



FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

Policies and Practices to Advance Decent Work in Global Supply Chains





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WHAT ARE FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Conditions of employment not only have a significant impact on the well-being of workers but also their children and families. 1 Yet, for the hundreds of millions of workers in global supply chains, basic entitlements that provide them with the time, services and resources to support their families are widely absent. Paid parental leave, living wages that cover family costs, quality health care and paid sick leave, breastfeeding and nutrition support, child benefits and access to affordable, quality childcare are a distant reality for most workers. The absence of these entitlements disproportionately affects women, who often shoulder greater care responsibilities, undermining gender equality and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Large-scale business disruptions and the socioeconomic crisis resulting from COVID-19 have

exacerbated the situation. Worker vulnerability to risks related to decent work deficits, loss of income, exploitative labour practices and poverty has been compounded.² The crisis puts children at particular risk of being deprived of their basic rights and access to essential services.3 According to UNICEF and Save the Children, the pandemic has resulted in approximately 150 million additional children living in multidimensional poverty - lacking access to health, education, nutrition, housing, water and sanitation.4 A recent ILO and UNICEF report also warns of increased child labour risk as a result of the pandemic, as studies have shown that a one percentage point rise in poverty leads to at least a 0.7 per cent increase in child labor in certain countries. 5 In this context, family-friendly policies and practices are needed more than ever to support workers and their families during the crisis and beyond.

Family-friendly policies are defined as those that help workers balance their work and family lives. Evidence shows that investing in family-friendly workplaces is good for families, businesses, economies and societies at large. Family-friendly policies contribute to healthier, better-educated children, greater gender equality and sustainable growth. They are also linked to better workforce productivity and the ability to attract, motivate and retain employees.6

Supply chains continue to be one of the most important levers for business to create a positive impact in the world, with an estimated 80 per cent of global trade passing through them annually. Companies that commit to advancing working conditions of all workers in their supply chains can significantly improve the lives of many people — often those who will benefit the most from sustainable development — and lift millions of workers and their families out of poverty.

Despite the positive benefits, progress in the business and policy spaces is too slow. Greater investment in family-friendly policies is urgently needed. Employers can implement family-friendly practices in their own operations and use their influence and leverage to promote family-friendly policies for parents and caregivers among business partners and within their supply chains. This can be done by:

- Ensuring policies and practices are aligned with national legislation and international labour standards, whichever is higher, and strive to go beyond (e.g. in relation to maternity protection, parental leave, non-discrimination, etc.).
- Integrating family-friendly provisions into core supply chain policies and standards, including supplier codes of conduct and legal arrangements (e.g. purchasing contracts).
- Investing in supplier awareness and capacity to improve the situation of working parents, which in turn will impact the health and well-being of their children.

FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES AND COVID-19

UNICEF has compiled a short video (2020) providing a snapshot of how businesses, with support from governments, can take action to mitigate the negative consequences resulting from COVID-19.



 Adopting responsible and fair procurement and supply chain sourcing practices that enable and support business partners to implement family-friendly policies.

International Labour Organization (ILO) labour standards have enshrined several aspects of decent work as critical for reconciling work and family life of workers. The ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) and its Recommendation No. 191, the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) and Recommendation No. 165, provide key stipulations on policies such as maternity and parental leave, breastfeeding, non-discrimination and health protection in the workplace. These policies have also been referenced in SDG 5.4 on valuing and supporting unpaid care and domestic work, as well as in SDG 8.5 on achieving productive employment and decent work for all.



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ELEMENTS OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE POLICIES AND PRACTICES



Not only are maternity protections an internationally recognized labour right, 7 they are also crucial to ensure that work does not pose risks to the health and well-being of a woman and her child. In addition, they ensure that women's reproductive roles do not compromise their economic and employment security and prospects.

