

Creating Flexible and Gender-responsive Workplaces



WOMEN & THE FUTURE OF WORK


POLICY BRIEF 1 in the  series
'Women and the future of work'

AUTHORS

SHREYA GHOSH, SUHANI PANDEY, SONAKSHI CHAUDHRY

CREATING FLEXIBLE AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE WORKPLACES

The Need for Gender Intentionality in Work-Near-Home Centres and Co-working Spaces



As the Covid-19 pandemic became a serious threat in March 2020, the 'future of work' shifted, with an acceleration in remote work trends across the world. A sudden surge in remote work opportunities due to the pandemic has resulted in a new normal around the world. In the US alone remote work jumped from 17% to 44%¹ during the pandemic and in India remote jobs posting on LinkedIn increased by 5 times.² Gartner in its 2021 report had predicted that India will have one of the largest number of remote workers in the world, with 1 in 3 Indian employees working remotely by 2022.³

In parallel, the pandemic also had a gendered impact on jobs. Research reveals that during the pandemic, in India, not only did women lose more jobs than men, they also recovered them at a slower rate than their male counterparts.⁴ Moreover, women who were highly educated recorded higher job losses than highly educated men. Nearly 70% of women leaders and managers in Public Sector Enterprises highlighted access to infrastructure facilities and tools as a key challenge of working from home during the pandemic.⁵ However post pandemic, there is an upward trend in preference for flexible work options among women, with evidence suggesting that as many as 7 in 10 working women in India either quit or were considering quitting in the

¹ <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/business-transformation/library/covid-19-us-remote-work-survey.html>

² <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/74-indian-workers-keen-on-flexible-remote-working-microsoft-work-trend-index-11623304773331.html>

³ <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2021-06-22-gartner-forecasts-51-percent-of-global-knowledge-workers-will-be-remote-by-2021>

⁴ <https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/publications/down-and-out-the-gendered-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-indias-labour-market/>

⁵ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_814727.pdf

absence of flexible policies at the workplace. Research also highlighted that despite wanting greater flexibility, women are reluctant to ask for it as they are afraid of being held back from promotions, and also fear pay cuts and unfavourable treatment from superiors.⁶ LinkedIn's analysis showed that 8 out of 10 women in India want greater flexibility at their jobs after the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷

With these trends gaining ground, in Aug 2022, Prime Minister Modi also announced that the Labour Ministry was in the process of drawing up its vision for the year 2047 in Amrit Kaal. He emphasised the need for flexible workplaces, a work-from-home ecosystem, and flexible work hours, highlighting that this can provide opportunities for women's labour force participation.⁸ Several state governments have also made efforts to create remote work opportunities through 'Work near Home' Centres' and co-working spaces. These developments are especially relevant for the services sector.

As of 2020-21, India's burgeoning services industry, the IT/ITES sector employs over 4.7 million people, enabling an estimated indirect job creation of over 12 million.⁹ Women represent around 35% of tech employees in the country.¹⁰ The shift towards flexible work presents an opportunity to quickly move the needle towards equal representation for women in the IT/ITES industry. Apart from IT/ITeS, there are also other sectors that also offer possibilities to work remotely or using hybrid/blended models - like teaching, consulting, tele-medicine. However, it is important to note that further innovation may be required to provide flexibility to women employed in other sectors in India. For instance in the apparel sector, women may not be able to take up flexible work hours as it is usually a group activity.¹¹ These challenges aside, with collaborative efforts between government, civil society and the private sector, remote and flexible work arrangements hold tremendous potential for women's entry and retention in the labour force. In light of the existing evidence, this brief delineates certain gender-responsive design principles that Work near home Centres/co-working spaces should provide in order to increase Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP). This brief explores the following questions:



What flexible work initiatives are in the pipeline in Indian states?

How might flexible work-near-home options that enable women to engage in remunerated work be set up?

What design principles can support women in accessing shared spaces for doing remote work?

What would it take to scale up these efforts?

What can we learn from different state level efforts to inform the Labour Ministry's Vision for 2047?



⁶ <https://indianexpress.com/article/jobs/7-in-10-working-women-india-quit-consider-quitting-jobs-inflexible-work-environment-report-7865603/>

⁷ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/company/corporate-trends/eight-in-10-working-women-want-to-work-more-flexibly-linkedin-survey/articleshow/90792604.cms>

