

Shaping platform policy and worker rights –
An introduction to global best practices

Deep Dive: Gender in the Platform Economy

Facilitator's Notes

Time needed: 2 hours

Aim

By the end of the session, participants will:

- *Understand the specific challenges and opportunities that platform work presents for women and marginalised workers*
- *Recognise the intersectional dimensions of gender in the platform economy and how ethnicity, religion, migration status, disability and care responsibilities compound disadvantage*
- *Reflect on the gender-based regulations affecting women's position in the platform economy*
- *Identify what platforms, governments, unions, worker organisations and male allies can do to improve conditions for women.*

This session is divided in 2 parts.

Read the Trainer Resource Sheet before delivering this session. It provides up-to-date research, key concepts and background on the intersectional dimensions of gender in the platform economy.



Part 1: The Challenges and Opportunities of Platform Work for Women

This first part of the session focuses on supporting participants to understand the challenges and opportunities presented to women by work in the platform economy.



[Learn]



15 minutes

1. Welcome participants, introduce the learning aims and distribute the Handout Sheet ( Slide 2).
2. Present (in the presentation on the women in the platform economy) the challenges they face and the potential benefits of platform work. Highlight the following key points ( Slide 4):
 - Women are an important part of the platform economy labour force, but their experiences are often overlooked and there is a scarcity of data available on the issues they face.
 - The **gender digital divide** can prevent women from accessing and succeeding in the platform economy. Those that do, predominantly work in gendered sectors such as cleaning, domestic work and beauty services. Latest reports show that cloudwork has an even gender balance concerning participation rates.
 - The platform economy provides opportunities to improve women's social and economic conditions, but women face many challenges that prevent them from equitably participating in and benefiting from platform economy jobs.
 - **Intersectionality matters.** A migrant woman, a disabled woman, a woman of colour, a single mother — each faces compounding layers of disadvantage. Gender cannot be understood in isolation from race, class, migration status, age and care responsibilities.

Key Definitions and Concepts

- **Social norms** – A set of societal expectations, standards, and behaviours that are assigned to individuals based on their perceived gender. These social beliefs dictate how individuals of different genders should present themselves, interact with others, and fulfil roles within their communities. Traditional gender norms place limits on the recognition, roles and opportunities available to women in particular.
- **Gender digital divide** – Structural discrimination that creates inequality in 'access' to and 'use' of digital products like mobile phones, and the internet (e.g. digital platforms), thereby leading to a greater divide in digital capacities between men and women.
- **Gendered division of labour** – The unequal distribution of work and responsibilities based on traditional gender roles and expectations within a society. It makes it more likely that women will be mostly or entirely responsible for unpaid domestic and caregiving work, which limits their opportunities to access and excel in paid work.
- **Gender based occupational segregation** – The unequal distribution of individuals into specific jobs and professions based on their gender. Women are disproportionately represented in jobs which are under-valued and underpaid, reinforcing traditional gender roles and stereotypes.



[Relate – Worker Case Study]

45 minutes

3. Divide the participants into small groups.
4. Give each group a flipchart and marker pens in two different colours.
5. Assign each group one of the three worker case studies ( **end of instructions**). If there are more than three groups, multiple groups can work on the same worker case study. Display the case studies (also provided on the Handout Sheet) and ask one member of each group to read it out loud.



Priya

Priya and her husband moved to the city with their three children to earn more money. They live in a small, rented room with shared cooking and bathroom facilities. Priya recently started working for the food delivery platform FoodFleet, in the hope that she could earn money while working flexibly around looking after her children. Priya took out a loan so she could rent a moto and persuades her husband to let her use his phone so she can access the app. She lives a long way from the area where most of FoodFleet's customers live and often only finds time to work in the evening when it is dark. Her husband works long hours and has agreed that Priya can work for FoodFleet as long as she remains responsible for the children and looking after the family. Priya enjoys that the work is an opportunity for her to be independent and out of the house.



