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Charting the Future: Revisiting Beijing's Commitments in the Digital Era

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* The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of UN-Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

1. Introduction

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, represents a landmark commitment to advancing gender equality and protection of women's rights as human rights. As we mark the 30th anniversary of this pivotal framework, it is essential to reflect on the document in the current climate and assess the challenges faced in integrating gender considerations within the consistently evolving technological landscape of the world, particularly the Global South.

The Platform for Action offers a comprehensive agenda encompassing strategic objectives to address the need for transformative changes across various sectors, including education, health, economic empowerment, and decision-making to ensure participation and protection of women's and girls' rights and interests. Despite being one of the few human rights instruments that are still globally followed through, today the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action falls short on addressing the continuously advancing technology, the risks and opportunities associated with it, particularly through a gendered lens. There's a need to not only acknowledge these risks and opportunities, but also devise a road map for member states to update their commitments and implementation plans under the Action document.

The Global South region, characterised by its diverse and dynamic political, socio-economic and cultural contexts, has undergone significant technological evolution over the past three decades.

The current context of feminist movements demonstrates that gender justice and equality cannot be fully achieved without incorporating a digital justice agenda. Such an agenda must be guided by intersectional feminist approaches that transcend the online-offline dichotomy and critically examine technology-mediated existence of communities.

Anita Gurumurthy writes, "So far, a strong civil and political rights framework has led feminist actions in the digital realm. Using the normative compass that feminist conceptual tools on development offer, digital rights activism must promote an idea of gender justice that accounts for the lived experience of women at the margins of the mainstream economy. This calls for a composite approach that underscores the indivisibility and interdependency of social-economic and civil-political rights."¹

Gender dynamics profoundly influence the trajectory of digital information technology, and conversely, technological advancements shape gender relations. Over the last three decades, the rapid evolution of technology has produced innovations that range from those evocative of Orwellian dystopias to others that offer transformative perspectives on humanity and society.

¹ Anita Gurumurthy, A history of feminist engagement with development and digital technologies, Association for Progressive Communications, May 27, 2017, <https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/history-feminist-engagement-development-and-digital-technologies>.

The realm of artificial intelligence (AI), in particular, has become a focal point of weekly developments – ranging from AI systems capable of generating convincingly false information with potentially severe real-world consequences,² to projects exploring establishing connections with the dead,³ and more severe applications including AI-driven military technologies such as drones targeting individuals in conflict zones.⁴

With the rise of Generative AI, the intersection of technology and gender has become more complex and multifaceted. It has been used to create realistic⁵ yet fake non-consensual intimate images,⁶ disseminate disinformation, and fabricate audio content, all of which disproportionately affect women and gender-diverse individuals. While these developments raise significant ethical concerns, it is important to acknowledge the positive applications of AI in sectors such as healthcare, education, and accessibility. For instance, chatbots and virtual assistants have enhanced the independence of people with disabilities, and AI tools are being deployed to counter disinformation in various contexts.

The challenges and opportunities associated with technology offer a need to comprehensively examine how its emergence needs to be addressed in light of human rights and the implications it will have on these rights. There's no doubt that access to digital rights from a gendered lens are severely limited in low- and middle-income economies that majorly comprise the Global Majority. These advancements, when considered alongside the mainstream uses of digital technology – such as communication, community building, education, work, and access to information – underscore the profound implications for human rights and gender equality. The evolution of technology in relation to these rights is contingent upon addressing the systemic flaws that currently exist. Without deliberate and ethical intervention, the risk remains that the "broken" aspects of our current system will simply evolve into a more advanced, yet still flawed, version.

Given the rapid advancements in technology and its transformative potential, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive review of existing human rights and gender equality frameworks, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This reassessment is essential to address the evolving global political landscape and the specific needs of the Global Majority.

² Dan Robitzski, New AI Generates Horrifyingly Plausible Fake News, Futurism, May 30, 2019, <https://futurism.com/ai-generates-fake-news>.

³ AI Project That Allows People To "Connect With Dead" Concerns Experts, NDTV, July 27, 2024, <https://www.ndtv.com/science/ai-project-that-allows-people-to-connect-with-dead-concern-experts-6199332>.

⁴ 'AI-assisted genocide': Israel reportedly used database for Gaza kill lists, AlJazeera, April 4, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/4/ai-assisted-genocide-israel-reportedly-used-database-for-gaza-kill-lists>.

⁵ Hija Kamran and Meher Ahmad, Pakistan's revenge porn law is stronger than most. For one woman, that made no difference, Rest of World, April 30, 2021, <https://restofworld.org/2021/pakistans-revenge-porn-law-is-stronger-than-most-for-one-woman-that-made-no-difference/>.

⁶ Mariel Padilla, 19th News, With AI, anyone can be a victim of nonconsensual porn. Can laws keep up?, March 11, 2024, <https://19thnews.org/2024/03/ai-deepfakes-legislation/>.

Failing to adapt these instruments to contemporary challenges would represent a significant oversight in the pursuit of gender equality and human rights.

As Anri van der Spuy and Namita Aavriti write in their 2018 study titled, “Mapping Research in Gender and Digital Technology for APC”, “The spread and adoption of ICTs has not lessened the digital divide, in fact it has made existing inequalities around caste, race and possibly gender even more acute as those who do not have access to technology can still be mapped and made part of datasets, and this has implications on all other aspects of their lives such as wealth, security, employment, and so on.”⁷

It is absolutely crucial that we take into account the technological intersections with gender and human rights, and revisit the concerns that were listed as part of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, along with the commitments and the road map for gender equality that 189 countries adopted in 1995.

An important question at this point is: “How would you draft the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action if you were writing it today?”

This discussion holds significant weight in global policy advocacy, particularly due to the implications it carries. The Platform for Action remains one of the few human rights instruments to which governments worldwide continue to demonstrate a formal commitment. This is particularly noteworthy given the current global political, economic, and social context. The fact that governments still submit review reports suggests a persistent, albeit varied, intent to fulfil the commitments made in Beijing nearly three decades ago. This ongoing engagement, especially among governments in the Global South, is an intriguing and positive indication of the enduring relevance and influence of the Platform for Action in shaping gender equality policies. However, it is essential that we adapt and progress with the changing times.

