



Learning Lab Series

Understanding Digital Risks:

*Protection of forcibly displaced and host communities
and realising the benefits of the digital economy*

ILO-UNHCR



Understanding Digital Risks:

***Protection of forcibly displaced and host communities and realising the
benefits of the digital economy***

Learning Lab #3

Date: 4 October 2023

Time: 13:00 – 14:00 (CET)

Co-hosted: ILO-UNHCR

Background

Digital risk is a growing concern, particularly for displaced populations who often face unique barriers to accessing digital services and who may be particularly vulnerable to cyberthreats and cybercrime when working in the digital economy. This Learning Lab session will explore the risks faced by displaced populations when engaging with digital services or jobs and livelihoods in the digital economy. It will consider how these digital risks can be defined, categorised and assessed in order to identify the most effective means to prevent and mitigate them.

Digital risk is a broad and growing area of concern for researchers, technologists, and policymakers. However, humanitarian and development practitioners and their partners often lack guidance when it comes to understanding and addressing the various ways in which digital risk manifests for displaced populations. Forcibly displaced and stateless populations face a number of barriers to accessing digital services, upskilling opportunities, jobs and livelihoods that are mediated by digital technology and the platform economy. The gaps in legal, financial and social context may make refugees particularly vulnerable to cyberthreats and cybercrime when working in the digital economy. For example, many platformised labour opportunities require proof of identification, a bank account, or the right to work – access to which is not always easy for displaced populations. Additionally, the harms that can arise from using digital services – such as exposure to misinformation, lack of privacy, or potential for scamming – can have a disproportionate impact on those with fewer financial resources or those at greater risk of persecution.

A framework for assessing the digital risks faced by forcibly displaced populations, and the harms they can engender, can equip UN agencies and their implementing partners with the tools to: identify sources of potential risk; work with governments, communities, communications providers, and technology companies to address them; and support forcibly displaced populations with safely navigating online services and the opportunities brought about by the platform economy.

At a time where the gig economy, mediated by digital platforms, is offering increased opportunities to forcibly displaced and stateless populations, examining the risks that can arise from this engagement is crucial. While the gig economy may offer work opportunities to populations otherwise excluded from the formal labour market, it has often been shown to have the potential to increase financial precarity, create stressful conditions due to 'algorithmic management', and offer poor levels of protection from physical risks (such as accidents associated with platform-based delivery services). This Learning Lab will delve into what 'digital risk' means for displaced populations, as well as how it manifests in the context of gig work and the digital economy, in order to support UN agencies and their partners with promoting safe and fair use of digital services and technology for work and livelihoods.

Learning Lab Objectives

1. **Understand the risks** faced by displaced populations when engaging with digital services
2. **Consider how these digital risks can be assessed** and how they manifest in practice, specifically when engaging in platformised labour
3. **Distinguish the various stakeholders** involved in mediating and mitigating digital risk, and their different roles and responsibilities
4. **Gain insight into potential approaches** for mitigating digital risk

Outcomes

By the end of this Learning Lab participants will have:

- Gained a better **understanding of what digital risk is**, and how it emerges in practice;
- Been provided with tools for **categorising digital risk and identifying appropriate stakeholders** to collaborate with on mitigation measures;
- **Examined a series of real-world examples** to better understand how digital risk can be identified before harms emerge; and
- Learned about various **initiatives that seek to mitigate digital risks** and considered how they may be adapted to different contexts.

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Agenda

Co-hosted by UNHCR

4 October 2023

13h00 CET

Opening

- Zulum Avila, Specialist on Employment Strategies in the Digital Economy at ILO
- John Warnes, Senior Innovation Officer at UNHCR

Digital risk: Assessment methods and mitigation

- Sophie Bennani-Taylor, Researcher at the Oxford Internet Institute

From mitigation to remediation

- Aaron Martin, Assistant Professor of Data Science at the University of Virginia
- Nicholas Oakeshott, Senior Policy Officer on Digital Protection at UNHCR
- Samah Ibrahim, Digital Facilitator at Terre des hommes