

ILO/SCOPE Study Report on

# Impact of WfH on Women Executives and Managers in PSEs in India



# **Impact of Working from Home (WfH) on Women Executives/Managers in PSEs in India**

**A study report**

**June 2021**

# Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
Abbreviations and acronyms .....	ii
Executive summary .....	iii
Women Executives (n=1969).....	v
Key Informant Interviews (KIIs; n=78).....	vii
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 COVID-19 declared pandemic and Work from Home (WfH).....	1
1.2 SCOPE-ILO Study Initiative on Adoption of WfH Model in PSEs in India .....	1
1.3 Study Objectives .....	3
1.4 Outline of the study report.....	3
1.5 Way forward for SCOPE .....	5
2. Methodology .....	6
2.1 Two tiered approach .....	6
2.3 Study limitations .....	10
2.4 Ethical considerations .....	10
2.5 Reliability of the study .....	11
3. Survey in SCOPE member organizations: Analysis of results .....	13
3.1 Introduction .....	13
3.2 Characteristics of respondents.....	14
3.3 Survey results on the 13 core questions .....	14
3.4 Survey analysis .....	25
3.5 Conclusion.....	27
4. Key Informant Interviews in selected Public Sector Enterprises: Key reflective learning.....	29
4.1 Introduction .....	29
4.2 Key Informant Interviews.....	29
4.3 Women Leaders in PSEs .....	33
4.4 Conclusion .....	36

5. Adoption of Work from Home (WfH) in PSEs: Summary of Findings and Hearing Women’s Voices .....	37
5.1 Summary of Findings .....	38
5.2 Hearing Women’s Voices – WHAT WOMEN SAID .....	41
5.3 Conclusion .....	43
6. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Proposed Guidelines .....	44
6.1 Conclusion .....	44
6.2 Recommendations .....	45
6.3 Guidelines for a Gender Sensitive Work from Home (WfH) Policy in PSEs .....	45

## ANNEXURE

I. Dissemination Plan .....	48
II. SCOPE Taskforce (Network of Champions) .....	49
III. Select Global Company Practices on Work from Home .....	50
IV. Survey Questionnaire .....	52
V. Checklist Questions for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) .....	59

## Acknowledgements

The study, thanks to the exceptional support of Standing Conference of Public Enterprise (SCOPE), drew the attention and involvement of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) in various sectors. Top decision makers in the CPSEs, namely the Chairman cum Managing Directors, the Heads of Human Resources, Women in Senior Management and other Stakeholders willingly gave time in sharing their views and insights, thus effectively guiding the study in its understanding of the COVID-19 induced work from home arrangements in PSEs in India.

The study, extends its appreciation to the SCOPE Taskforce i.e. the network of champions (12 PSE executives trained and certified by ILO), for their enthusiastic participation throughout the duration of the study. They facilitated developing the “Guidelines for a Gender Sensitive Work from Home (WfH) Policy in PSEs”, a key outcome of the study.

This study report is part of the International Labour Organization Bureau for Employers’ Activities (ACT/EMP) global initiative on Women in Business and Management. It was prepared by Malika Basu (PhD), Gender Analyst and Knowledge Management Specialist; ILO Consultant for the SCOPE-ILO Study, and Ravi Peiris, Senior Employers’ Specialist, Decent Work Technical Support Team for South Asia of the ILO. Inputs to the report from a panel of experts led by Mr. Atul Sobti, Director-General, SCOPE is deeply acknowledged.

## Abbreviations and acronyms

AAI	Airports Authority of India
ACT/EMP	ILO Bureau for Employer's Activities
AS	Assistant Manager
CMD	Chairman cum Managing Director
CONCOR	Container Corporation of India Limited
CPSE	Central Public Sector Enterprises
DG	Director General
DGM	Deputy General Manager
EIL	Engineers India Limited
GM	General Manager
HPCL	Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited
HR	Human Resources
IOCL	Indian Oil Corporation Limited
IT	Information technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
NSIC	National Small Industries Corporation
ONGC	Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited
OIL	OIL India Limited
PGCIL	Power Grid Corporation of India Limited
PSE	Public Sector Enterprises
SAIL	Steel Authority of India Limited
SCOPE	Standing Conference of Public Enterprises
SCI	The Shipping Corporation of India Limited
SMART	Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timely
WIPS	Women in Public Sector
WfH	Work/Working from Home

## Executive summary

The COVID-19 declared pandemic disrupted the way people work. Be it Governments, Employers or Employees – all the stakeholders in the economy were hard-hit by the pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns. Almost every organisation worldwide was caught unprepared to respond to this unusual challenge. At the same time though, each had a colossal task to ensure business continuity and sustainability, besides ensuring employees' welfare including their job protection.

COVID-19 evidently contagious in nature, to limit its spread, and to keep the business operations going, employers across the world, opted and rolled out a work from home (WfH) arrangement for their employees. This was a switch from the prevailing work arrangements.

The WfH arrangement is not a new concept; however, the COVID crisis made it the most desirable and inevitable option – standardising it as a new workplace culture, labelled as the “new normal.”

Like all other big or small companies in India or globally, the Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) in India too – made a forcible shift, and adopted the “WfH” model, bringing in a new dimension to the workplace culture of PSEs.

In light of this new workplace culture – the new normal, The Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACTEMP) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) along with the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) initiated a study to look into the “Impact of Working from Home (WfH) on Women Executives/Managers in PSEs in India”; and whether this is a long term sustainable solution. The study being part of SCOPE-ILO's larger initiative to empower women executives in PSEs<sup>1</sup>, it specifically explored the impact WfH had on women in PSEs, many of whom play a multiple - rather a triple role simultaneously that of “employees, caregivers, and managers/leaders”.

*The WfH arrangement is not a new concept; however, the COVID crisis made it the most desirable and inevitable option – standardising it as a new workplace culture, labelled as the “new normal.”*

---

<sup>1</sup> Under their joint initiative to empower women executives in PSEs, in August 2017, ACTEMP-ILO, in collaboration with SCOPE initiated its first study titled, “Women in Leadership and Management in the Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in India”. Study available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new-delhi/documents/publication/wcms\\_632553.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new-delhi/documents/publication/wcms_632553.pdf)

SCOPE-ILO's previous study on "Women in Leadership and Management in Public Sector Undertakings in India" (2018) focussed on hindering and influential factors that contribute to women's career development and advancement to managerial and leadership positions. It had revealed the need for positive initiatives, enabling dialogues and discussions within PSEs. To facilitate this, as an immediate initiative, SCOPE created a body of champions - both women and men, drawing from different PSEs. ILO trained and certified these champions who have now become a SCOPE task force (a *Network of Champions*), to conduct gender training and sensitization sessions focusing on equal opportunities for career advancement in different PSEs.<sup>2</sup>

"Work from Home (WfH)" arrangement was one of the key recommendations of the 2017-18 SCOPE-ILO study. It received a fair share of arguments. *Many women executives had cited the WfH arrangement as an influential factor in not only advancing their careers but also facilitating a better work-life balance.* The senior management or decision-makers in the company nevertheless had argued that WfH is not practical or feasible as it is made out to be. Primarily because, not all job functions and tasks can be done outside the specified workplace. Also, deploying it may influence or make companies reengineer among other things their performance appraisals, on which depends employees' promotion.

With COVID 19 being the catalyst in adopting WfH arrangement, it was prudent to revisit the same set of women executives (i.e. E4-E9 Level) in PSEs who were part of the previous study to ascertain their views on its advantages and challenges. In addition to administering a survey to the women executives, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted in select PSEs with Chairman cum Managing Directors (CMDs), Heads of Human Resources (HR), Women in Senior Management and other stakeholders.

*"Work from Home (WfH)" was one of the key recommendations of the 2017-18 SCOPE-ILO study. It received a fair share of arguments. Many women executives had cited the WfH arrangement as an influential factor in not only advancing their careers but also facilitating a better work-life balance. The senior management or decision-makers in the company nevertheless had argued that WfH is not practical or feasible as it is made out to be.*

---

<sup>2</sup> One of the objectives of the 12- SCOPE Task Force Members is to initiate interactive dialogues within PSEs, and in particular encourage women executives to aspire to positions of leadership and management. This is done by addressing and discussing the challenges that face them at work. The task force deserves special mention for their assiduous involvement in the WfH study. *For List of Task Force Members refer to Annexure II.*

A record number of 1969 women executives (E4-E9 level) from 50 SCOPE member organizations participated in the online survey; and 78 KIIs were conducted in 22 select PSEs that included 14 CMDs and 21 Heads of HR.

The study findings brought to light a number of issues, followed by a set of recommendations streamlined into *guidelines for gender sensitive work from home policy in PSEs*. The highlighted issues, recommendations and guidelines, revolve around six key dimensions of WfH arrangement that the study broadly identified. These relate to having i. A well-defined WfH policy to avoid ambiguity; ii. A safe environment to work without fear or apprehensions; iii. Critical support systems isolated to enable business run on a continual basis; iv. A decentralized decision making to respond faster to snags and glitches; v. A robust communication with suitable digital support; and vi. Well-defined measures to assess both productivity and performance.

Notable issues that emerged out of the study findings can be summarized as follows:

#### *Six Key Dimensions of WfH Arrangement*

- i. A well-defined Work from Home Policy with unambiguous terms and conditions*
- ii. Provide Safe environment to employees to work without apprehensions*
- iii. Identify critical support systems to ensure continued operations*
- iv. Decentralize decision making based on ground situations or circumstances*
- v. A robust communication system with suitable digital/technological support*
- vi. Well defined measures to assess productivity; besides, well defined metrics to assess performance*

*Source: SCOPE-ILO WfH Study, 2020*

## **Women Executives (n=1969)**

1. Overall, there was a mixed response to adjusting to the new norm of WfH. As mentioned, in a recent study (pre-COVID) conducted by SCOPE-ILO, majority of women had suggested that given a choice, they would opt for Work from Home. In the current study though, the mixed response is an indication that many now – having experienced the WfH arrangement, may not prefer it on a long term basis. It is inferred from this that WfH was tried out during the most challenging circumstances which may have added to the pressure on women to fulfill more demands expected by them from families, merely because they were at home. It may not have been so demanding with a normal support system operating (Pre-COVID). Also, amongst other things, lack of a dedicated and compliant workspace, with inadequate IT infrastructure at home was cited as a challenge, at times discomfoting to stay focused on work. Some (27.48%) even noted a lack of inspirational work atmosphere at home.
2. Maximum number of respondents indicated that their company has no written WfH Policy but issued guidelines/directives periodically. It was felt a written document

with clear timelines for tasks and expectations from staff would facilitate a WfH arrangement better.

3. Of the total number of respondents, 89.79% experienced the Work from Home (WfH) arrangement either for a long or short duration during the COVID induced lockdown period. However, at the time of the study (October-December 2020), most of the respondents seemed to have been back to office; and some were working on a ROTA basis (rotational basis). Irrespective of the duration of the WfH, three things stood out in terms of key work related challenges. These included viz. infrastructure facilities and tools; loss of the real time benefits of face to face interactions; and loss of informal knowledge sharing that kept colleagues connected at a personal level.
4. Besides the three work related challenges, two other challenges were highlighted by the women i.e. getting preoccupied with unpaid care work; and blurred boundaries between work and personal life. Many actually felt that their time management skills were tested. Time management was important as most women lamented - one of the negative influence of WfH to be: 'heavier workload with long working hours'. However, a key benefit and a positive influence of the WfH arrangement: No commuting stress, was the unanimous choice.
5. The findings revealed a high rating for support from colleagues during the Pandemic. Within different PSEs, colleagues/subordinates seemed to have provided necessary and required support to each other. This team spirit and coordination was later emphasised by senior management interviewed in different PSEs. The lowest rating i.e. 1 was on "company's providing with tools and resources needed to do jobs remotely and stay connected (e.g. pay for home internet; provide for any hardware/equipment)." It may be added that the rating varied in different PSEs owing to the tools and resources provided to employees in each PSE to undertake jobs remotely. Some companies seemed to have made the digital and remote transition much faster than some others.
6. The respondents who had an additional role of managers/supervisors felt that there will be a need to change the supervisory techniques in a work from home arrangement; some also indicated adopting new techniques to assess performance of subordinates. Presently, this included for example, individual and weekly goal setting; attending/participating in virtual team meet-ups, etc.

*Irrespective of the duration of the WfH, three things stood out in terms of key work related challenges. These included viz. infrastructure facilities and tools; loss of the real time benefits of face to face interactions; and loss of informal knowledge sharing that kept colleagues connected at a personal level...*

*Besides the three work related challenges, two other challenges were highlighted by the women i.e. getting preoccupied with unpaid care work; and blurred boundaries between work and personal life.*

7. Overall, maximum number of women felt their level of productivity during WfH period was same (44.03%) as compared to pre COVID days. Women who felt they were less productive (16.66%) when working from home, their number was less as compared to those who felt their productivity level increased (30.62%).
8. Of the 1969 women executives who participated in the survey, close to 90% felt that the WfH arrangement is relevant; and that it was sustainable. While close to 75% found the WfH arrangement effective as well as efficient, it was felt that definite guidelines, also well-defined metrics that assesses productivity and performance, will facilitate being more effective and efficient.
9. Women who found themselves juxtaposed in a triple role i.e. as employees, caregivers, also supervisors/team leaders (some quoted in this report), articulated one thing upfront i.e. as an employee, and more so if in a leadership role, their focus is to achieve company's objectives. *Gender cannot come in the way to achieve company objectives*. However, they indicated that carrying out full time work in decision making roles can be efficiently performed if they have a strong support system to take care of their household/caring responsibilities. During Pandemic that support system lay paralyzed i.e. there was no crèche, no domestic help taking care of elders, etc.; as a result, the working woman had to bear the brunt of it. But they did their best to bring a balance, and move ahead to achieve to the extent possible in both fronts; nevertheless, "it is/was challenging". It is challenging playing multiple roles, and therefore it is important that it is understood by everyone - both in the organization and at homes, to enable better productivity and contribution of women work force in organisation/nation-building.
10. Even though the number may not be substantial, but one cannot undermine or ignore that some women ( $n=26$ ) have indicated that during the work from home arrangement, they felt some kind of threat or act of violence and harassment within their four walls, which made them feel unsafe and uncomfortable. Organisations may through their internal mechanisms try generate information, or atleast as a start, issue a general communication encouraging its employees to seek advice/guidance or necessary support if they are faced with any act of violence or harassment at home.

### **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs; n=78)**

1. The senior management and the decision makers interviewed under Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) in the PSEs were unanimous in their opinion that while the WfH was a necessity, it was forced post COVID-19 declared pandemic and it definitely cannot be applied for the entire company. For them, the new norm was not specifically the WfH but how to return to function optimally with necessary safety and precautionary measures.
2. As a corollary to the point above, it was reiterated that the experience of PSEs show that WfH is a sustainable option; however it cannot be relevant to all departments or units in a company. Each company needs to reviews its manpower requirements and functioning of its departments to come up with a practical WfH policy which keeps the company interest as well as employee welfare in place.

3. As indicated through the survey, KIIs confirmed that most PSEs did not have a written WfH Policy. Based on central and state government directives, periodic guidelines were issued. Mostly these guidelines referred to managing the manpower in post COVID as offices were directed not to work with 100% staff.
4. The companies' main focus was to make its IT system (e-offices; digitization; paperless functioning) robust; also make available the needed IT support at home for employees to work without hindrance. As stated by many of the key informants, '*Operations, Productivity and Performance*' even in an exigency could not have been compromised. It was shared that the biggest concerns of working remotely were i. Dilution of team dynamics ii. Distractions impacting working and focused approach and iii. Sustained productivity and consistent results.
 

*For the senior management and the decision makers interviewed under KIIs, the new norm was not specifically the WfH but how to return to function optimally with necessary safety and precautionary measures... It was reiterated that WfH is a sustainable option; however it cannot be relevant to all departments or units in a company. Each needs to reviews its manpower requirements and functioning of its departments to come up with a practical WfH policy which keeps the company interest as well as employee welfare in place.*
5. It was felt that even if the levels of productivity of the employees were affected in the initial days of lockdown; with the employees and the line Managers gradually getting acquainted with the new normal, things improved. In almost all PSEs CMDs shared it with great pride that their employees working from home contributed immensely towards the success of the organisation; and companies were able to achieve similar level of productivity as before (in some organisations, it was even better).
6. One thing that was unanimously credited across PSEs, was the resilience the employees showed during the pandemic. There was a new vigor in team work, wherein people were supportive of each other and coordinated well. Most felt organisations were agile and professionally run during the lockdown phase. In addition, since each could withstand the pandemic and did not let its operations get affected, all found their business models to be resilient enough to overcome exigencies like COVID19.
7. No PSEs indicated to making any significant changes to their performance appraisal systems; however, there was a unanimity that in case of WfH translating into a written policy document, performance appraisal systems would require a thorough review and modification with focus on specific quality deliverables by individuals. The Heads of Human Resources in particular felt that this was also the right time for them to recalibrate their priorities, focus towards managing remote workforce, digitalize the corporate function, and re-imagine workforce models. Some of them shared that they have already come out with different ideas and policies to deal with the pandemic.

