

Locking Down the Impact of Covid-19: Appraising State and Private Measures for App-based Transport and Delivery Workers

Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers (IFAT) and International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), New Delhi office

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Between March and June 2020, IFAT and ITF conducted 4 surveys with transport and delivery workers to assess (i) their income levels during the Covid-19 pandemic, (ii) the burden of loan repayment during these months, (iii) the relief provided to them by companies, and (iv) the access to welfare schemes offered by state and central governments.

The first survey, on income levels and loans administered in March 2020, had 5964 respondents, across 55 cities, in 16 states. The second and third surveys conducted in April 2020, on financial relief from companies and governments, had 1630 respondents, across 59 cities, in 16 states. The fourth survey was conducted in June 2020 to assess income levels as the economies were slowing opening up. Some of the most startling findings from the 4 surveys are:

- The average monthly EMI of the respondents in March 2020 was between Rs. 10,000 - 20,000. 51% of the respondents had taken vehicle loans from 19 national public sector banks.
- 30.3% of the respondents worked between 40-50 hours a week, in the week prior to the first national lockdown. Despite high hours of work, the average income of the drivers for the week commencing April 15, 2020 was less than Rs. 2500. 57% of respondents earned between 0 to Rs. 2250.
- 89.8% of workers did not receive any ration or food assistance, and 84.5% did not receive any financial assistance from either companies or governments.
- Where companies had announced financial assistance programmes, including through donations collected by customers, there was no transparency in disbursement of funds. Other reasons for exclusion included administrative red tape (such as the requirement to produce bills that are GST compliant), and absence of clear criteria for eligibility, leading to random disbursement, among others.

- Ola announced waiving off the rental amount for leased vehicles, and asked drivers to return such vehicles. However, there was no announcement of a plan to repossess vehicles once there was an easing of the lockdown, causing great anxiety among workers.
- After the easing of the national lockdown, 69.7% of respondents indicated that they had no earnings, while 20% earned between Rs.500 to 1500.
- 2716 respondents from 19 states across gig platforms articulated their support for a peaceful demonstration against company practices.
- Mandatory installation of Aarogya Setu by workers raised concerns of privacy, as this would allow companies to surveil workers and collect data on their movements after work hours.

IFAT organised several meetings and protests after each survey, to bring attention to the vulnerable conditions of workers. At these gatherings, workers raised the following key demands:

- Companies must reduce commission rates to 5%, to allow workers to get back on their feet, and compensate for losses over the past few months;
- Adequate protective equipment and health insurance cover to all drivers must be provided;
- There must be increased transparency in disbursement process of funds, and in the criteria for selection of beneficiaries;
- Compounded interest must be waived on EMIs for the 3 months of moratorium on loan repayment.

The full report is available on the Centre for Internet and Society's [website](#).

Hear our voices and address our demands.

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