



The Digitalisation of Social Protection in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Africa: A case study of home-based workers

Edwin Bett

Regional Coordinator, HomeNet Africa

Ex-officio Member Executive Committee, HomeNet
International

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Research objectives.....	2
1.2	Expected value of the study	2
2	Methodology	2
2.1	Population	2
2.2	Data-collection procedure	3
2.3	Facilitation of focus group discussions by Country Network Coordinators	3
2.4	Data analysis methods.....	3
2.5	Feedback and validation workshops	3
3	Analysis and findings	4
3.1	Response rate.....	4
3.2	Profile of participants	4
3.3	Profile of social protection programmes and systems.....	5
3.4	Thematic findings	11
3.5	General findings.....	32
3.6	Recommendations	33
4	Conclusion	36
	Appendix: Focus group discussion guide for home-based workers	37

List of tables

Table 1: Social protection programmes.....	5
Table 2: Benefits and challenges	9
Table 3: Violated rights.....	10
Table 4: Rights potentially violated.....	11
Table 5: Information sources.....	11
Table 6: Accessibility of social protection programmes.....	12
Table 7: Entitlement accessibility and challenges	14
Table 8: Key sub-themes	15
Table 9: Information requirements	17
Table 10: Information-sharing	19
Table 11: Private information	21
Table 12: Knowledge of rights.....	21
Table 13: Preferences for methods of receiving social protection	22
Table 14: Availability and reliability of services	24
Table 15: Use of online and mobile platforms	25
Table 16: Mobile and digital skills.....	26
Table 17: Impact on way of life.....	26
Table 18: Impact of digital systems on ability to access assistance	28
Table 19: Digital exclusion	29

Abbreviations and acronyms

CDF	Constituency Development Fund (Kenya)
FGD	focus group discussion
HBW	home-based worker
HBWSAA	Home-based Workers South Africa Association
HELB	Higher Education Loans Board (Kenya)
ILO	International Labour Organization
HNA	HomeNet Africa
MBO	Membership-based organisation
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NSSF	National Social Security Fund (Kenya)
PWD	person with disabilities

1 Introduction

In an era marked by rapid technological advances, the intersection of digitalisation and social protection is reshaping the landscape of labour and welfare across the globe. Nowhere is this transformation more keenly felt than in Africa, where marginalised workers face a unique set of challenges and opportunities within this evolving situation. This research seeks to illuminate the impact of digitalisation on social protection for a specific group of vulnerable workers – home-based workers (HBWs) in five African countries: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, and South Africa. Through this comprehensive study, we aim to contribute new knowledge and insights that will inform evidence-based collective action, ultimately safeguarding the interests and priorities of African workers as social protection systems adapt to the digital age.

The study's primary objective is to generate an in-depth understanding of how digitalisation is influencing the lives and livelihoods of HBWs in Africa, a group often overlooked by traditional labour structures. As we delve into the experiences of these workers, we also anticipate that the research will culminate in the publication of country-specific findings and recommendations within a regional synthesis report. This report will serve as a vital resource, fostering cross-country dialogue and policy development that is responsive to the needs of marginalised workers. Furthermore, this research seeks to empower African HBWs by strengthening their collective voice, thereby enabling them to effectively shape policy action and practices regarding the digitalisation of social protection systems. In line with the principles advanced by the International Labour Organization (ILO), this study aims to promote and protect the digital rights of African HBWs, making their voices heard in an increasingly digitalised world.

In the context of Africa, the digitalisation of social protection systems poses a multifaceted challenge, especially for HBWs, who represent a marginalised segment of the workforce. The problem at hand encompasses the interplay of digital exclusion, digital security concerns, private sector accountability, and digital surveillance within the digitalised social protection landscape. These issues jeopardise the rights of HBWs, their access to social protection, and their quality of life, and impact the overall efficacy and integrity of social protection services in the selected African countries. This research seeks to investigate the dimensions of this problem, address the implications, and propose solutions to ensure the equitable and effective provision of social protection services for HBWs in Africa.

1.1 Research objectives

1. To examine how the digitalisation of social protection systems is affecting HBWs in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa.
2. To generate new knowledge on and insights into the specific challenges and opportunities faced by HBWs in the context of digitalised social protection.
3. To provide evidence-based information that can inform collective action aimed at safeguarding the priorities and interests of African workers as social protection systems evolve.

1.2 Expected value of the study

The value of this study is significant as it seeks to fill a glaring gap in our knowledge gap about digitalised social protection in Africa, a rapidly changing situation. By investigating the impact of digitalisation on marginalised workers in several different African countries, the research not only contributes to the growing body of knowledge on this topic but also provides a platform that enables marginalised voices to be heard and understood. It has the potential to spark collective action and advocacy efforts, enabling workers to assert their rights and voice their concerns. Moreover, the study aims to protect workers' rights by shedding light on the challenges and opportunities presented by digitalisation. As a result, its findings can influence the shaping of policies and practices in the realm of digital social protection, ensuring that the evolving systems are equitable and responsive to the needs of vulnerable populations. Ultimately, the study could empower African workers by enhancing their capacity to influence and actively participate in shaping the future of social protection, aligning with the principles promoted by international organisations like the ILO.

2 Methodology

2.1 Population

The study targeted HBWs from HomeNet Africa (HNA) country networks. Approximately 30 per cent of the membership of each HNA country network was selected to participate. The study focused on individual artisans either working independently or organised within formal groups. Special attention was given to factors such as representation of minority groups and diversity among the selected participants.

2.2 Data-collection procedure

Data collection for this study employed mixed collaborative research methods. Primary data was gathered through these means:

- inception and validation workshops
- focus group discussions (FGDs)
- interviews.

Secondary data was collected through a review of relevant research outputs and internet content. While the primary data collected was predominantly qualitative, quantitative data was sourced through structured, closed questions included in a questionnaire.

2.3 Facilitation of focus group discussions by Country Network Coordinators

The facilitation of FGDs was carried out by HNA Country Coordinators, who ran informal, face-to-face, and interactive discussions with groups of eight to ten HBWs. The facilitators commenced each FGD session by providing an overview of the research objectives and expectations, as well as the reasons for selecting the participants. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of information they shared during the discussions. Each FGD began with participant introductions and lasted between one and two hours, with breaks provided as needed.

2.4 Data analysis methods

Data analysis encompassed the use of appropriate methods and techniques to draw inferences from the field data collected. Recordings from field activities were transcribed, serving as valuable inputs for the report-writing process. A selection of field photographs was included as annexes in the final report.

2.5 Feedback and validation workshops

A draft country case study or situation report was presented in feedback and validation workshops held at the country level. These workshops provided an opportunity for participants to offer feedback on the findings and to validate them. The final synthesis report incorporated the feedback received in these workshops, serving as an integral component of the country case studies within the HomeNet Africa region.

3 Analysis and findings

3.1 Response rate

The study aimed to collect responses from five countries: Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa. However, only four of the five countries, namely Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa, provided responses. The response rate of 80 per cent (four out of five) indicates a relatively high level of engagement and interest in the research from the target countries. While the absence of Ethiopian responses is notable, the insights gained from the participating countries still provide valuable information and highlight trends related to the digitalisation of social protection services in the East African and South African regions.

3.2 Profile of participants

The case studies encompassing HBWs in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Africa unveiled distinctive gender dynamics, various categories of HBW, and a wide spectrum of crafts.

In the Kenyan context, the participant profiles demonstrated a well-balanced gender distribution, with 50 per cent women and 43.75 per cent men. Additionally, there was noteworthy representation of persons with disabilities (PWDs), constituting 6.25 per cent of the participants. Kenya exhibited a blend of independent artisans and formal group members, highlighting the diverse landscape of home-based work in the country. There were very few independent artisans, with one man and no women, but a higher count of formal group members, with a significant representation of women (65.67 per cent) compared to men (34.33 per cent). The crafts encompassed stone carving, jewellery, textiles, leather goods, and various other crafts, reflecting the variety of skills and economic activities of Kenyan HBWs. This gender balance and the inclusion of PWDs reflected the comprehensive and inclusive mentality within Kenya's HBW community.