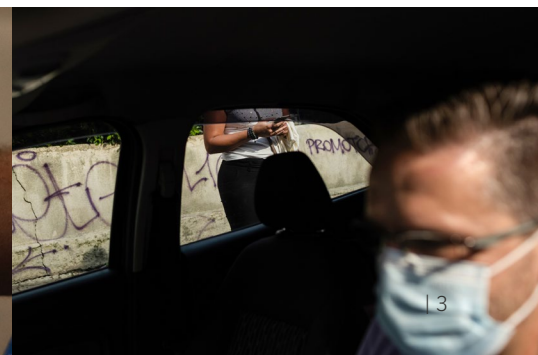
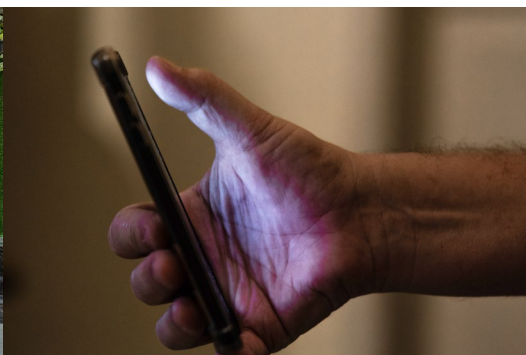
Anika

Anika lives at home with her parents and supports them to run their convenience stall. 6 months ago, she started working for NannyNest providing childcare and other domestic duties to earn more money for her family. Her parents are religious and do not like Anika working outside the home. Anika relies on public transport to get to and from her customers' homes. She sometimes feels unsafe being in customer's homes around men she doesn't know. Anika is semi-literate and struggles to understand whether she is being paid correctly by NannyNest. She has been propositioned by two male clients; the app has a reporting function, but she is afraid of being deactivated if she uses it. She has never heard of a union for platform workers. Anika enjoys looking after children and dreams of working in a nursery.



Meera

Meera lives with her two children, her husband and her parent's in-law. Meera studied ICT and is a skilled web-developer, but she stopped working when her children were born. Meera heard about WebWeaver from a friend - a platform which connects web developers with customers around the world. Tasks won via WebWeaver can take from half a day up to a few weeks to complete, but Meera hopes she can find the time in the evenings after she has cooked and put her children to bed. Meera has registered on WebWeaver and works from home annotating data for AI training tasks. She earns 3-4\$ per hour which after looking on online forums seems to be less than male counterparts from other countries. She can't find anybody at WebWeaver to ask for assistance though. Through the forums she has connected with other women to share their experiences.



6. Ask each group to draw a table on their flipchart with two columns. The first column should be labelled “Challenges” and the second “Opportunities and Benefits” (see example below and on  Slide 6).

Challenges	Opportunities and Benefits

7. First, ask the groups to discuss the following questions and to write their answers in the “Challenges” column on the flipchart, using one pen colour ( Slide 7):

What challenges might the worker experience...

- when first trying to start working for the platform?
 - in finding time to work for the platform and getting the algorithm to regularly assign them tasks?
 - when delivering tasks for the platform?
 - when they have complaints or concerns about their work and/or the platform?
 - from their family and societal expectations of her when she engages in platform work?
8. Once the groups have written down their answers, ask them to reflect on the challenges and discuss the following question: Which of these challenges are only or disproportionately experienced by women and why?
9. Ask each group to circle each challenge which is only or disproportionately experienced by women using a different coloured marker pen.
10. Then, ask each group to consider the following questions ( end of instructions) and to write their answers on the “Opportunities and Benefits” column on the flipchart: What opportunities and benefits does platform work offer to women in terms of:
- Their participation in paid work?
 - How much they earn and whether they can increase their income in future?
 - Their mobility and life outside the home?
 - Their financial situation and decision-making power in the home?
 - Their terms and conditions of work?
11. Once each group has finished, ask each group to nominate somebody to report back on their discussion in plenary.



[Summarise]



5 minutes

12. Once each group has presented, summarise their findings on the challenges and opportunities of platform work for women. Relate the participant's proposals to the following key messages:

- Women make up a significant portion of the platform economy, yet they face many challenges that prevent them from equitably participating in and benefiting from platform economy jobs. These include:
 - Societal challenges
 - Platform-driven challenges
- The platform economy provides **opportunities** to improve women's social and economic conditions, including:
 - Economic benefits
 - Social benefits
 - Socio-economic benefits
- **Intersectionality shapes all of this.** The experience of platform work for a young, educated woman with no care responsibilities differs substantially from that of a migrant woman, a disabled woman or a woman in poverty.

Part 2: Gender-Based Policy to Improve Women's Position in the Platform Economy

The second part of the session moves on to supporting participants to understand and reflect on the gender-based regulations which can be used to improve women's position in the economy.



