

# INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE DESIGN

October 2021

## Participants

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Name	WIM Organisation	Role in WIM Organisation	Role in Working Group
Kate Finch	WiR NT	Chair	Coordinator
Kristy Christensen	WENZZ		Participant
Gladys Smith	IWiM	Head of Engagement	Support
Luz Castellanos	WIM Ecuador	Member	Participant
Iliana Rodríguez	WIM Ecuador	Vice-President	Participant
Doris Edenoku Aidoghie	WIM Nigeria	Legal Advisor	Participant
Janet Adeyemi	WIM Nigeria	President	Participant
Topi Vaarala	WIM Finland	Communications	Participant
Andrea Korney	WIM USA	Member	Participant
Talia Flagan	WIM USA	Member	Participant
Lara Sims	WIM USA	Member	Participant
Suzanne Seivright- Sutherland	CALCIMA/WIM USA	Dir. Gov. Affairs, Vice- President (WIM USA California Chapter)	Participant
Gladys Smith	IWiM	Head of Engagement	Support
Sueli Tang	IWiM	Head of Operations	Support

## Andrew Korney, WIM USA: inclusivity in the mining workplace

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How can we ask companies to improve working conditions and build confidence in employees to ask for these changes themselves? IWIM is planning to publish a position paper for companies and governments to outline these challenges.

## Challenges

Typically, women entering a career in mining are forced to relocate to remote areas, detracting them from taking jobs in this industry due to home and family responsibilities, particularly related to women

with younger children. In general, the mining industry has been described as a lonely business, and these issues impact men as well as women. Isolation can be understood quantitatively when considering the minority status of women in particular. Societies are often more accepting of men gathering together in groups, which has a direct impact on the mental health and stability of women when they are barred from doing so. Andrea presented challenges and solutions to mitigate these issues, including how to maintain an effective fly-in and fly-out roster and how to mitigate feelings of isolation.

Andrea began by sharing her personal experience while working on a 6x4 rotation in a mine in Magadan, Russian, located in the northernmost part of the country. She explained issues related to language barriers as a Canadian national, harsh winter weather conditions, isolation, and loneliness.

Moving to a foreign country can be a great experience, but women in general may be hesitant to relocate so far away from their homes and families. Being away from home for long periods of time becomes too difficult for workers who miss their loved ones and worry they are losing too much time with family, decreasing productivity at work. Many women are being nominated for awards for being single mothers, which can be attributed in part to FIFO working conditions, giving the impression that sacrificing personal and/or family time is a reason to be rewarded. The companies using these erroneous incentives should note this error. For example, women living in Queensland with a FIFO work scheme in NT on a 2x2 rotation must rely on family and friends to care for school-aged children while working for two weeks straight. A solution is vital to support working mothers who depend on their single incomes to support their families.

Work-life balance can also be an issue when returning home on days off, including difficulties in switching off workplace mentality and transforming to effectively provide for family and nurture home life outside of the work environment. This sentiment has been equated to living two separate lives. Topics such as work-life balance have proven to be effective conversation starters as a way to open discussions about this topic for women.

Despite these efforts, shorter shifts can mean more time traveling to and from work depending on destination and mode of transport, and not everybody is afforded the opportunity to travel on company time. Night shifts can cause security problems for women, particularly in enclosed areas such as restrooms which may be isolated without locking mechanisms and may not afford a separation between men and women. During 12-hour shifts underground, women may lack restroom access which can be detrimental during menstrual cycles. Portable toilets can be challenging to install, maintain, and service, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Speaking up can be incredibly difficult for women. Men may not understand their experiences and may interpret requests for change as weakness, contributing to the notion that women are less powerful. These conversations should be highlighted with supervisors and managers in relation to general workplace conditions.

In relation to the corporate side of the mining sector, even if a job is located in a city, commuting can take hours which limits time spent at home. The added costs of nannies and day care can influence

larger career decisions based on time priorities when forced to choose between family and career. Townships or mining towns run by mining companies can act as a solution for long commutes, but only dependent on whether the spouse or partner can find a job near the town if not employed by the same company. Long shifts can lead to significant health and safety issues, especially if sites are not equipped to respond to accidents.

## Solutions

The main objective is to change organizational mindsets related to inclusivity. As women, we need to change this mindset with respect to organizational commitment to realistically achieving inclusivity. Employers often perceive hiring women as a complication, but it is important to consider the cost of discrimination, particularly if an employer is sued for wrongful discriminatory practices, in comparison with the cost of hiring women.

A positive exercise within mining operations would be to have workers share their experiences as a way of making the prospect of working in a mine site less frightening, particularly when foreign new hires are exposed to unfamiliar cultures and locations. Companies can use these types of practices to place emphasis on factors which make mining sites safe for workers, including flexibility for fly-in fly-out schedules and knowledge sharing promotion.

Newly constructed mines should consider opportunities to improve restroom access for women and ensure they are safe and sanitary. Simple additions such as shelves inside of bathrooms for women's menstrual products should be considered rather than forcing women to run from one place to another to maintain privacy. Restrooms should also be adapted to women's needs, such as breastfeeding. The addition of milk pumping rooms at mining sites would reduce barriers for women with young children to enter the mining workforce.

Companies are beginning to improve conditions for working parents considering taking workers from their families affects them emotionally and negatively impacts productivity in the long run. Maintaining flexible schedules is crucial for supporting families, especially those with small children. Companies should foster healthy and productive environments by creating physical spaces for women and by redesigning and restructuring jobs. Mining companies are considering the addition of more and more remote jobs promoted by technological innovation within the resources sector. Organizations must push to think more broadly about structure and inclusivity, integrating different strategies to increase female participation in leadership especially. Andrea detailed a few examples from her work at Kinross:

- Women enjoy their own gym and private recreational space to meet, talk, watch movies, read books, and engage in other activities to prevent feelings of isolation and present them with a safe space to feel safe and share parts of their lives with other women.



- Women and men share designated spaces for interaction in an environment without alcohol or other substances that may cause problems for families at home.
- Kinross consistently engages in efforts to understand the needs of women, including by administering surveys to improve existing conditions, and responds to them as a method for increasing women's participation in the workforce.
- Kinross developed a program entitled "Girls Can Do Anything" which entailed 900 male miners wearing shirts with the phrase to promote a culture of inclusion, normalizing the presence of women in very remote locations and celebrating diversity.