

Mouvement Mondial des Mères (MMM) – Make Mothers Matters A Global Level of Action



Mouvement Mondial des Mères Europe
Make Mothers Matter Europe

“One factor remains constant: the timeless importance of mothers and their invaluable contribution to raising the next generation”

- Ban Ki Moon, UN Secretary General, 15 May 2009

Introduction

The family and - even more so - family policy, are sensitive issues at a national level where there is the simultaneous need to maintain a fragile balance between the privacy, free-choice and independence of an individual, versus the state's desire to ensure the wellbeing of its population. Organisations - whether they be grassroots, community-based, or non-governmental -, often run by committed volunteers attuned to the constraints, sensitivities and practicalities of such personal intervention, can be much more effective at raising public awareness and implementing family-friendly policies than public authorities. They can also, in good working relationships with academic institutions and governments, alert those advising and making social policy of unexpected consequences of policies on the family.

When these issues are considered at regional and global level, the situation is further complicated by transnational cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, and the desire for national sovereignty. International activities always make it necessary to put aside differences and find common ground. The highest international institution - the United Nations - does not have legislative powers, nor can it implement policies. Representatives of Member Nations in the various sessions work together on the texts of thematic documents on which all 192 member states must agree, and only then may they choose to ratify the document. Only NGOs can encourage their governments to implement what they have promised to do in a given sphere. NGOs have significant power to ensure that international directives are properly and fully implemented at the national level.

For these reasons, the importance of civil society organisations working in complementary collaboration with academic, national, regional and international institutions should not be underestimated. This is how Mouvement Mondial des Mères (MMM/Make Mothers Matter), sees its role at all levels: from the grassroots, to policy implementation. MMM is an example of an NGO working globally to support mothers and highlighting the importance of their social and economic role in the heart of the family and beyond the home.

MMM in a Nutshell

MMM is an international NGO in General Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and Department for Public Information., while MMM's European Delegation enables the organisation to work effectively with the European Commission and European Parliament. For 60 years MMM has federated associations from widely different backgrounds working with and for mothers to ensure at least the basics of human security and improved quality of life. The input of a mother and a father in bringing up children is - or should be - symbiotic, equal, different but complementary. However, mothers believe that they have a most profound and lasting influence from a child's earliest moments. For this reason MMM seeks to address many social issues through the natural authority of mothers.

To reinforce its open, inclusive character, MMM defines itself as an independent, apolitical and non-denominational movement. It is managed by mothers who volunteer to organise, support and represent Member Associations throughout the world: in short, MMM is run by mothers, for mothers and their children and family. The wide range of issues covered by MMM reflects not only a mother's essential multi-tasking skills, but also the diversity of its Member Associations. All of the different levels of activities - practical, and institutional and international networking - enhance each other.

Mission and Vision

The founding document of principles of MMM states: "A mother is the most powerful influence on the life of the family and, therefore, on the cultural, economic and social life of the nation. It is vital that public opinion and policymakers recognise and value the irreplaceable contribution of mothers throughout the world".

Therefore, MMM supports the action of mothers for peace and human security by:

- helping mothers as the first educators of their children to fulfil all their responsibilities: family, professional, social and civic;
- raising awareness and obtain recognition for a mother's mission, the social and economical value of her work with the general public and policy makers, in laws and in international conventions;
- fighting against different forms of violence, exclusion, discrimination and exploitation that affect mothers.

The specificity of MMM is that it works with issues of concern to mothers (and therefore, women), the family and children: mothers are the living link between these sometimes conflicting roles. Mothers do everything that women do, but in addition they have made a commitment to bear and raise children, which is a huge investment in - and direct influence on - the future; this is a fundamentally important dimension to add to the normal concerns and activities of women.

This is why the mother at the heart of the family and the community is an effective resource for all family-focused stakeholders and why MMM encourages the inclusion of mothers in decision-making processes at all levels, bringing to this the benefit of their specific expertise as mothers. MMM believes that policy beneficial to mothers can only be successfully developed with the direct input of mothers. Mothers can be agents of peace – a source of experience, strength, resilience, communication and mediation to help prevent, resolve and recover from family and community

dysfunction and to build an integrated and inclusive society. This is what MMM seeks to encourage mothers, policy-makers, opinion formers and the general public to recognise.

To date, most communities and societies have, however, not granted mothers the corresponding public influence that their responsibilities and quiet on-going actions deserve. Ultimately, mothers' participation in public life might also give their societies a better chance of survival in the long run.

