



Image:

Report

**Building a shared agenda on the evidence base for  
Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse**

Wednesday 17- Friday 19 August 2022 | WP3057

## Report

# Building a shared agenda on the evidence base for Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse

Wednesday 17- Friday 19 August 2022 | WP3057

### Summary

1. **Online and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV), abuse and harassment against women and girls (referred to in this report thereafter as technology-facilitated GBV) is a growing global phenomenon.**<sup>1</sup> Despite increasing global commitments, there remain significant gaps in data and evidence on its nature, prevalence, impacts and drivers. In particular, data collection is not yet coordinated at regional or global level, and studies use different methods and definitions which makes comparisons and measurement difficult.
2. **This report draws together insights and recommendations from a multi-stakeholder event, co-hosted by Wilton Park, the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse (Global Partnership) and UN Women**, which aimed to lay the foundation for establishing reliable, comparable global and regional data to measure technology-facilitated GBV and its effects. The event looked at lessons learned from the violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) fields, including work to establish a measure of online VAC and youth. It identified a number of important opportunities to advance this agenda, including through: using the existing evidence base for action now; addressing priority gaps and challenges with the existing evidence base; and identifying the parameters of what is needed to establish a unified framework for data collection on technology-facilitated GBV. This includes the development of common concepts and definitions, data collection principles, and utilising existing and new sources of data. The report ends with a set of recommendations for coordinated action for the Global Partnership and its allies.

### Introduction

3. **Technology-facilitated GBV is a broad term that is inclusive of all forms of GBV against women and girls which are perpetrated, enabled or aggravated by existing, new and emerging information and communication technologies (ICTs).** It has unique characteristics, including in relation to reach, scale, speed and impact. Like all forms of GBV, technology-facilitated GBV is driven by gender inequality, power imbalances, patriarchy and misogyny, and is part of the continuum of violence women and girls face throughout their lives. It is a breach of a wide range of human rights and has impacts across the social ecology, including a chilling effect on democracy. Women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting discriminations and oppressions, including for example due to race, ethnicity, age, disability, caste, class, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), are more likely to experience technology-facilitated GBV, as are women and girls because of the work that they do (see 'what is already known' below).
4. **The Global Partnership is committed to building a rigorous evidence base to enhance understanding of the nature, prevalence, impacts and drivers of technology-facilitated GBV.** Building a shared evidence base requires a multi-stakeholder, multi-sector response, bringing together different perspectives and approaches. Therefore, this multi-stakeholder event convened over 50 stakeholders from government, academia, civil society, international and regional bodies, and industry, including experts on VAC and youth. Specific objectives were to:
  - Develop core elements for a shared conceptual understanding and operational definition;

- Identify gaps and comparability of current measures and indicators;
- Lay the foundation for a unifying framework for data collection and reporting;
- Explore emerging best practices and efforts to establish a measure for online VAC and youth;
- Discuss methodological approaches and innovations in metrics and research;
- Identify opportunities to strengthen platform transparency reporting;
- Formulate an action plan and timeline.

5. The two-day event built on previous discussions and debate, including: the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 65 in 2021, where the Global Partnership was launched; and a Wilton Park event on tackling online gendered harms in November 2021.<sup>2</sup> Insights from these discussions were intended to inform a white paper on building the evidence base for gender-based online harassment and abuse to shape the work of the Global Partnership to advance new commitments on data and research, and inform advocacy efforts.

### Examining the existing evidence base:

6. **The existing evidence base on the prevalence, forms and impacts of technology-facilitated GBV is growing.** Examining the existing evidence base is important in establishing parameters for developing a more standardised way to measure these newer forms of GBV. However, there are also significant gaps in the evidence base which present challenges in documenting and measuring technology-facilitated GBV, and there are methodological and ethical challenges in collecting data on this which must be acknowledged and addressed.

7. **What is already known: There are multiple existing sources of data on prevalence, forms and impacts of technology-facilitated GBV.** Much of the existing global and regional evidence base comes from civil society, the UN and research organisations, many of which rely on survey data, as well as a growing number of big data initiatives.<sup>3</sup> Some governments do collect data on some forms of technology-facilitated GBV as part of national prevalence surveys measuring violence against women. There is also a significant evidence base on the prevention of VAW which can be utilised.

“We need to accept how big the problem is. With every study we find this violence is so pervasive”

“The offline-online continuum can be instant and women can experience these different forms of violence simultaneously”

- **Prevalence of technology-facilitated GBV is high** (and likely to be higher – see gaps in data below). A recent global study found that 38% of women reported personal experiences of online violence, and 85% of women reported witnessing online violence against other women.<sup>4</sup> The most common forms were misinformation and defamation (67%), cyber harassment (66%) and hate speech (65%). There are other global prevalence studies and regional and multi country studies which have varying prevalence-related data, ranging from 23% to 60%.<sup>5</sup> Available national prevalence survey data ranges from 16% to 58%.<sup>6</sup>
- **Technology-facilitated GBV is part of the continuum of violence that women and girls experience throughout their life course and cannot be separated from ‘offline’ violence.** It is rooted in the same systems of gender inequality, patriarchy and misogyny as other forms of GBV, and enhanced or enabled by the misuse or exploitation of digital technologies. GBV can move from online or digital spaces into the ‘offline’ world and vice versa, often at speed, and from the workplace or public spaces to personal and private spaces. For example: intimate partners and ex-partners use technologies, including phones and computers to carry out stalking and surveillance of their partner or ex-partner; doxxing (publicly posting survivors’/victims’ personal details and location) can result in physical harm and is carried out with malicious intent.
- **Technology-facilitated GBV is intersectional and affects some women and girls disproportionately.** Evidence shows that Black, Indigenous and ethnic minority women, women with diverse SOGIESC and LGBTQI+ people,<sup>7</sup> women and girls with disabilities, adolescent girls and young women, and refugee and

“Most people do not report to anyone. People are going to their social networks instead.”

