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## WHITE PAPER: Balancing Work and Family Life

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*A little over four years ago, my wife, Cheryl, and I announced to the world, through our family and friends, that we were expecting our first child. It was truly one of the proudest moments of our lives. Included in that list of friends was my wife's employer. However, within a week of the 'good news,' my wife was terminated from her employment because her boss feared that she might not return from maternity leave.<sup>1</sup>*

*Renee never thought her biggest worry at work would turn out to be caring for her mother. But since last summer, she has tried frantically to juggle her full-time job as a program administrator with helping her sister take care of their 78-year-old mother. Renee has used all her sick leave and four of her five weeks of vacation. She occasionally has to leave work early and make up the time at odd hours. While on the job, she makes phone calls checking on her mother's care. During Christmas vacation, instead of taking time to recharge, she drove three hours round trip every day to visit her mom in a hospital. "There've been a lot of days over the last several months when it's taken every bit of effort I have to get out of bed and come to work."<sup>2</sup>*

### Overview

Most working individuals are familiar with the difficulty of maintaining a balance between work and family life. Caregiving is undoubtedly the most demanding of family responsibilities and can easily disturb the delicate work/family life balance. Caregiving is defined as the act of providing unpaid assistance and support to another individual who has physical, psychological or developmental needs.<sup>3</sup> Some definitions of caregiving include parenting while others exclude it. It is clear, however, why parenting can be considered a form of caregiving as it includes the provision of unpaid assistance and support to one's children, and children can be viewed as having developmental needs. Sociologists generally limit their discussion of caregiving to unpaid caregivers, typically family members of the individual requiring care.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Evelyn Murphy, *Getting Even: Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men—and What to Do About It*. Touchstone: New York City, 2005. Page 194.

<sup>2</sup> Marsha King, *Caring for Aging Parents Takes a Toll on Workers*. Accessed November 22, 2011 from *The National Health and Life Associates*.  
<[http://nhlonline.com/Sen\\_Res/articles/SR\\_5112001\\_123651\\_2.asp](http://nhlonline.com/Sen_Res/articles/SR_5112001_123651_2.asp)>

<sup>3</sup> Sloan Work and Family Research Network. Glossary. *Caregiving, Definitions of*. Accessed December 20, 2011. <<http://wfnetwork.bc.edu>>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

While women have entered the work force in increasing numbers throughout the world in the last few decades, their responsibility for caregiving has not declined in proportion.<sup>5</sup> As a result, many working women in industrialized countries are fighting to strike a balance in a society that expects women to bear the primary responsibility of caregiving as well as expects, and increasingly requires, all adults to work for pay.<sup>6</sup> Today in many parts of the world, working mothers are part of a two-earner couple with children and must typically juggle multiple forms of childcare and their work schedule, along with unpaid household responsibilities.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, women constitute 75 percent of family caregivers for elderly or disabled relatives: the average family caregiver is 46 years old, female, married and working outside the home earning an annual income of \$35,000.<sup>8</sup>

The reality is that today's women are expected to fulfill both traditional and contemporary expectations. Traditional views of family and stereotypes that continue to plague women clash with contemporary notions of female empowerment, which has repercussions for women: women, whose personal choices are often shaped by traditional views and stereotypes, require "substantial economic and personal sacrifices"<sup>9</sup> in order to also meet the contemporary expectations.

Contemporary expectations are also challenging the meaning of caregiving. With more women in the workforce, the childcare and eldercare industries, in which non-relatives are paid in exchange for providing care, have grown tremendously. In the 2010-11 fiscal year, the childcare industry in the United States was worth about \$7.3 billion dollars, having grown 2.1 percent each year on average since 2005. Additionally, in 2010, Fortune Watch ranked home healthcare services and services for the elderly and persons with disabilities as the third and second (respectively) of the top five industries predicted to show growth in the near future. Both industries have exhibited strong growth over the past decade, particularly taking into account the recent global financial crisis which affected growth in nearly all industries. This indicates that more individuals are opting for such services rather than providing caregiving themselves, placing their work responsibilities over caregiving responsibilities.

While it may seem that contemporary society values careers over caregiving, this is not the case for most individuals. Most parents feel an innate desire to be directly involved in their child's upbringing, which studies have shown is crucial to the health and well-being of a child and one of the key factors for success in a child's life.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, many individuals feel a responsibility to personally care for their elderly or disabled family members. However, these individuals face internal conflict as they want to act as caregivers but feel pressured (by contemporary notions of female empowerment or traditional stereotypes regarding men and family responsibilities) or are forced (for monetary reasons) to work.

Working caregivers must often opt out of the workforce entirely or severely cut back on work time in order to fulfill their caregiving responsibilities. However, if caregivers cannot achieve their desired

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<sup>5</sup> Economy Policy Institute, *An Economy That Puts Families First*: Page 3. May 24, 2007.  
<<http://www.epi.org/publication/bp190/>>

<sup>6</sup> Janet Gornick and Marcia Meyers, New America Foundation: Work & Family Program. *Helping America's Working Parents: What Can We Learn from Europe and Canada?*: Page 1. November 2004.  
<[www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/helping\\_americas\\_working\\_parents](http://www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/helping_americas_working_parents)>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid: Page 1.

<sup>8</sup> Family Caregiver Alliance, *Women and Caregiving: Facts and Figures*. Accessed November 10, 2011.  
<[http://www.caregiver.org/jsp/content\\_node.jsp?nodeid=892#](http://www.caregiver.org/jsp/content_node.jsp?nodeid=892#)>

<sup>9</sup> American Association of University Women, *Behind the Pay Gap*: Page 3. 2007.  
<<http://www.aauw.org/learn/research/behindPayGap.cfm>>

<sup>10</sup> The National Parent Teacher Association, *Parental Involvement*. Accessed December 20, 2011.  
<[http://www.pta.org/topic\\_parent\\_involvement.asp](http://www.pta.org/topic_parent_involvement.asp)>

work/family life balance, not only is their income curtailed by virtue of working part-time or opting out of the workforce, but so is the economic development of countries through a reduced labor supply.<sup>11</sup> Instituting effective family-friendly workplace policies will help reduce poverty and enhance equity between women and men. It will also provide more flexibility in choice, allowing those individuals who wish to work to do so, and those who wish to undertake family caregiving responsibilities to do so, each with fewer repercussions. In addition, as parenting is crucial to child development, allowing individuals to more easily undertake childcare responsibilities will increase the perceived social value of caregiving as well as help shape future generations.<sup>12</sup>

Work-family reconciliation policies that are common in much of Europe are often criticized in the public rhetoric of the United States for imposing “one size fits all” government programs that restrict personal choice.<sup>13</sup> Yet in comparison with most of Europe and parts of Canada, the United States offers less government support for family caregiving than any other industrialized nation—with U.S. policies failing to protect the role of women as mothers and caretakers.<sup>14</sup> The latest research shows that many U.S. public policies still lag dramatically behind all high-income countries, as well as many middle- and low-income countries.<sup>15</sup> At least 163 other countries guarantee leave with income in connection with childbirth.<sup>16</sup> The U.S., however, guarantees no paid leave for mothers in any segment of the workforce, with only four other nations sharing this quality: Australia, Lesotho, Papua New Guinea and Swaziland.<sup>17</sup>

Since the U.S. has not set a minimum standard for work leave, private employers determine whether and to what extent employees receive paid leave for illness or for parental, family, vacation or personal time.<sup>18</sup> Even unpaid leave is only required by the U.S. government in businesses with 50 or more employees. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 requires these businesses to provide employees with at least 12 weeks a year of unpaid leave for birth, adoption or illness affecting the employee, employee’s spouse, child, or parent.<sup>19</sup> Employers must pay health-care coverage during the leave and return employees to their same or equivalent jobs.<sup>20</sup> According to “A Woman’s Nation,” a 2009 study by Maria Shriver and the Center for American Progress, America’s workplace policies have not kept pace with demographic changes in the workplace.<sup>21</sup> This report concludes that the Family and Medical Leave Act must be expanded so that all workers receive paid sick days to properly care for themselves and their families.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Janet Gornick and Marcia Meyers, New America Foundation: Work & Family Program. *Helping America’s Working Parents: What Can We Learn from Europe and Canada?*: Page 1. November 2004. <[www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/helping\\_americas\\_working\\_parents](http://www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/helping_americas_working_parents)>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid: Page 3.

<sup>15</sup> The Project on Global Working Families, Harvard University of Public Health. *The Work, Family and Equity Index: Where does the United States Stand Globally?*: Page 23. June 16, 2004. <[www.hsph.harvard.edu/globalworkingfamilies/images/report.pdf](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/globalworkingfamilies/images/report.pdf)>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid: Page 1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid: Page 24.

