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FAMILY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

Interim Recommendations, 24 March 2020

The school closures across India, as part of efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, are posing new challenges to working parents. Many are struggling to fulfil both their work and family obligations due to lack of flexible work arrangements, childcare support and paid leave policies that take into consideration their care giving responsibilities.

Without support from parents, children's health, education and emotional well-being is at risk. There are concerns relating to children's protection if they are left alone or with temporary caregivers, who are not trained to take care of children.

By introducing family-friendly workplace policies and practices, your company or organisation will be in a better position to promote children's safety and wellbeing and provide systematic support to your employees. Not only do family-friendly policies pay off in healthier, better-educated children, and greater gender equality, they are linked to better workforce productivity and the ability to attract, motivate and retain employees. In addition, such policies have been found to improve employee learning and innovation due to increased self-determination and fewer work-life conflicts and stress.

Steps your company/organization can take:

1. Take the self assessment developed by UNICEF to understand to understand where the organization stands w.r.t. Family Friendly Policies. (Please check the multiple checklists for use in Annexures)
2. Update your employee profile to include the number of children by age, gender, current level of school enrolment, disabilities (if any), so you are aware of the number of children benefitting from your policies.
3. Carry out a rapid needs-assessment with parent employees and employees with care-giving responsibilities to understand if the current workplace policies and practices are meeting their needs during COVID-19 and beyond.
4. When introducing new policies, make sure all your employees know about them, feel comfortable using them, and that there are no drawbacks if employees implement them.
5. Design and implement family-friendly policies and programmes, including a governance structure, a workplan, company-wide awareness-raising and feedback channels. *(UNICEF to technically support with this process when you identify the specific policies that you would like to implement)*
6. Monitor and evaluate all family-friendly policies and delivered programmes, making continuous improvements and maximizing the positive impact *(UNICEF can technically support the organization if they would like expert technical guidance)*



Good family friendly policies and practices that your company/organization can introduce:

Category	Impact on children	Examples
<i>Family-Friendly Policies</i>		
TIME		
Parental leave (maternity and paternity)	Paid maternity leave is not only a basic labour right but also crucial to child health and development. Paid parental leave is important to allow mothers to recover from childbirth, and for parents to provide adequate care for their infants. It is also critical to promote breastfeeding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid maternity leave • Paid paternity leave • Paid parental leave • Emergency leave • Care leave
Lactation breaks	Returning to work can be a major obstacle to optimal breastfeeding practices. Lactation breaks during working hours are important means to accommodate breastfeeding or expressing of breastmilk at work. ⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding breaks during working hours (e.g., two 30-minute breaks in 8 hours of work)
Flexible working arrangements	Flexible working hours and family-friendly arrangements allow parents to balance work and family life. It allows them to spend quality time caring for their children, which is linked to (early) childhood development (e.g., preventing school dropout). ⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible working times (including teleworking, home office) • Reduced working hours (e.g., part time) • Work sharing, rotation
RESOURCES		
Employment protection and non-discrimination	Prevention of discrimination and arbitrary dismissals based on pregnancy or family responsibilities are critical to provide the social protection and income that parents need to raise their children under conditions of economic security.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment protection (e.g., protection from dismissal) • Non-discrimination (e.g., return to work under the same conditions) • Prohibition of pregnancy testing
Breastfeeding facilities and wider support	In addition to breaks during working hours, a supportive breastfeeding environment (incl. adequate facilities) enables mothers to continue exclusive or complimentary breastfeeding after returning to work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate breastfeeding rooms and facilities (including for the expression and storage of breastmilk) • Supportive breastfeeding environment (e.g., lactation counselling)
SERVICES		
Childcare support	Quality childcare is critical to help mothers return to work, support early childhood development and avoid neglect for children. It can be an important factor to prevent early school dropout, ⁸ whereas a lack of affordable, good-quality childcare can put children at risk of abuse while their parents are working. ⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer-supported childcare (on-site or near-site) • Financial support/subsidies • Collaboration with public sector • Transportation solutions • After-school care • Support for migrant worker families (e.g., summer camps)
Health and safety protections for pregnant and nursing women	Occupational health and safety for pregnant and nursing women is critical to protect the health of mothers and their children (unborn and newborn). This may include reduced working hours, protection from arduous work and prevention of exposure to harmful substances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and monitoring systems to protect pregnant and nursing mothers from engagement in arduous and unhealthy work • Reduced working hours and workload • Protection from exposure to harmful substances (e.g., pesticides)
Promoting positive parenting practices	Employers have an opportunity to raise awareness and promote positive parenting practices with, e.g., employees, customers and the wider public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for awareness and information campaigns (e.g., on breastfeeding, early childhood education, participation of fathers)
Maternal health and nutrition support	Employer-supported health and nutrition programmes, especially in countries with poor maternal health indicators, can promote working mothers' ability to bear and raise a healthy child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health services in the workplace (e.g., free ante- and post-natal check-ups) • Provision of food supplements • Awareness-raising and communication for development campaigns

