

Insight #1

## Emerging Trends in Inclusive Digital Employment

Sharing knowledge from the webinar series, '[Digital Technologies and Quality Jobs – Lessons Learnt and New Horizons](#)', co-hosted by Digital Technology for Development Unit, Social Development Thematic Group and Education Sector Group

### Webinar Details

'Emerging trends in inclusive digital employment'

23 April 2021, 15.00-16.30 MNL

Hosted by Digital Technology for Development Unit, Social Development Thematic Group and Education Sector Group | [Online via MS Teams](#)

#### Speakers:

- **Sopheap Im**, Executive Director
- **Phabphada Dokbouathong**, Vice President of Operations, Digital Divide Data
- **Celina Agaton**, Founder and Managing Director, Map the Philippines
- **Dhruv Patel**, Chief Executive and Founder, The Nisai Group

#### Opening remarks:

- **Thomas Abell**, Advisor to the Sustainable Development and Climate Change department and Chief of Digital Technology for Development, ADB

#### Closing remarks:

- **Michiel Van Der Auwera**, Senior Social Development Specialist (social protection), ADB

#### Moderator:

- **Helen Osborne**, Youth Employment Specialist, ADB



## Emerging Trends in Inclusive Digital Employment

23 April 2021, 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm Manila Time



*Job destruction from COVID-19 has disproportionately affected low-paid and low-skilled jobs*



*Working-hour losses globally in 2020 from COVID-19 impacts were approximately four times greater than during the global financial crisis in 2009*



*A 20% increase in the size of the digital sector over the baseline by 2025 will create 65 million new jobs per year in Asia*

The 90-minute webinar convened three organizations to discuss their experiences operating inclusive digital strategies in the region to improve employability and employment of marginalized groups.

Joined by around 50 participants from ADB and external partners, the discussion covered:

- effective modalities to reach vulnerable and at-risk groups, such as low-income women, low-skilled youth, and learners with special education needs and disabilities;
- opportunities and challenges to scale what works to support inclusive and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- ways governments and the private sector can work together, including opportunities for ADB engagement.

## The development challenge

Digital technologies are changing both how people can access and prepare for quality jobs, as well as the nature of jobs available linked to the digital economy. The pace of change has been accelerated through the impacts of COVID-19 on labor markets, the business environment and on education systems.

The effects of the pandemic have been regressive, with vulnerable groups hit hardest, such as young, female, low-educated and migrant workers. Inclusive digital employability and employment strategies are a critical part of overall recovery efforts to reboot productivity and reset progress towards regional equality and prosperity.



## Webinar highlights

- The digital economy can provide opportunities for people at all levels of education and skills, and digital technologies can help bridge the gap for underserved communities
- Community ownership must be at the centre of designing and delivering inclusive approaches to strengthening attachment to the labor market for vulnerable groups
- COVID-19 recovery strategies can accelerate adoption of innovative practices to improve access and affordability of non-traditional pathways to sustainable employment



## About the three organizations

### DIGITAL DIVIDE DATA

Year founded: 2001

Target group: young people aged 18-25 from low-income families, women, persons with disabilities and rural migrants

Countries: Cambodia, Laos, USA, Kenya

Digital Divide Data runs an impact sourcing model providing ITO/BPO services to hundreds of international clients through training and hiring underserved youth, including Microsoft, Stanford University and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. They identify, recruit and invest in talented youth with limited prospects, offering comprehensive technical and life skills training, scholarships and loans for university study, and employment opportunities and continuous professional development. The employment rate of graduates into DDD is around 60%, based on their current portfolio of clients. Other trainees are supported to secure employment elsewhere. On average, DDD graduates earn USD \$175,000 more than their peers throughout their lifetime. Half of staff are young women; about 10% are youth with disabilities.

Year founded: 2015

Target group: low-income women from marginalized communities, including indigenous women  
 Countries: Philippines, including conflict-affected and disaster-risk areas; operations planned in Canada and Indonesia

Map the Philippines is an international initiative to provide free, comprehensive and accessible maps to help achieve Sustainable Development Goals, and enable social and economic inclusion. MapPH trains women from marginalized rural and indigenous communities to use mapping software and take ownership of creating new local maps and data that enable inclusive design of new community-based assets and services. MapPH collaborated in a World Bank project in Mindanao, Philippines, to fill critical gaps in rural maps to support new road and traffic planning and investment. In the project six two-day workshops in field study mapping were attended by 180 local participants who then worked as part of a larger group of mappers (633) to add roads, buildings and land use via OpenStreetMap to inform local government decision-making.

