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So today we want to discuss the effects of Remotasks closure on Kenyan workers and here with me is one of the workers who was working on Remotasks here in Kenya who also got affected by the Remotasks closure. So I'm going to ask her a few questions and just to kick-start I want to understand the primary challenges you faced following the closure of Remotasks operations in Kenya.

00:27

Ahhhh One of the main challenges that I faced is that I lost my source of livelihood because that is why I was getting my daily bread. That is the only job that I knew doing best. So when Remotasks was closed, I lost my job, I lost my source of livelihood financially and also on my well-being because it came as a shock, something that I was not prepared because it was just closed abruptly.

01:02

So I would say primarily I lost my source of livelihood, yes.

Okay so you said it was closed abruptly. Yeah. Were you informed about the closure and before the closure did you have some earnings on the dashboard that were supposed to be paid and were they paid later on or not?

01:22

Yeah like I said it was closed abruptly, there was no communication that was done and yes I had saved some money on my dashboard there was more than 2,500 dollars. I ..., yeah..We were being paid weekly that was on Wednesday and I had left my money to accrue for two months and I remember I wanted to upgrade my life so I said that let me continue saving there because we were being paid weekly.

02:00

Aahm The main reason I was not withdrawing is because I was waiting for maybe the dollar to go up, so when I withdraw I can get some good money. But since the account was closed abruptly, I wasn't even able to withdraw my money.

02:16

And there in the airTM, I realized they reversed the money, so I couldn't even get hold of any contact that I could call, so that I could know how to get back my money.

Okay, so Remotasks pays every, week, Wednesday ?yeah

02:38

So if you said you were saving, were you saving on AirTM account or Remotasks account? I was being paid via AirTM. Of course the platform that I was working with was Remotasks, but my payment used to come through AirTM.

02:56

So I was just leaving it to accumulate so that I can get a good amount that is for the sake of clarification. The Remotasks was a platform that I worked with, but my payment I was being paid via AirTM. Yeah

03:12

Okay, so when Remotasks was closed, did you receive any kind of support mechanism?

When it was closed, we did not. I did not, let me speak for myself, I did not get any kind of support. I was expecting that I will get some type of closure, maybe somebody to come and explain to us what really happened, but I did not get any communication.

03:39

Secondly, I expected that maybe we will get some kind of help, that is in terms of financially, because we were just left on the edge, we never got any support. Thirdly, I thought that maybe we will get some kind of well-being support, that is maybe in terms of therapy, because most of us were left in shock.

04:01

Some of us were the breadwinners of our families, and we just didn't know what to do. For me, I'm still in shock until now. I have not been able to get another job, and I really don't know what to do.

04:13

I'm even skeptical about these online jobs, such as Remotasks. So I'm really, really confused right now, and to be honest, I have not get any type of support. Yeah.

Would you know why Remotasks closed their operations in Kenya?

04:32

The reason why, like, what could make them close their operations in Kenya? Do you, by any chance, know the reason?

No, I don't. I don't know. Okay, Yeah.

So, how complex were the tasks that you were working on, and were the pay fair?

04:56

Aahm The tasks It depended with the type of training that you were getting because we were being trained before the tasks. I would say some of them weren't that complex to me and some were very complex. In terms of payment, I really didn't feel it was fair because I used to look at the payment for the people that maybe worked overseas as America and the kind of payments that we used to get here in Kenya just doing the same job but we were being paid way less compared to the ones working in America.

05:28

I even had friends who had opened their accounts using the VPN and their address would read that they are in America, we were doing the same job and them they were being paid way more than whatever we as people working from Kenya were getting and I really felt like this was very very unfair considering that we were doing the same job.

05:55

That's very unfortunate because it's some kind of discrimination in terms of geographical location of where you are. Yeah. So, in many platforms, in many freelance platforms that train AI, like Remotasks, there are some mechanisms to check quality.

06:10

Yeah. So, some have AI tools that help them to check quality. And in some platforms, quality check is being done by people, real human. Yeah. So, in the case of Remotasks, what was your experience? Do you, was there any AI tool helping to do quality check, and if there was one, how fair was the tool?

