



How technology issues impact women's rights : 10 points on Section J

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1. Access to infrastructure

Issues

Access to information and communications technology (ICT) plays an important role in the economic, social, cultural and political development of societies and nations. The significance of access to the internet, mobile telephony and other means of communications facilitated by technology have long been identified by researchers and policy makers alike as central to improving empowerment of women and marginalised communities. From women in Uganda running a profitable business with the help of their mobile phones, to young women in India accessing websites that allow them to make more informed decisions about their sexual health, there are many documented cases that demonstrate ICT's potential for women's empowerment.

Although access to infrastructure, the cables and the satellites by which we communicate, has become more pervasive, the question of accessibility remains ever present. Aside from troubling inequalities in terms of access between the North and the South, there is a growing body of evidence on a notable gender divide exacerbated by factors such as level of employment, education, poverty, literacy and geographical location.^{1 2} According to the International Telecommunication Union, 16% fewer women than men used the internet in developing countries in 2013.³ That figure jumps to 45% in sub-Saharan Africa, partly due to the costs of mobile broadband making up a higher percentage of women's income.⁴

The assumption by many is that technology is gender-neutral, when in fact women are often excluded from the development and implementation of technology because of cultural biases. To meet women's needs, especially those of women in the South, women's rights organisations must invest in spaces where decisions about access and infrastructure are made, and influence decisions that address economics as well as the cultural and social norms that are barriers to access for women and girls. Through better access to information, debates, discussions and networks of peers that ICT provides, women can be better equipped to challenge patriarchy and work towards a more just and equal society.

¹ Milek, A., Stork, C., & Gillwald, A. (2011). Engendering communication: a perspective on ICT access and usage in Africa. *Info -The journal of policy, regulation and strategy for telecommunications*, 13(3), 125-141.

² GenderIT. (2007, 16 July). Access & Gender. www.genderit.org/newsletter/access-gender

³ International Telecommunication Union. (2013). *The World in 2013: ICT Facts and Figures*. www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2013-e.pdf

⁴ Alliance for Affordable Internet. (2014). *The Affordability Report*. a4ai.org/affordability-report/report/#affordability_a_global_picture

Demands

- A public access⁵ strategy that emphasises women's needs
- Expansion of infrastructure networks and decrease in communication costs
- Women's participation in decision-making processes at national and international levels on internet governance, infrastructure planning and regulation, and technology development.

⁵ APC, IFLA & TASCHA. (2014). *Public Access: Supporting Digital Inclusion for All*. www.apc.org/en/system/files/APC_PublicAccessBriefing_20140513.pdf

2. Expression, information, agency

Issues

In the last few years, issues of freedom of expression, the right to information and censorship have been at the forefront of debates related to the internet. In his 2011 report on freedom of expression, UN Special Rapporteur Frank La Rue developed a framework⁶ to assess freedom of expression and identified obstacles on the internet, including the arbitrary filtering or blocking of content, the criminalisation of legitimate expression, cyber attacks, privacy and data protection, and internet access.

Since the so-called “Arab Spring”, governments have realised the power of the internet for activists to organise, mobilise and express dissent, and have consequently cracked down on mobile and internet networks. Internet corporations and governments are also increasingly enacting some form of censorship online, often under questionable reasoning around morality and bolstered by very vocal conservative advocates for the protection of children or against “obscenity”. For example, LGBTIQI websites have been blocked by some internet service providers in Indonesia,⁷ and women posting pictures on breastfeeding pages have been censored on Facebook.

For gender and sexuality rights advocates, the internet has become a critical space to access relevant information, provide support and mobilise people. When essential information on sexual health and reproductive rights is dubbed obscene and then censored, women and queer persons who need access to this information to make informed and vital choices about their lives are prevented from fully exercising their rights as stated by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).⁸

Women have long realised the importance of freedom of expression and access to information in voicing opposition to patriarchal systems and challenging the status quo. As an extension of offline life, the internet can be a transformative public and political space where people deconstruct notions of citizenship and express identities, feelings and ideas in a relatively safe space.⁹ However, this space has been under threat for women and gender rights advocates who face a backlash in

⁶ Association for Progressive Communications. (2013). *Monitoring Freedom of Expression: The La Rue Framework*. <https://www.apc.org/en/node/16359/>

⁷ Institut Pelangi Perempuan. (2014). *Queering Internet Governance in Indonesia*. erotics.apc.org/research/queering-internet-governance-indonesia

⁸ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (1966). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx

⁹ Association for Progressive Communications WNSP. (2010). Internet Governance Issues on Sexuality and Women’s Rights. *GenderIT.org*. www.genderit.org/articles/internet-governance-issues-sexuality-and-womens-rights

the form of misogynistic hate speech.¹⁰ More specifically, women's freedom of expression is restricted by online violence, which is often ignored when online platforms express their commitment to free speech.

