

Forum : Citizen's forum of Labour

Theme : Empowering the youth to drive/ thrive/ embrace and match the requirements of the future labour market

Name of the citizen : Alina Velikonja_____

Family situation • Married / dating ○ Single • With kids, if so how many : 2	Education level ○ Primary ○ Secondary • University
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1. How are you concerned by the subject?

I am Alina Velikonja, I am 45 years old and I live in Odisha State in Eastern India. I am married and I have two children. I am a trade unionist representative for Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh or also known as BMS. As a trade unionist I work hard to support the rights, pay and working conditions of workers.

BMS was founded on 23rd July 1955, which is the birth of Lok Manya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who was a veteran of the freedom movement. It is not linked to any political parties and works in the interest of National interest. We represent workers mostly in India but also Indian workers abroad. As a trade unionist, I work hard that the workers in India would be treated fairly, have good working conditions and opportunities. Workers in India are confronted with a huge number of different challenges, including extremely high share of informal work, challenges linked to the AI as well as challenges for young people to find work.

About 90 percent of the Indian workforce work in the informal sector, meaning they work in jobs that are not stable: they have no social security (no pensions, health insurance), low and unstable pay, unsafe working environments and much more. We also see that this share remains rather stable, despite the economic progress made in India.

AI is also a recurring subject, with the main question being; is it useful or in fact dangerous? I am stuck in the between. India already has high unemployment, because there are simply too many people. With AI, many entry-level white-collar jobs are getting replaced. Factory workers are also being heavily monitored so that AI can learn from their way of working. They are not yet replaced, as labour is still rather cheap, because of poor and insecure working conditions as well as a high share of the informal sector. But I'm afraid that they too will be replaced soon.

Looking at young generation in particular, the issue of the worsening of mental health is very present in India. There is a test called the Mind Health Quotient (MHQ), an assessment that measures mental health and wellbeing. Young Indian workers (18-34) scored a 33, which is very low in comparison to the older generations who scored much higher, a 96. This could be a serious problem for our national economy. The World Health Organization, (WHO) estimates that due to workers being absent or their

inability to perform jobs efficiently and concentrated, India could lose about 1 trillion dollars in economic output.

2. What do you suggest on your scale ?

For workers in India, it would be crucial to have better working conditions and more secure jobs. Normal labor hours, safety at work, and time for rest. It is the only way we can expect workers to work more efficiently. It should also be normalized that office workers do not have to be on duty once they leave. They should not be obliged to answer emails or phone calls outside working hours.

More psychological and health departments should be opened in every job. This so that all workers get an opportunity to talk about their feelings, anxiety, depression and more in a safe and private way and the possibility to look after their health at work. Most working places in India do not have this and it should be transformed. The Indian tech company Infosys recognized that its workers had poor mental health and began HALE (Health Assessment & Lifestyle Enrichment) plan. It has many different aspects, including meditation, talks with health professionals, health checks, widgets that provide health tips, and much more. Infosys is proof that it is possible to do this with a bit of work.

To make changes in the informal sector, we need to advocate for the adoption of laws, so that more enterprises that are currently run by households would be obliged to apply minimum standards about rights. But this will take time. In the main, it would also be useful to place assistant hubs around cities to be able to help any workers get help for better rights in an easy, accessible way.

For the AI issue, we should find a balance between the use of both. Yes, it is useful for certain aspects, such as monitoring, giving quick answers and being multi-functional; however, a country's first priority should be its people. The people should all have jobs, and then AI could jump in where help is actually needed.

BMS must also discuss everyday problems in different jobs seriously with the government, such as problems of unemployment, low pay and high costs of living. These are automatic stress givers.

I am ready to fight for our workers and help them overcome their problems. I am aware that this is not something you can eliminate and get rid of that simply. This does not count only for today's workers, but for future generations. Mahatma Gandhi once wisely said: "The future depends on what you do today."