8. Upon asked to rate their company's WfH Policy on a scale of 1 (very low) – 5 (very high), most PSEs preferred to give themselves a rating of 4. The reasons cited were primarily three. First, there was no written work from home policy; or there was on-going process of developing the policy; or where a policy did exist, a review was being considered. Second, A large part of the company's business are related to field operations, also spread/located in far flung areas, where WfH is not possible. Third, since there has been no assessment of the impact of the policy or the work from home arrangement as yet, the companies did not wish to rate themselves 5/5. Though they were confident that the WfH arrangement is unlikely to hinder the level of employees productivity; also it will enable employees to meet their aspirations and personal responsibilities.
9. While companies gave quarantine/COVID leaves, it assured its employees that such leaves had no bearing on any other leave/privileges of employees (e.g. women employees' maternity or childcare leave). Similarly, the Grievance Redressal Mechanisms remained available online to address any office related issues; if while working from home, the employee felt any work related harassment by their superiors they could avail of the grievance redressal avenues. Further, all PSEs used various online channels to make their employees stay connected besides connecting for work. Wellness programmes were also promoted online.
10. It was reiterated that any WfH policy is applicable to the company as a whole which has to run on its performance and profits. Hence, *a WfH policy can only be gender neutral i.e. applicable to all employees* except that due considerations and exemptions are given to pregnant women, women with young children, women with aged parent; also people with special needs (both men and women). In fact, in many instances, Head of Units/departments were given guidance to give women (pregnant, etc.) the option to work from home. Nevertheless, it was suggested that any women centric recommendations/guidelines put forth by the present study, would definitely be taken into consideration by PSEs while drafting their respective policies.

The issues highlighted above and other related issues (mentioned in the main report) led to deriving a set of **10 interconnected recommendations with regards to the WfH arrangement in PSEs**. These are mentioned below:

- i. Formulate a Work from Home Policy with unambiguous terms and conditions
- ii. Communicate the policy effectively to all employees, also any amendments made to work expectations due to the changing situation
- iii. Provide support for setting up equipment and infrastructure to facilitate work from home/remote working
- iv. Define impact on entitlements, privileges/benefits, compensations, if any
- v. Define metrics of assessment for productivity and performance; analyse important tasks and track progress on a time bound basis
- vi. Define provisions regulating absence and leave
- vii. Carefully draft the secrecy and confidentiality requirements/agreements
- viii. Give proper directives to line managers for WfH to be effective. They must understand their colleagues' WfH arrangements, also discuss issues like burnout, work stress, work/ life balance, mentoring needs etc.

- ix. Manage periodic virtual meetings efficiently; facilitate digital archiving/reporting by employees
- x. Ensure/make arrangements for employees' physical and mental well-being; policy to succinctly cover medical and insurance benefits.

Along with the study findings, the 10 recommendations were discussed with the SCOPE taskforce members. Since, the WfH study specifically looked at the impact it had on women employees of PSEs, **the recommendations were concretized to develop a set of guidelines**. These guidelines as “**Guidelines for a Gender Sensitive Work from Home (WfH) Policy in PSEs**”, were further shared and discussed with select key informants (i.e. 1 CMD; 2 Head-HRs; 1 Senior Management; and Director General –SCOPE) before giving it a final shape.

The guidelines can be read in attribution to the three roles (employees, caregivers, leaders) executed by women in particular. Some of the guidelines are applicable to all genders; some guidelines are overlapping. A work from home/remote working policy - integrating these guidelines, is recommended to ensure that current employees and those who will be joining in future are clear about working from home arrangements. SCOPE has further suggested that the guidelines can be converted into a customised Toolkit in line with organisational requirements, and facilitate any PSE working to develop its WfH policy.

This report along with the Guidelines once shared by SCOPE with Department of Public Enterprises, Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Government of India; also its Member Organisations and other Stakeholders, it is hoped will encourage PSEs to integrate it within their well-defined WfH/Remote Working Policy. It will surely enhance employee engagement, and facilitate any form of remote working including WfH.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 COVID-19 declared pandemic and Work from Home (WfH)

Be it Governments, Employers or Employees – all the stakeholders in the economy were hard-hit by the COVID-19 declared pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns. Almost every organisation worldwide was caught unprepared to respond to this unusual challenge. At the same time though, each had a colossal task to ensure business continuity besides ensuring employees' welfare.

COVID-19 evidently contagious in nature, to limit its spread, and to keep the business operations going, employers opted and rolled out a work from home (WfH) arrangement for their employees, a switch from the prevailing work arrangements. It was part of the Business Continuity Plans (BCP) of most organisations.

*Work from home (WfH) arrangement... was part of the Business Continuity Plans (BCP) of most organisations.*

The WfH arrangement is not a new concept; however, the COVID crisis made it the most desirable and inevitable option – standardising it as a new workplace culture, labelled as the new normal.

Work from Home (WfH) is an alternate way of organising task that may be defined as the work which can be performed from home (away from the traditional workplace such as factories or offices) and enables employees to access their labour activities through the use of information technology (ILO, 2020).<sup>3</sup> WfH can be for a temporary period or for a long-term duration. Irrespective of its duration, it requires a shared responsibility and commitment by both employers and employees. In the current scenario, it is explored as a foreseeable substitute to the traditional way of doing work in the near future.

## 1.2 SCOPE-ILO Study Initiative on Adoption of WfH Model in PSEs in India

In August 2017, The Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACTEMP) of the International Labour Organisation, in collaboration with Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) initiated a study on "Women in Leadership and Management in

---

<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organization (2020). An employers' guide on working from home in response to the outbreak of COVID-19; [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_dialogue/---act\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_745024.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---act_emp/documents/publication/wcms_745024.pdf)

the Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in India”.<sup>4</sup> The study was successfully completed with active support from SCOPE and its member organizations including the Women in Public Sector (WIPS) forum in PSEs.

The study findings revealed the need for positive initiatives, enabling dialogues and discussions within PSEs. To facilitate this, as an immediate initiative, SCOPE created a body of champions - - both women and men, drawing from different PSEs. ILO trained and certified these champions who have now become a SCOPE task force, to conduct gender training and sensitization sessions focusing on equal opportunities for career advancement in different PSEs.<sup>5</sup>

“Work from Home (WfH)” arrangement was one of the key recommendations of this study. It received a fair share of arguments. *Many women executives cited the WfH arrangement as an influential factor in not only advancing their careers but also facilitating a better work-life balance.* The senior management or decision-makers in the company nevertheless argued that WfH is not practical or feasible as it is made out to be. Primarily because, not all job functions and tasks can be done outside the specified workplace. Also, deploying it may influence or make companies reengineer among other things their performance appraisals, on which depends employees’ promotion.

The COVID 19 pandemic brought a forcible shift to “working from home’ (WfH) work arrangement, making it an inevitable option. The percentage of remote workers has risen tremendously, as companies have taken steps to facilitate the practice in an effort to keep their operations ongoing (ILO, 2020b).

During the lockdowns that followed, PSEs in India like all other big or small companies in India or globally, adopted the “WfH” model, bringing in a new dimension to the workplace culture of PSEs.

In light of this new workplace culture – the new normal, SCOPE-ILO initiated a study looking into the “impact of Working from Home (WfH) on Women Executives/Managers in PSEs in India”; and whether this model is a long term sustainable solution. Also, the study is part of SCOPE-ILO’s larger initiative to empower women executives, and promote their career advancement to managerial and leadership positions in PSEs in India. In this regard, the WfH study explored the specific impact of WfH on women in PSEs who may be playing multiple rather a triple role simultaneously that of “*employees, caregivers, and managers/leaders*”.

---

<sup>4</sup> Study available on ILO Website; [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new\\_delhi/documents/publication/wcms\\_632553.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_632553.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> One of the objectives of the Task Force is to initiate dialogues with women executives in the PSEs and motivate them to aspire to positions of leadership and management. This is done by addressing challenges that face them at work.

### 1.3 Study Objectives

The key objective of the SCOPE-ILO initiative was to study the Work from Home (WfH) Model as adopted in PSEs in India.<sup>6</sup> Specifically, the study objectives included<sup>7</sup>:

- a. To investigate the impact of the Work from Home (WfH) model on Women Executives/Managers<sup>8</sup> in PSEs in India; also its long term sustainability.
- b. To draw particularly the experiences of women executives in PSEs<sup>9</sup> in adopting the WfH work arrangement.

The study has resulted into bringing out this comprehensive report on the adopted working from home arrangement in PSEs. A key outcome of the study is a set of guidelines developed from a gender lens, and proposed for PSEs to integrate it in their WfH policies or guidelines.

### 1.4 Outline of the study report

This report has been divided into **six chapters** including introduction and conclusion, which specifies a way forward for SCOPE as well as the network of champions to advocate and work towards promoting the *Guidelines for a Gender Sensitive Work from Home (WfH) Policy* in PSEs, a key outcome of the study. Also, encourage adoption of the same in the PSEs in line with their organisational requirements.

The **present chapter** has introduced the SCOPE-ILO study in the context of COVID declared pandemic. **Chapter 2** presents the methodology for the study. The study

---

<sup>6</sup> PSEs covered under the study are SCOPE member organisations. SCOPE has 201 member organisations.

<sup>7</sup> Based on the study findings, trainings have been conducted with SCOPE Taskforce – a Network of Champions, who will make use of the study within their organisations, specifically sharing the guidelines that have emerged as a key outcome; they will also use it in their gender training programs with different PSEs, which are SCOPE member organisations (Chapter 6, the concluding chapter mentions the guidelines; and Annexure I presents the dissemination plan)

<sup>8</sup> In the report, the term executives has been used. The group of women who participated in the study, they fall in the category of E4-E9, wherein E refers to Executive. E4-E9 includes people in superior/senior management positions.

<sup>9</sup> The study covered E4-E9 Level women in PSEs wherein women executives especially above the rank of E7 tend to be in managerial and leadership positions. The same E4-E9 executive level was part of the previous study on 'Women in Leadership and Management in PSUs in India', conducted by SCOPE-ILO in 2017-18. Through the current study on WfH, ILO in particular aimed to revisit the same set of people to know their views in the present on WfH which was enforced due to COVID-19 pandemic. A majority of the E4-E9 women executives previously participating in the study ( $n=1665$ ) had favoured WfH arrangement for women to maintain a better work life balance; and indicated it as an enabler or facilitating their career advancement.

employed a two tiered approach including a Survey and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) in SCOPE member organisations.

**Chapter 3** draws from a record number of responses – that of 1,969 women employees of different SCOPE member PSEs who participated in the online survey, and provides an analysis of the survey results. It is evident that women employees in PSEs having experienced the work from home arrangement in the most challenging circumstances, weighed its pros and cons accordingly. They have realised and therefore highlighted that a WfH arrangement without clear cut guidelines leads to blurring the boundaries of work hours. *PSEs need to be culturally adapted to the idea of WfH, and then devise effective policies and the infrastructural support system for its proper implementation. This alone will go a long way in facilitating the “work-life balance” in every woman employees' life”.*

**Chapter 4** provides key reflective learning based on the findings of the KIIs in 22 select PSEs. The KIIs formed a significant part of the methodological approach employed by the SCOPE-ILO study. These were conducted to provide an opportunity to senior management and decision makers in the PSEs to voice their understanding and insights on COVID induced work from home arrangements as the *new normal*. Herein, there was unanimity that while WfH was a necessity, it was forced post COVID-19 declared pandemic and it definitely cannot be applied for the entire company. Also, the new norm was not specifically the WfH but how to return to function optimally with necessary safety and precautionary measures. In addition, the women respondents under KIIs, specifically responded to how differently the work from home arrangement influenced women in the PSEs *as employees, as caregivers, and as managers/leaders*.

**Chapter 5** provides a synthesis of the findings of the study (survey and KIIs) and summarizes six key dimensions of WfH arrangement that the study identified. Besides, *the chapter captures some of the women’s voices*. Drawing from their COVID induced work from home experience, women cutting across PSEs, shared multiple anecdotes that acts as an eye-opener to various facets of a work from home arrangement. **WfH cannot simply be labelled as a good or a bad option. Underlying a good or a bad option, there are factors at play.**

**Chapter 6**, the final and concluding chapter, presents the key outcome of the study “*Guidelines for a Gender Sensitive Work from Home (WfH) Policy in PSEs*”. The guidelines based on inputs from multiple stakeholders that include women executives (E4-E9 level executives in PSEs); senior management and decision makers in PSEs, besides SCOPE can be read in attribution to the three roles executed by women in particular. *Some of the guidelines are applicable to all genders; some guidelines are also overlapping.* A working from home policy - integrating these guidelines, is recommended to ensure that employees, now and those joining in future are clear about working from home practices.

## 1.5 Way forward for SCOPE

The guidelines are a key outcome of *the study*.

*To facilitate further discussion within PSEs* so that the guidelines can be better adapted in line with organisational requirements, there is a dissemination plan with the network of champions (Annexure 1). This will complement dissemination done by SCOPE. On its behalf, SCOPE has also proposed converting the guidelines into customised Toolkit in line with organisational requirements, and facilitate any PSE working to develop its WfH policy.

The study along with the *guidelines* once shared by SCOPE with Department of Public Enterprises, Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Government of India; its Member Organisations and other Stakeholders, will encourage PSEs to adapt and integrate it within their well-defined WfH/Remote Working Policy. It will surely enhance employee engagement, and facilitate any form of remote working including WfH.

---

### References

International Labour Organization (2020). An employers' guide on working from home in response to the outbreak of COVID-19; [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed\\_dialogue/---act\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_745024.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_dialogue/---act_emp/documents/publication/wcms_745024.pdf)

International Labour Organization (2020a). Work From Home - A Policy Prescription; [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed\\_dialogue/---act\\_emp/documents/newsitem/wcms\\_755686.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_dialogue/---act_emp/documents/newsitem/wcms_755686.pdf)

International Labour Organization (2020b). Working from Home: Estimating the worldwide potential. Policy Brief; [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_743447.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743447.pdf)

## 2. Methodology

Even prior to COVID-19, there has been much literature on remote work including working from home (WfH). These highlighted both positive and negative aspects ranging from flexible work hours, increased work-life balance and job satisfaction to lacking communication and feeling isolated from colleagues and organisations (Wheatley, 2017; Eddleston, & Mulki, 2017; Reshma et.al, 2015; Grant, Wallace, & Spurgeon, 2013; Staples, 2001; Cascio, 2000).

Whereas WfH in the past was an option for organisations and the workforce, under the COVID declared pandemic - an unprecedented situation, WfH became imperative across regions as an immediate step to minimize public health risks. Thus, *the working population transitioned to working from home out of necessity rather than convenience*. So did the workforce in the Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) in India.

However, the transition (though not just specific to India or PSEs but globally reported) seemed to contain *stressors* viz. double burden of work including family responsibilities; lack of infrastructure and related support leading to work related stress; health concerns; also uncertainty over general safety.

In a spate of studies on 'working from home' during COVID-19, the *stressors were emphasized as amplified during the pandemic* (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Gorlick, 2020; Prasad et al., 2020) and called for employers to address employee well-being. The protective or mitigating factors recurrently underscored included regular, managerial communication; positive organizational climate; policy and organizational support; training opportunities and career-support, etc. (Dingel & Neiman, 2020; Costa & Tumagole, 2020). These mitigating efforts were expected to facilitate the adjustment during the transition phase to WfH.

The COVID induced work from home arrangement provided SCOPE-ILO an opportunity to understand the gender-differentiated impact of such an arrangement especially on women employees; more so, as in one of its recently concluded study (2018), women employees in PSEs had cited WfH as one of the most influential factors for a better work-life balance, and their career advancement.

A consultative meeting was held with SCOPE and the Network of Champions, who represent different PSEs, and most are members of Women in Public Sector (WIPS) forum. During the consultation, a study plan along with methodological approach was chalked out, discussed and finalised.

### 2.1 Two tiered approach

The two tiered approach of the study used both quantitative and qualitative method i.e. an online survey (administered to women executives in PSEs); and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with senior management and decision makers in selected PSEs, which are SCOPE member organisations. The methodology of each level of the study is described in turn below.

## Online Survey

For the online survey, the E4–E9 level in PSEs was particularly chosen<sup>10</sup>. Women employees at this level had previously participated in an earlier study wherein they had enthusiastically advocated for WfH. SCOPE-ILO therefore decided to revisit the same cohort for the present study.

The survey initiated through Survey Monkey was thus made available to E4–E9 level women employees in 201 SCOPE member organisations. It was open for a period of 1.5 months (21 October – 04 December 2020). 1969 women employees in E4–E9 level from 50 SCOPE member PSEs participated in the survey.

The online survey had 26 questions and is annexed to the present document (Annexure IV). It included four open-ended questions with space provided for respondents to highlight any experience or issue related to their working from home; expand on reasons if they felt WfH had a negative or adverse impact; or if they felt they were less productive at work. An open ended question also related to what they would include in a WfH policy in relation to women employees.<sup>11</sup>

## Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

The second level of the study comprised interviewing top managers or decision makers of the 22 selected PSEs. There were four preferred informants for the interviews:

- i. Chairman cum Managing Directors (CMDs), PSEs
- ii. Head – Human Resources (HR) Unit
- iii. Supervisor/Team Leader of a Unit
- iv. Women in Senior Management and Decision Making Positions.
- v. In addition, Director General (DG), SCOPE was interviewed.<sup>12</sup>

A total number of 78 KIIs were conducted of which 14 were CMDs; 21 were Heads of HR; 22 were Supervisors/Team Leaders of a unit; and 21 were women in senior management and decision making positions. All interviews based on a questionnaire were conducted virtually. In some instances, the interview questionnaire was sent to the key informant via email (See Annexure V, Questionnaires for KIIs).

Thus far, no study has been conducted on the adopted work from home arrangement in PSEs, post COVID and subsequent lockdowns. The 22 PSEs covered under the study appreciated the SCOPE-ILO initiative. A prime reason, as cited, was that the

---

<sup>10</sup> The employment grades E1–E9 indicate or correspond to positions in the organizational hierarchies of PSEs.