Category	Impact on children	Examples
<i>Other Relevant Policies</i>		
Prevention of sexual harassment	Sexual harassment in the workplace is widespread and can affect not only the victims but also their families. Particular risks exist for adolescents and young workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and enforcement to prevent sexual harassment, abuse and discrimination in the workplace • Awareness-raising and sensitization campaigns
Adequate wages	Decent wages at levels sufficient for workers to support their families have a significant influence on parents' ability to adequately care for their children and provide a sufficient standard of living for them to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum wages that are calculated based on the needs of workers and their families • Base salaries that provide sufficient income without need for overtime work • Non-discrimination in salary levels based on, e.g., gender or migrant status
Supply chain and procurement policies	Employers can use their influence and leverage among business partners and within their supply chains to promote family-friendly policies for parents and caregivers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of family-friendly provisions into core supply chain standards, policies, contracts and supplier capacity building

The above list reflects what has been identified as potentially the most relevant policies and initiatives to contribute to positive outcomes for children. We encourage you to identify any of these that you feel you would like to initiate in company.

What is in it for your organisation?

UNICEF has identified a few key drivers for the implementation of Family Friendly Policies at the workplace. They can be categorized as:

1. Regulation and compliance;
2. Productivity, profitability and resources; and
3. Values and normative frameworks for business responsibility.

1. **Regulation and compliance:** A key driver for the introduction of family-friendly policies is compliance considerations. Compliance considerations for business encompass national legislation but may also include requirements to comply with industry standards, international certification standards, trade union agreements, as well as supplier codes of conduct.

2. **Productivity and profitability:** Businesses and business stakeholders have reported that they adopt family-friendly policies in recognition of the business case and value to the company. Many businesses are recognizing that family-friendly policies can contribute to achieving gender equality and thus business profits, by enhancing the recruitment and retention of female employees. There is increasing evidence that workers seek greater work-life balance. This is a global trend that includes women as well as men, and that holds across different age groups including millennials, as well as work contexts from manufacturing jobs to office work.¹⁸ For businesses competing for talent, offering better work-life balance and family-friendly policies can enhance competitiveness to attract labor. This is also true in labor-intensive sectors such as manufacturing and agribusiness.

While the above reflect improved productivity at an institutional level, there is also discussion of improved individual productivity from improved health, well-being and therefore, worker efficiency. Paid parental leave has been reported to increase employee morale as well as productivity, programmes for breastfeeding in the workplace have been associated with fewer sick children and parents taking less time off from work, work-life balance policies have been found to improve employee learning and innovation due to increased self-determination and fewer work-life conflicts and stress, and programmes targeting women's health have been linked to a reduction in errors made by apparel factory line workers.

3. Values and normative frameworks for business responsibility: One non-financial lever for family-friendly policies is the belief that they reinforce company values. Research shows that values can be a strong driver for business action on sustainability issues. Values may relate to a company being a 'family' oriented business, or to values of diversity and inclusion, or a company focus on human rights.

