Best Practice Forum
Gender & Access (2017):
Unique challenges for unique women

An exploration of the unique needs and challenges women from diverse communities face in gaining meaningful Internet access

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This is the final resource produced as an output of an intersessional, multistakeholder and community-driven best practice forum of the IGF; aimed at investigating challenges and opportunities for promoting women's meaningful access to and use of the Internet.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the final output resource produced by a community of participants in the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)'s Best Practice Forum (BPF) on Gender and Access in 2017. It is also the third publication produced by the IGF BPF on Gender and Access over the past three years. In 2015, the BPF published an extensive resource on online abuse and gender-based violence.[1] Building on this work, the BPF in 2016 published a report investigating the variety of barriers to women's meaningful access as well as existing initiatives aimed at overcoming these barriers.[2]

The BPF Gender's work remains important because the proportion of men using the Internet is estimated to be higher than the proportion of women using the Internet in two-thirds of countries worldwide. In Africa, the proportion of women using the Internet is estimated to be 25% lower than the proportion of men using the Internet. In Least Developed Countries (LDC), only one out of seven women use the Internet compared with one out of five men.[3] These access discrepancies are disconcerting because Internet access has the potential to accelerate sustainable development for women.

The BPF's work in 2015 and 2016 made it clear that women in different circumstances may experience unique barriers to meaningful Internet access and use. Yet little research and very few initiatives differentiate between the needs and barriers of women in diverse communities or circumstances. The BPF Gender's work in 2017 therefore focused on identifying the needs and challenges of various women's groups, including refugee women, indigenous women, young women, women with disabilities, rural women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) women with respect to Internet access.

Findings from the BPF's survey, a session held at the IGF 2017, and other research the BPF volunteers conducted indicate the significance of barriers like affordability and infrastructure challenges, a lack of relevant and local language content, lack of digital skills, and social stigma and cultural barriers. Some barriers are experienced more keenly by some women in certain communities than in others. Uniform policy recommendations to address generic barriers to women's meaningful Internet access are therefore unlikely to effectively target women's unique needs and challenges. The BPF concludes to urge policymakers and

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[1] IGF (2015). *BPF Online Abuse and Gender-Based Violence Final report.* Available at: http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/documents/best-practice-forums/623-bpf-online-abuse-and-gbv-against-women/file.
[2] IGF (2016). *BPF Online Abuse and Gender-Based Violence. Final report*. Available at: http://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/3406/437.
[3] ITU (2017). *ICT Facts and Figures*. Available at: https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2017.pdf.

stakeholders to further investigate and consider the significant effect that unique circumstances have on enabling women's meaningful access.

How was this resource produced?

This outcome resource was produced as a reflection of an open, iterative and bottom-up process in which people from diverse regions and stakeholder groups participated by completing a survey, attending regular virtual meetings, submitting input on the mailing list, sharing reports of relevant/linked events and workshops on gender and access, and contributing background research. This resource also contains references to discussions facilitated at the BPF's session at IGF 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland.[4]

For a more detailed explanation of the BPF's methodology in 2017, see Part B of this resource.

For additional background and information on how to participate in the IGFs intersessional activities, please visit the IGF website.

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[4] See Appendix 3 for a full session summary. IGF (2017) *Gender and Access Session*. Available at: https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2017-day-3-room-xxv-bpf-best-practice-forum-on-gender-and-access.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A4AI	Alliance for Affordable Internet
APC	Association for Progressive Communications
BPF	Best Practice Forum (IGF)
Broadband Commission	Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development (UN)
CSTD	Commission on Science and Technology for Development (UN)
ICT(s)	Information and Communication Technology/ies (ICTs)
IGF	Internet Governance Forum
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
ILO	International Labour Organisation(UN)
ISP(s)	Internet Service Providers (s)
ISOC	Internet Society
ITU	International Telecommunication Union (UN)
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
LDC(s)	Least Developed Countries
MAG	IGF's Multistakeholder Advisory Group
NRI	National and Regional IGF initiatives
RIA	Research ICT Africa
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
UN	United Nations
UNCRPD	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN)
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
USF(s)	Universal Service and Access Fund(s)
Web Foundation	World Wide Web Foundation
WHO	World Health Organization
WB	World Bank
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society

INTERPRETATION NOTES

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this resource do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The term 'country' as used in the text of this publication also refers, as appropriate, to territories and areas.

The designations 'developed' and 'developing economies' are intended for statistical convenience and do not necessarily imply a judgment about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process.

Mention of the name of any company, organization, product or website does not imply endorsement on the part of the United Nations.

- For the purposes of this resource, unless specifically otherwise defined:[5]
  All references to '**women**' should be construed as including 'girls' and anyone identifying as women, unless otherwise specifically noted. Women of diverse sexualities and gender identities are also included in relevant sections of the resource.
- '**Girls**' is defined as female individuals from birth to the age of 18.
- '**Gender**' refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in women or men in a given context. Gender is part of broader socio-cultural contexts, intersecting with other factors such as class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age.
- References to **'access'** should be construed as referring to 'meaningful Internet access' unless otherwise construed.
- '**Meaningful Internet access**' should be construed as pervasive, affordable connection (of sufficient quality and speed) to the Internet in a manner that enables the user to potentially benefit from Internet use including to participate in the public sphere, exercise human rights, access and create relevant content, engage with people and information for development and well-being, etc.; irrespective of the means of such access (i.e. whether via a mobile or other device; whether through private ownership of a device or using a public access facility like a library).

[5] As defined in the IGF (2016) *BPF Online Abuse and Gender-Based Violence Final report*. Available at: http://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/3406/437.

PART 1

1. FINDINGS

1.1 Introduction

Various efforts have been launched in recent months and years to address connectivity challenges and to ensure that more people are able to benefit from Internet access – including diverse initiatives at intergovernmental and state level and by the private sector, academic and research institutions, technical community, and civil society stakeholders.

Fewer initiatives address specifically the need to promote women's meaningful access to the Internet, although the number of initiatives focused on this challenge has grown in the past five years. And even lesser acknowledge the unique circumstances women find themselves in around the world, as well as the impact that these circumstances may have on women's ability to access and use the Internet in a meaningful manner.

For the past three years, the IGF's BPF on Gender has been investigating various challenges pertinent to women's ability to access and use the Internet. The volunteer group's work indicated that much of the initiatives and literature on women's ability to access and use the Internet tend to approach women as a homogenous group and fail to account for the unique ways, contexts and circumstances that might impact women's ability to access and use the Internet. As a result, the BPF community in 2017 decided to look at the specific barriers faced by specific communities of women including – women with disabilities; refugee women; young women; rural women; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) women and indigenous women.

While the BPF's mandate, methodology and other relevant background are contained in Part B below, the rest of this section provides an overview of the general findings the BPF collected in 2017 for each of these groups of women, namely:

- Refugee women
- Indigenous women
- Young women
- Women with disabilities
- LGBTQI women
- Rural women

For each of these, the specific needs and unique barriers experienced by women in the specific community are discussed, along with the benefits Internet access could have for the community concerned.

1.2 Refugee women

Over the past 25 years, Internet and mobile communications have transformed life in the industrialised and the developing world. Cloud computing, remote working opportunities and networked global teams are reshaping the way in which we humans interact and connect. But the same may not hold true for the world's refugees, especially women refugees.

Today, more than 65 million people – the largest number in decades – are living as refugees or are internally displaced, uprooted from their homes in search of safety, and often struggling to access the basic means of survival.[6] In 2014, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that there were 14.4 million refugees. Half of the world's refugees are children under 18 years of age, and around half of the total number of refugees are women or girls.[7]

Unfortunately digital transformation is leaving refugees behind. Displaced people are living without the connectivity that is so essential given their condition to obtain vital information, communicate with loved ones still back home or elsewhere, access basic services, and to link to the local, national and global communities around them. According to a UNHCR global assessment, while 7% of refugee communities lack the requisite digital infrastructure for Internet access and mobile communications, most refugees in urban areas live in places that have 2G or 3G mobile coverage. For those in rural areas, however, the situation is far worse, with 20% living in areas with no connectivity at all[8]. The assessment also found that refugees often spend up to a third of their disposable income on staying connected – highlighting the main obstacle to refugee connectivity as cost. Globally, refugees are 50% less likely than the general population to have an Internet-enabled phone, while 29% of refugee households have no phone at all.

At the BPF's session at IGF 2017 in Geneva, Katie Drew of UNHCR reminded participants that 60% of the refugee women did not live in camps. Moreover, she noted that women are less likely to own a mobile phone than men in refugee populations, especially ones that have recently been displaced. Women are often unable to take their devices across borders for fear or risk of confiscation; or devices getting damaged along the way. Access to devices is therefore one of the most pressing challenges that women face. In an emergency situation where refugees have just arrived to a new location, they often do not have the disposable income to spend on assets like connected devices.

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[6] UNHCR (2016). *How Internet and Mobile Connectivity can Improve Refugee Well-Being and Transform Humanitarian Action.* Available at: http://www.unhcr.org/5770d43c4.pdf.

[7] UN General Assembly (2016). *In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, Report of the Secretary-General*. Available at: http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/in_safety_and_dignity_-_addressing_large_movements_of_refugees_and_migrants.pdf.

[8] UNHCR, 2016 (*Ibid*).

Dr. Gundula Epp, who worked with refugee women at a German Red Cross tent at the Cherso refugee camp in northern Greece, feels that the Internet is as a lifeline for refugees. She added that amidst challenges like food scarcity and poor hygienic conditions, mobile devices were the only saving grace for the refugee women whose husbands had already migrated to Germany. Internet connection enabled these women to communicate with family and friends. Cherso, Greece, is just one of 22 sites where NetHope has responded to the refugee crisis by providing free Wi-Fi for refugees and the NGOs aiding them. The Red Cross, for instance, uses the connection to track key metrics and to reorder supplies.[9]

A connected refugee population can also play a critical role in enabling organizations like the UNHCR to innovate effectively and to improve the quality of services that they provide. Most significantly, better connectivity can promote self-reliance by broadening the opportunities for refugee women to improve their own lives.[10]

Why is Internet access important for women refugees?

The survey results suggest that Internet access for refugee women is integral in not only finding and connecting with relatives and family members, but also in gaining access to important information. BPF participant Josephine Miliza worked at a refugee camp in the northern part of Kenya. At the BPF Gender and Access session at IGF 2017, she noted:

> *"Their primary purpose for access is communication. Most of the relatives lived outside the camp, and so [Internet access was important] in terms of just finding out how they're doing. And the main platforms for communications were Twitter or Facebook."*

Survey responses indicated that access to information via the Internet is important for refugee women wanting to remain updated about their country of origin (especially when their countries are still engulfed in a war) and to learn about future options for them and their families. It also helps them to learn more about the flow of aid. From a practical perspective, Internet access gives women refugees access to information about buying or obtaining a sim card, getting registered for identification purposes, and/or other legal purposes relating to their refugee status.

Access can also play a role in enabling women refugees to play more active roles in their new communities. One survey respondent from Chad, for example, noted that social networks can enable women refugees to more actively share their experiences online instead of simply

[9] Nethope (2017). *'For Refugees, Internet is a Lifeline'*. (Blog). Available at: http://nethope.org/2016/05/17/for-refugees-internet-is-a-lifeline/.
[10] UNHCR, 2016 (*Ibid*).

being passive consumers of content. Student respondents at a refugee camp in Kenya, similarly, noted that the Internet is crucial for them in not only gaining a fraction of financial independence – e.g. accessing Paypal – but also in continuing or gaining an education (survey respondent, 2017).

What barriers do refugee women face?

Survey respondents cited a lack of public access facilities, (in)availability of infrastructure, and cost/affordability challenges as general challenges to Internet access and use for refugee women.

One survey respondent noted that in a Kenyan refugee camp, for example, while women struggled to gain access to devices from a cost and general availability perspective, they also often lacked the skills needed for using devices, and/or do not think the Internet is relevant to them or their needs. To these women, access is limited to public access at a school as data costs are prohibitively high for women refugees. Access to a public access facility as opposed to private access can limit women refugees' ability to develop their digital literacy skills and the requisite privacy to explore their options without fear of social surveillance.

Another challenge relates to identification. For example, Katie Drew, UNHCR, said at the BPF Gender and Access session at IGF 2017:

> *"One of the specific challenges that women refuges more so face is the documentation requirements that is needed in a new country to access the SIM card. What registration do they need and whether they're legally able to access an SIM card, etc. So very often refugees are excluded from being able to access SIM cards legally and women because of (low)literacy levels might not be able to fill in the documentation or apply for an SIM card even if they can do so. So that's one of the specific challenges around access to devices, pricing plans."*

Restriction of movement, cultural norms and discrimination also contribute to a lack of Internet access at camps or displacement centres for women groups. In Pakistan, for example, a survey respondent noticed that men are sometimes reluctant to allow women to gain access to Internet in refugee camps. In Kenya, similarly, a respondent pointed out that married women needed to seek permission from their husbands before being allowed to access social media.

Cultural norms can also have other negative effects. Drew explained that in an urban area in Egypt where women were sent SMS text messages to their mobile phone, providing information about family planning, it led to unintended consequences. Women often lacked

the skills to know how to delete messages and when their husbands or male members of the family found such messages on the phone, they accused the women of infidelity and sometimes even subjected the women to domestic violence as a result.

1.3 Indigenous women

In the emerging information economy, the Internet is a very powerful resource. It is now embodied in our collective shared human condition, cutting across geographical boundaries and different spheres of our lives and identities.[11]

It is estimated that indigenous people number approximately 370 million around the world, or less than 6% of the global population. At the same time, they speak 5000[12] of the world's estimated 7,000 languages, and are the stewards of some of the most biologically diverse areas accumulating an immeasurable amount of traditional knowledge about their ecosystems.[13] According to the World Bank, although indigenous people make up five 5% of the global population, they account for about 15% of the extreme poor.[14]

According to International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 169, indigenous people are descendants of populations "which inhabited a country or geographical region during its conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries" and "retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions."[15]

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007, provides a global framework for efforts to advance indigenous people' rights. Together with other human rights instruments and growing human rights jurisprudence concerning indigenous people, the Declaration contains crucial guidance for building societies that ensure full equality and rights of indigenous people.[16]

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[11] GenderIT (2017). *There is no opting out:Indigenous women in Malaysia and questions of access.* (Blog). Available at: https://www.genderit.org/feminist-talk/special-edition-there-no-opting-out-indigenous-women-malaysia-and-questions-access#fn1.