The participant profiles in Tanzania showed that women predominated in home-based work. In the TZ Amkeni Group, all the participants were women. The majority of participants operated as independent artisans, showcasing a strong focus on women's entrepreneurship and skill development in crafting activities. The TZ MUWAMINTA cluster mirrored this trend, with 100 per cent women members engaged in various crafts. All the independent artisans were women, and in the formal groups, all 85 members were women. The items produced encompassed basketry products, leather goods, jewellery, and other crafts, signifying the diverse skills and economic activities prevalent in Tanzania's HBW sector. The participant profiles underscored the pivotal role of women in home-based work and its potential for their economic empowerment through craft production.

In Uganda, the participant profiles revealed a substantial female presence within the UG Central and UG Wakiso clusters. In UG Central, women constituted 91.67 per cent of participants, while the UG Wakiso cluster consisted entirely of women. These profiles underscored the vital role of women in Uganda's home-based work sector. There were no independent artisans in this dataset. Among formal group members, 95.45 per cent were women. A diverse range of crafts, including basketry, wood carving, ceramics, metal products, textiles, leather goods, and jewellery, highlighted the richness and diversity of Uganda's craft output.

There was varying gender representation across the South African clusters. The HBWSAA (Home-based Workers South Africa Association) Eastern Cape Cluster demonstrated a substantial female presence (75 per cent), accompanied by a notable proportion of men (25 per cent). The HBWSAA Gauteng Cluster exhibited a higher percentage of women (83.33 per cent) and a smaller proportion of men (16.67 per cent). The HBWSAA KZN Cluster contained a significant majority of females (90.91 per cent) and included participants with disabilities (9.09 per cent). South Africa included 11 independent artisans, with a strong female presence (90.91 per cent). Within formal groups, there were 12 members, evenly split between men and women. Craft categories included textiles, jewellery, and various other economic activities, such as baking, farming, catering, and laundry services. These profiles reflected the diversity of skills and economic activities among South Africa's HBWs.

By implication, the data indicated a significant gender disparity in the HBW populations, with women predominant (87.10 per cent). Across these four countries, there were 239 women and 27 men involved in these economic activities, reflecting a gender ratio of approximately 8.85 women for every man.

3.3 Profile of social protection programmes and systems

3.3.1 Names of social protection programmes and systems

Table 1: Social protection programmes

Country	Social protection programme	Demographic targeted
Kenya	Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Bursaries, Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), National Social Security Fund (NSSF), Pension Mbao, Inua Jamii Cash Transfer (OPCT), Linda Mama, Persons with Severe Disability Cash Transfer (PwSD-CT), Marwa Health Insurance in Kisumu County, mobile health wallet: M-TIBA.	Students seeking secondary and tertiary education, general public, vulnerable populations in need of cash support, expectant women and mothers, PWDs, old persons, orphans, and people with disabilities

Uganda	Health insurance, Pension	General population
South Africa	Social Relief Grants (SRD); The National Health Insurance (NHI); School applications for education special care	General population, elderly, orphans and vulnerable children, students
Tanzania	Health Insurance, Pension	General population

Table 1 presents the social protection programmes and their corresponding beneficiaries in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa. In Kenya, a diverse range of programmes, including CDF Bursaries, HELB, NHIF, NSSF, and Inua Jamii Cash Transfer, target specific groups, such as students pursuing secondary and tertiary education, vulnerable populations in need of cash support, expectant mothers, persons with disabilities, and the elderly. Tanzania and Uganda primarily focus on health insurance and pension programmes that benefit the general population. In South Africa, various programmes, including Social Relief Grants (SRD Grant), NHI, and school applications for education, cater to a broader audience, including the general population, the elderly, orphans, vulnerable children, and students. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of social protection programmes in these countries, addressing different needs and groups within their societies, ultimately contributing to social welfare and inclusive development.

Participants in each country highlighted various advantages. In Kenya, these programmes offered access to health services and support for education, as well as addressing the needs of expectant mothers and individuals with disabilities. They saved time, reduced transportation costs, and provided easier access to information, making them more efficient and convenient. However, some participants faced challenges, owing to a lack of network connectivity and data. In Uganda, mobile communication made life more convenient and led to time and cost savings in transportation, while providing access to information and opportunities for product marketing. In South Africa, the digitalisation of social relief grants and school applications saved time and costs and helped familiarise individuals with technology. Nonetheless, there were concerns about security and privacy. In Tanzania, the programmes facilitated communication, financial services, and access to essential services such as water, electricity, and health insurance.

3.3.2 Benefits and challenges

The research participants were asked to comment on the benefits and challenges of accessing social protection schemes digitally. The results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Benefits and challenges

Country	Benefits reported	Challenges
Kenya	Access to health services; support for education fees in high schools and colleges; livelihood support for elderly persons, orphans, and PWDs; maternity support; saving time and money; easy access to personal data; easy to use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of network and data connectivity. - Some participants lacked smartphones or knowledge on how to operate the apps. - No benefits mentioned as they are not registered and were not consulted on the implementation of digitalisation.
Uganda	Communication made easy through mobile phones; time and cost savings for transportation; access to information and programmes; opportunities to market products; improved financial management; access to virtual workshops and educational content; learning about developments in the world; enhanced security in their village; access to nutritional information; time-saving and efficient communication for church activities; listening to the radio for world news updates.	
South Africa	Time and cost savings; exposure to technology; avoiding long queues; enhanced convenience in accessing social relief grants; streamlining school applications for special care; faster access to services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some respondents mentioned that digitalisation exposed them to scammers and hackers.
Tanzania	Communication; financial services; access to water and electricity; access to a safe working environment; access to health insurance and pension; right to be heard and recognised by the government.	

Participants in all countries appreciated the convenience and accessibility provided by these digitalised programmes, although digital security concerns were raised in some instances. In summary, social protection programmes and services offered a wide range of benefits, from improved access to services to enhanced economic opportunities and communication.

3.3.3 Rights violations

Our research participants raised various potential rights violations that could result from the digitalisation of social protection programmes. These were related primarily to privacy, access, and equal treatment, as Table 3 indicates.

Table 3: Violated rights

Country	Rights potentially violated
Kenya	Right to accessible digital infrastructure (e.g. smartphones, laptops); right to affordable data; right to consultation before digitalisation implementation (Kisumu Cluster); right to inclusive digitalisation (Kisumu Cluster)
Uganda	Right to privacy (Central and Wakiso Clusters)
South Africa	Right to privacy (Eastern Cape and KZN Clusters)
Tanzania	Right to non-discrimination (MUWAMINTA Cluster)

Tables 3 and 4 show the rights potentially violated. In the Kisii Cluster, the primary challenge revolved around accessibility, owing to a low level of smartphone ownership and a lack of proper digital infrastructure, including affordable data. Similarly, in the Nandi Cluster, concerns were raised about the absence of smartphones and a lack of knowledge about app usage, which had the potential to infringe upon the rights of HBWs. In the Kisumu Cluster, some participants expressed apprehension about the lack of consultation before the implementation of digitalisation, potentially excluding HBWs. In Uganda, concerns centred on privacy issues and unauthorised access to personal information, especially through mobile phones and digital systems, suggesting potential rights violations. In the Eastern Cape Cluster of South Africa, there were anxieties about unauthorised access to information by scammers and marketers, with potential privacy implications, indicating possible rights violations. The KZN Cluster raised concerns about the safety of personal information being compromised and exposed to scammers and hackers, which could similarly violate the rights of HBWs. In the Amkeni Group Cluster in Tanzania, participants voiced concerns about false information regarding commercial agreements, differences in agreements, and delays in financial transactions, potentially infringing upon the rights of HBWs. In the MUWAMINTA Cluster, there were concerns about discrimination between government workers and HBWs in health insurance and pension programmes, pointing to potential violations of their rights related to equal treatment.

Table 4: Rights potentially violated

Country	Rights potentially violated
Kenya	Right to consultation and recognition of HBWs in social protection programmes (Kisumu Cluster); Right to accessibility of digital infrastructure and affordability of data (Kisii Cluster, Nandi Cluster).
Uganda	Right to privacy and confidentiality (UG Central and UG Wakiso Clusters)
South Africa	Right to privacy and confidentiality (HBWSAA Eastern Cape Cluster and HBWSAA KZN Cluster)
Tanzania	Right to non-discrimination in accessing health insurance and pension (MUWAMINTA Cluster)

3.4 Thematic findings

The study focused on four thematic areas: awareness, information security, digitalisation, and exclusion. Each theme is discussed below

3.4.1 Awareness

The results revealed that the selection of information sources within each cluster depended on various factors, including access to technology, regional preferences, and local context. HBWs in these clusters used a range of sources to gather information, combining both traditional and modern communication channels. Table 5 summarises the findings on the information sources used.

