Reclaim Families:
A Feminist and Human Rights Based Approach to Family Policy
Side event at the 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69)

Invited Co-sponsors: Fòs Feminista, Outright International, ECMIA, Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, Permanent Mission of Cabo Verde to the UN, Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the UN, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the UN, Permanent Mission of South Africa to the UN, UNFPA.
Location: UN Headquarters, Conference Room TBD
Date: March 10-21, TBD
Modality: In-person

Background:
Article 16[3] of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." Similarly, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action affirms that "in different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist. The rights, capabilities, and responsibilities of family members must be respected."

Moreover, the existence of various forms of families has been acknowledged by General recommendation No. 21 of CEDAW, which stated that families take many forms and underscored the obligation of equality within the family under all systems, "both at law and in private." Subsequent statements by other entities in the United Nations system confirm this understanding that "the concept of family" must be understood in a "wide sense" and that "families assume diverse forms and functions among and within countries."

Based on facts and realities, many household structures and family forms exist across the world, including traditional nuclear families; extended multi-generational families; women-headed households with children; civil unions; migrant transnational families – including mothers and fathers, and youth, working abroad to sustain their children, parents and/or other family members back home; households headed by grandmothers or other relatives with orphaned children; as well as those without families and safe households to go home to (e.g. homeless persons, including due to mental illness, domestic violence and sexual abuse, those who have been expelled from home by their parents or the case of children and adolescents who have run away from home as a result of neglect).

As many studies have shown, families can be a central locus of people's well-being, emotionally and financially, and a cornerstone of children's upbringing; but they can also be settings of discrimination, abuse, violence, and exploitation. Failure to recognize families in all their diverse forms and to address specific challenges and rights violations that occur within households perpetuates cycles of poverty, social exclusion, and inequality, undermines human capital accumulation, and leaves many behind. Also, States must combat the misuse of the discourse of 'protection of the family' as an attempt to ignore intrafamilial violence and discrimination suffered by groups such as children, women, older persons, LGBTI persons, and persons with disabilities within traditional family contexts.

In order to be supportive of families, States should provide laws and policies that are fact-based, informed by data and analysis of trends, and be responsive to diverse realities and needs to be relevant, effective, and inclusive for all. As a guiding principle, legislative and policy development and reforms should ensure the respect and protection of the human rights and well-being of all individuals within families and households, without discrimination regardless of family form, and with particular attention to equal rights within marriage, to gender equality and protection from all forms of violence, including child abuse, gender-based and sexual violence.

Policies and programs for families must take on a feminist and human-rights-based approach. This means addressing family formation to foster healthy, resilient families, by ending child, early, and forced marriage, and through universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including modern methods of contraception. Family-friendly policies also include those that support balancing work and family responsibilities, including through paid maternity and paternity leave, affordable quality child care and support for the care of the elderly, the ill and people living with HIV or disabilities.

Purpose:
In this regard, on the sidelines of the 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 69), Fòs Feminista, Outright International, Permanent Mission of Cabo Verde to the UN, Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the UN, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the UN, and UNFPA are convening a dialogue between Member States, UN agencies, special mandate holders, and civil society to discuss the importance of making policies and programs for families from a feminist and human-rights-based approach.
This event will focus on the objectives below:
1. Explore intersectional perspectives of the concept of families, centering the experiences of systematically excluded groups and the Global South;
2. Examine how the concept of families has been weaponized to impede and devalue the human rights of individuals;
3. Discuss the roles of families in upholding human rights and gender equality;
4. Share best practices and strategies from national levels on how families and family-supportive policies can advance the human rights of women, girls, and gender-diverse persons.

Key Discussion Questions:
1. What is your intersectional perspective and experience with the concept of the family?
2. How has your family been structurally excluded from certain policies at programs that are aimed at families?
3. How has the concept of families been weaponized to impede and devalue the human rights of individuals, including in your own family or community?
4. What are the roles of families in upholding human rights and gender equality?
5. What are some best practices and strategies from national levels on family-supportive policies and programs that advance the human rights of women, girls, and gender-diverse people?

About Us:
As an intersectional feminist alliance of 170+ organizations, Fòs Feminista works to advance SRHRJ across the Global South. Together with local partners, we engage in healthcare, education, and advocacy, thus bringing key on-the-ground experience regarding the provision of services and

implementation of community-based strategies that make sexual and reproductive healthcare more accessible to the most marginalized women, girls, and gender-diverse people in the Global South. Our work on this topic includes our successful [Families for CSE Campaign](#), launched at CPD57.

Outright International is a US-based LGBTIQ organization dedicated to working with partners around the globe to strengthen the capacity of the LGBTIQ human rights movement, document and amplify human rights violations against LGBTIQ people, and advocate for inclusion and equality. One of Outright's core areas of work is advocating for the advancement of the rights of LGBTIQ people at the United Nations. Our work on this event topic includes the [Outright Proud: Family Pride](#)

Draft Run of Show:
- **Opening Remarks (5m)**
  - Fos Feminista
  - Outright International
- **Lived Experiences Panel (15m)**
  - Migrant representative (2m)
  - Indigenous representative (2m)
  - Religious community representative (2m)
  - LGBTQI+ representative (2m)
  - Disability justice representative (2m)
  - Youth and child rights representative (2m)
  - RJ movement representative (2m)
- **Best Practices Panel (18m)**
  - Representative from Cabo Verde (3m)
  - Representative from Brazil (3m)
  - Representative from the Netherlands (3m)
  - Representative from South Africa (3m)
  - UNFPA on the importance of SRHR, CSE, etc (3m)
- **Q&A, Interventions from the Floor (10m)**
- **Closing Remarks by Moderator (5m)**
  - Invitation to participate in campaign