

Title: BPF Gender and Digital Rights

Names of at least two Facilitators (at least one of which is a MAG member)

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Background

With the increasing wave of censorship and unlawful criminalization of different minority communities worldwide, it is important to raise awareness on the impacts regulations are having on the most diverse groups - i.e. newly proposed regulation or legal amendments that might represent changes to users rights such as freedom of expression, online identity, safety and civic space . On that note, we believe its important to keep in mind how LGBTQI+ people, historically marginalized communities, human rights defenders and sex workers are being constantly criminalized, harrassed, and segregated despite the various recomendations made by international human rights defense initiatives regarding the worldwide impact the pandemic has had in these populations.

Stakeholders in the Internet Governance ecosystem need to prioritize these conversations to actively approach gender issues far beyond existing conversations about how to tackle gender-based violence online which tend to privilege the experiences of cis women. In that sense, using a powerful platform such as the Internet Governance Forum to raise awareness about the horrid impacts some regulations have on the direct wellbeing of these populations and communities could also be a pertinent way to put the intersectional perspective into practice and use our collective power to put these conversations on the agenda of urgent/necessary transformations for a better internet ecosystem.

Over the course of the past years this group has invested time and community efforts into very timely discussions such as violence against women, Internet Access, the Internet as a mean of women and LGBTQI+ communities empowerment and also the impacts of gender disinformation on female and LGBTQIA+ communities. The relevance of this BPF lies, therefore, in its facilitation of a safe and relevant space to discuss the different aspects in which gender comes into play at the broader Internet Governance debates. Added to that, it is important to stress that there is sufficient interest on behalf of the BPF Gender, as well as on behalf of civil society and technical community actors willing to generate traction in order to involve more stakeholders in these conversations.

Description:

Today, gendered censorship is pervasive, online and offline. Women's and non-binary people's voices are suppressed, controlled or punished explicitly by laws, policies and discriminatory practices. Gendered censorship needs to be addressed while taking a human rights and gender-sensitive approach to the right of freedom of expression. Added to that, this BPF has addressed in previous years that the Internet can serve both female and LGBTQIA+ communities as means of expression of their identities and sexualities, as well as provide them a space for economic empowerment.

The objective of the BPF Gender and Digital Rights is, therefore, analyze the various impact of regulations from a gender justice perspective, following up on the work of the United Nations Special Rapporteurs for freedom of expression and opinion, Violence against women and human rights defenders - and widen the scope of discussion to how gender intertwines with accessibility, and to raise awareness on how the prevalence of biases in the understanding of gender from a public (and international) policy perspective undermines the human rights of women, LGBTQI+ people, and historically marginalized communities.

Through a year-long intersectional research programme that can harness experiences of underrepresented

populations worldwide, we aim to present a series of recommendations regarding the current impacts of Internet regulation and how to overcome them by incorporating a wider perspective on gender as a core element of human rights defense in the internet ecosystem.

By analyzing relevant legislations all over the world under the clusters of freedom of expression, access, censorship and criminalization of women and LGBTQI+, our goal is to set a conversation with the Internet Governance community on what are the possible effects exercised by such regulations, as well as pointing out to the available rights protection mechanisms.

Focus of the BPF

The focus of the BPF in 2022 will be to :

- Analyze the impact of regulations from a gender justice perspective taking into consideration the work done by the United Nations Special Rapporteurs for freedom of expression and opinion, Violence against women and human rights defenders;
- Assume an active responsibility in generating conversations with people who are affected by these regulatory practices - both on the end of over and under-regulation, i.e. . regulations which are meant to tackle GBV but fail to protect marginalized women;
- Assess the impacts of the -diminishing privacy and the hiper-fiscalizations of women and LGBTQI+ people online;
- Assess the role of Privacy and Freedom of Expression provisions on female and LGBTQI+ groups online identities;
- Promote the defense of digital rights as human rights, understanding the biases and divides that keep women and LGBTQI+ people out from these conversations in order to avoid framing these issues from a revictimizing perspective.
- Understand the importance of the internet ecosystem as an ecosystem of democratic development, aiming towards more accessibility and less constraints towards underrepresented/historically marginalized populations.

Outreach plan and multi stakeholder engagement

We aim to develop relevant work throughout the year on the topic of possible impact legislation might have on the fruition of rights online for communities of women and LGBTQIA+ groups. On that note, being able to wrap up the work at the IGF would be a great opportunity to set a wider conversation about how these groups are differentially impacted by over regulatory practices on a worldwide scale. We are looking forward to hear from activists, human rights defenders, the technical community, and academia from different regions in order to create a bigger picture that could spike the interest of local initiatives and other stakeholders in taking a deep dive on these issues and promote a shift in the paradigm of how gender is approached in the Internet Governance Ecosystem.

As in previous years, this BPF plans to reach out to NRIs and other stakeholders from the Digital Rights and Internet Governance ecosystems to promote the work and seek their inputs, also requesting the IGF Secretariat to share about the BPF work with its other sister UN organizations involved in similar work.

For information purposes, some of the organizations who have been involved in the BPF work include: Comun.al (Mexico), Mozilla Foundation (International), Internet Society (International), Association for Progressive Communications (International), #ShePersisted (USA) and Demos (UK). Additionally, this years work already received support from specialists from the Internet Governance and Gender Studies such as Alexandra Argüelles, comun.al / Mozilla Fellow; Umut Pajaro Velasquez, ISOC; Marwa Azelmat, APC; Lucina Di Meco, #ShePersisted; and Ellen Judson, Demos.