



Family Matters



Circular No.5

Follow-up to the International Year of the Family

December 1996

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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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Some Activities of the Subprogramme on the Family

During 1995-1996, the Secretariat, as the focal point within the United Nations system in matters relating to families, continued its efforts to consult and cooperate with Governments, NGO=s and other IYF partners on an effective follow up. Central to collaborative efforts were the advocacy of the family as a prime issue of social policy. The Secretariat has utilized meetings and conferences and general correspondence to promote and publicize family-related topics.

The operations of the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities were continued to provide financial assistance to activities and projects of direct benefit to families, particularly in developing and least-developed countries. In this respect, the Secretariat reviewed requests from Governments and NGO=s for funding and prepared funding recommendations and monitored and evaluated projects.

The Secretariat: (a) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bratislava International Centre for Family Studies [of the Slovak Republic] and (b) assisted the Austrian Federal Ministry for Environment, Youth and Family Affairs in selecting candidates for the Visitor=s Programme for Studying Exemplary Family Benefits and Family Services in Austria. An inventory on best practices of family policies has been initiated. Supportive relationships with the Non-Governmental Organizations Committees on the Family in Vienna, New York and Paris have been reinforced. Moreover, research and data collection on family issues is a priority. In collaboration with partners, the Secretariat is initiating and promoting action-oriented research and case studies on salient family issues.

Current and future actions are geared to:

- (a) Providing policy guidance to Governments in order to strengthen family-centered components of development policies and programmes;
- (b) Organizing a series of subregional perspectives on the family [expert group meetings] to promote a long-term integrated approach to family issues within the context of sustainable Development;
- (c) Facilitating the dissemination and exchange of ideas and experiences on family issues;
- (d) Preparing a global family [country profile] report in 1999;
- (e) Mobilizing resource utilizing the UN Trust Fund on Family Activities to support salient initiatives; and
- (f) Developing an inventory of best practices of family policies.

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Family Meetings

The Officer-in-Charge of the Subprogramme on Family attended three recent important meetings.

The International Family Policy Forum organized a High Level Strategic Planning Meeting from 3-5 November 1996. It invited its members to a strategic meeting [third in a series] to plan IYF follow-up activities. A main aim of this meeting was to provide support to the UN Subprogramme on the Family. Member organizations came from Australia, Belgium, USA and Quebec. Concrete results were: (1) support for the UN Subprogramme on the Family; (2) possible joint research and meetings for 1997-1998 were explored; (3) a review of priority concerns confronting IYF follow up.

The 6th International Seminar on Integrating Family Social Progress and Development was organized by the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family. It

was co-sponsored by the Ministry for Environment, Youth and Family Affairs, (Austria), the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Spain, the European Commission, the United Nations Fund for Family Activities, the City of Vienna, and private donors. It was held from 11-12 November 1996. The aim of the Seminar was to strive for the implementation of family-specific recommendations of 4 global Conferences of the 1990's -- Children=s Summit, Copenhagen, Beijing and Cairo Conferences. In addition to over 60 member organizations of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, there were many important participants. The Seminar proposed numerous recommendations for action by the NGO sector.

The International Seminar on Family Policy and Plans of Action was an opportunity to share the experiences and expertise garnered to formulate a 3-year family plan. It was organized by the Secretariat of the Family, an agency of the Government of Quebec, in collaboration with the Commission on Family Policy and the Role of Public Authorities, of the International Union of Family Organizations. The Seminar, held from 3-4 December 1996, addressed the issues of family-policy formulation in a North American, European and international perspective. It provided training sessions on the development of a family action plan.

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