Table 5: Information sources

Country	Information sources
Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Kisii Cluster: social media, radio, TV, live shows, road shows, public <i>barazas</i>, workshops, mobile-based organisations (MBOs), NGOs, print media.- HNK Affiliates in Kisumu Cluster: social media, local radio stations, television, friends, word of mouth, road shows, community <i>barazas</i>, posters.- HNK Affiliates in Bungoma Cluster: Workshops, radio stations, television, phones.- HNK Affiliates in Nandi Cluster: Public <i>barazas</i>, meetings organised by HBWs, church services, public participation meetings.
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- UG Central: TV shows promoting the use of mosquito nets, community leaders, social media, training, workshops, schools, teacher communication, church services, law courts, Zoom sessions, health-care services.- UG Wakiso: Mobile phones.

South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HBWSAA Eastern Cape: Radio stations, word of mouth, newspapers, social media, television, government officials like councillors. - HBWSAA Gauteng: Radio stations, SMS, word of mouth, television. - HBWSAA KZN: Radio stations, word of mouth, newspapers, social media, television.
Tanzania	- MUWAMINTA Cluster: Mobile phones.

In Kenya, HBWs received information about social protection programmes and services through a multitude of sources. This extensive array of sources provided HBWs with diverse channels for accessing programme-related information.

Similarly, in Uganda, HBWs relied on various sources, such as community leaders, social media, training sessions, workshops, health-care services, and TV promotions advocating the use of mosquito nets. They also received information through community-oriented channels like schools, teacher communication, church services, law courts, and even Zoom sessions. Additionally, the Wakiso Cluster mentioned mobile phones as an information source, indicating a more digitally oriented approach.

In South Africa, HBWs in the Eastern Cape accessed information from a mix of traditional and modern channels. In the Gauteng Cluster, information sources varied, catering to both traditional and digital preferences. Similarly, in the KZN Cluster, sources like radio stations, word of mouth, newspapers, social media, and television were used.

In the MUWAMINTA Cluster in Tanzania, the primary source of information for HBWs was mobile phones, emphasising a more digitally oriented approach to programme communication.

3.4.2 Accessibility of social protection programmes

The analysis provides valuable insights into the accessibility of social protection programmes across different regions, highlighting both the most challenging and easiest programmes to access. These results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Accessibility of social protection programmes

Country	Most difficult	Easiest
Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kisii Cluster: NSSF - HNK Affiliates in Kisumu Cluster: National Social Security Fund and Inua Jamii programmes - HNK Affiliates in Bungoma Cluster: National Hospital Insurance Fund - HNK Affiliates in Nandi Cluster: Cash Transfer 	National Hospital Insurance Fund. CDF and HELB

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HNK Affiliates in Bungoma Cluster: Basic necessities, capital - HNK Affiliates in Nandi Cluster: Slow network and PIN code accessibility, poor infrastructure, and a lack of skills - National Hospital Insurance Fund 	Materials
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UG Central Cluster: Justice from the court - UG Wakiso Cluster: Access to social media for those with limited data, health services, especially scans 	
South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HBWSAA Eastern Cape Cluster: Housing and social grants - HBWSAA Gauteng Cluster: Social grants and applications for schools; - HBWSAA KZN Cluster: Ambulances, medication shortages, and counselling 	ARV, family planning, male condoms, social grants, and food parcels Children's grants
Tanzania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MUWAMINTA Cluster: Pension and a safe work environment 	Health insurance

The results indicated varying levels of accessibility across different clusters in Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, and Tanzania. Table 6 shows which programmes were the easiest and which the most difficult to access, indicating some of the reasons why. In Kenya, respondents from the Kisii Cluster identified the NSSF as the most difficult programme to access, while considering CDF and HELB the easiest. In Uganda, participants in UG Central found it difficult to access justice from the court, with no specific mention of the easiest programme, while participants from UG Wakiso encountered obstacles related to limited data access for social media and health-care services. South Africa's HBWSAA clusters struggled with housing, social grants, and school applications, though the easiest programmes were not explicitly mentioned. In Tanzania's MUWAMINTA Cluster, programmes on pensions and safe working conditions presented the most challenges, while health insurance was identified as the easiest programme to access. These findings underscore the varying access barriers faced in different regions, influenced by programme complexities and regional contexts.

Concerning the HBWs' awareness of their rights and entitlements, the results showed a mixed picture, with varying degrees of knowledge across clusters. In the Kisii Cluster, Kenya, respondents expressed limited awareness of their entitlements, indicating that not all provisions were well known despite constitutional mandates. In several clusters in Kenya, including Kisumu, Bungoma, and Nandi, some HBWs demonstrated a lack of knowledge or understanding, while others simply answered 'No', suggesting a general lack of awareness about their entitlements.

In UG Central, awareness about entitlements was described as limited, highlighting the need for further education and information dissemination on the subject. Similarly, in UG Wakiso, the responses centred more around privacy and individual rights than specific eligibility for social protection programmes, indicating the cluster's focus on these concerns.

Within the South African context, respondents from the HBWSAA Eastern Cape Cluster presented varying degrees of awareness, with some knowing their rights but not fully comprehending the extent of their entitlements. The HBWSAA Gauteng clusters in South Africa also showed varying degrees of awareness, with respondents mentioning some entitlements but not all, reflecting different levels of awareness. Respondents from the South African HBWSAA KZN Cluster exhibited knowledge about their entitlements but might not have fully understood the scope of these entitlements.

In the Tanzanian context, the MUWAMINTA Cluster at MAMBA HALL demonstrated comprehensive awareness. Respondents from this cluster exhibited a relatively comprehensive understanding of their entitlements, covering aspects such as annual leave, employment contracts, pensions, and government recognition.

In summary, the analysis revealed diverse awareness levels among HBWs regarding their eligibility for social protection programmes, highlighting the need for targeted education and information dissemination tailored to specific awareness levels and needs within each country or cluster.

Table 7 shows how easily participants could access their entitlements, and what challenges (if any) they faced in doing so.

Table 7: Entitlement accessibility and challenges

Country	Ability to access entitlements	Key challenges
Kenya	Varied (yes and no)	- High costs, bureaucracy, and corruption (Kisumu Cluster); lack of information, high costs, corruption (Bungoma Cluster); limited knowledge, slow network, poor infrastructure (Nandi Cluster)
Uganda	Varied (yes and no)	- Health-care system issues (Central Cluster); health services, financial constraints, and corruption (Wakiso Cluster)
South Africa	Difficulties (mostly no)	- Timely access issues (Eastern Cape Cluster); system downtimes (Gauteng Cluster); timely access difficulties (KZN Cluster)

Tanzania	No, except specific group	- Lack of government recognition for home-based workers (MUWAMINTA Cluster at MAMBA HALL)
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HBWs in the Kisii cluster reported relatively easy and timely access to their entitlements. However, participants in the other Kenyan clusters faced challenges such as high costs, bureaucratic processes, and corruption.

In Uganda, the accessibility of entitlements varied by region and presented specific challenges. Respondents from the UG Central cluster experienced mixed access, with some individuals encountering difficulties related to the health-care system. The UG Wakiso cluster also faced challenges, primarily linked to health services, financial constraints, and corruption, which hindered the easy and timely access to entitlements.

Similarly, in South Africa, participants encountered common issues across clusters regarding access to entitlements. The HBWSAA Eastern Cape cluster reported difficulties in timely access to entitlements. In the HBWSAA Gauteng cluster, interruptions in the system could impede access. Participants from the HBWSAA KZN cluster also encountered difficulties in timely access due to a range of issues, suggesting consistent challenges in accessing entitlements across South Africa.

