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**DIVISION FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT
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Approaches to Family Policies: A Profile of Eight Countries

This study responds to General Assembly resolution 52/81 of 12 December 1997. It is the first in a series to be published in light of preparations for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family. This publication addresses the issue of developing a framework for family-related policies. It provides guidance in viewing different approaches to family policies.

SUMMARY

The United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 44/82 of 8 December 1989, proclaimed 1994 as the International Year of the Family (IYF). The observance of the Year served to highlight the role of the family as the basic social unit in every society and the need to pay adequate attention to the family dimensions in development efforts.

The study presents the eight country profiles in two parts: first, a brief description of the national institutions responsible for developing and/or implementing family policies & programmes, and second, a detailed description of priorities and key elements of their national family programme.

The eight country studies indicate that as a field of activity, “family policy” finds expression in a multiplicity of family-related programmes and services. These include child care, counseling, social services, income maintenance, etc. The profiles presented here illustrate different approaches to the challenge of supporting families through government action. In the eight country studies reviewed, government policies, programmes and initiatives address rapid contemporary social and economic changes.

It is a product of several authors within the Family Unit, including Alex Irwin, who served as an intern from Columbia University in 1999.

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APPROACHES TO FAMILY POLICIES – AN OVERVIEW

1. The United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 44/82 of 8 December 1989, proclaimed 1994 as the International Year of the Family (IYF). The significance of the landmark event of the IYF lies in its reinforcement of the interrelationship between family well-being and sustainable development. It has encouraged actions directed towards integrating a family-sensitive approach to development strategies. It also recognized that the family is entitled to the widest possible protection and support.
2. The observance of the Year served to highlight the role of the family as the basic social unit in every society and the need to pay adequate attention to the family dimensions in development efforts. Because of the different definitions of the family, there are also various definitions that illuminate different aspects of 'family policy'.

General Policy Framework

3. As part of the approved work programme relating to families (A/52/303), and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/81 of 12 December 1997 entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of the Family", the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat prepared a study entitled "Approaches to Family Policies: A Profile of Eight Countries". It is the first in a series to be published in light of preparations for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family.
4. The Division for Social Policy and Development sent a request to governments in April 1999 asking for family-related information. Of the many responses received, profiles of Ireland, Malaysia, Mauritius, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago were chosen. The study contains a descriptive summary of salient issues and initiatives important to the eight countries surveyed. It also presents decision-makers with a resource on how various countries attempt to strengthen and support families in performing their societal and developmental functions.
5. The study presents the eight country profiles in two parts: first, a brief description of the national institutions responsible for developing and/or implementing family policies & programmes, and second, a detailed description of priorities and key elements of their national family programme.
6. In the eight countries surveyed, "family policy" is not a single concept but rather a range of concepts. These entail a perspective for thinking about policy in relation to families. Also, as the 'country profiles' show, while family policy is defined in various ways, its components entail laws, regulations, benefits and programmes that are designed to achieve specific objectives for the family as a whole, or for its individual members.
7. The eight country studies indicate that as a field of activity, "family policy" finds expression in a multiplicity of family-related programmes and services. These include child care, counseling, social services, income maintenance, etc. The profiles presented here illustrate

different approaches to the challenge of supporting families through government action. In examining these approaches, both explicit and implicit, the focus has been on the content of a given policy or programme as well as on identifying key issues and institutional mechanisms.

8. In the eight country studies reviewed, government policies, programmes and initiatives address rapid contemporary social and economic changes. All the approaches reviewed are direct or indirect responses to the consequences of the changes in the traditional social role of the family, as well as in the role of the individual as a member of the family. Action takes place through policies as well as through appropriate institutional mechanisms. Moreover, reaching policy objectives also involves the cooperation of various social actors. Interventions are directed towards the family as a whole or towards specific vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, women, etc. Various social groups such as the poor or various ethnic groups can also become the target groups of specific policies.

9. The issues that various institutional frameworks deal with range from policy advice and recommendations, to the design of action plans regarding family issues, from the actual implementation of family development programmes in regard to social development goals to specific legislation aimed at families. Policy initiatives target a wide variety of issues, which are related to families: promotion of family life through income support services as well as through child and family social services; a focus on protection of the rights of children and young people; child care and the combination of work and family; marriage and relationship support; living conditions of the elderly and of single-parents; campaigns targeting alcoholism, domestic violence and child abuse as well as parental education programmes; the promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities for minorities; extending economic and social opportunities to break cycles of disadvantage to contribute to the eradication of poverty; a focus on health and education policies; as well as initiatives concerning population and community affairs.

10. While the eight country studies agree upon the necessity to improve the well being of the family, not all advocate direct intervention. New Zealand, for example, views the family from the perspective of its autonomy. The state is expected to intervene only when the family responsibility has failed. In South Africa, there is no formal family policy. However, various institutional bodies carry out components, which relate to family issues. Some governments formulate their objectives and strategies around specific vulnerable groups within the family and implement social services to address their needs. These groups include children and youth, the elderly, single parents, minorities and ethnic groups.

11. Family-related research is encouraged and conducted in many of the profiled countries. The research topics range from studies on the interrelationship between social, cultural, economic and demographic changes within a specific country to how changes in social welfare, taxation or the status of women affect the position of families. Other themes cover the situation of the elderly and children in regard to families as well as questions on teenage pregnancy and young mothers.

12. In some countries, non-governmental organizations (NGO's) are involved in the implementation of family policy either by participation in joint ventures together with governments, by participating in advisory bodies or by independent activities. In Mauritius, for

example, the non-governmental sector's activities are channeled through coordinating bodies. In Panama, NGO's are part of the National Council of Coordination and participate directly in the decision-making process in regard to activities concerning families.

13. The United Nations International Day of Families has inspired a series of awareness-raising events e.g. National Family Days. Numerous countries were able to report initiatives as a follow-up to the International Year of the Family (1994), including actions to mark the annual celebration on May 15. In Trinidad and Tobago, the event is celebrated annually with activities including workshops and conferences, radio programmes and newspaper articles as well as television and cultural programmes highlighting themes impacting on family functioning (echoing annual designated UN themes). Similarly, South Africa commemorates the day each year with the launch of campaigns to promote family life and to work towards creating a family-friendly culture. In Ireland and Malaysia, Family Day is seen as an opportunity to highlight different areas of interest and importance to families. From 1990 onwards, the government of Malaysia has celebrated according to different themes that reflect the current situation and prevailing issues. These included 'Together with the Family into the Next Millennium' (1999), and 'Family coping with Challenges' (1998). In Ireland, a forum was held in 1996 to determine areas for action that local groups and families see as a priority, which was attended by over 200 local and community groups. Accompanying activities included a national arts competition held in schools; the winning entries were exhibited in the National Gallery of Ireland to mark Family Day. In Mauritius, activities concentrate on a different region of the country every year. In celebration of Family Day a deprived region is adopted as the site for a week of intensive activities, in consultation with community-based groups. Activities have included: daily talks on family-related issues, sports and culinary competitions, musical performances, setting up of children's clubs and libraries, and open debates on the relations between parents and young people.

Specific Issues

14. Social services and programmes in the eight countries surveyed respond to a changing social environment in which the prevalence of the traditional family is decreasing. They aim at strengthening families as well as at enhancing the overall socio-economic progress of society by using the family as a framework for action. Some of these services are direct and specific, such as day care, public housing, child allowance or financial support to poor families, whereas others have an indirect impact on families, i.e. through counselling and guidance as well as through providing decision makers with useful information. In addition, while some services and programmes (e.g. education, health) are encompassing all social strata, others are tailored as social welfare programmes to address the needs of poor families.