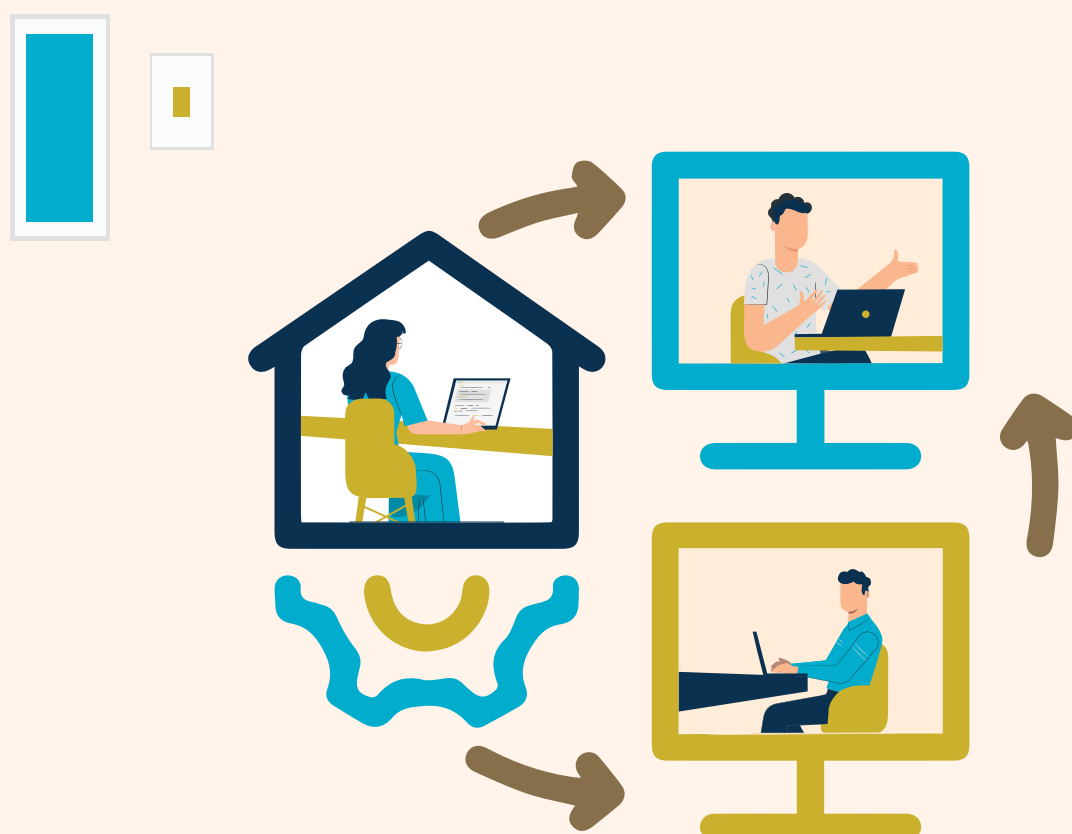
⁸ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1854431>

⁹ <https://www.meity.gov.in/content/employment#:~:text=Direct%20employment%20in%20the%20IT,to%20be%20over%2012.0%20million>

¹⁰ <https://nasscom.in/system/files/secure-pdf/indias-tech-industry-women-for-the-techade.pdf>

¹¹ <https://behanbox.com/2022/10/07/a-day-in-the-life-of-women-garment-workers-some-lessons-for-employers/>

1. STATE-LEVEL INITIATIVES



An emerging trend towards addressing challenges around remote work and bolstering the IT/ITES service sector has been policy interventions around a hub-and-spoke model for working ‘near’ home, which the states of Kerala¹² and Andhra Pradesh¹³ are already beginning to consider. The schemes aim to operationalise IT based employment centres across the state, and utilise the possibility of working online for companies across the world from villages and towns. In Goa¹⁴, Jharkhand¹⁵, Telangana¹⁶, Tripura and Gujarat co-working spaces are being set up under the state start-up policy to promote entrepreneurship amongst small business owners and IT professionals. These initiatives are listed below:

¹² http://www.niyamasabha.org/codes/15kla/Session_4/BudgetSpeech-2022-23-English_12.pdf

¹³ https://apit.ap.gov.in/WFHT/pdf/W@HT_Presentation_ITAAP.pdf

¹⁴ <https://startupgoa.org/coworking-spaces-in-go/#.YtaOEC8RpQJ>

¹⁵ https://www.startupindia.gov.in/content/dam/investindia/Templates/public/state_startup_policies/Jharkhand%20Startup%20Policy.pdf

