

BUILDING FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

A TOOLKIT FOR BUSINESS

GUIDANCE FOR FACTORIES

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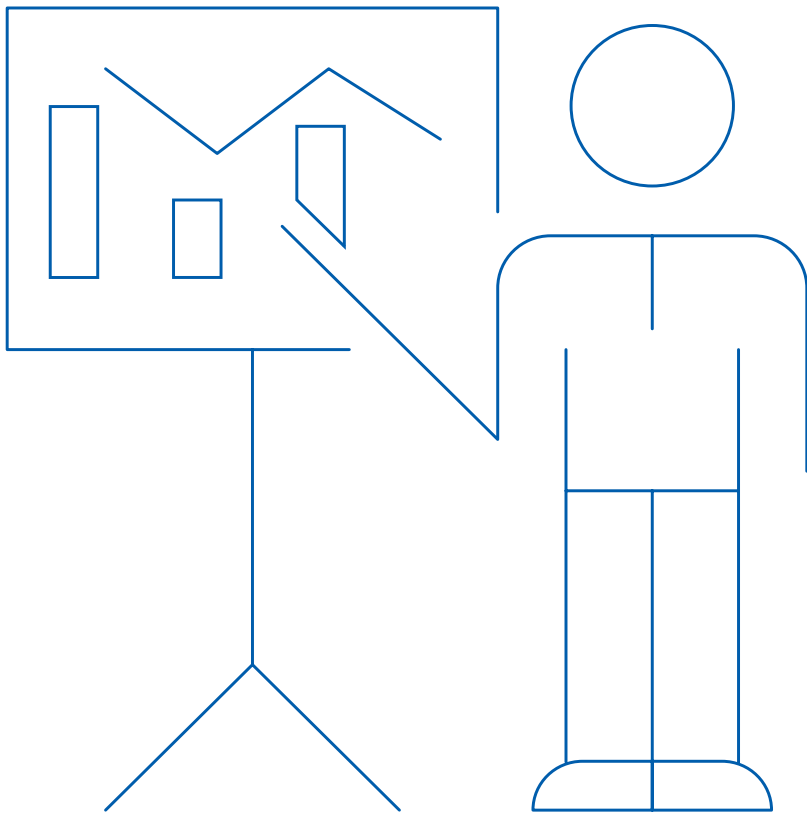
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INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT

The following section is an introduction to this document: why it exists, how to use it, and what you will find inside.

- Contents
- Introduction to the toolkit

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT .. 3

Introduction to the toolkit 5

BUSINESS CASE FOR FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES 6

Family-friendly policies and business competitiveness go hand-in-hand 7

Evidence consistently supports the business benefits of family-friendly policies 8

Companies can use key metrics to estimate the business case for family-friendly policies 10

Family-friendly policies help businesses adapt to regulatory shifts more easily 11

Companies can leverage government resources for family-friendly policies 12

Although family-friendly policies have gained traction, efforts remain insufficient and fail to ensure inclusivity in various aspects 13

Family-friendly policies directly advance the ESG agenda 14

SELF-DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT ... 15

Begin the process of change 16

Assess where you are 17

Determine your family-friendly policies maturity level 18

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDES 19

Follow a 4-step framework 20

Secure buy-in from the start 21

Design family-friendly policies that work 22



CLICK ANYWHERE ON THIS PAGE TO NAVIGATE DIRECTLY TO THE SECTION THAT IS MOST RELEVANT FOR YOU.

FACTORIES 24

Build an understanding of common challenges and pitfalls 25

Build an understanding of challenges and pitfalls specific to your company 27

Planning and developing family-friendly policies 28

Implementing family-friendly policies 40

Generating support and promoting uptake 41

Integrate with business operations 43

Engage with and influence the ecosystem 44

Measure success and improve by learning 45

ANNEX 51

State of ecosystem 52

Sample employee needs survey 55

Bibliography 56

List of technical contributors 58

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT

Despite mounting evidence, many businesses have yet to fully realise the important and strategic reasons to invest in family-friendly policies. The case is clear: data has shown time and again that businesses only stand to gain from these investments. Companies that invest in their employees' well-being see higher productivity, stronger retention especially of women, and improved bottom lines. Those that do not risk losing critical talent, and missing out on buyers, end consumers and investors who increasingly consider a company's responsible practices in their decision making.

Adopting and advocating for strong family-friendly policies positions businesses as leaders in their fields. Business leaders in family-friendly policies are better positioned to attract the best of available talent, keep up with regulatory shifts and push for standards across their industry. Businesses that go beyond implementation to actively advocate for change, often with peers, can unlock critical government resources to lower investment requirements.

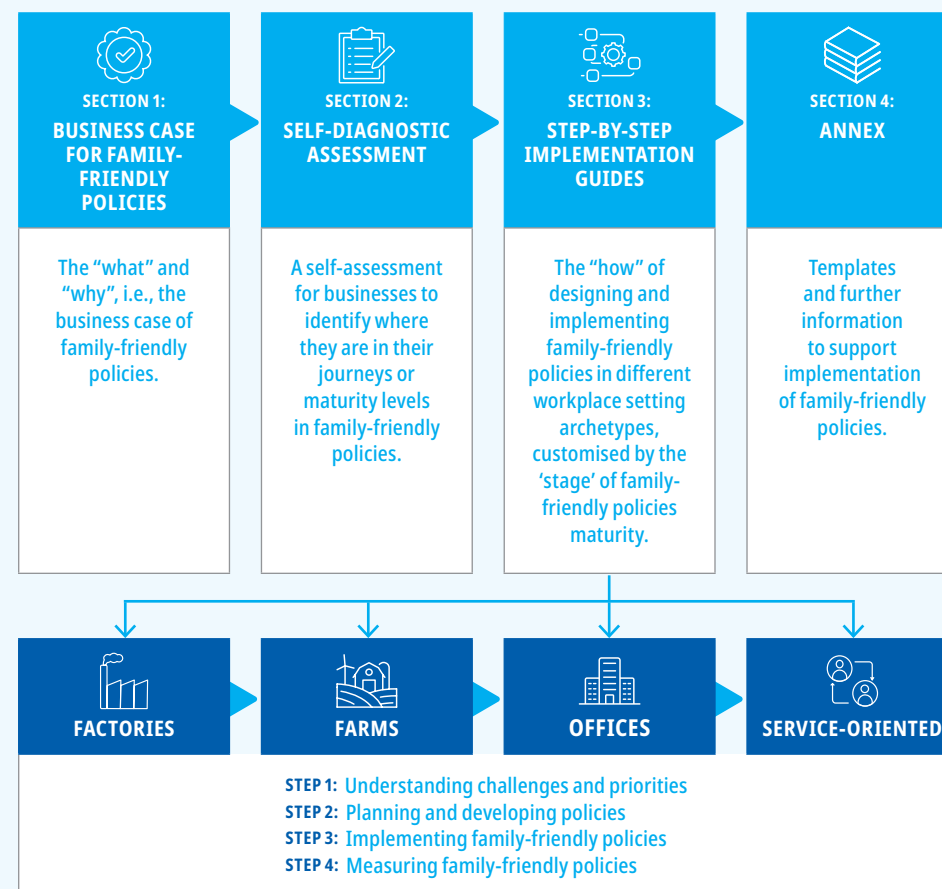
Businesses have a pivotal role to play in the broader care ecosystem. By complying with existing regulations and leading the way when standards fall short of international best practices, businesses can drive meaningful change. They have the opportunity—and responsibility—to eliminate the difficult choice millions of parents face between earning a living and nurturing their children. Such inclusive family-friendly policies extend beyond parents to all caregivers – including those who care for their spouses, siblings or parents.

This toolkit is designed to support businesses – regardless of size*, sector or stage of their journey – to implement family-friendly policies effectively. By creating workplaces and business practices that minimize risks to child development and support families and children to thrive, companies unlock their employees' full potential while contributing to healthier societies and stronger economies.

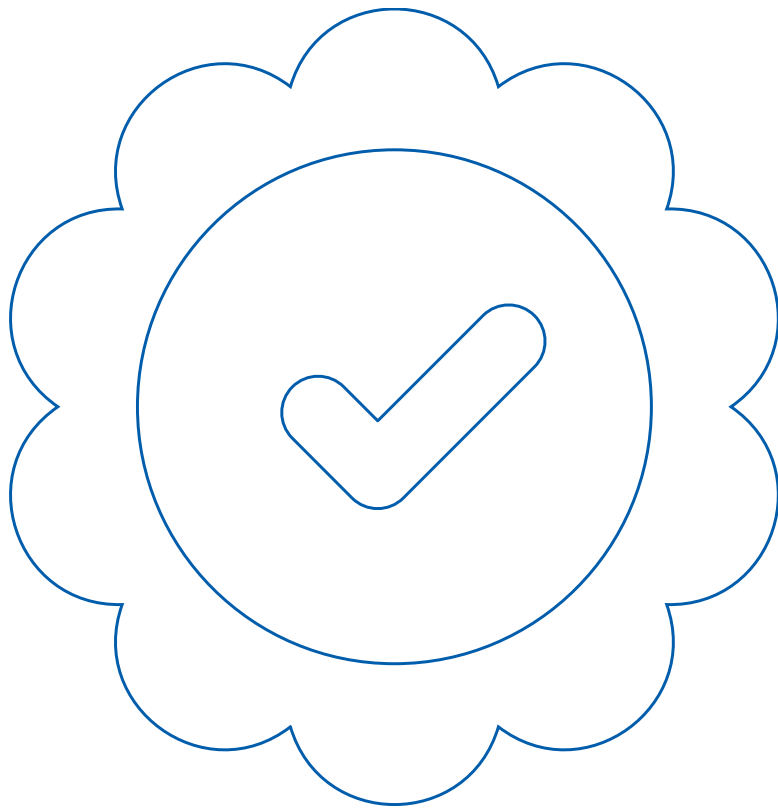
Family-friendly policies are more than the right thing to do. They are a strategic decision that pays off for businesses, families, women and children.

THIS TOOLKIT SEEKS TO HIGHLIGHT THE BUSINESS CASE FOR FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES AND PROVIDE STEP-BY-STEP GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

This is designed for businesses across all stages of their journey, including guidance for factories, farms, offices, and service-oriented (e.g., retail, education institutes, healthcare) businesses.



* The Toolkit is designed to support businesses of all sizes; however, small businesses may face structural and contextual challenges in implementing some of the recommended measures. For these businesses, the Toolkit and its recommendations may remain aspirational and as part of an ongoing journey towards driving meaningful change one step at a time.



BUSINESS CASE FOR FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

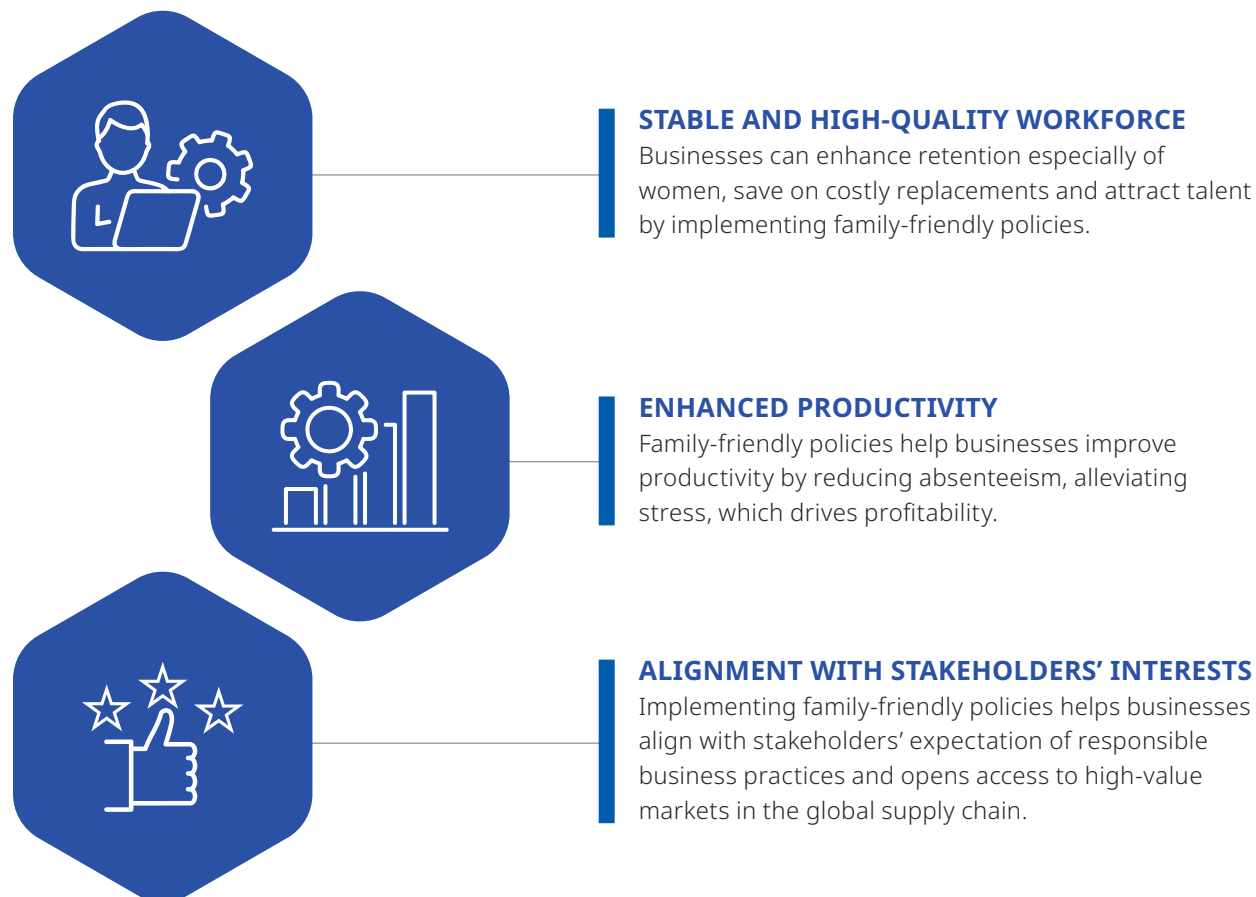
The following section highlights the business benefits of family-friendly policies, including supporting a broader Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) agenda.

- ▶ Family-friendly policies and business competitiveness go hand-in-hand
- ▶ Evidence consistently supports the business benefits of family-friendly policies
- ▶ Companies can use key metrics to estimate the business case for family-friendly policies
- ▶ Family-friendly policies help businesses adapt to regulatory shifts more easily
- ▶ Although family-friendly policies have gained traction, efforts remain insufficient and fail to ensure inclusivity in various aspects
- ▶ Family-friendly policies directly advance the ESG agenda

FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES AND BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS GO HAND-IN-HAND

Evidence consistently supports the business benefits of family-friendly policies

Why should businesses invest in family-friendly policies?



WHAT ARE FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES?

Family-friendly policies are measures and arrangements designed to help employees balance their work and family responsibilities.

UNICEF defines family-friendly policies through a child rights lens, emphasising their role in enabling workers to fulfil family duties and promote children's development.

Through these policies, the private sector contributes to supporting caregivers in managing their care burden, and in turn creating a nurturing environment for children, and ensuring their right to health, education, and wellbeing. Additionally, they minimize the unpaid care burden on adolescents, especially girls, freeing time for education and enhancing future earning potential.

The policies include:

- Paid leave
- Flexible working arrangements
- Breastfeeding support
- Affordable and quality childcare
- Protection of basic labour rights

Note: (*) In situations where children accompany their parents to the workplace or are left unattended at home by working parents, FFPs, can also contribute towards preventing and minimizing risks to children.

