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Primary Contact **Upasana Young (RAM & Hist Proj. Assist. Consultant**  
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*Upasana Young*

*Upasana Young*

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**UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND**  
Progress Report on Preparatory Activities  
to the International Year of the Family  
Inter-Agency Meeting  
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**UNICEF Policies in Relation to the Family:**

The strategic importance of families in fulfilling UNICEF's mandate for the survival, development and protection of all children is well recognised and needs no overstatement. The reader may refer to the paper prepared by UNICEF for this meeting on "Strengthening families for children's rights and the achievement of global goals" which discusses UNICEF's approaches to reaching the child in the family in the context of the changing role and responsibilities of the family (Agenda item 5).

In preparation for IYF, UNICEF undertook an internal review of both its policies and programmes of assistance with respect to their relevance and effectiveness to respond to changing trends in family structures as well as to the mobilisation of families in support of the global child goals. The information materials on IYF were shared with the regional and country offices encouraging them to assist in the promotion of IYF and to participate in national level actions related to its observance. Country offices were requested to complete a checklist on the family and preparatory activities for IYF as well as provide NYHQ documentation on programmes especially intended to strengthen families. This note is mainly based on the information received from the country offices.

**UNICEF's Programmes in support of families:**

While all UNICEF programmes for child survival, development protection and development are centered around the children and women in the family, this note selectively describes programmes directly targeted to support the family in fulfilling its functions as the basic unit of society and in providing the social and emotional environment. The reader is referred to the above mentioned paper (Agenda 5) which outlines UNICEF's programmes reaching families. Such programmes of UNICEF assistance are diverse and exemplify the country programming approach where the interventions are programmed to address the specific needs of children and women of the country. For instance, in Liberia there are specific projects aimed at tracing children separated from their families due to the civil war leading to their reunification. War trauma counselling centers reach out to families supported by the Community Social Service Centres which provide credit, child care and training to single-parent families. The Family Life Empowerment Programme in Namibia

holds promise of high impact for interventions of early childhood protection and development of children and women in especially difficult circumstances. Programmes directed at the involvement of parents and older siblings in early childhood education in Costa Rica, Ecuador, and the Philippines has received both popular support and the commitment of government counterparts. In China, the changing family structure has demanded the participation of multiple grandparents and child care. In the UNICEF assisted programme called Family and Parent Education Project, grandparents participate along with the parents in community based education programmes on child development.

Interventions directed at enhancing household food production/security include the participation of all adult members of the family as in UNICEF programmes in Vietnam and Mozambique. In Vietnam, the programme package includes productive activities for women, environmental sanitation and social mobilisation for community development. The recognition that the family provides the basic foundation for child development in the Vietnamese society has contributed to the mobilization efforts and manifested in the high levels of achievements in immunization and early childhood education. Women of female-headed households have always received special attention for support, especially in credit and self-employment programmes in countries such as Swaziland. On the other hand, in Indonesia the nationwide program runs through a network of community-based centers, popularly known as the PKK or the Family Welfare Movement which has a variety of activities targeted at family improvements. Similarly, UNICEF supports the Production Credit for Rural Women and the Small Farmers's Development Programme in Nepal which have been recognised as successful family-based national programmes for poverty alleviation. In all of these programmes, UNICEF supports capacity building and organization of communities around the issues of building self-reliance and local solutions to address basic needs.

UNICEF's advocacy for country level recognition of children's rights and ratification of the Convention has drawn attention to the actions in the "best interests of the child". In many countries, as a result of such advocacy, there is a recognition that family laws need to be reviewed for gender bias, order of birth, parental protection, inheritance, right to lineage, adoption etc. Traditional mores and social customs seem to obstruct the implementation of appropriate existing legislation necessitating actions for social mobilization and change in community attitudes. The application of other UN principles such as CEDAW are also contingent upon the enactment of enabling legislation and commitment towards equity and equality. (See above-mentioned paper for detailed discussion.)

Women and children in emergency situations, consequent to armed conflict, civil strife and natural calamities, have always received priority attention. The not-so-visible emergency of abandonment and destitution of children due to breakdown in family relationships is emerging as an area of concern and is being addressed, to some extent, through programmes of alternative non-institutional care in countries such as Chile, Ecuador, Costa Rica and India. These programmes are run by non-governmental organisations and are moving away from the traditional rehabilitation solutions to the development of long-term protection, policies and programmes for the "families at risk".

## **Activities in Preparation of IYF:**

In several countries UNICEF is working closely with the National Committees of IYF in the planning and preparation of the IYF Plan of Action. In almost all of these countries, UNICEF's counterpart ministries have been designated as IYF focal points, which has allowed for close collaboration. In Ecuador, Chile, Namibia, Bangladesh and the Maldives, UNICEF is a member of the Inter-Ministerial National Committee/Commission and is expected to play an active role in advocacy and formulation of "family-friendly" programmes or re-orientation of existing programmes. Some offices are assisting the conduct of special studies to support policy formulation.

On another plane, UNICEF offices are utilising other public events to focus on IYF. For instance, in Swaziland, "The Family" will be the theme in the observance of the Day of the African Child later in June of this year. In a similar initiative in Costa Rica, "The Family" has been identified as the main theme of the proposed meeting of the First Ladies of Latin America scheduled in mid-1993.

With regard to the four proposed regional IYF preparatory meetings scheduled in 1993, UNICEF is encouraging the participation of its regional Offices wherever possible. This will enable closer coordination and association with the regional IYF priorities. For instance, in China, UNICEF is closely associated with the regional preparatory meeting to be held later this year in Beijing.

At Headquarters, UNICEF is cooperating with DPI in the production of a film on the family and the IYF Information kit. It is collaborating with four other UN agencies on the Global Family Project, which is an anthropological study of selected families in 12 countries and a book based on the results will be published in 1994. There is also a proposal to produce a documentary film series, based on the study in time for 1994. In another initiative, UNICEF is collaborating with the Population Council on a special IYF publication on the family, which will highlight the policy implications of changing family structures and provide new insights to programmes responsive to the emerging needs. UNICEF, Geneva is assisting in the preparation of a publication on Women in the Family.

Subsequent to the previous interagency meeting formal agreements were reached with the IYF Secretariat to produce and market UNICEF products on the IYF theme during 1993 and 1994. The Greeting Cards Office of UNICEF has developed special IYF products such as the IYF bookmark, a set of earrings and brooch with the IYF logo, a desk agenda and a set of greeting cards on the family theme. Except for the desk agenda, the other products are ready and currently being marketed.

Finally UNICEF, both at Headquarters and the Field Offices, perceives IYF as an opportunity to strengthen and safeguard the family as the "smallest democracy at the heart of society" and as the most viable instrument for the achievement of children's rights and global

goals for the survival, development and protection of children. It looks forward to its continuing collaboration with the other UN agencies, the International NGO Forum and the national IYF Commissions/Committees to make 1994 a constructive and significant year for the families of the world.