

PROJECT REPORT: Digital Awareness, Empowerment and Storytelling

A digital literacy, online safety and video storytelling training programme for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa

Cape Town, South Africa | 29 June – 4 July 2026
Venue: Holy Cross Hall

Implementing partner organisations: Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa (SIHMA), ICT4D Collective at Royal Holloway, University of London, and STEPS Cape Town

Executive Summary

The [Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa](#) (SIHMA), in collaboration with [Royal Holloway University of London](#), successfully concluded a five-day training workshop titled *Digital Awareness, Empowerment and Storytelling* in Cape Town from 29 June to 4 July 2026. The training, delivered in partnership with [STEPS](#), comprised digital literacy, facilitated film-screening, video story-telling skills and responsible, safety-conscious use of social media.

Key achievements in the participants' skills acquisition included proficiency in digital platform use, safety and consent awareness, facilitation skills, and video production.

Participant testimonials demonstrate personal growth, high satisfaction and clear intentions to utilise the acquired skills in areas of entrepreneurship, community work and advocacy. Videos produced through the training programme will help raise awareness of migration and related issues and create livelihood opportunities through social platforms.

The training was delivered under difficult circumstances as it coincided with a period of acute national tension around migration and anti-immigrant violence in South Africa. Hence the training was compressed into five contact days rather than the six originally planned considering nationwide anti-migrant protests held on June 30th, 2026. Despite the challenges, the programme still achieved strong outcomes as detailed in this report.

Introduction and Background

The *Digital Awareness, Empowerment and Storytelling* workshop was aimed at addressing critical digital divide affecting migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa. To facilitate rapid digital transformation, access to digital tools and skills is important for inclusion, protection, and participation. Some of the risks that result from limited digital literacy include online scams, misinformation, and exclusion from economic and social opportunities. Furthermore, migrant voices are often underrepresented in mainstream narratives.

The training programme was a direct result of the work undertaken through the UKRI GCRF Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ, 2019-2024) project's work package on Digital Technologies and Inequalities, led by Prof. G. Hari Harindranath and Prof. Tim Unwin and supported by Dr Maria Rosa Lorini. Their research on digital tech, inequality and migration clearly evidenced the risks vulnerable migrants faced from the use of digital technologies and highlighted the need voiced by migrants for better digital capacity. In addition, their research in the South African context, where xenophobia and anti-migration rhetoric are widespread both online and offline, highlighted a need felt by many migrants to use their own 'voice' to share experiences and narratives on migration through video storytelling and social media engagement while developing digital and communication skills that can also support other aspects of their lives.

SIHMA partnered with the Royal Holloway team to build on this research and to run workshops with, and for, migrants in Cape Town and Johannesburg during the MIDEQ project. The MIDEQ Digital Tech and Inequalities work package led a series of training activities for migrants in the practicalities of video making and on training others in the safe, wise and secure use of digital technology, producing outputs that include the documentary *Through Their Eyes* and the *Fusion Avenue* YouTube channel created by a core group of migrants they worked with, showcasing a series of videos by, and for, migrants.

SIHMA have since continued to make this a key part of our organisational agenda. This would not have happened without the research undertaken by Prof Harindranath, Prof Unwin and Dr Lorini and the subsequent collaborative impact and engagement activities we have undertaken together. The current digital capacity and video storytelling training activities build directly on this foundation and are therefore a route to institutionalising such digital capacity building programmes at SIHMA. They also reconnected with some of the same migrants trained through MIDEQ, to sustain and extend the project's community level impact.

Main Objective: To enhance digital literacy and digital skills among refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers through training in social media tools, video storytelling and online safety, while leveraging the sustained impact of prior MIDEQ work.

Specific Objectives

- Equip participants with essential digital literacy skills, which include online safety and responsible use of social media.
- Create confidence in using digital platforms for communication, advocacy, and livelihood opportunities.
- Build participants' skills in video production, including scripting, filming, editing, and content publishing.
- Equip participants with skills on film screening and facilitation.

The training programme was held at Holy Cross Hall in Cape Town. It was facilitated by STEPS a Cape Town based, non -profit documentary organisation that uses film to spark dialogue and drive advocacy on human rights, health and environmental issues. STEPS designed and facilitated the training programme reported in this document. A total of 12 participants (gender balance ensured) participated in the workshop.

