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The Family and Safety Online

Firstly, a very big thank you to the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development for inviting me to speak today on behalf of the Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI). Of all the challenges facing the family, the Internet has and continues to have a profound impact on family life. So there's probably not a single issue covered in this conference that is not touched in some way by the Internet. With nearly 30 industry members, including AOL, AT&T, Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Verizon and Yahoo, today I want to share some the Family Online Safety Institute's thoughts.

Our confidential industry roundtables allow our members to share ideas and exchange technologies in pursuit of a safer, better Internet for families. Our public conferences are the largest of their kind. Our recent FOSI Annual Conference in Washington DC attracted over 400 attendees and our next conference is here in the Gulf region in Bahrain in April. In November 2009 at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) FOSI signed a ground breaking, two year Memorandum of Understanding with the Egyptian Government in the presence of H.E Suzanne Mubarak. This paves the way for a number of important joint family online safety initiatives in

Egypt and the wider Arab World.
But to begin with I want to put the Internet in some kind of context:
In just over 10 years, more than 1 billion people around the World have regular access to the Internet. But such rapid growth has brought its own challenges, as well as opportunities.

And the Internet has gone through 3 important phases during on time:
1. In its earliest stages it was largely unregulated. It was an academic and business tool.
2. In its second phase, as broadband, falling costs and technologies (like search) drove Internet penetration into the home. It gave families access to whole new world of information, but also a in a very unregulated way. Online content was distributed top down (often characterised a Web 1.0) and was predominantly an information tool or conduit.
3. The third phase began about 4 years ago as users started to generate their own content (what is often referred at Web 2.0) with Facbook, MySpace and others. Just as significantly, the Internet started to move to mobile devices and became more pervasive.

And it's during this third phase that a digital generation gap has opened up between parents and children. Some have suggested that as adults we are the digital immigrants in this new online world and children are the digital natives.

So the world may be flatter and more interconnected. But it brings with it new divisions amongst families, communities and cultures.

1. So what are the challenges?
2. Can we bridge this new generational digital divide?
3. Can we make the Internet safer and more positive?
4. What are the threats or opportunities for family life?

First the bad news and the challenges. It's unlikely that we are going to bridge the current generational gap.

Parents often fail to fully understand the risks and underestimate the benefits of the Internet. The gap between digital societies and the developing world will remain. Demographic trends that make children the dominant age group could accentuate that divide. The Internet will continue to pose a real threat to societies or cultures who don't share the same values as let's say Europe or America. And now the good news and the promises ahead The Internet is getting safer and better regulated. Illegal child abuse content will remain a problem, but is being dealt with. Network-based filtering on mobile phones triggered a move away from easily circumvented PC devices. Devices are becoming more appliance-like and filtering tools much more effective.

Governments now understand that good self-regulation requires them to understand not only the economic benefits but the social consequences of the Internet. The debate (traditionally driven by the media) in many governments and amongst online safety professionals is moving from a fear-based approach toward a more enlightened evidence-based approach. And that evidence can challenge certain assumptions. For example in the US the research of David Finkelhor and others at New Hampshire University over 5 years indicates there is often little correlation between social trends off line and online. Teenage suicide and bullying for example are in decline offline. So if the Internet is an amplifier, it's not the key driver.

Other research in Europe suggests we should have more faith in our children. Conformity to their peers is often a better moderator than parental intervention, particularly amongst teenagers. Around the globe, research shows that there is an incredibly high degree of commonality in the way children use the Internet and the challenges they face. This is a significant opportunity! When society does invest in ICT and online safety and teach their children how to behave responsibly, it proves effective and can be applied almost universally. FOSI calls that "building a culture of responsibility." In other words, preparing children to be good digital citizens.

So there are grounds to be very optimistic. There are immediate challenges but unless we teach children to be resilient and responsible in the online world, then we will only squander an important and enriching resource. First of all I should like to express my gratitude to Her Excellency Sheikha Hessa Al Thani and to all the members and staff of The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development for organizing this conference

Family Life and Work Balance

Balance is in fashion. We are tired of hearing how companies and governments boast about their plans and measures for employees and citizens to balance work and family. Facts show that those who try to achieve a balance don't have an easy time of it and are often forced to choose between work, family and their personal life. So, is it possible to find balance between these three pillars? Where should we start?

1.- Balancing With Oneself

Changing the reality that surrounds us requires us to modify things within ourselves. knowing

ourselves helps us to better understand reality and deepen our identity, giving us a security which we can later transmit to others. Understanding oneself is fundamental to identify the mission we have in life and to prioritize the roles we undertake.

Balance with oneself comprises all elements of personality: genetics, rationality and emotions. Understanding oneself includes recognizing the conscious and unconscious motives that lead us to make our decisions. This motives are basically: external usually related to social setting and internal more related to moral and can simultaneously influence any decision, yet they have a different weight depending on each person and his or her particular motive structure

2.- Balancing With Family

It is clear that strong families mean a healthy society and that the family is important to all of us both as individuals and as members of society since the natural family, father, mother and children working together for a long lasting project promoting education and welfare without jeopardizing their descendants certainly constitutes the best ecosystem for the primary sustainable cell of our society.

The family is important to the whole of society because is where the social behaviour is first learnt and because almost every social problem we are facing depends on the stability of the family; a necessary protection of the family will mean increased protection of the disadvantaged, the strengthening of the social fabric and the way to a better future with less failure and greater progress Today, long working hours are one of the reasons why individuals tend to focus on the nuclear family, relegating extended family without considering the usual negative consequences.

