Twentieth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2014: the Objectives

Expert Group Meeting
“Protecting Arab family from poverty: employment, social integration and intergenerational solidarity”

2-3 June, 2013, Doha International Institute, Doha, Qatar
Renata Kaczmarska, Focal Point on the Family, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
International Year of the Family, 1994

- The resolution establishing the International Year of the Family appealed to Member States and other participants to highlight 1994 as a special occasion to benefit families of the world in their quest for a better life for all, based on the principle of subsidiarity, which seeks solutions to problems at the lowest level of the societal structure. (GA/RES/47/237, 1993)


- Starting in 1994, International Days of Families have been observed around the world to raise awareness on family-related issues.
The significance of the International Year of the Family

- The Year set off actions at international, regional and national levels.

- Family issues have been considered at the international forum.

- Research on family-related topics has been conducted to inform policy making.

- Based on the research, Reports of the Secretary-General on a variety of subjects of concern to families have been issued and considered by the General Assembly & the Commission for Social Development (a subsidiary body of ECOSOC).

- General Assembly and Economic and Social Council adopted resolutions on the family and offered recommendations to Member States, civil society and other stakeholders on a range of family issues and increasingly on family policy issues.

- Regional frameworks for action on families have been established.

- Family-oriented policies have been enacted at national level.
Objectives of the International Year of the Family & its follow-up process

- Raise awareness on challenges faced by families.
- Strengthen national institutions to develop, implement and monitor family-centered policies.
- Improve the collaboration among national and international civil society organizations in support of family-oriented activities.
- Build upon the results of major events of concern to the family and its individual members.
- Review challenges and recommend solutions.
- Support families in their functions.
- Share good practices.
The family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened. It is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support.

Family has supporting, educating and nurturing roles & contributes to social integration and social cohesion.

Social & economic policies designed to meet the needs of families are encouraged as are promotion of mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation within the family and promoting equal partnership between women and men in the family. (Programme of Action of the WSSD, paras. 80-81)

More principles are contained in Plans of Action of major UN conferences (e.g. Beijing Conference on Women, World Summit for Children) with specific recommendations contained in GA and CSOCD resolutions.

- The General Assembly decided to observe the IYF on a 10 year basis.

- We are approaching 2014, a milestone year which Governments should use as a landmark year to assess their family policies and renew their commitment to the well-being of families.
20th anniversary: themes

- Confronting family poverty and social exclusion
- Ensuring work-family balance
- Advancing social integration & intergenerational solidarity within families and communities
20th anniversary: themes

- The themes reflect the mandate of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 1995 (eradication of poverty; expansion of productive employment – now decent work agenda; social integration).

- The three areas still require attention & urgent action to benefit the well-being of families and society.

- There are major demographic and socio-economic trends impacting these issues.

- They are relevant in all regions.
Confronting family poverty & social exclusion

- Poverty eradication is a primary concern of the United Nations on its Millennium Development Goals Agenda & will continue to be in the post 2015 framework.

- Poverty eradication should focus on families to succeed (we have examples of successful efforts of cash transfer programmes, child benefits, etc.).

- Fighting social exclusion, manifested by discrimination, prejudice, inequality, lack of access to resources and lack of voice is indispensable for poverty eradication.
Poverty & social exclusion

- Poverty and social exclusion are still prevalent.
- In OECD countries child poverty has not diminished despite numerous efforts and is on the rise in some countries.
- Despite positive legislation, social exclusion of groups & individuals continues (ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, older persons).
- Global progress has been uneven.
Ensuring Work-Family Balance

- Families, especially those with small children or caring for older persons have increasing difficulties in reconciling work and family responsibilities due to such trends as:

  - Higher number of women entering labour force
  - Less availability of the next of kin to care for vulnerable family members
  - More demanding work environments
  - Rising competition for jobs
Advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity within families and communities

- Trends impacting intergenerational relations:

  - Extended families are shrinking & may not live in close proximity (in search for jobs, due to migration, as a personal choice)

  - Families are more diverse

  - Young people delay marriage & child-bearing & depend on their families longer

  - Populations are rapidly ageing

  - Burden of care continues to be disproportionately placed on women
Anti-Poverty Family-Focused Policies in Developing Countries by Zitha Mokomane

Family-Oriented Anti-Poverty Policies in Developed Countries by Dominic Richardson and Jonathan Bradshaw

Work-Family Balance Policies by Margaret O'Brien

Policies and Programmes Supporting Intergenerational Relations by Donna M. Butts, Leng Leng Thang & Alan Hatton Yeo

Final Report: Family-Oriented Policies for Poverty Reduction, Work-
20th anniversary: International Expert Group Meetings

- **Expert Group Meetings on:**
  - Assessing Family Policies, NY, 1-3 June 2011
  - Dialogue and Mutual Understanding across Generations, Doha, Qatar, 8-9 March, 2011
20th anniversary: regional meetings

- European Expert Group Meeting, Brussels, 6-8 June 2012
  "Confronting family poverty and social exclusion, ensuring work-family balance; advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity in Europe"

  "Expert Consultation on the Family in Africa"

- Expert Group Meeting for Middle East and North Africa, Doha, 2-3 June 2013
  "Protecting the Arab Family from Poverty: Employment, Social Integration and Intergenerational Solidarity"

- Capacity building workshop on family-oriented policies for poverty reduction and work-family balance in Latin America, Santiago, Chile, 27-29 August, 2013

- North American Expert Group Meeting, Mexico City, 19-20 May 2014
  "Confronting family poverty and social exclusion; ensuring work-family balance; advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity in North America"
20th anniversary: observances

- High-level panel discussion at the Commission for Social Development, New York, February 2014

- International Conference for the 20th anniversary (working title “Empowering families: the pathway to development”), Doha, April-May, 2014

- International Day of Families observance commemorating 20th anniversary & landmark publication launch, New York, 15 May 2014
20th anniversary: conclusions

- International Year of the Family twentieth anniversary preparations give us an opportunity to refocus on families.

- We need to demonstrate that families should be at the center of social and economic policies.

- Development of policies for poverty eradication, work-family balance and intergenerational solidarity should be promoted at all levels since it contributes to the well-being of families and society at large.
Further action

- Considering trends affecting family poverty, work-family balance & intergenerational solidarity, it is imperative to:
  - Raise awareness of the issues
  - Design, implement and monitor policies in these areas
  - Promote research
  - Share good practices
The primary activities of the Focal Point on the Family are to:

- Provide substantive servicing in the areas of family and family policy to United Nations intergovernmental bodies, particularly the General Assembly, Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council;
- Promote the realization of the objectives of the International Year of the Family;
- Promote the integration of a family perspective into policy-making at the national, regional and international levels;
- Exchange expertise and experiences, disseminate information and support networking on family issues;
- Support family research and diagnostic studies;
- Encourage and support coordination on family policies and programmes within national governments and within the United Nations system;
- Provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to developing country Governments, at their request, in the area of the family; and
- Liaise and dialogue with Governments, civil society and the private sector on family issues.
Focal Point on the Family, DPSD/DESA: Our role

To serve and assist Member States in the area of family and family policy, addressing family in an objective and culturally sensitive manner and recognizing the fact that family policy remains firmly the responsibility of national governments. We count on stakeholders to help us accomplish this task successfully.
Thank you!

For more information contact:
Renata Kaczmarska, Focal Point on the Family
(kaczmarska@un.org)

Website: