

00:00

Okay, so today we are going to discuss the effects of Remotasks closure on workers here in Kenya. And I have here one of the workers who worked on Remotasks before it was closed and we want to hear from him.

00:15

So, first question is, what were the primary challenges you faced following the closure of Remotasks in Kenya? Okay, thank you for that question. Firstly, I can say, from the closure of Remotasks in Kenya, as per me as a tasker, first, I lost my job, that it was permanent.

00:41

Two, from the loss of job, I suffered psychological impact from the closure of the Remotasks in Kenya. You know, it caused stress on me, anxiety, depression among many things, especially when I was unprepared for the closure of the Remotasks platform in Kenya.

01:07

Okay, so in that case, I would ask if you are maybe notified before the Remotasks closed its operations in Kenya. Were you notified that they would close? Okay, no communication that was done, no remo, Remotasks community, I can say community, where all taskers get communication from them.

01:29

But from the, I can say last month, there was no communication, from the admins, from the Slack channel of it. The closure just hit us from nowhere without any communication, I can say that. So it became abruptly?

01:46

Yeah. And did you sign any contract with the Remotasks that had some kind of terms of your employment or your engagement with them? Okay, but when we were signed up, there was terms and conditions.

02:04

We signed, of course, when we opened the platform, there were okay I can say terms and conditions, security checks. In short, there were time contract we signed with Remo. So did it come like, you know, contract, I mean, in most contracts you sign something that looks like a paper.

02:27

So it can be online either through DocuSign or you have been sent some kind of document via email. But was that the case in Remotasks? Because if it's something that was just you read online, like policy guidelines and all that stuff, I'm not sure if that's the contract, but I think a contract should look like something on a paper.

02:50

It can be even in a softcopy. Okay, Remotasks as for me since I've worked for three years now. There were no physical contract signing, when you just sign up, that is it. Yeah, yeah, okay.

03:10

So, what were the emotional and psychological effects that Remotasks closure had on you as a worker? Okay, for me, there was frustration, anger. So, the closure of Remotasks without prior warning or adequate explanation, led me to feel my feelings and frustration.

03:32

You know, dealing with those unplanned closure of the platform intensified my frustrations and negative emotions. So, in your own view, based on the connections you have, and based on how you are seeing things, and the news you are hearing from people, or from the platform you mentioned that you are the slack channel, why do you think Remotasks had closed its operations in Kenya?

04:09

Okay, as for me, since I joined Remotasks, that is on 2021, August, the platform was quite well from 2022. Now things changed when approaching December of 2022, when some people from nowhere, they started using you know VPNs, accessing Remotasks from other other countries.

04:36

Again, I can say the other thing that led Remotasks to be closed was the spamming of the work. Some taskers you know, they were greed of money, but not doing the quality work that Remo required. So, that is another case that maybe, I don't know, maybe that led to the closure.

04:59

Again, number three, some taskers introduced something called a benchmark. That was called a benchmark, I think. That benchmark, I can say, it was a kind of a task that gets you to accuracy.

05:15

So once a tasker had that one in mind, and he has some guidance on how to do that one, he does that benchmark correctly. Once he passes that one, then the next task, he just spams it, just in for money.

05:31

Another thing I can say, there was selling of accounts online, on social medias, for example, Facebook. As for me, as a Facebook user, I was just seeing people selling accounts, that is user accounts, Philippines accounts.

05:47

So I think that one, Remo saw that, and so decided to close its operations in Kenya. Again, number four, I can say. there was the use of proxy according to my my fellow taskers they were communicating the use of proxy that is changing your virtual locations to operate from somewhere but you're in Kenya that is what I can say the last thing as for me led to the closing of Remo and then since Remotasks did not give any reason as to why they closed I think one day we hope one day they will come out and tell us the exact reasons so if people were selling accounts and these accounts were foreign accounts for instance accounts from the US and they were selling them to Kenyans do you think what could really make someone

to buy a US account and that person is a Kenyan do you think there were some kind of pay discrimination or pay discrepancies between Kenyan accounts and US accounts ?

Okay I can say Remo was unfair general according to what he paid taskers from different locations regions so for example let's take a task that was done in Kenya paid 0 .01 dollars that is almost one bob Kenyan shillings yeah and the same same task that was done for example let's say Philippines it was paying one to two dollars you see now from that you've Kenyan taskers they raised that so they went ahead and try to use proxy to I can say to get that money because when you work from Kenya you are paid one bob but if you change your location you are paid let's say two to three dollars you see so that is the pay rate is the one that caused people to use proxies to start selling accounts I can say yeah that one. So in that case even Remotasks was not even fair because if the same task will be done by Kenyans and you get paid 0 .01 USD, and the same task is done in Philippines and they are paying higher rates, and you know you all work remotely, we can't say that those guys who were having some kind of advantages than us, so that was not even fair from the Remotasks' side.

