

**TENTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
**FAMILIES FACING GLOBALISATION: BUILDING STABLE MARRIAGES,**  
**NURTURING FAMILIES AND CARING COMMUNITIES**

**November 4-9, 2003.**

**CHENNAI-INDIA**

**PREAMBLE:**

01. The Tenth International Conference for the Family was held at SERFAC, under the auspices of the Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture (SERFAC) from November 4-9, 2003. This Conference which brought together 50 participants from the Countries of Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Malaysia, Philippines and Sri Lanka had a two fold purpose

i It was an International Conference to Launch the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations International Year of the Family.

ii. It was an International Conference that brought to the fore, the urgent need to take a fresh look at Marriage and Family in the context of the powerful forces of globalisation that threaten the stability of these Institutions.

2. The Conference was privileged to have Bishop Lawrence Puis Dorairaj, Auxiliary Bishop of Madras - Mylapore, India who Inaugurated the Conference and Mr Tim Schaffter, Regional Representative of UNICEF for Tamil Nadu and Kerala, India who launched the Observance of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations International Year of The Family

3. In keeping with the earlier Conferences organised by SERFAC, this Conference provided an excellent platform for persons with different religious backgrounds to meet and reflect on the theme of this conference **"Families Facing Globalisation: Building Stable Marriages, Nurturing Families and Caring Communities"**.

4. This Conference had two distinct features.

i The analysis of two major forces that have an impact on marriage and family life. I.e. Technology and Religion

ii. A positive and proactive approach in building stable marriages and healthy family life in a globalising society.

## **1. The Impact of Technology on Marriage and Family**

1.1 Technology in all its forms is one of the major factors contributing to the present situation of the family. The Conference recognised that:

1.2 A Globalised society without borders has brought about different forms of insecurity: Personal, Financial, Health, Cultural, Environmental, Political and Community. Such forms of insecurity are threats to the stability of marriage and family well-being.

1.3 The inappropriate use of Domestic, Medical, Industrial, Information and Communications technologies have profoundly and negatively impacted the quality of marriage and family relationships, interactions, coping skills and value systems.

1.4 The inappropriate use of new Information and Communications technology, such as television and the internet have become potent socializing agents capable of engendering individualism, materialism and self-centeredness, thereby weakening the foundations of marriage and family life.

1.5 Many of the factors that bring about migration are due to poverty and the need for monetary gain. It has also resulted in shifting marriage and family structures, fragmenting these Institutions and compromising the emotional well-being of couples and family members.

## **2. The Role and Influence of Religion**

2.1 Religion is a force that permeates human experience, influences culture and its interweaving attitudes, concerns, views and perspectives. The Conference recognised that:

2.2 All over Asia, Religion has a strong influence on Marriage and Family life.

2.3 In Asia the influence of Religion on family life has been shaken by many forces over the years. The most recent blow has come from globalisation and due to it the changes on the family front have been accelerated in an unprecedented way.

2.4 That every Religion in Asia fosters, and promotes love, peace, justice, sharing, compassion which are human values and embraces all the dimensions.

2.4.1 All Religions in Asia recognise that Marriage is a sacred alliance between man and

woman It is an alliance that is contractual and sacramental and is the foundation for family life.

2.4.2 That when the diversity of religious faiths, heritage, traditions and culture are followed, this strengthens faith-life and enables the counteracting of the adverse effects of globalisation.

### **3. The Power of Positive Parenting:**

3.1 Having analysed the forces that have a strong impact on Marriage and Family Life, the Conference recognised that the need of the hour is creating a nurturing environment for the members of a family. This is possible through the power of positive parenting In this context The Conference recognised:

3.2 That the environment of the family depends on the state and stability of the marriage of the parents.

3.3 That parents need to transform their mindset from just being "Providers" to being "Responsible Parents" who respect their children's uniqueness and individuality as persons

- Parents who can provide a nurturing and caring family, an atmosphere conducive to helping children grow
- That parents help to develop an integrated and wholesome personality.
- Through responsible parenting, parents balance gentleness and firmness, and children learn to develop self-esteem, respect of self and others, as well as the practice of freedom with responsibility.

3.4 Parents themselves need be role models to their children.

### **4. The Need of a Realistic and Authentic Spirituality:**

4.1 In the face of a rapidly globalising world, there is a need for a spirituality that enables marriage and family life to build on enduring relationship. A relationship that is founded on a deep and solid Humanity.

4.2 Marriage and Family Life today must develop an authentic spirituality that reaches out to everyone regardless of class gender, and social conditions.

