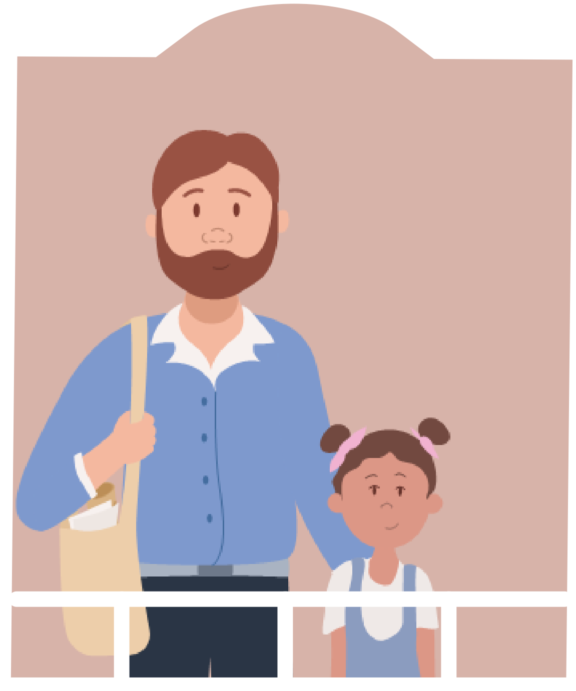
Brochure 1 of 4

Why Family-Friendly Policies Matter

Building Family-Friendly Workplaces: A Toolkit for Business



BACKGROUND

Family-friendly policies are a strategic business investment, not just a social initiative. Businesses that invest in family-friendly policies see higher productivity, stronger retention, and improved performance. Those that do not act risk losing talent, increasing costs, and falling behind as expectations from investors, consumers, and regulators rise.

UNICEF works with businesses to advance family-friendly workplaces as part of responsible business practice. As referenced in the Children's Rights and Business Principles, companies play a critical role in providing decent working conditions and supporting employees with caregiving responsibilities and strengthening the broader care ecosystem that underpins equitable socio-economic growth.

By supporting caregivers, businesses unlock workforce potential, reduce operational risks, and position themselves as leaders in a rapidly evolving global market.

WHAT ARE FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES?

Family-friendly policies are workplace measures and arrangements that enable employees to balance their work and family responsibilities. UNICEF takes a child rights lens, recognizing that when employees are supported as caregivers, businesses benefit from a more stable, productive, and engaged workforce which in turn creates a nurturing environment for children's development.

Family-friendly policies can include:

- A mix of paid parental leave (e.g., maternity, paternity, parental, child caring, emergency leave)
- Flexible working arrangements
- Breastfeeding support
- Affordable and quality childcare
- Protection of basic labour rights

Family-friendly policies are inclusive of all types of families and caregiving arrangements, including single parents, adoptive and foster families, LGBTIQ+ parents, kinship carers, and others.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES ARE GOOD FOR

BUSINESSES

Family-friendly policies deliver higher productivity, improved profitability, and strengthen competitiveness. Implementing these policies supports:

- Higher productivity and savings by increasing retention and reducing absenteeism and turnover
- Attracting top talent in a competitive labour market
- Increasing gender equality and leadership pipelines
- Strengthening operational stability and workforce reliability
- Enhancing trust and reputation, opening access to high-value markets.

In 2020 **Levi Strauss** introduced its global family paid leave policy for hourly and salaried US benefits eligible employees. This policy has **strengthened Levi Strauss' reputation, decreased turnover rates, increased worker satisfaction, and enhanced productivity**.

CHILD RIGHTS

Supporting employees as caregivers is an investment in the next generation, positively shaping children's development and future outcomes. Family-friendly policies facilitate:

- Enabling caregivers to provide children with time, care, and stability
- Improving children's health, education, and well-being
- Reducing risks linked to inadequate or unsafe care.

In 2023, **Inter IKEA Group** led an initiative with **Findora Internusa** in Indonesia to provide children of rattan farmers with a safe, nurturing space with trained teachers that supports their learning while their parents work. This led to **improvements in children's literacy, numeracy, and social development.**

SOCIETY

Family-friendly policies are foundational to inclusive and resilient economies, supporting the broader care ecosystem alongside governments and communities. These policies promote:

- Increasing workforce participation, especially among women
- Reducing inequality and supporting vulnerable workers
- Strengthening care systems across communities
- Contributing to long-term economic stability and growth

In 2016, **SORWATHE Tea Company** identified that plantation workers, particularly mothers, lacked safe childcare options, making it difficult to balance work and caregiving. The company partnered with UNICEF to establish preschools and mobile crèches and train childcare workers.

This initiative **enabled mothers to focus on their work and led to broader efforts in partnership with the Rwandan Government to expand support for families across the country.**

CASE STUDY: Biosev

Biosev, the world's second-largest sugarcane producer based in Brazil, implemented a wide range of family-friendly policies ranging from paid leave to upskilling and reskilling programmes. Other notable arrangements included focusing on the health and safety of pregnant and lactating women, as well as transportation access in case of family emergencies.

These policies have allowed Biosev to:

- Promote productivity by retaining the best workers and encouraging high performance
- Raise operational outcomes by promoting gender equality and a strong safety culture
- Enhance its reputation as a modern, sustainable company to workers, investors, and the wider community

SUPPORTS MEETING INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS AND OTHER EXPECTATIONS

Family-friendly policies support meeting global responsible business practice expectations. They support alignment with:

- International and domestic labour standards
- Global sustainability and ESG frameworks
- A growing number of global regulations requiring family-friendly policies and responsible business conduct more broadly.

As these expectations grow, family-friendly policies are becoming a baseline for operating in global markets.

WHO EXPECTS THESE POLICIES?

The demand for family-friendly policies is being driven by stakeholder interests across the entire business ecosystem.

- **Investors** are linking ESG performance to financial value and risk
- **Consumers** are choosing brands that reflect responsible practices
- **Supply chain partners** are requiring compliance with social standards
- **Governments** are expanding regulations related to family-friendly policies
- **Employees**, particularly younger generations, are increasingly expecting flexible and inclusive workplaces.

RISK OF INACTION

Inaction can place businesses at a strategic disadvantage in an increasingly competitive and regulated environment. The absence of family-friendly policies can result in:

- Higher turnover and increased recruitment costs
- Increased absenteeism and reduced productivity
- Loss of skilled workers, especially women
- Reduced competitiveness in global supply chains
- Exposure to regulatory and ESG compliance risks
- Negative impacts on employee well-being and future workforce quality

TAKE ACTION TODAY

Learn more and identify practical first steps with the UNICEF Building Family-Friendly Workplaces Toolkit at:

https://www.unicef.org/childrightsandbusiness/workstreams/global-supply-chains/family-friendly-workplaces.

unicef for every child