

OFF THE VANIER BOOKSHELF

SARA MACNAULL

In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed that year as International Year of the Family (IYF) – an observance dedicated to families, which were seen as the “basic unit of society” warranting special attention. This year provided an opportunity for citizens, governments and civil society organizations to recognize and celebrate the role that families play in the development and well-being of individuals and the societies in which they live. In May 2014, as part of the 20th anniversary celebrations for IYF, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development (UNDESA-DSPD) published *Family Futures* – a book focusing on the importance of strong families in society and activities across the globe that support and strengthen families.

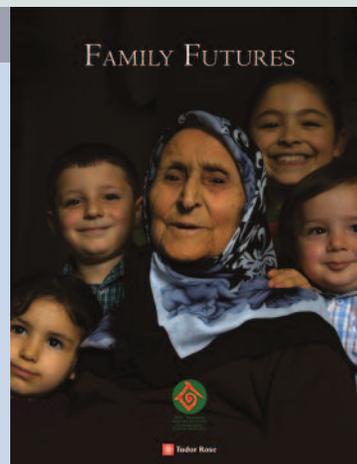
In her foreword to the book, Amina J. Mohammed, Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning, emphasizes that as the “basic economic unit in every society,” families are key to global efforts to address poverty and develop economies. The book’s chapters consist of contributions from heads of state, national government ministers, academics and civil society representatives – including the Vanier Institute of the Family. Each chapter covers three main development themes: advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity within families and communities, confronting family poverty and social exclusion, and ensuring work-family balance.

Family Futures is a highly diverse collection of writings. Some describe the rationales for focusing on the family in terms of development goals, such as the impact that intergenerational solidarity and family poverty can have on societal well-being. Others focus on the issues faced by families from particular countries and cultures and how these differing contexts can shape their experiences. Finally, some contributions provide an introduction to specific programs, policies and initiatives that have been designed to facilitate family living over the years.

Despite the diversity of the book’s contributors, the variety of countries being discussed and the range of policies and programs being described in its chapters, *Family Futures* speaks to common themes in family life.

Family Futures

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development (UNDESA-DSPD).
UK: Tudor Rose, 2014.



The contexts in which families live may vary substantially, but the overall function and importance of family is common around the world.

Regardless of their origin, families across the globe are bound by ties of care and support. Families seek stability and work to achieve well-being for themselves and the communities in which they live. Families interact with, have an impact on and are affected by social, economic and cultural forces – and these same forces are affected by the decisions these families make. The contexts in which families live may vary substantially, but the overall function and importance of family is common around the world.

Family Futures, like the International Year of the Family itself, provides an opportunity to learn about and reflect on the importance of families to us as individuals, as nations and as a global society. Studying the cultural context in which families live helps us to understand their individual and collective life, experiences, expectations and aspirations. *Family Futures* enhances our understanding by applying an international lens, demonstrating the significance of families to social and economic development. ♡

Sara MacNaull is responsible for Networks, Projects and Special Events at the Vanier Institute of the Family.



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