



ELEVENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Work and well-being: Work and family responsibilities in the ILO

1. At its 276th Session (November 1999), the Governing Body endorsed a framework for a wide-ranging human resources strategy.¹ In its response to the Governing Body's discussion of the strategy and of a related issue – the provision of assistance or facilities for childcare in the ILO – the Office considered that a broader set of proposals addressing a wide variety of issues concerning work, family and the well-being of ILO staff in Geneva and elsewhere should be put before the Governing Body at its present session.² The present paper, and more specifically its appendix, responds to this intention. A detailed policy and proposals for action will be presented to the Governing Body in November 2000.
2. Currently, there is no overall policy and no package of supporting measures that address balancing work and family responsibilities and other matters affecting the well-being of ILO staff at work. For the reasons addressed in the background section of the appendix to this paper, the Office is keen to remedy this situation. In developing a work, family and well-being policy, the Office will be aiming to provide a safe, healthy, non-threatening, family-friendly environment that takes into account the unique features of a multicultural workplace and recognizes the special needs of individual staff (such as those with disabilities). In this context, a number of issues, strategies, possible measures, and priorities will need to be considered. The appendix identifies several broad categories of issues and measures around which the Office proposes to focus an examination during the next few months: flexible working arrangements; flexible leave arrangements; special leave arrangements; relocation policies; equitable access to entitlements, benefits and facilities; and occupational health issues (including staff security). The appendix is not intended to present an exhaustive list of the various options that might be examined in

¹ GB.276/9/2, paras. 20-35 inclusive. The measures that have since been taken in the implementation of that strategy are set out in a separate paper (GB.277/PFA/10).

² GB.276/9/2, para. 37.

relation to each of these categories. Rather, it seeks to identify the range of more important issues and measures that should be considered in developing these options.

3. The paper to be prepared for November 2000 will present an overall draft policy, strategy, options in relation to particular measures and suggested priorities. The paper will also provide an indication of the associated cost of pursuing various alternative approaches and the extent to which the matters covered by the proposed work, family and well-being policy would have to be pursued within the United Nations common system or could be implemented as a matter of internal ILO policy.
4. Accordingly, the Office would appreciate the Committee's guidance at the present session of the Governing Body on the issues raised in the appendix.

Provision of assistance or facilities for childcare at the ILO

5. There is, however, one related issue – the provision of assistance or facilities for childcare in the ILO – where, in view of a recent development, the Office now seeks a decision from the Committee.
6. It will be recalled that, at its 274th Session (March 1999), the Governing Body agreed in principle to establish a childcare facility on ILO premises, in the form of a crèche,³ pending further examination of a more detailed proposal at its June 1999 session. At that session a revised proposal was presented to the Governing Body⁴ which provided further information on a number of issues, including possible locations for an ILO childcare facility, the cost implications of the various options, the level of demand among ILO staff for such a facility, and other related issues and arrangements. The proposal indicated that there was a need for access by ILO staff to daytime childcare facilities, that a new crèche facility could be expected to commence with approximately 20-25 places filled, but that the total number of places required would probably reach a maximum of 50 within two to three years (particularly if some places were provided to the children of staff of other international organizations). A number of alternative locations for a crèche on ILO grounds was considered. Initial construction/renovation costs at the preferred location were estimated at between Sw.frs.300,000 and Sw.frs.912,000. Estimates for the annual level of ILO subsidy that would be required to maintain a 50-place crèche were set at around Sw.frs.450,000 per annum.
7. The Governing Body noted this proposal but deferred further discussion until its 276th Session (November 1999). As there was no consensus on the proposal at the time, as noted above the Governing Body agreed to the Office's suggestion that the issue of childcare should be addressed further in the context of an overall Office policy on work, family and well-being.
8. In late January 2000, the Association Crèche Scoubidou – which has had previous experience in establishing and operating a private crèche in Geneva over an eight-year period – made an offer to the ILO and a number of other international organizations located in Geneva to set up and operate a crèche facility in Grand-Saconnex, a short distance from the ILO building.

³ GB.274/9/2, paras. 35-63 inclusive.

⁴ GB.275/PFA/1.

