



European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq International Labour Organization

Improved Livelihoods of Jordanian and Syrian Youth Research Project
Research on Jordan's Platform Economy, and the Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on the Role of
Platform-Facilitated Work

The Jordanian economy has experienced over a decade of stagnated growth, an issue that can be traced back to a cascade of external shocks, compounded by structural and cultural shortcomings that inhibit the private sector's ability to capitalize on potential opportunities. The issue of low growth is coupled with a rapid increase in population, largely driven by an influx of Syrian refugees, which began after the spark of conflict in the neighbouring country in 2011. To date, Jordan has received over 670,000 Syrian refugees registered under UNHCR's mandate, 80.43 percent of whom reside in host communities. This has placed an immense pressure on the country's infrastructure and limited resources, leading to unfavourable outcomes for Jordanians and Syrians alike. Prolonged regional volatility also led to frequent disruptions in key trade routes, which not only hindered Jordanian enterprises from accessing major markets, but also triggered a steep rise in energy and transportation costs, causing profitability and productivity to dwindle. Consequently, per capita income has plummeted to below its pre-global financial crisis levels, while the cost of living continues to climb, greatly dampening the average purchasing power and quality of life among residents.

At the same time, private sector growth is dulled by a difficult regulatory ecosystem and doing business environment, combined with logistics barriers and shortages in the skills most needed to sustain enterprise development. These challenges are reflected in a weak labour market, characterized by high informality, and a historic struggle of insufficient job creation, which has remained low even during episodes of impressive economic growth (2000-2008). Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, these issues only intensified, with Jordan seeing a net job loss of 68.900 in 2020¹. The long-subdued job creation, and more recent job destruction within high productivity sectors forces Jordan's quickly expanding labour force to compete for exceedingly scarce and low-value added job opportunities, resulting in poor employment outcomes for workers. Today, more people in Jordan are facing difficulties in securing decent work. As of 2021, unemployment reached 20 percent of the total labour force, and 24.1 percent amongst Jordanians, posing a major threat to social cohesion and overall stability.

Department of Statistics. Distribution of Persons Aged 15+ Years Who Joined of New Job or Left it and Net Jobs. Annual 2020

Labour market outcomes are even more concerning for historically excluded segments of the population, including women, refugees, and youth. In 2021, youth unemployment rates hit 43.9 percent of the total youth labour force, and 49.3 percent among Jordanians. That same year, female youth unemployment reached a total of 55.3 percent, and 67.6 percent among young Jordanian women. These figures point to a severe threat of inflated youth inactivity over the years to come, as young people in Jordan typically experience prolonged periods of joblessness prior to securing work. Long transitions into the world of work render many of the country's youth completely idle, with an estimated 37.4 percent classified as not in employment, education, or training (NEET) in 2020, and 42.9 percent among young females. When considering the relative size of the youth segment in Jordan, the gravity of this situation becomes unmistakably clear, with 18.9 percent of the population falling between 15-24 years of age in 2021, and 49.8 falling under 25 years of age. Prolonged unemployment and inactivity can have detrimental consequences on young people's employability and well-being, leading to skills erosion, marginalization, and general social insecurity, only further excluding youth from economic participation. To cope with these circumstances, many youth accept substandard job opportunities, often working in positions that do not align with their educational backgrounds and may expose them to unfair conditions. Further, with far less established employment histories than their adult counterparts, youth are more likely to resort to informal employment, with 54.8 percent of the youth workforce being employed informally in 2020.

Barriers to economic engagement are even more prevalent amongst young women, as women face multi-faceted disadvantages in acquiring and retaining decent jobs, leading to an array of subsequent social and economic impacts. Despite making significant strides in correcting the gender gap in educational attainment, Jordan is yet to have improved the socio-political, economic and cultural conditions that continue to disable women from engaging in economic production. While women outnumber men at the tertiary education level, their labour market indicators fail to reflect this reality, as women have long presented alarming unemployment rates, standing at 26.2 percent in 2021, compared to 18.7 percent amongst men. Unemployment rates are even higher for Jordanian women, reaching 30.7 percent in 2021. Even more critical, are the low rates of labour force participation (LFP) amongst women, which stood at 13.8 percent in 2021. Perplexingly, female LFP has shown negligible changes over the past decade, despite the severe fluctuations in Jordan's political and economic environment over this period, appearing seemingly unscathed by the 2008 global economic crisis, the Syrian refugee crisis, and the COVID-19 catastrophe.

