

**Concept Note**  
**Work from home: Designing flexible working hours**  
**15 th March 2024**

**Introduction**

In today's evolving work landscape, the establishment of flexible working hours has become increasingly significant, particularly within hybrid workplaces where employees have the option to work remotely or in-office. Flexible working hours offer numerous benefits, such as improved work-life balance, increased job satisfaction, enhanced productivity, and overall well-being. This introduction explores the importance of establishing flexible working hours in a hybrid workplace to optimize the Life Index of employees and create a positive work environment. A hybrid workplace combines remote work and in-office work, allowing employees to balance their personal and professional lives.

Technology has enabled different people from around the globe to share their grievances and vulnerable emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic, fostering a sense of global unity. Learning from the experiences of developed nations, many developing nations were quick to realize the major grievances and adopted a flexible working hour policy for inclusivity. However, the lack of a desired framework resulted in extreme work-life imbalance due to inadequate infrastructure and management. When work from home was initiated, working hours multiplied in many countries. In India, the provision of flexible working hours was observed in the IT Industry before the COVID-19 phase, hence were able to follow it pragmatically during the pandemic as their infrastructure and framework for working from home were already in place. The Government of India initiated this concept in the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act 2017 which has the provision to work from home providing flexibility to working mothers post-delivery. The extent to which it has been integrated into the mainstream is yet to be researched. However, recent trends show female labor force participation is declining in India, particularly among highly educated women who are not part of the active labor force due to care responsibilities which are still predominantly on women. India is a young country having youth as a working population wherein the average age of working-age Indians is 29 years. Almost fifty percent of this is women. It is essential to understand the implications in terms of the life satisfaction of this youth. Men need to be integrated into unpaid care work, this can happen with the implementation of affirmative policies and the provision of flexible working hours for everyone (men, women, transgender). Men may hesitate to express their emotions to be part of the unpaid care economy, women may suppress their emotions to be part of the paid economy because of fear of confronting the societal norms which prevail at their respective workplaces.

Surprisingly, according to the 2023 report by Lynda **Grattan**, even after a century since the adoption of Convention No. 1 in 1919, slightly more than one-third of the world’s workers still work more than 48 hours per week. While there has been substantial progress in reducing hours of work in many countries during this period, particularly those with advanced economies and especially in Europe, the prevalence of long hours of work remains a serious concern in most of the world today, especially in regions like Asia and the Pacific. Additionally, a substantial portion of workers, who work more than 48 hours per week, express a desire to reduce their work hours, even if it means a reduction in their income. This may stem from the prioritization of life satisfaction, which is reflected in the backward-bending labor supply curve.

*The ILO Declaration of Philadelphia states that “all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security, and equal opportunity” (Art. II(a)). In other words, paid work is about more than just meeting workers’ material needs; they also need to have the opportunity to fulfill their personal lives; that is, they need to be able to achieve a healthy work–life balance.*

-International Labour Organization (2022 )

Within the above context, an international workshop will be organized on **15th March 2024(hybrid mode)** in which all the stakeholders may be invited to discuss broadly the mentioned points to undertake detailed inclusive research for framing flexible work hour policies in the future:

- Working-time laws and regulations on maximum daily hours of work and statutory rest periods for better life satisfaction.
- Experience in working time and flexibility during the COVID-19 crisis may be drawn.
- The impact on female labor force participation, healthy work-life balance, productivity, and incentive for men to participate in unpaid care work may be examined.

Participants who are interested in participating in the workshop are requested to submit their nomination through the below link **before 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024.**

**Registration Link-**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/11OkDFny3IOw1u93HrohVYTYtszRiAvNfxv6tGMxr3\\_A/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/11OkDFny3IOw1u93HrohVYTYtszRiAvNfxv6tGMxr3_A/edit)

**Contact Person: Workshop Director**

**Dr. Shashi Bala, Senior Fellow,**

**V .V GIRI NATIONAL LABOUR INSTITUTE**

**SECTOR 24, NOIDA, 201301 INDIA.**

**Tel: 0120-2411776(Direct)**

**0120-2411533-35 Ext 225**

**<https://vvgnli.gov.in/faculty/dr-shashi-bala>**

**Email: [balashashi.vvgnli@gov.in](mailto:balashashi.vvgnli@gov.in)**