

OUTCOMES STATEMENT

T20/L20 Inclusive Digital Transformation Collaborations Meeting

27 September 2025



T20  **SOUTH AFRICA 2025**
CONSOLIDATE AND SUSTAIN

 **G20** **SOUTH AFRICA 2025**

Introduction

The gathering's deliberations underscored the urgency of placing workers' rights and interests at the centre of the global conversation on AI and digitalisation, particularly within the G20 process, where labour perspectives remain largely unrepresented. It noted that, as the South African G20 Task Force on AI, Data Governance and Innovation for Sustainable Development states: 'Digital inequality and data injustice, which are more pronounced in the Global South, are at the heart of the currently highly uneven development of AI.'

The following five outcomes represent the collective consensus of unions, researchers and policy institutions present.

1. Big tech ownership and concentration of power

Participants emphasised the dangers of the concentrated ownership of data, digital infrastructure and AI systems by a handful of multinational corporations. This concentration fuels global inequality, limits the policy space for developing countries and entrenches dependency on external technologies. Data is becoming increasingly valuable, with workers and communities giving up their data for free without seeing any benefits while large corporations profit.

The workshop called for:

- stronger regulation of data use and algorithmic systems, with explicit focus on ensuring the wellbeing and equality of workers, firms and countries for all;
- a rejection of companies' attempts to avoid regulation through 'self-regulation' or 'ethics';
- public investment in digital sovereignty, including infrastructure and skills;
- advocacy and support for efforts to form open data sets of African data, which will be useful to Africa researchers, policymakers, governments and activists, among others, to improve the lives of people living in Africa and promote development;
- efforts to ensure workers and communities benefit from AI-driven productivity gains through redistribution, shorter working hours, improved conditions and gain sharing;
- an end to exploitative labour practices occurring throughout the AI value chain but that are concentrated in Africa, ranging from extractive critical mineral industries and the de-skilling of workers to AI data labelling and content regulation factories;
- for social dialogue and policy to be enhanced to prevent large-scale job losses as a result of AI (such job losses have already begun and urgent action is crucial); and

- the introduction of mechanisms at a global level to hold (tech) companies responsible for any harms caused by their products and to ensure that their technologies are developed in a more responsible and inclusive way than is being done now.

2. Collective bargaining and worker agency

The group reaffirmed that collective bargaining and social dialogue must remain central to the governance of AI and digitalisation. Unions and worker organisations must:

- secure the right to organise in digital and AI-mediated workplaces;
- demand transparency in and engagement on algorithmic decision-making processes;
- negotiate protections on working hours, health and safety, data privacy and data use;
- ensure workers' voices shape the design, deployment and oversight of AI in workplaces; and
- ensure that companies pay for the harm they may cause, including retrenchments and the intensification of work, and pay for re-skilling and upskilling for workers in this changing world of work.

3. Research agenda for inclusive digital transformation

It was agreed that the research community, unions and think tanks should coordinate a joint research agenda that addresses:

- collecting comparative evidence on AI's impact on labour across and within regions, with a special focus on gender, youth, vulnerable groups and workers in Africa and the Global South;
- documenting and exposing exploitative practices in the platform economy, including wage suppression, unpaid labour and algorithmic bias;
- producing policy-relevant evidence to influence the ILO, G20 Employment and Digital Economy Working Groups and other global fora;
- further building and supporting African-led research that reflects the realities of the Global South, such as pervasive informality, weak human and labour rights protections, and data extraction without benefit-sharing;
- studying the labour impacts of different approaches to digital public infrastructure, particularly in the public sector; and
- addressing the AI labour disruption resulting from the most powerful general-purpose technology and the need for a basic income grant.

4. Building strong global alliances

The discussions stressed the importance of cross-border solidarity and alliances between workers, unions, research institutions, civil society and progressive policymakers. These alliances should:

- coordinate on advocacy and regulatory efforts against exploitative platforms;
- share organising models and strategies for algorithmic management;
- share information on litigation and regulatory efforts against exploitative platforms;
- advocate for an ILO Convention on Decent Work in the Platform Economy;
- push for worker-centred digital trade protocols and safeguards against the privatisation of public data; and
- share approaches for safe data gathering, methodologies and apps designed to support and promote worker welfare in online/virtual workplaces.

5. Centrality of workers in digital governance

Finally, the meeting resolved that the current G20 digital economy processes fail to centre worker issues. Labour demands that:

- decent work principles, social protection and freedom of association be nonnegotiable elements of any AI or digital economy agenda;
- the outcomes of this meeting feed directly into the G20 Digital Economy Working Group, the Employment Working Group and the 2026 ILO International Labour Conference; and
- a joint L20/T20 Working Group on AI and Labour Rights be established to sustain momentum, coordinate advocacy and monitor progress.

Conclusion

The meeting declares that inclusive digital transformation is only possible if workers' voices are placed at the heart of AI and digital economy governance. The future of the global economy, and its impact at national and regional levels, cannot be left to corporate power and technological determinism; it must be shaped by democratic oversight, global solidarity and social and economic justice.



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