IGF 2020

Best Practice Forum on Gender and Access

Gender at the Internet Governance Forum

Final BPF output report

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Executive summary

1. Introduction

Established in 2015 in the framework of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the Best Practice Forum on Gender and Access (in short, BPF Gender) has focused on different aspects of women's meaningful access to the Internet, from online abuse and gender-based violence to opportunities and challenges that women face to get the necessary skills to benefit from the future of work.

In 2020, the BPF Gender zoomed in on issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online, from a gender-diversity perspective. It has also chosen to focus on the IGF itself, to look at:

- Whether and how the BPF thematic issues have been brought up at the IGF between 2016 and 2019.
- Whether and how the IGF has fostered the participation of women and gender-diverse people in its activities in general, and in discussions focused on the thematic issues.

In its work, the BPF carried out an analysis of sessions held at the IGF between 2016 and 2019 (session descriptions, reports and transcripts) and of input collected through IGF tacking stock processes. It also conducted a public survey and ran interviews with members of the IGF community, the IGF Secretariat and the Chair of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG).

2. Whether and how the BPF thematic issues have been brought up at the IGF between 2016 and 2019

The BPF looked at session descriptions, reports, transcripts, and gender report cards between IGF 2016 and IGF 2019, to understand whether and how the BPF thematic issues (violence, harm, pleasure and consent online) have been included into IGF discussions. The analysis includes main sessions, workshops, open forums, BPFs, dynamic coalitions, sessions organised by national and regional IGF initiatives, and flash sessions.

Looking at the general picture between 2016 and 2019, the percentage of IGF sessions focused exclusively on gender issues has been relatively low (between 3% and 7%). But there is one positive trend showing that an increasing number of IGF sessions integrate gender-related issues when discussing other Internet policy topics (from 19% in 2016 to 41% in 2019). Zooming in, the percentage of sessions dedicated to issues of violence, harm, pleasure or consent has been relatively constant across the years, oscillating between 2% and 6%. One general observation is that gender issues tend to be discussed mostly in relation to access and inclusion (e.g. bridging digital divides, promoting digital skills among women and girls, empowering women entrepreneurs in ICT skills).

One main conclusion from this analysis is that, while the IGF has featured some discussions on gender-based violence and harm, this has not so much been the case when it comes to pleasure and consent. It seems there is a tendency to focus more on problems and negative issues and not emphasise what still needs to be done to promote the Internet as a space for self-expression and pleasure (with consent as a guiding principle).

Going beyond numbers, the BPF has also provided a summary of how issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and/or consent online were discussed at the IGF during the analysed years. The summary shows that discussions on consent, self-expression and pleasure were mostly related to the following topics: challenges and solutions to protect freedom of expression online (including sexual expression); the need for policies to distinguish between the consensual and non-consensual production and distribution of private content online; the use of consent as a tool to empower users; issues of doxxing and sextortion towards vulnerable groups; the connections between gender, sexuality and data; and concerns related to the criminalisation of certain behaviour in some societies (for instance, expressing one's sexuality).

Discussions on violence and harm covered a broader range of issues: the offline-online continuum in gender-based violence; how violence and harm affect the participation of women and gender-diverse people in the digital space; the need to create safer online environments for women, girls and gender-diverse people; the spread of gender-based violence in the context of certain professions (e.g. journalists, politicians); regulatory and self-regulatory measures to address online harassment, hate speech, bullying and other forms of gender-based violence; challenges in enforcing legal rules and ensuring access to justice; the need to balance safety and freedom of expression; and empowering women and gender-diverse people to deal with and fight online violence.

The survey and interviews conducted by the BPF offered additional insights regarding the integration of gender issues into the IGF programme. While the IGF is now generally open to discussing gender issues, improvements are always welcome. It is also important to break the silos in which gender discussions tend to happen and adopt a more intersectional approach. The fact that the IGF has less discussions on pleasure and consent should also be seen as part of a broader policy issue of how to create more positive content around sexuality and self-expression without dismissing the focus on violence and harm.

3. Inclusion of women and gender-diverse people

The BPF has also looked at the inclusion of women and gender-diverse people at the IGF. As a general observation resulting from the BPF analysis and the survey and interviews conducted, it was noted that the IGF has made good progress over the years in fostering better gender diversity. Here, too, improvements are welcome, in particular with regard to moving from simply ticking the gender diversity box to having more meaningful participation.

