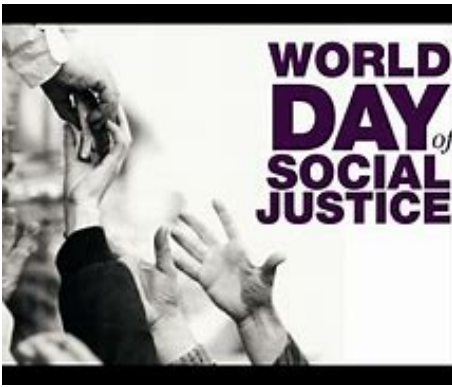


World Day of Social Justice 2021

“A Call for Social Justice in the Digital Economy”



Since 2009, February 20th has been designated as the United Nation’s Day of Observance known as “World Day of Social Justice.” The purpose of the observance is to focus on the plight of social injustices throughout the world and to advocate for improvements both within nations and between nations.

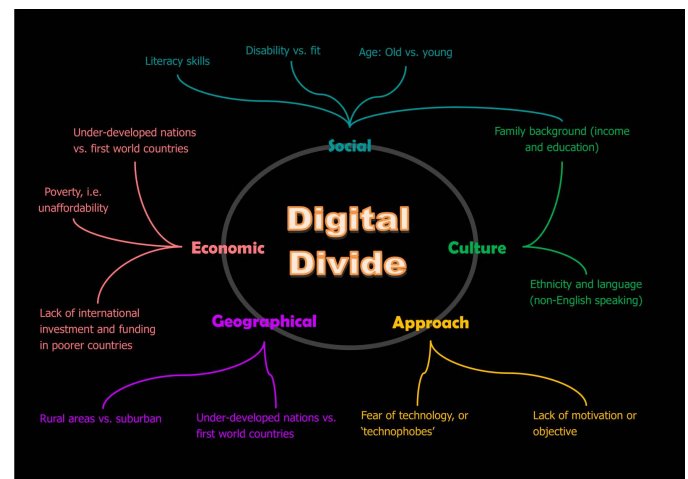
Over the years, this International day has recognized the need to promote Human Rights: standing up for migrants, the disabled, and elderly; the need to remove artificial social barriers based on race, gender, or religion; as well as tackling issues such as poverty, exclusion, and gender equality.

In recent years, internationally, “digital rights” has primarily been concerned with online privacy, data, and personal information protections. Digital technology has also made accessibility gains in the areas of physical disability through technology adaptations of large-print screens, text-to-voice review of web pages, and amazing assistive tools for communication.

The COVID- 19 pandemic has influenced a significant social impact on the way in which we interact with each other and the world at large. Quarantines and shut-downs created a significant reliance on remote environments through which there has been an increase in the use of digital platforms to access work, education, health care (including access to vaccine registrations), and public services. This year, the United Nations will focus on Social Justice in the Digital Economy. This will review the “Digital Divide” and its relation to social determinants, such as age, household income, and educational attainments as they impact an individuals’ effective access to digital information and technology.

The pandemic has also further magnified the effects of the digital divide by highlighting inequities in access to internet services and materials such as computers and tablets. Many of those who can connect may only be able to do so through the use of mobile phones, which presents with difficulties processing administrative procedures online, taking part in online educational activities, searching for jobs, and accessing video conferencing platforms.

One of the barriers to accessing the internet is household income due to cost. One of the most ambitious initiatives to take steps to close the digital divide, announced before the Pandemic, was New York City’s “Internet Master Plan.” The plan, a first of its kind in the nation, aimed to achieve universal internet access and affordable connectivity for New York City. In January 2020, the city government found that 18% of residents (over 1.5 million people) lacked internet access at home or via mobile phone. In the case of people living below the poverty line, up to 46% do not have home internet access. Many cities across Europe and the United States are taking similar action to boost connectivity in times of Covid-19.



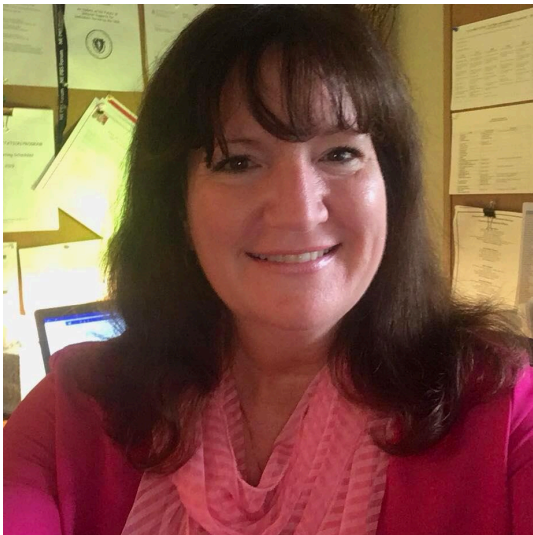
The digital divide is also a matter of skills. Mastering digital technology has become increasingly important to accessing services. Reportedly, over one-third of adults 65 and older say they never use the internet, and about half say they do not have home broadband services. One solution, found internationally, is from the City Council of Milan, which has established a collaboration agreement with Samsung to provide free training support to people over 65 who have difficulty using the internet. In France, the metropolitan government of Paris has adopted a digital voucher programs to exchange for digital training sessions with community organizations.

Maintaining a progressive social agenda for the digital age - one which will be more inclusive for those families and individuals we serve, by ensuring they have support for accessibility to work opportunities and services - will continue to be a priority as we move forward in the years ahead.



Wish to learn more?

Check out this years' event session offered through the International Labour Organization.
https://www.ilo.org/newyork/events-and-meetings/WCMS_767608/lang--en/index.htm



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