History

MMM was formed as a result of the work of the Feminine Civic and Social Union (UFCS). The UFCS was active in France in the 1930s, raising awareness about the problems faced by many mothers as they became increasingly active outside the home. It demanded that mothers be given a truly free choice between going to work and staying at home, and it is thanks to these pioneers that family allowances were granted in France.

During the Second World War women met the challenge of fulfilling the responsibilities of men while they were away at war; women, particularly mothers, kept alive not only their family, but also their national economy and the very fabric of society. But these women simultaneously had no say in the decisions which had so devastated their lives. This experience led women to realise that mothers are responsible for transmitting to their children from the earliest of years the values of responsibility, respect and peace – they wished to actively contribute to a peaceful future and to the economic and social developments of the time.

In this spirit, the UFCS organised an international congress in 1947 at the new UNESCO building in Paris, where delegates from 26 nations of the world debated the theme: "Mothers Work for Human Progress". Denouncing the horrors of war, participants asserted their determination to repair the ruins, to recreate conditions for lasting peace and to build a better world for their children.

At the close of the congress it was unanimously decided to found MMM and to adopt the text of the Mothers' Charter for its underlying principles.

In the aftermath of the war, there were still divisions between the peoples of Europe, but MMM understood from the start the importance of an inclusive approach to building a lasting peace. As MMM has developed links with many countries, its vision has been shared by associations worldwide. In 1949 MMM was granted Special Consultative Status to the Economic and Social Council at the United Nations, and in 2004 MMM was granted General Consultative Status – one of only 135 NGOs with this status out of over 3,000 non-governmental organisations active at the UN. Since 2001, MMM has been developing a working relationship with the European Union's authorities.

Organisation

All MMM members ultimately refer to the Paris office which ensures the unity of MMM in all its members' mission and activities. However, the different elements constituting the structure of MMM are all interlinked and communicate extensively to ensure shared information, vision, experience and expertise.

The head office: MMM's head office ('the hub') is based in Paris, and deals with day-to-day administration and coordinates all MMM activities. It is staffed solely by volunteers and the team based there currently consists of the Secretary General and Treasurer, aided by mothers who volunteer to take on a specific responsibility in the running of the organisation.

Internally, the hub:

- communicates through a monthly electronic newsletter to all members, through email and telephone communications, including international conference calls;
- informs, motivates and supports members;
- develops training sessions for members to improve their associative skills;
- assists in international representation of the organisation, acting as the interface between the grassroots members and the representatives to the international institutions whose decisions impact on their lives.

Externally, the hub:

- communicates through the website;
- ensures presence at international conferences, collaboration with other organisations;
- initiates research;
- oversees publications;
- organises international conferences and workshops;
- investigates applications for membership;
- raises funds for members' projects and for awareness-raising work;
- develops projects with members and other international organisations.

In addition to the hub, MMM sends representatives to the UN (New York, Geneva, Paris, Vienna, and other worldwide locations for specific sessions) and to the EU institutions.

Members: Members comprise associations adhering to the principles of MMM.

These include :

- regional MMM associations, such as MMM Europe, which represents the interests of the European Member Associations and works with the European Commission and the European Parliament (see below);
- national MMM associations, such as MMM France, MMM Lebanon, MMM Mali, and MMM England (a grassroots association of local relevance, linking mothers with local and national government and organising training sessions, conferences, discussion groups, etc);
- Member Associations, which include a wide variety of grassroots organisations encompassing action in fields such as education, training, health, rural development, social legislation, strengthening the family, combating substance abuse, and supporting mothers in distress.
- Individual mothers are also involved in MMM, working with MMM and fulfilling specific tasks for MMM.

Board of Governors: The governing body of MMM is elected from the members, both associations represented by an agreed delegate, and individuals. The composition of the board aims to reflect the geographical spread and range of different experiences of MMM's members. The Board of Governors elects the President, Vice-Presidents, Secretary General and Treasurer.

The Board of Governors – :

- develops MMM strategy to present to the members;
- discusses how issues raised by the members should be dealt with;
- deals with membership applications. Decisions of the Board are always ratified by the members in General or Extraordinary Assembly.

Informal panel of experts and advisors: These are international specialists - some MMM members, some not - on whom MMM can draw for specific advice on sensitive issues, such as family policy in various countries, inter-faith dialogue, law, mental health, and matters relating to security in its widest sense.

