



APC ISSUE PAPERS

# WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER AND INTERNET GOVERNANCE

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## OVERVIEW

**T**his issue paper addresses the degree to which gender and women's rights feature in Internet<sup>1</sup> governance, in multiple interconnected ways including, but certainly not limited to, access, content and representation. Gender and women's rights occupy a largely rhetorical role in today's discussion of Internet governance.

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<sup>1</sup> While it is the policy of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) not to capitalise "internet", as a step towards demystifying the term, the author argues that it is a proper name and needs to be capitalised. This paper thus follows the author's preference.

When speaking of access, there is a noticeable inverse proportionality in the movement against the digital divide. Often, especially in countries with pronounced gender discrimination, as the overall percentage of men with access grows, the percentage of women without access or with limited access remains steady, thereby increasing the gender imbalance. And often there is a direct proportionality between increased access for women and violence against women online.

On representation, an issue that has been very important in civil society and the private sector, there is recognition of the need for more women in leadership, more women on panels and more women involved in agenda setting. Civil society focuses largely on bringing women



and women's topics to the table, while the private sector has placed a premium on developing the capacity of girls and women for leadership in industry and representation as experts on mainstream topics. To a degree there is an improvement. One does see more women participating in the process of Internet governance, although meetings that are not specifically about women's issues still see only token participation at leadership levels. The IGF Gender Report Card discussed below highlights some of these trends. Dealing with women's issues as specific topics in mainstream discussions of Internet governance is still the exception. One has to search far and wide to find substantive outcomes that relate to gender, women's rights and the governance of the Internet. Many governments do, however, include targets in all of their resolutions, although questions remain about the degree to which these resolutions have any effect on the status of women on the Internet.

Discussion of gender in Internet governance often occurs as a set of stand-alone topics: There are not enough women on the board! Women are subjected to violence online! Women's lives as presented online are minimised, stigmatised and fetishised! Rarely are these issues discussed in terms of their intersections and their interrelated nature. It is often hard enough to get the stand-alone issues on the agenda. More involved topics are often shunned as being too complex and too difficult to understand. Even more rare are the occasions when issues are discussed in terms of the intersection of gender issues with other forms of social disadvantage, discrimination, and oppression, e.g. race, national status, age, or hetero and cis normativity. While this issue paper focuses on individual issues in gender and women's rights as related to Internet governance, the intersectionality of the issues needs to be kept in mind.

As human beings, we don't have one-dimensional identities – we're all a combination of biological, social and cultural categories. We're living intersections, we're multi-dimensional. And so are the issues affecting us.

So when we are designing a technology, a tool, a policy to sort out an issue emerging in any of the domains constructing our lives – politics, health care, security, labor, property, taxes, education, environment, media – adopting an intersectional perspective is greatly beneficial.<sup>2</sup>

2 Martini, B. (2015, 26 May). An intersectional take on technology, rights and justice. Beatrice Martini blog: On tech and tools for justice. [www.beatricemartini.it/blog/intersectionality](http://www.beatricemartini.it/blog/intersectionality)

## DEFINITIONS

To begin with, it is important to define the three terms included in the title of this report.

### Women's rights

Women's rights are human rights. This is confirmed and detailed in the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women:

Noting that the Charter of the United Nations reaffirms faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women,

Noting that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex [...].<sup>3</sup>

### Gender

The word gender has been subject to much discussion over the years. In the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, Annex IV<sup>4</sup> was dedicated to the usage of the word gender in the report. Gender was "to be interpreted and understood as it was in ordinary, generally accepted usage." At the time, and in fact still today, the mainstream dictionary definition is that gender means "Either of the two divisions, designated female and male, by which most organisms are classified on the basis of their reproductive organs and functions; sex."<sup>5</sup>

3 [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm)

4 [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/Beijing%20full%20report%20E.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/Beijing%20full%20report%20E.pdf)

5 The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: "gender" (accessed 17 May 2015). <https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=gender>

The discussion of gender, however, has gone deeper in feminist and queer theory and its meaning has evolved to represent a cultural process, which depending on the theoretical framework may or may not relate to physical or biological sex. In maintaining that human rights are applicable to all human beings without distinctions of any kind, they must apply to all human beings no matter how gender is defined and no matter how gender is expressed by an individual.

### Internet governance

Internet governance is sometimes considered challenging to define. Many claim that there is no such thing as Internet governance. Others claim that it is no different than other forms of government oversight. Defining it was important to governments during the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), and a United Nations Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) was created to discover or develop a definition. While the group failed to come up with a formal definition, it did produce a working definition that was included in the final report of the WSIS, the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. As this definition has become standard in the field, this paper will use the Tunis Agenda working definition for Internet governance:

34. A working definition of Internet governance is the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet.<sup>6</sup>

For over a decade people have been discussing and writing articles trying to explain the working definition and its relationship to what happens in Internet governance. A simpler definition can also be used: "Internet governance is the collection of practices, both explicit and implicit, that various stakeholders use when making policy or policy-related decisions concerning the development and use of [information and communications technologies (ICT) on] the Internet."<sup>7</sup>

In discussions of ICT and Internet governance it is important to make a distinction between the ICTs themselves, the Internet, the issue of Internet governance, and the availability of ICTs. All work done on gender and ICTs is not gender and Internet governance work. However, the policy considerations needed to make ICTs accessible and empowering on the Internet are often part of Internet governance.

### Stakeholders and the multistakeholder model

Often when speaking of Internet governance, two models are juxtaposed: the intergovernmental model dominated by nation states and the multistakeholder model. The multistakeholder definition was first borrowed from project management:

Loosely defined, a stakeholder is a person or group of people who can affect or be affected by a given project. Stakeholders can be individuals working on a project, groups of people or organizations, or even segments of a population. A stakeholder may be actively involved in a project's work, affected by the project's outcome, or in a position to affect the project's success.<sup>8</sup>

A multistakeholder model is a structure that is intended to foster a form of participatory democracy that allows all those who have a stake – the stakeholders – and who are so inclined, to participate on an equal footing in the deliberation of issues and the recommendation of solutions. When looking at any human being, it is usually possible to identify him or her as belonging to several stakeholder groups, yet in most multistakeholder models, people are slotted into a single stakeholder group.

6 World Summit on the Information Society. (2005). Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, paragraph 34. [www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc\\_multi.asp?lang=en&id=226710](http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en&id=226710)

7 Banks, K., Morris, J., & Doria, A. (2005). The Working Group on Internet Governance: A feminist conversation. In O. Drossou and H. Jensen (Eds.), *Visions in Process II: The World Summit on the Information Society, Geneva 2003-Tunis 2005*. Berlin: Heinrich Böll Foundation, p. 63. [www.worldsummit2003.de/download\\_en/Visions-in-ProcessII\(1\).pdf](http://www.worldsummit2003.de/download_en/Visions-in-ProcessII(1).pdf)

8 Piscopo, M. (2015). What is a Stakeholder? How to Identify, Analyze and Manage Project Stakeholders. *Project Management Docs*. [www.projectmanagementdocs.com/blog/what-is-a-stakeholder.html](http://www.projectmanagementdocs.com/blog/what-is-a-stakeholder.html)

## HISTORY, IMPETUS AND CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL ISSUES

### BEIJING, BEIJING+10, BEIJING+20

Any discussion of women's rights should include a reference to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and its Platform for Action. While this 1995 document includes neither information and communication technologies (ICTs) nor Internet governance, its plan of action does include several items which over the years have been recognised as being related to the Internet. These include strategic objectives and actions dealing with:

- A. Women and poverty
- B. Education and training of women
- C. Women and health
- D. Violence against women
- E. Women and armed conflict
- F. Women and the economy
- G. Women in power and decision-making
- H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- K. Women and the environment
- L. The girl child.<sup>9</sup>

Significantly, Beijing Platform Strategic Objective J.1<sup>10</sup> aimed to:

Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.