06:34

Yes. We used to have an AI tool that used to check on the quality of the job that I have done. And I wouldn't say that it was very fair, because sometimes you will do a job, and then the way the AI would do the quality, you'll find that it tends to differ with whatever you did, and you took your time to do it.

07:03

So, I feel like if we had maybe people doing the quality check, then it would be better, because for them, they would understand, or they'll get the real definition of whatever I was doing, from what point I was doing, as compared to the AI, which it is just the system that is put in place, forgetting that they need to put a more system check.

07:30

So, I felt like it was a bit unfair, because if the quality is not good, you might get to be paid very low, or you might be forced to redo the job again. And if the AI is not getting it, then maybe you might even end up not getting to be paid.

07:50

Okay so in other words AI was bias? Yeah, it was, I would say that.

Okay so for remote tasks like what you were doing for Remotasks you know some companies provides a training to employees on even how to prevent corruption yeah and based on the tasks that you do sometimes people can be doing very traumatizing tasks that needs some kind of psychological support yes so were there some training that were offered to you in person like training being carried out by human beings about your well-being as an employee or were there also tasks that were traumatising that you were working on that needed some kind of psychological support and if such kind of training was suppose to be needed were they offer to you?

Mmmmh yeah That's a good question I would say the only training that I got is the training that pertained the job if I'm going to take a certain job then they would train me for a day depending on hours but the Well-being support?

08:57

No, I did not get and it took a toll on me because sometimes we would work on things that were very vulgar in terms of the language and maybe right now that I'm not working I can say for real I'm seeing the effect.

09:15

During the the job during me doing the job during the time that I was doing the job I wouldn't say that I would realize how much I needed the well -being support because maybe most of the time I was just working and I did not stop to to see maybe I needed help but right now that I'm not working I can say that it has taken like a very good toll on me being a mother of two having these PTSD especially being anxiety being anxious that is sometimes reminiscing on the things that I have I have moderated I can say or the vulgar languages that I used to to see on the platform has really taken a toll on me so I have not gotten any support that can help me pick myself up even when the job just at a glimpse ended I was still in shock so I really don't know what to do there is nobody that I can lean on or somebody that I can vent out my issues for them to understand me and I feel like maybe next time if we are going to do such a job I feel like maybe they should put in place some support in terms of our well -being because there is no way I'm going to work if my mental health is at stake .

I am very sorry about that , yeah, so in your own view based on what you have told me about the pay discrepancies , even the pay per task and the difference between you know US accounts and Kenyan accounts,in your own view as someone who was working with the Kenyan account was the work really sustainable for you?

11:03

Aamh I wouldn't say it was really really but to some extent yes because this was my source of livelihood I was not doing or rather I'm not doing any other job that is the the job that I depended on to pay my bills to cater for my children so as much as it was a bit low paying I would say that that was my source of livelihood ,yes.

11:29

Okay so for platforms like Remotasks who employ people remotely do you think there is something that can be done to avoid the situation where you know they just shut down their operations without informing people they work without contracts and they violate people's basic rights do think there is something that we that that can be done to avoid that from happening again ?

Yeah, that's a good question I would say there are some measures that should be put in place to avoid the such situations from happening again Number one, I would say that There should be policies and guidelines that are put in place to help the workers in shielding them in case something like this happens again because If there was a legal framework that was put in place and we lost our jobs abruptly the way we did Then I feel like something will be happening right now and we will have a case, you know to save us from this Secondly, I would also say that maybe next time if we are we were to engage in such Remotasks jobs, then we should have contracts signed because in this one we did not have Any contract so of course even if it has ended it has ended right now There is nothing we can do about it But if we had contracts that we signed up because now most of the people that we are working for are not within here the geographical Area in maybe in Africa Then there is something that is binding us together.

13:15

And of course there are consequences That would have shielded us as workers. Yeah
Thirdly, I would also like to say that Maybe people should talk more because some people did not even know that such a company existed or There were jobs like Remotasks in Kenya and I feel like if something like this happens Then people should be able to speak because with us speaking we are able to to create that awareness That there's something that is happening, which is not right.

