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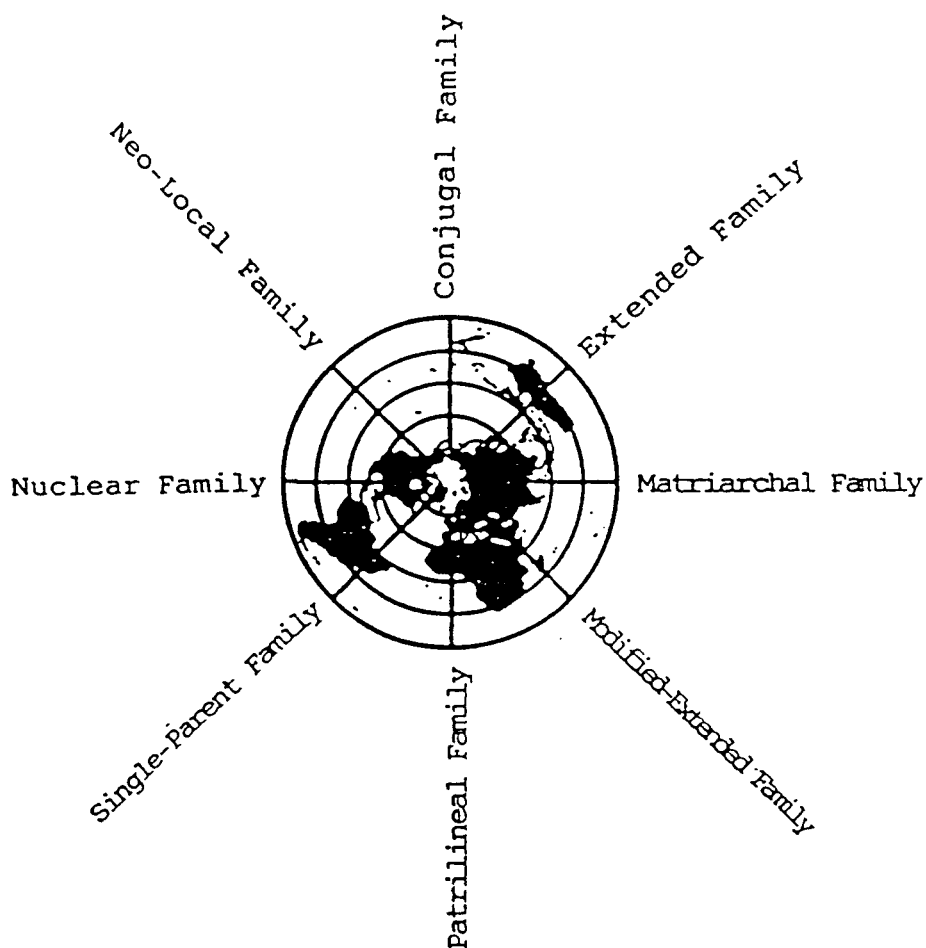
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THE VIENNA N G O COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY

CHECKLIST

of Activities for an effective
International Year of the Family 1994



Everyone is part of a family – *you too!*

Every governmental and every non-governmental organisation can be part
of the International Year of the Family – *yours too!*

1994 – The International Year of the Family

" No one is an island .."

Indeed, everyone is part of a family. At a closer look, families are a natural community which links and frees us from the isolation of the solitary individual and the anonymity of the solitary world. The family's sheer existence shows we are not meant to be totally alone. This 'basic unit of society' can provide a privileged environment for the nurturing, growth, well-being and freedom of its individual members, i.e. fulfilment based on mutual respect. Despite the often delicate and difficult situation in modern society, families continue to provide the basic life experience of responsibility and values such as loving, caring and sharing.

The impact of socio-economic changes in our society has very much affected and altered the family in its function as an institution. The growing concern for the role of the family calls for new perception and creative reassessment of what promotes or what hinders the family, in order to ensure its continuing vital status in modern society. Families themselves need to participate in structuring socio-economic and cultural conditions which affect their well-being!

The United Nations General Assembly has recognized the significance of this important issue by proclaiming 1994 as the International Year of the Family with the theme: "FAMILY RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN A CHANGING WORLD".

Call for Action – Effective Years do not just happen by themselves !

The Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, concerned that a major international action like IYF should have a real impact, presents herewith ideas, incentives and suggestions for action in the form of a "Checklist of Activities for an Effective International Year of the Family". This Checklist was compiled by representatives of member organizations for the Committee as a tool to stimulate dialogue, interaction and activities in preparation of the IYF.