The exclusion of women from the labour market is both a symptom of underlying challenges, as well as a provocation of detrimental impacts for the lives of women and households. Within traditionally structured Jordanian families, men tend to assume the role of primary breadwinner, leaving women in charge of most, if not all, domestic care duties. Often, childcare and other household responsibilities can conflict with existing aspirations to secure employment. This is especially true for women in lower income positions, due to the relatively high costs of childcare in Jordan. Another barrier limiting women's economic participation is the lack of access to safe, reliable and affordable means of transportation, imposing a significant obstacle to women's commutes to and from the workplace, particularly for women living in rural areas. Further, assuming that affordable childcare and safe transportation are available, sweeping misconceptions regarding women's fitness to fill certain roles reduce their engagement to a narrow pool of occupations. Tirelessly, these factors leave women of all ages with a lack of personal income-generating avenues, often causing their financial exclusion, and thrusting them into situations of complete dependency.

The issue of economic exclusion is far more pronounced among Syrian refugees, particularly Syrian youth and women. Standing at the centre of multiple intersecting disadvantages, Syrian youth and women are more vulnerable to experiencing all levels of poverty, discrimination and joblessness. Syrian women suffer disturbingly high unemployment rates which, according to UNHCR, reach 46 percent of female Syrian refugees in 2018, compared to 23 percent for Syrian men. At the same time, while various impediments halt the production of accurate labour market information on young Syrian refugees, the challenges of Syrian youth deeply impact the larger Syrian population, as the Syrian refugee population is considerably younger than that of their host country. In 2021, 49 percent of the total Syrian refugee population fell below the age of 18. In-camp Syrians are even younger, with 56.3 percent of in-camp Syrians falling under the age of 18 that same year, indicating a higher birth rate amongst this group. Further, in-camp refugees are also more prone to fall under other vulnerable categories, as positive correlations can be observed between household size and the likelihood of experiencing financial hardship, as well as physical disability. Consequently, in order to manage the harsh circumstances, many Syrian youth and their families resort to harmful coping mechanisms, such as reducing spending on essential non-food costs, discontinuing education, selling productive assets, early marriage, or resorting to informal, degrading or exploitative means for income-generation.

As Jordan's unemployment, underemployment, and inactivity dilemmas are long-enduring and have only become more aggressive as the years progressed, there is a prominent need for introducing innovative and alternative approaches to promoting better livelihoods for vulnerable groups, with non-standards forms of work holding great potential to support the economic integration of women, youth and people with disabilities (PWDs). Non-standard employment is an umbrella term used to refer to work arrangements that deviate from standard employment, including temporary employment, part-time work, on-call task-based work, and selfemployment. While non-standard forms of work have been increasing in popularity over the past few decades, accompanying rapid demographic shifts, macroeconomic fluctuations, and technological changes, following the COVID-19 crisis, alternative forms of work assumed an entirely new role. With the crisis provoking a global rise in unemployment and underemployment, many turned to nonstandard forms of work as a way to supplement a loss or reduction in income. This is especially true for working-from-home arrangements, and task-based, on-call work. Furthermore, due to the need to comply with government-imposed social distancing measures, which led to the forced shut-down of restaurants and traditional transportation methods, a growth in the demand for reduced or no-contact delivery and transportation methods caused an increase in the need for on-call drivers and delivery workers, providing millions with a means for earning a primary or secondary income during this time of high tension. All such working arrangements were enabled through the use of labour facilitation platforms, with the most widely used in Jordan being Uber, Careem and Talabat. Nonetheless, the growth in alternative employment arrangements are not exclusive to any one sector or country. To manage the threats of the COVID-19 crisis, a range of digital tools were applied to enable a shift towards remote working, learning, consumption, and socializing methods, with home-based work and web-facilitated employment becoming the new global norm.

