



UNITED NATIONS

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN - ECLAC**



**1994
International Year of the Family**

Distr.
LIMITED

LC/L.756(Conf.84/4)
21 June 1993

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting
Preparatory to the International Year of the Family

Cartagena, Colombia, 9-14 August 1993

**COMPENDIUM OF REPLIES TO THE SURVEY OF GOVERNMENTS
ON MATTERS RELATED TO THE FAMILY**

This document was prepared by the ECLAC Social Development Division.

93-5-606

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
FOREWORD	1
INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY	3
I. GENERAL ASPECTS	7
1. Main changes in the structure and functioning of the family	7
2. Households headed by women	7
3. Teenage pregnancy	8
4. Family sizes and types	8
II. NATIONAL OBJECTIVES CONCERNING THE FAMILY AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS	11
1. Argentina	11
2. Belize	12
3. Bolivia	12
4. Brazil	12
5. Colombia	13
6. Costa Rica	14
7. Cuba	14
8. Chile	14
9. El Salvador	14
10. Grenada	15
11. Mexico	15
12. Montserrat	15
13. Nicaragua	15
14. Panama	16
15. Dominican Republic	16
16. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	16
17. Uruguay	17
18. Venezuela	17

	<u>Page</u>
III. FAMILY-RELATED ACTIONS AND PROGRAMMES	19
1. Support for the formation and re-formation of families	19
2. Strengthening of the family as a means of preventing and resolving domestic conflicts	23
3. Programmes and actions for special cases	25
4. Strengthening of family functions	27
IV. NATIONAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY	31
1. Creation of institutional mechanisms for the observance of the International Year of the Family	31
2. Collaboration between the Governments of the region and the United Nations system in preparing for the Year	32
3. Family-related legal reforms	33
4. Observance of the International Year of the Family and national dialogues on the family	34
5. International and regional cooperation in preparing for the International Year of the Family	34
Notes	35

FOREWORD

The forces unleashed by the radical changes sweeping the world have determined equally profound changes in the structure and role of the family. Although many families have successfully met the challenge of adapting their collective projects to the new circumstances and keeping their bases of solidarity intact, others have disintegrated and lost their capacity to fulfil crucial functions for the development and well-being of their members.

In a series of international years and decades, the United Nations has drawn attention to the effects of global changes on different categories of people, such as women, children, youth, the elderly and the disabled, and has launched initiatives that have made great strides in defining and safeguarding the rights of individuals belonging to these social groups. However, these actions have taken a sectoral approach centred exclusively on specific aspects of human development. The International Year of the Family is based on the premise that world attention should be broader in scope, to reflect an increasingly integrated approach to creating conditions favourable to social progress. This was the goal of the United Nations General Assembly when it began, in 1987, to prepare for the proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the Family, which was made official by resolution 44/82 of 8 December 1989.¹ Subsequently, in its resolution 45/133 of 14 December 1990,² the General Assembly specified that the Year would "offer a unique opportunity for mobilizing efforts, particularly at the local and national levels, to highlight the importance of the family, promote a better understanding of its functions and problems and strengthen national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of the family".

In this context, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) convened the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting Preparatory to the International Year of the Family. The Government of Colombia offered to host the event, with support from the United Nations Office at Vienna, which is acting as organizational secretariat for the Year.

ECLAC was asked to serve as technical secretariat for the meeting and to prepare a series of documents for submission to the participants. The present paper is part of this series; its purpose is to report on government activities and programmes to strengthen the family. It is based on replies to a "Survey of Governments on matters related to the family" sent by ECLAC to all its member States to collect background material on national preparations for the Year and on the Governments' achievements and difficulties in the area of protecting the family.

Twenty countries³ replied to the survey or sent documentation on the topics it covered. The heterogeneity of the data received and the diversity of the methodologies used to estimate the quantitative coverage of programmes for the family have prevented the technical secretariat from supplementing this report with valid figures for the entire region.

Nevertheless, the information collected enabled ECLAC to prepare an overview of government efforts in recent years to carry out programmes for the family and to prepare for the International Year of the Family.

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Latin American and Caribbean Governments have carried out numerous activities in preparation for the International Year of the Family in 1994. The United Nations General Assembly's proclamation of the Year has evidently stimulated government concern about the topic and various initiatives regarding the design, formulation and execution of family policies, some of which have already been launched, while others will be put into operation in the near future.

The following analysis of replies to the survey does not attempt to evaluate achievements or progress in the area of family policies in the region. Its purpose is to systematize the information provided by Governments and to contribute data for the preparation of a status report on the family, its institutional framework and current and future activities in the countries of the region.

First, it should be stressed that all the Governments of the region agree that the process of change affecting the family cannot be excluded from reflection or action under State social policies. Changes in the family's structure and modes of formation and dissolution, and in the sets of values that influence the behaviour of its members, are perceived as affecting not only individual well-being, integration and the social order, but also national development opportunities; special consideration must therefore be given to these factors in the formulation of development policies.

Moreover, a study of the actions or plans which Governments present as "family policies" reveals that this widespread awareness of the need to address family issues is not, as yet, backed up by a common conceptual framework among all the countries of the region. This could be attributed to at least four unsolved problems reflected in the replies to the survey:

- a) Even though many countries define the family as a target group and basic concern of social policies, in practice the family is not explicitly considered a specific target group of social welfare policies, and most sectoral social policies and programmes focus on family members without taking into account how the structure and functions of the family are affected. Generally, the family is mentioned in connection with poverty, population policies, sectoral social strategies and overall economic recovery programmes.
- b) Family policies have a marked tendency to focus exclusively on low-income families, so that anti-poverty strategies are not clearly differentiated from strategies to strengthen the family as a basic social institution.

Although this distinction is complex, an understanding of family dynamics could significantly enhance the effectiveness of social policies, whose indirect effects on families do not necessarily give them the deliberate slant towards the family dimension required in strategies and programmes to strengthen families.

- c) In most countries of the region, institutions working with families seem ill-equipped, in terms of capacity for diagnosis and policy design and execution, to strengthen family structures in the face of the disintegrative trends manifested by the increase in households headed by women, teenage pregnancies, separations and divorces; lack of communication between parents and children; and the proliferation of more or less unstable cohabitation arrangements. This situation has widened the gap between the supply of, and demand for, social services to strengthen families.

Another factor to consider is these institutions' limited authority or capacity to intervene in family conflicts, in view of the right to privacy legally guaranteed to all citizens.

- d) The replies also indicate that although many qualitative diagnoses have been prepared on the family, there is a serious shortage of quantitative data. Thus, measures to correct the topic's statistical invisibility are urgently needed.

Given these problems, it is interesting to note the efforts being made to strengthen family-oriented institutions, with the establishment in many cases of institutes, committees or other types of local, regional or national entities to deal with the most urgent problems affecting families. One example is the Venezuelan Government's initiative in creating a National Commission for the Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy, which represents a dynamic, innovative way of addressing a phenomenon with profound social consequences.

A number of replies identified the lack of human and financial resources, extreme institutional dispersion and weak inter-sectoral linkage at the State level (and between State and private institutions active in the field of family policy) as some of the main obstacles to institutional development in the area of the family.

In relation to the changing structure and functioning of families, many studies in the region have approached the process of change from the most diverse points of view. Demographers have noted a number of evident trends, including falling fertility rates; postponement of marriage among women; intensification of migratory processes; and increases in divorce, consensual unions and one-person households, the last for various reasons (widowhood, migration, unmarried status). Sociologists have studied the new family roles created by women's incorporation into the labour market, and family conflicts rooted in the need for an equitable redistribution of household chores. There is concern about passing legislation in response to the increase in cases of family violence between parents and between them and their children. Belize's reply stresses that psychotherapeutic services are mostly confined to the mentally ill, and rarely available to battered women and children. Some countries, such as Uruguay, address the subject of domestic violence in a human rights context.

Also relevant is the trend towards nuclear families with fewer members, as well as the larger number of people living in composite families, as an economic survival strategy necessitated by the deteriorating labour and housing markets.

The place of the elderly within the whole set of family issues is beginning to be defined, in terms of recognizing their rights and their positive integration into the family or society. The situation of the disabled is being addressed in a similar fashion.

In almost all of the countries, concern for reforming the legal framework governing family life has led to the proposal of draft laws on topics such as responsible fatherhood, children's equality before the law, custody rights, divorce, abortion, alimony and child support payment systems, consensual unions, etc. Some countries have proposed legal codes for children and/or families.