All member organizations of the Committee, all interested persons and institutions are cordially invited

- a) to distribute these lists as widely as possible
- b) to enrich and expand these lists with their experience, new thoughts and concepts.
- c) to inform the NGO Committee on the Family of your experiences, ideas and progress for IYF.

WHO can take action ?

nearly everyone ...

from Grand-parents to Government Officials

From Popstars to Professionals

From Teens to Theologians

from Volunteers to VIPs

and of course from the UN to NGOs and families worldwide

HOW to stimulate action and dialogue ?

Take the attached lists which suggest possible action areas for the following target groups:

- Families
- Educational/Research Institutions
- Family Organizations/Social Services
- Media/Opinion Leaders
- National/ Local NGOs and Other

- Voluntary organizations
- National Governments
- Inter-Governmental and Non-governmental international Organizations

See **HOW YOU** can use and adapt these in your professional, volunteer, private and business contacts/ programmes. The overlapping of suggestions is intentional, as the family interacts with various structures and areas in all societies. Therefore, the proposed ideas should be looked at in their entirety by all readers.

The Vienna NGO Committee on the Family plans a further issue of these lists and relies on your

COOPERATION, ACTION AND FEEDBACK

For further information on IYF and on the activities of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family please write to:
NGO Committee on the Family, Secretariate, Spiegelgasse 3/8, A – 1010 Vienna, Austria.



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Checklist – Families

- o Think about the "meaning of family" for the individual family members to promote human relationships in full respect and sensitivity to individual emotional needs, intellectual capacities, needs for emancipation, sexual satisfaction, etc.
- o Define the predominant process of decision-making within the framework of a meaningful partnership in which responsiveness to the body, mind, feelings and spirit of each partner is assured and flexibility is developed..
- o Create awareness and assist family members to realize individually different points of view in one and the same situation; teach a mutual awareness of the various approaches within the family.
- o Institute a "Family Council" to debate decisions and problems affecting all family members, thereby training non-violent conflict resolution, culture of communication and dialogue among generations.
- o Avoid situations harmful or hurtful to the dignity of family members within and outside the family.
- o Recollect values traditionally transmitted through the family and important to the family and its members, including consideration of how values, relationships and the expectations on the roles of men and women change.
- o Take away the pressure of the multi-burden placed on women in the family by greater integration of men in family life.
- o Accept moral and actual obligations towards children, elderly, disabled or disadvantaged members, stressing full participation of all family members in the tasks of caring.
- o Realize your own self-care abilities and strengthen family ties, especially under difficult conditions. such as unemployment. emigration. etc. through moral and

- o Enhance the feeling of cohesion of the family through arranging family reunions, celebrating family feastsdays, searching for ancestry, etc.
- o Set aside at least one day per week for the whole family to share a meal (without TV!)
- o Make use of all offerings for families for common leisure activities (sports, music, games, singing, etc.).
- o Take time and care to build informal relations (trust) between families (neighbours, friends) for common leisure and mutual help.
- o Participate in learning possibilities and discussions about the importance of parenting, new findings in child development, parent-child relationship, roles of women and youth in society.
- o Motivate and train all family members to assume their full responsibilities in household tasks, community and public life.
- o Recognize that marriage and family are not static situations, but a lifelong process of growth which requires flexibility and responsiveness of all family members at different stages.
- o Explore possibilities to channel the earning capacities of family members in such a way that family members are partners in deciding on the family budget.
- o Meet with families from other communities or countries and exchange experiences.
- o Become aware of what the family contributes to society and the state, considering especially that all members of a family - men, women, children, elderly - contribute emotionally, economically, culturally, educationally, etc. to a functioning community and society.
- o Explore what society and the state offer for the benefit and protection of the family as a unit.
- o Utilize the network of all family associations to provide a forum for voicing the real needs of families, both material and non-material.
- o Utilize services offered by the state and society for the benefit and protection of the family (assistance, housing counselling, reuniting families, etc.) and become an advocate for creating new family-oriented services in areas of unmet needs.
- o Assist and participate in planning programmes for IYF and become an active contributor in all IYF activities - thus ensuring the success of the Year for families.