Maternity protections include the right to at least 14 weeks of paid maternity leave with adequate cash benefits to ensure mothers can support themselves and their child during leave. They also include medical care for both mother and child, protection of the health of pregnant and breastfeeding women and their children from workplace risks, protection

from dismissal and discrimination, and policies and facilities enabling continued breastfeeding on return to work. Maternity leave should be paid at least two-thirds of previous earnings. In line with ILO Recommendation No. 191, companies are encouraged to provide at least 18 weeks of leave with full pay.

An adequate period of paid parental leave also ensures that both mothers and fathers have the necessary time to bond with and care for their young children. A number of studies associate longer periods of paid leave with improved child health outcomes and lower rates of poverty.8 Yet, despite these clear benefits, 830 million women mostly in middle- and low-income countries - are not adequately covered by maternity protections,9 according to the ILO, highlighting the urgent need for improved job protection and paid leave.

L'Oréal offers a global minimum of 14 weeks paid maternity leave and six weeks paid paternity or co-parenting leave, with this standard often exceeded depending upon the country context. 10 This benefit falls under one of four pillars of the L'Oréal 'Share and Care' Social Program, which integrates a suite of policies – including social benefits, flexible and telework opportunities, and physical and mental health care – to promote a responsible, global workplace. 11

NUTRITION AND BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

Paid breastfeeding breaks during working hours enable mothers to continue exclusive or complementary breastfeeding after returning to work. They are also an internationally recognized labour right. 12 Breastfeeding is important for both child and maternal health. There is strong evidence that breastfeeding contributes to lower rates of illness and better development in children as well as lower rates of postnatal depression and improved physical health in mothers. 13 In lowincome contexts, breastfeeding also reduces the financial burden on working mothers who often spend significant portions of their salaries on expensive substitutes.¹⁴

The WHO and UNICEF recommend exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months after childbirth and continued breastfeeding for at least two years. Early and exclusive breastfeeding offers benefits for children's health, development and survival. A study of 75 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) with high child mortality rates found that more than 800,000 deaths of children under the age of two could be averted if breastfeeding became a nearuniversal practice. 15

Growing evidence suggests that breastfeeding support in the workplace can significantly contribute to making this a reality. Breastfeeding Support in the Workplace: A Global Guide for Employers details the critical role that businesses can play in instituting workplace policies and infrastructures that enable continued breastfeeding. Providing paid breastfeeding breaks, reduced working hours and dedicated facilities for comfortably expressing and safely storing breastmilk are some of the key ways in which businesses can support and promote the positive impact of breastfeeding on child health and development while reducing associated stigma for



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breastfeeding mothers. Companies should further encourage suppliers to provide the same support and integrate legal requirements and international standards on paid breastfeeding breaks into compliance and capacity-building programmes. In the context of COVID-19, the Global Guide for Employers provides additional guidance on promoting breastfeeding while maintaining occupational safety, health and hygiene for nursing mothers, their children and other employees.

Despite the benefits, just 40 per cent of children under six months of age are exclusively breastfed in accordance with UNICEF and World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations, far lower than the 2030 target of 70 per cent in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Globally, returning to work is a key reason why mothers choose not to breastfeed or to stop breastfeeding early. 16 Studies suggest that the poorest and most vulnerable mothers are most likely to be affected as they often lack access to maternity protections and need to return to work soon after delivery to support their families financially. 17



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There is a critical link between nutrition and health, which is too often overlooked in the workplace. Globally, poor prenatal nutrition is linked to high rates of child undernutrition and poor maternal health, which can have substantial consequences for children's physical and mental development. For instance, in the tea gardens of Assam, India, research found anaemia rates as high as 96 per cent – a key contributing factor to the state having some of the highest maternal mortality rates in the country. 18 Businesses can promote child and maternal health by providing adequate nutritional support for working mothers, particularly those who are pregnant and breastfeeding.

