Brochure 4 of 4

Making the Business Case for Family-Friendly Policies

Building Family-Friendly Workplaces: A Toolkit for Business

FROM EVIDENCE TO INTERNAL ACTION

A strong business case is essential to successful internal advocacy for family-friendly policies. The challenge is not only demonstrating the value of family-friendly policies, but also clearly framing their business impact for leaders and decision-makers. Making the case requires translating these policies into clear, measurable business outcomes. The goal is to highlight how family-friendly policies are strategic investments that support performance and long-term growth.

The following sections provide practical guidance to help you build a compelling internal case, align with leadership priorities and workforce needs, and move from awareness to implementation.

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.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE

1) Tailoring Messaging to Your Audience

Identify the right stakeholders to engage early, considering both their level of buy-in and decision-making power. Then align the benefits of family-friendly policies with what matters most to each group to build the most compelling case:

- **Leadership**: Focus on Return on Investment (ROI), competitiveness, and long-term growth
- **Human Resources**: Emphasize employee retention, recruitment, and engagement through responding to workforce needs
- **Finance**: Highlight cost savings and return on investment
- **ESG/Sustainability**: Link to reporting, compliance, and stakeholder expectations
- **Employee representatives or unions**: Policy uptake, effective implementation, and trust

Framing the same policy or investment through different lenses increases the likelihood of buy-in.

2) Linking to Business Priorities

To make a compelling case, position family-friendly policies as strategic investments that support key business priorities and performance outcomes:

- **Cost savings**: Reduced turnover and absenteeism lower recruitment and replacement costs
- **Talent strategy**: Stronger retention and attraction of skilled workers, especially women
- **Operational performance**: Improved productivity through reduced stress and workforce stability
- **Risk management**: Better compliance with evolving labour laws and reduced disruption risks
- **ESG alignment**: Stronger positioning with investors, buyers, and consumers

3) Framing ROIs

To make the case compelling, translate policies into measurable values such as:

- Number of employees impacted
- Reduction in turnover and absenteeism
- Productivity gains per worker
- Cost of implementation vs. financial return

TALKING POINT EXAMPLES:

Family-friendly policies are a business investment, not a cost. They reduce turnover, maintain talent, and improve productivity, while addressing hidden costs from absenteeism, attrition, and disengagement that businesses are already absorbing.

Family-friendly policies reduce compliance risks and support rising ESG expectations. As labour standards and workforce expectations evolve, family-friendly policies help ensure regulatory compliance while strengthening ESG commitments and reporting, aligning with investor, buyer, and regulatory expectations.

Family-friendly policies can be implemented in a phased, practical way. Companies can start with targeted pilots, manage costs effectively, and scale based on demonstrated results.

Family-friendly policies should start with understanding workforce needs. Assessing priorities helps target the most impactful investments, aligning policies with the specific business context and workforce needs.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTINS TO EXPECT:

Do family-friendly policies create additional costs for the business? *While there are upfront costs, many companies see net savings through reduced turnover, lower absenteeism, and improved productivity.*

Will these policies disrupt operations? *When designed effectively, policies improve workforce stability and planning, reducing disruptions rather than increasing them.*

Are these policies relevant for all sectors and roles? *Yes, but implementation should be tailored. Different sectors and unique business contexts require customized approaches.*

Do employees actually use these policies? *Yes, and uptake increases when policies are accessible, inclusive, and supported by leadership and workplace culture.*

Where should we start? *Start small and start now! Use a staggered approach. Begin by identifying workforce needs and business priorities. The UNICEF Toolkit guides businesses in this process.*

DEMONSTRATING SUCCESS THROUGH EXAMPLES

To build a strong case, identify and share successful case studies from businesses in your sector or peer companies to demonstrate proven impact and real-world feasibility.

- **Farms:** By introducing mobile crèches and on-site childcare, SORWATHE in Rwanda reduced caregiving barriers that previously limited worker productivity especially for women. This led to **significant increases in daily picking capacity from approximately 5kg to up to 20kg**, showing how childcare investments directly improve operational performance.

- **Factories:** By enabling on-demand pay, ECCO in Viet Nam helped workers manage urgent financial needs and avoid high-interest debt. The initiative reduced workers' stress and led to an **approximate 10% reduction in employee turnover**, demonstrating the business value of financial wellbeing support.

- **Offices:** By implementing a workplace programme, Banco de Bogotá in Colombia improved employee wellbeing and retention by supporting breastfeeding and co-parenting, reaching over 1,500 working parents. The programme led to a **44% increase in positive workplace perception among participants and an 18% rise in its Net Promoter Score**, strengthening both employee experience and organizational performance.

- **Service-Oriented Workplaces:** By introducing flexible and part-time roles for medical staff, George Hospital in South Africa **improved staff retention and reduced burnout** in a high-pressure healthcare setting. The initiative strengthened workforce stability while creating a more robust healthcare service.

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.

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