



2022 Shell India in the News

Shell India

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1. THE HINDU BUSINESSLINE | HELPING HAND. MOVING LNG ON WHEELS FOR SMALL SCALE USERS

Nov 27, 2022

Shell Energy's truck loading of LNG improves access to clean energy for off-grid industries

By Rutam Vora

Industrial clusters located off the gas grid in parts of Gujarat, Western Madhya Pradesh and Northern Maharashtra are increasingly turning to clean fuel, thanks to the truck transport of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). Indian arm of the Royal Dutch Shell – Shell Energy India – has started rolling out small-scale LNG supplies through its truck-loading facility from Hazira LNG terminal in South Gujarat. According to officials, this has helped industries in the off-grid locations to adopt cleaner energy fuels and reduce emissions.

Providing access

Launched in January 2021, the truck-loading facility is not new to India but was first for Shell's Hazira facility which is surrounded by industrial clusters along the coast of Gujarat and also in the hinterland of Western Madhya Pradesh and parts of Maharashtra. There are quite a few in the 300 kms area. This includes Ankleshwar-Bharuch chemicals, fertilisers and pharmaceutical cluster; textiles and engineering cluster near Surat and heavy engineering and equipment cluster at Vadodara.

Currently, Shell dispatches the trucks with LNG in cryogenic tankers to the remote areas within the radius of 300-500 kilometres from the Hazira facility, which is equipped with 5-million tonnes per annum LNG import terminal. The LNG terminal is connected to all the three major national gas pipelines effectively pushing gas to almost everywhere in the country.

Speaking to businessline, Rahul Singh, VP India, Integrated Gas & RES, underlined a growing adoption by small players. He also highlighted that the smaller industrial customers that were off the grid were disconnected from access to LNG. They were not able to have access to LNG for their decarbonisation needs.

Shell Energy has two operational truck-loading bays at Hazira. The trucks carry small loads in the size of about 20 tonnes capacity, effectively carrying about 800 metric million British thermal unit of LNG to meet their small requirements. The pipeline connectivity no longer becomes a constraint for them, he said.

Potential pitfalls

The customers would require regasification facilities to convert LNG back to natural gas. However, the industry sees some concerns too such as dependability of supplies and the price factor.

A Surat-based policy expert and former President of Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ajoy Bhattacharya said that access to clean energy for small businesses is immensely necessary.

However, there may be issues in truck transport of LNG like ensuring consistent and timely supply and control on pricing. Gas supplies through the grid are under certain controls, whereas truck-loaded LNG supplies may have variable factors such as distance and travel time, which could impact pricing, he said.

Notably, through the small-scale LNG, Shell Energy attempts to contribute in realizing India's target of increasing the share of gas in primary energy mix to 15 per cent by allowing small players to access clean fuel.

While gas customers in industrial clusters are expected to be the primary beneficiaries, small-scale LNG will also support the market seeding and development of the recently licensed CGD (City Gas Distribution) geographical areas, not yet connected by pipelines, the company had said while inaugurating the LNG truck loading facility.

2. THE HINDU BUSINESSLINE | SHELL E4 PROGRAM EYES INVESTMENT IN DEEP TECH START-UPS IN ENERGY AND MOBILITY SPACE

Nov 19, 2022

By Yatti Soni

Shell's flagship start-up incubation programme, Shell E4 program, has expanded its investment themes to include deep tech companies working in energy and mobility space, Nitin Prasad, Chairman, Shell Companies in India told businessline.

"We have in the past focused on bio solutions and waste-based solutions, but now we've expanded that to have a broader look at circularity-based solutions and greater use of materials efficiency in the energy space," he added.

Focus on CCUS

Further, the programme is also expanding focus on Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage (CCUS) related technologies, as the number of start-ups in this space grows and the quality of ideas flourishes.

Started in 2017, Shell E4 Program is a programme that collaborates with technology, venture, government, academia partners, eminent coaches and industry expert mentors to enable digital start-ups to achieve industry readiness and implement strategies for scaling and global expansion in the industrial and energy verticals.

Every year, the programme looks at roughly 1,200 to 1,500 start-up applications and selects an average of 20-25 start-ups in a year. The selected start-ups are given a grant of \$20,000 along with other benefits. "We run two or maybe three cohorts in a year. While there is no fixed cap on the cohort size, the number of selected start-ups is a function of how many of them are ready. If there was a bigger base of start-ups that we see ready for a particular cohort, then we do take them and we continue to grow in that respect," said Prasad.