In this matter, we must also take into account and to priorize the different roles a person has within the family: husband/wife, father/mother, son/daughter, grandparents, and the roles taken on by in-laws (son/daughter in-law, brother/sister in-law, etc.).

Following a role hierarchy leads to a family balance which avoids confusion, unease, disunity and conscience problems.

Roles:

Within the family, all types of role models can be found, including masculine and feminine models which integrate all ages, characters and professions this range of role models makes the family the ideal environment in which to achieve balanced progress and to develop personal, professional and social abilities.

3.- Balancing Work and Family

According to the experts, the difficulty of balancing work and family lies in the fact that the line between the two is becoming increasingly vague. Stress at work can cause a surge in tension within the family, leading to less quality time spent at home. The problem occurs when one area takes priority and damage the other as being an obstacle for putting the family first. In my country Spain, the need to balance was recognized somewhat later than in other western countries, due to the late mass incorporation of women in the workforce. Nowadays, balancing work and family implies much more than adjusting working hours: It means balancing life itself. And it requires a plan committed to total success which as we have seen at the beginning comprises all aspects of life: personal, family, professional and social. Each family has a profile and preferences, and goes through different times, needs and work possibilities in the various stages of its life. At this point the implementation of some measures to be negotiated with the various social agents could be certainly helpful in order to get a necessary freedom of choice. To give just some examples let us take: -Flexible working hours to adapt to the needs of workers with young

children. - Networking from the home. - Periods of part-time working to allow for the care of chidren up to for instance the age of three. - Support for the creation of crèches or nurseries at the workplace. - Specific scientific training for parents who decide to undertake the care of their children during their leave of absence and on returning to work.

Increase in the number of day-care centres, homes for the elderly and schools, with longer and flexible timetables.

- To promote preventive measures to help overcome family crises
- To prepare a Basic Draft Law for Family Protection and promote and strengthen public and private Centres for Family Orientation.

4.- Balancing With the Workplace

Let us now move on to the third pillar of our life: our profession.

The office, factory, hospital, school, etc are some of the places where we spend the most time, and because of this, the activities carried out there impact on individuals and on society.

We can not forget that the generic mission of any human organization is to help the people that work there grow personally and professionally, and facilitate the development of friendships between them.

At work the type of links formed between the employee and the employer will depend on the type of motives in play between each of the parties. Each of the workers has a personal and family mission but also a professional mission, which they should be capable of integrating at work. As professionals, employees must comply with the mission to satisfy the needs of others, such as clients. Nevertheless, as people, employees have a mission of dealing or interact with colleagues and bosses. Failure of the employer and the employee to fit together is clearly caused by a failed recruitment process. If so, companies should reassess their recruitment processes by carefully considering their motives and on the other hand, individuals have the obligation to understand themselves and to find out what type of company they are dealing with before joining it, this takes us back to the first point of our talk: Balancing oneself.

The mass entry of women in the workforce is the historical reason for the need to reconsider what a company is and how to make it flexible in order to make space for this diversity and making easy a freedom of choice.

Nowadays many companies are initiating a real period of change towards balance and more flexible working hours. In my country Spain, some companies aim to obtain accreditation as a "Family Responsible Company." By doing so, some wish to improve their image or brand; others because legislation or a trade union requires it. And the most pro-active seek the accreditation because they have a wide, long-term vision of balancing work and family for their employees. It should be also noted that managers would be in a unique position to serve as what we could say "role models" and advance a more family-friendly organization culture.

The field of leadership has emphasized the importance of leader as "role model" for their subordinates. Leader's behaviour in organizations serves as a model for their subordinates to understand what is acceptable or unacceptable in their organization.

5.- Balancing With Society, chalenges ahead

Although this is the last it is not the least issue at all.

It's important for us to adapt well to the environment in which we live, without becoming absorbed by the air we breathe. Through the various roles which we take on in society (political as electorate, economic as consumers and social as the humanising factors of society), people influence other individuals. Not everyone can contribute in the same way because not everyone has the same opportunities.

According to the studies there's no doubt that the promotion of stable families, commited to the education of their children and to the care of and attention to their elders means: less delicuency, less antisocial behaviour, less school dropout, better mental health, reduction of poverty (especially infantile poverty) and reduction of public spending associated with the crisis of the family and the freeing of funds which could be channelled into active family protection policies

On the other hand, the destructuring of families and the weakening of the vertical and horizontal ties between family members generate numerous social problems which the State must undertake and resolve at high cost then, the action of individuals and the influence in policy making is necessary in society.

I don't like to finish without mentioning that unfortunately in our society a job that doesn't pay is considered to have no value, and housewive's housework goes unpaid. Because of this, these works are undervalued which means according to some studies of the 1992 Nobel Price of Economy Mr. Gary Becker that about 30 percent of the economy wealth is not even recognized now, even though one of the most difficult and worthwhile jobs is homemaking.
Talking about this issue, let me recommend you to visit the following site: www.mon.salary.com where you will find some interesting info.

On the other hand, reducing all the home task to "homemaking" it is in all the cases a narrow minded point of view, working at home usually implies get our children become adults. Is there any job as serious as bringing up human beings or in some cases caring some relative?. If we look at some well known documents, it could seem that women are just looking for being integrated in the labour market with the same rights as men however beyond that reasonable and fair aim, what women want is having a freedom of choice to get a job out of home without having to renounce to their maternity.

This is an age that needs no so much teachers as witnesses. Without doing any exceptional, we all have great power if all the people who live normally good lives, defending what's upright were prepared to assume this aspect of their social responsability, I trully believe we could achieve a sustainable Family Life and Work Balance.
Thank you very much for your attention...