

# Global Best Practices: Care Provision in the Private Sector

## INTRODUCTION

The private sector, a major and growing provider of employment globally, can be an important partner in care provision: By instituting policies and practices that support, reduce and redistribute care work – such as child and family care and flexible work schemes – it can enable women, and others with care responsibilities, to enter and stay in the labor force.

This report reviews “best practices” used by the private sector to implement to recognize, reduce and redistribute care work. This report is part of the research that ICRW is conducting for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) that will help strengthen the business case for the private sector address care in the workplace and inform its internal and external stakeholders on effective and innovative strategies for firms to accommodate the care needs of workers and invest in broader care ecosystems.

## METHODOLOGY

The report is based on an extensive literature review of how the private sector accommodates worker’s care needs. We catalogued companies considered leaders, developed three in-depth corporate case studies, and conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with subject matter experts in the private sector, in multilateral organizations, development banks, recruitment companies and care sector providers. We conducted a systematic review that tracked over 188 resources, which examine policies and practices that support, reduce and/or redistribute care. We searched human resources and management science journals, books, and other papers in the grey literature to uncover information on practices and policies worldwide. The search process included reviewing Google, Google scholar, corporate blogs and publications, JSTOR, Science Direct, RePEC, Feminist Economics and Elsevier. We curated practices listed in these reports and information on companies, identified key informants and interviewed corporate representatives.

We continued to identify companies considered leaders in the gender space by looking at companies ranked highly by gender in the workplace awards, and certification or scoring systems (e.g., Equileap, EDGE; see the Trento case study). We reviewed, tracked and catalogued 20 companies that had policies and practices to support women’s unpaid care. These companies were tracked on their size, location, industry, and the different practices and policies implemented, as well as the business impacts and lessons learned. We developed four in-depth case studies on Patagonia, Yesim Tekstil, EMD Serono and the Municipality of Trento in Italy to capture the diversity of private sector approaches and public sector initiatives to engage the private sector. These case studies focus on the incentives to accommodate the care needs of workers and to provide flexible and family-friendly schedules, the return to the firm on the investment in accommodating care needs and the impact for workers.

## “BEST PRACTICE” OVERVIEW

“Best practice” is generally defined as, “a technique or methodology that has been proven to lead to a reliable result” (WHO, 2017). In the context of care, a **“best practice” for the private sector would be a policy or practice that has been proven to support, reduce or redistribute care work for their workers.**

Based on the literature review we explore “best practices” that have shown to support, reduce and/or redistribute care work (see table 1). These practices can be grouped in categories that include: (1) flexible working, (2) non-transferable parental leave, (3) direct and indirect childcare and elder care provision by the firm, (4) intermittent care needs support, (5) manager training, and (6) employee support groups.

For each “best practice”, we applied additional lenses that explore: (1) cost of implementation (relative to other practices) to the firm, (2) benefits of the practice to the firm, and (3) partnerships required. We also delved into the feasibility of implementing the practice and how the effectiveness of the practice might differ in different companies and contexts, understanding that the “best” types of childcare and elder care provision as well as intermittent care needs support can vary based on the company and context.

Table 1. “Best practice” benchmarking

	Practice/Policy	About
Flexible working	Flexible working policies	Flexible working policies allow employees to have greater control over starting and finishing times, shifts, number of hours and/or location of work in order to help parents and caregivers manage care agendas. This can include policies such as flextime, 10-hour days for condensed work weeks, and working from home.
Non-transferable paternity leave	Paid maternity leave	Maternity leave is a period of approved absence from one’s place of work for purposes of giving birth and caring for the newborn (a biological or adopted child) designated for mothers. It can last anywhere from several weeks to a period of months depending on the organization and may be paid or unpaid depending on policies. A certain amount may also be legally mandated for some nations, states or municipalities. Paid maternity leave is important for all women to be able to give birth and take leave needed to care for infant children.
	Non-transferable paid paternity leave	<p>Paternity leave is a period of approved absence from one’s place of work for purposes of caring for the newborn (a biological or adopted child) designated for fathers.</p> <p>Research indicates that in order for fathers to take advantage of paternity leave it must be accompanied by a high earnings-related payment. Non-transferable leave means that if the father does not take advantage of the paternity leave (or of his portion of the parental leave), the total leave period is shortened and the family thus loses out. In Iceland, for example,</p>

