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**Memo From R. Padmini, Coordinator, Inter-sectoral section, Attachment 1  
'International Year of the Family - an update' on Interagency meeting on IYF,  
Vienna, March 10-12, 1993, Memo to R. Jolly, Dy. Exec Dir, from Sreelakshmi  
Gururaja, IYF Focal Point,**

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**INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Dr. Richard Jolly 30 April 1993  
Dy. Executive Director

**FROM:**   
Sreelakshmi Gururaja **REF:IYF/1993/199**  
IYF Focal Point,  
Proj. Officer, Women's Prog.

**SUBJECT:** International Year of the Family: an update

This memo attempts to consolidate the outcomes of the recent Inter-agency meeting on IYF, the progress report on the preparatory activities within UNICEF and the responses from Field Offices to the checklist further to your memo of 4 January 1993 to Regional /Country Offices on the subject. I apologise that it is rather lengthy but the issues below merit recording for information and consideration for action. They suggest areas for follow-up action at Headquarters and Field Offices. Your views and advice on specific areas for action is requested.

The annexure provide selective information. Detailed documentation will be made available upon request.

**I. Inter-agency meeting on IYF, Vienna, March 10-12, 1993:**

1. **Progress of preparatory phase at IYF Secretariat:** The Director of the Social Development Division, United Nations Office, Vienna and Coordinator for IYF reported that the Commission for Social Development had called upon the support of all specialised agencies and other bodies in the UN system to IYF in its Meeting in Feb.1993. It requested that the agencies consider the principles and objectives of the year within the context of their substantive mandates and also to lend budgetary support, as appropriate to the observance and follow-up of the year vide operative paragraphs 12 and 13 of resolution E/CN.5/1993/L.8. In lieu of major global events for launching the year, a special plenary session on the family and IYF is being proposed during the General Assembly meeting in December 1993.

Information on the four regional preparatory meetings on IYF scheduled during March-July 1993 has been shared with UNICEF regional offices suggesting participation as deemed appropriate.

2. **Reports of UN Agencies:** The meeting was well attended by representatives from all U.N. agencies and affiliated institutions which facilitated a wide exchange of information, discussion and agreement on inter-agency collaboration and collective follow-up on identified activities at national, regional, and international levels. (Sixteen agencies and the NGO Committee on IYF (Vienna and New York were represented.) The presentations mainly reported progress on preparatory activities to IYF since the previous interagency meeting in March 1992 and included both special events during 1994 as well greater focus on the family in ongoing programmes. **The UNICEF report is attached as Annex 1.**

3. **UNICEF's presentation on the strengthening families for achievement of global goals for children and children's rights:** As recommended in the 1992 inter-agency meeting, UNICEF prepared a paper for discussion on "Policy implications and support for families resulting from the World Summit for Children, its World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for its implementation as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child." **The paper, attached as Annex 2, draws upon the National Programmes of Action selectively, to highlight the importance accorded to families in the follow-up of WSC and quotes from the Convention in support of UNICEF's focus on strengthening families for child survival, protection and development. The paper attempts to identify priority areas for action in relation to IYF. It was well-received and stimulated discussion on the identification, implementation and follow-up of similar provisions related to families in relevant U.N. Conventions and instruments at the national and international levels.**

4. **Outcomes of the meeting:** The following summary indicates areas of interest and for follow-up at headquarters and field offices, as appropriate.

- (a) **Joint Inter-agency policy statement on IYF : The draft statement (Annex 3) will be put up for approval and signature by the Heads of U.N. agencies during the next Organizational Committee of the ACC.**
- (b) **Information materials:** An Information Kit is under preparation by the Division of Public Information, U N Secretariat in consultation with other U.N. agencies. **UNICEF has been requested to provide 5,000 copies of Facts for Life for inclusion in the kit. Other joint projects include production of videos/films (DPI and UNICEF) publications on the family (The Global Family Project of UNDP-UNIFEM-UNICEF-UNFPA), photo-exhibit, (UNESCO - DPI), inventory of the provisions on the family in U.N. Conventions and inventory on the IYF activities of the U.N. agencies. Copies of the IYF booklet are available with UNICEF in English, French and Spanish, and limited copies of the IYF Occasional Series can be obtained from the IYF Secretariat, UNO, Vienna.**
- (c) **National Plans of Action for IYF:** An inventory of IYF National Plans and National Focal Points was shared. **By and large, the IYF national plans of most countries are focusing on public education programmes, workshops, seminars and cultural events. The National Steering Committees have been listed for some countries and comprise**

representatives from government departments, public and private sector agencies, NGOs and UNICEF.