Activities

Grassroots Activities: International aspect of MMM's activities make it necessary to find common ground: that is the powerful influence of mothers in their families and in their communities as agents of peace and security. The wide range of MMM network's grassroots activities shows the involvement of mothers in multiple fields, such as education, health, social and economical development, prevention.

- Enfance sans drogue – France: Training mothers to speak effectively with their children about drug abuse and raising awareness about this issue amongst young people in schools.
- Accion Familiar – Spain: Family counselling and support, drug prevention, mother's workshops, immigrants counselling, university Chair for the family;
- ONG Repères ("Reference Points") – Ivory Coast: Raising awareness among parents and training them about health and education issues, informing parents about their role in preparing children to live in their communities, training and information through 'Life schools', training seminars and workshops, youth camps, conferences, forums, dinner debates, round tables, open days, meeting places. Counselling: through support groups, creative activities groups, health groups.
- Ligue Marocaine pour la Protection de l'Enfance – Morocco: Defending the rights of the child, promoting child health and education, training and information in the field of mother and child, orphanages, facilitating adoption, crèches, schools, day care centres, health centres, literacy classes, development of a National Centre for the Mother and Child.
- The Rural Reconstruction Foundation – Bangladesh: Agricultural practices, woodland management, fish farming, rural economics, disaster management and reconstruction. Literacy classes, women's development, health and hygiene, citizenship.
- Fundalam – Argentina: maternal health, supporting young mothers and raising awareness of the importance of the mother-child bond and prevention of early pregnancies.

Interactions with the United Nations: As an NGO with General Consultative Status to the UN, MMM seeks to :

- participate in all high level meetings in New York;
- produce oral and written statements;
- attend information meetings, forums, commissions organised by the UN;
- be an active agent in panel discussions;
- actively participate in Working Groups on issues linked with the MMM mission;
- address petitions to the Secretary General office.
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Representation and work at the UN and the EU involve a lot of interaction with other international and European organisations. Although every organisation has its own specific mission and identity, effective partnership including joint ventures, petitions and statements are recognised as having the greatest impact. MMM works with a wide range of Member Associations throughout the world and is likewise challenged navigating the diversity of organisations it collaborates with. Finding common ground and consensus is essential, but being at the crossroads between women's and family issues and contributing to groups dealing with both these issues gives MMM broadened perspectives which are most useful for an inclusive approach to family and mothers' concerns.

United Nations and EU Representatives send MMM regular reports that the head office summarises and disseminates to its members. Members are also invited to attend UN and EU meetings on which they have specific expertise. They are also asked to send regular contributions on issues proposed by the UN and EU agendas to be relayed by MMM representatives in debates/working groups. Contributions may also concern publications such as what is projected presently by the branch of family affairs at DESA (ECOSOC Department of Economic and Social Affairs) on “Family policy and men in families” and by FAMILYPLATFORM at the EU on “The State of mothers in Europe”.

An important means of raising awareness of mothers’ issues, of transmitting MMM’s message, of networking with other NGOs, and reinforcing MMM’s network of members and partner organisations are conferences, and these have included:

- conference in Beirut (2003): *The Role of Mothers in Peace Building and Security*;
- seminar in Madrid (2005): *Conciliating Family and Professional Life*;
- congress at UNESCO (2007, Paris): *Mothers Work for Peace*;
- conference at the academy of Defence (2008, Oxford UK): *A Secure Society for the 21st Century – Why Mothers Matter*;
- session at the United Nations DPI (Department of Public Information) conference in UNESCO (2008, Paris for the 60th Anniversary of the declaration of Human Rights): *Mothers, a cohesive force: Mobilising mothers for the implementation of Human dignity and Rights for everyone and fighting discrimination*.

European Activities: MMM Europe has its own status as a Regional MMM Association and represents the European members of MMM to the European institutions. It is comprised of a team of volunteers with specific responsibilities. When required by specific projects, MMM Europe hires a project manager paid by the project commissioner.

MMM Europe brings a global perspective to European family matters, and :

- brings the practical grassroots expertise of MMM members to the EU;
- follows reports (initiative and legislative) presented and discussed at the European Parliament and attends specific Parliamentary Commissions;
- contacts MEP to discuss specific matters related to MMM’s mission;
- writes position papers;
- attends and participates in conferences, meetings and colloquia;
- takes part in European projects;
- communicates with its members through a web site.