[Learn – Gender Based Regulation]



5 minutes

1. Present in the Presentation on gender-based regulations to improve women's position in the platform economy ( **Slide 11**). Highlight the following key points:
 - **Regulation is essential.** Existing labour laws largely exclude platform workers. When they are included, they are often designed around male-dominated sectors. Gender-specific provisions must be explicitly built in.
 - **Classification is the gateway.** As long as women platform workers are classified as self-employed, they are excluded from maternity protection, sick pay, social protection and the right to organise. Any regulatory response must address this.
 - **Unions, worker organisations and male allies all have a role.** Collective action, collective bargaining and solidarity across gender lines are powerful tools and are available now, without waiting for new laws.
2. Gender based regulation can take many forms and is therefore a cross-cutting policy issue. Highlight the different sectoral regulation that can improve gender equality ( **Slide 12**).
 - Mobility laws
 - Protections against workplace discrimination and harassment
 - Measures improving women's pay
 - Childcare and educational support
 - Social protection measurements: maternity leave, pension benefits and health & sick insurance
 - Equal access to assets.



[Engage – Tripartite Response]



30 minutes

3. Divide the participants into small groups.
4. Give each group a flipchart and marker pens.
5. Ask each group to draw a table on their flipchart with three columns. The first column should be labelled “Challenges”, the second “Platforms”, and the third “Government” and the fourth “Worker Organisation” (see example below and on [Slide 10](#)).

Challenges	Platforms	Government	Worker Organisation
Violence and Harassment	• Introduce a reporting system. • Ban customers accused of V&H from the platform.	Ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 190.	Worker Trainings and Support Networks
Task-based discrimination	Change algorithm to not penalise workers who have care responsibilities.	Require platforms to adopt accountability principles to end task-based discrimination.	Demand explanation of algorithms and propose worker consultation

6. Ask participants to imagine that they are representing platform workers who work for FoodFleet, NannyNest and WebWeaver, and that they have been asked to participate in a tripartite meeting with the management of the platforms and the government. A large number of the workers are women, and they face significant challenges working for the platforms. The objective for participants is to come up with actions to address the challenges and strengthen the benefits of platform work for women.
7. Display the challenges and opportunities developed in earlier on the walls for participants to refer to. Ask each group to select 3 challenges they want to address and to write them in the “Challenges” column on the flipchart.
8. Encourage the groups to come up with demands and practical proposals from all stakeholders to address the challenges faced by women platform workers and to write their answers in the appropriate columns.
9. Reflect on what can male family members, allies and colleagues could do to support women platform workers? What concrete actions could a male ally take?
10. Once the groups have finished, ask them to present their ideas in plenary. See the Trainer Resource Sheet for more information on potential ideas.

Key Definitions and Concepts

- **Tripartite meeting** – Meetings which include representatives from governments, employers’ organisations and workers’ organisations.



[Learn – Gender Sensitive Regulation]

15 minutes

11. Improving women's position in the platform economy is not simply a question of platform economy policy but also wider regulatory changes that 'meet women where they are at' to overcome inequalities in society that often overwhelmingly impact women ( **Slide 14**).
12. Briefly run through the three presented cases highlighting the following points:
- Philippines: Based on contributions to the social security system
 - Chile: Extends social security funded parental leave to self-employed workers
 - Brazil: this law is progressive in that it addresses gender specific challenges (violence and harassment, child support, microcredit options) however it applies only to women who are employees – highlighting the relevance of the classification debate which was discussed in previous deep dives.
13. Note to the group that the issue of classification of platform workers has a significant impact on the ability to access other protections and provisions.



[Summarise]

5 minutes

14. Once each group has presented, Summarise their ideas for what platforms and governments can do to address the challenges faced by women working in the platform economy. ( **Slide 15**) Relate the participant's proposals to the following key messages:
- **Gender-based regulation and legislation** can improve women's position and experience of working in the platform economy. This could include legislation related to mobility, protection from discrimination and harassment, equal pay, childcare and parenting, social protection, and equal access to assets.
 - Measures might include stronger regulation of platforms, and education and training to empower women with the skills needed to progress in the platform economy.
 - Strong trade union rights are essential for improving women workers' bargaining power, including collective bargaining agreements to enforce gender regulation.
 - **Governments, donors, civil society, trade unions and the private sector** all need to be involved in developing policies which regulate the platform economy and promote gender parity.

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Trainer Resource Sheet

Please read this sheet before conducting the training. It provides both general information introducing trainers to the topic and also more specific details that can be used in guiding the activities.