[12] UN News Centre (2014). *First World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Opens at UN Headquarters*. Available at: www.un.org/apps/ news/story.asp?NewsID=48768.

[13] UNDESA (2009). *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*. Available at: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/SOWIP/en/SOWIP_web.pdf.

[14] World Bank (2016). *Partnering with Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Minorities Through Community-Driven Development.* Available at: *http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/05/11/partnering-with-indigenous-peoples-and-ethnic-minorities-through-community-driven-development*.

[15] ILO (1989). *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention* (No.169). Available at: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169.

[16] OCHR (2013). *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: A Manual for National Human Rights Institutions.* Available at: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/UNDRIPManualForNHRIs.pdf.

Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), four account for the development of Indigenous Peoples, namely:

- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
    - Indicator 2.3: By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous people, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment
    - Indicator 2.3.2 Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
    - Indicator 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations
    - Indicator 4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous people and conflict affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated[17]

A greater emphasis is placed on achieving gender equality in indigenous groups by educating and empowering women. And access to the Internet can act as a catalyst in doing so.

While Internet access for indigenous communities is often a challenge associated with developing countries, it is still a significant barrier to success for many rural and remote indigenous communities in Canada and the United States, says Mark Buell, ISOC North America.[18] According to the 2016 Broadband Progress Report, 10% of Americans lack access to broadband. The contrast is even more striking for Internet access in rural areas, with 39% lacking access to broadband of 25/4 Mbps, compared to 4% in urban areas. Many Canadian rural and remote communities too face similar access issues, according to the report.[19]

And if that is the case with one of the the most developed regions in the world, Internet access for indigenous women from other countries can be telling. This resource explores the

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[17] UNDESA, 2009. (*Ibid)*.

[18] Mark Buell/ISOC (2017). *Connecting Indigenous Communities*. ISOC (Blog). Available at: https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2017/09/connecting-Indigenous-communities/.

[19] Federal Communications Commission USA (2016). *2016 Broadband Progress Report.* Available at: https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/2016-broadband-progress-report.

issue of how the Internet is a viable resource for indigenous women to access health, education, employment and other valuable information that promotes a holistic approach to health and well-being. This also brings to fore the overlooked plight of indigenous people, especially women.

Why is Internet access important for indigenous women?

The right to access affordable Internet connectivity is another addition to indigenous women's historical struggle for collective rights over land, territories, resources, identity and livelihood. The injustices they face are reinforced by systemic barriers to access to infrastructure, welfare, healthcare and timely and accurate information. Difficult terrain and a general failure to understand and acknowledge infrastructure needs makes access to the Internet more unattainable for such communities. For indigenous women, the challenges are compounded by the intersectionality of their status as women, indigenous, rural, and poor.

For example, the indigenous community in Malaysia accounted for 13.9% of the entire population (as of 2015) and remain poorly connected to the Internet, even while the nation's broadband penetration stood at 81.6% per 100 household in 2016.[20] Little attention is given to the lived realities of indigenous women. Too few acknowledge and value the cultural connections that an indigenous woman has with natural resources, and how this knowledge alone shifts and shapes the mapping of the lands they derive their livelihood from. There are more than 50 ethnic groups in Malaysia with diverse customary practices and geographical distribution – forming a unique and distinctive relationship and power dynamics among the indigenous communities, and one of the more under-researched and under-documented area of interest in Malaysia.[21]

BPF participant Serene Lim, who works for EMPOWER Malaysia, notes:

> *"Mobile technology has been important in communicating and connecting with members of the community (to announce wedding or event, or to relay the message of someone's departure), especially where location between one community and another can be remote and hard to reach. The indigenous community has utilised the Internet to find associations with people beyond their tribes who share the same struggle, interests, hobbies etc or to simply meet new friends.*

Lim also added that in places where infrastructure was available in Malaysia, the Internet became an important space for expression and access to information. The indigenous communities in Malaysia, often resorted in a batin or village head/superior appointed by the

[20] GenderIT, 2017. (*Ibid)*.
[21] *Ibid.*

state in an attempt to implement a political leadership structure in the communities. The batin is the representative of the people's voices and the gatekeeper of information and communication. And sometimes the appointment of batin was political thus silencing many voices and opinions due to various complex reasons like state's agenda, commercial and economic interests, patriarchy and gender-based discrimination within the community etc. And in such cases, indigenous women, experienced layered forms of discriminations owing to their indigenous identity and gender. But access to social media has now allowed them to receive information from different sources, post real-time updates to interact with a wider audience and also facilitated citizen journalism, without having to go through the batin.

Access to the Internet can improve the livelihoods of indigenous women by promoting education and digital skills that can enable them to trade and find alternative sources of income. One of the survey respondents from Malaysia explained:

> *"Villages are depopulated due to deforestation and access to Internet can provide new opportunities like making or selling innovative products. They could market products through mobile apps if they have Internet. But a strong telecom signal is still lacking, making access to Internet seem like a distant reality. If that is improved, it will also reduce the pressure on migration to cities in search of jobs. Eco tourism and allied industries can be promoted with further digitalisation thus creating more jobs."*

What barriers do indigenous women face?

Lack of physical infrastructure for network connectivity and electricity, public Internet centres for women, affordability of devices and data services are among the reasons restricting access for indigenous women, especially for those residing in rural and remote areas.

Even in places where access to the Internet is more affordable and available, services have not been widely adopted in remote indigenous communities. In Australia, there are several problems with creating Internet access to remote indigenous communities in Australia. These problems include geographical isolation, economically disadvantaged communities and the cost of services, difficulty setting up services to remote Indigenous communities, lack of awareness, lack of skills, and lack of interest due to irrelevant cultural content websites for users.

The Indigenous population living in remote and very remote parts of Australia comprises 0.54% of the total Australian population. In central Australia, Indigenous households are 76% less likely to have Internet access than non-Indigenous metropolitan households. Though the size of the broadband market in remote Indigenous communities may be miniscule in

comparison with the national market, it is an important and evolving element in relation to social policy, the provision of basic communication needs, and the cultural prerogative of Indigenous people to live on their traditional lands.[22] The dispersed nature and small size of most remote Indigenous communities continues to be a significant challenge for government in terms of service provision and basic communication.[23]

In the Canadian North, for example, delivering high-speed services to remote indigenous communities that span a vast geographical area is extremely expensive and difficult. Residents pay high costs for slow speeds that often make just opening an email attachment quite tedious.[24]

The indigenous polynesians in New Zealand (also known as Maoris) face similar issues like the aborigines in Australia and Canada. In New Zealand, the Internet is accessed in remote communities through community access centres. It is likely that this trend will continue, until the cost of equipment and monthly charges for phone and Internet services in remote lower socio-economic areas change.[25]

Capacity and skills were emphasised by survey respondents as significant barriers for elderly indigenous women in places like Malaysia, Myanmar, and Indonesia. Most relevant are barriers pertaining to insecurity, lack of confidence and lack opportunity to learn and practice (as compared to men who have more opportunity to travel to town for errands or business). A survey respondent explained that while working with indigenous women in rural villages in Borneo, Malaysia, many women older than 60 had low literacy and to rarely left the villages. To train women in ecotourism, hence, took a long time as the women were not exposed at all to typically common requirements needed for homestays and also the kind of colours or designs of handicrafts that would be economically feasible. While trainers brought videos on flash drives and computers to show women, the material was rarely available in tribal languages; thus restricting interaction and limiting the scope of growth.

It is also important too to be mindful of the underlying cultural norms and power relation within indigenous communities. A survey respondent from Sarawak AIDS Concern Society noted that women have multiple responsibilities and tend to spend a disproportionate amount of time doing unpaid care, work over and above working in the farms or plantations. Moreover, indigenous women are sometimes expected to take up the responsibility of planning, cooking, serving and cleaning during a community event too. The time cost thus incurred limits them from accessing and benefiting from the Internet.

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[22] Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (2011) *Home Internet for Remote Indigenous Communities.* Available at: http://accan.org.au/files/SWIN-CLC-CATHomeInternet.pdf.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Mark Buell/ISOC (2017). *Connecting Indigenous Communities*. ISOC (Blog). Available at: https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2017/09/connecting-Indigenous-communities/.

[25] Shields, M.A. (1998). Equality and Inequality in Information Societies, Part 1-Introduction. *Social Science Review*, 16 (4), 349-352.

A survey respondent from Malaysia pointed out that age is also an important factor when it comes to planning initiatives with women. Initiatives that recognise age as a significant factor and that prioritise the capacity needs of young and/or elderly women can have greater greater impact. She noted:

"Older women needed more testimonial videos from other successful women in other communities to inspire them to believe 'women can' and thus reform some of the cultural dogmas. Elder women may have a lot more fear of the authority than the younger ones and thus relevant content in local languages and focus on women's success stories in other communities will energize them to use Internet for empowerment."

1.4 Young women

To achieve gender equality, girls and young women need equal access to technology and digital training. Instead of being another barrier, technology and the Internet can be a great enabler for girls. Technology can also be a powerful tool for girls to become leaders and agents of change, allowing women and girls to organise more efficiently.

Over 90% of jobs worldwide already have a digital component according to the ITU.[26] Thus exposing younger women to digital and ICT skills through prioritising education in ICT subjects will help ensure girls thrive in economies where routine work has been automated and digital/creative skills are prized. Without these skills, women are at risk of losing out on tomorrow's best ICT job opportunities, whether in the public or private sectors. This is especially so within the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—or STEM—fields. Estimates show that women will gain only one STEM-related job for every 20 jobs lost in other areas, whereas men will gain one new job for every four lost elsewhere.[27]

Sujatha Subramanian from the Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Ohio State University, notes that in India, of the total 191 million Facebook users, only 24% are female. She believes that in order to close the digital divide, it is not only necessary to

[26] Speech by ITU Secretary-General, Dr Hamadoun I. Touré (2012): *Women Leaders Forum Connecting Women and Youth for Digital Development.* Available at: https://www.itu.int/en/osg/speeches/Pages/2012-09-24-2.aspx.

[27] World Economic Forum (2016): *Women in the Firing Line of Fourth Industrial Revolution.* Available at: https://www.weforum.org/press/2016/01/women-in-the-firing-line-of-fourth-industrial-revolution/.

recognise the economic factors involved but also address the social and cultural barriers that discourage women from meaningfully using the Internet.[28]

For girls and young women, being able to access technology creates opportunities for their social and economic development.[29] "In my own experience working with young women, I have seen how being online allows girls and young women to solve their own problems as they begin to interact with and contribute to the world. The Internet allows them to attend virtual workshops, enroll in online classes, and livestream international conferences where decisions being made on their behalf are being debated," notes Nyaradzo Mashayamombe, a human rights activist focusing on girls and young women's issues in Zimbabwe.[30]

To tackle these challenges, policy tools and focused programmes are needed to shift priorities and investments, and to change the stereotypes and perceptions of women and girls in STEM fields that begin in early childhood.

Why is Internet access important for young women?

The survey results showed that the Internet can be used in order to provide young women with:

- Better access to educational resources and information that is otherwise difficult to find;
- Access to financial services, to new markets and opportunities of showcasing their work and/or business; and
- Additional employment opportunities.

Access to the Internet improves employment and career opportunities for young women. Survey respondents pointed out that young women find opportunities for employment posted on websites such as, Gumtree in South Africa. Freelance work or opportunities to work from home are becoming popular with young women as Internet access improves. Although less significant, Internet-enabled commerce and work opportunities are gaining ground in certain regions. Young women in Rwanda, Tanzania and Nigeria, for example, conduct small scale

[28] Subramanian, S. (2017). *Why are there so few women on the Internet in India?* Hindustan Times (Article). Available at: https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/locating-gender-in-the-digital-divide/story-zt10VjNAwnOqcChjkYCLfN.html.

[29] Women's Worldwide Web. *ICTs: Digital Tools for Connecting and Empowering Women.* More information available at: https://www.w4.org/en/icts-and-mobile-technologies-empowering-women/?gclid=Cj0KEQjw8pC9BRCqrq37zZil4a0BEiQAZO_zrMOnJIL9uoBmLzm5KhCLGcYgcm0nukkmrNi5Tohu_JAaAtZo8P8HAQ.

[30] Center for International Media Assistance (2016). *Empowering Girls Online: ICTs and Young women in Zimbabwe.* (Blog). Available at: https://www.cima.ned.org/blog/empowering-girls-online-icts-young-women-zimbabwe/.

businesses where commercial transactions mainly happen on social media sites (Survey respondent, 2017).

Internet access also facilitates the sharing of information, education, learning and connecting with the community. As a survey respondent from Argentina notes:

> *"In Chicas en Tecnología (Argentina) we work to close the gender gap in technology. It is important for young girls to have contact with other girls or women who work in tech, as well as role models in the area. Internet plays a crucial role for that. Besides, the importance of Internet access plays a great role in sharing work and study opportunities with the girls as well."*

According to a study done on youth and ICT access in Africa (survey respondent, 2017), the Internet provides a cheaper option to communicate in contexts where traditional voice and text services are still expensive. At the same time, African operators have been offering data products targeted at youth under 25. A respondent from South Africa notes that, as a young woman herself, the Internet provided her with unlimited access to potentially controversial information and to access it in a safe, comfortable and non-confrontational manner. Especially around issues of health.