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Checklist – Educational/Research Institutions

1. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- o Involve families themselves in all educational plans.
- o Portray a realistic approach to partnership and family life.
- o Teach skills and develop abilities necessary for everyday family life.
- o Organize lectures, courses, seminars, etc. on various family themes.
- o Promote youth and adult education by expanding and pooling resources of schools, institutions, universities and private initiatives.
- o Offer a wide range of family centred activities, e.g. on health education, creative hobbies, sports and games, to strengthen the communication within and between families, taking into account single parent families!
- o Utilize the network of schools and educational institutions to discuss the real needs of families, both material and non-material.
- o Provide special education for families with special needs, i.e. families confronted with unemployment, minimum income, poverty, disability, illness, aging, alcohol/drug problems, domestic violence, war situations, threatened status in society because of refugee or migrant situations, child conscription and labour, street or prostitute children, slum dwellers, etc., as well as general education for human rights.

2. RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

- o Study how families are related to other structures: nuclear family members to extended family, to the neighbourhood, community, school, church, family and work/economy, etc.
- o Develop studies on the situation of families and their material/non-material needs.
- o Encourage and initiate research projects (family-oriented living, family income, travel, etc).
- o Create a fund for research on family issues, e.g. on the various roles of family in different national and social contexts.
- o Discuss research findings, so that they may be used to the benefit of family life.
- o Distribute as widely as possible findings of interdisciplinary family studies.
- o Turn research findings into practical guidelines to assist family members in everyday life.



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Checklist – Family Organizations/Social Services

- o Act through members to monitor activities of governments for basic social services.
- o Establish National Family Boards, Commissions and Committees (ensuring co-operation with NGOs).
- o Provide a greater variety of support services that strengthen the self-care ability of families and informal neighbourhood networker (from supplementary, remedial, preventive to developmental forms of family support, i.e. family advice bureau, family life education centers, etc.).
- o Take necessary measures through private and public sectors to provide support and counselling to families with problems and to enable them to function (i.e. single parent families, families of migrant workers, families of unoccupied workers, families of immigrants, families with disabled members, etc.).
- o Include in your perspective of the "Rights of the Family", the problems concerning women's rights vis-à-vis domestic and social violence, that affect women as well as the family.
- o Consider the issues/problems and aspirations of often-neglected sectors of "child labor", street children, children exploited through prostitution, etc., in keeping with the spirit of the newly adopted U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- o Campaign for the abandoned child's right to a permanent substitute family and the same child's right to her/his roots.
- o Provide preventive help through volunteer counsellors, who, guided by experts, care for youth problems by helping them with their needs of employment, leisure-time activities and communication with friends, youth groups and families.
- o Encourage small group discussions, lectures, seminars and workshops as to enhance awareness of such topics as: differentiation between "family and household"; re-evaluation of the roles within the family; interpretation of the traditional term "family" (grandparents, parents and children) and other forms (communes, cohabitation of unmarried partners, single households, monastic life); obligation of the families towards the older generation, disabled or disadvantaged members; moral obligation for the mental and spiritual welfare of all family members, especially those under stress, sick or the elderly; mutual help in times of need with the family, friends, neighbours, and/or interference, etc.

- o Support educational campaigns which will favor strong intergenerational ties.
- o Promote programmes to improve family well-being and family health, especially mental and non-material needs.
- o Encourage and initiate research projects (family-oriented living, family income, travel, etc.).
- o Develop measures and programmes to create awareness in family members of different viewpoints on one and the same situation; teaching about various approaches within the family.
- o Promote, through education and training, the ability to establish human relationships; emotional emancipation with boys and men; intellectual emancipation with girls and women; sexual and erotic culture; culture of interhuman communication amongst woman-man-child; non-violent conflict resolution; partnerships based on responsiveness to body, mind, feelings and to spirit of one's partner.
- o Promote, through counselling, an awareness that marriage and family are not part of static situations, but a lifelong process with various stages of specific challenges, demanding distinct sensitivity and responsiveness of the family members.
- o Initiate family festivals, i.e. family reunions, clan gatherings, family competitions such as sports, song and dance, family chain letters, etc.;
- o Organize meetings of families in neighbourhoods and of families from neighbouring countries.
- o Provide basic health, medical, social security and other programmes of special family concern.
- o Provide solidarity in the community and mutual support in confronting social difficulties such as drug abuse, youth crime, alcoholism and single parents, using the "families help families" model.
- o Provide hospital care, mobile therapy by physio- and ergotherapists, as assistance for elderly to ensure living in familiar surroundings.
- o Promote creative and effective day-care solutions for elderly and children.
- o Study measures such as pensions, family allowance, maternity/ paternity leave, insurance against illness, disability, unemployment, etc. to ensure their adequacy for healthy family life.
- o Urge local universities to expand training programmes in family care, by identifying inadequacies of trained personnel, i.e. geriatric social workers, drug abuse prevention specialists and child care specialists.
- o Invite national reports on the laws and practices of adoption and foster care in the respective countries.
- o Devise ways of promptly identifying the need for assistance to families, not only for problem-solving, but for providing information, training and skills, for self-help support and ways in which family participation provides greater effectiveness and dignity.