Furthermore, in Tanzania, the accessibility of entitlements was hindered for HBWs in the MUWAMINTA cluster at MAMBA HALL. This was primarily because these workers were not recognised by the government as government employees, which prevented them from accessing their entitlements easily.

3.4.3 Suggestions on awareness

Respondents were asked for their suggestions on how to raise awareness of social protection schemes. These are given below and summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Key sub-themes

Country	Sub-themes
Kenya	Access and transparency; awareness and advocacy; government support; dialogue and engagement; infrastructure and empowerment
Uganda	Training and awareness; community involvement; education and anti-corruption; government recognition
South Africa	System improvement; qualified staff; quality control; language access; training and client service
Tanzania	Government recognition

In Kenya, the Kisii Cluster emphasised the need for transparency as far as accessibility was concerned, as well as measures to ensure freedom from corruption when claiming entitlements. The Kisumu Cluster suggested engaging in lobbying and advocacy to raise awareness and ensure easy access to information. They emphasised the importance of government action for better access to information. Additionally, holding dialogues between HBWs and policymakers was recommended to foster better communication and understanding. In the Bungoma Cluster, government support was seen as essential, both for helping claimants to access social protection and for helping them to find markets for their products. Reducing the cost of Wi-Fi and promoting awareness of social protection schemes were suggested to improve access. Civic education about social protection was considered crucial. Organising seminars for discussions and advising people to have NHIF and savings were seen as steps towards improving the situation. For Nandi Cluster, the key recommendations focused on increasing awareness and the range of social protection services, improving infrastructure, and empowering HBWs. Someone suggested that involving community leaders and the government in addressing these issues would lead to more effective solutions.

In Uganda, the UG Central Cluster recommended more training by organisations like WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing) and unions to help HBWs understand their entitlements and access them better. They proposed involving well-wishers and encouraging children to go to school to provide additional support. Reducing corruption in health centres was also highlighted as essential for ensuring proper access to health-care services. In the UG Wakiso Cluster, someone suggested that local leaders play an active part in monitoring government programmes to ensure that HBWs receive their entitlements. Increasing training and awareness in the cluster were seen as essential. The government was urged to recognise people's rights and take measures to ensure proper access to entitlements.

In South Africa, the HBWSAA Eastern Cape Cluster recommended upgrading systems and instilling work principles to improve access to entitlements. In the HBWSAA Gauteng cluster, the suggestions included employing qualified staff, upgrading and updating systems, and having an independent committee check or vet the quality of work to enhance the accessibility of entitlements. In the HBWSAA KZN Cluster, making translations available in indigenous languages was deemed important for better communication. Increasing the staff complement and equipping them with client service training were seen as steps that could contribute to more efficient access to entitlements.

In Tanzania, the MUWAMINTA Cluster suggested that government officials should understand the importance of HBWs as workers. This recognition was considered vital for improving access to entitlements in Tanzania. These recommendations aim to

address the specific challenges faced in each country and provide a roadmap for improving the accessibility of entitlements for HBWs.

3.4.4 Data requirements

Different countries required different information from programme participants and applicants. Table 9 summarises this.

Table 9: Information requirements

Country	Cluster	Information requirements
Kenya	Kisii Cluster	Personal information, wealth declaration, poverty status, disability status, family information, health status, marital status
	HNK Affiliates in Nandi Cluster	Various forms of identification, including full names per the national ID, ID number, KRA PIN, birth certificate, and smartphone number
	HNK Affiliates in Bungoma Cluster	Various forms of identification, including identification cards and phone number
	HNK Affiliates in Kisumu Cluster	Personal details and special codes
Uganda	UG Central	National ID, name, age, location, recommendations, health status, birth certificate, immunisation card, passport photos, education level, sex, tribe
	UG Wakiso	National identity, health status, names, age, number of children, and more
South Africa	HBWSAA Eastern Cape Cluster	Personal details, including name, ID, address, contact details, bank details, and signature
	HBWSAA Gauteng Cluster	Personal details, including name, ID, age, address, contact details, and bank details
	HBWSAA KZN Cluster	Personal details (name, ID, address, contact details, bank details, and signature), face recognition, biometric authentication
Tanzania	Amkeni Group	Government information and information from private organisations through online advertising
	MUWAMINTA Cluster	Not mentioned

In Kenya, the information required varied across different regions. The contrast in information requirements among the clusters within Kenya highlighted the need for a standardised and transparent approach to data collection for digitalised social protection entitlements.

Information requirements appeared to be relatively consistent in Uganda and South Africa, while in Tanzania, the information requirements appeared to vary significantly between clusters. No specific information requirements were mentioned for the MUWAMINTA Cluster, making it difficult to assess the data-collection approach in this context.'

'All in all, it was clear that some authorities required basic personal identification data, while others required far more than this, asking for a wide range of personal information, including disability status and tribe. Some even gathered data from private organizations through online advertising.'

3.4.5 Consequences for lacking information

In terms of the consequences for not providing the above information, the analysis revealed that in the Kisii, Nandi, Bungoma, and Kisumu Clusters, refusal was often associated with the denial of access, limited services, or the failure to be registered for social services. Participants in these clusters generally felt that they had no other choice but to share their information. This highlighted the lack of autonomy and the perception that individuals were compelled to provide their data to access social protection entitlements. In Uganda, both in the UG Central and UG Wakiso clusters, participants reported that refusal could lead to difficulties in accessing the services they needed. This suggested that individuals in these clusters felt compelled to share their information to overcome potential barriers, emphasising the limited choice they perceived in the matter. Regarding South Africa, the results showed that in the HBWSAA clusters in Eastern Cape, Gauteng, and KZN, refusal was linked to negative consequences, such as automatic rejection of the application or non-processing. Participants in these clusters consistently expressed a lack of choice in sharing their information, further underscoring the feeling of compulsion to provide the required data. In Tanzania, the Amkeni Group noted that participants did not expect to be asked for certain information, and refusal was linked to the potential failure to find solutions to social problems. In the MUWAMINTA Cluster, participants expressed the importance of sharing information to ensure their concerns were heard in Parliament, suggesting a sense of empowerment and the desire to be actively involved in decision-making processes.

3.4.6 Why the data and for what?

There were concerns about data protection. Participants were asked whether they knew how their data would be used and whether they agreed with that.

Table 10: Information-sharing

Country	Cluster	Purpose and information sharing
Kenya	Kisii Cluster	Participants complied with the requirements but didn't have control over how their data was shared.
	HNK Affiliates in Nandi Cluster	Participants mentioned knowing the purpose for personal identification but had limited information about sharing.
	HNK Affiliates in Bungoma Cluster	Participants mentioned knowing the purpose but had limited information about sharing.
	HNK Affiliates in Kisumu Cluster	Participants mentioned it was used for identification and shared with the government and supporting partners.
Uganda	UG Central	Information is used for identification, planning, budgeting, and shared with relevant departments.
	UG Wakiso	Participants mentioned various reasons, including inspection purposes and security in hotels, but some didn't know who it was shared with.
South Africa	HBWSAA Eastern Cape Cluster	Participants mentioned they knew why the information was needed but couldn't say much about how it was shared.
	HBWSAA Gauteng Cluster	Participants mentioned they knew the information was needed for identification and shared with relevant departments.
	HBWSAA KZN Cluster	Participants mentioned they knew it was for identification and shared with relevant departments.
Tanzania	Amkeni Group	Participants mentioned it was for getting information about HBWs' rights and self-identification education, shared with the government.

	MUWAMINTA Cluster	Participants recognised that the information was collected to ensure that HBWs got their rights as government employees, held by the government, employer, and participants themselves.
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In Kenya, in the KISII Cluster, participants reported that they complied with the demands for information, although they felt they had limited control over how it was shared. The response was similar in the other Kenyan clusters, although participants in the Kisumu Cluster seemed to have a better understanding of how their data would be used.

Participants in UG Central reported that the data played a crucial role in administrative and governmental functions, but some participants in the Wakiso cluster were unsure who their data was shared with. The responses from South Africa suggest that participants had not been fully informed about who their data would be shared with. Participants in Tanzania were more confident that their data would be used to protect and promote their rights.

In general, it seems that most of the data-collection processes lacked transparency, and that participants had limited control over their data.'