The programme has a focus on including almost 30 per cent start-ups from tier 2 and beyond cities. Talking about the vision behind this, he said, "it's a lot about expanding the pool of available start-ups. Our larger ambition is to grow the ecosystem. We are not just trying to get into this on a pure-play investment and returns type basis, the programme is about accelerating India's energy transition and building the collective country-level capacity to be able to do that."

3. MINT | 'NEED MORE CONTINGENCY IN PPA PRICING FOR SOLAR POWER AMID RISING COSTS'

Oct 13, 2022

Shell's Global Renewable Generation EVP Thomas Brostrom & Nitin Prasad, chairman of Shell Companies in India, talks about the acquisition of Actis Llp's Indian renewable energy platform Sprng Energy by Shell.

SYNOPSIS

You see more local supply chains starting to also take place in India, which I think will create a more stable cost, says Thomas Brostrom, Shell's Global Renewable Generation EVP.

The comments by Shell's Global Renewable Generation EVP Thomas Brostrom come against the backdrop of high cost of solar power development in India due to the customs duty on modules and high price of equipment.

In an interview, Brostrom said the global energy giant tries to ensure adequate capex while making bids and that its solar projects and those in the pipeline have so far not been impacted by the shortage of modules.

With Shell Plc buying Actis Llp's Indian renewable energy platform Sprng Energy at an enterprise value of \$1.55 billion, he noted that currently, the market is witnessing relatively volatile and extreme conditions due to inflation and supply chain bottlenecks.

Nitin Prasad, chairman, Shell Companies in India, said the impacted power developers in the current scenario have not just been affected by the price hike on solar modules but also by the land purchase deals they have done and the execution of the projects. Edited excerpts:

How has the recent rise in solar module prices due to the customs duty and the supply chain issues impacted your projects?

Brostrom: I think what we're seeing now is of course relatively volatile, almost extreme conditions. When you have inflation and supply chain bottlenecks, then you have to be very careful about how you match your PPA price with your capex (capital expenditure). And you also have the commodity prices which have been only going one way. We can see it's starting to normalize a bit more, so we'll hopefully get back to more normal conditions over the next six, 12 or 18 months. But in the interim what we've been doing, not so much in India, because we're very new here, is basically going back to our customers to say 'hey, we need to have another discussion around our PPA because in this market, the things have changed dramatically'. So, I think that's just been the nature of it. You see more local supply chains starting to also take place in India, which I think will create a more stable cost. Again, it might be slightly off because some of the components might be slightly more expensive compared to China. But I think over time, you will see more stable price development. What we've been doing is, we have as much certainty as we can on the capex. And of course, then on the PPA price, you may have to have a bit more contingency, and I think that's just how you navigate this market. But my hope is that in the next period, you'll see it starting to come back to a bit more normal circumstances again and we've seen the same thing in the US with all the tariffs and the dumping issues we've had there as well.

Prasad: What you are referring to is perhaps the economic sensitivity of some of our competitors, which is broader than I think just the modules and of course the modules have had their part to play as well as the prices. But I would also say, there's also financing structures..how they've gone about doing the land purchases and how they actually come back and execute and that's actually why we like Actis-backed platform Sprng and why we chose to acquire them—because they have demonstrated tremendous capability to be the most competitive in this

marketplace. It was really one of the reasons why we really liked them, and we continue to believe that we will be more competitive as we go forward.

4. TIMES OF INDIA | SHELL LUBRICANTS DOUBLING DOWN ON INDIA: EXPANDS B2C SERVICES, SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS, AND DATA CENTRE HOLD

Aug 16, 2022

Shell Lubricants global executive vice-president Machteld De Haan talks about expansion plans for India and new opportunities in the market for the Shell Lubricants business.

A recent Moody's Investor Service report stated that India is the third-largest finished lubricant market in the world, behind the US and China.

With general economic recovery and consumer preference shifting towards personal mobility, the demand is expected to grow at a steady pace. The automotive market of India saw a growth of 27 percent in 2021 alone. In an exclusive interview with TOI Auto, we spoke to Machteld De Haan, Executive Vice President, Shell Lubricants to understand how the oil and lubricants company is planning to expand its presence in India and what are the new opportunities that they are excited about.

The growing market of India is also witnessing a shift towards more sustainable mobility solutions such as bio-fuels and electrification.