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Checklist - Socio-Economic Organizations

The family as producer is well defined and its special problems are often described. The family as consumer is seldom discussed, because in the marketplace the family seldom appears as a whole; it is generally one family member who does the buying. However, before this person sets out, a decision is taken within the family on how the family income is to be spent. Very little is known about these decision processes and the role allotted to the individual members of the family. There is evidence, that consensus in economic matters strengthen the family bond, and that discord leads to family quarrels, in many cases to disruptions. It would be worthwhile to study these decision processes more closely.

As the bulk of consumption happens within families, we are convinced that the family as economic unit should be a topic taken up in preparing for the IYF.

- o Improve rationality in money management and buying habits.
- o Think about how the transparency about total income, family budgeting,, hierarchy of needs could be improved by an open communication between husband, wife, grandparents and children.
- o Improve the equality and balance of power in decision processes on purchasing, saving, loans, and investments.
- o Raise the level of awareness in respect of the need of information and advice about private and public goods and services. Information and advice is provided by consumer organizations, test-institutes, test-magazines, massmedia etc., which attempt to help families in wise decision making.
- o Examine the purchasing power of the family as basic economic unit indicated by its share of the Gross National Product (GNP).
- o Think about the family as important root of countervailing market-power.

- o Investigate the genesis of indebtedness and over-indebtedness in families and study the problem of compensatory functions of consumption in the cases of the poor, the unemployed, the disadvantaged and the marginalized.
- o Think about the relationship between financial problems and quarrels, disruptions, divorce, illness, drug-abuse, alcoholism, crime etc.
- o Investigate the problems caused by kidfluence (ie.influence of children) on the decisions of the family. Kidfluence is utilised by merchandising, ie. in the commercialisation of children's TV (eg. puppets, games, gimmicks). Severe problems are often the consequence of a mismatch between children's "needs" and the available income.
- o Evaluate the impact of Green Consumerism and the demand for ecological responsibility upon the information seeking, communication and problem solving processes in the family. How can the environmental conscience use the penny power and the "voting with pocket and purse" to influence both the character of products available in the market-place and the manner in which products are manufactured and marketed?
- o Consider the family's potential as a nucleus of local action in order to invigorate neighbourhood, to integrate elderly people, to support civil initiatives and consumer organisations, to foster voluntary work for the benefit of the local environment.
- o Think about the values of economic knowledge and understanding as a topic of in-family education and socialisation.

(Prepared by members of the International Organization of Consumers Unions)



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Checklist – Media/Opinion Leaders

- o Create a pro-family atmosphere and environment: make family desirable, positive, "in".
- o Draw attention to the problems and needs of families, both material and non-material.
- o Focus specific attention on the destructive effects of drug/substance abuse on families and enable them to realize their potential as central natural resource in prevention.
- o Offer communication and exchange about family (letters to the editor, articles, series, direct approach to play writers, film producers, insertion of advertisements, etc.).
- o Promote publicity and awareness of family concerns and issues.
- o Reach out to the community and family levels.
- o Be instrumental in creating community-oriented programs to promote the role of the family.
- o Instigate a group of experts to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the image of the family in the media, e.g. values assigned to family, expectations on family members, etc.
- o Use special sections, publications, programmes, films for family issues, e.g. family page.
- o Publish a booklet series "Facts of Family Life": practical advice and each country's local wisdom.
- o Support public campaigns in favour of intergenerational family ties.
- o Sensitize the artistic world to create a pro-family climate in the arts through

e.g. "Symphony for the Family".