Poverty Eradication

15. Fighting poverty is one of the most important tasks of governments to improve the quality of life for underprivileged families. Income support schemes, income maintenance programmes and increases in social welfare benefits are the cornerstones in effectively assisting families under economic hardship. Other programmes focus on temporary relief for needy

families, such as the provision of food. The assessment and collection of child support payments from non-custodial parents as well as payment of child support and spousal maintenance have been identified as important tools in supporting single parents. Tax credits are also used to ensure a minimum income for parents and their children.

Child Care

16. The provision of adequate child-care as well as family allowance benefits is closely related to the increased numbers of women participating in the labour force. The extent to which these services are provided varies from country to country and is largely dependent on the financial resources available. Research has been conducted to collect information about child-care arrangements available to families to provide policy makers with the necessary information. Numerous governments work towards providing more extensive child-care services. Early childhood development programmes aimed at working mothers who have very young children are targeted by improving and extending day-care services, while also raising the quality of these services.

Health

17. Health issues have a great importance for families. The commitment to both adequate health care for individual family members and access to health related information is especially crucial to the proper functioning of families. In the countries profiled, Ministries of Health usually provide policy advice to governments regarding health and disability issues, including child and family health and have usually the primary responsibility for family health services. Efforts are made to enable health, education, and welfare services to function more collaboratively and more effectively. Also, an increased emphasis is on preventive measures. Another focus, by and large, nutritional and rehabilitative assistance, with the goal of providing information, education and communication programmes on family planning and family health issues.

Education

18. Education and its role in family life is another area of policy relevance. Awareness raising campaigns regarding family issues have been started in the countries under review. By and large, modules cover areas such as communication within families, family roles and responsibilities, portrayal of the family in literature and in the media, support and resources available to families as well as families and the law. In other programmes, the foci are on family health, parenting, and the development of human potential to families. Moreover, childhood care and educational support to families is a priority in the eight countries. Designing support and reinforcing the role of parents in raising children and helping to prevent the development of negative patterns of interaction and psychological problems in children and young people are additional goals. To reduce the possibility of family breakdown, the governments provide both preventive public education programmes and on-going sensitization sessions through lectures, workshops, and media programmes.

Counselling

19. Most of the countries profiled listed social services and counselling services provided for families and individuals in crisis. Counselling services are provided to address marriage and relationship problems, in cases such as conflicts between couples, the breakdown of marriage, property and housing problems, as well as in situations of stress and tension. Other services refer persons experiencing problems in their psychosocial functioning, especially in regard to abuse, domestic and family violence. Some programmes are aimed at intervening to help troubled youth; they assist at risk children, young persons and their families. Early intervention services attempt to reach young people at risk through a variety of programmes.

Families of Indigenous Populations

20. Numerous governments have adopted special policies geared towards the families of indigenous populations and became sensitive in regard to which policies specifically affect those populations. The goals usually are to achieve equity between indigenous and non-indigenous populations when it comes to opportunities as well as to attain parity regarding social and economic progress. Special programmes have been designed for ethnic groups, which focus on children, adolescents and the elderly.

Role of Fathers

21. The eight countries are committed, through policies and programmes, to increasing the role that fathers play in family life and in the raising of children. Seminars, courses and workshops have been organized in most of the countries under review to educate married couples and those contemplating marriage regarding awareness and understanding of marriage and parenting skills. Fathers are encouraged to participate more actively in the child-rearing process. Research regarding the promotion of the role of fathers in family life has been initiated. The promotion of greater gender equality in home life is also valued.

COUNTRY PROFILES

I. IRELAND

National Policy Mechanisms

22. In October 1995, the Minister for Social Welfare set up the Commission on the Family to examine the needs and priorities of families in a rapidly changing social and economic environment. The Commission makes recommendations to the Government on proposals that would strengthen the capacity of families to carry out their functions.

23. The wide-ranging terms of reference of the Commission include examining how Government policies, programmes and services affect family life. The terms of reference are:

- to raise public awareness and improve understanding of issues affecting families;
- to examine the effects of legislation and policies on families and make recommendations to the Government on proposals which would strengthen the capacity of families to carry out their functions in a changing economic and social environment. The Commission would also be expected to make proposals to the All Party Committee on the Constitution on any changes which it believes might be necessary in the constitutional provisions in relation to the family; and
- to analyze recent economic and social changes affecting the position of families, taking account of relevant research already carried out, including reports of Commissions (e.g. Social Welfare, Taxation, Status of Women) and relevant working groups (e.g. Expert Working Group on Integration of Taxation and Social Welfare, Anti-Poverty Strategy Policy Committee); and carry out research as necessary.

24. The work of the Commission received a new impetus when the Government, on taking office in June 1997, expanded the remit of the Department of Social Welfare to make family policy and family services central to its activities. The new title of the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs indicates the new role of the Department in reflecting a modern society in which the family and community are key elements.

25. For the first time, a Minister was appointed with specific responsibilities for family-related issues. In addition, the Government established the Family Affairs Unit to coordinate family policy, to consider the findings of the Commission's final report, to undertake research and to promote awareness about family issues. The Family Affairs Unit works closely with other Departments that are affected by the Commission. In addition, it is responsible for marriage and child counseling services.

26. The Commission met at least once a month since it was established, with more frequent meetings of working groups. Much of the detailed work was initially prepared for the Commission by working groups comprised of Commission members with relevant expertise.

The Commission developed practical liaison arrangements with the Joint Committee on the Family, established by the Oireachtas in 1995.

27. Another development at the national level was the establishment of a Joint Committee on the Family by Parliament. Its terms of reference are similar to those of the Commission i.e.: (i) to raise public awareness and improve understanding of issues affecting families; (ii) to examine the effects of legislation and policies on families and make appropriate recommendations to the Government on proposals, which would strengthen families.

Family Related Programmes and Services

28. The Commission noted that family policy has never been coordinated or separately identified in any way. There is a range of policies in relation to families. Mostly these relate to provision for an individual family member with recognition of the dependency aspect of family relationships. Different policies cover social welfare, health services, and child protection and family law.

29. These policies can be described under two broad headings. The first is *resource distribution*: that is the allocation of material resources or services to families. Resource distribution can be designed to serve a range of purposes including promoting social equity and supporting minimum living standards. This includes child benefit, one-parent family payment, social housing or programmes to address certain kinds of family problems. The second major form of State action is the regulation of family matters. This includes the legal rules governing family practices such as the law on marriage, marital breakdown and family property legislation.

30. The Government is committed to adopting a “families first” approach by putting families at the centre of its attention regarding the development of coherent and effective policies. Key priorities of the Government’s Programme include: the establishment of a national family mediation service, policies to address the effect of divorce on families, and parental leave.

31. Within this approach, the Commission on the Family has taken initiatives to raise awareness and increase understanding of issues affecting families. This will be achieved through awareness-raising campaigns focusing on family issues. An example is a major campaign to encourage submissions from the public to assist its work. Advertisements were placed in national and local organizations and a random sample of 1,100 families throughout the country was taken. Over 530 submissions were received. Another awareness raising mechanism is the yearly celebration of the International Day of the Family (15 May). In 1996, on that occasion, the Commission hosted a Forum to find out what local groups and families perceive as priority areas for action. Representatives of over 200 local and community groups attended the Forum. The Commission and the Department of Education’s Transition Year Support Team have developed a number of pilot projects for second level school students, including a 10-12 lesson module for Transition Year students (15-16 year olds) to raise awareness about families and family issues as well as to provide a forum in which aspects of family life can be discussed. The module covers areas such as communication within families, family roles and responsibilities, the portrayal of the family in literature and in the media, support and resources available to families as well as families and the law in Ireland. A national arts competition for schools was also held to heighten

awareness about families among students.

