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The Family



Number 4/1993

Bulletin on the International Year of the Family, 1994

UNHCR

Enhancing the role and functions of the refugee family

The family unit has been of particular importance to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in two specific contexts: that of family reunification, which has been promoted and facilitated by UNHCR since its inception as an integral part of the Office's international protection and assistance functions; and that of the resources offered by the family as a unit in caring for its members in a refugee situation.

Wars and conflicts provoking displacement and exile disrupt, temporarily or permanently, the composition and functioning of family life in more ways than can be imagined. The circumstances in which refugees leave their countries of origin frequently involve the separation of families; such separation invariably leads to hardship and sometimes to tragic consequences. It may also create serious obstacles to a refugee's integration in a new homeland. Thus, the theme of the International Year of the Family (IYF), "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world", has particular implications for UNHCR as an organization that is concerned with over 18 million refugees worldwide, torn and ravaged by war and trauma, and in need of assistance to build their lives. Guided by both humanitarian and practical considerations, UNHCR is actively supporting the objectives and ideals of IYF by making intensive efforts to involve its field offices in the preparations for and observance of it. The focus of the Office's programme for IYF will be on promoting family reunification and supporting refugee families headed by women. Activities are aimed at enhancing the role and functions of the refugee family, keeping in mind the sensitive circumstances and specific needs of the refugee family, as well as its resourcefulness.

A comprehensive plan of action for IYF has been developed by

[continued on page 2]



Opening ceremony of the fourth and final regional preparatory meeting for IYF, held at Cartagena, Colombia, in August 1993

Colombia hosts fourth and final regional preparatory meeting

As part of an intensive and coordinated preparatory process for IYF, the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting to IYF, the fourth and last in a series of regional meetings before the launching of the Year, was held at Cartagena from 9 to 14 August 1993. It was hosted by the Government of Colombia and organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, in cooperation with the IYF secretariat.

Representatives of 23 countries adopted by consensus the Cartagena Declaration, a set of wide-ranging policy recommendations, as well as action guidelines for IYF designed to enhance the well-being of families.

In adopting the Cartagena Declaration, the participants of the meeting agreed on the following recommendations: to promote the formulation and consolidation of integrated family-oriented public policies, taking into account the diversity and cultural identity of families; to review, update, promote and implement a legal framework that would contribute to the integral protection of the family, eliminating all forms of discrimination

and violation of its rights; to maintain a suitable balance between the fulfilment of the State's functions and the limitations derived from families' privacy rights; and to encourage the development of high-level, decentralized technical and political institutional structures, with the participation of the citizenry, in order to integrate action in these areas.

They also agreed to reinforce programmes designed to satisfy the basic needs of families and, in particular, to facilitate their access to health services, education, nutrition, environmental sanitation, housing, recreation, employment and income generation. In addition, they called on multilateral and bilateral financial organizations and cooperation agencies to provide technical and financial support to government efforts to comply with signed agreements.

The recommendations of the Cartagena meeting, as well as of those of the regional meetings held earlier in 1993, at Tunis (for Africa and Western Asia), at Valletta, Malta (for Europe and North America) and in Beijing (for Asia and the Pacific), will be presented to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. ■

UNHCR*(continued from page 1)*

UNHCR, which consists of enabling the refugee family to care for its most vulnerable members, such as the elderly, the disabled, the mentally ill, unaccompanied minors and households headed by women, by integrating appropriate activities into the programme for each country; promoting national legislation that facilitates the reunion of separated families and regularizes their documentary and legal status; and involving other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and Governments in efforts to assist the refugee family in achieving economic self-reliance and viability as a social unit. Several UNHCR field offices have initiated specific activities to prepare for and observe IYF.

Other actions being undertaken by UNHCR include an awareness-raising campaign among field offices through the dissemination of material, posters and other literature related to IYF; competitions for refugee children and UNHCR staff; development of a UNHCR logo and slogan linking UNHCR and IYF; dissemination of model programmes among offices; and preparation of a discussion paper on UNHCR and IYF. An overall community-based approach is being adopted to provide support to individual families through mutual support systems. Cross-cultural dimensions and gender issues as well as the changed roles and functions of men and women will be addressed in preparation for and observance of IYF. Finally, in-service training is being provided to staff to promote creativity and sensitivity regarding the needs of refugee families. ■

Welcome to Malta! **World NGO Forum on Launching IYF**

The deliberations of the World NGO Forum on Launching the International Year of the Family to be held at Valletta, Malta, from 28 November to 2 December 1993 will cover a wide range of family-related issues. A provisional programme has been distributed by the Forum's organizers, containing an overview of the topics to be discussed. Plenary sessions will cover global perspectives and special aspects of the Forum's theme, "Promoting families for the well-being of individuals and societies" and will

seek to promote local- and grassroots-level participation in IYF and the involvement of families themselves in diverse IYF events. Among the issues to be addressed during the plenary sessions are: "Family: source of the future"; "Families relating to larger networks"; "Rights and responsibilities of families"; and "IYF — action for 1994 and beyond".