		total parental leave is nine months – three non-transferable months for the mother, three non-transferable months for the father and three remaining months to transfer between the mother and father. It is important for men to take paternity leave as involvement in the first few weeks and months of the care of a newborn creates a more even distribution of household and child responsibilities over time.
<b>Childcare and elder care provision</b>	On-site or near-site company childcare center	<p>Providing child-care at or near employees' workplaces can be convenient and attractive for new parents, and the hours can be adjusted based on the working schedule. They also can be resource intensive to set up and run, and having a workplace childcare center may not be feasible in all locations in which a company operates. Depending on business resources and employee and business needs, some companies can partner with local childcare providers for near-site company childcare.</p> <p>Companies can also support shared care arrangements between parents to be more cost effective for on-site care. In this scenario, companies provide a space for childcare and pay for some staff, while parents manage the center and provide some of the childcare themselves. This model can work in combination with flexible working options for parents not in full-time employment.</p>
	Reserved spaces in private or public childcare centers	In scenarios where a dedicated childcare facility may be too expensive or unavailable, companies can reserve a set number of spaces in commercial or public care facilities. Reserving spaces can share the risk of fluctuating demand for services between the employer and care provider.
	Subsidies, vouchers and/or reduced rates for child-care / elder care	Depending on business resources and employee and business needs, companies can subsidize costs instead of providing care support for free – potentially through partnering with local childcare and elder care providers. They can also offer vouchers or reduced rates. This approach can be a cost-effective option for employers and allows for flexibility of employees in selecting a care provider that meets their needs. It may not be a good option for businesses in areas with few quality childcare providers.
	Partnership with other companies	Companies can collectively pool resources to provide a near-site childcare center for employees of the different companies. This is a good, cost-effective option particularly when companies do not need many childcare spaces. In this scenario, companies share investments and operating costs. This has been applied in export processing zones and other industrial and trade zones to provide care to workers at a particular site.
	Engagement with other employers to provide additional resources for	This consortium model, in which several organizations channel resources to another provider, is particularly useful for employers without adequate resources to fund a solo center. It can be used to increase the supply of publicly available child and elder care resources or to buy-in to other provider's care provision securing spaces for workers.

	publicly or externally provided childcare and elder care	
	Public-private partnership (PPP) and Public-Public Partnerships for child and elder care	<p>PPPs have been used as a mechanism for employers to partner with governmental organizations to expand the supply of childcare and elder care in a particular community. For example, the company can provide the land and pay for construction costs while the city can be responsible for all operations, quality control and regulation. Feasibility of this approach depends on the public sector's policy priorities, resource base and willingness to work with the private sector. The extent to which they deliver quality care and quality jobs needs to be carefully evaluated.<sup>1</sup> These collaborations appear to function best when they are properly regulated and are not for-profit endeavors.</p> <p>Another option is a Public-Public partnership. This is between a government body or public authority and another such body or a non-profit organization to provide services and/or facilities.</p>
<b>Intermittent care needs support</b>	School vacation care, emergency and back-up care services	In order to support intermittent care needs there are different options that a company can provide. These include school vacation care, and emergency and back-up care services. School vacation care can include offering summer camps for employee's children or additional paid leave aligning with summer vacations or holidays. Back-up care services can support parents with alternative care options at short notice if care arrangements break down at short notice. Companies can work with external services that provide back-up child or elder care and either pay for this service or provide subsidies. Also, allowing options to bring children to work can be effective for some working environments.
<b>Training managers</b>	Training managers on how to support new parents (male and female), as well as on unconscious bias	Unsupportive supervisors and organizational cultures commonly counteract formal policies. Managers who oversee implementation of new policies often do so with limited success because they hold strong biases in favor of old policies. Finally, where policy implementation is based on supervisor discretion it can be subverted or rationed. Training managers on how to support new parents and caregivers (male and female), as well as on unconscious bias, about caring rights and responsibilities can prove very effective to reinforce policies and programs.

<sup>1</sup> See work by GADN and Eurodad on Can Public Private Partnerships Deliver Gender Equality? (GADN 2019).

