



Session Outcome Document

Title of Session: What migrants want: Digital tech, inequality and migration

Royal Holloway, University of London

17th March 2023, 11-11.45am

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2023/Agenda/Session/329>

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The session critically examined ‘what migrants want’ in relation to the use of digital technologies as opposed to the numerous apps that are supposedly designed for them. Building on our ongoing research (see <https://ict4d.org.uk/technology-inequality-and-migration/>), we explored how co-design with migrants can help ensure digital interventions that can usefully address migrant-defined inequalities. Digital technologies are both a lifeline and an increasing source of concern for migrants around the world. While these technologies can help address the many inequalities migrants face, they can also exacerbate such inequalities and create new ones.
- The session, which aligned with SDG10 and WSIS Action Lines C3, C4, C5, C7(iii, iv,v), C8 and C10, was structured around our digital interventions from [Nepal](#) and [South Africa](#) using a series of short-form videos ‘created by migrants for migrants’ as a framing device for the discussion. The discussion highlighted many inequalities faced by migrants and how digital tech can meaningfully address them as well as how digital tech can support personal life choices, offer networking opportunities, and become a peer-to-peer learning tool.
- The discussions centred around the need to do no harm through digital tech, the importance of safe, secure, and wise use of digital tech by migrants, the critical importance of digital capacity for migrants so that they can share their experiences and insights with other migrants and the need for international and local organisations to recognise the limits to the use of digital tech by migrants against a context of pervasive digital illiteracy.
- The overarching theme was the need for all actors at the interface of digital tech and migration to be mindful of the need to ensure the safe, secure, and wise use of digital tech by migrants.
- Prof G Hari Harindranath led the session with Prof Tim Unwin and Dr Maria Rosa Lorini while Bryce Hartley from GSMA (online) and Julien Varlin from ILO Geneva served as discussants. The highly interactive hybrid session was attended by several senior government officials and representatives from international organisations, CSOs and tech companies as well as researchers.



Towards WSIS+20 and WSIS beyond 2025, please share your views on the emerging trends, challenges, achievements, and opportunities in the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines to date (5-8 bullets)

- Despite increasing evidence of the challenges to the beneficial use of digital tech by migrants, actors such as tech companies, international and local organisations continue to design technologies aimed at migrants without due regard to their unintended consequences. International organisations and fora such as WSIS who are at the forefront of digital inclusion must recognise not just the opportunities offered by digital tech for migrants but also the risks and disbenefits associated with them. This is especially important given the pervasive structural inequalities and limited digital capabilities that characterise many migrant contexts.

Tangible outcomes (such as key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, and commitments (3-5 bullet points))

- Excellent sharing of insights on digital tech and migration from international organisations, regulators, researchers, and civil society organisations attending the hybrid workshop.
- Conversations with ILO and IOM in Geneva on pathways to impact for our work on digital tech, inequality, and migration.
- Commitment to return to WSIS with international partner organisations to present the impacts of our research and practice at WSIS 20-24.

Actionable plan (2-5 points)

- We plan to return to WSIS next year to engage in a follow up conversation with international organisations, tech companies and researchers on the effects of digital tech on the inequalities facing migrants.
- We are following up with international organisations, tech companies and others with whom we engaged during WSIS to discuss potential collaboration opportunities.

Suggestions for thematic aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2024 (WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event) (one paragraph)

- Digital tech and migration: Digital tech and migration are inextricably linked. While there are many benefits of digital tech for migrants there is increasing evidence of digital harms that exacerbate inequalities faced by migrants. It is important that WSIS addresses this important issue that affects the most marginalized people on the move.