¹⁶ <https://startup.telangana.gov.in/co-working/>

State	Intervention	Date of announcement	Description
Kerala	WnH Centres	April, 2022	Work Near Home Scheme: Develop and operationalise IT based communal work centres for working professionals who hail from rural and semi-urban settings. ¹⁷ Position Kerala as a premier destination to work from and is set on attracting the international and domestic Malayali diaspora under the Work Near Home scheme. ¹⁸
Goa	Co-working Facilities	July, 2022	Goa Co-working spaces: Building and converting spaces into co-working facilities for small businesses, start-ups and IT professionals. Provide plug and play facilities that are easy to commute to. ¹⁹
Andhra Pradesh	Hometown Centres	November, 2021	Work from Hometown Centres: Build a sustainable IT ecosystem for IT professionals in tier 2, tier 3 cities within the proximity of their homes and provide Plug and Play office facility. ²⁰ The committee on work from hometown chaired by Industries and Commerce gave its approval for 29 WFHT centres to be launched on a pilot basis in October 2021. ²¹
Jharkhand	Co-working Facilities	March, 2019	Startup Policy: Provide community co-working space for start-ups. ²²
Telangana	Co-working Facilities for Women	March, 2018	Startup Policy: Two establishments are offering world class facilities for entrepreneurs from diverse sectors at T-Hub Foundation, and We-Hub. WE Hub works with the mission to ensure that all women entrepreneurs have access to technical, financial, governmental and policy support required to start-up, scale up, sustain and accelerate with global market access. ²³
Tripura	Plug and Play facility	September, 2022	IT/ITeS Policy 2022: Development of office spaces to be made available to the IT industry on a lease basis. The IT/ITeS companies availing the plug and play facility at a government or private premise shall be eligible for 50% reimbursement on rent paid for each seat. ²⁴
Gujarat	Co-working office spaces	February, 2022	IT Policy 2022: Encourage stakeholders to create ready to occupy co-working space for the IT industry. An empanelment model and a government facilitated model have been proposed to achieve this objective. The government will empanel private co-working facilities under the first model, whereas the government will lease/construct co-working spaces under the second model. Fiscal support will also be provided to IT/ITeS units availing these co-working spaces, for a period of five years. ²⁵

Table 1: List of state govt. interventions to promote remote work. For further details on these announcements see annexure 1

¹⁷ http://www.niyamasabha.org/codes/15kla/Session_4/BudgetSpeech-2022-23-English_12.pdf

¹⁸ [http://www.niyamasabha.org/codes/15kla/Session_8/01.%20Budget%20Speech%202023%20\(English\)_final.pdf](http://www.niyamasabha.org/codes/15kla/Session_8/01.%20Budget%20Speech%202023%20(English)_final.pdf)

¹⁹ <https://www.goa.gov.in/goa-co-working-spaces/>

²⁰ https://apit.ap.gov.in/WFHT/pdf/W@HT_Presentation_ITAAP.pdf

²¹ https://apit.ap.gov.in/WFHT/pdf/W@HT_Presentation_ITAAP.pdf

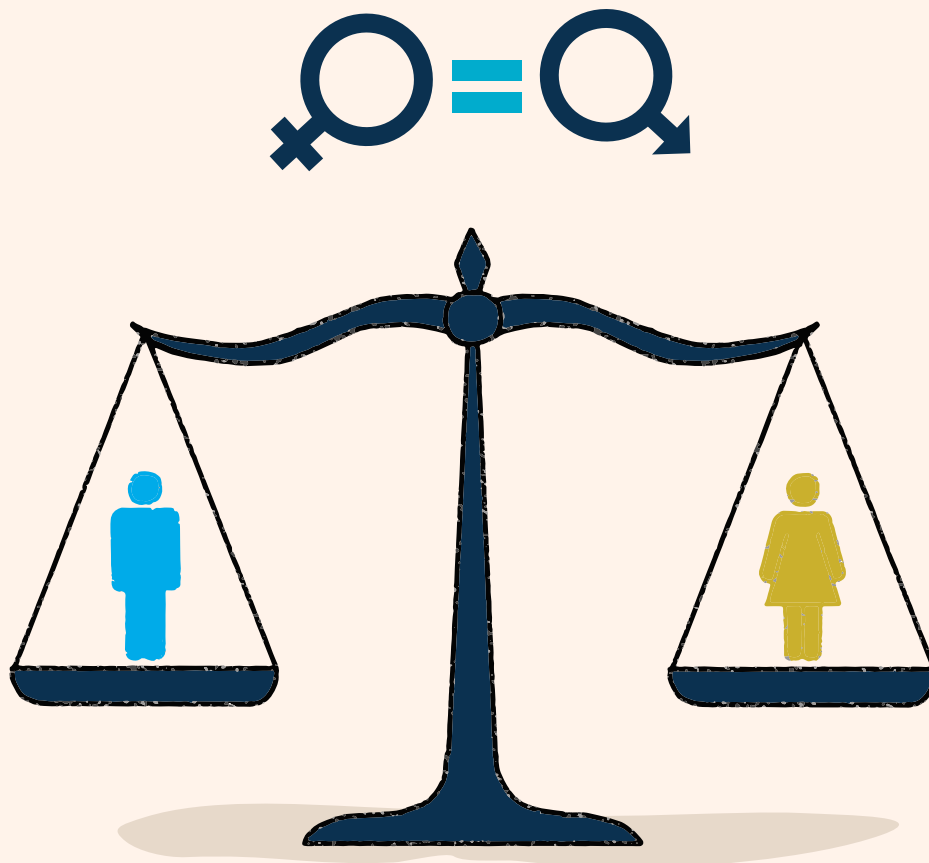
²² https://www.startupindia.gov.in/content/dam/investindia/Templates/public/state_startup_policies/Jharkhand%20Startup%20Policy.pdf