IGF discussions on violence, harm, pleasure and/or consent do exceptionally well in terms of gender diversity among speakers, moderators and participants. This, however, is only valid in terms of women–men diversity. The inclusion of gender-diverse people could not be measured. There is no mechanism in place to measure the inclusion and participation of gender non-binary people; more disaggregated data is needed in order to be able to fully assess the degree of gender diversity across the overall IGF and within sessions.

4. Recommendations

Throughout its work, the BPF has collected and developed a series of recommendations on how the IGF can foster greater gender diversity and how the discussions on gender-related issues in general could be more mainstreamed. Below is an extract from the overall set of recommendations which can be found in the report's dedicated section.

Gender mainstreaming at the IGF

- Continue to encourage the integration of gender-related issues within discussions on other Internet and digital policy issues.
- The MAG to consider including a question in IGF workshop proposal forms asking session organisers to indicate whether and how they plan to approach the proposed topics from a gender diversity perspective.
- While discussions dedicated only to gender issues should still happen, it is important to ensure that they are not only attracting the communities they are referring to.
- The inclusion of gender into the debates is a two-way responsibility: it has to be encouraged from the top (by the MAG, the IGF Secretariat, etc.), but the community should also be more proactive in requesting more gender-related discussions or more gender mainstreaming, as needed.

Integration of discussions on violence, harm, pleasure and consent

- Encourage more discussions on empowerment, self-expression, pleasure and consent, as women's and gender-diverse people's experiences online are not and should not be limited to harm and violence issues.
- The IGF has an opportunity to become the main space that fosters discussions on how to empower and uplift women and gender-diverse people in the online space, and this opportunity should not be missed.
- Make sure that discussions on these issues do not happen "inside bubbles", but that they reach and include the wider IGF community.

Gender diversity at the IGF

- More disaggregated data is needed in order to be able to fully assess the degree of gender diversity across the overall IGF.

- The MAG and the IGF Secretariat should consider developing a mechanism to measure the inclusion and participation of gender non-binary people. Gender-diverse people should be included in a conversation on whether and how such a mechanism could be built.
- The gender diversity principle should apply across all sessions, including those focused on gender issues. Avoid echo chambers.
- Having women and gender-diverse people in sessions should not be the end goal. Their participation should not be tokenised.
- Inclusion must go beyond participation in one session. Encourage women and gender-diverse people to engage with other work.
- Go beyond capacity building to also develop confidence building for those working on gender issues at IGF.
- Work more closely with other organisations which are active on gender issues. Create linkages with local and regional communities.
- When discussing approaches for fostering more gender diversity at the IGF, the MAG and the Secretariat should seek input from the targeted community directly.
- Use the list of resource persons to help session organisers have more gender diversity in sessions. Consider including specific tags allowing experts who are women and gender-diverse people to identify themselves as such if they wish to.
- Consider allocating more funds to encourage the participation of less represented gender communities.
- When appointing MAG members, the UN Secretary-General should also look at whether there are candidates who have expertise on gender issues. Simply having women on the MAG does not necessarily mean that expertise on gender issues is present.

Further work that could be taken up by the IGF

- Mapping policy processes and spaces that discuss issues of violence, harm, pleasure and consent in the digital space, from a gender-diversity perspective.
- Mapping policy processes and space that discuss issues of violence, harm, pleasure and consent from a gender-diversity perspective, but not necessarily in an Internet/digital context.
- Fostering linkages between these processes, by inviting them to contribute to IGF discussions and activities focused on the thematic issues.

I. General introduction

1. The Internet Governance Forum

The *Internet Governance Forum (IGF)* is a global forum, convened by the United Nations Secretary-General [1], where governments, civil society, the Internet technical community, academia, the private sector, and independent experts discuss Internet governance and policy issues.[2]

IGF 2020, the fifteenth annual meeting of the IGF and the first virtual IGF meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was hosted by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in November 2020 under the overarching theme "Internet for human resilience and solidarity".

2. IGF Best Practice Forums

The IGF *Best Practice Forums (BPFs)*[3] provide a platform for experts and stakeholders to exchange experiences in addressing Internet policy issues, discuss and identify emerging and existing good practices.[4] BPFs are expected to be open, bottom-up and collective processes, and their outputs to be community-driven.

