

# Livelihoods and Global Digital Platforms

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*Presented at Session 3: Opportunities and challenges for value creation that developing countries face when dealing with global digital platforms*

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UNCTAD

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Platforms are changing *livelihoods* --  
how people find work, and how small  
enterprises sell goods and services.

What are the implications of these changes for  
digital development and it approaches platforms?

To discuss:

1. Introducing a “platform livelihoods” framework based on a new review of 75 studies from across the Global South
1. Implications for policy: digital and economic inclusion for small-scale buyers & sellers



- ABOUT
- METHOD
- RESULTS BY ELEMENT
- RESULTS BY LIVELIHOOD TYPE
- RESULTS BY CROSSCUTTING THEME
- STUDY MAP
- RESULTS MAP

Filters: Sector ▾ Outcome ▾ Crosscutting Theme ▾ Country ▾ Public

Sector Outcomes

	Access to Work & Markets	Inclusion	Objectivity & Professionalism
Freelancers	10 8	25 8	10 5
Microworkers	14 8	30 6	17 1 2
Ride Hailing Drivers	8 11	8 5	11 3
Delivery & Logistics Drivers	5 4	4 2	5
Trades & Services	6 6	8 3	5 4
Asset Owners	2	1 1	
MSEs	3 2	3 3	4 1
Farmers	1 1	1	
Creatives		1	1

**8** evidence points from **7** studies

Hunt, Abigail, Emma Samman, Sherry Tapfuma, Grace Mwaura, and Rhoda Omenya. "Women in the Gig Economy: Paid Work, Care and Flexibility in Kenya and South Africa," November 2019.

**Sectors:** Trades & Services

Onkokame, Mothobi, Aude Schoentgen, and Alison Gillwald. "What Is the State of Microwork in Africa? A View from Seven Countries.," 2018.

**Sectors:** Freelancers, Microworkers, Ride Hailing Drivers, Trades & Services

Gupta, Shruti. "Gendered Gigs: Understanding the Gig Economy in New Delhi from a Gendered Perspective." In Proceedings of the 2020 International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development, 1-10. ICTD2020.

Key: Number of studies; and of which, number of tests with a positive impact negative impact no impact

The EGM was last updated in September 2020.

75 studies and counting:

Platform livelihoods in the Global South

Built by Caribou Digital and Qhala with support of Mastercard Foundation



# Platform livelihood experience elements

## *Economic experiences*

<b>Access to work &amp; markets</b>	Are there income generating opportunities for those who want them?
<b>Earnings</b>	Is there a fair return for time and assets applied?
<b>Flexibility</b>	Can people work and sell, when and where they want?

## *Subjective experiences*

<b>Social Acceptability</b>	How do others view platform livelihoods?
<b>Purpose &amp; Passion</b>	What mark does the work leave on the world?
<b>Entrepreneurial Drive</b>	Is it important to be one's own boss?

## *Human development experiences*

<b>Inclusion</b>	Can women and other marginalized groups pursue this livelihood?
<b>Objectivity &amp; Professionalism</b>	Do people feel they are treated with dignity and respect?
<b>Upskilling &amp; Growth</b>	Can people learn and advance?
<b>Health &amp; Safety</b>	Are people healthy and safe when pursuing this livelihood?
<b>Betweenness &amp; Protection</b>	How is this space between employment and self-employment experienced? And how are people protected in it?
<b>Association, Organization &amp; Support</b>	Are people in this together?

Notes: Version 1.0 October 2020. These elements come from an analysis of 75+ studies of platform livelihood experiences in the global South <http://platformlivelihoods.com>.

This figure was developed by Caribou Digital and Qhala, with the support of the Mastercard Foundation.

