

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY: TEN YEARS ON – PROBLEMS AND PROGRESS

EDITORIAL

The launch conference of the 1994 International Year of the Family (IYF), held in Malta, generated excitement and hope as well as a mountain of paper. What has been achieved? For this newsletter, IAFN has asked contributors to write about changes to family life over the decade. The articles tell of the increasing number of single parent families and of projects to help them. Another development is the changing roles of parents. In Africa, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, as well as in Western countries, some men are becoming more involved with the care of their children and more women are becoming breadwinners – modifying the traditional demarcation of roles. The global nature of change is again highlighted in the article from Myanmar/Burma, which notes the pressures of modern technology on children, with videos and Superman replacing the transmission of values through storytelling. In Papua New Guinea, the influence of cultural change has resulted in improvements in education and literacy but also noted is an increase in violence within the family. In some countries, changes affecting families reflect the aftermath of civil violence. An article tells of the signs of hope in Rwanda, despite the horrors of the genocide. The forgiveness

shown by the author for the tardy response of the international community is humbling. In Northern Ireland, too, there are signs of optimism despite the bitter legacy of the troubles. A major theme underlying many of the changes is the spread of HIV/AIDS. This was raised at the initial IYF conference, but the extent and consequences of the pandemic have vastly intensified during the ten years, bringing heartbreak and poverty to many. The death toll affects all generations of the family, with grandparents having to care for orphans and losing the support of their children in their old age.

Always in the front line of providing support to families are the many Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) – including the Churches. As well as projects to help AIDS orphans and single parents, contributors tell of the development of parenting support groups – professionally facilitated; the training of Mothers' Union trainers; the setting up of Family Centres. The final section of the newsletter tells of action taken by some Governments to help families. A point made by many at the Malta conference was that Governments needed to recognise the importance of families as the basic unit of society and do more to help them. It is clear that further Government action is needed, but articles tell of steps forward: in Ghana, action against violence within families; the

establishment of a Families Commission in New Zealand; efforts to improve the rights of children in Tanzania. And a further sign of hope is that many of these developments were achieved by a partnership between Government and other agencies.

St Paul wrote that we are all members of one body and when one suffers all suffer. This is true of individual families and of the vast family of the Anglican Communion. All parts are affected in some way by the changes of the last ten years and the dramatic pace of the change can cause confusion and doubt as to the way forward. But surely it is clear that tackling HIV/AIDS and the poverty which often underlies its spread, the problems of many single families and the legacy of violence should be priorities in the next decade for all members of the Body of Christ.

IYF – 1994



A heart sheltered by a roof; linked by another heart, to symbolise life and love in a home where one finds warmth, caring, security, togetherness, tolerance and acceptance — that is the symbolism conveyed by the emblem of the International Year of the Family (IYF), 1994. The open design is meant to indicate continuity with a hint of uncertainty. The brushstroke, with its open line roof completes an abstract symbol representing the complexity of the family.

Papua New Guinea, the vast majority of whose population live in rural areas, has undergone tremendous changes since gaining independence in 1975. In traditional PNG societies, a family meant the “extended family” and included grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. “Family” was not the nuclear family we have today of a father, mother and children. These extended families lived in closely-knit communities where the roles and responsibilities of its members were distinctive. These communities had social systems which governed the actions of its members. They also had ways of dealing with members who did not adhere to community norms. Today however, PNG communities are in touch with other communities and the outside world. The influence of media on the lives of families is massive. Both television and newspapers are easily accessible to families and make people aware that PNG is no longer isolated but belongs to the global community.

Advances for families in the past ten years

Families in PNG have seen an improvement in the education system during the past years. Most parents choose to send their children to Church agency rather than Government schools as they have a proven success rate. A few years ago, the Government introduced “Educational Reforms” which provided more opportunities for children and attempted to educate all citizens. Literacy has also improved in the past ten years. The country's only female Parliamentarian, Lady Carol Kidu, has been at the forefront in advocating literacy programmes. With her support and Government endorsement, the media are promoting literacy. Churches

are also doing their best to promote literacy development.

PNG also has groups like the “Eastern Highlands Family Voice” and “Marriage and Family Life Office” which specialize in providing assistance and awareness on family issues. With support from other groups in town, the “Eastern Highlands Family Voice” initiated a move towards greater networking with the Justice Department. A committee called Provincial Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee, made up of health professionals, a magistrate, police, probation officers, welfare workers and others, meets regularly to discuss family matters and ways forward. The committee acts also as an advisory board for the Government and the groups represented. It is very active in the Eastern Highlands and similar committees are planned for other Provinces.

Problems

Family violence has increased tremendously over the past years. The media reports family violence, rape and incest cases almost daily. What is most disturbing is the rise of sexual violence against women and girls, together with physical violence. Although intruders into family homes carry out some assaults, family members do most of them.

Another increasing problem is couples getting involved in extra-marital affairs. This is becoming a serious concern for families since it is splitting them apart. It is claimed that more men than women are involved in extra-marital affairs and most female prisoners today are in prison for stabbing their husbands or their husbands' mistresses to death.

Polygamy is also on the rise and creating huge problems. This is not a new problem

since polygamy was always present in the past, but today it seems that anybody can marry any number of wives they want regardless of whether they can support them. Today in the Highlands, more young women are choosing to become second or third wives because they think older men have more money. Other young women are choosing to be second or third wives married to older men because of HIV/AIDS. They are convinced that as second or third wives to older men they are safe against contracting HIV/AIDS. This false assumption is terrifying but nobody will convince them otherwise.