Generally speaking, the measures outlined in this introduction seem to manifest an intention to formulate policies that reflect family images suited to contemporary realities, and a willingness to address the problems of family formation, structure and functioning with growing flexibility and open-mindedness. On this foundation alone, long-term policies could be designed to promote the family and to protect and assist socially and economically vulnerable families. The regional exchange of experiences in this area will be very important for the future of family policies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The analysis of replies to the "Survey of Governments on matters related to the family" is divided into four sections. The first deals with general considerations regarding the most significant changes in family structure and functioning, especially phenomena such as the increase in the number of households headed by women and in the incidence of teenage pregnancy, and the decrease in family size, together with the proliferation of a variety of composite family arrangements. The second presents an overview of national objectives concerning the family and the most important aspects of institutional development under family policies, as described in the replies. The third, "Family-related actions and programmes", is the core of this study, since it reports on the many sectoral activities in this field. A distinction is made among i) **actions to support the formation and re-formation of families**, including family allowances, sex education and pre-marital counselling policies, and actions to make jobs compatible with domestic activities; ii) **actions to strengthen the family as a mechanism for preventing and resolving family conflicts**, in their social and legal dimensions; iii) **programmes for special cases**, such as the elderly, young people at risk and the disabled; and iv) **strengthening of family functions** through programmes for child nutrition, health, preschool care and home economics courses. The fourth section presents a general summary of preparations for the observance of the International Year of the Family in the region, based on information contained in the replies, and illustrates government efforts to comply with United Nations General Assembly resolutions 42/134, 43/135 and 44/82.

I. GENERAL ASPECTS

1. Main changes in the structure and functioning of the family

Current legislation in almost all the countries of the region considers the family as the basic unit of society, which must enjoy State protection. Accordingly, many government programmes mention support and strengthening of the family as a priority objective of social policy.

Although the Governments' attitude towards the family seems, in general, to illustrate a widespread consensus on the family's significance and its role in the development process, a specific examination of the way families are actually treated as objects of social analysis or as a target group for social policies reveals significant differences between theory and practice.⁴

The Governments see the family as an institution profoundly affected by the economic crisis and the restructuring and adjustment policies that characterized the 1980s, so that it no longer offers its members the support they need for positive integration into society. Many of the replies provide information on the economic crisis suffered by the countries, and directly associate the family's crisis with the deterioration of the population's quality of life and the increase in poverty and indigence.

At another level, the effects of the economic crisis on family structure are distinguished from the change in family members' functions stemming from women's integration into the labour market, even when this integration is very precarious or involves economic activities in the informal sector. In this regard, some replies note that the male image is in a profound state of crisis⁵, and therefore recommend that men be integrated into comprehensive programmes for the family.⁶

Most of the replies said that the deterioration of family relationships has strongly affected children,⁷ especially teenagers, who no longer find guidance in the cultural and political environments or sufficient protection to face adversities in the labour and economic areas. In this connection, the replies mention delinquency, drug addiction, vagrancy, abandonment of children, teenage pregnancy and physical aggression. These observations are not accompanied by analyses disaggregated by social stratum.

2. Households headed by women

Many of the replies emphasize the drastic increase in the number of households headed by women, especially in lower-income sectors. Because of these women's low levels of education, their consequent difficulties in finding adequately paid work and the lack of time to care for their children and households,⁸ this type of family is socially and economically very vulnerable.⁹ Among the causes of this phenomenon¹⁰ are increases in the prevalence of divorce, households headed by widows,¹¹ families abandoned by the father and teenage pregnancy.

3. Teenage pregnancy

The Governments of Costa Rica, Grenada and Venezuela said that teenage pregnancy was one of their highest-priority problems. Chile, for its part, reported that widespread illegitimacy among children of very young parents was probably attributable to the high frequency of premarital relations, with consequent pregnancies. Whereas in 1982, half of all children of very young mothers were illegitimate (49.9%), in 1988 that proportion had risen to 59.8%. Cuba's experience is interesting in this regard, since in 1983 teenage mothers dropped to third place in terms of their contribution to the total number of births, after having ranked second before that time. According to the Cuban Government, that result was achieved through the dissemination of sex education programmes for teenagers and parents and the extension of the "family doctor" modality.

Venezuela said it had taken a major step by designing a national plan for preventing teenage pregnancy, for the execution of which the National Commission for the Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy was established by presidential decree. The Commission hopes to reach nearly 500,000 young people in 1993 with its family life and sex education programmes.

4. Family sizes and types

With regard to family sizes and types, United Nations studies have identified a trend towards nuclear families and smaller family sizes. In Latin America, for example, the average number of people per household was 5.1 in 1965, fell to 4.8 in 1980 and will reach 4.1 by the year 2000.¹²

Among the reasons cited for the reduction in household size are the decrease in fertility rates, the improvement of indexes of women's education, the postponement of marriage, widespread family planning programmes and migratory flows from rural to urban areas.

In Bolivia, for example, nuclear families are concentrated in the rural areas of the *altiplano* and the valleys, and have higher fertility rates than other family structures. In addition, the average age at marriage for women has risen steeply, from 13 in 1976 to 17 in 1987. Brazil's Government reports that the nuclear family is losing ground in relation to the increase in the number of families headed by women and other family living arrangements. Fertility rates have dropped from an average of 4.38 children per woman in 1970 to only 3 in 1986. In Colombia, the decrease in fertility, from 6.9 children per woman in 1972 to 2.9 in 1990, has not had a proportional effect on family size, since the number of people per household has decreased by only 1.2 owing to the many composite households formed because of the population's critical labour and economic situation in recent years. In Costa Rica, the proportion of nuclear households rose from 56.6% of all families in 1973 to 62.1% in 1984. Family size has also decreased in Cuba, mainly because of the drastic drop in fertility rates, which in the period 1985-1990 hovered around 1.8 children per woman, with further reductions projected for the future. In Chile, the nuclear family headed by a man predominates at the national level (53.1% of all families in 1992), followed by extended families (39.8%). In 1992, the nuclear family averaged 4.1 people and the extended family, 5.6 people. Fertility rates have also shown a clear decrease, from 5.28 children per woman in 1960 to 2.5 in 1988. In Panama, average family size remained at 5 people throughout the 1980s and 1990s, although fertility has fallen from 5.92 children per woman in the period 1960-1965 to 3.14 in 1980-1985. In the Dominican Republic, average family size has decreased, since in 1981 38% of all households consisted of six or

more people, while in 1991 only 30% were this large. Some 25% of households consist of a single adult or of unrelated persons, and 18% include children under age 15 who do not live with their biological parents. Average family size has also decreased in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, from 5 people in 1985 to 3.9 in 1991. Lastly, in Uruguay, nuclear families represented 59% of the total in 1985, compared to 56% in 1975. Average family size decreased from 3.76 people in 1963 to 3.33 in 1985.

II. NATIONAL OBJECTIVES CONCERNING THE FAMILY AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

Since the crisis of the 1980s, two factors have combined to heighten government interest in the situation of families and efforts to give substantive and institutional support to public policies in this field. On the one hand, it was noted with concern that the deteriorating economic situation was accelerating a process—already observed for decades—of debilitation of the family's capacity to fulfil functions vital to society. On the other, there was a growing recognition that the fiscal crisis and reduced government social spending forced many structurally weak families to pay a larger share of the cost of providing services previously furnished by the State.

Following is a summary of the steps taken by Governments in recent years to address this situation.

1. Argentina

In 1986, the National Commission on Family-related and Population Policies was established by decree No. 2376/86, and assigned the task of laying the foundations for a national strategy in this area. The Commission was also put in charge of meeting with all relevant State agencies to ensure inter-sectoral coordination and to exchange ideas on the family. In addition, with the collaboration of many non-governmental and international organizations, a workshop was held on current family issues,¹³ at which distinguished experts considered the viability of family policies under existing institutional structures in that area. Diagnoses of the most urgent problems of Argentine families were presented, as well as reflections on the evolution of family structures in the country and its effects on types of living arrangements, survival strategies, intra-family dynamics, interrelations with society, problems of health, education, housing, etc.

In October 1990 the National Juvenile and Family Council was established by presidential decree, as a body under State authority that was also participatory and non-bureaucratic enough to address the problems of the family and of its members most in need of assistance. The Council is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, and reports directly to the Minister thereof. It consists of representatives of all administrative bodies dealing with the problems of children, the elderly and the disabled, with the participation, in an advisory capacity, of representatives of the judicial branch, the Ministry of Juvenile Affairs and non-governmental organizations active in this field. Its main task is to adopt measures to help consolidate the family through guidance and support. The Council plays a coordinating role that requires no additional government spending; its mission is to improve the dynamics, training and organization of existing human resources in the area of family services at the regional and national levels. Although the well-being of the family unit is addressed by public policies, actions that affect the family are carried out under long-standing sectoral policies that focus primarily on the needs of individual family members.

