ISRAEL
NATIONAL POLICY BRIEF

The objective of this policy brief is to present the current situation and progress made in family support on behalf of the children's rights in Israel towards achieving quality standards using the quality assurance protocol for family support services developed by the 19 countries participating in the COST Innovators Grant IG18123, QA(4)EuroFam. The aim is to provide key messages on current strengths as well as recommendations to key audiences, bringing relevant views and appraisals from the group of interdisciplinary experts, representatives of various sectors in the field at national level.

National Working Group

Consensual responses were provided by members of Israeli National Working Group made up of 17 researchers and coordinators of services and social entities at national, regional and local levels in social, education, health, and community sectors.

1. Contextualization and characterization of family support in Israel

Definition and understanding of family support in Israel: Extensive services exist in Israel, designed to assist families in various aspects of their lives, focusing on enhancing well-being, strengthening family bonds, and providing resources to navigate the challenges faced. Taking into account the diverse population, including: Jews, Arabs, Druze, and Bedouins, each with unique cultural and social dynamics.

Services are tailored to meet the variety of needs, relating to ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups, and are influenced by national policies and legislation aimed at protecting family rights and welfare. Government agencies, mainly the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services, play a significant role in providing and regulating the services. The services cover a wide range, promoting wellbeing. The ministry of welfare and social affairs provide a foundation of stability for families utilizing social work services, financial assistance & employment support (as families are impacted by low socio-economic levels putting children at risk for negligence, poverty and abuse). The main focuses of service are on the following: special needs, providing information, counseling and free support services required; domestic violence issues, providing tools for stability; disabilities, providing a variety of services according to specific issue, in order to improve quality of life; children at risk, providing hot-lines, therapy and shelter.

Family support services in context: There is a Multi-layered approach, providing comprehensive support for a wide range of family situations and backgrounds.

Nationally, The ministry of welfare & social affairs sets the national policy, allocating resources and overseeing service delivey (carried out by local social service departments).
Local municipality welfare departments provide supplement programs, such as after-school frameworks, and upload data from their region, to the national system.
These represent the public sector.

There are numerous Israeli organizations providing services, representing the non-profit sector.
Regarding areas: needs addressed through local healthcare service in collaboration with the Education system.

Political perspective on family support: There's common ground on the importance of family support. Various political parties and views influence programs and priorities within the national agenda. Debates continue regarding effectiveness of certain programs, cost of family support, and the balance between social welfare and individual responsibility.

Religious as well as center-right parties, tend to see family support as essential for national security and economic growth, as well as the foundation of society.

The overall political approach reflects a combination of welfare state principles, political priorities, and socio-economic considerations, leading to various child welfare and protection laws providing the legal framework for many support services.

2. Key messages from the National Strengths and Recommendations Report

Families and Children

STRENGTHS

1. A wide variety of programs exist, designed to address diverse needs: from financial assistance to disability services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Not all families may be aware of available services or have equal access due to geographic location or cultural sensitivities.

Professionals

STRENGTHS

1. Services provide a safety net, for families in need, providing basic support and crisis intervention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Development of broader social solutions to address the entire variety of issues faced by families, such as: poverty, discrimination, mental health.

Policymakers

STRENGTHS

1. A strong multi-layer system exists, incorporating government offices, municipalities, NGO's who work in collaboration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Creating a long-term affordability of programs- impacting service quality and availability.

Academics

STRENGTHS

1. Ongoing research is conducted, and many publications related to family support are distributed through Israeli universities, institutes and research centers, focusing on social welfare and family studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a need for ongoing evaluation to promote effectiveness of the programs.

3. Insights and lessons learned regarding the quality of family support

1 Non-profit organizations play a crucial role in shaping policies related to family support services. They work to highlight gaps and advocate for the rights of families to receive adequate support.

2 A high utilization rate and increase in services provided, indicates that the system is well known and accessible.

3 Feedback from families regarding the services provided, is crucial for improving the effectiveness and responsiveness of the service provider.

The author of this document is Dr. Orna Mager, Israeli Coordinator of the Project.

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