



Family Matters



Circular No.4

Follow-up to the International Year of the Family

1996

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Various governments have established mechanisms such as Ministries, Departments or Committees on the Family to promote effective national action [e.g. Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Libya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Philippines, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, Venezuela, Zaire, etc.

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The Subprogramme on the Family

The follow up to the International Year of the Family is the responsibility of the Subprogramme on the Family of the Division for Social Policy and Development within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. The follow-up activities to the International Year of the Family are in accordance with intergovernmental mandates e.g. General Assembly resolutions 47/237 of 20 September 1993 and 50/142 of 21 December 1995 respectively.

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Follow-up to the International Year of the Family at the National Level

After the culmination of the International Year of the Family [IYF] in 1994, follow up activities were proceeding in many countries. Responsibility for family issues in many countries was combined with, or subsumed by ministries devoted to children, women or social welfare. Various governments have established mechanisms such as Ministries, Departments or Committees on the Family to promote effective national action [e.g. Antigua and Barbuda,

Australia, Austria, Belarus, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Libya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Philippines, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, Venezuela, Zaire, etc.

In Antigua and Barbuda, the government is focusing on the unemployment situation in the country and its effects on families. Also, an education programme in financial management for family survival is underway.

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Environment, Youth and Family Affairs established the Austrian Institute for Family Research to improve conditions of family life and to promote international cooperation on family research. The Federal Ministry also initiated the Austrian Visitors' Programme for Studying Exemplary Family Benefits and Family Services, which offers an opportunity for representatives of developing countries to study family issues and programmes in Austria for one week.

The Institute of Family Welfare and the Ministry of Health and Colombia celebrated the Month of the Family between the second Sunday of May and the second Sunday of June. The Institute organized, in October 1996, an International Seminar on Family and Development Century XXI.

Follow-up activities undertaken during 1995 - 1996 in Cyprus entailed: a two-weeks seminar on domestic violence in cooperation with NGOs; the observance of 15th of May in 1995 and 1996 as the International Day of Families; publicity, studies and academic lectures on family issues; and the establishment of a Permanent Family Committee.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interministerial Child Committee in Denmark have focused on ensuring an improved balance between family life and working life. In 1996 the Government set aside DKK 175 million [up to and including 1999] to assist families with children who experience a crisis situation.

The Federal Government of Ethiopia is focusing on eradicating illiteracy among the vast majority of illiterate families (children, youth and adults) in the country and has designed a strategy of reforming the whole educational system.

Fiji recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. A Draft National Action Plan on the Family is under review. 1995 was the silver-jubilee year of Fiji's independence with the theme: >The Family, Fiji's Hope=. The Family and Population Activities Centre was established to assist NGOs to integrate family issues into their programmes.

In Finland, the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs and Health, in collaboration with the European Social Foundation, have launched a research and development project on combining work and family life, to be completed

by 1999. Legislation in 1996 secured the right to municipal day-care places for all families with children under school age. Also, a reform of the support system for the day care of children under school age is underway.

In Ghana, an Intersectoral National Planning Committee, under the auspices of the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare, was set up to plan and implement family programmes.

The Government of Malaysia formulated a National Action Plan for Malaysian Families. Furthermore, family issues are emphasized in the Seventh Malaysia Plan [1996-2000].

In Malta, the Ministry for Social Development created the Family Study and Research Commission. A survey was carried out to determine the actual state of Maltese families, with a view to setting future policies.

In New Zealand, the Department of Social Welfare initiated a Social Services Strategy for 1995-2005, emphasizing the family. In addition, various initiatives are envisaged: an Institute of Family Studies to conduct research and provide information; a Policy Unit to monitor policy proposals impact on families; an Office of the Commissioner for the Family and Children; and the development of a New Zealand Family Day into an annual event.

In the Philippines, a Presidential Executive Order in 1995 created the Steering Committee for the Proper Observance of the Family Week (every 4th Sunday of September). Also, sixteen regional consultations were conducted to monitor the Plan of Action for the Filipino Family. Among the activities to celebrate Family Week is the yearly Search for Outstanding Filipino Families who have demonstrated family values in their daily lives.

In Portugal, the High Commission on the Promotion of Equality and of the Family in 1996 organized meetings, disseminated family guidelines and provided financial and technical assistance to various family related NGOs. Also, research on the family, as well as legislation on strengthening the family, has been initiated. The Parliament in 1995 approved a resolution underlining the vital role of the family and its right of protection.

In the Republic of Albania, activities include meetings on the family, youth, women and violence in society; and commemorating the International Day of Families. Moreover, the Social Sciences Faculty of Tirana University has undertaken research on family problems and needs in Albania.

The Republic of Belarus has enacted legislation concerning state allowances to families with children and on the rights of the child. A new Family Code was reviewed by the Supreme Council and a National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women for 1996-2000 was adopted. A Department for Family and Gender Problems was established at the Social Welfare Ministry in 1995.

In the Republic of South Africa, a draft White Paper for Social Welfare, emphasizing the family was initiated in 1996. A National Programme of

Action for South Africa Families, Children and Youth is also being developed as part of the Five-Year Social Welfare Action Plan.

In Singapore, a family values public education information packages to help low income families have been widely disseminated. Since 1995, family life education programmes have been initiated. The Ministry of Community Development (MCD), which runs the Family Development Division and the Family Support Division, has initiated campaigns, national Family Day, exhibitions, etc.

In Thailand, the National Committee on the Family was established within the National Commission on Women=s Affairs. During 1995-1996, the Committee formulated the Ten-Year Policies and Plans for the Development of the Family. It also financed local family support activities in the provinces, reviewed family-related laws and organized two seminars on family issues in 1995 and 1996.

The Ministry of Family in Venezuela has assisted non-governmental organizations and community-based groups to participate in social programmes concerned with families. It revised and adopted relevant legislation; and strengthened mechanisms of follow-up for and evaluation of family programmes, policies and programmes.

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Updated: 29 November 1999. Comments and suggestions: desktop@un.org



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