<b>Support groups</b>	Support groups for employees	<p>Employee support groups provide opportunities to develop problem solving and coping skills. They can also support employees to discuss and address a variety of issues including conflicting time demands, emotional spillover, career priorities between spouses, child development, child care, gender division of household labor, etc. Often individuals and couples perceive problems as personal that are socially and culturally constructed and mediated; a support group can help people reframe their rights and obligations to care and seek help. Support groups can also foster organizational and legislative change.</p> <p>Many organizations have all-female groups (e.g., Gap's Women in Leadership group).</p>
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## FINDINGS

This section outlines the following for each “best practice” category: types of policies and practices, relative costs of implementation and benefits, requirements for implementation, and discusses how the effectiveness might differ in different contexts.

### FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICIES

Flexible working policies provide support to caregivers and can reduce care burdens for female caregivers in the case of male partners taking flexible work to assist in care work. Policies that fall under flexible working policies include flextime, compressed work weeks, and telecommuting or working from home. The costs of implementing these policies are low, relative to other care-related policies. Costs can include technology provision and support to ensure that employees can work from home.

Flexible working policies have been linked in the literature to various business indicators including improved retention, enhanced productivity, reduced absenteeism, enhanced organizational commitment, enhancing greater job satisfaction and morale, reduced job stress, improved recruitment. For example, data from a multi-organization database of studies conducted between 1996 and 2006 revealed that perceived flexibility and supportive work life policies were related to greater employee engagement and longer than expected retention. Both formal and occasional use of flexibility were positively associated with perceived flexibility, employee engagement, and expected retention (Richman et al, 2008). Critically, these positive business-related outcomes result in part because flexible working policies are expected to reduce stressors and conflicts related to balancing work and family responsibilities.

One study reviewed conducted a cost-benefit analysis to find that employers saved money by improving employee retention, decreasing office space and increasing their ability to hire highly skilled workers who might be disabled, home-bound or otherwise unable to commute daily (Smith and Gardiner, 2007). Telecommuting can also be cost effective for employees, allowing them to save on transportation, food and clothing expenditures (Goodrich, 1990).

*“We are keen to understand how all of these cultural expectations for women have impacted their ability to thrive and rise in the workplace. Flexibility at work is key, care giving has impacted women’s rise to leadership.” Key informant, transnational company.*

Despite these potential gains, there are few studies that link returns on investment (ROI) analysis to flexible work policies, one web-based survey fielded to lawyers in more than 100 Canadian law firms 2003, found that both female and male associates with positive perceptions of work-life culture at the firm intend to stay longer than those with negative perceptions. Associate turnover is estimated to cost the firm US\$315,000 (which is twice the average associate’s salary), consequently, work-life balance is considered to be important for firms to address from a financial perspective (Catalyst, 2005).

Although most studies highlight positive impacts on firms, there have been some studies that report findings that flexible work arrangements can be poor predictors of the stressors impacting workers and may not yield the benefits expected. Shinn et al (1989) found no effect of formal policies on married parents’ perceptions of job stressors and job satisfaction. Another study by Dex et al (2001) found that “flex” time actually increased absences in the UK.

It is important to note that for flexible working policies to be effective in reducing work-family conflict and result in improved business indicators, the environment and culture of the workplace must uphold and foster these policies. Flexible work arrangements should be made available to both men and women, and both men and women should also be encouraged to utilize the policies. If only women are taking advantage of flexible work policies in a culture that places a high value on face time and being visibly present, then those individuals that use these policies and programs will be penalized. For flexible work policies to be implemented effectively and for companies to benefit from the potential business impacts, it is important that the policies are available to both men and women, that both men and women are encouraged to take them, and that managers understand why the policies are being implemented. It is also important to note that flexible working policies may not be available to employees in certain levels and job categories. This can create another form of social stratification at work that can be counter-productive. Efforts should be made to ensure these benefits are widely available.

## LEAVE FOR CARE

Leave for care provides support to caregivers. Further, given that women tend to be the primary caretakers, if and when men are able to take leave to assist in care, care burdens for women can be reduced. Policies that fall under leave for care include: maternity leave, paternity leave and other paid and emergency leave to care for dependents. Paid maternity leave is a statutory entitlement for employed women in almost all countries with the exception of the United States, Suriname and Papua New Guinea (ILO, 2014). Also, a growing number of countries provide paid paternity leave around the time of birth and, for adoptive parents, around the time of adoption. Having job protection to support parental leave is fundamental for the use of this leave.