2. Belize

Belize has no government agency to deal exclusively with the family. The Ministry of Social Development deals indirectly with family issues through programmes for children, women and the elderly. Belize's five-year development plan for 1990-1994 emphasizes the need to strengthen cooperation between the public and private sectors for the enhancement and development of family-related activities.

The Government's recognition of the crisis in Belize's families prompted a series of measures for the adoption of an official policy on the topic, including a National Policy Statement on Women, the appointment of a National Coordinating Committee to monitor compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

3. Bolivia

The Bolivian Social Strategy, formulated in September 1991 as a national development plan, contains the State's policy in this area, for which the National Council on Social Policy is the highest legal and decision-making authority. This entity consists of representatives of all State social sectors, including the President of the National Agency for Juveniles, Women and the Family (ONAMFA), established in December 1992 under Act No. 1403 of the Juvenile Code. It is empowered to regulate, legislate, monitor and supervise policies for children, women and the family, and to coordinate with State and private agencies, both national and international.

Today, Bolivian authorities consider that ONAMFA represents a step forward from its predecessor, the National Committee for Solidarity and Social Development, which had operated since 1971 with a predominantly welfare-oriented approach, and reported directly to the First Lady. The law provides that the highest authority of ONAMFA be chosen by the President of the Republic from a list of candidates approved by the National Congress.

In Bolivia, comprehensive support for the family is clearly circumscribed by the fight against poverty, and the family itself as a basic unit of society is not a target of promotional policies outside this context.

4. Brazil

The State agency in charge of national family policy is the Department of Human Development of the Ministry of Welfare and Social Assistance. Currently, this Department is responsible for coordinating the elaboration of a national family policy, for which purpose a National Commission was created, consisting of experts from all competent government entities and representatives of communities and non-governmental organizations. A participatory methodology is being used in this process, in which the State and society interact at the federal and municipal government level. This initiative will take place in the framework of the Basic Social Assistance Law, which is currently awaiting adoption.

Although Brazil has many programmes for children, women, the elderly, the disabled and young people, they have not been integrated into a comprehensive idea of support for the family. The current Government considers family issues a priority problem within the country's serious socio-economic

situation. An underlying objective of this interest in the family is the recovery of Brazilians who are not exercising their rights of citizenship because of the crisis and their reintegration into society through integration into the family as the basic instrument for forming individual identity.

5. Colombia

The Colombian Family Welfare Institute, the cornerstone of the National Family Welfare System, has existed since 1968 as a government entity under the Ministry of Health. Initially, its work focused on issues involving minors, which had previously been addressed by the Juvenile Division of the Ministry of Justice and the National Institute of Nutrition. Beginning in 1989, the Institute's functions were broadened to cover protection of juvenile offenders. In 1990 the Ministry of Health was restructured and the Institute's objectives changed to promoting and strengthening the integration and harmonious development of the family, protecting children of minor age and guaranteeing their rights. The new work approach emphasizes parental responsibility, and assumes that the Institute's actions should be ancillary in nature, involving community participation and not replacement of the family's role. The Institute also works with the elderly and with the population that is most vulnerable in socio-economic, nutritional, psychological, emotional and moral terms.

To meet these objectives, the National Family Welfare System, and the Colombian Family Welfare Institute as its key agency, involving both public- and private-sector participation, were strengthened and consolidated.¹⁴ At the same time, they are undergoing a very arduous technical and administrative decentralization process, as the Institute has one central office in Bogotá and 26 regional offices scattered throughout the country. The regional offices, in turn, have a total of 190 local centres in the most populous municipalities.

By Special Decree No. 1680 of 1991, the Department of Administration of the Office of the President of the Republic was reorganized, with the creation of Directorates of Presidential Programmes, including a Presidential Programme for Youth, Women and the Family. Some functions related to family protection that had been within the competence of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute were transferred to the Department of Administration of the President's Office, to enable the latter to provide policy guidelines, design and implement programmes and support their subsequent institutionalization.

Each departmental government in Colombia has an Office for Youth, Women and the Family, and the mayor's office of each major city has an office of women's affairs, which broaden the System's scope of action and coverage.

In general, the Government's concern for the well-being of Colombian families is manifested by its commitment to guaranteeing them protection and support, especially in economically and socially disadvantaged sectors, through preventive and other programmes in various regions of the country. The Government intends to introduce the gender, age and disability perspectives into its development planning, as well as the human and family development perspective.

6. Costa Rica

Costa Rica has no specific agency to deal with family issues. However, in its national development plan for 1990-1994, the Government mentions the comprehensive strengthening of the family and improvement of the economic participation of women and youth as one of its central objectives. Under the State Reform Programme, efforts are being made to rationalize the use of social-sector resources to increase investment in human capital, in terms of both assistance and promotion of individual, family and group development.

Costa Rica's family policy emphasizes the situation of women and the changes observed in the structure of Costa Rican families owing to the economic crisis still affecting the country. Policies to address the needs of family members are oriented by a document on guidelines for a policy with and for children and youth, under the National Human, Child and Youth Development Plan, and the recommendations of the Monitoring Commission on the Rights of the Child.

7. Cuba

The family has a prominent place in social policies, which are designed and executed at the sectoral level and benefit family groups indirectly. Therefore, Cuba has no specific institution for the family and no plans to establish one.

The policy of support and protection for the family is based on the Government's commitment to meeting the basic needs of all human beings and maintaining the levels of social well-being attained in recent years despite the unusual political situation that has plagued the island since the collapse of the socialist countries.

8. Chile

The Government of Chile has no entity expressly responsible for ensuring the fulfilment of the national objective of protecting and strengthening families. Policies and actions are carried out by sector (housing, health, education) and affect families indirectly. However, agencies such as the National Institute for Youth and the National Women's Service (SERNAM) target specific family members, and the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation coordinates social policies for people living in extreme poverty and, therefore, for families in economically and socially vulnerable situations.

In August 1992 the President established the National Commission of Family Affairs, which will spend one year working on the first official diagnostic study of contemporary Chilean families, to serve as a foundation for the design of social policies and draft laws to benefit the family.

9. El Salvador

The National Secretariat of Family Affairs, which reports directly to the President of the Republic, acts as a liaison between the President and public and private institutions for matters of family policy. It is also responsible for coordinating, planning and evaluating policies for the family and for specific family members.

Since this Secretariat has no explicit constitutional basis or clear definition under secondary legislation, the Government has considered the establishment of a Ministry of Family Affairs. However, for political and administrative reasons of timing and appropriateness, it has temporarily opted to strengthen the Secretariat by designing a National System to Promote the Family, with both State and community participation. Another initiative for the family was the draft law that created the Salvadorian Juvenile Protection Institute, which went into operation on 1 May 1993.

10. Grenada

Family issues are addressed by sector through the various ministries in the social sphere. The family is also supported by some non-governmental organizations, the Church and the Grenada Planned Parenthood Association.

11. Mexico

In January 1989, Mexico's National Solidarity Programme went into operation, headed by the Commission for the National Solidarity Programme.¹⁵ The Programme is the country's highest authority in social affairs, and is in charge of designing, executing, coordinating and evaluating programmes for the most vulnerable population sectors, including the family.

In September 1992 the Programme, in its official publication *Solidaridad*, defined the family as the basic unit of society that preserved the shared values of a country and acted as a cohesive and integrating force in the community. In order for the family to fulfil its functions, its basic needs in the areas of food, health, education and housing must be met.

Accordingly, the Programme has carried out a series of actions which, though sectoral in nature, have benefited the family indirectly.

12. Montserrat

The Ministry of Education, Health and Community Services is in charge of implementing family-oriented policies and programmes. These activities take place in the context of social policy in general, and are not designed according to a specific official concept of family policy. Owing to the small size of the community in Montserrat, the good relations among the Education, Health and Community Services Departments and their close ties with other social entities, the State appears to have forged solid links with the general public in this area.

13. Nicaragua

The General Department of Social Welfare and its specific departments operate within the Nicaraguan Social Security and Welfare Institute. These specific departments include the Department of Juvenile and Family Affairs and the Department for Rehabilitation and the Elderly, and are represented throughout the country.