<sup>18</sup> Jodie Levin-Epstein, Center for Law and Social Policy. *Responsive Workplaces: The business case for employment that values fairness and families*: Page 1. March 5, 2007. <[www.clasp.org/publications/responsive\\_workplaces.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/responsive_workplaces.pdf)>

<sup>19</sup> Judith Nixon, Reference for Business. *Work-Life Balance*. Accessed November 22, 2011. <[www.referenceforbusiness.com/management/Tr-Z/Work-Life-Balance.html](http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/management/Tr-Z/Work-Life-Balance.html)>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Adam Zimmerman, American Association of University Women. *A Woman’s Nation Requires Work-Life Balance*. October 19, 2009. <<http://blog-aauw.org/2009/10/19/a-womans-nation-requires-work-life-balance/>>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

### *Issues for Working Female Caregivers*

Working female caregivers in the paid workforce confront a variety of problems and challenges including:

**Logistical problems.** Working female caregivers must coordinate all details of their day such as the use of the family car, arranging one's hours at work, picking up and dropping off children at daycare, arranging daytime eldercare, dealing with a sick child or elderly relative, and scheduling time away from work to take children or dependent family to doctor's appointments.

For working mothers, these issues are often exacerbated because they must plan their schedules around school schedules, which vary and can include shorter school days, school vacations and unplanned school closings. When childcare isn't available, women must find alternative arrangements. In poorer nations, this most impacts girls, who often kept out of school to care for younger siblings and undertake household work while their parents work. Evidence from Peru, for example, shows that because of an increase in female employment in that country, girls must stay at home so their mothers can work, thereby spending more time dedicated to household activities.<sup>23</sup>

Working women caring for elderly parents and relatives often experience sudden, unplanned logistical problems. For example, if an elderly relative falls during the day and needs immediate care, the caregiver may have to immediately leave work to rush to their aid. Additionally, if the elderly relative does not live with or near the caregiver, the caregiver must account travel time into her plans to care for her relative.

For the "sandwich generation," which has the responsibility of providing for both children and elderly relatives, logistical problems are undoubtedly doubled.<sup>24</sup> A 2003 study by ComPsych Corporation, the world's largest provider of employee assistance programs, found that workers who care for both children and elderly relatives put in as much caregiving hours as a second job. These individuals reported spending an average of 36 hours per week on caregiving duties: 10.4 hours on child-care tasks such as bathing, feeding or making care arrangements; 9.6 hours on extracurricular activities for children; 4.5 hours per week driving children to school; 4.1 hours on caregiving tasks for an elderly relative; 2.6 hours traveling to the elder's residence; 4.7 hours on making arrangements (financial, legal, social or health-related) for the elder. These caregivers reported getting only six hours of sleep per night and needing to take 18.9 vacation and sick days per year to deal with personal issues and caregiving responsibilities.<sup>25</sup>

Working women who are single have an even more difficult time balancing caregiving and work responsibilities. As primary breadwinners and caregivers, these women do not have a partner with who to share responsibilities. Logistical issues are thus exacerbated for single women and can significantly interfere with their ability to balance work and family life.

*On August 10, 2005, the only day she could register her two kids for school for the upcoming academic year and sign them up for an after-school program, Vickie Underwood left work at the end of her regular 8-hour shift at an Atlanta-area printing plant, politely refusing her boss's demand that she remain for three*

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<sup>23</sup> UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2007: Latin America and Caribbean edition*: Page 20. <[www.unicef.org/sowc07/docs/sowc07\\_tacro.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc07/docs/sowc07_tacro.pdf)>

<sup>24</sup> Karol Rose, *World at Work. Elder Care: A Responsibility That Requires a Collaborative Effort*: Page 60. 2006. <[http://awlp.org/awlp/pub/nwfm\\_Elder\\_Care\\_Collaborative\\_Effort.pdf](http://awlp.org/awlp/pub/nwfm_Elder_Care_Collaborative_Effort.pdf)>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

*hours of “mandatory overtime.” Despite 20 years of service for the company, including dozens of previous mandatory overtime shifts and an unblemished work record, she was fired.*<sup>26</sup>

Women such as Vickie are faced with difficult decisions regarding their work and family responsibilities daily. Like Vickie, some will be forced to prioritize one responsibility over the other and will experience repercussions for doing so.

**Lack of professional advancement.** Due to the difficulty of balancing logistical issues, working female caregivers must often cut back their employment to part-time work. As a result, they often lose opportunities for promotions as well as benefits, such as health insurance and paid leave. Furthermore, women such as Vickie who are fired from their jobs because of their commitment to family responsibilities have the added baggage of a dismissal on their resume, making it more difficult for them to find a new job yet alone a better job, and advance professionally.

Working mothers also experience prejudice during the hiring process. They are “hired later, fired earlier, paid less and promoted more slowly than women or men without children.”<sup>27</sup> Research shows that if a woman includes any information on her resume indicating she has children, she has a tougher time getting a job than women who don’t have children.<sup>28</sup> Researchers at Cornell University confirmed this in an experiment, creating hypothetical job seekers with strong resumes. Results found that mothers in the U.S. looking for employment were less likely to be hired, were offered lower salaries and faced a perception that they would be less committed to a job than fathers or women without children. The study also discovered that U.S. companies opted to hire 84 percent of women without children, compared to only 47 percent of mothers.<sup>29</sup>

**Wage penalties.** In 2010, American women’s earnings were just 77.4 percent of men’s.<sup>30</sup> It is estimated that the gender wage gap costs the average full-time U.S. woman worker between \$700,000 and \$2 million over the course of her work life.<sup>31</sup> The gender wage gap widens even more severely for working mothers. The previously-mentioned Cornell study highlighted the fact that employers offer mothers \$11,000 less in starting salary on average than women without children.<sup>32</sup> Women may also experience wage penalties in a new position if they had been dismissed from a previous position as a result of inflexible work environments.<sup>33</sup>

Working mothers and women caregivers spend an average of 12 years out of the workforce to raise children and/or care for an elderly relative.<sup>34</sup> This has long-term as well as short-term financial

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<sup>26</sup> The MultiState Working Families Consortium, *Family Values at Work: It’s About Time*: Page 4. September 2007. <<http://www.aecf.org/~media/PublicationFiles/FVwork%20Full%20Report%209.pdf>>

<sup>27</sup> Diane Gerdeman, PatriotLedger.com. *Moms face bias in the workplace*. May 6, 2008. <[www.patriotledger.com/news/x299932456/Moms-face-bias-in-the-workplace](http://www.patriotledger.com/news/x299932456/Moms-face-bias-in-the-workplace)>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Aloï, Cornell University News Service. *Mothers face disadvantages in getting hired*. August 4, 2005. <[www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Aug05/soc.mothers.dea.html](http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Aug05/soc.mothers.dea.html)>

<sup>30</sup> National Committee on Pay Equity, *Wage Gap Statistically Unchanged*. Accessed December 21, 2011, <<http://www.pay-equity.org/>>

<sup>31</sup> American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, *It’s Time for Working Women to Earn Equal Pay*. <<http://www.aflcio.org/issues/jobseconomy/women/equalpay/index.cfm>>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Christian Zappone, CNNMoney.com. *Moms rise up, fight for workplace rights*. January 11, 2007. <[http://money.cnn.com/2007/01/11/pf/moms\\_rising/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2007/01/11/pf/moms_rising/index.htm)>

<sup>34</sup> Family Caregiver Alliance: National Center on Caregiving, *Women and Caregiving: Facts and Figures*. Accessed November 28, 2011. <[http://www.caregiver.org/jsp/content\\_node.jsp?nodeid=892](http://www.caregiver.org/jsp/content_node.jsp?nodeid=892)>

ramifications. Degreed professional women in the U.S. who spend less than one year out of the workforce saw their salaries set back 11 percent, while an absence of three or more years set them back 37 percent.<sup>35</sup> Decreased wages coupled with years of lost wages while out of the workforce inevitably leads to lower retirement savings and Social Security for these women in their later years.

**Additional expenditures.** Working female caregivers encounter additional expenditures necessary to help them balance work and family life. These include the cost of childcare, eldercare, loss of income related to missed work and problems with continuity of health insurance coverage when a caregiver opts out of the workforce to assume caregiving responsibilities fulltime.

