International Telecommunication Union

Telecommunication Development Bureau

"ICT Accessibility for Employment"

Location(s)	Arab Region
Expected duration	3 years
Estimated Budget	Total: **USD 600,000**
Implementing Agency	International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
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Brief Description:

The youth employment crisis has become a stubborn reality in most countries and in all regions, with some 73 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 unemployed and 621 million not in education, employment or training (NEET). A multi-faceted situation requires a comprehensive strategy addressing all these different elements in a concerted manner. Within the framework of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth (GIDJ4Y), the Digital Livelihoods Initiative (DLI) takes a comprehensive approach that addresses simultaneously the youth unemployment crisis and the displaced persons' need for decent jobs and providing both groups with decent job opportunities. This project is within the framework of this global initiative as well as the Arab Regional Initiative on ICT Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities that was adopted in the World Telecommunications Development Conference in 2014. Furthermore, the project will accomplish this by matching the need for work with the growing demand by governments, non-profits and the private sector to have their public documents, websites and media resources accessible to all, in particular to persons with disabilities. The DLI is ITU's contribution to the GIDJ4Y thematic area, *Digital skills and "tech-hubs" to improve decent job opportunities for youth in the digital economy*.

Participants will be trained on tools and processes to make these resources accessible (e.g. conversion of digital documents and forms into accessible formats, website accessibility, captioning etc.) allowing them to perform the related work provided by collaborating entities. Once they complete the training – document remediation training can take as little as a half day – DLI will connect them to an existing

pipeline of paid online work. This will offer them decent job opportunities, sustainable income and portable skills while at the same time contributing to the global need for increased accessibility of digital resources, uniquely combining a number of complementary beneficiaries (youth, refugees and persons with disabilities).

A pilot project will be launched in Egypt to test the framework with prospects of expanding the project in Jordan to assist in their efforts in managing the refugee crisis imposed by the war in Syria and Mauritania to assist it as a least developing country.

This project is done in collaboration between UNHCR, ITU, and the Inclusive Design Research Centre at Toronto's OCAD University (IDRC).

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The youth employment crisis has become a stubborn reality in most countries and in all regions, with some 73 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 unemployed and 621 million not in education, employment or training (NEET). At the same time, conflicts, violence and violation of human rights taking place in several areas of the world are significantly increasing the number of forcibly displaced persons. The UNHCR reported that "by the end of 2014, 59.5 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide" and 5 million newly displaced during the first half of 2015[1]. One of the major obstacles faced by forcibly displaced persons is the global, acute and widespread inability to access decent jobs and generate sustainable income. This adds to the general and alarming youth unemployment crisis posing challenges for host communities, concerned that authorizing displaced persons to work locally will either reduce opportunities for citizens or dis-incentivize the displaced from leaving. As a result, most displaced persons are either forced into exploitative work situations in an informal economy or denied any ability to work at all reducing thus their opportunity to secure decent jobs and consequently improve their living conditions.

Overall Objective

The objectives of the project are:

- To **bring jobs to host community youth and displaced people (in particular young displaced people)**;
- To **provide ethical, sustainable work, portable skills and entrepreneurial capability to host-country youth and displaced persons** by employing them to improve the world's inventory of digital resources -- such as documents, videos and websites -- that are accessible to persons with disabilities;
- To **contribute to multiple human rights challenges** (youth unemployment and lack of information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility for persons with disabilities) and Sustainable Development Goals (4.4, 8.5 and 8.6).

Project Strategy

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[1] UNHCR (2015) *UNHCR Mid-Year Trends 2015.*

The project will provide qualifying ICT centers with the resources, training and mentoring required in management, quality control, business issues, and teaching of processes and tools. Program participants -- displaced persons and local host-country youth that meet the entry criteria related to digital and language literacy -- would be trained on conversion tools and processes, using a combination of online tools and local mentoring, including through online learning platforms such as the ITU Academy. Those who successfully complete the training will then be assigned tasks based on the available work using the IDRC cloud-based system. Staff at the Centres -- themselves program participants -- will manage the incoming jobs and associated tasks such as quality control and worker payments.

Initially the project will focus on simpler tasks requiring entry-level skills, taking on more complex tasks as the capacity and skill levels of participants evolve. In addition to the ICT accessibility tasks themselves, motivated participants will be trained in project management, quality-control, payment mechanisms and network policies. As the project, as part of the DLI, is seen to produce quality work, it will become known regionally and globally (and promoted) as a trusted and ethical supplier of services in this growing field. The project will also encourage and assist interested participants to develop the entrepreneurial capacity to market their skills independently. Long term objectives include the progressive introduction of more-advanced skills based on job demand such as captioning and accessible websites.

The initial source of such work is the government of Ontario, Canada, an early adopter of laws requiring its digital materials to be accessible, that now has a significant backlog of remediation work to be performed. Ongoing, the project partners will advocate for the greater adoption of accessibility policies; indeed ITU and IDRC have already identified a number of other governments and organizations as potential additional sources of work.

The project will establish mechanisms to promote the services provided by the network (and its entrepreneur partners), support ongoing advocacy efforts regarding refugee right-to-work and ICT accessibility, and to manage internal governance as required (i.e. pricing, ethical working standards, evaluations). It will also develop case studies and analysis to be fed into the Knowledge Facility of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth.

Expected Results

1. Jobs to host community youth and displaced people (in particular young displaced people);
2. Improving the world's inventory of digital resources -- such as documents, videos and websites -- that are accessible to persons with disabilities;
3. Contributing to multiple human rights challenges (youth unemployment and lack of information and communication technology (ICT) accessibility for persons with disabilities) and Sustainable Development Goals (4.4, 8.5 and 8.6).

Management and Partnership

The project will be managed by the ITU Project Manager in close collaboration with country counterparts and partners (UNHCR and IDRC).

The ITU shall be the implementing agency, and shall be responsible for the recruitment of project experts including the project manager.

The founding partners would be pleased to welcome additional partners who could provide training services, remote work facilities (workspaces and connected devices) and project management (work distribution, payment services, etc.), quality control/mentorship, relevant related curriculum, advocacy (e.g. on right to work issues), funding and other relevant resources.

4. Budget

The proposed budget of the project is $ USD **600,000** and this includes covering the costs of the training centers, expert recruitment's, training materials development and travel.