"Shell is the first company to introduce premium products made from natural gas and products that are more sustainable. We have products that are either biodegradable or made from re-refined base oils. For EVs we have multiple ranges of products such as EV-specific transmission fluids that are very specific to the EV drivetrain. An electric vehicle also has a battery that needs thermal management and we have products for that as well. We launched our first EV fluid range back in 2019, so we have been in the business for a couple of years. We are constantly working with large OEMs to improve these technologies, for instance our EV fluids are being provided to Mahindra for their Formula-E car. This helps us test our products under very extreme conditions and make them better." Haan said during the interaction.

Currently, Shell is among the top three market players in India in the passenger car motor oil (PCMO) sector. The company sees India as a key growth market that will be amongst its top five markets by 2027.

Haan says, "While better products are a bucket that we focus on as a key priority. Our second priority is that we want to grow in the industrial sector, as it is the largest market and a growing sector as well. It includes agriculture, construction and power. All these sectors grow when the GDP grows and we want to make sure that we increase our footprint in that space. We have growth markets such as India, China, Indonesia and Brazil, where we want to grow."

"We also want to grow into customer solutions which means we want to move from just products to customer solutions by offering services to B2C customers. This includes oil changes, services, multi-care and also provide B2B services such as oil monitoring, reliability services, total fluid management and lastly we also want to expand into new sectors. This means looking into thermal fluids for fluid management in batteries or data centres." Currently, Shell Lubricants reach is 50 thousand outlets in India, which the company aims to double by 2025. The plan is to expand presence in North and East India by investing in its distribution infrastructure (Feet-on-the-ground).

While the company sees scope to grow in motorcycle oil and commercial vehicle oil sectors too, there is another unconventional opportunity that has captured Shell Lubricant's attention. That is of India's growing market of data centres. All the electricity that is used by IT components in a data centre, generates heat that needs to be managed. "Data centres are particularly interesting because today most of them are being air-cooled and use a lot of energy.

With our new immersion cooling fluids that we are producing, we can reduce the temperature of the data centres and the computing power they need, helping them reduce their overall carbon footprint. Our immersion cooling fluids will be piloting in India very soon!" Haan said.

Compared with traditional air cooling, single-phase immersion cooling technology as an integrated solution can reduce energy use and carbon emissions in data centres by up to 48 percent through its high cooling efficiency which is advantageous for data centres of all sizes. What's more? The immersion technology can also be applied to EVs as well, so it is a win-win for Shell Lubricants India.

5. MINT | SHELL LUBRICANTS TO SELL EV BATTERY COOLANTS IN INDIA

Aug 08, 2022

Shell Lubricants global executive vice-president Machteld De Haan, and India head, Debanjali Sengupta, speak about Shell's diversification plans and how we are looking to become a global lubricant and fluid solutions company, shifting beyond its original focus only on lubricants.

SYNOPSIS

Company to initially import electric vehicle fluids, but will manufacture locally later.

Attracted by India's electric vehicles play, global energy giant Shell Inc.'s subsidiary Shell Lubricants will launch fluids for EV motors suitable for the climatic and geographic conditions.

In an interview, Shell Lubricants global executive vice-president Machteld De Haan, and India head, Debanjali Sengupta, said the company will initially import electric vehicle fluids, but manufacture the product locally later.

The heat transfer fluids, or coolant, is used in thermal management to keep the batteries cool. The development is significant as India has reported a number of electric vehicle fire incidents, mostly due to overheating of faulty battery packs.

"Thermal management is an important piece for electric vehicles. If you can keep the battery cool, you can prevent it from overheating," said De Haan.

The electric vehicle-specific product is available globally, and Shell is currently in talks with original equipment manufacturers in India, said Sengupta.

"When they are ready, we can bring it in. We have started pilots and trials, so things are ongoing," Sengupta said.

Talking of Shell's diversification plans, De Haan said the company is looking to become a global lubricant and fluid solutions company, shifting beyond its original focus only on lubricants.

"We will try to diversify from friction management to thermal management. We have got some really good experience in immersion cooling; this is where we can really help data centres to reduce the energy consumption and carbon footprint, an area where we are doing some pilots today in the market here" De Haan said.

Furthermore, with the electrification of the mobility space, Shell Lubricants is also looking at electric vehicle fluids, transmission fluids and e-greases.

In 2019, it had launched its first electric vehicle fluid, and continues to develop the product in partnership with original equipment manufacturers globally, she said.

India's push for electric vehicles is slowly gaining traction with 1.33 million registrations. With this diversification, Shell plans to double its business in India in the next five years, targeting to feature in the top five lube manufacturers from its current ranking among the top 10.

