

Family-friendly policies for workers in the informal economy ^[1]

Protecting and ensuring social protection and care systems for all children and families in the context of COVID-19 and beyond

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Excerpt

The publication was jointly developed by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The policy brief builds on UNICEF's call to action for governments and businesses to redesign the workplaces of the future and enable parents and caregivers to give their children the best start in life, while boosting productivity and women's economic empowerment. Find out more in "Redesigning the workplace to be family-friendly: What governments and businesses can do." In addition, this resource builds on the ILO's call to promote investment in the care economy as part of the transformative agenda for gender equality of the "ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work." It also expands upon the ILO and WIEGO policy brief series: "Childcare for workers in the informal economy," which explores how universal, publicly funded and quality childcare services, with decent care jobs and as part of social protection systems, can improve the lives and economic security of women workers in the informal economy, support their transition to the formal economy and promote gender quality at work.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented, disastrous impact on the ability of people to balance work and care for their children and families. With the slowdown in economic activity and the extreme health risks, millions are continuing to face disrupted education and childcare, family illness, loss of employment and income reductions that many fear will be long-lasting. This is especially true for the 2 billion workers in the informal economy, representing 61 per cent of the global labour-force. Their lack of access to many or all aspects of social protection systems and robust labour regulations has led to a dramatic loss of income, increased risk of food insecurity and hunger, and increased vulnerability to future shocks. This includes lack of access to universal health coverage, child benefits, paid sick and care leave, paid maternity, paternity and parental leave, unemployment benefits, pensions, other cash benefits, as well as, more broadly, social protection and labour regulation mechanisms. Yet, family-friendly policies and social protection are a fundamental right for all workers, their children and their families, regardless of their employment status, geographic location, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age or any other characteristic.

"Family-friendly policies" is a term used to communicate a specific package of evidence-based policies that support child development, poverty reduction, economic empowerment, gender equality, child protection and improvements in health and education outcomes. They do not only benefit children but every member of a family, in full recognition that every human is a rights-holder – underscoring the idea that children's rights cannot be protected and extended if their caregivers are left behind. Under this banner, UNICEF, the ILO and UN Women are calling for the implementation of a package of four critical policies, as part of broader social protection system strengthening, including recent guidance for businesses during COVID-19, focusing specifically on:

- the provision of paid parental and other care leave policies;
- breastfeeding support;
- access to affordable and good-quality childcare; and
- universal child benefits and adequate wages.

Region: International ^[3]

Tags: labour ^[4]

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