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GFI REPORT EXPOSES SYSTEMATIC LABOR VIOLATIONS IN GLOBAL DATA SUPPLY CHAINS

Washington, D.C. – The Global Fairness Initiative (GFI), a leading NGO committed to creating more equitable and secure livelihoods for the working poor, announces the release of a new report, *Informality, Accountability, and Labor Rights for Data Workers in East Africa*. The report reveals widespread labor rights violations affecting data workers who power artificial intelligence and social media platforms.

Tech companies in the Global North commonly outsource data work, such as data annotation and content moderation, to workers in the Global South. This is often framed as beneficial to communities where job opportunities may be scarce, but in reality, companies are often relying on layers of subcontracting to access inexpensive labor while avoiding responsibility for labor abuses.

“Technology always has the potential to advance development and achieve sustainable development goals,” says Dr. Nagla Rizk of the Access to Knowledge for Development Center at the American University in Cairo, “but we are also aware that technology has potential in every link of the value chain to trigger inequality. It’s a paradox.”

The report highlights how the deliberate use of informal arrangements in data work serves to undermine workers’ agency in global supply chains and leads to lower wages, poor working conditions, and minimal social protections. GFI offers recommendations to policymakers, tech companies, and civil society organizations to protect data workers and calls for human rights due diligence throughout supply chains.

Key findings from the report include:

- Data workers are often intentionally misclassified as independent contractors to exclude them from labor protections, including frequently leaving them without the right to organize.
- Workers are exposed to highly disturbing content with little to no adequate mental health support.
- Wages often fall below living wage standards and may involve unpaid labor or unstable bonus-based compensation, leaving workers with financial insecurity.
- Complex outsourcing chains obscure responsibility, making it difficult to hold companies accountable for labor abuses.

The full report can be accessed at the Inclusive Labor Institute [here](#).

About GFI

Since 2002, the Global Fairness Initiative (GFI) has partnered with poor and marginalized communities around the world to create more equitable, sustainable economies where fair wages, equal access to markets, and more inclusive public policies help communities of promise become centers of prosperity. We partner with worker-led organizations in the informal economy to implement worker-centered programs that create and preserve jobs, empower women in the economy, advocate for worker rights, and build prosperity so the future of work is bound to the success of workers.