A child begging for food and money on the streets is becoming a common sight. It is common knowledge also in the Highlands that criminals use children to steal from people's homes. It seems that children are doing this because parents are working and not spending enough time with them. For a nation that prides itself on its strong kinship systems, it is sad to see children roaming the streets. This is a very new phenomenon in PNG. Families have always taken care of their own people and nobody ever begged for food.

Conclusion

Many problems have come with so-called modernization. On the other hand, life for families has also improved because PNG has embraced changes coming from the outside wholeheartedly. Papua New Guineans cannot dwell on the past nor can they ignore it. They need to use the good things of the past as a stepping stone into the future.

Family life – changes, problems and advances

Family life in Sri Lanka has seen several challenges over the past decade.

The civil war, foreign migrant labour and growing divorce rates have led to an increase in single parent families. This undoubtedly has had negative effects. The absence of a second bread winner has brought additional strain on already deprived families. Long separation amongst spouses, due to distant employment, has sometimes led to marital breakdown and infidelity.

On deeper reflection, some positive aspects may also be observed. After the loss of husbands, culturally and economically dependent widows are increasingly being compelled to take initiatives and responsibility for family life. The spirituality and courage of some of these women offer fine role models for others and there is growing social acceptance of widows as persons who make a valuable contribution to society.

Also, in many instances where mothers migrate for labour, fathers who stay behind take on new roles as carer of children and provider of food. This balances parental responsibility and reduces the gap between gender roles.

Parallel with these developments however, the trend of domestic violence and male hierarchy still continues. The media, women's organisations and the Church, challenge these trends, calling for dignity and the empowerment of women and equal community amongst males and females. A serious obstacle met in

countering this hierarchy is the cultural expectation women also endorse – that they should remain submissive or subdued. Shame (of divorce) and economic dependence add pressure on women to endure these injustices.

A development within poor and middle class urban families in particular, is the dual hardship that working women face in having to supplement income as well as “carry the home” through traditional chores and responsibilities. In spite of some welcome exceptions, women by and large continue to carry the heavier load.

The crisis of uprooted and displaced families due to the war has not been adequately addressed. Sudden changes in habitat, livelihood and routine affect the psyche of the family and reduce rural resilience and dynamism. This results in depression, a sense of insecurity and hopelessness, indifference and the inability to dream dreams. Youth are most vulnerable and liable to be misled and even enticed into violent “causes” and crime.

Another noticeable shift in family life is the change in the central influence of parents in the choice of marriage partners for their adult children. While in urban communities young couples are clearly deciding for themselves, and in very conservative communities parents still make the selection, there is a growing compromise in semi-urban communities where the young people decide but also value parental approval. Also, the rise in priority of qualifications and careers amongst women has delayed the age of

marriage and child-bearing.

Another clear change in the quality of family life is the shift in some circles towards the institutionalised care of elders. This is largely due to the migration of families for economic and security reasons, and the prohibitive cost of paid domestic aid. When this happens grandparents and grandchildren are distanced from each other and the extended family system that forges strong community ties is undermined.

These trends are influenced by unprecedented socio-economic factors. The task is to evaluate these factors and discern and inculcate values that stimulate community life and safeguard personal dignity, freedom and growth. The Church and other concerned groups have sought to respond to this challenge mainly at the pastoral and educational level. Education, nutritional feeding centres-cum-pre-schools, medical clinics, seminars, family, pre-marital and marriage counselling, training and equipping for self-help and employment, relief and rehabilitation etc. form these programmes. Yet much more needs to be done. Inter-faith and ecumenical work require more emphasis, as also do progressive legislation and the securing of rights for women and children. Shared responsibility in these concerns brings the added bonus of much needed social trust.

acquired. This centre is under the auspices of Youth for Christ Uganda which is affiliated to Youth for Christ International.

Uganda has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Sub-Saharan Africa. Over 4000 pregnant girls have come to the centre over the last ten years hoping they can be helped to procure an abortion. This is a Christian organisation that does not support abortion. Many of the girls think abortion is simply getting rid of a pregnancy. They do not know the details and when they discover them they usually keep the pregnancy. They are then given an option of staying at the centre if their parents will not let them stay at home. A few, however, still want an abortion and they go off to get it somewhere else. Unfortunately, there have been a number who come to the centre for post-abortion counselling, who are suffering from the psychological and emotional effects of having an abortion. Abortion is illegal in Uganda.

The centre has a warden who stays at the house with the girls and counsellors who talk to them and try to help them through this difficult time. The pregnant girls are welcome to stay until they have the baby and during this time their parents are contacted and talked to. During their stay, they are trained in skills such as cookery and tailoring. Those who return home and cannot go back to school are welcome to continue this training. The centre has also started a new programme of finding sponsors and raising funds to pay school fees for those who want to go back to school. Our centre is charitable with free counselling and other services, and our support is from churches and individuals, mainly from outside our country.

These girls are shown the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ is shared with them and some of them accept Jesus as their Saviour. Most of the girls have been through hard times and it is not their fault. Some have been raped while others were taken advantage of. The challenge to parents is to love your children unconditionally, for we have found out that love changes lives and it will change them!

A shelter for pregnant girls

The number of young mothers has increased in the past ten years. This is due to the increase of HIV/AIDS female orphans who are not cared for by their guardians. These young girls look for false love, get pregnant and are abandoned by their sexual partners. There are many factors contributing to the increase of young mothers but this is high on the list. There is also the free distributing of condoms which prompts young boys and girls to have sex even when not knowing how to use them. And of course the condoms are not as 100% safe as most of the young girls think.