"Indian operations registered a 12% growth last year over 2019, and things are looking bright even in 2022, which will be better than the 2021 performance. India is a really important market for us. We want to double the business in India. We're looking to really increase our reach from the 50,000 points that we have today to 100,000 points. We want to bank on some of the new products that we're introducing over the last couple of months," De Haans said.

In July, the company launched Shell Engine Oil custom-made and designed for three-wheelers, with active cleansing technology that keeps engines clean and protected at high temperature. The engine oil can be used for compressed natural gas (CNG), liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), petrol and diesel engines.

Developed specifically for India, the company is now exporting it to the neighbouring markets with high three-wheeler penetration.

"India took the lead in developing something that is very market-specific, but then we'll see how we can apply it somewhere else in the world," she said.

Shell Lubricant India had increased its production capacity at its lubricant oil-blending plant at Taloja in Maharashtra recently, and it now plans further expansions for a few more India- as well as South Asia-specific products.

6. SHELL TO SET UP LNG STATIONS, BULLISH ON GAS MARKET IN INDIA

Apr 10, 2022

Global energy giant Shell will foray into retailing LNG for long-haul transportation like trucks, with its first filling station coming up in Gujarat this year as it bets big on the Indian gas market, a senior company official said.

Shell Energy India Country Head Nakul Raheja Speaks with PTI

New Delhi: Shell operates a 5 million tonnes a year liquefied natural gas (LNG) import facility at Hazira in Gujarat and has a small network of petrol pumps. It is now looking at the LNG for trucks/buses market as a growth avenue.

"We are looking to develop our own LNG sites and retail stations in the country," Nakul Raheja, country head of Shell Energy India, told PTI.

"So we are working now on our own expansion plans in this place and if things go to plan, then within this calendar year we should have our first site ready selling LNG as a transport fuel to heavy duty vehicles in the state of Gujarat and we are going to follow that up with a few more sites next year," he added.

While the first site is likely to be an exclusive LNG retail outlet, the company may in the future look to co-locate the LNG refuelling facility within petrol pumps.

"We are starting off with Gujarat in the vicinity of Hazira. Of course, as a very natural place to first start with around Surat and then logically expand, you know, further into Western India to begin with and then working on plans beyond that," he said, adding the company may have three-four sites in next 12 to 18 months.

The government is pushing the use of LNG as fuel for long-haul transportation. It is targeting 50 stations in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan in next three years and ultimately 1,000 outlets.

LNG, which is natural gas super-cooled to liquid form, has much less carbon footprint than diesel. Besides environmental benefits, it is also cheaper on long-haul routes.

China consumes 12 to 13 million tonnes of LNG in this segment annually. This is half of all LNG that India imports for use in power plants, fertilizer units, city gas and other industries.

"I look at India as being one of the few markets around the world where actually we can replicate the kind of size and scale that China has achieved. Of course, this takes time because you have to start side by side, truck by truck, fleet by fleet, customer by customer.

"But if you kind of fast forward 10 or 15 years, you can absolutely get this to become very material. Potentially, double digit million tonnes of LNG by that time frame," he said.

Shell will be the first private firm to foray into LNG retailing for long-haul transport. As of now, state-owned oil giants Indian Oil Corporation (20 stations), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Bharat Petroleum Corporation (11 stations each), GAIL India (six stations) and Petronet LNG (two stations) have announced LNG stations.

LNG for long-haul transportation is part of the government's plan to raise the share of natural gas in the primary energy basket to 15 per cent by 2030 from the current 6.7 per cent.

Raheja said to reach 15 per cent share, gas consumption has to grow to 500 million standard cubic metres per day from current 161 mmscmd.

With domestic production of gas barely meeting half of the current consumption, import of gas in the form of LNG will have to grow.

"We are projecting India to be one of the fastest growing markets for LNG in the world. We are seeing nearly 35 to 40 million tonnes of LNG demand growth in India alone in the period between 2020 to 2040," he said.

Asked about expansion plans for Hazira, he said there is room to expand the capacity depending on market growth.

"But again we think about expansion in a very linear sense. After we bought out Total's (26 per cent) stake at Hazira (LNG terminal) about three years ago, one of the first investment decisions we made was to set up a truck loading unit at Hazira. That has now been operational for more than a year and that has already added more capacity," he said.

For the share of natural gas in India's energy basket to grow, the pace of rollout of trunk pipeline infrastructure must continue and the gas must be included in GST.