3.4.7 Private information

The results from the study revealed that in Kenya, participants found it difficult to know which information should remain private, primarily due to the mandatory obligation to share certain data. Notably, individuals in different Kenyan clusters were aware of the importance of safeguarding sensitive information such as PIN codes, bank account PINs, and MPESA PINs. In Uganda, awareness of the importance of privacy extended to sensitive health and HIV status data. South African participants also acknowledged the need to maintain the privacy of bank PINs, and when it came to health status, they emphasised the importance of privacy unless the data was really needed. In Tanzania, participants recognised the significance of safeguarding online service secret numbers. These sub-themes underscored the fact that individuals in these regions were aware of their right to privacy and had a clear understanding of which specific pieces of information they should protect. This awareness is crucial, especially in the context of the evolving landscape of digital social protection, where ensuring the security and privacy of personal data is a fundamental aspect of protecting individual rights and overall security. Table 11 summarises these findings.

Table 11: Private information

Country	Cluster	Information that is not shared, but kept private
Kenya	Kisii Cluster	Lack of choice about what information to share; difficulty in distinguishing what is private
	HNK Affiliates in Kisumu Cluster	PIN codes
	HNK Affiliates in Nandi Cluster	Bank account PINs and MPESA PINs
	HNK Affiliates in Bungoma Cluster	PIN codes
Uganda	UG Central	HIV status
	UG Wakiso	Health status
South Africa	HBWSAA Eastern Cape Cluster	Bank PINs
	HBWSAA Gauteng Cluster	Bank PINs
	HBWSAA KZN Cluster	Health status private unless strictly required.
Tanzania	Amkeni Group	Online service secret numbers
	MUWAMINTA Cluster	Information that may endanger one's life

Respondents were asked to answer this question: 'Would you like to know more about your rights in this space of digitalisation (privacy, data protection, consent)?' Their answers are summarised in Table 12.

Table 12: Knowledge of rights

Country	Cluster	Response
Kenya	Kisii Cluster	Yes, would like to know more to understand what is specifically private and limited to share
	HNK Affiliates in Bungoma Cluster	Yes, would like to know more about their rights
	HNK Affiliates in Kisumu Cluster	Yes, would like to know more about their rights
	HNK Affiliates in Nandi Cluster	Yes, would like to know more about their rights

Uganda	UG Central Venue FORT LUGARD	All participants answered 'yes'
	UG Wakiso	Yes, including members without smartphones
South Africa	HBWSAA Eastern Cape Cluster	Yes, would like to know more about their rights
	HBWSAA Gauteng Cluster	Yes, would like to know more about their rights
	HBWSAA KZN Cluster	Yes, would like to know more about their rights
Tanzania	Amkeni Group	Yes, would like to know more
	MUWAMINTA Cluster	Yes, would like to know more about their rights

The results presented in Table 12 demonstrate a unanimous desire among participants from various clusters and countries to acquire a deeper understanding of their rights within the digitalisation space, with a particular focus on privacy, data protection, and consent. This collective desire for knowledge underscores the critical importance of educating individuals about their digital rights. Such education ensures that they can navigate the evolving landscape of digital social protection with confidence and a clear understanding of their rights.

3.4.8 Digitalisation

3.4.8.1 Preference

Table 13: Preferences for methods of receiving social protection

Country	Cluster	Preferences	Reasons
Kenya	Kisii Cluster	Both in-person and mobile/online services	Cost-effective; value of in-person for training and information-sharing
	HNK Affiliates in Kisumu Cluster	Mobile/online services	Easy access
	HNK Affiliates in Bungoma Cluster	Both in-person and mobile/online services	
	HNK Affiliates in Nandi Cluster	Mobile/online services	
Uganda	UG Central	Varied (some prefer mobile/online services, some prefer in-person)	Varied reasons – trends, understanding facial expressions, attitudes

	UG Wakiso	Varied (some prefer in-person, some prefer mobile/online services)	Face-to-face interactions
South Africa	HBWSAA Eastern Cape Cluster	Varied (mixed preferences for in-person and mobile/online services)	
	HBWSAA Gauteng Cluster	Varied (youth prefer mobile/online, the elderly prefer in-person)	Age-dependent preferences
	HBWSAA KZN Cluster	Varied (some prefer in-person)	Avoiding hackers and scammers
Tanzania	Amkeni Group	Both in-person and mobile/online services	Significance of both – understanding facial expressions, attitudes
	MUWAMINTA Cluster	Mobile/online services	Easy access

In Kenya, the Kisii Cluster and HNK Affiliates in Kisumu liked both in-person and mobile/online services. The Kisii Cluster valued in-person interactions for training and information-sharing. HNK Affiliates in Kisumu favoured mobile/online services for their ease of access.

In Uganda, preferences in UG Central varied, with some individuals favouring mobile/online services while others preferred in-person interactions. These preferences were influenced by factors such as trends, the need for understanding facial expressions, and individual attitudes. In UG Wakiso, preferences were also mixed, with some individuals favouring in-person interactions because they allowed for face-to-face engagement.

South Africa presented varying preferences. The HBWSAA Gauteng Cluster reflected generational differences, with younger participants favouring mobile/online services for their convenience, while the elderly preferred in-person interactions. The HBWSAA KZN Cluster had varied preferences, with some participants choosing in-person services to avoid potential hackers and scammers.

In Tanzania, the Amkeni Group appreciated both in-person and mobile/online services, as each had its significance. They valued in-person interactions for understanding facial expressions and attitudes. The MUWAMINTA Cluster preferred mobile/online services due to their ease of access.

3.4.8.2 Availability and reliability of services

Table 14 summarises the findings on how easily available services were and how reliable they were. As the table shows, internet connectivity and network problems were raised by participants in all four countries.

Table 14: Availability and reliability of services

Country	Availability and reliability of services
Kenya	Available, albeit with network issues and challenges with buying data; operations include registration, payments, and seeking accountability
	Available, but not always reliable due to network issues and the need for internet data
	Available, but reliability is affected by network problems; various actions can be performed online, with occasional difficulties in rectifying mistakes
	Available, but not always reliable due to network connectivity and internet data issues; various actions can be performed online, with challenges in rectifying mistakes
Uganda	Available, but not always reliable, with network issues and security concerns; actions include registration, payments, and seeking accountability
	Available online, with network problems and the need for internet data affecting reliability; various actions can be performed online, but rectifying mistakes can be challenging
South Africa	Some services available online, with reliability affected by system issues, load shedding, and network instability; various actions can be carried out online, with difficulties in fixing mistakes
	Some services available online, but with reliability problems; participants can use mobile/online platforms for various actions, but issues related to accountability and mistake rectification are reported
	Some services available online, but network problems can affect reliability; various actions can be performed online, with challenges in fixing mistakes
Tanzania	Services available via mobile and online platforms, but reliability is affected by network issues and phone charge problems
	Services available via mobile and online platforms, but network issues and low phone charge can impact their reliability

3.4.8.3 Use of online and mobile platforms

Table 15: Use of online and mobile platforms

Country	Cluster	Able to register, pay, or seek accountability via mobile or online	Ease of rectifying mistakes
Kenya	Kisii Cluster	Yes	Challenging at times
	HNK Affiliates in Kisumu	Yes	Not always easy
	HNK Affiliates in Bungoma	Yes	Not always easy
	HNK Affiliates in Nandi	Yes	Not always easy
Uganda	UG Central	Yes	Difficulties reported
	UG Wakiso	Yes	Not always easy
South Africa	HBWSAA Eastern Cape	Yes	Not always easy
	HBWSAA Gauteng	Yes	Issues reported
	HBWSAA KZN	Yes	Not always easy
Tanzania	Amkeni Group	Yes	Not always easy
	MUWAMINTA	Yes	Not always easy

The results shown in Table 15 indicate that across various clusters in Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, and Tanzania, most participants reported the ability to perform essential actions like registration, making payments, and seeking accountability through mobile or online platforms. However, it is important to note that it was not always easy to rectify mistakes, and some participants encountered challenges in this regard. Issues related to accountability and mistake rectification were also reported in specific clusters.

These findings emphasise the significance of streamlining digital services and improving user interfaces to make the process more user-friendly. Additionally, providing support to individuals, particularly those who may struggle because they lack digital skills, is crucial. The data underscores the ongoing need for continual efforts to enhance the accessibility and usability of online platforms for social protection services. This will ultimately lead to a smoother and more effective experience for users.