9. The Association proposed that a crèche of up to 50 places be established, involving a total subsidy of Sw.frs.350,000 per annum (Sw.frs.7,000 per place per year), divided between all participating organizations according to the number of places allocated to each. In addition to the ongoing subsidy, the Association has estimated that the establishment costs (renovation and initial start-up costs) of the facility would be some Sw.frs.150,000. The crèche would charge fees to parents ranging from a minimum of Sw.frs.1,100 to a maximum of Sw.frs.1,700 per month, based on a calculation of 11 per cent of the annual earnings of parent(s) having children in the facility.
10. In order to run the crèche, the Association would require each participating organization to subsidize a fixed number of places over a number of years. If the ILO, for example, wanted to have 20 places reserved for the use of children of ILO officials, the Office would be required to subsidize the crèche to the extent of Sw.frs.140,000 per annum. The Office would also have to share, on the same basis, in the one-off establishment costs (around Sw.frs.60,000 for 20 places).
11. Under the proposal, the Association would apply the terms of the Geneva collective agreement relating to day-care providers. The crèche would be organized and run by the Association, with each subsidizing organization entitled to nominate a representative to a management board.
12. The Association has asked for a firm indication by the end of March 2000, from each organization whose views were sought, of whether or not it would participate in the crèche project if it were to proceed. There is considerable interest among other international organizations, subject to clarification of the costs and other issues associated with running the proposed crèche.
13. The Association's proposal has a number of advantages by comparison with that proposed previously by the Office or other alternatives.
14. First, it should be recognized that the costs associated with running a crèche in Geneva in accordance with the local collective agreement are largely fixed. Under the Association's current proposal, the costs involved in providing an ongoing Office subsidy (about Sw.frs.7,000 per child per annum) is considerably lower (by about Sw.frs.102,000 per year, or some Sw.frs.2,040 per child) than was estimated last year if the Office were to establish and operate its own facility. It should also be noted that the ongoing subsidy proposed by the Association is much lower (about 60 per cent lower) than that proposed by the City of Geneva in 1999 for "buying" places in an existing crèche (at that time the local Geneva authorities were prepared to make places available to the ILO at a cost of about Sw.frs.17,000 per place per year).⁵
15. Secondly, the ILO would not be responsible for the establishment, organization or daily operation of the crèche. This would remove a potentially significant administrative burden. However, the Office and other organizations would have a role in the governance of the facility, being represented on its management board.
16. Thirdly, the ILO would not be committed to subsidizing the crèche on a long-term basis. Should the Office not be satisfied with the facility for any reason whatsoever, it could withdraw from any arrangement with the Association after five years.

⁵ GB.275/PFA/1, para. 20.

17. The ILO Programme and Budget for 2000-01 provides for a total of Sw.frs.270,000 to be made available for childcare facilities, should the Governing Body so decide. Under the Association's proposal, this amount would cover the biennial subsidy required for approximately 19 ILO places. Last year the Office had estimated (on the basis of the results of a staff survey) that, immediately following its establishment, about 18 children would use, on a full-time basis, an ILO childcare facility and that a number of other places would be taken on a part-time basis. It was also estimated that the occupancy rate in an ILO crèche would increase to about 50 places over the following two- to three-year period.
18. It is proposed that the Office seek 20 places in the crèche that the Association proposes to establish, subject to clarification of certain issues (see below). Given the level of interest shown by other international organizations in Geneva, this is likely to be the maximum number of places the ILO could reasonably expect to secure. Should additional places subsequently be available, the Office would consider whether further places should be sought and report to the Governing Body accordingly at that time.
19. The Office considers that the Association should clarify a number of issues before the Office could commit itself to any formal involvement in the proposed crèche. These include details of the budget estimates for the crèche; details of the day-care arrangements to be provided (such as the content of the pedagogical curriculum; the ratio of crèche staff to children; how children are to be grouped by age; the proportion of full-time to part-time places; crèche facilities; etc.); and the role(s) of the organizations in the governance arrangements for the crèche.
20. Subject to the satisfactory responses to the issues raised in paragraph 10, the Governing Body's approval is sought to commit the funds provided in the programme and budget for the current biennium (Sw.frs.270,000) towards an Office bid for 20 childcare places with the Association, and to agree that the shortfall of some Sw.frs.10,000 in addition to some Sw.frs.60,000 – the ILO's share of the establishment costs for the proposed crèche – be covered in the first instance from savings in Part I of the budget, on the understanding that, should this subsequently prove impossible, the Director-General would propose alternative methods of financing at a later stage in the biennium.
21. Finally, it should be noted that the issue of access to childcare by ILO staff serving outside Geneva will be examined in the context of the broader work associated with the preparation of an Office work, family and well-being policy.
22. ***The Committee may wish to recommend to the Governing Body that, should the Office decide to participate in the crèche proposed to be established and operated by the Association Crèche Scoubidou, the funding would be provided from the provision in the Programme and Budget for 2000-01 for this purpose, and that an additional Sw.frs.70,000 would be financed in the first instance from savings in Part I of the budget, on the understanding that, should this subsequently prove impossible, the Director-General would propose alternative methods of financing at a later stage in the biennium.***