Introduction to the topic

Women are an important part of the platform economy labour force, representing 1 in 3 digital platform workers in high income countries and 1 in 5 in low-income countries, according to the ILO (International Labour Organisation). Women in the platform economy predominantly perform location-specific tasks in gendered

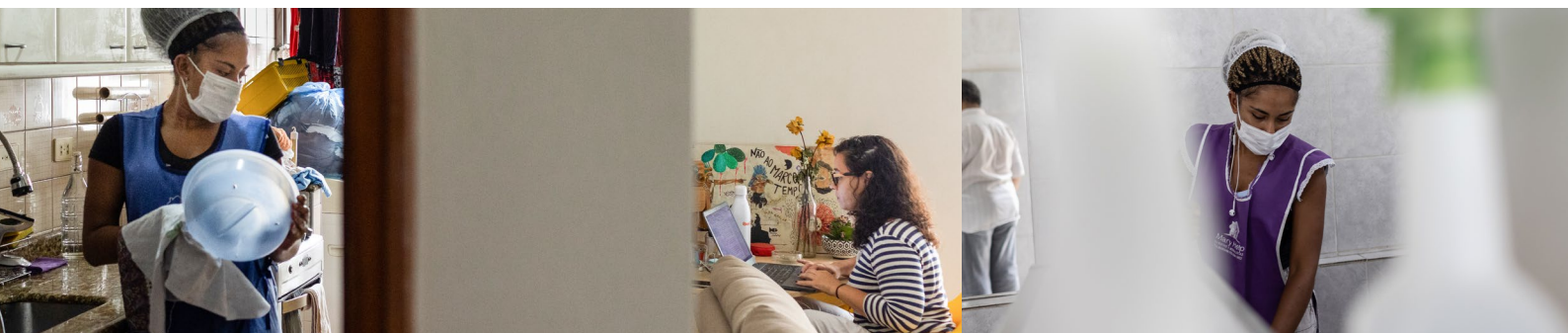
sectors e.g. care and domestic work. Furthermore, recent studies show that in some regions cloudwork participation has equal gendered participation. The gender digital divide - inequality in access to and use of digital products – can prevent women from accessing and fully benefiting from the platform economy.

Economic Benefits

- Greater flexibility
- Increased income (individual and household)
- In some cases, reduced gender pay gap
- Formalization of work if included in social protection system

Social Benefits

- Improved social mobility, particularly by challenging the traditional gendered division of labour
- Entry into community, societal and political actions via workplace interaction
- Open new social engagements
- Improved financial independence and bargaining power within the household
- Greater working hours



Women face many challenges that **prevent them from having equitable access and opportunities to partici-**

pate and thrive in the platform economy, these include:

Societal Challenges	Platform-Driven Challenges
• Access to and ownership of productive Resources • Gendered division of labour • Gendered social norms • Limited time to upskill and develop skills further • Cultural norms and lack of opportunities for career growth	• Task-Based Discrimination: less tasks received, more likelihood to have tasks cancelled • Algorithmic discrimination e.g. longer breaks taken due to care responsibilities • Customer discrimination e.g. lower ratings • Harassment in the digital workspace • Occupational health and safety in digital context • Dispute resolution and Participation Costs

Intersectionality shapes all of this. The experience of platform work for a young, educated woman with no care responsibilities differs substantially from that of a migrant woman, a disabled woman or a woman in poverty.

Gender-based regulation and legislation can improve women's position and experience of working in the platform economy. This requires addressing women's

unequal access to and participation in platform work, ensuring women gain equal benefits from platform work, and enabling women's economic empowerment.

Governments, donors, civil society, trade unions and the private sector **all need to be involved in developing policies which regulate the platform economy and promote gender parity.**

Part 2 – Gender Based Policy



[Relate – Tripartite Response]

Here is a collection of sample ideas that may be covered during the activity:

Challenge	Platform / Employer	Government / Regulator	Union / Worker Organisation
Violence & harassment	Ban repeat offenders; provide 24/7 safety helpline	Ratify & implement ILO C190 (Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019); extend protections to platform workers, prosecute domestic violence	Negotiate platform safety protocols; run know-your-rights campaigns; provide legal support for affected workers, discourage domestic violence
Task-based discrimination & biased algorithms	Audit algorithms for gender bias; make ratings not publicly visible, institute less strict availability policies	Require algorithmic transparency; mandate bias audits; enforce equal pay legislation	Demand algorithmic transparency clauses in agreements; collectively document discriminatory patterns
Exclusion from social protection & maternity rights	Voluntarily provide insurance and maternity pay regardless of worker classification	Extend social protection to platform workers; hold platform accountable to contributions;	Lobby for better social protection policy; use collective agreements to establish entitlements
Gender digital divide & access barriers	Subsidise data costs and equipment; provide mentorship between women colleagues	Invest in digital skills programs; improve connectivity	Create safe spaces in worker organisations for women



[Learn – Gender Sensitive Regulation]

Women's unequal position in society mean that they face disproportionate impacts in the platform economy. Gender-based regulation and legislation can improve women's position and experiences of working in the platform economy. This might include:

- Improving legal protections and policies against workplace violence, harassment and discrimination
- Enforcing legislation to ensure equal pay
- Improving measures for parenthood, such as legal protection for pregnant women at work, paid leave after childbirth or care infrastructure for women

- Ensuring women have equal entitlements to social protection, health insurance, unemployment insurance and pension benefits
- Mobility laws, and better public service infrastructure for safety to / from and during work
- Legislation to ensure women's equal access to assets.