Under the aegis of HERproject – a health and financial literacy training programme for workers in global supply chains – Li and Fung Limited, a Hong Kong-based apparel and consumer goods company, initiated a series of projects with its suppliers in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India and Viet Nam targeting more than 175,000 female textile workers. In Cambodia, the projects focused on issues relating to health and nutrition have yielded some significant results, with interim findings from the programmes indicating an 18 per cent increase in productivity and a 10 per cent decrease in resignations by female workers since commencement.19



Affordable, accessible and quality childcare is essential to ensure children grow up in safe, healthy and nurturing environments. 'Quality' childcare takes into account the structure, process and outcomes for each care environment, such as staff-child ratios, integration of care with learning and play that furthers developmental progress as well as overall benefits for child, family and community.²⁰ In addition to developmental benefits, universal access to childcare is critical for working parents, especially mothers, because it facilitates their return to work after maternity leave and is linked with lower rates of poverty among women.

Childcare can also have substantial impacts on business outcomes, with companies like Patagonia stating that their on-site childcare recoups 91 per cent of costs and lowers turnover for programme participants by 25 per cent.²¹ Childcare is also an important source of employment and its quality is linked to the quality of childcare jobs, including adequate pay, working conditions and access to training opportunities.²²

Despite this, working parents in many countries face barriers to accessing good quality childcare and early education. In 67 low- and middle-income



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countries, 69 per cent of children (nearly 57 million) do not attend early childhood education programmes.²³ Where access to childcare is limited, the burden of care most often falls on women, which can limit their ability to maintain formal employment and compromise their economic empowerment.

Providing adaptability for when and where parents work — especially in a child's earliest years — has been further shown to decrease stress, absenteeism and turnover among working parents.²⁴ Flexible work arrangements may also reduce barriers to continued breastfeeding by allowing mothers to work and breastfeed when and where they choose.

In partnership with the Center for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility (CCR CSR) the ICTI Ethical Toy Program (IETP) launched a programme in 2016 to provide safe spaces in factories for workers' children to learn and play over the summer. The programme has since grown across five provinces in China, providing childcare support for 1,100 children and supporting over 1,200 factory workers. IETP has noted that, following the implementation of these programmes, factories saw a 183 per cent increase in employee satisfaction, 58 per cent increase in worker trust in management and 13 per cent increase in worker retention rate.²⁵

CCR CSR has provided further support to fashion retailer Inditex by equipping migrant employees with the tools and mechanisms to confront the challenges of parenting at a distance, including how to leverage technology to stay connected to families. Since starting in 2019, the programme has engaged four factories with approximately 2,000 workers (including 175 parents) across their supply chain.²⁶

While flexible work arrangements and access to quality, affordable childcare have long been important components of comprehensive familyfriendly workplace policies, COVID-19 has brought the importance of these entitlements into even sharper relief. School, childcare centre and workplace closures have required now-remote workers to juggle the roles of parent, provider and teacher, while essential workers have been further challenged to identify safe childcare options amid global uncertainty. As the report Childcare in a Global Crisis: The Impact of COVID-19 on work

and family life²⁷ indicates, childcare and flexible work arrangements are essential for enabling countries to recover successfully and sustainably from the pandemic's health, economic and social impacts. Though the full effects of the crisis are yet to be entirely understood, the potential missed developmental opportunities for children, professional repercussions for parents (especially women) and economic consequences for countries if childcare is not squarely addressed cannot be underestimated. While an early study showed only nine of 195 countries reported instituting childcare support as part of their domestic pandemic response, businesses can play a critical role by taking action to ensure that the many benefits of childcare accrue to every child.



Ensuring every child can survive and thrive requires addressing the root causes that drive poverty and inequality – including guaranteeing income and social protections for vulnerable workers such as those in the informal sector. Wages and working hours for parents and caregivers affect their ability to provide an adequate standard of living for their children; however, low wages, long and unpredictable working hours as well as lack of access to other social, labour and collective bargaining protections hinder work-life balance and prevent workers from taking action to rectify workplace grievances. As a result, working parents,

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especially the most vulnerable, are too often compelled to choose between financially supporting their families and raising their children – pressures that have only been exacerbated by COVID-19.28