BPFs prepare their work in a series of intersessional discussions that culminate in a BPF session at the annual IGF meeting and a report published as part of the IGF outputs.

The objective is to collect from community experience, not to develop new policies or practices. BPF outputs intend to contribute to an understanding of global good practice, and to serve as a resource to inform policy discussions, standards development, business decisions, as well as public understanding, awareness, and discourse.

[1] The resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 16 December 2015 (70/125), "Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society", extended the mandate of the IGF as set out in paragraphs 72 to 78 of the Tunis Agenda.
[2] IGF website: http://www.intgovforum.org. The IGF is one of the key outcomes of the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS).
[3] BPFs were re-introduced in 2014 as part of the intersessional programme to complement the work of the IGF community and develop more tangible outputs to "enhance the impact of the IGF on global Internet". This intersessional programme was designed in accordance with the recommendations of a 2012 report by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development's (CSTD's) Working Group on IGF Improvements. https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/4586/588
[4] BPF outputs and activities are archived on the IGF webpage: https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/bpfs-outputs

3. IGF 2020 Best Practice Forums

BPFs are organised under the supervision of the *IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG)*, which selects the topics for the BPFs, and receive substantive IGF Secretariat support.

The MAG confirmed the following four topics for the 2020 BPF cycle:

- Data and new technologies in an Internet context
- Exploring best practices in relation to international cybersecurity agreements
- Gender impact on shaping Internet policy
- Protection, preservation and remuneration of creative work and collective wisdom from a local content perspective

II. BPF Gender introduction

1. About BPF Gender

Since its beginning in 2015, the BPF on Gender and Access (BPF Gender) has focused on different aspects of women's meaningful access to the Internet: online abuse and gender-based violence (2015); barriers for accessing the Internet (2016); identification of the needs and challenges of diverse women's groups with respect to Internet access (2017); the impact of supplementary models of connectivity on women's Internet access (2018) were the topics addressed by the community; and opportunities and challenges that women face to get the necessary skills to benefit from the future of work (2019).

During these years, the BPF Gender has worked in a bottom-up process that allowed it to collect, from diverse stakeholders, valuable data and anecdotal evidence of the challenges that formed the digital gender gap.

2. Themes and focus in 2020

In 2020, the BPF Gender has been stock-taking the progress made since its establishment. The initial plan was to assess a variety of Internet-related policy processes and spaces to determine whether or not the current Internet-related fora are gender-sensitive, and to which extent they protect, promote, and foster the participation of women and people of diverse gender and sexualities.[5] As such, the BPF has zoomed in on issues related to **violence, harm, pleasure and consent online**, considering the guidelines below.

1. Online violence presents specific challenges in gauging which data or images constitute violence. What is actionable violence and what is not is gauged by intent to harm, content, imminence of harm (credibility), extent of the harm and context.

2. In relation to violence online, consent is key to differentiating lawful from unlawful and harmful behaviour. Consent in an online context is often complicated by the exact act to which the consent, if any, relates. Because of this, defining consent is crucial in dealing with online violence and must be addressed in any relevant mechanisms.

3. Pleasure and consent online, as they relate to the Feminist Principles of the Internet (FPIs):

- Defending the right to sexual expression as a freedom of expression issue of no less importance than political or religious expression.

[5] "BPF Gender 2020 Work Plan", https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/filedepot_download/5004/2070

- Objecting to the efforts of state and non-state actors to control, surveil, regulate and restrict feminist and queer expression on the Internet through technology, legislation or violence.

- Recognising this as part of the larger political project of moral policing, censorship, and hierarchisation of citizenship and rights.

- Recognising that the issue of pornography online has to do with agency, consent, power and labour.

- Rejecting simple causal linkages made between consumption of pornographic content and violence against women.

- Rejecting the use of the umbrella term “harmful content” to label expression on female and transgender sexuality.

- Reclaiming and creating alternative erotic content that resists the mainstream patriarchal gaze and locates women and queer persons’ desires at the centre.

