



International Day of Families

15 May

Secretary-General's Message for 2013

Families hold societies together, and intergenerational relationships extend this legacy over time. This year's International Day of Families is an occasion to celebrate connections among all members of the constellation that makes up a family. It is also an opportunity to reflect on how they are affected by social and economic trends – and what we can do to strengthen families in response.

Unemployment is forcing many young people, often eager for independence, to rely on their parents longer than they would have hoped. The lack of affordable and quality childcare is complicating efforts by parents in dual-earner families to combine their work and home obligations. Inadequate pensions and care for older persons demands more attention as we succeed in our goal of extending lives.

These challenges make family support more important than ever – for the young person seeking a job while living with their parents, for the grandparent who relies on their children for shelter and care, and for the many members of extended families who take on childcare responsibilities.

Around the world, family members are doing their part. They deserve support from policy-makers and decision-makers, from public institutions and private businesses.

There is a growing recognition around the world that we need to strengthen policies promoting intergenerational solidarity and support intergenerational programmes and initiatives. Evidence shows that adequate pensions and caregiver support help not only older persons but whole families. Intergenerational programmes promoting volunteering among the young and old benefit all generations. Opportunities for people of all ages to bond revitalize whole communities.

Intergenerational initiatives also address global development priorities. They counteract inequality and exclusion, encourage active citizenship and even improve public infrastructure through community-based projects.

On this International Day of Families, I call on governments, civil society, families and individuals to support initiatives that bring people together across generations toward building a healthier world for all.

Ban Ki-moon