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# The Next Normal: The Changing Workplace in Africa - A guide for enterprises

International Labour Organization





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## >> Acronyms

<b>App</b>	Mobile Application
<b>EBMO</b>	Employer and Business Member Organizations
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>HCROI</b>	Human Capital Return on Investment
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IoPSA</b>	The Institute of Plumbing (SA)
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>MS</b>	Microsoft
<b>OHS</b>	Occupational Health and Safety
<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>QR Codes</b>	Quick Response Codes
<b>WFH</b>	Work from home
<b>WAP</b>	Worker Assistance Programme





**The Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has had a devastating economic, social, and health impact across the globe. Millions of lives have been lost. From the outset, [NAME OF EBMO] has been working with our member companies across the country to assist with the management of the negative economic, social, and health implications of the Covid-19 crisis.**

[NAME OF EBMO] continued to provide support throughout this crisis by: providing strong leadership to ensure the health and sustainability of the private sector, the workforce and wider communities; representing to Government, the interests and needs of business in crisis, and offering innovative and quick action measures, as well as solutions; and supporting member enterprises during this period by providing relevant information and services.

The pandemic has been such a disruptive event that its impact will be complex, multi-faceted and long lasting. The workplace, in particular, has undergone immense disruption – the likes of which have not been experienced in our lifetime.

[NAME OF EBMO] members will have to navigate a complex and evolving landscape. As the guide outlines, new realities are now in place that seemed unlikely before the crisis. The Pandemic has undoubtedly sped up the pace of change in the workplace. This guide has been designed to help [NAME OF EBMO] member companies respond to a so-called new normal that continues to evolve daily. Work from home (WFH) arrangements have been adapted across many sectors. Some companies adapted easily whilst other companies struggled. Different skill sets are emerging, output based rather than time-based modalities are emerging, and new ways at looking at productivity have been adopted. This guide will take members through these changes and provide practical help and assistance.

It is clear that the disruptive effects of the Covid-19 pandemic will leave a legacy in respect of how, where, and when we work. Workplace legislation will clearly need to be adapted to meet the emerging reality. [NAME OF EBMO] remains fully committed to working with our members, trade union partners, and government to address these issues.

I would like to thank the Bureau for Employers' Activities of the International Labour Organization (ILO) for their assistance in developing this guide.

Yours sincerely,

President of [NAME OF EBMO]



## ► INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the pace of change in the workplace and accelerated many pre-pandemic 'future of work' trends. This has reinforced the importance of an approach that is agile, dynamic, productive, and digitally enabled.

This guide identifies and unpacks the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the workplace and identifies structural changes that have taken place as a result. The guide is divided into chapters dealing with: workplace conditions; performance and productivity; health, safety and wellness; workplace relations; skills and development; and digitalization.

**The emerging trends caused by the Covid-19 pandemic are differentiated in the guide per sectoral lines. To provide greater direction to enterprises, the guide clusters sectors into three main groupings - those which have proved to have worked:**

- **predominantly onsite** such as agriculture, agricultural processing, manufacturing, construction, and mining;
- **predominantly offsite** such as professional and business services; and
- **customer facing** such as retail, banking, tourism and hospitality, and contact centres.

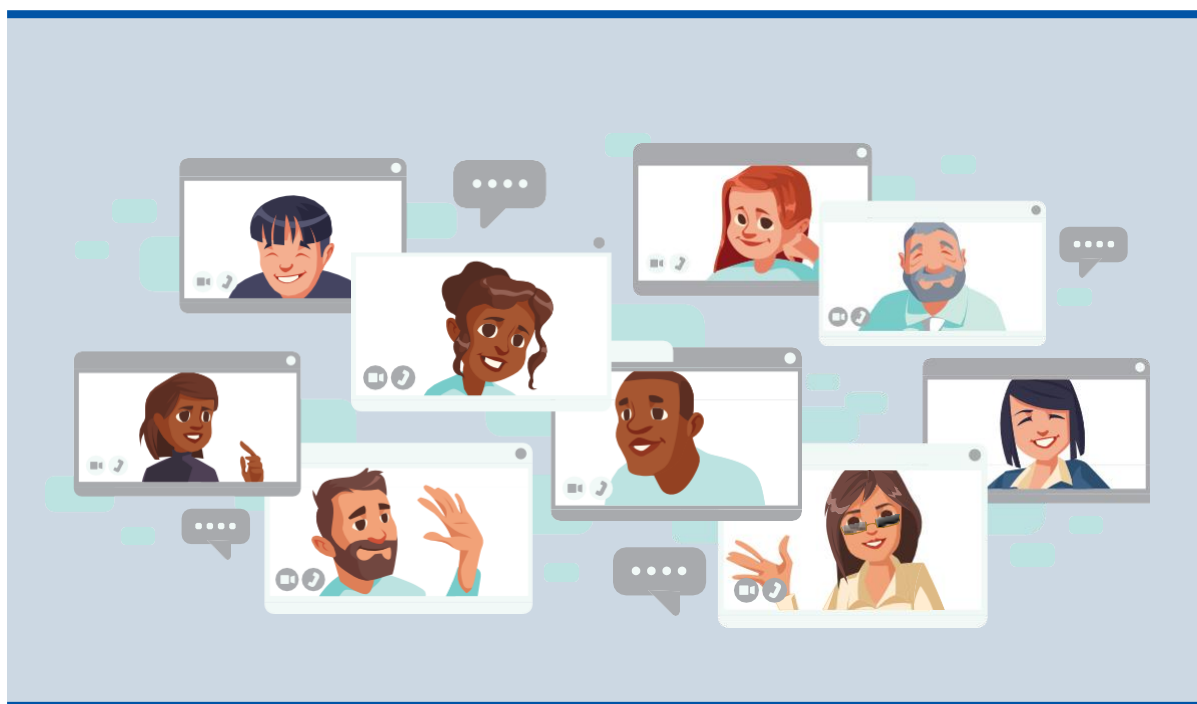
In clustering the different sectors, it should be recognized that these clusters are not binary, and there is likely to be a degree of overlap between onsite, offsite, and customer facing businesses in every sector.

**Also, it is important to distinguish between the following concepts:**

- **Remote work** means work carried out in a different geographical location than the actual, default workplace.
- **Telework means** remote work conducted with the assistance of electronic tools.
- **Work from home** means remote work at the worker's residence, likely with the aid of electronic tools.
- **Home-based work** refers to care work in the home.

Each enterprise will know which of these forms of work applies to their business at present, as well as the challenges that these new forms of work bring to the workplace.

The guide provides an overview of what has transpired during the Covid-19 pandemic, good practice examples, as well as guidelines to assist enterprises to adapt and optimize their responses. In addition, a number of self-help tools to assist enterprises are provided in the annexure.



(i) WORKING  
CONDITIONS

## ► HOURS OF WORK

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Most countries provide workers with legal rights as to the maximum (and in some instances, the minimum) ordinary hours they are permitted to work per day and week before the obligation to pay overtime applies. Minimum rest times are also prescribed by most countries. Some countries provide premium pay for work conducted at night, which entitles a worker to additional remuneration equal to a percentage of the salary for the same work performed during the day.

Employers, for the most part, regulate and monitor the hours of work performed by having workers physically present at work. In some sectors, workers are required to clock in and out from work in order to monitor and manage the ordinary hours of work performed, the meal intervals or breaks taken, the overtime hours worked, and work performed at night.

This section covers:

- Shifts.
- Transport.
- Time Management.

### ► Experiences and changes

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During the initial stages of the lockdown imposed by government to curb the spread of Covid-19, only those sectors defined as essential services (such as healthcare workers, farm workers, food retail staff, certain manufacturing plants, and law enforcement) were permitted to allow their workers to physically go to work. In some countries, these workers were required to **carry permits** on them in order to prove that they were permitted to leave their homes in order to travel to work. For those sectors not considered essential, workers had to remain at home, and those workers who were able to work from home did so. A significant number of workers whose jobs required them to be on site in order to perform their work, had to remain at home and not work at all. **Income protection or similar schemes to provide workers with financial relief** (due to not being able to work their ordinary hours during periods of lockdown) have buffered the economic impact of Covid-19 on the labour market, but the scope and level of income protection paid varied significantly between countries, with some countries not providing any income protection at all.

Although essential service workers were permitted to go to work during periods of severe lockdown, Covid-19 significantly impacted their hours of work. So too were the hours of work for other workers. Both categories (essential and non-essential) of

workers have gradually returned to work as Covid-19 restrictions have been eased. Many employers have had to implement **short-time arrangements or restructure their shift systems** to reduce the number of workers present at work during a given time, in order to observe social distancing requirements. Professional service workers (who were mostly able to work from home during periods of severe lockdown) experienced an increase in the number of hours worked per day.

**Curfew hours** imposed by governments resulted in enterprises having to change the start and end times of their operating hours, as well as the hours of work performed by workers – particularly to ensure that workers had sufficient time to travel to and from work in compliance with those curfew hours. With the interruption and delays to business operating hours as a result of curfew hours, some enterprises provided transport for workers, or paid allowances to staff so that could arrange private transportation, in order to reducing the risk of Covid-19 transmission and infection. In some countries, **transport costs have increased** for workers as a result of transport service providers having been required to limit the number of passengers at one time, so that they may observe social distancing. In these circumstances, some employers increased their workers' transport allowances to compensate for the increase in transport costs.

Some countries have, since the start of Covid-19, required employers to undertake **symptom screening** of workers before they are permitted to enter the workplace. At larger workplaces, this screening process has impacted hours of work performed by workers due to the time taken to screen each worker at the entrance of a workplace; this often resulted in long queues and congestion with the unintended consequence of workers starting work later because of the time taken to pass through the screening process. Larger employers with the means and technology, have removed paper-based symptom screening and introduced digital screening platforms. This was implemented to mitigate the time spent by workers performing symptom screening and to limit the number of workers who congregate while waiting to be screened. Workers were required to complete such digital screening before they arrives at work.

In some countries, employers have, in order to reduce the spread of Covid-19 at workplaces, been required to disable **biometric systems**, impacting the way in which employers monitor and manage the hours of work performed by workers. This resulted in employers having to introduce alternative forms of time and attendance monitoring.

Onsite businesses Farm, manufacturing, and mining workers (regarded as essential workers) continued





to work on site even during more severe instances of lockdown. This had a varied impact on hours of work, time management, and transport.

#### **Shifts:**

- Farm workers' shifts had to be adjusted, and the size of teams reduced to observe social distancing measures resulting in shorter work times.
- In observing social distancing measures in fields and packing facilities, this required a change in shifts and the size of teams and crews that worked conveyor belts in vegetable fields so as to.
- In mining, shifts had to be changed to ensure limited congregation of workers underground.
- Some manufacturing operations, particularly those that are integrated in supply chains that have been disrupted due to Covid-19, had been forced to reduce operations leading to shorter working time.
- Some manufacturing plants conducted shift handover meetings remotely (to avoid two different shifts coming into contact with one another), while the start, stop, and break times of different teams were staggered to minimize contact in communal areas of the plant (such as canteens).

#### **Transport:**

- Some employers paid their workers a Covid-19 transport allowance to assist with the increase in transport costs. This allowance was temporary in nature and did not continue throughout the pandemic.
- Vehicles used on farms are multi-purpose vehicles, they transport both workers and produce during the course of a working day. Production suffered, given that these vehicles could only transport a limited number of workers at one time.
- Arrangements were made by employers for workers in the same teams to travel together to and from work so that if a team members tested positive for Covid-19, it limited the number of workers exposed and having to isolate.
- A significant number of mining workers live far from the mines at which they work and, as such, required special permits to cross borders in order to travel for work. In most instances, mining employers arranged transport for their workers.
- Larger multi-national manufacturing companies arranged private transport for workers, smaller companies were unable to do so due to cashflow constraints, and staggered shifts to allow workers to travel to work avoiding peak

travel times that tend to see a large number of passengers travelling.

- The motor manufacturing industry divided production lines up into parcels and provided dedicated transport for each part of the line.

#### **Time management:**

- Some employers moved away from using finger biometrics and now use a facial-recognition clocking system, which automatically does a temperature reading too.
- Some employers implemented a mobile application (App) through which workers recorded their time and attendance.
- Most employers recorded and managed time and attendance by using the symptom screening forms completed by workers at the start and end of shifts.

#### **Offsite businesses**

Workers who worked for enterprises such as those providing general business services, contact centres, consultancy, legal, and accounting services had, for the most part, the benefit of WFH arrangements. In most instances, WFH workers worked longer hours, but the majority of these workers did not qualify for statutory overtime because of their seniority or rate of pay already earned. Without a physical presence at the office, the methods of monitoring time and attendance have evolved.

#### **Transport:**

- As a result of most of the workers in these sectors being able to WFH, they were not required to travel to and from work. This reduction in commute time meant that some workers worked longer hours and saved money on transport costs.

#### **Time management:**

- In respect of the retail sector and its WFH workers, the sector has largely moved away from monitoring hours actually worked and focus rather on the outputs delivered by these workers.
- For workers who WFH and who are entitled to overtime pay, employers require them to complete time sheets with a description of the work performed and time spent thereon. Any overtime performed at home, requires prior approval.
- In the banking sector, the preference evolved to the use of access cards so that no physical interaction with the access control (such as biometrics) was required, as only swiping a card was required.
- Some employers in the financial sector

have implemented facial recognition and temperature screening instead of workers having to use finger biometrics.

- Some employers have moved away from fingerprint biometrics and replaced access systems with cards which are denoted by colours to demarcate which parts of the building workers may access to ensure that if a worker tests positive for Covid-19, only those workers within the same colour group had to isolate if there a case of close contact was identified.

**Customer facing businesses**

Businesses such as retail, hospitality and tourism share their workspace with members of the public and customers on a daily basis. With social distancing measures and the restrictions on the number of people allowed in workplaces open to the public (based on the size of the workplace), employers in these sectors had to redesign their shift systems and hours of work:

**Shifts:**

- For call centre workers who WFH, time and attendance is mostly monitored by the number of calls attended to (as these calls are recorded).
- Retail employers in almost all instances, had to reduce the number of workers working per shift. Casual (part-time) workers were affected the most in this regard in that they were not always guaranteed a number of minimum hours of

work per week – as is the case with permanent workers. Shifts were arranged so that the same workers worked the same shifts weekly to ensure that if a positive case was recorded, only that shift had to isolate and alternative shift could come back to work on short-notice.

- Adjusting shift times in retail operations has been required in response to a number of changes in regulations that limited travel and extended curfew times. Even though retail workers may be working fewer hours, the workload increased with the reduced number of staff on a shift at one time.
- Hospitality and tourism sector businesses experienced significant reduction in demand, and have had to scale back operations and reduce hours of work.

**Transport:**

- The retail sector struggled with issuing paper-based travel permits to its workers on very short notice and, in some instances, had to engage with law enforcement authorities who challenged the validity of some of the permits carried by these workers.

**Time management:**

- Attendance at work in the retail sector was mostly recorded and managed by using the symptom screening forms completed by workers at the start and end of shifts.

[NAME OF EBMO] Guidance		
General		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sectors can develop sector-specific guidelines on how to implement short-time working arrangements.</li> <li>• Sectors can collaborate on the provision of transport where a group of employers in the same sector are located in the same area.</li> <li>• Provide digital tools for symptom screening to limit the disruption to working hours, and to mitigate congestion at entrances of workplaces.</li> <li>• Consider replacing finger print biometrics with facial recognition or a card lanyard systems and ensure that in larger buildings, workers are not permitted to roam freely so as to ensure that if there are positive Covid-19 cases at a workplace, the access system can determine which workers have been in contact with the positive worker or been in the same areas as the positive worker.</li> </ul>		
On Site	Off Site	Customer Facing
Where employers provide transport to employees, ensure that only workers from the same team use such transport in one trip.	Develop systems to monitor overtime hours of work performed from home.	Implement procedures which allow for flexibility around adjusting shift times in response to legislative requirements, and in a manner that is operationally feasible.



## ▶ WORK FROM HOME

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Prior to Covid-19, WFH arrangements have typically been few and far between. Although the number of people who WFH has increased steadily over the past few years, the current situation has expanded remote working at a rapid pace. In general, most workers did not have any experience in how to WFH and have never had the option or choice to WFH.

### ▶ Experiences and changes

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At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, those mandatory WFH orders prescribed by governments were implemented on short notice. Workers were swiftly sent home to work without any guidance from employers on how to do so, particularly because at first it was thought that the WFH orders would be for a limited period of time only. For most sectors, **workers were unaware as to what WFH would entail and lacked resources required for this change**, such as software, access to official documents, and proper working space. Some employers allowed workers, who did not have suitable office equipment at home, to take office chairs, printers, and stationery home with them.

WFH has come with a trade-off for both employers and workers. On the one hand, there have been **gains from the flexible work locations and hours**, workers reducing their commute time and costs, and employers optimising their costs (lighting, heating or air-conditioning, canteens, cleaning, etc.). The most significant trade-off for employers is that they have had **less control and oversight of the work performed by their workers**.

Covid-19 has demonstrated that WFH is best suited for workers who are required to **execute relatively independent tasks**, when knowledge can be easily shared electronically or from a distance. Being together at work is required **when tasks are interdependent or reliant on collaborative processes**.

Workers who have been required to WFH have been faced with having to manage their hours of work and family time, distractions, social isolation and, in some instances, having to bear the costs related to WFH. As **workers juggle the demands of work life and home life all** in the same place, with many workers demonstrating that they are capable of being productive as they WFH, employers have become more **flexible around work hours and work settings**. Giving workers the choice (unless there are government mandated WFH orders) is key to ensuring that a WFH model is successful.

To maintain a level of structure for WFH workers, employers have begun **setting expectations for when they require their staff to be available**

**online for staff meetings and other team activities**. Additionally, in order to create a balance between work time and personal time (which has become blurred for workers who WFH), workers and managers have had to closely manage expectations together to ensure that workers don't feel pressured to respond to emails and messages at all hours of the day.

Those employers who have approved more permanent WFH arrangements have carefully **assessed whether the kind of work their workers perform are dependent on proximity for quality**. Additionally, with the increase in employers allowing WFH arrangements, employers are more concerned with a worker's output based on their deliverables, as opposed to the number of hours seated at their desks working.

Going to the office to work individually is no longer a priority. Workers who can WFH and who go into the office from time to time, may do so to have in-person interaction with their co-workers, managers or clients. An experience that they cannot access remotely.

Employers have acknowledged that **not all workers would prefer to WFH**. Unless WFH orders are prescribed by governments during Covid-19 restrictions, employers have mostly allowed their workers to choose whether they WFH or not. Not all workers have suitable workspaces or adequate resources at home to work productively. In some instances, employers have (in order to maintain a level of social interaction at work) provided hybrid WFH arrangements where a worker might WFH for 3 days and then work in the office for one day. For some employers, a 'hybrid workforce model' will mean that a portion of the workforce will remain working from the office, a portion will work remotely, and another portion will follow a blended approach whereby they move between WFH and the office. In other instances, employers have used WFH as an incentive for consistently good performance.

One of the barriers, prior to Covid-19, of remote work was **trust**. Managers simply did not trust their workers to get the job done unless they were physically seated at a desk in the office. Covid-19 has illustrated that, for the most part, workers who can WFH with suitable resources, can do so productively. It has become important, in order to respond to those workers who abuse their WFH privileges, for employers to regularly communicate with and check in with their WFH workers.

WFH has required a **change in HR policies** in so far as WFH worker obligations are concerned; this is because most HR policies provide for



processes which reflect presence-based models of work. As much as WFH provides workers with flexibility, they are still required to comply with their employer's policies and procedures. Existing HR Policies have had to be amended and new HR policies be implemented. WFH Policies have been implemented, policies regulating hours of work have been amended, and disciplinary codes and procedures have been updated to cater for new rules that apply to workers who WFH – such as accommodating the use of enterprise property at home. Obligations relating to data protection and security of enterprise information has also come to the fore as a result of workers who WFH.