## THE NISAI GROUP

Year founded: 1996

Target group: learners up to age 25

Countries: across ASEAN, Europe and Middle East

The NISAI Group is an online learning platform and community that supports learners internationally up to the age of 25, and helps create pathways to further education and employment through personalized learning. They deliver accredited and inspected short-term (e.g. 6 month Core Curriculum) and long-term courses (e.g. 1-2 year Cambridge IGCSEs) in line with national curricula and standards through schools and their own Nisai Virtual Academy. In the UK they partner with local government authorities to identify disengaged learners, for example young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities or students with challenging behavior. Internationally they operate through established education institutions, such as Amnuay Silpa School, Thailand and Montessori Integrated School, Philippines.

## Webinar Summary



Sopheap Im and Phabphada Dokbouathong presented the work of Digital Divide Data in "[Increasing access to digital work for low-income workers](#)". They explained how their blended work-study model helped DDD to grow as the largest technology-related employer in Cambodia and Laos and to increase the incomes of underserved youth by 9 times compared with peers, giving rise to the 'impact sourcing' approach internationally. They shared three examples of partnering with clients in newspaper digitization for University of California, Riverside; archive digitization for Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Cambodia; and video categorization ("tagging") for sports analytics.



Celina Agaton's presentation, "[Upskilling marginalized communities in digital map creation for economic inclusion](#)", showed how putting open-source geospatial technologies and local data into the hands of marginalized communities can regenerate livelihoods. OpenKnowledgeKit includes free-to-use, low-cost, low-tech, interoperable tools including 3D StreetView, 360 Libre and OpenDroneMap that can be easily learned through short, remote training sessions to create maps for new public service delivery and monitoring, such as land titling and road planning. Hard and soft skills acquired, such as critical thinking and data visualization, are transferable and in demand in the labor market.



The NISAI Group's Dhruv Patel presented on "[Innovating in human-centered online skills training to empower learners of all backgrounds](#)". Sharing insights on the challenges of building inclusive education ecosystems, Dhruv explained the Nisai Learning Zone model that builds community-based, multi-purpose, blended learning facilities to deliver quality assured education and training to disadvantaged learners in hard-to-reach places with internet and electricity. Curriculum focuses on 4 Cs: Creativity, Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Communications, and is delivered flexibly by trained practitioners on-site and remotely online, based on the individual's psychological and psychometric assessment.

## Lessons for inclusive digital employment strategies

**Blending training with employment** in partner companies can build a **sustainable revenue model to scale up** operations. Running digital skilling programs as part of a pathway into formal wage work with selected technology employers directly **matches labor supply with demand**, especially where skilled workforce is scarce.

**Young people** who successfully complete work-study programs and enter stable employment can **inspire peers** to seek support to access formal work. **Role models** can be powerful influencers in marginalized communities overcoming issues such as disenfranchisement and information asymmetry.

For women who face cultural constraints to economic and social inclusion, **female-only training** programs can create **safe spaces** to develop skills, confidence and networks. In indigenous communities, women can hold unique local knowledge and relationships that can be leveraged to strengthen livelihoods for wider family and social benefits.

**Whole-child approaches** through **partnerships and learner profiling**; specialist **teacher training and certification**; and **family-based interventions** and **community-based mentors and coaches** are all relevant strategies for delivering accessible education and training to **at-risk learners, such as displaced, disengaged, disabled and disadvantaged** cohorts.



*"This is a really important topic as we head into the new normal. Post-pandemic digital transformation is going to be even more important than it has been. People are concerned that jobs will be made obsolete. What this webinar shows us is that there are opportunities in the digital economy for people at varying levels of education and skill. Digital technologies can address problems and support people's livelihoods at all levels. The jobs of the future will emerge in unexpected ways and we have to be looking for them and we have to be creative. These three organizations in the webinar are examples of that and highlight some of the opportunities."*

- Quote from Thomas Abell, Chief of Digital Technology for Development Unit, ADB



*"We know that digital technologies are changing both how people can access and prepare for quality jobs and the nature of jobs available linked to the digital economy. The pace of change has been accelerated through the impacts of COVID-19 on labor markets, the business environment and on education systems."*

*The effects of the pandemic have been regressive, with vulnerable groups hit hardest, such as young, female, low-educated and migrant workers. Digital technologies hold massive promise for addressing the quality jobs challenge ahead, as long as we directly tackle risks around exclusion and inequity."*

- Quote from Helen Osborne, Youth Employment Expert, ADB

For more information, you may contact:

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