

00:00

Hi, hello. My name is Mophat and today we are doing an interview on the effects of closure of Remotasks in Kenya and I'm going to ask you a few questions. Ahh so the first question is, what were the primary challenges you faced following the closure of Remotasks operations?

00:16

I must say the closure of Remotasks kind of affected us so much. It really affected our finances and since it was the main source of our income, the closure has brought so many challenges to us and we are unable to pay bills and we are in so much debt because of the closure and I must say it has really affected us in a big way.

00:44

That's very unfortunate and I'm very sorry for that. So how did the closure of Remotasks impact your livelihood and financial stability as a person?

Since it was my main source of income, for example, my child has a condition called a plastic anemia and she literally depends on drugs to survive since the transplant costs around 10 million shillings and we are unable to raise the money right now.

01:14

Now with the closure of Remotasks, I'm unable to get her medicine because her medicine is so expensive and I must say it is a big challenge for me as an individual because it was my main source of income and it was my only way of survival and my only way of paying bills.

01:36

So it has really affected me in a big way.

Okay, I'm very sorry about that and I hope things will go well. So the third question is what are the emotional and psychological effects of the closure on you as a worker?

01:56

The main psychological impact it has had on me as a worker It has really affected me so much. It has put me into a lot of depression, and it has put me in so much anguish. For example, right now, I have accrued so much debt, so it has really affected me so much.

02:22

And it is one thing I won't wish for anyone, because it's a big challenge for me as an individual and as a worker.

That's really unfortunate. So the next question is about when you were working in Remotasks

02:41

Were you being given any support mechanisms like wellness support or even some kind of training to keep your fit working from home, which kind of support mechanisms did you receive?

02:57

I'd say none. And considering the amount of work, and the tedious aspect of the work. I'd say I didn't receive any wellness support.

And do you think such kind of support mechanisms were necessary?

I think for me they're necessary as a worker because considering the huge amount of the workload and the tedious aspect of the work, I'd say it is very necessary for that support because it kind of like makes us feel more relaxed when the support of that wellness support.

03:38

And it will make us even concentrate more. So I'd say it is something that should be introduced like for support, wellness support that I think should be introduced.

And so I think that was also a false conduct because other companies provide such kind of support for their remote worker.

03:58

So, yeah. The next question is, would you have any idea of why Remotasks closed its operations in Kenya? Or were you somehow kind of notified and explained to why they were closing their business in Kenya?

04:14

No, there was no explanation that was given and I have no idea why the closure happened because I just tried to log into my account and it wasn't able to log in. The only notification I got was we are no longer operating in Kenya.

04:31

So there's no notification, which I find inappropriate considering you're working for them. And I think the best thing they should have done at least notify us so that we can be prepared for such eventualities.

04:46

Because you see with that closure, depending on since it was my main source of income, it has put me in a very bad position right now.

Okay, so if you were not notified and I understand that you know Remotasks you work and then they release payments towards the end of the week so if you were not notified about the closure were your dues settled or were your earnings that you worked during that week were they paid?

I accrued there's a there's a bill of \$900 US dollar that wasn't settled and I think the closure with the money that I was mainly depending on it has brought a big challenge to me as an individual

so it means they didn't pay you nine hundred dollars and did you try to follow up and what was their response

I tried to follow up but logging in was a was a was a problem I couldn't access their website I couldn't access their the page and I was just wondering how I'm going to access the money so it has been a struggle for me and I've been thinking of other ways to access the money since now Remotasks is no longer operational in Kenya.

06:03

So I really don't know how I'm going to retrieve the money.

That's very unfortunate. In that case, do you think you as a person can follow the money that they didn't pay you through a legal way? Can you and your colleagues maybe do some kind of legal process to receive the money or it's just gone?

06:28

I must say right now, because the legal challenges and the complexity of the issue and the finance, and let me say the financing the legal part of the proceeding, it would be a challenge for me.

06:50

But I raised my concern with a company called Tech Work that fights for the rights of workers, of online workers. And I explained my issues to them, and they say they'll follow up and maybe see how they can help.

07:13

What do you mean you say Tech Work? Do you mean Techworker Community Africa?

Yeah, I say Techwork Community Africa led by Mophat Okinyi.

Yeah, thank you. The next question would be, were you as a person happy with the pay you were receiving from Remotasks? For instance, pay per task, was it something that you were satisfied with? Or how did you take it as a person?

07:32

If I compare it with other companies, I'd say Remotasks, they pay a bit less considering the current economic situation in our country.