08:21

Correct. So, and then, in other words, you were not happy with the pay rates that you were receiving from Remotasks yeah? Exactly, yeah. And then, I just want to understand what the tasks were like in Remotasks platform, how were the tasks, in terms of complexity, and even the time you would take to complete those tasks, and all that, how were those tasks looking like?

08:50

Okay, Remotasks offered different types of tasks. There were different categories, For example, in content and language, there was text highlighting, transcription, in 2D, there was image annotation, image segmentation, the feedback annotation.

09:10

In 3D, there was LiDAR annotation and the LiDAR segmentation. So, they offer different variety across the platform. For example, if you were assigned a 3D task, I can say it generally paid a little, but still low because you were to, for example, if you work on a 3D LiDAR task, you were to work, for example, four hours for one task and you get paid like one dollar, two dollars, which was really unfair.

09:42

So, coming back to transcription, the pay of transcription was fair in Kenya, I can say, because you transcribe in five minutes, you get two bob three bob, which was at least fair in Kenyan people.

09:56

So, overall I can say, overall Remo provided a variety of tasks. So, yeah. Okay. So, I understand that every task that is done to train AI, they have to go through a quality check and some platforms, they have AI , artificial intelligence tool doing for them quality check and some platforms also those same tasks go through humans who are doing quality checks.

10:23

So, in Remotasks do you think there was some AI somewhere doing quality check at some point? And in your own view, if there was any AI tool that was doing quality check, do you think it was fair to you as a worker comparing it to human beings?

10:42

If the human being was supposed to do quality check on the same task, that was QAd by AI? Do you think AI tool was accurate and was it fair to you as an individual if at all other such kind of tools in Remotasks platform.

11:00

Okay, Remo had, okay, there were rankings in Remo. From a tasker, if you do, okay, there was a tasker, a reviewer, a super reviewer, then the task is delivered to a customer. So, for example, a tasker is doing, for example, a task, before you submit, there was an AI check, an algorithm check.

11:21

If there your task has an error, you can't submit until you fix. That was the AI check before you submit. Once you've submitted, it goes to the reviewer now. That's now the human intervention. Now, the reviewer checks.

11:35

If your task fails to meet some requirement, for example, if they say the task should be 80% and above, if it fails, it's send back to the tasker who did it. If it qualifies, now it goes ahead to the superior viewer.

11:50

If the super reviewer accepts the task, now it proceeds to the customer now, eventually. So the quality check in Remotasks was excellent, in fact, excellent, I can say. Okay. Yeah. So in your own view, was the work you were doing for Remotasks, was it sustainable in the long term?

12:19

Okay. Since I joined the Remotasks, that is November 2020, August 2021. I took Remo as my permanent job, so from November, everything was good, okay, it was sustaining me, from that time, that is paying my rent, my bills, taking kids to school, everything.

12:42

So from, I can say from November, August 2021, to mid -2022, Remo was sustainable for me, that is a long term, but now things changed abruptly 2023, yeah. Okay, so it was sustainable at some point in time, and then towards the end of last year, things changed.

13:08

Things changed, for example, they started saying you can't, okay, people are using VPN until last year, I think, noticed start adding restrictions, you can't do this, if you are in this location, you are given a project that pays less, you see.

13:22

So once they introduced that one, now you see the payment just cut down that way.

And then I also want to know, now that the accounts were closed without notifying anyone, did they close that account with some of your earnings, and if that's the case, if they closed with your earnings, were these earnings maybe paid later, or it just went like that?

13:53

Okay, the closure of Remotasks we can say it was last month. Before they closed, I was still working on Remotasks on my account. So before they closed I had worked for, I think, my dashboard had \$250, I think, for the project that I was working on.

14:14

So the abrupt closure of Remotasks, it went with my cash, my earnings. It was supposed to be paid the following Wednesday. So they closed my cash. Okay, I can say they went with all my cash, I can say.

14:32

Okay, I've also had colleagues who say they were accumulating their earnings in AirTM account, that the rate, the dollar rate would shoot, and then they withdraw. So all the money they had accumulated were taken back by Remotasks

14:50

Did you also express the same thing?

