



Dear Viva Family and Friends around the world,

This month I want to put the spotlight on the importance of 'Family'.

**We know that children thrive when they grow up in safe, loving families.** In many networks around the world, in addition to our focus on children at risk, we are engaging with families in all sorts of ways:

- Working to stop children becoming separated from their families through abuse or neglect
- Strengthening families and encourage good parenting
- Working with economic empowerment and to improve the livelihoods of families
- Encouraging emergency care for those children temporarily separated from their families
- Helping separated children trace their families; reuniting them safely or finding alternative families through fostering and adoption.

Despite all this good work, I have been challenged by the downward spiral of 'family' in many of our cultures and societies. Many societies have moved towards short-term relationships and individualism and even then relationships are marked by violence and brokenness. As such the whole concept of family is being systematically eroded and, rather than opposing this tide of experience, focus is turning to supporting the alternatives.

**The truth is that ‘family’ is God’s design, the building block of community and the essential environment for the nurture of children.** To give children at risk ‘all that God intends’ we must have strong families.

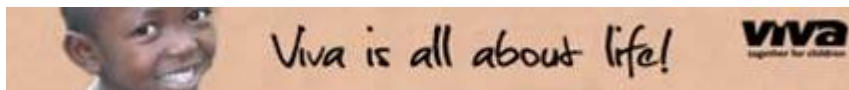
**Somehow this downward spiral has to be halted, this tide has to be stopped, and in my mind the Church has to be one of the voices speaking out – no-one else seems to be!** As networks in 22 countries, connecting 4,500 local churches, how can we start to make ourselves heard? How can we speak up for upholding the importance and value of ‘family’?

I look forward to seeing how we can work together more to nurture and protect God’s blueprint: the Family.

Blessings

Brian

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