EVIDENCE CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTS THE BUSINESS BENEFITS OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES (1 OF 2)



STABLE AND HIGH-QUALITY WORKFORCE

Businesses can significantly enhance employee retention, especially among women, by implementing family-friendly policies that support staff during critical life stages. Women who receive paid leave are 93% more likely to return to work within 9 to 12 months after childbirth.¹ Childcare support have proven effective in increasing women's labour force participation, particularly for those with children under five years old, across both developed and developing countries.² Similar effects apply to single parents and same-sex couples, driving gender equality and better outcomes for children of all parents. Companies that offer parental leave that is accessible for all parents - including same-sex couples, parents adopting children, etc., see positive impacts on employee retention and engagement.³

Many sectors face significant labour and skill shortages, where a stable workforce is a critical growth lever for these sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare, education.⁴ Factors such as declining female labour force participation since 2020 and shifts in employee preferences for working conditions have exacerbated these shortages.⁴ Hence, **family-friendly policies can play a pivotal role in alleviating the staffing challenges** though enhancing retention of the female workforce – many of whom are skilled and seasoned workers. **Lowering turnover will save replacement costs** which can be between 20% and 400% of annual salary, depending on seniority.⁵

In addition, family-friendly policies help businesses attract talent by aligning with evolving workforce expectations.

By 2025, millennials and Generation Z will comprise of over 75% of the global workforce. These generations have a high preference for employers who prioritise flexibility and offer paid parental leave.^{5,6} In settings where labour shortages are high, such as in factories in China, the conversation on working conditions is increasingly shifting from pure compliance to labour rights to providing family-friendly policies to attract potential employees.⁷

100% maternity return rates at **Fairway Holdings in Sri Lanka** due to family-friendly policies, including a creche⁸

97% return-to-work rate at **Macquarie Group** thanks to family-friendly policies relating to parental leave, flexible working and wellbeing⁹

15-30% decrease in attrition of working mothers in **factories in Bangladesh** when applying family-friendly policies¹⁰

Source: (1) Rutgers, *Pay Matters*, 2012; (2) UNICEF, *Linking Family-Friendly Policies to Women's Economic Empowerment*, 2019; (3) U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, *Business Success and Growth Through LGBT-Inclusive Culture*, 2019. (4) ILO, *Imbalances Between Supply and Demand*, 2024; (5) UN Women, *Attracting and Retaining Talent through Inclusive Family-Friendly Policies*, 2020; (6) Deloitte, *2023 Gen Z and Millennial Survey*, 2023, (7) IFC, *The Business Case for Employer-Supported Childcare in Sri Lanka*, 2018 (7) Expert stakeholder interviews. (8) Family Friendly Workplaces, *Case Study on Macquarie Group*, 2024; (9) UNICEF, Evaluation of the *Mothers@Work Programme in the Ready-Made Garment Sector of Bangladesh*, 2023.

EVIDENCE CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTS THE BUSINESS BENEFITS OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES (2 OF 2)



ENHANCED PRODUCTIVITY

Family-friendly policies enhance productivity by reducing absenteeism and alleviating employee stress, especially for women. Research highlights a strong link between flexible schedules and lower absenteeism rates.¹ Paid parental leave has been consistently observed to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, particularly among post-natal women.² Childcare is another major stressor for workers: 40% of participants in a UK study reported productivity challenges from suboptimal childcare.³ In Rwandan tea farms, parents benefiting from childcare support had up to 34% higher productivity compared to their counterparts without childcare.⁴

Family-friendly policies also drive business outcomes such as profitability. An IFC survey in Bangladesh found that 51% of companies implementing childcare solutions experienced increased profitability.⁵

ALIGNMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS' INTERESTS

By implementing family-friendly policies, businesses align with external stakeholders' increasing expectation of responsible business practices. This can position them not just as an employer of choice but also a responsible presence in the community, potentially earning them recognitions (e.g. in Best Places to Work rankings) and brand loyalty.

For businesses active in the global supply chain, family-friendly policies are even more important as buyers in high-value markets increasingly prioritise ethical business practices such as inclusivity, women's employment, and worker well-being. Implementing family-friendly policies strengthens partner relationships, ensures compliance with evolving standards, and opens access to high-value markets that reward responsible operations.

25% decline in unplanned leave at Red Lands Roses, a floriculture business in Kenya, within a year of introducing childcare support³

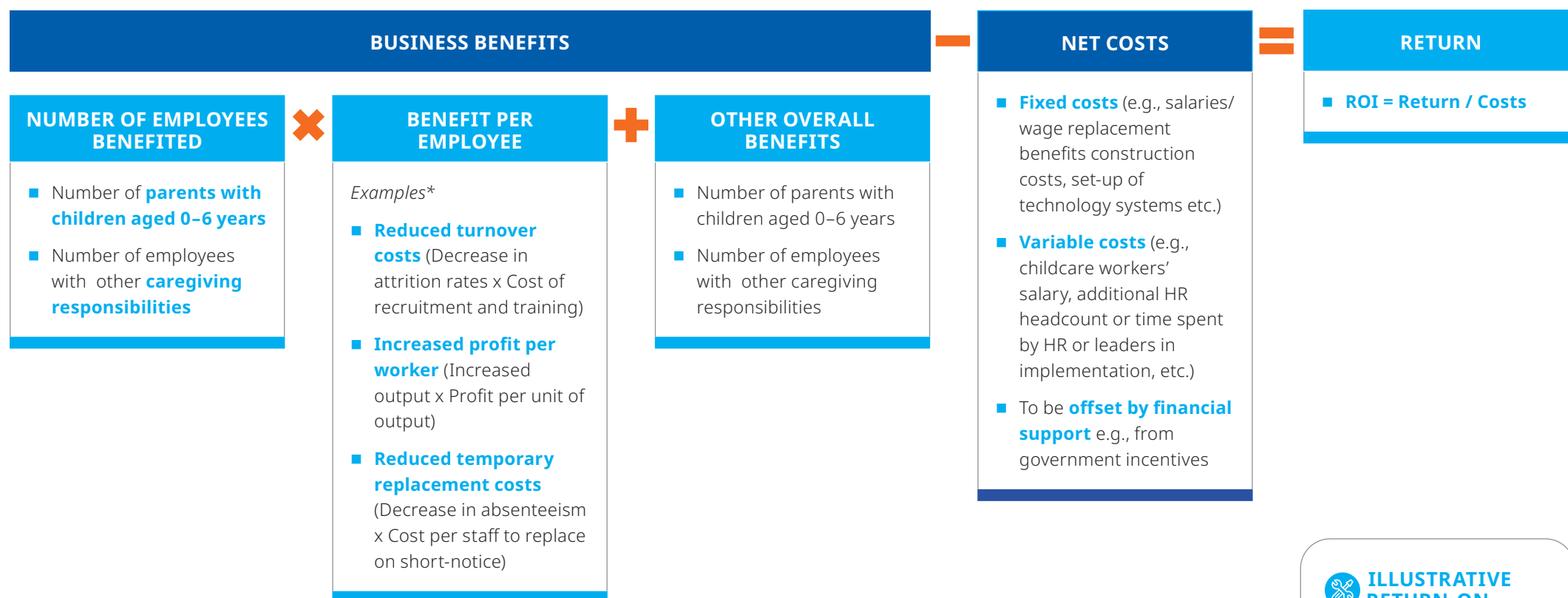
18% increase in productivity among female textile workers in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, and Viet Nam after implementing health & nutrition initiatives⁶

8.7% Net Promoter Score at Randstad thanks to the adoption of parental leave and flexible work⁷

Source: (1) Heywood, John, et al., *Schedule Flexibility, Family-Friendly Policies and Absence*, 2014; (2) UNICEF, *How Family-Friendly Policies in the Workplace Contribute to Child, Youth and Caregiver Mental Health*, 2024, (3) IFC, *Tackling Childcare: The Business Case for Employer-Supported Childcare*, 2017; (4) UNICEF, *Business Case for Employer Supported Childcare in Rwanda*, 2021 (5) IFC, *Tackling Childcare The Business Benefits and Challenges of Employer-Supported Childcare in Bangladesh*, 2019; (6) UNICEF, *Policies and Practices to Advance Decent Work in Global Supply Chains*, 2020; (7) Family Friendly Workplaces, *Case Study on Randstad*, 2024.

COMPANIES CAN USE KEY METRICS TO ESTIMATE THE BUSINESS CASE FOR FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

How businesses could estimate their return on investment (ROI)



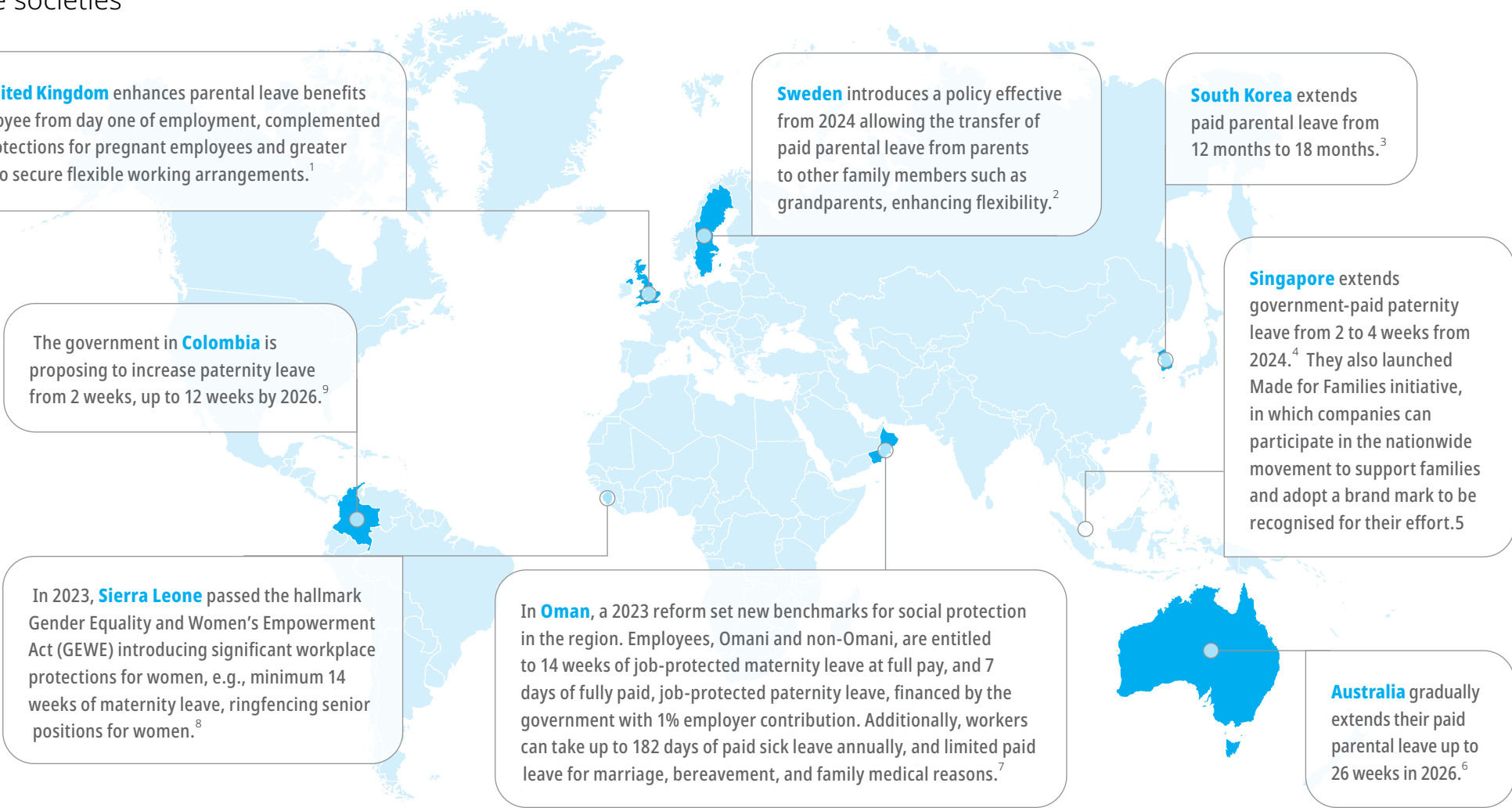
ILLUSTRATIVE RETURN-ON-INVESTMENT ANALYSIS:

+ Page 38: UNICEF, [Business Case for Employer Supported Childcare in Rwanda, 2021](#)

Note: (*) non-exhaustive, to be customized based on business and organizational context

FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES HELP BUSINESSES ADAPT TO REGULATORY SHIFTS MORE EASILY

Governments are constantly enhancing family-friendly policies and regulations in response to ageing populations and demands for inclusive societies



In 2024, the **United Kingdom** enhances parental leave benefits for every employee from day one of employment, complemented by stronger protections for pregnant employees and greater opportunities to secure flexible working arrangements.¹

Sweden introduces a policy effective from 2024 allowing the transfer of paid parental leave from parents to other family members such as grandparents, enhancing flexibility.²

South Korea extends paid parental leave from 12 months to 18 months.³

The government in **Colombia** is proposing to increase paternity leave from 2 weeks, up to 12 weeks by 2026.⁹

Singapore extends government-paid paternity leave from 2 to 4 weeks from 2024.⁴ They also launched Made for Families initiative, in which companies can participate in the nationwide movement to support families and adopt a brand mark to be recognised for their effort.⁵

In 2023, **Sierra Leone** passed the hallmark Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWE) introducing significant workplace protections for women, e.g., minimum 14 weeks of maternity leave, ringfencing senior positions for women.⁸

In **Oman**, a 2023 reform set new benchmarks for social protection in the region. Employees, Omani and non-Omani, are entitled to 14 weeks of job-protected maternity leave at full pay, and 7 days of fully paid, job-protected paternity leave, financed by the government with 1% employer contribution. Additionally, workers can take up to 182 days of paid sick leave annually, and limited paid leave for marriage, bereavement, and family medical reasons.⁷

Australia gradually extends their paid parental leave up to 26 weeks in 2026.⁶

Note: Non-exhaustive list of initiatives by governments; Source: (1) AP News, [U.K.'s New Labour Government Unveils Overhaul of Workers' Rights](#), 2024; (2) Le Monde, [Sweden Allows Grandparents to Take Parental Leave](#), 2024; (3) KBS World, [Parental Leave to Be Extended to 18 Months](#), 2024; (4) Strategy Group, [Building a Singapore Made for Families](#), 2023; (5) Made for Families, [Singapore is Made For Families](#), 2024; (6) Ministers for the Department of Social Services, [More Paid Parental Leave for Australian Families Than Ever Before](#), 2024; (7) ILO, [Far-Reaching Reforms in Oman Set New Benchmark for Social Protection in the Region](#), 2023; (8) BBC, [Sierra Leone Passes Landmark Law on Women's Rights](#), 2023; (9) ColombiaOne, [Colombia Mulls Extending Paternity Leave to 12 Weeks](#), 2024.

COMPANIES CAN LEVERAGE GOVERNMENT RESOURCES FOR FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

Given the availability of government support in some countries, it would be a missed opportunity for businesses not to leverage these resources

DIAMOND OF CARE⁵

The 'diamond of care' provides a stylized depiction of **four key stakeholders in the provision of care for children: governments, businesses, families, and civil society**. Across the globe, families often bear primary responsibility for caregiving, while other stakeholders play varying roles in supporting them – the extent and nature of this support differ from country to country. However, there is a growing demand for stronger collaboration among these actors to better assist families.

Businesses should then partner with other key actors towards building a comprehensive care ecosystem for employees and families. Together, this “diamond of care” represents **an integrated approach to advancing family-friendly policies**.

PAID LEAVE

Businesses can capitalise on publicly funded maternity and paternity leave programs, which include **co-payment mechanisms like social insurance** to reduce cost while supporting employee well-being.

