



COVID19 Pandemic Voices from Margins

Webinar series Webinar 16:

Struggles for Survival: Gig Workers talk about Struggles for Rights in times of a Pandemic

Date: May29, 2020

Minutes

Panelist profile:

Panelist 1: Abhishek

He has been working in the cab industry since the last ten years. He also acts as an advisor to the cab drivers in Delhi. He is associated with Savodaya Driver's Association of Delhi, an organisation working with cab drivers, since 4 years and is currently the spokesperson of the organisation.

Panelist 2: Ragini Gaur

She has been working as a driver with Ola and Uber since the last 3 years. A resident of JharodaMajraBurari, North Delhi, she is currently pursuing her BSc first year through distance learning.

Panelist 3: Suganthi

She is 25 years old and works as a cab driver in Bangalore. She has been working with Uber for past five years. Her husband is also a cab driver.

Panelist 4: Sripal Reddy

He hails from Hyderabad, Telangana, he has been working as the Organising Secretary of the Telangana Four Wheelers Association Union for the past 10 years and has been working in OLA as a cab driver for the past 5 years.

Panelist 5: Kamaljeet Singh Gill

He has been driving since the last 25 years and is associated with Ola since 2012 and Uber since 2013. He is the Vice President of Indian Federation of App Based Transport Workers (IFAT) and President of Savodaya Driver's Association of Delhi.

Panelist 6: Dharmendra Vaishnav

He is the President of the Indian Delivery Lions Organisation, Jaipur and also is the Joint Secretary of Indian Federation of App Based Transport Workers. He is an app based transport worker and through his union advocates for safety, security and better future for bike riders and delivery partners working in companies like swiggy, Zomato, Dunzo, Ola, Uber and Rapido.

Panelist 7: Mohammed Inayath Ali

He is the Joint Secretary of Indian Federation of App Based Transport Workers and Secretary of NCTU Karnataka union.

Panelist 8: Shaik Salauddin

He is the National General Secretary of Indian Federation of App Based Transport Workers (IFAT). He was also instrumental in formation of Telangana State Taxi and Drivers Joint Action Committee as is the Chairman. Also, he is the State President of Telangana Four Wheeler Driver's Association.

Mr. Tom Thomas, Moderator, Praxis: Praxis is an Indian organization that focuses on various facets of participatory democracy. Praxis tries to bring the voices, concerns, and solutions of marginalized communities through several kinds of research and studies directly or through face to face meetings that happen physically or digitally between the community members, policymakers, media, activists, etc., This webinar series of COVID-19 Pandemic – Voices from Margins is a continuation of that attempt as during the lockdown days the major hope is to bring to the forefront the voices of the communities that are left unheard. As the days go by we are seeing more and more evidence of government keen on easing the burden of the middle class, banks, industries, etc and very little on the hardships and uncertainties of the poor, marginalized and migrant workers in general. We are seeing that the Supreme Court is keener than telling the government very little evidence of the government is seen. Over the past 15 webinars, we have been able to bring voices of Migrant workers, Nomadic and Denotified tribes, Entertainment sector workers, Garments sector workers, Students with special needs, People from North east, Sex workers, People using drugs, LGBTQI communities, Adolescent girls, Victims of child trafficking and Petty contractors etc. This is the 16th webinar which is brought together by Praxis and Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers which brings those voices who are fighting two battles- COVID 19 and the struggles of gig economy. We will be in conversation with those familiar and regular faces of pre COVID days- the Ola and Uber drivers and the people who delivered things only at just one click on smart phones. Today, they are fighting two battles both at the same time. And the most obvious one is health battle as they don't have any choice where can they go and they are the people at the frontline delivering essentials and transporting people. Another battle is against the gig economy. In recent years, the gig economy is an offering of capitalism and the so called "free market". The gig economy can be broken down into two sects- use and throw labour force economy and the invisible employer. These two aspects are working against everything that labour workforce has fought for centuries- i.e. basic rights of workers, their basic fair wages and basic fair living for them. And this is changing the way capitalism and economies were at the beginning. For instance, Brick-and-Mortar companies during the era Industrialization era, the workers had the opportunity to fight and negotiate against the entity that had a physical infrastructure and the managerial personnel about their rights. While in gig economy they are fighting with an employer who is nebulous at best and invisible in most of the cases. In a way, the gig economy gives a kind of being pro consumer aura but it shouldn't be forgot that it is at the cost of someone. This pandemic is a clear proof that our skies are connected and fair trade and fair wages is what a good quality of life means to everyone. And without everyone having a good quality of life, fair wages and fair working conditions the society at large is not going to have a better quality of life.