The cost of implementing these policies varies and depends on the days of leave provided and the source of funding. Policies related to leave for care have been linked to various business benefits in the literature including retention, enhanced productivity, and enhanced recruitment. There are several studies in the literature that point to these benefits. Grover and Crooker (1995) found that the

presence of a maternity leave policy significantly reduced intent to leave among all employees in a US national cross section. Further, Dex et al (2001) found in the UK that offering paternity leave added the largest increase to the probability of above average performance in the case of labor productivity.

By men taking leave, this equalizes the division of family labor and significantly increases fathers' involvement with their infants (Hyde et al, 1995). Indeed, most mothers and fathers develop their parenting skills while parenting. When mothers are on leave from their jobs and fathers are not, mothers tend to learn more about their children's needs and personalities. This reinforces a mistaken but commonly held belief that mothers are naturally better caregivers and leads to maternal domination of child care (Malin, 1994).

There are three key barriers to paternal use of family leave: being available, being unpaid, and hostility to paternal use of parental leave (Malin, 1994). Because it is not normative for men to be engaged fully in family work, they can suffer even greater career fallout than women in taking paternity leave. Having paid, non-transferable paternity leave is thus important to encourage men to take leave (Starrels, 1992). It is also critical that managers are trained in supporting new parents and supporting them in returning to work.

There is no clear answer in the literature regarding the "ideal" time for parental leave (from an overall health, welfare, economic and business perspective) – and how this might differ in different contexts, cultures and companies (OECD 2011). Indeed, how return to work is handled is typically more important than the actual length of leave (Collings, Freeney & van der Werff, 2018). However, there is still some evidence regarding length of maternity leave and impacts on child development, individual well-being, future employability, wages and gender roles.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends breastfeeding up to 6 months of age and returning to work early can be a factor in preventing exclusive breastfeeding thus having potential negative health impacts for babies (WHO, 2016). Hyde et al (1996) found in evaluating a sample of Wisconsin parents, that short leaves (6 weeks or less) were a risk factor for increased maternal depression, decreased maternal affect and responsiveness, particularly so when combined with poor physical health, difficult infant temperament, or marital problems. Their study further revealed that having a job-guaranteed when using leave significantly decreased women's anxieties about losing their jobs.

There is various research exploring economic implications of differing maternity leaves in terms of women's rate of participation in the labor market, the effect of longer periods of leave on human capital, mothers' future employability after taking leave and costs for business. From a labor market perspective, research suggests 30 weeks of leave is the best, but 20 weeks is seen as ideal for minimizing negative effects on high-skill wages and occupational segregation (Grimshaw & Rubery 2015). While Ronsen (2015) found that universal parental leaves with job protection and earnings compensation increase women's labor market attachment in Norway, very long leaves (e.g., more than one year) may have negative consequences at both individual and societal levels. Taking extended leave can result in "human-capital depreciation" in which their skills may get rusty and work-social networks can fray negatively impacting an individual's career progression and trajectory (Hymowitz, 2013). Ultimately, existing evidence on this subject is generally weak and leave programs vary widely between and within countries (Broeks and Straing, 2017). From a business perspective, the jury is also still out regarding ideal leave time. However, providing maternity leave can secure



business benefits, which can vary based on the sector and size of the firm. For example, Google increased leave from 12 weeks to 18, and in turn halved the rate at which new mothers quit. When Accenture doubled leave from eight weeks to 16, its turnover rate for new mothers fell by 40% (Collings, Freeney & van der Werff, 2018).

It is clear that additional research is needed on paternity leave and transitions from and back into the workplace that support caring and foster career mobility (Kunze 2015).

Another concern is how much income workers are entitled to during parental leave and how this is financed, especially where insufficient income may undermine leave-taking. The ILO's Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) is the most up-to-date international labor standard on maternity protection and provides for 14 weeks of maternity benefit. This also notes that women on maternity leave should be entitled to a cash benefit no less than two thirds of her previous earnings or a comparable amount (ILO, 2018). Firms should not bear the full cost of replacing salaries during maternity and paternity leave and it is recommended that a social insurance scheme operate through the tax system to socialize the costs of financing this leave (ILO, 2014; OECD, 2011).

## CHILDCARE AND ELDER CARE PROVISION

Childcare and elder care provision reduces care burdens. There are several options that companies can choose from in childcare and elder care provision. These include: subsidies for childcare and elder care, securing reserved spaces in private childcare centers, on-site or near-site company childcare centers, partnerships with other companies to provide a childcare facility in a more cost-effective manner, engagement with other employers to fund an existing center, and public-private partnerships (PPP) for child and elder care in which companies partner with governmental organizations to expand the supply of childcare and/or elder care. In addition, support in the form of referrals for childcare and elder care provision can be provided.

