Asia Region CTIP/ Safe Migration Digital Tool Study

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

BACKGROUND

According to the ILO, Asia-Pacific is home to more than half of the world's internet users and around two billion people in the region use internet daily through their mobile phones.[1,2] Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the internet has become a vital part of daily life that offers new solutions to emerging and traditional challenges. Coinciding with this trend is the increase in development and deployment of digital tools in the development and humanitarian sectors as innovative solutions.[3]

This research seeks to understand the use of digital tools and technology in the Asia region that are designed to assist migrants with the overarching goal of reducing their risks to exploitation and forced labor. In particular, the objective of this research is to gather insights from people who have been involved in the development of a digital tool[4] in the CTIP and safe migration space under the following research questions:

- What are some challenges and good practices in developing digital tools in Asia?
- Which aspects should be considered when creating future digital tools in the CTIP and safe migration space?

The data was collected through semi-structured key informant interviews with a total of 18 individuals. Of which, 13 were representatives from non-government organizations (NGOs) and 5 were representatives of technology companies. The interviews were conducted online from May to July 2022. A wide range of digital tools were discussed, ranging from Interactive Voice Responses (IVR), social media channels, websites, to full-fledged smart phone applications.

KEY FINDINGS

Out of 18 interviews, we identified 4 general types of digital tool platforms which are: mobile application (16), social media channel, such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram (7), and chat application, such as Line, WhatsApp, Telegram, (4) and, and websites (3). Tools which fell outside of these four types are categorized as 'other platforms' (8) for example, e-learning modules, Interactive Voice Response (IVR), and Short Message Service (SMS).

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1   Op-Ed: How digitalization can help achieve fair migration (ilo.org)
2   Young people use mobile Internet more intensively in Asia-Pacific - Internet Society
3   In Southeast Asia, COVID-19 Speeds Transition to Digital Technologies – The Diplomat
4   For the purpose of this research, a digital tool is defined as tools that are available on digital platform such as mobile application, social media channel, or a website.

The table below provides a comparison between mobile applications, social media channels, and websites.

TOOL	BENEFIT	DISADVANTAGES
Website	• Less resources to create than a mobile application • Allows for more customization/function than social media	• Requires additional promotional costs • Can only be access with internet connection
Mobile Application	• Can be downloaded and used offline • Provides the largest range of functionalities • In some cases, it allows users to utilize their service without having to sign-in and keep their privacy	• Expensive to create and maintain • Requires additional promotional costs • Requires that users have enough capacity in their phone to download
Social Media	• Requires less cost, time, and technical knowledge to create and maintain • Reach people in online spaces where they already spend time • (Depending on the platform) has a direct chat function to interact with users. • Users generally understand how it works and hence requires less piloting	• Will not reach people who do not use social media • Requires frequent updates of content • Requires internet connection • Has limited functionality • Requires that users create an account which may compromise their privacy • Privacy concern as data is not stored with the developing team

In addition, the research also explores challenges and practices at each stage of digital tool development, from pre-assessment, to design, to pilot, and provides considerations on key areas such as accessibility, sustainability, monitoring and evaluation, privacy and data protection. The report can be accessed **here** or through the QR code to the right.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The interviewees were asked to give their recommendations in developing digital tool, resulting in these recommendations:

1. The digital tool should be built in the simplest possible way to ensure accessibility and minimize resources needed.
2. The tool should allow ease of access for workers, in other words it should remove as many barriers to access as possible. For instance, it should be free to use for workers and not require an email registration or account log in, to include audio-visual feature for low-literacy group, and to operate with a simple language for easy understanding.
3. The tool should have a value-centered design that aims to solve a specific problem.
4. A tool does not necessarily have to stand-alone, but rather can be integrated into existing tools, for example, a mobile application can provide a crucial function of the tool while at the same time social media channels are developed to increase awareness of the tool.
5. The tool should require as little internet data as possible, for example by avoiding unnecessary graphics that will translate to increased internet data borne by users. Ideally, digitals tools should have the capacity to function both on and offline.
6. End users should be consulted throughout the life of the digital tool. Their perspective and feedback should guide the development and iteration of the tool.
7. Ensure that the developing team has clearly defined the following: sustainability plan, IT plan, M&E framework, and intellectual property.
8. The developing team should have personnel with skillsets in both computer and social sciences to address the nuanced challenges of creating a digital tool in the development sector.
9. The type of tools developed should closely align with the purpose it is trying to serve. For example, a tool that stores workers' sensitive information should be a mobile application and an information dissemination tool should be on a social media platform.
10. Developers should design a tool that matches the level of digital literacy that intended users already have.