Leveraging digital inclusion and technological change to enhance equitable and gender-responsive service delivery for all migrants

Draft Concept Note

9 March 2023 9:00 to 10:15 EST

In-person for panellists: IOM Office to the United Nations, 122 E 42nd St 48th FL, New York, NY 10036

Zoom link: https://iom-int.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_TlxpZP4pSUyvGKbmgY8_Lw#/registration

Co-organized by: German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, The Permanent Mission of El Salvador to the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Women, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), DIESIS Network (the lead for Reach Inclusion Through Digital Empowerment for Migrant Women (RIDE) project)

Background:

Leveraging digital inclusion and technological change for all migrants will be critical for the achievement of more equitable societies. However, the existence of the digital divide exacerbates already existing issues with accessing services. The response to the economic impacts of COVID-19 increased the scale of and overall usage of technology, which presents both opportunities and risks for migrant women who are more likely to be impacted by the digital divide.[1] The UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation highlighted that women, migrants, refugees, and internal displaced persons, are among some of the groups that are at particular risk of being left behind by digitization. The 2022 International Migration Review Forum's Progress Declaration recognized that the increasing use of digital technologies during the pandemic contributed to the effectiveness and transparency of migration procedures, while also raising concerns about the digital divide for migrants as well as challenges to upholding migrants' right to privacy and the protection of personal data. It is also important to reflect on the use of digital technologies in border and immigration enforcement, and the ways in which this has perpetuated gender-specific, racial and xenophobic discrimination.[2]

The interlinkages between migration, gender and digitalization demand innovative approaches and solutions to respond to the multifaceted aspects of mobility today. While digital innovation has

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[1] UN Network for Migration. 2022. 'Anti-Discrimination and COVID-19 Advocacy Tool'
[2] Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. 2021. 'Racial and Xenophobia discrimination and the use of digital technologies n border and immigration enforcement'

enabled access to services, such as social protection services, or those who were previously hard to reach, the benefits of digital innovation are not equally distributed, with migrant women and girls often lacking access to online connectivity, digital devices and skills. For example, research from selected countries pointed out that men tend to rely more on mobile money transfer technology to remit than women, which may be an instance of the persistent digital gender divide with women facing greater obstacles in accessing digital technology as well as often having lower digital literacy than men.[3]

Harnessing the benefits of technological change and digital inclusion with a view to improving service delivery and rights protections of migrant women is also imperative for Germany in line with its feminist development policy. Digital innovation can contribute to achieving gender equality and transforming gender relations. Adopting an intersectional approach to the inclusion of all migrant women through technological change is a powerful catalyst for their empowerment and meaningful participation in all areas of life.

When digital technology centres a human rights-based and gender-responsive and gender-transformative approach, there are opportunities to better the lives of millions of people on the move. For example, in Cambodia, Ministry of Women staff at the national and sub-national level have been trained on how to assist survivors (including women migrant workers) and have additionally been supplied tablets and smartphones to respond to survivors in a timely manner and to connect them to needed support and protection services.[4] In Vietnam, female youth and migrant workers gained digital skill through access to online learning, therefore improving their employability and competition in the labour market. [5]

Objectives:

This high-level event will explore concrete ways on how to build a conducive environment for all migrant women and girls, to ensure that they benefit from digital inclusion and technology particularly in the context of accessing services while ensuring their rights are protected at all stages of migration. The panellists' intervention will focus on the following objectives:

- Share evidence, innovative practices and success stories on leveraging the potential of digitalization and technology to ensure migrant women's access to gender-responsive and equitable services.
- Propose innovative recommendations to reduce the digital gender gap for migrant women to better enable them to maximize the benefits of migration.
- Discuss the main challenges associated with digital inclusion and technological change for migrant women, and how these can be addressed.

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[3] UN Women. 2020. Migrant women and remittances. "Exploring the data from selected countries"
[4] ILO and UN Women. 2021. Safe Technology for the Provision of Services to Women Migrant Workers at Risk or Subject to Violence
[5] IOM. 2022. IOM Supports the Government of Viet Nam in Digital Transformation of Labour through Enhancing Vocational Education and Training

Proposed format:

9:00   Opening remarks:

            Ugochi Daniels, Deputy Director General for Operations, IOM

9:15   Panel discussion: (5 – 7 mins each)

            Moderator: ITU Representative

            Speakers:

            1. Jochen Steinhilber, Director General for displacement, crisis prevention, and civil society at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany (virtual)
            2. H.E. Ms. Egriselda López, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of El Salvador to the United Nations in New York (tbc)
            3. Representative, UN Women (tbc)
            4. Ms. Tendayi Achiume, Former Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism (tbc)
            5. Alessia Sebillo, Executive Director, DIESIS Network – the lead of Reach Inclusion through Digital Empowerment (RIDE) project (virtual)

10:00   Questions and answers

10:10   Concluding remarks