And the document also stated:

Women therefore need to be involved in decision-making regarding the development of the new technologies in order to participate fully in their growth and impact.<sup>11</sup>

While the Beijing Platform has been reviewed every five years since 1995, it has yet to include specific

reference to women online in connection with the plan of action.

APC put out a paper describing 10 points of contact between Beijing Platform Objective J and the power of ICTs:<sup>12</sup>

1. Access to infrastructure
2. Expression, information, agency
3. Economy and sustainable development
4. Privacy and autonomy
5. Decision making, public participation, activism
6. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)
7. Violence against women
8. Environment
9. Women's participation in the media
10. Women's representation in the media.

What still remains to be done is to find an approach that includes Internet governance in the development of policy reforms that can be implemented nationally and internationally to enable the power of ICT for women. Further work on unpacking the requirements for a stronger connection between ICT and gender is needed. In November 2014 the Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG) called for the inclusion of specific goals beyond those listed in Section J:

We cannot talk about equality, good governance, freedom of expression and sustainability when women are effectively silenced in and through the media, and where new technologies are used to undermine the human rights of women and women journalists.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., paragraph 238.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., paragraph 237.

<sup>12</sup> APC. (2015). *How Technology Issues Impact Women's Rights: 10 points on Section J*. [www.genderit.org/articles/how-technology-issues-impact-women-s-rights-10-points-section-j](http://www.genderit.org/articles/how-technology-issues-impact-women-s-rights-10-points-section-j)

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO. (2014, 6 November). Alliance calls for strong global gender and media agenda. *UNESCO*. [www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/news-and-in-focus-articles/all-news/news/alliance\\_calls\\_for\\_strong\\_global\\_gender\\_and\\_media\\_agenda/#.VXR8Kc9Viko](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/news-and-in-focus-articles/all-news/news/alliance_calls_for_strong_global_gender_and_media_agenda/#.VXR8Kc9Viko)

## On women in the media

In September 2005, the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women wrote about the advances to be expected from the post-WSIS process. The document discusses the derivation of its goals from the Beijing platform and goes on to lay out strategies for achieving the goals of gender equality in the use of ICT and the Internet during the next decade:

- Mainstreaming and monitoring of a gender perspective in all ICT initiatives.
- Collecting sex disaggregated data on the use of ICT and women's participation in policy making as well as developing targets, indicators, and benchmarks to track the progress of women's and girls' access to the benefits of ICT.
- Identifying and promoting good practices and lessons learned on the ways women and girls are using ICT.
- Capacity building towards gender equality in education and employment.
- Enhancing democracy and women's participation through electronic connectivity.
- Developing research and policies on health and environmental hazards of ICT industries.<sup>14</sup>

The reality 10 years later as reflected in recent work done by UN Women on Beijing+20 may give pause to the optimism of 2005. A recent report from UN Women describes:

Regardless of your choice of media, you'd have a good chance of encountering stereotypes that perpetuate gender discrimination.

Women in all types of media tend to be thin and sexualized. They talk less than men. They have fewer opinions. And they are far less likely, in the entertainment industry, to play roles as leaders or professionals, or even as women who work for a living.<sup>15</sup>

An infographic created by UN Women includes the following statistics:<sup>16</sup>

- 46% of news stories in print, radio and television reinforce gender stereotypes. Only 6% highlight gender equality.
- 1 in 4 people heard or read about in the news are women.
- Women hold 27% of top management jobs in media organisations.
- Misogyny and abuse are rife online. For instance, in the U.S., 26% of young women have been stalked online.
- 21% of filmmakers are women.
- 23% of films feature a female protagonist.

This is tangential to Internet governance as a field, but shows that 20 years after Beijing, little has changed. In 2014, however, GAMAG made the connection quite specific and placed the issue on the table during discussion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the proposed replacements for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which expire in 2015.

Provisions that GAMAG wants included in the SDGs include:

- Women's equal and effective participation and freedom from violence in all areas of media decision making and practice.
- Women's equal access to media ICT and their benefits.
- The right to safety and bodily integrity in the digitally mediated public sphere.
- Fair and balanced gender portrayal and occupational representation of women in the media.
- Sensitive, fair and rights-based coverage of violence against women and girls.
- Mainstreaming of gender in media and ICT policy and training curricula.
- Gender, media and information literacy training, education and campaigns.<sup>17</sup>

14 United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. (2005). *Women 2000 and Beyond: Gender equality and empowerment of women through ICT*. [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/w2000-09.05-ict-e.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/w2000-09.05-ict-e.pdf)

15 UN Women. (2015). *Women and the Media*. [beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/media](http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/media)

16 [beijing20.unwomen.org/en/infographic/media](http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/infographic/media)

17 UNESCO. (2014, 6 November). Op. cit.

## MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)

The concerns of women described in the Beijing Declaration were brought into relief by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),<sup>18</sup> intended to halve global poverty by 2015:

Eradicating extreme poverty continues to be one of the main challenges of our time, and is a major concern of the international community. Ending this scourge will require the combined efforts of all, governments, civil society organisations and the private sector, in the context of a stronger and more effective global partnership for development. The Millennium Development Goals set timebound targets, by which progress in reducing income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion – while promoting gender equality, health, education and environmental sustainability – can be measured. They also embody basic human rights – the rights of each person on the planet to health, education, shelter and security. The Goals are ambitious but feasible and, together with the comprehensive United Nations development agenda, set the course for the world's efforts to alleviate extreme poverty by 2015.<sup>19</sup>

The third Millennium Development Goal is to “promote gender equality and empower women.”<sup>20</sup> According to recent reports, while much has improved in the last 15 years, e.g. parity in education at the elementary level, this drops off for higher education levels. While there are more women in the chambers of government, there is not yet parity. Additionally, violence against women has not abated much at all, impeding progress. Women remain in poverty to a greater extent than men and “women are largely relegated to more vulnerable forms of employment.” The idea at the time of the MDGs was that ICTs would provide an opportunity for women's advancement. The problem has been that the policies necessary to make these ICTs accessible to girls and women everywhere have not been dealt with in Internet governance in a serious manner.

## World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

WSIS was a two-phase summit (2003, 2005) that included a multi-year preparatory process. Its purpose was to enable the achievement of the MDGs. By eliminating the digital divide, opportunities that empowered people would provide key mechanisms and instruments for achieving goals. WSIS was an intergovernmental process which included extensive multistakeholder consultations, initiated by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in response to concerns from member states over the implementation of the MDGs, the digital revolution, and the digital divide that had been created:

The digital revolution, fired by the engines of Information and Communication Technologies, has fundamentally changed the way people think, behave, communicate, work and earn their livelihood. It has forged new ways to create knowledge, educate people and disseminate information. It has restructured the way the world conducts economic and business practices, runs governments and engages politically. It has provided for the speedy delivery of humanitarian aid and healthcare, and a new vision for environmental protection. It has even created new avenues for entertainment and leisure. As access to information and knowledge is a prerequisite to achieving the Millennium Development Goals – or MDGs –, it has the capacity to improve living standards for millions of people around the world. Moreover, better communication between peoples helps resolve conflicts and attain world peace.