Throughout the work, the BPF has realised that, while various Internet-related policy processes and space may discuss the thematic issues (**violence, harm, pleasure and consent online**), this is usually done in the context or on the margins of other discussions, and there is no such process exclusively dedicated to looking at gender-related issues in an Internet context. At the same time, there are broader policy processes and spaces that look at least at some of the BPF thematic issues, but not necessarily from an Internet-related perspective. The BPF did not have sufficient capacity to conduct a mapping of such processes, and, instead, has focused on the Internet Governance Forum itself. As such, **the BPF looked at:**

- **Whether and how the BPF thematic issues have been brought up at the IGF between 2016 and 2019.**

- **Whether and how the IGF has fostered the participation of women and gender-diverse people in its activities in general, and in discussions focused on the thematic issues.**

The BPF has chosen to look back at the IGF starting with IGF 2016, when the new 10-year mandate of the forum started.

3. Methodology

This document reflects the work carried out by the BPF Gender in 2020. It builds on:

- An analysis of sessions held at the IGF between 2016 and 2019 (session descriptions, reports and transcripts)

- Responses to a public survey which resulted in 30 contributions
- Input collected through a series of interviews with members of the IGF community, the IGF Secretariat and the MAG Chair
- Insights collected from contributions submitted into the IGF taking stock processes
- Discussions held at the BPF Gender session organised during IGF 2020[6] (when the draft version of this report was presented)

[6] Details about the session are available at https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2020-bpf-gender-and-access. The session recording can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSYMlsjgygI

III. Gender at the IGF

1. Whether and how the BPF thematic issues have been brought up at the IGF between 2016 and 2019

The BPF has looked at whether and how the 2020 thematic issues (violence, harm, pleasure and consent online) have been brought up at the IGF between 2016 and 2019. For this, we carried out an analysis of IGF sessions (session descriptions, reports and transcripts), ran a public survey, conducted a series of interviews with members of the IGF community, the IGF Secretariat and the MAG Chair, and collected insights from contributions submitted into the IGF taking stock processes.

1.1. Analysis of IGF sessions

For this part of the BPF work, we looked at session descriptions, reports, transcripts, and gender report cards between IGF 2016 and IGF 2019, to understand whether and how the BPF thematic issues have been included into IGF discussions. The analysis includes main sessions, workshops, open forums, BPFs, dynamic coalitions, sessions organised by national and regional IGF initiatives, and flash sessions.

Key finding

- One main conclusion from the analysis detailed below is that, while the IGF has featured some discussions on gender-based violence and harm, this has not so much been the case when it comes to pleasure and consent. It seems there is a tendency to focus more on problems and negative issues and not emphasise what still needs to be done to promote the Internet as a space for self-expression and pleasure (with consent as a guiding principle).

- Our recommendation therefore is that IGF should encourage more discussions on pleasure and consent as well, as women's and gender-diverse people's experiences online are not and should not be limited to harm and violence issues.

1.1.2. General picture: What do the numbers say?

Looking at the general picture between 2016 and 2019, **one positive trend can be observed**: **the IGF has done gradually better at integrating gender-related issues within discussions on other Internet and digital policy issues**. In 2016, only 19% of all analysed sessions touched on gender-related issues while discussing other Internet policy issues; in 2019, the number of such sessions has increased to 41%.

Zooming in to look at how much this year's BPF thematic issues (violence, harm, pleasure and consent) were integrated into IGF discussions on various topics, the situation seems to be more or less similar across the years. If in 2016, 4% of the sessions looked at violence, harm, pleasure and consent online when discussing other Internet policy issues, the percentage grew slightly to 6% in 2018, and 7% in 2017 and 2019.

Key findings

- While the percentage of IGF sessions focused exclusively on gender issues can be seen as constantly low (between 3% and 7%), there is a positive trend showing that an increasing number of sessions integrate gender-related issues when discussing other Internet policy topics (41% in 2019).
- The percentage of sessions dedicated to issues of violence, harm, pleasure or consent has been relatively constant across the years, oscillating between 2% and 6%.
- One general observation across the years is that gender issues tend to be discussed mostly in relation to access and inclusion.

When it comes to the extent to which the IGF has hosted discussions having gender as the main topic, there seems to be a similar pattern across years. In 2016, 4% of all sessions focused on gender issues, and the percentage was relatively similar in 2018 (3%) and 2019 (4%). In 2017, there was an increase in the number of such sessions (7%), but this could be partially explained by the fact that the IGF generally hosted more sessions during that year, thus allowing for more space for various discussions.

A pattern can also be observed when looking at the percentage of sessions focused on this year's BPF thematic issues (violence, harm, pleasure and consent): 2% in 2018, 3% in 2019, 4% in 2016, and 6% in 2017.