3.4.8.4 Adequacy of mobile and digital skills required for optimal use of mobile/online social protection systems

Table 16: Mobile and digital skills

Country	Cluster	Adequacy of mobile/digital skills
Kenya	Kisii Cluster HBWs	Basic skills, some may require additional guidance
	HNK Affiliates in Kisumu	Lacking adequate skills for optimal use
	HNK Affiliates in Bungoma	Generally, lack the required skills for optimal use
	HNK Affiliates in Nandi	Partial knowledge of skills required for optimal use
Uganda	UG Central	Lacking adequate skills, more training is needed
	UG Wakiso	Generally, lack the required skills
South Africa	HBWSAA Eastern Cape	Generally, lack adequate mobile/digital skills
	HBWSAA Gauteng	Generally, lack the skills required for optimal use
	HBWSAA KZN	Lacking adequate skills for optimal use
Tanzania	Amkeni Group	Basic skills, need more knowledge for online finance and tech
	MUWAMINTA	Lacking adequate skills for optimal use

As Table 16 shows, most respondents had only basic IT skills, and needed more training or support if they were to make optimal use of the online or mobile platforms used for digital social protection.

3.4.8.5 Impact of digitalisation of social protection services, programmes, and systems on your way of life

Table 17: Impact on way of life

Country	Cluster	Impact of digitalisation on way of life
Kenya	Kisii Cluster	Instant access without the need for travel
	HNK Affiliates in Bungoma	Improved commercial communication and social services
	HNK Affiliates in Nandi	Time-saving
	HNK Affiliates in Kisumu	Time-saving, but lacking adequate mobile/digital skills
Uganda	UG Central	Facilitated social networking and faster processes

	UG Wakiso	Increased speed and more efficient communication
South Africa	HBWSAA Eastern Cape	Improved access to product information
	HBWSAA Gauteng	Enhanced ease of use for participants
	HBWSAA KZN	Simplified access to services
Tanzania	Amkeni Group	Improved commercial communication and social services; participants need more knowledge for online finance and tech
	MUWAMINTA	Easier communication and information access; lacking required mobile/digital skills

The results summarised in Table 17 reveal a spectrum of ways in which the digitalisation of social protection services has affected the daily lives of HBWs across different clusters in each country. In Kenya, HBWs in the Kisii Cluster highlighted the convenience of instant access without the need for travel. This immediacy offered a notable advantage, making essential services more accessible than ever before. Moving on to Uganda, the UG Central Cluster found that digitalisation not only expedited various processes but also facilitated social networking. This underscored the role of digitalisation in enhancing communication and efficiency in their daily lives. Similarly, in UG Wakiso, participants emphasised the increased speed and efficiency brought about by digitalisation, further highlighting its positive impact. In South Africa, the clusters unanimously reported that digitalisation had made life easier, primarily by providing enhanced access to information and streamlining various processes. This reflected the widespread benefits of digitalisation in improving the overall quality of life for HBWs in the country.

In Tanzania, the Amkeni Group noted improvements in commercial communication and access to social services due to digitalisation. However, they also highlighted the need for further knowledge about online finance and technology to fully leverage these advances. By contrast, the MUWAMINTA cluster in Tanzania indicated a lack of mobile and digital skills. Despite this, they recognised that digitalisation had made communication and information access more straightforward. This emphasised the potential for digitalisation to benefit even those who might need additional skills to navigate it effectively.

3.4.9 Exclusion

3.4.9.1 Impact of digital systems on ability to access assistance

Table 18: Impact of digital systems on ability to access assistance

Country	Cluster	Impact on ability to access assistance
Kenya	Kisii Cluster	Easy and convenient access
	Bungoma Cluster	Cost savings
	Nandi Cluster	Lack of knowledge and digital facilities; some find cost savings and privacy
	Kisumu Cluster	Difficulty addressing problems individually
Uganda	UG Central	Not able to access programs; disruption of daily routines; mixed impact – exploitative though beneficial in some cases
	UG Wakiso Cluster	Lack of information on accessing assistance; network challenges; presence of false information
South Africa	HBWSAA Eastern Cape Cluster	Positive impact, saving time
	HBWSAA Gauteng Cluster	Negative impact
	HBWSAA KZN Cluster	Positive impact, making things quicker and more accessible; question of exclusion and disadvantage
Tanzania	MUWAMINTA Cluster	Negative impact when internet or phone charge runs out
	Amkeni Group Cluster	Reduced workforce, change in the system of life, including financial payments

The results summarised in Table 18 indicate that Kenyan HBWs viewed the digital system positively albeit with a number of challenges, primarily due to the increased ease and convenience it brought to accessing assistance.

In Uganda, responses were more nuanced. While some acknowledged the benefits, concerns were raised regarding exclusion from some programs and disruptions to daily routines when communication occurred out of social media. It was noted as both exploitative and beneficial in different cases. Challenges included a lack of information on how to access assistance, network issues, and the presence of false information.

Conversely, in South Africa, the participants generally indicated a positive impact on their access to assistance, particularly in terms of saving time. They recognised that the digitalised systems had made access to social protection programs more efficient and

accessible. However, questions were also raised about who might be excluded or disadvantaged by the process of digitalisation.

In Tanzania, the response suggested a negative impact when issues like running out of internet or phone charge hindered access. Participants also pointed out that digitalisation had reduced the number of workers and brought about significant changes in their way of life, including the mode of payments to access the programs.

3.4.9.2 Digital exclusion – Reasons and affected groups

Regarding the question of persons being excluded or disadvantaged by digitalisation and why, the responses revealed a range of reasons for digital exclusion. Table 19 summarises the responses.

Table 19: Digital exclusion

Country	Digital exclusion reasons	Affected groups
Kenya	Challenges in accessing social protection services, discriminatory nature-targeted populations only	People from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, HBWs
	Lack of skills and knowledge	Illiterate people, elderly people, less fortunate individuals
	Poor infrastructure, lack of finances, disabilities, elderly	Poor people, illiterate individuals, people with disabilities, the elderly, people in remote areas
	Digital illiteracy, language barriers, education levels	Elderly people, people with disabilities, those facing language barriers and with lower educational attainment, informal workers
Uganda	Sensory and cognitive impairment	Deaf people, blind people, individuals with special needs
	Socioeconomic status, digital illiteracy, language barriers	Poor people, illiterate people, elderly people, people without smartphones, people facing language barriers
South Africa	Rural areas, age, lack of smartphones	People from rural areas, elderly individuals, people without smartphones
	Poor connectivity, low literacy levels	Illiterate individuals, people from underdeveloped areas or areas with poor network connectivity, potential job losses

Tanzania	Sensory impairment, digital illiteracy, poor connectivity	Children, elderly people, people without smartphones, illiterate individuals, areas with poor network connectivity
	Social restrictions, digital illiteracy, language barriers	Women, illiterate individuals, elderly people, less fortunate individuals, people living in marginalised areas, people with poor network connectivity, people facing language barriers

In Kenya, digital exclusion manifested as a complex challenge, with particular implications for HBWs. The Kisii Cluster reported difficulties encountered in accessing government social protection services, specifically concerning HBWs. Discriminatory practices were observed, where eligibility for the NHIF was contingent on social status, and Inua Jamii did not provide services to qualified beneficiaries automatically. The restricted support from the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) underscored the exclusion of individuals hailing from lower socioeconomic strata. Moreover, the Bungoma Cluster identified groups such as illiterate individuals, elderly people, less fortunate individuals, and those with limited skills and knowledge as being disadvantaged by the process of digitalisation. The Nandi Cluster emphasised that digitalisation adversely affected various sectors of society. The Kisumu Cluster reported the adverse impact of digitalisation on elderly people, individuals with disabilities, those experiencing language barriers and those with lower educational attainment levels, as well as various categories of informal workers, encompassing street vendors, waste pickers, domestic workers, and others.