Panelists DISCUSSION

Abhishek highlights the plight of drivers and poses serious questions regarding the role of cab aggregators in ensuring the safety of drivers. He initiates the discussion asking a question, "What is the government and company's definition of safety"? Both have a different definition of safety. What are the safety protocols that should be adopted by the drivers while driving for various cab aggregator companies? The company asks us to drive using a separation kit to ensure safety. They suggest us to switch on AC and drive as per customer's convenience. Entire world knows AC is a transmitter of the virus for COVID 19 and the cooling coil is same for all AC vents and this will transmit the virus. A driver is obliged to switch on AC if the driver asks. Between customer or driver in case anyone of them is already infected, the virus can be transmitted through air which is circulating through AC. As a result, if a driver gets infected, he will also infect his family.

Due to the situation of pandemic, people are scared and the bookings are very low. Besides, the companies also ask to sanitise the car after every ride. How it could be affordable for a cab driver driving at Rs. 6 to Rs. 7 per km to bear the sanitation cost during the entire day in a city like Delhi? Out of his all earning, the cab drivers have to manage a payment of 25-30% of commission to the company and 5% to the govt. The cab aggregators and the government are so self centric that they look only for their own profits and revenue respectively. What will be left to the cab driver after paying off these commissions to cab aggregators and government? In present times, when a driver steps out of his house he needs Rs. 500 for petrol refill, CNG and for his own basic expenses.

In case the driver gets infected, he will have to live under isolation for 14 days. Who will bear the cost company or government? The Delhi government says that they have only 5000 beds with facilities well equipped with oxygen. In such scenario, what is the assurance of safety when the cases in Delhi are more than 8,000? We are more prone to be infected with virus as we do public dealing on a daily basis. In car, there the distance between the customer and the driver is less than 1metre. None of the provisions talk about welfare of drivers. Neither any of the guidelines have been issued by company nor should the government regarding what protocols to be followed by them during the travel. No one wants to

take the responsibility? Today, how the driver will undergo a test of Rs. 4,000 when the day earning isn't even Rs. 100. I am not saying all this for Delhi but it applies to all states that permit cab aggregators to operate in their states.

Ragini Gaur raises pertinent questions regarding the efforts of cab aggregator companies and of the government in favour of drivers. I have two points to discuss. What govt. is doing for drivers? They declared to distribute Rs. 5000 but I wonder whether anyone received this or not? None of the drivers who were working from past 2-3 years have received any benefit. Only 5% of the total drivers who had the batches received an amount Rs. 5,000. I don't think government has done anything for the drivers. There are many drivers who don't have badges but were working and they didn't receive anything. And there were some who weren't working but they got the money. The government could have got all the details about the drivers from Ola and Uber.

There are many girls like me who are driving taxi and managing their studies and also supporting education of their siblings. Many female drivers are there who leave their families at home for 12-14 hours and work to run their homes. There are many who drive in the interior locations even they haven't received it? The companies collected funds in the name of supporting drivers but none of the benefits reached to Even, I also donated Rs. 200 in the fund. The badge deprived many drivers from availing this cash benefit. None of the drivers have received any ration or anything. On the other hand, the companies have received funds to deal with the situation. The companies have taken back the cars from us that have left us in a helpless situation that we are not able to go back to our home. They took back the vehicles on the ground of some safety related works need to be done in the cars. Now when we call them no one responds. We don't have any other source of livelihood. The drivers have paid the instalment Rs. 1035 for 3-4 years which is a big is a big sum of money that a driver can afford from his/her out of daily earnings and payments related to personal expenses and CNG refill. Till date, we have been paying off the instalments for the car. Maximum wages we used to earn was between Rs.200-400 on cars that we take on lease. The drivers have paid 15 lakhs to the companies for the cars which would cost Rs.7 lakhs. And still the vehicles were taken from us and we are left with nothing. The drivers drive work for 16-17 hours. Those who were not able to reach to the workshops the cars were taken by them using cranes.

