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Hi, I'm Mophat here. Today we want to understand the effects of Remotas closure on workers here in Kenya. And we have here one of the workers who worked for Remotasks before it was closed. And we want to ask a few questions to help us understand better the effect that the closure had on workers.

00:21

So the first question is, what were the primary challenges you faced following the closure of Remotasks operations in Kenya? Okay, first, when Remotas was closed, we lost where we were getting income. So, it became a challenge.

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Again, now finding another job became so difficult. You may get, like, getting another job and you have skills for remote and everything. Now it becomes difficult. Stress, hunting of jobs, it becomes difficult.

01:07

Okay, so how did the closure of Remotasks impact your livelihood and financial stability as a worker? Okay, changes in lifestyle. When I used to work at Remotasks, at least I can get income. I take my family out, I do some things, I support my family and everything.

01:31

Now that Remotasks was closed, life changed. Loneliness, difficulty in supporting family. Again, my life, when I was doing Remotasks, at least I can get something and do some investments. Since it was closed, life changed. It changed negatively? Yeah. okay That was very unfortunate.

02:04

What are the emotional and psychological effects of the closure on you as a worker? Okay, it was a shock and disbelief when it got closed. Again, I mentioned about stress. Obvious, when where you were working, get close, at least you get stressed.

02:31

Frustrations here and there, loneliness and hopelessness. So that brings me to another question. Before a Remotasks was closed, were you notified of it being closed and before it was closed, were there some earnings that were pending to be paid and were they paid?

02:52

No, they did not notify us about their closure. Actually, they closed, I remember it was on a Saturday and when I tried to open my account as usual in the morning to start doing work, oops it was closed I didn't access the account yeah there was some amount which were pending they were not paid and before they closed the account I had some amount in my AirTM account which were which I was being paid from so I had like \$2 ,000 which was in my AirTM account when I tried to do some transaction I was notified that I cannot move in or out my funds from my AirTM when I tried to contact the support they told me they are doing investigation they were notified from Remotasks to hold the money so that they can do investigations about my money now after like two weeks my account was banned permanently and they went out with my money they said money was refunded back to

Remotasks okay this is because I heard some people are multiplying money in a Remotasks dashboard using a bubbleshoot account using a bubbleshoot website yeah now let's say like somebody says is having \$500 in accounts of Remotasks and usually Remotasks pays at Wednesday yeah on on Tuesday someone can use a bubbleshoot website to multiply the earnings in a dashboard To reach even two thousand dollars three thousand five thousand dollars and get paid when Remotasks realised like there is a They are making they are making some losses They they they they reached out to AirTM AirTM AirTM company to hold money to hold accounts of people that are holding their a lot of money in the account and To do some investigation, to my side.

05:32

I was doing a genuine job I was accumulating my money in my AirTM in my AirTM account. I Didn't do anything any multiplication. or anything now a When some people were holding a lot of money in dollars in AirTM So they lost that money Now, that is the beginning of Remotasks making losses, trying to do some changes here and that leads to raise.

06:09

Okay, so just to help me understand something. So, you would work for a longer period of time, like two months. And all your earnings, you held them in AirTM account and they reached \$2000. Yes. And so, this \$2000 was refunded back to Remotasks.

06:28

The work you have been doing for over two months. Yes. That's very unfortunate. Yeah, I was waiting for the dollar to rise. The dollar to raise. Yeah. Yeah, so, did you have contracts with Remotasks?

06:48

No. So, there was no contract? No. Okay, so, okay, when you were working on Remotasks account, do you feel there was need to get some kind of trainings on well -being or some kind of psychological support?

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And if these services were needed, were they really provided? Okay, they didn't provide psychological support. What they provided was training on. Which kind of training? They provided us with a course, which you will do on yourself, understand on yourself.

07:36

Do an evaluation and start working. Okay, so these were the training to help you do some tasks. These were trainings that would help you do, yeah, yeah, or which would help you be assigned to task. And If you fail the evaluation you won't be assigned that task.

08:02

All right. So I was asking about the, you know, if you are working remotely, and you might need some kind of training to help you cope up with the remote work, and if you're working on some kind of traumatizing tasks or difficult tasks that you need a break in between, you should be getting some kind of training to help you with your well -being, with well -being support and or mental health support.

08:30

So those are the trainings I'm talking about. If you're working from home and or, you're working on a certain kind of tasks, you need some kind of wellness support and some kind of training to help you cope up with remote work.

08:45

So what those trainings, or do you really think they were necessary?

Yeah, but they didn't offer us. It's up to you to look for someone to... support you mentally, yes psychologically they didn't offer us such support okay so uh this next question i just want to understand your opinion based on your experience and based on the connections you have whether you might know what might have caused Remotasks to close its operation in Kenya in your own opinion if you don't have any idea you can just say pass and we pass it okay in my own opinion i've worked for Remotasks for several years uh during last year some people started using VPN in doing work this is because Remotasks was doing partiality in terms of payment now someone will use a VPN so that someone can use a VPN so that he can get some bigger higher rates yeah now when people start using VPN it went to a rate that people are using proxy to access like the countries that are getting higher rates yeah like like u .s india yeah and Argentina those those those countries it became worser when people i had like people are using the bubbleshoot website to multiply the payment after getting the higher rates from the other side of countries they are using the bubbleshoot again to multiply the earnings So, this made Remotasks to make a lot of losses.

11:03

Now, to my opinion, I think Kenya became the leading in doing such plans. Now, that made them to close Remotask. Okay, anyway, that will always become an opinion that it's not factual because Remotask hasn't told us why they really closed the operation in Kenya.

