

UNICEF urges all countries to provide 'Super Dads' with paid leave

Almost two-thirds of the world's children under the age of one live in countries where fathers are not legally entitled to any paid paternity leave, according to a new analysis by the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)).

There are 92 countries which lack national policies ensuring that new fathers get adequate paid time off, to spend with their newborn babies.

"Positive and meaningful interaction with mothers and fathers from the very beginning, helps to shape children's brain growth and development for life, making them healthier and happier, and increasing their ability to learn," said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore.

It's all of our responsibility to enable them to fill this role," she added.

Evidence suggests that when fathers bond with their infants, they are more likely to play an active role in their child's development. Research also suggests that when children positively interact with their fathers, they have better psychological health, self-esteem and long-term satisfaction in life.

UNICEF is urging governments to implement national family-friendly policies that support early childhood development, including paid paternity and maternity leave, free pre-primary education, and paid breastfeeding breaks.

Earlier this year, UNICEF modernized its approach to parental leave provisions, with up to 16 weeks of paid leave for paternity across all of its offices worldwide – the first UN agency to extend the benefit, beyond the standard four weeks.

"We cannot be 'For Every Child,' if we are not also 'For Every Parent.' We have to ask more of governments and more of employers if we're going to give fathers and mothers the time and resources they need to nurture their children, particularly during the earliest years of a child's life," said Ms. Fore.

Around the world, momentum for family-friendly policies is growing. However, with nearly 90 million children living in countries without paid paternity leave, much work remains to be done, said UNICEF.

The new analysis forms part of UNICEF's Super Dads campaign, now in its second year, which aims to break down barriers and allow fathers to play an active role in their children's' development.

The campaign is also recognizing Father's Day at this time, which is celebrated across more than 80 countries during June, and focuses on the importance of love, play, protection and good nutrition for the healthy development of young children's brains.