

# Care Economy Resolution

Family as first layer of protection, care and support

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The recently adopted Care Economy resolution by the United Nations highlights the critical role of care work and its significance in shaping resilient, prosperous, and equitable societies [1]. This resolution places a spotlight on the importance of supporting parents and caregivers, acknowledging that the family unit serves as the primary line of protection, love, and support for children [2].

Understanding this context is crucial in appreciating the profound impact that parenting support has on the development and well-being of children [3]. This text will explore the intricate relationship between the Care Economy resolution and the essential nature of parenting support, underscoring how family, as the first layer of protection, is indispensable for a child's growth and development. [4]

## **The Family as the First Line of Protection and Support**

From the moment a child is born, the family provides the initial environment of care, safety, and emotional bonding. This primary environment is where children first experience love, security, and stability; which

Strengthening intergenerational relations, through such measures as promoting intergenerational living arrangements and encouraging extended family members to live in close proximity to each other, has been found to promote the best interests of the child, as well as the autonomy, security and well-being of older persons.

Initiatives to promote involved and positive parenting and to support the role of grandparents have been found to be beneficial in advancing social integration and solidarity among generations, as well as in promoting and protecting the human rights of all family members.

*Resolution on Promoting care and support systems for social development.*

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are foundational elements for their overall development. Families are crucial in fostering a sense of belonging and self-worth, which is vital for children's mental and emotional health. The resolution acknowledges that families, supported by effective policies and programs, play a critical role in safeguarding children's rights and ensuring their well-being.

The role of the family extends beyond basic needs. It encompasses emotional and psychological support, which is critical in the early stages of life. A stable family environment nurtures children's cognitive and emotional development, laying the groundwork for their future learning and relationships. This nurturing is not limited to infancy but continues through adolescence and beyond, influencing a child's ability to form healthy relationships and contribute positively to society [5].

### **Critical Window of Early Childhood Development**

Early childhood, particularly the first few years of life, represents a critical period for brain development. During this time, a child's brain forms over one million new neural connections every second. This rapid brain development is unparalleled at any other stage of life, making early childhood a unique window of opportunity to shape a child's future.

The interactions and experiences a child has during this period are crucial. Every hug, every nutritious meal, and every playful interaction contribute to brain development [6]. These activities are not merely comforting; they are essential for the physical, cognitive, and emotional growth of the child. For instance, positive interactions with caregivers can enhance a child's language skills, emotional regulation, and social abilities, which are foundational for lifelong learning and development.

The resolution underscores the importance of creating environments that support this rapid development. When parents and caregivers are equipped with the resources and knowledge to provide nurturing care, children are more likely to thrive. This care includes responsive feeding, early learning activities, and a safe and stimulating environment.

### **Parenting Support as a Critical Component**

Parenting is a complex and demanding role that requires a range of skills and knowledge. Parents are the main providers of care, guiding their children through various stages of development. However, the challenges of parenting can be overwhelming without adequate support. This is where parenting support programs come into play, offering essential assistance to parents and caregivers.

Parenting support programs provide parents with the tools and strategies they need to foster their child's development effectively. These programs can include education on child development, stress management techniques, and guidance on positive parenting practices.

The resolution calls for a reimagining of how we support parents and caregivers. It highlights the need for comprehensive parenting support that addresses both the parents' and children's needs. Such support includes as already mentioned in the Resolution on the Follow-up of the International Year of the Family and Beyond: paid parental leave, breastfeeding support, and access to affordable, quality child care [7]. These measures ensure that parents have the time and resources to nurture their children during critical developmental stages.

### **Benefits of Paid Parental Leave and Breastfeeding Support**

Paid parental leave is a vital component of parenting support. It allows parents to spend crucial time with their newborns, fostering bonding and providing essential care during the early weeks and months of life. It leads to better health outcomes for both children and parents. It reduces parental stress, increases breastfeeding rates, and enhances child development.

Breastfeeding support is another critical aspect. Breastfeeding provides optimal nutrition for infants and has numerous health benefits for both mother and child. Support for breastfeeding can include providing lactation consultants, creating breastfeeding-friendly environments, and ensuring mothers have the time and space to breastfeed or pump milk. Such support helps mothers establish and maintain breastfeeding, which is beneficial for the child's immune system and overall development. [8]

## **Access to Child Benefits, Adequate Wages, and Affordable Child Care**

Access to child benefits, adequate wages, and affordable, quality child care are fundamental for enabling parents to provide the best possible care for their children.