As WFH arrangements become more permanent, employers have established mechanisms to ensure that WFH workers **participate meaningfully in virtual meetings**. For example, camera on policies have been implemented and appropriate attire to be worn during such meetings.

In order for WFH to be an effective model, some employers have provided workers with the **resources needed to be productive**. Some employers have assessed what costs associated with working at the office can be redirected to support these workers to work productively, efficiently, and safely at home. Meal allowances, car/travel allowances, and savings on office space rental have been used to allocate WFH workers with resources, access to data/internet, infrastructure, or allowances to facilitate the necessary support.

Sales workers struggled with productivity when required to WFH. Most of these workers require camaraderie and face-to-face interaction with colleagues, and wanted to work from the office.

### Onsite businesses

Support and admin staff at onsite businesses who could WFH, **struggled daily to retain balance with life and work**. Most of these workers were very keen to return to the office when they were permitted to do so.

### Offsite businesses

Professional and general service businesses that operate off site have generally adapted quickly to WFH arrangements:

- **Banks have highly effectively managed the mass transition to remote working**. Only key personnel maintained a presence in offices for vital functions.
- As lockdown restrictions eased, employers began **giving workers a choice** of whether to WFH or at the office (or both in the form of a hybrid system).
- Some employers implemented a **top performer flexibility model** where workers

whose performance was consistently good when they WFH, were given the option to continue to do so, even when government regulations allowed them to return to the office for onsite work.

- Some businesses have converted transport, meal subsidisation, or travel budgets into WFH allowances to assist workers to purchase ergonomically sound office furniture to use from home, or to use for internet access.
- WFH has enabled line managers in the financial services sector to manage outputs with increased trust. Workers were given clear deliverables and deadlines, and managers concerned themselves with the output rather than the number of hours workers spent at their desks when working from home.
- There are **diligent workers who WFH, and a category of workers who do not work so effectively from home and require more supervision and monitoring**.

### Customer facing businesses

- The call centre industry has adopted a hybrid model, with some workers working from the office and others who WFH, providing digital access and tools to do so.
- The retail sector enabled its workers who could WFH to do so effectively. Workers who use laptops were allowed to take their docking stations home, implemented a system of access via phone and, in some instances, workers who WFH didn't even require Wifi access. Desktop users could take desktops home and set up remotely. Employers allowed employees to take home their office chairs.
- There are retail and call centre workers who exclusively WFH and workers who work in terms of a hybrid model where they WFH for a couple of days and then work at the office for the remaining days. These workers are required to inform their Covid-19 compliance officers of their intention to come into work so that the number of workers present at work on any given day can be managed. The hybrid model creates choice and alleviates loneliness for workers.
- One retail employer has, for its WFH workers, implemented a system called 'no Friday meetings'. This is to give the staff in that team, a full day to catch up on work and emails given that WFH workers appear to be spending more time in daily meetings (albeit virtually).
- In the tourism sector, most workers have to be present at the workplace and WFH has been limited to those in bookings, office based work, and administrative functions.

<sup>1</sup> An employee who is charged with the monitoring and management legislated Covid-19 protocols in the workplace, in accordance with newly-prescribed labour law.



## General

- Before assigning a WFH position, make sure the worker has the ability and resources to work productively from home.
- Workers' personal circumstances are not the same. Conduct surveys to understand from workers whether they have a suitable and safe workspace at home and understand what support may be required for workers to effectively WFH. A one size fits all approach will not work.
- Better guidelines and policies from employers should be in place to properly regulate and make WFH feasible. One area of policy where planning and implementation is an absolute necessity is guidance into adapting to remote online work.
- When implementing a WFH policy, employers should do so in writing. The WFH policy should clearly set out what conduct is acceptable and that which is not acceptable in the remote workplace, as well as what would be considered a remote workplace.
- Focus on ensuring WFH workers are aware of cyber security protocols.
- Encourage workers to show their face on virtual calls (at least when speaking)
- For the hybrid model (a blend of WFH and office-based working), managers should put a structure in place to ensure that time in the office is optimised for interaction with colleagues and not just to sit at a desk and work (which can be done from home).
- A hybrid model will not succeed if choice is left to individuals as to whether or not, or when, they wish to come into the office. It must be structured, so that workers are together in predictable ways for the parts of the work that present the most interdependence.
- Provide WFH workers with practical training on situations that they may likely encounter when performing their duties at home. This is to demonstrate to workers, in practical terms, what the enterprise's expectations are. Request workers to confirm in writing that they understand and will follow the WFH protocols.
- Amend disciplinary codes and procedures to cater for transgressions related to WFH.
- Provide workers with coaching or practical tips on how to balance personal life and work life from home.
- Get regular feedback from workers who WFH to better understand the challenges they may experience while they WFH.



Photo Credit | ILO photo e53838

## ► RE-DESIGNING WORKSPACES

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Office space allocation has traditionally been designed for workers who worked nine-to-five jobs, and who had no option to work elsewhere. The size of workplaces and workspaces is traditionally determined by the number of workers employed at the site and the type of work being performed.

The number of personalised offices have, over recent years, reduced with a focus on open plan offices or office pods where workers are required, when they intend to work at the office, to use a booking system to book office space for a period of time – also referred to as hot desking.

### ► Experiences and changes

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Employers and workers have accepted that even after countries begin to recover from Covid-19 infections, that it will not be business as usual. With a large number of workers opting to WFH, employers have been forced to carefully consider the purpose for which they require office space. Is it to maintain visibility in the public eye, produce goods or services, provide space for collaboration and teamwork, attract new talent, to meet with clients, or to promote an enterprise's culture? Covid-19 has certainly created an opportunity for employers to engage with their workers and reinvent their workplaces. Office buildings may become facilities wherein to gather when teamwork is required, while focused work is done remotely. As employers reassess their workspaces, the extent of downsizing existing office space has come to the fore – particularly for those employers who have decided to implement WFH models permanently. With many workers choosing to WFH or to work in terms of a hybrid model, employers have started to redesign and reconfigure office space. For example, where large areas of unused office space and parking bays remain, employers have started to establish state of the art training centres to induct and train new recruits.

There has also been a focus on updating and innovating infrastructure in shared spaces. Building owners have started considering redesigning infrastructure such as more touchless fixtures, door sensors, enhanced ventilation systems, automatic sinks and soap dispensers, and voice-activated elevator banks – making offices more accessible for disabled workers. The layout of factories and plants have also had to be reconsidered to ensure adequate social distancing, and to improve the ventilation in closed workspaces.

Some employers have started considering whether a new layer of automation makes sense in light of worker Covid-19 outbreaks resulting in downtime.

### Onsite businesses

- Onsite businesses in manufacturing have had to re-design the layout of machinery and production lines to ensure social distancing. Where possible, protective transparent screens have been installed.
- Some packhouses in the agricultural sector have removed doors to avoid staff touching door handles with only bathrooms and changerooms having doors.
- In the construction sector, employers have implemented restrictions on the use of communal tools and strict sanitising protocols after use of tools.
- Workplaces with elevators have restricted the number of people allowed in the elevator at one time.

### Offsite businesses

For general business services, such as the likes of accounting and financial services, the following has been observed:

- With a significant number of workers in these sectors choosing to WFH, employers are reducing office rental space.
- With a significant number of workers opting to work in terms of a hybrid model (both WFH and at the office), hot desking has increased. Workers are required to book office space in advance.

### Customer facing businesses

Workspaces for retail stores, hospitality, and tourism will remain largely unchanged, although there has been implementation of protective transparent screens at many premises. Some businesses have changed the infrastructure/layout at these workplaces to provide a safe and healthy environment for both workers and customers.

- In the hospitality sector, restaurants have moved away from using paper menus and require patrons to access an electronic menu using their smart phones (QR Codes) and foresee retaining this system post-Covid-19, given the savings on printing costs. Restaurants are also maximising their outdoor space as much as possible to ensure that guests are exposed to natural ventilation.
- Similarly with tourism, online check-ins and processes have increased relative to physical processes.
- In the retail sector, most employers have installed protective transparent screens



- between cashiers and customers, and touchless payment services have been enhanced.
- Restaurants and hotels that serve buffet style meals have had to re-design the layout of buffets and assist guests with service in this regard, to limit the number of persons coming into close contact with the buffet meal utensils.
- In call centres, there has been a move towards protective transparent screens between staff members, and a heightened focus on cleaning and sanitizing.

## General

- Taking into account social distancing measures (which are likely to become the norm), determine what office space, furniture, facilities can be moved/converted to allow for more workers to work together collaboratively.
- Once an employer determines the number of workers who can work from home (permanently or on a hybrid model), employers can then assess how much office space is required for workers who will work at the office and what form of office space is required.
- Once the office space required has been determined, the reconfiguration of that office space can be planned – converting personalised offices into hot desks that will be allocated per a booking system.
- Clearly identify and demarcate spaces to classify eating areas, social areas, team meeting spaces, privacy booths, open plan office spaces, and the number of workers permitted to occupy these areas at any one time.

## ▶ CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS

All countries require employers to provide their workers with written particulars of employment that set out their place of work, working hours, leave, and rate of pay. These particulars of employment are largely provided for in a written contract of employment. In some sectors where there is a large trade union representation, collective agreements are in place which collectively regulate the workers' conditions of employment.

### ▶ Experiences and changes

Employers had to respond quickly as the Covid-19 pandemic progressed, including altering certain workers' written contracts of employment to balance the interests of the business with the welfare of the workers. Employers had little time to make difficult decisions about the contractual employment relationships they intended to create for the future.

As a general rule, an employer is not permitted to unilaterally change the terms and conditions of a worker's contract. Covid-19 has, however, required employers to reevaluate their existing contracts of employment (in consultation with trade unions and/or workers) to determine what changes need to be made to respond to the new ways and forms of work. This process of consultation and need for agreement to amend existing terms and conditions of employment, can be a lengthy one and some employers have found it difficult to quickly implement changes to contracts of employment in order to respond to the effects of Covid-19 on the workplace.

Most employment contracts refer to 'the office' as the place of work. Employment contracts are now being formulated to allow for flexibility of location but also being clear about organisational expectations for social interaction, attendance, and worker obligations/entitlements.

Many employers have also started engaging with trade unions and/or workers to implement agreed procedures to follow when it becomes necessary to introduce arrangements of short time

with little notice. Employers in most sectors have invested in technology to digitally sign contracts of employment. These include DocuSign, Foxit PDF, and Adobe enhancers (amongst others).

### Onsite businesses

Those in agriculture processing, mining, and manufacturing, for example, continued operating during early stages of lockdown but curfew hours as well as social distancing measures impacted workers' contractual hours of work and, as such, changes to contractual arrangements came to the fore. These sectors are often unionised, and it became necessary to review collective agreements and agree on short-time provisions that responded to the short notice given by government-mandated restrictions.

### Offsite businesses

Consulting and financial services enterprises found, given the nature of work performed by workers, that their contracts of employment were sufficiently flexible to respond to the



changes necessitated by Covid-19 regulations. However, there was a significant move by some financial services enterprises to implement amendments to contracts, so as to clearly set out in which circumstances a worker is permitted to work remotely, and how such remote work will be monitored and managed.

### Customer facing businesses

Security and other staff in retail operations and shopping centres have had to take on new

roles, such as temperature screening, symptom screening, sanitizing, and queue controlling. As such, their job functions have had to change. This has resulted in some contracts of employment for these types of workers having to be amended to record additional responsibilities.

With curfews and short notice of restrictions, employers in the hospitality and tourism sector had to renegotiate terms and conditions of employment with staff.

## General

- Employers should consider industry-specific guidance when making decisions which will implicate adjustments to employment contracts. Sectoral associations should engage with their members to identify what contractual changes are most needed in order to respond to Covid-19 restrictions, and how (in consultation with trade unions and/or staff members) these can be best implemented at sector level.
- Regardless of what changes are being made to a worker's contract, any amendment should clearly define the new terms, and determine whether the original terms will resume at any point in the future, or if they will continue indefinitely.
- Assess workers' job descriptions, roles, and responsibilities to identify whether any contractual changes may need to be made to include new duties necessitated by Covid-19 and the associated regulations.
- If there are contractual changes which will affect a worker's pay, employers should proceed with caution given that changes to pay will likely result in strong reactions by employees. Employers must carefully consider the communications to workers, and the messaging surrounding a potential reduction in remuneration.
- Signing of contracts need not be done in person. For job applicants and workers who have access to email and internet, employment contracts can be concluded electronically.
- Ensure that all contracts of employment issued to new workers going forward, contain provisions which allow for reasonable flexibility in terms of changing hours of work on short notice, and contain provisions which clearly inform workers of what their obligations are in relation to Covid-19.

Photo Credit | ILO E20320





## (ii) PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY

Managing performance and productivity in the workplace is critical to the competitiveness, sustainability, and growth of a business. This section is intended as guidance on managing the performance and productivity of a workforce working remotely.

## ► SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT OF WORKERS

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The management of workers who WFH presents unique challenges depending on the kind of business and jobs in question. Businesses use a variety of management and supervision structures to drive and monitor performance. Degrees of supervision and management vary subject to the nature of work, the workplace, as well as the systems and processes that are available. Observation and data tools, augmented by technology in some instances, are used to objectively measure performance.

### ► Experiences and changes

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#### General

Supervision and management of workers who WFH and were not present or meeting in a workplace, proved challenging and specific interventions were required to ensure that such workers were properly supervised and managed.

Employers in all sectors where WFH was possible, mentioned that there was a clear distinction between workers who were comfortable and productive with WFH, and workers who wanted to work from the office. It would seem that this distinction is, to a large extent, generational in nature and some employers who experienced this issue, mitigated it by providing digital training and awareness, or by allowing workers who wanted to come into the office the opportunity to do so by implementing staff rotation schedules.

In certain industries, complete teleworking is not possible. In these cases, empathetic and sensitive management became even more important, as a managers or supervisors may have needed to manage teleworkers, as well as workers whose jobs could not be made fully remote. Where workers worked in a combination of on site and telework within the same team, the management of such teams became very important. It is critical to ensure that there isn't resentment or perceived unfairness amongst workers, as this will erode productivity and performance.

Mixed on- and off-site work has further complicated management processes. In the agricultural sector many employers had to contend with office-based workers being able to work remotely, and farm workers who had to be on site. In offsite businesses, the situation could arise where support workers were office bound and operational workers were able to work remotely – such as in law enterprises, certain doctors, or receptionists. In customer-facing businesses, such as retail shops, management staff could likely work remotely with all other workers being on site.

#### Onsite businesses

With the Covid-19 pandemic came uniquely challenging social distancing requirements that have fundamentally impacted on how work is performed. Businesses that are by nature require onsite work, such as agro-processing and primary agriculture, had to adapt to ensure that the risk of transmission of the virus was reduced – while maintaining a balance of the ever-present demand for food. This meant that most employers decided to ensure that all workers who could, worked

remotely. However, where production processes required physical attendance at the workplace a variety of management adjustments had to be made.

- Social distancing has disrupted the usual functioning of packhouses and has meant that employers had to innovate to ensure adequate productivity while maintaining occupational health and safety standards. With social distancing requirements, new management protocols were required in order to brief and supervise staff.
- Where workers could not work remotely, maintaining morale was very important to ensure cohesion and therefore productivity and good performance, such as in initial intense stages of lockdown where the construction, mining, and manufacturing sectors were prevented, under legislation, from working.
- Communication was identified as the most important aspect for businesses to concentrate on – ensuring that hybrid teams (where some members are on site and some members WFH) are effectively and fairly managed.

#### Offsite businesses

In many instances professional service businesses and knowledge workers were, to some extent, already working off site prior to the pandemic, but this was by far the exception and applied by only some of the most innovative enterprises. With the advent of the pandemic, however, this has become the norm.

- Management had to rapidly transition to managing remote teams. Instead of in person team meetings, and popping past someone's desk, these interactions moved online.
- Reduced team cohesion due to reduced social interaction had to be compensated for in other ways. Many businesses have reported institutionalising check-ins and regular management sessions to make sure staff are aligned, clear about their deliverables, and that progress was being made.
- In some industries, such as insurance, employers reported that they were able to enlarge the management span of control



through using online tools, rather than having to manually walk the floor and check up on progress or wait for meetings.

### Customer facing businesses

Business such as retail, call centres, hospitality, and tourism:

- Metrics to measure productivity have changed to adapt to changing work requirements and circumstances. For instance, in retail, a commonly used measure was the takings per square meter, which applied to physical store space. With online shopping, this measure is not as helpful.
- Some businesses, such as contact centres, found that the initial nervousness experienced by managers who suddenly had to manage teams who WFH, was easily managed via regular check-ins with Microsoft (MS) Teams (or similar virtual meeting platforms) and dissipated after approximately two months.
- In the retail sector, a very sophisticated Worker Assistance Programme (WAP) was launched at a specific retailer that included workers and their families. This mechanism was used to promote wellness during the pandemic. The programme offered mental health support as well as a function where domestic violence could be reported.



Photo Credit | ILO E20100

## [NAME OF EBMO] Guidance

### General

- Managing a team remotely is a skill that needs to be developed, and certainly not a role that will come naturally to all managers and supervisors. Introduce training, systems, and processes to assist management in this regard.
- Evaluate all managers and workers with supervisory responsibilities, to establish whether their management style is conducive to enhanced productivity and performance, or whether additional support might be needed. Focus on the following areas:
- Constructive communication.
- Knowledge and implementation of relevant health and safety directions and/or legislation.
- Quick reaction and adaptation in a rapidly changing environment.
- Find a way to define job outcomes that aren't simply related to whether workers are in their seats or at the workplace. This requires defining deliverables, outcomes, and outputs – specifically over a period of time.

#### Where some people are working on site and others off site:

- Step up communication efforts to ensure that no worker harbours any feeling of perceived unfairness, as it erodes productivity and performance.
- Utilise digital tools to boost cohesion amongst team members in a hybrid team.
- Consider a formal two-way communication channel to address any underlying issues before they become a challenge.

<sup>3</sup>This article provides more technical input on the science of managing performance remotely: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7675760/>.

<sup>4</sup>Human Capital ROI or HCROI is a HR Metric that evaluates the financial value added by your workforce against the money spent on them in terms of salaries and other benefits. In other terms, it is the amount of profit obtained by a company against every dollar invested in their human capital compensation.

Clear communication remains the cornerstone of positive workplace relationships. It is important that employers make informed decisions in terms of expected performance and productivity, communicate that to workers clearly, and provide support to workers to attain the agreed goals. Regular feedback is key to ensuring that stumbling blocks are timeously addressed.

### ► Experiences and changes

#### General

Covid-19 has meant that performance and productivity goals have been difficult to set and manage. Short notice changes and relaxation of performance targets was necessitated due to the unexpected changes to lockdown regulations. This section details some of the practical interventions that businesses have implemented in setting goals.

#### Onsite businesses

Onsite businesses experienced changes in the way they did business, and this necessitated changes to performance agreements, that were managed by regularly communicating with workers.

- Performance management remains a challenge in certain parts of the agriculture value chain, especially where outcomes are not easily measurable. Agribusinesses have innovated by measuring the number of errors made as opposed to pre-lockdown. Other measures include: Human Capital Return on Investment (HCROI), revenue per worker, and people percentage of revenue.
- The construction sector and parts of the manufacturing sector experienced closures due to lockdown, which necessitated a new method of managing workers in existing projects with altered timelines.

#### Offsite businesses

Offsite businesses built on systems that were already in place due to the nature of their business but experienced a variety of knock-on challenges due to the lockdown-related closures experienced in other sectors.

#### Customer facing businesses

Support to workers was prioritised in certain sectors, as the uncertainty of circumstances posed a potentially negative impact to worker morale, and potentially on productivity.