Demands

- Inclusion of online realities in existing legal frameworks on hate speech and violence
- Measures and legislation that protect women's right to freedom from violence without infringing on freedom of expression and the right to information
- Policies against censorship and filtering of sexual speech and sexual health content.

¹⁰ Salas, M. (2013, 10 June). The false paradox: freedom of expression and sexist hate speech. *GenderIT.org*. www.genderit.org/feminist-talk/false-paradox-freedom-expression-and-sexist-hate-speech

3. Economy and sustainable development

Issues

While we have recognised the potential of information and communications technology (ICT) as a means for subversion of the patriarchal order and as a tool for the economic empowerment of women,¹¹ there is a tension with the mass production of the means through which we access the internet and mobile communications networks, as this production relies largely on feminine exploited labour.

As much as the use of mobile phones has been emancipatory for Jamaican domestic workers in claiming their labour rights,¹² women in China are earning slave wages to produce parts of the computers we use and women in the Democratic Republic of Congo are finding themselves victims of an increasingly militarised conflict around the fight for mining resources such as coltan, a mineral used in the production of our mobile phones. We must resist the economic enslavement, exclusion and violence that these technologies generate even as we celebrate ICT's potential for empowering women.

The internet has become an extension of our offline lives. As we challenge gender inequalities in all aspects of society, we must recognise that the neoliberal economic power that is omnipresent in the world we live in today must also be challenged on the internet. Corporations' control over the means of production, publication and consumption of content online is growing rapidly, be it your internet service provider or social media platforms like Facebook. For online media corporations, we have become the product, by producing and publishing content, as much as the consumers who are the main target of the advertisements accompanying this content.

As much as women have managed to subvert online commercial platforms for activism,¹³ we must think critically about the encroachment of corporations over a public sphere, limiting the space for political and social debates and the sharing of knowledge in favour of advertising and commodification. The internet is a critical space for women's rights activism, a struggle that is sharpening a conflict with the increasing commodification of this space and the corporate interests that profit from and foster a patriarchal order.

¹¹ Gupta, S., & Ma, M. (2014, 4 April). New media and girls' rights: Tying-in technology and empowerment. *GenderIT.org*. www.genderit.org/feminist-talk/new-media-and-girls-rights-tying-technology-and-empowerment

¹² Fascendini, F. (2013, 27 November). Jamaican household workers use cellphones to protect their rights and improve their working conditions. *GenderIT.org*. www.genderit.org/articles/jamaican-household-workers-use-cell-phones-protect-their-rights-and-improve-working-conditi

¹³ Daniels, J. (2009). Rethinking Cyberfeminism(s): Race, Gender, and Embodiment. *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, 37(1), 101-124. <https://muse.jhu.edu>

Demands

- Commitment to human rights and women's rights¹⁴ from ICT corporations
- Involvement of women's rights advocates in internet governance
- Training for women's rights activists on sustaining their own platforms in order to control the content they produce
- Support for community-owned internet service providers and access initiatives
- Women's involvement in the development of free/libre and open source software (FLOSS).

¹⁴ United Nations. (2011). *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf

4. Privacy and autonomy

Issues

Privacy has long been a central issue for women's rights. The concept of privacy has been both useful in establishing reproductive rights and sexual rights and harmful in enabling intimate partner violence. Historically, women have been viewed as property in both the private and public spheres, which led to laws, policies and social mores that controlled our behaviour and limited our opportunities, with violence as one way of enforcing these norms. Feminist movements have defended women's right to privacy while also challenging the notion of "private violence", turning it into a community health problem, a public issue. In the digital world, however, women's privacy is being threatened and connected to violence in new and chilling ways.

From friends, partners, ex-partners and strangers to cyber mobs, employers, law enforcement and governments, people are accessing personal data with an aim to manipulate and humiliate. Blackmail¹⁵ based on stolen or privately shared information and images (so-called "revenge porn") is an increasingly common crime that causes real harm to women. People share images of women without their consent because they think women's bodies and sexuality are shameful but also public property. The popular idea is that if we do not want such images disseminated, then we should not take them. The message is clear: privacy rights do not extend to women.