The troubles of the North of Uganda have left many girls homeless and they find themselves being used by the soldiers, rebels or "sympathisers" who give money and so expect to sleep with them. These become young mothers and are helpless. This makes me weep inside

because there is little or no help for such mothers in this part of our country.

Most of us do not know how to relate to girls who get pregnant out of wedlock, worst of all when they are our daughters and bring shame to our family. Many of us pass harsh judgment on them. We have no mercy, we say, "Didn't they do wrong!" What would Jesus do? Love them. And it is this love that will turn their lives around.

Ten years ago, when I was the Namirembe Diocesan Mothers' Union President, I realised the need to offer counselling services especially for mothers and daughters in the Diocese. Starting in the Mothers' Union office, it soon became apparent that another place would be needed. I am glad to say that now a larger house, which can accommodate 20 girls at any one time with counselling rooms, has been

Story of a single parent

Malaysia is a beautiful, fast developing South-East Asian country. Its people are multi-racial and multi-religious. But it is also an Asian country with ancient, conservative Asian traditions about family life and filial piety.

Sometimes it is hard to link our old world traditions with our modern way of living.

One thing affecting family life in our Asian countries is the rise of divorces resulting in the increase of single parents, mainly mothers. In a predominantly patriarchal society, this is a major social change.

I am a Malaysian of Indian-Chinese/Thai descent. Twenty-two years ago my husband told me that he was seeing another woman. On the day he told me that, I discovered I was pregnant with our child. It was a traumatic day.

Twenty-two years ago, I could not go out and share this with my family and friends. Divorce was taboo in the Indian society I lived in. We were not even encouraged to say the word "divorce".

What made it even harder was that I am theologically trained. I was a full-time church worker who had resigned to get married. I was expected to have a happy, secure marriage. So for me, the stigma was more than social; it affected my spiritual journey. When I finally told my eldest sister the terrible news it was three years later. Our family had never had a separation or divorce before. In Indian society, this might hamper the chances of other females getting a husband. At Church, when I told my vicar, he even said that I should remain in the matrimonial home if the other woman moved in.

After three painful months of separation, my husband asked for a reunion and I was overjoyed. But it was not to last. Six more years of pretence and living separate lives in the same home followed, and then my husband moved out. I had refused to initiate divorce, so after two years of separation, I was served with divorce papers and the divorce went through. My daughter was ten years old.

The second time that my husband left me, there was a different reaction from my family and friends. I am not sure if it is because society had changed or that my family realized that I had done everything I could to save the marriage. No one encouraged me to continue in the marriage. Even my 72-year-old mother was happy for me. I truly had the support of my whole family, including all my siblings and their spouses.

As for my Church, my attitude had changed. Although I kept hearing God's call for me to serve him full-time, for years I had taken a back seat in all activities as I felt that I could not work in a church set-up because of my marriage break-up. A visiting speaker reminded me that the formula was *not* **"You + your husband = perfection"** but **"You + Jesus = Perfection"**. At last my eyes were open that I was a person in my own right again.

As my Church is urban-based and multi-racial, my single status was accepted. A few years later, my Church started a ministry to the intellectually challenged and I was employed to head this work and remain so till today.

It took me a few years more before I could openly share about my marriage break-up in public. But God gave me the grace to do so and after testifying in Church, I received quite a few calls from other women who were in a similar situation but did not dare reveal it. In today's urban society, there is greater acceptance of the single parent and more and more people are coming forward and openly acknowledging that they are single parents.

Amazing things began to happen. In 2001, the Heads of Churches of the Council of Churches of Malaysia appointed me as the Moderator of the Women's Work Committee for Malaysia. In October, 2002, in Korea, I was elected the President of the Asian Church Women's Conference. My divorce status was known to both groups. *For a divorced woman to hold the highest Christian position in Asia – this can only be God's work!* I am deeply humbled and awed by it.

But I want to say that I went through some very painful and hard days. There

were times when I felt like committing suicide. Only the thought of my daughter and that God is in control of my life kept me alive. And after those first few hard, sad years, I learned to forgive and that released me. I learned to lean on God. Because my need of Him is so great, my experience of His love and provision is also very great. I learned that I was not really a single parent. Together, God and I raised my daughter. Praise God, today Abigail, my daughter, is a happy, well-adjusted 21-year-old.

Background information.

The 2000 Government statistics reveal that out of a total population of 23.2 million, 11.4 million are women. Out of this total, 1.1% are single mothers, with the largest number being aged 45 – 54 and relatively few being under 34. But I believe that these statistics may be only the tip of the iceberg as they may be derived from the figures of single mothers requesting help from the Government.

As divorce becomes more common and single mothers have to leave their villages to find employment in the cities, they lose the support of the extended family. The Malaysian Government has recognized the need to heed the changes in society and in January 2001, the first Minister of Women and Family Development was appointed. Her portfolio consists of the Women's Development Department and the National Population and Family Development Board. Single mothers are now able to seek help from this ministry and even be given preference in buying low-cost homes.

WEST INDIES

Grandparenting

Perhaps the topic – grandparenting – is so dear to me because at the age of two my parents gave me over to my grandparents who were responsible for my upbringing. Looking back over my life with them, I refuse to agree with the popular saying “Grandparents spoil children”. I saw them as co-trainers with my parents as they did not go contrary to the discipline administered by them and which was so evident in the lives of my brothers and sisters. At the time I marvelled at the abundance of love and care exhibited by my grandparents, for my brothers and sisters were given equal treatment when they visited.

It is true that grandparents of yesteryear were aged fifty years and upwards,

whereas grandparents today are younger and many are still actively engaged at the workplace.

