

Technical consultation on extending social protection to gig and platform workers in India

*A Government of Karnataka initiative in collaboration with the International
Labour Organization*

BACKGROUND:

The digital economy has been expanding at a rapid pace and gaining prominence globally. Digital labour platforms¹ are a distinct part of the digital economy and have risen fivefold in the past decade globally in the taxi and delivery sector on location-based platforms, and on online labour platforms². There has been a tremendous increase in the number of digital labour platforms in developing countries and they are being embraced with the hope of creating gainful employment opportunities. As observed by Guy Rider, former Director General of the ILO, “Digital labour platforms have the potential to benefit both workers and businesses – and through them, society more generally. But they will only fulfil this positive potential, and help us achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, if the work opportunities they provide are decent. Ensuring that all workers, irrespective of their contractual status, are covered by key labour standards will be critical, as will social dialogue³.”

In India, NITI Aayog’s study, ‘India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy - Perspectives and Recommendations on the Future of Work’⁴ observes that the rapidly burgeoning gig workforce is ushering in a new economic revolution. With its demographic dividend of half-a-billion labour force and the world’s youngest population, rapid urbanisation, widespread adoption of smartphones and associated technology – is the new frontier of this revolution. The study goes on to estimate that the number of gig and platform workers in India reached 7.7 million in 2020. The size of this workforce is expected to grow almost three-fold by 2029-30 to about 23.5 million⁵. Given the expected growth of platform workers, it is observed that with technological diffusion changing the future of work, greater efforts are needed to facilitate innovation while creating jobs and protecting workers. Several issues such as adequate wages and social protection for platform workers in India remain open for discussion and policy interventions.

¹ The emergence of the gig or platform economy is one of the most important new transformations in the world of work. An important component of the platform economy is digital labour platforms which includes both web-based platforms, where work is outsourced through an open call to a geographically dispersed crowd ("crowdwork"), and location-based applications (apps) which allocate work to individuals in a specific geographical area, typically to perform local, service-oriented tasks such as driving, running errands or cleaning houses.

² ILO (2021) World Employment and Social Outlook 2021: The role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work
International Labour Office [2021 World Employment and Social Outlook \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/publications/2021/06/2021-world-employment-and-social-outlook)

³ World Employment and Social Outlook 2021: The role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work,
International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2021. [2021 World Employment and Social Outlook \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/publications/2021/06/2021-world-employment-and-social-outlook)

⁴ NITI Aayog. (2022). India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy: Perspectives and Recommendations on the Future of
Work. niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-06/25th_June_Final_Report_27062022.pdf

⁵ NITI Aayog. (2022) India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy: Perspectives and Recommendations on the Future of Work.
niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-06/25th_June_Final_Report_27062022.pdf

From a social protection lens, the vulnerability of platform workers during the COVID-19 crisis highlighted the need to address the significant social protection gaps, including their lack of access to unemployment insurance and job retention schemes, sickness benefits and health protection.

Providing adequate and sustainable social protection to this growing group of workers is essential not only for the workers themselves, but also to safeguard and promote the efficiency of the labour market and fair competition⁶. In a landmark move, India introduced the Code on Social Security (CoSS), 2020, that serves as a potential blueprint for the world to 're-regulate' work and labour relations. CoSS 2020 affords much-needed legitimacy to all types of work arrangements, and in fact delinks social protection from standard employment relations⁷.

CONTEXT:

In June 2023, The State of Rajasthan, introduced the Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, 2023 seeks to register all gig workers and aggregators in the state, facilitate guarantee of social security to gig workers, and give them an opportunity to air any grievances⁸. Following Rajasthan's actions, Karnataka's Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah, announced the implementation of an insurance cover worth INR 4 lakh for each gig worker in the state. The scheme will cover approximately 2.3 lakh gig workers and aims to provide social security to those in the unorganized sector⁹. In furthering its commitment to platform-based gig workers, the Chief Minister, in the recently concluded budget session, proposed that a platform-based gig and workers fund and welfare fee bill will be implemented to formulate welfare programmes for gig workers.

Given that several states are now in the process of finding suitable ways for ensuring social protection for platform-based gig workers, a one-day technical consultation is proposed to discuss and deliberate social protection, areas that are beneficial to the learnings of key stakeholders. This timely consultation will also feed into the knowledge available at the International Labour Conference that the Governing Body of the ILO has decided to place on the agenda of the 113th Session (2025) of the Conference an item on decent work in the platform economy.

The consultation will be jointly hosted by the Labour Department, Government of Karnataka, and the International Labour Organization, Decent Work Team for South Asia and Country Office for India.