But they most certainly do. We also have the right to access information and express ourselves anonymously. Privacy is critical for survivors of gender-based violence and people living with HIV/AIDS to find information and to seek remedies and emotional support, and professionals offering support must be able to protect client records. Privacy is important for LGBTQI people and people exploring their sexuality, and it is vital for the work of women human rights defenders, whose lives are threatened daily.

The lengths our governments have gone to in order to monitor us have created a culture of surveillance that also empowers corporations to monitor our behaviour and track our data and contributes to the idea that privacy violations are no longer violations, especially when they happen to women. Without privacy, we cannot have autonomy. We cannot feel free to do what we want or even what we need. Without autonomy, we do not have bodily integrity. Our bodies, our thoughts and our spaces can be invaded without our consent. Yet the internet can enable women's autonomy and other rights if privacy is respected by individuals, the private sector and other non-state actors as well as the state.

¹⁵ Take Back the Tech! Blackmail Roadmap. <https://www.takebackthetech.net/know-more/blackmail>

Demands

- An expansion of our right to privacy, incorporating the digital realm, as the United Nations has declared in its "Right to Privacy in the Digital Age"¹⁶
- Stronger privacy policies in online platforms and workplaces and privacy by default and by design in applications
- Digital security training for women human rights defenders and women's organisations.

¹⁶ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Right to Privacy in the Digital Age. www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/DigitalAge/Pages/DigitalAgeIndex.aspx

5. Decision making, public participation, activism

Issues

The internet has enabled vast improvements in the work of women's rights activists and organisations. Raising awareness, engaging in dialogue, creating networks across borders, mobilising people and putting pressure on decision makers are all easier than ever before. In fact, 90% of activists working on feminist, LGBTQI, sexual and reproductive health or HIV/AIDS, and youth, adolescent and children's rights issues say their advocacy work would be difficult or impossible without the internet.¹⁷ Additionally, 37% of such activists largely based in the global South said the internet allows them to work in safer conditions than face-to-face. That's significant since half of them have received violent messages and threats while working online.

Likewise, the internet allows more women to participate in public life and culture by giving us easy access from safe spaces (though access and safety are still lacking in some parts of the world). We can more easily cross private/public, cultural and national boundaries, we can express ourselves and amplify the voices of other women and we can present alternative narratives to counter traditional or mainstream ideologies. But as with activists, average women users still face violence and security threats when we access technology.

We have the right to create and critique culture, lead and engage in politics, contribute to science and participate in decision making. One area in which internet access has been most effective is in assessing women's political participation,¹⁸ and women are still left out of decision-making roles, especially in internet governance,¹⁹ which is the development and implementation of "shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the internet."²⁰ Hence, women's under-representation affects everything from privacy rights to freedom of expression.

Digital spaces reflect and exacerbate the unequal power structures we challenge offline, so women's rights work must address dominant cultural norms perpetuated online as well as the transformative potential of these spaces. Technology may be a means to empower women, but

¹⁷ EROTICS. (2013). Survey on Sexual Activism, Morality and the Internet. erotics.apc.org/research/survey-sexual-activism-morality-and-internet

¹⁸ United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. (2005). *Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Through ICT*. www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/w2000-09.05-ict-e.pdf

¹⁹ Doria, A. (2012). Internet Governance and Gender Issues. In D. Sabanes Plou (Ed.), *Critically Absent: Women's Rights in Internet Governance*. APC. www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/critically_absent.pdf

²⁰ Working Group on Internet Governance. (2005). *Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance*. www.wgig.org/docs/WGIGREPORT.pdf

facilitating change and mitigating harms require ongoing vigilance. We must continue to build the feminist movement online and off, developing dynamic, strategic activism that suits the fluidity of the digital world but translates to lasting change.

Demands

- Emphasis on creating more democratic spaces online
- Gender mainstreaming in government and private sector information and communications technology (ICT) policies, especially in internet governance
- Gender equality in decision-making bodies.

6. STEM

Issues

Women and girls have long been marginalised in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Globally, women make up only one quarter of scientific researchers, a figure that drops below 10% in Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea and Senegal.²¹ Only 12% of engineers in the world are women.²² Out of 70 offices in 40 countries, Google, the world's biggest brand, has a staff that is only 30% women.²³

The biggest barriers to starting STEM education reflect the "knowledge gap": exclusion from school, lower literacy rates and less access to the internet and other information and communications technology (ICT) than men.²⁴ Basic education has a huge impact, as women comprise two-thirds of the world's illiterate population, and 54% of children out of school are girls.²⁵ Additionally, the historical tendency to see machines as masculine affects girls' confidence about STEM and discourages them from studying them.