"We need to continue to bring new markets into the fold that includes inter-state transmission, and also potentially intra state transmission infrastructure," he said, adding the city gas distribution network should continue to grow as it will fuel replacement of liquid auto fuels with gas (CNG) and piped cooking gas to household kitchens and industries.

"I think there is also a scope for us to kind of create a bit of a national level energy road map as a whole because we are talking about green hydrogen, we are talking about ammonia, we are talking about gas, we are talking about coal, we are talking about number of energy sources and each of them kind of is going to be on their own journey through this energy transition, bringing it all together to then say that, OK, this is the role that gas will play in these different segments.

"Again, helps create the confidence for various industry sector participants to make those long term commitments," he said.

Natural gas, just like petrol, diesel, ATF and crude oil, is out of the purview of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), which means tax paid on inputs cannot be set off with that on output.

Raheja said gas is at a disadvantage to coal and this creates artificial barriers.

"You can't create a credit for the tax you pay on gas today for, for example, all of which is kind of completely avoidable. So bringing it under the ambit of GST will make, I think, a big difference in the use of gas in the country."

Bringing gas under GST will also make it affordable.

"It will also make it more tradable across states and so on. And it will just make the ease of doing business also in this space a lot easier," he noted.

"India is an incredibly exciting energy market. We have for the last two decades played an important role in the gas market, in the LNG market in the country and we certainly want to grow along with it.

"So as the need and demand for gas grows, we want to play our role in it. So whether it's creating more supply infrastructure, whether it's providing LNG as a transport fuel, all of those areas are certainly of our interest," Raheja added.

Source: ***PTI***

7. AS AN HR HEAD, YOU CANNOT DIVORCE UNDERSTANDING OF THE BUSINESS AND DO YOUR JOB: PRATIBHA PRIYADARSHINI

Mar 23, 2022

In an interview with ETHRWorld, Pratibha Priyadarshini – VP – HR, Shell India, talks about how the company is leveraging technology to streamline its HR processes, the senior leadership commitment towards diversity & inclusion, and the future of work.

- “From an HR team of about 40 people in 2018, we are now at 140.”
- “We want to go Hybrid. But that flexibility of providing the choice to natural pockets of our teams, would remain”

Shell, a leading global energy company with presence in over 70 countries, has currently 50 per cent gender diversity on its board globally. At Shell India, women hold 22 per cent of leadership positions across all locations. Understanding the importance of gender balance at the very initial stage of hiring, Shell also has had success with 40 per cent of campus hires being women in 2020.

Pratibha Priyadarshini, VP – HR, Shell India, is a passionate and accomplished HR leader with over 19 years of professional experience in multi-cultural and multi-location businesses. She has been working with Shell India for more than 17 years, managing the HR function for Shell's multi sector businesses in India with over 10,000 employees.

Priyadarshini has an exceptional expertise in integrating human resources post acquisitions and managing shared service centers locally and globally. She has worked for Shell Finance Shared Services across Europe and Asia in overseeing Change Management, Capability Building, Critical Succession and Talent Management.

In an exclusive interview with ETHRWorld, Pratibha Priyadarshini talks about the senior leadership commitment towards diversity & inclusion, women empowerment practices, employee first approach, and other HR strategies being adopted by Shell India to become an innovative energy company.

Q1: You were trained as an engineer and then you moved on to the HR profession. How did this transition happen? Why did you choose HR as a profession?

I grew up in a South Indian Tamil Brahmin family. The most popular choices we had as children were to either become an engineer or a doctor. I clearly chose the former. However, since I grew up in a joint family set up, I was exposed to the nuances of relationships, empathy, authenticity, and people management at a much deeper level at a much early stage of life. I think it was something I was good at even then and it stayed with me.

Initially, HR as a profession wasn't even on the radar for me at that time. I was geared to be an engineer and joined REC Surathkal, now known as NIT college.

My first job was with GE selling cardiac Dopplers, after Surathkal. I had a senior in college attending TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences) at that time. Through them, I came to know of HR. Then on one of my sales trips of these cardiac Dopplers, I met a lady working for Cisco at that time. She was also a graduate of TISS and with more information from her I got my first foray into HR. Although I did not study HR, the result of that conversation on the train was that she gave me the number of one of India's old veterans in HR. His name is Hari Iyer and at that time he used to be in Sasken. I just went and called Hari on a Monday morning and said I'm quite interested, gave a brief on my background and expressed my interest in HR. In those days,

conflict management was in trend. On that thought, I expressed to him my interest in conversing with people, stressing I was unafraid of conflict. By the end of the day, I had a job in HR.