<sup>11</sup> The four-open ended questions led to reviewing close to 8000 comments/views; one question (Q 24) allowed respondents the option of suggesting maximum up to three points.

<sup>12</sup> SCOPE as a confederation of PSEs in India occupies a central position in advocating for policies that facilitates the working of PSEs and their achievements.

study was being conducted at an opportune time, when many PSEs were either developing/drafting their WfH policies; or reviewing their existing policies. In addition, it was appreciated that recommendations were to be drawn out of survey responses as well as the KIIs; and guidelines were to be proposed based on the study findings. It would therefore have greater acknowledgement and acceptance from PSEs; and they could consider integrating and adapting what is proposed, in line with their organisational requirements.

## Study Methods and Tools

TOOLS	RESPONDENTS	PURPOSE
<b>A. Quantitative</b>		
<b>i. Surveys<sup>13</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ E4-E9 Women Executives in PSEs</li> </ul>	To find out women executives' experiences and their views on the WfH arrangement – challenges, effectiveness, appraisals, communication, benefits, etc. - as a result of COVID and subsequent lockdowns.
<b>B. Qualitative</b>		
<b>ii. KIIs<sup>14</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chairman cum Managing Directors (CMDs), PSEs</li> <li>○ Head – Human Resources (HR) Unit</li> <li>○ Supervisor/Team Leader of a Unit</li> <li>○ Women in Senior Management and Decision Making Position</li> <li>○ Director General (DG), SCOPE</li> </ul>	To discuss and find out: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the changes brought in or made by the company to shift to a “work from home” (WfH) work arrangement for its workforce; and were these changes effective;</li> <li>b) organizational efforts or initiatives in facilitating its workforce particularly women executives to work from home;</li> <li>c) organizational assessment of the performance of women executives WfH home during COVID and subsequent lockdowns;</li> </ol>

<sup>13</sup> Annexure IV: Survey Questionnaire. The questionnaire was formulated in consultation with SCOPE and inputs from network of champions. It was administered via Survey Monkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ILOSCOPE-WfH>). SCOPE shared the survey link with its 201 member organisations.

<sup>14</sup> Annexure V: KIIs Checklist Questions (with inputs from SCOPE Taskforce).

		d) organizational preparedness in addressing or responding to any kind of challenges arising out of adopting WfH model; and e) Is WfH a work arrangement that can be looked upon long term?
<b>iii. Document Reviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relevant documents on WfH arrangements</li> <li>○ WfH policies/directives of PSEs</li> </ul>	To find out the specifics as outlined in written WfH policies of any PSE or directives circulated;  To document some of the global company practices on WfH

### Target Reached/Sample Size

TOOLS	RESPONDENTS	TARGET REACHED/SAMPLE SIZE <sup>15</sup>
<b>Survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ E4-E9 Women Executives in PSEs</li> </ul>	1969 Women Executives in PSEs
<b>KIIs<sup>16</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chairman cum Managing Directors (CMDs), PSEs</li> <li>○ Head – Human Resources (HR) Unit</li> <li>○ Supervisor/Team Leader of a Unit</li> <li>○ Women in Senior Management and Decision Making Position</li> <li>○ Director General (DG), SCOPE</li> </ul>	KIIs covering differing categories: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. CMDs - 14</li> <li>ii. Head-HR Unit - 21</li> <li>iii. Supervisor/Team Leader - 22<sup>17</sup></li> <li>iv. Women in Senior Management -21<sup>18</sup>; and</li> <li>v. DG-SCOPE</li> </ol> The PSEs were selected from across the following division of companies viz. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 7 Maharatna Companies (Out of 10)</li> <li>▪ 7 Navratna Companies (Out of 14)</li> <li>▪ 8 Miniratna &amp; Other Companies</li> </ul>

The Government of India has classified PSEs as *Maharatna*, *Navratna* and *Miniratna* (I&II) categories. PSEs representing different sectors (e.g. Power, Petroleum & Natural Gas, Renewable Energy, Manufacturing, Mining, Services, Construction, etc.) are

<sup>15</sup> Survey outreach was facilitated by SCOPE in its member organisations. All KIIs were also coordinated by SCOPE.

<sup>16</sup> KIIs were conducted either through email responses, over telephone or SKYPE/Video calls.

<sup>17</sup> Of these 22, 12 were conducted by the champions. Each of the 12 champions conducted one interview in this category

<sup>18</sup> Each of the 12 champions conducted one interview in this category.

ranked into these categories on the basis of their financial performance, net worth, revenue, profit etc.

## Data Analysis

- The data has been analysed and summarised by managing both qualitative and quantitative information related to the study objectives and expectations. It is triangulated with information drawn from multiple sources.
- Using the data collected and analysed, key observations and tangible recommendations are put forth with regards to the WfH arrangement in PSEs besides developing a set of guidelines from a gender lens.

## 2.3 Study limitations

Since there is limited data available on the exact number of women employed at the E4–E9 level in the 201 SCOPE member organizations,<sup>19</sup> it is not possible to know what share of all women employees were represented by the 1969 women who participated in the survey. Going by the limited data available, however, it is a fair estimate that 1969 constitutes approximately 15-20% of all E4–E9 women employees in the 201 member organizations.<sup>20</sup>

Given COVID situation, the study was conducted using virtual tools only. The study was dependent on the coordination and facilitation done by SCOPE in promoting the Survey as well as organise the KIIs in its member organisations within a short two month period. It was not an easy task. There were some unexpected delays in setting up online meetings with senior management including CMDs of PSEs. Irrespective of the challenges, including the lack of time and the unavailability of some key informants, SCOPE and the network of champions engaged in the study played a highly commendable role.

22 selected PSEs for KIIs did not include the banking sector companies and the railway sector. However, it is hoped that the findings from this study can guide specific sectors in reviewing their work from home arrangements.

## 2.4 Ethical considerations

A key ethical standard maintained in the study is not to disclose at any level any names of any individuals, without their permission, who shared their experiences and views on their companies' adoption of the WfH arrangement. The survey questionnaire

---

<sup>19</sup> SCOPE is aiming to create a robust database of all its member organizations.

<sup>20</sup> It surpassed the 1665 responses of the earlier survey conducted under the study, 'Women in Leadership and Management in PSUs in India'.

therefore did not require the name of individuals participating. This facilitated without any intimidation, a free and frank participation from all participants in the study.

## 2.5 Reliability of the study

The strongest reliability factor is the record number of responses the study received, and the wide cross section of KIIs, which gives credibility to the study.

The study provided an opportunity not only to the E4–E9 women employees in PSEs to express their views but it also provided an opportunity to the senior management and decision makers in the PSEs – comprising both men and women, to share their views on the WfH arrangement from a company as well as employees' welfare perspective.

For SCOPE-ILO, the study revealed the different facets of the WfH arrangement in PSEs. It also led to recommendations followed by a set of guidelines derived from the discursive and interactive methods, as the way forward. The guidelines can help organizations to come up with *gender sensitive not necessarily gender neutral* policies. It is hoped that the suggested guidelines besides SCOPE will be taken up by the network of champions to disseminate within their own organisations, and other PSEs, for a better and comprehensive WfH policies in India's PSEs. The SCOPE Management has also reiterated that it will discuss the study recommendations among its member PSEs; besides collaborating further with ILO for review, evaluation and adaptation of WfH in PSEs taking into account prevailing practices in private sector as well as best global practices.

---

## References

Cascio, W. F. (2000). Managing a virtual workplace. *Academy of Management Executive*, 14 (3); [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/246755382\\_Managing\\_A\\_Virtual\\_Workplace](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/246755382_Managing_A_Virtual_Workplace)

Costa, K., & Tumagole, B. (2020). A Pragmatic Inquiry into Employee's Lived Experiences in relation to COVID-19 Lockdown in South Africa; [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341567108\\_A\\_Pragmatic\\_Inquiry\\_into\\_Employee's\\_Lived\\_Experiences\\_in\\_relation\\_to\\_COVID-19\\_Lockdown\\_in\\_South\\_Africa](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341567108_A_Pragmatic_Inquiry_into_Employee's_Lived_Experiences_in_relation_to_COVID-19_Lockdown_in_South_Africa)

Dingel, J. I., and B. Neiman. 2020. "How Many Jobs Can Be Done at Home?" National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), Working Paper 26948; [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w26948/w26948.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w26948/w26948.pdf)

Eddleston, K. A., & Mulki, J. (2017). Toward understanding remote workers' management of work–family boundaries: The complexity of workplace

embeddedness. *Group & Organization Management*, 42(3), 346-387; [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287390501\\_Toward\\_Understanding\\_Remote\\_Workers\\_Management\\_of\\_Work-Family\\_Boundaries\\_The\\_Complexity\\_of\\_Workplace\\_Embeddedness](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287390501_Toward_Understanding_Remote_Workers_Management_of_Work-Family_Boundaries_The_Complexity_of_Workplace_Embeddedness)

Gorlick, A. 2020. "The Productivity Pitfalls of Working from Home in the Age of COVID-19." *Stanford News*; <https://news.stanford.edu/2020/03/30/productivity-pitfalls-working-home-age-covid-19/>

Grant, C., Wallace, L., & Spurgeon, P. (2013). An exploration of the psychological factors affecting remote e-worker's job effectiveness, well-being and work-life balance. *Employee Relations*, 35, 527-546; [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281035493\\_An\\_exploration\\_of\\_the\\_psychological\\_factors\\_affecting\\_remote\\_e-worker's\\_job\\_effectiveness\\_well-being\\_and\\_work-life\\_balance](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281035493_An_exploration_of_the_psychological_factors_affecting_remote_e-worker's_job_effectiveness_well-being_and_work-life_balance)

Prasad, K., Vaidya, R., & Mangipudi, M. (2020). Effect of Occupational Stress and Remote Working on Psychological Wellbeing of Employees: An Empirical Study during Covid-19 Pandemic with Reference to Information Technology Industry around Hyderabad; [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341778937\\_Effect\\_of\\_occupational\\_stress\\_and\\_remote\\_working\\_on\\_psychological\\_well-being\\_of\\_employees\\_an\\_empirical\\_analysis\\_during\\_covid-19\\_pandemic\\_concerning\\_information\\_technology\\_industry\\_in\\_hyderabad](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341778937_Effect_of_occupational_stress_and_remote_working_on_psychological_well-being_of_employees_an_empirical_analysis_during_covid-19_pandemic_concerning_information_technology_industry_in_hyderabad)

Reshma, P. S. Aithal, Shailashree V. T. and P. Sridhar Acharya (2015). An Empirical Study on Working from Home: A Popular E-Business Model. *International Journal of Advance and Innovative Research*, Volume 2, Issue 2 (I): April – June; [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281524771\\_AN\\_EMPIRICAL\\_STUDY\\_ON\\_WORKING\\_FROM\\_HOME\\_A\\_POPULAR\\_E-BUSINESS\\_MODEL](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281524771_AN_EMPIRICAL_STUDY_ON_WORKING_FROM_HOME_A_POPULAR_E-BUSINESS_MODEL)

Staples, D. S. (2001). A study of remote workers and their differences from non-remote workers. *Journal of Organizational and End User Computing (JOEUC)*,13(2), 3-14; [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220068687\\_A\\_Study\\_of\\_Remote\\_Workers\\_and\\_Their\\_Differences\\_from\\_Non-Remote\\_Workers](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/220068687_A_Study_of_Remote_Workers_and_Their_Differences_from_Non-Remote_Workers)

Wheatley, D. (2017). Employee satisfaction and use of flexible working arrangements. *Work, employment and society*, 31 (4), 567-585; [http://pure-oai.bham.ac.uk/ws/files/33436476/Employee\\_satisfaction\\_and\\_use\\_of\\_FWAs\\_WES.pdf](http://pure-oai.bham.ac.uk/ws/files/33436476/Employee_satisfaction_and_use_of_FWAs_WES.pdf)

## 3. Survey in SCOPE Member Organizations: Analysis of results

### 3.1 Introduction

A total of 1,969 women executives at E4-E9 level from different PSEs participated in the survey open for a period of 1.5 months (21 October 2020 – 04 December 2020). The Survey administered through Survey Monkey included 26 questions mostly closed ended multiple choice questions; with a few open ended questions to allow women to elaborate, expand as well as share their views and suggestions on specific aspects of the WfH arrangement. Some questions were put in as a check and balance, to make the survey as explicit as possible.

This chapter presents an overview of the survey questionnaire (available in Annexure IV). The findings from the survey questionnaire are presented under 13 key questions that formed the core of the survey (the number in parentheses following each question denotes the numbering from the survey):

1. Did the respondent work from home (WfH) following COVID-19 declared pandemic and subsequent lockdowns? (Q5)
2. How did she adjust/adjusting to the new norm of Working from Home (WfH) following COVID 19 pandemic? (Q7)
3. Did she have a workstation/space at home? (Q9)
4. Does the WfH model create a better work-life balance? (Q10)
5. Rating one's level of productivity during COVID 19 work from home? (Q11)
6. During WfH, as a manager/supervisor managing a team/group of people, what are the various changes noticed dealing with subordinates? (Q13)
7. What are the key work-related challenges faced while working from home? (Q14)
8. During the WfH arrangement, did the respondent experience any kind of threat or any act of violence and harassment by family members or anyone else which made her feel unsafe and uncomfortable? (Q16)
9. What are the key benefits of working from home? (Q17)
10. Rating the level of remote communication/interaction among colleagues/subordinates during WfH? (Q18)
11. Given a choice or once the COVID pandemic is no longer an issue, how would the respondent prefer to work? (Q22)
12. What measures can companies' take to enhance employee engagement and facilitate work of remote employees (i.e. as employees working from home)? (Q23)
13. A WFH policy in relation to women employees must focus on which specific aspects? (Q24)

**The chapter reviews the findings of the online survey, and presents an analysis of the results.**

### 3.2 Characteristics of respondents

All E4–E9 level women employees of 201 SCOPE member organizations were invited to complete the online survey, and a total of 1,969 women from 50 SCOPE member PSEs participated.

SERVICE LEVEL	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
E4	626
E5	497
E6	435
E7	255
E8	132
E9	24
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1969</b>

The approximate age range of respondents was 25-40 years for E4-E6 level; for E7-E9 level, the age range is more or less 40 years and above.

### 3.3 Survey results on the 13 core questions

The online survey touched upon 13 core areas or issues. These included women employees' experiences of working from home; and their views on the WfH arrangement – challenges, benefits, effectiveness, appraisals, supervision, communication, etc. - as a result of COVID and subsequent lockdowns.

## 1. Did the respondent work from home (WfH) following COVID-19 declared pandemic and subsequent lockdowns? (Q5)

Worked from Home (WfH) following COVID-19 declared pandemic	No of Respondents	Continuing to work from home (at the time of Survey)	No of Respondents
Yes	939 (47.69%)	Yes	91 (4.62%)
No	201 (10.21%)	No	1451 (73.69%)
Only for a limited duration	829 (42.10%)	Partially/ On a ROTA i.e. Roster Basis	427 (21.69%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1969</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1969</b>

Source: SCOPE-ILO Online Survey, 2020

At the time of the Survey, only a marginal percentage of women i.e. 4.62% were continuing to work from home. Most had returned to office i.e. 1451 (73.69%) women executives were back at their respective offices; 427, following a roster system were going to office as per office directives.

Immediately though, following the COVID-19 declared pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, 89.79 % ( $n= 1768$ )<sup>21</sup> experienced working from home; of these, nearly 42.10% ( $n=829$ ) worked from home only for a limited duration. The ones who could not or did not avail of the WfH, were mostly working on-sites/far-off locations.

For respondents who worked from home only for a limited duration, the duration ranged from one/two weeks or one month or maximum 3 months (mostly, March –May 2020; for some it was August/September 2020). For a few others, the period went beyond 3 months. The duration depended on company's directives, after evaluating organisational requirements.

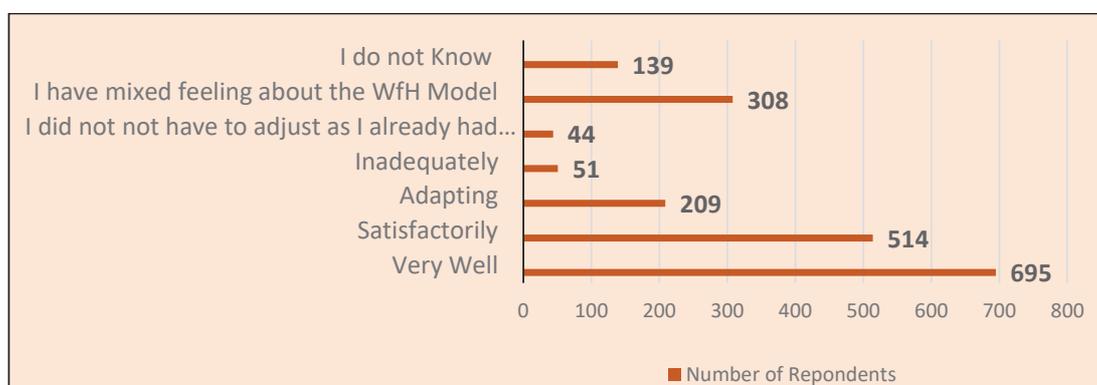
## 2. Adjusting to the new norm of Working from Home (WfH) following COVID 19 pandemic? (Q7)

As to the question how they adjusted to the new norm of WfH irrespective of the duration, there was a mixed response. 35.46% ( $n=695$ ) indicated that they adjusted very well to the new norm; for 44 people (2.24%) they did not have to adjust as even prior to COVID they had arrangements to work from home (like going to office on limited/alternate days). For around 55% of respondents, they found their adjusting to

---

<sup>21</sup> N= Number of respondents citing the option. The  $n=number$  in parentheses has been used throughout this chapter.

