

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES**

**15 May 2011**

Far too many families endure chronic, punishing hardship. Lacking jobs and the means to make ends meet, adults are unable to provide adequate nutrition for children, leaving them with lifelong physical and cognitive scars. Other family members can suffer neglect and deprivation. Poverty continues to claim the lives of hundreds of thousands of women each year in childbirth.

Social exclusion is often at the root of the problem. Discrimination and unequal access to social services deprive families of the opportunity to plan a better future for their children.

Certain types of families are at particular risk, including large families, single-parent families, families where the main breadwinners are unemployed or suffer from illness or disability, families with members who suffer discrimination based on sexual orientation, and families living in urban slums or rural areas. Indigenous and migrant families, as well as those living through conflict or unrest, are also on the front lines of marginalization and deprivation.

A number of governments have adopted family-focused strategies, including cash transfer programmes, child allowances, tax incentives and specific gender- and child-sensitive social protection measures. An expansion of these policies, which can improve the nutrition and educational status of children, can help end cycles of poverty that persist across generations.

On this International Day of Families, let us resolve to support families as they nurture the young, care for the old and foster strong communities built on tolerance and dignity for all.