2. Centring feminist approach to gender equality in the digital age

“The internet is a transformative political space. It facilitates new forms of citizenship that enable individuals to claim, construct, and express selves, genders, and sexualities. This includes connecting across territories, demanding accountability and transparency, and creating opportunities for sustained feminist movement building.”

Feminist Principle of the Internet: Movement Building⁸

⁷ Anri van der Spuy and Namita Aavriti, Mapping Research in Gender and Technology, Association for Progressive Communications, January 2018, https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/IDRC_Mapping_0323_0.pdf.

⁸ Movement Building, Feminist Principles of the Internet, <https://feministinternet.org/en/principle/movement-building>.

The Association of Progressive Communications (APC) has a long history of commitment towards the inclusion and protection of women and gender and sexually diverse folks on the internet, by connecting our rights-based engagements with policy advocacy. This commitment can be signified by the fact that APC was involved in the drafting of Section J of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which talks about the need for equal and safe participation of women in the media. There's a trust on the processes and instruments of human rights. But this trust also comes with an acknowledgement that times have changed since the Platform for Action was drafted, and so have the challenges and how the future is perceived during this moment in history.

The 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to which Member States committed, reflect the urgent human and gender rights issues prevalent at the time of its adoption. While these areas remain profoundly relevant today, the evolving digital landscape necessitates the addition of new concerns to this framework. As we advance in our advocacy for inclusive, safe, and meaningful internet connectivity, it is imperative to recognise and address emerging issues that were not originally contemplated but are now crucial to ensuring comprehensive rights for women and girls in all their diversities in the digital era.

3. Revisiting Section J

Revisiting Section J of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential in addressing the challenges and opportunities arising from technological advancements in the media landscape. In a digital era where the dissemination of information is no longer limited to journalists and traditional media, the threats of online violence affect individuals across various demographics, with the most severe impact on those already marginalised. Addressing the challenges posed by both mainstream and digital media to gender equality and women's safety requires expanding Section J to incorporate the complexities of women's inclusion in media, which have evolved over the past 30 years.

This discussion must prioritise enhancing digital literacy, strengthening legal frameworks, and advocating for ethical standards to ensure that technology-driven media serves as a tool for advancing gender equality. Integrating technology considerations into Section J, as well as across all 12 critical areas of the Platform for Action, will contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable world for women and girls in the digital age. An intersectional approach is essential to building a future in which women, in all their diversities, can fully exercise their rights and engage meaningfully in both the digital and physical spheres.

Since its inception in 1990, APC has been engaged in evidence collection through community engagement and mobilisation which is complimented by knowledge building strategies. One output of this combination of efforts is the Feminist Principles of the Internet (FPI) that reimagine the Internet from a feminist lens. The FPIs are a set of statements that together provide a framework

for women's movements to articulate and explore issues related to technology. They offer a gender and sexual rights lens on critical internet-related rights.⁹

To compliment this, Sachini Parera writes, “A feminist approach to the internet is based on a consciousness that the inequalities in our world, including the internet and other technologies, are rooted in structures and systems of power such as patriarchy, racism, colonialism and neocolonialism, militarism, authoritarianism, ethnoreligious nationalism, and macroeconomic policies and business models based on neoliberal capitalism. A feminist approach to the internet champions the right of women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people to use the internet in free, pleasurable and liberating ways and the freedom, capacity and resources to design and make an internet that puts them at the centre with autonomy and agency.”¹⁰

This reimagining is essential for shaping information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital rights in a manner that truly reflects the needs of the communities we serve. A feminist internet puts the agenda of Platform for Action at its centre to achieve gender equality by addressing inequalities on and off the internet.

By centring our approach on these needs, civil society can engage in more effective and relevant policy advocacy, ensuring that the voices of often underrepresented communities are included in the discourse and that their specific challenges and perspectives are addressed. This alignment between community needs and advocacy efforts is vital for creating policies that are not only inclusive but also responsive to the realities of those most affected by the digital divide and various challenges that we face today.

4. Challenges

Access to information and communications technology (ICT) is essential to how communities and individuals live and prosper in today’s age, and agree that it is a fundamental human right that must be guaranteed.¹¹ It is estimated that today, around 66% of the world’s population is connected to the internet, and this number is expected to increase by 47% by 2029.¹²

The mainstreaming of digital technologies is a double-edged sword for those living on the margins. It promised a more democratised and just world where everyone would have equal opportunities. This access, however, also unveiled and exacerbated deeply rooted societal issues that stemmed

⁹ Feminist Principles of the Internet, <https://feministinternet.org/>.

¹⁰ Sachini Parera, White Paper on Feminist Internet Research, Feminist Internet Research Network, 2022, <https://firn.genderit.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/FIRN-whitepaper-2022.pdf>.

¹¹ It May be Time to Reinforce Universal Access to the Internet as a Human Right, Not Just a Privilege, High Commissioner tells Human Rights Council, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, March 10, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/03/it-may-be-time-reinforce-universal-access-internet-human-right-not-just-privilege-high>.

¹² Internet Usage Statistics In 2024, Forbes, March 1, 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/home-improvement/internet/internet-statistics/>.

into the digital realm as it became more and more accessible. Online platforms and spaces quickly started to mirror the society that they were being accessed from, with crime rates consistently rising, impacting not just the individuals targeted by them but also those around them witnessing directly or indirectly. The nature and intensity of these cybercrimes continue to evolve as technology is advancing. From state violence to financial frauds to identity theft to scams and data leaks to harassment and disinformation capable of toppling democracies – the forms of online violence continue to change every day.

