This article discusses the contemporary stressful situations faced by families in many parts of the developing world due to war and armed conflicts and displacement of families due to mega development projects. While it highlights that both lead to impoverishment of people, it points out that the basic differences in the situation of families facing war and armed conflicts and displacement due to development projects, and outlines a few broad contexts of counselling when working with victims of war and displaces of development projects.

**KEY WORDS:** external forces; family transition; family coping; contexts of counselling.

### INTRODUCTION

When individuals build a family much effort and preparation goes into its establishment. This preparation is done with lots of expectations, dreams and aspirations. In the moments of preparation individuals firmly believe that it will be a long-term, rather lifelong, affair. Hardly ever thoughts cross the mind that it might not be long lasting. This belief is the strength of the family. It reinforces individuals confidence in themselves and enables them to look to the future with optimism.

There are many forces external to families that exert incredible influence on them. Some of the forces are such that these render families at times, helpless, powerless, almost at the mercy of the outside world. Some of these forces are not very difficult to identify. Information technology and information explosion, market forces determining economic relationship and thereby influencing social relationship, policy decisions of the politicians and a host of such other factors are

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of serious concern to families. Before the family is through with the process of one change, other changes crowd in.

The exigencies often are such that require individuals to move out of the family (of origin) fold and venture into the outside world. Today, families having three generations living together is a rarity; two generations are more common and single-member family is becoming increasingly a reality. Mostly by circumstances, rather than by choice, the composition of families is changing. Changing also are the modes of organization and maintenance functions of families. It is therefore, unrealistic to expect families to remain as they began with.

FAMILIES TRANSITION AND FAMILY COUNSELLING

When the stable state of a family is disturbed it is obvious that the family has to respond. The disturbance may be a stimulus for positive growth or development, or it may be negative or hindering. Nonetheless, the family has to initiate a shift in a direction that will first enable it to maintain itself or to simply “survive,” and then move on to make further necessary changes to keep the growth process moving.

What does this transition signify? It may call for reorganizing the working of the family, also the working relationships within the family. Some members may move out of the family or some new members may move in. The quality of the relationships however, will depend on the dynamics that will be operating within the family.

The transition is also characterized by new kinds of demands that are made on the family. As a result, often, “role substitution” takes place. If the bread-winner father is transferred to a new posting, the mother may have to take over the functions of the father for which she may be ill-equipped. Or it may be the death of an adult who stood like a rock in the face of ups and downs and the family now finds itself rudderless in their absence. The family is required to build its new rudder and learn to depend on its own resources, strength, and wisdom.

Transition is a period whose beginning or end is not easily discernible. Just as it happens when a mother suddenly realizes that her children are no longer children and their way of life has started taking different shapes and meanings. This requires her to change her ways with them. Similarly, some challenges of life throw the family into a state which makes the family rework its existing arrangements, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. Such as when, for financial reasons, a mother who hardly ever stepped out of her home has to venture into worklife outside. The venture can throw open a new vista before her which she never before could visualize—confidence in herself that she is capable of doing so much and achieving something. Children used to the ever-present mother, now have to learn to be without her around them most of the day. Thus the family’s perception changes and the family’s organization changes also.