



## Assessing National Action on Leave for Infant Care



The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) commits nations to guaranteeing civil, political, social, and economic rights to children. This fact sheet series by the WORLD Policy Analysis Center examines the extent to which countries have enacted or passed laws and policies consistent with CRC commitments.

### Background

- The CRC recognizes every child's right to conditions of living necessary for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development. Further, the CRC specifies that it is the responsibility of States Parties to assist parents and guardians in the implementation of this right (Article 27).
- Children's right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is also emphasized by the CRC. Accordingly, States Parties are directed to take appropriate measures to reduce infant and child mortality, ensure provision of medical assistance and health care, and combat disease and malnutrition (Article 24).
- The early period of life is recognized as critical to children's health, nutrition, and developmental outcomes. Labor legislation can support children's well-being by guaranteeing parents access to job-protected leave from work and income support during their children's infancy.
- Evidence confirms that maternal and paternal leave significantly improve infant and child health.
  - Global findings show that paid maternity and parental leave significantly reduce infant and child mortality.
  - Breastfeeding has been identified as the single most effective child survival intervention—maternal leave increases the odds that a child will be breastfed.
  - Childhood vaccination is a well-established, low-cost way to reduce childhood mortality, and longer durations of paid maternal leave are associated with higher childhood vaccination rates.
  - Paternal leave builds fathers' relationships with their children and shapes the home environment; fathers who take leave to care for infants are more likely to be involved in child care many months later.

### Findings

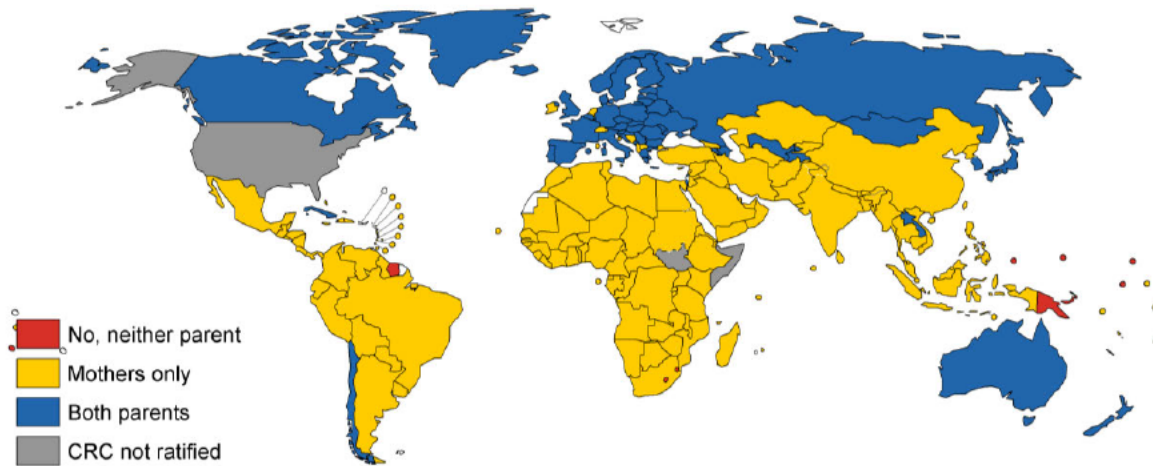
#### National Action on Maternal Leave

- Nearly all States Parties (96%) guarantee mothers of infants paid leave from work through maternity leave reserved for mothers, or parental leave that is available to both mothers and fathers.
- 81% of States Parties provide maternal leave wage replacement rates at 75% or above. When leave is paid and wage replacement rates are high, more families can afford to use it.
- However, 46% of countries do not yet guarantee new mothers access to the 14 weeks of paid maternal leave recommended by the International Labour Organization.

#### Provision of Leave for Fathers of Infants

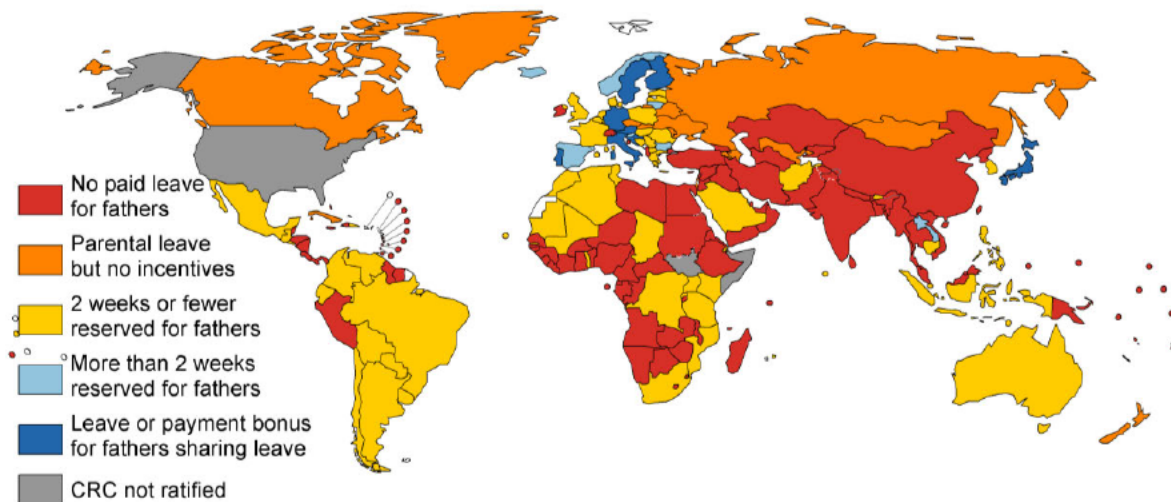
- 51% of States Parties do not guarantee paid leave for fathers of infants through either paternity leave reserved for fathers, or parental leave available to both mothers and fathers.
- When leave to care for infants is available to fathers, it is significantly shorter than leave available to mothers; 78% of States Parties do not guarantee fathers access to at least 14 weeks of paid leave.
- Although men are more likely to take leave when it is specifically allocated to them, only 41% of States Parties provide father-specific paid leave. The vast majority of these countries provide this leave for 2 weeks or less.

## Map 1: Is at least 4 weeks of paid leave available for both parents of infants?



Source: WORLD Policy Analysis Center, Adult Labor Database, 2014

## Map 2: Is paid leave structured to incentivize working fathers to share infant caregiving responsibilities?



Source: WORLD Policy Analysis Center, Adult Labor Database, 2014

## Table: Duration of paid leave guaranteed to parents of infants

	Mothers	Fathers
No paid leave	7 (4%)	97 (51%)
Less than 3 weeks	2 (1%)	46 (24%)
3 – 13.9 weeks	79 (42%)	5 (3%)
14 – 25.9 weeks	52 (27%)	4 (2%)
26 weeks or more	50 (26%)	37 (20%)

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