Also for many, grandparenting has become a burden because they have to fulfil the dual role of being grandparent and parents – eg where parents have died from AIDS and where marriages have broken down. Many who thought they would enjoy retirement have had their dreams shattered.

Whatever the situation, we should seize every opportunity to interact with our grandchildren. I thank God for the opportunity to pass on some of the positive things I inherited from my grandparents and which have remained with me forever. Here are some of them:

- Pray for and with them.
- “I love you” must be said to them often.
- When they know they are wrong help them to apologise.
- Instill in them the joy of knowing the Lord and read and tell them Bible stories.

In this Year of the Family, I pray and hope that grandparents would try to stay connected with their grandchildren and so help them develop into well-rounded adults.

RWANDA

Ten years after the genocide.

Rwanda, a tiny country in central Africa, featured on all radios and TVs in April 1994 due to the genocide that took place following the plane crash which killed the then presidents of Rwanda and Burundi. For about three months, killings and slaughtering went on unabated. It was only in July 1994, when the Rwandan Patriotic Front took power, that there was the possibility of evaluating the devastation and the desolation of the country: over one million killed and more who fled the country mainly into Congo and Tanzania.

From July 1994, relief and rehabilitation programmes started for the whole country. We wish that the international community had responded three months earlier to stop the killings; but there have been confessions of omissions on the part of UN and other influential countries that had a stake in Rwanda.

What has happened in the last ten years? The current Government tried its best to comfort Rwandese from within and outside the country. Settlement sites were located and built for the returnees and for the

survivors of genocide, as a lot of property had been destroyed by the war; children were able to go back to school; the Commission for Peace and Reconciliation was set up. It has played a big role in programmes for repentance and forgiveness.

Churches and para-church organizations also did a lot in the healing and reconciliation processes. But we still have to face sufferings. Most survivors are widows and orphans. Many who were raped are infected with HIV/AIDS. The country still has to deal with a big number of prisoners – about 100,000 often kept in unsuitable buildings. Trying the prisoners and feeding them are challenges to the Government. The Government has come up with GACACA* courts to address the trial of so many prisoners. There are problems arising from differing understanding between the survivors and the released prisoners’ families in some areas.

Poverty is a challenge to the Government, especially when it has to deal with vulnerable people (widows, orphans, AIDS

victims) but there is motivation and strength in developing technology being taken even to remote areas.

HIV/AIDS is a problem to the Rwandan in general, as a lot of education is still needed for change of behaviour. There is need for improvement of the health system in general, as the cost of medical services has been growing higher and higher. Having political refugees is another challenge to the country, especially when we want all Rwandese to enjoy the same rights wherever they are.

In any case, there is hope. Rwandans together with the international community are saying: “Never again to genocide”. Many Rwandans have returned to their homeland. We experience peace and security within the country. We have a growing number of young graduates who are taking over from those we lost in 1994. We also have catching-up schools for those children who were not able to start primary school as they were in the forest in the Congo.

We hope that we shall be more responsible about HIV/AIDS and stop its spread; we hope that we shall develop our agriculture in order to feed our people; we hope that many Rwandese families will have family planning; we hope that we shall enjoy more democracy as the current Government was democratically elected. And we are looking forward for a revival. Rallies, missions, intercessions take place at different areas and different times, and our Lord will respond mercifully to our prayers.

* Traditional, popular courts designed to provide village justice with restitution through community service.

IRELAND

Ten years on

"I never dreamt it would be like this; it's so beautiful," commented friends who recently made their first visit to Ireland.

We live in Portstewart, a seaside resort perched right on the north coast, surrounded by stunning and dramatic scenery. The fact that our friends came to visit us in Northern Ireland is testament to how perceptions of the place have changed over the past ten years. Now Northern Ireland is an acceptable holiday destination. For too long renowned only for the conflict, both sides have called a halt to their hostilities and relative peace has ensued. So our Province is emerging from its chrysalis state as a brightly coloured butterfly.

But if this is now an exciting place to visit, what is it like to live here? What is it like to work and bring up our families? Sadly, we share the same challenges and wrestle with the same issues as any other community in the United Kingdom. Here many families endure poverty and deprivation, are beset by debt, alcoholism

and other social evils and search vainly for employment. There are areas in our cities and towns where one fears to walk at night, places where drug addiction is rife and where there is not the necessary support or education.

Here, the family unit is under a barrage of threats and social workers are snowed under with work; children often ending up as innocent victims. Psychologists tell us that the aggression and energy, which fuelled past para-military activity, is now channelled in other directions and we are aware of a worrying trend in racially motivated attacks.

So we do not blind ourselves to our huge social problems; yet after the darkness of past years we cannot but be optimistic. Over the past ten years especially there is a newfound confidence, a daring to hope for a brighter future; there is a burgeoning belief in our worth and ability. Skies are dotted with cranes symbolising development; the worldwide technological revolution has hit our land no less dramatically than elsewhere and

our children have opportunities to expand knowledge and experience in a way previously unthinkable. Now too, our brightest youngsters see opportunities at home rather than having to move away and our most talented ambassadors who have already left are being tempted back to enjoy a less frenzied lifestyle, excellent education and a sense of returning to one's roots.

We still have a long way to go; politically yet again we are at stalemate; problems must neither be ignored nor must they be exaggerated. We are a proud people, a spirited people, where the family still influences greatly.

In the months and years ahead, I look forward to doing a lot more entertaining of visitors. For the good news is that life has changed and is changing in Northern Ireland and despite everything, it is change for the better.

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Proverbs 22:6

Teach a child how she/he should live, and she/he will remember it all her/his life.