Paradoxically, while the digital revolution has extended the frontiers of the global village, the vast majority of the world remains unhooked from this unfolding phenomenon. With the ever-widening gulf between knowledge and ignorance, the development gap between the rich and the poor among and within countries has also increased. It has therefore become imperative for the world to bridge this digital divide and place the MDGs on the ICT-accelerated speedway to achievement.<sup>21</sup>

18 [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml)

19 Ki-moon, B. (2008). *Committing to action: achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Background note by the Secretary-General*. United Nations High-level event on the Millennium Development Goals. [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel/pdf/committing.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel/pdf/committing.pdf)

20 [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/gender.shtml](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/gender.shtml)

21 ITU. *World Summit on the Information Society. Basic information: About WSIS*. [www.itu.int/wsis/basic/why.html](http://www.itu.int/wsis/basic/why.html)

The Geneva Declaration of Principles, a document produced at the conclusion of the first phase, included “promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women” as one of the principles:<sup>22</sup>

12. We affirm that development of ICTs provides enormous opportunities for women, who should be an integral part of, and key actors, in the Information Society. We are committed to ensuring that the Information Society enables women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes. To this end, we should mainstream a gender equality perspective and use ICTs as a tool to that end.

As part of the preparatory process, civil society, together with other stakeholder groups, formed a Gender Caucus:

[A] multi-stakeholder group consisting of women and men from national governments, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and the United Nations system. The Caucus sought to facilitate women’s participation in the WSIS process and ensure that gender equality and women’s rights are integrated into WSIS and its outcome processes.<sup>23</sup>

Civil society also formed the NGO Gender Strategies Working Group (NGO-GSWG), a single stakeholder group. Each of the two different civil society bodies had a separate focus; in the Gender Caucus it was the process in general and issues like mainstreaming, while the NGO-GSWG focused on specific topical text contributions. The work of the NGO-GSWG was instrumental in achieving the inclusion of the gender statement in the Declaration of Principles.<sup>24</sup>

During this same period, governments decided they needed to define Internet governance but were unable to do so. In 2003 they asked the UN Secretary General to create an advisory group to give the WSIS guidance on the meaning of Internet governance. The resulting Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) was the first fully multistakeholder special advisory group ever

created in the UN.<sup>25</sup> It produced two documents, one a consensus document, the WGIG Report,<sup>26</sup> the other a compendium of positions that did not reach consensus, the WGIG Background Report.<sup>27</sup> The WGIG Report included the definition of the multistakeholder process given above and included in the Tunis Agenda. While the WGIG Report was not focused on gender issues, it did have a clear position on the issue:

Gender balance should be considered a fundamental principle with the aim of achieving an equal representation of women and men at all levels.

The WGIG Report emphasised mainstreaming of women’s rights and gender issues as part of Internet governance.

### Tunis Agenda, Post WSIS and WSIS+10

The Tunis Agenda recognised the “need to fully integrate gender equality perspectives in WSIS related strategies and facilitate their implementation [...] to ensure that the Information Society enables women’s empowerment and full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes.”<sup>28</sup>

In 2014, a review was done of the achievements of a decade’s worth of WSIS. While the review included open multistakeholder consultations, the outcomes were solely determined by the member states. The overall view of the outcome on gender equality included:

25 While it was multistakeholder, a balance was struck in the WGIG between governmental and non-governmental actors, but not equally among the three stakeholder groups defined by WSIS: government, private sector and civil society. The bipartite government/non-government balance has been maintained in the Internet Governance Forum Multistakeholder Advisory Group (IGF-MAG), the continuing forum recommended by WGIG. This is a curious mismatch that persists across all such UN originated groupings, with three stakeholder groups divided equally between two categories - governmental and non-governmental. All stakeholder groups are not created equal. In reference to participation for producing these documents, they did try to achieve traditional gender balance across the entire group.

26 Working Group on Internet Governance. (2005). *Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance* [www.wgig.org/docs/WGIGREPORT.pdf](http://www.wgig.org/docs/WGIGREPORT.pdf)

27 Working Group on Internet Governance. (2005). *Background Report: The Working Group on Internet Governance*. [www.wgig.org/docs/BackgroundReport.pdf](http://www.wgig.org/docs/BackgroundReport.pdf)

28 World Summit on the Information Society. (2014). *WSIS+10 Outcome Documents*. [www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2014/forum/inc/doc/outcome/362828V2E.pdf](http://www.itu.int/wsis/implementation/2014/forum/inc/doc/outcome/362828V2E.pdf)

22 WSIS. (2003). *Geneva Declaration of Principles*, paragraph 12. [www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html](http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html)

23 Gurumurthy, A. (2004). *Gender and ICTs: Overview Report*. Brighton: BRIDGE, p. 13. [www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/cep-icts-or.pdf](http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/cep-icts-or.pdf)

24 United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. (2005). Op. cit.



While there is recognition of the potential of ICT as a tool for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women accessing and using ICTs, a “gender divide” has also been identified. We reaffirm the importance of promoting and maintaining gender equality and women’s empowerment, guaranteeing the inclusion of women in the emerging global ICT society and taking into account the mandate of the newly established agency UN-WOMEN, the recommendations of the High Level Panel in the post-2015, The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. We therefore wish to recall and emphasize the importance of taking into account throughout the WSIS+10 Statement and Vision para 12 of the WSIS Declaration of Principles stating that the development of ICTs provides enormous opportunities for women, who should be an integral part of, and key actors, in the Information Society. We are committed to ensuring that the Information Society enables women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes. To this end, we should mainstream a gender equality perspective and use ICTs as a tool to that end.<sup>29</sup>

Ten years after the Tunis Agenda, it was recognised that little had changed despite the work of WSIS arising from the Tunis Agenda. In looking forward, the outcome report for 10 years’ worth of effort to promote gender equality includes this statement:

We emphasize that progress in implementing gender commitments enshrined in the WSIS outcome documents and forward-looking recommendations should be promoted by pursuing practical and joint measures to advance women’s empowerment within the Information Society, in order to continue to realize women’s meaningful access to ICTs and full integration of women’s needs and perspectives, and their full and effective participation.<sup>30</sup>

In other words, they decided to keep trying to use the same processes that had failed thus far.

Most of the discussion has been in relation to women and ICT, with only a tangential relationship to Internet governance and the policies that might make this possible. The role of Internet governance relates to how ICT opportunities could be made available to girls and women by means of local, national, regional and international policies. One reason this doesn’t happen is that the organisations that discuss, and are responsible for, Internet governance never really delve into the issue of how Internet governance can foster the rights and well being of women or their access to ICTs, and are content with symbolic acts such as resolutions to improve things in the future. It is difficult to name any resolution or plan of action whose goals have been taken as more than symbolic by the larger group of practitioners in Internet governance. The effect of this can be seen in the fact that few sustainable goals have ever been achieved by grand resolutions or ambitious plans of action.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 35.



## ECOLOGY: PRINCIPAL INSTITUTIONS (INCLUDING REGIONAL AND NATIONAL), ACTORS AND PROCESSES

In this section some of the major institutions involved in Internet governance activities are discussed.

### UN SYSTEM

Throughout the UN system, Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM)<sup>31</sup> are being initiated. GEM empowerment programmes are seen as important because they offer a possible way to measure change. Often the ability to measure change can encourage change. The effectiveness of empowerment since GEM projects were first initiated remains an open question. GEM evaluation programmes have been instituted to attempt to evaluate the effects of these and other programmes to empower women.