In addition to the plenary sessions, workshops and an authors' forum will be organized to provide opportunities for discussion on the subjects of family life and family well-being in society as well as specific subjects of concern to individual family members. Workshop topics include the relationships between the family and its members; the functions and needs of the family in the context of societies; and ways and means of assisting families with special needs. Other proposed topics include assessment of family policy, family and the environment, empowering families, family and the elderly, and the emerging roles of men and women in the family.

Copies of the provisional programme for the World NGO Forum can be obtained from the IYF-NGO Executive Secretariat, An der Hülben 1/15, A-1010 Vienna, Austria. Telephone: 0043-1-5138687. Telefax: 0043-1-512163875. ■

OAU *Regional organization to support IYF*

Recognizing the vital importance of regional-level preparations for the success of IYF, the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), at its fifty-eighth Ordinary Session, held at Cairo from 21 to 26 June 1993, adopted a resolution on the Year. Among other things, the resolution welcomed the results of the United Nations Africa and Western Asia Preparatory Meeting for IYF; deplored violence and atrocities against families and urged member States to take action to bring an end to such injustices as discrimination, repression, violence and racism; urged member States to lend priority to the preparation and observances of IYF and called upon them to establish national coordinating committees or similar mechanisms for IYF; encouraged the maximum participation of non-governmental organizations in the observance of IYF; called upon the Secretary-General of OAU, in collaboration with the Executive Secretary of

the Economic Commission for Africa and the secretariat of IYF, to undertake an in-depth study of the impact of current socio-economic changes on the role, functions and structure of the African family and to hold a regional meeting on the subject. ■

Health for all **World Health Assembly adopts resolution on IYF**

At its forty-sixth session, the World Health Assembly adopted a resolution on IYF which, among other things, urged all member States to give effect to the objectives of the Year in the health sector, including the strengthening of intersectoral collaboration in support of the goals of health for all as a crucial means for meeting the health and other development needs of families. The resolution also urged all member States to determine, in collaboration with other sectors, which families were at risk of not being able to meet the basic needs of their members, and to develop or strengthen coordinated support to such families including close collaboration with non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations; to undertake operational research on approaches to enhancement of the health, nurturing, caring and development functions within the family; and to ratify and implement such international instruments as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex) as vehicles for family health development.

The resolution further urged the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) to provide coordinated support to member States, with other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, for research on methods for measuring and evaluating the impact of policies and programmes on the health and functioning of the family and its members. It also urged the Director-General to examine the cost, benefits and social implications of a greater involvement of the family in health promotion, disease prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, with particular emphasis on equity and on the sharing of family responsibilities. ■

Families at risk

Inter-agency task force initiates joint project

The first meeting of a United Nations system-wide Task Force on Families at Risk, convened at Geneva on 12 and 13 July 1993 and hosted by WHO, has resulted in the development of the conceptual framework of an inter-agency project on families that are at risk of breakdown or vulnerability. The concept of families at risk derives from the observation that families who are not able to cope with needs or problems in any one sector or area often demonstrate a similar inability in other sectors and, subsequently, are at risk of breakdown. At the same time, there are families who are able to cope successfully with their changing circumstances; these families demonstrate certain common factors that seem to be crucial in enabling them to be successful. Governments and the organizations concerned need to address these issues in their development efforts and to formulate and implement corresponding policies and programmes.

The inter-agency project on families at risk is one of several joint projects being implemented by the bodies of the United Nations system involved in the preparations for and observance of IYF. It recognizes that policies directed at one aspect of the family are likely to have implications for other aspects of the family. It also points out that the successful execution of the mandates of a United Nations body in one sector requires support and complementary action in several other sectors. The project aims at pooling system-wide expertise in order to identify indicators and circumstances placing families at risk, as well as factors that enable families to cope with problems and stress. Another aim is to identify tools for developing programmes and activities directed at families at risk, and to promote the application of interventions that will enhance family well-being. ■

Domestic violence

UN issues policy document

Domestic violence is a world-wide problem and one with which the United Nations has been concerned for some time. The issue has received particular attention in the deliberations and decisions of United Nations

quinquennial congresses on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, at the World Assembly on Ageing in 1982, in the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in 1982, and in the deliberations leading to the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 as well as at the World

Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace held in 1980 and the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace held in 1985.

[continued on page 4]

National action

Benin

The plan of action of the National Coordinating Committee for IYF in Benin includes a public awareness campaign, covering such topics as youth and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), vaccination programmes, family planning and juvenile delinquency. Conferences and round-table discussions using the mass media are also planned on a wide range of family-related themes; for example, youth and employment, improving the income of rural families, drugs and young people, childhood nutrition and hygiene programmes for parents in rural areas, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, seminars and training programmes will focus on various issues of concern to families.

Finland

In Finland, the theme for IYF is "Growing together — the family gives strength", with the aim of emphasizing the positive circumstances related to the family. Among the planned activities to be undertaken by the Finnish National Coordinating Committee for IYF are the promotion of the relationship between fathers and children and targeting the problems of youth. Other national actions include the organization of seminars on family themes, the production of television programmes on the family, and a publication series to raise awareness of family issues, including a volume of statistics on families.

