

Moving alone: Preparing your family



There are different reasons why staff members go on peace keeping mission. Some go for purposes of **career development**, a **desire to work in a new culture** or **to acquire new skills**. However there is one reason why you should not go on mission and that is to run away from marital and relationship problems, running away from financial obligations and so on. Problems have the tendency of waiting on you to come back and pick off where you left. Some get worse with your departure and may put you in an embarrassing situation that is not becoming of an international civil servant.

Moving with your family requires preparation but going to a non-family duty station and leaving your family behind has its own challenges too.

Communication with spouses and family

Take time to discuss the importance of upholding your marriage and how to avoid emotional relationships by only talking with people of the same sex or to family members when in need of emotional support.

Talk honestly about loneliness and the likely temptation for both of you to seek companionship elsewhere, and try to agree on how you would handle these situations when they arise.

When the news of the departure is made known there is likely to be psychological denial of the departure, intense preparation, and anticipation of the departure. **Communication is key** and you may want to start the preparation process by talking to children and extended family members about the mission assignment. Discuss how you will communicate whether by telephone, e-mail, or letters, and how often or at what times you'll communicate. Communication upon arrival at the peace keeping mission can be extremely reassuring to family members. It helps in the development of a more realistic appreciation of the mission assignment and letting go of any unrealistic worries that preoccupied them before your departure.

It is important to set aside time to **discuss the impact of your departure on the marriage, the children, and the household**. Discuss how your spouse will take care of the load of home responsibilities alone. When both of you are willing to discuss the realities of these changes, resentment and anger are mitigated. Each one of you will experience their own emotions and it is very important to **be sensitive to each other's needs and emotions** regarding the impending departure. Honest communication needs to accommodate the discussion of both fears and anxieties.



Communication and children

Communication helps alleviate the fear of family members. When faced with the loss of a parent due to movement to take up a job at another duty station, insecurity may set in due to the loss of status and change in routine. **Talking to children** about the impending departure and allowing them to be involved in some of the preparation activities can be helpful. While on mission remember that relationships with **children need constant nurturing**. It is important that you maintain communication with them.