Provision of childcare and elder care are linked to business impacts of retention, enhanced productivity, reduced absenteeism, enhanced organizational commitment, heightened job satisfaction and reduced job stress. Critically, these positive business trends result in part because childcare and elder care provision are expected to reduce stressors related to balancing work and family due to reduced work-family conflict.

Various studies have found that employer supported childcare decreases absenteeism and that childcare policies are linked to reduced turnover and tardiness (Glass & Estes, 1997; Seyler et al., 1995). Seyler et al (1995) and Ransom & Burud (1989) link employer supported childcare policies to positive effects on productivity and work performance. Positive effects related to organizational commitment (Grover & Crooker, 1995) and employer morale (Ransom & Burud, 1989) are also observed. While specific research on elder care is more sparse, positive benefits also exist in the literature. One survey of employers in the USA, found that the majority of employers reported that elder care services help decrease absenteeism, manage employee stress and boost productivity (Dembe et al, 2008).

There are several corporate examples illustrating this business case. Nalt Enterprise, a textile producer in Vietnam, found that offering childcare at the company reduced staff turnover by one third (and it costs 85% of a factory worker's annual salary to replace that worker). The Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UF in Japan realized a more than four-fold increase in retention of new mothers and saved



US\$45 million in employee turnover related costs by offering childcare and related initiatives such as extended maternity leave. Martur, a car component producer in Turkey, reduced staff turnover by 15% from offering childcare-related benefits, and estimate it takes eight months for a new production worker to become fully productive. Finally, Afrifresh in South Africa and MAS Kreeda Al Safi Madaba in Jordan found that efforts to support the childcare needs of their employees – alongside compliance with local and international regulations and standards – are enhancing their reputations as employers of choice in their respective communities of operation. Further, investments in childcare are helping to strengthen their relationship with high-value, international buyers (IFC, 2017).

Despite the majority of research highlighting these positive business impacts, there are several studies with findings that conflict with these results. For example, Kossek and Nichol (1992) and Thomas and Ganster (1995) found no significant effect of the use of childcare centers on absenteeism, while Glass and Riley (1998) found no significant impact of employer childcare assistance on retention following pregnancy. Kossek & Nichols (1992) also found no significant impact of these policies was found on work performance. Finally, Thomas and Ganster (1995) finds that employer-supported child care policies do not significantly impact job satisfaction. The realized benefits for the firm depend very much on the acceptability of use of the benefits and the company culture. These findings also need to be explored in greater depth for the sector and type of employee.

Selection of which option for a company to pursue depends on a number of factors including, for example, size of company, employee demographics and needs, desires of the company as well as investment available, and local conditions such as availability of quality childcare. Some of the options, such as providing one's own childcare facility, are clearly more resource and cost intensive and potential cost should be factored into decision making for a company. Simply providing information on childcare and elder care provision through referrals is the least cost intensive approach, with the highest costs associated with providing one's own childcare center. However, there may not be sufficient quality childcare and elder care nearby and therefore other options are important to explore. These options can include funding a new childcare center with other companies or pursuing a PPP to enhance local childcare and elder care quality. Furthermore, while having a childcare center on-site can be expensive, it can also produce strong business benefits that may make it somewhat cost effective. For example, Patagonia provides on-site childcare to its 550 employees at headquarters in Ventura, California and has found that the company recoups 91% of costs on its on-site childcare. Costs are recouped through tax benefits (50%), employee retention (30%), employee engagement and job satisfaction (11%). Another example includes JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A., which has estimated returns of 115% for its childcare program (Marcario, 2016). However, on-site childcare centers are not necessary to achieve positive results, as long as adequate and high-quality childcare is available and accessible in the community. Furthermore, in contexts where highly commodified access to care services produces very unequal access to quality care, the preferred approach may be to work with the public sector to expand the reach and quality of existing services through taxes and subsidies.