²³ <https://startup.telangana.gov.in/co-working/>

²⁴ https://dit.tripura.gov.in/sites/default/files/Notification_IT_ITES_Policy_2022.pdf

²⁵ <https://gil.gujarat.gov.in/Media/DocumentUpload/IT%20POLICY-Final-2022.pdf>

2. GENDER-RESPONSIVE DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Building gender sensitive workplaces can significantly improve Female Labour Force Participation.²⁶ India's overall female labour force participation rate is at 25.1% (PLFS 2020-21) while that for women with disabilities is a mere 7.7 per cent (NSS 76th round). Therefore, there is a strong case to build new workspaces with gender responsive design in mind. The true potential of flexible work to affect female labour force participation can only be harnessed, if the enabling systems like "work near home" centres and co-working spaces have the following gender responsive design principles:

a. Childcare

Under target 4.2 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, nations are urged to “ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education” by 2030.

In India, the opportunity to work or attend to the child creates a double bind- mothers with young children decide to work by looking at the trade-offs in childcare cost. Having young children increases the likelihood of women not working by 26%.²⁷ This highlights the linkage between women's ability to work and availability of quality childcare facilities.

The amended Maternity Benefit Act, 2017 now extends maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks. The Act makes it mandatory for companies with 50 employees to provide creche facilities and also encourages women to work from home. However, states have been slow in notifying rules under this Act causing a delay in the implementation of these amendments. Moreover, uniformity in policy is required in the informal sector as the Government of India is also implementing the National Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers. While the government has tried to successfully implement the scheme on ground, the number of creches²⁸ across Indian states have decreased from 18,040 in 2017 to just 6458 in 2020 due to several reasons. Even within the private sector the implementation of the Act remains a challenge due to lack of enforcement and lack of quality control in creche services.

With state governments facilitating flexible and remote working options, the demand for childcare facilities either within these centres or in close proximity is likely to increase. Childcare facilities at the workplace should include creches, feeding rooms, cafeterias where both parents and children can eat lunch together and engage in indoor play.²⁹ In Telangana the WE Hub co-working space, a start-up incubator exclusively designed for women entrepreneurs, addresses some of these aspects. To reduce the care burden of mothers with disabled children, we need to ensure children with disabilities can also access these creches and are able to receive quality care under a skilled and certified staff. Both private and public investment will be required to make flexible work accessible to all young mothers. A PPP model may become extremely crucial as the government's contribution to creches have reduced since the pandemic.

b. Infrastructure including electricity, internet and WASH facilities

For these centres to be successful, infrastructure constraints in different parts of the country, including power, internet and water disruptions would need to be addressed. To illustrate, reports of grid breakdowns due to increased domestic and commercial demands owing to hybrid work models have emerged³⁰ and while electrification in India has been steadily increasing, daily power supply in certain states is still lower than 20 hours according to data from Council on Energy, Environment & Water.³¹ More specifically to encourage use of these centres by women, WASH facilities need to be gender inclusive. Workplaces with separate WASH (toilet) facilities for women have been an important determinant in retaining women employees compared to workplaces without toilets.³² For women with disabilities, accessibility features such as ramps, tactile signage and paving, WASH facilities and so on would also have to be ensured in compliance with the RPWD Act, 2016 and other related infrastructural guidelines.

c. Safety at work

Both international precedents and national policies recognise the prevalence of this concern, and the UN SDG target 5.2 highlights the need to “eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres.”³³ Similarly, in 2019, the ILO passed C-190,³⁴ the Violence and Harassment Convention, which only 19 countries have ratified as of July 2022.³⁵

²⁶ <https://www.worklife.news/dei/how-inclusive-design-is-creating-more-female-friendly-offices/>

²⁷ https://www.wage.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/ChildcareseriesPaper1_compressed.pdf

²⁸ <https://pqars.nic.in/annex/256/AU948.pdf>

²⁹ While providing child care facilities at work, the necessary infrastructure should also include ECD professionals and staff, a child protection policy that sets standards for care and adequate child friendly infrastructure. In its 2020 assessment of the National Creche Scheme for Children, Niti Ayog recommended measures such as training of creche workers, plugging infrastructural gaps and enhancing community participation to address local needs.

³⁰ https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-s-power-grid-creaks-under-hybrid-work-model-intense-heatwave-122051900457_1.html

³¹ <https://www.ceew.in/publications/state-electricity-access-india>

³² <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/toilets-needed-to-bridge-gender-disparity-in-indias-urban-workforce-45034/>

³³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

³⁴ https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190

³⁵ India has not yet ratified this Convention.