Photo Credit | ILO E20618

## [NAME OF EBMO] Guidance

### General

- Focus on clear communication.
- Set SMART Goals: goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-based.
- Give workers the opportunity to comment on and possibly influence goals, to ensure engagement.
- Allow for flexibility as circumstances change, without entirely shifting the goalposts. Make provision for adapting and changing goals due to unexpected changes in law, supplies, or ability to deliver as a result of the pandemic.
- Support is incredibly important to enhance engagement.
- Have regular interventions and discussions to ensure that staff and organisational performance remains on track.
- For larger businesses, a clear and concise written performance management policy is important.
- Digital tools can be used to achieve collaboration in relation to goal setting. A number of digital tools, many of which are free to use, have emerged as important ways to replace the open plan office and brainstorming-whiteboard. A number of online resources exist, such as Miro (an online collaborative whiteboarding platform that enables distributed teams to work together on activities such as brainstorming with digital sticky notes, planning, and team management).



## ► DELEGATION, TEAMWORK, AND COLLABORATION

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Organising work by utilising delegation, teamwork, and collaboration is a normal part of the management of performance and productivity.

### ► Experiences and changes

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#### General

The trust relationship in a teleworking team is the difference between a successful teleworking team and an unsuccessful teleworking team. Businesses that survived (or thrived) in the pandemic have a few things in common, such as resilience, grit, and teamwork. These businesses have ensured that trust relationships continued to flourish. This is an essential ingredient for delegation when people WFH.

Teamwork and collaboration are more difficult to foster when staff WFH, as traditional mechanisms for collaboration, such as group meetings, breaks, and social interaction are not available. Many employers managing WFH teams introduced online collaboration technology, or virtual teamwork mechanisms to encourage workers to work together in remote locations. In addition, some employers have introduced special provisions for collaboration opportunities. These include set days in the office, or physical meetings with teams that need to work together on specific issues.

Enterprises across sectors grew more committed to partnering with each other in order to navigate the changed circumstances and to find areas of mutual concern to strengthen positions.

#### Onsite businesses

Onsite businesses had to compensate for situations where teams were disrupted due to Covid-19 and lockdown-related absences of team members.

- In the agriculture sector, many businesses opted to divide workers into smaller teams in order to mitigate disruptions, which meant new dynamics that had to be properly managed. Interestingly, none of the sectors surveyed had reported large numbers of absences, and simple measures (such as the implementation

of smaller teams) prevented large-scale disruptions.

- Within the mining sector, manufacturing, and construction industries, many businesses reported continuing with normal management processes once operations improved. However, in almost every instance, a higher level of sensitivity was required to accommodate for interpersonal challenges and lockdown-related difficulties such as transport availability and restrictions.

#### Offsite businesses

Keeping worker morale high is part of managing performance and productivity in a positive manner. Offsite businesses made use of a variety of online tools and video conferencing to ensure that workers continued to feel supported, and part of a team.

- In some offsite businesses, such as banks, teams were rotated in and out of the offices requiring management mechanisms to reach across both WFH and physically present workers.
- Some employers implemented online socials on Friday afternoons, to check in with workers and alleviate potential loneliness among workers.

#### Customer facing businesses

Customer facing businesses have had to manage people in a hybrid manner, both on- and off-site:

- In the tourism sector, many workers have been either temporarily or permanently laid off with the associated reduction in delegation and supervision requirements.
- The retail sector experienced similar team disruptions and had to employ creative strategies to ensure that business operations continued and that workers remained both productive and engaged. Team briefings happened either online or in-person, depending on whether the worker worked on site or WFH.
- Call centres have adapted to measuring worker outcomes too, with an emphasis on trust between workers and their managers. In one instance, consistent performance over a period of two to three months has been used as a basis to determine if workers can be permitted to WFH. In this way, WFH is incentivised.

#### General

- Build trust among and between teams and their managers or supervisors.
  - Streamline teams to ensure minimal disruptions.
  - Utilise available tools to keep teams engaged and productive, whether they work on site or remotely.
  - Streamline teams to avoid disruption.
  - Focus on teamwork and goal setting for teams (not only individuals).
  - Provide support for workers to attain goals.
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## ► MEASUREMENT, SYSTEMS, AND PROCESSES

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Measurement of performance is important in any business. Not only does it ensure delivery of efficient operations, but it also provides the basis for incentives, promotions, and performance management for underperforming roles or individuals. Ensuring that the right measures are in place and objectively measured, is a difficult yet important part of operating a successful business.

### ► Experiences and changes

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#### General

How did some employers successfully implement new systems or evolve old systems of performance and productivity management in workplaces? A key mechanism appeared to be the clarification of expectations and outcomes for different job types. Keeping a team on track in situations where the team, or part thereof, works remotely is a challenge. Digital tools such as Workflows , Slack (an online messaging tool for teams ), and Trello (project management tools ), have been used to enhance the management of performance.

#### Onsite businesses

- In the case of agriculture and agro-processing, performance management and productivity measurement systems have been a challenge to implement. In these types of industries a sector-wide method will not work due to the peculiarities of each farming commodity and

business operation. Agribusinesses measure output, as is the case in primary agriculture.

- Most construction and manufacturing businesses used output-base assessments. This means of measurement meant limited changes were required. Expectations needed to be reset when work was stopped or limited due to lockdown restrictions.

#### Offsite businesses

Offsite businesses built on existing systems and added a number of free tools available to supplement existing systems.

- MS Teams was heavily favoured among financial services and insurance sector employers, as it allowed managers to check in with workers frequently.
- Business management and consultancy services largely continued to monitor people on project outcomes. Measurement has, however, moved further away from physical presence, to being purely outcomes related.

#### Customer facing businesses

The change in retail businesses which had a far greater reliance on e-commerce, ensuring seamless teamwork, became pivotal. Jobs were rezoned, such as replenishers fulfilling and preparing online orders for collection by customers or courier partners.

## [NAME OF EBMO] Guidance

### General

- Make use of available tools and adapt existing systems with technological enhancements where available.
- Involve workers in creative ways to measure productivity and performance.
- Use the opportunity to focus on team-based performance assessment in addition to individual performance assessments.
- Identify good practice performance assessments that can be adapted throughout different contexts and sectors.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://help.miro.com/hc/en-us/articles/360017730533-What-Is-Miro->

<sup>6</sup> <https://slack.com/intl/en-za/>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://trello.com/en>.



(iii) HEALTH, SAFETY,  
AND WELLNESS

## ► OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AWARENESS

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Most countries require employers to provide and maintain, as far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of workers. This includes the duty to identify and remove or to mitigate risks or hazards that arise in the workplace. However, the focus on OHS awareness at workplaces has mostly been prevalent in high-risk sectors, such as mining, manufacturing, and construction, as well as those sectors dealing with food and medical safety. Not all workplaces are capacitated or geared to respond to occupational health diseases and/or safety incidents.

Not only do occupational health clinics play an important role in ensuring workers are fit and healthy to work, but they also to assist workers to manage diseases/illnesses which are not directly related to work. Having on site OHS clinics also assist with reducing absenteeism while increasing productivity and are valued by the workers who have access to these onsite services.

### **This section covers:**

#### **Safety at workplaces.**

##### **Covid-19 Risk Assessments.**

- OHS Clinics and health services.
- Experiences and changes

There is no doubt that Covid-19 has brought occupational health and safety at workplaces to the fore. Covid-19 has, in all sectors, been a catalyst in ensuring that both workers and employers are more aware of health and safety rights and obligations.

Traditionally, the responsibility to ensure that workplaces are safe and healthy has largely remained that of employers. With Covid-19, there has been an increase in responsibility placed on workers themselves (because it is people who transmit the virus) to ensure that they protect not only their health but also the health of their fellow colleagues and/or members of the public with whom they interact. Employers in all sectors have emphasised the need for workers to take personal responsibility for their health and safety as well as that of their colleagues. This includes ensuring that they do not report for duty if they display any Covid-19 symptoms, and that they act responsibly outside of working hours (limiting unnecessary travel and/or social gatherings).

Covid-19 has forced employers to act quickly and decisively to keep workers safe. Employers have had to adapt new business processes and address existing structures that are insufficient for the purposes of preventing the spread of

infection in the workplace. All sectors had to, in a very short period of time, significantly increase their health measures (symptom screening, sanitizing, provision of masks, installing protective transparent screens between workers, and implementing isolation protocols).

Covid-19 is spread by people in congregate settings or areas that are not well ventilated. Workplaces have therefore been a high risk location for the spread of infection, if the appropriate safety measures were not implemented or if the ventilation at a workplace was considered inadequate. This has resulted in employers having to reassess the adequacy of the natural and mechanical ventilation of buildings where workers are present.

In some countries employers were required, before workers could return to work, to conduct Covid-19 risk assessments. The purpose of these risk assessments is to determine the Covid-19 transmission risks at a particular workplace and to identify the measures necessary to eliminate or mitigate such risks from materialising. Risk assessments are technical in nature, and in some instances, sectors struggled to complete these risk assessments in an adequate manner.

With limited WFH arrangements prior to Covid-19, OHS awareness from a remote workplace has rarely been dealt with before. With more workers opting to WFH (or forced to WFH due to government regulations) employers have had to consider the extent to which they must ensure that these WFH settings are safe. Some sectors have provided WFH workers with guidelines on what is considered to be a safe work environment from home but by and large, most sectors have not focused on health and safety measures required at remote working places.

Covid-19 has resulted in occupational clinics and health services reducing the type of screenings and services they would ordinarily offer. OHS clinics had to change their pattern of operation, operating times, and services offered in order to cope with the pandemic.

#### **Onsite businesses**

##### **Safety at workplaces:**

- The construction and mining sectors have always been vulnerable sectors in terms of health and safety incidents. Management and workers have always been more cautious when it comes to health and safety and, as such, coped better with having to quickly implement new health and safety measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 at their workplaces.



- With WFH increasing for office and admin staff who work in these onsite businesses, compliance with health and safety protocols has resulted in an increase in focus toward health and safety at remote work areas, but it is likely to not be at the level required. In the manufacturing sector, employers have issued their WFH workers with guidelines on what the minimum safety requirements are for things such as electrical connections, plugs, chairs, and ventilation.
- Most onsite businesses (other than work which is performed outside like on farms) have struggled with ensuring that workplaces are adequately ventilated. Some mechanical ventilation systems are old, and employers are having to spend a considerable amount of money appointing experts to assess and improve ventilation in closed workplaces where there are a limited number of doors and windows to allow for natural ventilation.

#### **Covid-19 Risk assessments:**

- Risk assessments are a routine way of work in mining and, as such, it was a fairly quick process for the mining sector to undertake and implement its Covid-19 risk assessments.
- Farmers in the agriculture sector had trouble, at the start in navigating Covid-19 risk assessments but adapted quickly with the assistance of EBMOs in the sector that provided guidance on how to conduct risk assessments, and how to implement the controls required to eliminate or mitigate the risks identified in the risk assessment.
- The construction sector found the completion of Covid-19 risk assessments to be fairly comprehensive; these were implemented at speed and with competency, in that the completion of risk assessments is a daily task integrated into all construction sites.

#### **OHS clinics and health services:**

- Some mining companies provide primary healthcare at their mines. These OHS clinics had to suspend some routine and preventative screening tests (surveillance). With a focus on vaccinating workers, many mining companies have utilised their onsite OHS clinics to vaccinate workers.
- Some retail distribution centres that have onsite OHS clinics had to invest in equipping their clinic staff with full medical Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which has resulted in additional costs to the business. The operation of the clinics also had to change in that walk-in patients were no longer permitted. Appointments had to be made to visit these clinics, so as to ensure that social distancing is observed and the maximum number of people allowed inside the clinic at one time was not exceeded.

- Some employers in the manufacturing sector converted their OHS clinics (for the period during which they did not offer day to day clinic services) into Covid-19 testing stations. Testing was made available to workers and were paid for by the employers. These OHS clinics also conducted initial screening for Covid-19 symptoms by telephone in order to determine whether it is necessary for a worker to be tested for Covid-19 or to remain in isolation. The OHS clinics also offered medical support via telephone and, most recently, some of these OHS clinics vaccinate workers against Covid-19.

#### **Offsite businesses**

##### **Safety at workplaces**

- Professional and general service businesses that operate off site have generally had their workers WFH. This has meant that employers in these sectors have had little control over the health and safety of workers. Workers have had to be capacitated and trusted to ensure that their WFH spaces are suitable and safe.
- Due to the limited supervision of the health and safety of workers who WFH, employers in the financial sector ensure regular communication between employers and workers to ensure that workers remain safe and healthy while they WFH. Employers in the financial sector are relying on vaccination programmes to gain momentum in order to enable more workers to return to normal working at the office.

#### **Covid-19 Risk assessments**

The majority of workers who work for offsite businesses have been able to WFH during the Covid-19 pandemic. Although these sectors understand the importance of ensuring that workers who WFH do so within a safe and ergonomically sound environment, most employers have yet to implement processes to assess a worker's WFH space from a risk assessment perspective. Some employers in the financial services sector required their WFH workers to undertake safety surveys. These surveys revealed where and how staff whilst working from home. The survey results highlighted issues with ergonomics and dedicated workspaces, which employers had to respond to in order to ensure that workers WFH space was comfortable and safe.

#### **OHS Clinics and health services**

Where employers in these sectors have OHS clinics, the clinics have mostly transitioned to offer services such as Covid-19 testing, helping to managing chronic conditions and additional telehealth options for WFH workers as the Covid-19 pandemic continues. These telehealth options were also extended to workers' family members.

Even though workers in these sectors are working mostly from home, the OHS clinics continue to have an important role to play.

When the Covid-19 pandemic started, some employers partnered with local laboratories to provide Covid-19 testing for workers. Results were made available quickly, compared to the period of time it was taking the government testing sites to provide results.

## **Customer facing businesses**

### **Safety at workplaces**

Customer-facing sectors were required, in addition to keeping their own staff safe, to take into account the health and safety of customers/ guests. The cost of safety measures for customer-facing businesses was significant. Increased amounts of hand sanitizer, wipes (ie: to wipe down trolleys), disinfectant (to spray card machines and clean surfaces touched by hundreds of customers per day) were – and continue to be – necessary.

Customer-facing sectors also had the challenge of dealing with customers who did not wish to comply with Covid-19 regulations (such as refusing to wear a mask or refusing to sanitize hands before entering a store). This resulted in complex matters of having to deny customers entry to stores, and staff had to receive training on how to manage such incidents.

With a limited number of customers permitted in a public workplace at one time (such as retail stores), employers had to manage long queues outside stores – especially at month end. Some retailers issued each customer who entered a store with a peg or chip, which allowed security to monitor the number of people inside the store and to determine when the store was at capacity.

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a push from some governments for customer-facing businesses to take the temperatures and contact details of customers (for contact tracing purposes). This was onerous for these businesses and often resulted in congestion at store entrances, compromising social distancing.

Some retail stores installed protective transparent screens between the cashier and customer and implemented processes whereby cashiers do not touch a customer's bank card when receiving payment. Customers were, and continue to be, required to operate the electronic payment system.

Some employers in the retail sector found that improving ventilation is a key engineering control

that can be used as part of a layered strategy to reduce the concentration of viral particles in indoor air and the risk of virus transmission to unvaccinated and otherwise at-risk workers in particular. The tourism sector responded well to ensuring that its ventilation systems were adequate. The larger hotels undertook ventilation audits and air sampling to assess the extent to which ventilation systems need to be upgraded or changed.

The hospitality industry moved away from using paper menus. Some restaurants created QR codes that to be scanned by customers in order to read a menu from their smart phones. It is likely that most restaurants will, post Covid-19, retain the use of QR Code electronic menus as opposed to reverting back to paper menus. Some restaurants have also moved to using single use and sealed utensils (plastic), as well as individually packaged salt and pepper servings to ensure minimal contact with communal items usually available at a restaurant. This has negatively impacted these employer's commitment to limit the use of plastic and as such, these are seen only as temporary measures.

### **Risk assessments**

For retail stores, most employers outsourced risk assessments to specialist third party service providers. For distribution centres and office parks, the risk assessments were conducted by operations staff. Some employers in the retail sector have, in addition to undertaking their risk assessment process, required workers, when they return to work after a period of not being at work for some time, to complete a self-risk assessment form. This ensured that workers themselves acknowledged that they knew what the risks were and what procedures to follow in attending work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In South Africa, the retail and tourism sectors found that the guidance and assistance provided by the National Institute of Occupational Health website was most useful in navigating how to conduct risk assessments.

### **OHS Clinics and health services**

At the start of the pandemic, most retailers temporarily suspended the wellness testing of workers. Some employers in the retail sector are beginning to slowly reintroduce wellness testing in stores such as glucose, cholesterol, HIV, eye tests, and the provision of healthy eating plans. The retail sector has found that the OHS clinics have been of particular assistance with contact tracing when a worker has tested positive for Covid-19.



**General**

- Undertake a Covid-19 risk assessment for workplaces. A generic risk assessment template is attached and marked A1 and can be used by employers to assist with the process – especially for those workplaces that are not accustomed to performing risk assessments.
- Require workers who return to work after having worked from home, or returning from a long period of absence, to complete a self-risk assessment form. An example of such self-risk assessment form is attached and marked A2.
- Encourage workers to disclose any comorbidities they may have and reassure them that such information will be treated confidentially and not used for any purpose other than to determine what additional protective measures need to be implemented for workers who have comorbidities.
- All communication and OHS Covid-19 training provided to workers should be easy to understand and should be provided in languages spoken or read by those receiving the training. This should also be provided at the appropriate literacy level and include accurate and timely information.

On Site	Work From Home/Hybrid Model	Customer Facing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers should undertake an assessment of the effectiveness of ventilation for instances in which workers work inside, in order to mitigate long-range infection. Such assessment should determine whether there is adequate natural ventilation and/or mechanical ventilation. See: Guidelines issued by South Africa’s National Department of Health for ventilation to prevent the spread of Covid-19.</li> <li>• Ensure that OHS clinics do not neglect the day-to-day screenings provided to workers. General health screenings should continue – especially where these services are provided on site. Data about business model modifications, and services offered by the OHS clinics during the pandemic could help in better utilisation of OHS resources in the future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers should identify the hazards or risks that arise in a worker’s remote working environment and determine how such risks or hazards may be removed or mitigated. This includes educating WFH workers on what the minimum health and safety measures are for working at home. Attached is a checklist marked A3 for employers and workers to use when considering whether a worker’s remote workspace is adequate and whether sufficient processes are in place to manage a worker who performs WFH.</li> <li>• Issue workers who WFH with a compliance checklist to ensure that their remote workspace is safe. See example attached marked A4.</li> <li>• Managers of WFH workers should make regular enquiries to ensure workers are following safe practices and not experiencing aches or symptoms of stress.</li> <li>• Consider setting up a regular WFH forum where workers can discuss any concerns or difficulties experienced while they WFH.</li> <li>• Workers who WFH must know the procedures for reporting work-related accidents and ill health or any health and safety concerns. A WFH Policy should set out this procedure.</li> <li>• Apply similar furniture and equipment standards to a home workstation as an employer would in an office. A suitable desk and adjustable chair will normally be needed. These should be ergonomically designed to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement guidelines for staff on how to deal with incidents where customers/guests refuse and/or fail to comply with Covid-19 regulations.</li> <li>• Implement a system whereby the number of customers permitted in a store can be monitored so as to not compromise social distancing restrictions.</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nioh.ac.za/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nioh.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/V1.1-Guidelines-for-ventilation-to-prevent-the-spread-of-the-SARS-CoV-2-virus-FINAL.pdf>



## ▶ LEAVE

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All countries provide some form of statutory leave as a minimum amount of leave to which workers are entitled. Some employers provide leave in excess of what the law prescribes – this is commonly referred to as contractual leave or non-statutory leave.

Effective Management of leave (such as sick leave and annual leave) is ordinarily done most effectively where workers physically come to work, and employers know whether their workers are present at work or not. This has fundamentally changed with the onset of Covid-19 and with more workers who WFH or remotely.