In keeping with the times, gender working groups have been initiated within several UN bodies including the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), ITU and UNESCO. All of these groups are involved with ICT and Internet governance issues. Specific requirements for inclusion of women on panels, in promotion considerations, and hiring are being defined and measured.

### UN Women

Over the years, UN Women has started to participate in Internet governance through its association with the ITU and other bodies like the IGF. Its most visible participation has been with respect to the ITU WSIS+10 review in 2014. UN Women contributed to CSTD's 10-year review of WSIS outcomes by discussing the recognised potential of ICT for women, but went on to say:

Yet, despite the recognised potential and areas of progress, it is not happening fast enough, to a

transformative degree and investments are lacking. Women are not sufficiently engaged in and influencing the direction and content of the knowledge society.<sup>32</sup>

Their statement goes on to discuss what should be done:

Various reviews, conferences, and consultations have all revealed a number of gaps and challenges. There are strong calls to:

- Meaningfully integrate women's needs, perspectives, and capabilities through proper gender analysis and effective learning environments.
- Position women as equal partners, active agents, content producers, innovators and decision-makers.
- Promote women's access to ICTs in all their forms. This should also include mechanisms to ensure that women do not fall behind with new and rapid technical advances, whether this be broadband, the internet of things, and the like.
- Better connect and heighten understanding of online and offline realities and surface underlying factors that hinder women's engagement in the information society. This also includes linking rights offline with enjoyment of rights online and ensuring that harmful practices online – such as violence against women – are prevented or addressed.
- Involve women to much greater degrees in global Internet governance discussions.
- Increase attention, dedicated resources, investments, more coherent approaches and accountability measures for women's empowerment within the information society.
- Effectively integrate the myriad of issues related to the knowledge society within the work and deliberations of the gender community and normative frameworks.
- Update the WSIS framework in line with standard international practice which treats gender as a mainstreamed issue, as well as one in its own right.<sup>33</sup>

Their statement was one of the strongest statements made on the need to carry the goals over into the SDGs.

31 GEM is also the acronym of Gender Evaluation Methodology, which is an APC programme: [www.genderevaluation.net](http://www.genderevaluation.net). The two uses of the terms are different in emphasis, though related. In the employment field, gender empowerment means taking positive measures to ensure the employment of more women. In the APC meaning, gender evaluation methodology involves evaluating changes in a longitudinal and gender disambiguated manner: "GEM is an evaluation methodology that helps you integrate a gender analysis into the planning and/or evaluations of any social change initiative. GEM will help you determine whether your development project or programme is really improving the lives of the women involved, as well as promoting positive change at individual, institutional, community and broader social levels."

32 UN Women. (2014). Contribution to the CSTD ten-year review of the implementation of WSIS outcomes, paragraph 1. [unctad.org/Sections/un\\_cstd/docs/cstd\\_ws10\\_unwomen\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/Sections/un_cstd/docs/cstd_ws10_unwomen_en.pdf)

33 Ibid., para. 2.

More involvement for UN Women and others can be expected over the next years to attempt to realise some of the goals for women in the MDG as part of the SDGs.

### Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council, through the Special Procedures, is increasingly playing an important role in articulating the human rights dimension of Internet governance. In relation to gender and women's rights, the following are noteworthy:

In mid-2013, the UN Working Group on Discrimination against women in law and practice, in its first thematic report, included specific reference to the Internet as "a site of diverse forms of violence against women." The Working Group expressed concern that for "women who engage in public debate through the Internet, the risk of harassment is experienced online."<sup>34</sup> The Working Group further recommended that states support women's equal participation in political and public life through ICTs, including by ensuring gender-responsiveness in the promotion and protection of human rights on the Internet, and improving women's access to the global governance of ICTs.<sup>35</sup>

The addendum to the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women's report to the 29th session of the Human Rights Council on her mission to the United Kingdom expressed concern about "women aged between 18 and 29 being at greatest risk of threatening and offensive advances on the Internet."<sup>36</sup>

Other Special Rapporteurs, such as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (in her 2010 report)<sup>37</sup> and on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (in his 2015 report)<sup>38</sup> are starting to make the link between women's rights, sexual rights and the Internet.

### International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

There are three aspects to ITU activities with regard to gender:

- Staffing, especially in senior positions
- Participation within ITU Study Groups and the ITU Council

- The work of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, being done by ITU together with UNESCO, and of the Working Group on Broadband and Gender.

"Women's access to ICTs and particularly broadband must be made a key pillar of the post-2015 global development agenda," said Dr Hamadoun I. Touré, ITU Secretary-General and co-vice chair of the Commission.<sup>39</sup>

This stands in contrast to other discussions that occurred on development. The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference discussion on Resolution 70 (Rev. Busan, 2014) focused on "mainstreaming a gender perspective in ITU and promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women through information and communication technologies" during the period 2014-2015. It is remarkable that in these discussions it appeared impossible for the ITU delegates to talk about selecting a diverse leadership without reminding people that diversity is only acceptable as long as one makes sure that the people chosen as leaders are competent. In many of the discussions today about diversifying leadership in the ITU based on gender, there is always an admonition that we need to be sure this is diversity that is competent. This sort of caveat on women's participation is widespread throughout Internet governance organisations. This sort of message shows that there is no realisation of the degree to which qualified, competent women are ready and able to participate. Equally importantly, it fails to realise that diversity is important in itself and is a need that must be satisfied in order for the process as a whole to be competent.

The ITU secretariat is responsible for reporting on progress each year. ITU and UN Women have started conferring GEM awards for "outstanding contributions from women and men in leveraging the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to promote gender equality."<sup>40</sup> Seven awards were granted in 2014 for the first time at the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference. It will be worth monitoring and studying the gender changes and awards<sup>41</sup> over coming years to ensure that programmes for gender inclusion have not been cosmetic or superficial.

34 A/HRC/23/50, para. 66.

35 Ibid., para. 97(h).

36 A/HRC/29/27/Add.2, para. 23.

37 [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/16session/A-HRC-16-44.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/16session/A-HRC-16-44.pdf)

38 [daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/095/85/PDF/G1509585.pdf?OpenElement](http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/095/85/PDF/G1509585.pdf?OpenElement)

39 ITU. (2013, 17 March). UN Broadband Commission sets new gender target: getting more women connected to ICTs 'critical' to post-2015 development agenda. *ITU*. [www.itu.int/net/pressoffice/press\\_releases/2013/08.aspx#.VVynQUBznMs](http://www.itu.int/net/pressoffice/press_releases/2013/08.aspx#.VVynQUBznMs)

40 ITU. (2014, 14 July). ITU, UN Women announce new global awards for outstanding work in technology for gender equality. *ITU*. [www.itu.int/net/pressoffice/press\\_releases/2014/41.aspx#.VWtXy09Viko](http://www.itu.int/net/pressoffice/press_releases/2014/41.aspx#.VWtXy09Viko)

41 Any studies done on GEM awards and the like must take into account that these awards are often self-nominated and subject to extensive campaigning for votes.

## United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO has had a role to play in the implementation of the WSIS action lines. In 2015 it held a conference on “CONNECTing the Dots: Options for Future Action”. In the conference outcome document they are careful to include the standard reference to gender equality, including:

5.3 Enable girls and women to take full advantage of the potential of the Internet for gender equality through taking proactive measures to remove barriers, both online and offline, and promoting their equal participation.<sup>42</sup>

## INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM (IGF)

Over the course of the first nine meetings of the IGF, there have been 116 sessions that mentioned gender.<sup>43</sup> While gender was not a significant topic in many of those sessions, it was an indication of at least the surface adherence to mainstreaming goals; gender and women’s rights were mentioned. The first requirement of mainstreaming was met.