In India, in 2020, the National Crime Records Bureau recorded 488 cases of ‘insult to modesty of women at the work or in office premises,’ a slight decrease from the previous year, perhaps owing to reduced physical interactions during the pandemic. For cybercrimes against women, however, there has been a sharp increase (145%) over a four-year period — from 4242 cases recorded in 2017 to 10,405 in 2020. Given that Work near Home Centres are likely to have a thrust on working online, robust monitoring and redressal mechanisms would be essential. As per the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (also known as the POSH Act, 2013), workplace has been widely defined to include virtual, remote and extended spaces of work to protect employees from any sexual harassment.³⁶ However, complexities might arise due to the overlap of multiple entities and employers at the workplace, for instance regarding the jurisdiction of the Internal Committee, the definition of an aggrieved person and so on.

Safety at the workplace also includes ensuring employees’ health and wellbeing. Flexible insurance solutions that can adapt to such situations are becoming pertinent. As work changes, appropriate insurance coverage will have to be provided.

d. Last Mile Connectivity

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG Target 11.2, urge nations to “provide safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons” by 2030.

According to NFHS-5 data, only 48.6% of Indian women in urban areas and 39.2% of Indian women in rural areas (42% overall) are allowed to access markets, health facilities or go outside the village/community alone.³⁷ Evidence points out that men and women use transport differently, with women being more dependent on public transport. A recent survey shows that only 35% of women feel access routes to metro stations are safe and poor last mile connectivity of public transport continues to be a long standing issue in India (MMRDA, 2022).³⁸ To improve safety, GPS based tracking systems for public transportation are under implementation in Delhi, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Puducherry. In Trichy, the local authorities have successfully lit routes to bus stops for improving women’s accessibility and safety.³⁹

Since several States are focusing on encouraging working professionals from Tier II and tier III cities to use these centres or co-working facilities, infrastructural developments such as street lighting, public transport, and corporate employee transportation systems must be designed to address challenges around women’s mobility. Data insights from city mapping initiatives like those run by Safetipin on various parameters can also be utilised when improving transportation and safe last mile connectivity for women. Furthermore, these transportation systems would have to be made accessible in accordance with provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and the recently released Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility in India, 2021. This would enhance opportunities for participation of women with disabilities in India’s labour force.

e. Incentives for/Directions to Employers

Around the world, and in India women are under-represented at all levels in the workforce. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, under SDG target 8.5, urges member countries to “achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value” by 2030.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, companies have embraced alternative work opportunities. Current government incentives to support the private sector and encourage remote work have a monetary focus. Under the Karnataka government’s policy, tech companies that avail plug and play facilities at co-working

³⁶ <https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A2013-14.pdf>

³⁷ http://rchiips.org/nfhs/NFHS-5Reports/NFHS-5_INDIA_REPORT.pdf

³⁸ <https://wri-india.org/news/release-gender-inclusion-future-transport-mmrda-adopts-gender-related-findings-make-metro>

³⁹ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/trichy/corpn-adds-more-lights-on-roads-near-central-bus-stand/articleshow/91163619.cms>

spaces in tier 1 and 2 cities get lease and rental reimbursements of up to INR 3 lakh a year.⁴⁰ Similarly, the Andhra Pradesh government's IT policy highlights fiscal incentives for the creation of IT jobs in the state, along with infrastructural incentives for plug and play office space for the industry. Besides fiscal incentives, companies would also require state laws to be progressive and transparent for long term investments in the hybrid-work arrangement. For instance, some state labour laws have laid conditions towards the working of women late at night or beyond certain hours.⁴¹