- o Create a global solidarity campaign for families using worldwide, influence/moral authority to ensure that IYF focuses on the needs of families and all its members in developing and industrialized countries.
- o Focus on the obligation to care for the physical, mental and spiritual needs of all family members, especially the most vulnerable: children, elderly, sick and disabled, etc.
- o Carry out telethons, concerts, performances and other fund/awareness raising family actions.
- o Create awareness that every policy decision should consider its impact on families.
- o Evaluate if mass media are reinforcing racial, sexual, political and religious stereotypes and what the consequences are for family life.
- o Study the effects on families when information received through mass media is given higher credibility than opinions of family members.
- o Identify examples of mass media behaviour that have been both positive and negative on family life.
- o Involve family members and human welfare experts in planning process for media programmes.
- o Consider if mass media are causing a reduction in interpersonal communication, therefore contributing to less mutual understanding in families.



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Checklist – National/Local NGOs and other Voluntary Organizations

- o Encourage members to design and participate in activities for the IYF.
- o Provide leadership and coordination to promote, support and publicize activities of groups involved in improving family welfare.
- o Facilitate access to family services for potential users.
- o Create community-oriented social and recreational opportunities for families and their members in neighbourhood centers.
- o Contact newspapers, TV and radio and encourage presentation of a positive image of the family, providing examples of successful solutions to family problems.
- o Study and propose measures which governmental and semi-governmental bodies could take to improve legislation in support of families.
- o Alert responsible authorities to include family education in schools and in youth groups.
- o Create groups of parents for discussions of family life, involving fathers and other male family members!
- o Organize a "Day for the Family" to emphasize the need for family unity and the transmission of positive human values.
- o Facilitate family reunions and the search for ancestry (roots).
- o Organize national/regional conferences dedicated to family-related themes.
- o Encourage small group discussions, lectures seminars, allowing families to discuss with experts.
- o Consider different topics of the family and : ecology/economy, unpaid work, poverty, drugs/crime, loneliness, etc.

- o Reflect on the meaning of the extended family: a safety net or burden?
- o Study roles of family members to ensure growth of each individual.
- o Look at the traditional term "family" in relation to communes, cohabitation of non-married partners, single households.
- o Discuss obligations of the family towards the older generation, disabled or disadvantaged members.
- o Think about assistance of the family for members with special needs/weaknesses, especially children, the sick, elderly, and disabled.
- o Ensure mutual help of all members in times of need.
- o Ask about the validity of governmental support for families.
- o Consider the importance of the family in relation to the economy, environment, poverty, drug addiction, violence, etc.
- o Act as a resource centre for sharing knowledge, ideas, experience and information on aspects of social development which affect the well-being of families.
- o Provide guidance and information to families on changing patterns of child-parent relationship, on communication skills related to social and sexual behaviour.
- o Provide training for parents who can assume leadership in self-help groups to deal with various crisis situations, i.e. school difficulties; drug abuse; youth crime; alcoholism; AIDS; etc.
- o Support and publicize organizations involved with the problems of street children, child labour, internal and external migrant workers, slum-dwellers, both in industrialized and developing countries.
- o Establish active collaboration with competent organizations of society on working time, working hours, working conditions and their impact on family health and cohesion.
- o Intensify efforts to facilitate access to job opportunities for disadvantaged groups like the young, women, disabled persons, thus promoting justice and an active role of all family members in society.
- o Support informal structures such as family self help groups and volunteer organizations of parents with professional expertise and offers for skill development.
- o Consider social infrastructure (educational facilities, child care institutions, services for the elderly, cultural facilities, availability of market and shops to meet basic needs) in rural and urban areas in the context of family needs.
- o Encourage family organizations at all levels to participate actively in social educational, political institutions where decisions affecting families are debated and taken.
- o Evaluate the objectives of your organization in relation to the needs of families and community and study possible programme adjustment.



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Checklist – National Governments

- o Set up a concrete programme to promote the International Year of the Family.
- o Integrate findings of former UN Years and actions which affect families directly/indirectly into the action programme of the IYF.
- o Ensure that other coinciding UN events, regarding drugs, women, aging, etc. are linked to IYF and aim to strengthen the self-care capabilities of families.
- o Create an environment in society which promotes the family.
- o Remember that socio-economic decisions are not impersonal, but are made by and affect persons who are members of families.
- o Produce national reports on the laws and practice of adoption and foster care in countries.
- o Instigate the study of family support services, disadvantaged families, causes of family breakdown.
- o Develop innovative programmes and methods to help preserve/strengthen the family kinship structure as a focal point towards social development.
- o Urge local universities to expand training programmes in family care where gaps exist, e.g. social workers in geriatrics, youth crime/drug abuse prevention, special child care.
- o Reduce tariffs for families in public and private institutions.
- o Focus specific attention on the destructive effects of drug/substance abuse on families and enable them to realize their potential as a central natural resource in prevention.
- o Establish National Family Boards. Commissions and Committees (in cooperation with