- (d) **NGO Collaboration:** Agencies agreed to lend support to the World NGO Forum on "Promoting Families for the Well-Being of Individuals and Societies," to be held at Malta, 28 Nov.-2 Dec.1993. In particular, agencies agreed to consider sponsoring professional workshops on subjects of their direct interest at the Forum and explore the possibility of financing the representation of selected national and local level non-governmental organizations from developing countries at the Forum. Also, agencies of the U.N. system will actively advocate the involvement of NGOs in the national preparation for IYF. The only other IYF global event is the satellite network programme, FAMILY-FEST in July 1993. Details are given in Annex 4.

Follow-up actions on the above are underway jointly with DPA and nature and extent of UNICEF support is under discussion.

- (e) **Inter-agency Project on Families at risk (WHO, UNICEF, ILO and UNESCO):** It is proposed to develop a framework for assessing the vulnerability of families, indicators for the risk factors at family and community levels. Annex 5 outlines the draft terms of reference which will be shared and discussed in-house for incorporation of UNICEF's concerns.

The above activity deserves follow-up in terms of policy focus and better targeting of programmes at community levels. This could be developed on the lines of the research ideas presented by Ms. Judith Bruce, Population Council on analysis of demographic data for trends in family structures and an understanding of the situation of children's access to parental resources for policy development.

5. **Report:** The report and recommendations of the inter-agency meeting will be submitted to the ACC for consideration at its next meeting in July 1993.

## **II. Family Focus and IYF Preparations in UNICEF Field Offices**

This section is based on the reports from UNICEF Field Offices to the checklist aforementioned. To-date, 33 responses received: from one regional office, 31 country offices, and a combined response for CEE/NIS from the concerned geographical Section at Headquarters (Annex 6 gives the list—a few more are awaited). The reports varied in content and quality and in the time taken to reply (the latter delayed the analysis and this memo).

A quick review of the information reported under the questions below suggests that there is need to re-orient programme objectives and design of interventions to be more "family-sensitive". Actions to address gender-roles and responsibilities within the family will need to be matched by the mobilisation of multi-generational members, provisions of opportunities and autonomy of all members, and the implementation of the Convention and

the World Declaration. To ease readability, the responses have been summarised below in the order of the questions. Please note that Q.8-10 query how UNICEF policies affect the families of UNICEF staff.

*Q1: Does your office support any programmes specifically intended to strengthen families? If so, please give the name of the programme and who is the main implementing agency or partner of UNICEF in the programme (attach any existing descriptions or evaluation of programme).*

Among the programmes identified as directly strengthening /supporting families, field offices also listed sectoral programmes of MCH, nutrition, WES, etc., arguing that the programmes enabled families through service-delivery and enhanced access to basic services. **However, the following emerge as good examples of programmes where families have been identified as the target group and unit for programming.**

- Household Food Security Project - Vietnam
- Family and Parent Education - China
- Family Life Empowerment and Household Food Security - Namibia
- Tracing and Family Reunification Project - Liberia
- Family Food Production Programme - Cambodia
- Monitoring of Safety Net Measures - CEE/NIS (Headquarters)

Most Field Offices have included CEDC and Area-based programmes as "family impact" interventions. In most of the CEDC programmes described, attention is focused on the "child out of the family" rather than the "family-unifying" aspects, except in the case of the small-scale projects on family counselling in Bolivia and Jamaica. Similarly, disability programmes involve only one parent, usually the mother in education and care. In the area-based programmes, UBS and WID, both the planning and implementation of services was directed at children and women rather than towards the family/household as the unit for programming.

*Q2: Do you feel that some programmes have a significant positive or negative effect on families? If so, state which and explain.*

Four countries abstained from replying. **The overall tone of the responses to this question was speculative.** Field offices were unanimous that none of the UNICEF-supported programmes which have negative implications/impact on the family as such. However, most countries infer that area-based programmes are the most likely to have

positive effects on families as they provides multi-sectoral services inclusive of income-generating activities.

**Q3:** *Have any programme explicitly involved or mobilized families (in addition to women community leaders, etc.) as a programme strategy? If so, which programmes?*

**Nearly one-third of the field offices abstained from replying or could not specify any particular programme as example.** In addition to the above-listed programmes (Q1), the other offices include social mobilization efforts for service-delivery and awareness raising under this question. The provision of "family latrines", family-based rehabilitation of disabled, organization of community meetings, participation of individual members of families are mentioned as examples.

**Q4:** *Does the country have specific family laws and policies? Are family issues seen primarily as matters of government, religion, traditional culture, or another?*

All field offices except three responded with relevant information. **UNICEF Djibouti and Nicaragua report that at the country level, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is being used as the basis for the development of family laws in protection of children.**

Eighteen field offices reported that family issues are perceived more as a concern of tradition, culture and religious organizations rather than social issues that need to be addressed by public policy. **Advocacy or interventions to counter such sensitivities at the country level were not discussed or felt necessary.**

**Q5:** *Are there traditional family values, structures or practices which specifically support or constrain factors to reach the Global Child goals of the 1990s? Explain.*

Eleven countries maintained that the traditional family values, structures and practices are supportive and promoted the advocacy of the well-being of children. Of the remaining, four cited gender discrimination, son-preference, early marriage the status of women and inequitable gender roles as obstacles to the furtherance and achievement of child goals. The other offices cited urbanization, changing family and occupational structures, break-up of traditional extended families, and prevalence of strong social/religious taboos on acceptance of children born out of wedlock as constraining factors. Four offices abstained from responding to the question and four others proposed that the issue be researched since no definitive causative factors were discernible.