13:52

And even if we needed help then we need to speak first so I would urge like very many people to talk, to create this awareness it will really help and who knows you might even get some well wishers to help us and speaking of well wishers I would also want to say that there are some organizations here in Kenya that are really looking out for us that are working in the tech companies an organization like The TCA that is the Techworker Community Africa which is doing a very good job I would like to commend them kudos to to Mophat Okinyi with his team they're really doing a good job and you see if we are having such organization that are coming coming up to help us as workers who have been affected it really shows that we are not really really alone but there's somebody who cares because they have been reaching out just to get to know how are we how are we really faring up and they're trying to put some work into place to see how we can be helped So I am really hoping that we'll be able to go a step further.

14:59

So I feel like if these four things are done, then the situation will be different and we will be able to curb such a situation in future. Yeah, thank you.

That was cool. So I just also wanted to ask if you are currently working on a platform like Remotasks.

15:21

And if you're working on one, how different is it from Remotasks? If there is none, then why are you not currently working on such platforms?

To be honest, there is no platform that I'm working with right now. I can say I'm still in shock and I'm very, very sceptical.

15:43

You know, they say once bitten twice shy, so I am very sensitive on the type of job that maybe I'll be getting myself into, and because we have spoke about measures being put in place, now I know better, so if I'm going to engage myself in any of them, then I should be following a set of rules, which if they're not put in place, then I might not be able to join.

16:10

So, right now, I am not in any. Okay. Yeah, that's good. So, to those who are outside there, those who will be listening to this episode, and maybe what do you think the general public can do to support you guys who are affected by Remotasks closure in King?

16:33

That's a good question. I would call out to the public to come and help us, because I feel like the major issue that we are facing, and it's not just me alone, for most of the tech workers, especially for the ones that their money, they did not, they were not able to withdraw their, or to cash out their money.

16:55

We are stranded. So, I would really like to call out to the public to help us with the funding, to reach out, even if it's just a small amount, we can do, how do we call it, the, how is it called again?

17:14

It is the crowdfunding, yeah? If we can call out for the mutual aid, people to just support us with whatever they have from that account, and then we can be able to share across the tech workers who have been affected.

17:30

It would be a very very good thing and also secondly I'll call out for mental health support some of us are having a hard time for example I don't have a husband I cater for my children and right now I'm not working so I'm even stressed more still being in shock I'm even stressed more and I really don't know how to support my family so if I can get someone who can help me navigate through this journey of life and just to get back on my feet then it can be a good thing.

Yeah that's good so if you were given opportunity to talk to Remotasks officials right now yeah what would you tell them?

it's a very very good question I would say if I'm given up an opportunity I would want to to call them out that they should return our money especially for those who we we were not able to cash out for me I had more than \$2 ,500 in that account please Remotasks know that I really worked hard for that money it is not right for you people to go with our money so please if we can be able to get it back we had a lively we had a life to live we had fam.. we have families and it's not as if I did not work for that money that is my sweat and please we would want that money back and secondly please don't do that again please just don't vanish in thin air because it's really really troubling us and that was not a good thing to do you would have communicated so that maybe just to alert us to do the right thing to remove our money and also maybe start looking for greener pastures start looking for something else to do I'm sure we wouldn't be in this situation that we are in so yeah but that is what I would I would have told them

Okay, that's really cool and insightful So the very last question, I just wanted to ask if there is anything else that you'd like to share in regards to Remotasks closure, just anything else that can come to your mind?

19:42

I would say, I would want to say that Remotasks should understand it is people who are doing this job and they should be very considerate and also to the world out there. It's not just the AI who does the, can I say the dirty work?

19:58

Yeah, it is people and in case you have somebody like that, please understand them and offer any support that you can offer. Because they really need a lot of support. So if there is a way you can come through for them, please do.

20:12

That is what I can say. Okay, that was really cool. So that brings us to the end of this episode and thank you for joining us and we appreciate your contributions. Bye.