WfH satisfactory; or found themselves still adapting to the new norm; some felt they adjusted inadequately; and some were simply not sure how well they had adjusted.



Source: SCOPE-ILO Online Survey, 2020

### 3. Having a workstation/space at home? (Q9)

Workstation/Space at home	Number of Respondents
I have a separate designated work space	669 (33.98%)
I created a makeshift work space following WfH	579 (29.41%)
I sit anywhere at home (e.g. dining room table, garden) to do office work	323 (16.40%)
I am managing without a dedicated workspace	398 (20.21 %)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1969</b>

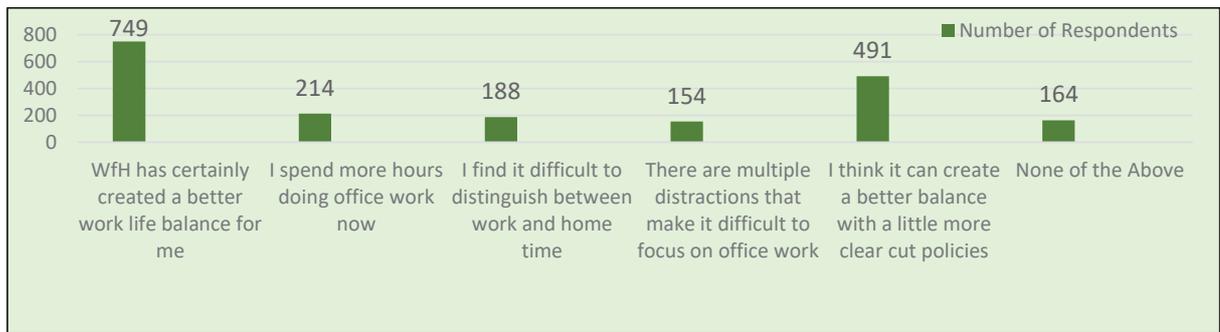
Source: SCOPE-ILO Online Survey, 2020

Less than half of the respondents reported having a separate designated work space at home. Most people either created a makeshift work space following WfH ( $n=579$ ); or they sat anywhere to do office work ( $n=323$ ). 20% of women executives who did not manage a dedicated workspace, found it more challenging than others in doing office work from home.

### 4. Does the WfH model create a better work-life balance? (Q10)

Only 749 (38.21%) respondents suggested that WfH created a better work life balance for them. While some (10.92%) lamented spending more hours doing office work under WfH arrangement; for some (9.59%) the distinction between work and home schedule got blurred. Some respondents ( $n=154$ ) shared that multiple distractions at

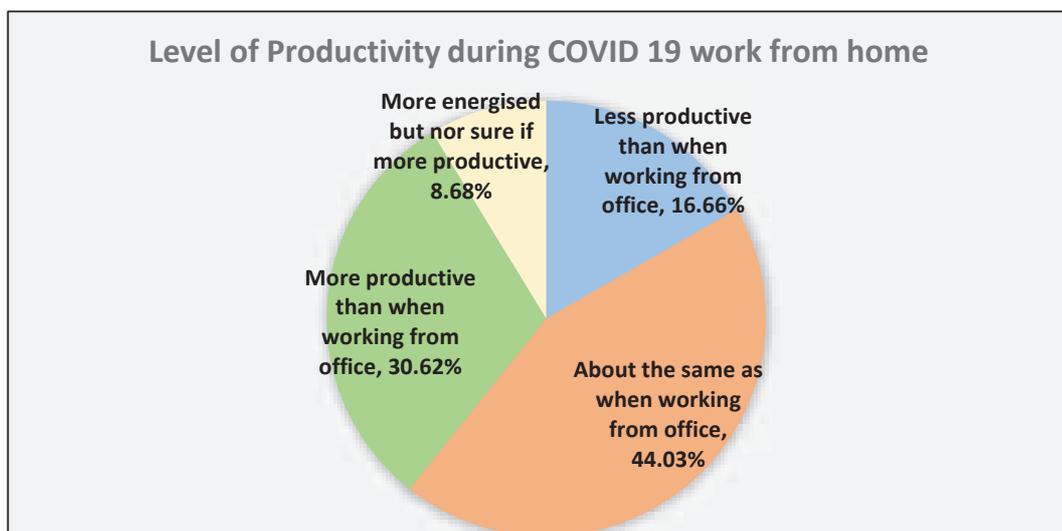
home made it difficult to focus on office work. Around 25% respondents felt that WfH can create a better balance with clearer policies.<sup>22</sup>



Source: SCOPE-ILO Online Survey, 2020

Interestingly, this same issue of work life balance was discussed at one of the virtual meetings with the SCOPE Task Force members. The meeting also revealed that this work arrangement became more challenging at times especially in the context of balancing work with home responsibilities because of the impact of lock downs. With less support systems at home, there was greater expectations on women to take on additional burdens.

### 5. Rating one’s level of productivity during COVID 19 work from home? (Q11)



Source: SCOPE-ILO Online Survey, 2020

<sup>22</sup> Of the 1,969 respondents, 9 did not respond to this question. Also, response to this question was a break from a previous SCOPE-ILO findings, wherein the majority of women had advocated for a WfH for a better work life balance, besides it being an influential factor in their career advancement.

Maximum number of women felt their level of productivity was same as compared to pre COVID days. The number of women who felt they were less productive when Working from home was less as compared to those who felt their productivity level increased.

## 6. During WfH, as a manager/supervisor managing a team/group of people, what are the various changes noticed dealing with subordinates? (Q13)

The work from home arrangement was not in force for a very long duration in PSEs. When the survey was conducted, most employees were back to office. Nevertheless, the managers/supervisors were asked during the WfH vis-à-vis their subordinates, if anything changed (e.g. subordinates productivity level went down; supervisors changed their supervisory techniques, etc.) A positive factor was there were no major complaints about drop in efficiency/productivity among subordinates/team members of a unit; nor did managers/supervisors felt that their subordinates underwent any major mental or psychological challenges. However, a majority noted that supervisory techniques must change with a new work arrangement; more so if it's institutionalised as one of the options in a workplace.

Some noted adopting new techniques to assess performance of subordinates.<sup>23</sup> It was shared that these were informal techniques to ensure team coordination, attendance during team meetings, and delivery of work on time. There has been no change in organisation's appraisal system. But even in a lockdown-WfH arrangement, output of employees must be measurable, reflected in their achieving set targets.

	YES	NO	NOT APPLICABLE	TOTAL
Did you adopt new techniques to assess performance of your subordinates?	36.31% 715	16.35% 322	47.33% 932	1,969
Do you think management/supervisory techniques must change with this new work arrangement?	57.95% 1,141	7.01% 138	35.04% 690	1,969
Did you feel that you were more engaged with your subordinates than before?	29.66% 584	28.49% 561	41.85% 824	1,969
Did you notice a drop in efficiency/ productivity in your subordinates?	15.64% 308	43.37% 854	40.99% 807	1,969
Did you notice any mental or psychological challenges faced on part of your subordinates?	18.44% 363	40.27% 793	41.29% 813	1,969

Source: SCOPE-ILO Online Survey, 2020

<sup>23</sup> Adopting new techniques was also posed to the selected Team Leaders/Supervisors under Key Informant Interviews. It was reiterated that output of work ought to be measurable and reflected in individuals achieving targets as assigned/agreed upon.

## 7. What are the key work-related challenges faced while working from home? (Q14)

Three things stand out in terms of key work related challenges: i. Infrastructure Facilities and Tools; ii. Real time Benefits of Face to Face Interaction Lost; and iii. Loss of informal knowledge sharing that kept colleagues connected on a personal level.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Infrastructure facilities and tools (e.g. Internet Connectivity; Availability of Power Supply, access to printer, etc.)	65.72%	1,294
Managing Engagement, Productivity and Reporting of Teams	24.83%	489
Assessing or Measuring Performance	21.23%	418
Real-time Benefits of Face-to-Face Interaction Lost in Delayed Replies and Other Interruptions	48.25%	950
Loss of Informal Knowledge Sharing (e.g. sharing experiences/ideas that kept team members connected on a personal level)	43.12%	849
Extended Decision-making time, also Enforcing the decisions	23.11%	455
Implementing Policies, Policy Changes and Regulations	12.24%	241
Protecting company data without the risk of any data breach incidents and malware attacks	20.92%	412
Ensuring the safety and well-being of team members	14.63%	288
Maintaining positive attitudes and motivation among staff	29.00%	571
Providing up-to-date information and guidance to staff regarding how to protect themselves and what to do in case of suspected infection	13.81%	272
Any Other, Please Specify:	10.77%	212
Total Respondents: 1,969		

Source: SCOPE-ILO Online Survey, 2020

Besides the work related challenges mentioned above, two other challenges were highlighted the most: a. getting preoccupied with unpaid care work (49.01%;  $n=965$ ) and b. blurred boundaries between work and personal life (55.41%;  $n=1091$ ). Respondents specifically pointing out to this blurring boundaries, some of them put it as,

- "Colleagues do not know where to draw the line and call up at odd hours/weekends which were freer earlier";
- "People have started calling any time day or night even on weekends or holidays. I feel as if suddenly I have no personal time";
- "There was no clear demarcation between office hours and personal time. Bosses expected, since we are working from home, we will be available round the clock";
- "It made me realize that working hours need to be defined as calls/ discussions used to be happening even after normal working hours".

One respondent even noted, *“I found it strange. People will not be available on phone or not pick up the phone citing various reasons; so work would get held up for some duration. Although, thankfully, they would make up – but by working at odd night hours!”*

Some respondents used the open ended questions in the survey to share another aspect i.e. “issue of trust”. It was felt by some that PSEs are not really used to a WfH model. The comfort and confidence derived from physical settings and interaction is absent in a WfH. The change needs to be accepted; and a culture of trust built. Otherwise, management will micro-manage; some will continue to treat WfH as holiday, and believe that WfH means employees are not working.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, a policy which also outlines a monitoring system that ascertains performance of employees in a WfH arrangement, is needed.

#### **8. During the work from home arrangement, did the respondent experience any kind of threat or any act of violence and harassment by family members or anyone else which made her feel unsafe and uncomfortable? (Q16)**

Though it may not appear to be a significant percentage i.e. 1.32%; 26 out of 1969 responded in positive to the questions whether they experienced any harassment or any other untoward act by family members or anyone else which made them feel unsafe and uncomfortable during the WfH arrangement.<sup>25</sup>

#### **9. What are the key benefits of working from home? (Q17)**

This question allowed respondents to choose multiple benefits from multiple options.<sup>26</sup> However, unequivocally the key benefit cited was “no commuting stress to office” (81.10%;  $n=1579$ ). A high number of respondents also chose better work life balance ( $n=1271$ )<sup>27</sup>; setting up one’s own comfortable home office ( $n=993$ ) and increased productivity and performance ( $n=811$ ) as other key benefits.

---

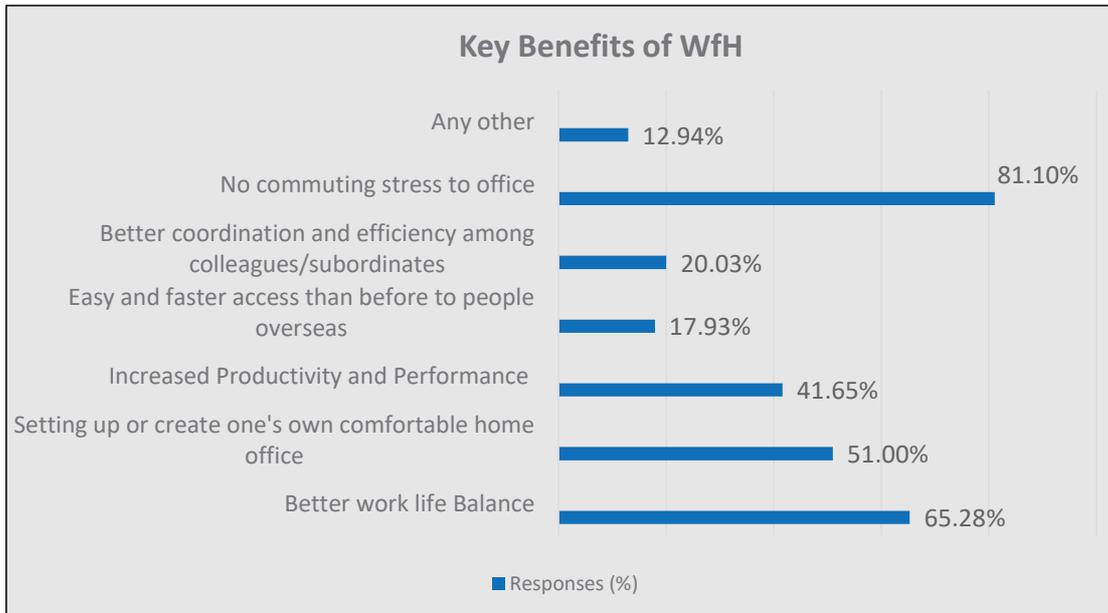
<sup>24</sup> Alongside, the challenge is also getting support from family, and convincing them that office work is of equal priority as household chores, while working from home.

<sup>25</sup> Though organisations have redressal mechanisms (which as per PSEs, functioned online during WfH), these mechanisms deal with situations that happen within normal/routine work spaces. During WfH if an employee faced/faces any harassment from their superiors/anyone, they could and are expected to make use of the available redressal services. However, if the harassment is within the four walls, organisation will not willingly tread into it, treating it as a personal matter. However, it should not deter someone from bringing such instances to the notice of their colleagues or superiors, and seek necessary help.

<sup>26</sup> Of the 1,969 respondents, 22 did not respond to this question.

<sup>27</sup> A high percentage (65.28%) of respondents included better work life balance as one of the benefits of WfH. But there was a rider added to it. *“If there is a well-defined policy,*

A high percentage (65.28%) of respondents included better work life balance as one of the benefits of WfH. But many added a rider to it such as, *“If there is a well-defined policy, better work life balance may be achieved through this arrangement”*; *“Policies must be in place defining protocols with provisions of required infrastructure to make working at home more productive”*.



Source: SCOPE-ILO Online Survey, 2020

While citing the key benefits of a WfH, there were no glaring adverse or negative impact of WfH cited. One aspect that was highlighted by the respondents ( $n=400$ ) was “heavier workload with long working hours”. Other than this, there were concerns that it can weaken connectedness with team members ( $n=324$ ); also, it may affect the visibility of one’s work within the organisation ( $n=264$ ).

---

*better work life balance may be achieved through this arrangement”*; *“Policies must be in place defining protocols with provisions of required infrastructure to make working at home more productive”*.

## 10. Rating the level of remote communication/interaction among colleagues/subordinates during WfH? (Q18)

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
I connected with my colleagues/subordinates and supervisors just the way I did when we were in the office	5.43% 107	9.50% 187	23.06% 454	30.73% 605	31.28% 616	1,969
I connected with my colleagues/ subordinates and supervisor more often and easily than ever before.	8.38% 165	14.47% 285	30.98% 610	24.83% 489	21.33% 420	1,969
My colleagues/subordinates and supervisors provided necessary and required support whenever I needed	4.01% 79	5.43% 107	18.23% 359	34.94% 688	37.38% 736	1,969
Our intra-unit or inter-unit sharing of information as well as receiving feedback was in a structured and easy manner using virtual tools	5.99% 118	10.01% 197	25.75% 507	31.54% 621	26.71% 526	1,969
Our company provided us with the tools and resources needed to do our jobs remotely and stay connected (e.g. pay for home internet; provide for any hardware/equipment)	20.31% 400	10.67% 210	16.81% 331	22.65% 446	29.56% 582	1,969
Our company faced no issues related to use of remote communication during WfH arrangement	10.16% 200	10.16% 200	23.36% 460	26.61% 524	29.71% 585	1,969

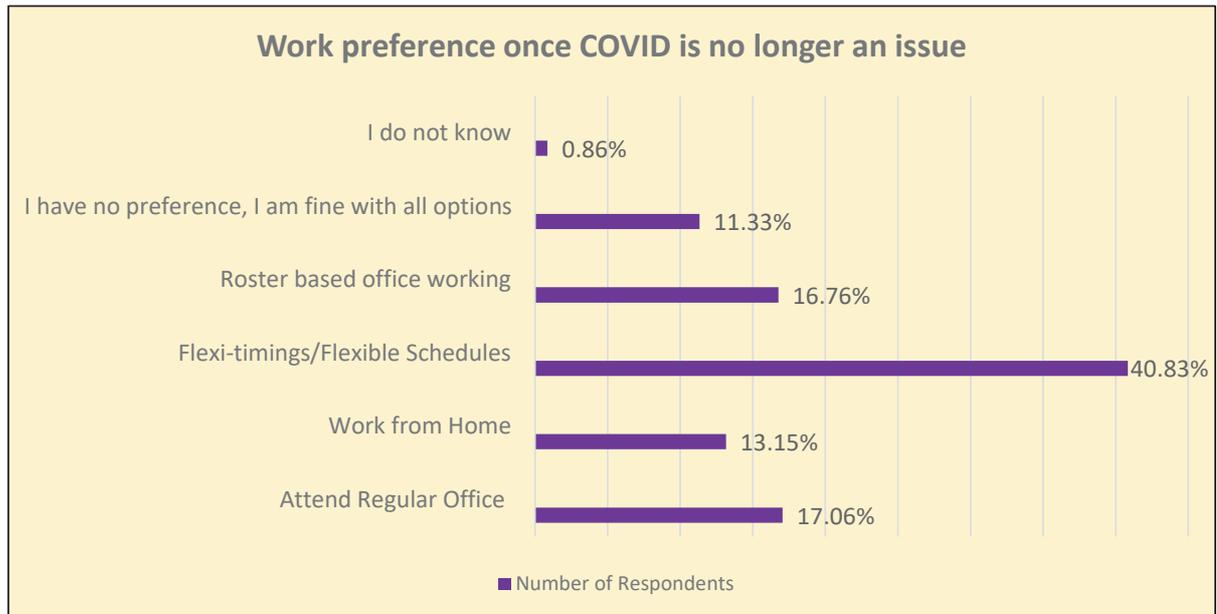
Source: SCOPE-ILO Online Survey, 2020

Asked to rate the level of remote communication among colleagues during WfH on a scale of 1 (lowest) - 5 (highest), the overall ratings on remote communication in different PSEs was within a scale of 3-5. Specifically, what received highest rating from respondents was “employees providing necessary and required support to each other whenever needed, remotely”. What got the least rating from maximum number of respondents was “tools and resources provided by companies to employees to undertake jobs remotely and stay connected”.