In **Viet Nam**, businesses can leverage the country’s social insurance program, which provides 100% salary coverage for up to six months of maternity leave and fully covers paternity leave ranging from 5 to 14 days.¹

FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Employers can make use of **government-provided frameworks and international guidance** for implementing flexible work policies.

In the **United Kingdom**, businesses can follow a government-backed process that simplifies how employees and employers negotiate and approve flexible work arrangements.²

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

Businesses can utilise **government subsidies and guidelines** to create breastfeeding-friendly workplaces.

In **Taiwan**, employers who set up breastfeeding rooms that ensure accessibility, privacy, and basic facilities – such as seating, tables, and refrigeration – can receive a subsidy of over 600 USD under the Gender Equality in Employment Act.

AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE

While recognising that governments are responsible to drive childcare infrastructure, businesses can play a role in enabling childcare options by using **tax incentives and government-supported childcare programs**.

In **Türkiye**, employers offering crèche or daycare services for employees’ preschool children receive income tax exemptions. Alternatively, employers’ payments for external childcare services can also be tax-exempt.⁴

Source: (1) Thư Viện Pháp Luật, *Vietnamese Law on Social Insurance*, 2014; (2) Gov.UK, *Flexible working*, 2024; (3) Ministry of Justice (Taiwan), *Laws and Regulations Database*, 2024; (4) Turkish Labour Law, *Tax Exemption for Crèche and Day Care Centre Services*, 2018; (5) UNRISD, *The Political and Social Economy of Care in a Development Context: Conceptual Issues, Research Questions and Policy Options*, 2007

ALTHOUGH FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES HAVE GAINED TRACTION, EFFORTS REMAIN INSUFFICIENT AND FAIL TO ENSURE INCLUSIVITY IN VARIOUS ASPECTS

GENDER	EMPLOYMENT TYPE	INCOME	CAREGIVING NEEDS
<div><div>96% of countries guaranteeing maternity leave</div><div>52% of countries mandating paternity leave</div><div>54% of countries enforce 14+ weeks of maternal leave by ILO standards</div><div>9 DAYS as the global average duration for paternity leave</div></div> <p>Family-friendly policies have alleviated the disproportionate care burden on women. However, these are often focused on women, reinforcing traditional gender roles and often excludes LGBT+ communities if designed with a traditional family structure in mind.</p> <p>Mandating equal parental leave and fostering workplace cultures that normalize male caregiving would promote gender equality for men and women, including a shift in traditional caregiving roles.</p>	<div><div>Informal employment accounts for: 90% in low-income countries</div><div>67% in middle-income countries</div><div>18% in high-income countries</div></div> <p>Informal workers typically do not have legal access to family-friendly policies. For instance, regulations may only extend paid leave for formal workers.</p> <p>Inequitable policies that exclude informal workers can deepen economic disparities and reinforce cycles of poverty, particularly for women who dominate informal work globally.</p>	<div><div>3.5x higher access to paid family leave for the highest income group than the lowest</div><div>3x more likely for full-time workers to have access to paid leave than part-time workers</div></div> <p>Low-income and part-time workers, who stand to benefit the most from family-friendly policies, often have lower access than high-income groups.</p> <p>Lack of such policies can worsen income inequalities. For instance, lack of affordable childcare would mean that parents (often women) leave the workforce to care for their children, losing out on income potential.</p>	<div><div>15% global population live with some form of disability</div><div>1 OUT OF 10 children worldwide have some form of disability</div></div> <p>Parents of children with disabilities require tailored policies, especially as this group is not homogeneous where children may require differentiated supported.</p> <p>Inclusive policies can be extended to employees with other caregiving roles, such as for family with disabilities or elderly. Such roles are often assumed by women, and inequitable policies will further exacerbate their care burden.</p>

Source: (1) UNICEF, *Paid Parental Leave and Family-Friendly Policies*, 2019; (2) ILO, *Care At Work*, 2022; (3) HRC, *US LGBTQ Paid Leave Survey*, 2018; (4) UNICEF, *Family-Friendly Policies for Workers in the Informal Economy*, 2021; (5) BCG, *Why Paid Family Leave Is Good Business*, 2017; (6) WHO, *World Report on Disability*, 2011; (7) UNICEF, *Press Release*, 2021

FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES DIRECTLY ADVANCE THE ESG AGENDA

Implementing family-friendly policies contributes to material issues for businesses and supports the Social pillar

Environmental – Social – Governance (ESG) considerations are increasingly important for businesses



GOVERNMENTS

Globally, ESG regulations are advancing. The European Union leads with more comprehensive regulatory frameworks such as CSRD and ESRS*, while regulations in North America and Asia Pacific progress at varying speeds.¹



SUPPLY CHAIN PARTNERS/ CUSTOMERS

ESG is gaining importance in global supply chains, driven by more comprehensive regulations in high-value markets, pushing companies to ensure partners meet ESG standards.



INVESTORS

Investors are increasingly integrating ESG factors into decisions. For instance, strong ESG ratings are linked to lower capital costs.²



CONSUMERS

Consumers, led by Millennials and Gen Z, are increasingly supporting brands incorporating ESG. An analysis of 44,000 brands in the US showed that brands making ESG claims grew faster than those who did not.³

Family-friendly policies help advance the ESG agenda

Majority of the workforce comprises of individuals aged 25-54, of which 34% have at least one child under six, making family-friendly policies material to many companies.⁴

FINANCIAL MATERIALITY

- ▶ **Operational stability:** Family-friendly policies reduce workers' stress and absenteeism related to caregiving, lowering risks of operational disruptions and compromised output quality, and revenue loss or rework costs.
- ▶ **Employee retention:** Family-friendly policies reduce turnover due to childcare demands, alleviating significant replacement costs.
- ▶ **Compliance:** Effective policies help companies avoid non-compliance costs (e.g., to labour standards) and loss of market access as regulations become more stringent.

IMPACT MATERIALITY

- ▶ **Employee and children well-being:** Family-friendly policies enable caregivers to balance work and family responsibilities. Children benefit from better parental engagement, leading to improved health, education, and emotional well-being.
- ▶ **Gender equality:** These policies alleviate career interruptions for women, promote equal opportunities for professional growth and narrow the gender pay gap.
- ▶ **Labour rights:** Family-friendly policies, through ensuring living wages, safe working environments and non-discrimination, ensure that companies adhere to fair labour practices.

Note: (*) Corporate Social Responsibility Directive and European Sustainability Reporting Standards; Source: (1) ERM, [The Global Regulations Radar](#), 2024; (2) MSCI, [MSCI ESG Ratings and Cost of Capital](#), 2024; (3) McKinsey, NielsenIQ, [Consumers Care About Sustainability](#), 2024; (4) ILO, [Women With Young Children Have Much Lower Labour Force Participation Rates](#), 2024.



SELF-DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

The following section provides a diagnostic framework to help businesses assess where they stand in their journey of implementing family-friendly policies.

- ▶ Begin the process of change
- ▶ Assess where you are
- ▶ Determine your family-friendly policies maturity level

BEGIN THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

Perform a self-diagnosis of your business to identify your starting point and chart your path forward

For all businesses, every step towards implementing family-friendly policies is impactful, regardless of where they are in their journey

Implementing family-friendly policies is an ongoing journey and can come with practical challenges like budget constraints, low management buy-ins, or workplace-specific limitations. This toolkit is designed to support businesses at every stage, while ensuring that the progress is achievable. Understanding where you stand is the first step in prioritising actions that will have the most meaningful impact for your employees and your organization.

The self-assessment exercise in this section will help you:

- **Understand where your business stands in its journey in implementing family-friendly policies** – from a ‘foundational’ to an ‘advanced’ maturity level.
- **Periodically log and report on improvements** to your maturity level by gradually increasing your score.



“It is important for businesses to determine where they stand, because regardless of where they might be in their journey, there is always something to improve upon.”

- CEO, Large trade association in the manufacturing sector

COMPLETE SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

- ▶ Read the checklist of questions split across three criteria: Strategy and Commitment, Design and Implementation, and Business Reporting Capabilities.
- ▶ Based on your company’s current state, ‘tick’ mark each question in the checklist.
- ▶ Tally your ‘tick’ marks in each criteria to get three separate scores.

CATEGORISE YOUR SCORES

Based on your tally of scores, use the scoring guide to classify your performance in each criteria into:

- ▶ Low
- ▶ Medium
- ▶ High

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) indicates basic family-friendly policies to be achieved before a company can be considered a ‘Medium’ or ‘High’ in the Design and Implementation pillar.

IDENTIFY YOUR MATURITY LEVEL

Use the below framework to determine the maturity level of your business:

- ▶ **Foundational:** If you score two or more ‘Low’ ratings across the three criteria.
- ▶ **Intermediate:** If you score no more than one ‘Low’, with a ‘Medium’ or a ‘High’ in the other criteria.
- ▶ **Advanced:** If you score a ‘High’ in at least two criteria, and no ‘Low’ scores.

ASSESS WHERE YOU ARE

Use the checklist and scoring categorisation to determine your performance across three criteria.



STRATEGY AND COMMITMENT		FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION		M&E CAPABILITIES
SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST	<p>Does the company have a dedicated family-friendly policies strategy linked to its business goals (e.g., defined outcomes, theory of change)?</p> <p>Has the company communicated the family-friendly policies strategy to its staff (e.g., through meetings, documents, handbooks etc.)?</p> <p>Does the company have communication guidelines in-place, to keep all communication free from discriminatory language or imagery (e.g., avoiding gendered language, representation of diverse groups in imagery, etc.)?</p> <p>Does the company's recruitment process incorporate steps to ensure that hiring is not influenced by gender, age, family responsibilities, and other biases (e.g., standardised assessment criteria, clear job requirements, unconscious bias training)?</p> <p>Does the company consider family-friendly policies of its suppliers as part of procurement or contracting?</p> <p>Does the company organize awareness/ training sessions for its management on policies and encourage them to promote uptake among employees?</p> <p>Does the company engage or advocate with government and/ or peers to drive family-friendly policies? (e.g., knowledge sharing, consultations, lobbying, partnerships, etc.)</p>	<p>Paid leave</p> <p>Does the company offer paid parental leave in-line with legal requirements or at least 14 weeks of maternity¹ (whichever is higher)?*</p> <p>Does the company offer paid parental leave beyond legal requirements or at least 18 weeks of maternity² (whichever is higher)?</p> <p>Does the company offer equal length of leave to all (mothers, fathers, adoptive parents)?</p> <p>Does the company offer additional leave like caregiving leave or sick leave for dependents?</p> <p>Are paid leave policies accessible to all staff, including contractual and part-time?</p> <p>Flexible working arrangements</p> <p>Does the company offer flexible working to relevant staff (like flexible start/end times, hybrid work, shift swaps)?*</p> <p>Is there a clear mechanism or process for staff to request for flexible working arrangements (e.g., approval criteria, guidelines for request, appeal process)?</p> <p>Are flexible working arrangements accessible to all staff, including contractual and part-time?</p>	<p>Breastfeeding support</p> <p>Does the company provide paid breaks for breastfeeding mothers?*</p> <p>Are dedicated and private breastfeeding spaces available in the company premises?*</p> <p>Are the breastfeeding spaces equipped with additional facilities (like refrigerator, sink, etc.)?</p> <p>Are mothers educated on their breastfeeding rights and provisions, and supported by management in utilising these facilities?</p> <p>Affordable and quality childcare</p> <p>Is financial support to access childcare services offered to staff?</p> <p>Does the company provide childcare facilities?</p> <p>Are the childcare support or services applicable for children between 0-6 years old?</p> <p>Protection of basic labour rights</p> <p>Are policies in place to prevent discrimination against staff with family responsibilities?*</p> <p>Does the company offer health and safety protections for pregnant and nursing women?*</p> <p>Does the company offer health insurance that includes family coverage and dependents?</p> <p>Does the company access government incentives or support to implement family-friendly policies?</p>	<p>Does the company have surveys or tools to track the usage and staff satisfaction of key family-friendly policies regularly?</p> <p>Does the company have accountability mechanisms to ensure that employee feedback are addressed (e.g., revision in policy, response from management)?</p> <p>Does the company have a grievance mechanism, and does it review cases to identify concerns with implementation of family-friendly policies?</p> <p>Does the company monitor the impact of its family-friendly policies (e.g., staff retention rates post-parental leave)?</p> <p>Is the data disaggregated (by gender, age, family responsibilities, etc.) when measuring the impact of family-friendly policies?</p> <p>Does the company conduct an analysis of the reasons for termination of an employment relationship, ensuring that it is not based on gender, family responsibilities or disability?</p> <p>Do teams responsible for evaluating and monitoring family-friendly policies include diverse archetypes of people, including employees of different seniorities, genders, family status?</p> <p>Does the company report on metrics related to family-friendly policies in line with international standards (e.g., GRI)?</p>
	SCORING	<div><div></div><div>TOTAL Low: 2 or less questions ticked Medium: 3 to 4 questions ticked High: 5 or more questions ticked</div></div>	<div><div></div><div>TOTAL Low: 7 or less questions marked with a tick Medium: 8 to 12 questions marked with a tick, including all questions marked with a * High: 13 or more questions marked with a tick, including all questions marked with a *</div></div>	<div><div></div><div>TOTAL Low: 2 or less questions ticked Medium: 3 to 4 questions ticked High: 5 or more questions ticked</div></div>

Source: Based on the [Empresas Que Cuidan \(ECU\)](#) diagnosis tool created by UNICEF; (1) ILO, [Maternity Protection Convention \(No. 183\)](#), 2000; (2) ILO, [Maternity Protection Recommendation \(No. 191\)](#), 2000.

DETERMINE YOUR FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES MATURITY LEVEL

Use the following framework to categorise your company's performance

Ready to take action?

Look for **'Foundational', 'Intermediate' and 'Advanced' labels in the following sections** to find the most relevant recommendations.

WHERE DO YOU STAND IN YOUR FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES JOURNEY?



LEVEL I FOUNDATIONAL

You scored 'Low' in at least two out of the three criteria.

Your company is in the initial stages of implementing family-friendly policies. Basic policies, if present, meet legal requirements but can be improved through integration with organizational strategy or systematic tracking.



LEVEL II INTERMEDIATE

You scored no more than one 'Low' and a 'Medium' or 'High' in the remaining two criteria.

Your company has established basic policies aligned with its business goals and is likely beginning to track their impact systematically. Some policies might extend beyond minimum compliance requirements and the leadership promotes family-friendly policies within the organization.



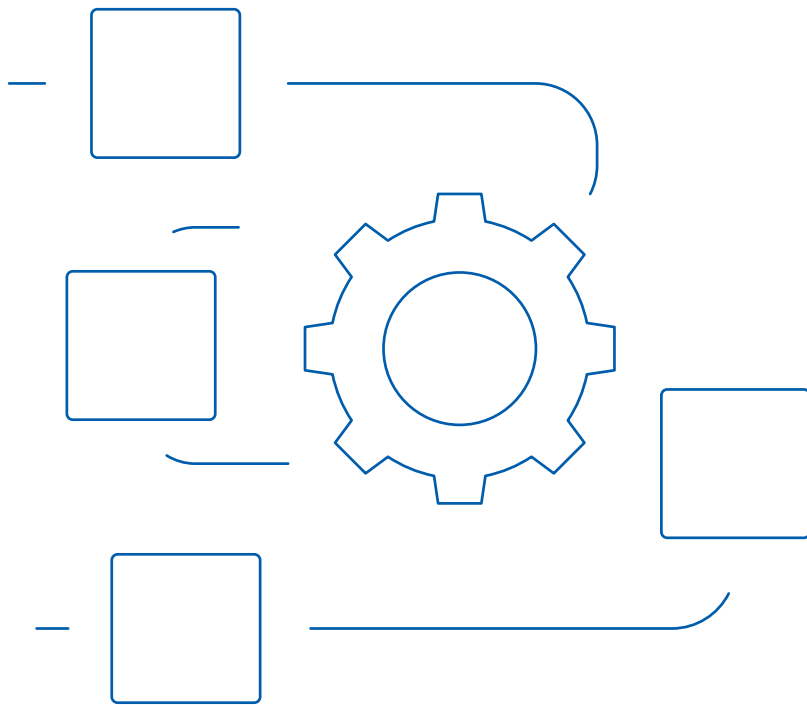
LEVEL III ADVANCED

You scored a 'High' in at least two criteria, and no 'Low' scores.