“There is no downside for any of the abusers.”

“There is less data from low and middle income countries, and on the impacts and costs of technology-facilitated GBV.”

“We need more eco system-based studies which focus on thick [qualitative] data.”

“We still don’t know how many cases of online abuse are reported [to technology platforms], or the success or failure rate in terms of

migrant women and girls, are at increased risk of technology-facilitated GBV.<sup>8</sup> Women and girls in public and political life, including women in journalism, politics and activism, are also at heightened risk. Women and girls experience technology-facilitated GBV in different forms and frequency across their life course (e.g., young people compared to their older peers).

- **Whilst women and men experience technology-facilitated violence, evidence shows that women can experience more frequent and more severe forms of abuse and more severe impacts.** The impacts of technology-facilitated GBV are wide-reaching, including negative impacts on mental health, decreased participation in public, economic and political life, including women self-censoring and withdrawing from online spaces, education and democracy.
- **Like other forms of GBV, studies show that most women and girls do not report technology-facilitated GBV.** Where women and girls do report, they tend to report to the police and social media platforms. Known reasons for underreporting include survivor/victim blaming, lack of knowledge about how to report, concerns that reports will not be taken seriously or that the response will be ineffective.
- **Technology-facilitated GBV can be perpetrated by people known to survivors/victims and by strangers** – mostly committed by men against women. Anonymity is a two-edged sword. It is used by perpetrators to make it harder for them to be identified, for example through encryption and privacy protocols, who can then act with greater impunity. However, it is also important to survivors, activists and women’s rights organisations as it offers privacy and protection of their identity if they want to speak out about issues or report abuse.<sup>9</sup>
- **Access to, control and use of technologies is unequal, with a clear gender digital divide.** For example, across low and middle income countries (LMICs), women are still less likely than men to have access to mobile phones and use mobile Internet.<sup>10</sup> As their access and use increases, so does their exposure to technology-facilitated GBV.<sup>11</sup> Internet governance is also gender unequal, with women less represented in decision-making related to the design and development of technologies.

#### 8. Gaps and limitations with existing data and evidence:

- **One of the biggest gaps in the evidence base on tackling technology-facilitated GBV is the absence of reliable and comparable global and regional data on prevalence, forms, impacts and drivers.**<sup>12</sup> Whilst some countries have national prevalence data and there are some regional and global studies (see above), data collection on technology-facilitated GBV is not yet coordinated at the international level and there are no standardised concepts, definitions and measures. Whilst data already shows the pervasiveness of the issue, the true extent is unknown and likely to be underestimated and underreported, like other forms of GBV. This also affects understanding of different typologies of technology-facilitated GBV.
- **Whilst there have been some studies in the Global South, most published studies are from the Global North.** Most evidence cites sources from English-speaking countries, however southern-based feminist, women’s and digital rights organisations are working on this issue and have produced studies from non-English speaking countries. The digital exclusion of women, as set out above, can also explain some of the regional variations in data where it does exist.
- **Whilst there are multiple sources of existing data, there is notably an absence of data published by technology companies on gender-based violence and harassment on their platforms,** including data on what they are and are not doing on this issue. Data from these companies is potentially an important source to assist understanding of prevalence, forms and impacts of technology-facilitated GBV. However, when platforms do provide researchers, users, the public and even government agencies (e.g., law enforcement) with data, it is typically not of the quality needed and can be difficult to interpret. Across platforms, data is not disaggregated (by gender and other factors in

response.”

“We need data on the impacts on broader society. It [technology-facilitated GBV] is an issue that has incredible impacts on social cohesion, women’s rights and democracy.”

“Safety by design is important. When bringing in [new] data, what will countries do with this?”

relation to who was targeted, type of violence, country where it occurred, perpetrators etc).

- In addition, there are data and evidence gaps in the following areas:
  - **The intersectional nature of technology-facilitated GBV**, particularly in relation to prevalence, forms and impacts of violence and abuse experienced by diverse and often underrepresented women and girls, including older women, women and girls with disabilities, migrant and refugee women and girls, women and girls with diverse SOGIESC and LGBTQI+ people.
  - **Perpetrators and their motivations**, including different layers of perpetration (primary and secondary) and the role of organised groups and networks, including incels and other extremist groups (e.g., how harmful narratives travel from one network to another, and how perpetrators use different platforms, encryption, and the Dark Web to avoid detection).
  - **The role of technology platforms in fostering an enabling environment for technology-facilitated GBV** through their product design choices, use of algorithms and monetisation of content.
  - **Specific drivers and risk and protective factors of technology-facilitated GBV**, in addition to those in relation to GBV more broadly. This includes a more nuanced understanding of the role that technology, including artificial intelligence, is playing in facilitating GBV and the role it can and should play in preventing it. It also includes a better understanding of the role of the technology sector, through responsibility laws, regulations, and further voluntary actions.
  - **The impacts and broader effects on society, and how technology-facilitated GBV plays out across the social ecology.**<sup>13</sup> There is significant overlap between disinformation campaigns, misogynistic discourse, backlash, roll back on gender equality and women’s rights and the erosion of democratic principles, including the reshaping of democracy through social media. Evidence is starting to emerge on impacts, including on mental health, productivity and freedom of expression, however more evidence is needed at scale for a more nuanced understanding of the impacts and effects on society of technology-facilitated GBV including in conflict situations, on the roll back of women’s rights and harmful social norms around GBV that drive a broader culture of violence.