Okay, that happened on I can say December, November -December last year, that is 2023, so you are working on certain projects that is training AI Out of which people are making some money and they got paid to AirTM

15:11

So Remo realized that Kenyans are receiving more money on AirTM so they went ahead and contacted AirTM to hold those money and they claimed that they are doing an investigation of the The earnings that they deposited with them So Kenyan taskers I think all I can say 90% 80% Yeah, they were They faced the same situation that you can't move your funds from AirTM

15:38

either to M-Pesa AirTM to your bank and Eventually those money were returned back to Remo after two months of investigation of which I don't know what they were investigation no communication Yep

That was very very unfortunate. So You know Those who are working remotely in in some companies, not all they received some kind of trainings to help them cope up remote work and then for training data for AI like in platforms like Remotasks You can occasionally come across traumatizing content Or illegal content and this kind of content they need some kind of psychological support or well -being support So in your own experience Did you come across some tasks that were traumatizing and did you need Psychological support or well -being support in any way and or it just some kind of trainings to cope up with the remote job . Did you receive such kind of training and support or they were not needed in your case

?

Okay, to such case there was a project that was on It was on May 2022, I think it was called the Roderana, something like that.

17:05

It had sensitive information, which I can't mention. But you were subject to it, you were forced to work on it. But being a Kenyan tasker, you know, we had to work it for our living, pay bills. And they didn't provide any emotional training and support to cancel us, of the images we were seeing on that website.

17:29

So I can say Remotasks didn't typically provide any specific training programs for those kind of tasks. Yap

Okay, that's really, really unfortunate. So we're almost done. We have like three four questions.

17:51

So we would just like to know if you think. There is anything that can be done to avoid similar instances of abrupt work closure taking place again, not repeating itself in future. Do you think there is anything that can be done to avoid such kind of instances?

18:10

Okay, to avoid similar instances, I can say Remotasks should have some measures that can be implicated. For example, transparent communication. They should communicate transparent. For example, if they want to close an account, they should communicate to you prior to the closing of the account.

18:31

For example, they can tell you in the next two weeks your account will be closed, but your earnings will be paid. Again, number two, fair compensation. They should improve. For example, in Africa, I think in Africa, if they pay some people well in other countries, they can also pay well.

18:52

In Africa, specifically in Kenya, I can say. But again, in such situations, we find that such companies can claim that, you know, we didn't have contracts that were maybe binding us together with these people and all that stuff.

19:12

So, do you think improvement in policies can help also to curb such kind of situations? Okay, I can say. You know, Remo just worked. You just risk it because there were no contracts, you can't sue them in any way.

19:29

So, it just worked for the... just to be brief in short. So, there was no contract timing. It just worked. We risked our details, yeah. Because before you... okay, last... before... Okay, I can say 2020, 2021, before when I joined Remo, they needed your ID to fill for your account.

19:52

You know, that is the sensitive information you're sharing with their company. No contract. So that was insensitive. Okay, so now that you are currently not working on Remotasks and are you engaged in any kind of online job or any job and if there is any job you are engaged in that is similar to Remo, is it better than Remotasks?

20:22

Okay, currently since the closure of Remo that is last month I've not yet recovered. I'm depressed at the moment. So I can say in the next two or three months you have not landed the right job that will sustain me in the town.

20:41

I'll decide to go back to the village, compose myself again, come back and proceed again. Yep. So what do you think? uh right now maybe those who will be listening to this episode uh what can you tell them uh is there any support that you can need from people and how can people help you?

Okay for that I can say for now i'm depressed i don't know what i can do i have no job at the moment if they if there is somebody out there who can help just help me for just help me because i'm depressed i'm planning to go back to the village because i don't have job so i will kindly if somebody is out there just help me out I get peace

yeah okay um okay so um we are almost done we only have two questions to go so the second last question is, is there an outstanding challenge you experienced during your work with the Remotasks that you'd like to call out for action

Okay okay i have one challenge since i joined the platform Remotasks there was okay Remotasks suspends accounts just abruptly again there was there was that is last year when us we were working on there's a project called pumblebees that is training AI on how to i think serve people in an hotel then yeah so you work on those tasks for a month when it comes to pay day Remotasks sends your money to under verification without know without know i can think no reason for that no communication that this task you did it poorly it has gone under verification to review again no communication that was the challenge i think we faced but we still navigated it . So it means you would do a task and then Remotasks takes that task on verification in order to pay you and they veri.. they verify it forever and ever and they end up not paying you completely

Yeah, completely, under verification until now I can say it's under verification ,no communication yeah

That's weird , yeah, so if you had an opportunity to talk to Remotasks officials right now what would you tell them ?

Oh okay of course I could share one thing regarding the closure of Remotasks in Kenya I will plead to Remotasks admins, that is officials, to renew the opportunity to operate in Kenya with a commitment to upholding the terms and conditions that will be agreed upon I believe that reopening Remotasks services in Kenya could provide again reliable and valuable opportunities for opportunity for individuals in Kenya to earn a living, yep.

So, the very last question, is there anything else you'd like to share in regards to Remotasks' closure?

24:06

Okay, No, I think no. Okay, if there is a no question, then I would just say thank you for joining us today, and we appreciate your time and your contributions, thank you and bye.