

## **Annotated Bibliography: Background readings for the manifesto exercise**

### **1. Web Foundation. (2016). Women's Rights Online- Report Cards. World Wide Web Foundation.**

**[http://webfoundation.org/docs/2016/09/WRO-Gender-Report-Card\\_Overview.pdf](http://webfoundation.org/docs/2016/09/WRO-Gender-Report-Card_Overview.pdf)**

Research by the WWW Foundation in 10 countries in 2016 reveals that the following policy actions can enable meaningful access and use of the Internet by women.

#### ACCESS

- Prioritise policy reforms to cut the prohibitive cost of connecting.
- Work towards the Alliance for Affordable Internet affordability target: 1 GB of prepaid mobile data costing no more than 2% of average per capita monthly income.
- Expand free Internet access in public places, including all schools, clinics, job centres, and community centres.
- Improve infrastructure and support the development of innovative last mile connectivity models, including by women's collectives and organisations.
- Consider access measures specifically targeting women, such as a free basic data allowance focused on women.

#### CAPABILITIES

- Integrate basic digital literacy in school curricula at all levels, from primary to tertiary, and ensure that teachers are qualified and supported to teach it.
- Ensure digital literacy goes beyond technical skills to support the ability of women and girls to participate in society and make life choices.
- Support female micro-entrepreneurs to gain digital capabilities.

#### RIGHTS

- Strengthen legal protection of the online rights and privacy of women and men, including through stronger data protection laws.
- Ensure that women and girls are able to take legal action against perpetrators of online violence, and that police and judiciary have training and resources to pursue such cases.
- Invest in large-scale, ongoing national awareness campaigns to stamp out online gender violence and educate users on their rights, privacy, and security.

### **2. Nyst, C. (November, 2013). How Gender Based Harassment Falls Through the Digital Cracks. GenderIT.org.**

**<http://www.genderit.org/feminist-talk/how-gender-based-harassment-falls-through-digital-cracks>**

This article examines the responses of internet intermediaries/platforms (like Facebook, Twitter etc. to technology mediated violence, and highlights the following inadequacies:

1. Intermediaries fail to recognise speech that trivializes or glorifies violence against women as hate speech. In response to the #Fbrape campaign by Women, Action and The Media against the targeting of women with images and content that threaten or incite gender-based hate, Facebook argued that while the platform permits "hate speech", there are instances of offensive content, including distasteful humour, that are not "hate speech", and thus do not justify immediate removal.

Facebook's statement went on to equate gender-based hate speech with "insensitive or cruel content", revealing a fundamental misapprehension of the destructive and threatening nature of gender-based hate speech. It is however important that we see such speech in the context of historical and institutionalised violence and discrimination against women, and the monumental power differential that persists between men and women. Equating gender-based hatred with insulting remarks only further undermines the position of women.

2. Internet intermediaries think that the use of common misogynistic slurs such as "bitch", "slut", "whore" etc. have reached such frequency in the mainstream media that their employment as a means of harassment or discrimination online is acceptable in all circumstances.

**3. Smita. (August, 2016). I Delete Myself: Anonymity and Sexuality Online. GenderIT.org. <http://www.genderit.org/feminist-talk/anonymity-and-sexuality-online>**

The fact that the Internet allows women to be anonymous has greatly aided in increased freedom of expression as well as in combating sexual discrimination, violence and domestic abuse. Within such freedom of expression, there is an implied hierarchy of things that can be spoken about. When women are encouraged to speak up about education, work, equal rights etc., free sexual expression is not on the approved list. Freedom of sexual expression is not seen as important and, on the contrary, is considered a mark of a 'fallen' or 'bad' woman who is harmful to the society. This stems from the fact that in a lot of countries, the honour of the family, village, society, country etc. is often centred around women's vagina. So any woman who speaks about sex as a pleasurable act or is sexual is not a 'good' woman.

Right to anonymity enables women's free sexual expression without repercussions. As [Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression](#), David Kaye has said, "Encryption and anonymity, today's leading vehicles for online security, provide individuals with a means to protect their privacy, empowering them to browse, read, develop and share opinions and information without interference and enabling...[them] to exercise the rights to freedom of opinion and expression." This is all the more important for women who live in countries that are extremely patriarchal, where it is dangerous for women to express their opinions freely as well as queer persons living in countries with homophobic laws and societal bias.