The LEGO Group's Responsible Business Principles set minimum expectations and best practices for protecting children, workers and the environment, including guidance dedicated to family-friendly policies. The Principles' application extends beyond corporate and production sites to hold all (sub/indirect) suppliers and manufacturers to account when it comes to protecting worker rights and adding positive value for the families and communities impacted by the LEGO supply chain. Specific provisions include parental leave, protections and special provisions for pregnant and breastfeeding women, childcare support and sufficient wages.29

Business support for children and caregivers is critical, but workplace or multi-stakeholder initiative efforts are not a substitute for government policy. Workers in the informal sector are just one example of populations who may be overlooked by traditional workplace policies and, thus, reliant on government intervention to ensure their needs are met and rights upheld. Especially given the profound impact of COVID-19 on businesses, universal social protection programmes and worker protection legislation is essential for ensuring family well-being during and after the pandemic.30

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THE BUSINESS CASE FOR PROMOTING **FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES**

Key drivers for family-friendly policies in global supply chains are compliance considerations for example, with national legislation, industry standards, international certification standards, trade union agreements or supplier codes of conduct.³¹ Norms and values can be additional, important incentives as family-friendly policies can play a strong role in reinforcing a company's value and culture.

The recognition of the business case and value to the company itself is another important aspect.³² Some of the business benefits include:

BETTER PERFORMANCE

Gender equality in the workplace is beneficial to business and has been correlated with better corporate performance, including unlocking more than US\$12 trillion in new market value annually.³³ A major barrier to women's equal participation in the workforce is the burden of childcare, particularly where women drop out of the workforce after maternity as a result of insufficient paid leave. Many businesses are recognizing that family-friendly policies, such as providing flexible hours and childcare support, can contribute to better gender equality and thus greater business performance.34

WORKER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Offering family-friendly policies can enhance a company's ability to attract and retain workers in addition to reducing turnover rates.³⁵ This is also true in labour-intensive sectors such as manufacturing. For example, UNICEF research has shown that manufacturing workers in Bangladesh and Viet Nam are more likely to stay in workplaces that implement family-friendly policies.³⁶ Similarly, impact studies from the CCR CSR on factories in China have shown that family-friendly policies can be an important factor for increased trust in management, and worker retention.37

IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY AND WORKER WELL-BEING

Evidence points to the positive impact of familyfriendly policies on productivity through improved worker health and well-being. In particular, paid parental leave has been shown to increase employee morale, engagement and productivity.38 Workers with employer-provided childcare support also have greater peace of mind during the working day, which increases the ability to focus on tasks, and be more productive during working hours.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYER-SUPPORTED CHILDCARE

A 2017 study by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) on the benefits of employersupported childcare equally found advantages for businesses in addition to working parents and their children.³⁹ Based on in-depth desk research and interviews with businesses, the research found that businesses can benefit from supporting childcare for their workforce through:

- ENHANCED RECRUITMENT: Improved quality of applicants and speed at which vacancies are filled
- **BETTER RETENTION**: Substantial reduction in employee turnover, and decreased recruitment costs

- PRODUCTIVITY GAINS: Reduced absences, increase in focus, enhanced motivation and commitment to the company among workers
- SUPPORT FOR WOMEN: Improved gender diversity and advancement of women into management
- IMPROVED REPUTATION: Considered as an "employer of choice" and "supplier of choice" among buyers
- COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS: Enhanced brand visibility through alignment with international guidelines and sustainability goals

STEPS FOR BUSINESSES TO PROMOTE FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Companies that commit to advancing working conditions in their supply chains can significantly improve the lives of millions of workers and their families. Procurement professionals are key actors in this process and can act as powerful change agents, working together with their suppliers to make these positive impacts a reality. The Decent Work Toolkit for Sustainable Procurement helps

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both buyers and suppliers start or strengthen their dialogue to identify and address gaps in decent working conditions, and can be used to promote family-friendly policies in supply chains. This toolkit was developed by the United Nations Global Compact Decent Work in Global Supply Chains Action Platform consisting of member companies and United Nations partners (UNICEF and the ILO). It builds an alliance of companies committed to respecting human rights and labour rights by leveraging their supply chains and taking collective action to address decent work deficits.

