

Concept Note

Knowledge-Sharing & Multi-stakeholder Regional Forum

Driving an inclusive and productive digital transformation for decent work

Date: 8-9 May 2024

Location: Emara Ole Sereni, Nairobi, Kenya

Organizer: PROSPECTS and Opportunity Fund/Gig economy

Format: Hybrid

Background

A digital transformation is underway.

As countries across the world embrace a rapid digitalization of economic activity and employment, it becomes crucial to ensure that the digital transformation can positively impact businesses of all sizes and benefit all workers with access to decent work opportunities. Digital technologies have spread rapidly enabling online access to digital payments, online learning, and the world of work.

More and more people are making a living in the digital economy. Demand for online remote positions, digital platform work and freelancing is growing rapidly. In 2022, the digital gig economy alone accounted for 12 per cent of the global market. The labour pool for the digital economy is also enlarging, particularly in developing countries. Skills in demand range from entry-level positions and task-based work to specialized ones in several areas including tech, transport, art and design, health, and education.

People facing barriers to employment, such as limited work experience, mobility, care obligations and gender stereotypes, are also exploring ways to use digital technologies for working and earning an income. Emerging evidence shows that underserved groups - refugees among them - value this type of work for its potential for overcoming barriers to access regional and global markets, and the possibility of combining flexible working hours with other traditional jobs, particularly in locations with limited employment options.

Opportunities & challenges

New jobs in the digital and gig economy, however, also come with limitations and wide variation within and across countries on how work is organized and regulated. Online self-employment and platform work can operate under models reliant on temporary assignments performed by independent contractors and freelancers rather than dependant employees. Workers may have little job security, limited access to social protection and career progression, and lack benefits and the right to organize collectively.

Despite the opportunities for economic growth and productivity that digitalization offers, there are also disruptions that can lead to inequality. Small and medium-sized enterprises, which represent most enterprises in Africa and Middle Eastern countries, face barriers to taking advantage of digital innovation technologies. Business digitalization also impacts workers at different levels, in terms of skills, algorithm management practices, rights and working conditions. Issues of privacy and safety in the cyberspace are also central for policy response and regulation. All these factors are creating a need for governance and policy frameworks for fair distribution of the gains and opportunities the digital transformation brings.

Digital divides persists and one third of the world's population remains offline. Many of the unconnected live in developing countries within urban impoverished locations, rural and remote

areas, including in refugee hosting communities. Closing digital divides remains a challenge that needs to be addressed to avoid exacerbating inequalities in the digital economy.

A comprehensive solution to advance decent work.

In a global context where recovery of employment is threatened by mutually reinforcing crises and additional challenges, such as conflicts and natural disasters, the digital economy holds potential for job creation if it is backed by the necessary policy and regulatory frameworks and incentives. Developing and planning a smooth transition into a more inclusive and productive digital economy and labour market requires a human-centred response that focuses on increasing people's capabilities and business' productivity and strengthening the institutions of work in the digital space.

Driving a transformation that is inclusive needs integrated policy frameworks to leverage digital technology and skills in the world of work. Aligning digital transformation with social development objectives is critical for laying the foundation for a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Governments, in partnership with the social partners and all stakeholders, need to devise innovative solutions and evidence-based national strategies that make the digital economy work for all, particularly for those who are disadvantaged and marginalized or at risk of being left behind.

Building a conducive environment needs targeted investment and commitment towards inclusive and decent work in the digital economy across five interrelated areas:

- **Expanding** access to ICT infrastructure and broadband connectivity;
- **Building** the skills and talent to leverage digital and AI technology advancements;
- **Developing** critical financial and business services for e-commerce and online transactions;
- **Designing** responsive governance frameworks for decent work and social protection; and
- **Tackling** cybersecurity concerns and new digital risks.

A partnership approach that integrates the efforts of all global and local actors can generate the necessary drive for an inclusive and sustainable digital transformation.

Objective

This forum is a platform to exchange knowledge and experiences to advance decent work and inclusion in the digital economy. The focus is on:

- **Taking stock** of the opportunities and challenges to unlock decent work in the digital economy that global and national actors are facing, including those from PROSPECTS countries,
- **Sharing innovative solutions** and evidence-based responses to global and local challenges,
- **Creating partnerships** and synergy to address the digital divide and foster decent work in the digital economy, and
- **Discussing potential solutions** to advance decent work and support a productive and inclusive digital transformation.

Participants

The forum will consist of insightful dialogues among experts, government officials, social partners, practitioners, the private sector, researchers, international development actors working in favour of refugees and their host communities, such as donors, UN agencies, the implementing partners of the PROSPECTS programme, and other relevant stakeholders.

Agenda

Knowledge-Sharing & Multi-stakeholder Regional Forum Driving an inclusive and productive digital transformation for decent work

Day 1

Wednesday 08 May 2024

Emara Convention Center: Talek Siana & Mara Ball Room, (1st floor)

8:30-9:00

Registration

9:00-9:50

Welcoming remarks and opening speeches

- Caroline Mugalla, Director of Country Office for the United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, ILO
- Sangheon Lee, Director of EMPLOYMENT, ILO
- William Kiprono, Secretary of Administration, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Government of Kenya

9:50-10:45

Setting the scene

Advancing a digital transformation for decent work, productive growth and inclusion

- Sher Verick, Adviser to the Deputy Director-General, ILO
 - Rufus Karanja, Policy Officer on Displacement and Durable solutions, Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Kenya
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10:45-11:15

Coffee Break

11:15-13:00

High-level panel

Building a conducive environment for a digital economy benefiting all

This panel will explore the responses and strategies that are needed to develop a conducive environment for doing business and unlocking decent work opportunities in an interconnected economy. Discussion spans across connectivity inclusion, skills and labour market demand, e-financial and last mile services, governance frameworks, rights at work and cybersecurity.