Since the family has high priority on the national development agenda, these entities have been put in charge of reviewing current legislation to identify any legal provisions needed and to propose corrective measures, with a view to guaranteeing real protection for the family.

14. Panama

Panama addresses family issues under the general rubric of development, and especially under its National Poverty Reduction Strategy, whose priority areas are food and nutrition; health; education; housing; community development and income generation; minors in especially difficult circumstances; and social institutional development. Panama also has a Plan of Action for Human Development, Children and Youth, which focuses priority attention on children and youth as the most vulnerable members of the family.

With regard to State machinery, since 1970 the General Department of Social Welfare of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has been responsible for coordinating and/or implementing national activities for the family.

15. Dominican Republic

By signing the agreements reached at the World Summit for Children, held in September 1990, the country committed itself to attaining a series of goals intended to promote the well-being of all children. Since initiatives for children are closely linked to family issues, the country has elaborated a national plan of action to address both problems. One activity under the plan is a campaign to amend current legislation on the family, women and children to reflect the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The Dominican Republic has no central agency dealing exclusively with the family; however, its government machinery includes the National Population and Family Council (CONAPOFA), established in 1988; the Secretariat of State for Public Health and Social Assistance (SESPAS); the Secretariat of State for Education, Fine Arts and Religious Affairs (SEEBAC); the General Department for the Advancement of Women; the National Children's Council (CONANI); and the National Planning Office (ONAPLAN).

16. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

To meet national objectives concerning the family, the country has established juvenile delinquency prevention programmes, a residential facility for adolescent girls at risk, a family court and a Women's Affairs Department within the Government. It is also seeking to reduce its population growth rate.

The Population Unit of the Ministry of Finance and Planning is in charge of coordinating national family-oriented activities. It works closely with the National Population Council, which consists of representatives of various government sectors and non-governmental organizations, who participate in formulating family policies.

17. Uruguay

At the initiative of the executive branch, and with parliamentary approval, the National Women's Institute was established on 23 October 1991 as an authority on national policies relating to women and the family. In November 1992, the Institute's name was legally changed to the National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs.

The Institute's purpose is to help establish full equality of rights and opportunities in the country's social, economic, political and cultural development process, by recognizing and assessing the value of women's and men's joint contributions in both the public and private spheres, and by reinforcing and updating family values and the values of each family member. Its activities will focus on six areas: health, education, employment, environment, legislation and human rights. Its priority target groups are women and families in the most disadvantaged urban and rural sectors, with special emphasis on women heads of household with dependent children and on teenage mothers.

18. Venezuela

In Venezuela, the State social sector is being restructured. The Ministry of Family Affairs, which to date has been responsible for social policy, will soon become the Ministry of Social Development. Within this Ministry is the Department of Family Affairs, which designs population strategies to help achieve the objectives of primary health care, family and youth programmes.

Although the Venezuelan Government has no explicit family policy, the Department of Family Affairs has identified three crucial problems in the areas of health, the family and population which should be addressed as priorities: i) insufficient information on population issues (sexuality, family planning, etc.), which strongly influence the quality of life of the most socially vulnerable groups; ii) the population's scant knowledge of preventive aspects of primary health care, especially with respect to maternal and child health and family planning; and iii) the public sector's inadequate capacity to meet needs in the areas of information, education and training of health care personnel.

The Government's priorities in the social sphere are the fight against poverty and the satisfaction of the basic needs of the most vulnerable groups. Thus, actions for specific population groups indirectly benefit Venezuelan families.

General observations

Among the problems detected with regard to institutional development in the area of strengthening the family are the following:

- Lack of human and financial resources;
- Excessive institutional dispersion;
- Weak inter-sectoral linkage among State entities and with private organizations;

- Scarcity of updated and socially and culturally disaggregated information on family problems;
- Lack of legal provisions concerning new social problems caused by changes in family structures; and
- Lack of modernization of existing agencies with respect to management and programme design and evaluation capacity.

III. FAMILY-RELATED ACTIONS AND PROGRAMMES

1. Support for the formation and re-formation of families

a) Tax policies that favour families and family allowances

The replies to the survey do not provide enough information to paint a clear picture of the region's experience in the area of tax policy to benefit the family. Some replies said that taxation did benefit the family indirectly, since it was an important source of financing for social investment.

Most of the countries provide dependency allowances in monetary form to employed workers. However, the economic deterioration of the 1980s forced many countries to reduce the allowances, which gradually lost significance in the total income of workers with families. For this reason, almost all the Governments in the region decided to implement support programmes for low-income families¹⁶ in the areas of nutrition, education and housing.

In 1974, Costa Rica adopted a law on social development and family allowances that provided for an experimental measure under which a grant was awarded for each dependent (the Bagaces Pilot Plan). The plan lasted six years, but its impact was relative and caused a string of side effects, prompting the Government to opt instead for contributions to "social wages" through the provision of services in the areas of health, education and nutrition.

In Chile, social policy basically provides for direct monetary subsidies, minimum wages and sectoral and special programmes. The cash subsidies are intended to supplement the income of the poorest families to help them meet the costs of subsistence. These subsidies include family allowances, welfare pensions and lump-sum family grants, in addition to maternity and unemployment benefits and pensions for retirees, widows and orphans. Since these subsidies lost much of their purchasing power between 1985 and 1989, the Government readjusted them through tax reform; at present, they exceed their level of ten years ago. The same measure was applied to minimum wages. In the area of sectoral subsidies, low-income families can opt for housing subsidies for the purchase of dwellings. In addition, primary health care services free of charge have been extended to all beneficiaries of the public health system, and the National Complementary Feeding Programme has been strengthened.

Current tax laws in El Salvador provide for family deductions from taxable income, including educational, medical, hospital and other expenses.

Montserrat's tax policy favours the needy and large families. Tax exemptions are granted for each child, pensions are tax-free and family dwellings are taxed at half the rate applied to commercial buildings. A number of basic food items are exempted from import duties and consumption tax.

Panama grants allowances for children of minor age, students aged 25 or younger, mentally or physically disabled persons and direct ascendants or descendants up to the second degree of kinship. It also allows deductions from taxable income for the purchase of residential housing, and refunds of taxes on loans used exclusively for the education, within the country, of either the taxpayer or the persons whom the taxpayer maintains or educates.

Venezuela also grants family allowances. However, the most important family support programmes are those involving direct transfers to the population sectors most severely affected by the crisis, in the form of cash subsidies or services in the areas of nutrition, education and housing. These programmes include cereal coupons, school milk programmes, school and preschool lunch programmes, school cafeterias, the Maternal and Child Feeding Programme (PAMI), provision of school supplies and uniforms, etc. In 1991 an income tax reform law was adopted, which allows exemptions for the costs of care and special education for family members with disabilities.

b) Sex education and family planning programmes

The region is clearly concerned about implementing activities in this field, especially to decrease the rate of teenage pregnancy (under age 19). Most of the replies to the survey offered no information on the coverage or the target groups of sex education programmes. Although many family counselling and planning programmes are inter-sectoral, most are implemented in the context of maternal and child health and do not have clear repercussions on the population in the educational system.

Belize has no explicit sex education programmes for the general public, although some aspects of reproductive health and human sexuality are taught under the Ministry of Education's School Health Education Programme, which is limited to primary school. However, not all primary schools are implementing this curriculum. A serious shortcoming is the lack of such programmes at the secondary school level, where students receive no information on human sexuality.

Premarital counselling programmes are new in Belize. The Ministry of Health has a psychiatric section, and there are a number of clinical psychologists and licensed counsellors in the country, but the number of people receiving such counselling is negligible. Similar activities are carried out by various churches in the country.

With regard to responsible parenting, the Belize Family Life Association (BFLA) has youth groups in four districts and family life centres in five, through which it provides information to students, women and the general public on family planning, reproductive health and related topics. Also, the Department of Women's Affairs has a parenting programme for young mothers.

Bolivia has a sex education programme under the National Reproductive Health Programme of the Ministry of Social Assistance and Public Health; it is implemented by the Inter-Agency Subcommission on Information, Education and Communication. Among the topics covered is responsible fatherhood and motherhood. Non-governmental organizations and the Catholic Church also implement sex and family life education programmes.

In Brazil, government family planning programmes are carried out in the context of maternal and child health activities under the Women's Comprehensive Health Care Programme. The programme's

educational component focuses on reproductive health, but its scope does not cover the population's needs in this area.

