![Internet Society logo](Internet Society)

Internet Society submission

Call for inputs from industry and the tech community, as well as other relevant stakeholders, to a report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on "ways to bridge the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective"

17 February 2017

Questionnaire

For the preparation of this report, OHCHR would appreciate receiving information in response to the following questions:

The meaning of the digital divide/extent of the problem

1. Please identify the main obstacles and barriers faced by women and girls to access digital technologies and participate in digital life. Please elaborate on the nature **of** these obstacles and how they manifest themselves in practice (e.g. political, economic, social and legal factors, cultural and religious norms, education and literacy gaps, online violence, bullying and harassment, infrastructural constraints, security, affordability, lack of relevant content).

    •   Availability (e.g. barriers to broadband access, limitations for women to have access at public internet centres or other places where women are not allowed)
    •   Affordability (e.g. insufficient income to pay for data, or cannot afford a device)
    •   Culture and norms (e.g. men prioritised for technology use at home, online gender-based violence, restrictions of movement)
    •   Capacity and skills (e.g. digital illiteracy, literacy gap in reading, lacking of skills and confidence to access the Internet or explore technology)
    •   Availability of relevant content (e.g. language issues, lack of content that speaks to women's contexts, gender-related content is censored/restricted)
    •   Women's participation in decision-making roles pertaining to the Internet and/or in the technology sector (e.g. when women are not able to pursue careers in science and technology, when their participation in relevant policymaking fora is restricted)
    •   Availability of relevant policies (e.g. policies with a gender focus and/or that address women's ability to access and benefit from the Internet)

internetsociety.org
@internetsociety

Galerie Jean-Malbuisson 15,
Geneva, CH-1204 Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 807 1444
Fax: +41 22 807 1445

1775 Wiehle Ave, Suite 201,
Reston, VA 20190 USA

Tel: +1 703 439 2120
Fax: +1 703 326 9881

2. Does your company/organization consider the impact of its digital products, services, strategies and policies on women and girls?

    Yes, Internet Society has prioritised an area of work on the impact of ICT on Gender Equality in it's 2017 objectives. This is not new as the organisation has been working in this field for many years, through campaigns and support for projects in various countries addressing the issue through our local communities. The SDGs and the focus on SDG 5 have provided a framework for all these activities and we intend to develop those further on an ongoing basis.

3. Please indicate if your company/organization collects sex and gender disaggregated data regarding access, use and impact of digital technologies. Is this data openly published and accessible (in accordance with responsible data practices)? If possible, please provide such statistics.

    Not systematically.

4. Please indicate if your company/organization has set measurable targets for gender equality in access and use of digital technologies and describe those targets and their effect.

    While we support various projects globally, as an organisation we have so far not set specific targets internally. However, we do have a criteria for gender balance on several of our fellowship programs worldwide.

5. How does your company/organization address the needs of diverse members of the female population in terms of accessing and participating in digital technologies, including women and girls belonging to ethnic or linguistic minorities, those living in extreme poverty or of low caste, those living in rural or marginalized urban areas, women and girls with disabilities, lesbian, transgender and intersex persons, elderly women etc.? What can companies/organizations do to ensure access to alternative communications mechanisms for those unable or unwilling to participate in digital technologies?

    Currently, the Internet Society (ISOC) has 2 main approaches to promote women empowerment in the field:

    -   Since 2014, ISOC has been organising activities around International Women's Day and last year we have started "Shine the Light", a communications campaign in social media showcasing outstanding women stories and promoting empowerment through different leadership examples of women who are using the Internet to innovate and make a difference. More info at: http://www.internetsociety.org/shinethelight

- Beyond the Net, a membership grants program, that has supported more than 10 projects to empower and engage women and girls in ICTs across the world. Past grantees and partners include iLab Liberia, which links female students with ICT companies' mentorship programmes and holds ICT career fairs for young women; the Chuuk Women's Council, an umbrella organisation in the Chuuk state which has set up a computer learning lab for women in the island nation; the Pakistan Social Association, which has trained hundreds of young girls from rural Pakistan in digital literacy with the goal of encouraging them to pursue careers in ICT; the Jhuwani Community Library, which promotes the use of a local mobile app to enable pregnant women to regularly access prenatal care in Nepal; and the Women Experts in Computer Maintenance and Internet Security which has trained women and girls in six high schools in Oruro, Bolivia to learn computing and web-related technologies, enable to find better employment opportunities and become promoters of technological innovation and social change on the principles of responsible Internet.