Over the period of the crisis, technological solutions gained a new appreciation for their ability to support major social and economic functions, accelerating the global proliferation of digital labour platforms (DLPs). DLPs are virtual tools that link service providers with employers across a range of industries, while facilitating the working-process through enabling remotework. In doing so, DLPs can even allow job seekers to secure opportunities working for employers that may be based in entirely different countries, potentially opening a gate for unemployed workers

to explore job markets in regions where the demand for their skills is much higher. Platform-facilitated work can introduce a world of prospects for a country such as Jordan, where labour supply greatly exceeds demand, particularly for workers in professional fields, with the country's labour market presenting a stark oversupply of university graduates, despite the far greater demand for technical and vocational workers amongst employers. Unemployment is consistently higher for university graduates when compared to individuals in technical and vocational fields, standing at 26.7 percent in 2020, compared to 19.9 percent for intermediate diploma holders. In 2021, university graduates accounted for 41.5 percent of the total unemployed Jordanian population, while those holding an intermediate diploma accounted for only 6.5 percent. Considering these figures, Jordan could greatly benefit from placing an increased focus on DLPs, as the majority of the global DLP workforce is highly educated, with many offering professional services through online channels, including those related to research, design and digital art, fields of computer science, etc.

The motivators for DLP work differ across platforms and occupations, with workers on freelance platforms generally being motivated by the possibility for remote work, and those performing location-based micro-tasks typically being drawn to platform work due to a need for supplementary income. The relative flexibility of remote work and other alternative forms of employment makes it highly suitable option for women, youth, and individuals with disabilities, as they can help individuals bypass mobility limitations, job shortages, and conflicting responsibilities. Moreover, with the progressive emergence of digitally native, Generation-Z into the Jordanian labour market, it is essential that the appropriate digital infrastructure is established to facilitate their challenging transition into an already saturated labour market.

I. Rationale

For years, Jordan has struggled to overcome its long-enduring challenges of insufficient job creation and widespread skills mismatches, bearing heavy consequences on the population's women and youth. A number of socio-cultural, economic and political factors continue to hinder the economy's ability to support its rapidly growing population. Consequently, poor labour market outcomes remain prevalent, with vulnerable groups facing exaggerated barriers to securing decent employment. This is especially true for the country's younger population, with youth unemployment reaching 43.9 percent of the total youth labour force in 2021, and 49.3 percent among Jordanians. Unemployment rates are even more concerning for young females, and Syrian refugees, who fall at the intersection of multiple categories of disadvantage. Prolonged unemployment and inactivity can have damaging repercussions for youth, leading to skills erosion, marginalization, and general social insecurity, only further excluding youth from economic participation. Following the COVID-19 crises, the urgency of the situation has only intensified, as the crisis led to widespread job destruction and increased job insecurity throughout the country. Unfortunately, this will likely have disproportionate impacts on younger generations, pointing to the need to provide increased supports to youth in particular, in order to ensure their ability to secure decent livelihoods. Addressing this issue required innovative and alternative approaches to promoting better livelihoods for youth, with non-standard forms of work holding a great potential to aid the country in coping with its most prominent labour market challenges; with the term comprising temporary and short-term arrangements, part-time work, on-call task-based work, remote work, and platform-facilitated employment. Thus, alternative forms of work can provide sound options for unemployed individuals with a variety of different educational backgrounds, offering employment opportunities in high-skilled, semi-skilled and low-skilled fields. When considering vulnerable groups, remote work can be particularly empowering for individuals

who may experience challenges with commuting to and from the workplace, particularly women, individuals with disabilities, and those living in rural communities. However, in order to fully realize these benefits, responsive, inclusive and culturally relevant policies, programmes and tools must be introduced, highlighting the need for a greater understanding of the different aspects of alternative forms of employment in Jordan. With that said, the current body of research on Jordan's labour market challenges are largely focused on labour supply-side issues, namely the gap between skills supply and skills demands. This continues despite the economy's clear inability to generate sufficient high-quality jobs. Furthermore, the available research primarily examines the various dimensions of traditional work, painting an incomplete picture of one of Jordan's greatest socio-economic challenges. Accordingly, this document proposes an exploration of Jordan's platform-economy, both on the ends of the platform users and the platform providers, with a focus on translation and care services.