This section covers:

- Types of leave during Covid-19
- Leave management

### ▶ Experiences and changes

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At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was much uncertainty amongst both employers and workers as to how time off from work would be treated, where governments mandated strict lockdowns which resulted in workers not being permitted to go to work at all. As the Covid-19 pandemic has progressed, most countries have given guidance or issued regulations on how this time off work must be treated.

Employers have been faced with the following scenarios:

- Workers having to stay at home and not work at all (due to government regulations).
- Workers who have comorbidities and are at high risk of severe illness/death.
- Workers testing positive for Covid-19 and having to isolate.
- Workers coming into close contact with a Covid-19 positive case and having to isolate, but who are not necessarily sick (this occurs repeatedly).
- Workers suffering long COVID.
- Workers requiring time off work to be vaccinated against Covid-19.

Most employers have had to reconsider their leave policies, taking into account the social income protection afforded by each country.

Long COVID, which is experienced by some people, has been a challenge for employers, particularly where the effects of long Covid on a worker negatively impacts their ability to do the work which they have been employed to do.

Many employers in several of the sectors have indicated that they have given excess paid sick leave (when a worker has exhausted their statutory

paid sick leave) for Covid-19 illness or isolation requirements. This is something that is likely to be reconsidered by employers in the future for those workers who refuse to be vaccinated and who subsequently contract Covid-19 and have exhausted all of their paid sick leave.

Employers have observed, in so far as WFH workers are concerned, that annual leave balances are increasing significantly, and that this category of worker is no longer putting in annual leave with being able to work remotely.

### Onsite businesses

Onsite businesses have experienced significant disruptions when a worker at work tests positive for Covid-19 and all close contacts are required to isolate for ten (10) days. In most instances, workers have had to utilise statutory sick leave,

and many have exhausted such leave which results in workers having to take unpaid leave. Some employers have implemented a special type of additional paid Covid-19 leave for workers who test positive, or who are required to isolate, but in some instances employers have experienced abuse of such leave and have had to start implementing processes to verify that a worker who has gone into isolation for close contact outside of the workplace (and where such worker does not have a positive test) has in fact been a close contact. This raises issues concerning an employer's right to request a worker to share medical information of a third party, which information is considered private and confidential.

In the mining sector, workers who have been able to WFH have not been taking leave and as such leave balances have significantly increased. Some mining companies have amended their leave policies to ensure that workers are required to take leave at certain intervals.

The manufacturing sector has also experienced a significant accumulation of annual leave for WFH and senior workers. Some employers implemented processes whereby workers were told to take annual leave by a certain date, and for that period of annual leave their access to emails was suspended. The manufacturing sector also provided, particularly during periods of strict lockdown, special paid leave. In circumstances where leave advances were given, these advances were off set from overtime worked.

### Offsite businesses

Call centres have implemented systems to insist that workers take annual leave, and such leave is scheduled on a roster basis.



Financial and consulting enterprises have implemented regular email reminders which are sent to staff, particularly those who WFH, to inform them of their leave balances and to encourage them to take annual leave.

### Customer facing businesses

Some workers in the retail sector who are customer facing and who have comorbidities and cannot be accommodated at the workplace, are required in terms of government regulations to stay at home. Some employers continue to pay these workers while they remain at home and others, where made available through social protection, apply for benefits from the state. It has become apparent in the retail sector that a number of these workers are abusing this arrangement. Some of these workers stay at home on full pay and then are seen going out with friends and socialising but are not coming to work.

Some employers in the retail sector who provide their workers with contractual annual leave (over and above statutory leave) have amended their leave policies to state that statutory leave has a monetary value whereas contractual leave has no monetary value. When a worker takes annual leave, statutory leave (with a monetary value) is deducted first. If a worker leaves the enterprise's employ, they are only paid out for the statutory annual leave which has a monetary value – contractual leave is no longer paid out on termination of employment.

Some employers in the retail sector have implemented policies which state that if a worker who has to isolate due to receiving a Covid-19 positive test result, (or for close contact to a positive test) has exhausted paid sick leave, and has been vaccinated, will be given special paid leave for the period of isolation. For those workers who have chosen not to be vaccinated and have exhausted their sick leave, the period of absence is treated as unpaid leave.

## [NAME OF EBMO] Guidance

### General

- Conduct regular audits of annual leave and sick leave balances so that these can be better managed.
- Ensure that workers are fully informed and understand the importance of taking annual leave and the circumstances in which annual leave will be forfeited if not taken.
- Consider providing workers who are vaccinated against Covid-19 and who have to self-isolate, a special type of paid sick leave (if they have exhausted their sick leave).
- Consider implementing a policy on how workplaces will deal with workers who suffer from long COVID, particularly in reference to the long period of time they may have to take off work, whether reasonable accommodation can be provided to those workers, and how the period of absence is to be treated where workers have exhausted all of their paid sick leave.

## ► GOVERNANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

This section covers:

- Health and Safety Committees.
- Reporting Covid-19 positive cases at workplaces.
- Privacy of health information.
- Covid-19 vaccines.

### Experiences and changes

Covid-19 has significantly improved the functionality and effectiveness of health and safety committees at workplaces. Health and safety committee members have, as result of Covid-19, acknowledged the important role they play at the workplace. Most employers have seen their health and safety committees moving away from a compliance tick box approach towards

ensuring that workers rights are protected, and that employers discharge their obligations to their workers. Boards of Directors have also, as a result of Covid-19 and the devastating impact it has had on the lives and livelihoods of workers, acknowledged the importance of having effective and responsible health and safety committees and the importance of including leaders in these committees. The importance of access to reliable health care for workers has also been highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the protection of workers at work, vulnerability of workers has come to the forefront. Due to the nature of the Covid-19 virus, workers at workplaces have received several requests from their employers to disclose health conditions





that might put them at higher risk if infected with Covid-19. In South Africa, the regulations issued under the state of disaster by the government oblige employers to make special provisions for “vulnerable workers” – that being workers over the age of 60 years and/or with known or disclosed comorbidities who cannot WFH. Despite the good intention, employers have had to struggle with how to meet these requests, as they could constitute an intrusion into a worker’s personal information, which often results in fear and anxiety as the worker is faced with the decision to either disclose highly sensitive personal information, or alternatively disregard an instruction by the employer. Employers have had to explain to their workers that this is a voluntary disclosure and the general rule that such information may only be processed with the worker’s informed consent shall apply. A worker should not be sanctioned for not making the disclosure. Where the employer is aware, as a result of a previous voluntary disclosure by the worker, of the worker’s underlying health condition, the employer may use this information for purposes of engaging the worker to implement additional measures to protect the workers. Some employers/sectors have onsite OHS clinics which hold the workers’ health information. This information is not necessarily in the possession of the employer, and independent advice will need to be obtained on a case-by-case basis regarding the processing and use of such information.

Several sectors, across most countries, have experienced resistance from workers to be vaccinated against Covid-19. Governments have yet to take the lead, for instance by mandating compulsory vaccinations for workers who are over the age of 60 years and/or those with comorbidities. In most countries, employers have a duty in terms of the Occupational Health and Safety legislation to take reasonable measure to protect workers and people entering any workplace. Not to do so, is a criminal offence. Employers are struggling to strike a balance where they can responsibly compel workers to be vaccinated but at the same time not to breach the constitutional rights of workers. Employers, at this point in time of the pandemic, are therefore implementing systems which will encourage workers to get vaccinated, rather than making it compulsory. The overall view is that it is better to educate and encourage the staff to get vaccinated but that this approach could change in future should an insufficient number of staff members be voluntarily vaccinated, and as such place themselves and their colleagues at risk. A form of negative incentive is provided for in some jurisdictions. In Zimbabwe subtle measures are being put in place to ensure that workers get vaccinated. If government provides transport and a person is not vaccinated, they will not be permitted to use that transport (unless the person has a valid medical reason for not getting vaccinated).

## Onsite businesses

- The manufacturing, construction, and mining sectors have observed positive results coming out of their OHS committees with heightened functioning, especially in terms of health issues affecting workers. Members serving on these committees are playing a more active role in ensuring that the health and wellbeing of staff is protected. Some members have also requested their employers to send them on Health and Safety training in order to improve their knowledge and skills on these matters so that they may contribute more meaningfully to the work of the committees.
- Onsite businesses have struggled with ensuring that vulnerable/high risk workers are kept safe when working on site. These workers generally cannot, due to the type of work they do, WFH and as such special measures have had to be implemented. These measures include allowing workers who use public transport to start their shifts later so that they do not have to travel at the peak of traffic when public transport is full (increasing risk of transmission). Where possible, dedicated workspaces/offices have had to be allocated to these members of staff to ensure that they limit the number of people they come into contact with while at work.
- Several automotive manufacturing employers in South Africa have established workplace vaccination sites at their manufacturing plants. This is to ensure ease of access to vaccines for workers and to minimise the disruption of workers who would need to leave work to be vaccinated at a public site where queues are long. These employers have not, at the time of publishing this guide, implemented mandatory vaccination policies but have rather encouraged workers to be vaccinated by providing easy access to vaccines.
- Some employers in the manufacturing sector have embarked on successful vaccine education campaigns by arranging for medical experts to come to site and speak directly to staff in order to explain, in layman’s terms, the science behind the vaccines and the benefits of being vaccinated. Some manufacturing employers have also incentivised staff to get vaccinated by giving staff who are fully vaccinated, a gift voucher to purchase groceries.
- Most of the mining sector in South Africa have OHS clinics onsite. These OHS clinics have established vaccination sites which vaccinate mining workers and, in certain instances, dependants of the workers. While the mining vaccination drive in South Africa started off slowly, with a significant number of workers being hesitant to vaccinate, the programme has developed and as formerly hesitant workers have witnessed their colleagues being vaccinated, they too have eventually



- come forward to be vaccinated.
- In the agriculture sector, many workers are provided a day's paid leave for vaccination (two days if two doses are required). Although the agriculture sector has not imposed mandatory vaccination policies, they anticipate that when bringing workers together for a conference, workers who attend the conference will be required to provide proof of vaccination or alternatively a negative COVID test result (at their own cost) not older than 72 hours.
- Some employers in the manufacturing sector have implemented policies where workers who have chosen not to be vaccinated must, at their own cost, submit to a weekly Covid-19 test and share those results with the employer.
- The construction sector has observed high levels of vaccine hesitancy amongst staff due to misinformation and the spread of fakes news. Employers in this sector are focusing on campaigns to educate workers about vaccines and the importance of being vaccinated. Call centre employers are also focusing on the sharing of credible and accurate information on Covid-19 vaccines with a view to encourage vaccination, rather than impose a mandatory vaccine approach. The matter of compulsory vaccination continues to be considered – particularly for call centre workers who do not WFH and who work in congregate settings.

### Offsite businesses

In the general business services sector, some institutions have established sub-committees of OHS committees that are dedicated as a Covid-19 task force. These sub-committees investigate the workplace health and safety of workers as they return to the work under the different lockdown levels announced by government.

- Offsite businesses have, due to most workers being able to WFH, not had to navigate processes to accommodate vulnerable/high risk workers.
- Some employers in the financial and equities sectors have implemented policies for office workers to state that they may only return to the office once they are fully vaccinated.
- In South Africa, the Banking Association of South Africa, together with all of its member Banks, has established a dedicated workplace Covid-19 vaccination site. Workers are provided with transport to and from these vaccination sites and are scheduled at a time convenient for the operations of the business.

### Customer facing businesses

- The importance of having OHS committees has been elevated by the Covid-19 pandemic and in both the retail and tourism sectors, OHS committees are instrumental in ensuring compliance with Covid-19 protocols.
- OHS committees are now seen as

organisational assets as opposed to a committee simply established to meet compliance requirements.

- Employers in the tourism sector encouraged their workers to disclose their comorbidities (but workers were not forced to do so). Where workers disclose comorbidities, such information is kept strictly confidential and is only shared with HR and/or the OHS departments in order to assess what measures can be implemented to protect these workers. If the worker's job allows, WFH arrangements will be made. If not, then additional social distancing measures are implemented and additional PPE issued to the workers concerned. The difficulty employers have is not knowing whether workers have failed to disclose comorbidities and this results in an unknown risk to employers.
- Employers in the retail sector have focused on educating and encouraging workers to be vaccinated. Videos of staff getting vaccinated have been shared on the workplace apps and intranet.
- Larger retailers have conducted anonymous surveys amongst workers in order to determine the number of workers who are already vaccinated, the number who intend to still be vaccinated and the number who are hesitant and if so, the reasons therefore so that the vaccination communication shared by leaders responds directly to the main concerns expressed by workers who completed the surveys.
- Some shopping malls with a large number of retail stores have launched OHS workplace vaccination sites to ensure that the retail staff who work in those shopping malls are vaccinated as quickly and efficiently as possible. What is evident from these sites is that there is a significant level of vaccine-hesitancy amongst retail staff (most of whom are young females). Retail staff interact with hundreds of customers per day and are considered by the sector to be high risk at infection of Covid-19. As such, it is particularly important for the safety of the retail workers and the customers they serve, that as many workers as possible are vaccinated. The retail sector has acknowledged that it needs to implement creative ways of communicating with staff about vaccines and the safety of such with a view to persuading workers to be vaccinated.
- Some employers in the tourism and gaming sector in South Africa have launched workplace Covid-19 vaccination sites at their hotels to ensure that they are able to vaccinate as many workers as quickly as possible with a view to make their sites safe – not only for workers but also guests, so that South African tourism may be reignited.
- Although no employers in the tourism sector publicly announced that they will make

Covid-19 vaccines mandatory for workers, should the number of workers who are willing to be vaccinated in the sector not increase, there may be a future move to implement mandatory vaccinations. Although some employers in the tourism sector have considered incentivising staff to be vaccinated, the approach adopted has been

to rather educate and encourage staff, and to make it easy for them to get vaccinated as opposed to rewarding them for doing so. The tourism sector has made a considerable effort to ensure that the vaccines are accessible on site to workers and if not, that workers are provided with transport to visit a nearby vaccination site.

**[NAME OF EBMO] Guidance**

**General**

- Identify workers who are vulnerable and at risk of severe disease and/or death if infected with Covid-19 and categorise them by age and comorbidity status. For purposes of ensuring the privacy of the workers, it is advisable that when preparing the lists of workers, a number system is adopted, rather than the use of names and surnames. Employers must treat this information as confidential and thus restrict access thereto.
- Implement a policy to define vulnerable/high risk workers and to outline what procedures to follow to ensure that the health of these workers is protected. Processes should also be put in place to ensure that the privacy of this information is protected and not used for any reason other than ensuring the health and safety of vulnerable workers.
- Implement a Covid-19 vaccination plan to set out how employers will encourage and assist workers to get vaccinated. Don't place the onus on workers to get vaccinated in their own time. The easier and more readily accessible the vaccines are, the more workers will agree to be vaccinated.
- Share Covid-19 statistics with workers on a daily basis, the infection rate, the number of deaths, and the number of people being vaccinated.
- Ensure that leaders in the business get vaccinated and share pictures internally, as well as externally via social media.
- Encourage vaccinated workers to share their vaccination experience with colleagues who are hesitant.
- Create a photo collage of staff who get vaccinated in a communal space.
- Create a visual tracker in a communal workspace that tracks vaccinations at that workplace with a defined goal of number of vaccinations to be reached.
- Run townhalls with medical experts to share info with staff (in languages workers understand), benefits of vaccinations and to answer questions staff may have about vaccines.
- Remove barriers to vaccination and provide incentives: ensure staff know where the nearest vaccination site is located (from work and home). Consider giving workers a paid day off work to be vaccinated or assist with transporting workers to and from a vaccination site.
- Ensure that health and safety committees not only focus on matters affecting workers who work on site, but also the health and safety of workers who WFH. It is important for those workplaces who have now emerged with a hybrid model of work, to include on their health and safety committees workers who WFH. This will ensure that the demographic of the workforce is adequately represented on the committee.

On Site	Off Site	Customer Facing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider proof of Covid-19 vaccination as a term and condition of employment for new workers – amend written offers of employment to include a clause which obliges a worker to be fully vaccinated if they are required to work on site.</li> <li>• Issue clear directives as to how to identify a vulnerable workers and how they can issue the relevant confidential note to the employer to avoid undue infringement of a worker's privacy.</li> <li>• Develop recommendations to use in protecting unvaccinated workers and otherwise at-risk workers, and to help those workers protect themselves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that health and safety committees also monitor and deal with health and safety of workers who WFH. This should be included in the meeting agendas scheduled for the committees and the committees should be representative of both staff who work at the office and those who WFH.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider proof of Covid-19 vaccination as a term and condition of employment for new workers – amend written offers of employment to include a clause which obliges a worker to be fully vaccinated if they are required to work in an environment where they interact with members of the public.</li> </ul>



## ▶ WELLNESS

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Worker wellbeing drives productivity and keeps workers motivated. It also impacts the culture of a business and provides workers with a sense of comfort and worth to know that their employers care about their mental wellbeing.

### ▶ Experiences and changes

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Covid-19 has exposed assumptions about worker safety, health, and wellbeing, and has been an accelerant to addressing these issues. The pandemic has also highlighted social issues that workers face, such as childcare and disability issues. Covid-19 has also impacted worker wellness in that many workers have expressed concern for their job security. Most employers have indicated that the best assistance in dealing with mental health and wellness issues is for leadership to communicate directly with workers.

Some employers have prioritised worker mental health through health coaching, health and wellness tips, online courses and resources aimed at addressing stress, loneliness, anxiety, or depression.

Using technology to give workers access to mental health resources, particularly to worker wellness programmes and wellness coaches who are available telephonically or online. Workers have, since the start of Covid-19, been more willing to talk about mental wellness and to request assistance in dealing with such.

Keeping in frequent contact with workers has helped them to feel supported, particularly younger workers who WFH and live alone, and who yearn for social interaction at a professional level.

Covid-19 has magnified workers' childcare needs, particularly during periods when schools were not permitted to teach learners on site. Single mothers without childcare support were most affected in that those who could WFH, had to do so while taking care of children, and those who had to go on site to work had the difficult decision of leaving children at home unattended or sending them away to family for long periods of time.

#### Onsite businesses

- Onsite wellness days were cancelled in the agriculture sector for several months after the Covid-19 pandemic started.
- In the mining and manufacturing sector, remote counselling support was offered to staff, and these services were well utilised. Workers felt very anxious and insecure during the stricter periods of lockdown.
- For WFH workers, the automotive sector organised online socials for workers where matters other than work were discussed – this

worked reasonably well. Some employers in this sector also appointed online life coaches to provide workers with life skills to cope with and manage the Covid-19 effects.

- In terms of South Africa's Covid-19 regulations for workplaces, in certain instances workers were required to wear a surgical mask for a period of time, when returning from isolation due to having tested positive for Covid-19. Some workers expressed reluctance to do so as they have been worried about the stigma attached to wearing a different mask to their colleagues, as this highlights to staff that the worker was recently infected.

#### Offsite businesses

- With most workers working in offsite businesses being able to WFH, these employers had to implement creative ways to keep connected with their workers on a personal and social level.
- Some professional business service companies arranged daily calls with their workers and invited guests (celebrities) to engage with the team and create comradery.
- Legal consulting enterprises implemented weekly online socials on a Friday afternoon with a theme for each week and workers having to dress up to that theme.

#### Customer-facing businesses

- The retail sector saw a significant increase in workers accessing helplines, particularly in reference to gender-based violence, alcohol abuse cases, and cases of workers who contemplated suicide.
- Some retail employers implemented dedicated Covid-19 helplines which regularly checked in with workers who were in isolation and also assisted should workers needed access to medical attention.
- Single mothers in customer-facing jobs struggled significantly during the stricter lockdown periods when the schools were closed. Safe child care was difficult to access without breaching lockdown restrictions and this led to many working mothers who could not WFH and take care of their children to suffer from anxiety.
- Some employers in the tourism sector have well-established wellness programmes, some of which are available to workers 24 hours a day (managed by an external service provider). There was, during stricter periods of lockdown, a significant increase in GBV issues that were dealt with through wellness programmes offered by employers in the sector.
- One call centre enterprise implemented a once per week care hour, during which light-hearted games were arranged.