Some time ago, life was easy for people of Myanmar when caring for each other. Parents were not worried about leaving their children alone, knowing that their neighbours would be with them until they came back. The interesting part of past life was our grandparents or our parents spending time with children telling stories. The stories were about the Bible and moral teaching. I believe the positive part of this story-telling was to build up the relationship between children and

parents. It also taught children about what is happening around them and was a strong foundation of the growth of every child to be an independent person.

It was an interesting and simple life. In summer, especially at night because of the hot weather, the children from each family went out and played traditional games. If we were tired, we went to somebody's house and listened to the stories. A few years later, we had cassettes and later still, television became a centre of attraction to everyone – children and parents.

In that time, only fathers worked away

from home and mothers looked after the children. Mostly, families stayed and ate together every mealtime. However, nowadays both parents are working outside. The reasons are the improving of technology and living standards and also women are becoming educated.

Sometimes, mothers or fathers went away for two or three years. Some children did not see their fathers till two or three years of age. Somehow, the children learn to be independent and self-confident.

Nevertheless, the children are now not enjoying the story-telling (we don't have oral culture any more) because of the technology such as children's movies (Power Ranger, Superman, TV games, cartoons). Moreover, there are many children's playgrounds, swimming pools, and games. Somehow, children are becoming very sharp and active but they are facing some dangers. For example, one boy was trying to imitate Superman: he was riding a bicycle and descending the stairs and fell down badly.

In my Christian Education area, that was a big challenge for us. What are the children's needs and how should the church school relate to those needs?

When I was young, my Sunday school teacher taught us Bible stories and gave us pictures for colouring. We were very happy to get these pictures. However, the children nowadays are not the same because of their surroundings. We have

to nurture them and meet the needs of the children in the Sunday School and also at home, with parents and children co-operating. For instance, we should give them different exercises such as puzzles, crosswords, maps and so on for their enjoyment and improvement.

The children's VCD organised by the Christian Education department, was produced for the very first time in Anglican Myanmar as one of the teaching methods in the new ways. Children can learn the Christian ethics but also patriotism by singing and dancing from

NIGERIA

It is a decade since the International Year of the Family. 1994 was the same year the Mothers' Union at Mary Sumner House London, planned training for MU trainers worldwide. We trained first at Mindolo Zambia, later in Selly Oak Birmingham.

Since 1994 our trainers have organised workshops for wives of church leaders. We have trained them in leadership roles, group dynamics, communication, conflict management, Bible studies, adult education, community development, etc. We have been getting feedback on improved relationship with our leaders at Church, Parish, Archdeaconry and Diocesan levels. With attendance at literacy classes established both in towns and villages sponsored by both Church and Government, our women can now read and write. Within this period, the dreaded disease HIV/AIDS emerged.

Awareness programmes have been mounted. In the Diocese of Awka, the Archbishop has trained a lot of personnel to get into the nooks and crannies of the Province to preach the "one man one partner" message. For Family, as was revealed to me, is an acronym for Father And Mother In The Lord's Yard.

More people have come to receive Christ into their lives. More new churches have sprung up, some to preach the good news, others to steal the sheep and consume them. It is discovered that some poor families have grown poorer within the decade. Some families have migrated due to religious intolerance and the Church is rehabilitating them.

In the decade, our environment has grown increasingly unhealthy. The Government has not provided places for refuse disposal and in consequence, the whole place is littered with polythene and filth. The farmer may soon find it difficult to till the soil for planting as the unburnt polythene will cover up the soil. The Anglican Diocese of Jos has published a handbook on a campaign for clean and safe environment.

Glory to God for changes and thanks to Him for using men and women.

these songs.

In this VCD which includes 16 songs, about 380 children participated. Some are from the Outstanding Children camp and some are in Sunday School at Yangon churches. (Outstanding Children are those selected for being active and clever in their diocesan camps.) Some children are orphans from Orphanage in Mandalay diocese and some are in Deaf school in Yangon. Some of the children are healthy and some are unhealthy; some are rich and some are orphans; some children are clever and some are ordinary, but they

are all happy in their camps, their school and their lives. God loves them and so they all are equal as God's children.

It is important there are links between the Church School teachers and parents in the home because Christian education is more than Church School. Both the home and the school are working with the most valuable objects on Earth, so that the children can find the same attitudes as God's children.

UNITED KINGDOM

Development of parenting programmes

When the profile of family work and the need for its development was raised nationally in 1994, members of the Mothers' Union, always passionate about parenting, were convinced about the need to support parents. Many volunteers worked tirelessly running crèches and playgroups, organising holidays and celebrations. Looking towards the new Millennium, the MU considered how it might develop its work further. Research findings reported in 1994 influenced the decision-making:

- considerable support was being given by Christians in their churches and communities to parents in groups
- parents who attended valued the groups immensely
- parents benefited most when the group was facilitated and most groups were not.

It seemed that the most urgent need was for trained Facilitators who understood how parents in groups behave so that they could ensure that confidence was increased as parents made friends, and acquired knowledge and skills for relating with their children. So the MU Parenting Programme was born in 2000 – a training course for

volunteer parenting-group Facilitators. Its accreditation through the London Open College Network means that the Facilitators work to a national standard. It also enables partnerships to happen; for example health visitors and midwives encourage parents to come because they know that the course is well facilitated.

So far over three hundred people have completed the taught course in the UK and Ireland. Once started, very few drop out of the programme – so multiply the number of Facilitators by the number of parents that come to their groups and you will see that the potential for developing more confident parents and children is great. Let the parents speak for themselves!

"I have been a parent for over 15 years and attended the parenting group unsure what I could possibly get out of it. I now realise that the answer is a lot."