Julians Amboko, Moderator

Part 1 – A conversation on new strategies for a regional digital transformation

- Mactar Seck, Chief of the Innovation and Technology Section, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
- Christine Sund, Senior Advisor, International Telecommunications Union

Part 2 – Innovative tripartite approaches to leverage digital job and business opportunities

- Alex Asimwe, Labour Commissioner, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda
- Abiyot Bayou Tehone, Senior Advisor, Minister of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia
- Argobasti A. Odera, ICT Manager, Federation of Kenya Employers
- Isaac Mbingi Okello, Administrative Secretary, Central Organization of Trade Unions Kenya

Q&A

13:00-14:00

Lunch

14:00-15:30

Cluster 1: Shaping a digital workforce and pathways into decent work

The discussion will focus on the investments and strategies for upskilling and reskilling workers, especially those with low- and middle-skills, and how to effectively create transitions pathways to enable business and economies to navigate the digital transformation of the labour market.

Jonas Bausch, Youth Employment Specialist, Regional Office for Africa, ILO, Facilitation

- Mohomad Wato Bonaya, Research Officer Technical and Vocational Training Authority, Kenya
 - Nora Toma, Deputy CEO, Education for Employment, Egypt
 - Ali Henok Ahmed, CEO, Ethiopia Ministry of Innovation and Technology of the IT Park
 - Teresios Bundi, Gig and Data Economy Advisor, GIZ
 - Ziad El Shammas, Member of the Board, Association of Lebanese Industrialists
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15:30-16:00

Coffee Break

16:00-17:30

Cluster 2: Impact stories - Building connected and inclusive economies for all

This theme explores innovative approaches to build an inclusive digital transformation, with a particular focus on connectivity divides affecting local business and workers, especially from traditionally underserved populations.

Amy Fallon, Associate Innovation Officer, UNHCR, Facilitation

- Alice Mundia, Board Member, United Disabled Persons of Kenya
 - Victor Mafigi Turatsinze, Co-founder, Unleashed
 - Derrick Nginya, Tech Trainer & Training Lead, Learning Lions
 - Pearl Gakazi, Founder, Kolaborate
 - Dhruvi Joshi, Kenya Programme Lead, Na'amal
 - Salim Ismail, Technical Advisor, Dadaab Collective
 - Sam Gichuru, Co-founder, Kuhustle
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Closing of the First Day

Day 2

Thursday 09 May 2024

Emara Convention Center: Talek Siana & Mara Ball Room (1st floor)

9:00-10:40

Recapitulation of Day 1 by Julians Amboko, Master of Ceremonies

Cluster 3: Harnessing the power of AI and digital technologies for business and work

This theme will explore some of the service gaps, barriers and cyber security threads, slowing down the digital transformation of business and the workforce readiness to take up online work, including electronic payments, e-commerce transactions and last-mile services.

Julians Amboko, Facilitator

- Joseph Kanyua, Head Digital Transformation, Safaricom
 - Hoda Dahroug, Advisor, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Egypt
 - Samuel Kioya, Technical Director, Lish AI Labs
 - Fiona Asonga, CEO, Technology Service Providers of Kenya
 - Dan Okanya, Federation of Uganda Employers
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10:40-11:00

Coffee Break

11:00-12:30

Cluster 4: Governance frameworks for decent work and protection in the digital economy

This cluster will discuss the critical elements to design responsive governance frameworks for decent work, including updating relevant legislation, reducing informality in digital labour markets through expanding social protection and rights at work, particularly for workers already facing vulnerability in the labour market.

Caroline Njuki, Program Manager PROSPECTS Kenya, ILO, Facilitator

- Stella Muhoro, Chief Manager Policy Research and Strategy, Konza Technopolis
- Leah Junck, Senior Researcher, African Observatory on Responsible Artificial Intelligence
- Frida Mwangi, Director, iWorkers
- Richard Bigirwa, General Secretary, National Organisation of Trade Unions Uganda

12:30-14:00

Lunch

14:00-15:30

Special Closing Session

Discuss potential solutions to advance decent work and inclusion in the digital economy through partnerships

The session will present the conclusion of the cluster discussions, the gaps mapped and the areas of intervention that need expanding to achieve the vision of a world of decent work and a digital transformation that is productive and inclusive, and that is facilitated by stronger partnerships. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of aligning digital transformation strategies with social development objectives.

Julians Amboko, Moderator

- Suhail Awan, Strategic Partnership Advisor, UNHCR
- Darinka Vasquez, Digital Specialist - Strategy & Innovation for Governments, UNDP

Concluding remarks

- Sangheon Lee, Department Director of Employment, ILO

Closing Message

Helen Opiyo, Labour Commissioner, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Kenya

End of the event