Individuals already marginalised in society, particularly women and gender and sexually diverse persons, are disproportionately targeted by cybercrimes. The gendered nature of these online offences mirrors the patriarchal and violent realities that these communities endure in their daily lives. Perpetrators of offline violence are increasingly exploiting digital platforms, thereby extending their abusive behaviours into the online realm. It is estimated that over 85% surveyed women have witnessed online violence, and at least 35% have experienced it, and women in countries with long-standing or institutionalised gender inequality experience it at a higher rate.¹³ A global survey found that online violence harms the sense of wellbeing of 9 out of 10 women (92%), whereas 74% expressed concerns of online violence escalating to offline abuse as 54% of the respondents knew the perpetrators of violence that they experienced.¹⁴

It is not just assumed but repeatedly proven by anecdotes and experiences of online gender-based violence that the line between online and offline worlds that was previously thought to separate the two does not exist anymore. As a result, the events occurring on or through technology have direct implications on human lives in the offline world. The concept of ‘online being not real’ does not stand true anymore as what’s real is both on our devices and around us in the physical realm.

Irene Kagoya writes, “[...] we must appreciate that the internet does not operate in a vacuum as perceived; whatever challenges women are grappling with offline are often mirrored online. We have to address the social, economic, political and cultural barriers to women’s advancement; short of this we shall continue to pour new wine into old wineskins.”¹⁵

The International Media Support (IMS) also posits that as more women speak up against the violence they face, the abuse also increases and takes severe form including sexual harassment, unequal working conditions, and relentless online abuse.¹⁶ Maria Ressa, a notable journalist from

¹³ Measuring the prevalence of online violence against women, The Economist Intelligence Unit, <https://onlineviolencewomen.eiu.com/>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Irene Kagoya, A painting of an African feminist internet, GenderIT, February 8, 2017, <https://www.genderit.org/feminist-talk/painting-african-feminist-internet>.

¹⁶ The safety of women journalists: Breaking the cycle of silence and violence, International Media Support, September 2019, https://www.mediasupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2871-Gender-safety_FINAL_31.10.19_spreads-1.pdf

the Philippines and a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, has been subjected to intense online harassment rooted in misogyny and racism, often leading to rape and death threats.¹⁷

A study titled “All of a Sudden” from Turkey finds that, “[...] nine out of every 10 LGBTQI+ persons are subject to digital violence and they witness hate speech almost on a daily basis on the internet.”¹⁸ The commercialisation of technology has mirrored and, in many cases, amplified systemic oppression within online and digital environments. These inequalities not only persist but also intensify in digital spaces, leading to a proliferation of online violence that disproportionately affects women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and other marginalised groups.¹⁹

This interchangeable nature of spaces and realities is important when discussing gender equality on a global scale. Technological advancements, with their profound impact on societal structures and individual lives, have become a critical domain where the concerns and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are tested and challenged.

We have diligently monitored the progress concerning the implementation of Section J of the Platform for Action. Often colloquially referred to as the “J Spot” by many colleagues, this section was notably absent from broader discussions in the following years regarding the commitments established in 1995.^{20,21} Activist and journalist Maria Suarez wrote in 2005 during the Beijing+10 review, “Despite the fact that the PFA contemplates Section “J” in Chapter 3, about Women and Media, the issue is hardly found in the provisional agenda for the evaluation process.”²²

Several country reports submitted during the Beijing+25 process reveal that references to women and media are minimal and often reduced to superficial public relations statements. For instance, in its 2019 report to the UN Women, Pakistan claims that the government has ensured fair representation of women in both fictional and non-fictional media, is fostering a positive portrayal of women, and that television channels are increasingly addressing social issues related to women.²³ However, the report notably omits any mention of the ongoing online violence

¹⁷ Guilherme Canela, Online violence is silencing women journalists, Al-Jazeera, May 3, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/5/3/online-violence-is-silencing-women-journalists>.

¹⁸ Yildiz Tar, All of a Sudden: Research on digital violence against LGBTQI+ communities in Turkiye, KAOS GL association, Feminist Internet Research Network (FIRN), 2023, <https://firn.genderit.org/research/all-suddenresearch-digital-violence-against-lgbtqi-communities-turkiye>.

¹⁹ Nyx McLean & Thurlo Cicero, The Left Out Project Report: The case for an online gender-based violence framework inclusive of transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse experiences, Feminist Internet Research Network (FIRN), 2023, <https://firn.genderit.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/The-Left-Out-Project-Report.pdf>.

²⁰ Leading up to the Beijing Review: Strategising for Section J, Association for Progressive Communications, March 19, 2014, <https://www.apc.org/en/news/leading-beijing-review-strategising-section-j>

²¹ Section J, GenderIT, <https://genderit.org/search/node?keys=section+J>.

²² María Suárez Toro, Where is Women’s “J” Spot?, Radio Internacional Feminista – Fire, 2005, <https://www.radiofeminista.net/feb05/notas/jpoint.htm>.

²³ Report of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action +25, UN Women, May 2019,

at the time – both state and non-state – against women journalists, and the draconian laws that impinge on freedom of expression and press freedom, which was particularly pronounced in the same year the report was submitted.²⁴ Pakistan ranks 142 out of 146 countries in gender inequality,²⁵ whereas according to a report by International Media Support, “women journalists constitute only 5% of media workers in Pakistan – and safety may be one of the reasons for this.”²⁶

Suarez said in her article, “To be in media is to have a place in the world; therefore, to leave media out, really implies to “be out of it!”²⁷ The failure of governments to acknowledge both the presence of women in the media and the violence they encounter is a troubling trend. This oversight exacerbates their marginalisation and perpetuates the ongoing harassment they experience.

Violations of fundamental rights, including privacy, freedom of expression, access to information, press freedom, and the right to mobilise, have become increasingly widespread, both online and offline. These violations now affect a broader segment of the population and manifest in new, previously unrecognised forms, with significant gendered repercussions. For instance, recent disclosures regarding state-backed military-grade surveillance technology targeting women, gender rights activists, and journalists have not only undermined their professional work but also severely impacted their personal lives, leading to persistent concerns for their safety.²⁸

It is important to recognise that much of the violence experienced by women and LGBTQIA+ communities is not necessarily state-sponsored but in fact technology companies play a significant part in perpetuating this violence while also hiding behind weak legislative protocols, particularly in the Global South countries, to evade accountability. These corporations have been found to be benefiting off the engagement generated through hateful and violent content and activities that further ignite online and physical violence.²⁹

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/Pakistan.pdf>.