Apart from that, our local communities (Internet Society Chapters) also carry out regular meetings or capacity building efforts at local level to support gender inclusion.

We also actively support other organisations who focus on Gender and ICT, such as the GEMTech awards, and participate in Women conferences on a regular basis to advocate for the importance of Gender inclusion in the development of the Internet.

Human Rights implications of the gender digital divide for women and girls

6. What is your company/organization doing to ensure that its interventions to bridge the gender digital divide, are based upon, and fully consistent with international human rights, including gender equality? Does it conduct impact assessments and/or consult with civil society, affected communities, and human rights experts? (You may wish to consider some key principles required to adopt a human rights-based approach *viz.*: accountability, equality and non-discrimination, participation, transparency, empowerment, sustainability, etc.).[1]

   Besides the initiatives already mentioned in question 5, the Internet Society (ISOC) and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) - a long-standing civil society organisation -

---

[1] Other human rights considerations that could/should be taken into consideration include freedoms of expression, association, religion or belief, freedom from violence, right to education, life, health, identity, an adequate standard of living, to participate in government and in cultural life, promotion of gender equality and rights of non-discrimination, rights of indigenous peoples, minority rights, rights of migrant workers, right to enjoy the benefits of scientific advancement, etc.

have been partners in gender related projects. More specifically, in October 2016, we held a joint workshop in Bangkok, Thailand to discuss strategies for the APAC region to mainstream gender issues in ICT policymaking, with a view to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our 2017 planning has specific metrics for deliverables around promoting gender equality through ICTs, including the launch of a paper mapping work in the field and policies around Women and the Internet for Sustainable Development. We are also planning on convening an event around ITU WTDC-17 with policymakers, civil society, technical community and entrepreneurs to share best practices and recommendations for women empowerment.

7. How does your company/organization encourage the development and use of digital technologies as a resource for the empowerment of women and girls? How does it support the creation of online content, applications and services that reflect women's needs and/or promote their rights? Does it support women's rights organizations, women human rights defenders and women environmental activists to use these technologies (for example to access critical information, build knowledge, express thoughts and beliefs, form networks and communities and mobilise for change)? Please provide any relevant examples.
    Please see answer above in question 5.

8. Does your company/organization take into account the gender and ICT targets contained in the UN Sustainable Development Goals?[2] Please elaborate.
    Yes, in 2017 ISOC has one specific project to develop a comprehensive framework of policies that could promote gender equality and women empowerment for sustainable development, which has a close link to SDG 5.

9. Are you aware of any laws, policies or practices to address technology-related or technology-mediated violence against women and girls (e.g. cyber bullying, hate speech, stalking, sexual harassment, trafficking, manipulation of personal information and images)? Has your company/organization taken any specific actions to protect against, and respond to violence experienced by women and girls via technology platforms (e.g. policies, monitoring of content, providing mechanisms for reporting and redress)?

---

[2] For example, Goal 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women; Goal 9.c Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.