"I didn't have a very good parenting model, so although I knew what I wanted to achieve, I wasn't confident about how to go about being a good parent or even if I could. Now I am a lot more confident."

Change and challenge.

During the past few years, Dioceses here in Wales have developed their own projects and work with children and families. This was necessitated by the withdrawal, due to financial reasons, of The Children's Society – a major voluntary organization linked with the Church of England and for many years the Church in Wales. The projects developed have included a network of small family centres in the Diocese of St David's, and a healthy-living centre in the Diocese of Bangor. The Diocese of Llandaff already had extensive amounts of work being undertaken – growing out of long established work at a mothers' and babies' project. Here in the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon, the major focus of our work over the past few years has been in the City of Swansea, a coastal port of some 200,000 that had been at the forefront of industrialisation in Britain but now struggles with finding a post-heavy industry future with all the social and economic challenges that this brings.

Our social responsibility work in the Diocese is centred on two large Family Centres which act as the base for a range of children and family-focused work designed to create the potential for social change and growth in some of the more socially challenged areas of the city. Two new centres are planned for 2004/2005.

A recent visit from the Compass Rose Society of the Anglican Communion enabled us to explore and explain our work and to articulate that one of the great joys over the past few years in our work in Swansea is that it has been done in partnership with others – with local communities, other voluntary sector agencies and with the State. This has enabled the work to have a far greater impact than if we had simply "gone it alone". During 2003 the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon was the recipient of the Lord Mayor of Swansea's Community Regeneration Award for the Most Supportive Partnership Agency. Traditionally, in Britain, the Church had been at the

forefront of the development of welfare provision which was then taken up by the State. It is good to see that the Church is again being recognised as a valued partner in this field. Our work in Swansea and Brecon continues to change and develop as we seek to make the best use of the small resources we have available. Increasingly, the emphasis of the work is taking a longer-term view of social change and growth. Evidence suggests that many of the problems and difficulties encountered by individuals in their later lives are rooted in early childhood experiences and development; consequently, child-centred initiatives to develop self-esteem from an early age are now the focus of many of our activities.

SOUTH AFRICA

survive. Most of them are poor, sickly, semi-literate and unskilled. Parenting during periods of rapid social change is difficult even for young adults, yet nowadays that high, impossible task rests on weary, aged shoulders.

Another first is the question of "child-headed" households where immature teenagers are catapulted into parenting their siblings. The financial assistance offered by the Government is most appreciated but it cannot replace parental love, support and guidance.

Most families find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty. Hopelessness and helplessness torments most ageing parents as they bury sons and daughters on whom they had pinned all their hopes. These sons and daughters had been put through education using all the meagre resources that families could scrape together. Instead of improving the lifestyle of the parents, they die – leaving behind a burden of orphans. Sometimes, these potential breadwinners die after a protracted illness that drains whatever resources they had begun to accumulate.

There is an increase in street children as well as abandoned babies. Child prostitution is also rearing its ugly head as some orphans explore other ways of making ends meet. Sexual abuse of infants and young girls is fuelled by certain myths that go around despite education programmes. For example, there is a rampant myth that sexual intercourse with a virgin cures AIDS.

As can be deduced, women and girls are the most hard-hit. They care for the sick, they initiate and maintain support groups, they look after the orphans BUT they sometimes get blamed for the spread of HIV/AIDS. Because of the patriarchal nature of society, male infidelity is not just tolerated but it is actually accepted as normal.

In some families, relationships are forever strained as one or both parents reject their

HIV-positive child/children. In other families, parents quarrel and blame each other. There are also instances where fear of rejection and stigma results in suicide and divorce. There have been cases of murder where angry HIV-positive male partners identify their sexual partners as the reason for their status and decide to kill them. These are the challenges that families have to deal with.

A lot of women who live in rural areas and are either illiterate or semi-literate, get infected and die without knowing what hit them. Their husbands, who work in cities away from home, might outlive them as nutrition is relatively better in the cities.

The magnitude of the problem has forced government, civil society and faith-based organisations to form partnerships that share ideas, skills and resources.

We hope for a miracle that will activate the link between knowledge and behaviour, because while many people know the facts about HIV/AIDS, they still behave irresponsibly. An internalisation of acceptable moral values as well as the realization that no-one is above HIV/AIDS remains an ideal for which we strive. As the Archbishop of Cape Town says: "We are working for a generation without AIDS but in the meantime we must ensure that nobody dies or cares alone. We must work at extending life through treatment and aggressive prevention."

HIV/AIDS

There is excitement and hope as we celebrate ten years of freedom and democracy. New opportunities have emerged in most spheres of life for all families. Laws that seek to enhance family life and to support the young, the aged and the disabled are in place. Unfortunately a dark cloud threatens to eclipse the rainbow of hope and excitement. That cloud is HIV/AIDS.

The statistics are quite scary – 1500 new infections as well as about 600 deaths daily. As we watch graveyards filling up, as families bury several members (mostly young breadwinners), as we attend funerals of friends, colleagues, relatives and fellow believers, the statistics become real people.

Family life is changing as new family patterns emerge. There are no reference points as these are "first-time" situations in our communities. We find ourselves having to "change tyres while a car is in motion", as we try to find answers and solutions to problems that nobody ever imagined.

Orphans have to be "parented" by aged grandparents who are themselves battling to

HIV/AIDS – Amigos Project

When my wife's cousin Joy was diagnosed with AIDS in 1994, little did we know then that ten years later we would be running a small charity helping to care for the many orphans this pandemic is leaving behind. Joy worked as a missionary nurse/midwife in Zimbabwe for 20 years: her death impacted on us as a family, but the realities of AIDS didn't seem to register until we had the opportunity to visit Africa and experience the devastation first-hand.