Such sexist attitudes mean that women in STEM careers can face hostile work environments, and many in the United States, the headquarters of major corporations such as Apple, Facebook and Google (whose engineering teams are only 15-20% female), are leaving tech altogether.²⁶ A study of European countries revealed that in addition to a glass ceiling, women face a "maternal wall", meaning that women's careers are hampered by their heavier burden of care and domestic work and a lack of supportive employment policies.²⁷

²¹ United Nations. (2010). The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics. unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/Worldswomen/wwEduc2010.htm

²² International Federation of University Women. (2015). Policy Update, January 2015. www.ifuw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/IFUW-PolicyUpdate-0115v2-STEM.pdf

²³ Google. Diversity. www.google.com/diversity/at-google.html

²⁴ UNESCO. (2003). *Gender Issues in the Information Society*. portal.unesco.org/ci/en/file_download.php/250561f24133814c18284feedc30bb5egender_issues.pdf

²⁵ United Nations. (2010). Op. cit.

²⁶ Lien, T. (2015, 22 February). Why are women leaving the tech industry in droves? *LA Times*. www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-women-tech-20150222-story.html#page=1

²⁷ European Commission. (2012). *She Figures*. ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/she-figures-2012_en.pdf

Because of the gender gap in STEM, women are seriously under-represented in the governance and development of the digital world, which affects society as much as the corresponding gender disparity in the offline world. STEM research and development tends to ignore the needs and concerns of women and girls. Much of the violence that women face online, for example, could be prevented or responded to quickly if women were more involved in developing tools, building spaces and making decisions. A feminist approach to technology could transform the way we work and play on the internet, and STEM solutions extend beyond digital spaces into many facets of our lives.

Demands

- Policies that improve girls' access to quality education and ICT
- Gender mainstreaming in STEM policies, education and recruitment, with an emphasis on challenging gender norms
- Mentoring programmes and family-friendly policies in STEM workplaces.

7. Violence against women

Issues

Thanks to years of online activism that has finally gotten the media's attention, it is now harder to ignore the increasing amounts and disturbing levels of violence perpetrated against women through the internet and other information and communications technology (ICT). Mobile phones and internet access have altered already-existing forms of violence against women and added new forms that often lead to repeat victimisation.

Technology has become a useful tool for abusers committing intimate partner violence, as they can now monitor or send abusive messages through a variety of avenues. Anyone from supposed friends to anonymous strangers can harass, threaten and blackmail women through ICT. Women, especially young women, are more likely than men to face severe online harassment that is sexualised and violent,²⁸ and for women of colour, the harassment is both sexualised and racialised.²⁹ In particular, women journalists and bloggers face constant harassment on the internet, especially when writing about gender or male-dominated fields. From doxing (posting someone's address, phone number and employer online, often with the suggestion of violence) and vicious rape and death threats to cyber mobs and defamation, women writers face a gamut of violence that aims to silence them and push them out of digital spaces.³⁰

Online violence such as cyber stalking, hate speech and blackmail violates our rights to privacy, work, public participation, freedom from violence and freedom of expression.³¹ In fact, people who commit harassment often defend it by falsely claiming freedom of expression, and platforms do little to prevent such violence under the guise of free speech while ignoring how it actually restricts that same right for women. The good news is that women's rights activists have made some progress. Companies such as Facebook and Twitter have taken important steps to deal with violence against women, and some jurisdictions have looked at how they can use or clarify existing laws to better address ICT. But more needs to be done, especially for women outside of North America and Europe.³²

²⁸ Pew Research Center. (2014). *Online Harassment*. www.pewinternet.org/files/2014/10/PI_OnlineHarassment_102214_pdf1.pdf

²⁹ TLDR. (2014, 17 July). #31 – Race Swap: Transcript. *On The Media*. www.onthemedial.org/story/31-race-swap-experiment/transcript/

³⁰ Hess, A. (2014, 6 January). Why Women Aren't Welcome on the Internet. *Pacific Standard*. www.psmag.com/health-and-behavior/women-arent-welcome-internet-72170

³¹ Take Back the Tech! Hate Speech: Related Rights. <https://www.takebackthetech.net/be-safe/hate-speech-related-rights>

³² GenderIT. (2014). End Violence Research Findings. www.genderit.org/VAWonline-research

All women's rights organisations should be concerned with how technology-related violence affects the issues on which they work, whether by silencing feminist writers, threatening women human rights defenders, decreasing women's access to information or keeping women out of leadership roles. The internet can be one of our tools for preventing and responding to violence, providing support to victims and mobilising for change.