We are convinced that when our people are happy with their children and with their families, and are safe, productivity increases, and they are focused on the job, which is their second home, where they spend a

> **Luis Aguirre** President. Index Mexico⁴⁰

majority of their time.

UNICEF's Family-Friendly Policies Handbook for Business⁴¹ further elaborates the pivotal role that businesses can play in creating workplaces that prioritize the needs of children, parents and other caregivers. In addition to setting the business case for implementing family-friendly policies, the Handbook includes priority-setting tools, policy frameworks and inputs on aligning workplace efforts in the advancement of the SDGs. The Handbook also demonstrates the many ways in which businesses and governments can work together to provide all families with the resources they need to ensure that every child has the best start in life.

Businesses can take the following steps to implement effective family-friendly policies in their supply chains:

INTEGRATE FAMILY-FRIENDLY PROVISIONS INTO CORE SUPPLY CHAIN STANDARDS, LEGAL PROCUREMENT AGREEMENTS AND SUPPLY CHAIN SOURCING POLICIES

- → Conduct an assessment to understand risks to working parents and their children in the supply chain and to evaluate the suppliers' maturity with respect to the company's policy and practice on the rights of working parents and their children. This should include developing an understanding of how children are directly and indirectly affected by business impacts in workplaces and communities.
- → Integrate family-friendly policies into supply chain standards and responsible sourcing management systems, including in supplier codes of conduct, supplier screening and selection, and audit processes.
- → Policies should include, at a minimum, 14 weeks of paid maternity leave paid at two thirds of previous earnings (countries are encouraged to provide at least 18

weeks with full pay in line with ILO Recommendation No. 191), a prohibition against pregnancy and maternity-based discrimination, paid paternity leave for fathers, paid breastfeeding breaks, paid sick leave to care for dependents and living wages for working parents.

→ Obtain senior management support for integrating family-friendly policies into responsible sourcing programmes, and train key decision-makers and relevant company functions (e.g., buying, compliance, sustainability, etc.).

Businesses should be prepared to face possible challenges in integrating family-friendly policy standards into procurement contracts, including:

- → The implementation of these policies often demands local adaptation across a variety of contexts, adding a further layer of complexity.
- → Suppliers, particularly those in first and second tiers, may find it challenging to grapple with a multiplicity of monitoring and reporting standards. A "checkbox" approach to supply chain management can exacerbate "audit fatigue," fail to capture a meaningful understanding of how child rights are impacted by business operations and leave other key programmes, such as grievance reporting mechanisms, underfunded.
- → Similarly, the prevailing notion that child rights impacts do not go beyond child labour often undermines the take-up of these policies as they are often not considered a priority.⁴²
- → Successful implementation of global policies can come at an initial cost and are dependent on an initial investment of financial and human resources.

MOVE BEYOND COMPLIANCE: RAISE AWARENESS AND BUILD CAPACITY

- → Raise awareness of the importance of family-friendly policies and their business benefits among suppliers to encourage them to devote resources to implement policies and establish support programmes.
- → Increase understanding of positive payoffs of workplace policy alignment with SDGs.
- → Strengthen supplier capacity to understand the gaps and support them in designing and implementing family-friendly policies through training programmes.
- Support suppliers in establishing effective worker engagement, including through social dialogue, by soliciting the voice and input of working parents to understand their challenges and needs.
- ROLL OUT OF THE "NOBODY'S PERFECT" INTEGRATED EARLY CHILDHOOD PARENTING TRAINING IN A FOOTWEAR **FACTORY IN VIETNAM**

UNICEF has partnered with manufacturing factories in Vietnam to promote familyfriendly business practices. The "Nobody's Perfect" early childhood parenting program aims to increase parents' understanding of children's developmental needs.



- → Support suppliers in creating and adequately funding channels of communication, such as whistleblowing or grievance mechanisms, to ensure concerns are reported and addressed.
- → Incentivize suppliers to address and implement family-friendly policies by rewarding suppliers that take action (e.g. through higher order volumes and long-term contracts).