Childcare costs are high in many countries. In OECD countries, after deducting relevant governmental support, the typical cost of childcare for two pre-school children can add up to 20 percent of a household's total budget. Other cases see net costs consume more than a third of family resources. Due to the high cost, parents find it difficult to work and afford high-quality childcare. This has adverse consequences for both parents and children: children miss out on the developmental opportunities that high-quality childcare can bring while parents are hindered in their attempts to seek employment and improve family income.<sup>36</sup>

Fifty-three percent of working mothers and 48 percent of working fathers do not receive paid sick days to care for children.<sup>37</sup> Millions of workers in the United States go to their jobs sick, or are unable to take care of an ill family member because they do not have paid sick leave.<sup>38</sup> For many working mothers, staying home to take care of an ill child or recover from their own illness means losing a day's wages or even jeopardizing their jobs. Children whose parents do not have paid sick leave are more likely to be sent to school with an illness, raising the likelihood that it will spread to others. In addition, these children are more likely to receive delayed treatment, resulting in worsened health outcomes. Therefore, not providing working mothers with paid sick leave is detrimental not only to their own health, but to their children's and the public.<sup>39</sup>

Eldercare is estimated to cost \$1,141 per employee per year in absenteeism, turnover and lost productivity. When elder-care needs occur, they tend to be unpredictable and involve many unknowns. These needs often cause anxiety about things such as the ability to find and pay for immediate care.<sup>40</sup> This anxiety is inevitable heightened if the elder does not have health insurance or sufficient retirement savings to put towards their health care costs. In this case, costs can be pushed onto relatives who often feel morally responsible to assume the responsibility of the costs. If relatives cannot cover the costs of non-emergency care such as daytime care services,

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Herwig Immervoll and David Barber, *Can Parents Afford to Work? Childcare Costs, Tax-Benefit Policies and Work Incentives*: Page 4. January 2006.  
<<http://politiquessociales.net/IMG/pdf/dp1932.pdf>>

<sup>37</sup> Vicky Lovell, Institute for Women's Policy Research, *Women and Paid Sick Days: Crucial for Family Well-Being*. January 2007. <<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/women-and-paid-sick-days-crucial-for-family-well-being/>>

<sup>38</sup> Institute for Women's Policy Research, *Fact Sheet: Paid Sick Days Improve Public Health by Reducing the Spread of Disease*. February 2006.  
<<http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/IWPRPublicHealth.pdf?docID=381>>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Karol Rose, *Elder Care: A Responsibility That Requires a Collaborative Effort*. World at Work, 2006: Page 62. <[http://awlp.org/awlp/pub/nwfm\\_Elder\\_Care\\_Collaborative\\_Effort.pdf](http://awlp.org/awlp/pub/nwfm_Elder_Care_Collaborative_Effort.pdf)>

**Tax/benefit systems.** The logistical issues and expenditures associated with caregiving are not the only impediments to work for women. Tax/benefit systems exacerbate these issues and greatly impact the ability and even worth of working while also acting as a caregiver.

For example, “while childcare fees can be very high, high prices may not impede employment if tax-benefit systems incorporate well-balanced provisions that help parents pay for these services. Conversely, even highly subsidized childcare markets can leave parents with little financial gain from employment if high tax burdens or benefit claw-back rates give rise to adverse work incentives.”<sup>41</sup> In many nations, tax burdens and a lack of benefits decrease gains from employment to such an extent that even very limited childcare expenses can leave families with fewer savings than if they were to stay at home and assume all caregiving responsibilities. For example, a system that taxes the income of the family as a unit will tax the second earner, often the mother, at the same rate as the father, even though her earnings are usually lower. As a result, the mother’s post-tax dollars may be comparable to (if not less than) the costs of the alternative care necessary for both the mother and father to work. These tax systems therefore often discourage mothers from working more hours or engaging in paid work entirely.<sup>42</sup>

Tax/benefit systems can therefore make balancing work and family life exponentially more difficult as they decrease the incentive to work at all since working women may see a net loss of profit after caregiving expenses and tax/benefit systems are accounted for. Conversely, the appropriate tax/benefit system can act as an incentive for women caregivers to remain in or return to the workplace.

**Health issues.** Caregiving has health as well as financial ramifications for working women. The pressure to balance work and family life inevitably causes many working mothers and women caregivers a great deal of stress, which affects their physical and mental health. Additionally, they often put their family and work responsibilities before taking care of their own needs. As a result, it is estimated that 25 percent of women caregivers have health problems as a result of their caregiving.<sup>43</sup>

Women who care for ill parents were twice as likely to suffer from depressive or anxious symptoms than noncaregivers. For women caring for an ill spouse, the likelihood is quadrupled. Caring for an elderly relative is often more stressful and emotionally trying than caring for a child since seniors often experience issues that arise spontaneously and need to be dealt with immediately. Seniors may also be cognitively impaired or emotionally fragile which can make caretaking both more difficult and extremely emotionally demanding.<sup>44</sup>

The stress women caregivers experience impacts their physical health. Stress causes blood pressure, heart rate, and blood sugar levels to rise. Long-term stress can lead to a variety of health problems, including mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety, obesity, hypertension, high blood

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<sup>41</sup> Herwig Immervoll and David Barber, *Can Parents Afford to Work? Childcare Costs, Tax-Benefit Policies and Work Incentives*. January 2006: Page 3.  
<<http://politiquessociales.net/IMG/pdf/dp1932.pdf>>

<sup>42</sup> OECD Observer, *Babies and Bosses*: Page 10. March 2005.  
<[www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/1581/Babies\\_bosses.html](http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/1581/Babies_bosses.html)>

<sup>43</sup> Family Caregiver Alliance: National Center on Caregiving, *Women and Caregiving: Facts and Figures*. Accessed November 28, 2011. <[http://www.caregiver.org/jsp/content\\_node.jsp?nodeid=892](http://www.caregiver.org/jsp/content_node.jsp?nodeid=892)>

<sup>44</sup> Marsha King, *Caring for Aging Parents Takes a Toll on Workers*. National Health and Life Association, originally featured in the Seattle Times. Accessed November 10, 2011.  
<[http://nhlaonline.com/Sen\\_Res/articles/SR\\_5112001\\_123651\\_2.asp](http://nhlaonline.com/Sen_Res/articles/SR_5112001_123651_2.asp)>

pressure, abnormal heart rate, menstrual issues and skin problems. Many of these health issues put individuals at higher risk for other, more serious and potentially life-threatening medical problems.<sup>45</sup>

The health ramifications of caregiving are most obvious when the health of caregivers is directly compared to the health of non-caregivers. In one study, 25 percent of caregivers (compared to 17 percent of non-caregivers) rated their own health as fair or poor; 54 percent (compared to 41 percent) had one or more chronic health conditions, 51 percent (compared to 38 percent) exhibited depressive symptoms. As well as being at a higher risk for physical and mental illness, caregivers are also less likely than non-caregivers to receive the proper healthcare: 16 percent of caregivers (compared to eight percent of non-caregivers) did not receive necessary medical care in the past year.<sup>46</sup> This is most often due to lack of time, as working caregivers will prioritize their caregiving and work responsibilities over their personal needs, which are often neglected as a result.

### **Family-Friendly Workplaces**

Today, many working mothers and women caregivers struggle to find family-friendly workplaces that help them reconcile work and family life. Family-friendly workplaces are those where the employer recognizes the family responsibilities of employees and accepts that such responsibilities can have an impact on employees' working lives. It tries to "facilitate reconciliation between work and family responsibilities for its staff and to make them feel supported in balancing their work and outside work commitments."<sup>47</sup> Policies and programs that can achieve this balance include family leaves, breastfeeding arrangements, childcare and daycare, and flexible working arrangements.

**Family Leave Policies.** Family leave policies allow employees to take time off from work to care for their families, deal with an emergency, or recuperate from a serious illness with a guaranteed job when they return.<sup>48</sup> Job- and benefit-protected family leaves for working parents include maternity leave (for birth or adoption), paternity leave, parental leave, child-rearing leave, leave to care for an ill child, leave to care for an ill parent, leave to accompany a child to school for the first time or to visit a child's school, and personal leave.<sup>49</sup>

Family leave programs vary substantially from country to country, but many provide generous maternity, paternity or parental leave during the first year after the birth or adoption of a child. This leave is typically funded through some combination of national sickness, maternity and other social insurance funds.<sup>50</sup> The role of fathers is also important. In an increasing number of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)<sup>51</sup> countries, fathers can take paternity leave and/or

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<sup>45</sup> Women's Health, *Stress and Your Health Fact Sheet*. Accessed November 21, 2011.

<<http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/stress-your-health.cfm>>

<sup>46</sup> Family Caregiver Alliance: National Center on Caregiving, *Women and Caregiving: Facts and Figures*. Accessed November 28, 2011. <[http://www.caregiver.org/jsp/content\\_node.jsp?nodeid=892](http://www.caregiver.org/jsp/content_node.jsp?nodeid=892)>

<sup>47</sup> International Labor Organization. *The family friendly workplace*. Information sheet no. WF-3. Accessed November 22, 2011: Page 1.

<<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/moscow/areas/gender/wf-3.pdf>>

<sup>48</sup> Sloan Work and Family Research Network. Glossary. *Family Leave, Definitions of*. Accessed December 11, 2011. <<http://wfnetwork.bc.edu>>

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is an international organization of countries with highly developed economies and democratic governments. Member countries include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, South Korea, Spain, Sweden.

