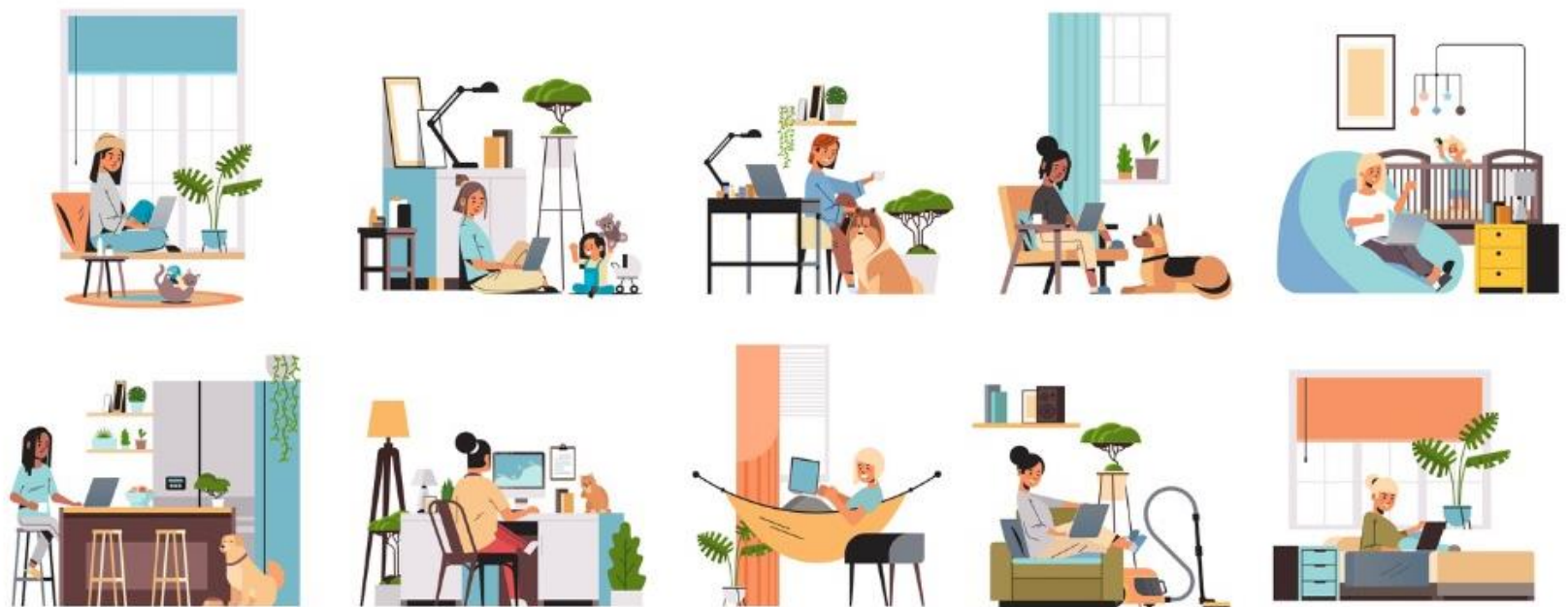


# Enhancing Employee Productivity & Well-Being in Challenging Times

## A Gender-Smart Guide to Remote Work for Employers & Managers



The [IFC Gender-Smart Business Solutions](#) program supports companies as they work to address corporate challenges, unlocking opportunities by closing gaps between men and women in their operations. **The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on individuals and businesses globally.** As businesses transition from offices to home-based work, **employers and managers need ways to better respond to work-life integration challenges of their employees.**

As in any health emergency, men and women have been impacted differently by the socio-economic upheaval caused by COVID-19. Since women around the world are predominantly responsible for unpaid care and household chores in addition to their paid jobs, the pandemic disproportionately increases workloads for them. The pandemic also exacerbates other risks such as domestic violence and mental health issues. As the crisis unfolds, the implications for companies include the loss of productivity and challenges in retaining female talent. **Without gender-conscious efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19, businesses risk widening existing gender inequalities in their workforce and the associated business losses.** An effective remote-working strategy adapts to the different and changing needs of employees of all genders, enhances workforce well-being, while ensuring sustainable corporate profitability.

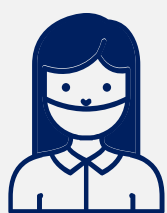
This guide provides employers and managers with resources to conduct a **gender-smart situational analysis** to understand how the pandemic may be affecting genders differently. It offers guidance on implementing **inclusive remote-work practices**. This is a general guide, intended for businesses with remote-working capacity, however some recommendations may not be relevant depending on the individual organization

## Remote-Working in Times of Crisis: What Should Inclusive Employers Consider?



### LEADERSHIP STRATEGY AND COMMUNICATION

- Do you collect information on how the current crisis impacts different employees' working abilities based on gender and caregiving responsibilities?
- Do you have a strategy in place to ensure that women and employees with caregiving responsibilities will not be impacted disproportionately by organizational changes due to the crisis?
- Do you emphasize employee well-being as a top corporate priority and monitor the well-being and engagement of employees by gender during remote-work? Do you use different communication channels to ensure you are reaching out to all your employees?
- Do you have a gender-inclusive policy on remote working that is a document shared with all employees? Do you systematically consider all gender-specific needs and constraints in the implementation of this policy?
- Do you ensure that employees, regardless of gender, are equipped with the necessary tools and resources (including internet connectivity) to perform their work optimally?



### PANDEMIC RESPONSE

- Do you provide employees with verified and up-to-date information on the crisis and guidance on how employees of all genders can implement safety measures at home?
- Do you share guidelines for employees to follow when they suspect that somebody in their household or they themselves might have contracted the disease?
- Do you share information on the type and range of support the company will provide employees of all genders?