32. Furthermore, the Commission initiated *inter alia* a research project to examine the role of fathers in family life. The research will assist the Commission in making recommendations to support fathers with their parenting responsibilities. An Economic and Social Research Institute has undertaken a nation-wide survey on behalf of the Commission to collect information about the child care arrangements which families make. The survey covered about 1,500 households throughout the country. Information has been collected in relation to children who are cared for by a full-time parent in their own home as well as on children where the parents participate in the work force.

II. MALAYSIA

National Policy Mechanisms

33. Malaysia is undergoing rapid economic development. The government is concerned with the emerging issues affecting family institutions as families strive to adjust to the fast tempo of development. As a result, the government embarked on a development strategy, to strive towards an industrialized nation status by the year 2020, which aims to balance economic growth and human development. Embodied in this vision is the recognition that people are at the centre of development and population policies, whether as individuals, members of families or as partners in society.

34. Family issues are the concern of the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development. The National Population and Family Development Board (NPFDB) under the Ministry of Social Unity and Social Development is the focal department for developing and implementing national family development programmes. The general objective of the Board is to contribute towards the development of society through the strengthening and improvement of family well being. More specifically, the Board supervises the inclusion of population and family development factors in the formulation of national, regional and sectional development policies and programmes. In addition, it assists implementing agencies involved in population, family development and reproductive health programmes to conduct training activities on family and parenting skills based on standardized and systematic modules. The Board is also responsible for increasing awareness, knowledge, attitude and practice of positive family values and norms among community leaders, parents, prospective parents and adolescents.

35. The Board is in charge of the supervision of training of all persons involved in population and family development extension work. In addition, the Board focuses on conducting medical research relating to population and family development. The Board's functions include assessing the effectiveness of the programme and the progress towards the attainment of national objectives.

36. Besides the NPFDB, a high-level inter-agency Cabinet Committee on Combating Social Ills was established to address issues and concerns of youth and the necessary interventions to combat social problems.

Family Related Programmes and Services

37. Currently, there are more than 30 agencies (both government and NGOs) implementing various programmes tailored to the needs of families. These programmes have been developed in line with the objectives of the National Development Policies (NPP) and contribute towards the achievement of Vision 2020 Strategies (the national development plan) for strengthening the institution of the family.

38. The National Population and Family Development Board's family development programme, initiated in 1991, covers various modules that include family health, parenting, and development of human potential. To promote healthy families, information on health promotion

and disease prevention, family planning, nutrition and child development is provided to families. As an initial step to the implementation of this programme, master-trainers from extension agencies, such as the Federal Land Development Authority (FELCRA) and relevant NGOs have been trained to conduct the family development programme. A second module package to address specific problems and issues was developed in 1997. The modules are: Preparation for Marriage, Parenting of Young Children, Parenting of Adolescents, Adolescent Development, Fatherhood and Reproductive Health.

39. The organization of training courses and workshops encompasses three categories of participants, namely master trainers from implementing agencies (government and NGOs), nursing staff from the Ministry of Health, the public as well as grassroots organizations. Training courses for master trainers and nurses are based mainly on existing modules developed by the NPFDB. However, training courses targeted to the public are based on new modules covering a wider range of topics such as Premarital Preparation, Parenting, Population and Environment, Counseling Families on HIV/AIDS, and Youth Camps.

40. The Malaysian Government in 1990 accorded the family its due recognition as a core unit of the society by declaring 11th November as the National Family Day. This date was subsequently changed to 15th May in 1994 in line with the International Day of Families. From 1990 onwards, the National Family Day has been celebrated under various themes according to the current situation and prevailing issues.

41. Based on the themes, programmes and activities are organized to teach family cohesiveness, ethics and values, and productivity among the family members. Activities promoting family participation and education are organized throughout the country. Activities such as family carnival, telematch, competition involving family members, drawing and essay competition for school children, debate and rhetorical contests, workshops, fora, seminars, training courses, work camps, and exhibitions are organized throughout the year by government agencies, the private sector, NGOs, and community groups. It is now a regular feature to have government agencies and the private sectors to set aside a "Family Day" as an annual event.

42. Various information programmes such as talks, briefings, group discussions, and dialogues on family development are also regularly organized. To support the overall Family Development programme, the NPFDB has published various educational materials on population, family development and reproductive health. In an effort to enhance dissemination of information regarding activities pertaining to population, family development and reproductive health, the NPFDB has utilized various approaches to deliver positive messages through the media, such as press conferences by the Minister of National Unity and Social Development, special articles in newspapers in conjunction with the National Family Day, as well as radio and television programmes.

43. The National Population and Family Development Board has also taken various steps to enhance cooperation and coordination of population and family development activities in the country. NPFDB also conducts population and family research. Population research encompasses various aspects that influence population trends, population distribution, structure

and size, as well as topics such as marriage, fertility, family planning, migration, health, education, and the status of women. Family studies cover issues that affect the status and stability of the family as well as human development. The research focus is on the changes in family type and structure, size, roles, communication among family members, and parenting styles.

44. In view of the increasing number of nuclear families and longer life expectancies, steps have been taken to ensure that family ties are maintained and that caring for the elderly continues to be the responsibility of the family. To encourage children to take care of the elderly, the government began in 1992 to provide tax relief to children for the medical expenses of their elderly parents. In 1995, the Government formulated the National Policy for the Elderly and drew up an Action Plan to ensure that the elderly are able to enjoy an independent and respectable quality of life.

45. The Government continues to care for the disabled through the provision of education, training and rehabilitation programmes. Programmes to enable the disabled to gain economic independence continue to be undertaken through the provision of technical training. The community-based rehabilitation concept, which involves the sharing of responsibilities between the family and the community, was introduced under the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000).

46. In order to bring youth into the mainstream of national development and promote the practice of healthy and productive lifestyles, the Rakan Muda (Young Friends) Programme was introduced in 1994. The programme focuses on physical, spiritual, social and intellectual development. The physical aspects are aimed at providing options for youth to utilize leisure time productively, while the spiritual aspects emphasize the teaching of positive values and attitudes among participants. The ultimate goal of the Rakan Muda Programme is to teach positive attitudes and values necessary to meet new challenges and expectations brought by rapid development, while at the same time countering negative influences arising from changing lifestyles.

47. Women will continue to be provided with skills in areas such as family life, family health, education and parenting. In addition, greater efforts are being undertaken to educate the Malaysian public on the benefits of sharing family responsibilities. Towards this end, seminars, courses and workshops are organized to educate married couples and those contemplating marriage, creating a better understanding of marriage and its responsibilities as well as parenting skills.

48. Community development programmes in the rural and urban areas are implemented to nurture the spirit of cooperation among various communities. They focus on achieving strengthening the institution of the family and the development of resilient communities, which participate effectively in the process of economic development.

III. MAURITIUS

National Policy Mechanisms

49. The Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development has the responsibility for the development and implementation of policies and projects for the family. The Ministry operates through a number of centres located in different regions of the island. The role of the Ministry is to promote the advancement of women as well as to provide protection and welfare of children. The Ministry has different units dealing with family-related issues. These are the Child Development Unit, the Information, Education and Communication Unit, the Women's Entrepreneurship Unit, the Domestic Violence Intervention Unit and the Gender Bureau.