²⁴ Parliamentary body hears complaints of women journalists, Dawn, August 19, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1575116/parliamentary-body-hears-complaints-of-women-journalists>.

²⁵ Amin Ahmed, Pakistan ranks 142 out of 146 countries in WEF’s global gender gap report, Dawn, June 21, 2023, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1760949>.

²⁶ The safety of women journalists: Breaking the cycle of silence and violence, International Media Support, September 2019, https://www.mediasupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2871-Gender-safety_FINAL_31.10.19_spreads-1.pdf.

²⁷ María Suárez Toro, Where is Women’s “J” Spot?, Radio Internacional Feminista – Fire, 2005, <https://www.radiofeminista.net/feb05/notas/jpoint.htm>.

²⁸ Thailand: “Being ourselves is too dangerous”: Digital violence and the silencing of women and LGBTI activists in Thailand, Amnesty International, May 16, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa39/7955/2024/en/>.

²⁹ Inside the hate factory: how Facebook fuels far-right profit, The Guardian, December 5, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/dec/06/inside-the-hate-factory-how-facebook-fuels-far-right-profit>.

The increase in violence also reflects the broader societal discrimination and abuse that oppressed communities face regularly. Various forms of online gender-based violence, including patriarchal control over technology access, intimate partner violence, cyber harassment, non-consensual dissemination of intimate images, doxxing, privacy violations, and the misuse of newly commercialised artificial intelligence, all disproportionately affect marginalised gender and sexually diverse individuals on the internet.³⁰

A study by Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, states, “Given the scale, scope, and impact of TFGVB, the WPS [Women, Peace and Security] field must evolve to account for the unique challenges women are facing in an increasingly digitized world.”³¹

It further adds, “Addressing the various manifestations and potential offline impacts of digital violence is crucial for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that within the realm of protection, WPS efforts must take seriously technological violence and acknowledge the tangible and substantial threat such violence poses to the safety, security, and well-being of women both online and offline. Second, it highlights the complex ways that technology and digital spaces can reinforce harmful patriarchal norms and create new avenues for GBV.”³²

Global trends indicate that women and girls across all diversities face several key challenges as technology continues to evolve, and the reimagining of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action must be done in light of these challenges.

4.1 Existing challenges

Harassment and abuse

In her 2018 report, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women writes, “It is [...] important to acknowledge that the internet is being used in a broader environment of widespread and systemic structural discrimination and gender-based violence against women and girls, which frame their access to and use of the internet and other ICT. Emerging forms of ICT have facilitated new types of gender-based violence and gender inequality in access to technologies, which hinder women’s and girls’ full enjoyment of their human rights and their ability to achieve gender equality.”³³ The interconnectivity of this violence, coupled with faster dissemination, easy access, and oftentimes longevity, makes it more widespread making the public online and offline spaces

³⁰ Creating safe digital spaces free of trolls, doxing, and hate speech, UN Women, November 13, 2023, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2023/11/creating-safe-digital-spaces-free-of-trolls-doxing-and-hate-speech>.

³¹ Kristine Backgaard, Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: An Emerging Issue in Women, Peace and Security, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, September 2024, <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Technology-Facilitated-Gender-Based-Violence.pdf>.

³² Ibid.

³³ Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective, UN General Assembly Human Rights Council 38th Session, June 18, 2018, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g18/184/58/pdf/g1818458.pdf>.

unsafe for women and gender and sexually diverse folks who experience these platforms strikingly differently than cisgender men.

Individuals with marginalised and underrepresented identities are consistently at risk of targeted violence. This risk is markedly heightened for women journalists, activists, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and women of colour, who frequently face escalated forms of violence that are often sexual and personal in nature. Research and data analysis suggests that on average, women receive abusive or problematic tweets once every 30 seconds; women of colour are more impacted than their white counterparts, and black women are disproportionately targeted.³⁴ The data indicates that online spaces are not only misogynistic, sexist and homophobic, they are also racist.³⁵

Such attacks generally have a more profound impact compared to the criticism received by their male counterparts, which is typically confined to critiques of their professional work. According to a 2020 global survey, 73% of women journalists have encountered online violence.^{36,37} A notable instance is Rana Ayyub, an esteemed journalist from India, who is reportedly targeted online every 14 seconds.³⁸ She writes, “The online world has always been a difficult place for me to navigate because those who aren’t able to find flaws in my work seek to discredit me with misogynistic statements and abuse. People have called me ‘the most abused woman in India’. If I even put a full stop on Twitter, I get a thousand replies.”³⁹

Women journalists and activists globally are subjected to state-sponsored violence, including the use of advanced surveillance technologies such as the Israeli NSO’s Pegasus,⁴⁰ which exacerbates the personal threats and sustained online hostility they endure.⁴¹

³⁴ Jenna Chambers, Study Shows Twitter Is Toxic For Women—Especially Black Women, AfroTech, December 19, 2018, <https://afrotech.com/study-shows-twitter-is-toxic-for-women-especially-black-women>; Crowdsourced Twitter study reveals shocking scale of online abuse against women, Amnesty International, December 18, 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2018/12/crowdsourced-twitter-study-reveals-shocking-scale-of-online-abuse-against-women/>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ UNESCO’s Global Survey on Online Violence against Women Journalists, UNESCO, December 15, 2020, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unescos-global-survey-online-violence-against-women-journalists>.

³⁷ Intensification Of Efforts To Eliminate All Forms Of Violence Against Women And Girls. Report Of The Secretary General (2022), UN Women, October 2022, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/A-77-302-SG-report-EVAWG-Infographic-and-recommendations-en.pdf>.

³⁸ Rana Ayyub, The Nobel Prize, <https://www.nobelprize.org/events/nobel-prize-summit/2023/panellists/rana-ayyub/>.

³⁹ Rana Ayyub, I was the victim of a deepfake porn plot intended to silence me. Huffington Post, November 21, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/deepfake-porn_uk_5bf2c126e4b0f32bd58ba316.