Your company is a leader in implementing comprehensive family-friendly policies. Policies are refined based on feedback of employees, and you are starting to play an advocacy role. The organization could further benefit from deepening the quality of its policies and driving external communications.



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IMPLEMENTATION GUIDES

The following section offers step-by-step guidance customized for the factory as a workplace archetype.

- ▶ Follow a 4-step framework
- ▶ Secure buy-in from the start
- ▶ Design family-friendly policies that work

FOLLOW A 4-STEP FRAMEWORK

Adopt a continuous loop of designing, implementing, measuring, and refining to ensure effectiveness

Each guide follows a 4-step process to guide you in advancing your family-friendly policies journey.

STEP	UNDERSTANDING CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES	PLANNING AND DEVELOPING POLICIES	IMPLEMENTING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES	MEASURING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES
KEY OBJECTIVE	Build an understanding of workplace-specific needs, barriers, and priority areas for action.	Develop practical, context-appropriate policies that align with your organizational capabilities.	Ensure adoption and uptake across the organization.	Track effectiveness of family-friendly policies in achieving business goals.
DESCRIPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Identify barriers to implementation within your industry, from structural constraints to cultural factors.■ Gain insights into your company's unique challenges in supporting a family friendly working environment.■ Learn how to assess your employees' needs and priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Develop recommendations across family-friendly policies based on workplace insights.■ Develop policies that align with your available resources and operational realities.■ Find practical guidance for creating ambitious yet achievable policies, regardless of where you are in your family-friendly policies journey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Push uptake of family-friendly policies by developing tailored communication approaches to persuade diverse stakeholder groups, encouraging awareness and adoption.■ Develop systems and processes to support implementation of policies.■ Leverage advocacy to champion best practices and communicate broader ESG goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Understand the importance and key considerations in business reporting.■ Learn to track policy effectiveness through metrics to assess outputs and outcomes.

SECURE BUY-IN FROM THE START

Identify and engage stakeholders for buy-in and support early on to ensure effective design and implementation

Leadership support is central to successful implementation of family-friendly policies. However, in large and complex organizations, buy-in from other key stakeholders across subsidiaries, geographies and functions is critical for effectiveness.

IDENTIFY THE RIGHT STAKEHOLDERS

Often in large and complex organizations, decision making may be decentralised across stakeholders to varied degrees. Consider the right parties to engage early on:

- **Leadership:** Beyond senior leadership (e.g., Board, C-Suite, global leadership), decision making power may rest with country or business heads.
- **HR teams/ Policy owners:** Family-friendly policy owners may be decentralised across HR teams, which may be decentralised by brands, functions, or countries.
- **Budget owners:** Consider where budget for implementation of family-friendly policies may be from – e.g., a centralised budget or spread across countries or departments.
- **Employee unions/ associations:** Engage local employee unions or associations from an early stage to secure grassroots support for policy implementation and evaluation.

FRAME THE BUSINESS CASE

In engaging these stakeholders, consider how best to build the business case:

- **What benefits would most speak to them** (e.g., retention, productivity, talent attraction, leadership pipeline)?
- **How is this balanced with potential costs** (e.g., salary costs of employees on parental leave, time investment, costs of childcare setup)?
- **What evidence would be most compelling** (e.g., industry-specific case studies or benchmarks, metrics from peer organizations, existing feedback from employees*)?

DRIVE ALIGNMENT ACROSS TEAMS

Each stakeholder may have different levels of ambitions or priorities for family-friendly policies. Consider how you can drive alignment:

- **What are key principles or constraints** in selecting the 'right' set of family-friendly policies (e.g., maximising number of employees benefited, alignment across global policies, set budgets)?
- **What are legal and industry benchmarks** that may apply to different geographies, and what level of ambition does the organization want to achieve vis-à-vis these (e.g., in line with standards, to act as industry leaders)?

Note: (*) Refer to Step 1 in the workplace guides on more information on how companies can assess employee needs in more depth.

DESIGN FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES THAT WORK

Ensure you think about three principles when designing policies for your business

Family-friendly policies should not only meet immediate worker needs but also promote equity, long-term viability, and adaptability.

WHAT SHOULD GOOD FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES LOOK LIKE?



ARE THE POLICIES INCLUSIVE?

Ensure policies are accessible to all employees, regardless of employment status, role or diverse caregiving needs.

- Are policies accessible to employees across roles (full-time, part-time, contract, and seasonal workers)?
- Are they accessible to everyone regardless of gender or family structure, including same-sex couples, single parents, and adoptive families?
- Do policies support women employees in care roles while simultaneously engaging men?
- Are they responsive to diverse care-giving needs such as relating to children with disabilities or elderly dependents?
- Do they consider barriers faced by marginalised groups (e.g., migrant workers or low-income employees)?



ARE THE POLICIES SUSTAINABLE?

Ensure policies are viable and aligned with the organization's long-term goals.

- Do the policies balance employee benefits with operational feasibility?
- Are mechanisms in place to periodically review and improve policy effectiveness?
- Do the policies accommodate changing workforce demographics or evolving needs?
- Are resources (financial, time, infrastructure) allocated to maintain the policies long term considering the potential cost outlay?



ARE THE POLICIES FLEXIBLE?

Ensure policies adapt to varying needs by integrating flexibility into implementation and design.

- Can employees customise aspects of the policies to suit their unique caregiving needs?
- Are there mechanisms to address urgent or unforeseen circumstances (like emergencies)?
- Are there tools (e.g., digital platforms or flexible leave trackers) integrated to simplify adoption?

DESIGN FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES THAT WORK

Ensure you think about three principles when designing policies for your business

Family-friendly policies should not only meet immediate worker needs but also promote equity, long-term viability, and adaptability.

WHAT SHOULD GOOD FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES LOOK LIKE?



WHAT EXISTING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT CAN MY COMPANY LEVERAGE?

- What kind of government support can my company tap on (e.g., subsidies, incentives, paid parental leave*), or should ensure employees are aware of?
- Is there existing childcare infrastructure nearby? How can the government be engaged to drive more support?
- Are there other businesses in proximity I can partner with to provide childcare solutions?



WHAT CULTURAL OR SOCIAL NORMS DO WE NEED TO BE AWARE OF?

- What are cultural expectations around who should be the primary and non-primary caregivers**?
- Do most employees live with or near extended family that can support childcare?
- What kind of beliefs do employees have about breastfeeding (e.g., preference for exclusive breastfeeding vs. expressing, preference for breastfeeding vs. formula milk)? How can more employees be supported in breastfeeding if they wish to?
- How socially acceptable is it for fathers to utilise family-friendly policies (e.g., use parental leave/flexible work arrangements)? How can more fathers be incentivised to utilise such policies?



WHAT IS THE STATE OF PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE?

- What kind of transportation do employees use to arrive at the workplace? Are such transport child-friendly, if parents are accessing childcare at or near your workplace?
- Do employees have access to stable internet connection and required equipment (e.g., laptops) at home?

Note: (*) In countries where there is government support for long maternity leave (e.g., more than 6 months), family-friendly policies such as breastfeeding support may not be as high priority to address. (**) In many countries, there are strong social norms towards mothers as primary caregivers. However, this may not be the case for all families, where fathers or other close family members may act as primary caregivers, including in same-sex partnerships and in single-parent families.



FACTORIES



BUILD AN UNDERSTANDING OF COMMON CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS (1 OF 2)



Understanding the common landscape of challenges and pitfalls faced by factories is crucial for companies to benchmark their performance against peers and identify blind spots.

Factories present distinct operational patterns and workforce demographics that make family-friendly policies not just socially important, but also business-critical. For instance, **women represent 30%¹ of the manufacturing workforce globally, with many of reproductive age, making the implementation of family-friendly policies a business necessity.** Designing good policies to drive employee wellbeing supports quality of output and minimises rework costs.



With production-driven schedules, physically demanding environments, and diverse workforce needs, factories face a broad set of challenges.

The lack of or underutilisation of **reliable childcare and appropriate flexible working arrangements** are a **leading cause of attrition** in factories, particularly for women. Factories looking to improve workforce retention and operational efficiency should therefore address this as a key priority. If implemented adequately, these policies help workers balance caregiving responsibilities while maintaining productivity.



“Most factories lack context-specific understanding of the common barriers prevalent in their industries and how to address them effectively within their operational constraints.”

- Gender expert,
Large Multilateral

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

▶ Nature of operations

Production schedules and shift work

- Factories often operate around the clock with fixed production schedules and shifts, complicating flexible working arrangements, breastfeeding support and paid leave. For example, line managers struggle to coordinate breastfeeding breaks while maintaining production targets, and long commuting hours, especially in industrial zones, limit family time for workers. Production also requires in-person presence, limiting options for how factories think about flexible working arrangements.
- Well-designed coverage systems and operational adjustments have witnessed improved workforce stability and productivity.

Physical infrastructure and space limitations

- Manufacturing environments must balance safety requirements with worker support facilities. Despite legal requirements in some regions, factories struggle to provide adequate childcare facilities due to limited available space in factory layouts, poor access to community services due to remote locations and safety considerations of constructing on-site breastfeeding or childcare facilities.
 - Innovative solutions like, partnerships and shared facilities can mitigate these challenges, and have proven to be successful.
- (continued on next page)

Source: (1) Workforce, [More Women Join the Manufacturing Workforce](#), 2023; Expert stakeholder interviews.

BUILD AN UNDERSTANDING OF COMMON CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS (2 OF 2)



KEY CONSIDERATIONS *(continued)*

Nature of operations *(continued)*

Physical risks and hazards

- Factory workers are exposed to physically intensive and potentially hazardous work (e.g., use of heavy machinery or chemicals), where special provisions need to be taken for pregnant and lactating women. This could bring about operational challenges in managing workloads and shifts.
- Integrated planning can effectively maintain both safety and support.

Workforce composition and needs

Proportion of migrant workers

- A significant proportion of factory workers are internal or international migrants (e.g., 70% in China, 85% in Bangladesh garment factories), who would have differing needs for childcare and breastfeeding support compared to locally-based workers.¹
- Flexible working arrangements or leave policies can help address their unique needs, such as balancing family commitments with work.

Nature of contract

- Factories often employ contractual and temporary staff in large numbers, where government resources and protections may not apply to all workers, requiring additional resources from companies to extend similar benefits to everyone. Unstable contracts, coupled with low pay for low-skilled roles can leave workers struggling to afford childcare.
- Successful implementations often start with permanent workers and systematically expand coverage.

Gender mix

- While in many sectors (e.g., garment, apparel) women make up majority of the workforce, male-dominated sectors e.g, electronics or automobile manufacturing may see increased challenges in driving acceptance and uptake of family-friendly policies.

Access to amenities

Location challenges

- Industrial zones often lack proximity to essential services, particularly impacting workers with care responsibilities. Some locations may have limited existing support infrastructure including transportation services. Further, catering to the individual needs of each factory (e.g., by opening an on-site childcare facility at a factory, operating transportation services) significantly increases the cost burden on companies.
- Collaborative models, including partnerships with local governments or NGOs, can help bridge this gap.



In factories, thoughtfully designed family-friendly policies not only support workers' wellbeing but also enhance operational stability through better retention, reduced absenteeism, and sustained productivity.

Source: (1) Boudreau, L., et al, *Migrants, Experience, and Working Conditions in Bangladeshi Garment Factories*, 2024; Expert stakeholder interviews.

BUILD AN UNDERSTANDING OF CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS SPECIFIC TO YOUR COMPANY

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4



To effectively implement family-friendly policies in factories, it's essential to tailor strategies to your company's specific circumstances.

Companies must assess their specific situation through three lenses: employee needs, industry benchmarks and business objectives.

ASSESS EMPLOYEE NEEDS

Identify family-related challenges and priorities of factory workers to inform relevant and impactful policies by:

- **Conducting employee surveys:** Use targeted questions to uncover nuanced worker needs across different family-friendly policies.
- **Holding focus groups:** Create safe spaces for workers to share their experiences and concerns.
- **Analyse feedback by demographics:** Disaggregate responses by gender, age, and marital status to identify specific trends.

Communicate early and consistently about how employee feedback informs policy design.

RESOURCES

- + Consider collaborating with trade associations/other local organizations for the needs assessment (e.g., [Ethical Supply Chain Program's Family Friendly Factory Program](#))
- + [Better Work's Global Compliance Assessment Tool \(CAT\)](#)
- + [Page 15: Better Work \(2022\), Mothers@Work Report](#)
- + [Page 37: UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office \(2020\), Family-Friendly Policies: Handbook for Businesses](#)
- + See [Annex](#) for a sample version of a short employee survey, to be customised to your own needs

BENCHMARK ECOSYSTEM AND INDUSTRY STANDARDS

Evaluate your practices against the ecosystem and industry standards and identify gaps for improvement by:

- **Researching industry practices:** Use publicly available resources to benchmark your factory's policies against regional standards or peers with similar size, revenue and workforce composition.
- **Assessing legal compliance and state of ecosystem:** Review local labour laws on maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks, and childcare provisions; and country-specific factors, like availability of care, cultural norms and infrastructure.
- **Leveraging buyer requirements:** Align policy efforts with buyer codes of conduct.

RESOURCES

- + Refer to the list of questions in the [Annex](#) to assess the state of ecosystem: (1) community resources, (2) social and cultural norms and (3) physical and digital infrastructure
- + Page 44: UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (2020), Family-Friendly Policies: Handbook for Businesses

ALIGN POLICIES WITH BUSINESS GOALS

Connect implementation to organizational objectives such as retention, productivity, and compliance by:

- **Aligning policies with your company's strategic goals:** Map out how implementing specific policies leads to desired business outcomes.
- **Setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Establish metrics to monitor the impact of specific policies on business performance.
- **Determining tangible benefits:** Use data and success stories to demonstrate the return on investment and tangible benefits of family-friendly policies.

RESOURCES

- + Page 72: IFC, Tackling Childcare: A Guide For Employer-supported Childcare (2019)
- + Page 80: UNFPA (2023), Family Friendly Workplace Model

PLANNING AND DEVELOPING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

This toolkit covers five policy areas that support workers throughout their parenting journey, from pregnancy to their children's early development.

In factory settings, these policies require specific considerations due to the unique nature of manufacturing environments:

PAID LEAVE

- Job protected paid leave of absence for working women and men, typically starting just before the time of childbirth (or adoption in some countries).
- Includes paid maternity leave, paid paternity leave, and parental leave.

- In a factory setting, paid leaves especially mitigate physical demands of labour-intensive work during pregnancy and promote recovery.

FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

- Provides employees flexibility to better balance work and personal responsibilities.
- Includes options such as staggered shifts, compressed workweeks, part-time arrangements, and, where feasible, remote work for administrative roles.

- While hybrid/remote work might not be the most relevant in a production environment, flexibility in shifts can help reduce absenteeism.

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

- Includes remunerated breastfeeding, lactation breaks during working hours and dedicated breastfeeding spaces.
- Facilities such as lactation rooms should ensure privacy, hygiene, and proximity to the workplace.

- Breastfeeding support would need to consider the challenges of rigid schedules and lack of appropriate spaces.

AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE

- Ensures access to affordable childcare services, including before- and after-school care.
- Can include partnerships with local childcare providers or on-site childcare facilities.
- Supports working parents, reduces absenteeism, and enhances productivity.

