Fair Digital Kazi

A manifesto on the Rights and recognition of platform workers' rights in Africa.

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A Statement from the Fair Digital Kazi Convenings on Advancing Equitable Labour Rights In the Digital Economy.

International Labour Day, 1st May 2025

Nairobi, Kenya.

In Memory of Ladi Olubunmi Anzaki and all the dedicated digital platform workers in Africa who tirelessly fuel the global Digital Economy, know that your efforts are the driving force of our revolution.

The Fair Digital Kazi Manifesto

This Fair Digital Kazi Manifesto emerges from a collective recognition that Africa's digital economy must not grow at the expense of labour dignity, rights and fairness. It summarises the African experience in labour and digital futures. It portrays imaginatively the realities of labour automation, human resources, and work culture.

Preamble

Across Africa, digital technologies are reshaping the nature of work. From ride-hailing and delivery services to cloud work, content moderation, and data labelling, millions of Africans now earn a living through digital platforms. The digital ecosystem, as it currently stands, disregards the lived experiences of workers, instead serving the relentless pursuit of profit, data extraction in the name of "market interests." In addition, contrary to the beliefs often sold to us regarding digital spaces being "democratic," or "inherently progressive" by virtue of the things they enable, such as connection and innovation, digital spaces are entrenched in and sometimes even worsen the inequalities we face "offline not limited to low and unpredictable wages, algorithmic exploitation, weak and nonexistent legal protections, and a lack of social security. Workers, especially women and other historically marginalised groups in the platform economy, face unique vulnerabilities that are often overlooked in national and regional labour policy frameworks.

The future of the creative economy and the shift in work in the age of AI remain at the forefront of several key forums on economic development, education, and agriculture in Africa. In a continent that produces talent and innovation at an unprecedented scale, powering Africa's platform economy and the global economy, the African labour system must evolve to protect, empower, and recognise digital platform workers as integral contributors to economic growth. We must act now to ensure that technology supports, rather than erodes, worker dignity, social protections, and equitable opportunities.

This Fair Digital Kazi Manifesto arises from the engagement held by Pollicy during the East African Data Governance Conference, hosted in Nairobi, Kenya, on 27th February 2025. It speaks to shared concerns, data, and the daily lives of digital platform workers, civil society actors, activists, and labour organisers across East Africa who participated in the conference. The manifesto responds to key challenges in Africa's digital work environment and aims to frame policy, practice, and public discourse in order to realize equitable, equitable, and dignified labor in the platform economy.

This Manifesto brings into focus an interactive and rights-based approach, empowering workers' collaboration with stakeholders in enforcing standards for fair work, from theory to practice in the movement of tech worker rights.

It highlights the role of class and power in understanding control points within ecosystems, monitoring shifting power dynamics, and redesigning digital work frameworks that prioritise workers' real-life experiences. The goal is to address inequality and create a basis for inclusive and rights-respecting innovation.

The Manifesto showcases several contradictions and difficult-to-understand phenomena in the world of work for tech workers in Africa. It identifies both man-made and autonomous systems as key factors in this landscape. It highlights how to convey these experiences and recommendations to data workers or tech workers through narratives.

Areas of Concern

1. **Recognition of the Platform Economy's Dual Nature.** Whereas digital platforms create job opportunities, they also increase precarity, undermine labour rights, and facilitate exploitative arrangements. Marketed as flexible, many digital jobs are actually rigid, high-pressure, and lack fair protections.

2. **Taxation, Compensation Inequities and Wage Exploitation.** Platform workers report unfair pay structures and unclear compensation models. Wage disparities exist between local and expatriate workers in similar roles, alongside issues such as unfair tax regimes, currency exchange delays for remote and teleworkers, and a lack of overtime pay.

3. **Ambiguous Worker Classification and Legal Gaps.** Platform workers are typically denied legal protection due to labour classifications that only recognize formal employees. Most are inaccurately classified as independent contractors or lead generators despite being under the clear control of the platform which denies them access to fundamental rights such as equitable remuneration, job security and social protection. This is supported by legal and regulatory loopholes across African countries regarding informal working arrangements and cross border operations.

4. **Contractual Concerns and Legal Invisibility.** Where contracts exist, they tend to be non-negotiable and lack input from workers. Content moderators report a lack of physical contracts and unclear terms of service. Platform workers demand standardised contracts with transparent terms and provisions for mental healthcare.

5. **Algorithmic Management and Data Exploitation.** Platform workers' conditions are driven by opaque, automated algorithms that control access to work, pay, and task assignment without transparency or appeal mechanisms.

6. **Legal and Regulatory Gaps.** Many African labour frameworks inadequately protect platform workers, particularly in informal and cross-border arrangements.

7. **The need for International Standards in New Forms of Work driven by Technological Advancements.** The ILC. 113/Report V(2) emphasises the realisation of decent work in the platform economy. Governments and worker organisations support a binding ILO Convention on Decent Work, tailored for national implementation and effective implementation.

8. **Push for Inclusive Definitions.** Although a homogeneous digital platform worker class does not exist, there is a need to ensure that a definition(s) of a platform worker that encompasses both employed and self-employed platform workers is essential for protecting all platform workers.