⁴⁰ Stephanie Kirchaessner, Two female activists in Bahrain and Jordan hacked with NSO spyware, The Guardian, January 17, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/jan/17/two-female-activists-in-bahrain-and-jordan-hacked-with-nso-spyware>.

⁴¹ Crowdsourced Twitter study reveals shocking scale of online abuse against women, Amnesty International, December 18, 2019,

Marie Lamnech writes for the Centre for International Governance Innovation, “The perpetrators are well aware of the effects on women. Their aim is to discredit, discourage and silence women, to “frame them as untrustworthy, unintelligent, emotional/angry/crazy, or sexual.”⁴²

The rise in online violence against women and gender-diverse communities during the COVID-19 pandemic was also an indication of how even during a global crisis, the commitment to objectify, sexualise, violate, and harass gendered bodies is consistent.⁴³ Furthermore, disinformation and misinformation are systematically weaponised against vulnerable gendered populations, exacerbating their susceptibility to online hostilities and attacks.

Subha Wijesiriwardena reminds in her paper titled, “The Machine That Fosters Shame”, “[...] while gendered disinformation is not a new phenomenon, it is fuelled by new technologies and social media.⁴⁴ Today’s disinformation campaigns that weaponise sexuality are intricately shaped by the explosive potential of digital technologies and the decision makers behind them – importantly, in many unseen and unknown ways.”⁴⁵

This realisation projects yet another reason why this challenge needs robust policy intervention rooted in global human rights commitments that states make and are accountable for.

Broad application of draconian laws

Many laws that are passed to protect women and gender-diverse people in the Global Majority countries, are deliberately kept ambiguous and are used to stifle the right to privacy, freedom of expression, freedom of association and political participation, press freedom and many other interconnected rights. The abuse of power granted to law enforcement authorities under these vague legal frameworks end up criminalising the access and/or dissemination of information, posing a serious threat to digital rights of individuals, particularly of those already living on the margins. Draconian laws that target civil liberties are often disproportionately applied to suppress critical voices, including those of women who challenge power structures.⁴⁶ These laws not only

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2018/12/crowdsourced-twitter-study-reveals-shocking-scale-of-online-abuse-against-women/>.

⁴² Marie Lamensh, Women Activists Lead the Struggle against Online Gender-Based Violence Worldwide, Centre for International Governance Innovation, March 7, 2022, <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/women-activists-lead-the-struggle-against-online-gender-based-violence-worldwide/>.

⁴³ Chennai Chair, There’s a pandemic of online violence against women and girls, World Wide Web Foundation, July 14, 2020, <https://webfoundation.org/2020/07/theres-a-pandemic-of-online-violence-against-women-and-girls/>.

⁴⁴ Irene Khan, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Irene Khan, A/78/288. 2023, <https://undocs.org/en/A/78/288>.

⁴⁵ Subha Wijesiriwardena, The machine that fosters shame: The weaponisation of sexuality in anti-gender anti-democracy disinformation, GenderIT.org, August 19, 2024, <https://genderit.org/resources/machine-fosters-shame-weaponisation-sexuality-anti-gender-anti-democracy-disinformation-0>.

⁴⁶ Kunal Majumder, Indian journalist Rana Ayyub on facing death threats and a money laundering probe, Committee to Protect Journalists, April 1, 2022, <https://cpj.org/2022/04/indian-journalist-rana-ayyub-on-facing-death-threats->

curtail freedom of speech but also reinforce a culture of fear that encourages self-censorship amongst those witnessing others going through hateful vitriol.

Additionally, the criminalisation of misinformation and disinformation, while ostensibly aimed at combating falsehoods, often results in the suppression of legitimate discourse. Women who challenge dominant narratives or question governmental policies are routinely unjustly targeted under these laws, further marginalising their voices and hindering their ability to participate fully in public discussions.⁴⁷ A broad example of this is that the women who spoke up about their experiences of sexual harassment as part of the global #MeToo movement were targeted with defamation cases by the accused, indicating the failure of the existing legal system to protect survivors and victims of violence.⁴⁸

Due to the public and online nature of this campaign, the implications of these cases were then directly mirrored in online spaces where self-censorship of victims of harassment, rampant trolling, hate speech, doxxing and various other violations of rights of survivors were witnessed.

Digital hate in the context of gender equality may have not been a challenge 30 years ago, but has become a major hurdle in realising the BPfA agenda in the current era, indicating that there is an urgent need to revisit the commitments that were made years ago.

Surveillance and invasion of privacy

A 2022 report by the Frontline Defenders and Access Now [revealed](#) that, “Dozens of women journalists and human rights defenders in Bahrain and Jordan have had their phones hacked using NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware.”⁴⁹ Bahraini psychologist, Dr. Sharifa Siwar, who was a target of Pegasus spyware on or around June 10, 2021, after her comments critical of the royal family, says, “Knowing for a fact that I was hacked put me under huge stress and emotional pressure, and I am fearful of what they might do to me in future.”⁵⁰

Marwa Fatafta, the Policy and Advocacy Director for the MENA region at Access Now, said at the time, “Surveillance is an act of violence. It is about exerting power over every aspect of a woman’s life through intimidation, harassment, and character assassination.”⁵¹

[and-a-money-laundering-probe/](#); Dr. Julie Posetti, Maria Ressa: Fighting an Onslaught of Online Violence, International Centre for Journalists, March, 2021, <https://www.icfj.org/our-work/maria-ressa-big-data-analysis>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Bryce Covert, Years After #MeToo, Defamation Cases Increasingly Target Victims Who Can’t Afford to Speak Out, The Intercept, July 22, 2023, <https://theintercept.com/2023/07/22/metoo-defamation-lawsuits-slapp/>.

⁴⁹ Marwa Fatafta, Unsafe anywhere: women human rights defenders speak out about Pegasus attacks, Access Now, January 17, 2022, <https://www.accessnow.org/women-human-rights-defenders-pegasus-attacks-bahrain-jordan/>.