11:28

Yeah, that's my opinion. Again, on that, you may find there were same similar projects people are working in Kenya, similar projects people are working in US, you get in Kenya, they are under paying, similar project done in US, they are paying in high rates, similar project done in Argentina, they are paying in high rate.

11:56

Now you get like, why should someone do same same project in Kenya and get underpaid when he can use VPN and get higher rates. Yeah, yeah. Understand it's some form of discrimination in terms of pay, yeah?

12:20

Yes. So, that brings me to another question of whether you as a same person or that you are happy with the payments that you were receiving as a worker using Kenyan account. Now that you know you had some of the friends who were having accounts for the US people, like a US account, but they were in Kenya.

12:46

So, you are a person who was using a Kenyan account. Were you really happy with what you were being paid versus the tasks you were doing? No. I wasn't happy because some people are making a lot of money using US account.

13:03

And me here, I'm struggling with a Kenyan account, same -same project and get underpaid. So, the next question would be, what were the tasks like for you on Ramotasks platform? Okay, the tasks were not that easy.

13:24

There were annotations, transcription and others. Yeah, the tasks were difficult. Others is, I remember, I was doing some tasks of a project called Bumblebee. The project was about annotation.

13:46

I could spend like 30 minutes doing the task. I made like 20 ,000 Kenyans. and I never received that money. It was last year, almost end of last year, I never received my money. I spent sleepless nights doing the job almost 18 hours a day, sometimes 16 hours, and I was expectant.

14:23

It reached on Wednesday, all the money were under verification. Up to date, I've never seen that money. So why would they verify a task after you spent so many hours doing the task? They said their workers' team, the reviewer team, are working on are checking on the quality of the work.

14:51

After done, they will send us the money. Since that they have never seen their money, they have never sent any feedback to us about the money. Yes. That's very unfortunate. So this question is in regards to quality check.

15:12

The way quality check was being done on the task you were doing, because you've mentioned that some tasks would go under verification. So was the quality check done by AI or humans or both? How was the quality check being done?

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Okay, in the Remotasks there were rankings. There were bronze taskers, silver taskers, gold taskers, bronze reviewers, gold reviewers, super reviewers, gold super reviewers. So when task is done, the quality is being checked by the reviewers, according to their rankings.

15:56

Now you can get like there were benchmarks, which were done mostly by the AI, and the AI was biased. In a way, you can do the right task the way it should be. And you find like you are being kicked out, like the AI has reduced your accuracy, making you to be kicked out of the project because of low accuracy.

16:27

Okay, so AI tool would mark your work as of low quality, and the same task if it were checked by a human being, it would be of quality. Yeah, yeah. So in your opinion, was the work sustainable to you in the long term?

17:00

No, I can't say like it was sustainable. At first, when we started doing Remotasks, the job and work was sustainable. During last year, I can't say Remotasks was giving us sustainable work, because you can work at the end of the day, no payment.

17:23

You can work, and being worried, will I get my payment at Wednesday? No, now, it was not sustainable. Okay, and then, how complex were the tasks assigned to you on Remotasks account, and do you think what you were paid for doing such kind of task, was it worth the task?

17:52

No, I can't say. There was some tasks that were paid well according to their complexity and there were others that were underpaid Like the project called Anteater, Anteater yeah It's an annotation project.

18:13

It's very complex You get here in Kenya you are being paid like zero point three two dollars While someone in the US is being paid ten to twelve dollars same same task? Very complex you spend like five hours doing the project and get underpaid.

18:36

Yeah They should check on that.

Okay, so do you believe anything Can be done to avoid similar instances about abrupt work closure? One Remotasks, on Remotasks or any other online job. Yeah, okay, one thing They should get policies to guide the project And the company number two at least the company should have a contract with the workers and being honest and Transparency on what's going on For example when a project comes They should sign a contract Tell the workers when something has went wrong with the project not like Remotasks going with money of the workers Again, I can recommend Like the company of Techworkers community Africa To raise the focus of honesty to make the Environment and the work a better place for working Okay, we're almost done we have just two more questions to go so In your own in your own view is there an outstanding challenge you experience during your work with the Remotasks that you'd like to call out for action Is there an outstanding challenge you experienced during your with Remotasks that you would like to call out for action like is there something that you think you should Tell people to act on it.

20:34

Yes Like going with our money So it means The issue of not paying workers is something that should be called out yes, okay, The money which were hold on AirTM, it's not me alone, many people, yeah, were affected about the AirTM issue.

21:07

So, the second last question, then we just end the interview. So, if you had the opportunity, what would you tell Remotasks' officials? Okay, what I can tell them, at least to support us financially, and again, at least to refund us our money, yeah.

21:39

Okay, so it means you... Okay, now, as we conclude, I would like to ask if there is anything else you would like to share in regards to Remotasks closure. Okay, the closure of Remotasks has affected many workers here in Kenya.

21:58

Firstly, for me, I'm a mother. I lost the only source of income I was depending on. I'm at home. I was doing the work remotely, taking care of my baby, and also earning. Now that the Remotasks has gone, I'm unable to pay my bills, feed my baby.

22:27

I'm hopeless. Not me alone. Same case applies to other workers who are doing Remotasks. Others have gone to upcountries because they have been unable to pay their bills here in town. And also, others have dropped out of school because they were working Remotasks to pay their school fees and everything, yeah.

23:00

Okay, that brings us to the end of this interview, and thank you very much for your time, and I hope everything will be okay with you and all of your colleagues who lost their jobs. Thank you and bye.