50. A Protection from Domestic Violence Act was enacted in 1997 to provide protection to victims of domestic violence and to help in the reconstruction of the family wherever possible. The Act provides for the issue of a protection order, which restrains the aggressor from using violence for a period to be defined by the court. It also provides for an occupation order that gives the victim the exclusive right to occupy the house and for a tenancy order, which places an obligation on the aggressor to pay for the rent of the house, even if solely the victim and children occupy it.

51. In 1998, extensive amendments were brought to the criminal code to protect women and children from abuse. One of the important amendments to protect the family is the provision to punish spouses who refuse to pay alimony and who abandon a pregnant wife.

52. In addition, the Ministry has been placing much emphasis on women entrepreneurship development. It is recognized now that women suffer most from poverty and exclusion and their situation invariably affects the family as a whole. Compared to men, they contribute more positively to the life of the family and may help to improve the life of the family by supplementing the family income. Thus, a strategy for entrepreneurship development is being implemented. It includes guidance and advice as well as training programmes for women entrepreneurs, micro credit loans without collateral, support for marketing of products and introduction to new technologies. The provision of loans to poor women has now completed its pilot phase and is being extended to wider groups of women. Most of the beneficiaries have expressed satisfaction of having been able to find a means of generating income and improving family life, by catering to the needs of the family.

53. Besides the governmental mechanisms, three parastatal bodies operate under the aegis of the Ministry. These are: the National Women's Council, which acts as the coordinating body for women's associations; the National Children's Council, to which NGO's for children are affiliated and which has the responsibility for coordination of activities of NGO's dealing with child protection and welfare; and the National Adoption Council.

Family Related Programmes and Services

54. Various services are available through the Women Centers, which, in 1966, have been renamed Women and Family centres to be accessible to all members of the family rather than

exclusively to women. These centres organize a wide range of activities such as education and information on health, nutrition, consumer protection, and environment as well as training programmes. Other activities provide relief from stress or offer relaxation activities.

55. A Domestic Violence Intervention Unit is operational in six decentralized centres and provides a 24-hour service through hot lines. Psychologists who provide free psychological counseling as well as a Legal Unit, which provides free legal assistance to victims, support the service. A survey of domestic violence has been conducted to define the characteristics of victims and of aggressors and thus enables the ministry to organize its actions more effectively. Domestic violence awareness campaigns are carried out every year on a national scale in order to sensitize the public in regard to human rights and the consequences of violence. The campaign reaches a large audience. In addition, the Women and Children in Distress Scheme provide assistance to women and children who face financial difficulties and need immediate support following the death of one of the spouses. This type of assistance helps parents and children alike and tries to prevent the disruption of family life. Counseling services are provided in six decentralized centres and include counseling in a variety of cases concerning conflicts between couples, breakdown of marriage, property and housing problems in marriage, stress and tension etc. Psychologists and legal advisers support the service. Mass counseling and individual counseling are provided on a regular basis.

56. In cases of child abuse, a Child Development Unit ensures intervention and provides advice and guidance to parents. In cases where children are at risk, they are removed from their normal environment and placed in a shelter. Both the children and parents are provided with psychological support. Often, children are rehabilitated within their families and parental guidance is provided. Recreational activities are organized every year in disadvantaged regions to enable families to take part in cultural and sports activities.

57. Another important programme is the Early Childhood Development for children between 0 to 3 years which aims at supporting working mothers. The programme focuses on improving the quality of day care as well as on extending day care facilities. This policy has been formulated by the Ministry and approved by the Government. It includes training of day care and home based caregivers as well as parental education. It is proposed to set up model day care centres in deprived areas in order to help mothers who have small children and need support for childcare.

58. Special activities are organized every year on the occasion of the International Day of the Family. In 1998, the Ministry adopted a policy of choosing a deprived region on the International Day of the Family. Thus, in that year one suburban residential area was identified and activities were organized according to a plan established in consultation with the community based association of the area. The activities were based on the participation of women, men, young people, the elderly and children. These activities included: daily talks on health issues, drugs, domestic violence and children's rights; sports competition for all members of the family as well as culinary competitions; and finally musical performance by young people of the region as well as setting up a children's club for the children of the region.

59. In the future, the Government intends to diversify these services and family related

activities. Among the activities and projects planned for the coming years are the review and improvement of the Family Counseling service, the setting up of a Family Court, the creation of recreational centres for the family as well as campaigns against alcoholism, domestic violence and child abuse.

IV. NEW ZEALAND

National Policy Mechanisms

60. The government has adopted a policy perspective, which emphasizes family autonomy. The care of children is primarily regarded as part of a 'private' domain outside the public and economic spheres. Therefore, the role of the state is a residual one: to intervene if family responsibility fails. Within this approach the Government Strategic Priorities for 1999-2002 include extending economic and social opportunities by strengthening families, especially through intervening and targeting services to break cycles of disadvantage. There is, however, no specific ministry in charge of family policy. Issues pertinent to the family are addressed by several institutions.

61. The Department of Social Welfare was transformed into the Ministry of Social Policy on 1 October 1999. It provides policy advice to the Minister of Social Services on income support services, child and family social services, care and protection of children, young people, youth justice, housing as well as positive ageing services.

62. The Ministry of Health develops policy advice for the government on health and disability issues, including child and family health. Its priorities are to ensure that effective health and disability support services are provided. The Ministry prepares the government's policy guidelines for the Health Funding Authority (HFA) which is the purchaser of publicly funded health and disability services.

63. The role of the Ministry of Education is to give policy advice to the Government on all aspects of education. This covers early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education; to implement Government policy effectively, efficiently and equitably; to advise on the best possible use of the resources allocated to education; and to provide an educational policy perspective to a range of economic and social policy issues.

64. Te Puni Kokiri – Ministry of Maori Development is the Crown's principal adviser on the Crown's relationship with the ethnic groups whanau, hapu, iwi and Maori, and on key government policies as they affect these groups. In carrying out this role, the Ministry's functions are to: provide strategic leadership advice; provide advice on sectoral issues particularly across the key sectors of education, health, welfare, employment and commerce; monitor agencies which have a responsibility for providing services to or for Maori; and facilitate communication between the Crown, its agencies, and the ethnic groups. In providing this advice, the Ministry aims to achieve parity between Maori and non-Maori in key social and economic outcomes, specifically addressing, whanau, hapu, iwi and Maori issues (implicit are children, young people, family members and old people).

65. In addition, each of the ministries of Pacific Island Affairs, Women's Affairs and Youth Affairs develops child, youth and family policy from their own perspectives. The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs develops policy advice to improve outcomes for Pacific peoples in New Zealand; the Ministry of Women's Affairs provides support to improve women's lives; the Ministry of Youth Affairs provides support on the well being of young people aged 12-24.

66. A Commissioner of Children was established under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989. The Commissioner's functions concern the welfare of children and young people, and in particular, monitoring welfare services provided to children and young people by the Department of Social Welfare and other organizations.