⁵⁰ Pearl 2 Pegasus: Bahraini Activists Hacked with Pegasus Just Days after a Report Confirming Other Victims, Citizen Lab, February 18, 2022, <https://citizenlab.ca/2022/02/bahraini-activists-hacked-with-pegasus/>.

⁵¹ Marwa Fatafta, Unsafe anywhere: women human rights defenders speak out about Pegasus attacks, Access Now, January 17, 2022, <https://www.accessnow.org/women-human-rights-defenders-pegasus-attacks-bahrain-jordan/>.

The increasing deployment of surveillance technologies poses significant threats to women's privacy and autonomy. State and non-state actors frequently use surveillance tools to monitor and control women's activities, both online and offline. This invasion of privacy disproportionately impacts women, particularly those at risk, activists, journalists, or belonging to marginalised groups, by subjecting them to constant scrutiny and undermining their fundamental rights. A Rest of World report finds, "While authorities generally pitch facial recognition as a tool to capture terrorists or wanted murderers, the technology has also emerged as a critical instrument in a very particular context: punishing protesters."⁵²

The collection and misuse of personal data has led to doxxing, where private information is publicly shared without consent, leading to threats and physical violence. One example of such invasion of privacy in action is the 2014-2015 [Gamergate](#) campaign that targeted women gamers on the internet leading to offline violence.⁵³

The pervasive surveillance environment erodes trust in digital platforms as well as the government institutions, and discourages women from fully participating in digital spaces, thereby hindering their ability to advocate for their rights and engage in public life.

Surveillance technologies are constantly evolving, and where private companies are developing these technologies for financial interests, governments are employing these tools to stifle dissent under the guise of national security in Global Majority authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian regimes.

Patriarchal control and lack of digital literacy

A significant barrier to women's participation in the global digital landscape remains limited access to digital technologies. I wrote in a 2022 article, "Where technology is known to serve its users in a way that leads to advancement of circumstances of their lives, refusal of this access, on the other hand, blatantly denies them this advancement keeping them away [...] from equally participating in various industries."⁵⁴ The 2024 GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report reveals that women in low- and middle-income countries are 15% less likely than men to use mobile phones, resulting in 265 million fewer women accessing the internet compared to men.⁵⁵ In South Asia, the gender digital divide is particularly stark, where 31%, or 285 million, women remain disconnected from the internet. This disparity is partly attributed to societal attitudes towards the internet, as illustrated by findings from Pakistan and Nigeria, where 42% of men and 28%

⁵² Darren Loucaides, The changing face of protest, Rest of World, March 27, 2024, <https://restofworld.org/2024/facial-recognition-government-protest-surveillance/#/an-end-to-privacy>.

⁵³ Aja Romano, What we still haven't learned from Gamergate, Vox, January 7, 2021, <https://www.vox.com/culture/2020/1/20/20808875/gamergate-lessons-cultural-impact-changes-harassment-laws>.

⁵⁴ Hija Kamran, Access Denied: Gender Digital Divide As A Form Of Violence in South and Southeast Asia, GenderIT.org, December 12, 2022, <https://genderit.org/edition/access-denied-gender-digital-divide-form-violence-south-and-southeast-asia>.

⁵⁵ The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2024, GSMA, May 2024, <https://www.gsma.com/r/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/The-Mobile-Gender-Gap-Report-2024.pdf>.

of women believe that the internet is more important for men than women, and 21% of men and 6% of women believe that it is more important for men, respectively.⁵⁶

During and post COVID-19, there was a surge in the access and usage of digital technologies and the internet – a silver lining amidst increasing limitations on access due to various factors amidst dwindling global economy, geographical barriers especially in rural and semi-urban areas, political factors that led to overregulation of online spaces, among many others. However, despite this, there was a clear indication of concerted efforts that contributed to the widening of gender digital divide, often rooted in violent patriarchal structures.

Research by Media Matters for Democracy identifies some of these challenges as: “Surveillance within homes, coupled with threats of domestic violence, also restricts women’s presence on the internet. The restrictions on offline mobility during the lockdown along with those inflicted upon them by their family members and society at large that further impacts women’s access to the internet, especially in cases where the only avenue to use the internet was and happens to be the places outside of homes.”⁵⁷

Highlighting the future implications of this divide, a report published during the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020 focusing on the digital divide in the ASEAN region, states, “The post-COVID-19 transformation will most likely generate a higher demand for more digitally-related jobs and skills. This means that the “digital divide” has the potential to become an even greater source of inequality. As a group, women fall under this second category – those lacking digital access and skills.”⁵⁸ It further added that some countries in Southeast Asia exhibit great gender disparities, for example, Indonesia, where gender digital divide was the largest at the time in APEC economies.

The GSMA 2024 report states, “In countries where “gatekeepers”, such as husbands, fathers or other senior family members, may dictate whether and how women use the internet, these findings highlight the need to account for and address such social norms in efforts to advance women’s digital inclusion.”

Patriarchal control over internet access remains a significant barrier to women's inclusion in technology, perpetuating a persistent gender divide and resulting in the disproportionate number of women who remain unconnected to the internet.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Hija Kamran, Zoya Rehman, Zoha Batool Khan. Women Disconnected: Feminist Case Studies on the Gender Digital Divide Amidst COVID-19, Media Matters for Democracy, January 2021, <https://www.digitalrightsmonitor.pk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Women-Disconnected-Gender-Digital-Divide-in-Pakistan.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Giulia Ajmone Marsan and Lydia Ruddy, Post-pandemic ASEAN must bridge digital gender divide, The Jakarta Post, May 15, 2020, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2020/05/15/post-pandemic-asean-must-bridge-digital-gender-divide.html>.

In addition to patriarchal control, factors such as the affordability of essential resources – especially in regions where men control household finances – along with digital literacy, language barriers, geographic limitations, and infrastructural challenges, all contribute to the barriers preventing women from fully exercising their human rights.

Addressing the gender digital divide is crucial in advancing gender equality. This requires coordinated efforts from governments, technology companies, and community-led initiatives that not only focus on policy interventions but also prioritise inclusive technology design and comprehensive digital literacy training.

