**Decent Work and the Digital Gig Economy:**

***A Developing Country Perspective on Employment Impacts and Standards in Online Outsourcing, Crowdwork, etc***

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### Abstract

This paper presents a review of current evidence and ideas relating to the digital gig economy (DGE): contingent (task- or project-based) intangible work delivered digitally and done for money, organised via online outsourcing platforms that are marketplaces bringing together buyers and sellers. Examples of such platforms include Freelancer, Upwork, Amazon Mechanical Turk and Zhubajie/Witmart.

While the paper takes a particular interest in the perspective of workers in developing countries, most of its findings will apply globally, and many will apply to the broader gig / sharing / platform economy.

This document aims to be comprehensive and so readers are directed to particular items of interest, posed in terms of question:

* What are the key definitions and terminology: see Box 1
* How big and how fast-growing is the DGE sector: see start of Section B
* What are the positive impacts of DGE work: see Section B1
* What are the negative impacts and problems of DGE work: see Section B2
* Why intervene to improve the digital gig economy: see Section B3
* What decent work standards should be applied to improve the digital gig economy: see Section C1
* How should decent work standards be applied for DGE improvement: see Section C2
* Can existing codes and standards be used in the digital gig economy: see Section C2iii
* What stakeholder-specific motivations and barriers will shape application of decent work standards: see Section C2iv
* What should be the next steps in terms of action and research: see Section D

Other questions addressed include:

* What are the problems with the current evidence base: see Box 2
* How can DGE problems and solutions be represented graphically: see Box 3
* What should be the aim of DGE intervention: see Section C2i
* Should decent work standards apply broader or narrower than just the digital gig economy: see Section C2ii
* What do individual items of literature have to say about problems, recommendations, proposals and codes for the digital gig economy: see Appendices

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### Educators’ Guide

##### Synopsis Questions

1. What are the positive and negative impacts of the digital gig economy in developing countries? [Sections B1 & B2]
2. What would be the justification for intervening in the digital gig economy? [Section B3]
3. What should a “decent digital work” set of standards consist of? [Section C1]
4. What key issues will be faced in implementation of decent digital work standards? [Section C2]
5. What is the research and practice agenda for the digital gig economy? [Section D]

##### Development Questions

1. Is the digital gig economy large enough to justify attention from academic research?
2. Do you agree with the view of global South workers that “the positives outweigh the negatives” for DGE work? Would you like a job as a DGE worker?
3. Discuss the four different rationales – economic, legal, social, ethical – for intervening in the digital gig economy. Which of these do you feel is most important, and why?
4. If you’ve not already done so, sign up for a DGE platform and see if you can obtain paid work. What conclusions do you draw about the findings of the paper?
5. What actions could you take – either individually or collectively – to address the negative impacts of the digital gig economy?