

Tuesday 13 January 2004
Morning session: 10.00-13.00

Panel discussion: “Childbearing and parenting in low fertility countries: enabling choices”.

Four comments based on the presentations

1. Very often we tend to over emphasize biological parenthood at the expense of under stressing the importance of social parenthood. The many and programmes, services and benefits prevalent in a number of Western societies tend to substantiate this. We must remember that parenthood is a lifelong phenomenon.
2. We often tend to downsize the role of the father. When speaking of parenthood one must take into consideration both genders, female and male and not only refer to women issues. We often tend to synonymies gender with feminism.
3. Speaking of parenting, we tend to forget the important role of grand parenting. This role is increasing in importance both in the Western World and the more so in the HIV/AIDS riddled countries where older grandparents are taking over the role of social parents as surrogate parents (Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, Issue 3, Objective 3).
4. A lot has changed since Cairo. During the past 10 years, the world has demographically shifted grounds, namely from younger to older populations.

Other variables have been highly influenced by government policies. Thus the fertility rate has been remarkably lowered through family planning and reproductive health policies. Similarly, the advances in the health and socio-economic sectors have increased a person's life expectancy. One dares to ask: “Can Population Ageing as such be changed”. In theory the answer is yes, in practice no. Hence greater emphasis needs to be made on how to face this challenge so that we will not let events overtake history.

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