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Department of
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**Expert Group Meeting
Families, Megatrends, Inequalities and Family and Child Wellbeing
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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES OF PARTICIPANTS



Juan Antonio López Baljarg is a public policy specialist with a focus on family well-being and social development, with a professional trajectory dedicated to advancing structural solutions to poverty and inequality. He serves as Executive Director of the Family Policy Institute (IAPF), where he has promoted an innovative approach that recognizes the family as a key social infrastructure for sustainable development. His work focuses on analyzing poverty through a multidimensional lens—economic, time-related, and affective—and on advancing public policies that strengthen family capacities as a foundation for social well-being. Among his main initiatives are Family-Sustainability-Oriented Cities, Positive Schools, and the Alliance for Family Well-being at Work, which aim to generate impact across government, education, and labor sectors. The IAPF operates under an evidence-based, multi-stakeholder, and sustainability-oriented approach, contributing to the strengthening of social cohesion and to the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in areas related to reducing inequalities, promoting social well-being, and fostering community development.



Dr. Benjamin Freer is the Dean of the Marion Turpan College of Psychology and Counseling (MTCPC) and Professor of Psychology at Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU). Dr. Freer is an innovative and collaborative leader focused on the training and career readiness of FDU's undergraduate and graduate students and advancing the university wide initiatives to promote FDU Health, empathy, character and leadership, and Humanics. As co-founder of The Empathy Center for Research and Training at Fairleigh Dickinson University, Dr. Freer leads collaborative efforts that apply empathy science to strengthen organizational culture and promote sustainable social change. His work bridges disciplines and communities – partnering with hospitals, schools, faith-based organizations, nonprofits, and municipal agencies to build connected, compassionate systems that thrive on collaboration, understanding, and conflict resolution. Dr. Freer has represented FDU at the United Nations since 2012, serving on the Executive Committee of the NGO Committee on the Family–New York. The NGO Committee on the Family-New York operates from the perspective that stable families are essential for stable communities, stable nations, and a stable world. Thus, the Committee on the Family works to promote, preserve, and protect the well-being of the family. Dr. Freer leads student engagement at international events such as the Commission on the International Day of Families (IDF), Status of Women (CSW), Commission for Social Development (CSocD), and Psychology Day at the UN. He has frequently served on expert panels for Commissions at the UN with a focus on best practices to empower children and families through global policies.



Dr. David B. Harris Harris is the President of Children's Research and Education Institute, a partner at Kids Project, a senior research fellow at the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University, an advisory board member of the Social Policies for Health Equity Research Center at Harvard University, an affiliate of the Center on Poverty and Inequality at Stanford University, and a senior research fellow at UNICEF Innocenti, Global Office for Research and Foresight. He received a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare from Columbia University.



Renata Kaczmarska is a Social Affairs Officer and the Focal Point on Family in the Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DISD/DESA) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. In this capacity, she acts as a spokesperson on family issues for the United Nations Secretariat and engages in the work of the Third Committee of the General Assembly and the Commission for Social Development of the Economic and Social Council. She conducts research on socio-economic policies in support of sustainable development outcomes. Renata has led research on new technologies, urbanization, migration, demographic shifts and climate change, contributing analytical inputs on socioeconomic impacts of global trends on families. She shapes international and regional approaches to family-oriented policy development demonstrating the importance of such policies to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. She also brings experience in capacity development conducting workshops on family policy development at the national level. She holds a Master of Science Degree in Social Sciences and Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Communications as well as the United Nations Studies Graduate Diploma.



Dr. Matthew Mulvaney is an Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Science at Syracuse University. He received his Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of New Hampshire and has held a series of faculty appointments, including a term as a Fulbright Scholar. Throughout his career, his work has been generally focused on parenting practices (particularly corporal punishment and other forms of harsh parenting), parenting beliefs and their mutual influences on children's development, with a particular emphasis on understanding intrapersonal characteristics of children that determine the impact of specific parenting approaches. Since his Fulbright at the Middle East Technical University- Northern Cyprus Campus, his work has more specifically focused much more on cross-national research on these parenting approaches as well as understanding how such parenting changes in the context of acculturation of diverse families in the United States. In his current work, he seeks to understand variations in harsh parenting, how harsh parenting is differentially interpreted across cultural contexts, and how parenting beliefs are determined by cultural beliefs and family circumstances.