- A necessity in factories due to a typical lack of or limited options of childcare facilities in industrial zones; childcare hours may also need to align with extended hours (e.g., night shifts).

PROTECTION OF BASIC LABOUR RIGHTS

- Includes benefits like child grants, insurance schemes, and access to health services.
- Facilitate access to national social security schemes, e.g., pensions.
- Ensures basic financial stability for workers and their families.

- These policies can bridge gaps in access to national social protection systems, especially among migrant workers.



THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS CONTAIN DETAILED GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTING EACH OF THESE FIVE POLICY AREAS, WITH SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS TAILORED TO YOUR COMPANY'S MATURITY LEVEL, PRACTICAL EXAMPLES AND CASE STUDIES OF SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION, AND BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE ADOPTION.



Source: UNICEF, Family-Friendly Policies: A Policy Brief, 2019.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES



Based on the outcome of the self-diagnostic assessment, consider these policy recommendations.

These recommendations are suggestive, not prescriptive, and based on industry best practices and expert insights. Please defer to higher legal requirements (if any apply to your company context).

While we offer stage-based recommendations we encourage you to adopt policies that fit your context—any step, no matter how small, can drive meaningful change.

		FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
PAID LEAVE	PAID LEAVE	Companies can begin with minimum leave policies required by law or ILO standards and gradually extend paid leave duration, expand coverage to more workers, and increase flexibility of leave terms. Compensation during paid leave should, at a minimum, comply with local regulations.		
FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS	MATERNITY LEAVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide at least 14 weeks paid leave (ILO minimum standard) to both permanent and long-term contract workers, even in locations without legal requirements.Ensure job protection and return-to-work guarantee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Extend paid leave duration to at least 18 weeks (ILO recommended standard).Include pre-birth leave flexibility for physically demanding roles and offer gradual return-to-work options with modified duties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide gender-neutral policies, e.g., 18 weeks or more of paid leave for both primary and non-primary caregivers.Include special provisions for multiple births or complications and offer extensions to parents of children with disabilities.
BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT	PATERNITY LEAVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Introduce basic paid leave of 2 weeks (global average is 9 days) for fathers or non-primary caregivers, even in locations where it is not mandated by law.Ensure job protection and return-to-work guarantee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide at least 4 weeks of paid leave to fathers or non-primary caregivers.Extend coverage to both permanent and long-term contract workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Childcare leave policies: Introduce policies for adoption leaves and childbirth leave for surrogates.
PROTECTION OF BASIC/AFFORDABLE AND LABOUR RIGHTS: QUALITY CHILDCARE	OTHER LEAVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sick and emergency leave: Extend coverage to both permanent and long-term contract workers.Caregiving leave: Introduce 5-10 days annual leave for all caregivers (e.g., children or elderly parents).Offer leave extensions for children with disabilities or special needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sick and emergency leave: Extend coverage to both permanent and long-term contract workers.Caregiving leave: Introduce 5-10 days annual leave for all caregivers (e.g., children or elderly parents).Offer leave extensions for children with disabilities or special needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sick leave: Allow use of sick leave for IVF, and conversion of unused leave to caregiving leave or to roll over into future years.Special leave policies: Introduce policies for bereavement and consider sabbatical options for long-term caregiving.Offer leave pooling to support employees with additional leave needs (e.g., due to caregiving).

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES TO MASTER THIS POLICY?

RELEVANT STANDARDS

- + [BetterWork \(BW\) Global Compliance Assessment Tool – Compliance Points: Discrimination \(Gender\), Compensation \(Paid Leave\), Working time \(Leave\)](#)
- + [Fair Labor Association \(FLA\) Compliance Benchmarks: ND.7, ND.8](#)
- + [Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria \(v. 6.1\): 5.34, 6.34, 7.3\(d\), 7.5\(d\), 7.11, 7.12](#)
- + [GRI Reporting Standards 401 and 406](#)


TOOLS

- + [Better Work's Global Compliance Assessment Tool \(CAT\)](#)
- + [Policy Repository by World Policy Analysis Centre](#)

SOURCE

- + ILO, [Maternity Protection Convention \(No. 183\)](#), 2000
- + ILO, [Maternity Protection Recommendation \(No. 191\)](#), 2000
- + WHO, [The case for paid sick leave](#), 2010
- + UNICEF, [Family-Friendly Policies: A Policy Brief](#), 2019
- + UNICEF, [Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain](#), 2020



 **WE CAN DECIDE TO HAVE CHILDREN WHENEVER WE WANT. THERE IS NO FEAR OF LOSING JOB OR EXTRA WORK PRESSURE OR FEAR OF LOSING OUT ON A PROMOTION. ALSO, MATERNITY BENEFITS ARE MOTIVATING THE MALE MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY TO LET WOMEN WORK OUTSIDE.**

– A factory worker



CASE STUDY

MOTHERS@WORK PROGRAMME IN BANGLADESH SUPPORTING MATERNITY LEAVE

UNICEF

The Mothers@Work programme, supported by UNICEF in Bangladesh's ready-made garments sector, underscores the transformative impact of paid maternity leave on working mothers' well-being and workforce participation. As part of the initiative, paid maternity leave was introduced and implemented as a critical workplace standard, enabling women to recover post-childbirth and balance their caregiving responsibilities with work.

Data from the intervention factories revealed that 60% of women cited paid maternity leave as the primary reason for returning to work. The leave period provided mothers with adequate time to physically and emotionally prepare for rejoining the workforce, with 98% of lactating women in these factories reporting they felt better equipped to manage their responsibilities upon return.

The programme highlights paid maternity leave not only as a benefit for mothers but also as a strategic advantage for employers.

Source: Stakeholder consultations with Mothers@Work implementation team in UNICEF Bangladesh Country Office, 2024.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

Based on the outcome of the self-diagnostic assessment, consider these policy recommendations.

These recommendations are suggestive, not prescriptive, and based on industry best practices and expert insights. Please defer to higher legal requirements (if any apply to your company context).

	FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
PAID LEAVE	Companies can introduce flexibility in work hours and breaks where tasks allow and gradually transition from a time-based system to an outcome-based approach.		
FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS			
FLEXIBLE WORK TIME & BREAKS			
FLEXIBLE SHIFTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce basic shift-swapping options with supervisor approval. Implement emergency shift change protocols for caregiving needs. Offer reduced hours for pregnant women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer flexible shift options for all. Introduce more flexible options for workers with diverse caregiving needs e.g., shorter and more frequent shifts or longer daily shifts in exchange for longer leaves (for migrant workers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop integrated shift selection system that allows workers to choose (1) preferred shifts on a quarterly basis based on seniority and performance and (2) split shifts while maintaining output targets.
BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT			
AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE			
BREAKTIME MANAGEMENT			
PRODUCTION LINE ASSIGNMENT			
PROTECTION OF BASIC LABOUR RIGHTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow basic flexibility in break timing for essential family needs, while ensuring mandatory compliance with legal requirements (if any), and dedicated spaces to rest during shifts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer flexible break options for all workers regardless of genders or contractual types. Offer option to convert entitled break time to accumulated leave days (for migrant workers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design personalised break schedules accommodating individual needs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Account for worker circumstances in line placement. Allow basic workstation modifications for pregnant workers. Implement temporary reassignment options for health needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce formal mechanisms for requesting line transfers. Offer cross-training for work rotation options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt working schedules during peak demand seasons to balance production needs with well-being (e.g., shorter shifts during summer).



While we offer stage-based recommendations we encourage you to adopt policies that fit your context—any step, no matter how small, can drive meaningful change.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES TO MASTER THIS POLICY?



RELEVANT STANDARDS

Globally recognised standards for implementing flexible working in factories are still evolving, but several key trends and practices have emerged, particularly in response to workforce demands and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- + [Flexible working in the manufacturing industry – can it work?](#)
- + [Can a factory offer flexible work schedules?](#)
- + [Flexible work arrangements in manufacturing: 5 tactics for employers to consider](#)



SOURCE

- + UNICEF, [Family-Friendly Policies: A Policy Brief](#), 2019
- + UNICEF, [Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain](#), 2020



IF WE CAN BE FLEXIBLE WITH PEOPLE, THEN PEOPLE WILL BE FLEXIBLE WITH US AND THEY WILL PROBABLY WORK HARDER FOR US. IF WE PUT BARRIERS UP AND SAY “WE’RE NOT WORKING WITH YOU,” WE WOULDN’T GET THE SAME RESPONSE FROM STAFF.

– A factory line manager



CASE STUDY

FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS IN THE U.K.

SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC

Schneider Electric introduced flexible working arrangements in their manufacturing sites to improve worker satisfaction and productivity. In factory settings, the company implemented staggered start and finish times, as well as the option for workers to swap shifts.

These policies were particularly beneficial in regions where caregiving responsibilities and cultural norms often limited worker’s ability to remain in the workforce. As a result, worker satisfaction and engagement improved, leading to a reduction in absenteeism. Operational efficiency was maintained through well-coordinated shift schedules and clear communication systems.

This initiative demonstrated that even in factory settings, where flexibility is often challenging, innovative policies can create a more equitable and productive work environment.

Source: CIPD, Flexible Working Case Study: Schneider Electric, 2019.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

Based on the outcome of the self-diagnostic assessment, consider these policy recommendations.

These recommendations are suggestive, not prescriptive, and based on industry best practices and expert insights. Please defer to higher legal requirements (if any apply to your company context).

	FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
BREASTFEEDING FACILITIES	Companies can start with basic designated spaces that ensure privacy and gradually enhance facilities to support different work schedules and service delivery patterns.		
FLEXIBLE SHIFTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Designate a clean, private space for breastfeeding/ expressing milk, close to production areas if aligned with safety standards. + Ensure adequate lighting, ventilation and basic hygiene standards. + Provide basic amenities like seating and electrical outlets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide private space accessible only by breastfeeding or expressing mothers. + On top of basic amenities meeting hygiene standards, provide refrigeration facilities and sterilisation equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish multiple lactation rooms with full amenities (e.g., armchairs, tables, refrigeration, sterilisation equipment, bin, handwashing stations) for breastfeeding or expressing mothers. ■ Include consultation space for lactation support.
LACTATION BREAKS	Companies can start with paid lactation breaks aligned with ILO standards and progressively develop flexible systems that support both operational needs and employee preferences.		
PRODUCTION LINE ASSIGNMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Offer scheduled breaks equivalent to 1 hour or a daily reduction of hours of work to mothers to breastfeed (ILO minimum standard)¹ or as per labour laws for at least 6 months post-birth, ideally 24 months. ■ Create flexible break scheduling system and offer flexible break timing based on individual needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide additional breaks, such as for caregivers of infants with disabilities or health issues, based on medical documentation (ILO recommended standard) for at least 6 months post-birth, ideally 24 months. ■ Offer option to convert unutilised breaks to accumulated leave days (e. g., for migrant workers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Offer flexible scheduling options for night shift workers. ■ Create protocols for extended break needs.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES TO MASTER THIS POLICY?

RELEVANT STANDARDS

- + [BetterWork \(BW\) Global Compliance Assessment Tool – Compliance Points: Compensation \(Paid Leave\), Working time \(Leave\)](#)
- + [Fair Labor Association \(FLA\) Compliance Benchmarks: ND.8.1](#)
- + [Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria \(v. 6.1\): 1.11, 6.8\(c\), 6.29, 6.36, 7.8\(d\)](#)

TOOLS

- + [Better Work's Global Compliance Assessment Tool \(CAT\)](#)
- + [Policy Repository by World Policy Analysis Centre](#)

SOURCE

- + ILO, [Maternity Protection Convention \(No. 183\)](#), 2000
- + ILO, [Maternity Protection Recommendation \(No. 191\)](#), 2000
- + UNICEF, [Family-Friendly Policies: A Policy Brief](#), 2019
- + UNICEF, [Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain](#), 2020

PLANNING AND DEVELOPING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES



Based on the outcome of the self-diagnostic assessment, consider these policy recommendations.

These recommendations are suggestive, not prescriptive, and based on industry best practices and expert insights. Please defer to higher legal requirements (if any apply to your company context).

	FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
	IF EXTERNAL CHILDCARE FACILITIES ARE LIMITED/NOT AVAILABLE:		
PAID LEAVE	CHILD CARE FACILITIES Companies can begin with collaborative childcare solutions that align with service schedules and gradually develop comprehensive on-site facilities that accommodate diverse workforce needs if there is adequate and sustainable financial resources.		
FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS			
BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT			
AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE			
PROTECTION OF BASIC LABOUR RIGHTS			
	INFRASTRUCTURE		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Partner with providers to establish shared childcare facilities across factories.<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Ensure facilities meet basic safety standards and emergency protocols and ensure nutrition needs.■ If existing transport infrastructure is not child-friendly, offer transportation to and from childcare facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Develop dedicated on-site childcare centre with qualified staff and age-appropriate spaces.<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Ensure adherence to health and safety protocols aligned with local standards.+ Provide appropriate meals for children, ensuring nutritional needs.+ Provide specialised support for children with disabilities or special needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Develop comprehensive childcare centres with specialised activities for different age groups.<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Maintain a low ratio of childcare workers to children (e.g., 1:5).+ Create dedicated spaces for children with special needs.+ Offer facilities for children of migrant workers (for e.g., introducing language classes, summer programs).
	OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Align childcare hours with shift timings.■ Establish clear emergency protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Extend operating hours to cover standard shifts.■ Establish basic child drop-off and pickup procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Provide 24/7 childcare coverage to accommodate all shifts.■ Offer backup care options for emergencies.

Businesses should also advocate with and engage governments closely in driving childcare support, recognising the supporting role that they play in the care ecosystem.

(Continued on next page)

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES TO MASTER THIS POLICY?

RELEVANT STANDARDS

- + Fair Labor Association (FLA) Compliance Benchmarks: HSE.27
- + Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria (v. 6.1): 3.9(t), 4.17, 4.22, 4.23
- + Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action: Standard 23, 24, 25

TOOLS

- + Better Work's Global Compliance Assessment Tool (CAT)
- + Policy Repository by World Policy Analysis Centre

SOURCE

- + UNICEF, Family-Friendly Policies: A Policy Brief, 2019
- + UNICEF, Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain, 2020
- + UNICEF, ILO, WIEGO, Family-friendly policies for workers in the informal economy, 2021

PLANNING AND DEVELOPING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

Based on the outcome of the self-diagnostic assessment, consider these policy recommendations.

These recommendations are suggestive, not prescriptive, and based on industry best practices and expert insights. Please defer to higher legal requirements (if any apply to your company context).

	FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
PAID LEAVE	IF EXTERNAL CHILDCARE FACILITIES ARE LIMITED/NOT AVAILABLE:		
FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS			
FINANCIAL SUPPORT	Companies can start with basic financial assistance and gradually develop comprehensive benefit packages that address diverse workforce needs.		
BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer a basic monthly stipend to reduce cost of childcare or negotiate discounted fees with childcare providers with additional stipend for parents with children with disabilities. Assist workers in accessing available government support for childcare or partner with quality providers for discounted rate for workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer sliding scale fee structure based on worker income levels and additional support for single parents, low-income workers and parents of children with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement comprehensive childcare benefit packages (incl. offering full subsidies to vulnerable workers). Include coverage for specialised care needs.
AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE			
PROTECTION OF BASIC LABOUR RIGHTS			

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES TO MASTER THIS POLICY?