Interactions with National Governments:

Actions include :

- MMM France, which maintains regular contacts with government officials, deputies and ministries concerning women’s issues - raises awareness and makes proposals - currently concerning parental leave and mothers’ pensions.
- MMM Lebanon, which participates in an NGO network lobbying government to reinforce women’s rights and more specifically campaigns for the right of Lebanese women to transmit nationality to their children.
- Donneurope Federcasalnghe (Italy), which has contributed to a law protecting women’s rights in the context of domestic accidents and raises awareness on issue of mother’s pensions.

Barriers and Challenges

Organisations such as MMM often face challenges, some shared by other global-level NGOs and others specific to MMM.

Unpaid work: Whether it takes place at home or in voluntary organisations, volunteering is often underestimated in its scope and impact. Volunteers must reconcile voluntary service with their family and workplace commitments, and this means that their valuable input is always part-time. Maintaining continuity and follow-up is an additional priority and challenging task for their organisation. However, volunteers show a deep understanding of and commitment to their cause; they are grounded in the practical, and use their time effectively. In short, they are not ‘just doing a job’: they give of themselves wholeheartedly to the cause.

Funding: Is always an issue, particularly in the current financial climate. It is clear that regular funding is vital for the effective functioning of any organisation. However, MMM only taps sources of funding that respect and preserve its innate independence. MMM also encourages and helps its regional, national and local associations to benefit from funding for relevant concrete projects.

Communication: With no travelling budget, it is difficult to help some member association representatives with their travelling expenses. These expenses are essential to ensure participation at MMM meetings and facilitate the “person-to-person” contacts that provide the necessary cement to communication and collaboration. In the same way, MMM staff members do not have a budget to visit

Member Associations in their own country.

Other concrete factors also impact on close communication with some members: the international context of restrictive security measures for instance, does not help members who wish to travel from reputedly unstable countries. Obtaining a visa, for instance, can turn into an exhausting hurdle of obstacles that discourages people who already face difficult life conditions. Infrastructure in some countries is not always reliable and this can be a challenge to effective and regular collaboration.

Mothers: MMM’s mission is not always well understood: “*Why* would mothers need help?” is a quote from correspondence with the UK Charities Commission when MMM England applied to become a charity. Single, black, teenage mothers can be considered a ‘charitable purpose’ but not mothers in general. And yet, we find that they are in need, and ask for support balancing responsibilities inside and outside the home. They need recognition for their investment in the future.

Discrimination: “What about fathers?” This is an accusation sometimes levelled at MMM. The principles of MMM underline the importance of the different, but complementary nature of the input of mother and father. While MMM encourages and approves of any approach highlighting the role of both parents, MMM’s specific mission is to focus on mothers. It is therefore important, to build good collaborative relations with many different, but like-minded entities, to identify common ground and to build effective working relationships with other organisations. In this way, family-focused organisations can put an international spotlight on the importance of the family.

From the Grassroots to the Policy Level

The following few examples of MMM’s work demonstrate how activities can reach from the grassroots family level to the policy level, and how the international reach of MMM benefits and enriches activities of its Member Associations at local, national and regional level. At the same time this interactive, dynamic relationship underpins our partnerships with other institutions regionally (such as with the EU and NATO) and globally (MMM input at the United Nations). The first example

shows how MMM, working with international institutions, integrates and stimulates the work of associations at local, national, regional and international level.

From UNESCO's *Decade for a Culture of Peace* to MMM Mothers' Workshops: The starting point of MMM's renewed focus on the role of mothers in building peace and security was the implementation of the *Decade for a Culture of Peace* programmed by the United Nations. UN Resolution 1325 (adopted in 2000), confirmed the "importance of the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building". It underlined the "equal importance of their participation and total involvement in peace-keeping and security". Kofi Annan also declared: "In war-torn societies, women keep society going. They maintain the social fabric... Women are often the prime advocates of peace. We must ensure that women are enabled to play a full part in peace negotiations, in peace processes, in peace missions". MMM felt it appropriate to highlight how women in their role as mothers can contribute to peace building

In 2003, MMM organised a **conference at the UN building in Beirut** entitled *The Role of Mothers in Peace Building and Security*. This event brought together 350 women, mostly mothers from all of the communities present in Lebanon. These women, who had not been in contact in the 12 years since the war, started talking to each other. The outcome was the creation of MMM Lebanon, which aimed to continue this dialogue focusing on family and the role of mothers in building a secure society. Another outcome of the Beirut conference was to raise awareness among MMM members: they could see their local, national and regional activities in the context of the international scene. The following year, MMM made a presentation at the UN about this work at the Commission on the Status of Women addressing the main issue of "Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post conflict peace building" to raise awareness about the role mothers can play in building peace.

