

protected by maternity leave cash benefits. These are the regions where employer liability schemes are more prevalent, informal work is predominant and maternal and child mortality ratios are still very high.

An increasing number of women and men face important challenges not only in starting their family with health and dignity, but also in earning sufficient income while providing adequate care to their children, dependent elderly people and family members living with permanent or temporary disabilities or illnesses. Women and girls still perform the large majority of unpaid care work, which limits their equal employment opportunities and treatment in labour markets. Measures to assist women and men in balancing work and family responsibilities, particularly adequately paid parental and paternity leave, family-friendly working arrangements and quality, State-funded childcare and other social care services, are unavailable, inaccessible or inadequate for most.

7.1 What works for maternity and paternity at work

The benefits of maternity protection and work–family balance to families, workers, employers and society as a whole are broadly recognized. As discussed in this report, providing adequate maternity protection is not only affordable and feasible even in the poorest countries, but it is also conducive to social and economic development. There are also multiple options for expanding fiscal space for maternity benefits as part of broader strategies to extend social security for all. Yet millions of women and men workers around the world still lack the rights enshrined in ILO international labour standards on maternity protection and workers with family responsibilities. Governments are called upon to prioritize the set-up and implementation of inclusive legislative and policy frameworks for comprehensive work–family policies, with adequate fiscal space. They should also create an enabling climate for social dialogue on these issues and promote collective bargaining that can help workers and employers collaborate in determining a “regulated flexibility” (Lee and McCann, 2011), in order for workers to harmoniously integrate paid work with their care responsibilities. As stated in ILO Conventions, in devising and applying

maternity protection and work–family measures, employers’ and workers’ organizations – representing the needs and concerns of working parents, their children and employers – have a key role to play. The following considerations aim to guide policy design and implementation in order to make maternity protection and work–life balance a reality for all.

Adopting and implementing inclusive laws and policies for effective protection

Access to effective protection rests on labour legislation, policies and regulations that enshrine, explicitly, the right to maternity protection and work–family balance for all working women and men, including self-employed, informal, domestic and agricultural workers and those with non-standard contracts, without any discrimination. Therefore, the first step in extending effective maternity protection and work–family measures is to assess the gaps in current legal and policy frameworks, make their scope universal and eligibility criteria inclusive. The feasibility and the adequacy of the delivery mechanisms to improve access to maternity benefits should be carefully assessed in line with national circumstances and keeping in mind the needs of those most vulnerable to social exclusion and discrimination. Strengthening implementation of maternity protection rights is also a priority, calling for greater efforts in raising awareness among employers and workers of maternity protection rights and investing in monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. To this end, improving data collection to measure adequately the effective coverage of maternity protection legislation and its outcomes requires increased efforts. More statistical efforts are also required to measure unpaid care work, which is a prerequisite if such work is to be recognized, valued and supported as a “public good”.

Preventing and eliminating discrimination against women and men with family responsibilities

A comprehensive approach to preventing and combating the multiple forms of discrimination based on maternity and family responsibilities requires the establishment of adequate anti-discrimination frameworks supported by specialized authorities to deal