

SUMMARY

COVID-19 and World of Work: Sharing Experience and Way Forward

VIRTUAL MEETING WITH INDIAN TRADE UNIONS

ILO ACTAV & ILO DWT/CO- New Delhi

Monday, 27 April 2020

A virtual meeting with Indian Trade Unions was organized on Monday, 27 April 2020 to share experiences and way forward with regard to COVID-19 and World of Work. The meeting was participated by the senior leaders of most of the Central Trade Unions where Ms. Maria Helana Director ACTRAV, Ms. Dagmar Walter, Director DWT/CO- New Delhi, Mr. Satoshi Sasaki, Deputy Director DWT/CO- New Delhi, Mr. Ariel Castro, Desk Officer, ACTRAV, and Mr. Sultan, Workers Specialist, DWT/CO-New Delhi joined along with other colleagues from ACTRAV, DWT/CO-New Delhi and ITC Turin.

Mr. Sultan welcomed all the trade union leaders and colleagues, setting the context for the meeting. It has been broadly covered into three parts-

- the experience of COVID-19 pandemic, lock down and its impact on the workers life and livelihood
- what needs to be done and
- most importantly how the Trade Unions and ILO can work together to tackle this unprecedented situation.

Mr. Satoshi stated some of the work done by ILO Delhi office during the lockdown as part of the immediate response including – recommendations for informal workers on request of Odisha Government, draft inputs to the advisory on female internal migrant workers, Jharkhand State request for Employers & Workers support for migrant workers stranded in the destination States and development of different tools including Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) visual tools. He further mentioned that we have to prepare ourselves for opening of businesses once lockdown is lifted in terms of- protecting workers from COVID-19 thereby minimizing the risk of getting them infected at workplaces; uphold the international labour standards and national labour laws; cope with reduced market situation; jobs for the returnee migrant workers at the origin/source states; importance and role of social dialogue process – tripartite/bipartite.

This first virtual meeting (webinar) has been one of its kind to maintain the communication with trade unions. Ms. Maria Helana shared some of the concerns in this situation re-emphasizing the ILO's commitment to reach out to all its constituents and to continue the dialogue. As this pandemic has caused and continues to cause massive disruption to the long-term livelihood and well-being of millions, it has brought an entirely new dimension to the world. She mentioned how all constituents working together will play a crucial role in combating the outbreak and in ensuring safety of individuals and

sustainability of businesses and jobs. She shared some of the ILO global initiatives including sharing of information with the constituents, measuring the impact, providing technical assistance etc. Working on comprehensive policy framework based on International Labour Standards (ILS), navigate through human- centred recovery process – short/medium/ long term, emergency response in line with ILO Decent Work agenda, structural transformations, social justice & peace, social dialogue process (in some cases sector specific), work place measures, looking into new avenues for supporting workers and in India’s context “informal economy” were some of her key thoughts.

Participants (in total 24):