Key Themes/Areas Covered

Though the use of the STEPS methodology, the training combined the theoretical instruction with extensive practical learning to ensure that the participants can build their confidence and effectively practice and apply the knowledge that they have acquired during the training. Some of the key areas the five-day training focused on included:

- Using social media and AI tools responsibly, including an introduction to monetisation.
- Using digital platforms to build and promote a personal brand.
- Video making/filming and documenting experiences.
- Hands-on editing using mobile editing tools.
- Using films as a tool for dialogue and impact.
- The impact of facilitated film screenings.
- The knowledge, skills and attitude of a good film screening facilitator
- Designing an "impact strategy", linked to personal stories.
- Hands on Practice on planning and facilitating a film screening with an audience (The participants invited an audience and practiced facilitation with them).
- Documenting and reporting on facilitated screenings.

Across the five days, the daily structure combined a short recaps, input and group activities, practical filming/ facilitation/editing blocks and closing evaluation giving participants

repeated, immediate opportunities to apply new skills rather than receiving them as one-off theory. Selection of participants prioritised the inclusion of vulnerable groups, while requiring basic digital familiarity and a commitment to attend the full week.

Training Testimonials

The interviews, handwritten testimonials and closing testimonials provided rich qualitative evidence of the training's impact, showcasing the progress the participants: technical skill acquisition, growth in confidence and self-awareness, online consent and safety awareness.

Participants spoke of understanding the attributes of a good facilitator, of learning how to host a successful film screening that encourages audience participation, and of gaining a new awareness of how artificial intelligence (AI) tools can be used for both beneficial and harmful purposes, as well as how AI could be used constructively to strengthen personal social media presence. Several respondents linked these new skills directly to concrete future action, describing plans to host their own film screening programmes or to apply what they had learned within existing human-rights and community organisations to which they already belonged. Below are some of the testimonials from the participants:

Pretty (South Africa, age 27)

Pretty joined the programme while looking for work, and most enjoyed group work, film editing and group discussion. She named consent, cyberbullying prevention, digital-footprint awareness, personal branding, and filming/editing as the key skills she gained and said she had not previously realised how important it was to get consent before posting pictures of others online. Her confidence grew enough to shift her sense of her own future: she now sees opportunities in entrepreneurship and community work and said she would strongly encourage another young migrant to join a similar programme. In her own words: *"I came, I learned and my whole perspective about use of social media changed."*

Baraka Ester Basabose (DRC, age 25)

Baraka came to the training already searching for work as an affiliate marketer while studying full time. She described the training as bringing her storytelling, storyboarding, filming, editing and teamwork skills together, and was surprised by *"how simple"* using everyday tools to bring a story to life could be. Looking ahead, she plans to create more content for her own business and sees clear opportunities for entrepreneurship and community-supported work. Her own summary: *"I was watered and nourished both physically and emotionally, and now I can see confidence to grow."*

Uwonkunda Kevin Musabe (Rwanda, age 24)

Uwonkunda had struggled with paid digital tools before the training and found some of the new software difficult at first. Over the course of the week, he learned storyboarding, filming, editing and how to use social media and AI tools responsibly, and said the group discussions gave him real clarity on how to approach situations with a more open mind. He described the training as having given him strategies, taught him to work as a team, and made him more confident and self-assured, including in public speaking. His message to future participants: *"Upskill yourself."*

Riziki Katema (DRC, age 21)

Riziki, who ran a small business before the training, found tools like KineMaster difficult to operate at first, but named filming, editing, personal branding and confident storytelling among the skills she gained. She said she was most surprised by everything that goes on *"behind the scenes"* in being a good facilitator and described the project as having made a

real difference in her life, helping her use social media pages more wisely and become more confident and self-aware.

David Mbwavu (DRC, age 22)

David came into the training already comfortable with digital tools and social media, and named online safety, responsible social media use, storyboarding, filming/editing and confident storytelling as his key takeaways. He said he was most surprised by "*the amount of excitement when working as a group,*" and that the training helped him think differently about his future and changed how he communicates with others. His advice to future participants: "*Attend and pay very close attention to what most interests you.*" His memorable line: "*This was the most mind-blowing, conclusive and productive [experience].*"

Christian Bake (DRC, age 28)

Christian, who had been working as a vendor and described himself as not comfortable with digital tools beforehand, gained online safety, responsible social media use, digital content creation, storyboarding, filming/editing and teamwork skills. Like David, he named the energy of working as a group and community as the most surprising part of the week, and said the training changed how he thinks about connecting with others and hopes to apply what he learned in community work, entrepreneurship and advocacy.

Christian Katepe (DRC)

Before this training, Christian was working as a panel beater and welder, with little formal background in digital media. He described learning about medium-shot composition storytelling and, in particular, the importance of consent, reflecting: "*I have learned about medium shot, storytelling, also about consent. Before you do anything... you need to ask first.*" His testimony reflects how directly the training's consent and ethics content landed with participants coming from outside the media or advocacy sectors.