- o Utilize the network of schools and all family-member associations connected with them to provide a forum for voicing the real needs of families, both material and non-material.
- o Publish and share national "whitebook" reports showing the concrete situation and key problems of families in each country and what action and by whom action is desired at all levels.
- o Study measures such as pensions, family allowance, maternity/paternity leave, insurances against illness, disability, unemployment, etc. to ensure they are supportive of healthy family life.
- o Provide basic health, medical, social security etc. programmes with special family concern.
- o Provide a greater variety of support services that strengthen the self-care ability of families and informal neighbourhood network (from supplementary, remedial, preventive to developmental and new forms of family support, e.g. family advice bureau, family life education centres, etc.).
- o Establish family policies and review existing family policy and laws: are they pro-family?
- o Study and, where necessary, adjust tax system so as to be favourable to families.
- o Provide hospital care, mobile therapy by physio- and ergotherapists, assistance for elderly, families and neighbourhood so that, e.g. elderly can be cared for in familiar surroundings.
- o Consider the effects of environmental destruction, misuse of resources, etc. on families now and in the future.
- o Enhance the development of "human-size" technologies to prevent the alienation of families from their environment and development processes in society.
- o Issue a special postage stamp for families with revenues perhaps toward a special family fund.
- o Give special attention to the problem of "internal refugees", "migrant workers", "slum-dwellers", who are often deprived of the "basic right of family life".
- o Take into consideration the issues/problems and aspirations of often-neglected sectors of "child labour", "street children", "prostitute children", etc.
- o Direct foreign organizations not to unnecessarily "extract" children from families and communities, but advocate "sponsorship" type programmes which support the whole family.
- o Decide to include in all new social policy statements a paragraph: "impact of statement on the family".
- o Prevent the disruption of family life by militarisation, wars and violations of Human Rights.



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Checklist – Inter-governmental and Non-governmental International Organizations

- o Advocate full participation and action coordination in an IYF with all member(s) organizations.
- o Formulate and adopt a "Declaration" or "Guidelines" on the Family and implement this instrument in IYF.
- o Initiate and adopt a UN Convention on the Family for introduction and implementation in IYF.
- o Implement all existing/imminent UN instruments affecting families: e.g. the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (which places the family within the overall context of "national development" and "community welfare" thus going way beyond merely "family welfare"); the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with special consideration to such often neglected areas as "street children" and "child labour" and children in areas of armed conflict; child adoption; the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Guiding Principles for Social Welfare Policies and Programmes and other instruments pertaining to youth, aging, disabled, drug abuse, crime prevention....
- o Set up a concrete programme to promote the IYF.
- o Ensure that other coinciding UN events regarding drugs, women, aging, etc. are linked to IYF and aim to strengthen the self-care capabilities of families.
- o Integrate findings of former UN Years and actions which affect families directly/indirectly into the action programmes for IYF.
- o Publish a booklet "FACTS FOR FAMILY LIFE" (along the lines of the UNICEF/WHO/UNESCO publication "Facts for Life") with each country's local priorities/expertise.
- o Undertake a worldwide survey of national family life in relation to national development.
- o Alert member states to the importance of the family for world peace and progress.
- o Urge and support member states to formulate a comprehensive national family

- o Include sessions concerning family themes at NGO Conferences.
- o Establish an international newsletter for family activities, issues and discussion.
- o Organize an interdisciplinary conference (at international or regional levels) on family issues (family policy, social security, community planning, employment, trade unions, health, housing...).
- o Provide special funds for national level activities of NGOs (NGOs being a direct link to families and in the forefront of family welfare activities).
- o Issue a special postage stamp for families/for IYF with revenues perhaps towards a special family fund.
- o Initiate competitions at national and international level for a UN Award, e.g. songs (on families/love/relations), literature (novels/short stories/poetry), media (TV and radio scripts/newspaper articles on the above mentioned topics), children's drawing competitions on how they see their families).
- o Cooperate closely with the NGO Committee on the Family in working for IYF.
- o Encourage your members to assume an active role in national family roundtables or communities.
- o Stress the importance of pluralistic and inter-disciplinary discussions and actions in all matters concerning family welfare.