A further outcome of the Beirut international conference was its impact on the work of MMM France. Research carried out by MMM France had identified that mothers often feel isolated and less able to cope with their children. The traditional "mother-to-daughter" transmission of parental skills falls short when it comes to coping with new educational challenges in a fast changing world. A relevant example is how to educate children to use new technologies: computer equipment, videos, internet social networks, mobile phones – and the subsequent increase of peer influences. A need of connecting with other mothers experiencing the same type of situations was expressed. Starting with informal discussion groups between themselves, a "mothers talk to mothers" workshop activity was initiated: the facilitator, a mother herself, was there not for explicit training purposes, but to help mothers realise that they have many innate skills, can share experience and build mutual understanding.

MMM's global outreach and activities helped **MMM France** to develop this action one step further. After the Beirut conference, MMM France widened the scope of workshops by implementing "Relay Mothers' Workshops" targeting mothers in difficult French suburban areas riddled with underlying community conflicts: mothers at the heart of the family proved that they can help to build social cohesion. An important part of the programme was the involvement of the local authorities to give mothers the necessary recognition to reinforce their natural authority as mothers and motivate them to become more proactive – not only in their families but in their neighbourhoods. Rioting in the suburbs of Paris in 2005 sparked heightened interest in MMM's workshops on social cohesion: the district of Colombes, where MMM workshops had been running, would have been expected to be in the forefront of the violence, but actually remained calm.

This led the French government to sponsor a survey and programme through the national *Living Better Together Agenda* which was completed in 2008: a practical tool for collaborative decision-

making and joint action between the local actors and mothers to deal with dysfunctional communities.

MMM's 60th Anniversary Congress in 2007 at UNESCO Paris was titled *Mothers Work for Peace*, and further highlighted this best practice among other MMM members. The outcome was that many Member Associations, such as Spain, England, Lebanon and the Ivory Coast, wanted to implement the workshops in their own countries, addressing specific issues of concern to them, such as integration for migrant women in Spain, or the prevention of recruitment to violent extremism and radicalisation in England.

In 2008, **MMM England** hosted MMM's international AGM and organised, in partnership with the Institute of Statecraft and Governance, a conference at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom entitled *A Secure Society for the 21st Century – Why Mothers Matter*. The UK armed Forces are currently faced with the challenge of ensuring security in a globalised world in which the nature of conflict has changed and has taken on multiple forms (economic, technological, societal, and ideological) which far exceeds a traditional mission of defence. This involves new approaches which include the necessity of civilian input where the intervention of institutions has not proven adequate and reactive enough: the speed of change outpaces the capacity of the institutions to adapt. Subsequently, the Academy of Defence is looking into strategies to anticipate conflict situations that would be best resolved by the actors of civil society themselves, and therefore organises seminars of research with civil society organisations such as MMM.

The conference was an opportunity to exchange and share experiences between mothers belonging to MMM Member Associations, other community-based organisations fighting violence and the UK Armed Forces on common concerns such as violence, drugs, delinquency and extremism in society. Representatives of the Armed Forces and the Home Office were particularly interested in MMM's programme of workshops for mothers in disadvantaged urban areas. An in-depth seminar was organised by the Defence Academy and MMM England in which MMM France made a presentation on *Living Better Together Agenda* – powerfully highlighting the link between what is taught at home in the family and behaviour in the community. MMM's association in Spain has begun the *Entremadres* workshops and plans to disseminate this model in Spanish-speaking countries in South America, and Repères (Reference Points) in the Ivory Coast plans to use the model in their training for young people in responsible parenting.

This example underlines how international partnerships and interaction at all levels make MMM effective in its field of activity – enabling mothers to ensure peace and human security for their children and families.

MMM Serbia in an advanced research workshop in partnership with NATO: The second example shows that despite MMM's multi-directional dynamism, follow-up remains a major challenge which cannot always be met.

MMM Serbia - a grassroots association - had requested MMM's assistance in dealing with the emerging symptoms of trauma in their children. Partnering with NATO gave MMM the opportunity of co-organising an Advanced Research Workshop on *Developing Strategies to Deal with Trauma in Children and Adolescents: A Means of Ensuring Conflict Prevention, Security and Social Stability* (see ARM, 2005), precisely focusing on the case brought up by MMM Serbia.