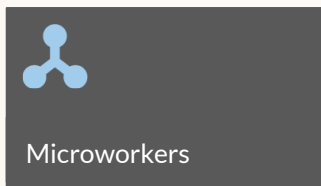
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# Platform livelihood types

GLOBAL / EXPORT

## PLATFORM WORK

Exporting labour, staying home



Freelancers



Creatives

## PLATFORM SALES

Serving global markets

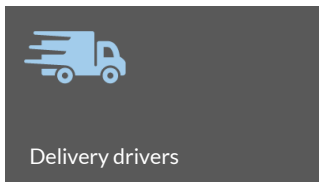


Farmers

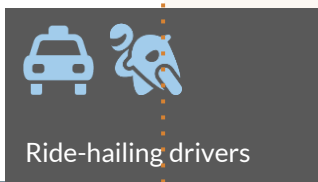


Micro and small enterprises (MSEs)

LOCAL



Delivery drivers



Ride-hailing drivers



Trades and services



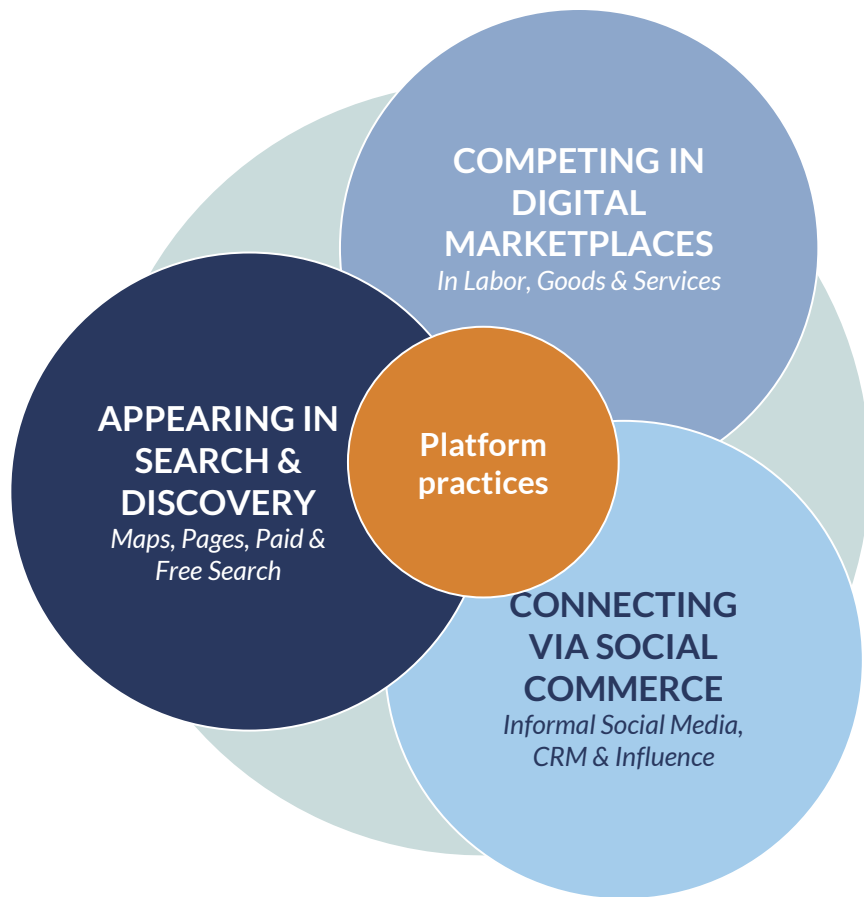
Asset owners

Work near home, algorithmically matched

The local economy on digital rails

Shading represents the depth of platformization so far.