4.3 It calls for a spirituality that responds to a universal call to wholeness of mind, body and spirit grounded on the dharma of law, life and love

4.4 Such a spirituality engenders the mutual sharing and deep commitment of man and woman to the profound union as husband and wife and their relationship with their children in order to build a strong human community that will respond to the contemporary challenges of globalisation.

## **5. The Challenge:**

5.1 The Conference awakened, enlightened and challenged us with the call that **Marriage and Family** have a unique and irreplaceable role in living up to its vocation in a globalising society.

## **6. Conclusion:**

6.1 To enhance the spirit of collaborative effort on behalf of Marriage and Family. there was the sharing of work done in the different countries represented. This sharing helped strengthen the bonds of solidarity among the participants. The participants considered appropriate to further collaborate and network with each other so as to realise common goals on behalf of Marriage and Family

6.2 In conclusion the participants of the Tenth International Conference on "**Families Facing Globalisation: Building Stable Marriages, Nurturing Families and Caring Communities**" reaffirmed with the help of The Almighty their commitment to work for the well-being of Marriage and Family in a rapidly globalising society.

## **Recommendations:**

### **1. At the Level of United Nations:**

1.1 That the Family Unit in The Department of Economic and Social Affairs be retained and equipped with adequate staff and finances to engage in its world wide work smoothly and

effectively.

1.2 That the Family Unit through its Trust fund makes available moneys for Research and Regional Conferences on The Family.

1.3 That the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary observance of the UN International Year of the Family be an impetus for the Family Life Programmes throughout the world to redouble their efforts on behalf Marriage of Family Life.

## **2. At the Level of Governments:**

2.1 Realising that the damaging effects far out number the positive effects of globalisation, we call upon all Governments in the countries of the world to safe guard families and establish a Department / Ministry for the Family.

2.2 That all policies whether with regard to finance, technology, culture, education etc. take into account the negative impacts of globalisation and thereby develop an awareness of these impacts and promote family friendly policies at national and state levels.

2.3 To influence state policy on what technologies - particularly domestic technology - are to be encouraged or dissuaded and establish guidelines that are helpful to the family.

2.4 To influence state policy or assigning a 'labour attache' to their embassies in the host countries that attract migrant unskilled labour diplomatic post should have bilateral recognition and authority.

2.5 Establish a foreign employment bureau which provides up-to-date information on immigrant labour regulations, official documentation, etc.,

2.6 Monitor high migration areas and maintain records with personal information, employment and other relevant details.

## **3. At the Universal Level of The Catholic, and Other Christian Churches:**

3.1 That every Episcopal Conference in the world establish an active Commission for the Family. Such a commission to be adequately staffed by a full time person and finances be made available for its effective, efficient and smooth functioning.

3.2 At the level of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences a full fledged Desk for

Family Affairs be set up with a full time secretary for its effective and efficient functioning

3.3 That every diocese in Asia be equipped at the earliest with a full time and full fledged programme for Marriage and Family

#### **4. To Leaders of Other Religious Faiths:**

4.1 To ensure that Marriage and Family Life are strengthened, promoted and protected through Marriage and Family Life Programmes at Institutional levels as well as through other avenues available to them.

#### **5. At the Level of Corporate Groups:**

5.1 That Corporate Sector realise that man / woman power investment in work depends on the tone and state of Family Life and therefore develop Family Friendly work hours, and work place, family friendly policies as these will in turn reward the work turn out

#### **6. To NGO's:**

6.1 To incorporate Family related Programmes in existing service programmes

6.2 To network and interlink with Family work related organisations and intensify endeavours on behalf of families

6.3 Develop new institutions if needed that are dedicated to the above process.

6.4 Network with like-minded organisations.

#### **7. To Families:**

7.1 Educate and empower the family with regard to its role and responsibilities

7.2 Equip decision makers in the family with the information needed to make an informed choice regarding technology, particularly domestic technology

7.3 Equip children and youth with the ability to critically evaluate technology for they are the future users

7.4 Review the role of existing social institutions in order to impart these skills in a structured and systematic manner

7.5 Prepare families where members have migrated or are planning to migrate regarding employment possibilities in the host country.

7.6 Create a community based agency that monitors the flow of money, and Impart financial management information and skills so that hard earned remittances are not squandered

## **8. Training of Family Life Educators:**

That persons employed in the above programmes and persons engaged in Marriage and Family Life Services be adequately trained and competent for the task For this we recommend that the Two Year Post Graduate Diploma Course that will be started by SERFAC in July 2004 be the minimum requirement for such persons who are recruited in these positions.