It may be added that level of tools and resources (more in the nature of digital IT services) was not the same in all companies. Some were better prepared than others; some could provide better services than others. This got reflected in the varied rating received on the level of remote communication from respondents, representing different PSEs.

## 11. Given a choice or once the COVID pandemic is no longer an issue, how would the respondent prefer to work? (Q22)

The most preferred choice for women employees - once COVID is no longer an issue, is not Work from Home but flexi-timings/flexible schedules combined with roster based office working.



Source: SCOPE-ILO Online Survey, 2020

WFH not being the first preferred choice is inferred not just from the chart above, but also from multiple stated views of the respondents. Some are cited below:

- "There should be either flexi time or roster based work as WfH 100% may not keep one self-motivated and depression or loneliness may set in ..."
- "It is a very good option to have flexibility in timings and schedule ...one can focus on the job and attend office for which, a roster also helps"
- "Roster could be a better balance for WfH and regular office..."
- "WfH is a good option, but not all the time...Roster option is a better one..."
- "WfH may be relevant but employee do tend to miss the social life & informal learning experience. An Ideal model would be the combination of office & WfH on roster basis".

**12. What measures can companies' take to enhance employee engagement and facilitate work of remote employees (i.e. as employees working from home)? (Q23)**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Communicate Work Expectations	47.49% 935
Set Clear Rules that establish the times when people must be available	64.30% 1,266
Help Managing Workloads	28.29% 557
Manage Periodic Virtual Meetings Efficiently	45.91% 904
Ensure/Make Arrangements for employees' physical and mental welfare (e.g. stress management, safety)	40.43% 796
Analyse important tasks and track progress on a time bound basis.	44.49% 876
Better Security Policies to Support Remote Work	31.28% 616
Provision of Childcare facilities	30.83% 607
No Measure is required	2.59% 51
I do not Know	3.76% 74
Any Other (please specify):	4.22% 83
Total Respondents: 1,969	

*Source: SCOPE-ILO Online Survey, 2020*

There is no doubt that companies need to strengthen some of their existing measures to facilitate work of remote employees. This is indicated by respondents, marking out top five areas that PSEs need to look into.

**The top 5 areas or aspects with regards to WfH arrangement that requires firming include:**

- i. Setting clear rules establishing people's work hours under WfH arrangement
- ii. Communicate work expectations
- iii. Manage periodic virtual meetings efficiently
- iv. Analyse important tasks and track progress on a time bound basis
- v. Ensure/make arrangements for employees' physical and mental welfare (e.g. stress management, safety, etc.)

### 13.A WfH policy in relation to women employees must focus on which specific aspects? (Q24)

Respondents were asked to mention not more than three key aspects that a WfH policy must include to facilitate in particular women employees in PSEs. The recurrent themes were as follows:

- a. A clear guideline on the working time (e.g. a 9.30 AM-5.30 PM work requirement); availability expectations (i.e. setting rules that establish the time when people must be available);
- b. Communicate clearly the work allocations (e.g. agreeing upon individual tasks and responsibilities, which is measurable in terms of task fulfilment, achievement, also success).
- c. Determine the technological needs of employees working from home (e.g. it could be hardware, software, high-speed internet connections, learning skills, etc.) so as to perform tasks assigned efficiently through ITC services.

It may be added, though the question was to underscore women specific aspects to a WfH policy; it was noted by women respondents that the “*work from home arrangement is a gender neutral arrangement*” i.e. it must be an option applicable to not only to women but also to male employees of the Organisation. However, the “*work from home policy needs to be gender sensitive and not gender neutral*” i.e. it must take into account gender specific differentials at all levels and at all times

### 3.4 Survey Analysis

Drawing from the survey results a number of inferences can be made. It must be added that most of these inferences are also complemented by responses from respondents under the open-ended questions that allowed space for respondents to expound on the WfH arrangement by highlighting any issue or issues that made them reflect on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of such an option/arrangement.

Notable issues that emerged out of the study findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Overall, there was a mixed response to adjusting to the new norm of WfH. As mentioned, in a recent study (pre-COVID) conducted by ILO-SCOPE, majority of women had suggested that given a choice, they would opt for Work from Home. In the current study though, the mixed response is an indication that many now – having experienced the WfH arrangement, may not prefer it on a long term basis. It is inferred from this that WfH was tried out during the most challenging circumstances which may have added to the pressure on women to fulfill more demands expected by them from families, merely because they were at home. It may not have been so demanding with a normal support system operating (Pre-COVID). Also, amongst other things, lack of a dedicated and compliant workspace, with inadequate IT infrastructure at home was cited as a challenge, at times discomfoting to stay focused on work. Some (27.48%) even noted a lack of inspirational work atmosphere at home.

2. Maximum number of respondents indicated that their company has no written WfH Policy but issued guidelines/directives periodically. It was felt a written document with clear timelines for tasks and expectations from staff would facilitate a WfH arrangement better.
3. Of the total number of respondents, 89.79% experienced the Work from Home (WfH) arrangement either for a long or short duration during the COVID induced lockdown period. However, at the time of the study (October-December 2020), most of the respondents seemed to have been back to office; and some were working on a ROTA basis (rotational basis). Irrespective of the duration of the WfH, three things stood out in terms of key work related challenges. These included viz. infrastructure facilities and tools; loss of the real time benefits of face to face interactions; and loss of informal knowledge sharing that kept colleagues connected at a personal level.
4. Besides the three work related challenges, two other challenges were highlighted by the women i.e. getting preoccupied with unpaid care work; and blurred boundaries between work and personal life. Many actually felt that their time management skills were tested. Time management was important as most women lamented, as one of the negative influence of WfH to be, 'heavier workload with long working hours'. However, a key benefit and a positive influence of the WfH arrangement: No commuting stress, was the unanimous choice.
5. The findings revealed a high rating for support from colleagues during the Pandemic. Within different PSEs, colleagues/subordinates seemed to have provided necessary and required support to each other. This team spirit and coordination was later emphasised by senior management interviewed in different PSEs. The lowest rating i.e. 1 was on "company's providing with tools and resources needed to do jobs remotely and stay connected (e.g. pay for home internet; provide for any hardware/equipment)." It may be added that the rating varied in different PSEs owing to the tools and resources provided to employees in each PSE to undertake jobs remotely. Some companies seemed to have made the digital and remote transition much faster than some others.
6. The respondents who had an additional role of managers/supervisors felt that there will be a need to change the supervisory techniques in a work from home arrangement; also some indicated adopting new techniques to assess performance of subordinates. Presently, this included for example, individual and weekly goal setting; attending/participating in virtual team meet-ups, etc.
7. Overall, maximum number of women felt their level of productivity during WfH period was same (44.03%) as compared to pre COVID days. Women who felt they were less productive (16.66%) when working from home, their number was less as compared to those who felt their productivity level increased (30.62%).
8. Of the 1969 women executives/managers who participated in the survey, close to 90% felt that the WfH arrangement is relevant; and that it was sustainable. While close to 75% found the WfH arrangement effective as well as efficient, it was felt that definite guidelines, also well-defined metrics that assesses productivity and performance, will facilitate being more effective and efficient.

9. Women who found themselves juxtaposed in a triple role i.e. as employees, caregivers, also supervisors/team leaders (some quoted in this report), articulated one thing upfront i.e. as an employee, and more so if in a leadership role, their focus is to achieve company's objectives. *Gender cannot come in the way to achieve company objectives.* However, they indicated that carrying out full time work in decision making roles can be efficiently performed if they have a strong support system to take care of their household/caring responsibilities. During Pandemic that support system lay paralyzed i.e. there was no crèche, no domestic help taking care of elders, etc.; as a result, the working woman had to bear the brunt of it. But they did their best to bring a balance, and move ahead to achieve to the extent possible in both fronts, nevertheless, "it is/was challenging". It is challenging playing multiple roles, and therefore it is important that it is understood by everyone - both in the organization and at homes, to enable better productivity and contribution of women work force in organisation/nation-building.
10. Even though the number may not be substantial, but one cannot undermine or ignore that some women ( $n=26$ ) have indicated that during the work from home arrangement, they felt some kind of threat or act of violence and harassment within their four walls, which made them feel unsafe and uncomfortable. Organisations may through their internal mechanisms try generate information, or atleast as a start, issue a general communication encouraging its employees to seek advice/guidance or necessary support if they are faced with any act of violence or harassment at home.

### 3.5 Conclusion

It is evident that women employees in PSEs having experienced the work from home arrangement in the most challenging circumstances, weighed its pros and cons accordingly. It has led - most of them to suggest that given a choice, they would opt for flexi-timings combined with a roster system of attending office. They have also realised and therefore highlighted that a WfH arrangement without clear cut guidelines leads to blurring the boundaries of work hours. Additionally, it requires outlining the reporting requirements and performance monitoring.

As one respondent opined, and it aptly summarizes this section:

*"WfH is not a new concept. But PSEs in our country are yet to demarcate a clear policy on WfH. What happened in the recent past is crisis management. It can't be called a WfH model and cannot be adopted on a permanent basis without considering the realities and clear expectation of both parties*

*It is evident that women employees in PSEs having experienced the work from home arrangement in the most challenging circumstances, weighed its pros and cons accordingly. It has led - most of them to suggest that given a choice, they would opt for flexi-timings combined with a roster system of attending office. They have also realised and therefore highlighted that a WfH arrangement without clear cut guidelines leads to blurring the boundaries of work hours.*

*(i.e. employees and employers). PSEs need to be culturally adapted to the idea of WfH, and then devise effective policies and the infrastructural support system for its proper implementation. This alone will go a long way in facilitating the “work-life balance” in every woman employees' life”.*

## 4. Key Informant Interviews in selected Public Sector Enterprises: Key reflective learning

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights some of the key reflective learning as a result of the KIIs conducted in 22 PSEs (See box item).<sup>28</sup>

The KIIs formed a significant part of the methodological approach employed by the SCOPE-ILO study. These were conducted, with SCOPE Taskforce Members also involved in conducting the KIIs, to provide an opportunity to senior management and decision makers in the PSEs to voice their understanding and insights on COVID induced work from home arrangements as the *new normal*.

The interviews focused on organisational preparedness and their efforts or initiatives in facilitating its workforce particularly women executives to work from home. Also, whether the shift to a “work from home” (WfH) work arrangement was effective; did it throw up any challenges; can WfH be looked upon long term? In addition, was there a need to adjust organisations’ performance management systems to cover the WfH arrangement?

Since KIIs were conducted simultaneously with an ongoing Survey, some of the emerging trends from the survey were shared with the respondents during their interviews as key informants. This enabled better discussions among company decision makers to suggest plausible measures to make work from home, feasible and an effective workplace option.

Of the 78 KIIs, 30 were women. While all the KIIs were asked if a WfH arrangement meant being more empathetic towards women employees; the women respondents in particular were asked to reflect upon the impact of WfH arrangement on women as “*employees, caregivers and leaders*”.

### 4.2 Key Informant Interviews

---

<sup>28</sup> Given the time period allotted to data collection, it was possible to cover a select number of PSEs only. 22 PSEs were identified in consultation with SCOPE that represented different sectors as well as the Government of India’s PSE classifications: *Maharatna, Navratna, and Miniratna*. Other considerations in selecting the PSEs included companies having an effective gender and HR policy, also WfH policy in some form; companies with a high or low ratio of women employees; SCOPE membership and active participation in SCOPE activities.

Cutting across all PSEs, all CMDs interviewed<sup>29</sup> shared that the COVID pandemic taught new ways of conducting business; though flexi-timings or working from home options were already existing in some. There was no ambiguity in their stating three things upfront viz. i. All jobs in the company will not be possible through WfH ii. WfH arrangement require companies to become empathetic towards supporting all their employees, not only women employees and iii. There is a need to formulate a written WfH policy.<sup>30</sup>

The following core points emerged from the KIIs:

1. The senior management and the decision makers interviewed under Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) in the PSEs were unanimous in their opinion that while the WfH was a necessity, it was forced post COVID-19 declared pandemic and it definitely cannot be applied for the entire company. For them, the new norm was not specifically the WfH but how to return to function optimally with necessary safety and precautionary measures.
2. As a corollary to the point above, it was reiterated that the experience of PSEs show that WfH is a sustainable option; however it cannot be relevant to all departments or units in a company.<sup>31</sup> So each needs to reviews its manpower requirements and

#### **LIST OF PARTICIPATING PSEs IN KIIs**

##### **MAHARATNA**

1. *Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited*
2. *GAIL (India) Limited*
3. *Indian Oil Corporation Limited*
4. *NTPC Limited*
5. *Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited*
6. *Power Grid Corporation of India Limited*
7. *Steel Authority of India Limited*

##### **NAVRATNA**

8. *Container Corporation of India Limited*
9. *Engineers India Limited*
10. *NMDC Limited*
11. *NBCC (India) Limited*
12. *NLC India Limited*
13. *OIL India Limited*
14. *The Shipping Corporation of India Limited*

##### **MINIRATNA (Category I)/OTHER PROFIT MAKING CPSEs**

15. *Airports Authority of India*
16. *Central Warehousing Corporation*
17. *Fertilisers and Chemicals Travancore Limited*
18. *MOIL Limited*
19. *RailTel Corporation of India Limited*
20. *Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers Limited*
21. *SJVN Limited*
22. *Western Coalfields Limited*

<sup>29</sup> CMDs of 14 PSEs were interviewed.

<sup>30</sup> A few PSEs, already had a WfH policy in place; some were in-process of making; most however did not have a written/defined WfH policy.

<sup>31</sup> WfH is effective in case of office going personnel like Finance, Legal, Business Development, Company Secretary, HR, etc.

functioning of its departments to come up with a practical WfH policy which keeps the company interest as well as employee welfare in place.

3. As indicated through the survey, KIs confirmed that most PSEs did not have a written WfH Policy. Based on central and state government directives, periodic guidelines were issued. Mostly these guidelines referred to managing the manpower in post COVID as offices were directed not to work with 100% staff.
4. The companies' main focus was to make its IT system (e-offices; digitization; paperless functioning) robust; also make available the needed IT support at home for employees to work without hindrance. As stated by many of the key informants, '*Operations, Productivity and Performance*' even in an exigency could not have been compromised. It was shared that the biggest concerns of working remotely were i. Dilution of team dynamics ii. Distractions impacting working and focused approach and iii. Sustained productivity and consistent results.
5. It was felt that even if the levels of productivity of the employees were affected in the initial days of lockdown; with the employees and the line Managers gradually getting acquainted with this new normal, things improved.<sup>32</sup> In almost all PSEs CMDs shared it with great pride that their employees working from home contributed immensely towards the success of the organisation; and companies were able to achieve similar level of productivity as before.<sup>33</sup>
6. In fact, one thing that was unanimously credited across PSEs, was the resilience the employees showed during the pandemic.<sup>34</sup> There was a new vigor in team work, wherein people were supportive of each other and coordinated well. Most felt organisations were agile and professionally run during the lockdown phase. In addition, since each could withstand the pandemic and did not let its operations get affected, all found their business models to be resilient enough to overcome exigencies like COVID19.
7. No PSEs indicated to making any significant changes to their performance appraisal systems; however, there was a unanimity that in case of WfH translating into a written policy document, performance appraisal systems would require a thorough review and modification with focus on specific quality deliverables by individuals. *Policy should focus on assignment based work to promote objectivity*

---

<sup>32</sup> In digital mode of interactions, familiarity with digital tools matter and one needs time to get accustomed to workplace digitization.

<sup>33</sup> In some instances, Despite a bad first Quarter (Q1) post lock down, companies' not only made up on their physical performance but also did well in comparisons to the previous year in most of the parameters.

<sup>34</sup> DG-SCOPE, during his interview also noted that the resilience shown by the PSE employees during the pandemic and the support of management to their employees in the face of adversity, is highly appreciable.

*in evaluation.*<sup>35</sup> The Heads of Human Resources<sup>36</sup> in particular felt that this was also the right time for them to recalibrate their priorities, focus towards managing remote workforce, digitalize the corporate function, and re-imagine workforce models. Some of them shared that they have already come out with different ideas and policies to deal with the pandemic.<sup>37</sup> While following all the government guidelines, companies were largely giving flexible work timings to their employees; providing medical care with number of hospitals empaneled with the company<sup>38</sup>; giving special causal leaves up to 30 days; also cashless med claim facilities to employees and their dependents, etc.