⁶ Providing adequate and sustainable social protection for workers in the gig and platform economy -Technical paper prepared for the 1st meeting of the Employment Working Group under the Indian presidency ILO, ISSA and OECD , January 2023

⁷ India's Social Security Code, 2020:A Catalyst for Promoting and Protecting Platform Labour Aishwarya Raman ,Sreelakshmi Ramachandran and S.K. Sasikumar, Labour & Development, Vol. 28, No. 1, June 2021

⁸ [In a first, Rajasthan clears bill granting social security to gig workers | Latest News India - Hindustan Times](#)

⁹ [gig workers: Karnataka rolls out Rs 4 lakh insurance cover to gig workers - The Economic Times \(indiatimes.com\)](#)

OBJECTIVE:

To convene key stakeholders for effective scheme design and developing an action plan for the implementation of social protection for gig and platform workers in India

PARTICIPANTS:

Senior officials from the Labour Department, Government of Karnataka
Officials from relevant Ministries of the Government of Karnataka
Senior Officials from the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India
Senior officials from State Governments such as Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and other States
International agencies and institutions
All platform aggregators
All Central Trade Union representatives and relevant gig and platform unions
Academia such as
Centre for Labour Studies, National Law School University of India
Azim Premji University, Bengaluru
Civil Society Representatives
The International Labour Organization

FORMAT, DATE AND LOCATION FOR MEETING:

The meeting will be hosted on 7th March 2024, at Hotel Taj West End, 41, Race Course Road, Bengaluru, Karnataka.



AGENDA

Thursday 7th March 2024

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM
REGISTRATION

Inaugural session	9.30-10.05 am	<p><i>WELCOME ADDRESS AND OVERVIEW:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Michiko Miyamoto Country Director, International Labour Organization Representative – Employers’ Organization – AIOE• B. C. Prabhakar President, Karnataka Employers’ Association (KEA) Representative-Workers’ Organization• Lakshmi Venkatesh President The Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) <p><i>SPECIAL ADDRESS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I. Rani Kumudini, IAS (Virtual) Spl. Chief Secretary, Labour, Employment Training and Factories, Government of Telangana• Sri Mohammad Mohsin, IAS Principal Secretary- Labour Government of Karnataka <p><i>KEYNOTE ADDRESS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sri Santosh S Lad Honourable Labour Minister Government of Karnataka <p><i>VOTE OF THANKS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr H. N. Gopalakrishna, IAS Commissioner of Labour, Government of Karnataka
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10:05 AM- 10:15 AM
GROUP PHOTO

Context setting agenda

10:15 AM- 11:00 AM

Technical presentation and discussions on ILO's report, '*Realizing Decent Work in the Platform*'.

The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 108th Session (2019), calls on all ILO Member States to put in place “policies and measures that ensure appropriate privacy and personal data protection, and respond to challenges and opportunities in the world of work relating to the digital transformation of work. In accordance with the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference relating to a double discussion procedure, the ILO has prepared this report which provides up-to-date information on platform work and the regulations and practices related to it from around the world. It is intended to inform the discussions at the Conference and to help Member States in responding to the appended questionnaire. In this session, **Nuno Meira Simoes da Cunha, Sr Specialist, Labour Market Institutions, ILO Geneva**, will present key findings and findings that are relevant from the report of findings.

Chair – Babu Mathew, Professor and Co-Director, Centre for Labour Studies, NLSIU

Discussants:

- Nikhil Dey, Founder, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS)
- VJK Nair, Karnataka State Vice President, Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU)
- Prof. Rajesh Joseph, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru
- Sanjay Shende, Director, HR, Flipkart
- Sukirti Singh, Associate Director, Public Policy, OLA (Virtual)

TEA BREAK

11:00 AM-11:15 AM

PLENARY-I

11:15 AM-12:15 PM

Technical presentation and discussions on extending social security coverage to workers in new forms of work, including digital labour platforms

The vulnerability of platform workers during the COVID-19 crisis highlighted the need to address the significant social protection gaps, including their lack of access to unemployment insurance and job retention schemes, sickness benefits and health protection. Providing adequate and sustainable social protection to this growing group of workers is essential not only for the workers themselves, but also to safeguard and promote the efficiency of the labour market and fair competition. In this session, **Mariko Ouchi, Senior Specialist on Social Protection, ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia and Country Office for India** will make a technical presentation on providing adequate and sustainable social protection for workers in the gig and platform economy. The presentation will be followed by a question-and-answer session.