## General

- Implement communication systems to keep workers connected and feeling supported if they are in a period of self-isolation due to Covid-19.
- Ensure leaders in the workplace connect with workers directly to discuss their personal wellbeing and mental health, especially for those members of staff who WFH and no longer have face-to-face contact with their managers at the office. Implement regular check in engagements with staff who WFH using video conferencing (face-to-face), as it feels more personal than written or audio-only communication and is useful when discussing sensitive or personal matters.
- Provide workers who WFH with practical training and tips on how to separate their work and home lives.
- Prevent social stigma related to Covid-19 at the workplace and ensure that workers do not feel shamed for having tested positive for Covid-19.

Photo Credit | ILO photo E19697



# (iv) WORKPLACE RELATIONS

## ▶ ENGAGING WITH WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS

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Some businesses encounter trade union participation at the workplace when a trade union is recruiting membership or seeking to secure organisational rights such as debit-order membership deductions, trade union representation and leave, full time union officials, and forms of recognition. Most countries provide legal rights and protection for trade unions, their officials, and members once they reach a certain threshold of representation.

In businesses that have an established trade union relationship, the exercise of trade union rights becomes fairly routine and institutionalised. Day to day visits to the workplace to meet with members, provide advice, representation or support, regular meetings with management, as well as mass meetings of members of a number of workers at outside venues are regular occurrences.

In addition, specific process related engagements with trade unions tend to take place in more traditionally staffed and organised enterprises or sectors pertaining to negotiations on terms and conditions of employment, and other matters for collective bargaining.

This section covers:

- Impact on trade union relationships.
- Collective bargaining.
- Strike action.
- The role of union officials and representatives.
- Workplace, sector, and national consultations.

### ▶ Experiences and changes

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#### General

During initial stages of the Covid-19 lockdown regular union meetings were severely constrained as they are normally convened in person. Likewise, recruitment of new union members was limited as many workers were housebound and restricted. Gradually, however, digital technologies started to form an alternative and complementary channel through which to engage on day-to-day matters and processes.

As living with the Covid-19 pandemic becomes more normalised, trade unions and their officials, as well as the management they interact with, are adjusting by utilising digital technology to replace medium and large gatherings in order to remain connected to their members. In addition,

the issues around which the trade unions have seen a shift, range from adversarial issues to those areas of mutual interest that are more focused on health and safety, transport, and job preservation. Through this, some relationships have strengthened, become more cooperative and mutually supportive. In other instances, however, some unions have not had the resources to engage quickly and comprehensively with the employer or its representatives.

In periods of severe lockdown, collective bargaining could not physically take place. As restrictions eased, however, many negotiations have restarted, but meetings are smaller and expectations have had to be realigned to the impact of Covid-19 on the workplace. In other instances, negotiations took place online. These were extremely challenging as it is difficult to build trust online, and there were also technical challenges with caucus rooms and note-taking. Some unions, however, are insisting on in-person meetings.

Strikes appeared to be relatively limited, although Zimbabwe indicated they had experienced strikes mainly in the health sector. Botswana indicated that where strikes did take place, the apex EBMO was required to step in and provide support.

Protests were extremely limited in earlier stages of lockdown, but as the economy has opened up these become more prevalent. When workers embark on protest action, there is irregular mask usage and crowd control is often not in place. There have been limited instances of online strikes or boycotts

against employers. Where they have taken place, it seems that normal manual balloting processes have applied.

National social dialogue fora have tended to continue to operate and adapted well to online meetings. At Nedlac South Africa, for example, meetings are now all conducted online and business has reported that during the pandemic Nedlac has been more effective than ever, with heightened collaboration and consensus. Many dispute resolution processes through institutional structures are now offered both online and in-person – depending on digital access and preference.

#### Onsite businesses

Farm, manufacturing, and mining workers that were regarded as essential sector workers continued to work even during more severe





instances of lockdown. This had varied impacts on trade unions in the workplace as can be seen below:

- In mining, employers experienced lower levels of conflict and greater collaboration between employers and workers, as everyone was focused on the common enemy – Covid-19.
- Trade unions servicing farm workers experienced higher levels of disconnection from members as it was more difficult to make workplace visits. In many countries Inter-provincial travel was restricted in early stages of lockdown; local travel was more constrained than usual with limited hours due to curfew. Moving and gathering was also limited.
- Many trade unions that rely on physical meetings with a large number of people were unable to do so. Gathering numbers were restricted, and even when people did gather, they were limited in time and number, and had to battle with projecting their voices through masks – attempting to read body language when much of the face was covered.
- Meetings between trade unions and management focused on solving Covid-19 related problems. In many instances this resulted in a higher level of insight as to the challenges faced by the worker or business. This has built greater levels of sensitivity, understanding and trust.
- Trade unions operating in the mining and advanced manufacturing sectors rapidly shifted their focus towards health and safety matters. Risk evaluations and contingency measures such as mask wearing, sanitization and social distancing, as well as particular workplace adaptations have become the order of the day.
- Some manufacturing operations, particularly those that are integrated in supply chains that have been disrupted due to Covid-19, have been forced to reduce operations leading to short time, reduction of staffing, or complete closure. Trade unions have to provide advice and support for an increased number of operational requirement adjustments and/or retrenchments.
- Ordinarily meetings with individual members, management and gatherings are proceeded by handshaking, hugging, and reconnecting through lively engagement, laughing, and joking. While initially more limited, this appears to be on the rise as people tend to become fatigued and ignore Covid-19 risks and mitigation measures.
- Some trade union meetings break into singing and dancing without social distancing or mask wearing where large numbers of people are present.

## Offsite businesses

Many sectors of business such as those providing general business services, contact centres, consultancy, legal and accounting services have been able to adjust more easily to remote services. In some instances, such sectors tend to be less organised by trade unions, whereas in others, such as financial services, there tends to be more established trade union relationships that are more suited in their operations to meeting the needs of office-based workers. Dealing with Covid-19 has had a variety of different impacts for trade unions:

- Trade unions with established representation in the financial services sector struggled to interact with members who were not physically present at the workplace.
- Organising and mobilising new membership through physically meeting was no longer advisable, nor possible in many instances.

## Customer facing businesses

- Business such as retail, hospitality, and tourism faced a higher risk of Covid-19 exposure as they interact with their colleagues, suppliers, and customers. In relation to trade unions, the following was, and may continue to be experienced:
- Transport availability is a key issue. In some enterprises, businesses have found solutions and speedily imposed them. In others, this has been the subject of protracted negotiations between trade unions and employers.
- Adjusting shift times in retail operations has been required in response to a number of changes prescribed by government regulations that limit travel and expand curfew times, has been met with resistance at times. It has also required rapid adjustment as regulations are published with short notice.
- Trade union meeting times may be restricted due to shorter trading hours and curfew travel restrictions.
- Hospitality and tourism sector businesses experienced significant reduction in demand, and these sectors had to scale back operations, partially, temporarily or had to completely close down. A number of restaurants indicated that it was not worth their while to open for fewer customers. Trade unions do not have enough qualified officials to support a large number of such processes, and workers were therefore largely left to deal with such matters on their own, without the requisite expertise.
- Tourism reported that the trade unions have been supportive in addressing challenges arising out of the pandemic, as well as in tacking common approaches to vaccination and workplace safety. Where negotiations took place, these were face-to-face as they did not work well on virtual platforms.



**General**

- Protocols should be put in place to provide guidance when engaging with trade union officials, or when meeting with members; people should be encouraged to wear masks at all times and sanitise before and after handshaking and hugging.
- When negotiating online, ensure all parties have the requisite digital savvy to participate. Consider a neutral technical partner who can assist with managing the online tools. Use applications, such as Miro to capture areas of consensus.
- Sectors can develop sector-specific guidelines on how to minimise Covid-19 risks pertaining to trade union visits and meetings, without unduly infringing on organisational rights, and also what health and safety interventions can be considered. Excellent guidelines, for example, have been prepared for the workplace by the South African National Institute of Health
- Trade unions can consider activating digital platforms and communication tools to stay in contact with members and support them, even if they cannot physically meet.
- Employers and trade unions should seek to migrate to digital platforms and ensure that there are the requisite tools of trade to do so.
- Covid-19 related protocols should be enhanced and regularised for protest action purposes. This could take the form of marshal responsibility for monitoring mask wearing, social distancing, and participation numbers.

On Site	Off Site	Customer Facing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find innovative mechanisms to remind people to be COVID-safe while meeting with trade union representatives. Outdoor meetings should be encouraged wherever possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade unions and employers should explore digital mechanisms and platforms to complement, replace, and scale physical interactions. WhatsApp groups, video calls, and other social media tools and mechanisms can be used to communicate and keep people connected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade unions and employers, particularly in tourism and hospitality, would benefit from added guidance on options and processes for temporary or permanent downscaling or closure.</li> <li>• Trade unions and employers may wish to engage on identifying safe, affordable, and time-suitable transport options to enable workers to arrive at shifts in time.</li> <li>• Flexibility around adjusting shift times in response to legislative requirements, and in a manner that is operationally feasible is required.</li> </ul>



Photo Credit | ILO photo E19697

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nioh.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/1.Covid-19-update-WORKPLACE-PREPAREDNESS-SHOPSTEWARDS.pdf>



## ► COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

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Regular communication and engagement processes are often embedded into operational, business communication, as well as staff and management interactions. These are used to keep management, workers, and different parts of the business connected to each other and deal with opportunities and challenges. Issues dealt with may be wide ranging – from visioning to day-to-day operational meetings, updates on new initiatives or particular strategies, worker challenges, or problem solving. The statutory concept of a workplace forum, or informal and innovative versions thereof, would form a part of the communication and engagement mechanisms, if applicable.

Depending on the size and nature of the business these take a variety of different forms and complexity. Communication and engagement could be through physical (letters, notices, speeches, interpersonal interactions) or digital channels (emails, platforms, social media).

Examples of types of communication and engagement mechanisms are set out below.

- Enterprise-wide communication.
- Worker or staff meetings.
- Regular operational meetings.
- Workplace forums (statutory or non-statutory).
- Check in and delivery meetings.
- Engagement sessions on particular focus areas.

### ► Experiences and changes

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#### General

During the course of the pandemic those businesses that had pre-existing digital communication and engagement mechanisms adapted quicker and used such channels to communicate on Covid-19 related matters. Those businesses that relied more on physical, inter-personal interactions, however, initially had no means of communicating and engaging with workers. This has gradually evolved and been enhanced as the impact of the pandemic in the workplace continues. However, the extent of adaption has depended on the business and worker's ability and willingness to access and embrace new digital technologies.

Generally, it has been somewhat easier to convert one-way communication onto digital platforms. The traditional speech or letter sent to workers has been replaced with an SMS, WhatsApp message, or enterprise-wide digital message. Engagement has been a bit more challenging, though. Many businesses have introduced some

form of digital online meeting tools. This caused initial challenges as businesses decided which platforms to use (Zoom, MS Teams, Skype, Google Teams, Webex etc.); whether to invest in enhanced platform capabilities; who would have access; what confidentiality and security measures would be applied. The platform technology has rapidly enhanced since the start of the pandemic. Many businesses have continued to innovate and enhance the use of digital platforms and it has become a way of bridging physical divides that may previously have been prohibitive. In addition, participants have rapidly built their online meeting capabilities.

Online meetings have opened up a whole new world of opportunity but have also brought with them challenges – camera on or off approaches, the lack of boundaries to the workday, over- or under-participation, and how to ensure that people are actually present and engaged in the issues under consideration. Meetings held online have also benefited many with reduced traveling time and costs, as well as being able to easily secure participation from people in different parts of the country and internationally.

#### Onsite businesses

Onsite businesses, such as mining, agriculture, and manufacturing, have generally taken longer to adapt to digital communication and engagement mechanisms which were not that necessary, nor well used, before the Covid-19 pandemic. Speed of adaptation can be linked to pre-existing levels of digitisation familiarity, and access by the business and workers alike.

- Agricultural operations find it difficult to implement new digital technologies for communication and engagement as broadband access, access to digital devices, and familiarity with digital technologies are all limited in more rural settings.
- Manufacturing businesses that rely on face-to-face meetings with staff, struggle to convene meetings. Some have adapted meetings i.e., reduced the size of meetings by restricting this to key representatives, or have held meetings in shifts. Others have stopped such meetings, especially where space is limited. Some have moved meetings outside into parking lots and onto rooftops.
- Some manufacturing businesses, particularly those in advanced manufacturing operations, have pivoted to using digital platforms for communication and engagement. Enhanced digital platforms are used to connect work processes, and these have been extended to people-related processes.
- Mining operations that are shift based

and highly structured, likewise have highly structured communication processes. Meetings have continued but tend to take place at the start or end of a shift and in a socially distant and outdoor location.

### Offsite businesses

Professional and general service businesses that operate offsite have generally adapted quickly to digital technologies to interact with workers and keep them involved and engaged.

- Workers have been grouped into WhatsApp, telegram or other such work groups, depending on the scope of work. This can be for work or social purposes, or sometimes a combination of both. Another technology that has been extensively used is Microsoft Teams, where it is used by some businesses for all work related communication purposes.
- Most offsite businesses rapidly introduced digital meeting platforms, and continue to enhancing the usage and access thereto.
- Some offsite businesses, particularly with management consultancy and knowledge workers, have put in place particular interventions to enhance digital access. For example, one business gave all of its workers a digital enhancement voucher to spend on improving wifi connection, devices, back-up electricity supply, or to make ergonomic enhancements.
- There are examples of businesses that have conducted a digital access audit or wellness surveys of workers.
- Some businesses have converted transport, meal subsidisation, or travel budgets into digital enhancement.

- Email has largely replaced physical notices. There has been an increased demand for developing and maintaining updated email lists and groups.

### Customer facing businesses

Retailers, and those in hospitality and tourism, as well as contact call centres, have generally adapted relatively quickly in larger operations, and within senior management levels. However, when it comes to staff, digital access has been more of an inhibitor.

- Some large retailers have used digital scheduling technology for the purposes of enhancing communication during the lockdown. This together with WhatsApp groups has made communication easier. Smaller retailers have tended to rely on WhatsApp.
- Tourism companies that shut down struggled to connect with workers, many of whom went home to rural or other inaccessible places for extended periods of shutdown. As their earnings declined and time lapsed, the workers often abandoned their cell phone contracts and were uncontactable.
- Contact centre businesses have identified the high need for social interaction among younger workforce participants and have therefore prioritised communal engagement mechanisms for such groups.
- Hotels and restaurants that initially shut down completely have gradually returned to limited operations. In these instances, greater use of digital technology, such as WhatsApp, is now used to communicate with workers.



Photo Credit | ILO E53739



**General**

- Invest in an online meeting platform/s for the business and educate members on the use thereof. Implement specific training for management on how to communicate and interact with workers on digital platforms.
- Critically review and consider doing an audit or survey of worker access to digital devices and technology, electricity security, broadband access, and digital capabilities, with a view to enhancing access.
- Introduce meeting behaviours that encourage efficiency and participation. For example, the outcome of the meeting should be clearly articulated at the start. Cameras should be on as often as possible, but definitely at the start and at critical stages when engagement is required. There should be scheduled breaks for longer meetings, and participation should be limited to those that have a specific responsibility, accountability, or knowledge requirement to participate in the meeting. Every now and again, check the number of people on the call, and calculate the cost of the call with reference to hourly wages – it will be a good reality check as to whether the meeting and participation was really worth its while.
- Visit <https://www.return2work.co.za/behavioural-change-training/> for short, practical techniques and mechanisms that can be used by employers to connect with your workers. This provides a very efficient way to check in with workers and become aware of underlying challenges impacting on work.
- Consider investing in advance CRM (customer relationship management) technology to maintain and update worker groups for communication and engagement purposes.

On Site	Off Site	Customer Facing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how best to leverage the use of existing mobile phones to form the basis of new communication channels.</li> <li>• Explore digital access enhancement options, together with adjacent properties to get better deals and service packages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider collaboration opportunities online.</li> <li>• Provide for set events or days or times of the week when knowledge workers are required to be physically present.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider using scheduling communication for broader communication purposes.</li> <li>• Find affordable and value-added ways to engage people on digital platforms.</li> <li>• Bring workers that require higher levels of socialisation as a value addition to work on site.</li> </ul>

## ► INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY, DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Discrimination refers to prejudicial or biased treatment of a certain category of people on the basis of arbitrary grounds that are not related to work, such as race, sex, sexual orientation, origin,

language, religion, class, political affiliation or HIV status. Discrimination can be directly targeted at a specific category of persons; or indirect, in that it has the impact of disproportionately impacting on a specific category of persons.

Harassment is frequently linked to discriminatory factors. A well-known form of harassment is sexual harassment, where a person is subject to offensive, belittling, threatening or unwelcome physical, visual, or verbal behaviour. Discrimination and harassment is generally prohibited. When it comes

to the workplace, the employer has a duty to act against discrimination and harassment.

### ► Experiences and changes

#### General

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many people were temporarily laid off work, others shifted to home-based work, and others would work on site – under conditions that were outside of the norm. This resulted in a variety of different forms of discrimination and harassment challenges, that require consideration. One particular area of concern was the large number of women that have



left the workplace as a result of Covid-19 working conditions being impossible to reconcile with home-based responsibilities and the responsibilities of unpaid care.

Generally, women bore the brunt of the lockdown and experienced higher workloads due to their care and household responsibilities, without domestic assistance, and with home schooling of children. Respondents in both Botswana and Zimbabwe indicated that the lockdown had a disproportionate impact on women. In Malawi, trade unions have stated there were marked increases in sexual harassment and reports of women having to engage in sexual favours to keep their jobs.

### Onsite businesses

For businesses that continue to operate on site during the lockdown – such as agriculture, mining and manufacturing – incidences of discrimination tend to have manifested indirectly. Some key areas of concern emerge:

- Low earning workers are more reliant on public transport which was more expensive, available only at restricted hours, and less safe from a Covid-19 infection risk and personal safety perspective. The public transport challenges are more likely to impact negatively on people living far from work and form a type of indirect discrimination against women and poorer people. Women commuters, who ordinarily would travel in groups, had less 'safety in numbers' and were exposed to higher risks.
- Reduced numbers of people worked on site in order to contain the risk of Covid-19 infection, and also as a result of reduced demand for goods and services. In addition, people may have been distracted due to addressing other challenges, and not be as vigilant as normal. This may have resulted in limited management, supervision, and security – opening the opportunity for sexual harassment.
- In agriculture, employers indicated that women left the workforce in huge numbers, particularly in rural areas where they had a triple burden of households, education, and work.
- Mining indicated that there was a huge strain on women as they had an almost double workload with home pressures – largely as a result of children being at home.
- Manufacturing identified a number of challenges with childcare and in some instances, businesses secured and paid for community projects or non-profit organisations to assist with childcare. When doing so, they made sure they conducted criminal checks on volunteers.

