Title: “An institutional perspective to bridging the divide: The case of Somali women refugees fostering digital inclusion in the volatile context of urban Kenya, New Media and Society (2022)” Holly Ritchie

Abstract

This article examines the growing influence of Informational Communication Technologies (ICTs) in less certain refugee contexts and the role of civil society groups. Drawing on an empirical case study of Somali refugees in Kenya, the article explores the grassroots use of ICTs by refugee women and local socio-economic dynamics in processes of inclusion. Adopting a micro-institutional perspective, the discussion looks at the emerging influence of mobile technology on refugee women’s precarious norms related to mobility and work, and the evolution of new digital norms. The article highlights the strategic role of women’s groups and proactive group members as ‘institutional entrepreneurs’, in aiding levels of ICT adoption among group members, motivated by connection, protection and collective enterprise, with potential effects far beyond the group. In a transitory and fragile refugee context however, constraints on civil society may lead to the exclusion of more isolated populations without formal institutional support.

Bio: Based in Kenya, Dr Holly Ritchie is a research fellow at the International Institute of Social Studies and a research affiliate with the International Centre for Frugal Innovation (ICFI), a Leiden-Delft-Erasmus Universities research alliance. She takes a special focus on gender, culture and institutions in ‘fragile’ economic development. Holly’s work has included studies with conflict-affected populations, in particular Afghanistan (where she conducted her doctoral research), as well as refugee groups across East Africa and the Middle East.  Recently, she has explored refugee links to ICTs, culture and digital inclusion. She has published articles with *World Development,* *Disaster Studies* and *New Media and Society*.