9. **Methodological and ethical challenges:** There are a number of important methodological and ethical challenges to consider when seeking to collect and measure data on technology-facilitated GBV:

- **Technology-facilitated GBV is evolving quickly**, with new and different technologies being developed and being used by perpetrators. It is evolving faster than data collection and analysis, and policy and programming response.
- **The normalisation of gender-based violence and harassment online.** The Internet is not a feminist place and attacks and abuse of women online are largely normalised. It will be important to develop measures that are able to capture the role of harmful social norms online that fuel gender-based harassment and abuse on and offline, building on what is known about how to transform harmful social norms to prevent and respond to GBV more broadly.
- **The under-reporting of technology-facilitated GBV**, particularly in relation to women and girls who experience multiple discriminations due to their intersecting identities. There are multiple reasons for under-reporting and barriers to women accessing justice, including: shame, stigma and discrimination; fear and distrust of law enforcement; the focus on the survivors/victims and users to report abuse they experience; inadequate response from social media platforms, including language barriers in responding to abuse in non-English speaking countries.
- **There is a time lag in data** on technology-facilitated GBV. First, online forms of GBV occur and spread at a scale and speed that are difficult to track in real time.

Second, as is the case with all forms of GBV, there can be delays in survivors/victims reporting abuse.

- **There are significant ethical issues collecting data from children.** All data collection efforts must adhere to global standards on the safe and ethical collection of data from children.
- **Technology companies are already collecting data on users** (adults and children), and they are often not aware and have not knowingly consented to data being collected about them. It will be important to ensure any additional data requests of technology companies in relation to technology-facilitated GBV data they collect and publish is in line with international standards of research ethics for adults and children.
- **The weaponization of data by state and non-state actors in some contexts**, with risks that data could be used to attack and silence women who speak out (e.g., to fuel disinformation campaigns against certain women including journalists and activists).<sup>14</sup> There are examples of governments around the world using online/cyber violence laws intended to protect women from technology-facilitated GBV to silence women and threaten their safety.
- **Trust and collaboration between citizens, survivors, governments, and platforms** is complex and in many cases, lacking, with people generally not knowing what a platform will or will not do with their data.

**Establishing a unified framework for collecting data on technology-facilitated GBV**

**10. There are significant opportunities to establish a unified framework for data collection on technology-facilitated GBV.** This includes integrating technology-facilitated GBV into existing data collection measures on VAW and VAC, learning lessons from existing work to measure online violence against children and youth, and the development of specific data collection instruments on technology-facilitated GBV. In order to establish a unified framework, it will be important to consider and address challenges and concerns that allies and stakeholders have raised, and develop and agree data collection principles to help standardise data collection and ensure measures do no harm to survivors/victims, technology users and society.

**11. Developing common concepts and definitions:** Globally there is a need to agree and develop operational concepts and definitions which can be used as the basis for improving and standardising data collection on technology-facilitated GBV. Terminology is important and needs careful consideration when developing more standardised definitions, particularly to minimise any unintended consequences. The forthcoming white paper will highlight the need for common concepts and definitions for data collection purposes (including from civil society, the UN, research organisations, platforms), however there are a number of important things to consider in taking this work forward, based on lessons learned from the VAW and VAC fields:

- **Remember that technology-facilitated GBV is part of the continuum of violence that women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people experience.** Concepts and definitions should reflect the risks they face across their life course, and the relationship between online and offline violence to ensure that data and evidence on technology-facilitated GBV is not collected in isolation.
- **Recognise that all forms of GBV, including technology-facilitated GBV, are rooted in gender inequality, patriarchy and misogyny.** However, recognise that there are specific drivers, risk and protective factors of technology-facilitated GBV which are unique and need to be reflected in concepts and definitions.
- **Recognise that not all forms of technology-facilitated GBV are experienced ‘online’, or reflected in the terms ‘online’ or ‘cyber’.** Standardised definition/s of technology-facilitated GBV should be inclusive of all forms of abuse that make use of technology, including digital tools and devices, smart home devices (e.g., “internet of things”), spyware or stalkerware, and violence perpetrated by mobile phone calls, cameras and texts. It is important to recognise that the initial act of

“We are talking about patriarchy

and social justice. The offline/online distinction isn't useful [as] the body experiences this [violence] and by talking about technology-facilitated VAW we make the body remote."

technology-facilitated GBV does not need to occur in an online or digital space and even people who do not have access to or use digital technologies can experience technology-facilitated GBV.

- **Terminology should reflect women, girls and LGBTQI+ people's experiences and pain of violence.** There is a risk that standardised terminology on technology-facilitated GBV could materialise violence and 'otherise' the body and women's experiences of violence.
- **Ensure standardised definition/s are broad and flexible enough to reflect the ever-evolving forms of technology-facilitated GBV,** and also functional and specific enough to be measured at the local level, taking into local languages and contexts.
- **Recognise that violence is not neutral** and the gendered dimension should be at the forefront of any data collection work. Data collection should not undermine the rights of women and girls in their diversity to define who they are. LGBTQI+ people should be included, as evidence shows they are at higher risk of violence.
- **Recognise the intersection of VAW and VAC.** A 2016 global review identified six key ways in which VAW and VAC intersect:<sup>15</sup>
  - 1) VAC and VAW have many shared risk factors.
  - 2) Social norms often support VAW and VAC and discourage help-seeking.
  - 3) Child maltreatment and partner violence often co-occur within the same household.
  - 4) Both VAC and VAW can produce intergenerational effects.
  - 5) Many forms of VAC and VAW have common and compounding consequences across the lifespan.
  - 6) VAC and VAW intersect during adolescence, a time of heightened vulnerability to certain kinds of violence.
- **Build on existing efforts to classify and define VAW and VAC at a global level, including measures on online VAC and youth.** This includes the International Classification and Operational Definitions of Violence Against Children for Statistical Purposes (ICVAC), an initiative led by UNICEF, which aims to provide a basis for a standardised and consistent approach to classify statistical data on VAC.<sup>16</sup> Other important initiatives relate to population survey data and are included below under 'existing surveys'. Two other important data systems to learn from include GBVIMS and GBVIMS+, an interagency management system for GBV data in humanitarian settings.<sup>17</sup> Finally, it will also be important to incorporate technology-facilitated GBV into initiatives such as the UN Women-WHO Joint Programme on VAW Data<sup>18</sup> and the kNOwVAWdata Initiative.<sup>19</sup>

**12. Data collection principles:** Important data collection principles must guide any process undertaken on data collection on technology-facilitated GBV and should be applied by all actors who are involved in data collection. These principles are based on past and present best practice from the VAW and VAC fields and best practice on data collection more broadly.<sup>20</sup>

"Be strategic and consider how to use this [data] to raise uncomfortable questions. What is the evidence that makes a difference?"