María Priscila de Anda Núñez is the Chief Executive Officer of *Un Kilo de Ayuda*, a leading Mexican organization focused on early childhood development and family wellbeing. She currently leads national efforts to deliver integrated early childhood interventions, benefiting more than 23,000 children across seven states in Mexico, as well as thousands of vulnerable families affected by humanitarian emergencies. With over 15 years of experience at the intersection of social development, philanthropy, and community-based interventions, Priscilla has built a strong track record in designing and scaling programs that address structural inequalities from early childhood, with a particular emphasis on strengthening families as the primary environment for child development. Her work focuses on translating evidence from community-based interventions into practical insights that can inform broader efforts to improve child and family wellbeing. She has contributed to the implementation of integrated, family-centered approaches that respond to the complex realities faced by vulnerable populations. Priscilla holds a degree in International Business from Tecnológico de Monterrey and has completed executive and specialized training at institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. She is currently pursuing a diploma in Early Childhood Public Policy in Latin America at Tecnológico de Monterrey.



Dr. Mohamed Obaidy is an associate director and economist at the Center for New York City Affairs and a senior economist affiliate at the Learning for Well-Being Institute. He has over a decade of experience in economic policy, research, and international diplomacy. Prior to joining the Center for New York City Affairs, he worked as a consultant for the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNICEF, UNDP, and the New Development Bank. Mohamed holds a Ph.D. in economics from The New School for Social Research.



Masumi Ono is Chief of the Social Inclusion and Participation Branch at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). In this role, she leads global policy, intergovernmental, and analytical work to advance the social inclusion and participation of older persons, youth, persons with disabilities and families, and support Member States in implementing internationally agreed development commitments. She has over 25 years of UN experience, including supporting the development of the Sustainable Development Goals, advancing high-level advocacy on education financing, and managing trade facilitation programmes in Asia and the Pacific. She holds an MBA and a BA in Economics from Cornell University.



Dr. Dominic Richardson is the Managing Director and co-founder of the Learning for Well-being Institute. Dominic previously worked with UNICEF Innocenti and the OECD Social Policy Division on issues related to family policies, child well-being, integrating human services, and public expenditure. Dominic has led or co-authored multiple reports on comparative family policy and child well-being in high-, middle- and low-income countries. In 2018, Dominic was awarded the Jan Trost Award (lifetime achievement) for Outstanding Contributions in International Family Studies by the National Council for Family Relations in the United States.



Dr. Mihaela Robila is Professor of Human Development and Family Science at Queens College City University of New York. Her scholarship is focused on international families and policies. Besides publishing peer-reviewed articles, she edited the *Handbook of Family Policies across the Globe* (Springer, 2014), and *Families in Eastern Europe* (Elsevier, 2004), wrote *Eastern European Immigrant Families* (Routledge, 2008) and co-edited *Global Perspectives on Family Life Education* (Springer, 2018). Her work has been supported by funding from the National Science Foundation, U.S. Dept. of State - American Councils for International Education, Fulbright, United Nations, Spencer Foundation, Fahs Beck Fund for Research, Jacobs Foundation, and CUNY, among others. She is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association Divisions 52 (International Psychology), 43 (Family Psychology), and 37 (Child and Family Policy and Practice). She has been NCFR Representative at the United Nations since 2009. Dr. Robila was an American Association for the Advancement of Sciences (AAAS) Science and Technology Policy Fellow (STPF) (2021-2022) in the Division of Social and Economic Sciences (SES) in the Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and an Intermittent Expert in the SES Division at NSF (2022-2024).



Dr. Emilia Toczyłowska is a Senior Economist Associate specializing in social protection design, microsimulation, and poverty and inequality analysis, with a strong focus on child wellbeing, and a senior researcher at the Learning for Well-Being Institute. She has extensive experience working with international organizations, including UNDP, UNICEF, UNRISD, and Eurostat, contributing to policy-relevant research, data systems, and impact evaluation. Emilia holds a PhD in Social Science from the University of Luxembourg, where her research examined inequality, poverty, and household income dynamics in Europe.



