

The length of the extension varies significantly. In some countries, the length of the extension is not specified (e.g., Austria, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Malaysia, Nigeria, Paraguay and Solomon Islands), while in others the duration of additional leave is set explicitly. The latter is the case, for instance, in Barbados, where an employee is entitled to an additional six weeks of leave for illness arising out of childbirth, and in Niger and Senegal, where women workers may take three additional weeks of leave on medical grounds arising from pregnancy or childbirth. In Iraq, a qualified medical practitioner may extend the period of leave for up to nine months in the case of a difficult childbirth, the birth of more than one child or the appearance of complications before or after childbirth (days which exceed the length of the leave are counted as unpaid leave). In Kuwait, maternity leave may be extended by up to 100 days in the event of illness (although this period is unpaid).³¹ As an important infant and maternal health protection measure, many countries also extend the maternity leave period when a child is born prematurely (for example, Austria, Colombia, Germany, Haiti, India and Luxembourg extend the postnatal portion of leave, usually by two to four weeks, for premature births) or if the child has special medical needs.³²

Many countries provide for special periods of leave for miscarriage, stillbirth, death or other complications arising from childbirth. Examples of countries providing leave on any of these grounds are Nicaragua and Panama, where paid leave is provided in accordance with the woman's needs in the case of miscarriage, stillbirth or complications arising from childbirth. Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation also extend the postnatal portion of leave for "abnormal" births. Mauritius provides two weeks of miscarriage leave and Indonesia provides leave for one-and-a-half months in the case of a miscarriage. In Denmark, the leave period in the event of a stillbirth is 14 weeks. The CEACR has underlined the important role of postnatal compulsory leave (six weeks) as a health-related measure that should also be provided to women in the event of a stillborn child (CEACR, Direct Request, C103, Hungary, 1994).

Consistent with Recommendation No. 191, several countries have special provisions in case of multiple

Provision should be made for an extension of the maternity leave in the event of multiple births.

Recommendation No. 191, Paragraph 1(2)

births. Of the 166 countries where information was available, the vast majority do not extend maternity leave in the case of multiple births. Only 41 countries, or 25 per cent, make any provision at all for multiple-birth leave extension.³³ Of these countries, over half (24 countries) are Developed Economies and Eastern European and Central Asian countries. In the Middle East only two of the ten countries for which information is available extend leave.³⁴ China, Estonia and Kazakhstan are among the 20 countries that extend the maternity leave period by two weeks for multiple births. Five countries (Angola, Luxembourg, Peru, Portugal and Viet Nam) extend the leave by four weeks. In the case of multiple births, other countries provide longer leave extensions. For example, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia provides for 13 weeks, while Bosnia and Herzegovina provides for 26 weeks.

Some countries also provide an extension of maternity leave according to family size or composition. In France, for example, maternity leave is extended from 16 to 26 weeks for the third child. In Croatia, women may extend the maternity leave period to 3 years for the third or subsequent child. In Slovakia, single mothers are entitled to 37 weeks of leave, compared with 28 weeks for other mothers.

A small number of countries allow extensions of the normal maternity leave period upon request, although the extended leave period may be unpaid. Zimbabwe, for example, allows unpaid extensions of the normal duration of maternity leave. In Argentina, a woman who has worked for more than 1 year in an enterprise may opt to extend her period of maternity leave by a period of not less than three months and not more than six months in order to care for her child.