



# ***FAMILY MATTERS***



Circular No. 32

*Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (2004)* June 2001

## **FAMILY UNIT**

Preparations for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (2004) is the responsibility of the Family Unit, Division for Social Policy and Development within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Activities are in accordance with intergovernmental mandates e.g. General Assembly resolutions 50/142 of 21 December 1995, 52/81 of 12 December 1997, and 54/124 of 17 December 1999 respectively.

### **Preparations for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004**

Within the context of the preparations for, and observance of, the Tenth Anniversary of the IYF, the objectives of IYF in 1994 remain the same:

- (a) to increase awareness of family issues among Governments, policy-makers and the public;
- (b) to strengthen and support families in performing their societal and developmental functions and to build upon their strengths, in particular at the national and local levels;
- (c) strengthen the capacities of Governments to address the developmental potential of families and their needs;
- (d) undertake at all levels reviews and assessments of the situation and needs for families, identifying specific issues and problems;

- (e) enhance the effectiveness of local, national and regional efforts to carry out specific programmes concerning families, generate new activities and strengthen existing ones; and
- (f) improve the collaboration among national and international non-governmental organizations in support of families.

The Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family should be launched in December 2003 at a plenary meeting of the General Assembly. The observance of the Tenth Anniversary during 2004 would culminate in the holding of plenary sessions of the General Assembly on the topic of families. Concrete results sought from the General Assembly plenary session in late 2004 would be: (a) an assessment of global trends that impact on families; (b) a review of the progress achieved and obstacles encountered in the implementation of IYF objectives since 1994; and (c) a review of national profiles on families.

The Family Unit's activities will focus on five critical areas as well as on catalytic actions for the preparation and observance of the Tenth Anniversary. Analysis and policy guidance will be provided to Governments in five critical areas. They are:

- (1) Technology and its impact on the Family;
- (2) Approaches to the development of family policies;
- (3) Indicators and statistics for family well-being;
- (4) Parental roles and intra-familial support system;
- (5) HIV/AIDS and its impact on Families.

During 2001-2004, Technical papers will be prepared for policy planners in the above cited five critical areas. In 2001, three major papers are being finalized:

- The Most Affected HIV/AIDS Families in Selected Countries
- Information and Educational Technology and its Impact on Families (Ireland and Malaysia)
- Indicators and Statistics for Family Well Being

A major research activity geared to the Tenth Anniversary is the proposed policy study on major trends affecting families. Major trends will include *inter alia* issues concerning globalization's effects on families, such as drug abuse and trafficking in women and children, migration, HIV/AIDS, impact of technology, environmental degradation and its impact on families, etc.. This can be prepared jointly with relevant partners within and outside of the United Nations.

The Family Unit will undertake a promotional campaign jointly with partners. This also includes the promotion of the annual observance of the International Day of Families [IDF] (to encourage the active follow up to the IYF at the national and local levels). Moreover, the Family Unit can promote IYF objectives and concentrate public attention on the pivotal role and needs of families. The UN Family website can be found at [www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/index.html](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/index.html). It is updated periodically and contains all UN resolutions and Secretary General's reports concerning family issues as well as substantive publications that were issued by the Family Unit. In addition, "Family Matters", a bimonthly newsletter informs about new developments within the arena of family affairs.

The Family Unit will provide, through the UN Trust Fund on Family Activities financial assistance for family-related activities and projects, especially in least-developed and developing countries, and countries with economies in transition. The projects will be chosen to support the goals of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in terms of the financial and human resources assistance for national capacity building (institutional building), and support for families at the micro-level.

Workshops/Seminars/Conferences will be held during 2001-2004 within the context of the Tenth Anniversary to identify and exchange international "how to" approaches to developing a framework for family-policy development. Special attention needs to be directed to strengthening national capacities for policy analysis, formulating of options and evaluation.

An aim of the Family Unit is to 'strengthen national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families'. An Inter-University Network would address these goals. It would be a mechanism to facilitate and coordinate global exchange, access to and distribution of the latest research findings on national family policies. The Inter-University Network would consist of a group of eminent experts communicating the results of their research through the Internet and in meetings. It would have no permanent address or need of a physical infrastructure for its functioning. It would not be a substitute or replacement of already existing institutions, but a resource that could link isolated research efforts to increase their impact.

The Family Unit will provide substantive servicing to intergovernmental bodies to assist them in the monitoring of progress achieved in the preparations for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Moreover, the Family Unit will prepare parliamentary documentation for the 57<sup>th</sup>, 58<sup>th</sup> and 59<sup>th</sup> sessions of the General Assembly as well as the 40<sup>th</sup>, 41<sup>st</sup>, 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> sessions of the Commission for Social Development. The parliamentary documentation serves to inform Member States on the progress achieved in preparatory activities for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of IYF as well as to address specific mandates emanating from relevant resolutions.

To facilitate Tenth Anniversary preparatory actions at the national level, the Family Unit will prepare and disseminate suggestions/guidelines to relevant Ministries, NGOs, IGOs, etc. At the intergovernmental level, the Family Unit will encourage the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly to review proposals contained in Secretary General's reports and recommend that the preparations proceed along these lines. Also, the Family

Unit will consult with Permanent Missions on Tenth Anniversary objectives and strategy.

System wide cooperation is a major goal. United Nations agencies and bodies, including the Regional Commissions are vital partners. The Family Unit will also strengthen the consultative process with NGOs at all levels. The Family Unit will support and promote networks among NGO Committees related to Families. Focus of collaboration will be on advocacy preparing statements and exchange of experiences. With the NGO sector, the FamilyUnit seeks to cooperate closely in an effective manner.

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Ms. Odile Frank recently joined the United Nations as Chief of the Social Integration Branch. She was previously with the World Health Organization in Geneva, where she worked in the Special Programme for Research on Human Reproduction, in Global Health Situation Assessment, and mostly recently, in External Relations and Governing Bodies. Ms. Frank is French, received her doctorate from Harvard University, and is a social demographer, public health specialist and a psychologist by training.

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