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Priority Theme: Right to Work and Access to the Labour Market

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***Digital literacy as a Human Right and Right to Work
(472 words)***

It is extremely urgent to close today’s digital divide since the pandemic has pushed learning, work, and public services and communication into cyberspace. While COVID-19 on one hand accelerated the digitalisation processes , it has kept many people in poverty including all race, age and gender diversity. More people will be left behind unless efforts will be made to build a better future will include digital literacy as a human rights of the 21st century.

It is our obligation to eliminate an important part of social injustice and empower many people, old and young, living in conditions of digital illiteracy to participate and contribute to the economy and society of our countries.

The populations excluded from digital literacy are many children, youths, elders, people living in low-income developing countries, the working poor of developed countries and marginal populations such as migrants or minorities and millions of working-class persons residing in developing and developed countries. These people deprived of digital literacy are left out of economic growth since they cannot participate in contemporary life which is increasingly based on IT technology.

We need to remedy this situation urgently if not, the people who are already left behind due to poverty, rudimentary educational attainment and discriminatory work opportunities will be further excluded in the post-COVID era and remain as a burden, instead of an asset, to the country.

Specific situations that exemplify this hidden “exclusion” caused by digital inequality are plenty. Many governmental services are increasingly provided by internet or smart phones while the traditional offices are closing for fear of crowd gathering and fast spreading of COVID-19. Not to be digitally skilled and not having access to modern digital technology excludes a large group of people who cannot download and process administrative information and application forms or purchase and pay goods via smart phones or participate in receiving education on-line nor are they able to register for vaccination or to receive notices of social benefits pay via internet.

Without having access to internet connections represents an insurmountable barrier to learning, to get health advice, to buy and sell and to continue to work. Poor and disenfranchised families that do not have the financial resources and hence are not able to purchase either a personal computer nor pay helpers who could tutor their children during lock-down, and if some internet access exists, they are inadequate due to insufficient bandwidth or very limited connectivity .

The situation for people working in the back office with low pay fares no better. Remote working is not a practicable option for them due to the lack of broadband subscription, adequate working space versus their need of prioritising between works versus helping their children study. They are forced to choose between sheltering at home or risking getting infected, between their own work obligation and attending to their children’s future.