

The International Labour Organisation issued press release yesterday that said:

*The continued sharp decline in working hours globally due to the [COVID-19 outbreak](#) means that 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy — that is nearly half of the global workforce — stand in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed, warns the International Labour Organization.*

According to the [ILO Monitor third edition: COVID-19 and the world of work](#) , the drop in working hours in the current (second) quarter of 2020 is expected to be significantly worse than previously estimated.

They added:

*Compared to pre-crisis levels (Q4 2019), a 10.5 per cent deterioration is now expected, equivalent to 305 million full-time jobs (assuming a 48-hour working week). The previous estimate was for a 6.7 per cent drop, equivalent to 195 million full-time workers. This is due to the prolongation and extension of lockdown measures.*

In particular they noted:

*As a result of the economic crisis created by the pandemic, almost 1.6 billion informal economy workers (representing the most vulnerable in the labour market), out of a worldwide total of two billion and a global workforce of 3.3 billion, have suffered massive damage to their capacity to earn a living. This is due to lockdown measures and/or because they work in the hardest-hit sectors.*

*The first month of the crisis is estimated to have resulted in a drop of 60 per cent in the income of informal workers globally. This translates into a drop of 81 per cent in Africa and the Americas, 21.6 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, and 70 per cent in Europe and Central Asia.*

*Without alternative income sources, these workers and their families will have no means to survive.*

Obvious questions arise, and I assume that the ILO is right in making these claims.

The first is why is no one talking about this?

Second, if true, what is anyone doing about this?

Third, what should be done about this?

Fourth, if nothing is done what will happen?

Fifth, are we happy to accept death on a scale previously unimagined in human history if this issue is not addressed?

Sixth, how do we plan to manage the attempts at mass migration that this will give rise to?

Seventh, how will our economies survive when this implies that those of many countries in the world will collapse?

Eighth, what does this imply for our futures? Do we have one?

Ninth, what risk is there of this happening without conflict?

Tenth, did anyone get as far as imagining all this? I admit, I had not.

The risks the ILO draws attention to are very sobering indeed.