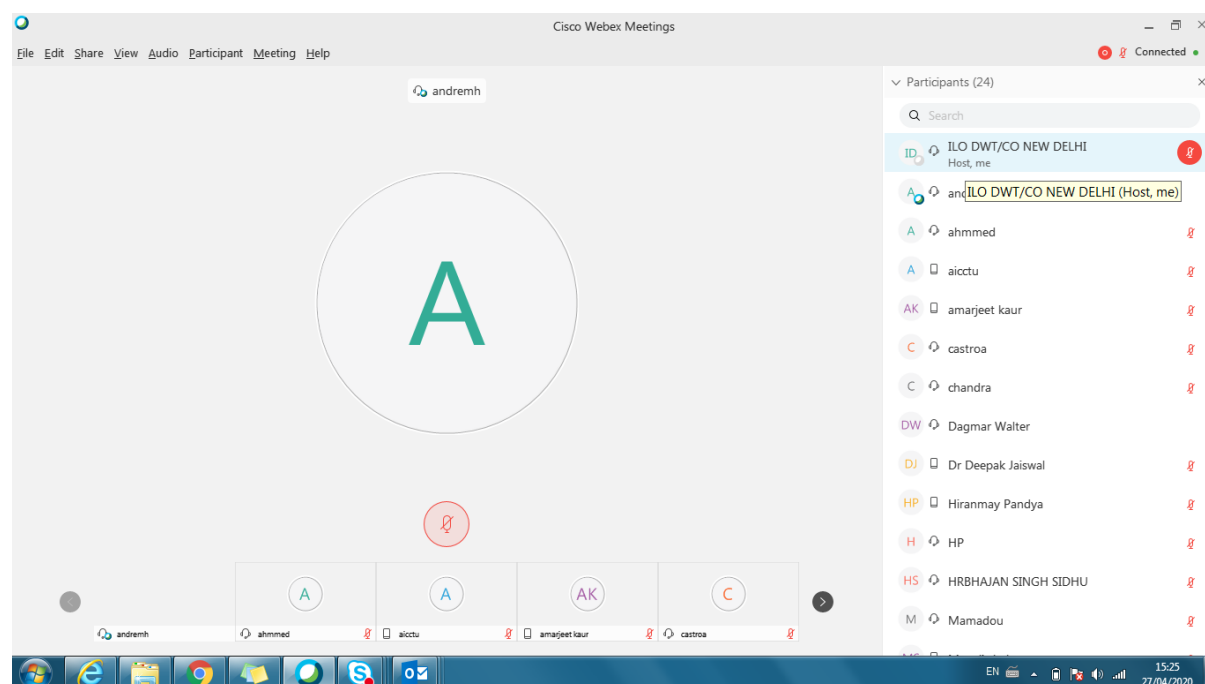
Senior leaders from Indian Central Trade Unions: Mr C.K. Saji Narayanan (BMS), Mr. Hirmmay Pandya (BMS), Mr. R. Chandrasekheran (INTUC and ILO GB Member), Mr. Harbhajan Singh Sidhu (HMS), Ms. Amarjeet Kaur (AITUC), Mr. V S Giri (AITUC), Mr. Shankar Dasgupta (AIUTUC), Mr. Ramensh Sharma (AIUTUC), Ms. Manali Shah (SEWA), Ms. Sonia George (SEWA), Mr. Rajiv Dimri (AICCTU), Mr. P.M. Shrivastava (NFITU), Mr. Virat Jaiswal (NFITU), Mr. Ashok Ghosh (UTUC)

Senior leaders from CITU and LPF were available for the discussion but could not join due to network connectivity issues.

ACTRAV: Ms. Maria Helana Andra (Director ACTRAV), Mr. Ariel B Castro (Desk Officer for Asia Pacific, ACTRAV), Mr. Mamadou Kaba Souare (Communication and Public Information Officer, ACTRAV)

ITC Turin: Mr. Mapalo Rafael

DWT/CO--New Delhi- Ms. Dagmar Walter (Director, DWT/CO-New Delhi), Mr. Satoshi Sasaki (Deputy Director, DWT/CO-New Delhi), Mr. Syed Sultan U Ahmmed (Specialist of Workers’ Activities), Ms. Ruchira Chandra (Programme), Ms. Rani Selvakumar (Programme), Mr. Yogendra Uniyal (IT Support).



CTU leaders spoke in the meeting and expressed their views focussing in different areas of the crisis and its impact, government actions and the suggestions for the way forward. Following are the broad concerns and suggestions by Trade Union leaders:

Present Status of the Word of Work and its impact on Worker's Safety, Rights and livelihood

- Major concerns were around the economic and humanitarian crisis in the country and how to protect workers in this situation with social protection measures. Social Protection for the informal sector and domestic workers must be ensured
- Universal Social Protection measures need to be guaranteed and fundamental human rights need to be respected
- Impact of pandemic cannot be just contained by this lockdown, but there is no planning forward
- Home based workers, supply chains are largely affected in which most of the women workers are engaged
- Migrant workers suffering need to be addressed with immediately. Inter-state and international migrant workers issues such as their transfers, reintegration into the economy, no guaranteed jobs
- Ensure free movement of workers to and from home state and mobilizing them to workplaces
- Cash transfer should be made to the internal migrant workers and informal sector workers
- Disrespect of international labour standards and national labour laws by some states, example of working hours changed from 8 hrs to 12 hrs
- Workplace issues-several workers getting terminated, no pay/delayed pay/reduced pay, freezing of additional DA of government employees, non- adherence to minimum wages, contractors not working adequately, no income security of workers, quality of jobs being compromised, forced work
- Special focus needs to be given to the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups
- Difficulty in maintaining social distancing within workers especially in the informal sector, acute shortage of PPE and sanitizer, scarcity of medical facilities
- Physio-social support needed for the workers especially who are in camps
- Immediate requirement by providing financial packages, food security and universal public distribution system Revamp skilling ecosystem, new skill development to be devised both for the enterprises and workers including entrepreneurial courses, investment in human development is very important and essential
- Inter-state migrant workers act to be made functional to look into both the supply and demand areas
- Occupational Safety and Health measures to be ensured at workplaces once workers return to their workplaces