Normative frameworks, such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011, have created significant momentum among governments and the business community in relation to societal expectations for responsible business conduct. They provide a widely accepted standard for businesses in relation to their potential and actual impact vis-à-vis human rights.

Even the latest "**National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct**", released in March 2019 and subsequently the new report on the committee on Business Responsibility Reporting focus on how a rights based approach to workers and synchronization with the UN guiding principles are now a part of the annual reporting frameworks with various authorities. In December 2019, SEBI extended the BRR requirement to the top 1000 listed companies by market capitalization, from the financial year 2019-20.

As per the committee report (http://www.mca.gov.in/Ministry/pdf/BRR_11082020.pdf)

"It is significant to note that as India prepares her National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, the NGRBC and its disclosure framework will have a critical role in enabling businesses to future-proof themselves responsibly and sustainably in being responsive to their stakeholders."

UNICEF India is committed to support businesses across different value chains and sectors to adopt and implement family friendly policies. As a technical support partner to these organizations, UNICEF shall provide technical support and guidance to the early adopters of family friendly policies.

Also, in addition to the above UNICEF India shall be looking at sharing a letter of appreciation for the early adopters and FFP champions over a period of time for organizations that have been able to demonstrate results and action on implementing the global best practices of Family Friendly Policies. We shall also endeavor to showcase the work being done by the champion companies in meetings, webinars, reports and newsletters at all local, national and international levels of the organisation.

More resource links for Covid-19 in India:

<https://www.unicef.org/india/coronavirus/covid-19>

Please share with us the family friendly policies and practices your company/organization has introduced at: kdhanaraj@unicef.org (Ms. Kavitha Dhanaraj)



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Annexure 1 - SELECTING PRIORITIES FOR YOUR FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

Policy options	Priority level
Parental, maternity and paternity leave Employers can provide a range of job-protected and paid family leave options for all workers, including men and women, mothers, fathers, and adoptive and surrogate parents. Along with parental, maternity and paternity leave, this could include paid time off for childcare and eldercare (see Section 4.1).	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
Flexible work arrangements Flexible work arrangements give workers the option to choose when or where they work. Arrangements might include flex time, reduced working hours, job-sharing, telecommuting, or a temporary or permanent switch to part-time work (see Section 4.2).	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
Breastfeeding support A supportive breastfeeding environment enables exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months after a baby is born, with the option to continue as long as desired. It includes paid lactation breaks during working hours to allow mothers to breastfeed and express milk at work (see Sections 4.3 and 4.4). An ideal breastfeeding space would be private, hygienic and well-equipped (sink, refrigerator, high-quality breast pumps).	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
Childcare Employees may have a range of care needs depending on their family circumstances. Care policies can include on-site or off-site childcare or financial support to parents so that they can choose their own childcare facility; back-up care to help parents when regular childcare arrangements break down; after-school care, school-holiday programmes or holiday camps for older children; and referral services to provide parents access to high-quality, affordable, and accessible childcare (see Section 4.5). In addition, policies could apply to eldercare, particularly through resources and referrals.	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low

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Annexure 2 - CHECKLIST FOR A FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICY COMMITMENT