RELEVANT STANDARDS

- + Fair Labor Association (FLA) Compliance Benchmarks: [HSE.27](#)
- + Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria (v. 6.1): 3.9(t), 4.17, 4.22, 4.23



TOOLS


- + IFC's Guide For Employer-Supported Childcare
- + Better Work's Global Compliance Assessment Tool (CAT)
- + Policy Repository by World Policy Analysis Centre



SOURCE

- + UNICEF, [Family-Friendly Policies: A Policy Brief](#), 2019
- + UNICEF, [Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain](#), 2020
- + UNICEF, ILO, WIEGO, [Family-friendly policies for workers in the informal economy](#), 2021



 **I WAS ALWAYS WORRIED ABOUT MY KID'S SAFETY DURING THE SUMMER VACATION, AS EVERY YEAR I HEARD ABOUT ACCIDENTS INVOLVING CHILDREN SUCH AS CHILDREN DROWNING IN PONDS OR DYING FROM ELECTRIC SHOCKS. FCFS HAS FOUR TEACHERS TO LOOK AFTER MY FIVE-YEAR-OLD SON. I FEEL MUCH MORE AT EASE NOW AND CAN FOCUS ON MY WORK.**

– Father at a participating factory

© UNICEF/UNI726562/Ma; Photograph not related to the testimonial to preserve anonymity



CASE STUDY

CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES IN FACTORIES IN CHINA

THE CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS AND BUSINESS

The Centre implemented child friendly spaces in five factories in China to provide children of migrant workers with a safe, inclusive space to play, interact with others and to take part in joint parent-child activities.

With a high proportion of migrant workers in factories, many of them have to leave their children behind with extended families. The child-friendly space was set up during the summer months to allow factory workers to spend more time with their children.

This saw positive results in worker-management relationships, with 68% beneficiaries having 'absolute trust' in management compared 49% of non-participants; **and intention to remain with the factory**, where 88% of beneficiaries reported intention to stay for at least 2 more years compared to 71% of non-participants. .

Source: Centre for Child Rights and Business, Factory Child-Friendly Spaces Pilot Program in China, 2016.



MY CHILD HAS IMPROVED EMOTIONAL CONTROL AND HAS BECOME MORE RESPONSIBLE FOR HER ACTIONS. THE CFS TEACHERS ALSO HELP BRING HER TO SCHOOL WHILE I AM WORKING.

– A mother of a 6-year-old child



CASE STUDY

CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES IN INDONESIAN RATTAN COMMUNITY

IKEA, FINDORA INTERNUSA, CENTER FOR CHILDRIGHTS AND BUSINESS

Launched in May 2023 in Muara Pulau, this initiative provides a safe, nurturing space for children of rattan farmers and workers in IKEA's supply chain to learn, play, and grow while their parents work.

Operating weekdays from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., the child-friendly space accommodates up to 14 children, with two locally recruited, trained teachers managing no more than seven children each. The teachers completed rigorous training in child safeguarding and age-appropriate teaching methods. The facility features materials that support literacy, numeracy, and social development and has been renovated to create a safe and engaging environment.

This initiative reflects IKEA's commitment to improving working conditions throughout its supply chain. Early results show **53% of parents feel less worried while working, and about 70% of children have improved their literacy and numeracy skills, with 63% showing enhanced emotional and social intelligence.**

Source: Centre for Child Rights and Business, A Child-Friendly Space in Muara Pulau, 2024.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES



Based on the outcome of the self-diagnostic assessment, consider these policy recommendations.

These recommendations are suggestive, not prescriptive, and based on industry best practices and expert insights. Please defer to higher legal requirements (if any apply to your company context).

	FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
PAID LEAVE	<div>Companies can begin with basic wage compliance and gradually develop comprehensive compensation systems that recognise the unique demands of service roles.</div> <div><div><div>■ Ensure all workers (incl. contractual staff) are paid at least the legal minimum wage on time.</div><div>■ Provide clear documentation of earnings and benefits, and implement basic grievance redressal mechanisms for wage disputes.</div><div>■ Ensure non-discrimination of wages, regardless of gender, residential and/ or family status.</div></div><div><div>■ Ensure all workers (incl. contractual staff) are paid at least a living wage* on time.</div><div>■ Monitor and address gender-based or other wage disparities to promote equitable pay structures.</div><div>■ Provide the option of on-demand pay, allowing workers to access earned wages before payday.</div><div>■ Include policies addressing unique caregiving requirements, like allowances for parents of children with disabilities or special needs.</div></div><div><div>■ Implement comprehensive financial wellness programs like education savings support for workers' children.</div></div></div>		
FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS			
BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT			
AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE			
PROTECTION OF BASIC LABOUR RIGHTS			

(Continued on next page)

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES TO MASTER THIS POLICY?

RELEVANT STANDARDS

Maternal health and nutrition

- + [BetterWork \(BW\) Global Compliance Assessment Tool – Compliance Points: OHS \(Health Services and First Aid\), Compensation \(Paid Leave\), Working time \(Leave\)](#)
- + [Fair Labor Association \(FLA\) Compliance Benchmarks: ND.12, HSE.11, HSE.12](#)
- + [Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria \(v. 6.1\): 5.34, 6.1\(e\), 6.34, 6.35, 7.8\(d\)](#)

Wages and working hours

- + [Fair Labor Association \(FLA\) Compliance Benchmarks: ND.3, C.1 to C.25](#)
- + [Sedex SMETA Measurement Criteria \(v. 6.1\): 5.6, 5.12, 6.2\(a\), 7.1\(b\)](#)

SOURCE

- + UNICEF, [Family-Friendly Policies: A Policy Brief](#), 2019
- + UNICEF, [Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain](#), 2020
- + UNICEF, ILO, WIEGO, [Family-friendly policies for workers in the informal economy](#), 2021

Note: (*) [Living wage](#) is a level of pay that gives workers and their families a decent standard of living



ONE EVENING, I RECEIVED AN URGENT CALL FROM MY FAMILY: A CLOSE RELATIVE NEEDED IMMEDIATE MEDICAL TREATMENT, AND THE PAYMENT HAD TO BE MADE UPFRONT. IN THE PAST, I WOULD HAVE FELT FORCED TO APPROACH A BLACK-CREDIT LENDER – A ROUTE I DREAD BECAUSE OF STORIES I’VE HEARD OF PEOPLE FALLING INTO DEBT TRAPS. BUT I FEEL HAPPY THAT WITH THE ADVANCE PAYMENT I WAS ABLE TO SUPPORT THE EXPENSES.

– Factory worker



CASE STUDY

ON-DEMAND PAY FOR WORKERS IN VIET NAM

ECCO

In Viet Nam, several companies across sectors such as manufacturing, retail and services are offering their employees the option of on-demand pay through the fintech service ekko – a salary advancement service allowing employees to access their earned wages before payday.

The financial service is particularly popular among workers aged 21–40. This on-demand pay service enables employees to secure funds for essential expenses such as household costs, emergency health needs, and paying off debt.

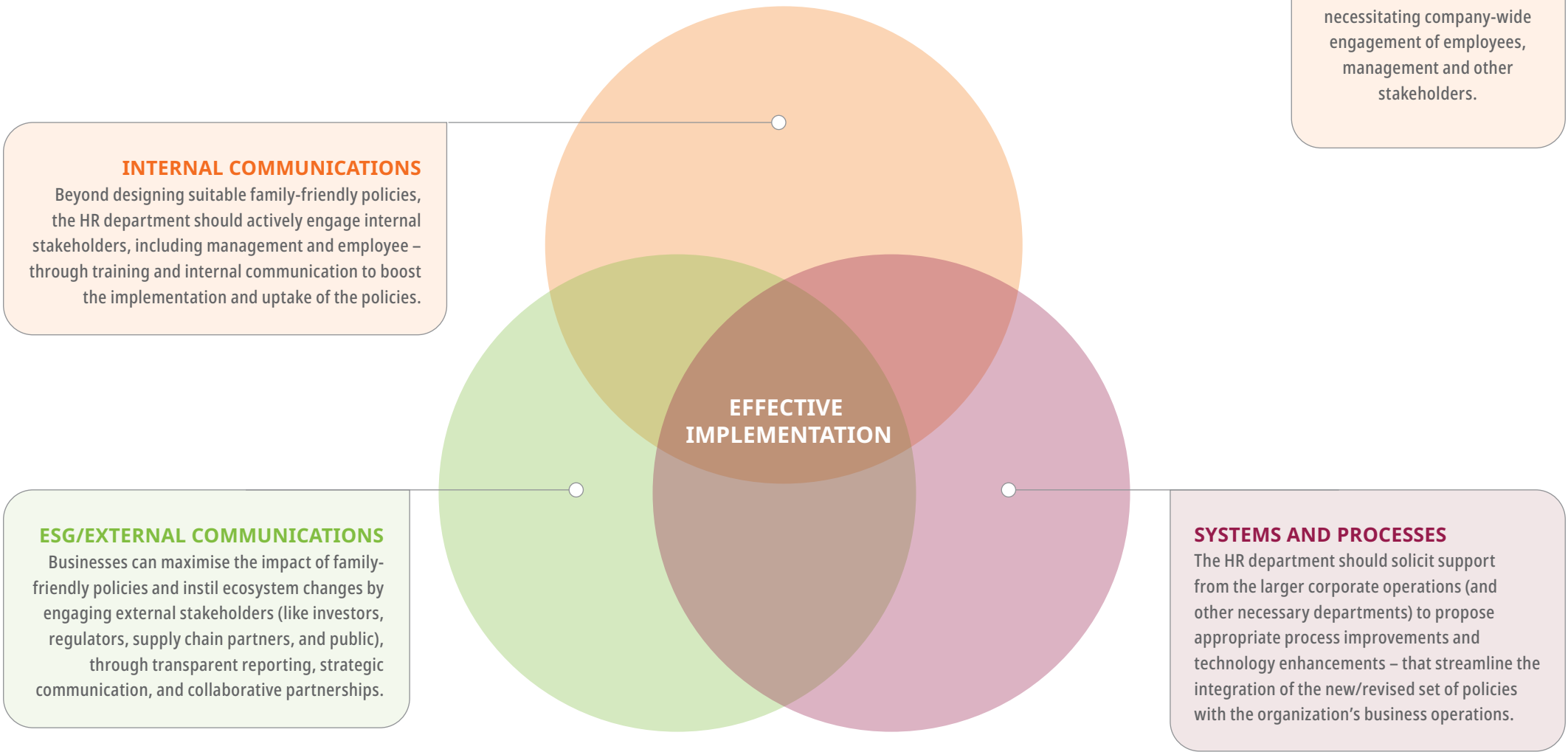
By providing an alternative to high-interest black market loans, on-demand pay helps employees avoid financial traps while addressing immediate needs. This solution has proven to not only reduces stress for workers but has also supported companies in reduce their turnover by ~10% on average.

Source: Stakeholder consultations with ekko team, 2024.

IMPLEMENTING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES



Three implementation drivers are crucial to translate family-friendly policies from intent into meaningful practices.



Effective implementation of family-friendly policies remains a big challenge for most farms, with success necessitating company-wide engagement of employees, management and other stakeholders.

GENERATING SUPPORT AND PROMOTING UPTAKE



Effectively implementing family-friendly policies in factory settings requires clear, inclusive, and strategic communication to ensure awareness and alignment across all levels of stakeholders.

Successful implementation of the policies depends on understanding and addressing the unique perspectives, concerns, and needs of each stakeholder group; A thoughtful communication strategy that considers several distinct viewpoints is essential for driving meaningful adoption and ensuring sustainable impact.

WHO ARE THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS, AND WHAT ARE THEIR CONCERNS?		
FACTORY WORKERS <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Have immediate concerns about how the policies will affect their daily work lives.■ Worried about job security and whether availing the policies will impact their future in the company or financial sustainability.■ May fear potential stigma from colleagues or negative effects on their performance evaluations.■ Given the production-driven nature of their work – need clear assurance that family-friendly policies will not create tension within their teams or with the management.	SUPERVISORS/LINE MANAGERS <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Face the complex challenge of balancing worker needs with production demands.■ Primary concerns centre around maintaining efficiency of operations and output/ production capacity while implementing family-friendly policies.■ Many mid-level managers worry about their ability to handle emergency situations while keeping operations running smoothly.■ Need clear guidance on managing shift coverage, coordinating leave arrangements, etc.	FACTORY OWNERS <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Focused on financial feasibility, resource allocation, and operational efficiency.■ Need clear evidence of return on investment and understanding of how family-friendly policies affect operational costs and profitability.■ Management teams also worry about training requirements and implementation costs that might affect the factory's bottom line.■ Value-driven management teams are specifically concerned with putting an emphasis on the strong adoption of policies and fostering a meaningful culture shift.



INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

By aligning their internal communications with the concerns of key stakeholders, factories can create a sustainable pathway for adoption of family-friendly policies, ensuring that worker well-being and business success go hand in hand.

Source: UNICEF, [Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain](#), 2020; UNFPA, [The Family-Friendly Workplace Model](#), 2023.

GENERATING SUPPORT AND PROMOTING UPTAKE

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

Clear communication pathways create sustainable adoption while fostering a supportive workplace culture.

Such communication should ensure that they are designed to reach all genders, including men. Engaging men as allies and champions is crucial for driving uptake and implementation of family-friendly policies and promoting shared responsibility for caregiving.

	OBJECTIVE	KEY MESSAGES	MODE OF COMMUNICATION
FACTORY WORKERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure workers understand their family-friendly policy entitlements and feel confident accessing them without fear of negative impact to their employment or progression. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Availing these policies will not affect your job security or growth opportunities." "Clear procedures exist to help you balance work with family needs." "Support systems are in place to maintain your income while using these policies." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multilingual posters and visual guides in high-traffic areas with equal gender representation Regular shift briefings Worker committee discussions Mobile messaging updates, where appropriate
SUPERVISORS/LINE MANAGERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build capability and confidence in implementing family-friendly policy while maintaining production efficiency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Effective policy management improves team productivity and retention." "Clear protocols exist for managing leave arrangements and shift coverage." "Your role is crucial in creating a supportive environment for policy use." 'You should act as role models to encourage uptake of family-friendly policies' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed implementation guides Regular management briefings Hands-on training workshops
FACTORY OWNERS	<p>Maintain engagement and support for implementation while demonstrating successful integration with service operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Family-friendly policies are crucial for long-term business sustainability and deliver measurable return through improved retention and productivity." "Effective implementation strengthens market position and enhances our reputation with investors, and buyers." "Clear systems exist to manage costs." "Leadership should act as role models to encourage uptake of family-friendly policies." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly implementation progress dashboards Service quality and staff satisfaction trend reports Quarterly implementation milestone updates



INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

A successful communication strategy ensures buy-in from leadership, middle managers' active involvement and employees' understanding of available family-friendly policies and trust in their fair and equitable application.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES TO MASTER THIS POLICY?



RELEVANT STANDARDS

- + [UNFPA \(2023\), Family Friendly Workplace Model: Page 131](#)
- + [UNICEF Children's Rights in the Garment and Footwear Supply Chain: Page 34](#)

INTEGRATE WITH BUSINESS OPERATIONS

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

FOUNDATIONAL

ADVANCED

SIMPLE RECORD-KEEPING SYSTEM

- Build on existing systems, like standard spreadsheets or existing software to introduce simple record-keeping mechanisms for policy uptake – This helps teams transition smoothly while keeping things simple.
- Adapt current HR paperwork and forms to include family-friendly policy elements, focusing on clear, easy-to-follow processes that work within existing workflows.
- Begin with small-scale trials of low-cost process changes in one department or shift, using current scheduling tools to test what works best for both staff and service delivery.

SCALED-UP AND STANDARDISED SYSTEM

- Build upon your existing HR systems to include family-friendly policy tracking, automated notifications for approvals and other policy related metrics.
- Collaborate with operational teams to introduce flexible working models (e.g., part-time roles, split shifts) without hampering productivity.
- Create regular opportunities for staff feedback via existing channels like team meetings or employee surveys, and use insights to refine implementation.
- Work with department heads to recognise and reward managers who effectively support policy implementation, making it part of regular performance reviews and team success metrics.