**Q6&7:** *Are there any activities planned for observing the IYF in the country? If so, please describe. State how your office is involved in the above IYF activities, if any.*

Twenty-five offices out of 32 reported that they neither had any knowledge about IYF (to quote one office: "not heard of IYF before your memo arrived") nor had they been approached by the government counterpart. The list below summarizes the activities/events/and nature of involvement as reported by other UNICEF offices. These activities have since been included in the global IYF calendar of events, issued by the IYF Secretariat and will receive wide publicity.

Regional Office, Amman: Organising the Regional Seminar: "The Arab family: Support Systems and Networks," Amman, May 1993, in conjunction with Arab Thought Forum. The documentation under preparation for the seminar will provide basis for future research.

UNICEF, China: (a) associated with the U.N. Inter-regional meeting on the Role of the Family in the Socialization of Youth. Beijing, 31 May to 4 June 1993.

(b) co-sponsor of the International Seminar on Family and Child Care in China along with EAPRO and Government institutions, Beijing, July 1993.

UNICEF, Costa Rica: Support to meeting of First Ladies of Latin America, mid-1993, the theme is "The family."

UNICEF Namibia, Bangladesh, Ecuador and Maldives: Member of National IYF Steering Committee.

UNICEF Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, Haiti, Uruguay: Associated with the review of legislation on family code and investigations on the structure of the family (proposed/underway).

UNICEF, Swaziland - Support to observance of the Day of the African Child - Theme: Family, June 1993.

#### Feedback on Families of UNICEF staff

**Q8:** *Have there been specific cases of families of UNICEF staff being adversely affected by the condition of work for UNICEF? If so, briefly describe.*

Six offices reported in the negative and four abstained from responding. Five offices reported having held internal consultations with staff, as advised in RJ's memo. The following factors were identified as adverse affecting family-life of international staff:- security conditions in the duty station, isolation, lack of adequate employment opportunities for spouse, difficulties in acculturation to new, unfamiliar, socio-cultural situations, absence of festivities and posting to hardship (non-family) duty stations. Recommendations included child-care/creche on office premises, increase in frequency or relaxation in the regulations for family visits in



hardship (non-family) duty stations and flexitime in office hours.

Q9: *Have any special arrangements been made to accommodate family concerns of staff? Describe briefly.*

**The fact that 21 out of the 31 respondent offices felt that such arrangements are either not necessary or said that they had nothing to report is worth noting.** Family-friendly arrangements, as reported by other 10 offices, included adjustments in individual staff members' working hours in times of personal/family emergencies, creche facilities, part-time employment opportunities for spouse, growth monitoring of children of staff members, consideration in postings and transfer.

Q10: *How could staff rules or other policies be modified to be more family-friendly?-*

One office queried the 'why' of the question and ten offices abstained. **The other offices provided the following suggestions :**

- increase efficiency to avoid working beyond office hours
- ban travel and work during weekends/holidays
- travel should not extend beyond seven continuous days.
- coverage of health insurance to family members not presently included
- creche facilities
- implementation of flexi-time policy
- supervisors/management should interpret rules with positive attitudes and considerations towards the family situations, particularly in rotation and recruitment
- definition of "dependents" should take cognisance of local cultural family structure
- spouse employment policies
- examine option of installing families of staff members working in hardship duty stations in neighboring countries
- provide option for "Reverse Education Grant", i.e. allow parent to avail of travel entitlement if child is unable to utilize the entitlement .

**Actions for follow-up: While I am aware that observance of IYF could add to the workplans**

of field office without tangible outcomes, I venture to add that some of the above substantive issues demand attention. From the above, it is apparent that we cannot presume that within UNICEF there is considerable recognition of the family- impact factors of our programmes nor on its role as the primary environment for the child in WSC follow-up. Some observations on this aspect of our work was made during the current Executive Board and perhaps needs consideration for actions both at Headquarters and field offices.

Some field offices are interested and/or closely involved with IYF activities and have requested advice. An earlier in-house interdivisional consultation on the subject in October 1992 had resulted in useful recommendations for IYF and the checklist. **We would like to suggest that a similar consultation be held at a convenient time in the near future to discuss the emerging issues.**

Thanks.

cc: Mr. Kul Gautam  
Mr. Manzoor Ahmed  
Ms. R. Padmini  
Ms. M. Elias

iyf-rpt.