Geneva, 10 March 2000.

Point for decision: Paragraph 22.

Appendix

Issues and measures to be considered in developing an ILO policy

Background

1. In 1995 the executive heads of all the agencies of the United Nations common system in the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC)¹ adopted a policy to foster a supportive work environment in each organization aimed both at promoting productivity and enabling staff members to respond to the conflicting pressures of work and of family life.² That initiative, together with the adoption of a policy on the status of women in the secretariats of the United Nations common system,³ were precursors of the decision to embark on an overall reform of human resources management in the United Nations. This decision was reflected in a policy statement adopted by the executive heads of all the agencies in 1998.⁴ Subsequently, the United Nations General Assembly called on the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) to play a lead role in the development of innovative approaches in the field of human resources management as part of the overall reform currently taking place in the common system agencies. In response, in July 1998 the ICSC created a Working Group on the Framework for Human Resources Management. Inter alia, the final report of the Working Party to the ICSC considers, as one of the guiding principles in the area of recruitment, placement and retention of staff of common system agencies, the need to incorporate contemporary approaches to balancing work and family needs in their compensation and benefits packages.⁵ The report will be considered by the ICSC at its session in spring 2000 and by the General Assembly later this year.
2. The commitment made by the agencies of the United Nations common system to introduce a work and family agenda is not, of course, unique. Because of the distinct and quantifiable benefits obtained by implementing family-friendly policies, a considerable number of public and private sector bodies throughout the world have already instituted such measures. In doing so, account has been taken of the increasing diversity of family structures and workplaces and of demographic changes and social trends (such as the wider participation of women and, therefore, mothers, in paid employment; the preponderance of dual career couples; and the greater likelihood that workers will assume the care of relatives or other persons who are elderly or who have long-term illnesses or

¹ The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) was established in 1946 by Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 13(III) as a standing committee to supervise the implementation of the agreements between the United Nations and the then existing three specialized agencies. Today, 25 UN system organizations, including UN funds and programmes as well as specialized agencies, WTO, and the Bretton Woods institutions, participate in the work of the ACC. Its mandate is to promote cooperation within the system in the pursuit of the common goals of member States and encompasses the whole range of substantive and management issues facing the common system.

² *Work/Family Agenda*, CCAPO(PER), 1995; Internet: <http://accsubs.unsystem.org/ccaqper/publications/current/workfamily.htm>.

³ *The Status of Women in the Secretariats of the United Nations Common System* (CCAPO(PER)), Dec. 1995; Internet: <http://accsubs.unsystem.org/ccaqper/publications/current/women-status.htm>.

⁴ *The Reform of Human Resources Management in the United Nations Common System* (CCAPO(PER)), Feb. 1998; Internet: <http://accsubs.unsystem.org/ccaqper/publications/current/hr-management.htm>.

⁵ *Human resources management: Report of the Working Group on the Framework for Human Resources Management* (ICSC/51/R.9), 10 Feb. 2000.

disabilities). Equally, though, the agencies have become conscious that winning the commitment and loyalty of their employees is crucial to the achievement of corporate objectives. Acknowledging and addressing the dual roles of employees is a major part of developing and maintaining that commitment. There is now substantial evidence to support the view that organizations and companies that have integrated work and family considerations into their human resources policies have seen an improvement in performance, increased productivity, and reduced absenteeism. Moreover, they have gained a competitive edge as a result both of attracting and retaining skilled, capable and adaptable employees and from having an enhanced public image.