"If we do a survey that defines too

**Planning:**

- Be clear on purpose and content: why is data needed and from whom; what policy and data questions are being asked and why; what data is needed?
- Be clear on methods: how will the data be gathered; how can this be done safely and ethically? (see 'safe and ethical data collection' below)
- Be action-orientated: what action do you want taken with the data?
- Be clear on access and use of data: what will it be used for; who will have access to and use the data?
- Be clear on risks: could the data collection process or the data itself be used to silence women, girls and excluded people and groups; what are the risks of backlash; are there any risks to other fundamental human rights?
- Be gendered and intersectional: how can you ensure the differential impacts on women and girls across their life course are understood?

narrowly who women and girls are then we risk excluding people and going backwards.”

- Be clear on resources: how can you ensure resources are equitably distributed, and reach southern-based women’s and digital rights organisations?
- Be multi-sectoral by design: how can you work in partnership with government institutions and civil society in countries where data is being collected?
- Be accountable and survivor-centred: how can you ensure accountability to survivors/victims and users of technology?
- Be meaningful: how can you avoid the data collection process being extractive and tokenistic; how can you meaningfully involve survivors/victims?

**Adapt to local context and work with local partners**

- Adapt to national settings and local languages, and consider how online expressions in different languages have developed unique lexicons.
- Be collaborative: involve a wide range of stakeholders in data collection, including survivors/victims and representative organisations, and be clear on each actor’s different and complementary roles. Lessons from early survey work on VAW showed the importance of bringing women’s movements and researchers together to advance the field. Lessons from the Violence against Children and Youth (VACS) surveys (see below) show that government ownership and leadership of survey process ensures government owns the results and the responsibility for data-driven action as a result of those findings.

**Keep things as simple as possible:**

- Only collect essential and required data. It is important not to try and capture everything in one data collection process and keep data collection and analysis manageable. There will be opportunities for follow up by other actors.
- Be specific: what forms of technology-facilitated GBV should be prioritised?

“People can start to question the quality of data if they don’t want to take action.”

**Collect quality data that is reliable, credible and valid:**

- Collect data on prevention and response that is robust and will incentivise governments and other actors to take action. Remember that governments will be interested in the scale of the problem and how robust the data is.
- Use a mixed methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative data for maximum impact.
- Include the breadth of lived experiences and measure survivors’/victims’ experiences. Remember that quantitative data is very powerful when combined with personal stories.

**Ensure safe and ethical data collection:**

- Adopt a ‘do no harm’ approach, including ensuring respondents’ safety and seeking informed consent and confidentiality. There should be strong measures in place to avoid the data collection process being extractive and tokenistic.
- Data collection on technology-facilitated GBV should be guided by well-established safety and ethical principles for the collection of data on VAW and VAC.<sup>21</sup> There are already strong standards for ethical and safe VAW research, with the WHO’s *Ethical and Safety Recommendations for research on domestic violence, and subsequent ethics and safety guidelines*.<sup>22</sup> In addition, there are important safety and ethical considerations when collecting data on violence against children.<sup>23</sup> It is important to ensure these VAW and VAC standards and principles are applied in relation to technology-facilitated GBV.



“The choice of methods is important as it can lead to more actionable data”

“Surveys are only one piece of much larger data that we need for action, but they can play an important role.”

**13. Data collection methods: existing and new sources of data.** There are multiple existing sources of data on VAW, VAC and youth which present opportunities to measure technology-facilitated GBV at global and regional levels. However, care should be taken when using methods developed for other purposes to ensure that these methods are appropriate, safe and ethical. A key existing source of data on VAW and VAC is **population surveys**, including some which are already measuring online VAC. There are opportunities to integrate specific questions into existing surveys and develop specialised surveys on technology-facilitated GBV. In addition to survey-based data, **data from technology platforms** is potentially another source of data for technology-facilitated GBV. There may also be other sources of data from reported violence (administrative data), however these were not discussed in detail.

**Existing survey data:** There are several existing surveys which already collect globally and regionally comparable population data, which present important opportunities for improved measurement of technology-facilitated GBV.

**(a) Dedicated surveys on VAW, and VAC and youth:**

- WHO multi-country surveys, which provide global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women.<sup>24</sup> These surveys give information on:
  - Prevalence and patterns of various forms of intimate partner and non-partner violence
  - Risk factors for intimate partner violence
  - Association between intimate partner violence and a wide range of health outcomes
  - Women’s coping strategies including retaliation, help seeking, reporting.
- Disrupting Harm, a joint research initiative between UNICEF, ECPAT, INTERPOL and the End Violence Fund, that aims to better understand how digital technology facilitates the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. It also captures information about risk and protective factors, and the impacts of online violence on health and well-being. It includes a nationally representative survey with internet-using children aged 12-17 in 13 countries across Eastern and Southern Africa and Southeast Asia. Additional countries and regions are scheduled in 2023.<sup>25</sup>
- The Violence against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS), led by CDC as part of the Together for Girls partnership, are nationally representative household surveys designed to measure physical, emotional, and sexual violence against children and youth globally amongst 13 – 24 year olds. The survey also captures information about risk and protective factors, and the impacts of violence on health, well-being, and life opportunities such as education and employment.<sup>26</sup> Some countries have already included questions on online violence developed specifically for their country contexts (e.g., Namibia, Kenya, Lesotho, Colombia, Honduras). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is currently working with the Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse at Johns Hopkins University to develop a module for measuring perpetration of online and in-person violence against children, which could potentially be expanded to include victimisation and survivors’/victims’ experiences.
- Regional surveys, including the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) Violence against women survey in the European Union<sup>27</sup> and UN Women’s survey in the Arab States region.<sup>28</sup>