Demands

- Inclusion of gender-based violence, including hate speech, in community guidelines and a commitment to women's freedom of expression from social media platforms
- Inclusion of technology-related violence in existing laws
- Training for law enforcement, legal staff, victim advocates and educators.

8. Environment

Issues

Women face more harm than men from climate change because they are more likely to be poor and depend on natural resources to make ends meet and less likely to be able to access supportive resources or serve on decision-making bodies.³³ In Africa, more than 90% of women in the labour force work in agriculture, which means that climate change affects their income as well as their food sources. The more time women and girls spend producing crops and collecting traditional fuels for their families and communities, the less time they have to attend school, participate in culture, engage in politics and take care of their health, and the greater their risk for sexual violence as they toil in isolated places.³⁴

More women than men die from natural disasters, one impact of climate change, but they are also a great resource for community risk reduction during such times.³⁵ The internet and other information and communications technology (ICT) can help women mitigate risk as a tool to collect data, increase awareness and build capacity. It can also help them initiate community change on ecological issues. Due to poverty and marine degradation in coastal India and Kenya, environmental organisations successfully introduced ICT to promote environmentally sustainable alternative livelihoods for women.³⁶ The world's increasing reliance on technology, however, generates e-waste (discarded electronics and their toxic byproducts), which also disproportionately harms women, affecting their health, fertility and children.³⁷

Because the mainstream media fails to fully address the implications of environmental degradation and its urgency, community media such as local outlets and citizen journalists can better tackle the needs of women in rural communities, and social media can enable women with access to participate in relevant discussions and pressure governments and the private sector for change.³⁸ Manila-based Isis International, for example, developed a toolkit on gender justice and climate

³³ UN WomenWatch. (2009). Fact Sheet: Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change. www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ International Union for Conservation of Nature. (2009). How natural disasters affect women. www.iucn.org/news_homepage/events/isdr/?3373/How-natural-disasters-affect-women

³⁶ Wamala, C. (2012). *Empowering women through ICT*. Spider ICT4D Series No. 4. spidercenter.org/polopoly_fs/1.163638.1390315398!/menu/standard/file/Spider%20ICT4D%20series%204%20Empowering%20women%20through%20ICT.pdf

³⁷ McAllister, L., Magee, A., & Hale, B. (2014). Women, E-Waste, and Technological Solutions to Climate Change. *Health and Human Rights*, 16(1). www.hhrjournal.org/2014/07/01/women-e-waste-and-technological-solutions-to-climate-change/

³⁸ Tsedu, T. (2011, 1 December). Using ICTs to communicate climate change to women. *Gender Links*. www.genderlinks.org.za/article/africa-using-icts-to-communicate-climate-change-to-women-2011-12-01

justice from Southern feminist perspectives, with emphasis on using ICT for advocacy and communicating women's lived realities.³⁹

Demands

- Gender mainstreaming in ICT and climate change policies
- Policies that support community media and ICT training for women
- Programmes that build women's power as change agents in the home, community and global arena.

³⁹ Isis International. (n/d). *Gender and climate change: Toolkit for women on climate change*. isisinternational.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1530:gender-and-climate-change-toolkit-for-women-on-climate-change&catid=163&Itemid=344

9. Women's participation in media

Issues

Women have always been under-represented in the fields of print, radio and television media, especially as editors and producers, and the same power structures exist in online media. Only 27% of top management positions and 36% of reporting positions are held by women.⁴⁰ Women engaged in only 37% of the reporting on television, radio and newspapers in 2010, reflecting no increase since 2005.⁴¹

Women reporters are least likely to report on politics, government and the economy, which means there is a lack of women's voices in a variety of discourses. Even in the fields where they report most – so-called "soft" economics such as poverty and consumer issues, arts and entertainment – they do not dominate. As new technologies are introduced, women are outsiders from the beginning. In the very new field of podcasting, for example, men host 70% of the world's top 100 podcasts.⁴²

This inequality is due to cultural biases steeped in sexism, entrenched male dominance in certain fields, lack of education on and access to information and communications technology (ICT), and pervasive violence. Media coverage leads people to believe that violence against reporters is restricted to journalists taken hostage in war zones, but women reporters face violence in the field and in the workplace. In one study, nearly two-thirds of women in news media said they had experienced "intimidation, threats and abuse," with one-third perpetrated by bosses, and a quarter had experienced sexual violence in the office.⁴³ Almost half endured sexual harassment and 21.6% faced physical violence on the job. To make matters worse, only 30% said their employers take steps to protect their security. Women who write online face frequent harassment and intimidation, causing some feminist writers to leave.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ International Women's Media Foundation. (2011). Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media. www.iwmf.org/our-research/iwmf-global-report