One general observation across the years is that gender issues tend to be discussed mostly in relation to access and inclusion (e.g. bridging digital divides, promoting digital skills among women and girls, empowering women entrepreneurs in ICT skills).

IGF	Total no of sessions analysed	Sessions that tackled gender as main topic		Sessions that integrated gender issues in discussions on other Internet policy topics	
		Total	Tackled BPF focus issues (as either main or side topics)	Total	Tackled BPF focus issues
2019	153	6 (4%)	4 (3%)	62 (41%)	10 (7%)
2018	149	4 (3%)	3 (2%)	51 (34%)	9 (6%)
2017	187	13 (7%)	11 (6%)	49 (26%)	14 (7%)
2016	179	8 (4%)	7 (4%)	34 (19%)	8 (4%)

1.1.3. IGF 2016

Held under the theme "Enabling inclusive and sustainable growth", IGF 2016 featured over 200 sessions under the following key themes: access and diversity; critical Internet resources; gender and youth issues; cybersecurity; human rights online; emerging issues; sustainable development and the Internet economy; and multistakeholder cooperation.

a) General overview of gender discussions

Out of the 179 analysed sessions, 8 tackled gender issues as their main topic, as indicated in their descriptions, and (where available) session reports and/or transcripts. Among these 8 sessions, **7 tackled (either as the main topic or throughout their overall discussions) issues related to violence, harm, pleasure or consent online**.

Session transcripts and reports indicate that, among the remaining sessions, 34 integrated gender issues in discussions on other Internet policy topics. Such issues ranged from **access and inclusion to empowerment and participation**. One important point made throughout the discussions on inclusion was that "if we want to include more women on the Internet, the Internet should be [more] relevant for women". Participation in Internet governance (IG) processes was another key point raised in some discussions. It was noted that all genders must be able to shape IG and they should all have equal opportunities to participate in IG processes. Then, it is important to change the conversation so that users are seen as people of different genders; this would help

us understand better some of the fundamental issues that affect concepts like privacy and freedom of expression. There was also a discussion on gender diversity at the IGF itself. It was noted that gender should not be defined through the binary of men and women, but through a gender spectrum that includes individuals who do not define themselves as men or women. In this regard, suggestions were made to have a category called "other" in the IGF registration form to foster the inclusion of gender-diverse people. Another key issue was how to include other genders in the IGF.

Out of these 34 sessions, **8 touched on issues that form the focus of the 2020 BPF Gender.**

b) How violence, harm, pleasure and/or consent featured at IGF 2016

IGF 2016 introduced "gender and youth issues" among its main themes. Most sessions that explored issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and/or consent were held under this theme, while others were included under the themes human rights online and access and diversity.

⇒ Consent, self-expression and pleasure

Several discussions pointed that sexual expression is an important component of online expression and must be protected, like all other forms of online expression. Policymakers must ensure that **freedom of sexual expression** is protected online as part of the freedom of expression. Issues that affect this form of expression include barriers to access, lack of anonymity, violations of consent and privacy, and laws (e.g. dealing with obscenity and pornography) that tend to consider that the prime harm in nonconsensual sexual expression is obscenity rather than the violation of consent and the right to privacy.

Other debates highlighted the need for **policies to distinguish between consensual and non-consensual sexual expression**. Policymakers should develop frameworks that protect (i.e. do not restrict) the consensual exchange of intimate images/videos, and take strict measures against non-consensual exchange of the same. The principle of harm, rather than morality, must be the standard to distinguish legitimate sexual expression from illegitimate one.

Issues related to consent surfaced in a discussion on sextortion. The concept of "online self-disclosure" came up, which is when people willingly share personal information (including images or videos) online, tending to be unaware or forget that Internet services used for sharing of data are not free of breaches (like identity theft, information leakage, etc). Such breaches can then lead to that information (initially consensually shared) being misused for sextortion purposes. Excessive self-disclosure, it was pointed out, can result in victim blaming and shaming.

One important point raised was that the non-consensual online distribution of private images or videos often becomes a form of online violence, as it opens the door to various forms or harassment and abuse which can then affect physical and emotional well-being and lead to self-censorship.