Recognising the rapid digitalisation of labour and the growing dependency on digital platforms worldwide for employment, especially among Africa's workforce, young people, and women, signifies growth.

Drawing attention to the unfair platform work conditions experienced   by digital platform workers across the continent, including poor pay, systemic discrimination, lack of labour protections, algorithmic control, mental health distress, and unsafe working environments, which disproportionately affect young people, women, and historically marginalised groups across the African continent.

Affirming that only a worker-centred, justice-oriented approach can truly address these structural challenges and that a bold, coordinated action is urgently needed to realign Africa's digital economy with principles of equity, fairness, and dignity.

Acknowledging that progress in labour rights strengthens overtime through consistent action.

Fully Aware that African Governments, Employers, and Worker representatives are preparing to engage in the upcoming 113th Session of the International Labour Conference (2025), where the ILO will begin the standard-setting, first discussion on realising decent work in the platform economy. We call upon them to boldly carry forward the voices, experiences, and rights of digital workers from the continent.

We call upon the stakeholders including ILO, African governments, academia, multi national platform companies, Civil society organizations to;

1. **Acknowledge that digital platform workers are essential contributors to the labour force not just supplementary.**

2. **Leverage Broad-Based Learning on the Future of Work in Africa through Investment in Research and knowledge production** on digital labour participation, welfare impacts, gendered experiences, and policy innovations that make digital platforms more inclusive for decent work. National labour strategies must be informed by localised evidence that captures rural-urban disparities, infrastructure access gaps, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities of platform workers. African schools, academia, think tanks, and civil society organisations must be resourced and empowered to lead curriculum development, conduct research, and produce policies informed by contextually relevant findings on the future of work.

3. **Include Platform Workers' Rights in National Labour and Employment Laws** by revising national labour laws to explicitly recognize and protect platform workers ensuring they are well classified into worker categories that reflect the work they do. Legal frameworks that guarantee social protections, fair wages, collective bargaining rights and remedies for fair termination.

4. **Ensure Accountability and Algorithmic Fairness through Standard Fair Work Frameworks.** Digital platforms lack transparent grievance mechanisms, leaving workers vulnerable to unfair treatment, algorithmic biases, and arbitrary termination. Algorithmic management must comply with transparency, explainability, and fairness standards. Workers must be informed of what data is used to make decisions about access to jobs, wages, and ratings. Workers must have access to appeals mechanisms that involve human review of automated decisions, such as account suspensions, deactivations, or downgrades. Governments should require periodic algorithmic audits and the publication of transparency reports to ensure accountability. We demand that technology companies establish clear and accessible communication channels for workers to voice their concerns. Algorithmic decision-making, including payment rates and job assignments, must be transparent, fair, and accountable. Workers must have mechanisms to challenge and appeal unfair decisions, beyond relying solely on automated tools.

5. **Ensure Worker Representation and Collective Bargaining Power.** Digital workers often have little say in workplace policies and face barriers to organising collectively. Workers must have the unrestricted right to form and join trade unions, cooperatives, or informal networks. Governments must protect the right to organise and establish effective dispute resolution mechanisms. Platforms must be legally obliged to engage in good-faith negotiations with recognised worker collectives and publish the outcomes of such processes. We demand that platforms uphold fair and equal treatment of all workers and ensure accessible policies that workers can review and influence. Workers must have the right to organise independent unions, and platforms must engage in good-faith negotiations with worker organisations.

6. **Provide Mechanisms for Gender Equity and Inclusion.** Digital labour platforms fail to provide safe and inclusive workspaces for women and other marginalised groups. Gender-based harassment and discrimination persist without adequate redress mechanisms. We demand platforms implement inclusive, equitable, and safe structures that include safety tools and harassment reporting systems. Anonymous, accessible reporting mechanisms for gender-based harassment and abuse must be established, with clear consequences for perpetrators. Gender-sensitive policies must be embedded in digital labour platforms.

7. **Protect Digital and Data Rights for Workers.** Many digital platforms collect excessive worker data without transparency, consent, or adequate protection, leading to privacy violations and increased surveillance risks. Workers must retain rights over their personal and performance data. All data collected must be minimised, anonymised, and used only for the clearly stated purposes for which consent has been given. Workers must also be able to access, correct, or delete their data. Platform workers must be protected from surveillance technologies and unfair biometric profiling. We demand that platforms uphold data protection, privacy, and digital rights by providing clear and accessible policies on data collection, storage, usage, and sharing. Consent must be sought before data collection, which should be limited to essential work-related purposes. Workers must have the right to opt in or out of non-essential data tracking without jeopardising their jobs.

Enforcement.

We call upon policymakers, trade unions, civil society organisations, and technology and data/digital workers to adopt and advocate for this manifesto as a foundational framework for ensuring equitable labour rights in Africa's digital economy, building a just and inclusive future for all digital platform workers in Africa.

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Join Us!

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Reach out to us through our **Chief of Sustainability, Irene Mwendwa,** at mwendwa@pollicy.org.