3. The new ILO human resources strategy recognizes that the skills, abilities and motivation of staff are integral to the delivery of the highest quality products and services. Even though most aspects of that strategy are designed to have a direct impact on the well-being of staff, it is worth recalling a few specific measures in this context. One is the introduction of a programme aimed at combating workplace harassment of all types. Work is well advanced on formulating a new policy on sexual harassment, underpinned by procedures that will enable individuals to seek a range of assistance to deal with problems of this nature. It is also anticipated that work will begin shortly on developing a policy and procedures to deal with other forms of harassment, if and when they arise (such as bullying, mobbing and manipulation). Awareness-raising campaigns incorporating discussions, seminars and brochures will accompany the introduction of these new policies and procedures. Aligned to these matters – and also highlighted in the strategy – is the intention to introduce a system to help resolve individual grievances in a manner that is quicker, less stressful and more effective than those currently available.
4. In order to create the optimal environment for the introduction of all these measures, the strategy is being developed alongside a number of other measures designed to improve the well-being of staff and the conditions in which they work (including an emphasis on teamwork; a “flatter” organizational structure; greater adherence to considerations of equity; an internal communications strategy; and increased accountability and transparency at all levels). In the overall context of the reforms being undertaken to improve the general climate at work, special attention is also being given to the development of a modern occupational health and safety policy for all ILO staff.
5. All of the above initiatives provide the Office with an excellent opportunity for the successful introduction of a work, family and well-being policy. The example of best practice measures taken by national and international organizations – many inspired by the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156), and Recommendation (No. 165), 1981 – and the guidelines offered by the UN *Work/Family Agenda* will be of considerable assistance in developing a policy tailored to the unique circumstances of the ILO. To ensure that the policy deals as comprehensively as possible with the relevant issues, a process of consultation with staff representatives and individuals both at headquarters and in the field will be undertaken to identify and discuss the various options to be presented to the Governing Body in November 2000. Even though some of the measures outlined below may require decisions by the ACC, the ILO has the opportunity here to give effect internally to the relevant international labour standards and to take the lead in shaping a work, family and well-being agenda for the agencies of the UN common system.
6. In developing a work, family and well-being policy, a number of issues and measures should be considered. These are discussed below under the following major categories: flexible working arrangements; flexible leave arrangements; special leave arrangements; relocation policies; equitable access to entitlements, benefits and facilities; and occupational health and safety issues (including staff security matters).

I. Flexible working arrangements

7. A certain number of measures are already in place in the ILO. *Flexible working hours (flexitime)* were introduced in 1974: staff are allowed flexibility in choosing a starting time (from 7.00 to 9.30), a finishing time (from 16.30 to 19.00) and a midday break (from 12.00 to 14.00). Within this framework, officials are expected to work 40 hours a week, but it is possible to work a little more or a little less and make up the difference later. The maximum cumulative credit or debit of time that officials are authorized to carry over from one week to the next is ten hours. *Part-time work* is also authorized either on the basis of half-time work (introduced in 1976) or at 80 per cent capacity

(introduced in 1990). In the context of the current reorganization of the Office, changes are being made to work design (including when and where the work is done, how jobs and tasks are organized, who does the work and how the work is managed). These changes will facilitate the introduction of greater flexibility in the various workplaces of the Office. For example, it might be feasible to introduce additional arrangements such as *compressed work schedules, job-sharing, phased or partial retirement and home-based work*. In addition, it could be advisable to review the present flexitime and part-time work arrangements: in the years since schemes such as these were introduced, innovative variations have been introduced by organizations and enterprises which allow for a better harmonization of work and family responsibilities.

II. Flexible leave arrangements

8. Various arrangements could be considered to enable staff to meet particular family responsibilities by taking additional periods of unpaid leave. The options to be considered could include, for example, *flexible working years* and various ways of affording staff *career breaks*.