**(b) Modules on VAW and VAC in wider surveys:**

- Demographic and Health Surveys which collect, analyse and disseminate accurate and representative data on population, health, HIV, and nutrition through more than 400 surveys in over 90 countries.<sup>29</sup>
- Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). MICS are household surveys implemented by countries under a UNICEF-led programme to provide

internationally comparable, statistically rigorous data on the situation of children and women. Two new modules are under development to support measurement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): bullying (including online) and sexual violence.

(c) **Crime victimisation surveys** on VAW are also a source of survey data, however these are largely skewed towards high-income countries.

**Platform data:** This includes both self-reported data (user reports) and automated data generated by the platforms themselves. A range of stakeholders use data from technology platforms to highlight the issue of technology-facilitated GBV. For example, a recent UNESCO-commissioned study produced by the International Center for Journalists analysed the role social media plays in online violence and abuse against women journalists.<sup>30</sup> Whilst platform data has been analysed and published by other actors, platforms themselves are not publishing data on technology-facilitated GBV, even as part of their transparency reporting.

14. **Priorities for data collected through population surveys and platforms:** It will be important to prioritise what is essential and appropriate data to collect from population surveys and platforms in relation to technology-facilitated GBV. Some initial priorities were identified and will need further refinement and consultation (see Recommendations and Next Steps below) in partnership and collaboration with a diverse group of stakeholders.

**Survey data:** Key topics and themes that global survey instruments could include were identified as follows:

- Type/s of technology-facilitated GBV experienced and perpetrated.
- Details of the platform/s on which the abuse occurred.
- Details about the perpetrator/s.
- Impacts on survivors/victims, including mental health and broader effects.
- Diverse representation in data collection teams and meaningful engagement of survivors/victims and excluded people and groups in data collection processes.

**Platform data:** In order to collect and use platform data to measure technology-facilitated GBV it will be important to strengthen platform reporting practices and increase transparency and protections for users, survivors/victims and researchers. If this can be done, there is potential to use platform data to hold governments and platforms to account and improve the response to survivors/victims. The following were identified as some initial priorities for the collection of platform data:

- **Clarify the asks of technology platforms** and prioritise essential and appropriate data that is needed.
- **Apply universal standards for data collection** in the way that technology platforms collect data, adhering to data collection principles (see above). This includes ensuring a 'do no harm' approach.
- **Ensure accountability to all survivors/victims** by ensuring diverse representation in data collection teams and diversity of those that are doing the asking of platforms. Meaningfully involve survivors/victims, platform users and communities.
- **Disaggregate demographic information** by gender and age as a minimum. However, other socio-economic and identity factors should also be considered, including disability and SOGIESC, and where someone lives, whilst adhering to a 'do no harm' approach at all times.
- **Ensure greater transparency** about how to report abuse, reports of abuse, how reports were handled or not, response times, types of perpetrators, the role of artificial intelligence and algorithms.
- **Monitor cross-platform trends** and interoperability.

“GBV isn’t a solvable problem for tech companies, but online GBV is.”

“There is a fair amount of content that is ‘lawful but awful’ which shouldn’t be there.”

“Companies already have this data and are sharing it. The risks to human rights are already there.”

- **Reduce the burden on survivors/victims** by shifting responsibility onto governments and technology companies to take action and prioritise women's and girls' safety.
- **Ensure safety by design** throughout platforms' operations and product design and development, including by engaging with women's rights organisations.
- **Ensure measures do not infringe on other fundamental human rights of women, girls, and LGBTQI+ people**, e.g., right to access ICTs or freedom of expression.

## Recommendations

"We have to challenge the normative belief that VAW is not preventable."

"We need to create brave spaces as opposed to safe spaces."

"Data and action are not contradictory."

15. A number of key recommendations and opportunities for action were identified, in relation to using existing approaches to inform measures on technology-facilitated GBV and establishing a unified framework for collecting data through population surveys and platform data. These were:
  - **Maintain a focus on a multi-stakeholder, multi-sector response**, bringing together different perspectives and approaches from the GBV and digital fields to standardise data collection and measures of technology-facilitated GBV.
  - **Be ambitious and capitalise on the moment to act now**, as the problem is growing and the pace of change in the technology sector fast. Use existing evidence for action, whilst simultaneously strengthening the evidence base. Continue to build on and learn from existing research, efforts and emerging best practices in the VAW and VAC fields, as well as specific attempts to define and measure online violence against children and youth.
  - **Capitalise on immediate opportunities** to advance this agenda through multistakeholder and multilateral efforts, such as the Global Partnership and the Generation Equality Forum Action Coalitions, and wider advocacy spaces, including the 2023 Commission on the Status of Women. Explore other processes and spaces to amplify civil society voices and increase political will.
  - **In strengthening the evidence base, pay particular attention to gaps and challenges** and draw more on grey literature, including evidence from non-English sources, including from southern-based feminist organisations. It will also be important to prioritise the most critical areas for data collection and collect appropriate data that will inspire evidence-based policy and action.
  - **Ensure all actors who are involved in data collection on technology-facilitated GBV apply agreed data collection principles**. This includes adopting a 'do no harm' approach and applying existing ethical and safety standards for VAW and VAC data collection. Identify risks for any data collection efforts, including the risk of backlash and weaponization of data.
  - **Utilise different sources of data to measure technology-facilitated GBV at global and regional levels** (from civil society, academia, governments etc), with an immediate focus on population survey data. Capitalise on immediate opportunities to integrate or enhance specific questions on technology-facilitated GBV into existing measures and initiatives, including VAW and VAC population surveys and work to establish a measure of online VAC and youth (such as Disrupting Harm and VACS). Develop specialised surveys for the collection of data on technology-facilitated GBV.
  - **Develop an evidence-based strategy** on technology-facilitated GBV, setting out what data needs to be collected, why, for whom and how the data will be used. The strategy should look at prevention and response, and make it clear that technology-facilitated GBV is preventable.
  - **Prioritise inclusive research partnerships** with women's rights and digital rights organisations and experts, particularly from LMICs.
  - **Consult and hold dialogues** with women's rights organisations, youth organisations and representatives of other excluded people and groups in the Global South, and where it is safe and ethical, with survivors/victims themselves.
  - **Take a survivor-centred and intersectional approach** to ensure accountability to survivors/victims in their diversity and to ensure no one is left behind, including