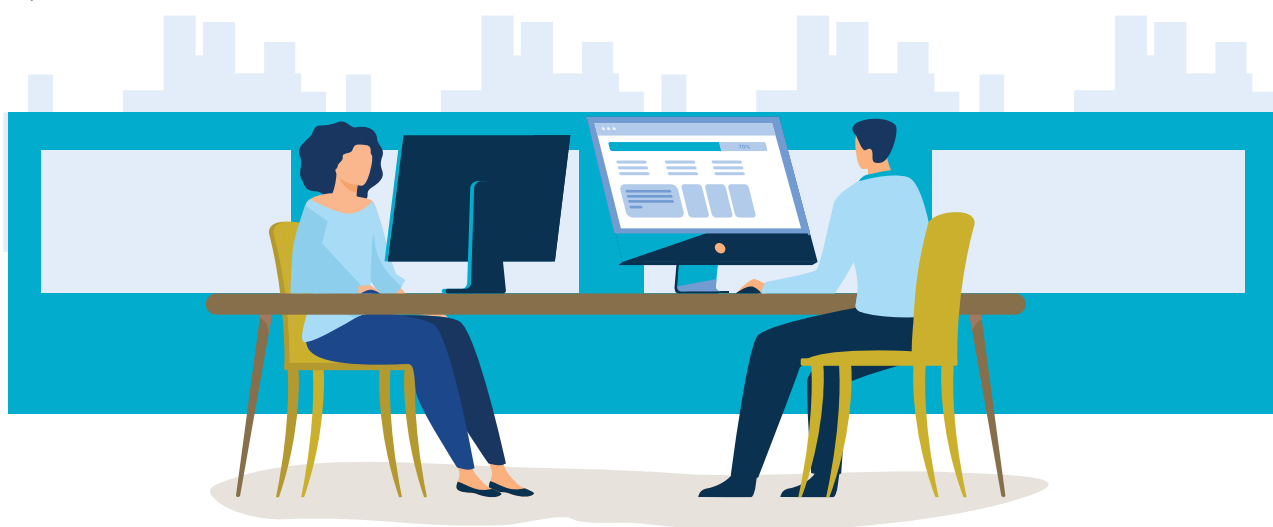
Measures to incentivise business groups to create jobs for women while designing remote work facilities are also necessary to address employer bias. Research reveals that there is a strong existence of gender bias in hiring in India- women are more preferred in low-quality, low-status, typically low paid informal jobs while job ads targeting men specify/offer much higher salary compared to women.⁴² From the social inclusion perspective, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 mandates the appropriate Government and the local authorities to provide, "within the limits of their economic capacity and development, incentives to employers in private sector to ensure that at least five per cent of their workforce is composed of persons with benchmark disability."⁴³

f. Professional Development Opportunities

Around the world, women have weaker career networks than men and therefore their professional growth suffers from less access to high paying jobs and leadership opportunities. To illustrate, according to a LinkedIn survey, working women in India are 14% less likely than men to have a strong network.⁴⁴ Inspiration can be taken from the WE Hub co-working space in Telangana, where women entrepreneurs that are working out of the co-working space also get access to a network of mentors and investors that help them scale their business solutions. Multiple community events and workshops are also organised by WE Hub partners such as government bodies and international companies.⁴⁵

Firms that are participating under 'Work Near Home' schemes can also roll out apprenticeships for women for a variety of roles in different sectors. Under the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) establishments undertaking apprenticeship training can receive financial support from the government.⁴⁶ However, the existing digital divide between women and men⁴⁷ needs to be addressed and necessary capacity building exercises should be undertaken as the platform economy and new emerging job markets still remain inaccessible to many women.⁴⁸

Another unexplored dimension of remote work is its potential impact on long term careers. Experts have highlighted potential risks that workers who are working remotely may not rise to leadership positions due to lack of facetime and networks.⁴⁹ To counter this, companies who are availing of work near home facilities should be encouraged to design leadership programs for their remote workers. Further, the administrative departments of these spaces can build programs that foster a sense of community and lead to more exposure for these workers.



⁴⁰ <https://startup.karnataka.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/IT-Policy-2020.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/up-allows-night-shift-for-women-after-their-consent/articleshow/91860433.cms?from=mdr>

⁴² <https://www.globalwomennet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Gender-Inclusion-in-Hiring-in-India-Full-Paper.pdf>

⁴³ https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A2016-49_1.pdf

⁴⁴ <https://www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/talent-acquisition/women-less-likely-to-have-strong-networks>

⁴⁵ <https://wehub.telangana.gov.in/collaborations/partners/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.apprenticeshipindia.gov.in>

⁴⁷ <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR375/FR375.pdf>

⁴⁸ https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-06/25th_June_Final_Report_27062022.pdf

⁴⁹ www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/pages/leaders-share-perspectives-on-managing-remote-workers.aspx

POLICY TAKEAWAYS



Access to Quality Child-care Services

1. On-site childcare facilities with trained personnel should be a strong consideration while designing 'Work Near Home' centres and co-working facilities. It would also in turn create more jobs and bolster the care economy.
2. Expediting formulation of State Rules under the Maternity Benefits Act, 2017 would provide the required push to ensure access to quality childcare for working women.
3. Increasing public investment in childcare infrastructure would be required to operationalise provisions under existing policy framework, monitor quality standards and compliances.

Supportive Infrastructure: Inside the premises and en-route

1. Investing in infrastructure provisions such as streetlights, examining route maps to identify underserved locations and increasing women-only/ women-driven transport that especially cater to these centres would hugely impact women's mobility and safety enroute
2. Work Near Home Centres would need to ensure separate and functional WASH facilities for women to ensure menstrual health and hygiene requirements.
3. Conducting 'access audits' to enhance access to infrastructure for women with disabilities and ensuring 'reasonable accommodations' as per the RPWD Act, 2016 would enable greater participation of women with disabilities

Strengthening legal Provisions under PoSH, Act 2013 and the Labour Codes

1. PoSH Procedures for all that are employed by the workspace centres and those that use their services require re-think of rules for Work near Home/ Co-working facilities. Issuing guidelines clarifying the same would be beneficial in ensuring women's safety at the workplace.
2. Compliance with the Labour Codes and safety measures mentioned therein need to be assessed while planning/ rolling out 'Work Near Home' centres. Further, liability in case of non-compliance needs to be re-thought.