Child benefits can help alleviate financial stress, ensuring that families have the resources needed to meet their children's needs. Adequate wages ensure that parents can support their families without working excessive hours, allowing them to spend more time with their children.

Affordable and quality child care is essential for working parents. Quality child care provides a safe and stimulating environment for children, promoting their development and allowing parents to work with peace of mind. [9]

## **Government and Business Investment in Parenting Support**

Governments and businesses play a crucial role in supporting families and caregivers. The resolution calls for increased investment

*“in care and support and promote legal systems or frameworks in care and support policies and infrastructure, and promote national legislation and capacity-building to ensure universal access to affordable and quality services for all, including childcare [...], which is necessary to address care needs for persons throughout their life course, and to ensure universal access to paid maternity, paternity and parental leave and social protection for all workers, including for both informal workers and those in non-standard forms of employment”.*

Such investments are not only beneficial for individual families but also for society as a whole. When families are supported, children are more likely to grow into healthy, productive adults, contributing positively to the community and the economy.

Family-friendly policies, such as flexible working hours, parental leave, and child care support, enable parents to balance work and family responsibilities. These policies can reduce stress and improve the well-being of both parents and children. Moreover, businesses that implement family-friendly

policies often see increased employee satisfaction, loyalty, and productivity.

## **Building Resilient, Prosperous, and Fair Societies**

The resolution underscores that supporting families and caregivers is essential for building resilient, prosperous, and fair societies. When parents are equipped with the tools and resources they need, they can provide the nurturing care that children require to thrive. This, in turn, leads to better outcomes for children, families, and society.

Investing in parenting support and family-friendly policies is a strategic approach to promoting social and economic development. It helps create a more equitable society where all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Such investments also contribute to social cohesion, as supported families are more likely to be engaged and active members of their communities.

## **Conclusion**

The Care Economy resolution emphasizes the pivotal role of care work, particularly the care provided by parents and caregivers, in shaping a child's future and, by extension, society's future.

Recognizing the family as the first line of protection, the resolution highlights the necessity of supporting parents through comprehensive parenting programs and family-friendly policies. These supports are crucial during the early years of a child's life, a period marked by rapid brain development and significant growth.

By investing in paid parental leave, breastfeeding support, child benefits, adequate wages, and affordable quality child care, governments and businesses can create an environment where families thrive. These investments lead to healthier, happier children and more resilient, prosperous, and fair societies.

The resolution calls for a reimagined approach to supporting parents and caregivers, recognizing that their role is fundamental in nurturing and protecting the next generation. When families are supported, children can develop the skills and confidence needed to become productive, engaged members of society,

ultimately benefiting everyone.

### Key policy recommendations

- Develop programs -including education on child development, stress management techniques, communication and positive parenting practices- that provide knowledge and skills to nurture children's development.
- Advocate for increased funding from governments and businesses for parenting programs and family-friendly initiatives
- Ensure parents have sufficient paid leave to spend crucial time with their newborns, promoting bonding and providing essential early care.
- Align leave policies with best practices to improve health outcomes for both children and parents.
- Provide access to lactation consultants and create breastfeeding-friendly environments in workplaces and public spaces to ensure mothers have the time and space to breastfeed or pump milk, and to support the establishment and maintenance of breastfeeding.
- Offer financial support to families through child benefits to reduce economic stress and ensure children's needs are met.
- Ensure parents receive adequate wages to support their families without the need for excessive work hours, allowing more time for parenting.
- Invest in accessible, high-quality child care services that provide a safe and stimulating environment for children, to support working parents by ensuring affordable child care options and enabling them to balance work and family responsibilities.
- Encourage businesses to adopt flexible working hours, parental leave, and other family-friendly policies to support employee well-being.
- Recognize that family-friendly policies contribute to increased employee satisfaction, loyalty, and productivity
- Emphasize the long-term benefits of such investments for children, families, and society as a whole.

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- [1] Resolution on “promoting care and support systems for social development”, [www.undocs.org/E/CN.5/2024/L.5](http://www.undocs.org/E/CN.5/2024/L.5).
- [2] Special message by Ms. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director of UNICEF on the IFFD celebration of the International Day Of Families, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yfz1P6UqhcM>
- [3] Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, [www.undocs.org/E/ICEF/2021/25/Add.1](http://www.undocs.org/E/ICEF/2021/25/Add.1)
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