Amigos International came about as a result of visiting Tanzania and Uganda and seeing so many children orphaned by one of the biggest human disasters the world has ever experienced. The UN predicts that the number of children orphaned as a result of AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa will plateau at around 40 million by 2030. These children are mainly affected and not infected by the HIV virus: the majority will survive, though around 10% may die of AIDS.

By and large Africa's vast number of children are hungry to learn, knowing full well that their future depends on having an education. Over the past three years, the Amigos Project has been helping Ugandans feed, house and educate around 150 children in the Makindye area of Kampala, Uganda. We fund a junior school/orphanage facility and last year added a

secondary school. Working with the Ugandan Government, we have put together a training farm project for 2004 that will cover all aspects of farming and vocational training, teaching new and resourceful skills and techniques for AIDS orphans and poverty-stricken young people from all over Uganda. It will eventually be self-sustaining, mainly from the incubation and sale of around 10,000 chicks per week. We hope to be able to train 50 to 100 students per year and help them start up their own chicken projects as well as giving them opportunities to learn other practical skills. In turn, this will help improve and enrich the local communities in which they live. Our aim is to equip each student with not only a basic education in reading, writing and maths, but also biblical principles, chicks or seeds and/or vocational tools including computers, sewing machines, typewriters, carpentry, metalworking, mechanics, plumbing, building and leatherworking.

We believe that the Church has a vital role to play in bringing hope and a future to these vulnerable children.

HIV/AIDS

There are now said to be 40 million people affected by AIDS throughout the world.

Of these, five million are found in India, where I have recently been in charge of a hospice for HIV/AIDS patients. The Hospice is situated in Tamil Nadu, South India, one of the worst affected states in India, and the need for it became clear in the early 1990s.

At first, people came to the Hospice as individuals and were often very afraid and depressed after having been diagnosed HIV-positive. They were referred through doctors, local hospitals and social workers. Others just turned up seeking help. Gradually, after much local AIDS awareness teaching, couples began coming for help and then whole families. The programme of the Hospice originally concentrated on residential care, but soon extended to village clinics, health teaching, home care and seminars. Caring for the individual was not enough. The whole of society needed educating and the best way of making contact was to show our care and concern through giving medical care in the villages and health teaching in the schools.

The Hospice today cares for men, women and children and has facilities for families to stay together and also for the children to continue at the Hospice after the death of one or both of their parents. A number of patients come having been completely rejected by their families. It is often the middle-class, Christian family who finds it most difficult to come to terms with one of its members being HIV-positive. But there is often one member of the family who will stand by them, and this makes a tremendous difference to the patient's state of mind. Because AIDS affects the immunity of the patient, their mental state is very important. A fear of immediate death leads just to that – an early death. But a patient who, after coming to the Hospice, grasps the hope and acceptance that is offered, seems to receive new life and strength to turn and help other patients.

In the early days of the AIDS epidemic, it was assumed that everyone contracting the disease had an immoral life style. However, that is far from true. Some patients have received infected blood before having an operation. Others have been given an injection with a non-sterile needle. For such, the diagnosis of HIV-positive is a terrible shock. Sometimes, there is deep anger, resentment and bitterness. This happens especially where there is an arranged marriage, and it is discovered after the ceremony that one of the couple is HIV-positive. This has a devastating effect upon both families as well as the couple themselves.

One sad example was the story of a couple who came with a small boy. His mother was desperately ill with advanced TB. She tested HIV-positive when she had gone for

NEW ZEALAND/AOTEAROA

antenatal treatment. The couple spent every penny they had on her treatment but to no avail and she died some six months later. The father too was found to be positive and the little boy. All this came about because the mother had been previously married to a lorry driver, who had died. Being illiterate, she had no idea he had died of an AIDS-related disease and that she too was infected. So three people had become infected in total ignorance. The good news is that the father and the boy continued living at the Hospice. Both are doing well. The father works on the land surrounding the Hospice and helps to produce a good crop of vegetables. He also cares for the cows which provide the patients with fresh milk. His son goes to the local school where he is accepted lovingly and receives an education.

Much more needs to be done to encourage families to care for AIDS affected members without fear, but until that time the Arulagam Hospice (which in Tamil means the House of Grace) is able to supply encouragement, acceptance and hope to those in need.

Families' Commission

Probably the very best thing to be happening in New Zealand in this "International Year of the Family" is the establishment of a Families' Commission by our Government. In our last Parliamentary elections, one of the minor parties campaigned on a "Back-to-basics, good-old-fashioned family values" ticket, and attracted a high number of votes. Unfortunately, the majority party elected is not so much in accord with the Mothers' Union outlook. Their official line is that the nuclear family as we have known it, with two parents bringing up their children within marriage, is no more important than a solo-parent with children from casual relationships, or any other variation that the word "family" could be applied to. These two parties are now in coalition, and the trade-off for votes has resulted in a Bill authorising establishment of the Families' Commission to monitor all legislation which might affect "the family".

Learning from our failure to stop a Bill legalising prostitution (which passed by one vote), the Mothers' Union made representations at an early stage of the Bill to

establish the Families' Commission. Our submissions were accepted, and the Bill passed. There is to be one leading commissioner, three full-time commissioners, and three part-time commissioners, and we accepted the invitation to submit a nomination for one of the part-time positions. The Commission is due to come into effect in July, and we do not know yet who has been appointed, but the Mothers' Union has been advised that, of the 190 nominations received, ours was not successful. However, we intend to monitor the Commission's work very closely, and hope to have a strong input into it.