<[http://www.oecd.org/document/58/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_201185\\_1889402\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/58/0,3746,en_2649_201185_1889402_1_1_1_1,00.html)>

are eligible to share parental leave with mothers, and workers are given leave to care for elderly or ill parents.<sup>52</sup>

- **Maternity Leave.** Maternity leave is a job-protected leave from employment for employed women at the time they are due to give birth and following childbirth (or adoption in some countries).<sup>53</sup> The International Labor Organization (ILO)<sup>54</sup> created the first global maternity leave standard, the Maternity Protection Convention, in 1919 aimed at protecting working women before and after childbirth.<sup>55</sup> The standard was revised in 1952 to call for a minimum 12-week leave and recommend a 14-week leave.<sup>56</sup> In 2000, the standard was extended again, calling for a 14-week minimum and 18-week recommended leave.<sup>57</sup>

Currently, 163 countries around the world offer guaranteed paid leave to women in connection with childbirth.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, 51 percent of all 167 ILO member-countries provide a maternity leave period (either unpaid or paid) of at least 14 weeks, 20 percent meet or exceed the recommended 18 weeks of leave, one-third (35 per cent) of countries provide 12 to 13 weeks of leave, and only 14 percent provide less than 12 weeks of maternity leave.<sup>59</sup>

Length of maternity-leave provided through national legislation varies drastically among nations. Ninety-two percent of countries in the European Union meet the 14-week minimum standard and 46 percent meet the recommended 18-week standard. One-hundred percent of Eastern Europe (non-EU) and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries offer at least a 14-week maternity leave, with 93 percent offering at least the 18-week standard. Among the 50 African countries analyzed, 48 per cent provide 14 weeks of leave or more, 34 per cent provide 12 to 13 weeks, and 18 percent provide less than 12 weeks. Tunisia offers only 30 days while South Africa provides four months of maternity-leave. Of the 11 Middle Eastern ILO member-countries, only two, Syria and Iran, offer a 14-week leave. The remaining nine Middle Eastern countries studied (82 per cent) provide fewer than 12 weeks

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<sup>52</sup> OECD Observer, *Babies and Bosses*: Page 10. March 2005.

<[www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/1581/Babies\\_bosses.html](http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/1581/Babies_bosses.html)>

<sup>53</sup> Sloan Work and Family Research Network. Glossary. *Maternity Leave, Definitions of*. Accessed November 22, 2011. <[http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/glossary\\_entry.php?term=Maternity Leaves, Definition\(s\) of&area=All](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/glossary_entry.php?term=Maternity+Leaves,+Definition(s)+of&area=All)>

<sup>54</sup> The ILO was founded in 1919 as an agency of the League of Nations (the predecessor of the United Nations). It is the international organization responsible for drawing up and overseeing international labor standards. It is the only United Nations agency that brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers to jointly shape policies and programs promoting decent work standards for all. This unique arrangement gives the ILO an edge in incorporating “real world” knowledge about employment and work.

<sup>55</sup> International Labor Organization, *Maternity Protection*. Accessed December 27, 2011.

<<http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/maternity-protection/lang--en/index.htm>>

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> International Labor Organization, *R191 Maternity Protection Recommendation, 2000*. May 30, 2000.

<<http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?R191>>

<sup>58</sup> The Project on Global Working Families, Harvard University of Public Health. *The Work, Family and Equity Index: Where does the United States Stand Globally?*: Page 1.

<[www.hsph.harvard.edu/globalworkingfamilies/images/report.pdf](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/globalworkingfamilies/images/report.pdf)>

<sup>59</sup> The International Labor Organization, *Maternity at Work: A review of national legislation, Findings from the ILO Database of Conditions of Work and Employment Laws*. 2010: Page 6.

<[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_124442.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_124442.pdf)>

of leave. Among the 32 Latin America and Caribbean ILO member-countries countries, four countries (Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica and Panama) were found to provide at least 14 weeks of leave, three countries (Chile, Cuba and Venezuela) provide the recommended 18 weeks of leave, 72 per cent provide 12–13 weeks of maternity leave and six per cent provide less than 12 weeks. In the Asia and Pacific region, just four countries (Bangladesh, Mongolia, Singapore and Viet Nam) provide at least 14 weeks of leave, 65 per cent of provide 12–13 weeks of leave and four countries (Malaysia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines) provide fewer than 12 weeks.<sup>60</sup>

Most developed countries provide maternity leave paid at 80-100 percent of the women's previous earnings.<sup>61</sup> Maternity leave is generally funded through a contributory social security or social insurance policy, paid by employees and employers with government contributions.<sup>62</sup> Brazil offers working women 120 days of maternity leave paid at 100 percent; Chile, 18 weeks at 100 percent; Peru, 90 days at 100 percent; and Japan, 14 weeks paid at 60 percent.<sup>63</sup> In developing countries, maternity leave is most commonly paid at 60 to 100 percent of previous earnings.<sup>64</sup>

- **Parental Leave.** While maternity leave with employment protection has been widespread in OECD countries for many years, parental leave is a more recent development.<sup>65</sup> Parental leave has often been defined as leave in addition to maternity/paternity leave to allow parents to take care of an infant or young child.<sup>66</sup> Parental leave differs more profoundly than maternity leave among different nations in regards to length of leave, payment during leave, flexibility in use and whether the leave is a family or individual entitlement.<sup>67</sup>

Parental leaves are “gender-neutral, job-protected leaves from employment that usually follow maternity leaves and permit either men or women to share the leave or choose which of them will use it.”<sup>68</sup> Since more women take advantage of parental leave than men, some countries allot a portion of parental leave strictly for fathers on a non-transferable, “use-it-or-lose-it” basis to create an incentive for fathers to play a more active parenting role.<sup>69</sup>

In most Western countries, parental leave is available for those who have worked for their current employer for a certain period of time.<sup>70</sup> Sweden, the first nation to replace maternity

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid: Page 6.

<sup>61</sup> APESMA Professional Women's Network, *Paid maternity leave entitlements around the world*. April 2001. <[www.apesma.asn.au/women/articles/paid\\_maternity\\_leave\\_june\\_01.asp](http://www.apesma.asn.au/women/articles/paid_maternity_leave_june_01.asp)>

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Sloan Work and Family Research Network. Glossary. *Parental Leave, Definitions of*. Accessed November 22, 2011. <[http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/glossary\\_entry.php?term=Parental Leaves, Definition\(s\) of&area=All](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/glossary_entry.php?term=Parental%20Leaves,Definition(s)of&area=All)>

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> OECD. *Balancing Work and Family Life: Helping Parents into Paid Employment*. 2001. Chapter 4: Page 145. <<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/12/2079435.pdf>>

<sup>66</sup> Sloan Work and Family Research Network. Glossary. *Parental Leave, Definitions of*. Accessed November 22, 2011. <[http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/glossary\\_entry.php?term=Parental Leaves, Definition\(s\) of&area=All](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/glossary_entry.php?term=Parental%20Leaves,Definition(s)of&area=All)>

<sup>67</sup> Sheila B. Kamerman, *The politics of parental leave policies: children, parenting, gender and the labour market*: Page 3. 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Department of Business Enterprise & Regulatory reform, *Internal Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2007*: Page 96. July 2007. <<http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file40677.pdf>>

leave with parental leave in 1974,<sup>71</sup> provides generous parental leave: currently, all working parents are entitled to 18 months paid leave per child, the cost being shared between employer and state.<sup>72</sup> In 2000, parental leave was greatly expanded in Canada from ten weeks to 35 weeks, divided as desired between two parents. This is in addition to 15 weeks maternity leave, giving a total possible period of 50 weeks paid leave for a mother.<sup>73</sup>

In Great Britain, legislation was introduced in 2010 to give parents more choice and flexibility in how they use maternity and paternity leave. New fathers could take advantage of additional paternity leave and pay during the second six months of the child's life, if the mother wished to return to work with any of her 52-week (39 paid weeks) maternity leave remaining. This enables parents to share a period of paid leave between them, giving families greater flexibility in how they choose to look after their children.<sup>74</sup>

- **Paternity Leave.** Paternity leave is job-protected leave from employment for fathers for many of the same purposes as maternity and parental leaves, but especially for reasons of gender equity. Paternity leave is usually much shorter than maternity leave, functions as a supplement to maternity leave, and is especially important when a second child is born and the first child still requires care while the mother is recovering and caring for the newborn.<sup>75</sup>

In contrast to fathers' use of limited parental leaves, many fathers take advantage of paternity leaves.<sup>76</sup> In 1980, only five percent of Swedish fathers took parental leave, and in 1990 only 7 percent took parental leave. However, uptake rose to 77 percent in 1996 when one month of the country's then 13-month parental leave was designated as a nontransferable and well-paid paternity leave known as "daddy month" solely for fathers. A second "daddy month" was added in 2002 and the participation rate has since risen to above 90 percent. Eighty percent of Swedish fathers now take a third of the total 18-month leave, and 9 percent take 40 percent of the total or more, which marks a four percent increase from a decade ago. This has had a significant impact on both society at large and the family structure. "Companies have come to expect employees to take leave irrespective of gender, and not to penalize fathers at promotion time. Women's paychecks are benefiting and the shift in fathers' roles is perceived as playing a part in lower divorce rates and increasing joint custody of children."<sup>77</sup>

Germany and Quebec, Canada experienced similar results in paternity leave participation rates after instituting non-transferable paternity leave. In 2007, Germany introduced a variation of Sweden's model, reserving two months of a 14-month parental leave as paid leave solely for fathers. Within two years, fathers taking parental leave surged from three percent to more than 20 percent.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, when the Quebec government introduced a new

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<sup>71</sup> Katrin Bennhold, The New York Times. *In Sweden, Men Can have it All*. June 9, 2010. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/world/europe/10iht-sweden.html?pagewanted=all>>

<sup>72</sup> Ibid: Page 261.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid: page 108.