TABLE 2. CHECKLIST FOR A FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICY COMMITMENT	
Policy item	Suggested content
<input type="checkbox"/> Statement of commitment	<p>Declare why support for parent workers and their children is important to the company; mention, for example, corporate values, national laws and/or international human rights or labour standards.</p> <p>Describe what support the business will provide for its workers and how it will carry out this commitment.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Needs for family-friendly workplace policy and statement of equality	<p>Describe the motivation for creating this policy. Based on issues revealed during the needs assessment, give tangible examples of potential negative vs. positive impacts on children and working parents.</p> <p>As appropriate to the context, note the groups of children who are most likely to benefit from this commitment to resolve issues that negatively impact their well-being (e.g., children in migrant or displaced families, those living in isolated or disadvantaged locations). Include a statement of non-discrimination and equal treatment.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Key terms defined	<p>Define the most important terms, in particular, a child as any individual under age 18, regardless of whether the national age of majority is younger.</p> <p>For ideas on how to define the core family-friendly measures – parental leave, flexible work arrangements, protection for pregnant and nursing women, support for breastfeeding, childcare and child benefits – see the beginning of each subsection in Chapter 4.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Applicability of commitment	<p>Clarify that the commitment covers all employees and other individuals or entities acting on behalf of the company. And it applies to all aspects of the company's operations and business relationships where children and their families are potentially impacted.</p> <p>Reinforce that caring for children is everyone's responsibility and that everyone covered is required to adhere to the commitment. Explain how the family-friendly workplace policy commitment links to other company policies and procedures, for example, the code of ethical conduct.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Emphasize the value of the policy, and call for broader cooperation	<p>Reiterate the importance, value and long-term contribution of the family-friendly workplace policy, and invite all stakeholders to cooperate with and support the company's new policy.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Governance structure	<p>Name the business function (e.g., general management, human resources) or individual (high-level management) who has responsibility for implementing the commitment, and the 'corporate sponsor' or executive assigned to ensure the commitment is upheld.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> CEO or chairman of the board approval	<p>The commitment should be signed off at the highest level of the company, for example, by the CEO or the chairman of the board. Not only does the CEO's signature align with external stakeholder expectations, but it also signals to workers and business partners the commitment's importance to the company.</p>

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ANNEXURE 3 - SAMPLE MANAGEMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY 3.A BASIC INFORMATION OF WORKFORCE

Basic information on the workforce	
Question	Answer
How many workers are employed by your company?	
What is the level of gender parity in various roles?	% women to men throughout the organization _____ % women to men in senior decision-making posts _____ % women to men junior management _____ % women to men in clerical work _____ % women to men in manufacturing _____
How many workers are migrants?	Total # of migrant workers _____ # of female migrant workers _____ # of male migrant workers _____
How many workers have children? Married versus single; and (may want to consider) same-sex couples	Total # of workers with children _____ # of married workers _____ # of single workers _____
What is the average number of children per worker?	
Regarding the age distribution of workers' children, how many are there in each age group?	0–2 (breastfeeding age) _____ 3–5 (preschool) _____ 6–12 (primary school) _____ 13–15 (lower secondary) _____ 16–17 (working age ⁴⁹) _____ 18 or older (age of majority) _____

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3.B MANAGEMENT PERCEPTION OF WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

Management's perception of general challenges faced its workforce, particularly that of parent workers and pregnant workers	
Question	Answer
Do you consider it important to have gender parity in the company?	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
Do you think it is important for your workers to keep a good work-life balance?	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
Has your company ever performed a needs assessment related to work-life balance and family responsibilities?	
In your company, which workplace factors/arrangements might have a positive impact on workers' private/family life?	
In your company, which workplace factors/arrangements might have a negative impact on worker's private/family life?	
Is there any additional support provided to parent workers in your company?	
How are pregnant workers and lactating workers protected in your company?	
Do you perceive any other challenges related to family responsibilities that may face your workforce?	

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3.C MANAGEMENT PERCEPTION OF FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

Management's knowledge and perception of family-friendly policies	
Question	Answer
Does your company have a general strategy for corporate social responsibility?	
Have you ever heard of the 'family-friendly workplace' concept?	
Do you think your company is family-friendly?	
If yes, please explain why.	
Do you think it is necessary to introduce family-friendly policies/programmes in your company?	
Does your company already have family-friendly policies/programmes?	
If yes, have family-friendly practices been planned or implemented?	
If yes, does management at all levels and/or the human resources department participate in training on family-friendly practices?	
If yes, do all workers receive training on the company's family-friendly policy, programmes or benefits?	
If yes, how many employees/workers have participated in training on the company's family-friendly policy, programmes or benefits?	
How regular is this training?	
If family-friendly practices have been implemented, do you think workers are satisfied?	
Are there clear procedures on how to handle violations of your policies?	
Do you work with your business partners to ensure that they respect parent workers, pregnant workers and children's rights?	