In Uganda, digital exclusion assumed diverse forms. The UG Central cluster underscored that deaf individuals, blind persons, and individual with special needs, including those encountering mental challenges, were being excluded by digitalisation. The UG Wakiso Cluster identified vulnerable segments of the population, including the impoverished, illiterate people, elderly people, and individuals without access to smartphones, as those who experienced exclusion or disadvantages attributed to digitalisation. Language barriers were also recognised as a significant challenge.

South Africa exhibited pronounced digital exclusion. Digitalization had resulted in disadvantages for individuals from a range of already disadvantaged groups, as the table shows Furthermore, the digitalisation of specific industries had the potential to induce job losses, further exacerbating the existing digital exclusion.

In Tanzania, digital exclusion had ramifications across various segments of the population. The MUWAMINTA Cluster noted that children exhibited behavioural changes attributed to their digitalization had resulted in disadvantages for individuals from a range of already disadvantaged groups, as the table shows use of digital devices. The

elderly population, individuals lacking access to smartphones, illiterate individuals, and those residing in regions grappling with poor network connectivity were at a disadvantage. The Amkeni Group Cluster reported instances where certain women were prevented by their spouses from using digital systems. Additionally, they identified illiterate individuals, the elderly, economically disadvantaged individuals, residents of areas characterised by inadequate infrastructure, individuals confronted with limited network connectivity, and those who encountered difficulties in comprehending modern technology conveyed in the English language as individuals disadvantaged by the process of digitalisation.

3.4.9.3 Suggestions on minimising exclusion from digital programmes and services

In Kenya, the enhancement of digital inclusion was contingent on addressing challenges related to affordability and accessibility. Participants in the study proposed measures aimed at making mobile phones, specifically Android devices, more cost-effective to facilitate broader access. Moreover, they advocated for the improvement of network coverage and infrastructure to ensure reliable and economically accessible connectivity. Additionally, participants underscored the significance of public IT labs offering free and dependable WiFi services, thereby promoting greater access. The call for an amelioration of network infrastructure and the responsible management of data was prominent in efforts to enhance the digital experience. Furthermore, participants recommended increasing awareness and promoting a high standard of data integrity. Emphasis was placed on compliance with international data protection laws to bolster security and engender trust.

In Uganda, the primary focus was on augmenting digital inclusion through heightened awareness and educational improvement. Suggestions encompassed the raising of awareness, provision of training, and the encouragement of digital system adoption. Notably, participants emphasised the necessity of improving network infrastructure to ensure a more extensive reach of online services. Recommendations also encompassed the monitoring of service delivery and the promotion of inclusivity in social protection, with a goal of bridging the digital divide by addressing both knowledge and infrastructure gaps.

South Africa's approach to advancing digital inclusion encompassed various factors, including economic development, accessibility, training, and the enhancement of network infrastructure and security. Participants articulated proposals for economic improvement, which had the indirect benefit of facilitating digital access and inclusion. Enhancing the competition within the data services sector was considered essential to make digital services more accessible to the general population. Furthermore, empowering users was deemed pivotal; thus, participants suggested providing

additional training and introducing user-friendly systems. The amelioration of network infrastructure, the availability of electricity, the generation of awareness regarding online services, and the improvement of online system security and efficiency were all deemed integral to rendering digital services more accessible and secure.

In Tanzania, the strategy for augmenting digital inclusion revolved around education, online security, and inclusivity. Recommendations entailed the expansion of education regarding the use of social networks to mitigate the digital literacy gap. Furthermore, the advocacy for improvements in network infrastructure to ensure dependable and extensive connectivity was emphasised. Ensuring online security and privacy were pivotal concerns, leading to suggestions for the establishment of foolproof online services and the implementation of measures to curtail the activities of fraudulent actors. Additionally, privacy policies and the accuracy of national identity information were identified as mechanisms to enhance security and engender trust. The cultivation of inclusivity and learning, especially among the elderly, was championed to guarantee the accessibility of social protection systems. Encouraging individuals to embark on a learning journey and fostering the enhancement of service delivery in the health-care sector featured among the strategies recommended to bolster digital inclusion.

3.5 General findings

Digital exclusion was found to be multifaceted in nature. The research illuminated the presence of diverse demographic groups facing barriers to digital inclusion, including impoverished individuals, the elderly, those lacking access to smartphones, and residents of marginalised or remote areas. This multifaceted dimension of exclusion emerged as a recurring theme throughout the countries studied.

Worker rights emerged as a prominent concern in the study, particularly concerning HBWs. Participants from various countries underscored the significance of advocating for, raising awareness about, and legally recognising HBWs as workers. These insights underscored a shared preoccupation with safeguarding worker rights within the regions under investigation.

The study revealed divergent approaches to enhancing digital inclusion across different countries. Kenya's focus was on improving affordability and accessibility, whereas Uganda placed a strong emphasis on augmenting awareness and educational initiatives. South Africa prioritised efforts to enhance economic conditions and network infrastructure, while Tanzania concentrated on education, online security, and inclusivity. These differing approaches underscored the necessity of context-specific strategies to effectively address digital exclusion.

The study highlighted the significance of adhering to international data protection laws and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders. Recognition of international

data protection standards was considered essential in building trust, and effective collaboration between government entities, organisations, and workers was deemed crucial for driving positive transformation in the realms of social protection and digital inclusion.

3.6 Recommendations

The analysis on the key strategies and actions needed to secure the right to social protection and enhance digital inclusion for marginalised workers across the study contexts are presented below.

3.6.1 Key strategies to enable access to social protection

- advocacy for policy changes and lobbying for worker rights;
- raising awareness about digitalisation of social protection;
- offering financial support or affordable conditions for acquiring digital devices;
- promoting self-identification and recognition of HBWs;
- diversifying income sources to enhance economic security;
- ensuring government support for inclusive social protection;
- strengthening capacity building for workers;
- collaborating with other HBW organisations for collective action;
- running public awareness campaigns to inform workers about their rights;
- providing frequent training and education on social protection;
- Implementing government policies that safeguard worker rights.

3.6.2 Enhancing digital inclusion

- establishing community resource centres with internet access;
- Providing phones with internet access to HBWs
- increasing network infrastructure and access;
- creating foolproof online services that cannot be infiltrated;
- improving network infrastructure and infrastructure like electricity;
- making online access data-free;
- ensuring inclusivity in social protection for all;
- advocating for the recognition of HBWs as workers;
- recognising the rights of employees who work at home;
- equalising rights for government employees, private individuals, and self-employed workers;
- joint negotiations between the government, workers, and employers to protect HBW rights;
- education about social networks to prevent hacking and protect children.
- data-free online access;
- more training and workshops;

- knowledge about the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act;
- increased security of personal information.
- sensitisation about social protection tailored to specific informal work types;
- advocating for the recognition of HBWs as workers.
- affordable conditions for accessing services;
- equal rights for private sector and government employees;
- recognition of rights for home-based employees;
- adequate education about using the internet for social services;
- equal rights for government employees, private individuals, and self-employed;
- joint negotiations between government, workers, and employers;
- education about social networks to prevent hacking and protect children.

3.6.3 Suggestions on enhancing worker rights for HBWs

- offer more training and workshops to educate HBWs about their rights;
- advocate for the legal recognition of HBWs as formal workers;
- collaborate with relevant authorities and organisations to promote HBW rights;
- raise awareness, conduct advocacy, and implement public awareness campaigns;
- establish HBW groups for collective empowerment and advocacy;
- campaign for reduced taxes and improved government policies;
- support digital rights and government reorganisation for better HBW recognition;
- promote equal rights for HBWs compared to private sector and government employees;
- provide technology access by offering phones with internet access and community resource centres.

On the basis of these findings, the study's recommendations encapsulate a comprehensive approach aimed at enhancing the entitlements and access to social protection for HBWs across diverse nations. Strategies to realise this goal encompass advocacy and policy advocacy, as well as the dissemination of awareness regarding the digitalisation of social protection, and the provision of financial assistance for the acquisition of digital devices. Collaborative efforts with other HBW organisations, the orchestration of public awareness campaigns, and the provision of recurrent training initiatives were further recognised as avenues that would serve to empower HBWs. Concurrently, ameliorating digital inclusion was deemed crucial, involving the establishment of community resource centres, the provisioning of internet-enabled mobile devices, the enhancement of network infrastructure, the facilitation of data-free online access, and the active promotion of HBWs' formal recognition. Safeguarding worker rights, encompassing equitable entitlements across diverse employment categories and fostering dialogue involving government officials, labour representatives,

and employers, represented a recurring theme. Furthermore, the dissemination of knowledge among HBWs concerning social networks and the advocacy for digital rights and privacy measures were underscored as imperatives. These recommendations would, if adopted, help to secure the entitlements of HBWs, foster their digital inclusion, bolster their economic security, and enable their equitable treatment and recognition.