During the workshop, professionals and non-professionals from nineteen countries looked at integrated strategies of practical activities in which non-professionals complemented the work of professionals to deal with the consequences of conflict in children and adolescents – as victims, witnesses and perpetrators of this violence. It soon became apparent, however, that many Serbian

participants were themselves traumatised, and that this needed to be addressed before any work on traumatised children and adolescents could properly take place.

Attempts at organising workshops to address this trauma failed due to the great difficulty of co-ordinating disparate agendas and availabilities of potential volunteer facilitators, translators and workshop participants. MMM Serbia did manage to develop a programme *For children with children* aiming to raise awareness of children's rights, and develop active participation of children to local community plans with adults and helped by professionals in many Serbian localities. One of the outcomes for MMM was providing MMM Serbia with tools and contacts to implement the strategy but irregular contact up to 2007, and a subsequent loss of contact with MMM Serbia has not enabled MMM to support MMM Serbia towards a fully successful outcome.

Mainstreaming family policy at the global level – The Doha Process: A powerful example of this effective, collaborative and global outreach is the Doha Process that proves that very different transnational actors with a common vision and mission can effectively bring family issues to the fore on a global level. The Doha International Conference for the Family in 2004 was the culmination of preparatory sessions held worldwide; MMM attended the sessions held in Geneva. The event celebrated the United Nations' 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family. It brought together global research and studies on the family with the views and experience of representatives of civil society and international institutions and organisations. The conference agreed the text of the Declaration of the Rights of the Family as the reaffirmation of long-standing international commitments to the natural family. This was ratified by the UN General Assembly as the “**Doha Declaration**”.

MMM contributed a chapter to “The Family as a Source of Strength and Life-skills: The Role of Authoritative Parenting in Building Resilience” (Loveless & Holman (eds.), 2007), which was an outcome of this process of the Doha International Conference for the Family. Collaboration in the Doha Process has led to further involvement in international family-focused events. As it becomes increasingly evident from research in many countries of the world that one of the major signs of the disintegration of traditional values, attitudes and institutions is the unprecedented breakdown of family - the foundation of social stability and wellbeing - it is vital that cohesive and collective action is taken to reverse this trend.

Conclusion: Commonalities and Consensus Principles

For MMM, promoting the family - with the mother as its pivotal force and a role model in the community - must be a continual process at all levels.

At the global level, organisations such as MMM can stimulate and enable collaborative projects between local, national, regional and international entities and can continue to raise awareness in an attempt to mainstream beneficial family policy.

Such a sensitive and culturally specific issue cannot be the subject of “global policy” – and probably not a regional one either. It is not just an issue of national sovereignty, but rather of a national government's intimate knowledge in collaboration with civil society of the diverse families that make up its population. MMM targets a wide range of sensitivities and cultures and mothers reflect this immense diversity; their various concerns are addressed in totally different ways around the world. In the EU, mothers' needs could be a better conciliation of family and work, to have the time to be with their children. In developing countries, it would be developing resource generating activities to support themselves and their children and an improved status as women.

Yet, experience shows that there are strong commonalities between all mothers and this is what has to be highlighted in the search for “common ground” to work upon. These strong commonalities, such as addressing and meeting children’s needs, fuel the responsive and responsible attitude of mothers over the world. They emphasise ‘common knowledge’, such as “Educate a woman, and her whole family will be educated”, or that an overwhelming majority of micro credit clients are women because of their reliability.

Moreover, awareness about the importance of women being part of decision-making processes is increasing all the time and concerns every field of activity: business, peace building, policy making and social issues. Implementation is slow and patchy, but the top-to-bottom and bottom-up process from UN resolutions to grassroots implementation and up again is nevertheless present with challenging success stories and best practices which should inspire further implementation.

Among women, mothers are a pivotal force in their families; they are the main actors affected by family policy measures. For these reasons and in the context of what has been said here above, women as mothers should participate in the family policy making process. Mothers’ active contributions guarantee that family policy measures adequately respond to the real needs of families.

In the search of general family policy guidelines, as they are undertaken **FAMILYPLATFORM** (<http://www.familyplatform.eu/>), MMM recommends that the direct contribution of European mothers themselves should be encouraged and facilitated. They represent the diversity of cultures and are bonded by the strong commonalities. Consulting them and integrating their expertise, not only at a professional level, but also as mothers in decision taking processes, would not only conciliate the necessity of respecting diversities, but also build common guidelines and consensus principles to help EU countries in encouraging innovative, coherent and productive measures to support families.

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