

# Family Support Indicators

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Since the commencement of this series of annual forums we have come a long way in sharing our thoughts over the value we attach to the natural family and in comparing notes on the growing threats to the stability and sanctity of the family that are being encountered, partly from some deviational tendencies arising in the west, and partly from the effects of industrialization, urbanization, and mechanization of agriculture in the Third World. While the causes, and the resulting nature of the problem, may vary from situation to situation, the end product is turning out to be almost the same: erosion of family values, a gradual nuclearization, and eventual disintegration, of the family as we know and cherish it today.

Since we regard the family as the basic social unit of society on which the strength and stability of the society depends, any weaknesses in the status and structure of the family cannot, and must not, be ignored. That conclusion, I believe, we commonly share. Indeed, this is what has brought us together here in this pleasant and hospitable environment of Provo and Brigham Young University; and the few days being spent in this atmosphere, away from the increasingly competitive and impersonalized battle stations of what are categorized as civilized lives, are very welcome.

The question is where do we go from here? The answer is not difficult to find. While discussions will continue in the quest of advocacy, we need to begin to move into action so that such impediments as may actually be endangering the enjoyment of family life today may be contained, and timely precautions that should prevent their spread, or recurrence, may be taken.

Coming from Pakistan and having spent a career with the United Nations, in the avenues of economic and social development in Africa and the Middle East, I hope you will permit me to invite attention once again, as I have done in the past, to the situation of families in developing countries, and explore with you some practical ways and means of diagnosing and arresting problems that endanger the continuity of healthy family lives. Towards this goal, it might be worth examining whether the physical, intellectual, and networking resources of the World Family Policy Center here at Provo could be better and more effectively used for this purpose. In turn, this should provide the center with some additional tools and examine and evaluate the tangible progress that should be expected to emanate from such efforts.

It may be recalled that at the second and third family policy forums and at the 1999 World Congress of Families in

Geneva, I advocated four practical measures at the national and international levels for protecting and enhancing the interest of families in developing countries. These were first, a proclamation at the highest governmental level by the head of state in support of the family, thereby establishing a national commitment and sending out the right signals to all elements in the government, and in society in general, to keep the interests of the family intact in all spheres of the country's social, cultural, and economic developmental pursuits.

Second, the establishment of an appropriate national coordination mechanism that would undertake advocacy and harmonize policies of all governmental, quasi-governmental, and nongovernmental institutions and ensure that family interests are meticulously safeguarded in all national and local development programs, plans, and projects.

Third, the establishment of an effective information system that would compile and disseminate information on family-friendly policies, instrumentalities rules, regulations, and procedures in all those avenues of life and work in which family interests would be relevant. The information system I advocated should be accessible to anyone and everyone seeking information, or referral, to family-friendly facilities, products, and experiences. Organizationally, this could become a part of the national coordination mechanism I spoke of a moment ago.

Fourth, the identities, or designation, of international support mechanisms which would reinforce and complement efforts at the national level, and foster inter-country cooperation in the interest of the natural family and in maintaining respect for family values worldwide.

I now seek your permission to take these ideas a step further. I suggest that the time has come for us to move from discussion to action, with built-in monitoring devices so that at successive forums we may be able to review the impact of our efforts and be prepared to take timely corrective actions. Not only is it important for the natural family to be continually protected from the predators and misguided missiles of modern civilization, but the family needs also to be strengthened and empowered to continue to play its role, a positive role, in enriching and stabilizing the human society as we advance towards the global village of the new millennium into which we have recently entered. I would propose a four-point program.

First, the World Family Policy Center designate knowledgeable and resourceful focal points in different countries

of the world, charged with the responsibility of advocating family values through all possible avenues, governmental, societal, media, academic, and so forth, and keep the center informed of developments.

Second, the center compile a compendium of national proclamations or declarations on the family, and family values, and make copies available to the proposed national focal points all over the world, not only for the record but also to trigger inspiration in those countries that have yet to have their own national proclamations or declarations on the family and family values.

Third, with information to be obtained through the proposed national focal points, the center arrange the preparation of similar compendiums of information on national coordination mechanisms, and on national information systems, and on national laws concerning the interest of the family, and family-related matters, and give the material as wide an exposure as possible through the Internet and other conventional and innovative means at the center's disposal. Here again the objective should be not only to maintain up-to-date records but also to serve as reference and guidance to countries that have yet to establish national coordination mechanisms, and information systems, on the family and family-related issues; and to compare family laws. The proposed national focal points should be encouraged to disseminate the information on family laws to the local bar associations, law schools, concerned NGOs and others seeking to improve their national legislation and family services.

And fourth, we establish some realistic targets for actions in all these areas, and use the occasion of future sessions of the World Family Policy Forum, and of the World Family Congress, to review the progress of these planned efforts, identify impediments of any, and decide upon corrective measures; then establish fresh targets for future actions.

In making these proposals, I have tried meticulously to avoid the bureaucrat's temptation of turning the soothingly academic and intellectually exhilarating atmosphere of the World Family Policy Forum into an austere and business prone environment of a corporate boardroom, or closed-door governmental conference room. My intention has been to help make the deliberations of the forum more meaningful and productive, while continuing to use the event as an instrumentality of exchange of information and ideas on the enhancement of family values and interests.

I present these proposals, in the hope that on the basis of the collective experience and wisdom available here in the distinguished participants, who represent a rich diversity of professions, cultures, religions, and nationalities, these would be realistically and seriously considered. I need hardly remind you that the forces of diversion, with very unhealthy, even dangerous, impact upon, and repercussions

for, the natural family, are now at large. To ensure a timely defense, protection and preservation of our precious family values, I sincerely believe the time to act, and act boldly and decisively, is now.