

IGF 2020 Best Practice Forum on Gender and Access

Online meeting I | 14 May 2020

Summary report

The first online meeting of the IGF 2020 Best Practice Forum on Gender and Access was dedicated to informing the community about the BPF's scope of work and kick-starting a discussion on work modalities for the months in the lead up to IGF 2020. The meeting was attended by 10 participants.

1. Introduction

The BPF on Gender and Access is one of the four BPFs approved by the Multistakeholder Advisory Group to carry on work in the IGF 2020 cycle. This year, the BPF will focus on gender impact on shaping Internet policy.

2. A look back

Since its beginning in 2015, the BPF has focused on different issues related to gender and access: aspects of women's meaningful access to the Internet: online abuse and gender-based violence (2015); barriers for accessing the Internet (2016); identification of the needs and challenges of diverse women's groups with respect to Internet access (2017); the impact of supplementary models of connectivity on women's Internet access (2018); and opportunities and challenges that women face to gain the necessary skills to benefit from the future of work. Throughout these years, the BPF's work modalities have included online meetings, surveys, calls for input, and calls for volunteers.

3. BPF Gender: 2020 focus and work plan

This year, the BPF will conduct an assessment of Internet-related policy processes and spaces through a feminist approach, to determine whether and how they protect and foster participation of women and gender-diverse people, particularly young ones. The focus will be placed on Internet-related policy processes and spaces that address issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online.

The BPF will also look at how digital policies focused on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic consider gender perspectives related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online and integrate the views of women and gender diverse people.

The BPF aims to compile examples of good practices on the issues explored, and develop recommendations on ensuring representation of women and gender diverse people in Internet-related policy spaces and decision making processes.

More details are available in the [BPF work plan](#) and in the [slides used during the meeting](#).

Participants in the meeting expressed support for the outlined BPF approach: focusing on Internet-related policy spaces from a feminist perspective.

4. Discussion on scope, work modalities, and next steps

Participants were invited to share their views on how the BPF should go ahead with the work in the upcoming months. Options that could be considered include: scoping survey and desk research to identify Internet-related policy processes and spaces within the BPF's focus; questionnaires to help identify good practices; and the engagement of entities active in the focus areas.

These and other options are outlined in a **collaborative working document**, which the **community is invited to contribute to**, by adding comments, suggestions, and recommendations for the work ahead (including in terms of stakeholders that could be involved in the BPF).

One point raised during the discussions was related to **the scope of BPF's work and how wide or narrow this should be**, to allow for meaningful work. It was explained that, first, the BPF would look at where Internet-related policy engagement is happening - be it at global, regional or national level (still to be decided), with a focus on issues of online violence, harm, pleasure and consent. The BPF would then assess how influential the focus issues are within these processes: whether they are on the agenda, how often they are addressed, whether we see any resistance with regard to their inclusion on the agenda.

This could be a good moment to **assess the IGF** itself from these points of view and make recommendations. At the end of the assessment, the BPF may be able to come up with constructive criticism and say things such as: 'we need further inclusion of certain groups' or 'we need some other topics to be put on the agenda'.

A decision should be made on **whether the BPF will look exclusively at the IGF, or also include a couple of other processes**, such as the follow-up to the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation.

A suggestion was made for the BPF to also consider looking at issues of access and inclusion, from the perspective of women and gender-diverse people.

Another suggestion was to consider **including the voice of women from rural areas**. This could be done, for instance, by extending a few questions to local community networks, allowing the inclusion in the BPF's work of direct feedback from them on the issues explored. Here it is important to keep in mind the focus on the BPF and ensure that the information that could be gathered from local networks can meaningfully feed into the BPF. For example: To what extent do such communities face issues related to online violence, harm, pleasure and consent? What policy spaces do people that work with community networks engage with, and what issues do they raise?

It was then argued that major policy spaces, like the IGF, do not seem to take into consideration the experience of people in rural areas or other specific communities, the narrative being that they are not considered because they are a minority. It could be useful to take note of this in the BPF's work. The fact that the BPF is taking a feminist approach allows it to assess how Internet policy spaces address issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online and how they include different communities. At the end, the BPF could say that, while these spaces argue that they bring in the majority, they could actually do more. A question to further explore is whether the BPF could also shine light on alternative spaces that maybe are doing better in addressing the needs and issues of specific communities.

5. Next steps

- BPF meetings will take place every two weeks, on Thursday, at 13:00 UTC.
 - The next meeting is on **28 May, 13:00 UTC**.
- Everyone is invited to contribute thoughts and suggestions to the [collaborative working document](#)
 - Suggestions are particularly welcome on stakeholders we could invite to contribute to the BPF work.
- In the upcoming weeks, the co-facilitators may consult the community on developing a methodology/questionnaire to highlight the issues we want to bear in mind throughout the BPF work when assessing Internet policy processes and spaces.