One of the Colombian Government's activities to support the formation of families is its National Sex Education Plan. Colombian law recognizes both marriage and consensual unions, and the institution of divorce has created conditions for recognizing successive unions. The State therefore provides sex education and family planning assistance to all couples, whether married or in a consensual union.

Costa Rica has a nationwide family planning programme that focuses mainly on educating different age groups on responsible parenting. Its information campaigns and the definition of its contents are coordinated inter-sectorally through the Ministry of Health, the Costa Rican Social Security Fund, the Costa Rican Demographic Association and *Lucha contra el SIDA*, an organization to combat acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

In 1990, a document on adolescent health policies was published and the National Commission for Comprehensive Adolescent Care was established, which launched a programme to prevent teenage motherhood and to address the sexual problems of this age group. Adolescents may now receive counselling at 157 social security clinics and 99 care centres operated by the Ministry of Health, where inter-disciplinary teams of professionals such as general practitioners, psychologists, dieticians, pediatricians, obstetricians and psychiatrists are supported in their work by primary care assistants supplied by the Ministry of Health. Another component of the programme is training of professionals and technicians to treat adolescents. Having operated successfully in various regions, the programme is expected to achieve national coverage in 1993.

Cuba has a sex education programme that was established in 1974 in response to a request made by the Federation of Cuban Women at its second Congress. This initiative was supported by the Government and entrusted to the Commission on Children, Youth and Equality of Rights for Women, of the National People's Assembly (Parliament). The programme is directed inter-sectorally by the Ministers of Education and Public Health, the Federation of Cuban Women and the Union of Communist Youth.

In 1989 the programme's inter-sectoral and multidisciplinary nature was made official, the National Sex Education Centre (CENESEX) was established and the cooperation of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television and of scientific institutions was enlisted to improve the dissemination of information on the topic. The Centre has 14 provincial commissions and 169 communal commissions, which work mainly on training multipliers and researchers, elaborating audio-visual materials, responding to consultations, counselling and sexual therapy.

In general, family planning services have been linked to maternal and child health programmes.

In Chile, initiatives in response to the need for mass programmes for youth on sex education and family counselling are carried out by the National Women's Service (SERNAM), which has organized a series of seminars in all parts of the country to raise awareness of the topic among education and health professionals, parents and guardians, teachers, health care personnel, and youth and grass-roots organizations in the community, to generate a network of support for teenagers. This awareness campaign enabled SERNAM to convince the Ministry of Public Education to repeal rules that prevented pregnant teenagers from continuing their studies during the day.

With respect to premarital counselling, Chile's Registry and Identifications Service offers premarital discussions on property regimes, the rights and duties of spouses, filiation and legitimacy. In addition, organizations of the Catholic Church implement family counselling programmes.

El Salvador's Ministry of Education is beginning a review of primary and secondary school curricula in the area of sex education. The National Secretariat of Family Affairs is implementing the "Planning Your Life" programme, intended to give teenagers over 14 the knowledge they need to make free and informed decisions. The courses include modules on handling emotions, communication, assertiveness, decision-making and future expectations. Reflective exercises are conducted on cultural aspects of sexuality from a gender perspective, including sexual stereotypes, roles and prejudices. Information is also provided on reproductive health.

In Grenada, the Planned Parenthood Association is responsible for offering sex education courses in the schools.

Montserrat has a Health Promotion Unit under the Ministry of Education, Health and Community Services which, with the help of community nurses, provides courses on sex education and responsible parenting in the schools. Premarital counselling is offered by the Church.

Nicaragua has no national State-run sex education programmes, but small groups carry out community-level information activities on topics relating to sex education, family planning, contraceptive methods and relationships among fathers, mothers and children.

Panama's Ministry of Health has a maternal health programme that promotes education on sexual health, including family planning. Its health centres run family planning programmes and distribute contraceptives free of charge. There is also a sterilization programme, open to women who are at least 33 years old and have at least three children. The Government feels that these actions, which have national coverage, should be strengthened to enhance their effectiveness.

In the Dominican Republic, programmes on maternal and child health, family planning and sex education are implemented in coordination with non-governmental organizations. In addition, the National Population and Family Council administers a family planning programme with national coverage, but only 40% of State establishments have enough contraceptives to meet demand.

In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, sex education and responsible parenting programmes mainly target 13- to 19-year-olds attending school. Teenagers who are not in school are covered by a limited number of programmes offered by non-governmental organizations.

Venezuela attaches great importance to sex education and family planning programmes. The Department of Family Affairs of the Ministry of Family Affairs is implementing a National Youth Plan, one of whose main components is sex education for young people of both sexes between the ages of 10 and 19. Moreover, at the President's initiative, the National Plan for the Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy was launched to alert the population to this problem and promote more responsible decision-making with respect to sexuality, motherhood and fatherhood.

Uruguay's National Plan of Action for Women and the Family for 1992-1997, implemented by the National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture, provides for two action programmes that give priority to sex education. These are the Family and Community

Health Project, which will cover topics such as teenage pregnancy, women heads of household, prevention and reduction of child and teenage prostitution, and an active recognition of women's value as promoters of family health; and the Family Planning Project, which will mainly target young people with its pilot activities concerning information, counselling and advice for couples in the area of family planning.

c) Compatibility of jobs and domestic activities

The replies to the survey offer little information on programmes to help family members make jobs compatible with domestic duties. Only El Salvador said that current labour policy is being completely revised and that the revision will consider compatibility between household and job activities. Because of the absence or weakness of initiatives in this area, a regional reflection is needed on their importance as central elements of policies to strengthen family structures and functions.

2. Strengthening of the family as a means of preventing and resolving domestic conflicts

In the area of assistance in resolving family conflicts, there is consensus on the need to establish State and community authorities to deal with situations of domestic violence, and to strengthen institutions active in this field and reinforce their legal backing. However, very few countries reported any initiatives to raise men's awareness of the need to share household chores and child care.

In Belize, most actions to help prevent domestic conflicts are taken by non-governmental organizations. However, they enjoy legal backing by virtue of the recent Domestic Violence Act. In addition, the National Assembly of Belize will soon adopt a draft law on sexual harassment. With regard to support for victims of family violence, a Family Court has been set up and a home for battered women and children was established recently.

Bolivia's Comprehensive Family Care Programme (PIAF) is implementing a project on family legal offices to provide legal, social and psychological attention and advice to women and their families. Such offices already exist in La Paz, Cochabamba, Sucre, Santa Cruz, Potosí, Tarija and Oruro. PIAF activities also include a temporary shelter for battered women who leave their homes, and campaigns to mobilize public opinion on the problem of domestic violence.

A number of initiatives to combat family violence are under way in Brazil. One of these is the National Plan to Combat Violence against Children and Adolescents, which works closely with the ministries of justice and social welfare to protect children and young people. To fight violence against women, Brazil has established women's police stations, linked to the federal governments, in all large and medium-sized cities. To date, no government-level authorities have been established to strengthen the family and prevent domestic conflict.

Colombia has a family conflict prevention programme, sponsored by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, that promotes the establishment of parenting schools, with broad-based citizen participation. With respect to support for victims of domestic violence, two basic programmes are currently in existence: the "Family Counselling and Intervention" programme, implemented through the Institute's 190 regional centres, and the family police stations, established in 1987 under the authority of

municipal mayors' offices. These stations, of which there are now 70 throughout the country, seek to create a culture of negotiation and agreement as a mechanism for combating family violence. To help incorporate men into the care and socialization of children, the project Community Homes for the Welfare of the Family, Women and Children (FAMI) encourages fathers to become actively involved in the processes of gestation, raising and development of children up to two years of age. To that end, the organization has elaborated a series of posters and leaflets that highlight the need for men to be emotionally available to their children and to participate in family development.

Costa Rica's National Children's Foundation handles cases of domestic violence against teenage girls, although its coverage is still limited. In addition, the National Centre for Women and the Family has promoted the establishment of shelters for victims of family violence, especially women. However, the country recognizes that its institutions are not adequately equipped to solve these problems in a timely fashion, and that their budgetary resources are insufficient.

In Chile, the National Women's Service (SERNAM) established the National Programme to Prevent Family Violence in response to growing evidence that many homes were affected by this problem. The recognition of this fact led to the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Commission on Family Violence in May 1992, to study the phenomenon and propose initiatives to control it. SERNAM is also working on raising awareness of this topic and its implications among the Chilean police, since women turn first to the police to report incidents. To date, 2,800 policemen have received training. To assist abused persons, three districts of the capital have centres for victims of family violence, and four others have concluded agreements with SERNAM to establish such centres.