“Online safety expectations are about driving systemic change in platforms.”

adolescent girls, women and girls with disabilities, women and girls with diverse SOGIESC and LGBTQI+ people.

- **Shift responsibility for action** from survivors/victims to governments and technology companies who have human rights obligations and are accountable to survivors/victims and technology users, including prioritising their safety. Measures taken by governments and technology companies to address technology-facilitated GBV should not infringe on other fundamental human rights.
- **Situate this work within the context of responsible and inclusive digital development**, with more women and girls accessing and using technologies safely, closing the gender digital divide, and more women in the technology sector.

**Next steps**

The Global Partnership will be taking forward the development of a white paper to bring together all the learning and insights shared during this event and previous discussions. The white paper will be the basis for further consultation on priorities and action. UN Women will work with the Global Partnership to coordinate an Expert Group Meeting later in 2022 to reach consensus on an agreed definition and framework for measurement.

**Maria Vlahakis**

Wilton Park | September 2022

Wilton Park reports are intended to be brief summaries of the main points and conclusions of an event. Reports reflect rapporteurs’ accounts of the proceedings and do not necessarily reflect the views of the rapporteur. Wilton Park reports and any recommendations contained therein are for participants and are not a statement of policy for Wilton Park, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) or Her Majesty’s Government.

Should you wish to read other Wilton Park reports, or participate in upcoming Wilton Park events, please consult our website [www.wiltonpark.org.uk](http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk). To receive our monthly bulletin and latest updates, please subscribe to <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/newsletter/>

## Additional research and resources

The following resources were shared by participants:

Ahlenback, V., Clugston, N., Vlahakis M. (2022). *Issues Paper: Global prevalence of online VAWG. What Works Violence against Women and Children Helpdesk*. London: Social Development Direct.

<https://ww2preventvawg.org/evidence-hub/issues-paper-global-prevalence-online-vawg>

eSafety Commissioner. 'Safety by Design puts user safety and rights at the centre of the design and development of online products and services.' Online resource available at <https://www.esafety.gov.au/industry/safety-by-design>

eSafety Commissioner (2022). *Women In The Spotlight: Women's experiences with online abuse in their working lives*. Melbourne: Australian Government. <https://www.esafety.gov.au/research/women-spotlight-how-online-abuse-impacts-women-their-working-lives/report>

Guedes A, Bott S, Garcia-Moreno C, Colombini M (2016). *Bridging the gaps: a global review of intersections of violence against women and violence against children*. Glob Health Action. 2016 Jun 20;9:31516.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4916258/>

Guedes A, Bott S, Garcia-Moreno C, Colombini M (2016). *Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children – The Points of Intersection. Causes, Consequences and Solutions*. Glob Health Action 2016, 9: 31516

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/gha.v9.31516>.

Hinson, L., Mueller, J., O'Brien-Milne, L., Wandera, N. (2018). *Technology-facilitated gender-based violence: What is it, and how do we measure it?* Washington D.C.: International Center for Research on Women.

<https://www.icrw.org/publications/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-what-is-it-and-how-do-we-measure-it/>

Hinson, L., O'Brien-Milne, L., Mueller, J., Bansal, V., Wandera, N., and Bankar, S. (2019). *Defining and measuring technology-facilitated gender-based violence*. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). Washington DC. <https://www.icrw.org/publications/defining-and-measuring-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence/>

Insoll, T., Ovaska, A., Vaaranen-Valkonen, N. (2021). *CSAM Users in the Dark Web: Protecting Children Through Prevention*. ReDirection Survey Report. Finland: Suojellaan Lapsia ry.

<https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/en/post/csam-users-in-the-dark-web-protecting-children-through-prevention>

Jankowicz, N., Hunchak, J., Pavliuc, A., Davies, C., Pierson, S., Kaufmann, Z. (2021). *Malign Creativity: How Gender, Sex, and Lies are Weaponized Against Women Online*. Washington DC: Wilson Center.

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/malign-creativity-how-gender-sex-and-lies-are-weaponized-against-women-online>

Judson, E., Atay, A., Krasodonski-Jones, A., Lasko-Skinner, R., Smith, J. (2020). *Engendering Hate: The Contours of State Aligned Gendered Disinformation Online*. London: Demos. <https://demos.co.uk/project/engendering-hate-the-contours-of-state-aligned-gendered-disinformation-online/>

Kardefelt-Winther, D., and Maternowska, C. (2020). 'Addressing violence against children online and offline.' *Nat Hum Behav* 4, 227–230 <https://www.unicef-irc.org/journal-articles/101-addressing-violence-against-children-online-and-offline.html>

Lockett, K. (2021). *Tackling online gendered harms*. London: Wilton Park. <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/WP1984V-Report.pdf>

Masseti, G.M., Chiang, L., Mercy, J., Fernandez, B., Ligiero, D., & Hart, C. (2021) *Linking Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys to Coordinated and Effective Action: CDC and the Together for Girls Partnership*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://www.togetherforgirls.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/VACS-Process-Paper-2021.pdf>