As pointed out by the Young Latin American Women's Declaration,[31] access to the Internet can enable young women to become more politically engaged. They can learn, gain a voice in their community and outside of it, improve their income, and create new opportunities for the future generations. In her survey response, Bruna Martins dos Santos, Research Lab on Public Policies and Internet (LAPIN), notes:

> *"We should consider the importance of engaging with politics, young women need to be empowered to participate in policy processes at any level. Therefore, Internet can and should also be used to enhance and enable female online participation in democratic processes."*

A survey respondent said that girls and women do not have the same opportunities as boys and men to access higher education as women are not often allowed to go far from the family, but the Internet allows online training and access to useful information for their fulfillment. Internet access continues to enable education and lifelong learning opportunities, work opportunities, scholarships, free courses (both online and offline) for this sub-group.

[31] Youth Observatory (2016). *Young Latin American Women Declaration: Enabling access to empower young women and build a feminist Internet Governance.* Available at: http://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download%2F3406%2F161.

What barriers do young women face?

When it comes to barriers and challenges faced by young women with regards to access, the inputs provided to the question can be divided in four general themes: safety concerns, affordability and availability, digital literacy, and cultural conditions.

The survey inputs demonstrate that young women have significant safety concerns when it comes to sharing pictures and expressing themselves online. One survey respondent said, for example, that she created a fake online profile because she feared the outcome if the community found out what her true opinions were around certain laws and practices. Another said:[32]

> *"Some girls and women do not post profile pictures to avoid being recognized and suffering from harassment and comments that belittle them."*

The UN Broadband Commission on Sustainable Development has pointed out that fears concerning safety and harassment form significant barriers that inhibit some women from benefiting from or even wanting to access the Internet. Women can face concerns of physical violence in respect of devices they own or borrow, including vulnerability to theft, and also concerns about online harassment and threats (including cybercrime).[33]

Accessing online spaces allows women to forge friendships and relationships, and express sexual and romantic desires outside the surveillant gaze of their families and communities. However, efforts by women to participate in online spaces and make their voices heard is often met with violence;[34] leading women to withdraw from such spaces. A young woman from India spoke about deleting her Facebook account after receiving rape threats in response to one of her posts.[35] The incident exemplifies how the presence of women in online spaces and their participation in political debates is seen as a challenge to the status quo that limits women's participation to the private sphere.

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[32] Survey input translated from French, original text: "Certaines filles et femmes ne mettent pas de photos de profil pour éviter d'être reconnues et aussi éviter des harcèlements et des commentaires qui les rabaissent."

[33] United Nations (UN) Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, Working Group on the Digital Gender Divide (2017). *Recommendations for action: bridging the gender gap in Internet and broadband access and use*. Available at: http://broadbandcommission.org/Documents/publications/WorkingGroupDigitalGenderDivide-report2017.pdf.

[34] Dutt, B. (2017) *Let's Talk About Trolls | Online abuse a weapon to silence women: Barkha Dutt (Blog)*. Available at: https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/let-s-talk-about-trolls-trolling-is-a-weapon-to-silence-women-barkha-dutt/story-A9X3fAuRwZiwVrhYQnKbYL.html.

[35] Hindustan Times (2017): *Gurmehar Kaur deletes her Facebook account.* Available at: https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/gurmehar-kaur-deletes-her-facebook-account/story-dnLz9leGiQ2gWmF9YGrwEM.html.

Another significant barrier, also pointed out in other reports, is affordability. A survey respondent said, "Affordability of smartphones, which enable young women to access the Internet, is a barrier that needs to be explored. It (is) becomes connected to how they then access the Internet – are they able to make use of it optimally if they have to make use of a family member's device? What are the levels of freedom they have in relation to the content they can access when borrowing devices?"

Another one added, "Our school does not have enough bandwidth and children do not have Internet access at home as it is expensive." Women are also more likely to have lower incomes, less financial independence and limited access to sources of finance thus making the cost of devices and data difficult to afford.[36] As a survey respondent from Madagascar, for example, explained:

"We are one of the poorest countries in the world; so, access to the Internet is still a luxury. Not everyone can have access to the Internet."

At the BPF Gender and Access session at IGF 2017, Bruna Santos noted:

"The problem is lack of affordable devices. We're still in the early stages of our careers. We don't have access to like a lot of money where some of us rely on our parents. And therefore, sometimes we don't have money to buy phones to have access to the Internet and be mobile…"

The availability of infrastructure and easy access to the infrastructure can be a deterrent too. Women may find the Internet particularly difficult to access in areas outside the home or in locations that are unsafe or inaccessible. Sometimes safety concerns and/or social or cultural norms may constrain their freedom of movement and ability to visit, for example, public access facilities.[37]

In a focus group study in Tanzania, Rwanda and Nigeria, Chenai Chair, Research ICT Africa, found gender challenges for young women where the perception of young women was that they were not trusted in the communities they stayed in or their lives were heavily monitored and controlled when it came to Internet use.[38] In rural Tanzania, for example, women are often regarded as "troublemakers" likely to get pregnant or fall out of school. As a result,

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[36] Broadband Commission, Working Group on the Digital Gender Divide, 2017, *(Ibid)*.

[37] UN Women Watch (2009): *Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change*. Available at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf.

[38] Chair, C. (2017). *Internet Use Barrier and User Strategies: Perspectives from Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa*. Available at: https://researchictafrica.net/publications/Other_publications/2017_INTERNET%20USE%20BARRIERS%20AND%20USER%20STRATEGIES-%20KENYA,%20NIGERIA,%20SOUTH%20AFRICA%20AND%20RWANDA%20.pdf.

their education was not prioritised or invested in.[39] At the BPF's session at IGF 2017[40], Chair noted:

"In urban Tanzania, we found that for young women who were trying to get work, they were more likely to face sexual harassment from older male employers who were asking for sexual favors in order for them to secure employment. And then we also found that in places like Rwanda, parents were reluctant to see their children -- to see young women leave their houses to get employment because they felt like they weren't sure what it is they were going to do with their lives."

Chair also explained that Research ICT Africa's work in Nigeria has shown that young women's movements tend to be monitored and closely controlled as a result:

"If your point of access to the Internet is a public access point, for example a public Wi-Fi or a library, your movement will be limited by parents."[41]

Another problem faced by young women, especially from developing countries, is digital literacy. As one survey respondent from Burkina Faso noted:[42]

"The illiteracy and low educational attainment of young women in Burkina Faso severely limits their access to the Internet."

Another survey respondent from India explained that:

"As a married woman, commitments at home like managing children, looking after husbands and elderly in-laws, along with maintaining our customs and culture, it is really hard for women to keep themselves on par with the opposite gender in keeping up with new technologies and involving in knowledge sharing; even though they possess good knowledge in technology and thrust to learn new things."

As stated before, a lot of barriers relate to women's digital skills gaps. The lack of education is one that makes going online more and more difficult. As pointed out by the Young Latin American Women's Declaration: Enabling access to empower young women and build a feminist Internet Governance[43], if girls are not educated, they will not be able to navigate the web even in their own language. In remote regions where there are low education and literacy

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[39] IGF 2017. *Gender and Access Session*. Available at: https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2017-day-3-room-xxv-bpf-best-practice-forum-on-gender-and-access.
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid*.
[42] Translated from French, original text: "L'analphabétisme et le niveau d'études très bas des jeunes femmes au Burkina Faso limite considérablement leur accès à Internet."
[43] Youth Observatory, 2016. *(Ibid)*.

levels, a girl will only access a limited part of Internet because most of the content online is in English.

Similar to the views of a survey respondent from Burkina Faso, a lot of underserved countries face problems with education quality. Latin America, Africa and other regions from the Global South are the most affected areas when it comes to the proportion of men who have access to higher education levels, while women tend to have higher levels of illiteracy.

In Myanmar, for example, young women at lower income levels from rural areas and ethnic states where communities experience the largest infrastructure gaps and lowest literacy rates have a high rate of women labour force participation — as high as 75%.[44] Young women who plan to participate in the paid labour force are more likely to be granted access to technology tools and skills training by family, but this is still not translating into equal access to opportunities. Although institutional reform and new infrastructure investments are underway, they cannot keep pace with the rate of change. Young women need access to alternative avenues for skills development. It is not just enough to provide adult women with skills and support services. Young women — particularly adolescent girls — need targeted opportunities to build digital skills.

Founder of pro-education equity coalition, EdChange; Paul Gorski stated the majority of the content, games, or instructional material that is found online is often designed by males in a manner that excludes girls and women from the culture of technology.[45] Consequently, it is crucial that programmes seek to promote technology access, develop and share free and open content that is relevant for girls and women. There should be more blogs that address issues that affect women, and create spaces for women and girls' interaction (e.g. Girls Globe Blog) [46] and women should have space for self-expression through blogging and self-publication.[47]

Last but not least, another challenge pointed out is the low number of women effectively working in science and technology-driven industries. Survey respondents cited the difficulties of entering the market and how important it is to teach girls from early ages in order to enable them to work in the field and become effective technology leaders.

A survey respondent from Argentina noted that there are heavy stereotypes around the concept of technology which suggest that it is mainly for men. Such strong cultural concepts seen as "natural" also deter the advancement of women in science and technology-driven

[44] Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government. (2016). *Women and the Economy in Myanmar* (2016). Available at: http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/women-and-the-economy-in-myanmar-assessment-dfat-private-sect-dev-prog-jan-16.pdf.
[45] Action Aid (2015). *ICT for girls and women empowerment.* Available at: http://www.actionaid.org/ghana/2015/11/ict-girls-and-women-empowerment.
[46] Girls' Globe is a platform to educate and inspire people to take action on issues related to human rights, social justice and gender equality through creative communications: https://www.girlsglobe.org/.
[47] Action Aid, 2015, *(Ibid)*.

careers or simply in using Internet and technology as creators and not only as users. Another survey respondent noted that while joining Internet governance discussions is easy, not all technology communities welcome women similarly. Often women's opinions are ignored or responded with insults.

1.5 Women with disabilities[48]

Around 15% of the world's population, or estimated 1 billion people, live with disabilities. They are the world's largest minority.[49] The World Disability Report, published by the World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank (WB), states that over 80% of those with disabilities live in isolated rural areas in developing countries.[50] Internet access for people with disability means being able to use a product or service as effectively as a person without a disability. Inclusive design principles and assistive technologies are therefore particularly important in this context.

Women of all ages with any form of disability tend to be among the more vulnerable and marginalised of society.[51] Women with disabilities face significantly more difficulties than women without – in both public and private spheres – like obtaining access to adequate housing, health, education, vocational training and employment.[52] Disability rights scholars have adopted the term "intersectionality", describing the overlapping forms of discrimination and systematic injustice that affect women with disabilities.

A study has found, for example, that men with disabilities are almost twice as likely to have jobs than women with disabilities.[53] Women with disabilities experience inequality in hiring, promotion rates and pay for equal work, access to training and retraining, credit and other productive resources, and rarely participate in economic decision-making as compared to men with disabilities.[54] Women with disabilities can therefore be said to experience "double discrimination", which places them at higher risk of gender-based violence, sexual abuse,

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[48] *Note: The BPF's survey did not receive many responses to the issue of challenges that women with disabilities face. There is clearly, therefore, a need to further study and understand the issue.*

[49] WHO. (2018). *Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities*. Available at: http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health.

[50] World Health Organization, World Bank (2011). *World Disability Report*. Available at: http://www.who.int/disabilities/ world_report/2011/en/index.html.

[51] UN General Assembly (2000). *Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. Resolution S23/3 of 10 June 2000, annex, paragraph 63. Available at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/ress233e.pdf.

[52] OHCHR (2012). *Women and the right to adequate housing*. Available at: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/WomenHousing_HR.PUB.11.2.pdf.

[53] O'Reilly, A. (2003). "Employment Barriers for Women with Disabilities" in: *The Right to Decent Work of Persons with Disabilities.* IFP/Skills Working Paper No. 14. Available at: http://193.134.194.11/public/english/employment/skills/disability/download/rightowork.pdf.

[54] International Labour Organization (2003). *(Ibid).*

neglect, maltreatment and exploitation. Internet access for women with disabilities is crucial, especially for better employment opportunities.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)[55] too recognizes the relationship between gender and disability, and that women with disabilities often are subjects to multiple discrimination.

Why is Internet access important for women with disabilities?

A survey respondent said that women with disabilities benefit greatly through social interactions facilitated by the Internet. The remote access allows them to curb feelings of isolation or judgement.

For people with disabilities who face structural and attitudinal barriers to participation, access to communication technology could facilitate participation in social networks, civic organizing, and employment. Forms of digital communication such as blogs, Internet forums, Twitter, and other forms of social networking are powerful means to encourage debates and discussions and shape public opinion on issues such as disability rights.[56]

Internet access can aid women with disabilities' education and employment needs. Education is of paramount importance for persons with disabilities; and highly impacts their employability. But the resources and trained teachers may not always be enough. For instance, the Malaysian government has established special schools for the disabled, but it is not enough compared to the number of disabled students. In addition, such schools require specialized teachers and the majority of such schools are administered by the private sector. This makes them more expensive and often inaccessible.[57]

ICTs, therefore, can be a valuable tool for learners with disabilities by enabling education and making them less vulnerable to the digital divide and exclusion from educational opportunities. Inclusive ICTs can improve their quality of life by increasing participation and reducing social exclusion.[58] A respondent noted that:

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[55] Adopted in (2006). *The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).*Available at: http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf.

[56] United States Agency for International Development (USAID). (2012). *Women With Disabilities In The Europe & Eurasia Region.* Available at: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/Women-with-Disabilities-EE-Region-FINAL-2012.pdf.

[57] Diah, N. (2017). *Empowering People With Disabilities (Pwds) Via Information Communication Technology (ICT): The Case Of Malaysia.* Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317400251_EMPOWERING_PEOPLE_WITH_DISABILITIES_PWDs_VIA_INFORMATION_COMMUNICATION_TECHNOLOGY_ICT_THE_CASE_OF_MALAYSIA.

[58] UNESCO (2014). *Model Policy for Inclusive ICTs in Education for Persons with Disabilities.* Available at: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002272/227229e.pdf.

"Access to the Internet will enable them to participate in online markets both as a seller as well as giving themselves more convenient purchasing power. It will broaden their opportunities for better education and learning new skills - thus enhancing their confidence and skills for employment."

