

Reducing Dislocation of Families in Developing Countries

Let me introduce myself first.

I am Member of the Dutch Parliament and spokesman on Development Aid and Foreign Policy, but also on Youth and Family. That's why it is a honour for me to speak to you today on a subject that is close to my heart and of which I think is crucial for the wellbeing of society not only in the West, but also in developing countries.

My previous job was development aid worker for a Dutch Christian Aid organization called Dorcas. We worked mainly in Eastern Europe and in East Africa.

Strengthening families and the support for vulnerable children were one of the focus point of the organization. Before that my wife and I worked in Brazil with street kids. So when I became Member of Parliament my focus point again was vulnerable children en strengthening families, in Holland as well in Development Aid or better Cooperation.

Why? Because God created family. It was in his purpose not only to create Adam but also Eve. It was not good that men should live alone, God said. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, to become one with his wife. So there was set forth the bond, the commitment between man and wife. Jesus repeats these words and add. What God has joint together, let man not separate.

Until today 90% of the children grow up in Holland within a family of husband and wife.

United Nations

Even the United Nations has the aim to strengthen and secure a family live. It even has a complete program for it with the aim: to encourage and support coordination on **family** policies and programmes within national governments and within the **United Nations** system. It also supports family life in developing countries by provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to developing country Governments, at their request, in the area of the **family**. 31 resolutions were accepted on strengthening family life within the UN from 1987 onwards.

Effects of dislocation of families

If families do get dislocated we see especially a devastating effect on the development of children but in most cases also of women. For children to grow up without a father means in most cases in developing countries, poverty. For women too it also means reduce of income and the stress to go out of the house working, leaving their children alone behind. For children it can also mean that they have to quit school, because there is no money to pay the bills and school fees. That's when the poverty cycle starts again. No schooling of the children, no change on a better life then their parents.

Root Causes

That's why I am very pleased that primary school for every child, is one of the 8 Millennium Goals of the United Nations. But even this Goal is instrumental if we not look at the root causes of the dislocation of families. The socialists in politics will say that everything has to do with poverty. If poverty was the root course of dislocated families, then why there are so many divorces in the rich West.

And yes poverty will create a lot of stress within families. I have heard many stories of street kids in Brazil about poverty within their families and how that lead the fathers into addictions and into leaving their wives. But not all families are at risk of dislocation because they are poor. It also has to do with a commitment. In sickness and in health, rich and poor situations. And escaping into addictions is no way out of the problems, although there are no easy solutions either. Aids is a terrible disease, but sometimes it is a result of adultery.

Labor migration can be a way to find a job abroad, but in many cases it leaves the family separated and alone for years.

Family life can be good, but sometime a torture for women who are not treated with respect of even rapped and harassed.

Of course poverty can put a lot of stress on families and we will see this more and more even in the West, but there is more to it than this. It has also to do with a moral agenda, a commitment, a bond between spouses.

Therefore I put forward a resolution in Parliament to put families at the focus attention of our development Aid programs, so it will not lead or tried to avoid to the dislocation of families. In Parliament I stressed three points on this:

1. Assisting children who become orphans to be taken care for by preferably extended family or foster parents with financial assistance of the government;
2. To prevent dislocation of families by reducing labor migration;
3. To enhance the position of women with families.

I now will extend a bit more on these three points:

1. Social Protection Program

Aids is a terrifying disease and causes also dislocation of families. Worldwide there are over a 100 million orphans and 20 million of them due to the death of their parent caused by aids, mainly in Africa.

Therefore I have amended, with an increase of 8 million euros, our nation budget for development aid to help to set up an orphan welfare system in different countries in Africa, in response to the appeal of African leaders themselves. It is called the social protection program and the appeal is called the Livingstone plus 2 appeal, where it was stated that social protection is a basis human right. It aims at giving a cash transfer to families who take care of orphans or paying school fees for orphans. England have already invested 250 million ponds in social protection.