All in all, New Zealand is a great little country in which to bring up a family. The recent immigration of new citizens with cultures previously unknown is providing us with challenges, and "building relationships" within the family of New Zealanders is something we need to learn.

CANADA

The diversity of family structure in Canada has encouraged us to define family in functional terms – as a core group of people who are deeply committed to each other and the responsibilities of assisting each other through the challenges of life: caring for children, the ill and the elderly. Launching young people into education, training jobs and careers and establishing new homes also requires intensive support and guidance from family members; often needed yet again when job loss or career change occur.

The International Year of the Family in 1994 emphasized the importance of community support for the family in meeting these challenges. Canadians seek to provide this support through advocating for family-friendly legislation and where necessary, developing community projects.

Canadians look to their governments for leadership, and governments at all levels – municipal, provincial and federal – are monitored and lobbied by advocacy groups. Advocacy has also intensified at the international level, where the United Nations agreements set a standard for our evolving global community. Specifically, a coalition of advocacy groups in Canada has focused on utilizing the UN review process of the World Summit on Social Development, to keep the national Government alert to the important issues of poverty, employment and inclusion, which were the focus of this Summit. Provincial governments have already begun

appointing personnel to analyze all pending provincial policy and legislation for its impact on families. Some achievements include the recent legislation giving one full year of parental leave for new mothers or fathers, paid at 60% or more of salary. Government also encourages, with funding, programmes which address the critical "early years" of childhood, since these years are believed to have far-reaching impact on a child's development. Another improvement has been legislation allowing for eight weeks' leave for employees who must care for a dying relative.

In a practical way, churches and other groups provide day care, elder care and, occasionally, a project such as Habitat housing where everyone helps to build a home for a needy family. Government-sponsored job programmes provide salary replacement to small businesses who hire youth for that essential first employment. Partnered with the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association), governments contribute to skill-building programmes for women, of all faiths, which include on-the-job experience, shown to result in an 80% success rate for full-time employment. Recently, professional social

service programmes are being expanded to provide services that create stronger links between Canadian families and newly arrived immigrants and refugees. With all these initiatives, Canadians are becoming accustomed to changes in our families and in our communities. This may include having older children stay longer living at home as they seek to launch their careers or, as well, becoming hosts, mentors and friends, to strangers from afar. We continue to work with our governments, as well as within our communities, in support of our families, to strengthen and reinforce family life in a changing world.

TANZANIA

Development of Children's Rights

Tanzania is one of the states which recognises the right of every child to be "protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be harmful to the children's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development." (Article 32 of the UN Convention on Children's Rights). The Government has been doing all it can to create awareness in society about the rights of children.

Problems

- Children are prone to many hazards at family level: they are abused, they are used as domestic servants and are low-paid, exploited, used as petty vendors, sexually abused by adults. They are also used in big plantations and industries as cheap labour and poverty drives some parents to send their children to work in towns.

Progress

- In 2001, the Government launched a programme to stop child labour and sexual abuse. This programme is in cooperation with other stakeholders: such as NGOs which are in the forefront of creating awareness in people by using mass media seminars, workshops, etc.
- The Government has another programme for free education at primary level, a programme for children whose parents were not able to send them to school and for orphans.
- The Government, together with other development agencies, has a programme for poverty alleviation. This is a national strategy which aims at eradicating child labour by 2025.

The Church and NGOs

- The Church has orphanage centres for children in the country whose

parents have died from HIV/AIDS and other related diseases. The Church and many other institutions have been supporting such orphans.

- Church organisations and other development agencies have been promoting income-generating activities for children to raise their standard of living.
- There are vocational training institutions for children.
- Awareness creation for the whole society is done by the Government and other organisations like *kuleana*, a centre for children's rights sponsored by many international organisations.

So there is progress achieved by the Government with the community on the rights of children. By creating awareness within the community, people have joined together to establish NGOs to fight for the rights of children.

GHANA

Campaigns against violence

Since the International Year of the Family in 1994, our Government has used the media for campaigns against violence on television and radio. The police attack on armed robberies, murders, rape, defilement (under-age sex) and other forms of violence has been on the increase. In fact, the law does not compromise with perpetrators of violence and people are urged to come out against all forms of violence instead of shielding the culprits. For instance, people who committed rape, defilement or incest were shielded by relations or others but now, due to education, people are not prepared to agree to this.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

These have been involved in combatting all forms of violence in our society. We have the female lawyers association (FIDA), Women and Juvenile Unit of the Police (WAJU), Women's Association (Matantudu) and many more groups which educate and advocate against violence in our society.

Society

It is interesting to note that with the education and campaigns going on some men now carry their babies or accompany their women to child welfare clinics. This was unseen in our society some time ago, but now some men even help with house chores.

Also, men are seen with their sick babies in hospitals or even on admission to hospitals. Programmes on television such as "Mbaankomo" (Support for Women) are helping in this education. The wives are now becoming partners at home instead of "punching bags".

A PRAYER FOR FAMILIES

Lord of the Communion of Saints
and of the whole family of mankind:

Bless all individual families
both large and small, young and old;
Bless loving families of every kind;
Bless families of neighbourly care;
Bless families of encouragement and
spiritual heart;
Bless families of tragedy and families of joy;
Bless families needing healing and repair;
Bless every family member
with Christ's dignity and peace.

Amen

Rev'd John Bradford.

**THE NEXT FAMILY
NETWORK NEWSLETTER**
will be on the theme of **Moving
Families** and cover issues of travelling
families and those forced to move or
seek work away from home.
Please send articles as soon as
possible to the Network Office.

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