

Let me move on to a component of our workforce which we have not treated as such -our families, and in that context, our spouses and partners.

THE FOREIGN SERVICE COMMUNITY

FOREIGN SERVICE FAMILIES OF THE FUTURE

The majority of employees, including rotational employees, will continue to have families, people whom we call "dependents". This is not a revelation. What we have to realize, however, is that if we are to have a Workforce in the Future, families, especially Foreign Service families, will have to be viewed and treated differently.

The family unit is a vital source of certainty and safety. This source of stability is especially important abroad, in uncertain, often unsafe environments. The family on post is therefore the opposite of a liability (or necessary burden) which is how, at its heart, the system treats "dependents". It is a vital contributor.

We have to stop "tolerating" and start systematically to foster the family if we are to continue to have viable employees in the field.

We will have to go beyond providing material support (FSD's) if we are to recruit the family as a key Human Resource management partner. The issue demands focussed long term attention. Here are a number of ideas to start the ball rolling.

First, we have to **ensure that we do not send families in harm's way, by not posting them when they are unprepared.**

- we have to ensure that families are ready for postings (as Nortel does with pre posting family assessments).

Second, we should work on the assumption that families with a **shared sense of values and purpose** are the best in fostering resilience in employees. **We should foster a sense of corporate purpose in which families can share. We should invest in outreach aimed at reinforcing a sense of pride among employees and their families, stressing the values we serve and the challenges we face,** i.e., regular LBP open houses for employees families, encouraging the media explore FS life, putting in place a systematic corporate speaking program in NCR school networks, to reinforce of the value of service abroad vis-à-vis the peers of employee children when they come home.

We also have to accept that **family separation** for assignments will also be a reality because of real world factors:

- 2 career families where the spouse is not mobile
- dangerous posting locations
- illness or disabilities or aged dependents in the family