<sup>74</sup> The Department of Business Innovation & Skills. *New Help for Parents*. January 28, 2010. <<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/clientmicrosite/content/Detail.aspx?ReleaseID=410677&NewsAreaID=2&ClientID=431>>

<sup>75</sup> Sloan Work and Family Research Network. Glossary. *Paternity Leave, Definitions of*. Accessed November 22, 2011. <[http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/glossary\\_entry.php?term=Paternity Leaves, Definition\(s\) of&area=All](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/glossary_entry.php?term=Paternity%20Leaves,Definition(s)&area=All)>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Katrin Bennhold, The New York Times. *In Sweden, Men Can have it All*. June 9, 2010. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/world/europe/10iht-sweden.html?pagewanted=all>>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

provincial parental leave program in 2006, including five weeks of non-transferable leave for fathers, the share of fathers who used their parental leave benefits increased from 36 percent to 56 percent in one year.<sup>79</sup>

- **Pregnancy leave.** Pregnancy leave is different than maternity leave. Pregnancy leave is medical leave that is provided in connection with a pregnancy-related disability, either before or after childbirth.<sup>80</sup> Companies in the United States with 15 or more employees are subject to the federal Pregnancy Discrimination Act, part of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Act provides that women affected by pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions must be treated the same as other applicants and employees on the basis of their ability or inability to work.<sup>81</sup> The law protects women against being fired, being refused a job or being denied a promotion merely because they are pregnant.

Sweden provides “pregnancy benefits” to ensure the safety of expecting mothers while in the workplace. Some work can be difficult or impossible to do when you are pregnant either because the work is physically strenuous or because there are risks in the working environment. In these situations, federal law requires employers to transfer pregnant women to other tasks. If this is not possible, women can receive pregnancy benefits, which equals 80 percent of a woman’s sickness benefit (based on her annual income).<sup>82</sup>

Most nations do not have laws and regulations regarding pregnancy leave. A woman may, however, choose to use her maternity leave before the birth of her child if she is unable to perform work while pregnant.

- **Child rearing leave.** Child rearing leaves from employment were developed in some countries as a supplement to maternity leaves or as a variation on parental leaves. This benefit is longer than maternity leaves and paid at a much lower level, and is often described as a kind of “mother’s wage.” The cash benefit may be the equivalent of the government subsidy for out-of-home early childhood care—and is used either to supplement income while one parent is at home or to purchase private care.<sup>83</sup>

**Childcare/Daycare.** Today, the employment of more mothers with young children requires that parents use outside childcare services. The term “childcare” is used to describe the care provided to a child by someone other than a parent or guardian. Care can be provided by a licensed childcare center, a licensed family care provider, or an informal caregiver.

In many countries, good childcare provisions exist but they are not always affordable and may not suit working hours.<sup>84</sup> In the United States, good childcare can be hard to find, leaving parents to

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<sup>79</sup> Gender Across Borders, *Sweden’s Daddy Shift*. June 18, 2010.

<<http://www.genderacrossborders.com/2010/06/18/swedens-daddy-shift/>>

<sup>80</sup> Business Owner’s Toolkit. *Pregnancy/Parental Leave*. Accessed November 22, 2011.

<[www.toolkit.com/small\\_business\\_guide/sbg.aspx?nid=P05\\_4402](http://www.toolkit.com/small_business_guide/sbg.aspx?nid=P05_4402)>

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Försäkringskassan (Sweden’s Social Insurance Agency), *Pregnancy Benefit*. January 12, 2010.

<[http://www.forsakringskassan.se/irj/go/km/docs/fk\\_publishing/Dokument/Publikationer/Faktablad/Andra\\_sprak/Engelska/havandeskapspenning\\_eng.pdf](http://www.forsakringskassan.se/irj/go/km/docs/fk_publishing/Dokument/Publikationer/Faktablad/Andra_sprak/Engelska/havandeskapspenning_eng.pdf)>

<sup>83</sup> Columbia University, The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policies. *Mother’s Day: More than Candy and Flowers, Working Parents Need Paid Time-Off*. 2002.

<[www.childpolicyintl.org/issuebrief/issuebrief5.htm](http://www.childpolicyintl.org/issuebrief/issuebrief5.htm)>

<sup>84</sup> OECD Observer, *Babies and Bosses: Page 11*. March 2005.

<[www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/1581/Babies\\_bosses.html](http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/1581/Babies_bosses.html)>

create a patchwork of caregivers during working hours.<sup>85</sup> Concern about childcare has grown, not only in the United States, which offers few provisions for working mothers, but also in OECD countries, reflecting a demand for quality childcare that facilitates the social and educational development of children.

Under Sweden's "leisure-time care" program, children receive before- and after-school care until age 12, with sliding scale fees.<sup>86</sup> In Mexico, childcare is a constitutional right, with insured mothers who are employed and employed persons who have legal custody of children entitled to free employer-provided day care until children reach age four.<sup>87</sup> Japan provides non-government approved daycare centers, as well as government approved daycare centers for children up to six years of age and nursery school for three to six years. All governmentally approved daycare centers receive subsidies from national, local and municipal governments.<sup>88</sup> Unfortunately, childcare in Japan is extremely scarce. Most public programs, particularly for infants, typically have extremely long wait lists, while private options are typically much more expensive and have inferior facilities. Additionally, some women continue to be subject to a social stigma perpetuated by older generations surrounding childcare. For these reasons, only 29 percent of young mothers with children under the age of two return to work, compared to 52 percent in OECD countries. Japanese women also cite the lack of childcare as one of the primary reasons for choosing to not have children.<sup>89</sup>

As with leave benefits, early childhood education and daycare services in European Union countries are financed largely by the government.<sup>90</sup> Care for very young and preschool-aged children is partially funded through parental copayments that cover an average of 18 percent of costs.<sup>91</sup> Because copayments are scaled to family income, lower-income families typically pay nothing, while more affluent families pay no more than ten to 15 percent of their income.<sup>92</sup>

In the United States, childcare is overwhelmingly private in both provision and financing. In the mid-1990s, the U.S. government spent about \$550 annually per child under school age on childcare assistance through subsidies and public preschool programs.<sup>93</sup> "Unfortunately, the U.S. gets what it pays for. Minimally-regulated, private childcare arrangements provide uneven and generally low-quality care."<sup>94</sup> Today in the U.S., 48 percent of employed families with children under 13 pay for

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<sup>85</sup> The Urban Institute, *Getting Help with Child Care Expenses*. February 2003.

<[http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310615\\_OP62.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310615_OP62.pdf)>

<sup>86</sup> Mindy Cameron, *Sweden's Commitment to Children and Families*. Seattle Times. June 3, 2001.

<<http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=20010603&slug=mindy03>>

<sup>87</sup> Commission for Labor Cooperation, *Women's Guide to Work and Pregnancy in Mexico*: Page 3.

Accessed November 22, 2011. <[http://fr.naalc.org/migrant/english/pdf/mgmexwpr\\_en.pdf](http://fr.naalc.org/migrant/english/pdf/mgmexwpr_en.pdf)>

<sup>88</sup> Nobuko Nagase. *Balancing Work and Family in Japan: Inertia and a Need for Change*. Asian

Perspective 27.3, 2003. <<http://www.asianperspective.org/articles/v27n3-d.pdf>>

<sup>89</sup> Jeff Kingston, *Contemporary Japan: History, Politics and Social Change since the 1980s*. John Wiley & Sons, June 28, 2011.

<sup>90</sup> Janet Gormick and Marcia Meyers, New America Foundation: Work & Family Program. *Helping America's Working Parents: What Can We Learn from Europe and Canada?*: Page 1. November 16, 2004.