Providing Employer Incentives

1. Awareness generation among employers is essential to address recruitment bias against women
2. A certification/accreditation model can be instituted that will enable identification of shared workplaces/ 'Work near home' centres as gender responsive and inclusive (disabled-friendly). Further, other desirable certifications may also be introduced like environmental sustainability. This would incentivise employers to utilise certified work places for higher employee satisfaction.
3. State governments may also make information regarding these certifications available on public platforms, to create more transparency and incentives in the system. A third-party accreditation might bring in more credibility to this process.

Professional Development

1. Co-working facilities can provide strong opportunities for integrating peer support programmes and women mentorship groups can be organised at these centres for women.
2. Creating linkages of Work near home Centres/ Co-working spaces with existing Skilling and Apprenticeship Schemes would be hugely beneficial to facilitate women's entry and retention in the labour force.
3. Review of existing Skilling and Apprenticeship Schemes from the perspective of accommodating requirements of women with disabilities would be hugely beneficial to create inclusive workspaces.

ANNEXURE: STATE LEVEL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INITIATIVES



Kerala: As announced by K N Balagopal, the minister for finance in his annual budget speech for 2022-2023, the Work Near Home Scheme aims to develop and operationalise IT based communal work centres for working professionals who hail from rural and semi-urban settings.⁵⁰ Through such working facilities, the government hopes to address infrastructural shortcomings one faces at home, such as poor internet connectivity and lack of designated work desks, while solving for proximity by providing options near the home. Given Kerala's booming IT sector, the proposed scheme "intends to facilitate employment opportunities for the educated citizens of the state, including the housewives". While other details about the scheme are still awaited, the government is most likely to rope in IT park developers and rent out existing buildings to provide computers, internet cafe, air-conditioners, and meeting room facilities.⁵¹ For the pilot program, the government has earmarked 50 crore rupees for FY 22-23. Additionally, the state is trying to position itself as a premier destination to work from and is set on attracting the international and domestic Malayali diaspora under the Work Near Home scheme.⁵²

Goa: Recently, the State Tourism and Information and Technology (IT) Minister Rohan Khaunte stated in the Goa Legislative Assembly that Goa government is striving to promote the "culture of #WorkationGoa." According to media articles, the concept for co-working spaces is being developed on the beaches. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be signed with the Telangana Academy for Skill and Knowledge (TASK) to provide skills and upskills to existing local professionals. The process of creating co-working spaces is already underway and the government has compiled a database for it. The tourism department is also building modernised beach shacks with "plug and play" capabilities across four stretches of beach in North and South Goa districts.⁵³

⁵⁰ http://www.niyamasabha.org/codes/15kla/Session_4/BudgetSpeech-2022-23-English_12.pdf

⁵¹ <https://www.onmanorama.com/news/business/2022/01/07/kerala-govt-shelves-work-near-home-project.html>

⁵² [http://www.niyamasabha.org/codes/15kla/Session_8/01-%20Budget%20Speech_2023%20\(English\)_final.pdf](http://www.niyamasabha.org/codes/15kla/Session_8/01-%20Budget%20Speech_2023%20(English)_final.pdf)

⁵³ <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/goa-to-soon-provide-co-working-spaces-to-visitors-on-beaches-8861821.html>

Andhra Pradesh: With the Work from Hometown Centres (W@HT) initiative the government aims to provide employees with a co-working environment and the amenities of an IT office close to their home in tier 2,3 and 4 cities. In collaboration with the Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation, the Andhra Pradesh Non-Resident Telugu Society, the Andhra Pradesh Innovation Society (APIS), and the Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education, 29 W@HT pilot centres will be established in each parliamentary constituency at engineering colleges or APIS facilities. The project is expected to be completed in three phases and the government is counting on the fact that 20% of India's IT workforce is from Andhra Pradesh.⁵⁴ Further, the state IT policy document (2021-25) also highlights Andhra Pradesh's commitment to 'work from home' incentives to firms, co-working spaces set up through public-private partnerships, IT concept cities, IT parks, and Integrated Technology Parks.⁵⁵

Jharkhand: Atal Bihari Vajpayee Innovation Lab (ABVIL) is a joint initiative of the Government of Jharkhand and IIM Ahmedabad to create a world-class innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem in the state.⁵⁶ Under ABVIL the state's first government-run coworking space opened in March 2019 in Ranchi as per media sources. The coworking space has 24 workstations in total and is completely free of charge to the 12 startups chosen by ABVIL.⁵⁷