3.7 Opportunities for policy, practice, and academic research

The research has presented several opportunities for governments, civil society, and future research:

1. **Policy formulation and implementation:** Governments have the opportunity to formulate policies aimed at enhancing digital inclusion and social protection, especially for HBWs from vulnerable groups. These policies can encompass affordable access to technology, awareness-raising campaigns, and the protection of worker rights.
2. **Collaboration and advocacy:** Civil society organisations can leverage the findings to collaborate with governments and advocate for the rights and inclusion of marginalised groups. The research identifies the importance of collaboration between various stakeholders in addressing digital exclusion.
3. **Empowering vulnerable populations:** The study sheds light on the specific challenges faced by various vulnerable populations, such as elderly people, illiterate individuals, and those in remote areas. Governments and civil society organisations can develop targeted programmes to empower these groups and bridge the digital divide.
4. **Future research avenues:** The findings of this research open doors for further studies on digital inclusion and social protection. Future research can delve deeper into the specific needs and challenges of HBWs and other marginalised populations. It can also explore the impact of policy interventions and initiatives aimed at enhancing digital inclusion.
5. **International collaboration:** Recognising the importance of adhering to international data protection policies, governments can engage in international collaborations to ensure data security and build trust. This presents an opportunity for cross-border initiatives to address digital exclusion.

4 Conclusion

The research findings confirm previous assumptions about the way home-based workers are viewed by policymakers and government departments, namely:

- that home-based workers are invisible and often left out of decision-making processes;
- that home-based workers do not have a voice and often lack an opportunity to be heard in decision-making processes;
- that home-based workers are not counted; i.e. their validity is taken for granted, they do not count much, and they are not captured by statistics carried out by policymakers and government departments.

It is imperative therefore that in light of the digitalisation of social protection services, the needs and aspirations of home-based workers be taken into consideration.

Appendix: Focus group discussion guide for home-based workers

Main research objective and expected outcomes:

- The current research aims to investigate and generate new knowledge on how the digitalisation of social protection is affecting marginalised workers in Africa, specifically home-based workers (HBWs) in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, and South Africa.
- Successful publication of the country experiences (research findings and recommendations) in a regional synthesis report is expected to inform evidence-based collective action towards ensuring that African workers' priorities and interests are protected as social protection systems evolve.
- Ultimately, it is anticipated that the ability (collective voice) of particularly the African HBWs will be strengthened to effectively influence policy action and practices in the digitalisation of social protection systems, thus promote their digital rights as advanced by the ILO.

Selection of target participants:

- The target HBWs should be selected from about 30 per cent of the membership of each HomeNet Africa (HNA) Country Network. The participants should include individual artisans either working independently or organised under a formal group.
- Special consideration for in-country factors, including representation and diversity among the membership profiles, should be considered.

Facilitation of a focus group discussion (FGD) for HBWs:

- HNA Country Coordinators should facilitate informal, face-to-face, interactive discussions with selected HBWs organised in groups of eight to ten individuals.
- At the start, the facilitator will be required to explain the research objectives, expectations and why the participants were selected. He or she should assure participants about confidentiality of information shared.
- Each FGD is expected to commence with introductions and take one to two hours; a health break may be granted as needed.
- Translation of key discussion questions and topics into a popular national language is recommended; depending on prevailing literacy diversity among participants, the facilitator may engage the services of a translator (interpreter) to stimulate discussion points using the local language.
- All FGD sessions must be recorded in appropriate formats and two or three photographs taken during the sessions.
- At the end, the facilitator ought to thank the participants for their time and participation in the research.

(A) PROFILE OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) PARTICIPANTS

The facilitator to collect below information (tick or fill as appropriate):

- ☐ FGD Code Name: _____ Venue _____
- ☐ Name of Convener: _____ Mobile No. _____
- ☐ Number of Participants: Total _____ Women _____ Men _____
- Persons with Disabilities (PWDs): _____
- ☐ Categories of HBWs present
- I. Independent artisans: Total: _____ Women: _____ Men: _____
- II. Members of a formal group: Total: _____ Women: _____ Men: _____
- ☐ Categories of crafts produced by participants (*Tick as appropriate*)
- Basketry products
 - Wood carving products
 - Stone carving products
 - Clay ceramic/pottery products
 - Metal products
 - Textiles/Fashion products
 - Leather products
 - Jewellery
 - Recycled/upscaled products
 - Others (specify) _____

(B) INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS FOR CLIMATE SETTING

1. Are you aware of any digitalised social protection services/ programmes/ systems in the country? *[If the answer is yes, ask the participants to mention them].*
2. What benefits do HBWs enjoy from such digitalised social protection services / programmes/ systems?

3. Do you think digitalisation of these social protection services / programmes/ systems violates your rights as a home-based worker in any way? How?
4. Which specific rights of home-based workers have been violated by the digitalisation of social protection services / programmes/ systems?

(C) SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES/ PROGRAMMES/SYSTEMS, DIGITALISATION, AND RIGHTS OF HOME-BASED WORKERS

Awareness:

5. How do you get information about available social protection services / programmes/ systems?
6. Which is the most difficult social protection service / programme/ system to access in the country? What about the easiest one to access?
7. Do you know what and how much social protection you are entitled to?
8. Are you able to access your entitlements on time and easily? *[If the answer is no, ask the participants to explain challenges faced].*
9. What should be done to address the cited challenges and improve the situation? Who needs to do what differently? *[You may mention examples of key players to stimulate the discussion].*

Information security:

10. What information do you have to provide to register/access the digitalised social protection entitlements?
11. What do you think would have happened if you refused to provide this information? Did you feel you had any choice about having to share this information?
12. Do you know why that specific information was needed or what it is used for? Do you know who that information is shared with?
13. Do you know what information you have the right to keep private and not share?
14. Would you like to know more about your rights in this space of digitalisation (privacy, data protection, consent)?

Digitalisation

15. Do you prefer in-person or mobile/online services? Why?
16. Are any forms of social protection services / programmes/ systems available via mobile or online? Do they always work? Are there any problems?
17. Are you able to register/ pay-in/be-paid/seek accountability via the mobile or online platforms? If there is a mistake, is it easy to fix?
18. What are the advantages of the mobile/online systems? What about their disadvantages?

19. Do you have adequate mobile/ digital skills required for optimal use of the mobile/online social protection systems?
20. How has digitalisation of social protection services / programmes/ systems changed your way of life?

Exclusion:

21. How has the move to a digital system affected your ability to access assistance?
22. Who is being excluded or disadvantaged by the digitalisation and why?
23. Other than home-based workers, do the digital systems disadvantage other people or group of workers? *[If the answer is yes, ask the participants to mention them]*. What kind of problems/challenges do they face?
24. Are some social protection providers better than others? What makes the difference?
25. Have you experienced any instances in which you felt frustrated or overwhelmed by the digital social protection systems? *[If the answer is yes, ask the participants to mention them]*.
26. In your view, what needs to be done to improve the situation?

(D) EXIT AND CLOSURE

27. In your opinion, what needs to be done to enable everyone to secure their right to social protection?
1. From a worker **Conclusion**
 2. The research findings confirm previous assumptions about the way home-based workers are viewed by policymakers and government departments, namely:
 3. that home-based workers are invisible and often left out of decision-making processes;
 4. that home-based workers do not have a voice and often lack an opportunity to be heard in decision-making processes;
 5. that home-based workers are not counted; i.e. their validity is taken for granted, they do not count much, and they are not captured by statistics carried out by policymakers and government departments.
 6. It is imperative therefore that in light of the digitalisation of social protection services, the needs and aspirations of home-based workers be taken into considerations' rights' perspective, what should be done to improve social protection of home-based workers?
 7. As we conclude, what else do you suggest to be included in similar research work?

-END-
