

Box 6.3 Supporting the care needs of the most vulnerable through childcare

In March 2014, **Costa Rica** adopted the law No. 9220 which institutionalizes the *Red Nacional de Cuido y Desarrollo Infantil* (National Network for Childcare and Child Development). The programme targets children from birth to 7 years old living in low-income families where women are heads of household. It aims to promote parents' labour force participation and to foster child development. The service lasts around 10 hours per day and covers more than 32,000 children through a network of 852 centres funded by a number of public and private national and local institutions, according to the principle of "co-responsibility". The Government earmarked around US\$ 36 million (in 2014) in order to increase places, construction, remodeling, expansion and equipment of childcare centres.*

The Productive Safety Net Programme of **Ethiopia** includes the provision of time off for pregnancy and breastfeeding, crèche facilities and flexible working hours so that parents can balance paid work with domestic and care-work responsibilities (Holmes and Jones, 2013).

In **South Africa**, the Expanded Public Works Program includes social care service delivery in its definition of public work, an important innovation, which has translated into the provision of early child development services and home- and

community-based care for people living with HIV. The programme provides temporary jobs, training and accreditation to caregivers (Kabeer, 2013).

The *Chile Crece Contigo* (Chile Grows with You) in **Chile**, is a comprehensive social protection programme that provides free childcare for the most vulnerable 40 per cent of the population. Along with a strong child development focus, it also aims to promote women's employment. The number of public crèches increased from around 700 in 2006 to more than 4,000 in 2009, caring for over 70,000 infants (ILO and UNDP, 2009).

In **Mexico**, the Federal Daycare Programme for Working Mothers (*Programa de Estancias Infantiles para Madres Trabajadoras*) explicitly aims to address gender inequalities at work resulting from family responsibilities. It provides childcare services to children aged between 1 and 4 years old from households earning less than six times the monthly minimum wage. Mothers and single fathers in paid work or study are eligible. It also includes financial support for the setting up of day-care centres. In 2009, the programme cost less than 0.01 per cent of GDP, covered 261,728 children (in 8,923 centres) and generated around 45,000 paid jobs for childcare providers and assistants. Childcare centres are open at least eight hours per day, five days a week (ILO, 2011a).

* Costa Rica's Embassy in El Salvador: <http://www.embajadacostarica.org.sv/index.php/novedades/noticias/239-presidenta-firma-ley-de-red-nacional-de-cuido-y-desarrollo-infantil> [14 Apr.2014].

pre-primary education are available, they often do not meet the needs of working parents in terms of costs, duration and opening hours.

In the absence of State-provided childcare, many households turn to "individual coping strategies", which may include the reduction of desired fertility; reliance on often low-paid domestic workers providing home-based care and household work, who also face the challenge of juggling work and their family needs (ILO, 2013b); or dependence on low-quality childcare arrangements such as enlisting older children to care for younger ones, leaving children unsupervised or taking them to the workplace. This, in turn, can lead to lower school enrolment rates and a higher incidence of child labour, thus perpetuating the poverty cycle, or it may contribute to antisocial or criminal behaviour by youths left alone by working parents (ILO, 2011a).

Finally, the benefits of childcare depend on the quality of the childcare services, which mainly rely on the quality of interaction between care providers and children. The care sector is a key source of employment creation, but the working conditions of early childhood education personnel remain challenging. Childcare workers are among the lowest paid workers in all countries, have to cope with high numbers of children, with lack of training opportunities and high staff turnover rates. Facing growing demand for formal childcare, some governments have therefore been prone to prioritize the quantitative component and neglect the qualitative aspect of job creation, with the result that it is often the childcare workers who are "squeezed" by the need to provide affordable childcare (Hein and Cassirer, 2010). Recommendation No. 165 encourages national authorities to "provide or help to ensure the