When I got married and moved to London, I decided to take a formal degree and applied to Shell on a graduate management programme. Now I'm the first Indian graduate to have been made a Global VP in Shell.

Q2: 17 or 18 years ago as an engineer when you opted to choose HR as a career, how did your near and dear ones react?

My mother was very skeptical and thought that after studying engineering in one of the foremost colleges, I was going to be calculating leave days and submitting to payroll. She's an engineer herself who graduated in 1971 and worked in the State Electricity Board for 39 years. So, for her, the concept of HR was limited to calculating annual leaves and encashment, submission to payroll etc. My father on the other hand was more nuanced. He has done industrial relations before and hence was more informed and aware.

But we are in a different world at the moment. I've joined a very different kind of a company with a unique fabric. People didn't understand the power of HR at that time because they weren't familiar with kind of impact efficient HR could have on an organization.

Q3: We have moved to a day when the Head of HR has become the Chairman and Managing Director of ONGC. How do you see this as a transition?

I'm ecstatic at multiple levels. Firstly, being a woman I am delightful to see another woman get a well-deserved position and secondly from a cultural landscape it is even more appreciated. An HR woman leader is a powerful combination! Along with the content and functional knowledge of the business it is also about adaptation, leading, managing communities of people, direction, vision and inspiration. All of that becomes a great concoction. She (Alka Mittal) has clearly established that and showcased her ability to lead a big Indian government body. So, I believe it is a fantastic news. Her, and Leena Nair going to Chanel... so big and very positive news!

Q4: In that context, what would be your message for women at large?

"Break the Bias" is very topical because that is the IWD (International Women's Day 2022) theme. I've been fortunate enough to not have felt the bias as much. I was in a progressive family where my mother had broken the bias and had graduated in 1971 in engineering especially at a time when there were three women in her batch. I've been fortunate to have gone through a life where I've never felt that because I'm a girl, I am two steps lesser. So, for me, the message of break the bias translates to people testing against their own vision, their own abilities, their capabilities and to bust these societal and personal myths and to just go after their dream. You see the rainbow, chase it; don't give up thinking, oh it's just really too far away. Every step matter, no matter how big or small.

If you are going to ask me, what next, I would say, I would be Shell India Country Chairman.

Q5: You have been a part of Shell for 17 years, what's so great about this company?

There are three fundamental reasons as to why I have not jumped ship. There is something in the very fabric of Shell that has kept me here for such a long time.

First and foremost, Shell has allowed me to be who I am. It is so important to turn up at a workplace being your authentic self, in terms of how you engage, collaborate with people, the way you work, the effectiveness, that all sets up the foundation of a positive cycle for one's professional goals. The company's ethos and values, which are respect, integrity, and trust, are a true match to mine.

The next reason is the support system and space to be flexible. Shell has given me immense support throughout my journey. I've taken maternity leave, work flexibility, sick leaves for mental health. Shell has a sick leave policy of 999 days, and it's 100 per cent based on trust. I've had a time when I've not been mentally well and required time to attend to my mental health. I was given off for about six weeks to cater to my health. Shell truly has walked the talk when it comes to recognizing work-life balance and catering to the wellness of their employees.

My husband and I have a dual career; he was constantly in Delhi, while I was in Bangalore. I was raising my son on my own while doing a global job. I wasn't turning up into the office. Life just was difficult and there was just not a time when I was happy. And I took six weeks off at that time. Throughout these difficult times, I didn't have to lie or make an excuse to my employer. There was a mature understanding of an employee not being in a good mind space and taking time out. Even when my husband moved to Delhi and I requested for a transfer, and it was done.

The third and the biggest element is leadership. I've had the chance to work with some great bosses and world-class HR leaders. Archana Bhaskar used to be in Shell before and now she's CHRO of Dr Reddy's, a fantastic leader. Suri Rajagopal used to be in BG and now has moved on. There is immense opportunity to get inspired, learn and grow.

Q6: How the company helped its women employees in general to become future leaders? How does the company create a leadership pipeline among women employees?

At Shell we believe the journey starts from the beginning. There is an assessment of wanting gender balance. We always seek gender balance for 50:50. Right from the point of recruitment, when we pick up CVs, we want a 50:50 representation of CV shortlists. We want as many women on the shortlist as there are men.

From there onwards, we highlight talent, gender, and potential as key points. A person may not be ready for a leadership role 100 per cent. But we believe in taking chances and to provide that person enough cushion to be able to grow whilst in the role.