8. Upon asked to rate their company's WfH Policy on a scale of 1 (very low) – 5 (very high), most PSEs preferred to give themselves a rating of 4. The reasons cited were primarily three. First, there was no written work from home policy; or there was on-going process of developing the policy; or where a policy did exist, a review was being considered. Second, A large part of the company's business are related to field operations, also spread/located in far flung areas, where WfH is not possible. Third, since there has been no assessment of the impact of the policy or the work from home arrangement as yet, the companies did not wish to rate themselves 5/5. Though they were confident that the WfH arrangement is unlikely to hinder the level of employees productivity; also it will enable employees to meet their aspirations and personal responsibilities. Though one of the KIIs interviewed added, "WFH is effective only when people realize their responsibility towards the work while working from their homes and not making it an excuse to do less work or ineffective work."
9. It was shared that while companies gave quarantine/COVID leaves, it assured its employees that such leaves had no bearing on any other leave/privileges of employees (e.g. women employees' maternity or childcare leave). Similarly, the Grievance Redressal Mechanisms remained available online to address any office related issues; if while working from home, the employee felt any work related harassment by their superiors they could avail of the grievance redressal avenues. Further, all PSEs used various online channels to make their employees stay connected besides connecting for work. Wellness programmes were also promoted online.

---

<sup>35</sup> It was added that a WfH arrangement also does not have any impact on promotion and leadership aspirations. Responsibilities and growth opportunities of any employee are not affected by WfH; rather career progression is regulated by objective criteria based on merit.

<sup>36</sup> 21 Heads of Human Resources participated in the study.

<sup>37</sup> Some of the important interventions made during the period which brought results included i. Building rapport and carrying out business through virtual platforms/off-locations ii. Significant reduction on physical movement of paper, people and work force iii. Training and knowledge enrichment activities iv. Digital intervention and investments in technology.

<sup>38</sup> Some PSEs also empanelled home care agencies for providing home care services to the employees.

10. It was reiterated that any WfH policy is applicable to the company as a whole, which has to run on its performance and profits. Hence, *a WfH policy can only be gender neutral i.e. applicable to all employees* except that due considerations and exemptions are given to pregnant women, women with young children, women with aged parent; also people with special needs (both men and women). In fact, in many instances, Head of Units/departments were given guidance to give women (pregnant, etc.) the option to work from home. Nevertheless, it was suggested that any women centric recommendations/guidelines put forth by the present study, would definitely be taken into consideration by PSEs while drafting their respective policies.

### 4.3 Women Leaders in PSEs

The women respondents under KIIs, were specifically asked how differently they think the work from home arrangement can influence women in the PSEs *as employees, as caregivers, and as managers/leaders*. The following three responses<sup>39</sup>, aptly summarizes what women, particularly those in leadership and decision making positions experienced; and advocate.

#### **Ms. H K Joshi, Chairperson and Managing Director & Director (Finance) (Additional Charge), The Shipping Corporation of India**

Ms. H K Joshi, the first woman CMD of the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), a *Navratna Company*, in its 60<sup>th</sup> year of operation shared:

“If I see myself as a regular employee of SCI, I would say that work from home is a very convenient arrangement as it enables employees to handle and balance out multiple roles and responsibilities. As a woman in the role of a caregiver too, definitely the work from home is a boon especially if one is a young mother or has young children. During the pandemic, there was a sense of insecurity; hence, the physical presence of a mother could make the environment for a child at home comfortable. Also, there may be in-laws, aged and ailing parents or an unwell family member to look after. In such a situation, WfH balances out one’s role such that justice is rendered to both the caregiving and professional roles, without being subjected to any guilt pangs.

*It is, as a leader, that I would say the WfH proves most challenging. ...A leader has multiple roles to play...As a leader, I did not have a precedence to follow. I feel the pandemic tested us as leaders; and our pressures and responsibilities increased.*

*Ms. H K Joshi, CMD,  
The Shipping Corporation of India*

However, it is, as a leader, that I would say the WfH proves most challenging. A leader has multiple roles to play. As a leader, I did not have a precedence to follow. There was inevitable disruption in my office set up. For

---

<sup>39</sup> The three also interacted with the Network of Champions during a training session wherein they discussed the guidelines developed as a result of the study findings.

instance, a simple thing that I could do, dial a number on the intercom and speak to my colleagues or the assistance I could draw from my office staff was missing. I had to facilitate, manage my own calendars and meetings from home. Further, some decisions in regular times that I would take collectively after rounds of consultations were not feasible. I feel the pandemic tested us as leaders; and our pressures and responsibilities increased. As a leader, I was responsible to ensure that everything goes as planned and provide direction when something seems to be going wrong. I was positive, up and shining and ensured that I was available to meet any organizational eventuality. This did put additional pressure and responsibility but the satisfaction for me is that despite the pandemic this instilled in my employees immense confidence, and a spirit to perform and excel. I am happy that our company broke a decade old record by reporting highest quarterly profits when the economy was actually going down, and businesses in the country suffered lockdowns.”

**Dr. Alka Mittal, Director (HR), Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited**

Dr Alka Mittal, the first woman Director - Human Resources of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited, a *Maharatna Company*, had this to say:

“The covid-19 pandemic has certainly altered the workplace in unexpected ways. If not for the pandemic, new ways of working such as Work from Home (WfH)

*We need to develop inclusive WfH policies that are clear, objective and integrated into the organisational culture. Line Managers and Supervisors need to be trained and sensitised on WfH modalities and expectations, because I see mind-set change as one of the biggest challenges. We need to learn to evaluate output and contribution, rather than those who are ‘present’.... Going forward, we should use this crisis to transform our workplaces to be more flexible and agile, integrate new-age technologies and flexible ways of working that contribute to increased productivity and performance for sustained business growth.”*

*Dr Alka Mittal, Director (HR), Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited*

would have taken years to be adopted by organisations globally, across the board. In these times when health and safety has assumed top priority, WfH has enabled continuity of operations for many businesses, and has also opened a wider range of opportunities for employees, with flexible working arrangements.

From a gender perspective, we need to focus on the implications of remote working/ WfH in context of the role of women in our societies where caring for children and the elderly, and household chores fall disproportionately on women. Stress, fatigue, feelings of isolation, disconnect and being over-burdened due to working from home as lines between personal & professional space blur, can be concerning pitfalls, if not managed properly.

As we move ahead, we need to develop inclusive WfH policies that are clear, objective and integrated into the

organisational culture. Line Managers and Supervisors need to be trained and sensitised on WfH modalities and expectations, because I see mind-set change as one of the biggest challenges. We need to learn to evaluate output and contribution, rather than those who are 'present'.

Women need to be provided with an enabling environment to be productive, positive and engaged. Personalised coaching, opportunities for learning and growth and support for mental well-being, in a culture that is inclusive, fair, collaborative and enables all employees, including women, to step into leadership roles, is vital for any organisation to succeed.

At the end of the day, businesses need to be future-ready and adapt to the changing demands of time. We need to be prepared for repeated cycles of similar pandemics and have in place a robust system that can withstand disruptions and ensure that our employees remain safe and our operations continue. Going forward, we should use this crisis to transform our workplaces to be more flexible and agile, integrate new-age technologies and flexible ways of working that contribute to increased productivity and performance for sustained business growth.”

**Ms. Vartika Shukla, Director-Technical, Engineers India Limited<sup>40</sup>**

Ms. Vartika Shukla, working as Director-Technical at Engineers India Limited, a Navratna Company, serves at a senior management & decision making position. In her view:

“COVID-19 engulfed us in its enormity and has taught humanity many life changing lessons. The pandemic has been a game changer on how things are perceived not only at the personal or professional front, but also how human beings need to align themselves to meet the challenges while fulfilling their purpose and enriching their lives with more meaningful aspects.

The situation has equally and often largely affected women. The social structure of India often needs most women to shoulder more responsibility in managing the household and also be the primary caregiver. The dichotomies become further enlarged when the same women have personal and professional aspirations and want to make a difference at their workplaces; such paradoxes have been the origin of most debates on 'work-life balance'.

The prevalence of 'Work from Home' arrangements, necessitated by this Pandemic, have presented women working in PSE with an opportunity to redefine their roles both at home and at work. Women now have to make additional efforts to structure their day and compartmentalize their roles so that they can continue to be productive and add-value both in offices and WfH. Although the flexibility of

---

<sup>40</sup> Ms. Vartika Shukla has been selected as the first woman CMD of Engineers India Limited.

working from home has provided comfort but has also often resulted in merging of

*The prevalence of 'Work from Home' arrangements, necessitated by this Pandemic, have presented women working in PSEs with an opportunity to redefine their roles both at home and at work. Women now have to make additional efforts to structure their day and compartmentalize their roles so that they can continue to be productive and add-value both in offices and WfH. Although the flexibility of working from home has provided comfort but has also often resulted in merging of boundaries between work & home, thereby demanding women to inculcate higher self-discipline, assertiveness and accountability.*

*Ms. Vartika Shukla, Director-Technical,  
Engineers India Limited*

boundaries between work & home, thereby demanding women to inculcate higher self-discipline, assertiveness and accountability.

However, I do believe, that the WfH arrangements, with the enabling IT support systems and associated governing policies will encourage more women to focus on their careers and prevent mid-career attrition, the stage where the demands of both work and home are pronounced.

This will enable women to continue their growth path on the professional front, make significant contributions to the work-place and bring diversity into the decision making process, furthering the growth trajectory of their organisations.”

## 4.4 Conclusion

The WfH concept is not a new concept; however the COVID declared pandemic necessitated revisiting the concept to ensure everyone's job responsibility and compliance. Moreover, the companies' felt a sense of obligation wherein it needed to

- i. assuage employees that the company shall back them up in the event of any crisis;
- ii. Take steps to make work place safe and hassle free
- iii. Encourage contribution to the business operations by way of infrastructure, facilities and training, etc.
- iv. Ensure adherence to team ethics, and support to other verticals.

As noted by a KII respondent,<sup>41</sup> SMART companies require to be pragmatic and need to show empathy towards the employees while facing a situation like COVID. While WfH was an arrangement to continue doing the business, it is only one of the many arrangements that a company can offer. Considering similar situation, a SMART company is required to:

- i. Provide safe environment to the employees to work without apprehensions
- ii. Isolate critical support systems to continue operations
- iii. Empower and decentralize the decision making based on local conditions and
- iv. Ensure robust

---

<sup>41</sup> Respondent at the time of the interview served as Director (Commercial), Steel Authority of India Limited. By the time the study was completed, she was the first woman CMD of this Maharatna Company.

communication system with suitable digital support. And, most PSEs seem to be adopting this pathway. Director General – SCOPE, also concurred that “structure and flexibility, discipline and sensitivity” must go hand-in-hand to enlist higher engagement and commitment of all – employees and employers alike.

## 5. Adoption of Work from Home (WfH) in PSEs: Summary of Findings and Hearing Women’s Voices

### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The survey and the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) brought to light a number of issues related to the adoption of work from home in PSEs, as the previous chapters have highlighted. These issues helped to ascertain a set of recommendations as a way forward; moreover, in consultation with the Network of Champions, these recommendations were further streamlined into *guidelines for gender sensitive work from home policy in PSEs* (Chapter 6).

The issues, recommendations and the guidelines, revolves around six key dimensions of WfH arrangement that the study identified. These relate to having i. A well-defined WfH policy to avoid ambiguity; ii. A safe environment to work without fear or apprehensions; iii. Critical support systems isolated to enable business run on a continual basis; iv. A decentralized decision making to respond faster to snags and glitches; v. A robust communication with suitable digital support; and vi. Well-defined measures to assess both productivity and performance.

The six dimensions were echoed in multiple ways across PSEs, in the responses of 1969 women employees and 78 KIIs with the senior management.

It was discernible that for *women as employees* in a remote working set up what mattered most was seamless digital technology services complemented by a clear-cut remote/WfH policy with well-defined parameters of performance assessment. For *women as leaders* i.e. those in decision making positions (like their male counterparts), continuity in business operations was an overriding factor. Without undermining the importance of having a well-defined WfH policy and well managed IT support services in a work from home arrangement, women in managerial and leadership positions across PSEs had similar sentiments. In their views, *gender cannot come in the way to achieve company objectives*; hence, even in challenging

#### *Six Key Dimensions of WfH Arrangement*

- i. A well-defined Work from Home Policy with unambiguous terms and conditions*
- ii. Provide Safe environment to employees to work without apprehensions*
- iii. Identify critical support systems to ensure continued operations*
- iv. Decentralize decision making based on ground situations or circumstances*
- v. A robust communication system with suitable digital/technological support*
- vi. Well defined measures to assess productivity; besides, well defined metrics to assess performance*

*Source: ILO-SCOPE WfH Study, 2020*

circumstances, “the focus cannot deviate from company’s desired business outcomes; it also enables remote workers to deliver quality work.”

COVID 19 came up as a challenge for working women, whether employees or leaders. In most cases, as primary caregivers, women without a support system that lay paralyzed during the pandemic (i.e. there was no crèche, no domestic help taking care of elders, etc.) found themselves shouldering the bulk of domestic work. Women especially those at decision making roles indicated that carrying out full time work can work efficiently if they

*WfH is a necessity in today’s scenario. To implement it efficiently and effectively, a clear policy and standard operating procedure (SOP) must be developed at an organizational level in general, and at the departmental level in particular.*

*Respondent, Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers Limited  
Source: SCOPE-ILO Survey 2020*

have a strong support system to take care of their household responsibilities.

*Adequate sensitisation is needed so that women can handle their dual responsibility i.e. work and care efficiently without affecting either. The challenging roles women play, it is important that it is understood by everyone in the organisation and at home as well, for better productivity and contribution of women as a work force.*

*Respondent- KII  
SJVN Limited*

Having experienced the work from home arrangement in an exceptional circumstance like COVID-19 pandemic, was perhaps the reason that there was a mixed response to adjusting to the adopted norm of WfH. Based on the responses, it is inferred that with a normal support system operating, the WfH option may not have been so overwhelming. In fact, the mixed response was a surprise deviation from a previous SCOPE-ILO study findings, which looked into the influential factors in facilitating women’s career

advancement to managerial and leadership positions. In this study conducted with the same level (E4-E9) women executives, the women had quite strongly indicated WfH to be an influential factor in not only advancing their careers but also facilitating a better work-life balance. *The preferred model now is a combination of flexi-timings/schedules and WfH on ROTA (roster) basis.*<sup>42</sup>

*The fact that the pandemic made us do all the household chores ourselves took a lot of energy from us. Under normal circumstances, i believe, WfH will be more productive.*

*Respondent, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited  
Source: SCOPE-ILO Survey 2020*

Irrespective of whether the conviction towards advocating for WfH has swayed a bit, there is no negation of its usefulness. Rather, it has

<sup>42</sup> The difference between WfH on ROTA basis and Flexi-timings is that the latter is an arrangement allowing employees to alter the starting and/or end time of their workday. Employees still work the same number of scheduled hours as they would under a normal work schedule. And WfH on ROTA basis would mean attending office on stipulated days.

been reiterated that WfH is relevant and sustainable. However, it is imperative that the company lays down clear policies on WfH, with a well-established matrix to measure performance and productivity. Also, unequivocally it was maintained by all who participated in the study that the choice of opting for WfH must be available for both men and women employees in PSEs.<sup>43</sup>

Advocating a structured WfH policy was a recurrent theme. Absence of a written unambiguous policy meant giving rise to apprehensions. Herein, two aspects were highlighted. First, without a policy, it is difficult to shove aside a general perception that those opting for work from home seek comfort, are less productive, or are shirkers. Second, as a corollary to this perception, often the boundaries defining work hours get blurred; and people opting for WFH end up working longer hours, thereby leading to greater stress, exhaustion; also, lack of motivation and ultimately, less productivity.

While an effective work from home will depend on the policy of the organization; it also seeks responsible behaviour of its employees. In a work from home arrangement, *trust, commitment and efficiency* are key to its success. In addition, women recognize, as do the senior management in PSEs, that all jobs may not be possible through WfH.

It needs to be added that except for two respondents (one in Survey and one under KII), no one in particular felt that organisations embracing the work from home model, could give a boost to the workforce participation of women in PSEs. The two respondents who brought out the issue felt that the WfH by giving flexibility in managing home and work, can have an impact on women workforce; it may aid those who forego their promotions over family responsibilities or who quit their jobs to be caregivers.

*When a woman employee is on transfer and away from home, WfH for atleast one week in a month will enable the employee to find work and home balance. It has been observed that women employees at times refuse the promotion on transfer due to family circumstances. This will enhance the motivation of the employee as well as to advance in her career, which will ultimately benefit the organisation.*

*Respondent, NTPC Limited  
Source: SCOPE-ILO Survey 2020*

*The norms for working from home needs to be developed so that the thin line dividing one's work life balance does not get blurred and one is in a position to devote quality time to discharge both the responsibilities of work and home.*

*Respondent, Power Grid Corporation of India Limited  
Source: SCOPE-ILO Survey 2020*

---

<sup>43</sup> This facilitated in developing guidelines for “gender sensitive” work from home policy in PSEs and not a “women-centric” or “gender specific” policy.

## 5.2 Hearing Women's Voices

### WHAT WOMEN SAID...

Drawing from their COVID induced work from home experience, women cutting across PSEs, shared multiple anecdotes that acts as an eye-opener to various facets of a work from home arrangement. WfH cannot simply be bracketed into a good or a bad option. Underlying a good or a bad option, there are factors at play. Therefore, it is interesting to hear the women's voices. Some of them are captured here.<sup>44</sup>

#### *Workplace is a competitive Space*

- "Work place is a competitive space; absence or lack of it, is not good for professional grooming. I therefore believe a balance between the two – that is, work from office (WfO) and Work from home (WfH) is best. Moreover, in an office set up, we interact, meet and learn from diverse group of people; in a work from home, this interaction is mostly limited to peers (*Respondent, Power Grid Corporation of India Limited*).