Tshikal Kabulu Matsi (DRC) A published author and Vice President of the Grass End Foundation, Tshikal described the training as reconnecting him with a sense of purpose he felt he had lost: "*This training has impacted my life in a way that it has rebranded me. I had forgotten about my brand, but it has awakened again.*" He named communication skills, public speaking and storyboarding as the three skills he valued most from the week, noting their direct relevance to shooting videos and documentaries.

Therese (DRC)

A full-time student based in Cape Town, Therese took part in the closing panel reflection alongside fellow participants Christian and Tshikal. Her participation reflects the training's reach among migrant students balancing full-time study with the programme's practical demands.

These and other testimonials consistently demonstrate enjoyment of collaborative learning, surprise at creative capabilities, manifest confidence acquisition, and readiness to apply skills for personal and community benefit. The following links are for the testimonials and the videos created: [Videos and Testimonials](#)

Implementation Challenges and Mitigation Measures

The training's delivery timeframe coincided directly with a difficult period around migration in South Africa. Anti-migration groups had set an unofficial deadline of 30th June 2026, for undocumented foreign nationals to leave the country and the days surrounding and the days surrounding the deadline saw large-scale protests and marches in cities across the country, including Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria and Durban. While government officials described the period as peaceful and contained, the period was marked by isolated looting and public violence in many areas across the province and country, forcing many migrants to seek protection in consulates, refugee reception centres and places of worship.

These events led to our cancelling the activities planned for 30th June and integrating the content for that day into the remaining five days (29 June and 1-4 July). Only 12 out of the planned 20 participants were able to take part in the workshop due to understandable reluctance or practical inability to travel to and attend sessions amid heightened public tension, policing activity and fear directed at migrants, refugees and asylum seekers even if they had initially confirmed their attendance.

This experience also carries a direct implication for future iterations of the programme. Any future cohort delivered during a period of heightened anti-migrant sentiment, should build in explicit contingency planning and close coordination with local safety networks and partner organisations to protect both participant safety and continuity of learning.

Pre and Post evaluations were shared with the participants this was done to determine their understanding of Digital Literacy as well as to test the impact of the previous workshop that was done. However, in the initial evaluation phase we had only 7 (seven) participants join and to the end we had moved up to 10 (ten) participants. This report therefore does not attempt a pre/post comparison; the baseline and endline findings are instead reported separately, on their own terms, elsewhere in this document. A more robust monitoring approach for future cohorts including consistent participant identifiers and a clear, enforced sampling protocol so that comparable data can be matched at the individual level.

Ethical Standards, Outputs, and Broader Impact

The programme followed established ethics protocols, including voluntary participation, informed consent, protection of privacy, and content review processes. The produced videos and testimonials will be responsibly shared through SIHMA platforms, contributing to public awareness, advocacy, and showcasing livelihood opportunities for participants.

The wider impact includes enhanced community awareness on migration issues, cascading of skills through participant networks, and contribution to more inclusive narratives.

Strategic Value for Donors and Recommendations

This evaluation demonstrates strong programme relevance and effectiveness even though delivery diverged from the original plan in two important, budget -relevant respects: 12 participants were trained rather than the 20 envisaged, and the content was delivered over five contact days rather than six, following the loss of 30 June to national unrest. Reading against those actual figures, strong baseline digital confidence allowed rapid progress into advanced content, and the facilitation and consent -awareness gaps identified at baseline were closed almost entirely by the end of the week.

Recommendations for Future Support

- Funding additional cohorts in other locations is highly recommended.
- Follow-up with the trained cohort to support and help them navigate the practical challenges that they might be facing in implementation.
- Collaboration with the trained cohort on practical implementation.
- Development of open toolkits and mentorship programmes.
- Establishment of a more robust monitoring system for longer -term outcomes.
- Exploration of integrated livelihood or advocacy components.

Conclusion

The Digital Awareness, Empowerment and Storytelling training programme delivered by SIHMA, Royal Holloway and STEPS to participants over five contact days, achieved notable success despite being delivered against an acute national tension around migration. The programme captured evidence of personal growth, technical skills development and strengthened sense of purpose among participants.

Testimonials from participants described the training as an experience that goes beyond technical instruction but fosters empathy and a renewed sense of purpose tied to community advocacy and storytelling. The combination of strong evaluation data, ethical implementation and positive feedback from participants makes this model worthy of continued investment.

Significant scaling and collaboration opportunities abound with ample support from prospective donors and stakeholders, and SIHMA and partners welcome veritable collaborations in this regard. Supporting this work represents an impactful contribution to digital equity, migrant inclusion, and community resilience.