

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES

15 May 2001

The theme for this year's International Day of Families, "Families and Volunteers: Building Social Cohesion," highlights the indispensable role that families and volunteers play in enriching and safeguarding the life of the community.

The ideals of reciprocity, service, and solidarity are embodied in the spirit of volunteerism and are at the heart of any healthy family. They are also requirements for successful civic engagement. Families and volunteers promote civic engagement by emphasising the value of altruism over egoism, strengthening social cohesion, and creating social capital.

Families and volunteers also confront challenging social environments. Volunteers tackle the exigencies of war and famine, crime and disease. By the same token, families cope with private disasters, such as illness and unemployment. Both families and volunteers seek to overcome these challenges through cooperation and mutual aid. Their good works are imbued with a sense of trust, responsibility, and duty to others. Their example helps to sustain democracy and promote peace.

By upholding these values, families and volunteers have been, and will continue to be the core components of a successful community. On this day, let us pause to reflect upon the critical role that families and volunteers play in society, and let us commit ourselves to providing them with the resources they need to continue playing these roles.