A respondent from the Pacific Islands, who works as an advocate for women with disabilities, stressed the importance of Internet-enabled participation in government and democratic processes as well. She emphasised that access to the Internet can enhance women's role in a democracy by extending their means to participate in-person and online.

The ability to access financial information and systems online is important too. "Women should have access to and be able to control their own money, so that they can take charge of their own lives," the respondent noted.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) identified the following areas where ICT applications have the potential to assist and empower persons with disabilities:

- Raising awareness about disability issues throughout the society, combating stereotypes, and promoting awareness of the social contributions of persons with disabilities (Article 8 of the UNCRPD);
- Facilitating access of people with disabilities to information, products and services, including inclusive mobile and other devices and internet (Article 9);
- Allowing persons with disabilities to exercise their right to freedom of expression and opinion as well as access to information (Article 21);
- Facilitating inclusive education systems and life-long learning (Article 24);
- Facilitating the right to work, on equal basis to others, for people with disabilities (Article 27)
- Facilitating participation in political and public life (Article 29)
- Facilitating participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (Article 30)
- Facilitating cooperation in accessing scientific and technical knowledge (Article 32) aiming towards solutions that are affordable to all (reasonable access, universal design).[59]

Ensuring accessible ICTs for persons with disabilities and expanding access to these technologies, as well as to assistive technologies, should become a key element of global, regional and national strategies to remove the remaining barriers faced by persons with disabilities.[60]

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[59] UNCRPD, 2006. (*Ibid)*.

[60] ICT Consultation in support of the High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development of the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly (2013). *The ICT Opportunity for a Disability-Inclusive Development Framework.* Available at:

What barriers do women with disabilities face?

The affordability and cost of Internet access and specialised proprietary software geared at specific disability needs, as well as the language of software programmes, are major barriers for women with disabilities.

The cost of assistive technologies, that includes the cost of the technology as well as the cost of assistive technology assessment, training and support services, is still a significant barrier that prevents persons with disabilities from fully accessing healthcare services, benefit at all educational levels, be competitive on the labour market and live independently. And sometimes while these may be provided for free, they may still remain unused due to lack of experts and rehabilitation professionals trained in the use of these technologies and features.[61]

Cultural barriers and social judgement of women with disabilities are furthermore rife. They are perceived with pity or shame in many countries. They may be restrictively "protected" by family for any of a number of reasons, ranging from a lack of suitable educational facilities to a lack of appropriate government services, thus restricting freedom to access.[62]

Restriction of movement can be a strong barrier for Internet access. Encouraging and meeting the needs of persons with disabilities in isolated or remote areas may be a relatively low priority under such conditions.

Summarising her interactions with an expert on ICT for persons with disabilities, Jac SM Kee noted at the BPF's session[63] at IGF 2017: The role of technology in terms of advancing the lives of people with disabilities is really huge but largely untapped. A dire need is around mobility and isolation that goes from a whole range of physical disabilities to learning disabilities. Moreover, it is necessary to evaluate how technology and access can aid all kinds of disabilities. There is a lot more understanding around people who are visually impaired but less so of the different kinds of disabilities that might be worth delving into.

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https://www.itu.int/en/action/accessibility/Documents/The%20ICT%20Opportunity%20for%20a%20Disability_Inclusive%20Development%20Framework.pdf.

[61] *Ibid.*

[62] ISOC (2012). *Internet Accessibility: Internet use by persons with disabilities: Moving Forward*. Available at: https://www.internetsociety.org/resources/doc/2012/internet-accessibility-internet-use-by-persons-with-disabilities-moving-forward/.

[63] IGF 2017. *Gender and Access Session*. Available at: https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2017-day-3-room-xxv-bpf-best-practice-forum-on-gender-and-access.

1.6 LGBTQI women

Not only does the exclusion of LGBTQI women affect the development of tools that can enrich women's lives, but it also limits the construction of laws, policies, and institutions that define women's capacity to enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms. LGBTQI women often face stigma and discrimination in developed and developing countries alike. In many patriarchal societies in the world, LGBTQI women's lives and realities are discounted.

Why is Internet access important for LGBTQI women?

Connecting within communities and building social ties online are integral for LGBTQI women. In the absence of a physical or a geographical safe space, cyberspace can foster the same level of interactivity amongst its users. It therefore becomes a social space which promotes interpersonal relationships and community-building. "Queer women in Nigeria are mostly able to meet other queer women on online forums," explained a survey respondent from Nigeria. Another respondent from India noted:

> *"The only people who I could talk to about my unrequited love were the people I met online. Or about my fears of my family not accepting me, or even about how lesbians actually have sex."*

In Vietnam, lesbian and queer women groups tend to connect with each other through Internet via online forums (IPB, VBB, etc.), said one survey respondent. With the arrival of Facebook in Vietnam, a lot of these groups fragmented. Individuals joined Facebook as it helped them to retain their privacy. One of the Facebook groups for queer women in India abbreviated a local innuendo for 'lesbians' which is accepted by the community as its group name. This is because even if it is a private Facebook group, the names of the members who are 'Friends' are visible to non-members as well. They chose a non-explicit queer name[64] to avoid outing members unintentionally, noted BPF volunteer and community focal point Smita Vanniyar based on an interview with one of the founders of the above mentioned page.

The Internet has also facilitated access to information like health, counselling, and wellbeing advice for many women in this group. As one survey respondent from Vietnam noted:

> *"There is no information by mainstream channels about sexual diversity and human rights, so the Internet has been the most popular, direct, and with great sources to access the information. LGBTQI was considered taboo in the Vietnamese society so many*

[64] The Facebook page name is withheld for privacy and safety concerns.

LGBTQI-related artwork, books, papers... were censored and removed from public spaces."

A lesbian student from Tamil Nadu, India, similarly noted (in an interview with Smita Vanniyar):

"At one of the queer events, I met with queer women from some of the other colleges in the city. They added me to an informal WhatsApp group which had students from other colleges in the city as well. They had a private list going with the names of the homophobic professors and staff in these colleges. The idea behind this was to ensure that we don't out ourselves or someone else by mistake in front of these professors and get into more trouble. I thought this was brilliant as mine was a Catholic college and there had been cases of students who were outed and were made to leave the college. This list was on a private Google Doc, and was also posted from time to time on the WhatsApp group."

Government processes and attempts to seek justice online are still not relevant to this community, but Internet access can help them seek education and use financial and related services that are otherwise limited due to the social perceptions, usually against them in many countries, said Vanniyar. Members of this community might be unable to engage in education-furthering courses or classes because of discrimination or financial constraints.

Two of the respondents to the survey spoke about how the Internet helped improve LGBTQI women's access to financial services. A respondent from Vietnam noted:

"This is the common practice of Vietnamese general people. But sometimes, transgender people would not be questioned about their gender, sex, voices, appearance... when they stay at home and do online banking."

In Vietnam, LGBTQI women also use the Internet to find freelance jobs or online jobs which does not require them to go to the field in order to avoid being subjected to stigma and discrimination from the public. A respondent from Nigeria said that access to financial services via the Internet is especially important for organisations which work on these issues. "Over 80% of the funding supporting LGBTQI women are from outside Nigeria and so are the fund sources and banking options," she explained.

The Internet is important for LGBTQI women in terms of expressing their sexuality and strengthening and connecting with relevant communities. A respondent from Vietnam reiterated that this was a very important role of the Internet:

"You can share your ideas while staying safe and anonymous. Vietnamese culture does not like people to talk about themselves as an individual or the culture of debating is not

welcomed here. We have the term of 'public stone' to talk about a person sharing their ideas which is not associated with the social norms or general ideas, so that people in the Internet will attack and abuse them verbally. In some cases, if your place (location) is shared on the Internet, they will come to find and physically attack you".

The Internet is also seen as an important tool for leisure activities amongst LGBTQI women owing to social stigma and discrimination offline. In Vietnam, for example, while it is not common the survey respondents pointed out that online spaces are key for dating and meeting fellow members of this community. A respondent from Nigeria said that queer women use the Internet also to access queer specific shows as well as for dating purposes.

What barriers do LGBTQI women face?

The barrier to Internet access most often cited in the survey results related to social stigma and discrimination that hinders this group's access to the Internet. Women are afraid of being exposed to the risk of harassment, attacks or other kinds of threats by using the Internet. This includes online violence and discrimination, which can spill into women's offline lives as well. In Vietnam, families often 'cut' Internet access when a family member 'comes out of the closet', one survey respondent pointed out. The families often perceive it as a disease, that can "be transmitted" and make the person LGBTQI, and believe that Internet access can further connect the individual to the community at large and make them more confident.

In Nigeria (a country that does not allow or recognise LGBT rights), state actors have allegedly joined forums of queer women to entrap them. Non-state actors have also used these tactics to meet, befriend, out and blackmail queer women. A survey respondent from the country explained:

"My community is very cautious when using the Internet and digital privacy, safety and security are very important. When someone is also outed, it is usually done via technological means eg: on blogs, facebook, Instagram, twitter or even whatsapp groups."

Another challenge faced by LGBTQI women is that platforms take long to take down content which is not in English. As a respondent from India noted:

"Some of my friends found out that their photos were taken from their social media profiles and were being used on porn websites without their consent or knowledge simply because they were transwomen. Because of this, they are always scared of putting up photos online now. Facebook also keeps taking down their queer profiles and asks for

government-issued ID proof to reinstate it. This is really annoying and cuts their access to others from the community."

Vanniyar said that more often than not, there is not enough content available in local and regional languages on issues of relevance to LGBTQI people. Even if queer persons themselves manage to somehow overcome this barrier by producing more content, it becomes harder when it comes to providing non-English families and caregivers with resources. It is particularly hard in countries like India, which have several regional languages in current use. Therefore, linguistic barrier is a serious issue in Global South communities where English is not widespread.

1.7 Rural women

Radio, television, mobile telephones, and Internet are all popular among men and women in urban and rural areas, but their accessibility differs vastly for their counterparts in rural areas. Women's access to those technologies is slightly less than access available for men. For instance, if there is a radio in a home, it is often controlled by the man, who in turn listen to programmes preferred by the man. Besides, women may not have time to listen to the radio, as they have many chores to oversee and carry out.[65]

Similar to indigenous women, rural women have not been able to fully tap in to the potential of Internet access and ICTs. The Internet dramatically reduces the costs associated with accessing information across global knowledge resources. Innovations in hand-held devices, in mobile telephony, and in satellite communications have led to cutting-edge information and communication tools specifically relevant to the needs of the poor. In some developing countries, rural health workers are now using small hand-held devices to record health data from their clients.[66]

Apart from aiding literacy and social development, connectivity can help meet the needs of rural female farmers, and can also benefit rural communities. Rural women need information to improve their farm practices, which culminate in an improvement of the quality and quantity of the farm produce and the overall quality of life for their families.[67] These and other improvements are discussed in the next section.

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[65] Rose Akaki, WFO Women's Committee, Uganda National Farmers' Federation (UNFFE). *How Women's Access to Information can Improve Agricultural Productivity.* Available at: http://www.wfo-oma.org/women-in-agriculture/articles/how-women-s-access-to-information-can-improve-agricultural-productivity.html.

[66] International Journal of Education and Development using ICT Vol. 4, No. 4 (2008). *Analyzing ICT use and access amongst rural women in Kenya.* Available at: http://ijedict.dec.uwi.edu/viewarticle.php?id=537&layout=html.

[67] *Ibid.*

Why is Internet access important for rural women?

In survey responses from Bangladesh and Nepal it was noted that Internet access plays a key role for rural women to express themselves, to realise their rights, and to participate in democratic processes to some extent. Topics like sexuality are prone to be discussed amongst online communities more freely, said a respondent from Nepal. Internet access is regarded as a social empowerment tool for these women.

Still in a relatively nascent stage in Nepal, the potential benefits of Internet access in education, commerce, or even leisure have not been tapped into, noted survey respondents. Better healthcare via applications like telemedicine, or a specialised app for pregnant women's education, for example, have helped address basic needs in the country.

ICTs also offer an opportunity for rapid and cost-effective dissemination of agricultural information to remote locations and diverse populations. The Internet can make it possible to deliver near real-time information regarding the weather, market and market prices, diseases and pests outbreaks, and the availability of services; allowing women farmers to make informed decisions on what to grow, how to improve their agricultural practices, and how to address emergencies on their farms. The use of ICTs to reach women farmers could contribute to improving farming practices and yield.[68]

Access to the Internet can significantly improve the economical conditions of rural women by suggesting new ways of earning a livelihood and aiding skills training to improve their current occupations. For example, one of the women who benefited from the Internet Saathi programme[69] in rural India explained that the Internet helped her to supplement her income in tailoring. As a tailor, she was able to offer more designs to her customers by looking up patterns and following the fashion trends of movie stars. YouTube is a popular app amongst the recipients of the Internet Saathi programme in India to view how-to videos, and of course for movies and television series. They often resorted to the voice feature since most of them cannot read or write.[70]

The use of ICTs among rural women also plays an important role in distance education. According to study Mary Ngechu of the Department of Distance Education in Nairobi, Kenya, distance education particularly helps disadvantaged communities in rural areas, as it

[68] *Ibid.*

[69] See section 2.6 of this document. *Internet Saathi: Bridging the online gender divide in rural India.* More information available at: https://www.google.com/about/values-in-action/internet-saathi/.

[70] Bakshi, A. (2017). Android Authority. *Here's how Google is transforming internet access for rural women in India*. (publisher). Available at: https://www.androidauthority.com/heres-google-transforming-internet-access-rural-women-india-792007/

is for those who are looking for a second chance in education. Ngechu further writes that these programmes have had a significant impact on women, who can select programmes according to their various needs. The programmes disseminate information on diseases such as malaria, or research findings on agriculture from the University of Nairobi. An overwhelming number of women (70%) have reportedly adopted techniques and methods learnt from these classes.[71]

What barriers do rural women face?

Several barriers hinder Internet adoption in rural areas, where high costs of installing infrastructure and thus enabling Internet access is detrimental to ICT growth. Survey respondents also felt the need for more relevant and local language content, education and awareness about the Internet and its benefits are lacking, thus limiting this marginalised group's potential to take advantage of this resource.