We also believe in recognizing early on the leaders and especially women leaders, mentoring support, and sponsorship to them. It's a very nurturing environment, supportive at all times. At Shell, we see mentors as people who are constantly available to you, helping you grow. There is a space for conversations, apart from your boss, acting as an extra pair of eyes and hands.

Most importantly, there is a concept of sponsorships where very senior leaders sponsor and stand behind women leaders who are talented and have high potential. Their role is to act as support system, creating space for them unapologetically. I will not categorize it as positive discrimination, but it's one of capability and support to be able to push out better environments for women employees, because if you don't have that 50:50 diversity and inclusion at the very top, it's never going to trickle down to better averages and numbers below.

Programs like WCDP or Women's Career Development Programme are specially tailored help women employees take a broader look and evaluate their careers right from writing your own CVs, guiding to an accessible mentor, sponsor, inculcate and groom the skills and assessment that it takes to have an executive presence and build yourself as a brand itself. There are some very hard questions we need to ask to keep up with practical know how and then be able to help women leaders grow. Just like it takes a village to bring up a child, it takes an entire company to be a conduit in an ecosystem where women can grow and manage through a talent pipeline at a process.

Q7: You mentioned that the process starts right at the CV stage where you try to ensure that there should be 50:50 gender ratio.

Yes, it is one of the forward-thinking ideas, although we may have not been able to implement all of these for e.g. we would like to have women's advisory councils when senior leaders get promoted. The idea is very simple that if you are a strong senior community leader, we will access you to enquire if you are D&I savvy and have a proven history in the company around

being a champion for women. And therefore, a senior women advisory committee that would sit and advise on promotion boards and recommend individuals with solid backgrounds and effortless credentials churning out strong senior leaders. We at Shell do recognize that such forward-thinking ideas, come with their own set of difficulties, but it is the outcome that keeps us going.

Q8: Is there also some initiative to get women in technology roles?

One of the biggest and the flagship ideas Shell has introduced is second career women break re-entry programme. We've been very open to women's re-entry, especially for technology roles, because that's where the flaws and misses lie. Mid-career women, with their nuanced lives and humongous set of responsibilities are trying to find a balance between life and work, very often resulting in drop off, not just for childcare, but also increasingly for old age care. We at Shell, make the employer part of this process because the encouragement starts with acknowledgement that there is a bigger and challenging system that these women are a part of, and that acknowledgement means that we're open with flexible working patterns.

We had a woman employee who shifted to Hyderabad post marriage, but we didn't have an office there. So, we made a one-year flexible working arrangement for her. We've had people who've said we need to move bases but are not yet in a space where they can come back to work and need a three-month time out, and we accommodate them.

For women, especially in technology we have a very important maternity programme, called Mpower, which is more than just policies, insurance and hospitalization. We've got WhatsApp groups where we put women that are on maternity leave in touch with women that have come back from maternity leave. There's an actual help group about reintegrating into the workforce. It's got everything from which children's toys to buy to what is the right time to give booster shots to interview tips. We top it with line managers, and it enables them to empathize with a returning maternity woman. We even do scenario plays with them around how to have conversations with women who are coming back from maternity leave.

Q9: You are an engineer yourself. So, could you please share one or two examples how Shell is leveraging technology to streamline its HR processes?

Shell is a global 125-year-old company with large scale offices and ever-growing roots. So, anything that we try and implement, immediately brings the question of 85,000 employees in the world that have to be streamlined. This gives a peak at the complexity of our HR digitalization journey.

Until as recent as 2018, we had a very standard HR model. We used to do payroll input on Excel spreadsheets, put a password protect, send it to the payroll office. We used to have HR people in person at an office where employees would walk up with queries, query management etc. It was a very one-to-one, very standard old-world model.

But the HR transformation, which began in 2018, has caused a complete digitalization at the base with the entire model being changed from one-to-one HR support to a model where the first point of contact for line managers or employees is HR operations and HR operations is enabled by technology. You can WhatsApp them, you can chat with them, you can email them, you can call them and anywhere in the globe you can find an HR person with a very streamlined standardized model. India is supported out of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for this first level of HR operational support.

We have also moved to a state-of-the-art system for jobs like computing leave days and encashment.

We are able to put in requests for employment verification letter, able to attend and understand leave online and compensation structures at the click of a button. Then there's big HR MI and analytics organization that was specially created as a part of this transformation journey to standardize reports. As an HR VP, I used to ask my HR managers to give me what is the status

of FTE and employees in this business versus in that. All that are now available via Workday, at the click of a button.