### Offsite businesses

People working from home are likely to have experienced less physical harassment, but may have experienced higher levels of digital, verbal,

or written discrimination and harassment. Some examples are set out below:

- Many businesses are meeting on video platforms, and normal work and meeting hours have been extended which can impact on family life and care responsibilities. Extended hours of work impact disproportionately on people with childcare responsibilities who are more likely to be women. This can be a form of indirect discrimination.
- When meeting on video platforms, the other participants are invited into a person's home. Photos, pictures, and images displayed behind the camera can sometimes be offensive. In one example, a man was speaking on camera with a provocative picture of a woman behind him. This made the women who were participating in the meeting uncomfortable.
- Several people are oblivious to what is happening around them when they are on camera. In one case, a person constantly has a domestic worker in uniform cleaning subserviently behind her. People should be conscientious about the impact on others of what is happening behind their workspace when they are on video camera.
- More subtle forms of discrimination can also manifest as to who speaks in a meeting. Voice is a proxy for those that feel empowered in a particular meeting. Those that speak out, are relatively empowered in relation to those that do not.
- The nature of the online call reflects an organisational culture. In one case, an enterprise does a short meditation or 'regrouping', whereas in another, the organisation insists on restating the objectives of each meeting at the start. Online calls, as the new way of working, should reflect the culture of the organisation in the same way that physical environments do so.
- Due to the digital divide, many lower-earning people do not have access to the internet or digital equipment. Employers have a duty to ensure all relevant workers are equipped with the means to effectively do their job – physically or remotely.
- Another challenge relates to gender-based violence. Where the worker works from home, it is arguable that the home becomes the virtual workplace, and the employer has a duty to take steps to ensure that the worker is safe, including being safe from gender-based violence where the employer is aware thereof.
- Some businesses have taken additional measures to bring people back to work where they are at risk of gender-based violence when working from home.

### Customer facing businesses

Similar to those workers at onsite operations, there has tended to be a disproportionately adverse impact on certain groups of people as a result of



Covid-19 interventions. Curfew hours, for example, may have resulted in some people being confined to the workplace, being forced to take unsafe transport, or being stranded on the side of the road, as they were unable to travel home after their work shift. In addition, there are some particular types of discrimination and harassment that appeared to have proliferated during the pandemic:

- Harassment by customers towards workers has increased. There are countless reports of people insulting, demeaning, or swearing at till operators, or security guards or insisting on being given access to a premises outside

of curfew hours or in contradiction to the limited number of people that may access the premises.

- Discrimination between customers has also increased. Customers feel emboldened or duty-bound to point out Covid-19 protocol breaches, and when this is pointed out to other customers, this has resulted in offensive and discriminatory comments.
- Customer-facing workers are exposed to greater risk of catching Covid-19 when customers flout health and safety rules.

## [NAME OF EBMO] Guidance

### General

- Communicate and train workers on what discrimination and harassment is, as well as gender-based violence and workplace bullying – outlining what people should do when encountering such conduct.
- Encourage a culture of awareness, where people can speak out and generate solutions that can create awareness and limit incidences in the workplace.
- Ensure that management understand their responsibility to deal with acts of discrimination and harassment when they arise.
- Refresh discrimination and harassment policies.
- Employers (including government as an employer) can consider a range of mechanisms to empower women to re-enter the workforce more quickly after the pandemic. This could range from childcare assistance to flexible WFH arrangements, and appropriate job-value related recognition through salary and level of the contribution of the person in question.
- Provide access to worker assistance lines, if possible, for counselling on home-related pressures, gender-based violence and a range of other work-related pressures that have been revealed during the pandemic.
- Find ways to bring people at risk of gender-based violence back to the workplace.

On Site	Off Site	Customer Facing
<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitating or arranging safe workplace transport for workers which, if feasible, is partially subsidised.</li> <li>• Using digital platforms with lift sharing schemes such as Lift, Uber or Bolt</li> <li>• Adjusting shift times in light of safe transport availability and curfew times.</li> <li>• Set up WhatsApp groups with workers living in the same area so that they can wait for each other and stay in contact.</li> <li>• Introduce additional measures to ensure safety in isolated or quiet workspaces and for night shifts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a work at home code of conduct that: respects working boundaries in terms of hours of work; is sensitive to people's home circumstances; advises people on how to set up their working space for video calls.</li> <li>• Encourage workers to approach a designated person at work if they are experiencing gender-based violence at home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a clear policy on customer to worker, worker to customer and customer to customer discrimination and harassment. Acknowledge that people are stressed, but make sure that people know that discrimination and harassment is never acceptable.</li> <li>• Put up signage for customers on treating people with dignity and respect.</li> <li>• Have supervision available to intervene and protect workers from harassment.</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> <https://fortune.com/2021/02/13/Covid-19-women-workforce-unemployment-gender-gap-recovery/> reports that 80% of 1.1 million people who have exited the workforce were women. A McKinsey and LeanIn.org study reports one in four women are considering leaving the workforce or downshifting their careers versus one in five men [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwju4ZC-x8jxAhWSYcAKHRGaDZ0QFjAAegQIBRAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.mckinsey.com%2Ffeatured-insights%2Fdiversity-and-inclusion%2Fseven-charts-that-show-Covid-19s-impact-on-womens-employment&usq=AOvVaw0zpVAYLQOnYh9L\\_8L299fB](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwju4ZC-x8jxAhWSYcAKHRGaDZ0QFjAAegQIBRAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.mckinsey.com%2Ffeatured-insights%2Fdiversity-and-inclusion%2Fseven-charts-that-show-Covid-19s-impact-on-womens-employment&usq=AOvVaw0zpVAYLQOnYh9L_8L299fB)



## ► INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY, DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

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Conflict management is an inevitable part of workplace dynamics. It can take a variety of different forms, from informal conflict between various actors, as well as the more formalised processes that are generally entrenched as rights in law and supplemented or given effect to as a result of collective bargaining, policy or contract.

Types of conflicts that are considered in this section include:

- Workplace conflict.
- Grievances and dispute resolution.
- Conduct, capacity and operational requirements processes.

### ► Experiences and changes

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#### General

Covid-19 has resulted in many people experiencing considerably higher levels of stress and anxiety, which can manifest in a variety of ways from aggression, passive resistance, dissociation, or actual physical or psychological illness. This can be due to loss of income, job insecurity, illness, and the related fears, when a loved one contracts Covid-19, and general uncertainty and inability to deal with change. This, in turn, can become a hotbed for conflict in the workplace. Many businesses, that are similarly suffering stress, uncertainty, and possible closure, have not found sustainable mechanisms to deal with these issues and the resultant conflict.

Some workplace conflict, if not resolved, continues to fester, and may become more severe, whereas other forms of conduct can convert into formalised processes. During the earlier stages of the pandemic, formal processes tended to be put on hold, particularly where operations were shut down, and people were unable to meet. Now, however, as businesses adapt to ongoing functioning with Covid-19, many of such processes have moved online.

Hearings for conduct, capacity, and grievances have tended to move more online as a result of the pandemic. Hearings took place in person in Botswana and Malawi; in Zimbabwe a combination of online and physical negotiations took place; and in Tanzania hearings took place in person. In Eswatini, however, they reported that due to the absence of online processes, hearings ceased during lockdown, and were thereafter resumed in person. While management may have adjusted more easily to this, workers may have experienced limitations depending on levels of digital access and familiarity. Online people participate from different

locations, some of which are at the workplace and others at home. In some instances, in order to guard against irregular forms of representation during an online hearing, the worker will be asked to participate from the workplace.

Dispute resolution processes have generally been more focused on capacity and operational challenges, as opposed to disciplinary issues. Disciplinary issues, where they arise have been focused on more severe issues, such as various forms of dishonesty, undermining of Covid-19 protocols, and sexual harassment or abuse. A new form of disciplinary action has also emerged around inappropriate use of social media platforms, digital technology, and online conduct. There have also

been a number of cases of abuse of data or devices for personal reasons. WFH has brought new challenges in relation to sharing of confidential information if home workspaces are crowded and devices are shared. A new form of disciplinary misconduct relates to violation of Covid-19 safety protocols where workers refuse to comply with protocols such as signing in, wearing a mask, and staying off work when exposed to Covid-19. There are also instances of abuse of leave, and conflict of interest where people that WFH are busy with other work while they are in fact employed and should be providing their productive capacity to the employer. Cases dealing with falsifying Covid-19 results and vaccination certificates are also on the rise. There has been a noted rise in alcohol and drug related cases.

In relation to retrenchment processes, some countries such as Botswana have been prohibited, by virtue of the state of emergency from retrenching. Others, such as Eswatini suspended processes during the lockdown. In other locations, consultations have tended to move online for more digitally enabled businesses or have been conducted in socially distant settings. In some instances, however, employers have bypassed consultations completely. This has been the case in businesses that have not functioned during the lockdown for some time, or smaller businesses where there are no resources to consult with workers.

Provisions pertaining to representation at online hearings have been more difficult to enforce. Generally, legal representation has been discouraged, and trade union representation allowed, but it is difficult to monitor this for online hearings.

Many businesses have also expressed disappointment that statutory dispute resolution





bodies have not sufficiently enabled online hearings as they are still requiring people to attend their processes in person. However, once present, Covid-19 safety precautions tend to be well observed and enforced, with hearings being relatively expeditiously dealt with.

### **Onsite businesses**

Those in agriculture, mining, and manufacturing, for example, tended to continue operating during early stages of lockdown. Issues of transport, affordability of transport, working conditions, and Covid-19 risks have taken centre stage when it comes to difficult interpersonal interactions. Mechanisms to deal with conflict have generally not adapted significantly during Covid-19. Formal processes have gradually re-emerged and are generally conducted in person.

- Agricultural production businesses, particularly large commercial operations, report that while there were initial challenges relating to transport and scheduling that resulted in conflict, these have largely stabilised as time went on. The lack of communication tools made this more difficult to deal with.
- Agricultural processing businesses also had initial challenges relating to workload, transport of staff, and scheduling that resulted in conflict. Staff working in such facilities tend to be more digitally enabled, and many of these challenges have been ironed out. A similar experience is reported in relation to other manufacturing businesses that were classified as essential services.
- A number of general manufacturing operators initially shut down, and then gradually came back on board. The lack of contact during more severe stages of lockdown resulted in significant challenges, which were generally not dealt with, as businesses were in survival mode and lacked the ability to connect with workers. When conducting disciplinary hearings, the experience was that a hybrid approach was followed, with some opting for online and others in-person hearings – this largely depended on the enterprise’s rules and processes, in consultation with social partners.
- The construction industry indicated that most of its businesses held disciplinary hearings and grievances on site.
- In mining, most operations continued in-person and so did the disciplinary processes. Due to the focus on Covid-19, there was greater collaboration and not as big a focus on tension and conflict. Mining indicated that initially they put hearings on hold as they had to figure out how to manage the risks of hearings. These are now conducted in person, but the initial hold has resulted in a huge backlog. Mining also indicated that there were limited retrenchments and where these did take place, they were generally not Covid-19 related.
- In manufacturing, including agricultural

processing businesses, many hearings were moved online, with a number of employers reporting a rise in alcohol, drug abuse cases, as well as breaches of lockdown regulations. Some reported that holding hearings on online platforms was effective and concise with less time wasted. Where retrenchments applied, a hybrid approach was taken with physical meetings taking place to manage emotions and fear.

### **Offsite businesses**

Businesses that were able to rapidly transition to offsite operations have also experienced conflict and disputes, but these have manifested differently. They tend to be more focused on appropriate behaviour for online work, capacity issues relating either to Covid-19 related isolation or illness or child or elderly care, or operational adaptations to the new ways of working.

- Hearings for most knowledge-based workers takes place virtually. Where there is no home facility available for the hearing, the worker can be allocated a private room in the workplace to participate in the hearing.
- In some workplaces they provided additional data for workers to be able to participate in hearings from home.
- Professional accounting or legal enterprises have tended to experience conflict in relation to changing operational requirements and performance.
- Banking and insurance industries moved hearings online and this worked well. Going forward, a hybrid system is anticipated as Covid-19 was a catalyst for remote working.
- Extended online working hours and the 24/7 on call practices have resulted in considerable stress which has in some instances resulted in burnout, stress, and conflict as people become tired and irritable. This has increased conflict and the need for grievance and resolution processes.

### **Customer-facing businesses**

- Tourism, hospitality industries, and non-food retail businesses tended to be closed in initial stages of lockdown, while food retailers operated as essential services.
- Food retail workers face many Covid-19 related pressures that may manifest in conflict. There have been immense challenges in relation to transport, shifts, and workload. This has in turn resulted in childcare related stresses, safety concerns, and limited rest times.
- General retail sectors moved hearings online. One retailer indicated that it bought data for workers to participate and that people would download video conferencing applications on their phones. It also would take telephonic statements.
- Customer non-compliance with Covid-19

protocols, and masking and sanitation requirements relating to people, facilities, and products, created a new form of work and stress.

- Security and other staff in retail operations and shopping centres have taken on the role of sanitizing people on entry and monitoring compliance with Covid-19 protocols. Where customers are unhappy, it seems that there is a much more intense response resulting in enhanced belligerence, rudeness, and abuse

experienced by customers. This can result in staff reacting and responding accordingly.

- Banking services, many of which were migrating online before the pandemic, have undergone further transition, as customers have moved online in preference to visiting branches. This has required workforce retraining and skilling into alternative online roles, or retrenchment.
- Contact call centres have tended to conduct hearings online, or at the workplace in a private room.

## [NAME OF EBMO] Guidance

### General

- Raise awareness, educate and impose standards pertaining to appropriate use of social media platforms, digital technology and online conduct, including in relation to keeping enterprise and personal information confidential.
- Visit <https://www.return2work.co.za/behavioural-change-training/> for short, practical techniques and mechanisms that can be used in the workplace to assist workers to express Covid-19 related stresses and pressures, thereby opening up the way for a more understanding work environment.
- Proactively identify and strategically manage areas of potential dispute before they become a problem. It is recommended that businesses include this in their normal risk management and worker relations processes.
- Regularly remind people that if they have conflicts or challenges, about the channels for surfacing and addressing such concerns.
- Develop accessible digital and physical guidelines for safe dispute resolution processes during the Covid-19 pandemic and ensure that workers are aware of the seriousness with which Covid-19 related transgressions will be dealt with.
- Review representation and witness guidelines for hearings conducted online.

On Site	Off Site	Customer Facing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Safe and appropriate facilities should be designated for dispute resolution purposes if online options are not available.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Provide for safe and secure online digital platforms for dispute resolution purposes.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Build awareness of what is acceptable and unacceptable customer behaviour and how best to deal with and respond to extreme customer behaviour.</b></li> <li>• <b>Where businesses, particularly in tourism and hospitality, are required to reduce or close operations they should first give workers the opportunity to understand and possibly mitigate the shutdown. Where not possible, ways to ease the impact on workers should be considered, with input from those concerned. These processes can be done at a distance and through smart use of digital technology.</b></li> </ul>

# (v) SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



## ► SKILLS IN HIGHER DEMAND

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As work operations change and evolve, so do the requisite skills associated therewith. This section considers some of the emerging areas of work and the associated skills and development needs that are required.

### ► Experiences and changes

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During the course of the pandemic certain sectors have become far more extensive, thereby resulting in an enlarging of the related skills in demand. These are wide-ranging across different sectors and include:

- Health and safety related skills, as well as those pertaining to wellness.
- Digital skills (dealt with more comprehensively in the section of Digital Access).
- Management and leadership skills, change management, risk management and occupational health and safety and disaster management skills.
- Healthcare, healthcare devices and personal protective equipment manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, care work and community healthcare services.
- Exercise, wellness, fitness, nutrition and supplementary healthcare products and services.
- Agricultural production, processing, including small- and large-scale operations.
- Sales and marketing through alternative platforms – online and call centres.
- Logistics, including services and product innovation through ports, rail and road, as well as household delivery services.
- Programme and project management.

Demand for generic skill sets, previously regarded as competencies that are required in the future of work, have been fast tracked into the present. Adaptability, innovation, sensemaking of complex and changing issues, solving problems, building a sense of optimism and 'can do' attitude, working across silos, connecting people and ideas, operating collaboratively in multifunctional teams, advanced communication capabilities, empathy, compassion, and self-management and leadership skills, are all new forms of competencies, often referred to as dynamic capabilities that are in high demand.

#### General

All sectors report that the Covid-19 pandemic has rapidly and significantly increased the demand for skills relating to the digital economy. This has been directly in relation to digital sector, as well as in most senior and office-based roles. From data

capturing, management and big data analysis to new applications, websites, and communication tools – there has been increased demand for digital products, platforms, skills and services, as well as infrastructure deployment for connectivity. Cyber security demands have also significantly increased. Some countries have deliberately evaluated their

digital skills demands relative to current capacity.

Management skills of all kinds, from strategy to supervision and team management, systems and process and, project management have enlarged.

#### Onsite businesses

As a result of increased demand for certain products and services during the pandemic, some industries hold great potential to continue to expand and grow, along with the opportunity to develop associated skill sets and competencies:

- There is an increased demand for agricultural smallholder and own-use production, small-scale processing and market access, and the related skills. In response to food security needs and joblessness of people previously employed, there has been a significant increase in training of producer to market skills for small growers. Such training is generally experiential in relation to production.
- Also in the agricultural space is the increased demand for digital technology solutions.
- Product innovation and manufacturing enhancement has increased in agricultural processing, healthcare product manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, personal protective equipment, ventilators, supplementary healthcare products, exercise, and wellness equipment industries. This requires a proportionate increase in skilling in these areas of work.
- While there was an initial disruption to construction services, these have resumed with the focus on installation, repair and maintenance, adaptation of existing facilities for different use, and large-scale bulk infrastructure. Many construction industry businesses have indicated that to resume work they have been forced to rapidly adopt digital technology and train workers to use it.

#### Offsite businesses

Many professional and business service industries working off site have experienced increases in demand:

- Management consultancy enterprises have increased the provision of change management, project, strategic and technical support

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<sup>12</sup> See for example: <http://digital.harambee.co.za>



relating to managing the risks of Covid-19, as well as economic recovery and new areas of opportunity.

- Financial, legal and accounting services have expanded their use of digital technologies for services, processes and systems enhancement.

### Customer facing businesses

- Businesses such as retail, banking, hospitality, and tourism have shifted considerably:
- Retail operations have enlarged their online presence, calling for greater numbers of people to be skilled to be able to design and operate platforms, deliver goods, and market products online. Some retailers have also innovated with click and pay solutions enabling customers to

order online and then pick up their goods at a certain point, rather than access a retail outlet. All these innovations require different skill sets.

- Tourism has experienced an increase in experiential online offerings, opening up a host of small provider opportunities, if such providers are digitally enabled. A good example is the Airbnb academy that identifies, trains and mentors community members on how to host online or physical experiences on anything from language, to cooking, crafts, hiking, and cultural experiences.
- Contact centres, where possible, have enlarged their business opportunities as sales and services have moved online, instead of taking place through physical stores and service centres.

## ▶ SHIFTS IN HOW LEARNING TAKES PLACE, AND ACCESS TO LEARNING

Traditionally theoretical learning has taken place in classroom-style formats, with experiential on-the-job learning taking place in the workplace. Generally, work is preceded by primary, secondary, and tertiary/university education. Long, formal qualifications, and shorter more agile skills training contribute to workplace skills and development. Qualification authorities tend to be more focused on formal and long-term qualifications, with short term skills and micro-credentials sometimes obtaining some form of accreditation on their own or as a contribution towards a longer term qualification. Professional bodies tend to monitor and support continuous learning and standards. Sector training authorities, where in place, focus on sector development in line with sector needs.

### ▶ Experiences and changes

While some online learning took place prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, this has rapidly accelerated with the adjustments that have been imposed on workplaces and educational facilities. In some countries, online learning has expanded exponentially creating opportunities to digitise content, supplement, or augment learning, or convert learning onto online platforms. This has dramatically expanded access to education, skills, and development.

On the supply side, individuals have seized the opportunity to upgrade skills, or change careers. With the opening up of online learning opportunities, the

linear education into work trend has been disrupted and many more people are learning alongside work or taking time off from work to undergo training or education. Cost and time, as well as accreditation of short courses, tend to be the biggest inhibitors in this regard. There has been a marked rise in modular training to assist the user to manage their time and the costs of training better. In many instances, however, formal qualification authorities have struggled to accredit emerging and new forms of training, and it has been extremely difficult to verify training as required for formal certification.

