



Concept Note

The potential of online labour platforms: connecting displaced talent with decent jobs

Learning Lab #1

Tuesday 11 July 2023

14:00 - 15:30 CET - Zoom - [Register here](#)

Background

This Learning Lab will discuss how digital labour platforms can be used to connect displaced talent with decent jobs and what kinds of coordinated action are required to maximize its potentials while addressing possible challenges and risks. Freelancing on these platforms can be complex, requiring not only technical skills, but also navigating specialised marketplaces and establishing a strong online presence. These challenges, in parallel to the structural barriers that refugees often face -restrictions on working rights, limited Internet connectivity, access to SIM cards and financial exclusion- hinder their ability to fully participate in online platform work.

Understanding these challenges can help UN agencies and their implementing partners to better target the assistance they provide to refugees and their host communities, in collaboration with governments, businesses, workers' organisations, and local actors.

Some online platforms are actively supporting refugees to bridge existing gaps, as onboarding them diversifies their pool of freelancers and aligns with their social responsibility visions. For example, [Upwork](#), a global freelancing platform, has collaborated with the Tent Partnership for Refugees to launch the [Opportunity Unlimited](#) initiative. This programme aims to support displaced professionals in securing work and accessing necessary resources for their success. Refugee freelancers have also developed their own strategies to thrive on these platforms. Despite intense competition, discrimination, and skill-related challenges, [refugee freelancers in the Dadaab camp](#) have united and leveraged collective efforts to make a positive impact.

While progress has been made, there is still substantial work to be done at all levels to address accessibility for refugees on online digital platforms, making them conduits for decent work and fostering inclusive digital economies. The first Learning Lab session will delve into the motivations and level of engagement of online platforms in working with displaced talent, paving the way for greater empowerment and decent work opportunities for refugees in the digital economy.

Learning Lab Objectives

1. **Understand online labour platforms** motivations and engagement with displaced talent
2. **Learn how refugee freelancers and online labour platforms are adapting** to a fast-changing global market and how platforms are responding to refugees' needs
3. **Gain insights into a variety of initiatives** to better support refugees in accessing decent work on online platforms

Outcomes

By the end of this Learning Lab participants will have:

- **a better understanding of the changing job landscape** from the platform's perspective and displaced talent's engagement with online labour platforms;
- gained **insights into the rationale behind online platform engagement with displaced individuals**, their practices for including refugees, the barriers they encounter in expanding refugee inclusion, and tangible steps that need to be taken to overcome these barriers;
- learned **how online labour platforms are engaging with UN initiatives** to support connecting refugees with jobs; and
- explored **measures to organise online platform work in a manner that aligns with decent work principles** and strategies to change existing models and scale up practices that enhance access and improve working conditions for all participants.

You will hear from refugees sharing their experiences, challenges, and strategies in navigating online platforms and discover the key areas of support they need to access these platforms effectively. The Dadaab Collective will provide an example of how they collectively compete with the global workforce on Upwork.

Participants

The Learning Lab will be attended by:

- Staff from ILO, UNHCR, UNDP and ITC, and other PROSPECTS partners
- Online labour platforms and online freelance coworking organisations

Agenda

TUESDAY, 11 JULY 2023

14h00 to 15h30 (CET)

TIME (CET)	Subject
14:00 – 14:20	Moderation • <i>Zulum Avila, Specialist on Employment Strategies in the Digital Economy, ILO</i> • <i>Lorraine Charles, Center for Business Research, Cambridge University</i> Opening and Learning Labs launching • <i>Nicholas Grisewood, PROSPECTS Chief Technical Advisor, ILO</i> • <i>Hovig Etyemezi, Head of Innovation, UNHCR</i>
14:20 – 14 :30	Interactive session
14:30 – 15:00	Perspective of Platforms and Refugees <i>Moderated session where questions are addressed to panellists</i> • <i>Abdullahi Abdirahman Noor, Dadaab Collective Kenya</i> • <i>Amadou Daffe, CEO and Co-Founder, Gebeya Inc.</i> • <i>Marwan Abdelaziz, Co-Founder and CEO, Ureed.com</i>
15:00 – 15:25	Plenary discussion <i>Participants are able to share thoughts and address questions to panellists</i>
15:25 – 15:30	Concluding messages and closing remarks