Transparency is a critical component of equitable, family-friendly supply chains. In 2020, the World Benchmarking Alliance released findings on apparel company disclosures of compensation and benefits offered to supply chain workers. Of 36 companies analysed, none publicly disclosed whether they required suppliers to provide family-friendly benefits to workers engaged across their supply chains. Only one company explicitly referenced and set a best practice standard for maternity leave provisions.⁴³

USE VOICE AND INFLUENCE AND SUPPORT GOVERNMENT EFFORTS

- → Support government efforts and advocate for better public policies in line with and beyond international labour standards that protect and fulfil the rights of working parents and their children, especially those in low-income and informal employment.
- Collaborate with local stakeholders (e.g., business partners, civil society, government) to scale good practices that achieve positive impact.
- → Support programmes that address challenges beyond the first tier of the supply chain and promote collective worker empowerment and freedom of association.



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KEY RESOURCES

- UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (2020): Family-Friendly Policies: Handbook for Business
- UN Global Compact (2019): *Decent Work* Toolkit for Sustainable Procurement
- UNICEF (2020): Breastfeeding Support in the Workplace: A Global Guide for Employers
- IFC (2019): Guide for Employer-Supported Childcare
- ILO, Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work
- ILO, Guide to developing balanced working time arrangements
- ILO, Maternity Protection Resource Package

- ILO, Policy Guidelines on the promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel
- ILO, Work and family: Creating a familyfriendly workplace

COVID-19 RESOURCES AND GUIDANCE:

- UNICEF (2020): Childcare in a global crisis: the impact of COVID-19 on work and family life
- IFC (2020): Childcare in the COVID-19 Era: A Guide for Employers
- UNICEF, ILO and UN Women (2020): Family-friendly policies and other good workplace practices in the context of COVID-19: Key steps employers can take

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) are a set of seven Principles offering quidance to businesses on how to advance gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community. Established by the UN Global Compact and UN Women, the WEPs are informed by international labour and human rights standards. In addition to joining the WEPs network, companies are encouraged to take the WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool, a free online resource to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities to improve their performance on gender equality.

ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT

As a special initiative of the UN Secretary-General, the United Nations Global Compact is a call to companies everywhere to align their operations and strategies with ten universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Launched in 2000. the UN Global Compact guides and supports the global business community in advancing UN goals and values through responsible corporate practices. With more than 10,000 companies and 3,000 non-business signatories based in more than 160 countries, and more than 68 Local Networks, it is the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative.

For more information, follow @globalcompact on social media and visit our website at unglobal compact.org.

ABOUT THE DECENT WORK IN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS ACTION PLATFORM

The United Nations Global Compact launched the Action Platform on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains in 2017 to build an alliance of companies and partner organizations that are committed to respecting human rights and labour rights by leveraging their supply chains and taking collective action to address decent work deficits. This platform builds the case for improving decent work in global supply chains and demonstrates how labour rights and human rights are critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The focus lies on fostering leadership, learning and sharing across sectors, establishing good practice, identifying and incubating innovative solutions and accelerating actions to address human rights and labour rights in global supply chains.

UNICEF is a partner of the UN Global Compact Decent Work in Global Supply Chains Action Platform, providing guidance and expertise on family-friendly policies and children's rights, health and well-being.

ABOUT UNICEF

UNICEF works in the world's toughest places to reach the most disadvantaged children and adolescents - and to protect the rights of every child, everywhere. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we do whatever it takes to help children survive, thrive and fulfil their potential, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines, we support child health and nutrition, safe water and sanitation, quality education and skill building, HIV prevention and treatment for mothers and babies, and the protection of children and adolescents from violence and exploitation. Before, during and after humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF is on the ground, bringing lifesaving help and hope to children and families. Nonpolitical and impartial, we are never neutral when it comes to defending children's rights and safeguarding their lives and futures.

ENDNOTES

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