The demand for short term, rapid skills development has also expanded significantly. The speed of change in the workplace has brought with it the requirement for businesses and workers to adapt as quickly as possible to gain the requisite skills. The focus has

been on 'can the person do the work', rather than 'is the training accredited and certified'. Certification and accreditation have lagged somewhat behind the dynamic needs of business, and businesses have self-funded training rather than wait to recover the costs through sector or state programmes.

Across many sectors, management training has moved online. However, this has tended to stifle creativity, engagement, and collaboration, and a hybrid online and on-site approach is gradually emerging.

Another trend which has arisen is that older people have tended to struggle more with adapting to online training, preferring physical meetings where

<sup>13</sup> A good example of this is the Growing to Market Agricultural Development Agency township initiative with Gauteng Province, South Africa – over 600 township based youth have been trained and supported to grow their own produce, access market, and obtain funding for agri-entrepreneurship.

<sup>14</sup> Vodafone Women Farmers Programme is a good illustration of such technological enhancements. 1300 women farmers have been empowered to use smartphones to access the Connected Farmer's platform and, through SMS, receive valuable information, including weather forecasts and market prices. In addition, the agribusiness and even third-party providers can issue vouchers to the farmers, who can exchange the SMS-based vouchers at participating dealers for farming requirements, such as seeds, fertiliser and access to mechanisation.



possible. Malawi and Zimbabwe identified this as a particular challenge. Zimbabwe also indicated that some people were more reluctant to attend online training as it tended to be unpaid, when ordinarily people would receive training allowances when physically present. Engagement levels tended to be lower with online training.

### Onsite businesses

Manufacturing, construction, agricultural, and mining operations have been exposed to many of the general shifts in learning as described immediately above, however, there are some shifts taking place in these sectors:

- Most agricultural training has remained on site in physical format, with additional health and safety precautions being put in in place. The Peritum Agri College is an example of where the delivery method has changed to online learning . In contrast, many wine producers who suffered from frequent closures due to lockdown restrictions reported that training also stopped and started in line therewith.
- For forestry operations, refresher training is mandatory, and this has largely moved online. Many elective online training offerings, however, have been declined as people prefer hands-on training.
- Many in construction businesses have moved training onto online platforms, but they have found that the uptake is poor, and people prefer face-to-face training. People also find physical training more relevant for physical work e.g., bricklaying.
- In manufacturing, training moved online but has in many instances been stagnant during higher levels of lockdown. Now that work is resuming, the focus tends to be on occupational training and apprenticeships rather than advanced training such as MBAs. There is also a greater interest in digital skills. Manufacturing also reported using online platforms like MS Team and Zoom for training purposes.

### Offsite businesses

Professional and general service businesses have tended to rapidly scale online learning and development opportunities:

- Management consulting enterprises have enhanced access to specialist or executive online training.
- Banking and insurance industries indicated that they continued to use online training during the pandemic, as this was already in place pre-Covid-19.
- In the insurance industry, knowledge-based workers have had access to new training tools such as LinkedIn Learning, enabling workers to access a large range of mandatory or voluntary learning opportunities.

### Customer-facing businesses

- Retailers, tourism, and hospitality businesses have tended to use downtime as a result of the lockdowns to upgrade management qualifications. In addition:
- Call centres for sales and business services have converted in-person training to online training on products and sales techniques.
- Retailers that have made rapid product, delivery, or service-related adjustments have provided training either online, or in socially distanced training centres.
- The retail motor industry also moved largely to online training platforms to deliver training, despite the hands-on nature of the work.
- Many people working in tourism and hospitality whose operations have temporarily or permanently closed, have used online options to upgrade their skills or access training in other sectors.
- A number of individuals are providing online masterclasses through social media or established networks. These are provided across national boundaries and have been used by many individuals to pivot into new forms of work.

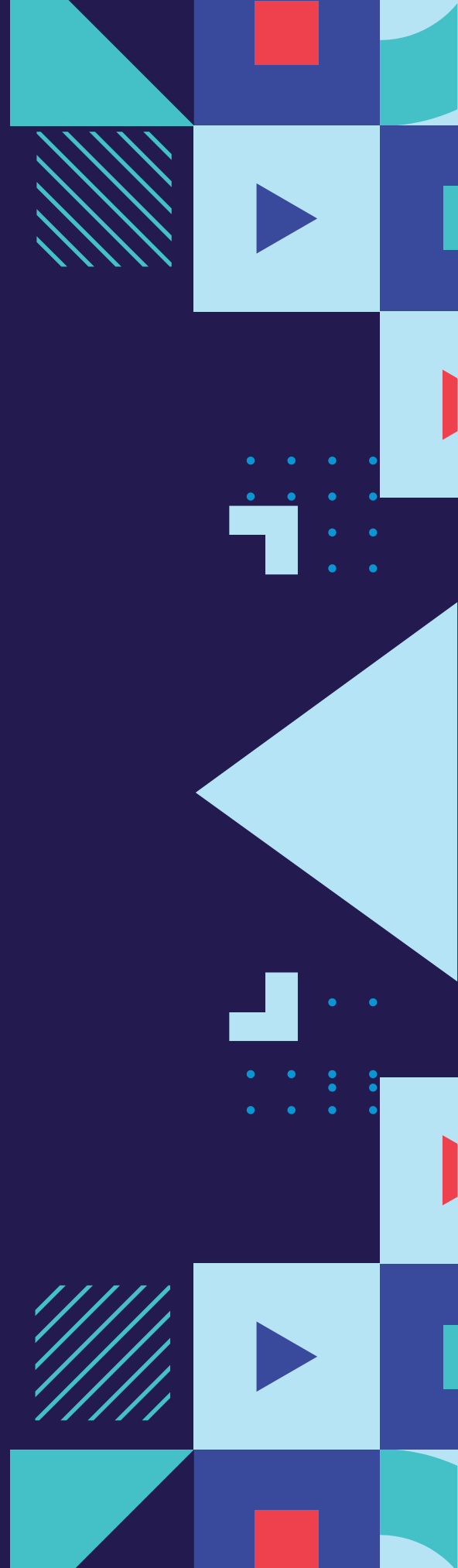
[NAME OF EBMO] Guidance		
On Site	Off Site	Customer Facing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop protocols for safe physical training during the pandemic.</li> <li>• Consider sector wide strategies in mining, manufacturing, construction, and agriculture on how to augment online training opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider sector wide strategies in legal, financial, accounting, IT, business, and consulting service industries on how to augment online training opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop protocols for safe physical training during the pandemic.</li> <li>• Consider sector wide strategies in retail, tourism, and hospitality on how to augment online training opportunities.</li> </ul>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.peritumagri.com/online-learning>.

<sup>16</sup> The plumbing industry association in South Africa, IoPSA, is in the process of speeding up the digitisation of learning content for the last three years of secondary school, which together with real work experience, will enable matriculants to qualify with a plumbing qualification.

## (vi) DIGITAL ACCESS

Digital access is determined by a combination of factors pertaining to connectivity, technology, and infrastructure, as well as affordability for continued access. A pre-requisite and key enabler of digital access is digital skills.



## ► CONNECTIVITY, TECHNOLOGY, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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Digital access by means of a stable electricity supply, internet connectivity, the requisite devices and a suitable workplace determines a person's ability to WFH.

### ► Experiences and changes

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#### General

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, for some workers, WFH was more limited. It tended to occur in smaller self-owned businesses, for those working after hours, or in more agile businesses. Businesses tended to pay only for home-based devices for more senior management or where the person was always on the move and required portability. WFH, prior to the pandemic, was largely individualised, and people would still need to go into the workplace for meetings, or to make a phone call in order to discuss a topic with a colleague who was not on the same premises. Conference calling technology was exclusive, inaccessible, and limited to businesses that had good video conferencing facilities across different locations. People would travel across town, countries and internationally to attend meetings or finalise business deals, incurring the time, inconvenience, and costs of travel.

This has significantly shifted as a result of the pandemic and WFH has been mainstreamed, to a greater or lesser extent, across many sectors. Businesses that relied predominantly on office desktop computers were initially, during early stages of the severe lockdown, caught off guard. This was relatively quickly rectified by moving desktops to homes or allocating laptops to those doing WFH.

To add to this, while many people have cell phones, some are not smart phones and even when they are, they are generally not suitable, due to the smaller screen size, to be the main digital device for working purposes. Smart phones can, however, be used for a wider range of applications, platform based services, video conferencing and the like. This has resulted in greater convenience and versatility for those who have the benefit of a functional smart phone.

Internet connectivity has posed a greater challenge. Many homes do not have connectivity due to a variety of factors. This may be because the home is located in a remote rural area, an informal suburb or township that does not have internet access, because of the cost of internet access, because there is no stable electricity supply, or because

there has been no prior need for such access. To a large extent, connectivity has been widely available for wealthier residential and commercial locations as this has been where it is commercially viable to deploy such infrastructure.

Lastly, home infrastructure can be a limiting factor for WFH. A stable electricity supply is required for desktop computing, video conferencing, and general work productivity. Where electricity outages take place, and the supply of electricity is regularly interrupted, battery or generator backup is advisable. The home environment should ideally have desktop space and should be relatively private so as to enable the person to deal with confidential business and personal information, as well as participate on online video conference meetings. Prior to the pandemic, the cost of internet connectivity and digital devices was, to a large extent, borne by the employer for installation and use at the workplace. WFH has necessitated a significant shift that requires employers to support workers to gain digital access from their homes. The costs of connectivity, devices, and back up electricity solutions has become an issue that many employers have grappled with. Most employers have been compelled to find solutions and budget to support workers in this regard.

The extent of the digital divide has revealed itself and been enlarged during the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. Countries have recognised that without significant investment in connectivity and digital technology that inequalities will broaden as people's learning and earning abilities are now fundamentally linked thereto. In the same way as water, sanitation, electricity, and roads are basic services, so too now is digital access.

#### Onsite businesses

Many farm, manufacturing, construction, and mining workers that were regarded as essential sectors continued to work on site even during more severe instances of lockdown. Although most of this work did not require WFH digital access, there are some instances where this was required:

- As a result of scheduling and transport restrictions, logistical arrangements for manufacturing and mining workers during the early stages of severe lockdown were predominantly made by use of cell phone communication.
- Construction work, unless it was for emergency repairs, was initially shut down during the hard lockdowns. As a result, cell phones were used to stay in contact with workers for a range of





matters including information exchange on remuneration, leave and anticipated return dates with the associated safety conditions. WhatsApp was a preferred means of communication. Offices based workers in the sector migrated to working from home and regular check in meetings were used to assist people to manage during the lockdown.

- Primary agricultural workers, and those working in agro-processing continued to work throughout the pandemic. The need for a functional phone to stay in contact relating to transport, absences and shifts, emerged as a growing need.
- Even in workplaces that largely perform their work on site, WFH applied for office related parts of business such as finance, human resources, and some management functions.

### Offsite businesses

- Many sectors of business such as those providing general business services, consultancy, legal and accounting services moved rapidly to WFH. Examples of how this has been done include:
- An advisory enterprise provided all its professional staff with a WFH voucher to spend as the person required to enhance their digital access. Some staff used the money to upgrade their devices, install generators, purchase a desk or screen off their work areas.
- Many enterprises, such as those providing business services, have re-allocated their travel, conference, meeting and entertainment budgets into digital device or connectivity allowances for staff.

### Customer facing businesses

Business such as retail, banking, tourism, and hospitality have experienced a combination of

onsite and offsite experiences in relation to digital access. In addition:

- There has been a marked increase in online sales support with the related need to augment digital access for such staff. From retail, telecommunications, banking product queries, to flight and accommodation bookings, postponement, cancellations, and refunds; the demand has increased significantly as people have shifted from visiting the store, to communicating on email or over WhatsApp.
- One business with a business service centre which had desktop computers at the workplace purchased laptops and data for its staff and has donated the desktops to a school that had no computers for classroom-based learning.
- Another area of substantial increase has been in online marketing, through a variety of channels including social media. In addition, staff that are involved in development of applications, surveys and customer focus groups have also been in short supply. Staff working in digital marketing, application and software development required rapid digital access.
- An unexpected area of growth has been business services provided through contact centres where more and more customer queries, business services and product support services are now provided online, and in some instances from home.
- There has been a growing trend of employers providing digital connectivity and devices to enable call centre staff to work from home. In South Africa, for example the call centre industry association reports that more than 40% of staff are now regularly working from home. The demand for digital device installation and support has increased significantly in the call centre industry where WFH is becoming an increasingly viable option.

## [NAME OF EBMO] Guidance

### General

- Develop a digital access audit for your enterprise that includes connectivity, devices, infrastructure, and stable electricity supply. Use this audit to inform your digital access strategy. An example of such audit is attached to this guide and marked A5.
- Reallocate budgets from travel, entertainment, meeting, and conference expenses to digital access enhancement.

On Site	Off Site	Customer Facing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop affordable and effective mechanisms to secure smart phones, data and airtime for workers who need to report to work onsite.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Augment digital access for computing purposes. The more that is invested in this regard, the more productive workers will be.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop mechanisms to secure smart phones, data and airtime for workers who need to report to work onsite.</li> <li>• Augment digital access for computing purposes.</li> </ul>



## ► CONDITIONS AND PROTECTION OF USE

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Regardless of the type of technology used, be it ordinary or smart phones, computers, or other devices, they are now commonly regarded as work tools and assets. In most instances they are loaded with specific software that also has value and must be maintained. In addition, data access at home, when provided by the employer, may be provided under specific conditions. Where digital access is provided at the home, specific provisions need to be put in place.

### ► Experiences and changes

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#### General

As a result of the speed at which digital access was implemented, many employers dealt with conditions in a somewhat haphazard manner. Some employers imposed no conditions at all, whereas others imposed excessively harsh provisions. Some employers have provided uncapped internet access to workers who WFH, yet limit such data access exclusively for the worker's use. Others make it clear that uncapped internet can be used by the worker and family members. Many employers that have closed intranet systems prohibit the downloading of software onto computing devices in order to secure the safety of the system. Some employers provide IT backup support for those who WFH, but often this is more accessible for senior staff.

What is clear is that both the physical device, as well as the content thereon requires protection. There has been an increase in device related theft from homes since the start of the pandemic and efforts should be taken to ensure the safety of devices. This requires creating an awareness thereof and ensuring that systems and processes are in place to back up content and secure it from breaches that may compromise business or personal information protection. It also requires keeping a clear asset register and insuring devices for offsite use. In addition, many businesses have experienced a rise in cyber security challenges – from spam mails to ransomware demands and systems hacking.

As WFH regularises, so too do the applicable conditions and a wide body of experience is being developed. Generally, conditions pertaining to protection of the device, the enterprise's intellectual property, its systems and information, access to the device for work related purposes and a duty of care apply. In addition, a good process for device maintenance, repair and support should be developed. Companies may also wish to extend such support to connectivity support and to make

WFH workplace environment adjustments. This has tended to result in a change in the roles performed by IT staff – the role has become one that is on call 24/7 and may require visiting of multiple workplaces at home to install and repair digital devices.

#### Onsite businesses

Many onsite businesses have increased their reliance on mobile phone communication to and from workers, which may require consideration of how to support ongoing access to a suitable

phone, airtime, and data. The communication is predominantly pertaining to scheduling, change in lockdown regulations and its impact on work, and to report illness or isolation for Covid-19 related purposes.

- Most cellular phone devices are self-owned by workers. This may result in challenges when the phone is stolen or out of order, or the person has no airtime or data.
- Some employers have sought to access bulk deals for workers to secure suitable cell phones or data.
- Some business, such as agriculture, have implemented new standards requiring workers to stay in touch.

#### Offsite businesses

Many sectors of business that have migrated to WFH have rapidly made adjustments. In addition to the general points made above, some examples include:

- Professional business services have considerable intellectual property that should be protected, and face disproportionate data security risks. Additional cybersecurity interventions have been put in place.
- Some business services have put in place ethical guidelines for online meetings and recordings, warning staff not to say things that are not for general consumption as meetings are recorded. Most businesses have implemented mechanisms to let participants know and agree to recording of online meetings.
- Some banks indicated that the impact of the pandemic was not that severe on their work practices as they were already migrating to hybrid online service models before the pandemic.
- In some businesses operating off site, they provide strict conditions for use of data for work related purposes, and place technological restrictions on access to the web, for streaming purposes or other non work-related purposes.



## Customer facing businesses

Businesses that are predominantly customer facing have in addition to general digital conditions, focused specifically on protection of customer and personal information:

- In many businesses, additional systems have been implemented to keep customer information stored on WFH devices secure and confidential.
- In some businesses, customer lists have been disaggregated and encrypted so that they cannot be copied and transmitted to others outside of the enterprise.



Photo Credit | ILO

### [NAME OF EBMO] Guidance

#### General

- Develop short guidelines on what is and what is not acceptable digital conduct applicable for WFH staff.
- Put in place clear standards to protect business information, intellectual property or personal protected information and the conditions of use.
- Implement cybersecurity measures to guard against loss or corruption, or theft of data by use of ransomware, phishing attacks or the like. Consider centralising online team recordings and cloud based storage for backup purposes. Consider imposing duties on workers to immediately report any cybersecurity incidents.
- Ensure asset registers are updated with digital devices provided to staff to WFH.
- Institute safe digital signatures and document storage solutions
- Ask workers to agree to take reasonable care of enterprise issued devices when they WFH. This may include provisions such as placing devices out of site at night, when not home or when there are unknown visitors in the home. Be clear about whether the device or internet access can be used by family members residing in the home and the conditions under which that may or may not take place.
- Update insurance policies to cover devices that are used by workers who WFH.
- Review IT service staff conditions of employment to take into account extended hours, home visits and the costs related thereto.
- Consider the impact and how to manage the risk of continuous work, and limited rest times as a result of constant availability via online tools.
- Consider augmenting IT support services and technology.
- Advise online meeting participants of recording of proceedings.

On Site	Off Site	Customer Facing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put in place cell phone access standards and communication mechanisms.</li> <li>• Consider allowances to support workers to stay in contact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Augment your IT service support services to support those that WFH.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create clear guidelines for staff about personal protected information.</li> <li>• Put in place systems protection to prevent irregular sharing of customer lists and information.</li> </ul>

## ► DIGITAL SKILLS

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Digital skills are broadly defined as those needed to 'use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information'.

Digital skills include those that are required directly by digital experts, such as:

- to design, build and repair devices
- to install and maintain internet connectivity
- to design, install or operate software
- to manage, develop and programme digital services, applications, webpages, social media and platforms

In addition, many business functions are becoming increasingly digitised ranging from business and process analysis, data management, marketing, to learning and development.

Entry-level digital literacy is also required by most workers that are office based or who WFH. This requires basic skills how to operate a smart phone, computer, send and receive emails, use of online applications, document development, filing and the like.

### ► Experiences and changes

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The demand for digital skills has expanded exponentially as a result of the new WFH working practices. As per an African Development Bank article, the fourth industrial revolution has been accelerated during the pandemic and it is imperative that businesses and governments digitise their operations as part of building resilience to economic and social shocks.

Not only has the demand for advanced digital skills expanded during the pandemic, but all those that now WFH have had to acquire, by necessity, a basic level of digital literacy including how to participate in online meetings. Microsoft Teams, by way of example, has recorded a 775% increase in virtual working platform use in countries that have put in place social distancing and confinement measures. In addition, business processes have been rapidly digitised to enable greater efficiencies and effective operations during the pandemic.

#### General

Basic digital literacy skills have, by necessity, been acquired by those who WFH, and many in management levels of the business. This includes the ability to use a computer, access emailing and documents and participate in online meetings. This in turn has increased the need for digital devices, connectivity and the related repair, maintenance and installation services.

There has also been a general increase in the demand for digitalisation of business processes. Demand for people with digital skills in business analysis, data science, analytics and visualisation, project management, product management, marketing, media, and learning and development have all markedly increased.