II. Objectives

This document proposes an exploration of the many aspects of platform work in Jordan, on the ends of the workers, service seekers, employers, and employment-facilitators (or DLP providers). This will involve an examination of the demographic characteristics of the workforce engaged in platform work in Jordan, taking into consideration workers' age, gender, educational backgrounds, nationality, area of residence, household size, income group, and the services workers offer. The study will also explore the demand for services through non-standard arrangements, whether locally or globally, examining the concentration of opportunities by economy and industry. An examination on the working conditions of those involved in the platform economy will also be performed, in order to assess the prevalence of informal work within the country's platform economy, along with potential correlations between decent/indecent working conditions and sector of activity. The study will also assess laws and regulations relating to the sector, to build a better understanding on the level of protection platform-workers have, vis-a-vis those working in more traditional forms of work. The services of focus will include both non-remote, task-based gigs, as well as those offered by workers remotely and are fully facilitated through web-based tools, as each can offer a great degree of value for workers in Jordan. Further, given the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the role and popularity of non-standard work, as well as the global proliferation of DLPs, the study will also shed light on the ways that alternative forms of work may or may not have aided Jordanians and Syrians in coping with the crisis. This will help depict the potentials that platform work may have in increasing the labour market's resilience to major shocks, as well as the gaps in the current such opportunities available to individuals in Jordan. Ultimately, the study seeks to better understand the current situation of the platform economy in Jordan, as well as the ways that such arrangements could be better utilized to help improve the working and livelihoods outcomes for Jordanian and Syrian workers in Jordan. This will inform the production of recommendations for increasing the popularity and/or regulation of platform work in Jordan, to help secure more and better livelihoods for Jordan's labour force.

III. Scope of Work

The study will utilize a blend of research methods to examine the nature of alternative employment arrangements in Jordan, the role that platform work play in facilitating employment following the COVID-19 crisis, the challenges with such employment arrangements, with regard to their ability to improve the working and livelihoods outcomes of workers in Jordan. The study will focus its exploration on the most prominent platforms and tools used to facilitate non-standard working arrangements in Jordan, with a focus on platforms offering opportunities in the occupations most-favoured by female service providers, them being (i) web-based

translation services and (ii) domestic and care-work. That being said, it is important that the platforms chosen are ones that link workers with a range of opportunities, both in remote and non-remote services. This is an important consideration to make, particularly when considering the composition of Jordan's workforce in terms of gender, area of residence, and educational background.

Analysis shall begin with a thorough desk research process utilizing reports and publications provided by both national and international sources, including Jordan's Department of Statistics, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, World Bank, International Labour Organization, along with several others. The data gathered will highlight general information on Jordan's platform-economy, past projects launched to introduce digital solutions to Jordan's labour market challenges, potential policies in the area of non-standard work regulation and/or DLP promotion, statistics highlighting investments in DLPs, as well as relevant labour market indicators. This will be followed by a detailed platform-mapping process, covering all alternative-employment-facilitation platforms available to individuals in Jordan and identifying the most popular platforms in use.

Following the desk research stage, the study will implement primary data collection methods, gathering and analysing quantitative data on the composition of the workforce engaged in alternative forms of work, by age, educational background, gender, service type, geographic location, nationality, household size, and other key descriptors. A focus on the working conditions of individuals involved in platform work will also be key. This data will be collected through the distribution of questionnaires, surveys or other such tools amongst workers, either face-to-face or through phone calls. A sample of platform and traditional workers in the care and translation sectors will be sought to better assess employment characteristics and the associated working conditions and deficiencies. The main objective of this stage is to map out the major features of Jordan's current platform-facilitated workforce and service-seekers, with a focus on the interaction between (i) demographic profile, (ii) service type and industry or sector of work, (iii) degree of involvement in platform-facilitated work (number of days worked/ does it offer a primary or secondary income), and (iv) working conditions.

Further, qualitative data collection tools will be applied to assess the motivators behind alternative forms of work for Jordanians and Syrians, as well as the major issues workers face in maintaining and benefitting from these working arrangements. Through structured discussions covering a smaller sample of workers, the study will question participants on the major factors driving workers to seek platform work. Such motivators may relate to the need for workers to cope with prolonged unemployment, or major shocks, such as the COVID-19 crisis, while others may relate to the relative flexibility of non-standard employment, with some workers potentially showing a preference for alternative work over more traditional employment circumstances. Questions will also focus on workers' level of satisfaction with their work arrangements, the level of legal protection workers are offered under these arrangements, the challenges they may have faced with acquiring, maintaining, and fully benefitting from such arrangements, and the actions required to guarantee their fundamental rights at work. To conclude, all of the findings of the study will be verified and finalized in collaboration with various social partners and stakeholder groups involved, including workers, employers, labour platform developers, and policy developers, in order to develop data-driven recommendations for action.