A lack of awareness about the Internet and the belief that it is not relevant to them, and similar social norms, further make it difficult for rural women to seek access to Internet or even understand its importance and value in their lives. In her experience in working to connect rural areas in India, Sarbani Banerjee Belu found that a lot of women she questioned believed they did not even need Internet connectivity, she said at the BPFs session at IGF 2017. She noted that there was no digital awareness in the villages amongst the people, let alone the women. Her team had to first educate women as to why and how Internet connectivity is important and how it could impact their lives. She noted:

> *"If you look at the connectivity scenario, 640 villages in India don't have connectivity at all. Out of which, 50,000 villages don't even have voice connectivity. So, the scenario is really grim and a lot of work needs to be done."* [72]

Also at the BPF's session at IGF 2017, Carlos Rey Moreno from APC shared his experience with access and community networks. He said that mobile operators and big companies are seldom aware of on-the-ground ground realities and the general lack of infrastructure in rural and inaccessible areas. In his experience, a lot of communities in particularly rural areas are therefore increasingly engaging in discussions pertaining to how they can meet their connectivity needs themselves. "The community network space is very male-dominated," noted Moreno. He also said that there is ample scope to be explored for women to become

[71] International Journal of Education and Development (2008). *(Ibid).*
[72] IGF 2017. *Gender and Access Session*. Available at: https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2017-day-3-room-xxv-bpf-best-practice-forum-on-gender-and-access.

network leaders in setting up such community ICT networks, thus improving access and infrastructure for rural communities.

2. PROMOTING ACCESS FOR WOMEN: EXISTING INITIATIVES

2.1 Introduction

While it is impossible to map all existing initiatives that aim to overcome the variety of barriers some specific communities of women face in gaining access to the Internet, it is useful to investigate a sampling of relevant initiatives. This section explores some of these initiatives for each of the specific communities of women the BPF investigated. It aims to enlist their needs in their specific societies and maps their ability to meet or challenge some of the barriers discussed above.

2.2 Refugee women

Refugee Hotspot, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany

Refugee Hotspot, a mobile device to remove the obstacles that refugees face when it comes to accessing the Internet, is developed by Internet Society Netherlands (ISOC-NL) in dialogue with refugee collectives in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. It is built with Raspberry Pi 3, a 3G USB modem, and an SD card. It is powered with a USB and usable with a battery pack. This makes it transportable.

ISOC-NL is aiming to deploy this device as wide as possible, starting with collectives in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. Although it does not have a strong gender focus, it helps refugees:

- communicate with relatives at home,
- get oriented with the Dutch communities/society, and
- find information on their legal positions.

With the device, ISOC-NL have been able to connect a number of refugee communities who did not have any scope to access the Internet communities. ISOC-NL said that one of the hindrances to promoting access for refugees was that the government considers Internet access to be a government task, and so it strives to keep all volunteer projects out of the loop, even if the government themselves cannot always fulfill this promise.[73]

Echo Refugee Mobile Library, Greece

[73] *Refugee Hotspot.* Available at: http://refugeehotspot.net.

After the closing of the Greece-FYROM border in March 2016, over 50,000 asylum seekers remained in Greece, waiting to have their asylum claims heard and processed. As people continued to make the risky boat crossing to Mediterranean shores, this number was continuously rising.[74] Not all had the opportunity to leave Greece and be relocated to Europe - and most waited in limbo, hoping for their status to be recognised and for any opportunity on which to build a future. In the midst of uncertainty and waiting, the task of 'filling time' must become that of 'using time'.

The Refugee Library project was created to provide these refugee women with opportunities to equip themselves with skills and knowledge for the future that lies beyond this long wait. Work began in August 2016, with a library in Vasilika camp in Northern Greece. In November 2016, a mobile library was launched to service multiple camps in the Thessaloniki (Northern Greece) area. Since May, 2017, the mobile library washas relocated to Athens, visiting sites throughout the city.

The aim in setting up these libraries is to nurture a space of learning and creativity, a place to cultivate the mind. The library spaces provide the following:

- books and a quiet reading space,
- access to online learning and information on educational opportunities,
- language learning resources and informal small group tutoring,
- advice on university and job application processes, and
- a space for community-led creative workshops.[75]

Cybercafé Associatif, Chad

This project, by Action Humanitaire pour le Développement (Achude) in Chad, works to improve Internet access for displaced women and to fight underlying discrimination. It also focuses on the needs of women with disabilities and older women.[76]
One survey respondent from Chad explained:

"The Internet opens a new dimension, that of the exchange. Social networks, online communities, theoretically allow grassroots people to share their experience and contribute instead of just receiving truths. It is in this direction that Achude wishes to engage, in partnership with the leaders of the refugee camps in which it operates. Social networks, provided they are well used, can support the movement of responsibility and empowerment that we all wish to develop. That is to make people

[74] UNHCR (2018). *Refugee Situations.* Available at: http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean?id=83.
[75] *Echo Refugee Mobile Library.* Available at: http://echo-greece.org/projects/.
[76] *Cybercafé Associatif.* Available at: http://www.achude-td.org.

aware of the base that they have the power to change things on the condition of associating with each other and learning from each other."

URISE Initiative for Africa, Kenya

URISE stands for U: Ubuntu, R: Restore, I: Inspire, S: Solve, E: Encourage. URISE Initiative for Africa is a refugee-run and community-based organisation that seeks to guide young refugees to develop their own technology skills.

URISE Initiative for Africa believes that access to relevant information, backed with relevant infrastructure and services, will not only allow young refugees and women to improve their quality of life but can also upgrade their existing sources of incomes in a sustainable way. Access to information and services like e-fundraising, peace education, education, news, e-refugee learning, etc. through infrastructure, can provide refugees in Kakuma with a solid foundation for social and economic prosperity.

A regional organisation run by the refugees, URISE Initiative for Africa hopes to empower the youth and mainly women. The initiative focuses on promoting livelihood skills.[77]

Media Literacy for Migrant Women, Greece

The media can facilitate the integration of refugees and migrants by providing access to information about available education, health or other services, about political and administrative information on the host country, and support systems/organizations available.

Started by KMOP, a non-profit organisation founded in 1977 and one of the oldest Greek NGOs, this project aims to contribute to the integration of refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women in six European Union Member States (Austria, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta and the UK) with large numbers of refugees/asylum seekers and migrants. Refugee women face a greater risk of social exclusion (or double discrimination) and the project aims to build the competencies - knowledge, skills & attitudes - needed to access, interpret, use and/or produce information and other media content, in the context of the Internet and social media, and in a safe and responsible manner.

At a local level the project builds the competence of low-skilled/low-qualified refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women; enabling them to access, interpret, use and/or produce information and other media content, in the context of the Internet and social media. It thereby enhances the use of media by women for more advanced purposes such as looking for a job, learning the language of the host country, accessing information about available

[77] *URISE Initiative for Africa*. Available at: https://uriseforafrica.org/.

services or political/administrative information, and promoting their integration into the relevant networks, socio-economic activities and institutions of host countries.[78]

2.3 Indigenous women

Oca Digital and Indios Online, Brazil

To facilitate a more inclusive, democratic process in Brazil, Oca Digital and Índios Online were designed in 2012. Through judicial, political and social advances based on information technology, the programmes aim to promote the inclusion of indigenous people in the digital realm, fomenting e-democracy in a more effective way, and bringing quality of life to broader segments of society.

Oca Digital has a strong gender focus and works on initiatives to prioritise access to technology and content that facilitates community interaction with governments. E-democracy is understood to encompass the use of electronic tools and social media for enabling individuals to exchange, plan, act and interact with policymakers both within and outside of traditional political spaces and institutional systems. The prospect of interactions between citizens and governments taking place increasingly over the Internet entails challenging aspects with regards to Internet security and confidentiality, while holding promises of including hitherto excluded segments of societies in the political process.[79]

Makaia, Colombia

Makaia is a nonprofit organization that has been using technology to advance projects for social development since 2006. Founded by Colombians Catalina Escobar, Camilo Mondragón, and Maria Claudia Camacho, Makaia draws its name from one of the region's indigenous languages. In Miskito, "makaia" means both "to do" and "to build". This ethos and social awareness inform Makaia's mission to create innovative local development projects at the institutional, social, and economic levels. Along with this mission, Makaia focuses on the improvement of digital skills and the adoption of technology by various communities, including teachers and coffee growers, through digital literacy programmes.[80]

eBedian, Malaysia

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[78] *Media Literacy for Migrant Women*. Available at: https://kmop.gr/index.php/current/422-media-literacy-for-refugee,-asylum-seeking-and-migrant-women.

[79] *Oca Digital*. Available at: http://www.thydewa.org/projetos/oca-digital/

Indios Online. Available at: http://www.indiosonline.net/quem-somos/.

[80] *Makaia.* Available at: http://makaia.org/en/about/

eBedian is a telecommunication model implemented in remote areas of Sarawak by the University of Malaysia, Sarawak. Implemented in 2003 with a government funding, it was to replicate the success of the eBario project, which was initiated by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), but the outcome was completely different.

The eBedian project was aimed at the village of Long Bedian, situated in Baram, Miri division. It occupies an area of 15,456 sq m. At present, there are 1,578 people living in the 150 homes in the village. The majority of the population in Long Bedian are Kayans. The Kayan community that eBedian had hoped to serve, however, refused to participate in the project and it is generally regarded a failure.[81]

Cultivating Coders, North America

While it is not aimed only at women, Cultivating Coders teaches coding classes in rural, tribal, and inner-city areas where resources are not currently available for this type of training. They focus on high school students aged 13-18 and aim to track them for the duration of their high school years. Instead of students coming to them, they take their bootcamp to them, including in remote areas.

They offer an eight-week intensive boot camp-style training course focused on web application development fundamentals and technical training. The camp teaches a host of evolving web development technologies, ensuring students are always learning the optimal curriculum to be successful and employable upon completion. They identify businesses and non-profit organizations in the community that could benefit from the web development produced by the successful students and partner with local companies, to create employment opportunities for students.[82]

2.3 Young women

Research ICT Africa (RIA), South Africa

RIA a non-profit think tank based in South Africa that conducts public-interest research on ICT policy and regulation in order to provide African researchers, governments, regulators, operators, multilateral institutions, development agencies, community organizations and trade unions with the information and analysis required to develop innovative and appropriate policies, effective implementation and successful network operations that can contribute to sustainable development.[83]

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[81] *eBedian.* Available at: http://www.unimas.my/ebedian/

[82] *Cultivating Coders*. Available at: http://cultivatecoders.com/

[83] *Research ICT Africa mission.* Available at: https://researchictafrica.net/vision-and-mission/.

Although the think tank's work is not solely gender-directed, it has a new IDRC-funded digital policy project with a sub-focus on gender. Researchers at RIA, including Chenai Chair, Alison Gillwald, Mariana Deen-Swarray, and Anri van der Spuy, have done extensive work on gender issues for organizations like the World Bank, UN Broadband Commision on Sustainable Development, G20's W20, UNESCO, UNDESA, GSMA, etc.

Taiwan Gender Equity Education Association (TGEEA), Taiwan

TGEEA is a capacity-building initiative mostly composed of teachers and dedicated to gender equity education. By offering training courses to all interested groups and developing teaching materials and research on gender equity education, the initiative based in Taiwan dedicates its work to developing local and international networks to exchange experiences and monitor government policies. TGEEA also offers in-job training courses, lectures and workshops on gender equity, consulting services on gender equity, education, and law, especially cases related to sexual harassment and discrimination on campus and other gender and human rights-related issues.[84]

Vacances TIC pour les filles, Chad

An initiative of the Association Action pour l'Éducation et la Promotion de la Femme[85] (Association Action for the education and promotion of women), AEPF-Tchad is a national, apolitical and non-profit association based in Chad dedicated to women's empowerment. It developed the Vacances TIC pour les filles (ICT Holiday for Girls), amongst other gender-related initiatives, with the goal of raising awareness, offering training,[86] and inviting women and girls to specialise in ICT, based on the growing demand for ICT skills around the world and the opportunities for women and girls that such training can unlock.[87]

Chicas en Tecnología, Argentina

Chicas en Technología is a national initiative based in Argentina and run by Sofia Contreras, Melina Masnatta, Carolina Hadad, and Mariana Varela. The non-profit organization aims to help bridge gender gaps in the technology field by motivating, training and enhancing young women's knowledge on related subjects by raising awareness regarding the gender imbalance and promoting the engagement of young women from a very early age not only as users, but as professionals and entrepreneurs.[88]

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[84] *Taiwan Gender Equity Education Association*. Available at: http://www.tgeea.org.tw/index_en.php.
[85] *Association Action pour l'Éducation et la Promotion de la Femme*. Available at: http://www.aepf-t.org.
[86] *Tigo lance la formation des jeunes filles en informatique dénommée* «Vacances Tics». Available: http://tchadinfos.com/tchad/tigo-lance-la-formation-des-jeunes-filles-en-informatique-denommee-vacances-tics/.
[87] *Association Action pour l'Éducation et la Promotion de la Femme.* (Facebook page). Available at https://fr-fr.facebook.com/AEPFTchad/posts/?ref=page_internal.
[88] About Chicas en Tecnología. Available: https://www.chicasentecnologia.org/sobre.

The initiative provides mentoring opportunities for young women who are willing to become developers and to work on a project for their community and follow-up for the participants of the projects in order to enhance their engagement.

Hamara Internet, Pakistan

Hamara Internet is run by Digital Rights Foundation and is a national initiative originally from Pakistan. The project was created to raise awareness of digital violence against women given the lack of laws to tackle cyber harassment in Pakistan. Hamara Internet,[89] or Our Internet, aims to help empower Pakistani women to not only use the Internet but also to perceive it as theirs; i.e. differently from the older generations who envision the Internet as a "bad thing".

The initiative therefore recognizes age as a significant factor in access barriers and challenges. It prioritises the realities and capacity needs of young women and seeks to enable a platform for women to give voice to their dissent.