Chair - Alok Prasanna, Co-Founder, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy

Discussants:

- Shaikh Salauddin, Founder Sate President, Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU)
- Vinay Sarathi, President, United Food Delivery Partner's Union (UFDPU)
- Dr. Jaskiran Kaur, Head, Public Policy, Zomato
- Gautam Bhatia, Advocate, Supreme Court of India (Virtual)

PLENARY-II

12:15 AM-1:30 PM

Proposed legislative frameworks and good practices on extending social protection to gig and platform workers by State Governments

Since the introduction of the Code on Social Security, 2020, several Indian States have proposed to introduce key legislation for the extension of social protection for gig and platform workers in India. In this session, government representatives will present their proposed legislative frameworks and good practices. Panellists shall provide inputs on the formulation of a legislative framework to be proposed by state governments.

Chair – Sri Mohammad Mohsin, IAS, Principal Secretary- Labour, Government of Karnataka

Co-Chair – Mani Ram Sharma IAS, Labour Commissioner, Haryana (tbc)

Panellists:

- Dr. E Gangadhara, Additional Labour Commissioner, Government of Telangana (tbc)
- Dr. G Manjunath, Additional Labour Commissioner, Government of Karnataka
- Om Prakash Saharan, Joint Labour Commissioner, Government of Rajasthan
- Madhavan B, Secretary, Tamil Nadu Manual Workers Social Security and Welfare Board

Discussants:

- Dr. Sarayu Natarajan, Founder, Aapti Institute (Virtual)
- Sujoy Jana, Regional Business Head, South India, Bigbasket
- Sanjit Naresh Nagarkatti, General Counsel OLA – Electric
- Shubhangi Shukla, Consultant, Government of Chhattisgarh

LUNCH

1:30 - 2:15 PM

Technical Session – I

2:15 PM -3:30 PM

Financing Social Protection for Platform based Gig workers

The Government of Karnataka had announced the provision of accident and life insurance worth ₹2 lakh and ₹4 lakh each to gig workers. This session will delve into the mechanisms required for the levy, collection, transaction and allocation of cess by the State Government.

The Government of Karnataka, in the Budget Speech of 2024-25 has announced that a platform-based gig workers fund and welfare fee bill will be introduced in order to provide livelihood security and welfare to gig workers, and that a cess will be levied on eligible online transactions.

Recently, the Government of Karnataka has announced social security and welfare programmes for Motor Transport and Other Allied Worker's and also constitution of Board by imposing a cess/tax on the registration of commercial transport vehicle.

Chair - Dr N. V. Prasad, IAS, Secretary to Government, Transport Department, Government of Karnataka

Presentation:

- Shanthanu Sharma, Manager Public Policy, Rapido
- Priyanka Navle, Manager Public Policy, Uber
- Rakshita Swamy, Founder, Social Accountability Forum for Action & Research

Discussants:

- Mannat Waraich, Tax expert and Supreme Court Advocate (Virtual)
- Bhavya Sharma, Director, Communications and ESG-Urban Company
- Ashish Aggarwal, Vice President, Head Public Policy, NASSCOM

TEA BREAK

3:30-3:45 PM

Technical Session – II

3:45 PM -5:00 PM

Database, effective scheme design and its implementation

Social protection systems are pivotal elements in governance. Any policy on scheme design largely depends upon the database pertaining to the active labour force in gig economy, actual transactions, incentive component and other financial implications for both the aggregators and gig workers.

Implementation of the scheme will be effective only by structuring an effective IT tool. It is observed that the policy makers are facing deficit in data to be provided by aggregators or any scientific survey to assess the quantum of financial transaction in the gig economy. Any effective scheme designing, targeting and its implementation is an important component of the above. Hence, this technical session will probably provide solution to the above theme.

Chair: Michiko Miyamoto, Country Director, International Labour Organization

Panellists:

- Aishwarya Raman, Executive Director, OMI Foundation
- Kathyayini Chamaraj, Executive Trustee, CIVIC, Bangalore
- Hrishikesh Parthasarathy, Chief Program Officer, Azim Premji Foundation
- Rahul Jain, Head HRBP, Bigbasket

Discussant:

- Dr. Balaji Parthasarathy, Professor, Indian Institute for Information & Technology, Bangalore
- Mariko Ouchi, Senior Specialist on Social Protection, ILO DWT South Asia and Country Office for India.

VOTE OF THANKS

5:00 PM-5:05 PM

Karun Gopinath, National Project Coordinator, ILO

Reflections on the way forward and closing remarks

5:05 PM-5:15 PM

- **Dr Manjunath G, Additional Labour Commissioner, Labour Department, Government of Karnataka**
- **Mariko Ouchi, Senior Specialist on Social Protection, ILO DWT South Asia and Country Office for India**