It is important to also explore how different policies and care provision are implemented and supported internally. First, childcare and elder care provision should be made available to both men and women. Secondly, supervisor support is critical to effectively implement policies related to care provision. Supervisor support for child-care arrangements links to employee satisfaction and can decrease work/family conflict leading to business benefits (Pringle, 1996). Moreover, Grover and Crooker (1995) found that offering information on childcare services had a significant negative impact on intent to leave. Therefore, on-site employer-sponsored childcare centers aren't necessary to

achieve desired business results – given that adequate and high-quality childcare programs and support are available and accessible to employees.

In regards to childcare and elder care provision, quality of care is very important. Having provision of care in itself is not sufficient, particularly if the quality of care is low or the care is difficult to access. As one key informant at a multilateral organization with experience conducting research and programming on care provision reports,

*"The quality piece is very important. Even if [a company] were to give provision of childcare, it could be bad... [Further] each employer needs to listen to its employees to [gauge care needs] and see if [different interventions are] feasible."*

Outside of formal childcare and elder care provision, companies should consider supporting intermittent care needs that can decrease absenteeism and positively impact work-life balance and satisfaction. To support intermittent care needs there are different options that a company can provide. These includes school vacation care, and emergency and back-up care services. School vacation care can include offering summer camps for employee children or additional paid leave aligning with summer vacations or holidays. Back-up care services can support parents with alternative care options at short notice if care arrangements creak down at short notice. Companies can work with external services that provide back-up child or elder care and either pay for this service or provide subsidies. Also, allowing children options to bring their children to work can be effective for some working environments (IFC, 2017).

Doing so can have positive implications for the firm. Recent research from McKinsey shows that top-performing companies are more likely to offer extended parental leave, as well as programs to smooth the transitions to and from the leave (HBR 2018). But they are also more than twice as likely as those at the bottom of the distribution to offer emergency back-up child care services, and three times as likely to offer on-site child care.

## MANAGER TRAINING AND EMPLOYER SUPPORT GROUPS

Policies to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work can be implemented but ultimately without an enabling workplace culture, these policies will not be successful. Unsupportive supervisors and organizational cultures commonly counteract formal policies. Indeed, managers who oversee implementation of new policies often have limited success in implementing those policies as they hold biases in favor of old policies. Also, where policy implementation is partially based on supervisor discretion it can easily be subverted and undermined (Starrels, 1992).

On an informal level, managers must interpret and implement formal policies in such a way as to be consistent with the purpose and intent of the policies. However, as a result of their own social and or personal resistance to changing roles, managers may make it difficult for subordinates to take advantage of progressive programs. If subordinates do take advantage of programs, managers may judge or evaluate employees negatively who use these policies or programs (Brinton & Mun, 2016). Ultimately, disapproval from managers and co-workers discourages workers from using work-family programs to the fullest – or even at all.

On the other hand, research finds that supervisor knowledge and understanding is critical in effective implementation of unpaid care and work-life balance policies and practices. Thomas and Ganster (1995) found that supportive supervisors had direct positive effects on employee perceptions of control over both work and family; Warren and Johnson (1995) found that work environment support and supervisor flexibility were related to lower work-family role strain. Ultimately, managerial support has been the strongest predictor of use of initiatives related to work-life balance (Thompson et al, 1999) and is critical to a family-friendly workplace culture (Friedman, 2001).

Despite managerial support and understanding being critical for unpaid care and work-life balance initiatives and policies to work, most organizations do not train managers to build their understanding and support. Indeed, a 2011 US World at Work survey found that only 21% of organizations offering flexible work options provide training to managers on how to support employees in being successful with flexible work arrangements. Unconscious bias training is important for managers, as they may not realize the biases they have related to subordinates – both male and female – taking advantage of unpaid care and work-life balance initiatives.

Beliefs about gender roles and responsibilities are a significant obstacle to care and work-life balance policies being effective. Family-friendly and work-life balance policies are often seen as a benefit for women and that they address “women’s issues”. Unsurprisingly then, female employees take more advantage of work-life balance initiatives, while men who take advantage of them can be judged or punished. In this scenario, gender norms of care are reinforced. Gerson and Jacobs (2005) confirm that it is common for family-friendly policies to ‘reinforce and reproduce both public and private gender inequality.

Employees reporting higher levels of management support and supervisor support for care, perceive lesser career damage and fewer time conflicts, and as a result tend to use more work-life balance initiatives. Thus, ensuring that managers (and employees) see these initiatives and policies as appropriate and accessible to men as well as women is important (Wise, 2003). In order to make use of available work-life balance initiatives employees need to feel that their career prospects will not be damaged if they use these initiatives (Gardner & Smith, 2002).

