



Paternity Leave ‘Beneficial for Business’ at Indian Power Utility

Improving work/life balance boosts performance at BRPL

[Research](#) shows that parental leave benefits help companies attract and retain talent, improve retention, increase employee productivity, and promote diversity and inclusion; factors known to improve business performance. Parental leave is the right for employees, both women and men, to take paid or unpaid leave from an organization to care for children or other dependents, while continuing to maintain their employment status. A recent [study](#) by Promundo found that women conduct as much as six times the amount of unpaid work that men do, and that providing equal parental leave benefits can help equalize the care burden as fathers spend more time at home with their children. [USAID’s Engendering Utilities](#) program supported [BSES Rajdhani Power Limited](#) (BRPL)—an Indian energy utility—to develop and roll-out a paternity leave policy; the first of its kind for the company.

“Today both parents are working and child care is the joint responsibility of both parents,” said Alok Varma, Senior Executive Vice President and Head of HR. “Paternity leave is an important tool for increasing gender equality. It strengthens the family unit, allows the father to support his spouse, and encourages couples to share the burden of care for the newborn. It is our experience that men who participate in family care-giving are more satisfied at work and are also more efficient.”

BRPL isn’t the only company that reports a positive correlation between parental leave and improved performance. A Boston Consulting Group [study](#) conducted with more than 1,500 employers found that 80 percent of the companies that offer paid family leave experience a positive impact on employee morale, and more than 70 percent report an increase in employee productivity.

BSES RAJDHANI POWER LIMITED (BRPL)

Formed in 2002, BRPL is a joint venture of Reliance Infrastructure Limited and the government of Delhi.

The company serves 2.7 million customers across 750km of South and West Delhi.

In April 2019 BRPL partnered with Engendering Utilities to increase gender equality and economic opportunities for women across the organization.

Of the company’s 2,700 employees, 11 percent are women.

“We introduced a new paternity leave policy because implementing paternity leave is an important step in promoting gender equality at home, and in the workplace,” said Puneet Jain, General Manager of Human Resources. “Parenthood becomes less of a challenge when parents share equal responsibility, regardless of gender. Increased parent-child bonding improves the outcome for children, and the marital partnership becomes stronger. Happy parents make happy employees, and happy employees are what make BRPL an employer of choice in India.”

While [15 days of paternity leave](#) are sanctioned for government workers in India, there is no law that mandates private companies offer paternity leave benefits to their employees. In 2019 BRPL introduced the paternity leave benefit, enabling male staff to take a ten day leave after the birth or adoption of a child.

“Paternity leave is a good initiative,” said Anuj Rawat, an Assistant Manager at BRPL. “It helped me build confidence to take care of my child, and allowed the family to bond. When I returned to work after my leave, I felt happy, motivated, and full of energy, which proved beneficial for the business.”

The company, which already had strong paid leave benefits for female employees (26 weeks paid leave for women who give birth and 12 weeks paid leave for women who adopt a child under the age of three months), felt that offering paternity leave would benefit its young workforce. Although research shows that achieving gender equality and reducing bias requires equal maternity and paternity leave benefits, this initial step taken by BRPL is a significant leap in the right direction. The utility implemented this

policy to reduce the stress associated with welcoming a newborn into the house, allowing employees to focus exclusively on their responsibilities at home as they settle into fatherhood.



“Paternity leave was an enriching experience which gave me the opportunity to be emotionally and physically available for both mother and child,” said Kumar Gaurav, a Senior Manager at BRPL. “Paternity leave got me more involved in caring for my baby from the start, and gave me more time to bond with my little one. I thank our company for this great initiative to support employees in their initial parenting days.”

Today, BRPL’s male staff are more inspired than ever before to take an active role at home.

*Vivek Singh, wife, and newborn daughter
(Photo: BRPL)*

“With the introduction of paternity leave I was able to take care of my wife and my newborn daughter without any hindrance,” said Vivek Singh, a manager at BRPL.

