



Dattopant Thengadi Foundation

The Question of Jobs

Less for men and far lesser for women

After almost a year lost to the pandemic which contracted the growth rate by 7.7% in the financial year 2020-21 the situation seems to be better, the IMF estimate that India will have a growth rate pegged at 11.5% in FY 2021-22 is obviously a silver lining as estimated. But there are some issues that are stilling troubling, economists are repeatedly pointing out that the recovery will not be equitable, some of the segments of society will do far better and some of the segments will find themselves further depressed, in economic circle the buzz word is the K-shape recovery. Although it is good that policy makers seems to be well aware of the issue and are responding pro-actively the recently announced [budget](#) focused and inspired by the idea of *Aatmnirbhar Bharat* has tried to fix this problem through giving push to labor-intensive textile and other sectors and preparing the workforce for the new normal through skilling and reskilling.

The pandemic has a huge impact on the overall job situation of [India and the world](#), loss in trade, lockdown measures and overall restraints observed by masses made production shrink and jobs gone. According to the [Covid-19 livelihood survey](#) conducted by Azim Premji University, at least 20% of those who lost their [jobs](#) during the pandemic are still unemployed in December with women faring worse than men. From a gender perspective, the COVID-19 crisis brought lots of change for the working women. The lockdown measures taken forced a large number of workers out of the workforce and it has been seen that women lost the jobs [1.8 times more than](#)

[their male colleagues](#). For those looking from a human-centric worldview this is a serious concern because, one, women has already been marginalized, if look at the data of labourforce participation, women compose around 39% of the global and [19.9%](#) of Indian labourforce. That means even during the pre-COVID times the overall participation of women even before pandemic was low in comparison to men. In India against 76% men only [20.3%](#) of women (above 15) enter the labourforce. It is unanimously agreed fact that the participation of women in the workforce has been low in India and this received a further severe blow during the pandemic when a large number of women have been forced out of the workforce. But the issue does not end, here a [report](#) by Oxfam India has shown that women who were employed before the lockdown are also 23.5% less likely to be re-employed compared to the men. Further this report has explored that the workload on women has increased during the pandemic due to blurring of domestic and office activities due to work from home.

Being an issue very much debated in the recent years because of further declining women labourforce participation there is no dearth of literature on why women tend to participate low¹, what impact government employment generation programs have on it² and what are the policy options to increase the their participation³. Some of the measures are already being taken for example, a major reason for low female labourforce participation rate has been education. Women were largely enrolling themselves in humanities course, considered less-job oriented. To correct it, as report by [Financial Express](#) in the newly released draft of science and technology policy, there is an increased focus on women's participation in STEM.

Another equally significant issue is of working conditions. A significant proportion of women usually engaged in domestic duties reported their willingness to accept work if the work was made available at their household premises. Of the total women usually engaged in domestic duties, [34 per cent in rural areas and about 28 per cent in urban areas reported their willingness](#)

¹ Mehrotra Santosh and Jajati K. Parida; 2017; why is the Labour Force Participation of Women Declining in India? World Development Vol. 98, pp. 360–380

² Abhishek, 2019; Government Intervention in Rural Labour Market and its Implications for Women: How MGNREGA made Women Economically Well-off, Journal of Rural Development, Vol. 38 (4), pp. 733–758

³ Mehrotra Santosh and Sharmistha Sinha; 2019; Towards higher female work participation in India: what can be done? [Mehrotra Sinha Towards Higher Female LFPR.pdf \(azimpremiuniversity.edu.in\)](#)

[to accept work](#). In this regard, the thrust on work from home, an ad-hoc measure adopted during COVID-19 crisis to control spread but now taking shape as a permanent feature is worth looking at. There are lots of positive changes that are being expected from rising acceptance of WFH as a future's preferred mode of working, rules are also being changed in this direction. On January 1 the Ministry of Labour and Employment published its draft standing order on work-from-home (WFH) for the service sector under the Industrial Relations Code. The [work-from-home](#) is being seen by many experts as an opportunity to encourage the women to re-enter the workforce, especially the second career women which refers to those women who have taken a break from their work to attend their domestic and other responsibilities and are willing to rejoin the workforce. A large number of women leave the workforce in their mid-career stage so theoretically we can expect that the WFH will help in re-entering the workforce.

If we go for empirical data on what working women think about WFH, a [survey](#) conducted by the Kaspersky has said that almost 38 per cent Indian women working in the tech or IT industry prefer working at home to working in the office. Also, about 36 per cent women said they had more autonomy when not working in an office. The data from [YouGov-Mint-CPR Millennial Survey](#) suggests that women are more likely to be working from home, 62% have opted for working from home.

The [budget](#) has given consideration to increase women participation by enabling women to work in all work categories, including night shifts. In addition to this, two-pronged approach can be employed, one to enhance their employability, in this regard for those who have left the workforce due to the pandemic and the job that they were doing has been lost permanently because of change in circumstances [reskilling](#) can to help them re-enter the workforce can be a solution. Second is to focus on the sectors and jobs that tend to be more women dominated and give them a boost through policies.

Our Publications:

1) Democracy, Capitalism, Labour Movement: In Quest of Decent Work:
<https://www.suruchiprakashan.com/democracy-capitalism-labour-movement>

2) Decent Wage : It's not Just About Workers :
<https://www.suruchiprakashan.com/decent-wage>

3) Industry 4.0 and the Future of Work(er) :
<https://www.suruchiprakashan.com/industry-4-0-and-the-future-of-work-er>

DTF Events:

Lecture 2 of Series titled: GLocal Wage Report-2020 : Mitigation of Socio-Political and Economic Impacts of Rising Inequality through Wage Subsidy on 16/01/2021.

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