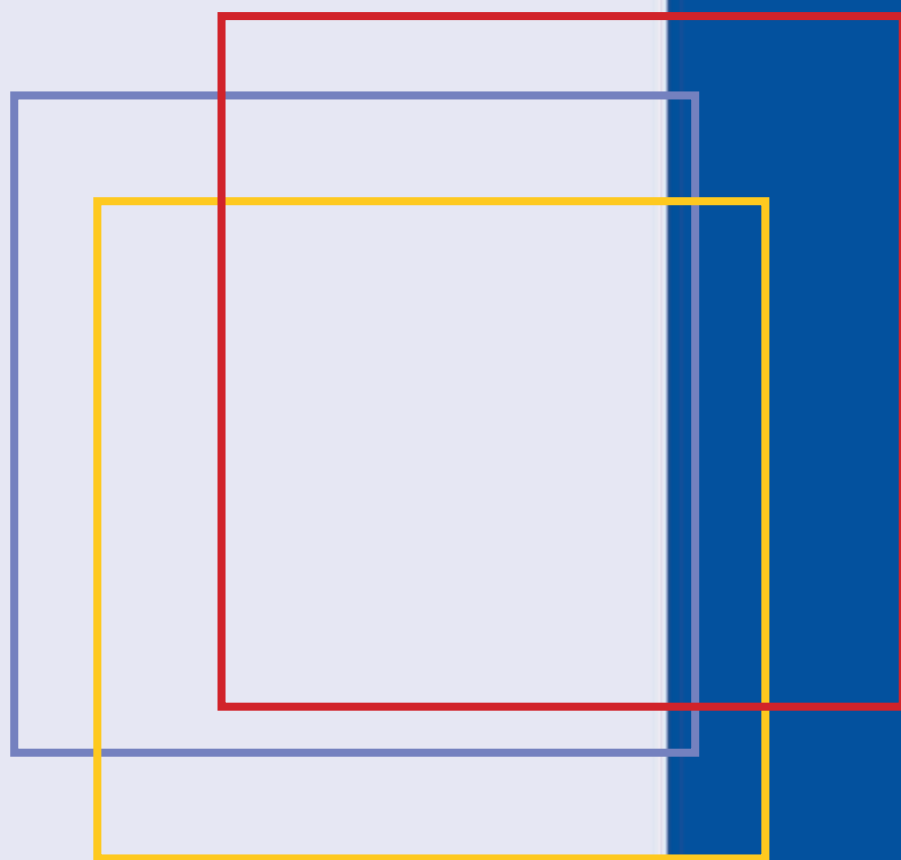




International
Labour
Organization



COMBINING YOUR WORK AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES



WORK AND FAMILY – WHERE THE CONFLICT LIES



Work and family have always been the foundation of most people's lives but today we often say there is a conflict between them. What is the reason behind it?

Agricultural pre-industrial society combined the notions of work and family in a different way. Farmers' or craftsmen's work had close linkages with their family life and involved almost all family members. The family was different, too. Three or four generations shared the same home, facilitating the care of children, the sick and the old.

As the industry developed, work went beyond the households becoming more specialized and families became smaller, too. Today when the able-bodied family members are at work often there is no one to look after the children and the old. Family responsibilities are more difficult to combine with work; the balance is tilted. Women are more clearly specialized in household tasks, taking care of children and the old while men become the main breadwinners.

Such a disbalance between work and family responsibilities, first of all, affects women because they bear children. Pregnancy, delivery, breastfeeding and childcare are hard to combine with a full-time job and high workload. Given these tensions, women often sacrifice their professional careers to family responsibilities. No wonder employers treat women as potentially "problem-causing" workers who would often be absent from work and demanding for additional privileges, like maternity leave. Such situation leads to gender discrimination when employers are reluctant to employ women, women are low-paid, not promoted, etc.

At the same time, men with no family responsibilities become "ideal workers". With higher attachment to the work force, men suffer from increased work stress which tells on their physical and psychological health. Those men wishing to dedicate more of their time to their family are discriminated against just like women. Society does not welcome deviations from stereotypes.

WHAT DOES WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT LEAD TO?

The conflict between work and family responsibilities affects everyone: workers and their families, employers and companies, state and society as a whole. What are the main consequences of the conflict?

For workers (men and women) and their families:

- Increased pressures and stress at the workplace;
- Incompatibility of working conditions and schedule with family responsibilities;
- Inconveniences resulting from the absence or the lack of family supporting services;
- Involuntary decisions (e.g. accepting a more flexible working schedule at the expense of lower wages);
- Worsening family relationship, higher divorce rate, etc.

For employers:

- Absence from work or late arrival due to a work-family conflict;
- Turnover of staff or loss of skilled workers;

- Expenses on recruiting and training new staff;
- Lower efficiency of work.

For society as a whole:

- Preserving poverty and inequality (parents in low-income families are forced to quit jobs because they cannot afford childcare facilities, nurses, etc.);
- Loss of labour resources, lower economic activity among women, under-use of professional skills and knowledge;
- Lower birth rate due to the lack of incentives, especially for mothers;
- Overload of the social protection system;
- Feminization of home nursing (children are brought up mostly by women);
- Employment and occupation inequalities between men and women (all limitations in connection with family responsibilities refer mainly to women).

NORMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Experience of most countries proves that, in many cases, as soon as a man claims his right to being a worker with family responsibilities he is discriminated against at his workplace in the same manner that affects many women. In fact, here we are dealing with discrimination against all workers with family responsibilities – both men and women.

ILO Convention No.156 (1981) and corresponding Recommendation No.165 provide for the principles of non-discrimination against workers with family responsibilities. Unlike Recommendation No.123 (1965) that protects the rights of women as workers with family responsibilities, the ILO Convention No.156 covers both women and men. The title of the document – **Convention on Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities** – speaks for itself.

WHAT ARE FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES?

Under Convention No.156, family responsibilities are responsibilities in relation to dependent children and other members of workers' immediate family who clearly need their care or support. The notions of 'family' and 'family responsibilities' can be interpreted differently depending on the national context and local conditions. Nonetheless, Convention No.156 clearly applies to *children, the sick and the old who depend on the worker. Household tasks* are also seen as part of family responsibilities.

'With a view to creating effective equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers, each Member shall make it an aim of national policy to enable persons with family responsibilities who are engaged or wish to engage in employment to exercise their right to do so without being subject to discrimination and, to the extent possible, without conflict between their employment and family responsibilities.' (Convention No.156, Article 3).

Another ILO convention – **Convention No.183 on Maternity Protection** (2000) and Recommendation No.191 that supplements it are aimed at providing opportunities for women workers to combine childbearing with work and eliminate occupational inequality due to their childbearing function. It includes health protection during pregnancy and breastfeeding, maternity leaves and accompanying leaves and grants.

Unlike previous ILO conventions on maternity protection (No.3, dated 1919 and No.103, dated 1952) ILO Convention No.183 applies to all women employed in formal and informal economies irrespective of the type of work, enterprise and contract relationship, including those involved in atypical forms of dependent work (for

APPLICATION OF ILO CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ILO Conventions are international agreements subject to ratification by the member-states. As a rule, recommendations relate to issues covered by conventions and have guidelines for the national policies and practices. Irrespective of whether a state has ratified this or that convention national institutions and structures are guided by its norms. If the state ratifies an ILO convention it must fix the appropriate principles in the national legislation and legal practices as well as to report on practical measures taken to translate the ratified convention into reality.

instance, domestic workers) who are usually not covered by any social guarantees. Convention No.183 extends the minimal compulsory maternity leave up to 14 weeks, thus extending protection of health and wellbeing to more working women and their children.

Benefits for workers resulting from Conventions No.156 and No.183 are obvious. They allow workers live a comprehensive private life having a stable income and career prospects.

At first sight, it may not be clear how employers can benefit from a policy of combining work and family responsibilities. Very often it requires managerial decisions and money to arrange for favourable conditions for workers with family responsibilities. However, such expenditures have a long-term positive effect and are much lower than losses of an employer who does not realize the importance and economic efficiency of such investment. A worker who can reconcile work with family responsibilities is more efficient, loyal and cooperative.

BENEFICIAL FOR BOTH THE EMPLOYER AND THE WORKERS

Managers of a British pharmaceutical company have found out that 6 employees remained faithful to the company exclusively due to its policy that took into account their family responsibilities. Keeping those employees saved the company some 7,500 pounds per worker that could have been spent on hiring new staff. Thus, the company managed to save 45,000 pounds per year. The company's psychological environment improved and the employees appreciated the management's efforts while the staff turnover reduced by 15 percent. And it cost the company almost nothing.

SEARCHING FOR NEW SOLUTIONS

It requires a tripartite dialogue between the state, employers and trade unions as well as cooperation between a lot of interested parties to take into account family interests and make enterprises competitive in the context of a certain culture, traditions and values. The **state** should promote childcare and elderly care services, create a network of childcare facilities, improve community and social services. **Trade unions and employers** should provide for combining working conditions and employment (for instance, leaves, hours of work, etc.) with family responsibilities, i.e. they should **organize family-friendly workplaces**. Such measures can be fixed in collective agreements and/or through the appropriate managerial practices at the level of enterprises.

CHILDCARE FACILITIES IN RUSSIA

As of January 1, 2007 Russia had more than 45 thousand childcare facilities attended by 4,800 thousand children (61.3% of children aged under 7 which almost equals the 1991 figure of 63.9%). But in some regions families have to wait to get a place in a childcare facility. According to the Russian Statistics Committee, there were about 1 million children waiting for a place in a childcare facility as of early 2007. Nowadays, children attend traditional full-day childcare facilities along with short-term childcare centres, fitness centres and facilities for early correction of child development, etc.

