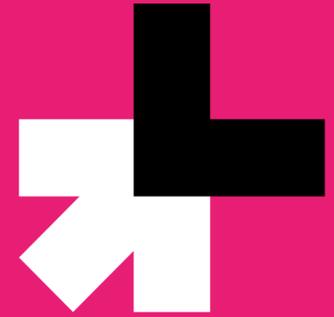


**Proven
Solution**

Economic Justice



HeForShe

Danone
**Breaking gender
stereotypes through
a gender-neutral
parental policy**



Global Context

The United Nations Human Rights reports in Gender stereotypes and Stereotyping and Women's Rights that discrimination against women includes differences of treatment based on stereotypical expectations, attitudes, and behaviors. These include stereotypes about women's role in the family which often lead to women having less time for activities outside the home and lower education levels.

In the Parental Leave Survey conducted across the US businesses by Deloitte in 2016, 63% said women and men should benefit from the same amount of parental leave. However, 54% said their colleagues would negatively judge a man for taking the same amount of leave. This was further explained by the fact that one in three men said they do not plan to take paid parental leave as they think doing so could jeopardize their position.

Fully recognizing that each family is unique and that it is key to provide employees with the flexibility to take paid leave based on their caregiver role - not based on their gender - we launched our Gender-Neutral Parental Policy in 2017. We are convinced

that offering a gender-neutral parental policy strongly contributes to transforming the stereotype that caregiving is predominantly a woman's responsibility.

"Men have a big role to play in gender equality. Not only because it is unfair not to have all genders with the same opportunities for personal and professional achievement. Not only because numerous studies show that having gender equality at the top and through different levels of the companies leads to better performance. But also because achieving equality in the workplace brings us a step closer to a more balanced and forward looking society.

As a leader in a decision-making position, I feel responsible for challenging the status quo and unconscious bias. I encourage all men, in every sector, to drastically alter the power dynamics - not tomorrow but right now. Recognize the existence of glass ceilings, review your recruitment and promotion practices, analyze eventual pay gaps and listen to women's and men's voices. Together, we will succeed.

Henri Bruxelles,
Chief Operating Officer End-to-End Design to Delivery, Danone



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Key Stages of Implementation

Danone's Gender-Neutral Parental Policy goes above and beyond the legal framework in many countries, providing 18 weeks paid leave for primary caregivers and 10 days for secondary caregivers. Our policy also requires the implementation of office lactation rooms for breastfeeding mothers, counselling during pregnancy, progressive return-to-work programs, and flexible working hours.

It is important to note that prior to launching the gender-neutral parental policy, we launched a global Dan'Cares policy in 2010, which ensures that all our employees are provided with high quality coverage for core risks such as hospitalization and surgery, maternity care and outpatient services. By the end of 2019, around 100,000 Danone employees had healthcare coverage in line with the standards defined by Dan'Cares, and this has set up the basis for the Global Parental Policy implementation.

Step 1 Build an inclusive governance model

Implementing an inclusive governance model that connects HR teams at global and local level was the first step to launch the Global Parental Policy. A Global Parental Policy Steering Committee was formed at the global level, which consisted of a Project Leader (in this case, the Global Benefits Manager), a Social Dialogue Director, a Health and Safety Director, a Corporate Communications Lead, a Diversity and Inclusion Lead and several employee representatives identified as parental policy champions. It's important to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in designing the initiative so that it works for everyone. Using established standards formats, such as those created by ISO, helps to provide structure.



Step 2 Assess, Analyse & Adapt

Conducting a global assessment by developing e-questionnaires was essential to assess where we were in terms of parental policies across our operations in 55 countries. The questionnaires were developed based on the key elements laid out in the gender-neutral parental policy, that is elements of pre-natal, caregiver leave and post-natal. Some examples included in the e-questionnaires were adapted working conditions and flexible working schedules for the pre-natal period, primary and secondary caregiver leave and reward elements maintained during leave for the caregiver leave period and job protection and breastfeeding support for the post-natal period. A scoring methodology was then developed to identify the level of preparation required from each country to comply with the policy.

The assessment also highlighted local legislation constraints as well as challenges regarding local cultures to evaluate the readiness of the countries to adopt changes. For example, to ensure the gender neutrality of the language used in the policy, we asked the countries to use the term "parental leave" instead of maternity or paternity leave. However, local legislation in many countries such as South Africa, China, Thailand, and many others, require companies to use the term "maternity" and "paternity". Similarly, adoption leave is much less common culturally in Asia compared to Europe or the US. There are also some countries like Turkey which already offer parental leave that is more generous than the local legislation.

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Step 3 Co-construct country specific roadmaps

During the development phase, each country crafted an implementation roadmap based on the assessment and gap analysis. This included identifying estimated financial investments to implement the policy by the end of 2020, which is particularly important for those countries where global minimum of 18 weeks significantly exceeds their local legislation. The roadmap also included a risk assessment which could include social dialogue risks such as local consultations with the work councils or unions. For companies like Danone, this plays a key role as there is a high number of employees working in production sites, who are unionized. All countries shared their completed country implementation roadmaps and action plan with the Global Parental Policy Steering Committee for feedback, tracking and monitoring purpose

4

Step 4 Provide guidance & monitoring

Prior to implementing the policy locally, countries go through a validation process with the global team to ensure that their policy is as reflective as possible of the global one, while respecting the local regulations. Developing a checklist to review with each country before they go live with their policy can help establish clear expectations and therefore gain time.

The Global Parental Policy Steering Committee meets quarterly to track and monitor implementation and provide necessary support as needed. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) include the number of employees benefiting from primary, secondary and adoption caregivers' leave as well as the retention of employees returning from leave. In 2020 for example, 95% of our women managers have returned to work after taking the leave.

Step 5 Communicate to drive long-term engagement

In order to maximize employee awareness and comprehension, you need a robust communication plan, which is an integral pillar of the policy's implementation. The quality and clarity of your communications will in turn drive long-term engagement. One of the main objectives of your communication plan should be to provide support to local teams during their implementation process. At Danone, this has been done through countries sharing their best practices with each other. Singapore, for example, was an inspiration regarding the use of external and peer-to-peer counselling for parents returning from leave. In addition, their comprehensive pre-natal nutrition education for expecting parents was also adopted by other countries.

5

As part of the HeForShe global communication plan, we also capitalized on international events such as International Women's Day and Global Day of Parents to communicate internally and externally on our progress and engage employees. In addition, through a powerful video we shared employees' inspiring testimonials as both parents and dedicated employees. Through regular communication that helped regarding the understanding of the policy and through real-life personal stories, we created a strong sense of pride amongst employees. In countries like Italy, Indonesia, and Egypt, they have leveraged the policy as part of their employer branding strategy which has helped us to attract and recruit best talents in these geographies.

Resources

Tools, guidelines and resources were also shared with the countries to adopt within each local policy. These include roadmaps and cost assessment templates, guidelines on language neutrality, communication and breastfeeding room as well as "Dos and Dont's" for line managers during pre-natal, caregiver leave and post-natal period.

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