employers are required to provide cash benefits at a rate below the full rate of pay.[54]

When countries use a mixed system in which employers and social security systems share responsibility for benefits, the percentage that employers must contribute to cash benefits varies. Sometimes, employers' contributions are relatively small.[55] In many countries, such as Burundi, Costa Rica, Guinea, Madagascar and Togo, contributions are split equally between social security and employers. Other countries require employers to make variable contributions, such as when employers must pay the difference between the social security benefit and a woman's previous earnings (e.g., Burkina Faso and Panama). In a few of the cases where mixed systems exist, employers bear responsibility for most of the cash benefit.[56]

Trends between 1994 and 2013 in level and source of funding

Between 1994 and 2013, there was notable progress in improving payment levels and a gradual shift away from reliance on employers to provide maternity leave benefits.[57]

During that period, the small number of countries providing no cash benefits during maternity leave declined from seven to three. In 1994, for example, Namibia was preparing a social security code including paid maternity benefits and, by 2004, it had provided 12 weeks of maternity leave paid by the social security system at 80 per cent of the woman's wages. By 2010, Namibia had further extended cash benefits to provide for 100 per cent of a woman's wages up to a ceiling (Namibian Social Security Commission, 2009). Between 1994 and 2010, New Zealand, which formerly offered unpaid leave, introduced cash benefits for 14 weeks of leave. In 2010, Australia introduced cash benefits for maternity leave under its first paid parental leave scheme with 18 weeks of pay at the federal minimum wage. Since 2007, Lesotho has been progressively introducing paid maternity leave covering an increasing number of categories of workers. Following the 2013 labour code wage amendment, paid leave for workers in the textile sector has been increased from two to six weeks, in line with workers in security services. Other categories of workers, including domestic workers and workers employed in businesses with fewer than ten employees are entitled to 12 paid weeks.

Although paid leave existed in Switzerland in 1994, maternity protection at that time was not applicable in federal legislation. The length of leave, percentage of earnings paid and sources of payment differed between the public and private sectors (depending on the legislation and/or collective agreements applicable in each case). Amendments to the social security legislation, which came into force in 2005, provide women workers across the country with uniform protection that meets the minimum period and remuneration set out in Convention No. 183 (14 weeks at 80 per cent of previous earnings paid through social insurance).

The level of payment during maternity leave increased in 20 countries between 1994 and 2013. In Israel, the level of benefits increased from 75 per cent to 100 per cent, while, in Jordan, benefits increased from 50 per cent to 100 per cent and, in Syria, the level of payment rose from 70 per cent to 100 per cent (while leave also increased from 50 to 100 days, as noted earlier). In Ghana, benefits increased from 50 per cent to 100 per cent. In Belize, benefits increased from 80 per cent to 100 per cent and in Vanuatu from 50 per cent to 66 per cent in 2010. The percentage of earnings paid during leave periods increased from 84 per cent (up to a ceiling) to 100 per cent (up to a ceiling) in France and from 75 per cent to 100 per cent of average earnings in Spain. In 2010, Botswana increased leave benefits from 25 to 50 per cent of former earnings.

Although the overall trends during this period were towards longer and better paid leave, there were a few countries in which the level of payments appears to have decreased, in part as a likely consequence of the economic crisis and related austerity measures (but see box 2.5). In Bulgaria, for example, benefits were reduced from 100 per cent of prior earnings to 90 per cent between 1994 and 2009, although this was counterbalanced by an increase in the length of leave from 120 to 227 days. In the Czech Republic, benefits were reduced from 70 per cent to 60 per cent as a temporary measure from January to December 2010; however, the benefit has once again been raised to the original 70 per cent as of 2011 (Gauthier, 2010, page 10; Czech Social Security Administration, 2013).[58]

Regarding the sources of payment, figure 2.5 provides information on how cash benefits were financed