IV. Main Tasks & Phases of the Research

The process of data collection and report delivery will be aligned with the following phases:

Phase 1: Planning and methodology preparation:

- o Prepare activity action plan.
- o In depth secondary research review, drawing from internationally accredited sources, building on existing ILO and UN reports to the extent possible.
- o Prepare methodology, comprising a mixture of research tools, both qualitative and quantitative.
- o Prepare quantitative surveys and questionnaires.
- o Prepare interview outline, with clear areas of focus to guide interviews/focus groups.
- o Map out DLP platforms available to workers in Jordan, to identify DLPs of focus within the research.
- o Map out relevant stakeholders, to identify potential research participants (primarily workers using DLPs in Jordan).
- Establish contact with potential participants and produce final respondent list, approved by the ILO, comprising the following composition of stakeholders:

For quantitative surveys and collection methods:

- i. Representatives of workers engaged in platform work:
 - a. workers offering domestic and care services (75 minimum).
 - b. workers offering translation services (75 minimum).
- ii. Representatives of workers engaged in traditional forms of work:
 - a. workers offering domestic and care services (75 minimum).
 - b. workers offering translation services (75 minimum).

For qualitative interviews and verification:

- i. Representatives of workers engaged in platform work:
 - a. workers offering non-remote services (10 minimum).
 - b. workers offering web-facilitated services (10 minimum).
- i. Representatives of innovators and platform developers (5 minimum).
- ii. Representatives of government (5 minimum).
- iii. Representatives of international implementing agencies, research centres, think tanks, etc (5 minimum).

Phase 2: Data collection and the production of findings:

- Coordinate with stakeholder to schedule interviews/focus groups/other data collection methods.
- o Distribute surveys and quantitative data collection tools across worker representatives.
- o Conduct interviews/focus groups with stakeholder groups, maintaining adequate record of outcomes.
- o Transcribe interview/focus group outcomes.

Phase 3: Data analysis & validation:

- O Clean and process data to extract relevant information and identify key trends and/or anomalies, applying statistical and/or logical techniques to illustrate, simplify and evaluate data
- o Contextualize outcomes through measuring findings against both regional and global trends.
- O Validate findings with stakeholders and identify potential areas of contradiction and/or those requiring further investigation.

Phase 4: Report generation and recommendations for action:

O Prepare report on the major characteristics of Jordan's platform-economy, as well as the major benefits and challenges associated with platform work in Jordan; with a focus on translation and care services. This will be done through (i) an assessment of the job quality and size and composition of the platform-facilitated workforce, (iii) an exploration of the major benefits and challenges facing the country's platform-economy, with regard to promoting better livelihoods outcomes for Jordan's workforce (particularly for youth, women and Syrian refugees), (iv) potential solutions, initiatives, and supports for promoting decent work and quality jobs in the platform economy and for the better utilization of DLPs for enhancing livelihoods outcomes in Jordan. The report shall cover the following main sections, among others:

#	Section		
1	Introduction & economic overview, with a focus on Jordan's labour market outcomes, digital		
	divide, and investments in innovative digital-labour tools.		
2	Overview of all DLP available to Jordanian workers and/or employers/service seekers.		
2	Research methodology, platforms of focus in the care and translation sectors/ industries,		
	target respondents, interview questionnaire.		
3	Situational analysis on the size and composition of the platform workforce under the		
	identified DLPs.		
4	An assessment of the major benefits and barriers of platform work for users in Jordan.		
5	An exploration of potential policies, initiatives, and supports for improving the utilization of		
	DLPs for the enhancing the livelihoods outcomes of workers in Jordan.		

- O Validate research through consultations with relevant stakeholders.
- o Consult with innovators, platform-developers, government representatives, and representatives of international implementing agencies to produce recommendations for improving livelihoods outcomes through the promotion and better utilization of DLPs.