Suganthi sums up how severely she has been financially impacted have created challenges in managing the daily life expenses. I am working in Uber from past 2 years. There was an assurance from State govt that they will deposit Rs.5, 000 in account of the drivers but we have not received yet. From last 2 months I am facing many challenges how I will pay EMIs and school fees for my children. No bookings are coming for cabs. In morning we pay Rs 500 for fuel but no bookings means how we will live life. We don't have money even for food. We don't know what the govt. is doing? Drivers are so important for daily activities and govt is not anticipating with us. Without drivers how daily lives of people will move. The government does not understand this. Govt not talked with us at all. Requesting govt. to come forward and listen to our voices. We are requesting govt. to support us. We are facing lots of problems no groceries to eat.

Sripal Reddy hails from Hyderabad, Telangana and has been working with OLA Cabs for the past 5 years. OLA receives a commission of 25% to 30 % from us per day but since the lockdown they haven't helped us. They did not even care about whether or not the cab drivers existed. Since the lockdown we have been struggling a lot to pay EMI's, rents and to even get basic provisions as we do not have any income. During the lockdown OLA had raised funds from the customers but there is no idea on what happened to these funds as none of these funds were used to support the drivers. OLA had offered to provide Ration Kits to its drivers but none of it was provided to us. It has been more than a week since cabs started functioning again in Telangana. I have been paying Rs.500 for diesel everyday but there is no booking maybe just one or two per day. We haven't earned more than Rs. 200 or Rs.300 per day but we have been buying all the safety equipment's with our money as OLA has not provided us with any safety kits but the commission is being charged from us regularly. It has been a week but even now the incentive has not been updated on the App. Even when we called OLA there was no proper response from the App. The government rule says that '1+3' is the way of accommodating customers in cabs but the customers have not been cooperating with us as they want to accommodate more number of people in a cab. As we are unable to avoid any bookings due to lack of income, we have been forced to consider rides. Traffic Police have warned cab drivers and some have been charged with a fine for not following the rules. The government or the OLA as a company does not take responsibility for this but we have been blamed for considering the rides. If we do not agree to the customers, they will file a complaint against us. OLA generally considers complaints of customers that they file against us and not about the complaints/concerns of cab drivers. Even though the cab drivers had to income during the lockdown they were charged with paying the instalment fee of Rs.1075 regularly. The government requires the votes of drivers for just winning but no measures have been taken to improve the conditions of these drivers during the lockdown. Although the RBI had announced that customers can pay EMI's after 3 months none of the banks or the company had agreed to this statement. We have been asked to pay our instalments and if we fail to pay it then the penalties were changed in double.

We have been borrowing money to pay the EMI's and during times like these we have been charged with double penalties and there is no response or support from OLA for our struggle. OLA or the government has not helped the drivers during the lockdown whereas only through IFAT we were able to receive the ration kits. The cab drivers require support from OLA and the government to survive the lockdown.