#### *WfH gives less time for idle biases*

- "It kept me away from office gossips and politics. There was better utilization of overall available time on daily basis" (*Respondent, Indian Oil Corporation Limited*).
- "There was better time management - meetings could be started and ended within planned timelines without cascading effect on other planned activities. In view of online meetings, wait period for people to assemble for the meeting was bare minimum. Relevant people attended the meetings; discussions and approvals were to the point and with lesser digressions" (*Respondent, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited*).

#### *WfH without self-discipline and accountability is not that easy*

- "Set hours – not stretched hours while WfH. Even if the company has not issued a guideline or prescribed a rule, it is best to set specific office time for oneself while working from home. If we do not fix a set time for work, in all likelihood family members may feel that she is home all the time, so she can do all the house work. They won't be able to comprehend the requirements of our job" (*KII-NLC India Limited*).

---

<sup>44</sup> Source: SCOPE-ILO Survey, 2020.

### *Work from home a win-win situation for both employee and organization*

- “Employee can work from home without commuting and can look after his/her house; and organization can save in terms of transportation, electricity bill, rented spaces, and canteen expenditures, etc. However, WfH is useful for employees occupied with office work alone; in case of sites, where manpower availability is required, work from home will not be useful” (*Respondent, Power Grid Corporation of India Limited*).

### *A home environment cannot substitute a work environment*

- “Virtual meetings were not a good experience as audio and video disturbances were observed. Also, disruption due to low internet speed, power cuts, non-availability of immediate IT support in case of help required” (*Respondent, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation*).
- “Site work supervision suffered. Proposal files were to be brought to home for note preparation/comments. Front to front interactions as required in a manufacturing unit was not happening leading to communication lapse and connected issues” (*Respondent, National Aluminium Company Limited*).
- “I was handling vendor bill payment which was not possible working from home. Also my reporting officer was not approving my WfH. My subordinate who is a non-executive doesn't have provisions to work from home like laptop, printer etc. Also, most of the quality complaints of customers that is to be settled were maintained as physical file. Bringing these files home was not allowed. Getting physical files scanned and sending it through email required visiting office” (*Respondent, Steel Authority of India Limited*).

### *WfH option cannot be women centric or gender specific*

- “Though more women may opt for WfH; but the option needs to be extended to our male colleagues as well. For example, certain male colleagues may also need a WfH if they have working partners who do not have the WfH option and need to attend office on regular basis. With schools and crèche facilities closed, managing children for male colleagues is likely to be equally difficult. Hence WfH cannot be gender specific; rather it needs to be extended to all employees, on need basis” (*Respondent, Engineers India Limited*).

### *COVID Induced WfH brought in a new vigor in team work*

- “We faced hurdles like unavailability of regular manpower as well as hired/contract manpower, difficulties in procurement of necessary items, etc. However all was met with, and stood apart in front of team work, team spirit, and dedication of regular and other employees, which supported the entire organisation” (*Respondent, Airports Authority of India*).
- “We had lot of work during the lockdown. I have two young ladies working with me - one pregnant and the other having a young child. I allowed them complete

WFH; I managed when needed to work in the office. I could secure complete support from them and we completed all the tasks as and when required” (*Respondent, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation*).

- “Despite the challenges, people had a positive outlook which is worth appreciating. Colleagues could depend on one another for support of any kind. Inter departmental coordination was effective. People were sensitive towards making work happen within the constraints” (*Respondent, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited*).

### 5.3 Conclusion

WfH is not a new model but the pandemic enforced it even when some PSEs were probably not fully ready for it. Most organizations are now equipping, and have equipped themselves to continue *business-as-usual* by shifting gears and adopting work-from-home practices. This has included eliminating the need for physical document management by using digital solutions. Further, in the absence of a specific and written policy, many PSEs are formulating their WfH policies in conjunction with any guidelines or directives by the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE), the nodal ministry for CPSEs, under the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Government of India.

For the PSEs, WfH is not a women centric or gender specific arrangement. Though more women may avail of the option than men. Notwithstanding, who avails WfH option, COVID-19 made the need for a clear cut WfH policy inevitable. And as summed up by a woman executive:

“For WfH arrangement to be adopted by company, there must be a clear WfH policy, which covers - infrastructure at home, performance management, career progression, project evolution, new project distributions, etc. It must also clearly address the issue of visibility in organisation, leadership, transfer, networking, etc.” (*Respondent, MMTC Limited*).

## 6. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Proposed Guidelines

### 6.1 Conclusion

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19), a pandemic sweeping across the globe, challenged societies in more than one way. Not only did it have individual impacts forcing people to reconsider how they work or travel, but it has also impacted countries from an economic standpoint.

COVID-19 provided a sound business reason for PSEs to establish virtual workplaces, in which employees operate remotely from each other. The study therefore provided a unique opportunity to assess WfH as a working model in PSEs. The study findings showed that the advantages of WfH may be offset by factors such as lack of infrastructure and technological support in remote locations. Besides, virtual teams and telework are not appropriate for all jobs and all employees.

In addition, the study indicated that women employees – having experienced the WfH arrangement in a challenging circumstance that of a COVID induced lockdown period, if given an option now, when most of them are back to their offices, would not prefer WfH on a continual basis but opt for flexi-timings/flexible Schedules combined with WfH on a need/rotational basis.

WfH may not have emerged as “the most favored option” that PSE executives, especially women would like to opt for on a continual basis, but the interest in WfH remains. Only the perception to view the option has seen a marginal shift.<sup>45</sup> It calls for better guidelines and policies from the company to be in place to properly regulate and make WfH feasible. For example, one area of policy where planning and implementation is needed relates to guiding all and not select staff into adapting to remote online work. The decision to swiftly shift from in-person meetings and working to remote working, may have caught some if not all employees unaware in respect to what WfH entails; and they also lacked resources required for this shift in work culture (like software, access to official documents, proper working space). Proper training and guidance is required, which many PSEs are facilitating, if the WfH practice is to be a feasible option or the new normal. Possibly, the work-life balance will be better visible when WfH is no longer a forced mandate, rather a flexible option.

---

<sup>45</sup> As mentioned earlier in the study, the E4-E9 level women executives who participated in the study had previously participated in another SCOPE-ILO study wherein they endorsed WfH as an influential factor in their career advancement.

## 6.2 Recommendations

The issues highlighted by different participants – either through survey or the KII, in the study led to deriving a **set of 10 interconnected recommendations** with regards to the WfH arrangement in PSEs. These are mentioned below:

- i. Formulate a Work from Home Policy with unambiguous terms and conditions
- ii. Communicate the policy effectively to all employees, also any amendments made to work expectations due to the changing situation
- iii. Provide support for setting up equipment and infrastructure to facilitate work from home/remote working
- iv. Define impact on entitlements, privileges/benefits, compensations, if any
- v. Define metrics of assessment for productivity and performance; analyse important tasks and track progress on a time bound basis
- vi. Define provisions regulating absence and leave
- vii. Carefully draft the secrecy and confidentiality requirements/agreements
- viii. Give proper directives to line managers for WfH to be effective. They must understand their colleagues' WfH arrangements, also discuss issues like burnout, work stress, work/life balance, etc.
- ix. Manage periodic virtual meetings efficiently; facilitate digital archiving/reporting by employees
- x. Ensure/make arrangements for employees' physical and mental well-being; policy to succinctly cover medical and insurance benefits.

Along with the study findings, the 10 recommendations were discussed with the SCOPE taskforce members. Since, the WfH study specifically looked at the impact it had on women employees of PSEs, **the recommendations were concretized to develop a set of guidelines**. These guidelines as “**Guidelines for a Gender Sensitive Work from Home (WfH) Policy in PSEs**”, were further shared and discussed with select key informants (i.e. 1 CMD; 2 Head-HRs; 1 Senior Management; and Director General –SCOPE) before giving it a final shape.

## 6.3 Guidelines for a Gender Sensitive Work from Home (WfH) Policy in PSEs

In light of ‘a new normal workplace culture’, the purpose of the guidelines was twofold viz.<sup>46</sup> i) to present select guidelines to PSEs, which are gender sensitive, rather than gender neutral; and ii) to advocate integrating the gender sensitive guidelines in a written WfH policy so as to facilitate women employees in playing their triple roles - as

---

<sup>46</sup> Under the SCOPE-ILO Study, the aim was not to develop a WfH policy for PSEs, as many PSEs are already developing their internal WfH policies; the aim was to propose a select few guidelines that even if not women centric - by being gender sensitive and not gender neutral, can facilitate the work of women employees/executives in PSEs. Overall strength of women in PSEs is less than 10% as per Government Sources; some PSEs may have a larger percentage.

“company employees; as caregivers at home; and/or managers/leaders/decision makers in companies”, as they strike a work-life and family balance.

The guidelines based on inputs from multiple stakeholders that include women executives (E4-E9 level executives in PSEs); senior management and decision makers in PSEs, besides SCOPE can be read in attribution to the three roles executed by women in particular. *Some of the guidelines are applicable to all genders; some guidelines are also overlapping.* A working from home policy - integrating these guidelines, is recommended to ensure that employees, now and those joining in future are clear about working from home practices.

## GUIDELINES

### I. GENERIC

- a. PSEs, irrespective of enabling a temporary or short term or a long-term WfH arrangement, redefine the definition of a “workspace” to include “remote work”, “tele-work”, or “work from home”; and spell out clearly, and in written, both the employers’ and employees’ obligations under any such work arrangements.
- b. Guidelines mentioned herein are workable only when line managers and supervisors are i) a trained and sensitized on WFH modalities and expectations; and ii) well informed on the eligibility factors, approval processes, performance evaluations, etc. to avoid confusion and prevent perception of different employees being treated differently.

### II. WOMEN AS EMPLOYEES

*Rationale: Flexibility and customization are important elements in a WfH arrangement*

- c. A clear guideline on the working time (e.g. a 9.30 AM-5.30 PM work requirement); availability expectations (i.e. setting rules that establish the time when people must be available) – must be outlined in the policy.
- d. Besides availability expectations, communicate work expectations i.e. communicate clearly the work allocations (e.g. agreeing upon individual tasks and responsibilities, which is measurable in terms of task fulfilment, achievement, also success).
- e. Specify how employees will be evaluated in terms of their productivity.
- f. Unless otherwise agreed upon in writing, any work-from-home arrangement must not affect an employee’s benefits, work status, work responsibilities, etc.
- g. Making arrangements for employees’ physical and mental well-being with also an assurance of all redressal channels available for communicating any duress/stress while working from home.

### III. WOMEN AS CAREGIVERS

*Rationale: The unpaid work women do is one of the biggest barriers they face to reaching their potential in the workforce*

- h. A policy must give due recognition to women’s unpaid work that includes domestic upkeep, parenting responsibilities, caring for the sick and the elderly.

- i. Give due attention to pregnant and lactating women, women in need of ante and post natal care; also women with special needs besides single parents.
- j. In consultation with women employees or their representatives, consider WfH for example, in lieu of a non-paid childcare leave (CCL); also, if there is no CCL or sabbatical policy consider WfH as an option.

#### **IV. WOMEN AS LEADERS/SUPERVISORS/DECISION MAKERS**

*Rationale: Women often need to make additional efforts to structure their day and compartmentalize their roles to be productive and add-value to what they do*

- k. Taking into consideration the strategic nature of job and the work profile of each employee, companies can decide acceptable levels for WfH (e.g. the basic eligibility requirements to opt for/be given WfH; decide which executive levels or which jobs are conducive to a WfH policy, etc.).
- l. Determine the technological needs of employees working from home (e.g. it could be hardware, software, high-speed internet connections, learning skills, etc.) so as to perform tasks assigned efficiently through ITC services.
- m. Analyse Individual Tasks and Track Progress on a Time bound Basis so as not to affect any long term appraisal linked to promotions.
- n. Make leaders visible role models for inspiring other women, and demonstrate that it is possible to combine a career and family/home, successfully through working flexibly.

#### **The guidelines are a key outcome of the study.**

To facilitate further discussion within PSEs so that the guidelines can be better adapted in line with organisational requirements, there is a dissemination plan with the Network of Champions (Annexure 1). This will complement dissemination done by SCOPE.

The study along with the *guidelines* once shared by SCOPE with Department of Public Enterprises, Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Government of India; its Member Organisations and other Stakeholders, will encourage PSEs to adapt and integrate it within their well-defined WfH/Remote Working Policy. It will surely enhance employee engagement, and facilitate any form of remote working including WfH.

## **ANNEXURE**

### **I. Dissemination Plan**

#### **Guidelines for a Gender Sensitive Work from Home (WfH) Policy in PSEs**

SCOPE Network of Champions propose a five-step dissemination plan as Follows:

1. The SCOPE Network of Champions agree to promote the guidelines among PSEs in the SCOPE membership.
2. The Champions start promotional activities within their own organizations with awareness raising programmes on the study and the guidelines.
3. Take into consideration any feed- back from management on the guidelines to adapt it more to organisation's requirements.
4. Revise and finalise guidelines as required.
5. Move for adoption.

## II. SCOPE TASKFORCE (NETWORK OF CHAMPIONS)

*Trained and Certified by ILO*

1. Mr. Kapil Dhruv, GM, HPCL
2. Mr. Raj Kumar, GM (HR),AAI
3. Ms. Subarna Nag, Dy. Manager, NSIC
4. Ms. Anjali Narayan, AGM (HR), NBCC
5. Ms. Anju Gupta, GM, MMTc
6. Ms. Anubhuti Bhushan, Manager, MMTc
7. Ms. Bhavna Mathur, Sr. GM (HR), PGCIL
8. Ms. Hina Sharma, AM(HR & L&D), NSIC
9. Ms. Meetu Jain, DGM (HR), AAI
10. Ms. Pratibha Singh, DGM-HR, NTPC
11. Ms. Renuka Verma GM-HR, HPCL
12. Ms. Sanjeeta Ramrakhyani, GGM, CONCOR

### III Select Global Company Practices on Work from Home

COVID-19 has changed the workplace culture; every organisation today is embracing a different sort of workplace behaviour, keeping in line with their organisational requirements. WfH has thrown up unique challenges both for employees and employers. But, organisations worldwide practising WfH arrangement, need to make sure that their employees are engaged and remain motivated when they are away from their normal/routine work environment.

Following are some of the initiatives undertaken by different global companies.<sup>47</sup>

- Gitlab, a software company, has adopted a virtual coffee break. These are video calls where employees connect virtually to take breaks, and socialize. These conversations seem effective in preventing potential burnout and isolation.
- Steyer Content, a full service content company has a happy hour every Thursday which holds informal contests, celebrate birthdays and asks employees to talk about the books they are reading, etc.
- At Anheuser-Busch InBev SA/NV (commonly known as ABInBev), multinational drink and brewing company based in Leuven, Belgium, employees connected virtually for their Total Rewards Town hall to not only talk about the wellbeing of the team and families, functional updates and projects, but it was symbolic of the spiritedness. This empowers employees to continue to dream big and put in their best efforts in such testing times!
- Bluewolf , IT Service Management Company, now part of IBM, used the gamification technology and created a #GoingSocial program through various initiatives like an employee 'Pack Profiles' giving rewards and points for external/internal collaboration, where employees could earn points of 50 or more, by publishing a blog post on official company's blog and others.70% of Forbes Global 2000 companies will use gamification to boost engagement, retention and revenues.
- In Culture Amp, employee analytics platform, each employee has access to a professional coach through the Coaching for Everyone program. Employees are provided with sessions at 6, 12 and 24 months, and they can choose to focus on personal or professional goals. Coaches help assess where a person is and where they want to be, then guide each person through a strategy to reach their goals.
- At Infosys, an Indian multinational information technology company, learners can choose topics to add to their 'Playlists' and create their learning paths. These paths can be shared with their peers. Learners can build a team of certified and deployable talent with 'Virtual Proctored Certifications', which enables learners to complete certification with ease anytime, anywhere. Seamlessly integrate internal enterprise content or external third-

---

<sup>47</sup> The initiatives presented are based on a desk review relying on articles and study reports where such initiatives find a mention. The section is not based on any impact assessment of such initiatives and its outcomes on employees' and their productivity/performance.

party content into bite-sized micro modules or dive deep into macro learning modules. Many of their customers also engage their employees through the Infosys Learning Platform.

- Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase, leading investment banks, are installing teams at disaster recovery sites, and trading facilities at workers' homes.
- Starbucks, American multinational chain of coffeehouses, announced it would expand mental health benefits to include up to 20 therapy sessions for all employees.
- Ryan, the global tax services firm, their MyRyan program allows employees to work anywhere any time as long as the work gets done. There are no hour requirements, no location requirements and no schedules.
- Unilever's Agile Working program contains the following principles: All employees may work anytime and anywhere as long as business needs are fully met; Leaders must lead by example, working in an agile way themselves; Performance is determined by results, not time and attendance—every employee has a personal work plan identifying desired results and how they will be measured; Travel is to be avoided whenever possible; and Managers are assessed annually on how well they support agile workers and this feeds into the variable element of their pay.

## IV SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

### “Adoption of Work from Home (WfH) Model”

(To be administered to all E4-E9 Women Employees of all SCOPE Member Organizations)

#### Name of the Respondent is not required

Q.1 Name of Your Organization

--

Q.2 Please indicate your Service Level

E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9
----	----	----	----	----	----

Q3. At your level (E4, E5...E9) are you supervising a team or a group of people?

YES	NO
-----	----

Q4. Select your Age Range

25- 35	35- 40	40- 45	45-55	55 or above
-----------	-----------	-----------	-------	-------------

Q5. Did you work from home (WfH) following COVID-19 declared pandemic and subsequent lockdowns?