07:51

So I'd say it's a bit low compared to other companies. And... I realized if I compare with other companies, Remotasks pay so much low and it's something that should be looked into.

So in other words, what you were paid was not worth the task you are doing?

08:16

No, no, no, no, because considering the workload, you work so many hours and at the end of the day, the pay is so low and you realize sometimes you don't sleep the entire night, working and then when it comes to the pay, you know, the current economic situations like the economy is literally rising every day, the prices of goods are going up and there's too

much, everything is a burden right now.

08:46

So for you to accomplish and to manage all this, like you have to be paid like in a way that can make your life comfortable as a worker because it's also challenging. The task is also challenging.

That happens with most of the online companies.

09:03

They pay very, very less not considering the economic situations in that country where they are operating. So that's still a challenge that we're experiencing as online workers. But I hope one day we'll have some better changes.

09:17

So I just want you to maybe explain to me how the tasks you were doing in Remotasks were like.

First of all, I'd say they were so tedious. And they were so difficult. And then you do a task. And then after spending so much hours and putting in so much work, then when you submit your work, the auto AI just comes and pokes mistakes in it, not considering the amount of work, the amount of hours you've put into it and then corrects it.

09:57

And then they say the work is not well done. And then you wonder, like why? Especially after going through over and over and over. And then someone points mistakes, someone that doesn't even go through the tedious process we go through as a worker.

10:19

As a worker. And then I find it's not appropriate. And I feel like Remotasks should now look at better ways to look into this issue.

Okay So was the quality check conducted by human evaluators or AI algorithms?

10:41

And if AI, do you think the algorithms were fair to you as a worker?

I feel like the AI wasn't fair to me as a worker because I've been doing this for a long time. And I feel... I feel like everything I've been doing is on board, I've done so many tasks and there's nothing that has been raised ever.

11:08

But now you find sometimes after spending so much hours, the AI algorithm like pokes some holes into it and it makes it so difficult. After spending so much hours in it and then when it points out the irregularities and the discrepancies, it makes it so difficult, it even demoralizes you as an individual.

11:30

So it means the same task that AI would say doesn't meet quality standards, if the same task were reviewed by a human being, you would have some better scores?

Yes, I feel AI is more biased, but I feel if the review is done by a human being, I think it would be better.

11:49

That's very unfortunate, AI tools are not that perfect and we have had complaints about AI being biased, AI being inaccurate, so it's a challenge that, you know, I would expect from such kind of tools.

12:05

So, were some training, were some training offered to support your well-being, because, you know, if you're working from home, you can have some kind of fatigue and you may need some kind of wellness support or well-being support.

12:23

So, was that something that was provided to you or it was something that was not provided but was necessary?

To me, as a worker, I think it's one of the most necessary things ever. You know, for any working environment you have to have like, say, some wellness support and some psychological support considering the amount of pressures and the amount of work you put into it.

12:52

And, you know, I'd say it is one thing that I think Remotas should introduce. The wellness support, I'd say it is something that is very key because it will help you after spending so much hours and the, you know, and with the complexity of the task, I'd say I think the wellness support should be one thing that should be looked into because it will come a long way for us as workers.

13:20

Okay, so it's something that was needed but was not provided. It wasn't provided, it wasn't provided, but it's something that is very necessary. Okay, so based on the tasks you were doing, because we have different kind of tasks that people do online, especially on a platform like Remotasks, you know.

13:38

So based on the tasks you were doing, because some platforms provide tasks like contact moderation or tasks that are very traumatizing in nature. Did you come across such kind of task? Yes, a couple of times.

13:53

I came through I experienced such scenarios the moments I would get tasks that are so difficult and I have to like you know put in it extra work and too much effort and I feel like it is a very it is something that it's so demoralizing.

14:17

The only thing is we do it because we are passionate of the job of the work but I feel like the tasks sometimes are very very hectic and very tedious yeah.

Okay, was the work sustainable in the long term like was the work you were doing and the pay you were doing was it able to cater for your basic needs and cover for the things that you needed to survive as a person so was it sustainable in the long term?

14:49

I'd say not a big percent considering The economic situations in the country, in our country right now, our life has become so difficult and I feel as an individual, it is one thing that should be considered.

15:10

I think they should be looking at the economic situations in a country, yeah, I think it is very necessary to look at the economic situation in a country because sometimes it's not sustainable. You have, like for my kids, I have to get medicine for my child every month and I have to pay rent, my partner is not working and I'm the main breadwinner, now you can imagine the amount given to you, it's not sustainable and then, you know, it's not sustainable, I'd say.