Kamaljeet Singh Gill underlines the irresponsible behaviour of the aggregator companies towards cab drivers. My name is Kamaljeet Gill. I represent the workers of Delhi NCR app based drivers. I am Vice President with IFAT at the national level. We have three main problems. After the lockdown the aggregator companies did not take any responsibility for us. Ola and Uber don't care for the drivers. These companies used to charge 25-30% commission from us and used us in every way. Be it by putting ads on our cabs or installing tablets in our cabs they made huge earnings from us. We needed their support during this. All we needed was a drivers' salary not relief in instalments or CNG but they didn't give us anything. Uber at least paid Rs. 3000 to the drivers but Ola did nothing. Whosoever was distributed by Ola with the money generated from funds were briefed that this is refundable which means later it will be taken back from them. The government ordered companies to pay salaries to all, but they have not done anything. Secondly, the police penalise us when we drive beyond 40 km per. Roads in Delhi are such that one can drive at 120 kmph, but we can't drive beyond 40 km ph. Even cycles go at 60kmph and they ask the cars to drive at 40 km. This was decided all of a sudden and the *challan* (Fees) ends up costing 1500 and this end up in a lakh. Those who driver cars which they pay Rs 2 lakh for, can't pay fines of up to Rs 3lakh. We want aggregator companies to implement the decided fees. When the govt has fixed the fee, why do they bow down before the companies? Even autos charge Rs 9.50 per km. But our AC cars pay us Rs 6/7 per km when they reach at the door of the customer for pickups and still we are paid less. The Rs 2000-fine for crossing 40kmph speed limit must be stopped immediately. We should be given at least 10 km given as we are not left with enough savings. The Delhi govt. Chief Minister distributed Rs. 5,000 to people who had the badges. Due to this many have received and many are there who have not got anything. Many car owners have not got any money and in total only 25% people got the money. Certain conditions have been imposed that has exempted many people. When the govt already has fixed the pay has already been fixed by the government and the Supreme Court why does it bow down before these companies. Earlier, we used to earlier be provided with a discount of at least 10 km ph over the prescribed speed limit but now the fines are high. We must fight against these issues for our Delhi NCR drivers - else drivers will be forced to commit suicide. My fight is with these can aggregator companies who should pay what has been decided as the fees and the drivers should be provided with the essential medical claims in cases of accidents.

Dharmendra Vaishnav elucidated about the situation of app based transport workers in the backdrop of safety issues, mismatched income and expenses and conditions of workers before COVID19 after pandemic and post COVID situations. He started off the conversation by sharing his own erstwhile experience of joining as a transport based worker in Uber eats.

I started as a transport based worker. In the initial days, when we were working the incomes used to be Rs. 2000 per day and it gave us a happy feeling that our income has increased but eventually we realized that the graph is going down to Rs. 500- 700 after working for 12 to 14 hours. So the problem starts when one earns a good sum of money in the beginning, the person starts to plan and priorities e.g. children education, buying car/ bikes for commuting other priorities accordingly. However, with a downfall in income it creates pressure on workers to manage family needs. While coping up with situations of mismatched income and expenses, this also impacts the mental health of workers. We don't any have an idea about how much we will get paid. We work as per demand.

Safety is another issue that we are fighting for. We have been fighting with the Govt. to ask companies to pay attention to our safety concerns. After stepping from home whether it's a cab driver or a delivery person s/he doesn't know with what income they will come back home. They often work for 12-16 hours to earn an income. People work as per their needs. Often orders get snatched at the gun point, accidents occur and the workers have to face such circumstances. Sometimes they are beaten up badly. In any of the circumstance they are not provided with any insurance, or medical health care claim relief. When workers stay at home after the accident they are not extended with any kind of help. Recently on Facebook I posted about a worker who met with a terrible accident and he was unable to move and was on rest on the advice of doctor. The company forced the person to come to work and threatened of cancelling his ID. In cases of death of family members, the workers have to bear insensitive behavior of the company, which asks them to join back and threatens to cancel their IDs. The companies compel the employers to join irrespective of the condition of employees. I am sure the government is gaining from these companies.

In consideration of these challenges, we started with a union as our challenges also got escalated with the outbreak of pandemic and lockdown. No safety measures was ensured for the workers -no safety kits, no masks and no sanitizers .