67. There are also several government-established agencies involved in implementing family-related policies. Since 1 October 1999, the Department of Children, Young People and Family Services is responsible for identifying service needs, planning, service delivery as well as providing or purchasing services primarily to or for children, young people and their families. This covers a range of services from the promotion of family well being and the prevention of adverse situations, to active intervention into families in crisis. Within the health sector, the Health Funding Authority has the overall responsibility for the purchase of all publicly funded health services, including family health services. The Inland Revenue Department (IRD) assesses and collects child support payments from non-custodial parents and makes payment of child support and spousal maintenance to those entitled to receive it. It also administers the tax credits, which supplement family income. Finally, the Children, Young Persons and their Families Agency (CYPFA) is in charge of the prevention of adverse situations and of an active intervention into families in crises. The Agency employs a "youth services practice model" that incorporates the latest research findings on known effective responses to troubled and troublesome youth.

Family Related Programmes and Services

68. There are several areas of government activity, which contribute particularly to supporting families. Among them are the Strengthening Families Strategy; Care, Protection and Youth Justice Services; Financial Support to Families; Supporting Social Service Providers for Families and Maori; and Positive Ageing.

69. The Strengthening Families Strategy applies across government and many non-government agencies, including Iwi and Maori based groups. The focus is on families whose children are at risk as a consequence of their social and family circumstances. The strategy strengthens families by improving services through effective local interagency collaboration over cases and preventive initiatives; by coordinating policy, funding and purchasing across relevant Government sectors (particularly health, education and welfare); and by improving the ability of families to resolve difficulties and problems and to maximize the outcomes and opportunities for their children. A key element of the Strengthening Families Strategy is the initiative to improve collaboration at the service delivery level between the various agencies of Government.

70. A further initiative is Family Start that provides an intensive home visiting programme designed to help 850 families with the greatest difficulties from the time their children are born to the day they start school. Participation in the programme is voluntary. Health professionals refer potential participants to the programme. It is expected that the programme will cover about 15% of families with newborn infants. There are a number of established sites that are recruiting 10-14 families a month with new sites that are to be contracted by the end of this year to deliver family start programmes. It is envisaged that once established 4000 families at any given time

will be getting support from Family Start programmes.

71. The Government set up several financial assistance measures. The Family Support programme is available to both low to middle income working families. It provides maximum payments of between \$32 and \$60 a week per child, depending on the child's age, and is subject to an income test. The Family Plus programme is available to low and middle income working families, on top of Family Support programme. It comprises a new Parental Tax Credit (starting 1 October 1999) under which parents get up to \$150 a week assistance for the first eight weeks after their child is born. The rate of assistance depends on the parents' income. Other measures are the Child Tax Credit of up to \$15 a week per child and the Family Tax Credit that ensures a minimum income for parents working at least 30 hours a week.

72. In addition, the Government introduced a new abatement regime in July 1996. This initiative applies different rates of abatement to groups who can be expected to perform different amounts of work. A lower rate of abatement, supporting greater part-time work, applies to domestic purposes, widows and invalids beneficiaries, who because of their child minding responsibilities or disabilities, are not expected to be seeking full-time work. A higher rate of abatement, designed to maintain a focus on full-time employment, applies to unemployment and sickness beneficiaries. The rationale behind the new abatement regime is to increase the workforce attachment of sole parents by encouraging them to undertake more substantial amounts of paid work as a step towards full-time work.

73. From 1 April 1997, unemployment beneficiary spouses with no or little childcare responsibilities were required to seek full-time work. Thus, both spouses have all equal obligations to take steps toward self-reliance. Similarly, from 1 April 1999 widows beneficiaries whose youngest child is aged 14 or older will be required to seek work or undertake training or education. Those with the youngest child of six years are required to seek part-time work or training. This recognizes changes in women's labour force participation.

74. To assist beneficiaries to return to the workforce or to assume training, out-of-school care and recreation programmes have been introduced for children aged 5-14. These are more common in areas where there is a large proportion of low income families, high unemployment, large numbers of single parents and a big proportion of Maori and Pacific Island children.

75. Increased attention has been paid to disparities between Maori and non-Maori families in regard to issues like health, education and overall living conditions. There is a greater emphasis on addressing those disparities including more cooperation among Maori. An example of the development in the welfare sector is Iwi Social Services. Iwi Social Services is a key player in the provision of services to Maori, which was established under the mandate of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989. There are also a number of Maori providers delivering Strengthening Families programmes such as an organization called Waipareira Trust, which is involved in Family Start, and Ngati Porou, which provides Social Works in Schools. In the health sector there are over 240 Maori providers delivering a range of health services such as Well-Child, health promotion, health-related services, asthma information, "Auahi Kore" (Smoke Free programme), mental health and community health related programmes.

76. The Compass Programme in New Zealand is aimed at assisting sole parent beneficiaries into education, training and employment. Participation is voluntary and is seen as an example of a “helping” or “supportive” approach to active assistance. The principle aim is to assist single parents to take steps that will improve their employability, which will in turn reduce the numbers of single parents, dependent on income support and their duration on benefit.

V. NORWAY

National Policy Mechanisms

77. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs is in charge of coordinating government policy in the following areas: children, youth and family affairs; equal gender status; consumer rights; and product safety.

Family Related Programmes and Services

78. In 1995, a National Programme for Parental Guidance was initiated as a joint project by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs Guidance, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. The goal of the programme is to reinforce the role of parents in raising children and as caregivers, as well as to help prevent the development of negative patterns of interaction and psychosocial problems in children and young people. The programme focuses on the parents' own resources and need for support and aims at providing guidance to parents throughout their children's childhood and adolescence.

79. In Norway, it is encouraged that one of the parents stays at home with his/her child during the first year of its life. Therefore, working women are entitled to one year of leave at 80 per cent pay. They may also choose to take leave for a shorter period of time (42 weeks) at 100 per cent pay. Women who have not been gainfully employed are entitled to a lump-sum benefit after childbirth of NOK 32,138. Parents who adopt a child under the age of 15 are entitled to largely the same benefits as those who apply at childbirth. Parents entitled to paid leave may take portions of this leave in combination with shorter working hours. Under a "time account" scheme, parents may resume work on a part-time basis and retain the right to a portion of the parental benefit. This scheme may offer advantages to parents who wish to stay in touch with their work while at the same time taking much of the responsibility for looking after their children. However, the scheme is dependent on the employer's consent to such a solution.

80. Furthermore, under the "father's quota" scheme, four weeks of the period of paid leave must be taken by the father. If the father does not make use of these four weeks, the family normally forfeits the right to them. This scheme was introduced in 1993 and has proved to be a very effective means of getting more fathers to take leave. Since 1977, fathers have had the right to share the period of paid leave with the mother, but only very few men took advantage of this right until 1993. The purpose of the fathers' quota is to encourage fathers to participate more actively in the care of their young children. The increased participation of fathers in childcare may also promote greater gender equality in family life. Surveys show that almost eight out of ten men avail themselves of their right to take the father's quota of leave.

81. In addition to the year of paid leave, each parent is entitled to one year of leave without pay. Thus, parents may choose to stay at home for a continuous period until the child reaches the age of three. The right to leave ensures that the parents of young children who choose to interrupt their careers to care for their children on a full-time basis for a relatively long period of time are still able to maintain contact with their work and have the possibility of returning to the same job.