III. Special leave arrangements

9. At present, female officials are entitled to paid maternity leave of 16 weeks (and of seven weeks when a woman official adopts a child below school age). All officials are entitled to a total of seven days in any calendar year and of not more than three consecutive working days at any one time either for uncertified sick-leave or for an unforeseen family-related emergency. Special leave (compassionate leave) of a maximum of three days (plus travel time, if necessary) is granted to an official whose spouse, child, father or mother dies. It is also permitted to grant special leave with pay for certain studies or vocational training where resources are available and special leave without pay for the special care of a close relative (spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild), especially in the case of a serious illness or on the death of a close relative other than the spouse, child, father or mother; or to care for a baby following maternity leave; or for study, when Office resources do not allow for paid study leave.
10. Following the adoption of any new instruments revising the Maternity Protection Convention (Revised) (No. 103), and Recommendation (No. 95), 1952, by the 88th Session (2000) of the International Labour Conference, it may be desirable to reflect on the entitlements available to pregnant women and new mothers. In the same vein, the opportunity should be taken to examine the desirability of establishing new entitlements in relation to paternity and parental leave. This consideration should include issues such as replacement cover both for women on leave related to maternity and for male and female staff who have taken leave for childcare or other family reasons.
11. Finally, consideration should also be given to the issue of care for dependent adults and dependants with disabilities. Any proposed leave for these purposes would have to be considered within the framework of other leave provisions for staff with family responsibilities.

IV. Relocation policies

12. Relocation is an extremely important work and family issue and should take into account a broad range of factors. For the purposes of the present paper, only a few issues are being highlighted, although the Office recognizes that there is an urgent need to settle a comprehensive policy on the matter, one that covers the full range of information and assistance that should be available prior to and during relocation and on return to the original duty station. Ideally, the necessary policy should be developed within, or together with, the present policy. Of paramount importance is the need to consider a number of strategies to address issues relating to the effect of relocation on family members. In this regard, special consideration should be given to a range of measures relating to the effects of relocation both on the career of an official's spouse (or partner) and on other dependants. (For example, a staff member who has responsibility for the continuing care and support of an elderly parent, or of another family member with a disability, or of a same-sex or unmarried partner may face particular difficulties in relocating.) At present, the Staff Regulations provide only for the relocation of an official's spouse and dependants (defined as children in respect of whom a family allowance is payable). Further consideration needs to be given to such issues, both in the context of relocation and more generally as regards access to other entitlements.

V. *Equitable access to entitlements, benefits and facilities*

13. As noted in the previous paragraph, there should be some reflection on according access to the various entitlements, benefits and facilities that accrue from ILO employment to dependants who are not in a “traditional” or formal legal relationship with staff members. There has already been some action on this issue at a UN common system level. Equity considerations also arise in the case of persons employed on a range of short-term contracts, who in many cases may have worked for the Office for considerable periods of time and whose family responsibilities are equally as affected as those of ILO regular staff. Other issues relating to persons working under “precarious” contracts are being examined in an internal Office review of contracts policy and administration.

Childcare

14. The issue of providing assistance or facilities for childcare in the ILO has been the subject of recent consideration by the Governing Body. A specific proposal (for decision) is outlined in the covering paper in relation to access to childcare facilities for Geneva-based staff. However, as part of the development of an overall work, family and well-being policy, an examination will be made of whether there are particular childcare issues in relation to staff serving outside Geneva that should also be addressed.

VI. *Occupational health and safety and staff security*

15. At present a number of areas of the Office are responsible for different occupational health and safety questions. For the most part, however, these services tend to work independently of each other, with no overall objective or authority. While the specific activities conducted may be useful, they are necessarily piecemeal and capable only of reacting to particular needs, both because of the lack of a comprehensive approach and because insufficient attention is paid to preventive measures. A modern occupational health and safety policy should focus more on promoting the health and well-being (and therefore, working capacity) of all staff, instead of being concerned only with avoiding occupational health risks. This means that attention should be placed on improving the health of individuals (by identifying the factors that jeopardize health, preventing occupational disease and disability, and protecting vulnerable groups); improving and developing a healthy work environment (by identifying hazards and undertaking assessments of risk; preventing accidents and overstrain; introducing new and safe technologies; giving proper attention to ergonomic considerations; and facilitating the access of staff to recreational services and facilities); and developing and improving organizational health (by implementing the human resources strategy). Accordingly, consideration could be given to the creation of an occupational health service with authority to determine and implement an occupational health policy for the Office in accordance with modern needs and in line with the relevant ILO Conventions and Recommendations.
16. In addition, and in accordance with the relevant provisions in international legal instruments relating to the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel, ILO staff have the right to expect that their health, well-being and lives will not be subject to undue risk. In this regard, an examination will need to be made of whether any additional measures are required to protect the safety of ILO staff and their family members arising from factors affecting work and living in particular duty stations.