FULLY INTEGRATED, DATA-DRIVEN SYSTEM

- Implement enterprise-level solutions (e.g., ERP systems) to seamlessly integrate family-friendly policy tracking with broader business processes (e.g., productivity metrics, financial KPIs).
- Analyse workforce trends (e.g., absenteeism due to childcare issues) and proactively design interventions.
- Establish dedicated committees or task forces to drive continuous improvement in policy related initiatives.
- Create a network of 'policy champions' across departments who can share best practices and support implementation.

DEPARTMENTS TO BE ENGAGED

- **HR:** Adapting existing forms and tracking processes.
- **Operations:** Incorporating policy considerations into current scheduling practices.
- **Finance:** Working within existing budgets to support implementation.

- **HR:** Coordinating feedback and recognition programs.
- **Operations:** Adjusting workflows for flexibility.
- **IT:** Implementing digital systems and upgrades or integrate HR metrics into next system upgrade.
- **Finance:** Securing funding for system upgrades.

- **HR:** Strategic leadership on policy design and advocacy.
- **IT:** Advanced integration of ERP systems.
- **Finance:** Cost & benefit analysis and sustainability reporting.



SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

While designing strong family-friendly policies is the first step for businesses, strong systems and processes must be put in place to implement them effectively - Companies can start small and build on existing processes to support successful implementation.

ENGAGE WITH AND INFLUENCE THE ECOSYSTEM

STEP 1

STEP 2

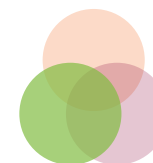
STEP 3

STEP 4

FOUNDATIONAL

ADVANCED

	REPORT & DISCLOSE	SHARE	ADVOCATE	INFLUENCE	COLLABORATE/ CO-INVEST
WHY	Demonstrates compliance to enhance reputation and trust with supply chain buyers or partners, investors, and open access to high-value markets.	Demonstrates commitment to society and positions the company as a thought leader in ethical and responsible practices.	Creates conditions for sustainable implementation while reducing individual organizational burden.	Motivates family-friendly policy implementation with contractors, suppliers, or franchisees ensuring ethical labour practices across the supply chain.	Spreads implementation costs and risk, and supports stronger relationships in the community while ensuring standardised implementation.
TO DO THIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate implementation into your reporting, in alignment with global standards (e.g., SDG indicators, GRI, ESRS). Demonstrate alignment with ethical sourcing commitments. Showcase impact through data-driven success stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in forums with/ convene governments, business associations, peer businesses, etc. Publish learnings and best practices or share inputs to industry reports and toolkits (developed by ecosystem actors like IFC, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for enhanced regulations and government support, such as expanded tax incentives and subsidies. Collaborate with development agencies (e.g., UNICEF), business associations, trade unions, to co-develop policy briefs or white papers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training and guidance to ensure alignment with company standards on ethical employment and family-friendly policies. Incentivise adherence to family-friendly policies by prioritising partnerships with compliant contractors and suppliers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate or co-invest with local government, peer businesses, suppliers, or NGOs to develop shared solutions (e.g., community childcare facilities).
KEY STAKEHOLDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply chain buyers Investors Regulators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer businesses Business associations Development agencies Media Women's groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Polymakers Development agencies Business associations NGOs, think-tanks Women's groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractors Suppliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer businesses Government Industrial zone developers Women's groups



EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Effective implementation of family-friendly policies extends beyond internal practices. Companies can amplify their impact through strategic external engagement, creating positive change across the broader ecosystem while strengthening their market position.

MEASURE SUCCESS AND IMPROVE BY LEARNING



Robust monitoring and reporting serve three critical purposes for companies implementing family-friendly policies.

- ▶ Promotes effective resource utilisation: For companies where family-friendly policy investments represent significant operational costs, effective monitoring and reporting helps ensure maximum returns through better uptake and implementation.
- ▶ Enhances operational efficiency: Regular monitoring helps identify and address implementation challenges early, minimising disruption to production schedules and workforce management.
- ▶ Supports strategic decision-making: Data-driven insights enable factories to adapt policies to workforce needs while maintaining productivity targets.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE BUSINESS REPORTING:		
ALIGN WITH STRATEGIC GOALS.	MAKE SMART RESOURCE DECISIONS.	BUILD FOR SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Map policy metrics to your strategic objectives and reporting metrics.■ Establish baseline data collection system and use existing HR systems where possible to minimise disruption.■ Create clear data privacy and protection protocols*.■ Address regulatory requirements (for e.g., any mandatory reporting metrics) and align with relevant frameworks (like GRI, ESRS) – if operating in markets with comprehensive requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Track a balanced set of output metrics (e.g., retention rates, productivity).■ Track cost-benefit indicators to demonstrate return on investment.■ Build capacity gradually (for e.g., start with manual tracking if needed and expand to automated systems as programs mature).■ Train relevant staff on data collection and analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Establish clear accountability and designate specific roles for data collection and analysis.■ Define reporting responsibilities across departments.■ Create feedback loops between workers and management.■ Build monitoring into standard operating procedures.■ Use data to refine policies and implementation.



Whether a small healthcare practice or a large retail chain, companies can make informed decisions by focusing on meaningful metrics and continuously improving implementation through systematic learning.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES TO MASTER THIS POLICY?



RELEVANT STANDARDS

- + Overview of child rights' sub-topics and related European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) topics: [page 12, UNICEF Reporting on Children's Rights Under the Social Standards](#)
- + Mapping of child benefits and supported SDGs: [page 4, UNICEF Role of Child Benefits in Enabling Family-Friendly Policies to Achieve the Triple Bottom Line](#)

Note: (*) Please refer to relevant legislation for data privacy and protection in your country. For example, companies collecting data on EU residents may refer to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and refer to this [link](#) for a summary.

MEASURE SUCCESS AND IMPROVE BY LEARNING



List of monitoring metrics

These recommendations are suggestive, not prescriptive, and should be implemented as suitable in individual contexts. Where relevant, data collected should be gender-disaggregated.

	FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
PAID LEAVE	<div>OUTPUS</div> <div>Company has a policy on maternity leave that meets national legal requirements or is at least 14 weeks, whichever is longer. <i>Align with: GRI 401-2(a); FLA ND.8.1; SMETA 5.34; BetterWork (BW) Global Compliance Assessment Tool (Working time, Leave)</i></div>	<div>Company has a policy on maternity leave that meets national legal requirements or is at least 18 weeks, whichever is longer, applicable for both permanent and long-term contract employees.</div>	<div>Company has a policy on gender-neutral parental leave that meets national legal requirements or is at least 18 weeks, whichever is longer.</div>
FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS			
BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT			
	<div>OUTCOMES</div> <div>Average length of maternity leave (above) actually taken by mothers in the last 12 months. <i>Align with: GRI 401-3, 406</i></div> <div>Average length of paternity leave (above) actually taken by fathers (or parents) in the last 12 months. <i>Align with: GRI 401-3</i></div> <div>Percentage of employees satisfied with paid leave policies (above).</div>		<div>Correlation between policy usage and satisfaction with workforce retention.</div> <div>Correlation between policy usage and satisfaction with productivity.</div>
AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE			
PROTECTION OF BASIC LABOUR RIGHTS			



To effectively evaluate the impact of family-friendly policies, businesses need to shift focus from metrics measuring outputs (policy availability) to outcomes (policy uptake and other outcomes), enabling actionable and meaningful learnings for improvement.

(continued on next page)

MEASURE SUCCESS AND IMPROVE BY LEARNING



List of monitoring metrics

These recommendations are suggestive, not prescriptive, and should be implemented as suitable in individual contexts. Where relevant, data collected should be gender-disaggregated.

	FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
PAID LEAVE			
FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS			
BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT			
AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE			
PROTECTION OF BASIC LABOUR RIGHTS			
OUTPUTS	Company has policies on flexible work time & breaks and task assignment, as recommended in Step 2.	Company offers policies on flexible working arrangements to both permanent and contract employees.	
OUTCOMES	Percentage of employees who have requested flexible working arrangements, per policy.		Correlation between policy usage and satisfaction with absent rate.
	Percentage of employees satisfied with flexible working policies.		Correlation between policy usage and satisfaction with workforce retention.



To effectively evaluate the impact of family-friendly policies, businesses need to shift focus from metrics measuring outputs (policy availability) to outcomes (policy uptake and other outcomes), enabling actionable and meaningful learnings for improvement.

(continued on next page)

MEASURE SUCCESS AND IMPROVE BY LEARNING



List of monitoring metrics

These recommendations are suggestive, not prescriptive, and should be implemented as suitable in individual contexts. Where relevant, data collected should be gender-disaggregated.

	FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
PAID LEAVE	Company has a breastfeeding and/or lactation space with quality in accordance with national legal requirements or inclusive of features described in Step 2. <i>Align with: FLA ND.8.1</i>		
FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS			
BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT	Company has a policy on breastfeeding and/or lactation breaks equivalent to 1 hour (ILO minimum standard). <i>Align with: FLA ND.8.1; SMETA 7.8d; BetterWork (BW) Global Compliance Assessment Tool (Working Time, Leave)</i>		Company has policy for emergency extension of break.
AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE	Average length of paid breastfeeding breaks taken by nursing workers per day in last 12 months.		Correlation between policy usage and satisfaction with rate of mothers with infants under 6 months coming back to work.
PROTECTION OF BASIC LABOUR RIGHTS			Correlation between policy usage and satisfaction with productivity.
	Proportion of working mothers with infants under 24 months currently breastfeeding.		
	Proportion of working mothers with children under 24 months who have used employer-provided breastfeeding facilities in the last 12 months.		
	Percentage of working mothers satisfied with the quality, accessibility, and privacy of breastfeeding/lactation spaces.		



To effectively evaluate the impact of family-friendly policies, businesses need to shift focus from metrics measuring outputs (policy availability) to outcomes (policy uptake and other outcomes), enabling actionable and meaningful learnings for improvement.

(continued on next page)

MEASURE SUCCESS AND IMPROVE BY LEARNING



List of monitoring metrics

These recommendations are suggestive, not prescriptive, and should be implemented as suitable in individual contexts. Where relevant, data collected should be gender-disaggregated.

	FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
PAID LEAVE	OUTP Company has a policy on providing safe and accessible childcare facilities for working parents with children under 5 years of age. Align with: FLA HSE.27; SMETA 3.9t	Company has more comprehensive policies relating to childcare and child rights as described in Step 2, such as childcare facility with childcare workers and basic amenities, transport support.	
FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS			
BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT	Company has a policy on providing childcare benefits (i.e., subsidised tuition) to working parents with children under 5 years of age. Align with: SMETA 4.23; GRI 405	Company has more comprehensive policies on financial support for childcare suitable for lower-income workers, parents of children with disabilities, vulnerable workers.	
AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE	OUTCOMES		
PROTECTION OF BASIC LABOUR RIGHTS	Proportion of working parents with children under 5 years of age who have enrolled in employer-provided childcare.	Correlation between policy usage and satisfaction with workforce retention.	
	Proportion of working parents with children under 5 years of age who have received childcare benefits in last 12 months.		
	Percentage of working parents satisfied with the childcare benefits.	Correlation between policy usage and satisfaction with productivity.	



To effectively evaluate the impact of family-friendly policies, businesses need to shift focus from metrics measuring outputs (policy availability) to outcomes (policy uptake and other outcomes), enabling actionable and meaningful learnings for improvement.

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MEASURE SUCCESS AND IMPROVE BY LEARNING



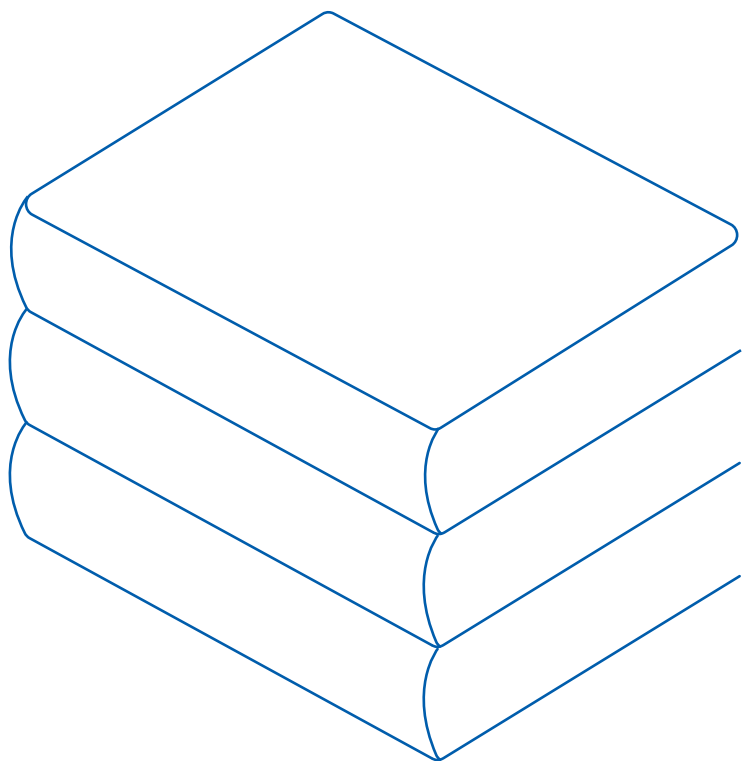
List of monitoring metrics

These recommendations are suggestive, not prescriptive, and should be implemented as suitable in individual contexts. Where relevant, data collected should be gender-disaggregated.

	FOUNDATIONAL	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
PAID LEAVE			
FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS			
BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT			
AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY CHILDCARE			
PROTECTION OF BASIC LABOUR RIGHTS			
OUTPUTS	Company has a policy that wages and benefits during maternity leave should meet a living wage standard, and be no less than two-thirds basic income.	Company has a policy on equal wage among genders.	Company has other support for employees as described in Step 2, such as financial wellness education, access to tele-health services, mental health services.
	Company has policies guaranteeing job protection (position, pay and seniority) throughout pregnancy and maternity leave. <i>Align with: GRI 401-3</i>	Company has policies on insurance coverage for employees.	Company has policy for emergency extension of break.
	Company has a policy protecting workers from discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, maternity and family status. <i>Align with: UNGC Principle 6; FLA HOW.15; SA 8000 5.4</i>		Company has a policy on insurance coverage for dependents of employees.
OUTCOMES	Proportion of wages and benefits received by workers on maternity leave relative to basic salaries in last 12 months.		Correlation between policy usage and satisfaction with workforce retention.
	Proportion of workers returning to employment after maternity leave in same or similar position. <i>Align with: GRI 401-3</i>		
	Number of pregnant workers and workers on maternity leave dismissed from employment during the reporting period.		Correlation between policy usage and satisfaction with productivity.
	Percentage of employees satisfied with the benefits (e.g., wage, insurance, other support) offered.		



To effectively evaluate the impact of family-friendly policies, businesses need to shift focus from metrics measuring outputs (policy availability) to outcomes (policy uptake and other outcomes), enabling actionable and meaningful learnings for improvement.