Initiatives that form a part of Hamara Internet include Emergency Help: the crisis Center,[90] a hotline for teaching women what is online harassment and how to report it. Putting eVAW on the map,[91] furthermore, is a collaborative map that identifies incidents in the different cities of Pakistan and creates a repository of information for digital rights activists in the country.

With a team of digital defenders holding security training workshops in Pakistan, the initiative also raises awareness of the fact that every women has the right to use the Internet without being exposed to harassment, surveillance, or other digital threats.

Ghana Code Club, Ghana

Ghana Code Club is a non-profit ICT education initiative started in 2015 by the Healthy Care Initiative to expose young people, especially girls, to computing and coding. In addition to basic ICT training, students learn skills such as games, animation, web design, and programming. The project has started in underprivileged schools but its long-term aim is for every school in Ghana to have a coding club.[92]

She Will Connect Africa, Nigeria

The Intel She Will Connect Africa programme is an initiative that uses a combination of

[89] Hamara Internet. Available: https://hamarainternet.org/ur/.
[90] Emergency Help: the Crisis Center. Hamara Internet. Available: https://hamarainternet.org/crisis-center/.
[91] Putting eVAW on the map. Hamara Internet. Available: https://hamarainternet.org/mapping-evaw/.
[92] *Ghana Code Club.* Available at*: http://www.ghanacodeclub.org*.

digital literacy training, development of gender-relevant content, and the creation of an online peer network to help bridge the gender gap in Internet access in Nigeria. The programme has trained more than 150,000 women in Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya in face-to-face training conducted by the programme's partner organizations since its launch in 2013.[93]

Give1 Project Gambia, Gambia

Give1 Project Gambia organizes All Girls Tech-Camps across the Gambia. The Tech Camp provides training for girls (ages 13-20 years) through intensive and interactive sessions aimed at introducing participants to web design, computer graphics, coding, and database design; interlaced with career talks and advice from leading women in technology in Gambia. The initiative brings girls from across the country to participate in training programmes, to develop ICT skills, and to be paired with an entrepreneurial mentor.[94]

Datamation Foundation, India

Datamation is a non-profit organization established in 2002. Based in India, Datamation is an educational foundation that links its students with skills enhancement and technology. It focuses on providing its services to women, especially those who depend on informal labour markets. By training students in both basic and digital literacy and offering robust online vocational training in a variety of different fields, Datamation facilitates income opportunities for women in marginalized social communities in India.[95]

The Jugaad (Innovation) Lab For Girls by Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT), India

FAT examines womens relationship with technology as users, creators/makers and decision-makers, and began to explore these possibilities with girls through their Jugaad Innovation Lab, after a study that determined that underprivileged girls were not entering STEM careers. FAT approaches this from an intersectional point of view, recognising that in India gender discrimination coupled with discrimination based on caste, class, religion and region all influence the gender gap in science and tech. Their Innovation Lab brings together girls from across South Delhi to experiment and play in science and technology, including learning coding and other aspects in Level 2 of the Lab.[96]

Centro de Investigación para la Acción Femenina (CIPAF), Dominican Republic

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[93] *She Will Connect Africa*. Available at: http://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/technology-in-education/she-will-connect-africa-video.html.
[94] *Give1 Project Gambia.* Available at: *http://www.give1projectgambia.org/*.
[95] *Datamation Foundation*. Available at: http://www.datamationfoundation.org/
[96] *The Jugaad (Innovation) Lab For Girls by Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT)*. Available at: http://www.fat-net.org/main-programs/jugaad-innovation-lab-girls

CIPAF, started by Feminine Action Research Center has held girls technology clubs "e-Chicas y Supermáticas" for years in Santo Domingo to break down gender bias in ICT fields, and give basic classes in this area to address the limited schooling curriculum in ICT. They've also produced a manual[97] based on their experiences for celebrating Girls and ICT Day.[98]

Society For Promotion of Alternative Computing and Employment (SPACE), India

Space Kerala promotes the use of free and open source software for youth and noted the difficulty of access to STEM by girls. They've responded with a program on free software exclusively for women in engineering colleges of Kerala integrating FLOSS issues with gender, environment and consumerism. They encourage students to "Re-think technology and learning if gender matters" and have held hackathons with engineering students.[99]

Centre for Information Technology And Development (CITAD), Nigeria

CITAD's broad range of work in Nigeria includes expanding access and ICT skills throughout Nigeria, especially among youth in rural areas and areas of conflict. Their work is accompanied by research and a consistent concern about the situation for girls and women in their country. One of many examples of girls training is the Annual Abuja Summer Institute (ASI) for Young Women.[100]

2.4 Women with disabilities

Cook Islands Women and Girls with Disabilities, Cook Islands

Although it lacks funding, it is a group of committed volunteers that support women and girls with disabilities in the Pacific region. Their vision is to provide an environment, that will give support, strengthen and empower all women and girls with any disability, in their relationships through recreational, educational, social, spiritual, health, safety and wellness opportunities that are inclusive to all people.[101]

Sexualityanddisability.org, India

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[97] CIPAF. *Guía Didáctica para el Día Internacional de las Niñas en las TIC* (Teaching Guide for the International Day of the Girls in ICT). Available at: http://cipaf.org.do/index.php/component/dropfiles/?task=frontfile.download&id=36

[98] *Centro de Investigación para la Acción Femenina.* Available at: http://cipaf.org.do/

[99] *Society For Promotion of Alternative Computing and Employment.* Available at: http://www.space-kerala.org/

[100] *Centre for Information Technology And Development*. Available at: citad.org

[101] *Cook Islands Women and Girls with Disabilities.* Available at: https://ciwgdo.tumblr.com/

An initiative started by Point of View and CREA[102], Sexualityanddisability.org is a resource website which is constructed in a question and answer format addressing questions at the intersection of sexuality, disability, and gender. It is built on the premise that people with disabilities are also sexual beings, and discusses a wide range of questions that a woman with a disability might have without shying away from any topics. Themes range from queries about the body, the mechanics and dynamics of having sex, about the complexities of being in an intimate relationship, having children, etc.

The website has added features which makes it accessible for people with disabilities. The blog section of the website, Skin Stories, has published personal essays, largely written by persons with disabilities themselves, and a few by close caregivers.[103]

2.5 LGBTQI women

Agents of Ishq, India

Agents of Ishq is a multimedia project about sex, love and desire. Started in 2016, it is run by Parodevi Pictures in India. As they explain, they "make cool video, beautiful images and great audio about sex, love and desire in India." They have first-time surveys, materials on how to talk about sex, consent, agency etc., and all Agents of Ishq materials are free and open to being shared under Creative Commons agreement. Content is also available in English and Hindi.[104]

Kvir Arhiv, Bosnia & Herzegovina

Kvir Arhiv is an initiative that explores, documents, and distributes personal stories, history and works of LGBTQI persons in Bosnia & Herzegovina. The initiative does this through a series of interviews, photos, audio and video content, and is launching a digital database for the same in the name the Queer Archive. The website is available in Bosnian and English.[105]

Deep Dives, India

Run by Point of View, Deep Dives is a digital imprint specialising in longform journalism, personal narratives, and occasional works of art, poetry and fiction. Their first collection, *Sexing the Interwebs*, features in-depth stories at the intersection of sex, gender and technology. Season One ran in 2015, and its now running *Sexing the Interwebs: Season Two*.

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[102] More on CREA is available at: http://www.creaworld.org/
[103] *Sexualityanddisability.org.* Available at: http://www.sexualityanddisability.org/
[104] *Agents of Ishq.* Available at: http://www.agentsofishq.com
[105] *Kvir Arhiv*. Available at: http://www.kvirarhiv.org

It is fully queer and has many essays that speak about the non-normative aspects of sexuality, including from the perspective of women living with disabilities.[106]

Equal Grounds, Sri Lanka

Equal Grounds is the only organization in Sri Lanka currently actively fighting for equal rights for the LGBTQI community. Founded in 2004 it is also the oldest organization of this nature functioning in the country. Since then it has been advocating for the decriminalization of homosexual activity and the elimination of discrimination of individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Equal Grounds has resources in English, Sinhala and Tamil on queer issues. They also have a trilingual publication which is available online.[107]

Gender and Development Advocates Filipinas (GANDA), The Philippines

Gender and Development Advocates (GANDA) Filipinas is a nonprofit, nonpartisan and non-government organisation led by transgender women in The Philippines. Founded in June 2012, GANDA Filipinas believes that gender is at the heart and centre of issues of development including access to education, economic justice, environmental justice, and sexuality and reproductive health rights—areas where transgender voices are commonly left out or neglected.[108]

Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, United States

Forty years ago, a group of mostly queer women of colour founded the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice to address the lack of funding for progressive women's organizing, particularly organizing led by lesbians and women of colour. Astraea is a public foundation, rooted in LGBTQI communities and movements. They work in strategic partnership with foundations, individuals and governments to ensure that their resources reach activists who need them most and who are best positioned to make transformational impact over time. To this end, they raise and distribute funds to programmes and initiatives led by and for diverse constituencies, prioritising groups led by lesbians and queer women, trans and gender non-conforming people, intersex people, and people of colour.[109]

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[106] *Deep Dives*. Available at: https://deepdives.in.
[107] *Equal Grounds*. Available at: http://www.equal-ground.org/.
[108] *Gender and Development Advocates Filipinas (GANDA)*. Facebook Page. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/gandafilipinas.
[109] *Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice.* Available at: https://www.astraeafoundation.org/.

2.6 Rural women

Grameen Phone, Bangladesh

While it is not completely gender-focused, Grameen Phone also considers the needs of women in Bangladesh when addressing basic literacy in tandem with technology literacy. It has a long-term sustainability plan which also includes initiating projects to increase access to type of technology and adding relevant and localised content that is useful for the community.[110]

MOS@N, Burkina Faso

MOS@N is a nonprofit initiative that seeks to reduce mother and infant mortality through improved access to treatment, as well as to reduce the number of people living with HIV/AIDS or People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) who drop out of receiving treatment by providing accessible treatment and targeted health information using mobile phones.

The pilot project was launched in the district of Nouna in rural Burkina Faso and piloted the use of mobile devices to improve the use of health care services by pregnant women, sending voice medical appointment reminders and health advice to "godmothers" who act as community relays to follow up with pregnant women in their respective villages. In 26 villages, served by five different primary healthcare centers, MOS@N brings together various stakeholders, including pregnant women, godmothers, rural primary healthcare centers, health workers, technicians, and public health researchers.

African Women Power Network, Nigeria

The African Women Power Network empowers African women agricultural entrepreneurs through funding and training, as well as publicity on indigenous new media platforms online, since 2012. It currently runs three major training programmes: training for women farmers in northern Nigeria to connect them with improved agricultural methods and materials, webinars for African entrepreneurs featuring African experts, and education in developing business plans for Nigerian students.[111]

Universal Service Fund, Pakistan

The Universal Service Fund is a not-for-profit company that operates under the aegis of the government of Pakistan. Its goal is to bring fiber optic connectivity to Pakistan's sparsely populated rural regions that are unserved by Internet Service Providers (ISPs). By subsidising

[110] *Grameen Phone*. Available at: http://www.grameenphone.com.
[111] *African Women Power Network*. Available at: https://awpnetwork.com/.

the operational costs of telecommunication companies, USF incentivizes private businesses to provide connectivity to sites where it would have been otherwise unprofitable.

In addition to facilitating infrastructural development in rural districts, USF implements and oversees a number of special projects that aim to enhance new users' Internet usage.[112]

Amakomaya, Nepal

After being awarded a grant from ISOC in 2011, a team of local ICT and healthcare professionals developed the web app Amakomaya (mother's love), to help women in Nepal deal with the challenges of prenatal care, pregnancy, and maternal mortality. Once a woman sets up her free profile on the app, she receives audio, video, and text content suited to the stage of pregnancy she is in.

Materials are accessible via mobile device and can also be downloaded to be viewed at times when there is no connectivity. So far, Amakomaya has reached 11 communities and 1077 women have taken advantage of its materials. Amakomaya is an example of leveraging ICTs to enable successful public health intervention.[113]

DocmeUp, Ghana

Since 2013, DocmeUp has implemented pilot programmes to offer better prenatal healthcare to women in rural Ghana. Their first project involved providing mobile ultrasound scans. Approximately 400 women were able to take advantage of this deployment. Their current project, launched in June 2017, also focuses on prenatal care by providing glucometers to test for diabetes in pregnant women. DocmeUP is an example of a successful public health intervention that has seen countrywide rollout of their project impeded by lack of funds and overzealous bureaucracy, believes BPF volunteer Sharada Srinivasan.[114]

Internet Saathi, India

Launched in July 2015 in partnership with Tata Trusts Internet Saathi (Saathi means 'friend' in Hindi) and is a digital literacy programme to help women in rural India understand the benefits of the Internet in their day-to-day life. The programme focuses on training women in rural India to explore the various uses of Internet, who then impart training to the larger rural community in their own and neighbouring villages. While Google provides Internet-enabled devices and training material, Tata Trusts helps in implementation and rolling out the initiative.

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[112] *Universal Service Fund*. Available at: https://www.usf.org.pk/.
[113] *Amakomaya*. Available at: http://www.amakomaya.com/en.
[114] *DocmeUp*. Available at: http://www.docmeup2.com.

While India has the world's second largest Internet population with over 400 million users, only 30% of these Internet users are women. This is one of the largest technology gender gaps in the world, and it further widens as in towards rural India. Only 1 out of 10 Internet users in rural India is a woman.[115]

Today, Internet Saathi operates in 100,000 villages across twelve states in India. 25,000 fully-trained Internet Saathis are working everyday across these villages to help women and children learn about the Internet. In total, over 10 million women have benefited from the programme so far. These Internet Saathis have become change agents in each village and are contributing in improving the lives of the entire community in their villages. They take a lot of pride in helping other women learn about the Internet and contribute to the collective prosperity of their communities.[116]

Sula Batsu Cooperativa, Costa Rica

Sula Batsu has developed a holistic model connecting local rural economy, school curriculums, women ICT specialists as mentors of young girls, girls technology clubs and hackathons in women-led rural "technology poles" encouraging entrepreneurship that prioritises local community growth, in collaboration with public and private sector. Winners of the ITU-UN Women EQUALS in Tech prize for leadership in 2017, citing their impact with 1,500 rural young women, 700 teenage girls, and 200 mothers of rural girls and ability to influence university curricula, companies and public policies, their model will now expand throughout Central America.[117]

[115] Bakshi, A. (2017).*(Ibid)*.
[116] *Ibid.*
[117] *Sula Batsu Cooperativa.* Available at: http://www.sulabatsu.com/.

