

Outcome Document

GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION IN OUR DIGITAL FUTURE: A NEW GENDER DEAL FOR WSIS+20

Conveners: *World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) &
Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG)*

Wednesday 29 May, 2024. 5 -5.45 pm CET

<https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/Agenda/Session/301>

Key Issues discussed

- Current version of the Global Digital Compact. Analysis from a feminist perspective:
 - What the GDC has done well: Eg, recognition of digital divides within countries.
 - What the GDC misses:
 - While the need to address the concentration of market power is noted, a gender analysis of markets is missing.
 - The imagination of public participation is missing. There needs to be a stronger articulation of the sovereignty of people – in line with feminist principles.
 - Recommendations to increase possibility of a GDC that a safe, equitable, and empowering for all.
- Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV)
 - is amplifying risks for women who want to be part of the digital space. That is, ALL women, not limited to those in the public eye. Gender biases and stereotypes are amplified.
 - Lack of algorithmic transparency. It's not clear if women genuinely hold the right to participate.
 - When women and girls are harassed online, the responsibility of defending themselves is entirely on their shoulders.
 - Platforms while not the main actors, are not interlocutors for everyone - only for the privileged. When issues arise in global majority nations, there's no recourse as the platforms in most cases are not domiciled in these countries.
- META Inc case.
 - Collaborates with civil society across the globe to provide guidance on its community guidelines and especially how they impact women and girls. META engages regularly with safety partners worldwide to inform the work and seek feedback.

Towards WSIS+20 and WSIS beyond 2025

Challenges

- Marginalisation of women's rights activists from digital governance spaces
- Solutions tend to be contextual at best while they should be systemic as well. For example, rather than address TFGBV against an individual, address the chilling effects.
- There seems to be no ability to act on digital injustices.
- There is as well no ability to scrutinize data agreements, particularly so in global majority nations that are recipients of what comes from the global north.
- Policy experiments happen without regard for national laws.
- There is lack of recognition of misogyny in all its forms and intensity.

Opportunities

There exists a wealth of feminist knowledge in civil society that can be harnessed to inject critical analyses and approaches to WSIS processes. It is important to encourage and welcome this input.

Tangible outcomes

1. Advocacy for a New Gender Deal for WSIS+20. One that:
 - a. Calls on all relevant actors – the UN system, governments, media and digital communication companies, and civil society movements - to support the inclusion of a new gender deal in the digital ecosystem.
 - b. Interrogates existing norms and reinforces mechanisms to strengthen gender equality within the technology sector.
 - c. Implements actions designed to respond to urgent identified needs, such as:
 - i. ensuring universal and safe access of women and girls to the digital ecosystem;
 - ii. promoting regulatory and co-regulatory mechanisms at national, regional and international levels;
 - iii. implementing frameworks for algorithmic transparency, incorporating methods such as third-party audits;
 - iv. promoting digital literacy programmes with a gender component;
 - v. encouraging efforts by women's organisations in using digital media and online spaces to amplify their stories;
 - vi. ensuring safe conditions for women journalists and human rights defenders; and,
 - vii. tackling online and offline gender-based harassment and violence against women and girls, gagging clauses and consequent immunity from the law.

- d. Urges the international community to recognise the centrality of these issues in achieving gender equality in the 21st century.

Key recommendations

The Global Digital Compact should be revised as follows:

- It should include provisions that **recognize and address misogyny**
- It should include a **standalone specific gender goal** to prioritize women's and girls' rights to live free from violence and benefit equally from technology.
- It should provide for the establishment of a **gender equality committee** to integrate gender perspectives into digital policies, consisting of experts in gender, digital rights, cybersecurity, and representatives from women's organizations and survivors of digital violence.
- It should require **mandatory gender impact assessments** for all digital policies and initiatives to anticipate and mitigate negative impacts on women and girls.
- It should require **gender parity in decision-making** bodies related to digital technologies to ensure diverse perspectives and equitable outcomes.
- It should require **comprehensive online safety standards that prioritize the safety of women and girls**, including robust mechanisms for reporting and swiftly removing harmful content in order to transform norms.
- It should require **international collaboration and data sharing** given that TFGBV transcends borders:
- It should require provision of **safety services, psychological support and legal aid** to TFGBV survivors.
- It should ensure **investment in education and awareness campaigns** that promote digital literacy, respectful online behavior, respect and consent.
- It should **hold rights bearers accountable for violating human rights in ALL jurisdictions**.

Suggestions for thematic aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2025

- Building an Information Society founded on feminist principles of equity, equality, inclusion, fairness and justice.
- Tackling online misogyny and tech-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)
- Transforming gender norms in the online space to enable respect for women's digital rights, including the right to participate in all aspects of tech ecosystems.