifting, impacting on the opportunities for and nature of intergenerational dialogue. Equality within the family and in society more generally, impacts upon the nature of intergenerational relations. Whereas intergenerational dialogue between women might once have been, and in many countries still is, defined primarily as taking place within the home, women's entry to the labour force and

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[7] Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, Issue 5 Intergenerational Solidarity, point 42.
[8] Intergenerational Solidarity; Strengthening Economic and Social Ties Expert Group Meeting, October 2007, recommendations and proceedings
[9] Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002
[10] United Nations International Year of Youth Fact Sheet: Youth and Intergenerational Partnerships http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/youth-partnerships.pdf

increased participation in education and community life has allowed for increased intergenerational social interactions in non family contexts. Programmes and initiatives targeting intergenerational dialogue must therefore take these changing structures and roles into account. Families in all their formats should be supported to play a positive role in young people's development and in enhancing intergenerational dialogue.

45.   Several experts indicated that despite greater equality of roles within and outside of the family context, as a result of economic, cultural, political and demographic changes, there exists increasing 'generational disjuncture'[11], that is, a disconnect between the generations. In particular this is characterized by a physical distance between the generations, as a result of migration (economic migration, conflict driven migration), and a social distance. Social distance refers to the distance that exists between the generations as a result of differing levels of education, beliefs, influence of media, and ideas between them. Such differences serve to further distance the generations leaving them with fewer common points of interaction. Social distance can have a negative effect on the ability of generations to support each other, as they begin to feel less responsibility for care-giving to a generation they have little in common with or connection to. This can result in isolation and feelings of loneliness amongst older adults.

46.   Isolation and loneliness as it pertains to older people is an area of growing concern, particularly in Europe, where increasingly higher percentages of older people are living in single or couple only family households as a result of demographic ageing, perpetuating both social and physical distance. Demographic change has meant that the traditional system of younger people supporting their parents in their old age is dissipating. Increased life expectancy together with lower fertility rates has put a strain on intergenerational support of older people as well as social security and pension systems. In many societies in Europe most support now flows from older to younger people, as a result of younger people remaining in the home for longer periods and being reliant on their parents' income.

47.   To properly address this phenomenon, greater investment in intergenerational processes is needed as well as a commitment by both younger and older people in sharing the responsibility to make the intergenerational dialogue a success. The promotion of emotional bonds between the generations and within the family context is therefore key for improving intergenerational relations. Initiatives such as ensuring quality time for communication between parents and children within the family, ensuring time for visiting older relatives such as grandparents and including grandparents in family events all help to nurture bonds between family members. By actively participating in this process

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[11] The changing patterns of Intergenerational Relations in South Africa, paper presented by Makiwane Monde at 2011 United Nations and Doha International Institute for Family Studies Expert Group Meeting on dialogue and mutual understanding across generations.

young people can make useful and significant contributions to society and must be considered as key agents and participants in intergenerational dialogue.

48.   Greater recognition and redistribution of resources towards intergenerational programming and initiatives, together with adequate resources targeted to the needs of both older and young members of society are crucial for advancing dialogue across generations. Moreover, the recognition of both older and younger people as equal partners and contributors to the process of intergenerational dialogue is critical to its success. In societies where hierarchical structures exist between older and younger people the process of intergenerational dialogue becomes more challenging, as preconceived notions of the capacity of younger people and what they can contribute to the process may serve to limit its effectiveness. It is important that intergenerational relations be based on reciprocity

5. Intergenerational dialogue in context

49.   The changing roles of institutions; such as the family, educational institutions, and the workplace has had an impact on intergenerational solidarity. In all settings for intergenerational dialogue to be successful, intergenerational interactions should be intentional, preparing people for dialogue. Intergenerational dialogue should also be regular, taking place frequently so as to promote intergenerational ties. Dialogue which takes place rarely and sporadically does little to promote intergenerational relationships on a whole. With this in mind, experts discussed intergenerational dialogue and relations as they take place within the follow contexts.