### RESOURCES

- [COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects](#)
- [HBR: Why the Crisis Is Putting Companies at Risk of Losing Female Talent](#)
- [WBG: Gender Dimensions of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [IASC: Interim Guidance Gender Alert For Covid-19 Outbreak](#)
- [WBG: Supporting Women Throughout Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Emergency Response and Economic Recovery](#)
- [IFC: Interim Advice for IFC Clients on Supporting Workers in the Context of COVID-19](#)
- [IFC: Tip Sheet for Company Leadership on Crisis Response: Facing the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [WBG: Gender and COVID-19](#)
- [WBG: Guidance for Health COVID-19 Response Projects:](#)
- [UN Women: Gender Equality Matters in COVID-19 Response](#)
- [IFC: Interim Advice for IFC Clients on Preventing and Managing Health Risks of COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)
- [Johns Hopkins Live Dashboard](#)

## WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION



- Do you collect data or information on the specific remote-work challenges faced by your employees of all genders?
- Do you provide guidance on childcare or homeschooling support (as needed) to employees of all genders?
- Do you provide guidance on elder-care support (as needed) to employees of all genders?

## VIOLENCE PREVENTION



- Do you provide general information to employees about employee well-being, including access to counselling services?
- Do **not** provide detailed domestic violence and gender-based violence information to staff in their homes or attempt to survey workers or inquire about experiences of violence when the employee is working from home as many staff may live with the perpetrator.

## MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT



- Do you regularly communicate on the challenges of sustaining good mental health and encourage all employees to prioritize it?
- Do you provide a set of resources and tools to support mental health for employees of all genders?

## INCLUSIVE REMOTE WORK CULTURE DESIGN



- Do you ensure the participation of all managers in the design and implementation of best practices in remotely managing gender-diverse teams in an inclusive manner?
- Do you create inclusive opportunities for employees to socialize outside of work, ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to access informal and formal networks?

## RESOURCES

- [IFC: Childcare in the COVID-19 Era: A Guide for Employers](#)
- [UNICEF: Family Friendly Policies and Other Good Workplace Practices in the Context of COVID-19](#)
- [TJHF: Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Resources for Older Adults, Family Caregivers and Health Care Providers](#)
- [IFC: COVID-19 and Gender-Based Violence: Workplace Risks and Responses](#)
- [HBR: Why Sexual Harassment Programs Backfire](#)
- [IASC: COVID-19 Resources to Address Gender Based Violence Risks](#)
- [WBG: Guidance for Health COVID-19 Response Projects:](#)
- [PT: Guide To Living With Worry And Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty](#)
- [WHO Mental Health and Work: Impacts, Issues and Good Practices](#)
- [WBG: Harnessing Technology to Address the Global Mental Health Crisis: An Introductory Brief](#)
- [IASC Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19](#)
- [Catalyst: Managing Remote Team Inclusively](#) and other [Tools](#)
- [Trello Embrace Remote Work Guide and Personal Productivity Guide](#)

## Retaining, Supporting, and Motivating Employees: What Can Inclusive Managers Do?

**THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX :** Ask your employees via survey or consultation what they need to perform optimally and analyze the survey results by gender to create [appropriate solutions](#). Design [agile working solutions](#) considering [gender specific challenges](#). Re-assess these needs regularly and adapt your short-, medium-, and long-term strategy accordingly.

**SET CLEAR AND REASONABLE BUSINESS GOALS:** Define expectations on deliverables, their expected completion time, the way progress will be monitored, and provide examples of how the work should be completed. Set reasonable expectations on employees' productivity to [lower the pressure](#). Encourage accountability and focus on outputs.

**USE TECHNOLOGY WELL AND INCLUSIVELY:** Make sure to [run virtual meetings equitably](#), ensuring that all voices can be heard. Videoconferencing is best for complex or sensitive conversations as it feels more personal. Messaging tools are ideal to enable quick collaboration. Pick a complementary set of tools and decide on what medium to use depending on the task. Create an empathic and family-friendly virtual space that is understanding of interruptions and other remote-work challenges.

**ENCOURAGE SELF-CARE:** Encourage employees to take breaks and emphasize the importance of self-care and mental health. Provide flexibility in working hours, share [resources](#) and [tips](#) for improving well-being and counselling resources. Lead by example.

**FACILITATE INCLUSIVE NETWORKING:** Offer a structured way for employees to interact socially and talk about nonwork-related topics. Use the time to offer encouragement, strengthen team bonding and check on the well-being of your employees. Ensure that digital networking spaces are [inclusive](#).

### OFFER FLEXIBILITY AND FACILITATE WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION:

Be mindful that [mothers/parents/caregivers](#) are likely to have less productive working time. Share [best practices](#) on managing time and space to optimize focus and engagement. Invite employees to experiment on what works best for them. Be flexible and [trust](#) that your employees will complete their work to the best of their ability within the time needed.

### MOTIVATE AND SUPPORT YOUR TEAM:

Schedule regular calls with your team. Share updates and hold space [inclusively](#) for employees to share their concerns and questions. Consistent human contact and interaction supports team morale, motivation, fosters a feeling of connection, and boosts productivity.

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## More Information

[www.ifc.org/womensemployment](http://www.ifc.org/womensemployment)  
[www.ifc.org/gendersmartbiz](http://www.ifc.org/gendersmartbiz)

[@IFC\\_org](https://twitter.com/IFC_org) and [@WBG\\_Gender](https://twitter.com/WBG_Gender)