Though their advertisements talk about how all the safety measures are being taken and the customer's food is in safe hands but in reality they provide nothing to the workers in the name of safety measures. These companies have managed to collect crores of fund for COVID 19 but they have not given any benefit to their workers. Companies such as Swiggy, Zomato and Dunzo have accumulated funds in crores. Zomato joined hands with Milap organization and raised funds and now they are looking for volunteers to provide them with ration. But Zomato hasn't done anything for its own workers. Recently after two months of lockdown, they said that they will provide Rs. 1000 to its app workers but to avail of this benefit the workers have to produce a GST bill. How it is feasible for poor people who buy stuffs from local shops to produce a GST bill? Also due to lockdown and COVID, the companies e.g. Reliance fresh and Big Basket are also closed. Meeting such conditions is difficult at this hour. Only 5 to 10 per cent of the workers have been able to get the benefits. As per my estimation, the apps like Zomato have raised funds around Rs.30-35 crore but nothing have been provided to the workers. Those who are working they don't have any PPE kits and the working condition, hours and incentives for them are also like earlier. These app based companies like Dunzo, Zomato, Rapido, all of them have resumed work in the name of essential services but are not taking any safety measures for their workers. The reasons why they started working is because no one can object them later for not paying to the workers and they could say that they were working and it was workers' choice to sit at homes. About 80% of people are not working and only 15-20% of workers is working and is getting orders. They have employed new people and some part time workers who are paid Rs. 150 and the regular workers are getting Rs. 300 per day and they are getting 5-10 orders. Workers are working for 12-14 hours and his own money is spending on petrol. The working conditions and hours remain to be the same without any additional pay or benefits being provided to the workers. 80 per cent of workers are not going to work. Swiggy, Zomato are getting orders and they are providing only minimum benefits to the workers. We want the govt. to reduce the commissions. The companies earn and the workers should be given higher income. We have submitted letter to the Chief Minister and asked the govt. to provide at least Rs. 5000 per month to the drivers so that basic needs can be met. The common man should get work and his economic condition should improve so then a nation will improve and become financially sound. I have seen many families wherein people don't have money for basic things e.g. for buying medicines for children.

Mohammed Inayath Ali talked about the lack of efforts for the cab drivers by the companies and by the government. Drivers have been going through tough times and they have neither savings nor any income to survive. They are resorting to selling jewelry and money savings for children's school fees and using them in buying food. If they fail to solve these problems it will be a failure of the government. It was already difficult for the drivers to pay house rents and amidst of all these, COVID amplified the challenges of drivers. Recently, a driver committed suicide. Whatever drivers are earning from Ola and Uber that's not enough for their survival. The company accumulated a lot of money by employing driver in a big numbers. These companies are professional only by name but they do a lot of dirty politics. You must have seen Ola and Ube which raised funds up to 50 crores in the supporting the drivers. They have provided the drivers the ration- 5kg rice / 1 kg pulses. Don't these companies have a common sense to understand how these drivers will manage for 45 days? Uber said that they will be providing Rs. 5000 to their drivers. They are giving credit to the people but I know it very well that this will be taken back from them driver or will deducted from the income.

The buzz on social media by these companies to support the drivers was just to present themselves sensitive to the people. There is a twitter account of Indian drivers Federal Association through which you will get to know the actual situation of drivers they underwent and still undergoing during this pandemic. After accumulating so much money the support reached to only 15% to 20% drivers. An announcement was made from Twitter or the Face book account of Uber that it will give Rs. 5000 to the drivers. However along with this they also introduced certain conditions for the driver to avail help which included- drivers who work for longer hours or who have the most number of hours in their login system and ones with more ratings will be provided the money. What kind of help is this? This is not how you help people. This is simply politics just like a political party says they will help those who can provide them greatest returns. This meant that those who are working for more no. of hours and good ratings will be helped and others can die. It was said by these companies that they will provide support in emergency services and there will be 500 cars for the commuting purpose that can be used specifically by health staffs. None of the drivers were tested even though there have been some who have complained of symptoms while working during the emergency. This is in context of Karnataka. No measures related to cleaning of sanitization of providing safety kits to the drivers. Certain conditions were imposed that made it difficult for all the drivers to avail the benefits. How is this support?

Through IFAT, we supported the drivers with ration so that people can stay safe at home and also have access to food. Ola did the same thing by imposing conditions to distribute money among drivers. We put a lot of pressure on the State government- the Karnataka government and after much advocacy they identified 7 lakh 50 thousand drivers and promised to pay them Rs 5000. They set aside these funds for them. But then they imposed conditions - such having badges, having