Some examples of recent regulations that have an impact of women's position in the platform economy are:

a) Philippines – Expanded Maternity Leave Act



Covers women who are workers in the private and public sectors, workers in the informal economy and anyone who voluntary contributes to the Social Security System (SSS).

As long as a woman has paid at least three monthly contributions in a 12-month period before the birth, they will qualify and access 105 days of paid maternity leave.

More information here: [🌐 FAQs Availment of the 105-Day Expanded Maternity Leave Under Republic Act 11210 FAQs | Philippine Commission on Women](#)

b) Chile – Maternity and parental leave extended to self-employed women



Chile is one of only a handful of countries in Latin America that extends social security-funded paid parental leave to self-employed workers. As many platform workers are self-employed this could be extended to cover platform workers. Maternity leave lasts 18 weeks (126 days) and is funded through the public healthcare system.

More information here: [🌐 ILO and ECLAC call for strengthening care policies in Latin America and the Caribbean | International Labour Organization](#)

c) Brazil (*Emprega + Mulheres* ("Hiring + Women") Programme 2022)



Aims to support the entry and retention of women in the workforce through daycare reimbursement, support for parenting in early childhood, flexible working arrangements for mothers of young children, microcredit options, anti-harassment protections and support for domestic violence victims. The law is very innovative and is **gender responsive** in that it targets many of the unique challenges that women face. However, it is designed for women who are employees and therefore attaches access to these benefits to the classification of the worker status. Thereby, excluding sometimes the most vulnerable workers who are in the informal or platform economy.

More information here: [🌐 L14457](#)

Further Resources:

 [Fairwork-Gender-Report-2023-FINAL-red.pdf](#)

 [Fairwork | Fairwork Jordan Cloudwork & Gender Report: Opportunities, Challenges, & Gender-Related Problems](#)

 [Wee Care Exec Summary-Digitally Enabled Care Economy in SEA.indd](#)

 [ILO and ECLAC call for strengthening care policies in Latin America and the Caribbean / International Labour Organization](#)



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Handout Sheet

This sheet is to be handed to all participants to use as a resource during the workshop

The worker case study involves understanding the challenges and benefits women gig workers experience in the platform economy. Use these three personas to complete the task .



Priya

Priya and her husband moved to the city with their three children to earn more money. They live in a small, rented room with shared cooking and bathroom facilities. Priya recently started working for the food delivery platform FoodFleet, in the hope that she could earn money while working flexibly around looking after her children. Priya took out a loan so she could rent a moto and persuades her husband to let her use his phone so she can access the app. She lives a long way from the area where most of FoodFleet's customers live and often only finds time to work in the evening when it is dark. Her husband works long hours and has agreed that Priya can work for FoodFleet as long as she remains responsible for the children and looking after the family. Priya enjoys that the work is an opportunity for her to be independent and out of the house.



Anika

Anika lives at home with her parents and supports them to run their convenience stall. 6 months ago, she started working for NannyNest providing childcare and other domestic duties to earn more money for her family. Her parents are religious and do not like Anika working outside the home. Anika relies on public transport to get to and from her customers' homes. She sometimes feels unsafe being in customers' homes around men she doesn't know. Anika is semi-literate and struggles to understand whether she is being paid correctly by NannyNest. She has been propositioned by two male clients; the app has a reporting function, but she is afraid of being deactivated if she uses it. She has never heard of a union for platform workers. Anika enjoys looking after children and dreams of working in a nursery.



Meera

Meera lives with her two children, her husband and her parent's in-law. Meera studied ICT and is a skilled web-developer, but she stopped working when her children were born. Meera heard about WebWeaver from a friend - a platform which connects web developers with customers around the world. Tasks won via WebWeaver can take from half a day up to a few weeks to complete, but Meera hopes she can find the time in the evenings after she has cooked and put her children to bed. Meera has registered on WebWeaver and works from home annotating data for AI training tasks. She earns 3-4\$ per hour which after looking on online forums seems to be less than male counterparts from other countries. She can't find anybody at WebWeaver to ask for assistance though. Through the forums she has connected with other women to share their experiences.