Some of the third-parties work that we could reference include:

- UN Internet Governance Forum, Gender and Access Best Practices track, output documents from IGF 2015-2016, including key recommendations for policies and roadmap, available at: http://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/bpf-gender-and-access
- Gender Evaluation Methodology for Internet and ICTs by Association for Progressive Communications (APC), available at: https://www.apc.org/en/projects/gender-evaluation-methodology-internet-and-icts-ge
- Feminist principles of the Internet [2016] at: http://www.genderit.org/resources/feminist-principles-internet-2016

10. Does your company/organization facilitate access to remedy in accordance with human rights principles and standards, where human rights harms may be caused or contributed to by connectivity initiatives (e.g. where an individual is threatened by internet-based content, or by illegitimate surveillance, limitations on freedoms of expressions, and other rights)?[3]

While the Internet Society doesn't provide Human Rights remedies per se, we issue positions when needed in specific cases and host a Resource Center about Internet and Human Rights[4], which has our contributions, stories around the world, and other research groups who are fighting for an open Internet. A recent example is the position against Internet shutdowns: https://www.internetsociety.org/lets-keep-internet-everyone

11. Has your company/organization considered how Big Data, the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence and Ambient Intelligence may impact on the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective? Do you see a risk that women and girls may be discriminated against, or excluded by these technologies? Or are they likely to create new opportunities to promote gender equality and empowerment? How can companies/organizations influence design and standards to ensure these technologies are inclusive?

Yes, ISOC is undertaking an important project to identify the trends and forces of change that could impact the future of the Internet.. The Digital Divide and Gender Gap are one of the topics highlighted in this ongoing project, which will also identify inter-linkages with technological drivers including machine learning, AI, IoT etc.. More info at: https://www.internetsociety.org/future-internet

---

[3] See UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, Principles 29 - 31.

[4] https://www.internetsociety.org/internet-and-human-rights-resource-center

Possible solutions for bridging the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective

12. Is your company/organization taking measures to expand equal access and enhance the participation of women and girls in digital technologies as users, content creators, employees, entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders? Please elaborate on any initiatives, programs or other interventions you may be leading or supporting (including to address underlying causes of the gender digital divide).

    Please see reply above on question 5. In addition, we would like to point to a panel on "Women Connected in Africa"", organized by ISOC during the Africa Internet Summit – AIS 2016, which brought together African women who have been leading change on Internet and gender issues. The video recording is available at: https://livestream.com/internetsociety/connectedwomen

13. Does your company/organization engage in public advocacy or participate in the Internet Governance Forum to promote gender-responsive policies on digital technologies? Do you support processes and mechanisms that enable the full, active and equal participation of women and girls in decision-making about how the Internet is shaped and governed?

    Yes, ISOC has been actively participating in the IGF, particularly contributing to the IGF Gender and Access Best Practices track, which has issued the 2016 Outcomes report here: http://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/best-practice-forums-4

14. How can the industry and tech community be productively engaged in bridging the gender digital divide and improving the lived experience of women and girls online? What should be the responsibilities of different stakeholders to make digital inclusion a reality and ensure meaningful digital opportunities for all?

    As any other stakeholder, many actors from the technical community are ctively working to close the gender digital divide, particularly encouraging women and girls to enter the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. ISOC has directly supported several initiatives for capacity building and empowering women and girls, among them: Through our Beyond the Net program (grants for community projects with local impact on gender issues); specific workshops around key events in Asia, Africa and Latin America taking advantage of the participation of different stakeholders to share best practices and find a way forward; Shine the Light Campaign around International Women's Day, as well as other publications highlighting women leaders who are role models in the ICT environment (e.g. 10 extraordinary women in

tech we should recognize: https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/institutional/2015/06/10-extraordinary-women-tech-you-should-definitely-know-about)

Moreover, we have long-standing capacity building programs for next generation leaders and youth participation in Internet governance fora at the regional and global levels, that include specific criteria for gender balance.

Another successful program in the technical community has been the creation of specific groups to discuss women empowerment, for example the "IETF Systers"[5], which is made for women attending or participating in IETF work, allowing close interaction and coordination to advance on leadership positions.

---

[5] The Internet Engineering Task Force - IETF is a group of engineers and experts worldwide that aims to make the Internet work better, by producing high quality, relevant technical documents that influence the way people design, use, and manage the Internet. More info at: https://www.ietf.org