maxi cabs (9seaters), as conditions for availing of this Rs 5000. They said that Maxi drivers are not eligible. Then they asked for vehicle numbers. They have set aside 16 crore for the drivers, but this is not reaching to the needy drivers at all. Through IFAT, IFER and our local unions, we wrote to the Central government, because the State govt was not helping us. What we did that we have our local unions Nakka chala and IFA, we drafted a letter to the Prime Minister explaining the situations and also whether they really want to extend the support to the drivers. After two days, the State govt said they will remove the conditions. They said that the two drivers can avail the benefits from same vehicle. After Lockdown 4.0, many of the drivers complained about the customers who don't follow the rules of total no. of people travelling in car during one ride and customers argues to accommodate the family members during the ride. When drivers step out on roads they will face issues. Ola did the meanest act with the drivers. They took all the leasing cars saying that they will do the safety measures but they did absolutely nothing. We requested Prime Minister Modi that if State government doesn't want to help, they should just announce that publicly, instead of imposing such frivolous conditions. After sending the letter, the Karnataka government finally removed these conditions. The drivers are very worried. They can complete just a ride or two. That is why there are cases of suicides. Before lockdown, the Ola used its lease policy to take back the leased vehicles and keep them in their sheds. We will continue to fight with aggregators like Ola and Uber.

Shaik Salauddin talks about the context and also throws light on the missing things in the discussion. Despite of various meaning of gig economy in the dictionary, it's meaning in new or old definition of law is not defined. There is no framework that defines the workers of gig economy whether it's independent, temporary, platform or app based worker or worker in formal agreement. Due to the absence of such framework and also frees the companies from many obligations. Companies such as Ola and Uber played games without maintaining the employer and employee. The absence of any framework is also a reason for no relationship between them. Also, there are no defined working hours and the earnings depend upon how much a person earns. They have now come up with a new thing of Gig workers i.e. independent, temporary workers worker platform workers. About 35 thousand million workers come under contract workers. The companies are still not doing what they should have been doing. The companies such as Ola and Uber said drivers as their partners and there was a communication gap between the Labour Dept. Transport Dept. and IT company. These three depts. were divided and a new logic emerged that they are the aggregators and drivers will be treated under gig economy workers and platform workers. So a new policy was supposed to be formed. About 30,000 million workers are in urban settings who are working under contract and under this new definition and the graph is close to 69 million. In consideration of these many policies related works was supposed to be initiated which also required enactment some legal laws ensuring rights and classification of these workers. The companies take due advantage of these gaps and required work in this direction needs to be done.

The Minimum wages act was devised in 1948 but in private work spheres has not been implemented successfully yet. Under the new Indian Law, the gig workers, the gig workers have not been provided any status of employee despite of various representation efforts by the unions. And also the contract of unions of importer and exporter was stopped to create pressure. The contract Labor Regulation and Abolition Act 1970 exists but it wasn't given any prominence or discussion by the Central or the State government. Also the rules of Third Party are in place but there is no implementation of any of these. **Employee's Compensation Act, 1923** is there but still no demands of gig workers were brought under this law. The court did refer about it but it didn't give comment or say anything about its implementation. Under the new definition of law in 2019 under the labor court, it covers gig economy workers as platform workers but does not cover the employer employee relation which talks about the agreement and all such related aspects. The government knows what kind of laws will benefit them so the policies are framed accordingly. The issues of gig workers have not yet been discussed in any parliamentary discussion and thus the right of gig workers still remains a question. The central and the State government also know how the draft policy should be made and all aspects and befits it should and granted by the companies to the workers but still that's not being done. Due to this silence, there are no policies, no laws yet regulating and addressing the gig workers and the rights of the gig the challenges of the workers are still not being discussed. In case there would have been any policy, welfare board or regulations in place for the gig economy workers some of their challenges could have been addressed. Problems exists it is important to think of having policies in place for the gig workers. Due to the gap between the Central and the State govt., no welfare boards and schemes are in place for such workers. The new law on gig workers under which the schemes that has to be implemented is not being done effectively due to the communication gap between the Centre and the State and the implementation is stopped now. Under social security also, some new bill are supposed to come additions regarding the safety and social security of the drivers are to be included and corrections in allegations made against the drivers has to be made. Today you listened to people sharing issues from various states like Telangana, Banlore, Jaipur amd Lucknow and Delhi and there are issues that exist. But the need of the hour is to have a policy in place. If there would have any policy devised or welfare boards was there for the

drivers. Our demand is regarding the necessity to have a welfare board for the drivers in each state of the country that can help drivers in times of tough times like today.