In 2012, the DiploFoundation published “Gender and the IGF: Participation and Language Used”,<sup>44</sup> a lexical analysis and count of utterance of men and women over six years of IGF meetings. The report concluded:

The participation of men in the IGF, from its inception in 2006 to the last forum in 2012, significantly outnumbered women (number). But, as the IGF matures, a noticeable trend towards gender balance is coming to light. At each successive IGF more and more women are making substantial interventions.

In 2012, a volume was published, “Critically Absent”, that discussed the absence of women and women’s issues in Internet governance, and offered suggestions on how to get more involved. The book provides:

[A] policy advocacy toolkit [that] encourages women and their organizations to engage in a political discussion about the promotion of Internet development with a vision of inclusion, fairness and respect

42 UNESCO. (2015). CONNECTing the Dots: Options for Future Action. Outcome document, p. 5. [www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/outcome\\_document.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/outcome_document.pdf)

43 [www.friendsoftheigf.org/sessions/?Search=gender](http://www.friendsoftheigf.org/sessions/?Search=gender)

44 DiploFoundation. (2012). *Gender and the IGF: participation and language used*. [www.diplomacy.edu/IGFLanguage/gender](http://www.diplomacy.edu/IGFLanguage/gender)

for human rights. We expect [it] to be a tool that can be used to raise awareness and encourage participation in a new environment where women cannot and should not be absent.<sup>45</sup>

The IGF Gender Dynamic Coalition, coordinated by APC, has been doing a series of gender report cards to measure the degree of women’s participation and of substantive women’s issues discussed at the IGF. The first of these reports was done for IGF 2012,<sup>46</sup> held in Azerbaijan, with a subsequent report for IGF 2013,<sup>47</sup> held in Indonesia. A presentation made at the 2014 IGF<sup>48</sup> Dynamic Coalition meeting showed that there had been marked improvements between 2012 and 2013.<sup>49</sup> According to preliminary reports<sup>50</sup> on the 2014 IGF, ground was lost, with fewer women (31%) acting as moderators in 2014 than had done so in 2013 (40%). The report also indicates that “of the 71 sessions for which ratings were given, gender was rated as the main theme for only 1 session (1% of the total), and was seen as not relevant for 50 sessions (70% of the total).” So much for the reality and effectiveness of mainstreaming.

## Gender and Internet Governance Dynamic Coalition

Dynamic Coalitions are groups formed under the umbrella of the IGF to focus on a specific topic over the course of many years. Most dynamic coalitions meet yearly at the annual IGF meeting. From the Dynamic Coalition on Gender Equality’s Action Plan:

The Dynamic Coalition on Gender Equality aims to ensure gender perspective is included in the key

45 APC. (2012). *Critically Absent: Women in internet governance. A policy advocacy toolkit*. [www.genderit.org/resources/critically-absent-women-internet-governance-policy-advocacy-toolkit](http://www.genderit.org/resources/critically-absent-women-internet-governance-policy-advocacy-toolkit)

46 APC. (2013, 16 October). Results from the Gender Report Card at the 2012 IGF: More women make a huge difference. *GenderIT.org*. [www.genderit.org/articles/results-gender-report-card-2012-igf-more-women-make-huge-difference](http://www.genderit.org/articles/results-gender-report-card-2012-igf-more-women-make-huge-difference)

47 APC. (2014.) *Internet Governance Forum 2013: Results from the Gender Report Card*. [www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/igf2013genderreportv1.pdf](http://www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/igf2013genderreportv1.pdf)

48 Fascendini, F. (2014, 1 September). Moderate progress in gender parity and inclusion at the IGF between 2012-2013. *GenderIT.org*. [www.genderit.org/feminist-talk/moderate-progress-gender-parity-and-inclusion-igf-between-2012-2013](http://www.genderit.org/feminist-talk/moderate-progress-gender-parity-and-inclusion-igf-between-2012-2013)

49 IGF Gender Dynamic Coalition. (2014). *Gender Report Card: Results 2013*. [www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/igf\\_gender\\_report\\_card.pdf](http://www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/igf_gender_report_card.pdf)

50 [www.intgovforum.org/pipermail/igfmaglist\\_intgovforum.org/2015-May/003329.html](http://www.intgovforum.org/pipermail/igfmaglist_intgovforum.org/2015-May/003329.html)

debates around Internet governance issues, such as content regulation, privacy, access, freedom of expression among others. Among others, the coalition wants to promote women's visibility at the IGF and related fora; to conduct research and input on the main topics of IGF debates; to support capacity building of gender advocates and to promote more effective linkages between local, regional and global initiatives on gender and information society.<sup>51</sup>

### I\*, ALSO KNOWN AS I-STAR<sup>52</sup> – THE ORGANISATIONS THAT PROVIDE THE TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE INTERNET

In the groups responsible for developing and deploying Internet technology, the issue of women's leadership has been focused on the creation of women's groups, such as sister groups in the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and Domain Name System (DNS) Women at the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). Sister groups have also been created across the technical industry on e-mailing lists. The lists are venues for information sharing, mentoring and advice, with topics ranging from getting a job to dealing with discrimination in the tech development boys' clubs. These have been the major vehicle for dealing with women's issues in a field that considers itself neutral in regard to social issues.<sup>53</sup>

While there have always been a handful of women in the IETF technical community, they were never more than a de minimus minority. In the last years, as women started to become more visible in the IETF, more than just the old t-shirt-and-blue-jean-wearing stalwarts from the old days, the boys' club harassment that has become so commonplace among techies has also begun to become visible at the IETF. Currently work is being done on guidelines to combat it. An anti-harassment policy has been established:<sup>54</sup>

Harassment is unwelcome hostile or intimidating behavior – in particular, speech or behavior that is sexually aggressive or intimidates based on attributes such as race, gender, religion, age, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Harassment of this sort will not be tolerated in the IETF. Examples of harassment include the use of offensive language or sexual imagery in public presentations and displays, degrading verbal comments, deliberate intimidation, stalking, harassing photography or recording, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.

Additionally an Internet draft, IETF Anti-Harassment Procedures,<sup>55</sup> is working its way through the system. This is written in the nature of an IETF document, with its customary degree of precision and could become a useful reference, especially for other organisations that do not consider social issues such as women's rights and gender pertinent to the organisation's mission, roles and responsibilities.

### RELATIONSHIP OF THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT TO THE REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENTS

One of the missing links in the process of Internet governance has been the near absence of connections between the international and the local. With the exception of national state representation in the UN system, and the recent introduction of national and regional IGFs, there has been no concerted effort to bring the top-down rights-based efforts of international work into line with the bottom-up needs of local and national arenas. Recently this gap has been under discussion and can be expected to remain a topic of conversation in future.

51 [www.intgovforum.org/cms/dynamiccoalitions/77-gender-and-ig#action-plans](http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/dynamiccoalitions/77-gender-and-ig#action-plans)

52 The I\* institutions include not only the IETF, but organisations such as ICANN, the IAB, the NRO and its constituent RIRs, IEEE and the W3C.

53 This certainty about the technical community's neutrality with regard to social issues is currently coming under question in many of the I-star organisations.

