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Committee **Human Rights I**
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Equity in parental leave: Establishing basic rights for fathers

Introduction

As societies strive for greater gender equality, the concept of parental duties including parental leave has undergone significant transformations in recent years. Traditionally, parental leave policies mainly focused on mothers, highlighting their role in childbearing and nurturing. However, today's modern families and their evolving dynamics demand a more equitable approach and a more inclusive and balanced system that would acknowledge fathers' role in parenting and that would consider cases of non-traditionally structured families.

Definition of Key Terms

Maternity leave: Maternity leave is a period of authorized absence from work granted to a woman around the time of childbirth. The purpose of maternity leave is to provide new mothers with the necessary time and support to recover from the physical and emotional demands of childbirth, as well as to care for and bond with their newborn infants.

Gender-neutral/Inclusive parental leave: Parental leave, as opposed to maternity leave, is a more inclusive term that recognizes the role of both parents, allowing fathers and non-birthing parents to also take time off to participate in caregiving responsibilities.

Nuclear family: A nuclear family refers to a family unit consisting of two parents (traditionally a mother and a father) and their biological or adopted children living together in a single and self-contained household. In a nuclear family, the parents are typically married or in a committed relationship, and they share the responsibility of raising and caring for their children.

Background Information

Societal expectations and traditional norms regarding gender roles have historically assigned the primary responsibility for childcare to mothers. This idea, rooted in societal stereotypes, suggested that fathers' involvement in childcare is secondary. Therefore, parental leave policies tended to be designed around the assumption that mothers would be the primary caregivers, leaving fathers out of the picture and therefore limiting their time to bond with their newborns and actively contribute to the early stages of child rearing.

However, the concept of parental leave is experiencing a paradigm shift thanks to the evolving nature of family structures and increased diversity of parenting arrangements. Nowadays, modern families often feature dual-income households where both parents share responsibilities at home and in the workplace.

The duration and conditions of parental leave can vary significantly between countries, regions, and individual workplaces. Some parental leave policies are unpaid, while others may provide partial or full salary continuation during the leave period. Additionally, some jurisdictions have implemented policies to promote gender equity by encouraging both mothers and fathers to take advantage of parental leave opportunities.

Past Actions

There isn't a specific standalone United Nations (UN) resolution solely focused on parental equity. However, there are broader documents emphasizing the importance of challenging traditional gender roles and promoting equal sharing of responsibilities within families such as:

- [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\) \(1975\)](#)
- [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(1995\)](#)
- [ILO Maternity Protection Convention \(No. 183\) and Recommendation \(No. 191\)](#)

Possible Solutions

"U.N. Parents: Equal Rights Equal Roles", an informal group of more than 500 staff across U.N. duty stations founded in 2021, is striving to reform the U.N. parental leave policy and advocate for more child-centred family policies across the U.N. system (thus within the system - different from the Member States of U.N. voting on passing resolutions). To do so, they have developed [15 recommendations for consideration by the International Civil Service Commission \(ICSC\) as prerequisites for a fundamental change in the system](#). It is important to note that this document doesn't have its main focus on equity in parental leave rather than better conditions within the workplace for employees starting a family but there are certain points *that future U.N. resolutions on the topic of equity in parental leave could potentially be inspired by*.

1. Time dispensation for antenatal appointments
2. Pre-adoption and pre-surrogacy leave of four weeks
3. Pre-natal leave from four to six weeks prior to the due date for gestational parents
4. Leave for miscarriage and stillbirth for all parents
5. Access to twenty-four weeks of parental leave for all staff and non-staff
6. Mandatory leave period of eight weeks for both parents to encourage the participation of nongestational parents
7. Flexible parental leave arrangements within the first eighteen months after birth
8. Extended parental leave in the case of multiple births
9. Post-adoption or post-surrogacy leave of twenty-four weeks, equal to biological parents
10. Introduction of anti-discrimination policies
11. Time off to body feed, bottle feed or extract milk
12. Reimbursement of childcare costs during official travel
13. Paid family leave in case of sickness of a dependent child

14. Introduction of childcare allowance for children not yet attending mandatory education
15. Flexible working arrangements in favour of childcare and improved life-work balance

Questions to consider

1. What is the duration of parental leave provided to mothers and fathers in your country?
2. Is parental leave paid, and if so, what percentage of salary is covered?
3. Are there specific policies that encourage fathers to take parental leave?
4. Are there government initiatives or programs in place to promote parental equity?
5. Are there legal provisions ensuring equal opportunities for mothers and fathers in the workplace?
6. How is shared parenting viewed within the cultural context of your country?
7. What is the status of the gender pay gap, and does it vary based on parental status?

Sources & Useful Links

[*Are the world's richest countries family friendly? Policy in the OECD and EU - UNICEF*](#)

[*Gender Equality Index 2019: Work-life balance*](#)

[*Supporting equal parenting: Paid parental leave - OECDiLibrary*](#)

[*Paid Parental Leave in the United States*](#)

[*Parental Leave in Council of Europe member States*](#)