Although training topics and goals might be similar in different geographies, these will still need substantial adaptation across different contexts and companies. Trainings should build an understanding around the specific unpaid care and work-life balance policies and potential business benefits for the organization, build awareness around how to support new parents including helping them return to work, and incorporate reflection on local culture and gender expectations. Also, while workplace culture plays a large part in determining the experience of policies, so do resources. Organizational leaders need to acknowledge what is being asked of managers as part of their and their team’s business responsibilities and ensure this is compatible with formal work-life policies. If tasks and targets are not adapted to take account of the flexible work-life policies, then these policies will not be adhered to.

In addition to training managers, employee support groups can create enabling environments for supporting caregivers. Support groups provide opportunities to develop problem-solving and coping skills. Such groups can also address a variety of issues including conflicting time demands, emotional spillover, career priorities between spouses, child development, child care, and the gender division of household labor, etc. Often individuals and couples perceive problems as being personal that are in

fact socially and culturally constructed and mediated, a support group can help people correctly diagnose the challenge and work to resolve it. Support groups can also lead to greater demands for organizational and legislative change.

## FINANCING CONSIDERATIONS

The choice of what types of care provision and programs to adopt is not independent of the financing mechanisms. For instance, in the case of maternity and paternity leave, if the full costs of financing leave fall on the firm, this can create additional burdens and potentially increase the perceived and actual cost of hiring workers with care needs. Where some of these costs are also born by the public sector, whether through taxation and social insurance schemes or tax credits, the care provisions can be more easily implemented—particularly by smaller firms. With strategic cost-sharing between the public and the private sector, the opportunities to offer maternity and paternity leave of paid family increase (Ortiz, Cummins and Karunanethy, 2015; ILO, 2014; Ilkkaracan 2018). Moreover, there is the opportunity to hire replacements during these leaves and offer temporary employment contracts to new labor market entrants or those wishing to return to work after some period outside of the labor force. This has the potential to dynamize the labor market and facilitate greater labor market attachment in the medium and longer term.

*“The cost cannot be all on the employer, that doesn’t work... In an ideal world, the government needs to provide some subsidy.” Key informant, multilateral organization.*

The extent to which financing is entirely by the private sector or shared with the public sector also affects the private sector’s engagement with public sector initiatives and actions. Public sector financing can “crowd-in” private sector actions, spurring firms to address care needs.

*“We are a global company that operates in 55 countries, some countries have a lot more infrastructure and support where the government provides infrastructure, supports policies and legislates care needs: Germany, France, Sweden.” KII, transnational company.*

Regardless of whether there is public sector financing for care provision and programs, there are still actions that firms can take which may be less resource-intensive than direct care provision. These can include exploring flexible work conditions and supporting care provision through providing referrals to quality care providers (where / as is possible), for example. While these are not sufficient to fully support care needs, they demonstrate that multiple options exist to accommodate workers caring needs and responsibilities.

## ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The public sector has a central role to play in shaping the incentives and mandates for care, providing and regulating the provision of care and socializing the cost of care, with the goal of ensuring access to universal quality child and elder care (ILO, 2018b; Ilkkaracan, 2018). Many of the case studies explored, and key informants interviewed, reported that their companies initially began to accommodate the care needs of workers, or invest in care, as a result of government mandates for

childcare provision. Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities<sup>2</sup> is an ILO convention that lays out how the public and private sector can collaborate to accommodate and resolve care needs, that has been ratified by 44 countries. This convention refers to many of the best practices highlighted in this report and suggests how the private and public sector can work together to meet the care needs of workers.

In an ideal world, access to quality care would be universal and not stratified by income or labor force participation (Ilkharacan, 2018). The goal of engaging the private sector in accommodating the care needs of workers is to ensure that care needs are addressed and do not conflict with work responsibilities. Demonstrating that there are returns to accommodating workers' care needs also highlights the potential fiscal space that exists to be redistributed towards providing universal access to quality care.