National Democratic Institute (2019). *Tweets That Chill: Analyzing Online Violence Against Women in Politics*. NDI Report of case study research in Indonesia, Colombia, and Kenya. <https://www.ndi.org/tweets-that-chill>

National Democratic Institute (2021). *Addressing Online Misogyny and Gendered Disinformation: A How-To Guide*. NDI <https://www.ndi.org/publications/addressing-online-misogyny-and-gendered-disinformation-how-guide>

National Democratic Institute (undated). *Cybersecurity Handbook for Civil Society Organizations. A guide for civil society organizations looking to get started on a cybersecurity plan*. <https://cso.cyberhandbook.org/>

Plan International (2020). *Free to be online? Girls' and young women's experiences of online harassment*. Surrey, UK: Plan International. <https://plan-international.org/publications/free-to-be-online/>

Plan International (2021). *The Truth Gap*. State of the World's Girls report. Executive Summary. <https://plan-international.org/publications/the-truth-gap/>

Posetti, J., Shabbir, N., Maynard, D., Bontcheva, K. and Aboulez, N. (2021). *The Chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists*. Research discussion paper. Paris: UNESCO. <https://en.unesco.org/publications/thechilling>

Posetti, J. and Shabbir, N (2022). *The Chilling: What More Can News Organisations Do to Combat Gendered Online Violence?* [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/global\\_study\\_chapter3\\_what\\_more.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/global_study_chapter3_what_more.pdf)

Posetti, J., Bontcheva, K., Shabbir, N. (2022). *The Chilling: Assessing Big Tech's Response to Online Violence Against Women Journalists*. Paris: UNESCO. [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/global\\_study\\_chapter4\\_platforms\\_vectors.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/global_study_chapter4_platforms_vectors.pdf)

Posetti, J., Maynard, D., Bontcheva, K (2021). *Maria Ressa: Fighting an Onslaught of Online Violence. A big data analysis*. Washington DC: ICFJ. <https://www.icfj.org/our-work/maria-ressa-big-data-analysis>

Slupska, J. (2019). 'Safe at Home: Towards a Feminist Critique of Cybersecurity', in *St. Anthony's International Review 2019 no. 15: Whose Security is Cybersecurity? Authority, Responsibility and Power in Cyberspace*, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3429851>

Slupska, J. and Tanczer, L.M. (2021), 'Threat Modeling Intimate Partner Violence: Tech Abuse as a Cybersecurity Challenge in the Internet of Things', in Bailey, J., Flynn, A. and Henry, N. (Ed.) *The Emerald International Handbook of Technology-Facilitated Violence and Abuse (Emerald Studies In Digital Crime, Technology and Social Harms)*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 663-688. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83982-848-520211049>

SoSafe (2022). *Human Risk Review 2022. An analysis of the European cyberthreat landscape*. <https://sosafe-awareness.com/resources/reports/human-risk-review/>

Strohmayr, A., Slupska, J., Bellini, R., Neff, G., Coventry, L., Hairson, A., Dodge, A. (2021). *Trust and Abusability Toolkit: Centering Safety in Human-Data Interactions*. <https://researchportal.northumbria.ac.uk/en/publications/trust-and-abusability-toolkit-centering-safety-in-human-data-inte>

UN Women (2020). *Online violence against women in Asia. A Multicountry Study*. Bangkok: UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/12/online-violence-against-women-in-asia>

UN Women (2020). *Online and ICT facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19*. UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/brief-online-and-ict-facilitated-violence-against-women-and-girls-during-covid-19>

UN Women (2021). *Violence against women in the online space. Insights from a multi-country study in the Arab States. Summary report*. UN Women. <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/11/violence-against-women-in-the-online-space>

NORC at the University of Chicago and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). (2022). *Landscape Analysis of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Findings from Asia*. <https://www.norc.org/Research/Projects/Pages/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence.aspx>

Additional resources are also set out in WP1984V Tackling online gendered harms, November 2021.

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper uses the term 'technology-facilitated GBV' to be inclusive of all ways in which technology is used to perpetrate GBV, including all forms of online GBV and GBV that is facilitated by other ICTs that do not make use of the Internet (for example mobile phone calls, texts and cameras). It uses the term 'online' violence when referring to specific forms of technology-facilitated GBV or citing specific evidence which use this terminology. The Working definition from the Global Partnership 2022 Roadmap is: "Gender-based online harassment and abuse includes a wide range of acts that are amplified or enabled by social-media and technology platforms to control, attack, and silence women and girls, particularly those who have a disability, and/or identify as LGBTQI+ or as a member of a racial, ethnic, or religious minority. It is a continuum of technology-facilitated gender-based violence that can include (but is not limited to) the non-consensual distribution of intimate digital

images; cyberstalking; sextortion; doxing; malicious deep fakes; livestreamed sexual violence; rape and death threats; disinformation; and intimate-partner violence.”

<sup>2</sup> Lockett, K. (2021). *Tackling online gendered harms*. London: Wilton Park. <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/WP1984V-Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> For a definition of big data see <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/big-data-for-sustainable-development>

<sup>4</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit (2021). Measuring the prevalence of online violence against women. Economist Intelligence Unit. <https://onlineviolencewomen.eiu.com/>

<sup>5</sup> A multi-country survey in Denmark, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Spain, Sweden, UK and USA found that 23% of women have experienced online abuse or harassment at least once (Amnesty International, 2017) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/11/amnesty-reveals-alarming-impact-of-online-abuse-against-women/>; UN Women’s survey in the Arab States region found that 60% of women internet users in the region have been exposed to online violence in the past year (UN Women, 2021) <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/07/violence-against-women-in-the-online-space-insights-from-multi-country-research-in-the-arab-states>; A multi-country survey across sub-Saharan Africa found that 28% of women interviewed have experienced online gender-based violence (2020).

