

Book Launch

“Decent Work or Decent Income: ‘Corona Crisis’ Experiences”



26 January 2022 – The International Center for Development and Decent Work (ICDD) launched its latest book in a special webinar, featuring nine researchers from Brazil, Germany, Ghana, Mexico, the Philippines, the UK and the USA.

“Decent Work or Decent Income: ‘Corona Crisis’ Experiences” is the 24th volume in the [Labor and Globalization book series](#). This book, edited by Prof. Dr. Lygia Sabbag Fares and Prof. Dr. Pedro Henrique Evangelista Duarte, analyzes the impact of the pandemic on the world of work, taking into account gender and racial issues, and identifies strategies for addressing labour and economic challenges in different countries. It includes ten studies on single countries and two cross-country analyses.

[A collaborative project to capture the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work](#)

Dr. Lygia Sabbag Fares, a core faculty member at Brooklyn Institute for Social Research, and co-editor of the book, shared that the idea for the book came about during the Global

Labour University Workshop 2019 in Witzenhausen. She explained that “as editors, we really wanted to capture the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the world of work around the world, including different sectors of the economy, and intersectionalities such as gender and race”.

Prof. Fares highlighted that the pandemic occurred at a time when neoliberal ideas were still considered the main ideological framework for setting macroeconomic policies around the world. In terms of labor relations, the main goal of neoliberalism was to dismantle labour protections, seeing them only as a productive cost. This pandemic leads to growing inequality, poverty, unemployment and income loss.

Against this backdrop, this book aims to bring together valuable contributions from academics, researchers, and labour movement activists from all regions of the world to discuss and examine the consequences of the pandemic on the ground.

[Poverty and Vulnerability of Agricultural Work in Southern Yucatan through COVID-19](#)

Prof. Dr. Francisco Iván Hernández, Professor at the Marist University of Mérida, stressed that the pandemic prompted many workers in the secondary and tertiary sectors to return to carrying out agricultural activities. In this sense, subsistence agriculture served as “unemployment insurance”. Although the decent work deficits in agriculture are evident, households engaged in agricultural activities have an 18 USD higher monthly per capita income compared to households not engaged in agricultural activities. Practising subsistence agriculture also reduces the likelihood of falling into food poverty by 14%.

[Voices from Street Vendors in Accra, Ghana](#)

John Oti Amoah, Research Fellow at the Centre for Gender Research, Advocacy and Documentation, University of Cape Coast (UCC), and Lecturer at the Centre for African and International Studies (UCC), emphasized that the three-week partial lockdown in Ghana in 2020 hit informal workers, especially street vendors, very hard. Low market demand and loss of working capital have been the most common impacts of COVID-19 on the livelihoods of street vendors. Moreover, the pandemic disproportionately affects women’s productive and reproductive lives, compared to men. The pandemic also affects

women more, as men tend to trade with non-perishable goods, while women tend to trade more perishable goods.

Amoah also pointed out that the government response has been very limited and street vendors have been excluded from the government stimulus package for micro, small and medium enterprises. It is essential to transform the distributive schemes, underscoring gender focal points that engage women and vulnerable informal workers.

[Labour, Gender and Work in the Regions of India during the COVID-19 Period](#)

Prof. Dr. Wendy Olsen, Head of the Department of Social Statistics at Manchester University, analyzed women's disadvantage in the labour market and, in particular, how the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected women's work in India. The migration of family members increased women's workforce participation, especially in the informal sector. The pandemic has resulted in significant job losses, forcing many temporary migrants to return to their original villages and towns. Unpaid work rose for women, while paid work decreased.

Prof. Dr. Olsen also pointed out the different spread of the disease in different districts of India. She emphasized that increasing contagion is directly linked to physical movement and circular emigration at different spatial scales.

[The Repercussions of Dismantling Brazil's Social Protection System in the Fight against COVID-19](#)

Prof. Dr. Paulo Malerba, professor and union activist in the banking sector in Brazil, stressed that neoliberal policies and the corresponding labour reform have weakened the welfare state. These policies contributed to increasing the social vulnerability of the population and weakening the state apparatus. Specifically, there was a weakening of the public health system and a decline in formal jobs. Many Brazilians had no guarantee of income, and therefore need to expose themselves to the virus. This situation has been further worsened by the emergence of the new coronavirus.

[Gendered Dimensions of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Cross-country Analysis](#)

Verna Dinah Viajar, Postdoctoral Research Fellow of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung under the Global Scholarly Dialogue Program, stated that the pandemic in the Philippines, Indonesia and Uganda poses challenges and highlights weaknesses in the health sectors, as the sectors have undergone privatization and employment flexibilization. Due to the pandemic, the workload of health workers has increased and there has been a lack of protective equipment for workers. Women have been disproportionately affected.

Viajar also stressed that some governments responded with authoritarian (in the Philippines and Indonesia) and anti-democratic measures (in Uganda), which reinforced inequality, exploitation and violence against women. Because of their vital role in sustaining life amidst the pandemic, women need to be at the centre of the recovery effort, she emphasized.

[The important role of governments and social organizations in promoting decent work and decent income](#)

Lastly, Prof. Dr. Pedro Henrique Evangelista Duarte, Professor at the Federal University of Goiás, concluded that countries faced similar challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, their different social, political and economic structures and level of resources put them in very different positions to respond to these challenges. “I hope this book will be useful for trade unions, political actors and scholars to address some of the challenges we face due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments and social organizations are the key actors to promote decent work and decent income”, stated Prof. Dr. Duarte.

Read and discover more:

[Watch the Webinar](#)

[Decent Work or Decent Income Book](#) (*free access for University Kassel accounts*)

[Book Series Labor and Globalization](#)