3. CONCLUSION

This is the third resource output produced by the IGF BPF on Gender and Access. While it should be considered a living resource which will be updated and changed as additional input and comments are received, a few key themes and highlights of this year's work can be highlighted in conclusion.

For the past three years, the BPF on Gender and Access has been investigating various challenges pertinent to women's ability to access and use the Internet. The volunteer group's work over the past two years indicated that much of the initiatives and literature on women's ability to access and use the Internet tend to approach women as a homogenous group and fails to account for the unique way in which contexts and circumstances might impact women's ability to access and use the Internet. As a result, the BPF community in 2017 decided to look at the specific barriers faced by specific communities of women, including women with disabilities, refugee women, young women, rural women, LGBTQI women, and indigenous women. The objective also entailed mapping initiatives to the specific barriers thus identified for each of the sub-groups.

Although the Internet is beneficial to many people around the world, a significant digital divide exists between men and women. Once touted as the panacea in transforming unequal gender power dynamics, increasing democratic space, and promoting public participation, the Internet is in some ways even acting as an amplifier of existing gender inequalities; rooted in infrastructure challenges, online violence and the denial of human rights. The BPF's work is driven by SDG Goal 5, which acknowledges the understanding that access to the Internet can enable gender equality as well as enable the empowerment of all women, but to do so requires active efforts by all stakeholders in Internet governance around the world.

Findings from the BPF's survey, a session held at the IGF 2017, and other research the BPF volunteers conducted indicate the significance of barriers like affordability and infrastructure challenges, a lack of relevant and local language content, lack of digital skills and capacity development of skills necessary to access and benefit from the Internet, and social stigma and cultural barriers. It is important to note, however, that the degree or extent to which barriers are experienced varies across communities. Women from LGBTQI communities, for example, tend to experience barriers related to cultural stereotypes and stigmas quite acutely, while women refugees often highlight barriers related to the cost of devices and data. It is impossible at this stage, however, to draw stronger inferences from the paucity of data available at present. Uniform policy recommendations to address generic barriers to women's meaningful Internet access are therefore unlikely to effectively target women's unique needs and challenges.

This resource is merely an exploratory investigation of the issues. More work needs to be done to better understand the needs and challenges of unique communities of women around the world where Internet access and use is concerned. Such work will enable more effective and targeted policy approaches to the very tangible challenge of promoting uniform and meaningful connectivity for all women worldwide.

PART B: MANDATE AND METHODOLOGY

1. MANDATE

1.1 The IGF

One of the key outcomes of the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS) was the IGF. It is a global forum where governments, civil society, the technical community, academia, the private sector, and independent experts discuss Internet governance and policy issues.[118] While there is no negotiated outcome from IGF meetings, the IGF informs and inspires those with policy making power in both public and private sectors. At the IGF's annual meeting delegates discuss, exchange information and share good practices with each other. The IGF therefore helps to facilitate a common understanding of how to maximise Internet opportunities and address risks and challenges that may arise.

The annual IGF meeting is organized by a Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG)[119] under the auspices of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). The 12th annual IGF meeting took place in Geneva, Switzerland, on 18-21 December 2017.

To enrich the potential for IGF outputs, the IGF MAG developed an intersessional programme intended to complement other IGF activities, such as regional and national IGF initiatives, dynamic coalitions and BPFs. BPFs bring experts and stakeholders together to exchange and discuss best practices in addressing an Internet policy-related issue in a collaborative, bottom-up process.

1.2 Defining the BPF's mandate

The IGF's annual meetings enable BPF to present the findings of their community-driven work over the year in order to gather broader stakeholder input on each of the BPF topics concerned.

For the past three years, the BPF on Gender and Access has been investigating various challenges pertinent to women's ability to access and use the Internet. The volunteer group's work over the past two years indicated that much of the initiatives and literature on women's ability to access and use the Internet tend to approach women as a homogenous group and fails to account for the unique way in which contexts and circumstances might impact women's ability to access and use the Internet. As a result, the BPF community in 2017 decided to look at the specific barriers faced by specific communities of women including– women with disabilities, refugee women, young women, rural women, LGBTQI women and

[118] IGF. Available at: http://www.intgovforum.org.
[119] The full list of MAG members is available at: https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/mag-2018-members.

indigenous women. The objective also entailed mapping initiatives to the specific barriers thus identified for each of the sub-groups. In June 2017, the IGF MAG approved 'Gender and Access' as a topic for a BPF leading into the 2017 IGF meeting.

In its first year of work (in 2015), the BPF investigated online abuse and gender-based violence (see the report here). Last year, it looked at the variety of barriers that women face in not only accessing but also using the Internet, along with mapping initiatives and methods that have been used in diverse jurisdictions to overcome these barriers (see the report here).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Approach

The BPF's work built on its efforts in and outcomes from the preceding two years and also assumed a similar approach to the one it used in 2016, especially where the general process and methodology was concerned. This included the frequent use of the BPF's mailing list, virtual meetings, and the use of a survey.

MAG member Jac Kee volunteered to continue to help coordinate the BPF with the support of the editor/rapporteur from the previous two years (Anri van der Spuy), and the IGF Secretariat appointed a rapporteur in 2017 (Mili Semlani) to assist the BPF in coordinating, organizing and reporting on the BPF's work. The rapporteur was unfortunately only appointed in November, which meant that the group had to work without Secretariat support for a number of months.

The BPF coordinators and rapporteur thereafter adopted a semi-structured methodology by organizing virtual calls in order to introduce the topic to participants, to welcome broader participation, to define the scope of the BPF, and to investigate a proposed methodology.

2.2 Survey

The BPF launched a public survey to invite public contributions via the IGF website (hosted by APC) and received 49 submissions that describe the needs, challenges and barriers to Internet access for different women groups. An essential part of the survey also recorded local and regional initiatives that address the various issues for the chosen sub-groups. The survey responses fed into the discussions and are reflected in the document to a large extent, with quotes throughout the text (see Appendix 2 for the survey contents and analysis).

i) Survey design

Survey questions were drafted and refined in consultation with the BPF community after discussions on the BPF mailing list and virtual meetings dedicated to planning the survey. The aims of the survey were twofold, namely to:

- identify specific needs and challenges for the chosen sub-groups of women; and
- infer best practices, positive impact of existing initiatives, and viable solutions to address the identified barriers and challenges.

Responses were elicited by calls on the mailing list, social media, and emailed invitations to various mailing lists (including mailing lists within the Internet governance, academic and broader community). Participants were able to make submissions anonymously and/or using pseudonyms, and were notified that no personal information would be shared with third parties without their explicit consent.

The survey can be viewed at: https://www.apc.org/limesurvey/index.php/783797/lang-en.

ii) Survey analysis

The survey analysis was conducted with the goal of gathering stakeholder perceptions, comments and information on existing literature regarding the BPF's topic. The analysis was done to highlight existing work and to consolidate and identify common concerns and issues pertaining to barriers for further study and for incorporation into the main outcome resource where relevant.

Due to the number of substantive responses for open-ended questions, many interesting comments and/or quotations were also highlighted for inclusion in the main outcome resource. Note that these responses are generally verbatim in the main resource, although minor editing was sometimes done to fix minor spelling and grammar errors.

iii) Respondents

A total number of 49 responses were collected via the online survey, with the largest proportion of responses submitted by respondents who identified themselves as part or working with refugee women (30.6%), followed by young women (22%), followed by LGBTQI women (14%), and rural (4%), and indigenous women (2%). There was only one response for the sub-group of women with disabilities, while a few responses did not wish to state their identified sub-group.

The survey attracted responses from a diversity of regions, particularly from developing countries. A significant proportion of respondents were from Africa (57%), 11% from Asia Pacific and 6% from Central and North America and 4% from Europe. A few responses did not wish to state their nationality. Within these regions, a substantial number of countries were also represented. From the Asia Pacific region, for instance, survey responses were received from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Cook Islands and Indonesia. From the Africa region, responses were received from Madagascar, South Africa, Chad, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, and Zambia.

Note that this sample is by no means, nor does it purport to be, representative of any population.

2.3 Focal points

In 2017, furthermore, the BPF also adopted an additional measure to gather more input by inviting volunteers from the BPF mailing list to act as focal points for any of the sub-groups. The volunteers chose to work on the sub-group closest to their level of expertise and experience. The aim was to form into smaller, focused working groups to undertake research, collect data and collate case studies based on the specific community of women sub-group identified. Thereby, each of these focal points conducted ground level research, interviews, and found cases relevant to their area of work or interest. Their individual contributions, direct interviews, case study analysis and research fueled the findings of this document in addition to the survey results. (See Appendix 1 for list of focal points).

2.4 Main session at IGF 2017

The BPF for Gender and Access also hosted a sessional at the 12th IGF meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. It was an opportunity to engage with the IGF community present and participating remotely on access issues and those for all and any of the women sub-groups. In addition to a panel of experts from each sub-group, the session also recorded views and feedback from the community that reflect in this document. (See Appendix 3 for full summary of the session).

3. LIMITATIONS

The survey was published in September 2017 and widely distributed via the BPF mailing list to all its volunteers who, in turn, helped to distribute it to their respective regions and organisations. Since the survey was published in English only, language can be seen as one of the limiting factors to gathering responses. The focal points however made considerable effort to reach out to local organisations, NGOs, academicians and activists in their respective area of work and knowledge to gather more responses.

The survey was hosted online, and hence it was not fully able to bring in the views of the women from various sub-groups without access – refugees, rural and indigenous women in

particular. To overcome this limitation, a BPF volunteer reached out to agents working at refugee camps in Kakuma in Africa to record the views of young and other women in the camp. But not all groups were able to reach out to distant and unconnected groups equally.

PART C: APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONTRIBUTORS

As mentioned in Part A of this paper, one of the BPFs primary objectives was to encourage the engagement of stakeholders from a variety of stakeholder groups and regions. The lists of participants below include survey participants, panelists at the BPF's session at IGF 2017 (audience members are not cited), and cluster focal points.

Note that some contributors preferred to remain anonymous, and others used pseudonyms. Some of the participants interviewed directly by the focal points and those who responded to the survey informally are not listed below.

Due to the large number of people who participate at different times of the BPF's work, the lists remain subject to change and may be updated as and when reasonably required. Where possible, participants' country of origin is also listed.

Coordinators:
Jac SM Kee (Malaysia)
Anri van der Spuy (South Africa)

Rapporteur:
Mili Semlani (India)

Focal points working on the women sub-groups:

Refugee women	Anri van der Spuy
Indigenous women	Serene Lim
Young women	Bruna Martins dos Santos
Women with disabilities /LGBTQI Women	Smita Vanniyar
Rural women	Erika Smith, Sharada Srinivasan

Survey participants:

NAME	COUNTRY
Chong Sheau Ching	Other
Catarina Woyames	Brazil

Charity Gamboa Embley	United States of America
Zimkhita Buwa	South Africa
Sivasubramanian M	India
Lara Bitar	Lebanon
Renata Lima Ribeiro de Sena	Brazil
Loom	Nepal
Anonymous	Nigeria
Nguyen Hai Yen	Viet Nam
Arzak Khan	Pakistan
Esmeralda	Netherlands
Anonymous	Belgium
K Siddique-e Rabbani	Bangladesh
Maureen Hilyard	Cook Islands
N.Sudha Bhuvaneswari	India
Yolanda Mlonzi	South Africa
Tarryn Booysen	South Africa
Ying-Chu Chen	Other
Esther Mwema	Zambia
Gabdibé Gab-Hingoppne	Chad
Chenai Chair	South Africa
Marie	South Africa
Carla Bonomini	Argentina
Lina Karolin	Indonesia
Zo	Madagascar
Anonymous	Nigeria
Zina Brahim	Chad
Nguyen Hai Yen	Viet Nam
Gabdibe	Chad
Kabore Wendyam Micheline	Burkina Faso
Aneto Akongo	Undefined
Rukundo Alphonsine	Undefined
Fatina Mustafa Kocho	Undefined
Nura Suleiman Tiso	Undefined
Felista Keni	Undefined
Zamzam Abdikadir	Undefined
Grace Muvunyi Nshimiyumukiza	Undefined
Aladit Hannan Hassan	Undefined
Saida	Undefined

Jessica Akuach Deng	Undefined
Naima Abdullahi Jama	Undefined
Yuwana Podin	Malaysia

Panelists at the BPF's session in Geneva, Switzerland (21 December 2017):

Anri van der Spuy (RIA/ISOC)	South Africa
Bruna Martins dos Santos (Youth Observatory)	Brazil
Chenai Chair (Research ICT Africa)	South Africa
Serene Lim (Empower Malaysia)	Malaysia
Dr Sarbani Banerjee Belu (IIT Bombay)	India
Katie Drew (UNHCR)	Switzerland
Carlos Rey-Moreno (APC)	South Africa

APPENDIX 2: SURVEY DESIGN

The list of questions provided in the survey asked respondents to select only one of the specific groups of women that they are focussing their input to the BPF study on, or the population an initiative is aimed at, e.g. women refugees, or women with disabilities, young women, or indigenous women.

The survey was broadly divided into three parts: Context, Challenges, Good Practices and has ten broad questions with a mixture of closed and open-ended questions, and questions that specifically asks for more information about the initiative they would like to share. Some questions required them to provide brief details in the comment section before they were are able to select another option.

Each survey was intended to respond to one specific initiative or community of women. If any respondent had more than one initiative or community of women to share they responded to the survey more than once.

