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# From Facebook Group to Policy Tables: The Digital Pathway to Organizing Gig Workers in Kenya

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## Abstract

This presentation offers a grounded, practice-based reflection on how gig workers in Kenya have used digital platforms-not only for labor, but for organizing, training, and influencing national policy. My journey began in a Facebook group where I discovered a Kenyan transcription community. I received ten days of training by email, joined Upwork, and within three months became a top-rated freelancer.

Upwork's Nairobi Hurdles were peer-led city meetups for top freelancers, and they created a space where we shared client management strategies, platform challenges, and resource gaps. These gatherings laid the groundwork for imagining worker representation. In parallel, I founded *Kazi Remote* (2017), where I mentored freelancers, outsourced transcription work, and later trained hundreds of digital workers through partnerships with IREX (Mombasa youth), Riara University (third-year students), ITC (camp refugees), and the Kenya Film Commission(creatives). The model emphasized not just skills, but work-readiness, sustainability, and ethical freelancing.

In 2019, the spirit of the Hurdles evolved into the **Online Professional Workers Association of Kenya (OPWAK)**-the first organized effort to represent freelancers' collective voice. From there, I co-founded *iWorkers Kenya* to provide resources, community, and advocacy infrastructure. At iWorkers, we trained urban refugees and digital workers using the ILO's Generate Your Business, Start Your Business, and Embrace Digital Kenya manuals in supporting their transition from gig tasks to structured, growth-ready enterprises.

Now, as Deputy General Secretary of the **Kenya Union of Gig Workers (KUGWO)**, I help unify these networks through formal organizing. We've partnered with Microsoft to run a national campaign offering free Microsoft Career Essential Courses through LinkedIn Learning and a WhatsApp Community. Workers who complete certifications receive LinkedIn Premium, turning upskilling into an entry point for community organizing. These WhatsApp groups are not passive; they are spaces where workers support each other.

Our digital organizing has reached policy corridors. We've submitted feedback to the National BPO Policy, the ICTA Bill (after participating in a live X-Space with the Ministry of ICT), and business law reforms via the Senate. We're now preparing our voice for the International Labour Conference through COTU.

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This presentation contributes to a practitioner's case on the theme "Technology as a tool for worker organizing and collective action." It shows how platform features once used for labor brokerage are now being repurposed by workers themselves, as infrastructure for solidarity, education, and reform.

**Keywords:** digital labor, gig economy, platform work, worker organizing, collective action, community mobilization, digital inclusion, freelancer transition, union building, Kenya, Global South, informal work, refugee livelihoods