Education

50.   Experts agreed that education provides both younger and older persons with the skills and knowledge necessary to actively participate in society. In particular, Non Formal Education (NFE) is recognized as a valuable tool in developing the life skills needed for effective intergenerational dialogue and communication. Non Formal Education is a planned learning activity which typically involves a series of workshops which aim at developing the skills of the learner outside the constraints of formal education. The process is often peer led and places the learner at the centre of the process. Although NFE is a valuable tool, it is very often not recognized by educational institutions, employers, and often society as a whole. NFE therefore needs greater support, recognition and funding, as a tool for helping young people develop the skills necessary for life and the labour market.

51.   In addition, Life Long Learning, which is education taking place throughout the course of the learner's life, can often incorporate aspects of NFE and likewise provide a

powerful tool for people of all ages to engage in the educational process through all life stages.

52.   Greater resources are needed toward the investment of skills and transfer of knowledge across generations, in particularly for spaces which promote intergenerational transfers and learning. Both NFE and Life Long Learning are adaptable tools for education and the creation of intergenerational learning spaces.

Workplace

53.   Experts emphasized the importance of workplace based initiatives, such as mentoring, in helping to promote intergenerational dialogue and encourage skill sharing between older and younger people. The role of mentorship is particularly important in, though not limited to, the workplace. Mentoring provides a space for dialogue and skill sharing between older and younger workers where ideas can be shared and experiences exchanged. Mentoring can take place in a variety of different contexts, and should be supported as such.

54.   Equality in relationships is essential for effective intergenerational dialogue and mentoring, with both younger and older persons being equally valued for the skills and input they bring to the table. Often, when it comes to intergenerational relations, and particularly those within the workforce, an authoritarian power dynamic can exist which undermines the success of intergenerational dialogue. Ensuring a non hierarchical atmosphere is essential for intergenerational mentoring to be successful. Allowing all participants to contribute equally and openly fosters strong intergenerational ties.

Family

55.   Experts observed that family is often regarded as the first line of support for society. Promoting extended family ties helps to reinforce the basic role of the family in supporting both younger and older members. Within the family context, intergenerational relations can take many forms. Young people can become carers at an early age to ill parents, sacrificing their free time, friendships with peers and often education, to take care of a sick parent. A young person's contribution to society in this sense can be invaluable, though often left unrecognised. Likewise, parents can continue looking after their children long after the typical 'flea the nest' time has lapsed. In both situations, the family, and its members individually, must be better supported and recognised in the roles they play in an intergenerational context. In this context, it is often advisable to provide support to family caregivers instead of institutionalizing of care to healthcare institutions. For example, monetary compensation could be offered to family members taking care of older relatives, instead of arbitrarily placing older persons in care facilities.

56.   In Singapore, policies and schemes highlight the importance placed on the family as the primary space for providing intergenerational contact[12]. Housing policies which encourage intergenerational living, the creation of a taskforce on grand-parenting as well an intergenerational fund for projects promoting intergenerational interaction are all initiatives undertaken to improve intergenerational issues in Singaporean society.

57.   For intergenerational dialogue to develop, the family must be supported. Changing family structures, as mentioned earlier, are important to keep in mind when intergenerational programmes and policies are designed, so as to be inclusive of all realms where intergenerational dialogue can occur.

Community

58.   Although the family provides a base for intergenerational relationships, increasingly other spaces where social interactions take place are being recognized for their potential to foster intergenerational dialogue. In families where older and younger generations have little contact or do not live in the same household, community based initiatives and interactions provide a space for intergenerational dialogue to occur. Ensuring a more holistic approach to intergenerational communication is essential, particularly within the community where more public domains for both younger and older generations should exist. It is primarily society's youngest and oldest who are the least mobile and whose interactions take place primarily within their local communities. This creates potential for the development of intergenerational programming and initiatives at the community level. Such initiatives exampled at the EGM, and spoken about in detail in the Expert papers showcase schemes such as a community combining resources to run an intergenerational school/senior centre, where both young and older people operate activities within the same facility and develop joint activities.[13]