The survey also included a privacy statement and notified the respondents that all responses will be used only for the research, advocacy, or other specific purposes of this survey. And their personal information will not be disclosed to third parties without explicit consent.

The survey questions were as follows:

IGF Best Practice Forum Gender: Access
Context
This set of questions seek to understand the context of the specific community of women in relation to their Internet access needs
(All fields marked with * were compulsory)

*Please provide your name and contact details
    Name
    Email address
*Please indicate which country you are based in
Choose one of the following answers
(Drop down list)

*This survey aims to enable a better understanding of specific communities of women's experiences with the Internet. Which one of these communities of women do you identify, or work with?
Choose one of the following answers

Women with disabilities
Indigenous women
Refugee women
Rural women
Young women
Other (please specify the particular community of women that you work with)

* Which of the below descriptions best applies to you?
Check any that apply

I identify as a member of the community
I work with this community
I have done research on Internet access issues with this community
Other (please describe)

Based on your response above, why is access to the Internet specifically important to this community? Please provide examples or elaborate briefly in the comments section next to your choice.

Note: You can only select another option after you provide brief details on the comment section. It may be easier for you to write down your thoughts on a notepad and cut and paste it in the comment section. Please remember to save the survey intermittently.

Check any that apply
Comment only when you choose an answer.

1. Communicating and connecting with members of the community (e.g. to chat with friends or family on social platforms like Facebook; to connect with others who share similar contexts, etc.)Make a comment on your choice here:
2. Access to information that is otherwise difficult to find (e.g. to learn more about news about members of the community; or information that is otherwise censored/regulated, etc.)Make a comment on your choice here:
3. Access to government services (e.g. file income tax returns; apply for government beneficiary schemes, etc.)Make a comment on your choice here:
4. Participating in online democratic processes (e.g. referendums, public discussions with representatives, etc.)Make a comment on your choice here:
5. Access to justice (e.g. filing and checking freedom of information requests; issuing legal declarations; checking on status of legal cases; lodging human rights violation, etc.)Make a comment on your choice here:
6. Access to financial services (e.g. to do banking or transactions; to receive of make payments, etc.) Make a comment on your choice here:
7. For education, for further education, and/or to learn new skills (e.g. to do homework; to do e-learning courses; to watch videos and instructions to self-teach different skills, etc.) Make a comment on your choice here:

8. To express and share personal or community-specific reality and opinions (e.g. through blogs, Twitter, podcasts, etc.)Make a comment on your choice here:
9. To access new markets and to showcase work and/or business (e.g. online shopping, selling your products through online portals, etc.)Make a comment on your choice here:
10. To apply for jobs or to access employment opportunities (e.g. contacting potential employers, working digitally as a coder, writer, etc.)Make a comment on your choice here:
11. For leisure and pleasure (e.g. watching movies & shows online, online dating, sexting, etc.)

Challenges

This section of the survey focuses on specific access challenges or barriers that the focus community face.

*In your knowledge and experience, what are the top three barriers or hindrances that most significantly affect the community's access to the Internet?

Please select between 1 and 3 answers

1. Threats or safety concerns (e.g. women who are afraid of being exposed to the risk of harassment, attacks or other kinds of threats by using the Internet, including online violence and gender-based violence)
2. Availability (e.g. women have no broadband access or public Internet centres are in spaces where women don't usually have access to etc.)
3. Affordability (e.g. insufficient income to pay for data, or cannot afford a device etc.)
4. Culture and norms (e.g. boys prioritised for technology use at home or in shared device spaces, restrictions to movement, control over device and Internet use by partner/family/community decision makers etc.)
5. Capacity and skills (e.g. literacy gap in reading, lacking in skills and confidence to access the Internet or explore technology etc.)
6. Availability of relevant content (e.g. language issues, lack of content that speaks to the community's needs or contexts, gender or sexuality-related content is censored/restricted)
7. 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 policy making fora is restricted)
8. 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)
9. Other:

Do you have any specific example or experiences on barriers/challenges that you/your community face that you would like to share?

Note: It may be easier for you to write down your thoughts on a notepad and cut and paste it in the text section. Please remember to save the survey intermittently.

Good ideas, best practices & lessons learnt
This section is about initiatives that addresses the needs of the specific community with positive impact or in constructive ways, that can serve as lessons learnt or best practices that can be shared.

*Do you know of existing initiative(s) aimed at promoting access for the community(ies) which you identify or work with?
Yes
No

If yes:

* Please share the following details about the initiative.
Note: Please remember to save the survey intermittently.

1. Name of initiative
2. Organisation or person(s) running the initiative
3. When the initiative was founded/started (month/year)
4. Where to find more information about the initiative (URL)
5. What country or region is the initiative focused on?
6. Is the initiative national, regional or global in its operation?

*To what extent the initiative reflects a gender dimension? Please indicate from a scale of 1 - 5, 1 being gender blind (with no mention of gender), and 5 is gender focussed (with a strong focus on gender)

* In your knowledge and experience, what do you think contributes to the positive impact of this initiative (including lessons learnt and/or good practices)? Please provide further details in the comment section.
Note: It may be easier for you to write down your thoughts on a notepad and cut and paste it in the comment section. Please remember to save the survey intermittently.
Check any that apply

1. Addresses underlying discrimination and inequalities (e.g. addressing basic literacy in tandem with technology literacy; attention to social and cultural barriers such as mobility; etc.)Make a comment on your choice here:

2. Pays attention to existing gender disparity in economic power (e.g. income and cost of data and devices)Make a comment on your choice here:
3. Initiative has a long-term, sustainable programming (beyond providing one-off infrastructure/device solutions)Make a comment on your choice here:
4. Enables focussed community of women to have direct decision-making and control over access infrastructure, management and use (in other words, beneficiaries become the owners an initiative and directs it)Make a comment on your choice here:
5. Understands that women are not a singular homogenous group, and takes into account the multiple forms of identity that may affect their ability to access the Internet (e.g. women with disabilities who are also part of a minority racial group etc)Make a comment on your choice here:
6. Recognises that age is a significant factor in access barriers and challenges, in particular prioritising the realities and capacity needs of young and/or elderly women.Make a comment on your choice here:
7. Addresses groups of women who are particularly affected by discrimination and marginalisation.Make a comment on your choice here:
8. Addresses and integrates issues of privacy, consent, safety and potential risks of online gender-based abuse and violence.Make a comment on your choice here:
9. Consists of participatory process that includes intended beneficiaries in analysing the problem and in the development of solutions.Make a comment on your choice here:
10. Initiative prioritises access to type of technology and/or content that is relevant and useable by the community intended to benefit from it.Make a comment on your choice here:
11. Other (please elaborate)

(If No above, survey skipped to below question)

*In your knowledge and experience, what do you think are the top three factors that need to be considered for an initiative to have positive impact on the focus community of women you work with/are part of? Please provide further details in the comment section.
Note: It may be easier for you to write down your thoughts on a notepad and cut and paste it in the comment section. Please remember to save the survey intermittently.
Check any that apply
Comment only when you choose an answer.

1. Addresses underlying discrimination and inequalities (e.g. addressing basic literacy in tandem with technology literacy; attention to social and cultural barriers such as mobility; etc.)Make a comment on your choice here:
2. Pays attention to existing gender disparity in economic power (e.g. income and cost of data and devices)Make a comment on your choice here:
3. Initiative has a long-term, sustainable programming (beyond providing one-off infrastructure/device solutions)Make a comment on your choice here:

4. Enables focussed community of women to have direct decision-making and control over access infrastructure, management and use (in other words, beneficiaries become the owners an initiative and directs it)Make a comment on your choice here:
5. Understands that women are not a singular homogenous group, and takes into account the multiple forms of identity that may affect their ability to access the Internet (e.g. women with disabilities who are also part of a minority racial group etc)Make a comment on your choice here:
6. Recognises that age is a significant factor in access barriers and challenges, in particular prioritising the realities and capacity needs of young and/or elderly women.Make a comment on your choice here:
7. Addresses groups of women who are particularly affected by discrimination and marginalisation.Make a comment on your choice here:
8. Addresses and integrates issues of privacy, consent, safety and potential risks of online gender-based abuse and violence.Make a comment on your choice here:
9. Consists of participatory process that includes intended beneficiaries in analysing the problem and in the development of solutions.Make a comment on your choice here:
10. Initiative prioritises access to type of technology and/or content that is relevant and useable by the community intended to benefit from it.

APPENDIX 3: BPF SESSION REPORT AT IGF 2017

- Session Title: Best Practice Forum (BPF) on Gender and Access [120]

- Date: December 20

- Time: 10:10-11:40

- Session Organizer: Mili Semlani

- Chair/Moderator: Jac SM Kee

- Rapporteur/Notetaker: Mili Semlani

- List of Speakers and their institutional affiliations:
Anri van der Spuy (RIA/ISOC, South Africa), Bruna Santos (Youth Observatory, Brazil), Chenai Chair (Research ICT Africa, South Africa), Katie Drew (UNHCR), Serene Lim (Empower Malaysia), Carlos Rey-Moreno (APC), Dr Sarbani Banerjee Belu (IIT Bombay).

- Key Issues raised:
The key issues of the session were discussed with respect to each of the women sub-groups that form a basis for the study too.
Summarising the issues via quotes:

1. Refugee women

"Access to information, the sharing of knowledge is the sine qua non of empowerment and empowerment in one's own life. While keeping in mind a critical sense essential to avoid falling into the illusion of 'miracle solutions', we believe that the Internet and social networks represent in this respect an opportunity to exploit."
- Anonymous respondent

2. Indigenous women

"[Access to the Internet is important for women] to gain access to the outside world. Their windows to the outside world is largely through RTM (government run terrestrial television) – access to the Internet opens them up to alternative information, on health, on education."

[120] IGF (2017) *Gender and Access Session.(Video).* Available at: https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2017-day-3-room-xxv-bpf-best-practice-forum-on-gender-and-access.

- Respondent working with high risk and HIV positive rural and Indigenous women in East Malaysia

3. Young women
"A women created a fake online profile because she feared the outcome if the community found out what her true opinions were around certain laws and practices."
- Anonymous respondent

4. LGBTQI Women
"Queer women in Nigeria are mostly able to meet other queer women on online forums."
- Respondent from Nigeria

"There is no information by mainstream channels about sexual diversity and human rights, so the Internet has been the most popular, direct, and with great sources to access the information."

- If there were presentations during the session, please provide a 1-paragraph summary for each presentation:
Moderator Jac Sm Kee used a short presentation to give a brief about the BPF work so far including the past years. In 2016, it looked at the barriers that women face in not only accessing but also using the Internet, along with mapping initiatives and methods that have been used in diverse jurisdictions to overcome these barriers (see the report here). In 2015, it investigated online abuse and gender-based violence (see the outcome report here), which has been shown to form a significant barrier for women wanting to access and use the Internet in certain regions. She also introduced the process and methodology used in 2017 and the summarised the survey findings for each sub-group –women with disabilities, refugee women, young women, elderly women, LGBTQI women, women in rural areas, and Indigenous women.

- Please describe the Discussions that took place during the workshop session (3 paragraphs):
Over the past three years, the IGF's Best Practice Forum (BPF) on Gender has been investigating various challenges pertinent to women's ability to access and use the Internet.

The BPF's work has indicated that much of the initiatives and literature available on women's ability to access and use the Internet tend to approach women as a homogenous group and fails to truly account for the unique way in which contexts and circumstances might impact women's ability to access and use the Internet. As a result, the BPF community in 2017 decided to look at the specific barriers faced by specific communities of women - including women with disabilities, refugee women, young women, elderly women, LGBTQI women, women in rural areas, and Indigenous women.

The survey inputs received from women working, representing or advocating for the various sub-groups brought out the specific needs and challenges in social and economic

development facilitated by Internet access. It also detailed various initiatives at regional and national levels that are addressing some of these challenges. Connecting with the community, accessing information, and promoting educational opportunities were some of the key needs for the various sub-groups. The survey highlighted lack of infrastructure, insufficient local and relevant content, and social and cultural norms as major hindrances to Internet access for refugee women, Indigenous women, queer women and young women. It also stressed the need for gender-focused policies and the sustainable grassroot-level initiatives to enhance inclusivity.

The BPF and its panel at this working session discussed the BPF's preliminary findings and recommendations for further exploration, and the ways in which stakeholders can support the work in addressing barriers to meaningful access faced by specific communities of women.

Each of the panelists then shared their experience while working or belonging to their respective women sub-groups. They highlighted various ICT challenges and the specific issues pertaining to the sub-group they represented. Katie Drew of UNHCR spoke of her interactions with refugee women in Uganda who had to trade ration supplies for access to Internet or even phone chargers.

- Please describe any Participant suggestions regarding the way forward/ potential next steps /key takeaways (3 paragraphs):
Several participants from the session eagerly shared their experiences and related work they were involved with. A participant from Kosovo highlighted lack of local content as a key access issues for women from Africa. She also mentioned that low online security compelled them to use fake profiles online.

Another participant from Mexico stressed on the importance of ICT education for women, special interest groups and more IG training and opportunities for women to digitally empower them was the need of the hour. In terms of privilege and meaningful access to technology, the context in which women exist determines the effect technology will have in their lives.

Responses from some of the participants with STEM careers also showed that women in IT or tech still had to deal with male dominance at work, gender inequality and thus a need for a universal mentality shift was called for. "Gender bias in design of tech and in collection of data affects & exacerbates similar bias. Need to work in multistakeholder and multidisciplinary way and policies in place" said one of the participants.

Issues of gender violence online and offline was also seen as a major detriment in increasings women's access to Internet.

Gender Reporting

- Estimate the overall number of the participants present at the session: 33

- Estimate the overall number of women present at the session: 28

- To what extent did the session discuss gender equality and/or women's empowerment?
It was fully based on gender and access.

- If the session addressed issues related to gender equality and/or women's empowerment, please provide a brief summary of the discussion:
This session was based on the BPF work on Gender and Access thus all the discussions and inputs adhered to the work of the volunteer group and their findings in addition to seeking more input from the community for the same.