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**IMPROVING LABOUR  
PRODUCTIVITY:  
THE FAMILY-WORK FACTOR  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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The family is an important social institution that demands constant reflection on how it is faring and the consideration of enhanced human resource practices required to help the institution to improve its contribution to the productivity of the labour force, the economy and national development. The traditional family system used to provide family communal living and support mechanisms that enabled parents, as workers, to attend more to the demands of their work. With the virtual breakdown of the support systems due to social change, parents have more task managing their family and work simultaneously and harmoniously. Thus for increased productivity, there is the need to reactively and proactively address the dilemma for better sound mindedness for work and for improved work performance.

Managing the challenges of work and family to improve the productivity of the labour force presents a situation analysis that indicate that the traditional supports are virtually inexistent and parents are stressed up beyond the conventional stress management programmes that organizations offer. Managing a family has often been taken as a given i.e. the managers as spouses/parents are quite conversant with family life management and in the midst of their workload and challenges in the world of work. It is also assumed that they are knowledgeable about the processes and impact of the cycle of inputs and outputs on the wellbeing of the family and on work performance. The truth is that employees are also family members who are involved in complex intricacies of family networks. They are often in dilemma on how to balance the expression of their commitment, love and expected responsibilities towards other family members and the challenges of their jobs. This dilemma even adds to the stress and further worsens performance at work.

Policies and programmes have been put in place to address some family related concerns but more needs to be done. These should include the development of policies on family support systems and accompanying establishment of family friendly work places so as to enhance productivity. Additionally, these will give employees some leeways to address family concerns in dignity and reduce family related stress and old age insecurity.

There are calls for development interventions for family life education and management, adequate child care, male involvement in women's

empowerment and increasing incomes and increasing workload. Others are for the redress of the time and labour consuming social reproduction of the home and the management of the current challenges. The concerns of the family may seem like an individual private matter but the global nature of family issues and their effect on development render important the need to raise the awareness of policy makers to the family and for more involving social action. The adoption of balancing work and family life in Canada through the setting up of Work and Family Balance Unit within the Department of Labour and promotion of family friendly work places with a view to improve productivity are given as examples.

The document advocates for a work-family balance sensitive enhanced human resource practice to improve the productivity of the labour force. This is to be done within the sociological discourse on the sociological imagination of “thinking ourselves away” to address the issues raised. The adoption of this development approach will consequently, build extra development bridges into other areas as well. Warm homes are key to partners staying faithful to each other and the children having good self-concept to practise abstinence in HIV/AIDS management. There is empirical evidence that women’s empowerment and increasing incomes are resulting in more family distress and instability and the presence of a husband being negative to the cause though welfare indicators such as access to health, nutrition and education have improved. Family-work management centres can provide support systems pseudo to what the family communal living provided so employees (formally and informally) can have quality time with spouses and children after work. The nation cannot wait for its illiterate population to fade away. They can be harnessed through adult basic schools for improved health, work performance, family welfare and better appreciation of developmental and topical issues. A venture of that kind revamps the school economy in the evenings and off-school periods.

The institution of family-friendly policies and programmes will not only improve sound mind for work, work performance and productivity. They will be incentives to the redress of a number of development concerns. These include a reduction in HIV/AIDS through the promotion of warm homes, and marital sexual fulfillment to augment workplace HIV/AIDS programmes; improved family stability with increasing women’s empowerment and

incomes; better socialization and lifestyles for the children of employees; reduced child and youth delinquency and promotion of a better future work force. Other in-roads are a redress of the brain drain problem as the family-work management centres provide home and child care services for health and education personnel; health promotion through increased education and reduced stress; provision of education as a pivotal key to address poverty; and reduction in illiteracy through the institution of adult basic schools. Ultimately, these will facilitate the achievement of the Ghana Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals.

In more practical terms, forward looking strategies have been proposed to enhance action in this enterprise of managing the challenges of work and family life to improve the productivity of the work force and to reach out to its dependent population as a human capital development venture for a better future work force and productivity. Thus, if all relevant parties (employers, employees and governmental and non-governmental agencies) in the milieu of family and work will “think themselves away” to be committed to work-family friendly policies, programmes and workplaces, achievement of development goals will be facilitated. The economy will also improve. There will be simultaneous improvement in organizational targets, career development, harmonious family life and a more sound and secure society will be achieved.

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