82. A cash support scheme for families with young children was introduced on 1 August 1998. Under this scheme, families whose child does not have a full-time place in a day-care institution are paid a monthly sum equivalent to the operating subsidy per full-time place granted by the state to day-care institutions (NOK 3,000 per month). The scheme applies to families with children who are one and two years old. Families with children in part-time day-care institutions receive partial cash support. Apart from the stipulation that children may not attend a day-care institution on a full-time basis, there are no conditions linked to the right to cash support. The scheme is based on the assumption that parents themselves are the best persons to judge which form of care is best for their child, whether they choose to look after their child themselves at home, to place their child in a day-care institution or in the care of private childminder, or a combination of different solutions. The scheme is based on the following three main principles:

- The parents of young children must be given more time to look after their own children. The cash support scheme improves the financial situation of families with young children, thereby giving them a greater opportunity to choose to spend more time with their children.
- The cash support scheme also gives parents greater freedom to choose among different forms of care. In principle, all parents with children in the same age group benefit from state support to be used as the family itself chooses – to enable one of the parents to stay at home, to pay for privately organized childminder services, or to pay for a day-care institution, either private or municipal.
- The cash support scheme also helps to ensure that government funds are distributed more equally to families who place their child in a day-care institution and those who do not. This is achieved by fixing the amount of annual cash support at a sum equal to the state operating subsidy for a full-time place in a day-care institution (NOK 36,000).

The cash support scheme came into force for one-year-olds on 1 August 1998 and for two-year-olds on 1 January 1999. Thus, it is too early to say to what extent and in which ways the scheme is used. However, surveys conducted have shown that there is great interest in the scheme and that it has met the need and desire of many parents with young children to spend more time with their children. The use of the scheme will be followed closely in several evaluation projects.

83. The number of places offered by day-care institutions in Norway has increased considerably since the mid-1980s. Government policy in these field aims at attaining full coverage by the year 2000, in order to make day-care institution places available to all families requiring them. The state's most important instrument in developing the day-care institution sector is the subsidy scheme for day-care institution places. A fixed subsidy per place is provided from the fiscal budget, and in 1998 NOK 36,140 per place was granted for children under three years of age. The grant for children over three is NOK 19,630. In addition, lower amounts are granted for part-time places. The subsidy is granted to the owner of the day-care institution, regardless of whether it is public or private, on condition that the institution is publicly approved. Various grants have periodically also been provided for specific purposes, for instance to promote the establishment of more places for the youngest children. Day-care institutions are

both privately and publicly owned. The majority of them are privately owned, but since private day-care institutions are relatively small as a rule, a majority of children attend public day-care institutions.

84. Another important service for families with children is the day-care facilities for school children in the first four years of primary school. These services comprise day care and activities before and after mandatory school hours. Municipalities are required to provide such services, which are particularly designed, for families, in which both parents work or for other reasons are unable to be with their children immediately after school hours.

85. In addition to the paid leave for parents in connection with childbirth and adoption and the cash benefit scheme, there are several benefit schemes intended to improve the financial situation of families with children. The most important and most comprehensive scheme is the child benefit paid to all families with children under 16 years of age. For the first child, NOK 11,112 per year is paid. Slightly more is granted per child for families with more than one child. A supplement of NOK 7,884 per year is granted to families with children aged 1-3. A child benefit is not allocated on the basis of need and is not taxable, and is thus paid in full to all families in Norway.

86. Norway has well-developed benefit schemes for single parents. Under these social security schemes, persons who meet certain conditions are automatically entitled to benefits. Thus the benefit schemes are not part of the social assistance system. The purpose of the schemes is to ensure that single parents receive an income and temporary help to help themselves during a period when they are wholly or partly unable to support themselves because they have to take care of small children. The benefit is also provided to single parents who enroll in studies, which are necessary in order to become self-supporting. When a single parent's youngest child reaches the age of three, the parent is either required to work or study at least 50 per cent of the time, or be registered with the public employment service as a genuine job-seeker. Unless these conditions are fulfilled, the right to benefits lapses at this time.

VI. PANAMA

National Policy Mechanisms

87. The Government of Panama established a Ministry of Youth, Women, Children and the Family by Act no. 42 of 19th November 1997. Its role and functions, inter alia, are to implement the constitutional and legal provisions on social security and welfare; to promote the social development of communities; to guide planning, execution, and coordination of State's preventive, care protection, promotional and welfare policies; to promote social development policies and programmes as well as to implement international agencies' programmes; to evaluate the application of legal norms, plans, programmes and various activities for human development and to conduct research. An additional function is the provision of a forum for dialogue between government and society in the area of human development.

88. A specific body is in charge of implementing the family policy: the National Office for the Family (DINAFa). Other units of the Ministry also work on activities that include family related issues. The main objectives of the National Office for the Family (DINAFa) are to plan, promote, organize, direct, conduct, coordinate, execute and follow up the application of policies, programmes and regulations relating to the family. In addition, the DINAFa serves as Technical Secretariat for the National Council on the Family and Minors (CONAFAME) in conformity to the provision of the Family code. Furthermore, DINAFa is in charge of publicizing the rights and duties of families as indicated by laws and regulations; organizing and training families at the community level; formulating and establishing regulations and procedures for the conduct of basic, preventive health guidance and treatment programmes; following-up and evaluating the results of legal norms, plans and projects relating to the family and its members; and conducting any other activity relating to the family assigned to it by other laws, regulatory decrees or the Ministry.

89. DINAFa has four main departments: the Department of Social Analysis of the Family; the Department of Publicity and Promotion; the Department of Family Guidance; and the Department of Coordination and Follow up.

90. A parallel mechanism with advisory role is the National Council of Family and Minors (CONAFAME) which functions as a link between the government and other sectors of society. The council is an autonomous scientific, civic organization, which brings together representatives of Government, organized social sectors and the community. Its main objective is to advise on and coordinate the organization, promotion, and management of programmes and policies in both public and private sector aimed at providing preventive care, welfare and protection for minors, the family and its members.

91. Specifically, the main functions of the CONAFAME are to promote the civic and moral values of the family as well as stability and welfare of the nuclear family, whatever the marital status of its members; to prepare, through research an ongoing diagnosis of the situation of families in Panama; to call for Government family education activities to promote responsible parenthood; to raise awareness and information about the family-oriented programmes; to coordinate public and private-sector programmes; to ensure the application of the legislation

protecting minors, the family and its members; to strengthen the employers' associations, boards of directors and advisory councils; to cooperate and serve as an effective advisory body for the formulation and implementation of social policies established by the State.

92. The main role of CONAFAME, however, is to improve coordination among bodies in the governmental and non-governmental sectors. The Minister of Youth, Women, Children and the Family chairs the Commission. The board of directors is made up of 15 representatives, five of which are selected by the Government and 10 representing the non-governmental sector. The national office of the Family of Youth, Children and the Family provides the Technical Secretariat of CONAFAME.

93. The composition of the CONAFAME reflects the non-governmental organizations' input in addressing family issues. More specifically, this includes representatives of the Catholic Church, private companies, worker and teacher unions, indigenous groups, rural organizations, private universities and disabled people organizations.

Family Related Programmes and Services

94. Family related programmes are implemented through the DINAFA. In addition, programme components related to family issues can be found in other Units and offices of the Ministry of Youth, Women, Children and the Family. In addition, CONAFAME, the coordinating body, has 14 chapters at the national level, covering the nine provinces and one region of the country.

95. The National Office of the Family (DINAFA) is in charge of a series of programmes. In the area of data collection the Office implemented a system of family statistics and issues a diagnosis of the family situation. In addition, the office has an array of programmes, projects and actions in the family area. Among the Office's priorities is also the creation of a Documentation and Information Centre. The family guidance programme addresses the primary health care and legal assistance of families. The programme implemented a hot line and established a national network of family guidance services. The Office also provides comprehensive child guidance and pursues the reintegration of institutionalized children into the family. It also takes care of international adoptions. In addition, programmes focus on preventive action and care for boys and girls who are victims of prostitution.