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ANNEXURE 4 - SAMPLE SURVEY FOR ASSESSING WORKERS' NEEDS

Basic personal information	
Question	Answer
What is your gender?	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
How old are you?	
What is your marital status?	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Do you have any children?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, how many children do you have and how old are they?	# _____ age _____ # _____ age _____ # _____ age _____ # _____ age _____
Do any of your children attend a preschool or kindergarten programme? If yes, will you support your children to complete: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory primary education? Secondary education? Higher education? 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No a. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No b. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No c. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Do any of your children participate in any type of informal educational programme, e.g., community support, family tutoring?	

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Basic living needs	
Question	Answer
<p>How much do you agree with the following statement? (Select one box at right.) My household has adequate basic living facilities, e.g., running water, electricity, toilet, clean drinking water.</p> <p>If you disagree, please list what is missing below:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
<p>How much do you agree with the following statement? (Select one box at right.) My salary/income is sufficient to support my family.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree (sufficient) <input type="checkbox"/> Agree (fairly sufficient) <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree (quite insufficient) <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree (absolutely insufficient)
<p>What percentage of your family income do you spend on food per month?</p>	
<p>If you are paying rent or a mortgage, what percentage of your family income do you spend on housing per month?</p>	
<p>What percentage of your family income is particularly related to taking care of your children – education, childcare, clothing, health care – per month?</p>	
<p>On average, how much can you save up per month?</p>	
<p>Are you covered by any type of medical insurance?</p>	
<p>Are your children covered by medical insurance?</p>	
<p>How long does it take (on average) for you to commute to work daily?</p>	

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Major challenges workers face in relation to childcare and family care	
Question	Answer
Who is mainly taking care of your children?	<input type="checkbox"/> Myself <input type="checkbox"/> My spouse (wife/husband) <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparents <input type="checkbox"/> Older siblings <input type="checkbox"/> Other relatives <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: _____
Are you satisfied with the time and quality of the parental care and support you can give to your children?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very much satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Dissatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Very dissatisfied
Can you explain why you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the parental care and support you can give to your children?	
What kind of challenges do you face in terms of childcare? (Select all that apply.)	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (no child of childcare age) <input type="checkbox"/> High cost <input type="checkbox"/> Distance to home <input type="checkbox"/> Quality of caregivers <input type="checkbox"/> Concerned about safety <input type="checkbox"/> Hard to enrol <input type="checkbox"/> Opening hours <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate facilities (lack of cleanliness, space, toys, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> No challenges <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
What type of childcare support do you receive from your employer?	<input type="checkbox"/> Child-friendly spaces when school is not in session <input type="checkbox"/> After-school centre <input type="checkbox"/> Regular day care/ kindergarten <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare allowance <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Do you find the childcare support from your employer adequate?	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree

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Workers' awareness of family-friendly workplace policies and practices	
Question	Answer
<p>How much do you agree with the following statement?</p> <p>I am aware of my company's policy, practices and facilities related to a family-friendly workplace.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
<p>How much do you agree with the following statement?</p> <p>My workplace provides encouragement to employees to pursue a family-friendly working style.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
<p>How much do you agree with the following statement?</p> <p>The management values the importance of family-friendly policies and programmes.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
<p>Please select the types of family-friendly policies and practices in your workplace, checking all that apply.</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Breastfeeding facility <input type="checkbox"/> Family insurance package <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible working hours <input type="checkbox"/> Counselling programme for family issues <input type="checkbox"/> Leave benefits <input type="checkbox"/> College scholarship or loans for workers' children <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare support (room, fund, subsidy, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Eldercare support <input type="checkbox"/> Family-oriented events or programmes <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

