



CONCEPT NOTE

Understanding and improving women's work on digital labour platforms

Stakeholder Consultation Workshop in India

Date: Thursday 27 July 2023

Hyatt Regency, Bhikhaji Cama Place

BACKGROUND:

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is implementing a research project titled, “Understanding and improving women's work on digital labour platforms” in select developing countries, namely India, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The project explores the penetration of digital labour platforms in different sectors of the economy and assesses their business models. The objective of the project is to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges that these platforms present for workers, particularly women, and captures the experiences of workers by drawing on quantitative and qualitative surveys conducted in these countries. More information on the project is available in the attached project factsheet or can be accessed [here](#).

For the India component of the project, the ILO has been collaborating with the Indian Institute of Human Settlements, Bangalore and Centre for Internet Society, New Delhi. A scoping study was prepared for the country that identified key sectors for conducting the research, which were validated at an inception workshop with the ILO’s tripartite constituents held in July 2021. These sectors include tutors, ecommerce, health care, medical consultation, beauty work, business process outsourcing, as well as online platform work (freelance, microtask and competitive programming platforms). About 2000 workers have been surveyed across these sectors in India. In addition, interviews have also been conducted with key stakeholders in the country, including representatives of governments, trade unions, employers’ organizations and platform companies, to better understand their perspectives regarding the rise of digital labour platforms and the measures required for promoting decent work for all on such platforms. Drawing on this quantitative and qualitative information gathered, the project has produced a draft report titled, “*Digital labour platforms in India: Opportunities and challenges for women*”.

The findings from this research project, *Understanding and improving women's work on digital labour platforms*, will serve to reflect and discuss what kind of public policies are required to ensure decent working conditions, especially for those who are often the most vulnerable, socially and economically.



THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION WORKSHOP:

The main aim of the consultation workshop is to share and validate the findings of the draft report (*Digital labour platforms in India: Opportunities and challenges for women*) with key stakeholders to seek their feedback and engage in an exchange of ideas, while taking forward the discussions held in India in July 2021. In addition to the report of findings, a section of the consultation workshop will bring forth focused discussions on the extension of social protection for digital labour platform workers. This important discussion ties into a priority focus in the Indian context based on several key articles detailed in the Code on Social Security, 2020.

The workshop will bring together representatives of the Indian government (including the Ministry of Labour, Niti Aayog, etc.), trade unions, employers' organizations, platform companies, platform workers' associations, academics, as well as other key stakeholders.

The workshop will also serve as an avenue for the stakeholders to enhance their knowledge and capacities on the implications of digital labour platforms for workers, businesses as well as the broader socio-economic development of India. In addition, it will provide a forum for the diverse stakeholders to reflect upon the findings of the draft report and consider public policy pathways to overcome the prevailing decent work deficits in the platform economy, particularly for women workers as well as other groups in vulnerable situations, and to leverage digital labour platforms for achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

The consultation will be guided by the presentation of findings of the draft report and discussions regarding following aspects:

- What is the state of the digital ecosystem in India? What are the prevailing challenges regarding the digital divide, including the gendered digital divide?
- What is the scale of penetration of digital labour platforms across diverse sectors, including sectors where women have been participating or have the potential of participating, such as domestic work, ecommerce, health care, medical consultation, personal services, taxi and delivery, business process outsourcing, as well as online platform work (freelance and microtask platforms)?
- What are the prevailing business models of platforms operating in India, and how do these compare with global and regional platforms?
- Who are the platform workers in India? What are their basic characteristics and motivations to undertake platform work? What are some of the commonalities or differences between women and men platform workers, including in terms of motivations, participation rates and educational levels?
- What are the experiences of platform workers, particularly women workers, in accessing and performing work on platforms? What are the gaps between women and men regarding incomes, type of work, hours of work, access to work, and other relevant indicators?



- How do workers performing tasks using platforms fare compared to those working in a traditional way in terms of outcomes, including access to work, incomes, hours of work and working conditions?
- What are the implications of digital labour platforms for advancing inclusion in the labour market and offering decent working conditions, particularly for women workers and other groups facing socio-economic vulnerabilities?
- What are the initiatives by platform workers, trade unions, employers' organisations, or other stakeholders for improving the working conditions of platform workers?
- What are the public policy gaps in addressing the challenges faced by platform workers as well as the legislative and regulatory initiatives in India that aim to tackle these challenges?
- How can the platform business model be re-imagined and platform work be re-organised for improving working conditions and creating opportunities for workers, including women workers and other groups facing socio-economic vulnerabilities?
- What is the way forward to leverage digital labour platforms and promote decent work for all workers? What is the role of the government, trade unions, employers' organisations, platform companies and other stakeholders in this regard?

The draft report will be shared with all the participants prior to the workshop.