15:44

That's very unfortunate, so I'd also like to know whether there were some pay discriminations between Kenyan accounts and US accounts, if you know of guys or your friends who have any US accounts and so, were there some kind of discriminations in terms of pay, like were the Kenyans being paid the same rates like the people who have the US accounts, what can we say about that?

16:12

There's a huge difference because I have a friend of mine who does the in US account and his pay was so much way bigger than ours, so when I looked at his pay and I looked at mine, I realized I only received cents, I only received peanuts, you know, and to me I think it is one thing that should be looked into, I think if the pay with the kind of work being done, I think it should be level, there's no way, like there's no fairness in working so much and then you receive peanuts, so I think it's very necessary to do that, I think it's one thing that should be looked into, big time, because we get Cents, we get cents in our accounts.

16:56

and it's not fair considering the amount of work put into it.

I'm going to say that before I forget. I had asked this question before but I would like to ask it again. Were the accounts closed with your earnings and were you notified before the closure?

17:12

I wasn't, yes it was closed with my earnings and I wasn't notified. And it's very wrong and I think it's something that AI should not the AI but Remotasks should really work on yes. So it means even after closing the accounts they didn't release the payments at all?

17:27

They didn't release the payments at all. That is very unfortunate, so Did you have the contract with Remotas? And If yes, if you really had contracts with them, what were the terms that you feel were violated?

No, there's no contract I had with Remotasks. Okay so you were working without a contract?

17:47

I was working with other contracts, yes. That's very unfortunate. So how did you get into Remotasks? Did you just sign up and started working?

I signed up and just started working, I actually knew it through a friend and when I got into it, there you are, I was into it and you know working and getting paid, so I'd say I just signed up , yes.

18:12

Okay, we're almost done, so do you believe anything can be done to avoid similar instances of abrupt work closure, repeating itself in the future and if yes, then what can be done?

I think to me, I'd say it is important to have contracts, you know when there's a breach of contract at least you can have a way of reclaiming whatever is owed to you, but I feel in the long term there should be contracts, so that we work with knowing that we are protected, you know, and that is why, you know, like earlier I talked about tech work Africa which focuses on the rights of, I think it is one thing that, that once we have a contract and someone violates it, you can always go to them and maybe air your grievances to them, yes.

19:07

So if you talk of contracts being in place, then in other words, you'll be talking about policies that should govern this,yes, yes, you can have companies like Remotas to put contracts in place. Yes, yes, I think it's a very important issue.

19:20

So there is also need to work on policies? Yes. Okay, so are you currently working on any other platform like Remotasks? No, I'm not working on any platform right now.

Okay, so as we are about to conclude, I would like to ask if there is any outstanding challenge you experienced during your work with Remotasks that you'd like to call out for action?

19:49

I'll say maybe they look into the tasks they're giving us.they try make them a bit easier for us and there's just I think there's just importance like they look into into the task because sometimes the tasks are so hard and then it's draining for for you as an individual as a worker so I think they should look into the task you in and that's cool so if you had a chance what will you tell Ramatasco officials now that they closed your account they didn't pay you and all those challenges that you've explained to me so if you had a chance to talk to the Ramatasks officials right now what would you have told them? I'd say the closure has really affected me as an individual and I think in the future it is important to really look into such issues of closure I think it's important to notify your workers before making such a move

because for my case I just woke up tried to log in and there you are.

20:54

We are no longer operating in Kenya which I found so inappropriate. So I'd say in the future I think it's very important to really look into communicating with your workers before making moves. So I think it is one thing that officials really should really look into.

21:13

Okay now this is the very last question. Now that Remotasks was closed and they closed down with your money and you are now facing financial challenges, is there anything else that you think listeners or people outside there can do to help or to support you, maybe cope up with life or what do you think you can tell people outside there?

21:35

I'd say right now I think my biggest challenge is financial support. I'm currently languishing in so much debt. I have a sick child. I'm unable to pay my rent. I'm going through so much and I think it is very important and I would recommend maybe they set up of financial kitty for us so that when circumstances like this happen we are covered you know, yes.

22:05

So I think it is important to set financial kitty for the workers, maybe put an account, maybe every worker gets financial support in a way for eventualities like this. So I'd say it is something that Remotasks should really look into and maybe out there I think right now we just need financial support because we are going through a lot yes and it's very difficult for us.

22:32

Okay I'm very sorry for everything that happened to you and to your colleagues and we believe everything will go well and we wish you guys all the best. Thank you for joining and bye.