YES	NO	Only for a Limited Duration  Please specify Duration:
-----	----	---

Q6. Are you continuing to work from home?

YES	NO	Partially/ On a ROTA (i.e. Roster) basis
-----	----	--

Q7. How did you adjust/adjusting to the new norm of Working from Home (WfH) following COVID 19 pandemic? **Select only One.**

A. Very Well	B. Satisfactorily	C. Adapting
--------------	-------------------	-------------

D. Inadequately	E. I did not have to adjust as I already had arrangements to work from home prior to COVID 19	F. I have mixed feeling about the WfH Model
G. I do not Know		

Q 8. Does your company have a stated/written Work from Home policy? **Select only One.**

A. Yes the policy on WfH is clear	B. Yes, there is a WfH policy but I am not clear	C. A WfH Policy is being formulated
D. A generic WfH policy was shared which is not company specific	E. No, there is no WfH policy	F. I do not know

Q9. Please tell us about your workstation/space at home? **Select only One.**

A. I have a separate designated work space	B. I created a makeshift work space following WfH	C. I sit anywhere at home (e.g. dining room table, garden) to do office work	D. I am managing without a dedicated workspace
--	---	--	--

Q10. Do you think WfH model has created a better work-life balance for you? **Select only One.**

A. WFH has certainly created a better work life balance for me	B. I spend more hours doing office work now	C. I find it difficult to distinguish between work and home time.	D. There are multiple distractions that make it difficult to focus on office work
E. I think it can create a better balance with a little more clear cut policies		F. None of the Above	

Q11. Rate your level of productivity during COVID 19 work from home? **Please SKIP Q11 & Q12 if you did not work from home during COVID.**

A. Less Productive than I was when I was working from office	B. About the Same as I was when working from office	C. More Productive than I was when working from office	D. More energised but not sure if more productive"
--	---	--	--

Q12. Please cite specific reason or reasons for your response to Q11 i.e. why you think you were less productive or about the same or more productive or feel more energised but not sure if more productive? **Not more than 150 words.**

Q13. If you are a manager/supervisor managing a team/group of people, please respond to the following by stating Yes/No. If you are not managing/supervising a team choose Not Applicable.

A. Did work from home arrangement make you change your managerial / supervisory style in relation to your subordinates?	YES	NO	NOT APPLICABLE
B. Did you adopt new techniques to assess performance of your subordinates?			
C. Do you think management/supervisory techniques must change with this new work arrangement?			
D. Did you feel that you were more engaged with your subordinates than before?			
E. Did you notice a drop in efficiency/productivity in your subordinates?			
F. Did you notice any mental or psychological challenges faced on part of your subordinates?			

Q14. In your view, what are the key work-related challenges faced while working from home? **Select all that Apply.**

A. Infrastructure facilities and tools (e.g. Internet Connectivity; Availability of Power Supply, access to printer, etc.)	B. Managing Engagement, Productivity and Reporting of Teams	C. Assessing or Measuring Performance	D. Real-time Benefits of Face-to-Face Interaction Lost in Delayed Replies and Other Interruptions
--	---	---------------------------------------	---

E. Loss of Informal Knowledge Sharing (e.g. sharing experiences/ideas that kept team members connected on a personal level)	F. Extended Decision-making time, also Enforcing the decisions	G. Implementing Policies, Policy Changes and Regulations	H. Protecting company data without the risk of any data breach incidents and malware attacks.
I. Ensuring the safety and well-being of team members	J. Maintaining positive attitudes and motivation among staff	K. Providing up-to-date information and guidance to staff regarding how to protect themselves and what to do in case of suspected infection	L. Any Other, Please Specify:

Q15. In addition to specific work related challenges, what are the other challenges faced while working from Home? **Select all that apply.**

A. Getting preoccupied with Unpaid care work (e.g. household chores /responsibilities that includes additional attention to children due to school closures and remote learning)	B. Blurred boundaries between work and personal life	C. Feeling of loneliness, anxiety, and depression
D. Lack of understanding and higher expectations on the part of family members	E. Lack of inspirational work atmosphere	F. Any Other, Please Specify:

Q16. During the work from home arrangement, did you experience any kind of threat or any act of violence and harassment by family members or anyone else which made you feel unsafe and uncomfortable?

YES	NO
-----	----

Q17. In your view, what are the key benefits of working from home? **Select all that Apply.**

A. Better work life balance	B. Setting up or create one's own comfortable home office	C. Increased Productivity and Performance	D. Quick Decision Making
E. Easy and Faster access than before to people overseas	F. Better Coordination and Efficiency among colleagues/ subordinates	G. No commuting stress to office	H. Positive environmental Impact (i.e. having clean environment)
I. Any Other, Please Specify:			

Q.18 How would you rate the level of remote communication/interaction among colleagues/subordinates during WFH? **Please rate each of the statement below on a scale of 1 (lowest rating) to 5 (highest rating).**

A. I connected with my colleagues/subordinates and supervisors just the way I did when we were in the office	
B. I connected with my colleagues/ subordinates and supervisor more often and easily than ever before.	
C. My colleagues/subordinates and supervisors provided necessary and required support whenever I needed	
D. Our intra-unit or inter-unit sharing of information as well as receiving feedback was in a structured and easy manner using virtual tools	
E. Our company provided us with the tools and resources needed to do our jobs remotely and stay connected (e.g. pay for home internet; provide for any hardware/equipment)	
F. Our company faced no issues related to use of remote communication during WfH arrangement	

Q19. In your view, which amongst the following will be the most negative or adverse impact of Working from Home? **Select only One.**

A. It will be detrimental to my career advancement	B. It will be a deterrent to my leadership aspirations	C. It will affect my transfer/ promotion
D. It will affect visibility of my work within the organisation	E. I am skeptical of staying motivated overtime	F. It gives me a lesser sense of ownership and job satisfaction.

G. Heavier workload with long working hours	H. Weaker sense of connectedness with team members	I. Deteriorating health (due to heavier workload; and/or violence and harassment)
J. None of these	K. Any Other, Please Specify:	

Q20. Please specify the reason of your choice under Q19. **Not more than 100 words.**

Q21. In your view, which amongst the following will be the most positive influence or impact of WfH? **Select only One.**

A. Self-Motivation in work	B. More positive attitude and less exhaustion from work	C. Strong personal responsibility for one's work
D. Good Time-management skills	E. Digital literacy	F. Ability to Work Individually/Independently
G. More opportunities created for women to be employed as well progress in their chosen careers	H. No commuting Stress to Office	I. Any Other, Please Specify:

Q 22. Given a choice or once the COVID pandemic is no longer an issue, how would you prefer to work? **Select only One.**

A. Attend Regular Office	B. Work from Home	C. Flexi-timings/ Flexible Schedules	D. Roster based office working
E. I have no preference; I am fine with all the options		F. I don't know	

Q23. In your view, what measures can your company take to enhance employee engagement and facilitate their work as remote employees (i.e. as employees working from home)? **Select all that Apply.**

A. Communicate Work Expectations	B. Set Clear Rules that establish the times when people must be available	C. Help Managing Workloads	D. Manage Periodic Virtual Meetings Efficiently
E. Ensure/Make Arrangements for employees'	F. Analyse important tasks and track	G. Better Security Policies to	H. Provision of

physical and mental welfare (e.g. stress management, safety)	progress on a time bound basis.	Support Remote Work	Childcare facilities
I. Any Other, Please Specify:		J. No Measure is required	K. I don't Know

Q24. In your view, WFH policy in relation to women employees must focus on which specific aspects? Please indicate these aspects/issues (Maximum three only)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Q25. In your view which of the following can be attributed to the WfH model? **Select all that Apply.**

A. It is Relevant (i.e. allows better work life balance irrespective of COVID)	B. It is Effective (i.e. gives a structure and a routine to work)	C. It is Efficient (i.e. increases employees' productivity)
D. It is Sustainable (e.g. leads to healthy lives, clean environment; also gender equality)	E. All of them	F. None of them
G. I don't Know		

Q26. If you have had any other experience or any issue that you would like to highlight related to work from home, please share it here (**Not more than 100 words**):

## V CHECKLIST QUESTIONS FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KIIs)

### I. CHAIRMAN CUM MANAGING DIRECTOR (CMD), PSEs

- Q.1 In your view, how SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely - companies should react to the “new normal” – like Work from Home (WfH) arrangement, under COVID?
- Q.2 In your view, how is COVID pandemic affecting the way your company operates, and its business outcomes?
- Q.3 Does your company have a work from home policy? In your view, what women centric and/or gender specific aspects a company must include while drafting a WfH policy as response to COVID?
- Q.4 Do you think Work from Home (WfH) arrangement affected/affects your employees’ level of productivity/efficiency? In what specific ways?
- Q.5 When adopting WfH arrangement due to crisis like COVID, what are some of the key obligations companies have towards their employees?
- Q.6 Statement: *Due to WfH, many women are now more than ever faced with the burden of “double syndrome”: e-managing their paid work with unpaid caring responsibilities thereby risking falling behind in their work/careers.* How true is this statement?  
In your view, following COVID, the WfH arrangement did it require companies to become more empathetic towards supporting their women employees?  
Please share company experience.
- Q.7 Statement: *WfH can act as a deterrent especially to women employees’ promotion and leadership aspirations.* How true is this statement?
- Q.8 To what extent did your Company adjust performance management systems to cover WfH arrangement? Or, do you think it was not necessary?
- Q.9 Statement: *Remote work helps achieve workplace equality as there are less chances of biases and stereotypes.*
- Q.10 Do you think WfH arrangement will provide a unique opportunity for women by making companies more equal and inclusive?
- Q.11 On a scale of 1 (very low) – 5 (very high) how would you rate your company's remote work from home policy? What is the reason behind this rating?
- Q.12 What were your biggest concern about employees working remotely? Considering we may be in the situation of working remotely for a while, is this WfH model sustainable?
- Q.13 Is there anything that you did before that you are unable to do now because of WfH which is adversely affecting your company’s work and performance?
- Q.14 Is your business model resilient enough to recover from the COVID impact? In what ways would your company evolve out of the situation keeping also employee welfare in mind?

### II. HEAD – HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) UNIT

- Q.1 Does your company have a work from home (WfH) policy? When adopting WfH arrangement due to crisis like COVID, what are some of the key obligations companies have towards their employees?
- Q.2 On a scale of 1 (very low) – 5 (very high) how would you rate your company's remote work from home policy? What is the reason behind this rating?

Q.3 What infrastructure (e.g. IT, communication) and support (e.g. health & safety, stress management/counselling) was needed to facilitate a workforce working from home? Can you list some of these facilities that your company made available/organised for its employees to enable them to effectively WfH?

Q.4 In your view, what women centric and/or gender specific aspects a company must include while drafting a WfH policy as response to COVID?

Q.5 What support did your employees, especially women employees, need/seek during WfH? Example:

- Calling for counselling/advice (e.g. if WfH made one feel that their work did not actually matter for the company?)
- Requesting stress management support to maintain work-life balance?
- Seeking assurance that benefits like childcare leave, maternity leave, or sabbatical for women employees will not get affected due to WfH arrangement?

Q.6 In your view, is WfH is an effective arrangement for your company? Which departments or units in your company can be given WfH option? Which department employees must return to work first?

Q.7 Did you notice any changes in utilization of leave after WfH was introduced?

Q.8 To what extent did your Company adjust performance management systems to cover WfH arrangement? Or, do you think it was not necessary?

Q.9 If WfH is the new normal, will it influence or affect the company's compulsory or mandatory transfer policy for promotions?

Q.10 Do you think WfH arrangement will provide a unique opportunity for women by making companies more equal and inclusive as remote working will reduce chances of biases and stereotypes?

Q.11 Did the WfH arrangement allow maintaining the same level of internal control/discipline both over systems and workforce as it was prior to COVID?

Q.12 Is your company's business model resilient enough to recover from the COVID impact? In what ways would your company evolve out of the situation keeping also employee welfare in mind?

### **III. SUPERVISOR/TEAM LEADER OF A UNIT**

Q1. How did COVID pandemic affect the way your company operates?

Q.2 Does your organisation have a Work from Home (WfH) policy as response to COVID? In your view, what women centric and/or gender specific aspects a company taskforce/committee formed to look into WfH arrangement should include?

Q.3 On Connecting with Team Members:

- With WfH arrangement, how as a team leader/supervisor you handled the lack of face-to-face contact with your team? What were some of the key challenges?
- What are some of the concerns shared by your team members while WfH? Were you able to respond to these concerns? Can you cite one such example?
- Did you also face problems in decision making? Can you cite an example?
- What was your biggest challenge in managing your team with WfH arrangement?

Q.4 On Functioning of the Team:

- How did you prepare for your team meetings? How frequently did you meet the team?
- How did you facilitate the meeting to ensure these were effective and yielded desired results?

- In your team/unit, which responsibilities/tasks you feel cannot be fulfilled while WfH? Given that there was no alternative, how did it impact the functioning of your unit/team?
- Can team members remain effective in remote situations when they are used to working face-to-face? Did you feel that WfH arrangement affected the productivity of your team members?
- In terms of results/performance would you say that there has been a drop after WfH arrangement?

Q.5 Did the company provide the necessary infrastructure and support to ensure clear, transparent and smooth communication and functioning of the team?

Q.6 In your view, does WfH arrangement require changes in company's system of appraising employee performance? What changes if any were taken in the appraisal system on account of WfH?

Q.7 Considering we may be in the situation of working remotely for a while, is this sustainable?

## V. WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND DECISION MAKING POSITION

Q.1 When adopting WfH arrangement due to crisis like COVID, what are some of the key obligations companies have towards their employees?

Q.2 What could be a company's biggest concern with a high percentage of its employees working remotely?

Q.3 Statement: *Due to WfH, many women are now more than ever faced with the burden of "double syndrome": e-managing their paid work with unpaid caring responsibilities thereby risking falling behind in their work/careers.* How true is this statement?

Q.4 In light of this statement, please share your views whether COVID induced WfH arrangement require companies to become more empathetic towards supporting their women employees?

Q.5 In your view, what women centric and/or gender specific aspects a company's WfH policy must include?

Q.6 In your view, do you think WfH policy will affect women employees' promotion and leadership aspirations as some of them may be at a disadvantage during appraisal having worked from home (in comparison to those who had to work from office)?

Q.7 Did the management e-report to board on challenges faced by the company due to COVID pandemic? Were there well-coordinated communication systems and protocols to ensure clear and transparent communication?

Q.8 Has WfH adversely affected organizational performance? If so in what manner?

Q.9 Statement: *Remote work helps achieve workplace equality as there are less chances of biases and stereotypes.*

Q.10 Do you think WfH arrangement will provide a unique opportunity for women by making companies more equal and inclusive?

Q.11 In your view, does the process of decision-making works effectively in a company while it is supporting/implementing remote work culture? What could be the possible challenges?

Q.12 What would you suggest as mechanisms, and with respect to which areas of work, to be in place so that companies can assess potential risks and define responses in such eventualities like COVID?

Q.13 How does a company implement and meet its responsibilities concerning an employee's health and safety if they are working from home?

Q.14 Considering we may be in the situation of working remotely for a while, is this WfH model sustainable? Is WfH a work arrangement that could be considered in the long term?

## VI. DIRECTOR GENERAL (DG) – SCOPE

- Q.1 In your view, how SMART companies should react to the “new normal” – like Work from Home (WfH) arrangement, under COVID?
- Q.2 When adopting WfH arrangement due to crisis like COVID, what are some of the key obligations companies have towards their employees?
- Q.3 What could be a company’s biggest concern with a high percentage of its employees working remotely?
- Q.4 As an apex body of PSEs has SCOPE in any manner facilitated/contributed towards improving the resilience of companies during the COVID crisis?
- Q.5 How many member organisations of PSEs have a WfH policy? What guidance, if any SCOPE provided for its members to draft a WfH policy? In your view, what women centric and/or gender specific aspects a company’s WfH policy as response to COVID must include?
- Q.6 Statement: *Due to WfH, many women are now more than ever faced with the burden of “double syndrome”: e-managing their paid work with unpaid caring responsibilities thereby risking falling behind in their work/careers.* How true is this statement?
- Q.7 In light of this statement, please share you views whether COVID induced WfH arrangement require companies to become more empathetic towards supporting their women employees?
- Q.8 Statement: *WfH can act as a deterrent especially to women employees’ promotion and leadership aspirations.* How true is this statement?
- Q.9 In your view, does WfH arrangement require changes in company’s system of appraising employee performance? Do you perceive that employees who had to work from office will be at an advantage than those working from home during appraisal?
- Q.10 How does a company implement and meet its responsibilities concerning an employee’s health and safety if they are working from home?
- Q.11 In your view, does the process of decision-making works effectively in a company while it is supporting/implementing remote work culture? What could be the possible challenges?
- Q.12 Considering we may be in the situation of working remotely for a while, is this sustainable?
- Q.13 As an apex body for PSEs, what would you suggest as mechanisms, and with respect to which areas of work, to be in place so that companies can assess potential risks and define responses in such eventualities like COVID?

**ILO DWT for South Asia and Country Office for India**

Core 4B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, India Habitat Centre Lodhi Road, New Delhi 110 003 India

Tel: +91 11 47509200 Email: [delhi@ilo.org](mailto:delhi@ilo.org)

Website: [www.ilo.org/india](http://www.ilo.org/india)

**Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE)**

1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Core-8, SCOPE Complex, 7 Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110 003

Tel.: +91 11 24362604, Fax.: +91 11 24361371, Email: [info@scopeonline.in](mailto:info@scopeonline.in)

Website: [www.scopeonline.in](http://www.scopeonline.in)