V. Proposed Occupations and Services of Focus

The study will focus its analysis on web-facilitated occupations and services that are likely to provide prospective working opportunities for vulnerable groups in Jordan, particularly women. According to a 2021 study performed by the ILO, the global platform economy presents stark gender-based occupational segregation, with women and men often being drawn to distinct occupational categories. On freelance platforms, women are more likely than men to perform legal services, translation, writing and editing, with translation being particularly common amongst female web-based workers. On the other hand, remote jobs related to technology and data analytics are largely

dominated by males. When considering location-based services, taxi and delivery gigs tend to attracts more males, while women are more likely to seek work in pet or child-care. Accordingly, the proposed occupations and services of focus under this study include:

i. Web-based translation and writing services.

As observed amongst various economies across the developed and developing world, women typically dominate web-based translation and writing occupations. Like other web-based professional services, translation and writing services allow women to earn a full or partial income while enjoying the flexibility of remote work. Such alternatives to traditional work are vital, as women are often impeded from economic participation due to conflicting household duties, challenges with securing safe and reliable means for transportation to and from the workplace, and issues with indecent and unsafe work environments to name a few.

ii. Location-based domestic and child-care services.

Platform-facilitated domestic and care services could both provide safe and suitable options for female service providers, while also increasing the availability of safe and reliable childcare alternatives for service seekers. This could largely support the economic activation of women, as conflicting domestic duties and a lack of viable options for childcare are some of the primary inhibitors of female labour market participation.

VI. Outputs and Deliverables

The research project is expected to require 80 working days for completion, and is planned to start on September 1st 2022 and is expected to be completed no later than December 10th 2022. The deadlines in the table below are a suggestion. However, it is preferable to abide by the starting date and finish date of the assignment.

Table 1: Outputs and deliverables.

#	Phase	Deliverable	Due Date	# of Work Days
1	Planning and methodology preparation	 i. Research activity action plan. ii. Secondary research review. iii. Report section 2: Methodology iv. Final respondent list, approved by the ILO. v. Brief on Jordan's labour market outcomes, digital divide, investments in innovative digital-labour tools, and the potential for DLPs to improve livelihoods outcomes. vi. Questionnaire/interview outlines. 	20	26/09/2022

2	Data collection and the production of findings	 vii. Distribute surveys and quantitative data collection tools. viii. Schedule interviews/focus groups/other collection methods. ix. Transcriptions of focus group/interview results. x. Brief on the size and composition of the DLP workforce under the identified platforms. xi. Brief on the motivators behind platform work for workers, the benefits and characteristics of platform work, and the major challenges with DLP work. 	30	05/11/2022
3	Data analysis & validation	xii. An exploration of potential policies, initiatives, and supports for promoting decent work and improved livelihoods outcomes through better utilizing DLP tools in Jordan.	10	20/11/2022
4	Report generation and recommendations for action	xiii. Draft final report. xiv. Revised final report, based on ILO feedback and comments.	20	10/12/2022

VII. Service Provider Profile

Service providers wishing to apply for this assignment, shall meet the following requirements:

- 1. Proven expertise in economic, social, labour market, or socio-economic research in Jordan.
- 2. Proven expertise in preparing reports in both the Arabic & English languages.
- 3. Experience working with UN Agencies or other international agencies is considered an asset.

VIII. Payment Schedule

The table below summarizes the planned schedule for payments to be made upon the completion and submission of deliverables delineated in section 4 and 5 of this ToR. A deliverable is considered completed upon review and satisfaction of the ILO.

Table 1: Payments Schedule

1st Payment	Upon submissions of deliverables under outputs:	
	• 1 & 2	
2 nd & Final Payment	Upon submissions of deliverables under outputs:	
	• 3 & 4	

IX. Application Process

Implementing partners wishing to apply to this assignment must send an email to hamasha@ilo.org. The email shall include:

- 1. Company/organization profile.
- 2. Detailed technical proposal & tentative workplan
- 3. Detailed financial offer
- 4. Work sample
- 5. Resumes of the technical team.
- 6. Company registration

Emails must use subject title: RDPP_Research_02.05

The deadline for receiving applications is 31/08/2022 COB. Only applications that fulfil the requirements indicated above will be considered.