Islamic Republic of Iran

A National Coordinating Committee recently established in the Islamic Republic of Iran has become active in planning for IYF. A national seminar entitled "Family and the young generation" was recently convened in Kurdistan Province, and was attended by university professors and social experts. The aim of the seminar, which was the first of its kind, was to elaborate the role of the family; similar seminars are planned for other areas of the country. In order to increase awareness of the status of the family, a manual has been published entitled: "Talk to families".

Suriname

In preparation for IYF, Suriname has drawn up a list of family-related activities to be held at the national level, including an awareness-raising campaign about the importance of IYF. In addition, various studies will be undertaken, for example, on the effects of macroeconomic changes on the life, types and structures of the family, on problems related to various types of family and the quality of family life, and on family-related legislation. Other programmes will focus on strengthening the role of the family in society, increasing the capability of families to fulfil their needs, and encouraging an exchange of ideas in society on the roles of men and women in the family, especially with regard to the education and care of children.

Note: The designations employed do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Theme song for IYF A global focus through music

“The Family”, with words and music by Jacquelyn Reinach, a prominent American composer and lyricist,

has been chosen as the theme song to commemorate IYF by a selection committee from among the submissions made to the IYF secretariat. The lyrics, which reflect a full appreciation of the scope and principles of IYF, are reproduced below.

The family

Theme for the International Year of the Family, 1994

(Words and music by Jacquelyn Reinach)

Verse 1

All over the world
Everyone
Is somebody's daughter
Or somebody's son,
And we live and we grow
As well as can be —
It starts out at birth
Our sense of our worth
It starts in the family

Refrain 1

The family,
My family,
Learning to live in harmony —
Learning to love
Learning to share
Learning to count on someone to care!
Respecting each other
Each one feeling free
It all begins in the fam-il-y

Verse 2

All over the world
Everyone
Is somebody's daughter
Or somebody's son
And we live and we grow
As well as can be,
Everyone here
Lives in love or in fear
Because of our family

Refrain 2

The family,
My family,
Learning to live in harmony
Learning to trust,
Learning what's right
Learning new ways to talk,
Not to fight.
Protecting each other
Each one feeling free
It all begins in the fam-il-y!
The family!

Verse 3

All over the world
We are glad
To be somebody's mother
Or somebody's dad
And we get a new chance
To look and to see
How everyone here
Learns to love and to fear,
It starts in the family

Refrain 3

The family
The family
Learning to live in harmony
Learning to change
Learning at last
Not to repeat
The sins of the past
Affecting each other
Each one feeling free
It all begins in the

Fam-il-y,
My family,
All of us living in harmony,
Equality,
Everyone wins,
It all begins
In the family,
The family
The world's a world of fam-il-ies
With all kinds of sounds and mel-o-dies,
Families,
And we all can be in har-mo-ny
It all be-gins in the fam-il-y,
The family!
In harmony!
It all be-gins in the fam-il-y,
The family!
In harmony!
It all be-gins in the fam-il-y,
The family!
In harmony!
The family!
In harmony!
The family!
In harmony!
The family!
In harmony!
The family!

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New national coordinating committees

As reported in previous issues of *The Family*, Member States are continuing to establish national coordinating committees for IYF. Since the last issue, the IYF secretariat has been advised of the establishment of such committees in Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Panama.

Domestic violence

[continued from page 3]

As part of the international response to deal with the urgent problem of domestic violence, a publication entitled *Strategies for Confronting Domestic Violence: A Resource Manual* has been prepared by the United Nations. Focusing on violence against women in their own homes, a serious human rights violation, the *Manual* sets forth a range of options and strategies that are being used to tackle domestic violence in different parts of the world. It presents information on action taken by the police, prosecutors, health-service workers, social-service workers, women's groups and government agencies to respond to the problem of domestic violence.

Copies of the *Manual* may be obtained from the United Nations Office at Vienna, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch, Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, Austria. ■

Editor's note

The IYF secretariat welcomes contributions for inclusion in *The Family*, which is published every three months in English, French and Spanish.

Material in *The Family* may be freely quoted or reprinted if acknowledgement is provided. It is requested that a copy of the publication containing the quotation or reprint be forwarded to the IYF secretariat.

Request for copies of *The Family* and further information on the International Year of the Family should be directed to:

IYF secretariat

Department for Policy Coordination
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P.O. Box 500
United Nations
A-1400 Vienna, Austria
Tel: 43-1-21131-4223
Fax: 43-1-237497

Persons making such requests should specify the number of copies required and in which language(s) and, if applicable, should enclose a pre-addressed label.

Launching of IYF draws near

Proclaimed by the General Assembly in December 1989 to create a greater awareness of the family as the natural and fundamental unit of

society, the International Year of the Family will be launched at a special meeting of the Assembly at its forty-eighth session. The launching will be held in December 1993, probably on 7 December. ■