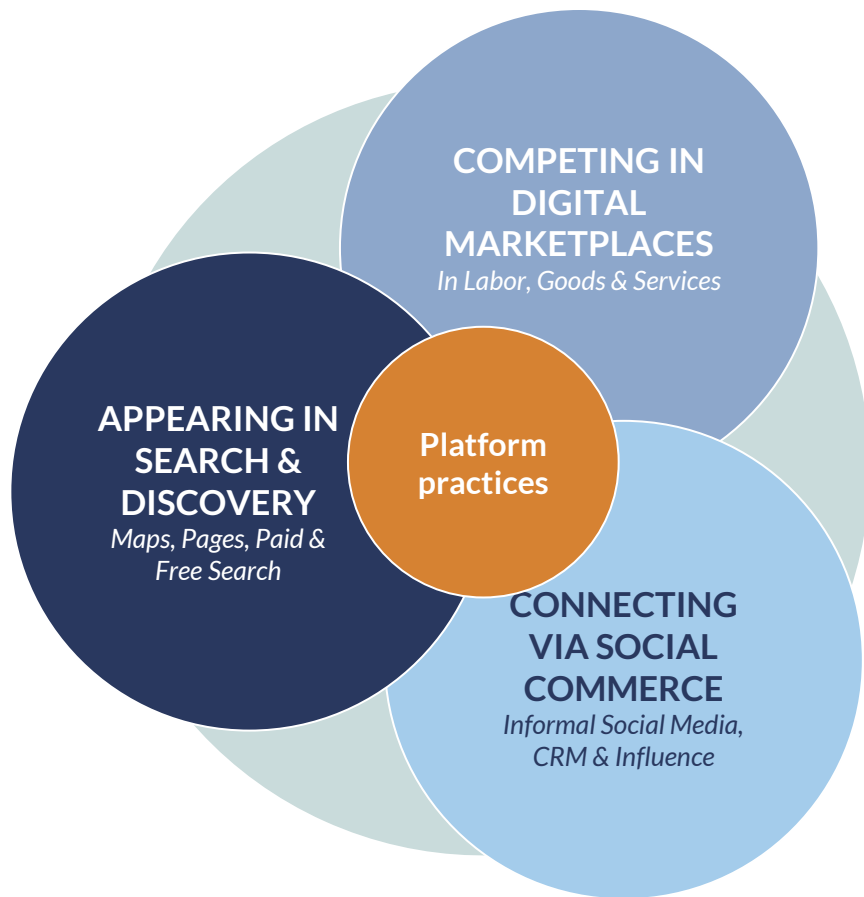
Notes: Version 1.0 October 2020. These types come from an analysis of 75+ studies of platform livelihood experiences in the global South <http://platformlivelihoods.com>. Types not to scale. There are other types of platform livelihoods – this list is illustrative. All types can involve a mix of formal marketplace platforms, social commerce, and search/ advertising. This figure was developed by Caribou Digital and Qhala, with the support of the Mastercard Foundation. © This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.



These are behaviors to survive and thrive in increasingly digitized markets

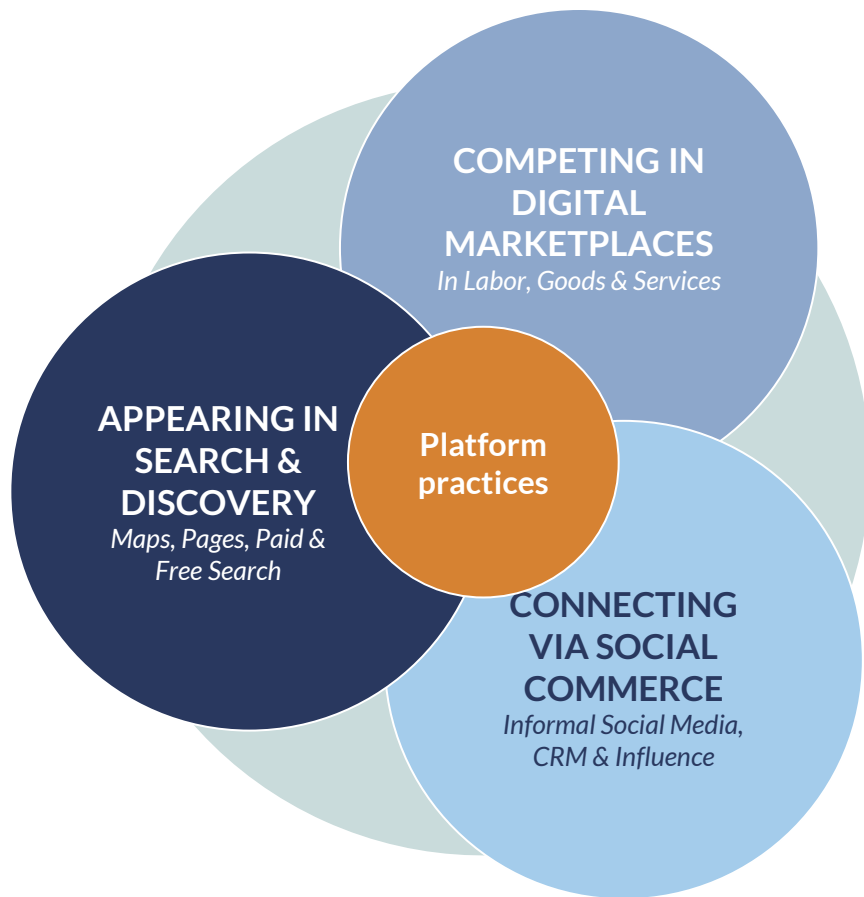
Platforms are at the heart of all these approaches