**4. Datta, B. (August, 2016). Belling the trolls: free expression, online abuse and gender. Open Democracy. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/bishakha-datta/belling-trolls-free-expression-online-abuse-and-gender>**

Does the 'Voltairean Principle' - *I wholly disapprove of what you say, and will defend to the death your right to say it* - hold water in the age of the digital? The Internet has democratized speech, given everyone a platform for expression, a right coveted by especially those who have historically been denied or afraid to exercise it. But when speech becomes effortless and there is almost no filter between thinking a thought and expressing it, and there is the cloak of anonymity to seek refuge in, hate speech and misogynistic abuse also proliferate. Where there is no danger of immediate reprisal and where the normal rules of face-to-face interaction do not apply, there is also more incentive to engage in abuse and violence. And most importantly, when a thousand trolls are hounding or

heckling a woman on an online platform, can they invoke the right to free speech in defence of their actions? Or does the woman's right to free speech include the right to be protected from these trolls?

**5. Sengupta, A. (2016). Where on the Internet is Your Knowledge? Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID).**

<http://www.forum.awid.org/forum16/posts/where-internet-your-knowledge>

The article deconstructs the world of Wikipedia, in order to get an insight into what content is being produced on the Internet, and who is producing it. The global North leads not only in those who contribute to articles, but also on content related to the Global South. Because the Internet has become the 'default reference library of the world', when women, human rights defenders, indigenous people, queer persons fail to record themselves online, they become inaccessible to those who wish to learn and connect with them. The less they speak, the less they are known.

**6. Gurumurthy, A. & Chami, N. (2017). Gender justice advocacy in the network society- A feminist analysis and action framework on gender, development and digital technologies. IT for Change.**

*A discussion from the article on the right to access and right to knowledge online:*

**Right to access**

The Internet is an enabler of other human rights and hence access to the Internet becomes critical in the digital age. Deprivations in access can thwart women's access to information and knowledge, freedom of expression and association, and certainly, the right to development. As the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (2011) underlines: "without Internet access, which facilitates economic development and the enjoyment of a range of human rights, marginalized groups and developing States remain trapped in a disadvantaged situation, thereby perpetuating inequality both within and between States". This thinking is echoed by Goal 5b of the 2030 agenda which exhorts states to "enhance the use of enabling technologies, in particular information and communication technologies, to promote women's empowerment". Taking this line of argument forward, the July 2016 resolution of the United Nations Human Rights Council pronounced access to the Internet a basic human right.

When we think about access to the Internet in the rights-framework, there are a number of aspects/dimensions that we have to consider. Firstly, no section of the population must lack access to the Internet or be unable to use it to the fullest because of high cost of connectivity. Universality and affordability are thus integral components of the right to access. Secondly, all individuals must have unfettered access to the Internet for expanding their informational, associational and communicative choices. There should be no household or community controls that restrict individual access; and online vigilantism should not cripple participation of any group. This becomes particularly important for women and gender minorities whose behaviour is constantly policed. Thirdly, access must be unconditional. Policymakers may regard zero service platforms such as 'Free Basics' as a viable strategy for the inclusion of women and other marginalised groups to the benefits of connectivity. But such choices would undercut the richness of experience of the Internet for users on a low-bandwidth, restricted zero service connection when compared to those

on a high-bandwidth, unrestricted Internet connection. In economics the term ‘experience good’ is used to refer to goods whose utility becomes evident as people use it. The internet is also an experience good. The more one uses it, the better one can make choices about its relevance.

### **Right to Knowledge**

The Internet has failed to create a culture that challenges traditional hegemony over knowledge by straight, white-male from the Global North. Even open knowledge movements have failed to address this gap because of the overwhelming rhetoric of individual choice and authenticity criteria that reject oral and local language documentation. The complex wisdom of the marginalized from the global South is consequently, completely ignored. Governments must invest in the creation of non proprietary technical tools that support the creation of context specific content in local languages and enact copyright laws that protect community knowledge, and prevent its commercial exploitation.