54 IETF. (2013). *IETF Anti-Harassment Policy*. <https://www.ietf.org/iesg/statement/ietf-anti-harassment-policy.html>

55 IETF. (2015). *IETF Anti-Harassment Procedures*. <https://data-tracker.ietf.org/doc/draft-farresnickel-harassment>


## CURRENT DEBATES IN INTERNET GOVERNANCE

As discussed in the Overview of this paper, there is a degree of intersectionality among the various debates. In the act of mainstreaming, the connection between issues is often lost in the discussion of how each issue is relevant to gender perspectives and vice versa. For example, instead of doing an analysis that shows the interconnectedness of the many aspects of discrimination, each issue is studied in isolation with its specific gender impact isolated from the overall social environment. This issue paper is not about the discussion of gender oppression as part of overall societal oppression, but about the relationship between women's rights, gender and Internet governance. What is significant is that there is no ongoing discussion of societal oppression and Internet governance. Internet governance has not yet gone beyond the discussion of compartmentalised issues. Internet governance has just begun to move beyond the narrow subjects of protocols, names and numbers into areas related to social impact and rights. As it moves into broader discussions, it is important that advocacy for women's rights and gender issues be adequately represented in the multistakeholder mix of work efforts and be adequately expressed in resolutions and action plans. And that beyond the action plans, some of the issues be adequately resolved in practice, and the workable practices be publicised as examples for others.

### THE FEMINIST LENS ON INTERNET RIGHTS

In April 2014, a Global Meeting on Gender, Sexuality and the Internet was held in Malaysia. This meeting released an evolving document that contained a set of feminist principles for the Internet.

1. A feminist Internet starts with and works towards empowering more women and queer persons – in all our diversities – to dismantle patriarchy. This includes universal, affordable, unfettered, unconditional and equal access to the Internet.
2. A feminist Internet is an extension, reflection and continuum of our movements and resistance in other spaces, public and private. Our agency lies in us deciding as individuals and collectives what aspects of our lives to politicise and/or publicise on the Internet.
3. The Internet is a transformative public and political space. It facilitates new forms of citizenship that enable individuals to claim, construct, and express our selves, genders, sexualities. This includes connecting across territories, demanding accountability and transparency, and significant opportunities for feminist movement-building.
4. Violence online and tech-related violence are part of the continuum of gender-based violence. The misogynistic attacks, threats, intimidation, and policing experienced by women and queers (LGBTQI people) are real, harmful, and alarming. It is our collective responsibility as different Internet stakeholders to prevent, respond to, and resist this violence.
5. There is a need to resist the religious right, along with other extremist forces, and the state, in monopolising their claim over morality in silencing feminist voices at national and international levels. We must claim the power of the Internet to amplify alternative and diverse narratives of women's lived realities.
6. As feminist activists, we believe in challenging the patriarchal spaces that currently control the Internet and putting more feminists and queers (LGBTQI people) at the decision-making tables. We believe in democratising the legislation and regulation of the Internet as well as diffusing ownership and power of global and local networks.
7. Feminist interrogation of the neoliberal capitalist logic that drives the Internet is critical to destabilise, dismantle, and create alternative forms of economic power that are grounded on principles of the collective, solidarity, and openness.
8. As feminist activists, we are politically committed to creating and experimenting with technology utilising open source tools and platforms. Promoting, disseminating, and sharing knowledge about the use of such tools is central to our praxis.
9. The Internet's role in enabling access to critical information – including on health, pleasure, and risks – to communities, cultural expression, and conversation is essential, and must be supported and protected.
10. Surveillance by default is the tool of patriarchy to control and restrict rights both online and offline. The right to privacy and to exercise full control over our own data is a critical principle for a safer, open internet for all. Equal attention needs to be paid to surveillance practices by individuals against each other, as well as the private sector and non-state actors, in addition to the state.

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11. Everyone has the right to be forgotten on the Internet. This includes being able to access all our personal data and information online, and to be able to exercise control over them, including knowing who has access to them and under what conditions, and being able to delete them forever. However, this right needs to be balanced against the right to access public information, transparency and accountability.
  12. It is our inalienable right to choose, express, and experiment with our diverse sexualities on the Internet. Anonymity enables this.
  13. We strongly object to the efforts of state and non-state actors to control, regulate and restrict the sexual lives of consenting people and how this is expressed and practised on the Internet. We recognise this as part of the larger political project of moral policing, censorship and hierarchisation of citizenship and rights.
  14. We recognise our role as feminists and Internet rights advocates in securing a safe, healthy, and informative Internet for children and young people. This includes promoting digital and social safety practices. At the same time, we acknowledge children's rights to healthy development, which includes access to positive information about sexuality at critical times in their development. We believe in including the voices and experiences of young people in the decisions made about harmful content.
  15. We recognise that the issue of pornography online is a human rights and labor issue, and has to do with agency, consent, autonomy and choice. We reject simple causal linkages made between consumption of pornographic content and violence against women. We also reject the umbrella term of pornographic content labelling any sexuality content such as educational material, SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression) content, and expression related to women's sexuality.<sup>56</sup>

The question of how to bring these principles into mainstream discussion of Internet governance remains.

## GENDER BALANCE

Mainstreaming, for the last 20 years, has been the rule. In every organisation, association and effort, there has been an acknowledgement of the need for more women participants as well as influencers, leaders and decision-makers. Heike Jensen argued that mainstreaming has never been consistently applied and that instead of assisting in women's empowerment, it has reinforced the status quo of male hegemony.<sup>57</sup> Another possible interpretation is that mainstreaming, while necessary, is not sufficient. In addition to mainstreaming the issues of women's rights and empowerment, it is also necessary to deal with gender issues in a manner that recognises the intersection of the various forms of oppression experienced in society and reflected on the Internet. The extent to which women's issues have received perfunctory recognition as opposed to producing a significant change in the proportion of women involved, needs to be understood and measured. This is one of the goals of GEM, both in terms of empowerment and in terms of evaluation.

As time goes on, one finds a greater number of Gender Empowerment Measures being established in organisations involved with ICT and Internet governance. A question that can be asked is whether GEM has been as effective in mainstreaming as had been hoped.

Gender balance also has a role when discussing the multistakeholder model. Often when the various stakeholder groups are being balanced in a process, and geographical origin is being balanced, gender balance is an afterthought. A good argument can be made that until the day where at least half of the representatives are women, the multistakeholder model will remain somewhat aspirational.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> APC. (2014). *Feminist Principles of the Internet*. [www.genderit.org/articles/feminist-principles-internet](http://www.genderit.org/articles/feminist-principles-internet)

<sup>57</sup> Jensen, H. (2013). *Whose internet is it anyway? Shaping the internet - feminist voices in governance decision making*. In A. Finlay (Ed.), *Global Information Society Watch 2013*. Johannesburg: APC and Hivos. [www.giswatch.org/institutional-overview/womens-rights-gender/whose-internet-it-anyway-shaping-internet-feminist-voice](http://www.giswatch.org/institutional-overview/womens-rights-gender/whose-internet-it-anyway-shaping-internet-feminist-voice)

<sup>58</sup> Anecdotally, at a CSTD Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation discussion in 2014 where that point was made, a representative from a gender-divided nation mentioned that in his country, more of the programmers were women. He then went on to ask if the principle of gender balance meant that some of them should be fired to achieve equality.

## WOMEN'S ACCESS TO INTERNET

As the digital divide is narrowed, often the gender divide on the Internet persists and sometimes it increases.