Dr. Bahira Trask is Professor Emerita of Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Delaware. She holds a B.A. in Political Science with a concentration in International Relations from Yale University and a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on globalization, women's employment, and family change in Western and non-Western countries, and she presents regularly on these topics at international forums. In recent years, Dr. Trask has also worked on issues of urbanization and migration from a global perspective. Dr. Trask has authored and edited several books including *Women, Work, and Globalization: Challenges and Opportunities* (Routledge, 2014), *Globalization and Families: Accelerated Systemic Social Change*, (Springer, 2010) and *Cultural Diversity and Families* (Sage, 2007), as well as having published over 100 peer reviewed articles, chapters, and reports. She is currently editing *The Handbook of Globalization and Families* for Elgar Publishers. Much of Dr. Trask's scholarship has been informed through participation with a number of international, national and community-based research projects that focus on gender and work challenges and policies to strengthen low-income, vulnerable families. Her work has been funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Marguirite Casey Foundation, Blueprints Delaware and various local community initiatives. Dr. Trask is a fellow of NCFR, the National Council on Family Relations, she has won the Jan Trost award for excellence in international scholarship, and in 2017 she was awarded the University of Delaware Excellence in Teaching Award. In 2022 she received the prestigious Groves Sussman Award for her work in International Family Studies and Policy.



Dr. Jose Alejandro Vázquez Alarcón is the Director of International Relations at the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD)—present in 68 countries on five continents. In this role, he opens lines of communication between Member States, academia, the UN system, families, and civil society to bring a family perspective and a child protection scope to social policy design. With a PhD in Political Thought and Development, he combines academic depth with practical engagement among stakeholders worldwide. At the UN, he has coordinated evidence-based projects on family-perspective policy, including the Global Report on Families, Family Policies and the Sustainable Development Goals (with UNICEF, CaixaBank, and Stiftung Maienburg), and has served as invited expert at UN Expert Group Meetings on families, parenting, and youth transitions in New York, Brussels, Qatar, Malaysia, Egypt, South Africa, Mexico, Kenya, and Poland. He coordinated the Civil Society Declaration for the 30th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (2024) and led IFFD's contributions to the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha (2025) and to UNGA high-level side events. He directs "Inclusive Cities for Sustainable Families," linking global frameworks to local action across 250+ cities on three continents. He has been co-chair of the NGO Committee on UNICEF and partners with UNICEF on the Parenting Month initiative. His PhD was jointly developed between the University of Navarra (Spain) and Columbia University in the City of New York.



Dr. Sergio Pires Vieira is an economist and UN official with over 20 years of experience shaping global and national policies on inclusive and sustainable development. His work spans macroeconomic analysis, social policy, and structural transformation, with a particular focus on how economic policies can support equitable development outcomes. Across his roles in UN DESA, he has led research on climate change, labour-market shifts, poverty, and income inequalities, drafting analytical contributions on socioeconomic impacts of global trends. Sergio's economic expertise is rooted in years of monitoring global and regional macroeconomic conditions, including in Latin America and the Caribbean. He also brings field experience from several Western African countries, including Cabo Verde, where he served as RCO Economist supporting national strategies on poverty eradication, jobs and social protection, and SDG accelerators, while coordinating development partners to strengthen inclusive and resilient economic pathways. Sergio holds a PhD in Development Economics from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. He brings to this event a deep commitment to social justice and solidarity.



Diane Whitehead, President and CEO of Childhood Education International (CE International), has dedicated her career to issues that affect the lives of young children and their families. She specializes in global education, early childhood development, children's education and wellbeing, the human right to education, nonprofit leadership, nonprofit management, strategic direction-setting, and program development. Through her strategic guidance and management of this 130+ year-old organization, Diane has expanded its global reach, built partnerships with education-focused organizations around the world, designed impactful programs, and participated in key international education forums and United Nations initiatives, a recognition of her commitment to transforming education and children's wellbeing. As Chief Executive Officer, she is dedicated to building CE International's relevancy, reach, and impact. Diane is committed in particular to supporting children who are facing extreme challenges such as war, conflict, migration, food and water insecurity, life threatening pollution, and the effects of climate change. Diane has spent much of her career advocating for improved economic outcomes and social change that promotes equity and social justice, as she believes these are essential to creating change for children and a better world for all. Diane has said, "No one should have the power keep people apart or treated differently based on race, ethnicity, country of origin, religious beliefs, or gender. We must find a way to live together and help our world to seek peace and harmony, together." She firmly believes that education is essential to providing individuals with more opportunities in life and creating a more stable and secure world.