## METRICS AND MEASUREMENT

To track the impact of investing in care provisions and workplace flexibility, many firms will need to review their human resources tracking mechanisms. To fully account for the potential impact on hiring, retention, promotion and productivity, as well as absenteeism and sick leave, companies will need to develop a set of appropriate metrics that allow them to track the implications at the firm of supporting care needs, including the return on investment if applicable. Companies will also need to track investments in training and support for the use of care programs. These measures can be strategically combined with workplace climate surveys that collect information about employee satisfaction, productivity, use of benefits, manager support and encouragement, and other measures of gender equality in the firm. This will allow companies to track the pathways through which investments in training, care provision and workplace flexibility affect key bottom-line outcomes such as retention, promotion, productivity and firm loyalty.

*"We have taken a look at the ROI for the onsite childcare. We do this every three years. Three years ago, we found we had a 91% return on investment. 50% is from a tax benefit. This is a Federal tax credit for on-site child care. This reduces our taxable income and we have a 30% return on investment because of retention." Key informant, United States.*

*"We have the resources to do an analytics survey, we understand attrition well, we have data on job level and sex, and can track attrition and promotion and hiring rates. Our real challenge is that it is difficult to address productivity issues. Absenteeism, sick days? We can count them. Exit interviews are also a potential source of information. But we don't really have the metrics to capture ROI yet." Key informant, transnational company.*

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Creating an enabling environment to recognize, reduce and redistribute care needs involves implementing policies and practices within the categories of flexible work, leave for care, and childcare and elder care provision (including intermittent care needs support). Flexible work, leave for care and care provision reduce work-family conflict when implemented effectively, which is then associated

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<sup>2</sup> See [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C156](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C156)

with business indicators including increased retention, improved productivity, greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Further, highly committed employees perform at a higher level than non-committed employees (Boots & Danzinger, 2008). Prospective employees can also be attracted to environments that balance work and family (see Trento case study).

For employees to take advantage of these policies and practices, they will need to train managers and workers on the policies and practices, as well as the business benefits of them and how their own unconscious biases may affect their use. Without training managers, the initiatives and policies will likely fail or under-perform, or could have other unintended negative consequences – such as women disproportionately taking advantage of flexible work or parental leave, thereby reinforcing norms and stereotypes and compounding challenges that women face being promoted in the labor force. Employees should also be made aware of the policies and of the organizational and managerial support for them to access and utilize the policies. Employee support groups can further contribute to an enabling environment.

In implementing these initiatives and policies, there are several key lessons we can take from these best practices:

- Employers should talk with their employees or conduct surveys and/or interviews to fully understand their care needs and the availability and accessibility of quality childcare and eldercare options for employees.
- Employers should identify which policies within the categories of flexible work and care provision may be best in their context. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Nor is there a clear business case associated with each policy option, but rather it varies by geography and effectiveness of implementation. Identification of actions to take and the business case can also vary by sector.
- For care provision, this analysis must include thoughtful inquiry into what child and elder-care issues to address (availability, affordability, accessibility and quality), what employer benefits they seek to reap (e.g., reduced absenteeism, enhanced performance, better recruitment), and what their community, regulatory and legislative context is (e.g., government mandates, government programs, community partners, local childcare market, taxes and subsidies).
- For flexible work-place initiatives, this analysis should include matching worker schedules to care needs. The type of work conducted and whether work can be conducted remotely or an alternate time schedules will be critical for this to be a viable option.
- Firms should seek to adopt paid maternity and paid, non-transferable paternity leave. Paid, non-transferable paternity leave has immense potential to support gender norm change related to care roles and the redistribution of care work. Where possible leave should be publicly funded through social insurance schemes, particularly to ensure that firms of all sizes are able to provide leave without potential unintended consequences for the firm or individual(s). The goal should be to work towards universal access to quality care for all those who need care. Enterprises can work with national and state level governments to institute legislative and fiscal changes to achieve this objective.

- Training managers and workers about care and work-life balance policies and initiatives will be fundamental for their success. These trainings should include information about the initiatives and policies and associated potential business benefits, as well as how unconscious bias can prevent these benefits from being used and realized.
- Low-income workers, who may need care and work-life balance support the most, must not be excluded. Low-income workers may also work in jobs that do not allow for flexibility. The public sector has a critical role to play in supporting low-income and informal workers and ensuring universal access to high quality care.
- The government can put in place policy and regulatory frameworks that enable the private sector to better accommodate the care needs of workers. The government has a key role to play to create incentives that foster employer-supported initiatives and build the capacity of quality and affordable childcare providers. The government should also be responsible for taxation, regulation and oversight to ensure that all workers have access to quality child and elder-care



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