<[www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/helping\\_americas\\_working\\_parents](http://www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/helping_americas_working_parents)>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid: Page 10.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid: Page 11.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

childcare.<sup>95</sup> Low-income families spend 14 percent of their earnings on childcare while families at or below the poverty line spend, on average, 18 percent of their earnings.<sup>96</sup>

An attempt to help working mothers with childcare has come as a result of President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.<sup>97</sup> The Act helps low-income parents obtain the childcare they need and helps children get the early learning they need to succeed. The Act includes block grants for child care and development and for Title I education programs, among others.<sup>98</sup>

The availability of affordable, quality childcare outside the home increases the probability that women will enter or reenter the labor force.<sup>99</sup> A study conducted in poor areas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, found that access to public childcare facilities is the main factor in enabling mothers to work outside the home, in full- or part-time employment.<sup>100</sup> As more mothers are able to work, they are able to raise their families' income and living standards.<sup>101</sup>

**Long-term eldercare.** About 70 percent of elderly individuals over age 65 will require some type of long-term care services.<sup>102</sup> Long-term care includes a range of health and support services that you may need as you age including help with personal tasks (bathing, dressing, going to the bathroom, getting out of bed or up from a chair, eating) and household tasks (housework, preparing and cleaning up after meals, taking medication, shopping for groceries or clothes, using the telephone or other communication devices, managing money, caring for pets, responding to emergency alerts such as fire alarms).<sup>103</sup>

Aside from Germany and Japan, few countries have developed a specific social insurance or long-term care program for the dependent elderly. Other countries, including Scandinavian countries and Austria, have organized their social and health services in such a way that those needs can be met appropriately without such programs.<sup>104</sup> Clearly, the type of accommodation arrangements available to elderly populations varies significantly by country. Arrangements are mostly public in Nordic countries, are mostly private in the United States and are mixed in continental Europe and Canada.<sup>105</sup>

While family members may be able to provide some long-term care services, if one's needs increase, paid care in addition to the services that family members provide will be necessary. In 2010, the

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<sup>95</sup>The Urban Institute, *Getting Help with Child Care Expenses*: Page 13. February 2003.

<[http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310615\\_OP62.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310615_OP62.pdf)>

<sup>96</sup> Ibid: Page 14.

<sup>97</sup> National Women's Law Center. *How the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Addresses Women's Needs*. February 13, 2009.

<<http://www.nwlc.org/details.cfm?id=3431&section=child+and+family+support>>

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> UNICEF. *State of the World's Children 2007: Latin America and Caribbean edition*: Page 20.

<[www.unicef.org/sowc07/docs/sowc07\\_tacro.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc07/docs/sowc07_tacro.pdf)>

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, Page 20.

<sup>101</sup> Economy Policy Institute. EPI Briefing Paper. *An Economy That Puts Families First*. May 24, 2007, Page 3. <<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/an-economy-that-puts-families-first-expanding-the-social-contract-to-include-family-care>>

<sup>102</sup> National Clearinghouse for Long Term Care Information, *Costs of Care*. Accessed December 1, 2011.

<[http://www.longtermcare.gov/LTC/Main\\_Site/Paying/Index.aspx](http://www.longtermcare.gov/LTC/Main_Site/Paying/Index.aspx)>

<sup>103</sup> National Clearinghouse for Long Term Care Information, *Definitions and need for LTC*. Accessed December 1, 2011. <[http://www.longtermcare.gov/LTC/Main\\_Site/Understanding/Definition/Index.aspx](http://www.longtermcare.gov/LTC/Main_Site/Understanding/Definition/Index.aspx)>

<sup>104</sup> Stéphane Jacobzone, *Ageing and Care for Frail Elderly Persons: An Overview of International Perspectives*: Page 13. OECD Labour Market and Social Policy Occasional Papers, No. 38, 1999.

<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/313777154147>>

<sup>105</sup> Ibid: Page 14.

average prices in the United States for in-home long-term care services were as follows: \$21 per hour for a home health aide, \$19 per hour for homemaker services, and \$67 per day for services in a daytime elder-care center.<sup>106</sup> An elderly person's needs may eventually increase to the point where he/she needs constant professional services in a nursing home or assisted living facility. Forty percent of Americans aged over 65 years will require care in a nursing home for some period of time. Today, the average monthly cost in an American nursing home is \$6,235 for a semi-private room and \$6,965 for a private room. For a one-bedroom unit in an assisted living facility, the average monthly cost is \$3,293. Most health insurance plans in the United States do not cover the costs of long-term eldercare. Under certain limited conditions, Medicare<sup>107</sup> will pay some nursing home costs for Medicare beneficiaries who require skilled nursing or rehabilitation services. Medicaid<sup>108</sup> will pay most nursing home costs for people with limited income and assets, but eligibility varies by state. About half of all American nursing home residents pay costs from their own savings. Many people who stay in nursing homes for long periods eventually spend all of their savings and then become eligible for Medicaid.<sup>109</sup>

The OECD is promoting a general strategy referred to as "healthy ageing" to respond to the challenges of caring for the world's growing elderly population. The healthy ageing approach requires the provision of long-term care services to be better integrated with other social policies. This is needed to both foster efficiency and to enable equitable access to care for all, and particularly those with the greatest needs. Healthy aging requires major reforms in pensions and health care to adapt them to today's elderly population's needs. The OECD believes more effective health and long-term care spending should be promoted. As people are living longer and healthier lives, health and long-term care services should remain cost-effective and meet the most pressing requirements: reducing time spent in long-term care. That is, more medical research and technology should be focused on the reduction of dependence arising from conditions which particularly afflict older people, such as dementia, Alzheimer's and arthritis.<sup>110</sup>

The OECD also believes that explicit policies and financial arrangements for caregiving are needed in order to deliver efficient, high quality and economically feasible services. Public policy can foster healthy ageing by expanding the range of options available to individuals through both health education and medical interventions that help people preserve their autonomy as they grow older. In regards to long-term care, policy responses require treating long-term care as a normal risk of life with the burden of financing shared by the working-age and older populations. They should provide coverage against extremely high and unexpected healthcare costs while ensuring access to long-term care. They should encourage a system with more emphasis on at-home care and less on publicly subsidized nursing homes. Provision of long-term care in hospitals should be avoided. Additionally,

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<sup>106</sup> National Clearinghouse for Long Term Care Information, *Paying for LTC*. Accessed December 1, 2011. <[http://www.longtermcare.gov/LTC/Main\\_Site/Paying/Costs/Index.aspx](http://www.longtermcare.gov/LTC/Main_Site/Paying/Costs/Index.aspx)>

<sup>107</sup> Medicare is a social insurance program administered by the United States government, providing health insurance coverage to people who are aged 65 and over; to those who are under 65 and are permanently physically disabled or who have a congenital physical disability; or to those who meet other special criteria.

<sup>108</sup> Medicaid is a health program administered by the United States for certain people and families with low incomes and resources. It is a means-tested program that is jointly funded by the state and federal governments and is managed by the states.

<sup>109</sup> Medicare.gov, *Nursing Homes: Paying for Care*. May 8, 2009. <<http://www.medicare.gov/nursing/Payment.asp>>

<sup>110</sup> Howard Oxley, *Policies for Healthy Aging: An Overview*. OECD Health Working Papers, Number 42. February 16, 2009. <[http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf/?cote=DELSA/HEA/WD/HWP\(2009\)1&doclanguage=en](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf/?cote=DELSA/HEA/WD/HWP(2009)1&doclanguage=en)>

long-term care policy should be harmonized with health reforms in order to support the best mix of health and care-giving elements.<sup>111</sup>

**Breastfeeding Policies.** Breastfeeding is a right of mothers and is a fundamental component in assuring a child's right to food, health and care.<sup>112</sup> Exclusive breastfeeding for six months is crucial for the health of mothers and infants worldwide.<sup>113</sup> Breast milk provides infants the optimal mix of nutrients and antibodies necessary for each baby to thrive. Scientific studies have shown that breastfed children have fewer and less serious illnesses than those who never receive breast milk, including reduced risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and less childhood cancer and diabetes.<sup>114</sup> For these reasons, The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for babies until the age of six months, and continued breastfeeding, with appropriate complementary foods, for children of up to two years.<sup>115</sup> If every infant were breastfed exclusively for this suggested six-month minimum, an estimated 1.3 million additional lives would be saved and millions more enhanced each year.<sup>116</sup> In addition, women who breastfeed have lower incidences breast and ovarian cancer.<sup>117</sup>

As more women enter the workforce in greater numbers, special support is needed to assist working mothers in being able to breastfeed. Research shows, however, that going back to work is one of the biggest barriers in continuing to breastfeed. Employed women are less likely to initiate breastfeeding and tend to breastfeed for a shorter length of time than women who are not employed. Most employed mothers who are lactating have to pump milk at work for their children and need to be provided with accommodations to do so. Challenges for working mothers who want to breastfeed include lack of break time, and inadequate facilities for pumping and storing breast milk.<sup>118</sup>

In 2009, half of all American mothers with children younger than one year were employed, and more than two-thirds of those employed worked full-time. Additionally, only 15 U.S. states required employers to support breastfeeding employees when they returned to work. In 2010, the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) included a provision for employers to provide workplace accommodations that enable employees who are breastfeeding to express their milk. The ACA amended the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 by having employers provide reasonable (though unpaid) break time for a mother to express milk and a place, other than a restroom, that is private and