Technology

59.   Experts noted that technology is playing an increasingly large and central role in the lives of many people, especially youth. Newer technologies, particularly social media, are changing the nature and frequency of interactions between people. More and more young people are spending time communicating with their peers online as opposed to in

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[12] Promoting intergenerational understanding between the young and old: the case of Singapore, paper presented by Leng Leng Thang to 2011 United Nations and Doha International Institute for Family Studies Expert Group Meeting on dialogue and mutual understanding across the generations.
[13] Existing framework for dialogue and mutual understanding across generations: family, community, educational institutions and workplace, paper presented by Donna Butts to the 2011 United Nations and Doha International Institute for Family Studies Expert Group Meeting on dialogue and mutual understanding across the generations.

face to face situations. At the same time, older demographics spend less time online. This results in a generational technology gap. As a result, utilizing technology in a way that enhances intergenerational contacts as opposed to distancing them is of importance. Central to this is ensuring the accessibility of technology to older people, those who experience technological marginalization, such as those who speak indigenous languages, those with disabilities and those in communities where computer based technology is not as easily available.

60.   Schemes where young people teach older people how to use newer technologies were discussed as having a benefit not only for the older learner, but also the younger person, in enhancing social connections between generations.

Research and Funding

61.   The strain being placed on pension and social security systems, as a result of demographic ageing in many countries, may reflect negatively on intergenerational relations, as the generations compete for scare resources. It is important for policy makers to keep in mind that each family member possesses competing demands. Resources, policies and programmes should be utilized and developed in a way that tries to meet demands so as to promote communication between the generations.

62.   In addition to resources, Experts identified the need for greater research and data collection on youth at the regional level so as to be able better identify the needs of young people and develop policies accordingly. For example, identifying how the characteristics of youth unemployment differ from one area to another is important in creating a multi faceted and appropriate policy response. For this to happen, better data collection at all levels is required.

63.   Training young people as youth researchers was also highlighted as a means of not only ensuring that data collected is done so with a youth lens but also allows new forms of youth employment to be created and allows young people to be actively involved in analyzing the situation of youth.

Conclusions and recommendations

64.   As reflected in the meeting, youth participation is central to ensuring full and meaningful intergenerational dialogue. Ensuring both older and younger generations are equal participants in dialogue, as well as providing appropriate funding and space for intergenerational relations to develop is central to fostering dialogue and mutual understanding across the generations.

65.   Moreover, the development of policy frameworks and initiatives which serve to strengthen the participation of both older and younger persons in society, as well as their rights and responsibilities is a pre-requisite for promoting successful dialogue and understanding across the generations.

66.   Support to structures, such as youth organizations and organizations geared and enhancing intergenerational dialogue allows civil society to foster better relations between the generations. Support should come in the form of both recognition and financing.

67.   Likewise, the promotion of the participation of all groups in society, particularly marginalized people, girls and young women, those suffering from discrimination allows for a meaningful dialogue.

68.   Programmes and initiatives such as mentoring and leadership programmes both for young people and in an intergenerational setting help develop the skills necessary for young people to participate in dialogue as well as to be become active youth leaders in their community.

69.   The development of national youth policies and regional coordination mechanisms on youth issues ensures young people's rights are enshrined into policy making. Central to this is the development of policies on youth issues which take a cross cutting and mutli-sectoral approach, where youth issues are not only dealt with by bodies or ministries in charge of youth, but where youth issues are mainstreamed and considered throughout all ministries with appropriate communication and coordination between.

70.   Social media and new technologies are playing an increasingly important role in the lives of young people and have provided an additional avenue through which youth can mobilize and participate. It is therefore a necessity for governments, policy makers and civil society alike to engage with youth via newer technologies and understand the impacts and potential this technology can have in advancing youth issues and dialogue across the generations.