The new target mandates 'gender equality in broadband access by the year 2020'. At present, ITU figures confirm that in the developing world, women are much less likely to have access to technology than their male counterparts. While that disparity is lower in developed countries, a measurable gap nonetheless still exists, even in the rich world.<sup>59</sup>

Because of power disparity and cultural norms dictating gender separation, women often cannot gain equal access to ICT improvements. This effect is exacerbated by the fact that in most cultures women do not control cash resources and thus cannot afford access, even when access might otherwise seem available to them. Internet governance has a role in developing policy considerations that would ensure that this disparity declines and eventually disappears. In 2013, the UN Broadband Commission set in place goals for post-2015 Internet:

The mobile miracle has clearly demonstrated how powerful information and communication technologies can be in driving economic growth. However, figures from ITU and its sister agencies like UNESCO and UNDP show a clear 'gender gap' in access to technology. We need to redress that imbalance to ensure that all people are empowered to take control of their own destinies through ICTs.<sup>60</sup>

In 2015, the Working Group on Broadband and Gender put out an optimistic report. "By summarising the current situation with regards to differential access to the Internet this report sketches some of the potential implications of gender gaps in access to the Internet, based on the inputs and viewpoints of the Working Group on Broadband and Gender."<sup>61</sup> The report, *Doubling Digital Opportunities: Enhancing the inclusion of women and girls in the Information Society*,<sup>62</sup> "examines the central questions of how access to the Internet and ICTs can help redress some of the inequalities women and girls

face in their everyday lives." The report includes reference to best practices and lists the contributions of the private sector in education and of civil society in grassroots organisation, and makes recommendations for yet another action plan. The report is important in that it not only discusses the problems but discusses Internet policy-making opportunities at the national level as well as more broadly, that is, it presents possibilities for Internet governance.

When measuring inequality, *Doubling Opportunities* discusses several ways to measure the inequality in Internet use, including:<sup>63</sup>

- Absolute numbers: in 2013 it was estimated that 200 million fewer women used the Internet.
- Proportion of total men to proportion of total women using the Internet: in India, for example, 12.2% of the male population to 9.8% of the female population use the Internet.
- Relative gap between men and women using the Internet: in the developed world this gap is 2%; in the developing world it is 16%.

The report makes recommendations in several areas:

- Integrate gender and national ICT and broadband strategies.
- Improve sex-disaggregated ICT statistics and measurement.
- Boost the affordability and usability of ICTs.
- Improve relevant and local content online.
- Initiate an action plan to achieve gender equality in access to broadband by 2020.
- Digital literacy training for women and girls.
- Empower women to participate in policy and decision making processes.
- Improve outreach to women and girls.

This is an ambitious programme for five years hence. At issue is the degree of emphasis that will be placed on these goals by Internet governance organisations. The glossy report is quite convincing, but every five to 10 years there is another commission with another glossy report. Yet the inequality persists almost unchanged.<sup>64</sup>

59 ITU. (2013, 17 March). Op. cit.

60 Ibid.

61 Broadband Commission for Digital Development Working Group on Broadband and Gender. (2013). *Doubling Digital Opportunities: Enhancing the inclusion of women and girls in the Information Society*. [www.broadbandcommission.org/workinggroups/Pages/bbandgender.aspx](http://www.broadbandcommission.org/workinggroups/Pages/bbandgender.aspx)

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., p. 17.

64 Ibid., p. 38-42.

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW)

VAW online has been an ever increasing problem as social media have expanded. As the problem becomes better defined, and as the local cultural aspects of that problem are recognised, work is being organised on methods for addressing it. Methods of redress include policy considerations as well as practices that intermediaries might engage in to prevent VAW.

A major difficulty in dealing with online VAW is getting people to recognise the seriousness of the problem. When speaking of VAW online, one is likely to be told that this is not real VAW, not like the other issues being discussed under that topic at the UN. Part of the solution in dealing with the problem is getting people to recognise that the continuum of VAW includes both offline and online actions, and that online VAW results in real, persistent harm. Changing that viewpoint is important and necessary as part of finding mitigations and solutions for the problem. In addition to work being done by ITU and UN Women to raise awareness of these issues, this year the IGF is addressing the problem in a forum titled Best Practices for Countering Abuse Against Women Online.<sup>65</sup>

### Women's images, "revenge porn" and censorship

One of the critical issues occurs at the convergence of freedom of expression and the form of violence against women called "revenge porn". APC defines "revenge porn" as a gross violation of a woman's privacy where private and sexually explicit video and photographic images are published without explicit permission and consent onto various websites for the purposes of extortion, blackmail and/or humiliation.<sup>66</sup> The framing of the term "revenge porn" is misleading, because what it describes is an act of violence, and should not be conflated with pornographic content.

While it is obvious that policies against "revenge porn" are not censorship, as they are intended to prevent harassment, once they are enacted these rules are sometimes used to stop the free expression of sexual orientation and gender identity content, and to constrain

expression related to women's sexuality. The family-friendly standards used by Facebook and others to limit liability, for example, are often the very instruments used to take down women's content after labelling it as possibly offensive. Finding policies that prevent the unauthorised use of women's images, while allowing for free expression, remains very much a current topic of discussion. These are issues that have been explored as part of the APC project End violence: Women's rights and safety online.<sup>67</sup>

## WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

This is an issue both in ICT and in Internet governance. While there are some women in leadership positions, they remain a minority. Whether it is the IETF technical leadership, the ICANN Board, or the ITU Council and Study Groups, there is a dearth of women in leadership positions. Sometimes enormous effort is required to get even one woman on a council or board and it requires a long term strategy.

Part of the problem one hears spoken about is the number of women in the "pipeline". This has become a mantra that is accepted by nearly everyone, including women involved in the process. Part of this is related to the issue of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and careers. The importance of capacity building was recognised in the WSIS Declaration of Principles and reaffirmed in the Tunis Agenda:

12. We affirm that development of ICTs provides enormous opportunities for women, who should be an integral part of, and key actors, in the Information Society. We are committed to ensuring that the Information Society enables women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes. To this end, we should mainstream a gender equality perspective and use ICTs as a tool to that end.<sup>68</sup>

This has yet to occur and there is no indication of how to move beyond the expression of good intentions.

65 [intgovforum.org/pipermail/bp\\_counteringabuse\\_intgovforum.org/2015-March/000006.html](http://intgovforum.org/pipermail/bp_counteringabuse_intgovforum.org/2015-March/000006.html)

66 Malhotra, N. (2015). *Good questions on technology-related violence*. APC. [www.apc.org/en/pubs/good-questions-technology-related-violence](http://www.apc.org/en/pubs/good-questions-technology-related-violence)

67 Malhotra, N. (2015). *Ibid.*

68 WSIS. (2003). *Geneva Declaration of Principles*, para. 12. [www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html](http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html)



## DEMANDS FOR THE COLLECTION OF GENDER-DISAGGREGATED DATA

In order to understand the discrimination against women on the Internet, it is necessary to collect data that brings out the disparities. To do this requires collecting data that differentiates between the responses of men and women. Doing this, however, runs counter to the idea that the Internet is neutral, and in addition to requiring a financial investment it also involves an implicit admission of the fact that there may be a disparity. As Heike Jensen pointed out:

At issue here is the collection and analysis of rough demographic data as well as the creation of indicators that will lead to qualitative and quantitative data of sufficient quality and granularity.<sup>69</sup>

Funding and cooperation with such efforts remain at a premium.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF ADVOCATES

One of the major issues in advocacy of gender and Internet governance is how to integrate the issues. How does one mainstream gender issues in a topic that does not recognise the relevance of gender issues? Internet governance, as defined in its working definition, is not primarily about people, but about organisations and a genderless Internet. Yet twice as many men as women access the Internet today.<sup>70</sup> The Internet is gendered, it is just that the predominant gender does not recognise that fact. Whether the issue is the ability to gain physical access, the time for unfettered access, suppression of women's content or violence against women on the Internet, the issue remains, as currently governed, that the Internet is a gendered space that does not provide equal access to or opportunity for women.