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> UNICEF, *Nutrition: Infant and Young Child Feeding and Care*. April 2011. <[www.unicef.org/nutrition/index\\_breastfeeding.html](http://www.unicef.org/nutrition/index_breastfeeding.html)>

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) USA, *Why Breastfeeding Makes a Difference*. Accessed December 22, 2011. <<http://www.babyfriendlyusa.org/eng/05.html>>

<sup>115</sup> The International Labor Organization, *Maternity at Work: A review of national legislation, Findings from the ILO Database of Conditions of Work and Employment Laws*. 2010: Page 81. <[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_124442.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_124442.pdf)>

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> The National Cancer Institute, *Genetics of Breast and Ovarian Cancer*. Accessed November 22, 2011. <<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/genetics/breast-and-ovarian/HealthProfessional/page4>>

<sup>118</sup> Abbott in partnership with Working Mother Media: *Business Backs Breastfeeding, A Flexible Workplace Program for Breastfeeding Mothers*: Page 3. July 2007. <[http://www.abbott.com/static/cms\\_workspace/content/document/Citizenship/gc\\_infantNutrition\\_policy1.pdf](http://www.abbott.com/static/cms_workspace/content/document/Citizenship/gc_infantNutrition_policy1.pdf)>

clean where she can express her milk. However, U.S. mothers overall have less support for continuing to breastfeed after returning to work than is recommended by the International Labor Organization.<sup>119</sup>

According to the ILO, legislation in at least 92 countries provides for breastfeeding breaks (in addition to regular breaks) for nursing mothers.<sup>120</sup> Nearly two-thirds of these countries protect breastfeeding for 15 months or longer.<sup>121</sup> Regardless of a nation's policies or lack thereof regarding breastfeeding, all employers should be encouraged to have a written policy about the promotion and protection of breastfeeding in the workplace.<sup>122</sup> Some employers may choose to offer their employees the options of working part-time or telecommuting for the first four to six months when breastfeeding is most important.<sup>123</sup> In addition, workplaces should provide a private room for either expressing milk or nursing a baby; a comfortable chair; an electrical outlet and small table for breast pumps; access to a sink to wash hands and equipment; a small, secure refrigerator for milk storage; protected breaks every three hours for pumping; and a non-harassment policy for breastfeeding mothers.<sup>124</sup>

Companies that adopt breastfeeding support programs see many benefits for both their employees and their company's bottom-line, including: cost savings of up to \$4 for every \$1 invested in breastfeeding support; less illness among breastfed children of employees; reduced absenteeism to care for ill children; lower healthcare costs (an average of \$400 per baby over the first year); improved employee productivity; and higher morale and greater company loyalty.<sup>125</sup>

**Flexible Work Arrangements.** Providing opportunities for flexible work arrangements—such as flextime, compressed workweek, part-time, job share and telecommuting—can create a more productive and effective work environment and help workers, especially caregivers, to experience less stress than those without such arrangements.<sup>126</sup>

Flexible work options can include a variety of schedules, such as:<sup>127</sup>

- **Flextime:** Employees choose starting and ending hours, but usually must be at work during a core period when all employees are present.

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<sup>119</sup> United States Department of Health and Human Services, *Executive Summary: The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding*: Page 2. January 20, 2011.

<<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/breastfeeding/executivesummary.pdf>>

<sup>120</sup> The International Labor Organization, *Maternity at Work: A review of national legislation, Findings from the ILO Database of Conditions of Work and Employment Laws*. 2010: Page 81.

<[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_124442.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_124442.pdf)>

<sup>121</sup> American Academy of Family Physicians, *Breastfeeding Position Paper*. 2008.

<[www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/policies/b/breastfeedingpositionpaper.html](http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/policies/b/breastfeedingpositionpaper.html)>

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Abbott in partnership with Working Mother Media: *Business Backs Breastfeeding, A Flexible Workplace Program for Breastfeeding Mothers*: Page 3. July 2007.

<[http://www.abbott.com/static/cms\\_workspace/content/document/Citizenship/gc\\_infantNutrition\\_policy1.pdf](http://www.abbott.com/static/cms_workspace/content/document/Citizenship/gc_infantNutrition_policy1.pdf)>

<sup>126</sup> Georgetown University Law Center: *Workplace Flexibility 2010, Meeting the Needs of Today's Families: The Role of Workplace Flexibility*: Page 7.

<[http://workplaceflexibility2010.org/images/uploads/FF\\_BW\\_FI\\_Fact%281%29.pdf](http://workplaceflexibility2010.org/images/uploads/FF_BW_FI_Fact%281%29.pdf)>

<sup>127</sup> Catalyst. Info Brief. *Flexible Working Arrangements*. <[www.catalystwomen.org](http://www.catalystwomen.org)>

- **Flexible week:** A variation on the standard workday and workweek, such as fewer but longer days or shorter days in a six-day week.
- **Work-at-home or Telecommuting:** Some or all work done at a location other than the regular worksite, usually at an employee's home.
- **Flexible Reduced-Time:** These options involve fewer hours than full time and can affect salary, benefits and career advancement to varying degrees. These can include job-sharing, where two people share or divide the responsibilities of one full-time job, and part-time work, the most familiar to employers and most sought after by employees among the reduced-hours options.
- **Part-time work.** Part-time work is the preferred form of employment among many mothers of young children in a large number of OECD countries, even though working part-time generally offers lower earnings and career prospects than full-time work.<sup>128</sup> In fact, the growth of part-time work in many countries has been “significant and steady in the past 10 years and its availability has resulted in greater female labor participation rates with women making up the majority of the world's part-time workers—between 60 percent and 90 percent.”<sup>129</sup> In the European Union, 83 percent of part-time workers are women.<sup>130</sup> Part-time work for women, however, is one of the main factors predicting the wage gap between men and women with women over-represented in part-time positions that are mostly low paid.<sup>131</sup>

Nearly 80 percent of employees said they would like to have more flexible work options and would use them if there were no negative consequences at work.<sup>132</sup> Despite that high percentage, flexible work schedules are available to less than one-third of workers in the United States.<sup>133</sup> In addition, with the increasing numbers of women and mothers in the workforce, less than one-quarter (22 percent) report that their work schedule suits their childcare needs.<sup>134</sup>

This situation, however, has been changing due to the current economic recession. The Families and Work Institute conducted a study in 2009 which found that in the face of the recession and a time of cost cutting, the overwhelming majority of U.S. employers (94 percent) are maintaining or increasing their workplace flexibility programs.<sup>135</sup> In fact, a quarter of employers (26 percent) specifically are using flexible workplace options – from reduced work weeks to telecommuting – to minimize the needs for layoffs.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> OECD, *Balancing Work and Family Life; Helping Parents into Paid Employment*: Page 145. 2001. <[www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/12/2079435.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/12/2079435.pdf)>

<sup>129</sup> International Labor Organization, *Equality at Work: Tackling the Challenge*. 2007. <[http://www.ilo.org/public/portugue/region/eurpro/lisbon/pdf/equality\\_07.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/portugue/region/eurpro/lisbon/pdf/equality_07.pdf)>

<sup>130</sup> International Labor Organization, *Facts on women at work*. <[www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_067595.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_067595.pdf)>

<sup>131</sup> International Trade Union Confederation. *The Global Gender Pay Gap*: Page 48. February 2008. <[www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/gap-1.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/gap-1.pdf)>

<sup>132</sup> Ibid: Page 5.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid: Page 6.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ellen Galinsky and James T. Bond, Families and Work Institute. *The Impact of the Recession on Employers*: Page 1. July 23, 2009.

<<http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Recession2009.pdf>>

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

## Flexible Options Work

Overall, flexible work options have been shown to benefit families and businesses. They allow working mothers to be more involved in their children's education and care, and provide working women caretakers with the time to care for their elderly relatives as well as their work responsibilities. Additionally, flexible work options have been shown to increase worker productivity and decrease costs to businesses.<sup>137</sup> Many employers who offer workplace flexibility say these practices improve their bottom line with lower health-care costs, higher rates of worker retention, and fewer employee absences.<sup>138</sup>

In fact, flexible work arrangements and time-flexible policies have often been cited as mechanisms that successfully reduce unplanned absences from work.<sup>139</sup> In one study, 63 percent of workers using flexible work arrangements said they were absent less often as a result of their flexible work schedule.<sup>140</sup> Reducing unscheduled absences is particularly important to businesses given the high cost. In 2005, 2.5 percent of organizations reported that absenteeism was a problem in their organization, costing around \$660 per employee annually.<sup>141</sup> For some large employers, absenteeism resulted in a loss of more than \$1 million per year.<sup>142</sup>

In addition, governments have an important role in fostering responsive workplaces for employees of all incomes, and should partner with businesses to make flexible scheduling commonplace and foster other family-friendly supports.<sup>143</sup> In the absence of supportive public programs and regulations, working mothers are struggling to craft private solutions that reconcile work and family responsibilities.<sup>144</sup>