Q&A SESSION:

QUESTION: Can you tell us more about IFAT? Is it a National Union?

RESPONSE: (Salauddin) IFAT is a national union. Presently, 16 states are in IFAT.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

QUESTION: Rs. 5,000 has been promised to be given to the drivers? What was that scheme? Was it any central or a state govt. scheme?

RESPONSE: (Salauddin) The benefit of Rs. 5000 was distributed in Delhi and Bangalore. There is no disclosure of form where and how these funds are being utilized. These policies for benefits are State level. Has this been a central level policy then all the states would have implemented it. In Bangalore the announcement was made and they said to provide Rs. 5,000 but no revelation has been done by them from where they are using this policy. We don't have any idea whether these are central or state schemes. If this would have been a Central govt scheme then driver in every state would have been benefitted under this scheme. Some days back 20,000 corers fund was announcement we felt happy that we will be also provided with relief. We surveyed 60000 drivers in 14 cities and found majority loans taken from govt bank

QUESTION: EMI was referred in some of the conversation. Can you tell us what kinds of loans these are? Was it a formal or an informal loan?

RESPONSE: (Suganthi) I took loans from Mahindra finance for car. I am paying the EMI.

CHALLENGES OF WOMEN DRIVERS

QUESTION: Being a female driver what kinds of challenges are you facing due to lockdown? Is work available now? Have you started working after lockdown?

RESPONSE: (Ragini) Now, I am idle sitting at home. Ola has taken car back from us. I am facing many issues and not able to manage the financial constraints. When I was driving I was taking care the education of siblings. My father is not well. Though he works in the factory. He has been ill. He went to the factory worked for 4 days and now is ill. House is run with my earnings. Now we are facing a lot of issues.

QUESTION: Is there any representation of women in union for gig economy?

RESPONSE: (Salauddin) We are looking for women to add them in the union at the national level. Yes there is a need of providing this platform and we would want to extend this to women.

COPING WITH LOCKDOWN

Question: Could we please understand whether the drivers had savings that they've been able to use during these tough times?

Response (Sripal): I had money saved for my children but since I did not have any income during the lockdown I had to use my savings to pay rent, EMI's taken on Car and Jewellery loans.

QUESTION: During the lockdown, what was the coping mechanism for app based workers? Did they face any discrimination while doing their work during their work during the lockdown due to Tabligi Jamaat issue?

RESPONSE: (Inayath) No religious issue. The people in Karnataka are educated so they did not discriminate. The people managed for food by seeing of some jewelry. Also people had savings. Some people had school fees that they used that to survive.

NETWORKING AND ADVOCACY

QUESTION: Are there any efforts to align with workers in Europe?

RESPONSE: International alliance of app based workers- IFAT has joined hands and work together. There was an invitation for a meeting before the lockdown. There is one person Mumbai who represents us in the meeting Every Monday we have online meeting where we all discuss the issues faced during the COVID 19 on zoom these days.

QUESTION: Is there any social media campaign for app based transport workers because it's high time we should altogether?

RESPONSE: Yes IFAT has come up with campaign and is putting forth the issues faced by several gig workers. We tried to share our challenges and we haven't received any support after 50-60 days of lockdown. Situation neither from the government, public as well as the company. The companies say that they given this much of relief. There must be an inquiry and it should be looked how many of the drivers were really distributed relief. Uber said they given money to 55,000 drivers in India. My question is whether only there are 55,000 drivers in India in Uber. What about others? Why the others were not given money.

QUESTION: In the present scenario where one faces the consequences of posing questions to the Govt. so in this situation, how the union workers and the drivers are putting their matters and negotiating with the govt?

RESPONSE: (Salauddin) we had drafted many letters to the PM and Ms. Nirmala Sitaraman about the problems that we faced. In a way we have been provided with some relief. But the required support is not being provided neither by the State govt. not by the Central govt. It is very important to provide the drivers with basics - food. Some schemes are being provided to the migrant workers but what about the cab drivers. The tourism sector has been severely hit due to COVID which has also affected the transport sectors. The entire year earnings were made into two-three months. This is a big loss for the entire transport sector.

LINKS:

Visit <http://www.praxisindia.org/covid19.php> details on previous Webinars.