



Family Matters



Circular No. 8

Follow-up to the International Year of the Family

1997

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The United Nations Subprogramme on the Family

The Follow up to the International Year of the Family is the responsibility of the Division for Social Policy and Development within the Department for Economic and Social Affairs. 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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Recent Activities of the Family Unit

Since January 1997 to the present, 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 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 Family Unit, reviewed 27 project proposals for family

requests from Antigua and Barbuda, Mongolia, the International Family Policy Forum, The International Federation for Parent Education, the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, etc.

The Family Unit is consulting with various partners to hold subregional meetings on family issues. Particular focus is on the Caribbean region, Southern Africa, the Mediterranean region and the South Pacific.

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Family Meetings

The Officer-in-Charge of the Family Unit attended, as an observer, to the 2nd European conference on Family Research: ALiving Arrangements and Family Structures - Facts and Norms@. The above cited conference was significant in that it brought together different lines of family researchers [sociologists, demographers, lawyers] to reflect on the social problems related to living arrangements of different household formations. The conference starkly pointed out the high degree of instability in family life in Europe and North America.

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UN Symposium on Social Integration and the Family

The basic objective of the Symposium is to assist governments in identifying priority needs, concrete measures and recommendations for action to promote the role of families in social integration. This will be accomplished by an exchange of selected national and regional experiences in the analysis of problems faced by families that prevent them from assuming their role in social integration, and in ways and means to strengthen families in this regard. The Symposium is scheduled for five working days from 10-14 November 1997 and will be convened in Melbourne, Australia. The Symposium will be organized by Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development in close cooperation with the Australian Institute for Family Studies.

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Singapore=s Report on Follow up to the International Year of the Family

As follow up to the International Year of the Family (IYF) 1994, Singapore continues to sustain interest and participation in activities and programmes which support families. New initiatives of the IYF year were incorporated into on-going efforts and as part of programmes and services which cater to families in Singapore.

Many of Singapore=s policies are deliberately pro-family. They aim to preserve the family unit and strengthen its capacity to care for its members

and serve the nation. We believe that as the nation prospers, our families reap the fruit of its success. One example of such pro-family policies is the use of the Central Provident Fund savings which could be transferred among family members, be it for the purpose of education medical care or housing. In this way, the Government helps the family to help itself. A booklet on pro-family policies called ASingapore - A Pro-Family Society@ is available to the public.

The focus is supporting families on preventive and developmental programmes and on stemming problems before they arise. Public education programmes on family life and parenting skills help families learn strategies and skills to balance work. Their number has increased since 1994 and additional ones have been introduced. These include:

- a) family life education programmes aimed at most families and also at those risk, including low income families and the less educated;
- b) promotion of family education programmes at workplaces;
- c) fuller utilization of various mass media to promote wholesome family values;
- d) a training package on pre-marriage programmes and marriage preparation courses;
- e) compilation of a comprehensive list of organizations offering marriage preparation courses;
- f) parent education programmes to reach out to those who do not normally participate in formal parent education programmes; and
- g) family enrichment training programmes, to equip parents with parenting skills, these include resource materials such as audio-visual aids.

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Upcoming events in Latin America

- IV Iberoamerican Conference about Family, AFamily, Work and Quality of Life@ in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia from 8-12 September 1997, organized by the Universidad Externado de Colombia.
- Seminar titled AFamily School@ in Chile, from 7-9 October 1997. Organized jointly by the National Service for Women (Servicio Nacional de la Mujer), the Ministry of Education and the Secretariat of Government.

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