

IGF 2017 Reporting Template

- Session Title: **The future of work: Is the gig economy working for the developing countries?**
- Date: Monday December 18, 2017
- Time: 10:10 - 11:40
- Session Co-organizers: Helani, GALPAYA, Civil Society, Lirneasia; Hernan, GALPERIN, Civil Society, USC/DIRSI
- Chair/Moderator: Hernan Galperin, Research Associate Professor at the Annenberg School for Communication (University of Southern California)
- Rapporteur/Notetaker: Aude Schoentgen, Research Associate, Research ICT Africa (Paris, Cape Town)
- List of Speakers and their institutional affiliations:
 - Sunil Johal, The Mowat Centre, University of Toronto
 - Pablo Bello, Inter-American Association of Telecom Operators (ASITET), Latin American think tank of Telecommunications (cet.la)
 - Alison Gillwald, Research ICT Africa, University of Cape Town
 - Mona Badran, Cairo University
 - Jacki O'Neill, Microsoft India
 - Helani Galpaya, LIRNEasia
 - Vinesh Vigneswara Ilavarasan, IIT Delhi
 - Valerio de Stefano, International Labour Office (ILO)

Key Issues raised:

This workshop explored the impact of digitisation on the labor market in developing countries and its long-term implications for development by discussing current research projects on the subject.

A booklet on « The future of work in the global South » (IDRC, CRDI, 2017) can be downloaded on www.fowigs.net

If there were presentations during the session, please provide a 1-paragraph summary for each presentation:

□ A **broad perspective** was first given by Sunil Johal through three main observations: the uncertainty of pace of change (We do not know on what extent Artificial Intelligence will affect the job market), the complex nature of issues and necessity of international coordination (e.g. tax compliance...) as well as the necessity to rebalance the workers-firms dynamic.

Given the fact that **Latin American** economies are mostly services-based, the gig economy has a big impact there. Pablo Bello laid the emphasis on the importance of workers' organisation to defend their rights (unions), the importance of education and skills, as well as of supporting unemployed people. He raised the issue of the institutional capacity of Latin American countries to tackle the necessity of a new labor framework.

On the **African** perspective, Alison Gillwald underlined the low take up of microwork in the eight African countries on which she conducted a study, even when low internet penetration is taken into account. Digital work reflects existing inequalities in the internet access and beyond access, such as the lack of ICT skills, the issue of affordability,

the gender gap, the level of education, etc...

The **Middle East** countries' view has been given on the gender perspective (by Mona Badran). Affordability (financial decisions are done by men), social restrictions (mobility), lack of access to ICT and cultural norms are the main factors hindering equal access of women in Arab countries. Recommendations to tackle the gender gap are the following: promote jobs in STEM for Arab women, implement mentoring schemes of women to other women (and thus increasing empowerment and improving skills), adopt a new approach for the division of work at home, apply flexible working hours and teleworking and implement a universal basic income.

Jacki O'Neill has shared her findings on the **gig economy in the global South**. Despite the large variety of types of digital works, the workers' issues are pretty much the same. Platforms basically limit flexibility and independence that workers would be supposed to have. Firstly, workers have to be flexible to the work available on the platform at the time needed (more than the work is flexible to the worker him(her)self). Secondly, as competition is high between workers to get the best paid jobs, workers usually need to work long hours a day to make a proper revenue and maintain their reputation on the platform. Jacki underlined that the situation is not immutable and suggested that platform designers should be lobbied to set up systems respecting more workers' rights.

Another speaker, Helani Galpaya, underlined the wide variety of jobs (from crowd work to software developers) and situations in the digital labor market (from very low-paid to privileged workers). In **Sri Lanka**, high-skilled independent workers face the policy issue that their labor category (and revenue types) is not officially recognised (even in a country with a high level of informal sector), which makes it difficult to get loans for instance. In the other way, in **Myanmar**, recruiters are afraid to take risks of hiring long-term contracts and workers to get bad quality jobs, so people turn to digital platforms. Helani concluded on the fact that there was a large part of people for whom the gig economy worked, despite the fact it was not a long-term nor a meaningful solution.

In **India**, Vinesh Ilavarasan does not see much impact by the digital work in the near future. Despite that more and more jobs are automated and start ups developing, the necessary conditions for automation are still not enough as lots of enterprises do not have electricity for instance.

A **legal point of view** was provided by Valerio de Stefano who stated the major problem that digital workers face: the need to convince people that it is actual work. In London, the tribunal recognised that Uber drivers were workers under the UK law. The issue of these workers status was underlined by the speaker, who concluded on the fact that working on a platform was not an excuse for not applying labor legal rights to digital workers.

Please describe the Discussions that took place during the workshop session:

The discussions took place on:

- open data and the challenging role for governments in working with private firms on data sharing
- the defence of digital workers' rights and its organisation
- the respective roles and responsibilities of the State and of platforms
- the importance of context and the difference in the issues of digital work between developed and developing countries □

Please describe any Participant suggestions regarding the way forward/ potential next steps /key takeaways:

Suggestions were made on workers' rights :

- Platform designers should be lobbied to set up systems respecting more workers' rights

- Laws should recognise officially the digital worker status

Suggestions were made on gender gap:

- Promote jobs in STEM for Arab women
- Implement mentoring schemes of women to other women (and thus increasing empowerment and improving skills)
- Apply flexible working hours and teleworking
- Implement a universal basic income

Gender Reporting

Estimate the overall number of the participants present at the session: 90 **Estimate the overall number of women present at the session: 40** **To what extent did the session discuss gender equality and/or women's empowerment? Part of the** session discussed the gender perspective of digital labor, in the presentation made by Mona Badran on Middle East countries.

If the session addressed issues related to gender equality and/or women's empowerment, please provide a brief summary of the discussion: The speaker discussed barriers to digital services and to digital work, and provided some recommendations to overcome them.