⁴¹ Global Media Monitoring Project. (2010). *Who Makes the News?* cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2010/global/gmmp_global_report_en.pdf

⁴² Madison, A. (2015, 23 February). In the Male-Dominated World of Podcasts, More Women are Claiming the Mic. *Bitch Magazine*. bitchmagazine.org/post/women-are-making-headway-in-the-male-dominated-world-of-podcasts

⁴³ International Women's Media Foundation. (2014). *Violence and Harassment against Women in the News Media: A Global Picture*. www.iwmf.org/executive-summary

⁴⁴ Goldenburg, M. (2015, 20 February). Feminist writers are so besieged by online abuse that some have begun to retire. *Washington Post*. www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/online-feminists-increasingly-ask-are-the-psycho-social-costs-too-much-to-bear/2015/02/19/3dc4ca6c-b7dd-11e4-a200-c008a01a6692_story.html

Gender inequality in the newsroom makes women outside the room invisible. It is significant that women journalists are 27% more likely than men to include women in their stories.⁴⁵ Women's under-representation in the media truly affects all women.

Demands

- Policies that promote gender equality in media work
- Policies that support community media and ICT training for women
- Commitment to women's human rights, especially freedom of expression and freedom from violence.

⁴⁵ Global Media Monitoring Project. (2010). Op. cit.

10. Women's representation in the media

Issues

Women's representation in the media suffers in two ways: women are often left out of stories, and even when central, their portrayal tends to reinforce stereotypes. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project's latest report, women comprise 24% of news subjects and are central in only 13% of stories in traditional media and 11% in online media.⁴⁶ Furthermore, only 6% of media stories challenge gender stereotypes.

The report shows that women are 2.25 times more likely than men to be portrayed as victims and 3.6 times more likely to be identified by their family status. Most often, they have no stated occupation, are celebrities or work in service or sex industries, and rarely work in sports, government, business or technology. Despite women in poverty having fewer resources than men⁴⁷ and making up two-thirds of the illiterate population,⁴⁸ only 3% of poverty stories and 2% of education stories highlight gender inequality. Audiences might think women play no role in the rural economy given that only 12% of stories feature them as subjects, yet women comprise 43% of agricultural workers in developing countries.⁴⁹ This erasure decreases women's already limited access to rights and resources.

People often access media through the internet and other information and communications technology (ICT) rather than traditional media, increasing the power of images that ignore the reality and diversity of women's lived experiences. Women in Africa, for instance, say that online content fails to "speak to them."⁵⁰ The media perpetuates unattainable and Western beauty standards that cause serious self-esteem issues, eating disorders and cosmetic surgery.⁵¹ Even women in politics are subject to body shaming and fashion critiques.

That women are at the periphery of the news normalises their exclusion in other parts of life, especially in decision-making roles. Women's perspectives and needs are left out of everything

⁴⁶ Global Media Monitoring Project. (2010). *Who Makes the News?* cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2010/global/gmmp_global_report_en.pdf

⁴⁷ UN Women. The Beijing Platform for Action Turns 20: Women and Poverty. beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/poverty

⁴⁸ UNESCO. Education. www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/resources/statistics

⁴⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The Female Face of Farming. www.fao.org/gender/infographic/en/

⁵⁰ Primo, N. (2003). *Gender Issues in the Information Society*. UNESCO. unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001329/132967e.pdf

⁵¹ Sepúlveda, A., & Calado, M. (2012). Westernization: The Role of Mass Media on Body Image and Eating Disorders. In I. Lobera (Ed.), *Relevant Topics in Eating Disorders*. InTech. cdn.intechopen.com/pdfs/29049/InTech-Westernization_the_role_of_mass_media_on_body_image_and_eating_disorders.pdf

from technology development to peace talks. These problems further inscribe public spaces as exclusive to men, decreasing women's ability to fully enjoy such rights as freedom of expression, freedom of information and freedom from violence. If physical and virtual public spaces are designated for men, then women enter them at great risk. Overall, the way women are portrayed in the media deeply impacts women's human rights.

Demands

- Gender equality in media codes of ethics
- Gender-sensitivity training for reporters
- Support for programmes on citizen journalism and media literacy.