SERNAM has supported a draft law that would entitle fathers to take leave from employment for the birth of a child and for the illness of a child under the age of one year, as well as the use of postnatal leave in the event of the mother's death in, or as a result of, childbirth.

In El Salvador, the Office of the Attorney-General of the Republic and the Salvadorian Child Welfare Council have programmes for resolving family conflicts through counselling services and parenting courses. In addition, the Project for Training in Rural, Economic and Social Development (PROCADES), a non-governmental organization supported by the private and public sectors, has established a Child Abuse Treatment Centre (CEPREMIN). In 1989, a programme was launched to provide medical, legal and psychological services for victims of sexual aggression. To that end, clinics were set up in hospitals in the country's three largest cities.

In Grenada, only non-governmental organizations, such as the Group of Concerned Women, deal with problems of family violence and conflict. Counselling for family members in critical situations is not provided through official programmes, but by social workers on an individual basis.

Nicaragua's regional social welfare offices support and assist families in preventing internal conflict under a programme called "School for Parents", which includes therapeutic services. The Nicaraguan Women's Institute addresses the problem of battered women from a legal and socio-psychological perspective, but no specific programme on violence has been established to date. With regard to raising men's awareness of their shared obligations and responsibilities towards their children, Nicaragua reports that no progress has been made.

The Dominican Republic has no official programmes to support victims of family violence. However, in the case of children, the Paediatrics Society is supporting efforts to establish a system in children's hospitals for reporting cases of physical abuse.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has no government initiatives to prevent family conflicts. The Young Parents Empowerment Programme (YPEP), run by private institutions, addresses this problem in cooperation with the Government's social welfare department, but its human and financial resources are few. A Family Court, established in 1992, deals with victims of domestic violence.

In Venezuela, legal steps are being taken to address the topic of domestic violence. Among these is a draft partial reform of the Penal Code that would decriminalize abortion when it is justified on therapeutic and eugenic grounds, and in cases of rape. The reform also institutes penalties for abuse between partners. At the same time, the National Congress is debating a draft law against domestic and sexual violence. Programmes for the prevention and treatment of family conflicts are executed by non-governmental organizations, such as the National Foundation in Defence of Abused Children (FONDEMINA) and the Venezuelan Association for Alternative Sex Education (AVESA).

Uruguay has a Women's Defence Commissioner who works in coordination with the Ministry of the Interior. One of the goals of the National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs for 1992-1997 is to strengthen the design and implementation of support programmes for women in situations of physical and psychological emergency. The Institute also plans to sensitize and train police and judicial officials who deal with this phenomenon. Also, mechanisms such as centres for the prevention and treatment of family crises have been proposed, so that comprehensive action can be taken in all areas related to the violation of human rights within the family.

3. Programmes and actions for special cases

Almost all of the countries have programmes or actions, executed by government institutions, for families suffering from specific problems, such as those headed by women or those with members who are drug addicts, disabled or elderly with no insurance coverage. The most common initiatives are designed to support households headed by women, whose greater socio-economic vulnerability is widely recognized.

In Colombia, the Office of the Commissioner for Youth, Women and the Family sponsors the National Programme for the Strengthening of Families Headed by Women, which comprises a comprehensive package of support services for women heads of household who carry out independent economic activities. The women are offered flexible credit adjusted to their ability to pay, as well as guidance, support and opportunities for personal growth. This same office promotes two programmes for the elderly, one on quality of life and creation of employment and income through special enterprises headed by older persons, and the other consisting of a Community Support System that provides aid alternatives for families with elderly persons in their households. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute runs a Comprehensive Services for the Elderly programme, which seeks to integrate them economically and emotionally into their family units.

Costa Rica has a series of programmes to address special family problems, although their coverage is insufficient and their means inadequate, and there is an acknowledged need to readapt their concepts and working strategies to current requirements. The Coeducational Institute for Social Aid offers support programmes for families living in extreme poverty and headed by women. To treat family members

addicted to drugs, the Institute of Drugs and Drug Dependency was established in 1965 under the authority of the Ministry of Health; its functions include prevention, detoxification and rehabilitation of people with this illness. Unfortunately, its actions to date have reached only adult males with alcohol problems, and not women and juveniles. In 1990, following Costa Rica's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, alternatives were designed for treating women and girls for drug addiction. Moreover, the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) programme was initiated, and now reaches nearly 30,000 schoolchildren. There is a national council for the disabled, and a national rehabilitation and special education centre; however, the country still has no reliable diagnostic study of the dimension and severity of this problem.

Costa Rica provides for its elderly through a non-contributory pension system that pays modest amounts, but gives elderly people access to medical care free of charge. In 1991, at the initiative of the First Lady of the Republic, a programme of public housing projects was initiated, with the construction of free dwelling units for the elderly. Another care alternative is offered by day care centres for the elderly, whose coverage is regional.

Cuba's special social assistance programmes target the social groups affected, not families. They include social services for the elderly in the community, single mothers and juveniles with social difficulties, the disabled, families with members suffering from such disorders as phenylketonuria, dominant ataxia and childhood autism, and alcoholism prevention programmes.

Chile has special support programmes for women, young people and the disabled. For example, women heads of household are offered training in non-traditional occupations, given priority in the assignment of basic housing units provided by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, and offered counselling in 20 Women's Rights Information Centres (CIDEM) throughout the country. The National Institute for Youth, founded in 1990, provides services to young people with psycho-social problems. The National Disability Council, also established in 1990, addresses the growing problem of social marginalization affecting a significant number of disabled Chileans. Although Chile has not yet formulated a national policy for the elderly, it has provided, at the sectoral level, for their preferential treatment in medical offices and in access to public housing.

El Salvador's National Secretariat of Family Affairs has launched a community banking programme to support women heads of household through participation, training and community organization to carry out production activities. Thus far, 368 of these banks have been opened in the country. Other pilot projects include an open house for working street children, which provides food, health services, and psychological and occupational therapy; and the Young Mothers programme of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance, which seeks to prevent repeated pregnancies among teenage mothers, to offer them job training and to educate them on reproductive health. In the area of care for the elderly, the National Secretariat of Family Affairs supports the Salvadorian Foundation for the Elderly, which administers 32 centres nationwide serving 7,000 older adults.

In Panama, a series of support actions for women heads of household have been launched, such as the Women, Health and Development programme of the Ministry of Health, co-sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The programme seeks to enhance women's level of training. The General Department of Social Welfare of the Ministry of Labour also offers job training programmes for women with few resources, to give them opportunities for access to better jobs. The problem of drug and alcohol addiction is addressed through the National Psychiatric Hospital and the Social Security Fund's alcoholism and drug dependency programme. Services

for the disabled are offered by the Panamanian Institute for Special Rehabilitation, which works with disabled children, and by the Social Security Fund, which provides physical therapy and rehabilitation services to the disabled population in general. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare runs a selective job placement programme for disabled persons through its Employment Bureau. To address the needs of older persons without insurance coverage, the Municipality of Panama City has established a shelter for the elderly homeless. In addition, the General Department of Social Welfare of the Ministry of Labour runs a comprehensive care programme for elderly people without families or whose families cannot care for them.

For 1989-1993, the Venezuelan Government set itself the goal of addressing the needs of the most vulnerable population sectors, which were hurt by the negative impact of adjustment policies. Accordingly, plans are under way for programmes to care for the elderly, to support and promote the advancement of women, and to teach youth to make good use of free time and to avoid drug abuse.

Uruguay's National Plan of Action for Women and the Family for 1992-1997 includes programmes for teenage mothers, women heads of household, the elderly and families of disabled persons. Most of them are still in the initial and diagnostic stages. Campaigns to raise public awareness of these problems will also be carried out, and proposals will be made for improving existing modalities of addressing them.

4. Strengthening of family functions

a) Nutrition programmes for children under five and child immunization campaigns

With respect to nutrition policies for children under five and child immunization campaigns, all of the countries have long-standing programmes, generally run by ministries of health and education.

Bolivia's Ministries of Social Security and Public Health and of Public Education, together with the National Agency for Juveniles, Women and the Family (ONAMFA), are coordinating the development of three nutrition programmes (micronutrients, nutritional surveillance and national nutrition education). The Ministry of Social Security and Public Health also runs an expanded programme on immunization to reduce child morbidity and mortality and vaccine-preventable diseases.