#### Onsite businesses

Businesses working onsite, such as agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction have enhanced digital skills opportunities and requirements in the following manner:

- Office based services in all onsite related businesses have moved to WFH, necessitating the acquisition of basic digital literacy skills.
- Business processes have been increasingly digitalised during the course of the pandemic, for example scheduling and communication on scheduling of work has been automated and distributed through online, rather than physical platforms.

#### Offsite businesses

Extensive basic digital literacy skills have been necessitated as a result of WFH in industries such as professional and business services:

- A law enterprise, by example, indicated that whereas previously partners would dictate all their emails and review paper-based documents, they had to learn to use their computers themselves and rely on virtual calls to dictate document changes.
- Professional service businesses indicated that they trained their entire staff on Zoom and MS Teams, and that workers learnt very quickly.

#### Customer facing businesses

- Businesses, such as those in tourism, hospitality and the like have rapidly expanded digital skills in areas such as:
- Business analytics, marketing and processes have been digitised as a result of the pandemic.
- Call centre staff that moved to WFH had to become familiar with computer applications and management, rather than the single application desktops that they would have used on site.
- The retail motor industry reported that they have moved to virtual recruitment processes, and that auditing of all autobody shops has become digital.
- Cash handling services have converted into cashless payments, with the associated digital applications and usage.



**General**

- Set aside budget to conduct basic digital skills audits for those that WFH, together with easy online training depending on where deficits are detected. This is a basic requirement for productivity, particularly with those in management levels and who do WFH.
- Bolster resources for the IT services within a business, understanding the strategic nature of IT and digitisation within the business. Consider digitising processes such as recruitment and auditing. Enable staff to enhance and diversify their digital skills.
- Build IT support skills to service those workers that WFH.
- Identify new areas of work requiring digital skills. Use the opportunity to bring young people into the business in order to augment the businesses digital capabilities.

On Site	Off Site	Customer Facing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify ways in which to augment physical processes with online tools and identify skills requirements to achieve this.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Augment physical processes with digital tools.</li> <li>• Ensure adequate capacity and skills to support WFH installations, repair, and maintenance, as well as support for online applications and tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider skilling opportunities to digitise processes. Importantly, the focus should be on capacity building rather than outsourcing which can result in ongoing dependence on external providers.</li> <li>• Build skills and capabilities around cashless payment solutions, including security of the payment environment.</li> </ul>



Photo Credit | ILO E51199

## ▶ VII.CONCLUSION

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Navigating the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath will continue to be one of the biggest business challenges of our time. The pandemic has no doubt given all employers of all sizes, an unprecedented opportunity to reinvent how workers work. While there are both pros and cons to the structural changes necessitated by Covid-19, these changes, as described in this guide, if clearly communicated to workers and implemented effectively, will improve business operations and the wellbeing of workers.

As enterprises continue to take stock of the impact of Covid-19 on the economy and the impacts on workers, there is still significant planning required that will have long lasting effects on the workplace. Enterprises must, as they implement new ways of work, have a response plan for possible future waves of Covid-19 while acknowledging that the Covid-19 virus is here to stay and at this point in time, the most effective response is to ensure that as many workers as possible are encouraged to get vaccinated.

As we learn more about the impact of Covid-19, the adaptations to the way we work as set out in this guide will continue and evolve over time for different sectoral clusters that work predominantly onsite, offsite or which are customer facing. It is important to be clear about the measures implemented at workplaces and to manage workers' expectations. These measures must be flexible enough to be updated as conditions and knowledge about Covid-19 changes. Collaboration and communication at all levels is key to ensuring that the changes implemented at workplaces are pragmatic and accepted by workers so as to ensure increased productivity and wellbeing of workers.

In today's globalized world, businesses face a vast array of threats to their business operations. The global Covid-19 pandemic has underlined, as never before, that business needs to be prepared to face unexpected events. In short, they need to be Resilient Businesses. Resilience strategies have been based on expected hazards, often natural hazards. There is now a greater acceptance of the need for wider preparation against a whole range of hazards.







# COVID-19 Risk Assessment Report



Photo Credit | Photo by ANTONI SHKRABA

COVID-19 Risk Assessment Report								
Name of Enterprise:				Date:				
Location of Site:		Risk Assessor:		Name and Surname		Signature		
Department:		Area Supervisor:		Name and Surname		Signature		
Type of work:		Health and Safety Representative:		Name and Surname		Signature		
Risk Assessment								
Source of Hazard	Route of exposure	Activities and Tasks	Existing Control Measures	Control Effectiveness	Risk Classification	Additional Controls Required	Responsible Person(s)	Due Date/s
Exposure Risk Classification								
<b>Low Exposure Risk</b>  Lower exposure risk (caution) jobs are those that do not require contact with people known to be or suspected of being infected with SARS-CoV-2, nor in frequent close contact with (i.e. within 2 metres of) the general public.	<b>Medium Exposure Risk</b>  Medium exposure risk jobs include those that require frequent and/or close contact with (i.e. within 2 metres of) people who may be infected with SARS-CoV-2, but who are not known or suspected to be COVID-19 positive persons.		<b>High Exposure Risk</b>  High exposure risk jobs are those with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19.			<b>Very High Exposure Risk</b>  Very high exposure risk jobs are those with high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19 during specific medical, post-mortem, or laboratory procedures.		

► COVID-19 Risk Assessment Report



## COMPANY NAME

Employee Name:	
Employee No:	
Department:	
Date Completed:	

### Covid-19 worker self-risk assessment form

- **This document must be completed by employees before they start to work.** Use the questions below to assess if it is safe for you to start work.
- If you answer **NO** to any of the questions, report this immediately to your supervisor, who will assist to identify a practicable and reasonable solution.

#### Always practice these controls in your workplace

1. Social distancing must be at least 1.5 metres away from any other person, in any circumstance.
2. Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser after contact with any person or after contact with frequently touched surfaces e.g. phones, door handles etc.
3. Cough in the fold of the elbow or into a tissue, which you safely discard in a bin, and wash your hands afterwards.
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

#### Employee training and awareness

I have received training on COVID-19 and the virus which causes it, how the virus is spread, the symptoms of the disease, and how I can protect myself against infection.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> STOP
I am trained and familiar with the COVID-19 protocols in my workplace.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> STOP
I know the protocol of self-isolation at my home, or at a quarantine site, should I become ill with symptoms of COVID-19.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> STOP
I know the protocol of who I should report to, should I become ill with symptoms of COVID-19.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> STOP
I understand that if I develop any COVID-19 symptoms, that I should not enter into the workplace and if already at work, I must report to my line manager and leave the workplace.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> STOP
I have been told about the process of contact tracing for COVID-19 if I test positive for COVID-19, and that I am required to co-operate with management during this process.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> STOP
I have been trained in the correct use, how many times PPE can be used before it needs to be replaced, storage, and safe disposal of used/contaminated PPE.	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> STOP



## Hygiene and cleaning measures

<p>A hand washing sink with soap and approved (70% alcohol) hand sanitiser is available in my work area.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STOP
<p>Surfaces and equipment are cleaned and disinfected with approved disinfection/sanitising products on a regular basis (at least every four hours).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STOP
<p>I know the required personal hygiene practices such as coughing/ sneezing into my elbow if I do not have a clean tissue with me, washing my hands regularly for 20 seconds, and not sharing stationary, eating utensils, and/or PPE with a colleague.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STOP

## Reduce physical contact (social distancing 1.5 m or 2 arms-length)

<p>I know the social distancing rule of keeping a distance of at least 1.5 metres or 2 arms-length between myself and any colleague or person from the public.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STOP
<p>I know that I need to avoid physical contact such as handshakes, touching, and hugging.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STOP
<p>I know that crowds or gatherings (e.g. large groups of &gt;10, or groups in spaces where there sufficient ventilation is not available) need to be avoided at my workplace.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STOP
<p>When dining at work or during breaks, I need to maintain a 1.5 metres distance from colleagues while dining, and I must not sit face-to-face opposite any other person.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STOP

## Personal wellbeing

<p>I monitor my own health for early COVID-19 symptoms (cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or fever <math>\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}</math>) or flu symptoms and know what to do and to where I must report if I experience any of the mentioned symptoms.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STOP
<p>I know the contact number and how to access psychological support services should I need them.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STOP

## Emergency response

<p>I am familiar with the reporting procedure in the event of someone at home or in my workplace experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GO <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STOP
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## Example checklist for setting up a home working environment



Checklist for employers and employees to use when setting up a home working environment, including work from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This checklist can be used or adapted to ensure that both the employer and employee have everything in place to work from home in a comfortable and effective manner. You should keep it as a record of actions taken.

	Action	Completed (date and notes)
1	Employer to ensure that employees complete a self-risk assessment at home.	
2	Employer to make sure employee has, or is provided with, the necessary equipment and technology, and agree upfront who will be responsible for costs.	
3	Employer to make sure that IT support is in place, including providing any necessary training.	
4	Employer to provide guidance and any policies around work equipment and technology. For example, how to report any IT issues, as well as rules pertaining to data protection and information security.	
5	Employee to check with their insurer, mortgage provider, or landlord to ensure that there are no issues with regard to working from home.	
6	Employer to check that the insurance covers employees working from home for any loss, damage, injury etc.	
7	Employer and employee to agree any arrangements around expenses, including what can be claimed, how, when, and what is taxable.	
8	Agree how and when to communicate with each other.	
9	Agree how performance will be monitored and managed.	
10	Agree how often the employee will attend the main place of work, in line with any government rules related to Covid-19.	
11	Agree: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When and how often the work from home arrangement will be reviewed,</li> <li>• when any trial period will be assessed, and</li> <li>• what will happen if there are any issues with the work from home arrangements.</li> </ul>	
12	Employer to put arrangements in writing and issue a work from home policy.	
13	Employer to produce a consent form. Employer and employee to sign it off, in order to reflect the agreed details of the work from home arrangement.	
14	If a permanent home-working arrangement is agreed, employer is to amend the employee's contract to reflect the home-working agreement (where necessary).	



## Checklist for employees: Working from home

Your safety remains our priority when you work from home. Please print and complete this checklist to identify any hazards in your home-based workspace. Our goal is to help you identify any safety concerns so that you can eliminate or avoid any risks.

Evaluate each item on this checklist. Check each item that is not a risk.

**Employee's name:**

**Remote work address:**

**Assessment Date:**

### Take appropriate breaks to ensure repetitive actions are not continued for long periods.

	Check that the level of illumination and location of lighting fixtures are suited to the activity. Lighting level should be sufficient for visual tasks to be completed without eye strain. Greater illumination is generally needed for very fine visual tasks. Natural and artificial light sources should not create glare via reflection on the computer screen or working surface.
	Check that there are sufficient levels of ventilation and thermal comfort.
	Check that walkways are clear of clutter and trip hazards, such as trailing electrical cords.
	Check that there is suitable storage space for documents and books. Is the area clutter-free so that you can easily focus on the task?
	Where possible, only use the equipment that has been issued to you by your organisation and ensure that it has been tested.
	Agree upon a reasonable communication system between you and your manager (for example: call-in or email once in the morning and once at night).
	Inform your manager if there is any change that may impact on your work environment, or your health and safety (for example: a new pet, renovations, or moving house).
	Take breaks and step away from your keyboard, standing up at least once per hour.
	Keep wrists upright while typing and make sure they are not supported on any surface while doing so.
	The ideal sitting posture is upright or slightly reclined, maintaining a slight hollow in your lower back
	Set up your workstation and establish boundaries around your work hours with your partner, children, and/or housemates.
	Schedule regular meetings and catch ups with your manager, team, and clients to help maintain ongoing contact and foster positive working relationships.
	Stay connected via phone, email, and/or online mechanisms (via your organisation's videoconferencing, instant messaging platforms, etc.) to keep you up to date with the latest developments regarding work, your team, and organisation.

	If a permanent home-working arrangement is agreed, employer is to amend the employee's contract to reflect the home-working agreement (where necessary).
	Use outdoor spaces, where possible, when you take breaks and try to incorporate some exercise or other activity as part of your working day.
	Identify any potential distractions and put strategies in place to minimise them; for example, separating your workstation from the rest of the house.

<b>Employee Details:</b>	
<b>Employee name:</b>	
<b>Department:</b>	

<b>Remote work address:</b>	
<b>Phone:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	

<b>Supervisor Details:</b>	
<b>Supervisor name:</b>	
<b>Department:</b>	
<b>Phone:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	

<b>Checklist:</b>			
<b>CHAIR</b>			
The chair is easily adjusted from a seated position (seat back height and angle).	YES	NO	N/A
The forearms and wrists are parallel to the floor or angled down slightly when chair height is adjusted.	YES	NO	N/A
When chair height is adjusted appropriately, the feet are positioned on the ground.	YES	NO	N/A
If feet are not positioned on the ground, a footrest is provided.	YES	NO	N/A
Seat back angle is adjusted so user is in an upright position when using keyboard.	YES	NO	N/A
<b>WORKSTATION DESK</b>			
Desk is large enough for the completion of mixed tasks (computer and reading/writing).	YES	NO	N/A
(The Australian Standard 4442:1997 advises this should be at least 1600 mm x 800 mm).	YES	NO	N/A
Desk is between 680 mm and 735 mm in height.	YES	NO	N/A
If desk is height adjustable, is this easily adjusted so that forearms are parallel to floor or angled down slightly?	YES	NO	N/A
Desk is designed so frequent trunk twisting/rotation is not required.	YES	NO	N/A
User is able to sit close to workstation without any impediment	YES	NO	N/A



(Check that the desktop is thin, chair arms are not in the way, clear leg room)	YES	NO	N/A
If documents are regularly referred to, they can be positioned & supported (ie. use of document holder, or desk slope) to avoid unnecessary neck movement (looking sideways / downwards).	YES	NO	N/A

<b>MONITOR</b>			
Positioned at approximately an arm's length away when in an upright seated position.	YES	NO	N/A
Positioned at an appropriate height (neck remains in a neutral position – not required to look upwards or downwards to view monitor).	YES	NO	N/A
If using a laptop, this is either raised or positioned on a docking station.	YES	NO	N/A
Monitor is positioned away from direct light sources and is free from glare/reflection.	YES	NO	N/A
<b>KEYBOARD AND MOUSE</b>			
Elbows remain close to side of body when keyboard and mouse are utilised.	YES	NO	N/A
Mouse is at the same level as the keyboard.	YES	NO	N/A
A separate keyboard and mouse is used when utilising laptop computers for extended periods.	YES	NO	N/A
<b>WORK ENVIRONMENT</b>			
Lighting is adequate (able to read/refer to documentation without eye strain).	YES	NO	N/A
Noise levels are not distracting from task concentration.	YES	NO	N/A
Ventilation (natural or artificial) is adequate.	YES	NO	N/A
<b>DATE COMPLETED:</b>			

<b>Actions or equipment required:</b>	
List any actions or equipment or modifications required:	





## IT access audit (used to establish if a person can WFH)

Photo Credit | Marcel Crozet-ILO Photo News

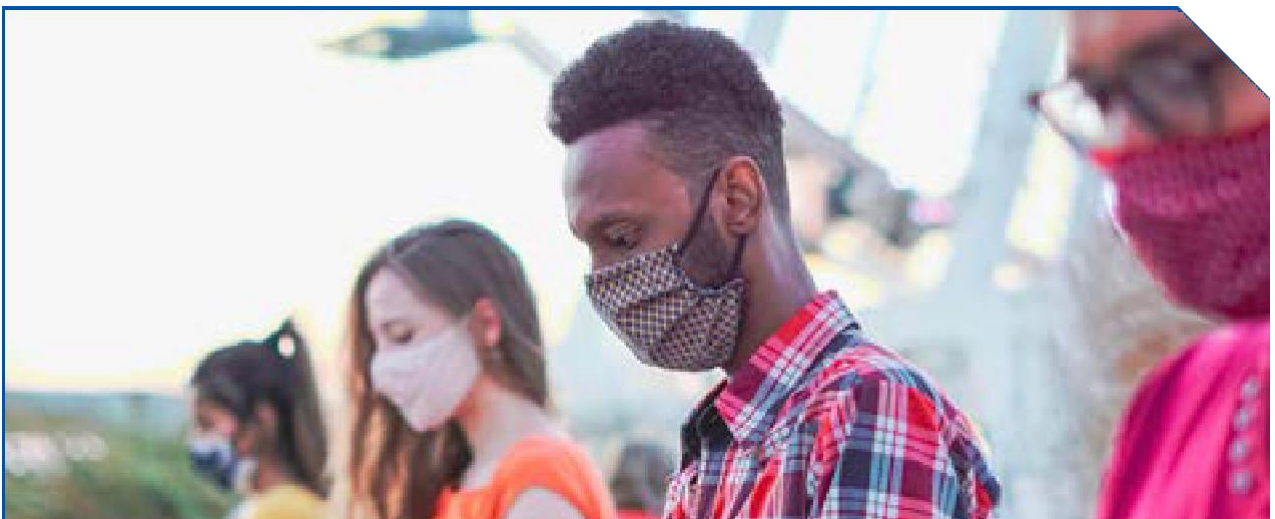
### IT access audit (used to establish if a person can WFH)

	Usual office-bound role (e.g. clerk/ manager/ knowledge worker, etc.)	Is this requirement critical or optional?	IT support role	Is this requirement critical or optional?
<b>Working space</b>	Does the employee have access to a dedicated working space? If not, does the employee have access to a working space where they can work without interruptions?	Critical.	Does the employee have access to a dedicated working space? If not, does the employee have access to a working space where they can work without interruptions?	Critical.
<b>Desk</b>	Does the employee have access to an appropriate work desk or work surface when using a laptop computer?  Does the employee have access to an appropriate work desk or surface on which to securely hold a desktop computer?	Critical.	Does the employee have access to an appropriate work desk or work surface when using a laptop computer?  Does the employee have access to an appropriate work desk or surface on which to securely hold a desktop computer?	Critical.
<b>Chair</b>	Does the employee have access to an appropriate chair?	Critical.	Does the employee have access to an appropriate chair?	Critical.





<b>Telephonic access</b>	<p>Does the employee have access to a reliable cell phone?</p> <p>Does the employee need access to a landline telephone?</p>	<p>Critical (cell phone). Optional (landline). This depends on the role.</p>	<p>Does the employee have access to a reliable cell phone?</p> <p>Does the employee need access to a landline telephone?</p>	<p>Critical (cell phone). Optional (landline). This depends on the role.</p>
<b>Internet access</b>	<p>Does the employee have access to a fibre internet connection or reliable Long-Term Evolution (LTE) mobile internet?</p> <p>Does the employee require the provision of mobile data to perform their duties?</p>	<p>Critical.</p>	<p>Does the employee have access to a fibre internet connection or fixed Long-Term Evolution (LTE) mobile internet?</p>	<p>Critical.</p>
<b>Computer access</b>	<p>Does the employee have access to a laptop with appropriate Central Processing Unit (CPU), memory and hard drive (Solid State Drive (SSD) capabilities to perform their job?</p> <p>Does the employee have access to a desktop computer with appropriate memory and hard drive capabilities to perform their job?</p> <p>Does the employee require an additional computer screen to perform their job?</p>	<p>Critical.</p>	<p>Does the employee have access to a laptop with appropriate Central Processing Unit (CPU), memory and hard drive (Solid State Drive (SSD) capabilities to perform their job?</p> <p>Does the employee have access to a desktop computer with appropriate memory and hard drive capabilities to perform their job?</p> <p>Does the employee require an additional computer screen to perform their job?</p>	<p>Critical.</p>
<b>Back-up electricity</b>	<p>Does the employee have access to back-up electricity (a generator or UPS system)?</p>	<p>Optional (depending on the role).</p>	<p>Does the employee have access to back-up electricity (a generator or UPS system)?</p>	<p>Critical.</p>



Add EBMO NAME  
& ADDRESS