Whatever are we to do?

In figuring that out, there is a question that we all need to answer:

Is it incumbent on every wom[a]n to carry the burden of addressing all policy issues, as well as ensuring that each and everyone incorporates a sensitivity that ensures that women and men can enjoy the outcomes equally?<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Jensen, H. (2013). Op. cit.

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<sup>70</sup> Broadband Commission Working Group on Broadband and Gender. (2013). Op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Banks, K., Morris, J., & Doria, A. (2005). Op. cit.

## APPENDIX I: ACRONYMS AND REFERENCES

Acronyms are an essential component of Internet governance discussion; they are something to be learned, not feared. It is not only the natural tendency of organised bodies to abbreviate complicated names and concepts for ease of reference, but it also comes out of the symbolic nature of language in computer and network

technology. One of the problems with acronyms is that beyond knowing the words that make up the acronym, it is important to have an understanding of the ideas implicit in the acronym. This reference will point to places one could dive deeper into the meaning of some of the acronyms used in this issue paper.

Acronym	Literal	One sentence explanation	Reference <url>
APC	Association for Progressive Communications	Vision: All people have easy and affordable access to a free and open internet to improve their lives and create a more just world.	<a href="https://www.apc.org">https://www.apc.org</a>
CSTD	Commission on Science and Technology for Development	A subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It was established in 1992 to provide the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council with high-level advice on relevant issues through analysis and appropriate policy recommendations or options in order to enable those organs to guide the future work of the United Nations, develop common policies and agree on appropriate actions.	<a href="http://www.unctad.info/en/Science-and-Technology-for-Development---StDev">www.unctad.info/en/Science-and-Technology-for-Development---StDev</a>
GAMAG	Global Alliance on Media and Gender	The Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG) is a global movement to promote gender equality in and through media.	<a href="http://www.unesco.org/new/en/gamag">www.unesco.org/new/en/gamag</a>
GEM	Gender Evaluation Methodology	An evaluation methodology that helps you integrate a gender analysis into the planning and/or evaluations of any social change initiative.	<a href="http://www.genderevaluation.net">www.genderevaluation.net</a>
ICT	Information and communications technology	“Often used as an extended synonym for information technology (IT), but is a more specific term that stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals), and computers, as well as necessary enterprise software, middleware, storage, and audio-visual systems, which enable users to access, store, transmit, and manipulate information.”	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_and_communications_technology">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_and_communications_technology</a>
IETF	Internet Engineering Task Force	The mission of the IETF is to make the Internet work better by producing high quality, relevant technical documents that influence the way people design, use, and manage the Internet. Newcomers to the IETF should start here.	<a href="http://www.ietf.org">www.ietf.org</a>

Acronym	Literal	One sentence explanation	Reference <url>
ITU	International Telecommunication Union	ITU (International Telecommunication Union) is the United Nations specialised agency for information and communication technologies – ICTs. We allocate global radio spectrum and satellite orbits, develop the technical standards that ensure networks and technologies seamlessly interconnect, and strive to improve access to ICTs to underserved communities worldwide	<a href="http://www.itu.int/en/Pages/default.aspx">www.itu.int/en/Pages/default.aspx</a>
MDG	United Nations Millennium Development Goals	The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and all the world’s leading development institutions.	<a href="http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals">www.un.org/millenniumgoals</a>
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	To promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world.	<a href="http://www.oecd.org">www.oecd.org</a>
RIR	Regional Internet Registries	Regional Internet Registries (RIRs) manage, distribute, and register Internet number resources (IPv4 and IPv6 addresses and Autonomous System Numbers) within their respective regions.	<a href="https://www.nro.net/about-the-nro/regional-internet-registries">https://www.nro.net/about-the-nro/regional-internet-registries</a>
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics	The term is typically used when addressing education policy and curriculum choices in schools to improve competitiveness in science and technology development.	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STEM_fields">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STEM_fields</a>
UNESCO	United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Strives to build networks among nations for education, intercultural understanding, scientific cooperation and the defence of freedom of expression.	<a href="http://unesco.org">unesco.org</a>
UN Women	UN Women United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women	To lead and coordinate the UN system’s work on gender equality as well as to promote accountability, including through regular monitoring of system-wide progress.	<a href="http://www.unwomen.org">www.unwomen.org</a>
VAW	Violence against women	Exploring remedies for technology based violence against women.	<a href="http://www.genderit.org/category/tags/flow-0">www.genderit.org/category/tags/flow-0</a>
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society	The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was held in two phases. The first phase took place in Geneva hosted by the Government of Switzerland from 10 to 12 December 2003, and the second phase took place in Tunis hosted by the Government of Tunisia from 16 to 18 November 2005.	<a href="http://www.itu.int/wsis/index.html">www.itu.int/wsis/index.html</a>

## APPENDIX II: PRIMARY SOURCE REFERENCES

*Commission on the Status of Women 49th Session 2006*  
[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/news.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/news.htm)

*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*  
[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm)

*Critically Absent: Women in internet governance. A policy advocacy toolkit.*  
[www.genderit.org/resources/critically-absent-women-internet-governance-policy-advocacy-toolkit](http://www.genderit.org/resources/critically-absent-women-internet-governance-policy-advocacy-toolkit)

*Doubling Digital Opportunities*  
[www.broadbandcommission.org/Documents/publications/bb-doubling-digital-2013.pdf](http://www.broadbandcommission.org/Documents/publications/bb-doubling-digital-2013.pdf)

*Feminist Principles of the Internet*  
[www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/fpi\\_v3.pdf](http://www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/fpi_v3.pdf)

*Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG)*  
[www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/crosscutting-priorities/gender-and-media/global-alliance-on-media-and-gender/homepage](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/crosscutting-priorities/gender-and-media/global-alliance-on-media-and-gender/homepage)

*Good questions on technology-related violence*  
[www.apc.org/en/pubs/good-questions-technology-related-violence](http://www.apc.org/en/pubs/good-questions-technology-related-violence)

*ITU Resolution 70 (Rev. Busan, 2014)*  
[www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/64/588&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/64/588&Lang=E)

*ITU Women in Technology*  
[itu.edu/blog/the-gender-bias-how-the-technology-industry-is-dealing-with-one-of-its-biggest-issues](http://itu.edu/blog/the-gender-bias-how-the-technology-industry-is-dealing-with-one-of-its-biggest-issues)

*WSIS outcome documents including Geneva Action Plan and Tunis Agenda*  
[www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc\\_multi.asp?lang=en&id=231610](http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en&id=231610)

*WSIS Action line c8*  
[groups.itu.int/stocktaking/About/WSISActionLines/C8.CulturalDiversity.aspx](http://groups.itu.int/stocktaking/About/WSISActionLines/C8.CulturalDiversity.aspx)

*WSIS Action line c10*  
[groups.itu.int/stocktaking/About/WSISActionLines/C10.EthicalDimensions.aspx](http://groups.itu.int/stocktaking/About/WSISActionLines/C10.EthicalDimensions.aspx)



## Internet and ICTs for social justice and development

APC is an international network of civil society organisations founded in 1990 dedicated to empowering and supporting people working for peace, human rights, development and protection of the environment, through the strategic use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

We work to build a world in which all people have easy, equal and affordable access to the creative potential of ICTs to improve their lives and create more democratic and egalitarian societies.

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