Brazil's Ministry of Health carries out a supplementary feeding programme under which basic food baskets are distributed, a national programme to encourage breast-feeding, actions to detect specific nutritional deficiencies and the Food and Nutrition Surveillance System (SISVAN). This Ministry also conducts immunization campaigns that reach all of the country's children.

Colombia's Ministry of Public Health wages periodic child immunization campaigns. There are a number of nutrition programmes for children through preschool care centres, actions for maternal and child nutrition, community homes for children up to age seven, Community Homes for the Welfare of the Family, Women and Children (FAMI), kindergartens and foster homes.

In Costa Rica, nutrition programmes for children under 12 were begun in 1954. Since the 1970s, the Fund for Social Development and Family Allowances has operated nutrition and education centres that distribute hot meals to high-risk children and mothers, and milk to families that cannot reach the

centres. Along with the Ministry of Health, the Fund implements child immunization campaigns that attain a high level of national coverage.

Cuba, in response to the economic embargo, runs a national feeding programme to ensure good nutrition among children up to age five, who receive a litre of milk a day through Children's Circles, schools, workers' cafeterias and hospitals. Child immunization coverage is 100% in Cuba.

In Chile, all mothers and children who receive attention from the National Health Service are eligible for the National Complementary Feeding Programme. There is also a school feeding programme intended, inter alia, to prevent school absenteeism.

El Salvador's Ministry of Public Health and Welfare and Ministry of Education carry out nutritional rehabilitation and preschool and school feeding programmes. With international cooperation, broad-based child immunization campaigns with national coverage have been conducted.

In Montserrat, child health clinics in all districts of the island monitor children's growth regularly. Food demonstration programmes for parents are carried out at all the clinics, using locally-produced foods. Also, nutrition information is disseminated through radio programmes, newspapers and posters. Child immunization coverage is maintained at 100%.

Nicaragua's system for improving the nutritional status of children under age five includes children's services at the community level and in rural and urban areas, child development centres, child feeding programmes, 16 prevention centres and day-care centres. Child immunization campaigns are carried out by the Ministry of Health, together with grass-roots organizations.

The Government of Panama runs a National Food and Nutrition Programme (PRONAN) aimed at eliminating severe malnutrition among children under age five (5.6% of whom are currently affected) and reducing chronic malnutrition among schoolchildren between six and nine by over 50%. The Ministry of Health also administers a Nutritional Health Programme targeting people at risk of malnutrition. Average child immunization coverage in Panama ranges from 71% to 90% of all children.

In the Dominican Republic, maternal and child health programmes operate through the Secretariat of State for Public Health and Social Assistance. They include the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and programmes to monitor and control low birth weight, acute diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections. All of these programmes are national in scope.

In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, nutrition and immunization programmes are implemented through clinics and preschool institutions.

Venezuela's National Institute of Nutrition is in charge of formulating the State's food and nutrition policy. Its actions in the field of child nutrition include the nationwide Maternal and Child Feeding Programme (PAMI), implemented through free clinics under the authority of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, and under the aegis of the PAMI Foundation. In addition, day care centres offer nutritional services for children up to age five. The Ministry of Education currently administers the Food Fellowship Programme, designed to supplement family income.

b) National child care programmes

There is great concern in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean about broadening the coverage of national programmes that provide for child care facilities and preschool centres, especially in order to facilitate child care for working mothers and to help children living in poverty or at nutritional risk. Another influential factor is the growing recognition of the positive correlation between preschool education and subsequent performance in school, since the former helps to reduce absenteeism and drop-out rates.

Despite a multiplicity of initiatives, coverage in this area has not reached the national levels attained in most of the countries in the health field (e.g., with child immunization programmes).¹⁷

c) Home economics courses

Of the 18 countries that replied to the survey, only three said that their national school system gave home economics courses for both girls and boys. Costa Rica's third-cycle curriculum includes a course on "education for home-making" for all of the country's schoolchildren. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, home economics courses are given in the areas of food and nutrition, home management and clothing and textiles for schoolchildren between the ages of 13 and 18. In Montserrat, home economics courses are compulsory for lower secondary schoolchildren. In the rest of the countries, such courses are generally provided by non-governmental organizations, and most of the participants are girls. The low-resource population is usually targeted by these courses, most of which concern the proper handling of food in the context of health and nutrition campaigns.

IV. NATIONAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY

Preparations for the International Year of the Family are currently at very diverse stages of progress in the countries of the region, since they depend on the human and financial resources available for organizing activities related to the Year, the official appointment of State entities to take charge of them and the maintenance of contact and exchanges of information on the Year and its objectives with the United Nations system.

It is clear, however, that the growing activity observed in the region in the areas of the family, women and children is directly related to the proclamation of the Year. Most of the countries are witnessing a proliferation of seminars, studies and legal and institutional initiatives that seek to emphasize the family's priority within social policies.

1. Creation of institutional mechanisms for the observance of the International Year of the Family

Six countries¹⁸ have opted to put existing State agencies in charge of preparing for the Year, while four others¹⁹ have established special national committees or commissions, generally linked to the Office of the President of the Republic, to focus exclusively on these activities. Four other countries²⁰ are in the process of forming such bodies, two²¹ report that no initiatives have been taken in this area, and no information is available for the remaining two countries.²²

Although Belize has not yet taken steps to appoint an official commission for the Year, it is carrying out preliminary activities through non-governmental organizations.

In Bolivia, the National Agency for Juveniles, Women and the Family (ONAMFA) is responsible for coordinating activities for the Year.

Brazil has not yet defined official mechanisms for preparing for the Year.

By a 1991 decree-law, Colombia established the National Coordinating Committee for the International Year of the Family, chaired by the First Lady of the Republic and consisting of all public and international entities dealing with the family, women and children at the national level.

Costa Rica recently appointed a Technical Committee within the Office of the President of the Republic to prepare for the International Year of the Family.

In late 1991, Cuba established a National Coordinating Committee for the Year, and the Council of Ministers agreed that it should be headed by the President of the Federation of Cuban Women. The Committee consists of all public ministries that address the topic, and various grass-roots and political organizations.

Chile has designated the National Women's Service (SERNAM) as the public coordinating entity for the Year.

El Salvador is in the process of forming a National Coordinating Committee for the Year, which will be instituted by presidential decree and chaired by the First Lady of the Republic. The National Secretariat of Family Affairs will be in charge of coordination.

In Grenada, no action is known to have been taken for the establishment of official mechanisms for the observance of the Year. Montserrat is in a similar situation.

Nicaragua's National Child Protection Commission invites public and non-governmental organizations to carry out preparatory activities and to comply with the resolutions regarding the observance of the Year, and coordinates those initiatives.

Panama's President and Minister of Labour and Social Welfare are in the process of forming a National Committee for the Year.

In the Dominican Republic, the Technical Secretariat of the Office of the President is the State authority responsible for planning, promoting and coordinating actions related to the Year.

In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Population Unit of the Central Planning Division will be in charge of activities concerning the Year.

Venezuela has put the Presidential Commission for the Rights of the Child in charge of preparing for the observance of the Year.

Lastly, Uruguay's National Institute for Family and Women's Affairs, together with the Support Unit for the Office of the President, make up the National Coordinating Unit for the Year.

2. Collaboration between the Governments of the region and the United Nations system in preparing for the Year

In terms of collaboration between the Governments and the organizations of the United Nations system regarding the Year, no process of regular exchange has begun as yet, since most of the countries have not requested support, though they are contemplating this possibility for the future. Such is the case for Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Panama and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Chile reported that it had requested materials, but had not yet received a reply before completing the survey. Other countries (Argentina, Belize, Costa Rica, Grenada, Mexico and Montserrat) did not specify whether they had requested support. Four Governments (Colombia, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Uruguay) reported on cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and/or ECLAC.

3. Family-related legal reforms

The replies to the survey reported on numerous legal reforms to improve the situation of families.

Belize is currently considering draft legislation on sexual harassment, domestic violence, the right of putative fathers to apply for custody of their children, changing the term "bastard child" to "child born out of wedlock" and empowerment of social workers to help prevent acts of physical abuse in families.

Bolivia adopted a Juvenile Code in 1992, and its Congress is currently in the process of adopting major reforms to the Family Code relating to marriage, divorce, legal declaration of paternity and family assistance.

Colombia's initiatives in this regard include the recognition of common-law unions and the regime of property owned by permanent companions (Act No. 54 of 1990). In addition, the civil consequences of marriage in the Catholic Church were abolished (Act No. 25 of 1992).

Cuba's most relevant legal step was the reform of the 1976 Constitution, based on a 1990 referendum. The reform strengthens the family's role in children's education and training.