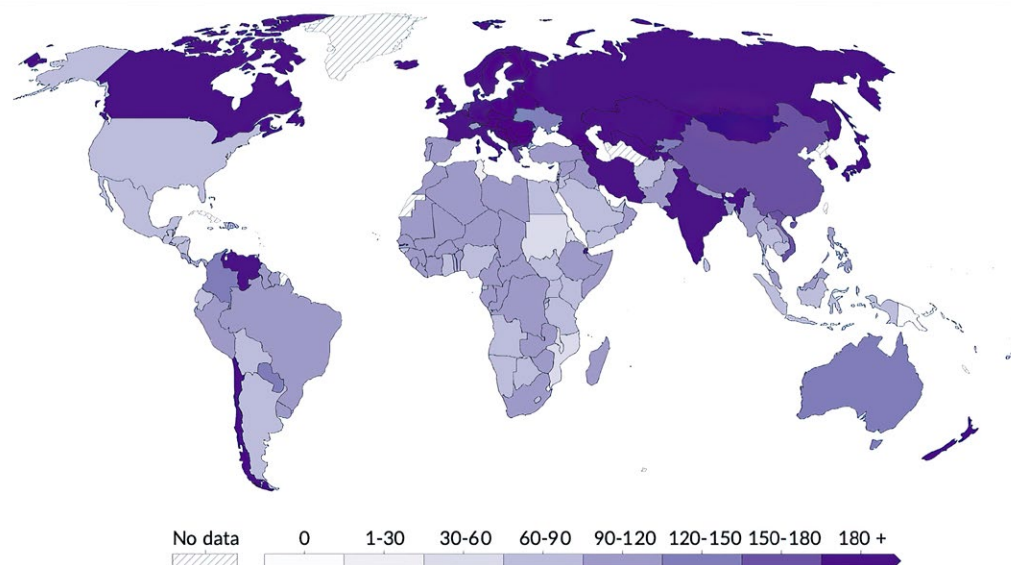


ANNEX

- ▶ State of ecosystem
- ▶ Sample employee needs survey
- ▶ Bibliography
- ▶ List of technical contributors

WHILE PAID LEAVE PROVISIONS HAVE EXPANDED GLOBALLY, THESE ARE USUALLY ONLY FOR MOTHERS

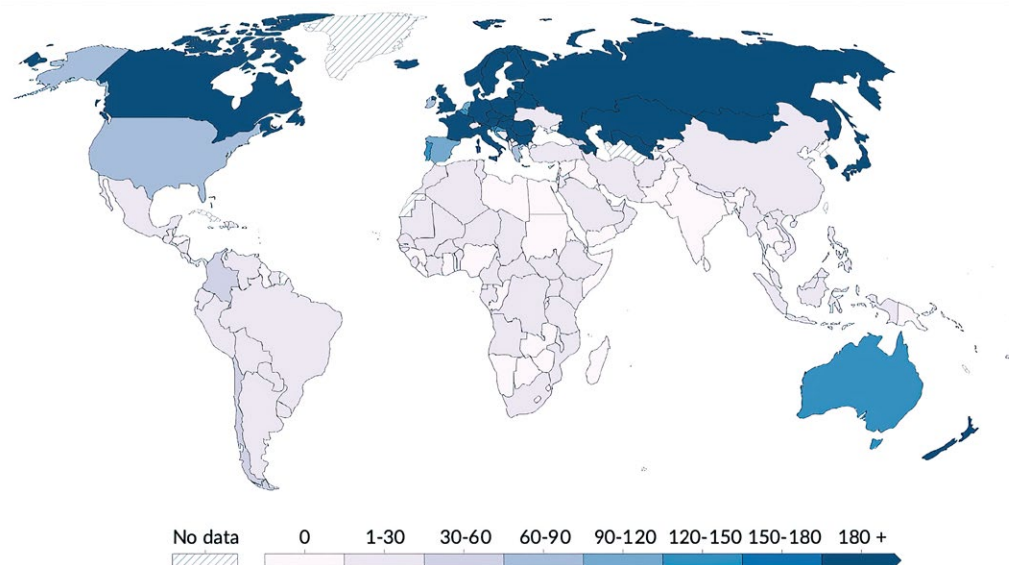
Maternity leave policies are common across many countries around the world.



Days of paid leave for childbirth and early childcare for mothers, 2023¹

- Duration of maternity leave is at least **14 weeks in 120 countries**.
- **52 countries** meet or exceed the ILO **18-week standard**, with 3 in 10 potential mothers globally living in these countries.

Paternity leave policies lag behind in comparison to maternity leave policies.



Days of paid leave for childbirth and early childcare for fathers, 2023²

- **115 out of 185 countries** offer a right to paternity leave, with 4 in 10 fathers living in these countries.
- However, paternity leave remains short with an average of **9 days**; only 1 in 10 potential fathers live in countries that provide >10 days of paternity leave.

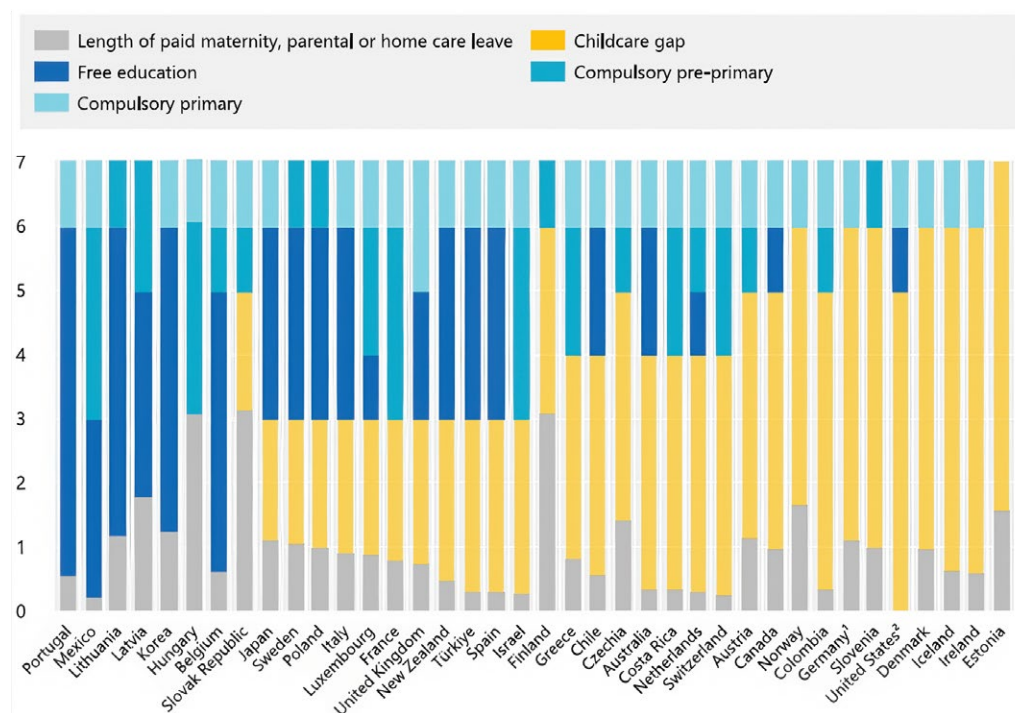
Source: ILO, [Care At Work](#), 2022; (1) Our World in Data, [Days Of Paid Leave For Childbirth And Early Childcare For The Mother](#), 2024; (2) Our World in Data, [Days Of Paid Leave For Childbirth And Early Childcare For The Father](#), 2024.



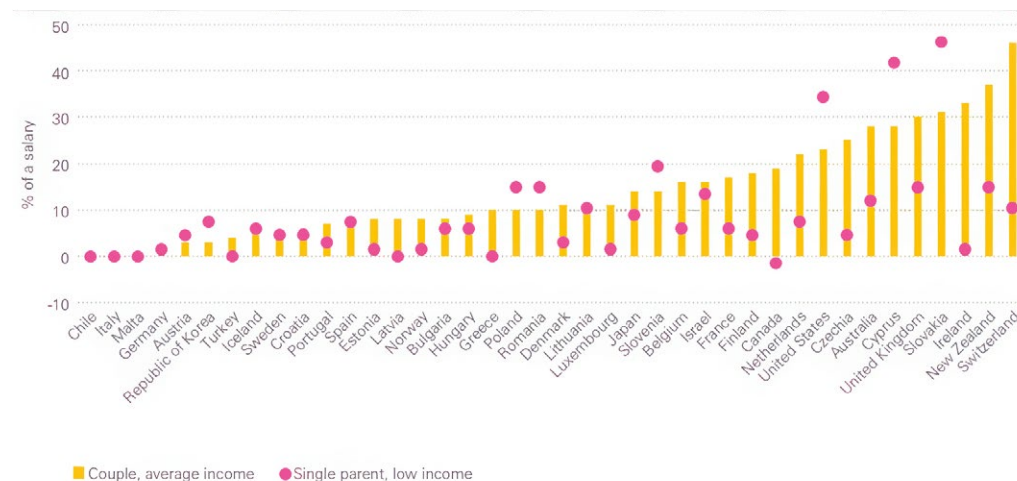
POLICY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION NEED TO BE GROUNDED IN CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS (1/2)

The coverage and affordability of childcare infrastructure varies around the world.

- In many countries, there is a significant childcare gap between the end of parental leave and the start of free early childhood education or primary school, forcing parents to rely on informal care (e.g., mothers or family members) if available, or private care if affordable.¹
- Informal care varies by region; for example, it is almost non-existent in the Nordic countries.²
- Childcare costs also vary, ranging from free in Italy, Chile, and Malta to exceeding 30% of a couple's average income in the UK, Ireland, New Zealand, and Switzerland.²



Childcare gap in years, 2022¹



Note: Low income is defined as two thirds of the national average wage. The graph presents a proportion of one salary spend on childcare: for a couple with average income, it is expressed as a percentage of one average wage, for a single parent of low income it is expressed as a percentage of two thirds of the average wage. The graph presents the net costs paid by parents for full-time centre-based childcare for two children aged 2 and 3 after government subsidies and any benefits designed to reduce the gross childcare fees. Data refer to 2020 except Republic of Korea (2019), New Zealand (2018), Chile (2015). When cost varies across regions or municipalities, region-specific fees and policy settings are used (usually ones applicable in the capital city).
Source: OECD Stats (2020).

Childcare costs for two children in full-time care, by family type and income, 2020²

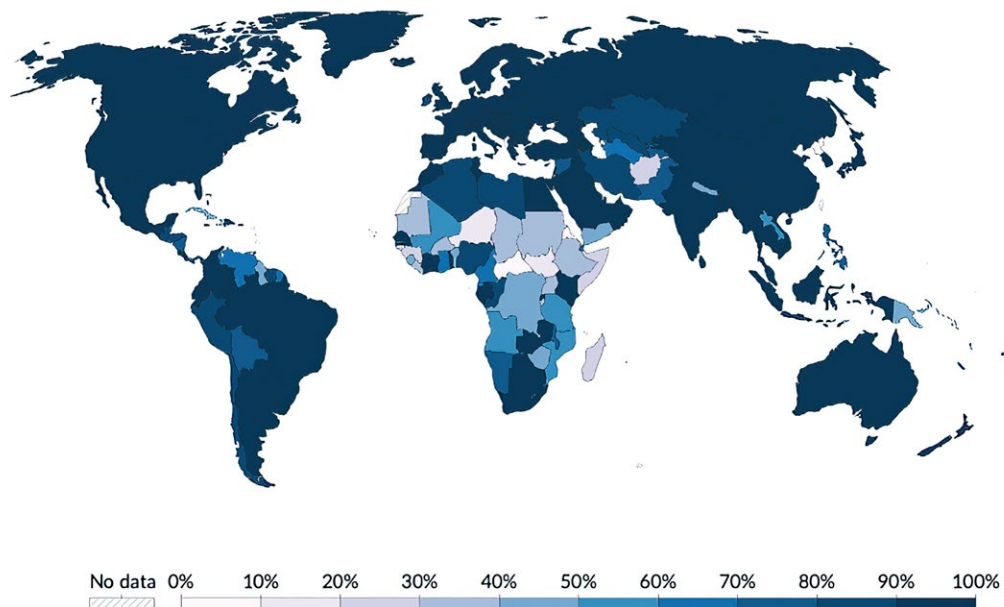


DIGITAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

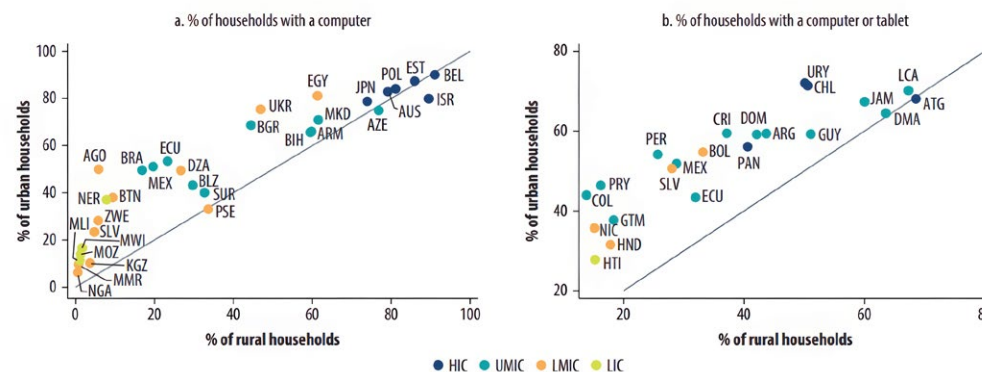
POLICY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION NEED TO BE GROUNDED IN CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS (2/2)

While digital infrastructure is advancing, many areas still face significant connectivity gaps.

- Connectivity varies around the world. Mobile broadband penetration is higher than fixed broadband globally, but remains low in low-income countries.
- Internet speeds in high-income countries are 5 to 10 times faster than in low-income countries.
- Remote work often requires computers rather than mobile devices, yet computer ownership varies widely between high-income countries and low-income countries: from over 80% of households in countries like Australia, Belgium, Estonia, Israel, Japan, and Poland to less than 20% of households in Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, and Nigeria. Computer ownership also differs significantly between urban and rural households.
- Informal care varies by region; for example, it is almost non-existent in the Nordic countries.²
- Childcare costs also vary, ranging from free in Italy, Chile, and Malta to exceeding 30% of a couple's average income in the UK, Ireland, New Zealand, and Switzerland.²



Share of people in range of 4G mobile network, 2022¹



Rural and urban households with a computer or tablet, by country income group, various years²

Source: (1) Our World in Data, [Share of People In Range of 4G Mobile Network](#), 2024; (2) World Bank, [Digital Progress and Trends Report](#), 2023.

SAMPLE EMPLOYEE NEEDS SURVEY

DEMOGRAPHICS

- What is your gender?
- What is your age?
- Are you a locally-based or migrant worker?
- Do you have children?
 - + If yes: How many children do you have? How old are they?
 - + If yes: what support do you have for childcare (e.g., spouse, grandparents, external daycare)?
 - + How do you bring your children to childcare?
- How do you travel to work and how long does it take?

NEEDS AND PRIORITIES FOR FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

Overall feedback on policies

- Which of these policies does your organization offer you? (e.g., paid maternity / paternity leave, childcare support, flexible work, breastfeeding breaks, lactation rooms, insurance plans)?
- Could you rank the top two policies that you would most need, to support you in balancing work and family better?
 - + What specific support would you need?

Challenges faced with policies

Paid parental leave

- How satisfied are you with the policy (scale of 1-5)?
- What challenges do you face in terms of paid parental leave (e.g., insufficient number of days, lack of team support to take leave, lack of flexibility to choose start/ end dates, etc.)?

Childcare support

- How satisfied are you with the policy (scale of 1-5)?
- What challenges do you face in childcare (e.g., high cost, quality of childcare workers, safety, transportation, opening hours, quality of facilities, etc.)?

Breastfeeding support

- How satisfied are you with the policy (scale of 1-5)?
- What challenges do you face in receiving breastfeeding support (e.g., lack of sufficient breaks, length of breaks, inadequate number of lactation rooms, lack of adequate facilities such as refrigerators, cleanliness, stigma faced by taking breaks etc.)?

Social protection measures

LIVING WAGE

- How satisfied are you with the policy (scale of 1-5)?

- Do you agree with this statement? "My income is sufficient to support my family" (scale of 1-5).
- On average, what percentage of your income goes to housing; food; and childcare expenses?

Health and safety

- How satisfied are you with the policy (scale of 1-5)?
- What concerns do you have related to health and safety (e.g., need for protective equipment, need for reduced hours when pregnant/ lactating, etc.)?

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