BUILDING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Research from around the world suggests a correlation between gender equality and improved company performance. A McKinsey & Company study of 1,000 companies across 12 countries concluded that gender-diverse companies are more profitable than their national industry averages.⁵ Despite this, it can be difficult to convince managers to hire more women, and women's participation in the workforce remains low. Engendering Utilities helps organizations develop a business case for gender equality to persuade senior leadership that equality is good for business. Gender equality can improve productivity, attract a stronger talent pool, and position an organization as the employer of choice for women.

Developing a business case for gender equality is critical for achieving buy-in and strategic action from all staff, particularly senior leadership. The business case provides a justification for undertaking the gender equality program, helps organizations evaluate the benefit, cost, and risk of alternative options and provides a rationale for the preferred solution.

By supporting organizations to identify business priorities and examining sex-disaggregated organizational data, Engendering Utilities helps organizations determine how gender equality will help achieve strategic business goals.

“Because the policy was well-defined, I was able to approach my manager confidently to request the ten day leave. Today we live in a nuclear family, and these leave policies allow us to settle into our new phase, create mutual respect and trust, and help us to reconcile our personal and professional life. Now you can happily enjoy your fatherhood.”

The utility also plans to extend its daycare facilities to male employees. Previously, only female employees had access to the utility's on-site daycare. By extending services like these to fathers, BRPL emphasizes the important role that fathers play in sharing caregiving responsibilities with their partners.

“These policies allow parents to share equal responsibility during this initial phase,” said Tarun Chauhan, a Senior Manager and Sub Division Officer at BRPL. “You can make the mother feel that you are here for her and for the baby. The partnership becomes stronger. Paternity leave helps the father fulfil their responsibilities with peace of mind, and be present during these important early days.”

The company combats male stereotypes and stigma associated with childcare responsibilities, and is building a supportive culture where men are encouraged—and feel comfortable—to take on more of a family role. Over 20 male employees have used the paternity leave benefit in the last year, modeling behavior that makes their male colleagues feel comfortable using the benefit as well.

“I appreciate and thank BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd and every person who helped bring the concept of paternity leave to the company,” said Gopal Krishan Jain, a

Deputy General Manager at BRPL.

“Now male employees feel we are able to live more completely, and participate in those first precious moments of life, which should be the right of every father.”



Tarun Chauhan and family
(Photo: BRPL)

ABOUT ENGENDERING UTILITIES

When women serve as leaders and employees, businesses benefit and company performance improves. USAID's Engendering Utilities program works with companies, organizations, and agencies around the world to increase women's participation in male-dominated industries. By introducing gender equality initiatives at each phase of the [employee life cycle](#), the program expands job opportunities for women while enhancing company performance. Recognizing that gender-equitable teams build better businesses, BRPL partnered with [Engendering Utilities](#) to increase gender equality across the organization. Engendering Utilities supports BRPL by:

- **Providing a framework to implement gender equality interventions.** USAID's [Delivering Gender Equality: A Best Practices Framework for Male-Dominated Industries](#) provides partners with the resources they need to implement gender equality interventions across the employee life cycle.
- **Demand-driven change management coaching.** BRPL receives expert change management and gender equality coaching and tailored technical support.
- **The Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program (GEELP).** Developed by USAID and Georgetown University McDonough School of Business, three BRPL staff participated in this 12-month course which empowers employees to integrate gender equality initiatives within their organization's structure.

In addition to the paternity leave policy, Engendering Utilities has supported BRPL to:

- Create the Workplace Equality (WE) initiative, through which strategic working committees design and implement gender equality initiatives.
- Encourage equal participation of male and female employees in trainings.
- Increase participation of women in leadership trainings.
- Invite and encourage women to speak at national and international forums, including India Smart Utility Week 2020 and Asia Clean Energy Forum 2020.
- Spearhead trainings and discussion on gender equality and diversity with senior leadership.
- Facilitate informal mentoring of female employees for field jobs.

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