

Advancing Parental Social Protection for All

Labour day statement 2018

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“Social protection policies not only protect people from various shocks across the life cycle, but also play a key role in boosting domestic demand and productivity, supporting structural transformation of national economies, and promoting decent work.”

-Guy Ryder, Director-General, International Labour Office-

Why do we need social protection

Social protection and the right to social security have been an integral element of the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) mandate and reflects the global tripartite commitment to guarantee at least a basic level of social security. The importance of social protection for sustainable development is reflected in several other goals, including universal health coverage, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, as well as greater equality. Social protection plays a key role in ensuring income security for women and men of working age, in the form of maternity protection, unemployment support, employment injury protection, and disability benefit. Well-designed social protection systems contribute to reducing poverty and inequality, while enhancing social cohesion and political stability.¹

Social protection policies also support optimal breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is a cost-effective way to increase health, human capital and stimulate economic growth. Globally, the cost of lower cognitive ability associated with lack of breastfeeding amounts to about US\$300 billion annually, representing 0.49 percent of global gross national incomes.

Elements of equitable social protection

The key to an equitable social protection for all includes legislation, positive attitudinal change and supportive work policies. This can be achieved through an effective partnership between the tripartite stakeholders (governments, employers, trade unions) and civil society organisations to increase the supply of and demand for gender equitable social protection that will lay a foundation for gender equitable social protection measures such as paid parental leave. Paid parental leave supports both parents to combine parenting (including breastfeeding) and paid work. WABA together with [MenCare Global Fatherhood campaign](#) advocates for governments and employers to adopt paid parental leave policies. Parental leave, when enshrined in national policy, has the power to contribute significantly to the recognition and redistribution of care work and to transform deeply rooted inequalities between men and women. ²

Equitable social protection to promote involvement of fathers in care responsibilities

Adequate maternity protection, as well as paid paternity and parental leave, recognise that both mothers and fathers have responsibilities as breadwinners and caregivers, and contribute to achieving a more equitable sharing of care responsibilities. Both mothers and fathers have important roles in caregiving and interactions with their children. Mothers should not be considered to be solely responsible for the care of a baby. Family members, particularly fathers, are more likely to step up to take responsibility when they understand how important their own part is in securing the health and welfare of their child. The greater involvement of fathers in child care not only has positive effects on children’s health but also in parent-child interactions. Many countries have therefore reformed their leave policies to facilitate greater involvement of fathers in childcare through introducing or extending paternity leave, as well as providing incentives to increase men’s take-up of parental leave. Parental leave made available to both parents is also gender neutral, which protects both parents from discrimination and gives fathers the opportunity of increasing their involvement with the care of their children. Involved fatherhood allows girls and women to achieve their full potential and also makes men and families happier and healthier.

There are many things that we can do together. Join us to:

- Advocate to ensure that maternity, paternity and parental protection measures are included as part of social protection coverage and entitlements at national level.
- Mobilise public awareness on parental social protection in order to eliminate barriers to gender equality.

- Build capacity and disseminate information related to parent-friendly work policies and support at the workplace.

On Labour Day 2018, WABA and partners call upon all stakeholders to join the [Empowering Parents Campaign](#) to advocate for parental social protection that will enhance workers' rights, breastfeeding, health and survival and lead to achieving greater gender equality and decent work.

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1. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—dgreports/—dcomm/—publ/documents/publication/wcms_604882.pdf
2. <https://men-care.org/what-we-do/advocacy/paid-parental-leave/>