96. The National Office of the Family has also a function of coordination with the Chapters of the CONAFAME as well as with non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Furthermore, it has an evaluation function in connection with the application of the Family code at the governmental level and with family NGOs. In

addition, it supervises research on the social status of families and children. DINAFA organized the International Day of Families.

97. Other offices of the Ministry of Youth, Women, Children and the Family have programmes or programme component relevant to family issues. For example:

- The National Youth Office organizes awareness raising and training for youth on coping with the socio-cultural problems they face; it offers a youth literacy project and trains young people as agents of change. This office organizes youth camps, multidisciplinary art workshops and has a programme for rescuing young gang members. It had also organized an Information, Guidance and Training Centre for Youth employment.
- The National Office for Women supervises a programme on non-violence against women. Other programmes focus on the promotion of gender and opportunity equality in Government institutions. The office undertakes research activities as e.g. on the impact of unemployment on women in Panama and on the situation of indigenous women. It had also organized the Rural Women's Forum.
- The National Office for Older Persons has a series of awareness-promotion programmes as well as programmes dealing with the prevention and care for physical and psychological maltreatment of older persons. The office established day care centres and grants temporary subsidies to older persons in need. The office supervises and evaluates the family protection institutions and centres and established by the National Council of Older Persons.
- The National Office for Persons with Disabilities initiates awareness raising activities at the community level in relation, inter alia, to the Equal Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities Act. The office organizes training and self-management courses for the disabled and grants direct subsidies to priority and vulnerable groups.
- The National Office for Social Promotion and Community Development also has a series of awareness-raising events at the community level concerning the use of drugs as well as concerning child nutrition and self-esteem. The office also undertakes promotional activities, such as the promotion of family committees at the community level, promotion of self-management at the community level and activities to strengthening personality through sports and cultural events.
- The Department of Indigenous People undertake a series of activities related to the indigenous family.

VII. SOUTH AFRICA

National Policy Mechanisms

98. Families have been particularly affected by the social, economic and political policies of the past, the inequitable distribution of resources, social changes, migration patterns, the growing subculture of violence, and changes in the traditional roles of women and men. Past policies such as influx control and the migratory labour system, in addition to divorce and desertion, and a lack of housing, have redefined household's structures in South Africa. A major contributor to family problems and breakdown in family functioning is the increasing economic stress facing households. Those living below the poverty line as well as poor single parent families, which are predominantly female-headed households, are the worst affected. Family dysfunction sets in when poverty is combined with environmental stress and feelings of powerlessness and frustration. This in turn could contribute to social problems, which affect the capacity of the family to function optimally. Moreover, families are faced with many new demands and challenges as they attempt to meet the needs of their members. Internal family problems such as alcohol and drug abuse; communication and relationship problems; marital conflict; a lack of preparation for marriage, remarriage and family life; parenting problems; family violence; a lack of family and community support networks; and family breakdown have been noted as some of the problems facing families. Children are also traumatized by violence in communities and natural disasters. Increasingly, women have had to join the labour market for economic reasons and have had to rely on childcare outside of the home.

99. During May 1995, at the initiative of the Minister of Welfare and Population Development and sanctioned by President Nelson Mandela, an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Young People at Risk was established to manage the process of crisis intervention as well as the transformation of the Child and Youth Care System over a limited time period. The Department of Welfare and Population Development – Lefapha la Pabalelo – therefore, shaped its approach to family policy according to the vision embodied by the IMC.

Family Related Programmes and Services

100. Although a formal family policy was not developed aspects of family policy were included in a number of initiatives. During May 1995, at the initiative of the Minister of Welfare and Population Development, the South African Cabinet, with the sanction of President Nelson Mandela, it was resolved that an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Young People at Risk be established to manage the process of crisis intervention and the transformation of the Child and Youth Care System over a time limited period. The transformation process was officially announced to the South African public on 17 July 1995. The IMC undertook a substantial empirical research pertaining to residential child and youth care in the form of a situational analysis of residential care facilities. The research asserted the need for the urgent transformation of the existing child and youth care system. It was indicated that such a transformed system would provide for:

- Prevention and early intervention to avoid children coming unnecessarily into the system.
- Participation by the young person, family and community.
- Reclaiming the spirit of Ubuntu – the principle for each other's well being within an attitude

mutual support.

- The effective reunification, reintegration and after care in order to return children and young people to communities as soon as this is appropriate.

101. The key to the transformation of child and youth care was to move away from a medical model which focuses on weaknesses, categorizing, labeling, helping and caring, towards a developmental and ecological perspective which focuses on reframing problems as strengths, on competency building and residential environments which empower children, families and communities.

102. The Government is committed to giving the highest priority to the promotion of family life, and to the survival, protection and development of all South Africa's children. Efforts are being made to involve families and children in decisions, which affect their lives.

103. The aim of family and child welfare services is to preserve and strengthen families so that they can provide a suitable environment for the physical, emotional and social development of all the members. Family-based policies and programmes should reflect the changing nature and structure of families. Programmes should be devised to strengthen families, and to reconcile family and work responsibilities. Significant efforts need to be made to transform family relationships, which currently contribute to the subordination of women and children.

104. A range of social services is available to all families in need to promote and strengthen family life. Special attention is geared to families who are vulnerable and at risk, and who are poor and involved in child rearing and caring for their members. Those in need of special support are families with children, especially those who are under five-year old, single-parent families, and families caring for children and member with disabilities and chronic illnesses. Families caring for the elderly should also be supported where necessary, as well as families in rural areas where there are limited economic opportunities and when there is no access to formal social support systems.

105. The IMC adopted a long-term vision and mission for the Transformation of the Child and Youth System. The vision formulated is: Children and Youth are our most treasured asset. They and their families are valued and capable and contribute to a caring and healthy society.

106. Practice principles guide the development of a framework for service delivery. This developmental framework is based on four levels of intervention namely: Prevention (Level I), Early Intervention (Level II), Statutory process (Level III) and the Continuum of Developmental Services (Level IV).

107. Family Care Services are to fall within the first two levels of intervention and aim to ensure that communities, families and groups of children and youth, broadly identified as being vulnerable to risk factors such as poverty, drugs, violence and unemployment, receive services which strengthen existing capacity and develop new capacity.

108. Policy moved towards reality, by setting up pilot projects in various centres of South Africa. Some of the pilot projects which follow hereafter as examples under each level of

intervention, mainly aimed at families, as the family is considered as the corner stone of society.

109. With respect to prevention services, the family preservation pilot project is based on a collective model of family strengthening and family support services, for the protection and development of young people within their families and communities. This project was located in an African community of Inanda, South of Durban in South Africa. Intensive family preservation services were rendered to families with the objective of preventing the removal from their homes. The family preservation project sought to address the risk factors within the family by strengthening families and developing support networks within the neighbourhood. Families were therefore, viewed as an integral part of a neighbourhood and attempted to place the responsibility of children, first with the family and with the community. It embodied the principle of Ubuntu (caring for other's well being within an attitude of mutual support) where every member of the neighbourhood has a responsibility for others, with children and families surrounded by the interconnected rings of caring and support.

110. With respect to early intervention services, early intervention within these frameworks is a deliberate intervention in relation to a specific young person or family, in order to divert young people and their families from the original justice system and/or the child and youth care system. This level of intervention includes the processes of reception, assessment and referral into programme such as diversion, family conferencing, intensive family support and capacity building as well as parent skills training.