These approaches overlap as data is shared within and across platforms



It is a policy and design challenge in ‘digital development’ to ensure that platformization works for *livelihoods* -- for small scale platform sellers and individual platform workers -- not just for platforms or for consumers

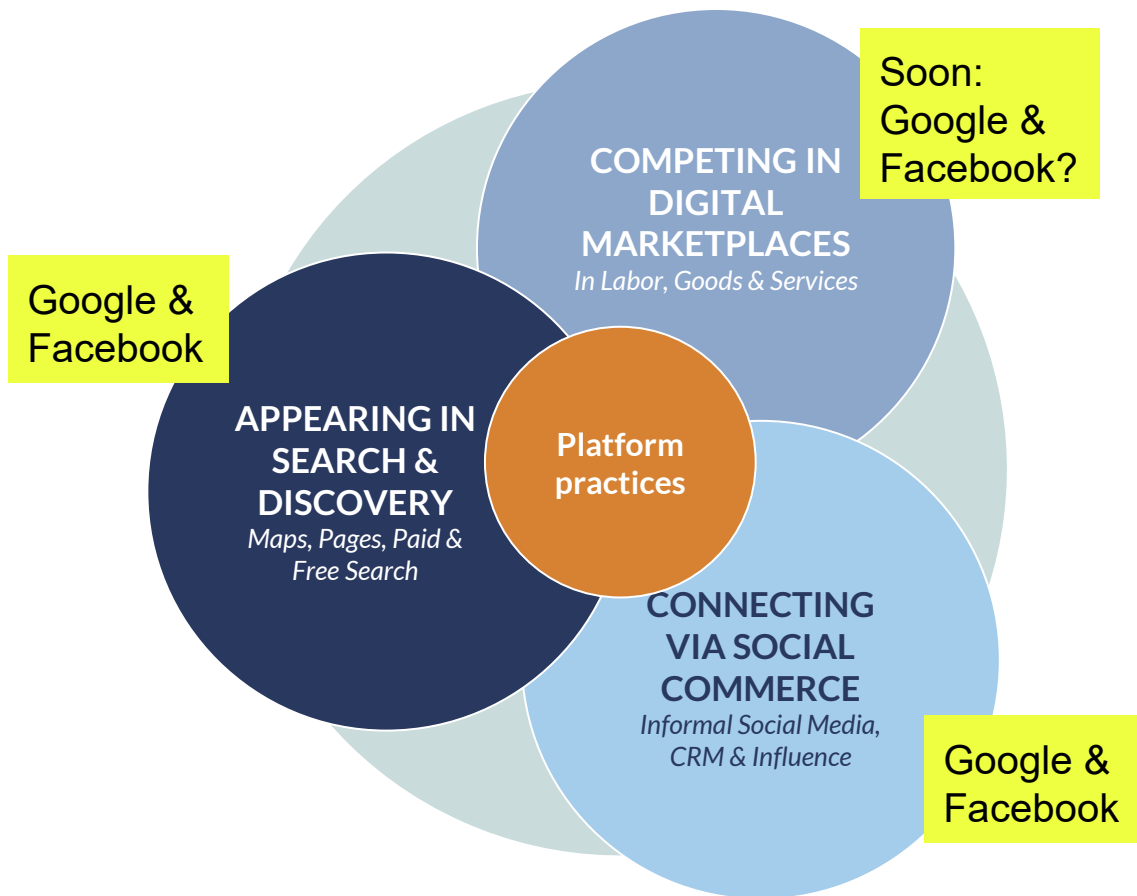




The evolving digital economy asks a lot of small firms and even individual gig workers and job seekers.

Digital skills and capabilities are increasingly required, even to do “offline” work.

