

These examples demonstrate that the careful consideration of gender issues in the design and implementation of social protection systems, and social protection floors in particular, is an essential contribution to the work of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

### 3. Implementing gender-transformative leave policies: Increasing provision for fathers and their take-up rates

The design of leave policies has enormous potential to promote a more egalitarian distribution of unpaid household and care work between women and men and therefore a shift to a model of equal breadwinners and caregivers (Castro-García and Pazos-Moran, 2015). Except for the time needed for recovering from childbirth and exclusive breastfeeding, much of the care work that a small infant needs is not directly related to women's biological role and can be divided between both parents. Research also shows that the healthy physical and psychological development of young children is not associated with the sex of the caregiver, but depends on the quality of caregiving and the child-caregiver interactions (Levtov et al., 2015; WHO, 2004).

Leave entitlements for fathers linked to the birth or adoption of a child, in the form of paternity leave or a non-transferable quota of parental leave, have been shown to benefit the health of the child, and also to lead to better job and home-life satisfaction for men and better health and labour-market outcomes for mothers (Levtov et al., 2015). Research also suggests that fathers' leave, men's take-up of family responsibilities and child development are all related. Fathers who take leave, in particular those taking two weeks or more immediately after childbirth, are more likely to be involved with their young children (Huerta et al., 2013; Nepomnyaschy and Waldfogel, 2007). This in turn is likely to have positive effects for gender equality in the home, which is the foundation of gender equality at work. Despite these recognized benefits, leave entitlements for fathers are only available in half of the countries in the world. When leave for fathers is provided, more often than not the leave duration is less than one week (42 countries), such as in Malta and Mozambique, or unpaid (at least eight countries), such as in Ethiopia or the United States (figure 37).

**Figure 37** Countries providing paid and unpaid leave entitlements to fathers for the birth of a child, by duration (days), 170 countries, 2015