111. Family Group Conferences involves the families of young people in trouble with the law. This programme refers to services that are delivered in an appropriate and sensitive way to young people in trouble with the law and their families. The key principle of Family Group Conferences is that of restorative justice. Family Group Conferences bring together victims, offenders and their families in an attempt to restore the brokenness, which has been brought about through crime.

112. The third level of intervention is the statutory process focusing on children in conflict with the Law and/or children needing care and protection and thus includes both the Criminal Court and Children's Court proceedings.

113. The fourth level of intervention is through the continuum of developmental services to troubled children, youth and families. Recognition is given to the fact that regardless of the reprioritization of resources and greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention, some children will alternative care. However, emphasis is placed on the reunification of such family members in the shortest period possible. Programmes are to be in place to minimize the length of the placement, the movement from one placement to the other, and the potential of institutionalization.

114. Professional foster care was piloted with the objectives to provide an effective developmental and therapeutic service to young people within a community-based alternative care context, and to re-unite 50% of the young people in the project with their natural families and/or community or origin. Professional foster care is an indigenous model in the South African context focussing on the strength perspective. The programme demonstrated a unique

team effort by foster parents, natural parent, young people, childcare workers and social workers in reunification work.

115. The above-cited pilot projects concerning families and others, which were developed for children and youth, provide models to take the transformation process forward by replication the model processes and practices throughout the country under the banner “Make a difference”. The idea is to adapt existing pilot projects to be relevant to different communities. These programmes as well as other innovative programmes, will indicate that creativity and an understanding of the developmental approach and the policy can be located around the country.

116. The NGOs rendering family care services play an important role to empower families. Organizations such as the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa recognize the fact that no single structure can replace the family as the primary moulding unit for each of its members and therefore, warrants strengthening of the whole family. However, it is envisaged that the services rendered by NGOs be transformed in accordance with the framework of the child and youth care system with special emphasis on preventative and early intervention services. The ideal is that the five main elements of the developmental approach, namely justice democracy and participation; capacity building and empowerment, sustainability and collaboration will consciously continue to characterize services rendered.

117. The commemoration of the family takes place on 15 May each year. Awareness campaigns are launched to promote family life and to create a family-friendly culture. Recognition is given to the fact that the business sector should value family life. Programmes within the business sector should enhance family life. Preventative programmes to enrich family life include marriage enrichment programmes, life skills training regarding the responsibilities towards families and parental skills training.

VIII. TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

National Policy Mechanisms

118. The Ministry of Social and Community Development is the leading Government agency with responsibility for implementing the Government's social development goals and objectives. The Ministry has prioritized programmes to chart an improved quality of life for all citizens, which includes the promotion of healthy and well functioning families as key stakeholders in the sustainable development process.

119. The Ministries of Social and Community Development, Legal Affairs, Culture and Gender Affairs and Housing are all involved in the provision of services for the implementation of national family objectives. Following policy guidelines by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, these Government agencies are actively involved in collaborative work with civil society in regard to the overall social development goals.

120. The Ministry of Legal Affairs, for example is the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority which ensures that constitutional rights to legal representation and equality before the law are available to all citizens, including in the application under Family Law. The Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs is involved in the development of a national gender policy. It conducts continuous programmes aimed at increasing gender equality and equity as well as gender based education programmes. The Ministry of Public Utilities also has activities affecting the well being of families. For example, it has introduced a Hardship Relief Programme that targets recipients of Old Age Pension for exemption from paying water rates.

121. The National Family Services Division within the Ministry of Social and Community Development is in charge of the promotion, empowerment and sustenance of a community of socially healthy families. For this purpose it is in charge of the incorporation of family programmes into national development strategies. The Division is responsible for the maintenance of effective communication with national, regional and international bodies and organizations concerned with family related issues. Its functions also include the organization of research and of data collection reflecting the present situation of families, the identification of family related issues and problems as well as guidance for policy formulation and programme planning.

122. The division is also in charge of organizing counseling and referral of persons experiencing problems in their psychosocial functioning, especially abuse and domestic violence as well as of other vulnerable groups, which are housed in institutions or homes managed by the Government and Non-governmental organizations. This division also provides foster care services to address the needs of children at risk who are between 0-16 years of age. Furthermore, the division is in charge of educational programmes consisting of lectures, workshops, and distribution of posters and pamphlets.

123. Other Divisions in this ministry have family related responsibilities as well. The Social Welfare Division is in charge of the administration of non-contributory social security programmes to the aged, poor and needy. The Probation Division insures the provision of

rehabilitative, conciliatory and mediation services in support of stable, healthy family life. This division also imparts preventive education to families and communities to reduce the possibility of family breakdown. The SHARE Division (Social help and Rehabilitation Efforts) supervises the provision of temporary relief in the form of food hampers to needy families as well as the rehabilitation work with these families towards self-sufficiency.

Family Related Programmes and Services

124. The main priority of the government is the eradication of poverty. For this purpose the government has planned to improve the standard of living of the impoverished population through income maintenance projects as well as through increasing social welfare benefits. In order to empower families towards economic independence it has established a series of micro-enterprise and training programmes. For the socially displaced (homeless) persons it has organized a social displacement unit for rehabilitation as well as the SHARE programme, which offers nutritional and rehabilitative assistance. Furthermore, the government supported the introduction of the Adopt a Community Programme where partnerships are arranged between corporate citizens and communities and are aimed at developing and empowering communities.

125. In addition, the government took a series of measures aimed at sustaining families through the stress of modern living. This is achieved through the provision of counseling and remedial services as well as through the NFS Division with rehabilitation and empowerment as the main focus. In addition, families benefit from the provision of information, education and communication programmes on Family Planning and Family Health Issues. Education curricula in schools have also adopted a provision of advice on the content of family life education curricula for schools and other training institutions.

126. Furthermore, the government undertook a series of preventive public education programmes, such as ongoing sensitization sessions through lectures, workshops and media programmes utilizing popular theatre, role play, group discussions, distribution of posters, pamphlets and booklets.

127. In order to stress the importance of the family, the government organizes the annual celebration of the International Day of Families, with a focus on media involvement with key stakeholders. Activities include workshops and conferences, the radio and newspapers, television as well as cultural programmes highlighting themes impacting on the functioning of families (echoing annual designated UN themes).

128. The government is also responsible for the implementation of intensive programmes to sensitize and network with children, parents, community teachers, etc. through seminars and workshops as well as for the organization and celebration of annual Child Rights Week, with focus on children's participation. Gender equality activities consist of ongoing public education programmes at the agency and community level.

129. The care for vulnerable members of the family is reflected in the development of a Plan of Action to celebrate the International Year of Older Persons. The Plan includes the publication of several articles in the print media, containing pertinent information on issues relevant the

needs of older persons, such as Care for the Aged, Financial and Legal Advice for the Elderly, Abuses Experienced by the Elderly as well as printing of calendars and bumper stickers. It also projects the establishment of Neighbourhood Day Care Centres for older persons and other activities aimed at facilitating the life of elderly persons.

130. Family related research aims at providing useful information for the creation of new programmes. From 1977 to 1998 research was completed focusing on the Family and Society in Trinidad and Tobago, Situation Analysis of Children and on Needs Assessment of Pregnant teenagers and young mothers. Currently new research projects are envisaged such as a survey of the Living situation of the Elderly and a review of the operations of Children's Homes.

131. The government also supervises the provision of training to young persons in Geriatric Care through the Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP). Families in need are also provided with trained personnel through GAPP's employment Agency.