Q10: Has the greater use of technology in HR domain created more jobs or reduced the need for HR professionals?

India is a house of talent. Gone are the days when it was only about costs. Now, it's much more about capability and for the Shell Group, we've showed how much India can actually deliver. So, from an HR team of about 40 people, we are now at 140.

Globally, we've got learning solutions being driven out of India; we've got recruitment for different businesses being driven out of India. We've now got consultants that work on global projects, sitting in India. So, for India, it's actually meant bigger and more value-added opportunity. Since digitalization has taken care of all the basics, we've now got people freed up to contribute more strategically and that's the India opportunity for Shell, with the third biggest footprint in terms of talent for the Shell Group, after the UK and the Netherlands, and continuing to grow.

Q11: In which year, did you have about 40 people in HR?

Until about 2018 we were no more than about 35-40 and after that we have significantly grown and we are now 140, in terms of global HR presence in the country. It's because the opportunities have steadily increased. And learning solutions brought in more jobs for us. Last year, we had a big overhaul programme at Shell, called Reshape, a realigning of our purpose and strategy, and everybody in Shell, all the businesses and functions went through that. We simplified our structures, we increased spans, reduced layers, and in all of that learning brought in more jobs. We moved from 90 to 140 just last year alone.

Q12: In the last one year or so, there have been lots of unprecedented kind of news like companies with four days working in a week, salary being paid on a weekly basis, Valentine's leave, open salary where each employee can see what others are getting. What is next?

Every company has their own way of working, attracting and retaining talent.

From a Shell point of view, we are not going to move things in a big hurry. We are a very established company with very solid HR practices.

The biggest thing that is changing for us is the future of work and we've never been a remote first organization. We've never had more employees working online than offline. However, we've managed efficiently in these last two years, fundamentally piggybacking around the world-class systems, the world-class processes, and our flexibility.

For us, the focus is on keeping the engagement and managing the employer-employee relationship. We've had 2,000 joiners over the last two years, that had joined our IT, finance, and operations, who'd never really worked for Shell before, for whom the brand is not as alive as it is for people who have worked for 17 years. I recognize the 'Sound of Shell' music anywhere, but there is no brand affinity that's actually built for these new people.

So, for me, it's more about how, in these times, are we going to be keeping who we are and our fabric alive and getting on board and working this through with lesser face-to-face time. And for our leadership to be more empathetic and prepare for unprecedented scenarios.

Q13: Now that Covid has subsided and things seem to be getting settled down, will you ask all the employees to come back to the office or do you think that it's a Jinn that has come out of the bottle and it's not going to go back?

We have very clearly said we're not going to be remote first for everybody, for the very emphatic reason that we do believe coming back to the workplace means that there is workforce productivity, workforce health, the collaboration, the social networks that people turn up to and

psychologically the feeling of wellness. Man is essentially a social animal and to be able to build all of those and to find that in your workplace is really keen and critical.

I think our ethos have really been that the Covid pandemic has shown us what flexibility can do and it's also shown us that everything is possible completely online. From an industry standpoint, as well as Shell's viewpoint hybrid is where it will inevitably end up. But that flexibility of providing the choice to natural pockets of our teams, would remain.

We also acknowledge that it is an experiment right now. There is no one size that fits all. We've opened satellite offices, something we hadn't thought about ever before, in Bangalore, for example for IT, and people can choose to go to an office even closer than what they used to go before.

We are doing this more cautiously and more experimentally, but also with steer on what is good for the wellbeing of our people.

Q14: With HR Heads becoming CEOs, how important is it now for HR Heads to understand the business and behave like a Business Head?

It was important. We also have always understood it, the difference is now it is being recognized. I think you cannot divorce understanding of business and do your job. Because we're not in that world of tabulating leave. I keep going back to that world of mechanized processes. India is big on biofuels, big on electric mobility, big on charge points, so many opportunities and if I don't understand the mechanics, the dynamics, what it actually means in terms of the P&L, how am I even going to be able to understand what talent strategy I'm going to adopt, how am I going to offer a good EVP to these people, what it takes to weather the supply demand dynamics. I will not be able to do any of that if I don't understand the business.

True and good HR professionals always understood it (the business). Now it has been brought to the fore and I'm so glad that even on HR roles we are breaking the bias, and getting to business roles from HR.

Source: [ER HRWorld](#)