A number of reforms to family legislation have been proposed in Chile. Currently undergoing legislative formalities are draft laws on filiation, consensual unions, an alimony and child support payment system and marital annulments.

One of El Salvador's priority areas of attention in preparing for the Year is the promulgation of a new Family Code and the consolidation of a national system for comprehensive child care.

Grenada has adopted a law known as "The Child is a Child", which establishes the legal equality of all children regardless of whether they were born in or out of wedlock.

Montserrat has not initiated legal reforms in the area of the family.

In 1992, Nicaragua promulgated a new alimony and child support law, and the Department of Juvenile and Family Affairs is implementing a project called "Support for the legal framework of child and family protection laws", with technical and financial support from the Nicaraguan Social Security and Welfare Institute and UNICEF.

In Panama, initial debates on a draft Family Code are being held in the Legislative Assembly.

The Dominican Republic is revising current laws under the campaign "Legislating for the Family, Women and Children", with the participation of relevant public agencies and grass-roots organizations. The topics being addressed are regimes for consensual unions, marital regimes, biological families, foster families, guardianship and tutelage, adoption regimes and juveniles in especially difficult circumstances.

In 1992, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines established a Family Court, and will soon submit a draft law on the status of women to its Parliament.

Venezuela is still considering a draft partial reform of its penal code, which would decriminalize abortion and institute penalties for domestic abuse between partners. In 1991, an income tax reform law

was adopted to make family expenses for the care and education of family members with impediments tax-exempt.

4. Observance of the International Year of the Family and national dialogues on the family

Efforts to stimulate national dialogues on the problems of the family and the observance of the Year have already borne fruit in countries which have elaborated national strategies or plans of action on the subject, where interesting discussions are taking place in technical seminars and in academic and political circles. Chile, Colombia, Cuba and Uruguay have designed many mass programmes of activity to encourage local participation in areas concerning the family, as well as academic research projects to improve the relevant social policy and the legal situation of families and children.

Colombia has waged awareness campaigns through activities such as the First Meeting on the Family, Children and Quality of Life. In addition, community processes of reflection have begun on the building of a "culture of childhood". Work is also planned on the topic "The Right to a Family", which will emphasize the role of young people and children in the family's daily functioning.

One of the activities which Cuba has planned in relation to the Year is a vast research programme on improving family relationships and the formative role of the family, comprising eight thematic areas, including the identification of factors that generate family conflicts leading to divorce and a training programme for divorced parents on minimizing the negative effects of divorce on their children's upbringing. Another important project on Cuba's agenda for the Year is the First International Meeting on the Protection of the Family and Children, to be held in Havana in 1993.

In Chile, SERNAMEC is conducting campaigns to raise public awareness of family violence using seminars, courses and televised messages at the national and regional levels. In addition, the National Commission of Family Affairs has adopted the slogan "Listening to the Community" to acquire a real database for the elaboration of a diagnostic study of the situation of the Chilean family by the end of 1993.

Uruguay has elaborated a programme of activities for the period May 1993-December 1994, which includes research projects on the family based on national public opinion surveys, cultural competitions and activities (painting, literature, cinema) concerning family realities and ideals, and the formulation of policies and programmes to promote comprehensive family development.

5. International and regional cooperation in preparing for the International Year of the Family

The countries that replied to the survey did not indicate whether their Governments felt that international and regional cooperation had been increased and/or enhanced in the field of protecting and assisting families, pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolutions 42/134 (1987) and 43/135 (1988). However, judging by the scarcity of cooperation initiatives between United Nations organizations and the countries of the region in the context of the Year, much remains to be done in this area.

Notes

¹ See United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: forty-fourth session, Supplement No. 49 (A/44/49).

² See United Nations General Assembly, Official Records: forty-fifth session, Supplement No. 49 (A/45/49).

³ Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, El Salvador, Grenada, Mexico, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Uruguay and Venezuela. Canada, and the United States provided reference material.

⁴ On this topic, see "Cuestiones actuales de familia", National Commission on Family-related and Population Policies, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1989, pp. 21-83.

⁵ Colombia notes that owing to conflicts over responsibility for household chores, which should be only short-term, the male image in Colombia is in a process of deterioration that translates into a real process of male deterioration, while women, at very high social and personal cost, have added to their traditional domestic role that of breadwinner, organizer and decision-maker for the household. From the viewpoint of succeeding generations, this gain is significant only for their daughters. However, because of the sharp distinction between men and women, the role model for male children is a father whose identity is increasingly unclear, so that their own identity-forming processes are affected. Although the situation varies by population sector, it represents a socially significant problem.

⁶ On this topic, Mauricio García and Amalia Mauro of Ecuador's Social Planning and Study Centre (CEPLAES) have noted that roles within families are undergoing profound changes, although reflection has focused solely on the role of women and neglected the role of men. See ECLAC, *La perdurabilidad de los lazos de parentesco en la reproducción social* (LC/R.1072; LC/DEM/R.142, series A, No. 238), Santiago, Chile, 17 August 1992, p. 16.

⁷ Some of the replies analysed the problem of deteriorating family relationships as a consequence of the stringent demands which parents must satisfy to earn a living and meet the costs of maintaining a family. They also mention the excessive burden on working mothers, the lack of time to devote to children and a growing tendency to replace emotional ties with strictly functional and economic ones. Colombia's reply sums up this phenomenon by saying that family relationships tend to revolve around economic concerns, as a result of the entrenchment of market values in the community. Functional, exchange-based relationships, governed by the cost-benefit ratio, have begun to prevail in the family, displacing ties of affection, solidarity and support. Relations between parents and children are increasingly reduced to economic terms, generating unmet needs and frustrations for both.

⁸ The replies say that the number of households headed by women has grown, but do not provide statistical data on this trend. Only four countries included information on the percentage of families headed by women out of the total number of households: Colombia (20.5% in 1988), Chile (21.6% in 1992), Panama (21.5% in 1980 and 23% in 1989) and the Dominican Republic (25% in 1991).

⁹ On the social and economic vulnerability of households headed by women, see Mayra Buvinić, "The vulnerability of households headed by women: Policy questions and options for Latin America and the Caribbean", *Mujer y desarrollo* series, No. 8 (LC/L.611), Santiago, Chile, April 1991.

¹⁰ See Mayra Buvinić, *op. cit.*, p.9.

¹¹ In El Salvador's case, it is important to note that one reason for the increase in the number of households headed by women was the situation of civil war in the country and the participation of many men in the Salvadorian armed forces or in the groups that took up arms. Added to this was the flood of emigration abroad owing to this process and the repatriation of the refugee population in other Central American countries. A similar situation was observed in Nicaragua.

¹² See United Nations, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, The Role of the Family in the Development Process, The Family series, No. 2 (ST/ESA/194), New York, 1986. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.86.IV.7.

¹³ See note 4.

¹⁴ Private-sector members of the System include 68 family allowance agencies and all non-governmental organizations that carry out family-oriented activities.

¹⁵ The Commission consists of the incumbent of the federal executive branch and, as permanent members, the Ministers of Finance and Public Credit, Programming and the Budget, Commerce and Industrial Development, Agriculture and Water Resources, Urban Development and Ecology, Public Education, Health, Labour and Social Welfare, Agrarian Reform, and Fisheries, as well as the Head of the Department of the Federal District and the Directors-General of the Mexican Social Security Institute, the National Basic Commodity Corporation, the National Institute for Indigenous Affairs, the National Fund for the Development of Traditional Handicrafts, FIDEPAL, the National Commission on Arid Zones, and La Forestal.

¹⁶ One interesting conclusion reached at the Third Regional Conference on Poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago, Chile, 23-25 November 1992) was that poverty had increased markedly among workers employed in the formal labour market, contrary to the widespread belief that poverty mainly affects the population working in the informal sector. This is why the State was compelled to offset the loss of purchasing power among employed workers by supplementing family allowances with wide-ranging programmes to support the maintenance role played by families. See ECLAC, Anti-poverty activities of the Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/L.713 (Conf.82/5)), Santiago, Chile, October 1992, and Latin American poverty profiles for the early 1990s (LC/L.716(Conf.82/6)), Santiago, Chile, November 1992.

¹⁷ On this topic, see ECLAC, Anti-poverty activities..., op. cit., pp. 12-17.

¹⁸ Bolivia, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela.

¹⁹ Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba and Uruguay.

²⁰ Belize, Brazil, El Salvador and Panama.

²¹ Grenada and Montserrat.

²² Argentina and Mexico.