<sup>6</sup> Information provided by UN Women for the conference, taken from: Hicks, J. (2021). *Global evidence on the prevalence and impact of online gender-based violence*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Institute of Development Studies.

<sup>7</sup> Different terms were used at the event to refer to people with diverse sexual and gender identities. In this report the term SOGIESC is used to include, for example, third gender groups who may not identify as transgender or intersex within a LGBTQI+ framework. The event recognised that further work is needed to capture the experiences of women and girls with diverse SOGIESC and LGBTQI+ people.

<sup>8</sup> See for example: Ahlenback, V., Clugston, N., Vlahakis M. (2022). *Issues Paper: Global prevalence of online VAWG. What Works Violence against Women and Children Helpdesk*. London: Social Development Direct; Hicks, J. (2021). *Global evidence on the prevalence and impact of online gender-based violence*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Institute of Development Studies; Posetti, J., Shabbir, N., Maynard, D., Bontcheva, K. and Aboulez, N. (2021). *The Chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists*. Paris: UNESCO.

<sup>9</sup> See for example: Aziz, A. (2017). *Due Diligence and Accountability for Online Violence Against Women*. <https://duediligenceproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Paper-on-Due-Diligence-and-Accountability-for-Online-Violence-against-Women-make-this-active-link.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> GSMA (2021). *The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2022*, London: GSM Association. [https://www.gsma.com/r/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/The-Mobile-Gender-Gap-Report-2022.pdf?utm\\_source=website&utm\\_medium=download-button&utm\\_campaign=gender-gap-2022](https://www.gsma.com/r/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/The-Mobile-Gender-Gap-Report-2022.pdf?utm_source=website&utm_medium=download-button&utm_campaign=gender-gap-2022).

<sup>11</sup> GBV AoR Helpdesk (2021). *Harnessing Technology to Prevent, Mitigate and Respond to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Developments, Good Practices and Lessons Learned*. London: Social Development Direct. <https://gbvaor.net/node/538>

<sup>12</sup> For further information on gaps in global prevalence data see the Issues paper prepared for this event: Ahlenback, V., Clugston, N., Vlahakis M. (2022). *Issues Paper: Global prevalence of online VAWG. What Works Violence against Women and Children Helpdesk*. London: Social Development Direct.

<sup>13</sup> For further information on the social ecological framework see <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/about/social-ecologicalmodel.html>

<sup>14</sup> See for example: Posetti, J., Shabbir, N., Maynard, D., Bontcheva, K. and Aboulez, N. (2021). *The Chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists*. Paris: UNESCO; Hicks, J. (2021). *Global evidence on the prevalence and impact of online gender-based violence*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Institute of Development Studies; UNFPA (2021). *Making all spaces safe: technology-facilitated gender-based violence*. UNFPA; and UN Women (2020). *Online and ICT facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19*. UN Women. Cited in the VAWC Helpdesk Issues Paper produced for this event.

<sup>15</sup> Guedes, A., Bott, S., Garcia-Moreno, C., Colombini, M. (2016). *Bridging the gaps: a global review of intersections of violence against women and violence against children* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27329936/>

<sup>16</sup> The relationship between the survivor/victim and the perpetrator or the setting where the violence occurs are not used as a unit of classification, however they are used to distinguish subtypes of violence, including online violence. Online violence here is defined as any violent act against a person under the age of 18 – intentional, unwanted, unnecessary, and harmful – that occurs in online digital spaces and/or using information and communication technology. The ICVAC is currently under revision.

<sup>17</sup> For further information see <https://www.gbvims.com/primero/>

<sup>18</sup> For further information see <https://endvawnow.org/en/initiatives/view/9-research-and-data.html>

<sup>19</sup> For further information see <https://knowvawdata.com/>

<sup>20</sup> These five main themes are based on the discussion at this event and will be further refined and expanded upon during the white paper development process.

<sup>21</sup> For more information on ethical and safe research on VAW and VAC see resources available at <https://www.svri.org/research-methods/ethics>

<sup>22</sup> World Health Organization. Global Programme on Evidence for Health Policy. (2001). *Putting women first : ethical and safety recommendations for research on domestic violence against women*. World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/65893>

<sup>23</sup> CP MERG (2012). *Ethical principles, dilemmas and risks in collecting data on violence against children: A review of available literature*, Statistics and Monitoring Section/Division of Policy and Strategy, UNICEF, New York.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022256>

---

<sup>25</sup> Disrupting Harm is several research projects under one umbrella, conducted by ECPAT, INTERPOL and UNICEF: qualitative research with government, social service workforce, justice actors, survivors of sexual abuse; a legal analysis to determine gaps in legislation; and a nationally representative survey with internet-using children aged 12-17. The Disrupting Harm survey measures the extent to which children in each country have been subjected to: sexual harassment, multiple examples of potential and actual grooming, non-consensual sharing of self-generated sexual content, sexual extortion, sexual exploitation. Extensive follow-up questions are asked of child survivors/victims to paint a better picture of the context and circumstances of the abuse. For further information see <https://www.end-violence.org/disrupting-harm>

<sup>26</sup> For further information see <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/vacs/index.html>

<sup>27</sup> FRA (2015). *Violence against women : an EU-wide survey*, Luxembourg: FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-main-results-report>.

<sup>28</sup> UN Women (2021). *Violence against women in the online space: insights from a multi-country study in the Arab States*. UN Women. <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/07/violence-against-women-in-the-online-space-insights-from-multi-country-research-in-the-arab-states>

<sup>29</sup> For further information, see <https://dhsprogram.com/>

<sup>30</sup> Posetti, J., Shabbir, N., Maynard, D., Bontcheva, K. and Aboulez, N. (2021). *The Chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists*. Paris: UNESCO.