HOW TO ORGANIZE FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

Working hours and schedule

- Reduce long weekly and unsocial working hours (nights, weekends);
- Notify workers in advance of overtime work and changed shifts;
- Introduce part-time work and job-sharing;
- Reduce working hours for carers while keeping the wages;
- Introduce flexible work schedule and time banking ("working time accounts") that allows to accumulate leave time by working overtime;
- Introduce telework (working away from the workplace).

Looking after children and elderly family members

- Arrange for nurseries at enterprises, earmark money for childcare;
- Provide conditions for breastfeeding at the workplace;
- Help workers look after family members;
- Allow using telephone for family purposes.

Leaves

- Regular annual leave;
- Maternity leave;
- Parental leave (often right after a maternity leave), as a rule, not paid or partly paid;
- Paternity leave (granted to new fathers around the time of childbirth);
- Short emergency leave.

FROM OVERTIME TO MORE EFFICIENT WORK

Among one of its problems Britain's Pricewaterhouse Coopers named men's traditional overtime work. As a solution the company proposed two brand-new principles: (1) a more flexible working schedule was introduced; (2) results achieved (and not the amount of hours spent at work) were made the key work efficiency criteria. And the company noted that most of its employees preferred a flexible working schedule including working from home. That improved mutual understanding and built confidence between the management and the staff as well as increased personal responsibility for the work done.

NORWAY'S SYSTEM OF PARENTAL AND PATERNITY LEAVES

Parents are granted parental leaves by turn until the child turns 3 years old providing that neither of them spends more than 2 years at home. It is done to keep the parents on the labour market after having a child so that they could resume work. The state either pays 100% of their wages during the first 44 weeks after the child was born or 80% of the wages during the first 54 weeks. Experience shows that it is mothers who usually take such leaves. However, the state is pursuing a policy that engages men in sharing family responsibilities. Norway was the first country to pass a law on a so-called 'father's quota', which is a 5-week paid paternity leave. At present, more than 80% of fathers take such leaves.



EVERYONE IS BENEFITED...

Policy that takes into account family interests and needs is beneficial for both enterprises and employees. Some measures may require substantial expenses by the employer. However, less expensive initiatives such as arranging for a breastfeeding room or allowing children in specially designed premises during their holidays can improve efficiency of work and performance of an enterprise.

Benefits for employees:

- Lower pressures and stress at the workplace;
- Stronger motivation to work resulting in higher efficiency and productivity of work;
- Satisfaction with working conditions and high morale resulting in workers' stronger loyalty and faithfulness to the company.

Benefits for employer:

- Reduced staff turnover, attraction of skilled specialists (both men and women) on a competitive labour market;



- Lower expenses on recruiting and training new staff;
- Fewer cases of absence from work or late arrivals; better work discipline;
- Increased work ability and motivation of workers and efficiency of work;
- Better psychological environment at work;
- Better image of the enterprise.

...ABOVE ALL, THE YOUTH

In most cases, people first enter the labour market and start a family at the same time.

As a rule, most weddings occur at the age of 20–25 that implies family responsibilities.

The majority of children in both urban and rural areas are born by mothers aged 20–29.

And it is young people who face a need to look after children and old-age parents.

Discrimination in work and employment against the youth is one of the major problems on the labour market especially in transitional economies. Young women are particularly affected since they suffer from sex and age discrimination. They often lack experience and professional skills and have prospects of starting

a family, bearing children and acquiring family responsibilities. Granting woman a maternity leave may require additional efforts from the employer to maintain the production process. Very often a family cannot get a place in childcare facilities (for various reasons) and women have to stay at home after the maternity leave is over. That is how many young women miss their chance of making a career.

While most young women have to devote themselves to family life and caring of children and relatives, young men often have to say yes to any unskilled and low-income work to support a young family (the same is true for young women as well). In this case they cannot improve their skills – at a non-career job young fathers either cannot get necessary education or lose their skills taught at a higher educational establishment.

Labour market discrimination against youth is disadvantageous for everyone:

- **Young people** miss their chance to get decent wages and make a career;
- **Society** loses what has been invested in education; workers' professional skills degrade;
- **Employers** suffer from a shortage of skilled labour which affects work productivity.

Among negative effects are rising poverty, gender inequality, fewer educational opportunities for children, etc.



Successful reconciliation of work and family responsibilities is a foundation of decent work for women and men. Experience of most countries that find solutions to the work-family conflict and bring the national legislation and policies in line with ILO Convention No.156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities and ILO Convention No.183 on Maternity Protection proves that. In their turn, employers and trade unions at their enterprises can do a lot for the workers with family responsibilities.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you have problems in reconciling work and family responsibilities and cannot solve the issue in your family:

- ✓ turn in the first place to your trade union or to any other workers' representatives;
- ✓ propose a meeting to discuss interests of workers with family responsibilities;
- ✓ study (get acquainted with) other countries' experience on how to organize family-friendly workplaces (if necessary turn to the ILO for appropriate materials);
- ✓ based on the information received and personal experience, prepare concrete proposals to be included in a collective agreement;
- ✓ remember that if your country is a party to ILO Conventions (in particular, ILO Conventions No.156 and No.183) you have the right to demand the fulfilment of the Conventions' provisions.



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