There is an unmet need for innovation and delivery of digital skills training at scale



The global digital companies, like Facebook and Google, **uniquely gather data/insights across all three domains, across multiple platforms**

They add value to users, but also prevent choice and capture value and may make it difficult for local and regional platforms to thrive

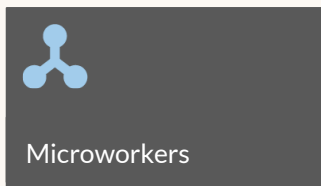
See: Pon, Bryan (2020) [The race to digitize commerce in sub-Saharan Africa](#)

# Platform livelihood types & the challenge of heterogeneity in use

GLOBAL / EXPORT

## PLATFORM WORK

Exporting labour, staying home

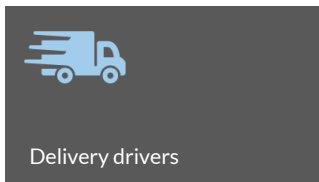


## PLATFORM SALES

Serving global markets

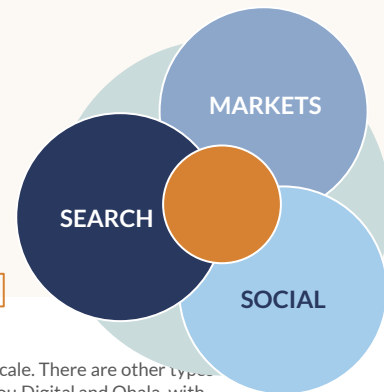


LOCAL



Work near home, algorithmically matched

The local economy on digital rails



Shading represents the depth of platformization so far.

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# Thank you!

The framework and review:

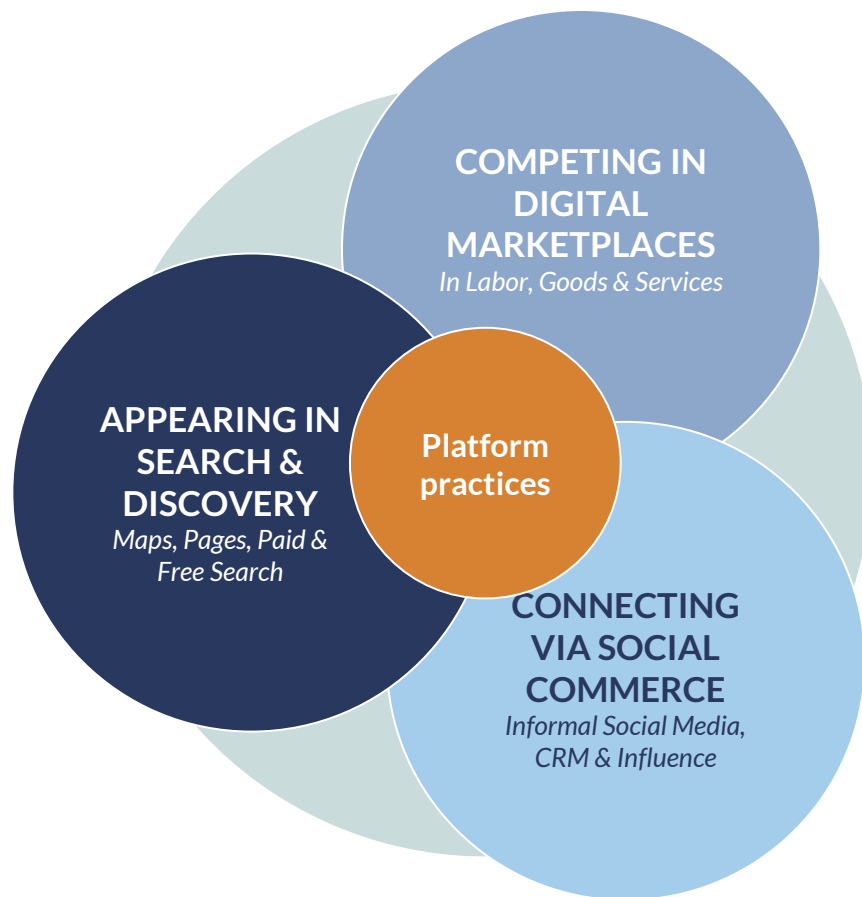
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Policymakers have to avoid focusing on one type of livelihood, or even one kind of livelihood practice.

What is best for a smallholder farmer is not best for a delivery driver, though both increasingly rely on the same platforms to reach customers.