4.2 New and emerging challenges

Artificial intelligence

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) introduces new dimensions to the challenges women and LGBTQIA+ communities face in digital spaces. Where AI technologies have been used to manipulate elections and distort public opinions, they have been particularly used to target women and gender-diverse individuals through synthetic media.⁵⁹ Commonly referred to as ‘deepfakes’, these AI-generated fabricated audio, visual and audio-visual content has become a significant risk to women’s safety and autonomy in the online spaces. Deepfakes are exploited to perpetrate gender-based violence, including non-consensual intimate images, harassment, defamation, among others to target women with an intention to harm their reputation and form a public narrative that works against them.⁶⁰

These technologies exacerbate the existing challenges by enabling and disseminating harmful content that have severe real-life implications. There are countless non-consensual videos of women generated through AI on pornography websites with a specialised category assigned to them, indicating that not only non-consensual intimate content is a sexual fantasy of this content’s consumers, but there is a specific demand for AI-generated videos as well.

The proliferation of non-consensual deepfake content can be largely attributed to the mainstreaming of artificial intelligence tools that facilitate the creation of highly realistic and often undetectable fabricated materials. According to an independent study, non-consensual deepfake content increased ninefold between 2019 and 2023, with over 150,000 videos generating a total of 3.8 billion views.⁶¹ Numerous free-to-use websites now enable the generation of

⁵⁹ Sam Gregory, Deepfakes and Synthetic Media: Updated Survey of Solutions against Malicious Usages, WITNESS, June 2019, <https://blog.witness.org/2019/06/deepfakes-synthetic-media-updated-survey-solutions-malicious-usages/>.

⁶⁰ Growing pandemic of deepfake image-based sexual exploitation requires an urgent response from lawmakers, Equality Now, January 26, 2024, https://equalitynow.org/press_release/growing-pandemic-of-deepfake-image-based-sexual-exploitation-requires-an-urgent-response-from-lawmakers/.

⁶¹ Google and Microsoft Are Supercharging AI Deepfake Porn, Financial Post, August 24, 2023, <https://financialpost.com/pm/bussiness-pmn/google-and-microsoft-are-supercharging-ai-deepfake-porn>.

AI-produced pornographic content.⁶² For instance, Rana Ayyub, the Indian journalist, was subjected to a deepfake porn campaign in 2018. ““It was devastating. I just couldn’t show my face. You can call yourself a journalist, you can call yourself a feminist but in that moment, I just couldn’t see through the humiliation,” she said, adding, “The next day, they doxxed me.”⁶³

Ayyub said that the impact of watching her deepfake video and the following online violence made her physically sick. “I was sent to the hospital with heart palpitations and anxiety, the doctor gave me medicine. But I was vomiting, my blood pressure shot up, my body had reacted so violently to the stress.”⁶⁴

In another instance, Helen Mort, a poet and broadcaster from the UK, was a victim of AI-generated deepfakes created from non-intimate photos she had posted on her personal social media accounts between 2017 and 2019.⁶⁵ These images were subsequently distributed on pornographic websites. Mort described her experience, stating, “It really makes you feel powerless, like you’re being put in your place. Punished for being a woman with a public voice of any kind. That’s the best way I can describe it. It’s saying, ‘Look: we can always do this to you.’”

The application of artificial intelligence to target women and individuals of marginalised genders serves to reinforce patriarchal dominance, perpetuating the objectification and sexualisation of their bodies to attack them. This practice is rooted in long-standing societal norms that have historically objectified and dehumanised these individuals.

Artificial intelligence-based systems are pivotal in shaping narratives and influencing public opinion. The manipulation of information through AI technologies facilitates disinformation campaigns that specifically target women, thereby undermining their character and credibility. This manipulation not only distorts public perception but also creates obstacles for women attempting to participate meaningfully in both digital and offline arenas.

Legislation intended to regulate artificial intelligence technology is often unable to keep pace with the rapid advancements in the technology itself. Lawmakers continue to struggle with the complexities inherent in AI, resulting in insufficient measures to address the harmful applications of AI that perpetuate technology-facilitated gender-based violence. There is a pressing need to develop a regulatory framework grounded in feminist principles to guide governments

⁶² Maggie Harrison Dupré, Google Caught Taking Money to Promote AI Apps That Create Nonconsensual Nudes, Yahoo News, August 7, 2024, <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/google-caught-taking-money-promote-203550519.html>.

⁶³ Rana Ayyub, I was the victim of a deepfake porn plot intended to silence me. Huffington Post, November 21, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/deepfake-porn_uk_5bf2c126e4b0f32bd58ba316.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Karen Hao, Deepfake porn is ruining women’s lives. Now the law may finally ban it. MIT Technology Review, February 12, 2021, <https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/02/12/1018222/deepfake-revenge-porn-coming-ban/>.

in effectively controlling the use of AI against women in all their diversities. This is crucial for advancing the objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

5. Areas of concern

- i. State-backed intimidation: State-backed intimidation against women journalists and activists is a significant concern in countries across the Global South. Women and gender and sexually diverse folks facing online harassment, threats, and surveillance from state actors experience severe risks that compromise their safety and freedom of expression, as witnessed in Uganda.⁶⁶ International bodies, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, have condemned such practices and emphasised the need for enhanced protection for women in both public and digital spheres. Addressing this intimidation requires international cooperation and accountability mechanisms to ensure equality.
- ii. Inadequate legal frameworks: CSOs frequently highlight the insufficiency of legal frameworks to address tech-facilitated violence against women. The rise of online harassment and non-consensual dissemination of intimate images exposes gaps in legal protections. CSOs advocate for the development and enforcement of comprehensive laws that address digital abuse and protect women's and LGBTQIA+ individuals' safety in online environments. Effective legal frameworks are essential for addressing emerging threats and safeguarding women's rights in the digital age.
- iii. Lack of gender-sensitive policies: The absence of gender-sensitive policies to control and counter technology-facilitated gender-based violence is a worrying trend in many of the Majority World countries that are still heavily influenced by patriarchal and religious narratives. Many technological platforms, tools and state policies fail to address the specific needs and challenges faced by women, resulting in exclusion, discrimination and revictimisation. CSOs advocate for multistakeholder policy interventions and inclusive technology policy design processes that incorporate gender perspectives to ensure equitable access and use of digital resources. Ensuring that policies meet the needs of all users is crucial for promoting gender equality and addressing disparities.
- iv. Failure of technology companies to protect marginalised communities: Technology and social media companies not only play a critical role in the perpetuation of violence against women and girls, particularly those from marginalised communities, within digital spaces, but they also profit off of this violence. The lack of transparency surrounding their content moderation practices and the absence of robust accountability mechanisms raise significant concerns about their complicity in facilitating gender-based violence on their platforms. Additionally, the processes by which existing and emerging technologies are developed warrant scrutiny. CSOs have consistently underscored the urgent need for greater

