

DIFI CONFERENCE ON ‘PARENTING, CHILD WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT’ GETS UNDERWAY IN DOHA

High-level discussions held by researchers, academics, and policymakers

Doha, Qatar, October 23, 2018: The Doha International Family Institute (DIFI), a member of Qatar Foundation (QF), kicked off its international conference entitled ‘Parenting, Child Wellbeing and Development’ at The St. Regis Doha today.

Held under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, in the presence of His Excellency Dr. Issa Al Jafali Al Nuaimi, Minister of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, and in partnership with UNICEF, the conference has brought together policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and experts from around the world.

The agenda focuses on the importance of investing in parents and parenting strategies – in the form of programs, laws, and policies at all levels – while identifying the different approaches adopted by governments around the world to achieve these aims.

In his keynote speech, H.E. Dr. Al Nuaimi said: “Children are the foundation of sustainable human development, and the investment in their care and development is an investment in the present and future of nations.

“Qatar places great value on the child’s wellbeing, through financial, health, and educational means, and has worked to improve childhood projects, qualitatively and quantitatively, following the directives of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Emir of Qatar, to protect all the rights of children.”

Ms. Noor Al Malki Al Jehani, Executive Director, DIFI, delivered the conference’s opening speech, saying: “Our choice of ‘Parental Education’ as the conference’s theme reflects our commitment to pursuing efforts to address family issues that align with national, regional, and global interests.

“International research not only shows that parental education is the most important factor influencing a child’s well-being, care, and protection, but also proves that good parenting contributes to national development by improving health and education outcomes, promoting gender equality, and intergenerational solidarity.”

Mr. Geert Cappelaere, Regional Director, UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, said: "On behalf of UNICEF, I would like to congratulate the State of Qatar for this unprecedented initiative. Parenting capabilities, and the capacity to provide children with care, are not traits people are born with. Such traits are learned over time, through exposure to one’s surroundings, and can be instilled in parents over time.

“In recent years, we have seen a wealth of science coming together that will help all parents in critical parenting moments and guide them on the best parenting practices.”

First-day proceedings included discussions and parallel sessions covering a number of topics, beginning with the ‘Supporting Working Parents’ session, chaired by Adrienne Burgess, Joint Chief Executive and Head of Research at The Fatherhood Institute. The session addressed the struggle faced by parents to maintain work/life balance, the impact felt by their children, and ways in which employers and governments can provide further support to working parents.

Participants highlighted current practices among public and private sector employers regarding support to parents, and presented models that have demonstrated positive results in the area. This was followed up with a panel titled ‘Parenting in Humanitarian Settings.’

Additionally, a session, titled ‘Parenting in the Digital Era: Opportunities and Challenges,’ was chaired by Anjan Bose, Child Online Protection Specialist, UNICEF, addressing parents’ anxieties regarding their children’s use of new technology, and the lack of parental digital know-how. The session went on to identify the most important risks in this area, and to debate what kind of parenting practices can help children manage new technology.

Panelists dissected the various parenting dilemmas, challenges, and opportunities created by new communication technologies, and highlight solutions and possibilities for parenting in the new technology environment. Participants included Anne Collier, Founder and Executive Director, The Net Safety Collaborative; Khawar Iqbal, Digital Society Department Manager, Ministry of Transport and Communications; and Patrick Burton, Executive Director, Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention.

Another session, titled ‘OSRA Grant Research Outcomes: Parenting in the Arab World,’ was held in parallel, in addition to two further sessions on ‘Parental Conflict and Absence’ and ‘Best Practices – MENA Region.’

For more information on this year’s DIFI conference, please visit event.difi.org.qa/overview/

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About Doha International Family Institute (DIFI):

DIFI is a pioneer international organization in the State of Qatar that supports research programs, policies and social outreach to promote the development of Arab families. Focusing primarily on research, DIFI supports a wide range of national, regional and international evidence based studies pertaining to marriage, family building, women, fertility, demographics, children, family safety, child safety, fatherhood and motherhood. DIFI comprises three divisions: family research division, family policy division and social outreach division. DIFI is a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development and has a special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC).

Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organization that is supporting Qatar on its journey from a carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential, for the benefit of not only Qatar, but the world. Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Emir, QF is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercializing solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit www.qf.org.qa