Telangana: WE Hub is a start-up incubator established in Hyderabad, Telangana that provides co working facilities for female entrepreneurs only.⁵⁸ It supports women entrepreneurs and small business owners that are working on innovative solutions and on emerging areas of technology. In order to scale their businesses, WE Hub also provides a supportive community for women to interact with mentors and other investors. It appears that the WE Hub co-working space has largely been designed based on principles to promote gender inclusivity at the workplace by removing various barriers that prevent women from participating in the economy.⁵⁹ It currently offers the following amenities: a child play area and mother's rooms, locker rooms, a pantry, a workshop area, an auditorium including a high-speed internet facility.⁶⁰

Tripura: Introduced in September 2022, the Tripura IT/ITeS Policy-2022 has been designed to provide an impetus for the development of IT parks and other physical infrastructure in the state.⁶¹ The vision is to provide IT office spaces of international standards on a plug and play basis to IT/ITeS enterprises. These enterprises shall be eligible to claim reimbursement of 50% of rent paid per seat when they occupy "Plug & Play Seat" in STP/ IT Park established by the government of Tripura, government of India or a private developer.

Gujarat: The new Gujarat IT/ITeS policy was released in 2022 with the goal of strengthening the state's information technology ecosystem and creating 1 lakh direct jobs. For immediate support to the IT/ITeS companies, the state has proposed two models for the development of "co-working spaces at an easy-to-commute location".⁶² First is the building/leasing of IT offices on Engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) model/Public Private Partnership (PPP) model and second is the empanelment of privately developed coworking IT offices. The coworking spaces that will operate under these models will be provided fiscal support for 5 years. The monthly rental support to IT/ITes units (per seat basis) is 50% of monthly rental – for the first 2 years – 10,000 INR per seat per month. Thereafter, 25% of monthly rental – for 3-5 years – 5,000 INR per seat per month.

⁵⁴ https://apit.ap.gov.in/WFHT/pdf/W@HT_Presentation_JTAAP.pdf

⁵⁵ <https://apit.ap.gov.in/assets/files/itpolicy.PDF>

⁵⁶ <https://abvil.jharkhand.gov.in/about.php>

⁵⁷ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/abvil-to-host-startups-in-states-first-govt-run-coworking-space/articleshow/68208964.cms>

⁵⁸ <https://wehub.telangana.gov.in/co-working/>

⁵⁹ <https://it.telangana.gov.in/sectors/wehub/>

⁶⁰ <https://wehub.telangana.gov.in/co-working/>

⁶¹ https://dit.tripura.gov.in/sites/default/files/Notification_IT_ITES_Policy_2022.pdf

⁶² <https://gil.gujarat.gov.in/Media/DocumentUpload/IT%20POLICY-Final-2022.pdf>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This brief has emerged from secondary research and a roundtable stakeholder discussion held on 24 November, 2022 at the India International Centre, New Delhi.

Valuable feedback and inputs were provided by Sona Mitra, Principal Economist, IWWAGE; Preethi Rao, Associate Director, LEAD at Krea University, Mayank Mishra, Public Policy Manager, TQH; and Aparajita Bharti, Founding Partner, TQH.

IWWAGE is an initiative of LEAD, an action-oriented research centre of IFMR Society (a not-for-profit society registered under the Societies Act). LEAD has strategic oversight and brand support from Krea University (sponsored by IFMR Society) to enable synergies between academia and the research centre. IWWAGE is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions in this brief are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Quantum Hub (TQH) is a public policy research and communications firm based in New Delhi. Since its inception in 2017, TQH has worked on complex public policy challenges along the entire policy lifecycle from policy mapping and research to policy engagement with government stakeholders. TQH's multi-disciplinary team brings expertise on a range of rapidly evolving policy sectors including tech policy, education, social policy, property rights, gender, urban affairs among others.

ABOUT THE SERIES



'Work' — as we know it — is shifting. Increasingly, there are a host of factors that are changing the landscape of employment, from skilling outcomes and sector-specific job creation to fertility rates and family sizes. Estimates from McKinsey & Co. suggest that globally, between 40 million and 160 million women may need to transition between occupations by 2030, into higher-skilled roles. Further, it is predicted that nearly 12 million Indian women could be staring at job losses owing to automation.

Against this backdrop, what might work to keep women in India's workforce as we face down an increasingly contentious future of work? Using secondary research, and interviews with stakeholders, the briefs in this series highlight gender responsive principles for different thematic areas that can enable and harness women's workforce participation.



IWWAGE

M-6, 2nd Floor, Hauz Khas, New Delhi – 110 016

Phone: +91 11 4909 6529