## Conclusions

While the economic empowerment of women across the world has been deemed one of the most remarkable revolutions of the past 50 years,<sup>145</sup> it has not been matched by a revolution in gender stereotypes including expectations regarding familial caregiving. Even as women enter the labor force in increasing numbers throughout the world, they continue to undertake the majority of unpaid caregiving. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult for working women to reconcile employment and family responsibilities, particularly where no social supports—such as quality, affordable childcare or long-term eldercare—are available.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Georgetown University Law Center. Workplace Flexibility 2010. *Meeting the Needs of Today's Families: The Role of Workplace Flexibility*: Page 7. <[www.workplaceflexibility2010.org](http://www.workplaceflexibility2010.org)>

<sup>138</sup> Jodie Levin-Epstein, Center for Law and Social Policy. *Responsive Workplaces: The business case for employment that values fairness and families*: Page 4. March 5, 2007. <[www.clasp.org/publications/responsive\\_workplaces.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/responsive_workplaces.pdf)>

<sup>139</sup> Georgetown University Law Center. Workplace Flexibility 2010. *Meeting the Needs of Today's Families: The Role of Workplace Flexibility*: Page 7. <[www.workplaceflexibility2010.org](http://www.workplaceflexibility2010.org)>

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Jodie Levin-Epstein, Center for Law and Social Policy. *Responsive Workplaces: The business case for employment that values fairness and families*: Page 4. March 5, 2007. <[www.clasp.org/publications/responsive\\_workplaces.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/responsive_workplaces.pdf)>

<sup>144</sup> Janet Gornick and Marcia Meyers. New America Foundation. Work & Family Program. *Helping America's Working Parents: What Can We Learn from Europe and Canada?*: Page 1. November 2004. <[www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/helping\\_americas\\_working\\_parents](http://www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/helping_americas_working_parents)>

<sup>145</sup> The Economist, *Women in the Workforce: Female Power*. December 30, 2009. <<http://www.economist.com/node/15174418>>

<sup>146</sup> UNICEF, *State of the World's Children 2007: Latin America and Caribbean edition*: Page 20. <[www.unicef.org/sowc07/docs/sowc07\\_tacro.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc07/docs/sowc07_tacro.pdf)>

The struggle to strike this balance has proved very difficult for many women, who feel pressured to satisfy the expectations accompanying both traditional notions of women's roles in the family and contemporary notions of female empowerment. A study of graduates of the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business found that only half of the school's female graduates who had chosen to have children were working full-time ten to 16 years after graduating. About a quarter were working part-time and another quarter had left the labor force entirely. Another study of American women who left work to have children found that 93 percent of them wanted to return to work but only 74 percent managed to return, and only 40 percent returned to full-time jobs.<sup>147</sup> Therefore, while women entering the workforce in large numbers is a trend that is likely to continue, it is clear that women cannot be expected to remain in the workforce in sufficiently large numbers without appropriate financial incentives to encourage them to do so and unless they can ensure adequate care for their children and elderly family members. Working caregivers can properly balance work and family life if the appropriate workplace and governmental policies are instituted. Leaves for parental and family care must be guaranteed, not only by employers, but by the government. Tax/benefit systems must evolve to work in favor of working parents and caregivers, providing incentives to work and tax breaks and benefits for using childcare and eldercare facilities.

Of course, many individuals, both women and men, feel a strong desire to assume caregiving responsibilities fulltime. Proper legislation must be created to protect the rights and economic security of these individuals. Furthermore, contemporary notions of female empowerment and traditional notions of masculinity must be overcome in order for these individuals to feel secure in their choices and for effective legislation benefiting these individuals to pass. As evident from Sweden, where, as previously stated, it is now considered "normal" for men to take parental leave, this cultural shift may accompany legislation rather than the other way around. In many other nations, this shift is already underway as more women become the primary breadwinners for their families and fathers chose to stay at home and assume caregiving responsibilities. Regardless, individuals who wish to assume caregiving responsibilities fulltime must be supported. Additionally, the quality of care provided by these individuals must be more highly valued – as previously stated, studies have shown that parental involvement in children's upbringing is one of the most important factors in a child's growth and success.

The tension between work and family life can be reconciled by a cultural shift in attitude towards gender roles and caregiving as well as effective legislation. Gender role expectations still exist and play into how and where women and men work, as well as their roles in the home and with family. These expectations need to adjust to the changing workforce climate. This must be coupled with a shift in the value of caregiving: quality caregiving ought to be more highly valued, especially when provided by a parent or relative, and policies to help caregivers balance work and family responsibilities or act as a fulltime caregiver when desired should be the norm to ensure the success of future generations in their formative years and the respect for past generations in their later years.

### **Soroptimist programs**

Soroptimist is an international volunteer organization for business and professional women who work to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world. Clubs undertake a number of different projects to confront realities facing women, both locally and throughout the world. Projects help women on a variety of fronts that impact their working lives, including: providing education and job-skills training, which leads to better employment

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<sup>147</sup> The Economist, *Women in the Workforce: Female Power*. December 30, 2009.  
<<http://www.economist.com/node/15174418>>

opportunities; confronting domestic violence in the workplace; and helping women in the wake of disasters. As an organization, Soroptimist supports the following programs:

**Soroptimist Women’s Opportunity Awards**—The [Women’s Opportunity Awards](#) program is Soroptimist’s major project. The awards improve the lives of women by giving them the resources they need to upgrade their education, skills and employment prospects. Each year, Soroptimist clubs in 19 countries and territories assist women in overcoming personal difficulties and improving their lives through education and skills training. The women, who provide the primary source of financial support for their families, may use the cash award to offset any costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education, including, books, childcare and transportation. Club recipients become eligible for additional cash awards at other levels of the organization, including three \$10,000 finalist awards.

Many Women’s Opportunity Award recipients have overcome enormous obstacles in their quest for a better life, including poverty, domestic violence and substance abuse. Each year, more than \$1.5 million is disbursed in awards at various levels of the organization, to help women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. Since the Women’s Opportunity Awards program began in 1972, it is estimated that \$25 million has been disbursed and more than 25,000 women have been assisted.

**Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence**—This ongoing effort raises awareness about domestic violence as a workplace concern. Soroptimist club members distribute hotline cards containing local contact information for domestic violence shelters and other services. Each year, tens of thousands of domestic violence hotline cards are distributed in workplaces throughout the world. In addition, clubs also hold lectures in their workplaces to draw attention to the issue of domestic violence as a workplace concern; lobby their employers to institute policies and include domestic violence information in their personnel handbooks; and hold seminars for local businesses about the costs associated with domestic violence in the workplace. As working women, Soroptimists understand the importance of reaching out to women in the workplace. As such, Soroptimist developed comprehensive guidelines called the Soroptimist Domestic Violence Workplace Policies. A [white paper](#) on this issue is also available on the website.

**Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls**—Often the abilities and ambitions of individual Soroptimist clubs exceed their financial resources. The organization introduced the Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls in 1997 to assist with community projects that improve the lives of women and girls. Each year, grants are given to clubs working on projects that help foster economic independence among women and girls. For the 2011-2012 club year, Soroptimist funded \$175,000 in club grants to 28 Soroptimist clubs for new or ongoing projects. Projects have included funding a micro-enterprise artisan project for low-income women, teaching marketable job skills to women with disabilities, and providing services to women who are domestic abuse survivors.

Listed below are some examples of past grant-funded Soroptimist projects that address the issue of work/family balance by providing women with flexible work options, access to affordable and innovative child care services and by supporting young mothers to continue their education.

Hope Baguio, Philippines

*Hub of Hope*

Soroptimist International of Hope Baguio received a \$10,000 Soroptimist Club Grant to establish a childcare center with a breast milk bank, thus supporting women to return to work and still breast feed their child. This is a neighborhood pilot project developed and managed by Soroptimists.

Ibarra, Ecuador

*Promising Future*

Soroptimist International of Ibarra received an \$8,500 Soroptimist Club Grant to support education and vocational training for teenage mothers. Soroptimists are also serving as mentors for the young mothers.

Salt Lake City, UT, USA

*Possibilities*

Soroptimist International of Salt Lake City received a \$7,000 Soroptimist Club Grant to create a mentoring and education program for teenage mothers. Soroptimists serve as mentors and teach workshops on personal finance, goal setting, and education and career planning.

San Juan, Philippines

*Bags for Life*

Soroptimist International of San Juan received a \$6,000 Soroptimist Club Grant to establish a “work from home” skills training program that provides women, especially those with children, the opportunity to work flexible hours at home. Soroptimists facilitate and manage the program.

Playas de Tijuana, Mexico

*Women Working for Their Future*

Soroptimist International of Playas de Tijuana received a \$10,000 Soroptimist Club Grant. They used this grant to remodel and expand a day care center for the children of low-income women attending school or job training courses. Soroptimist further supported these women by volunteering their time as child care providers.