While many programs have been undertaken on a pilot basis, successful implementation of large-scale **social protection** programs have taken place in Ethiopia and South Africa—each with more than 8 million beneficiaries. It has demonstrated that **social protection** systems are no longer only within the reach of rich countries. International Labour Organization (ILO) projections for seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa suggest that a child benefit would cost between 1.4 and 4.5 percent of GDP, and a universal old-age and disability pension between 0.3 and 0.6 percent of GDP. In low-income countries in Africa, international aid can play a large

role in initially financing **social-protection** interventions, and in some countries, sustained aid may be needed and appropriate. Over time, however, increased levels of domestic financing, with political commitment can facilitate sustainability. It can be a cash transfer to single moms or foster parents or to grandparents or to old age pensions. The main aim is to keep the children into schools and pay for the current cost like medicare and food. This can prevent children to be forced to go to work or be abused into prostitution.

Forced Child Labour

In this context I am also trying to get more funds for reducing child labor. In October I hope to visit India a country which has the most child labor at the moment especially in clothing industry, carpets, stone and food production. At this moment 20 million children are forced to work in India with no access to education. I have put forward different proposals how to stimulate Dutch businesses to help children go to school and not make use of child labour with their production lines. This resulted into a new policy that the Dutch government will not give any support to Dutch companies who make use of child labour.

2. Reducing Labor migration

Poverty and a lack of jobs can also enhance men to go to look for jobs outside of their rural areas and even outside of their own country. In Asia there is a lot of migrant labor to the middle east for example. But again this makes families vulnerable.

In different countries through development aid, *Job en Business Centra* were opened to help people who are looking for a job and give them vocational training, reading and writing training. These were mostly opened in cities to prevent men going into crime or women getting into prostitution. The other way to prevent men leaving their families is of course stimulating rural development. In Holland we have neglected rural development in the last ten years. Everything was focused on the Millennium goals. Our minister Koenders promised Parliament to refocus on rural development again.

3. Empowering the role of women within family

The EU has stated recently that the position of women is far from good.

- Women and girl are doing two thirds of the work in the world, while getting %5 of the income. Women produce the half of the food production in the world.
- 70% of the 1,3 billion in living in absolute poverty is women; poverty is not only a symptom, it is also the cause of unequal sharing of the income, possession and influence.
- 57% of the adults with hiv/aids in Africa beneath the Sahara is women; young women between 15 and 24 year have three times more change to get affected by aids then younger men.

Women are the most subject to violence with families in Development Countries. This shows out of the research of the WHO. These is a great need within development cooperation to strengthen to legal position of women for example within the law of marriage. I have asked our minister of development cooperation to support programs that aims to prevent domestic violence and to promote marriages on the basis of partnership in stead of the domination of the man. I have also asked our minister to promote education on child rising and promoting the health of children.

Furthermore It will be good to inform women on the prevention of aids and to reduce mother mortality. In this context I do not mean promotion of safe abortions or legalise abortions. But to put more emphasis on prevention of unwanted pregnancies, by better protection of girls and women against rape, again strengthening their legal position in society.

Equality of women must come from bottom up by trying to influence the culture and be assured and acknowledged by top down through laws.

Gender mainstreaming should be integrated within the PRSP (*Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*) of countries. But this is difficult because there are only a few specialist on gender with experience on national levels.

The Netherlands has allocated extra Money to reduce violence against women, about 25 million euro extra per year for millennium goal 3 (above the already allocated 50 million), equal rights for man en women. This money will be added to the goals of implementation of UN-resolution 1325 on women, peace and security

Special attention goes out to women and girl in conflict area's and marginalised women.

Conclusion:

To come to a conclusion. Strengthening families has not only to do with fighting poverty but needs also a cultural and moral change within societies. It needs a wide range scale of measures from strengthening women rights within families, to reduce labour migration to taking care of the orphans and the vulnerable children. Whenever we support development programs we should first thing through if this program also enhance and sustain family life. If this is not the case the program could have a short term positive effect, but on the long term has a devastating effect on ones wellbeing. That's why it is good to work through churches with the same goals, empower family life. After all God created family life not to put us in a box, but to share each others burdens and happiness.

Thank you for your attention

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