⁶⁶ Uganda: Court Upholds Anti-Homosexuality Act, Human Rights Watch, April 4, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/04/uganda-court-upholds-anti-homosexuality-act>.

transparency and accountability within these companies, advocating for comprehensive human rights assessments of technological tools and processes prior to their widespread deployment. This demand for accountability is essential to ensure that technological advancements do not inadvertently further contribute to or exacerbate existing inequalities and violence against vulnerable populations.

6. Policy interventions

Policy interventions must be multifaceted and address the diverse challenges faced by women in the digital age. Effective policies should include the following elements:

- i. **Feminist approach:** Addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence necessitates a feminist approach that comprehensively understands and responds to the diverse manifestations of this violence. Such an approach is essential for mitigating the impact of violence on women and LGBTQIA+ communities in digital and offline public spaces. It is crucial to evaluate technology and its development through the lens of Feminist Principles of the Internet, which are developed and informed by the experiences of vulnerable communities in the Global South. Achieving this requires the deliberate inclusion of feminist perspectives in policy-making discussions at both governmental and corporate levels. This approach should recognise how power and privilege play a role in the policy discussions, to ensure meaningful inclusion of marginalised people.
- ii. **Development of gender-sensitive legal frameworks:** Legal frameworks must be updated and strengthened to address the specific gendered challenges posed by technology. Governments should enact comprehensive laws that address online harassment and tech-facilitated gender-based violence in its many forms, and do not exacerbate it. These laws should be accompanied by effective enforcement mechanisms and support systems for survivors. Collaboration with CSOs and local communities can enhance the development and implementation of gender-sensitive legal frameworks.
- iii. **Monitoring, accountability and transparency:** There is a need for mechanisms and processes mandated by international human rights bodies to enforce monitoring, transparency and accountability in matters of policy design and implementation. Governments must be obligated to maintain transparency in their internet regulatory practices, in accordance with international human rights principles that mandate openness and accountability in official matters. Furthermore, it is essential that governments remain receptive to scrutiny and are held accountable for any deficiencies in their policies or implementations. Concurrently, governments must also enforce accountability within the private sector and among technology companies, ensuring that these entities fulfil their responsibilities to protect individual rights on their platforms.
- iv. **Investment in digital infrastructure:** Governments should prioritise investments in digital infrastructure to ensure that all women, particularly those in rural and underserved areas, have access to reliable internet connectivity and digital devices. Public-private partnerships

can play a crucial role in expanding digital infrastructure and providing affordable technology to underserved communities. Policies focused on bridging the gender digital divide must also be introduced.

- v. Support for civil society organisations: Governments and international organisations should provide support to local and national CSOs working on gender, technology and digital rights. CSOs play a vital role in advocating for women’s rights, addressing gaps in legal protections, and providing support to survivors of digital abuse. Funding, capacity-building, and partnerships with CSOs can enhance their effectiveness and impact.
- vi. Connecting with the diverse communities: Governments must actively engage with diverse communities, including indigenous peoples, queer communities, and those who are under-represented or structurally marginalised, such as sex workers, in discussions concerning technology and its regulation. To ensure that these communities are not excluded, it is imperative that they are consulted in a meaningful manner before the formulation of policies. Policy-making processes should be proactive in reaching out to these communities, rather than expecting them to adapt to established decision-making procedures designed to exclude them.

7. Future prospects and recommendations

Looking ahead, several recommendations can guide efforts to advance the goals of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the digitally advanced present and future:

- (a) Enhance collaboration: Greater collaboration between governments, private sector entities, CSOs and communities is essential for addressing the complex challenges faced by women in all their diversities in the digital age. Multi-stakeholder partnerships can facilitate the development and implementation of effective policies, programs, and initiatives that promote gender equality and address emerging issues.
- (b) Promote inclusivity in technology design: Technology companies should prioritise inclusivity-by-design in their design processes to ensure that their products, services and platform policies meet the needs of all users. This includes conducting gender-sensitive research, involving diverse perspectives in technology development, and addressing biases in AI and other emerging technologies.
- (c) Invest in education and skills development: Continued investment in digital literacy is crucial for closing gender gaps in technology as well as raising awareness around how to report violence on the internet. Programs that provide training, scholarships, and mentorship for women and girls, as well as those that educate men about the prospects of inclusion of women in the usage of digital technology for the future of the household and the community, can help create pathways to empower women to fully participate in the digital economy.
- (d) Strengthen legal protections and support systems: Governments should enhance legal protections and support systems for women and queer communities affected by online

harassment, cyberbullying, and tech-facilitated violence. This includes updating legal frameworks, improving enforcement mechanisms, and providing accessible support services for survivors, like 24/7 helplines, online complaint mechanisms, emergency hotlines and gender-sensitised officers.

8. Way forward

The intersection of gender and technology has become increasingly critical in the pursuit of gender equality. With the advent of digital technologies, new opportunities and challenges have emerged that necessitate a re-evaluation of how media and communication platforms can be leveraged to empower women and ensure their full participation in public spheres.

There is a unique opportunity for us to revisit our approach to the Platform for Action and how we expect governments to implement it. This reimagining has to be done in light of the current realities of the world, where technology has become an indispensable part of daily life, making sure no one is left behind.