Status of Social Dialogues, Tripartism and Return to work

- There no consultations/social dialogue and collective bargaining.
- Humanitarian approach to be applied in this crisis situation using the strengths of collective bargaining

Recommendations for ILO

- ILO should form a task force for regular monitoring the situation, coordination among the constituents, and different actors

- TUs need ILO technical support to prepare a TU common position paper in response of COVID- 19 situation
- A regular updates of the situation, global response and good experience from the countries by ILO will be very helpful for TUs in India
- All ILO Projects need to be reviewed and re designed to adjust with the need of the present situation
- ILO's should take global initiatives to tackle the migrant worker situation
- Take necessary steps to stop all the anti-workers demands and actions
- There is need of Social Dialogue, which is not happening. ILO needs to raise the issue with government for starting social dialogue. Social Dialogue practice must be uphold on the basis of Labour Standards and joint platforms

Way forward and Action points

Ms. Dagmar Walter in her reflection stated the needs and way forward -

- Special focus and working together towards informal economy workers and migrant workers (both inter-state and international), owing to the impact of COVID-19
- There is utmost need of Bipartite/ Tripartite consultations and meetings (sector wise/ topic wise/State wise), in which ILO can provide technical support. Exchange of experiences/initiatives in other places or countries can contribute towards it
- Labour laws, regulations and International Labour Standards needs to be looked and social dialogue process can help in it
- Skills development looking into the reduced market needs has emerged as a very important area
- Technical aspects and next steps would be worked out in detail. Relevant technical specialist from DWT would be involved as we go forward.

Mr. Ariel Castro appreciated this meeting and affirmed that we are going through this crisis together and joint efforts will lead to the solutions. Mr. Satoshi summarized and thanked all and informed that looking into the COVID-19 situation, currently ILO Delhi office is re-purposing all its projects and programme activities. Ms. Maria Helena concluded that the bipartite and tripartite joint work is one of the ways out, bringing out single voice of trade unions and putting forward in form of joint proposal is very important and we shall keep these channels (connecting virtually) open as a new way to connect with our constituents in these challenging times.

Meeting ended with vote of thanks from Mr. Sultan to all the trade union leaders and colleagues.

Meeting Agenda

14:30 – 14:35	Welcome (including context and modality) Mr. Sultan Syed Ahmmed , ACTRAV Specialist for South Asia
14:35 – 14:45	Opening Remarks: Introduction of the participants. Mr. Satoshi Sasaki , Deputy Director, ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia and Country Office for India.
14:45 - 15:00	COVID 19 and Future of World of Work: Challenge and Response. Ms. Maria Helena Andre , Director ACTRAV.
15:00 -16:00	COVID 19 Impact and Recovery: Views from the Central TU leaders. (Each union leaders will be given around 5 minutes to speak)
16.00 – 16.15	Remarks Way Forward: Present actions- Future plans. Ms. Dagmar Walter , Director, ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia and Country Office for India.
16.15 – 16.30	Closing Remarks and Summary for Action Points One TU representative Mr. Ariel B Castro , Desk Officer for Asia Pacific, ACTRAV Mr. Sasaki Satoshi , Deputy Director, ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia and Country Office for India.

Moderator: Mr. Syed Sultan U Ahmmed, Specialist for Workers’ Activities, ILO DWT South Asia.

Supported by: Ms. Ruchira Chandra & Ms. Rani Selvakumar, PROG, ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia and Country Office for India