Possible approaches to addressing such risks include tools which ask for explicit consent prior to sharing sensitive information or videos/images; awareness raising and education in preventing sharing sensitive information online; educating youth on safer sexual expression online instead of trying to ban and/or use scare tactics; and criminalising sextortion. And while taking down content that was not consensually published online could be also a solution, it is important to keep in mind that such measures could also be abused to silence or censor sexual expression or sexual minorities online.

Consent also featured in a discussion on doxxing towards gender sexuality and vulnerable groups (doxxing is the collection of many details about someone online; and it can have both good and bad consequences). Sometimes people freely share information about themselves online, including with regard to their gender and sexual identities. That information can provide resources for doxxing. So users need to be more empowered to protect their own privacy, and consent is an important element in this regard. Consent in the digital space tends to be seen as a simple tick box and as something that is "given" forever. This has to change. Consent should be a tool to empower the users of the technology and allow them to change their mind later on; you should be able to take your consent away easily.

⇒ Violence and harm

The idea of the Internet being a space and a tool for confidence and freedom of expression for women is threatened by fears of online abuse and violence. **Cyberviolence** is a barrier to getting more women and girls online, as fear is a factor that inhibits their engagement with the online space. Therefore, **creating a safe online environment for women and girls** is an issue of top priority. Digital literacy programmes and mentoring could help make women feel safer online.

We see more and more that **online harassment** – which occurs through speech – is restricting the freedom of expression of women. Thus, the free speech concept has to account for gender-based experience.

Online violence against women also occurs in the context of specific professions. For instance, women journalists seem to be targeted by more online threats than men journalists and "the discourse or the narrative [in these cases] is because they are not only journalists, but they are women. So they are getting more threats that are related with their personal relationships, with their appearances, with their supposedly lack of capacity for being women". The same applies (in some countries more than in others) when women are vocal in the public sphere with regard to topics of public interest: they are being attacked not necessarily for their views, but largely because those views come from a woman.

In some cases, gender-based violence has its roots in the failure to acknowledge the rights of women or LGBTQI communities. For instance, some countries simply criminalise homosexuality, and the offline reality caused by this is also reflected in the online world, where LGBTQI communities experience fear, stigma and various forms of threats, which, eventually, can lead to driving them away from using the Internet. The reverse applies too: online violence can also translate into offline violence. For example, if somebody is targeted by online violence and then

their private or identifiable information is exposed online, the online violence can translate into physical danger. But technology should not be seen only as a tool to exacerbate threats and risks; it is also a tool to be used for "fighting back" against such phenomena.

One problem in the fight against online gender-based violence is that, where legal frameworks are in place to address such cases, sometimes there is **no real enforcement and no access to justice**, and the victims find themselves unable to rely on institutions and on society for protection. It was also noted that the problem is not so much about adopting new legislation specifically focused on online violence, as existing legal standards for protection women are already in place in most jurisdictions, but about **implementing those legal standards in an online context**. Moreover, policy makers should be wary of the dangers of overregulation and censorship.

To counter abuse against women and LGBTQI people, we also need a way to effectively seek justice for crimes committed against these people without their moral characters being called into question or examined. One solution is to implement specific training programmes for law enforcement and the judiciary.

Discussions were also held on the **role of online platforms in promoting trust and safety online for women and gender-diverse people**. Enhanced privacy and security measures can help in this regard; for instance, not collecting and storing personal data and implementing two-factor authentication can help increase online safety.

It is often the case that **those working to counter online abuse and/or support sexual human rights become themselves the targets of online violence**. These people need a way to receive support from a caring and committed online community, because continued harassment will have a chilling effect on them raising their voices. One example of how this could work is to activate an alert when defenders are attacked that help generate a positive and loving speech from both men and women to denormalise the attacks.

Finding solutions to online crimes against women and gender-diverse people remains **a task for all stakeholders**. And what is extremely important to ensure is that such solutions are not misused to curb freedom of expression online.

We need to be mindful of the fact that **the discourse around gender-based threats may be abused** and may even become counterproductive in local contexts. For instance, some locally imposed Internet access bans are explained by the need to protect women and girls from online abuse. So the fact that there is a generalised perception of online threats tends to be used as an excuse for preventing women and girls from accessing the Internet. Thus, there is a need to refrain from fueling the abuse of this rhetoric by **stressing the need to empower women, rather than to protect them**.

Public policies focused on **empowering women and gender-diverse people** through education and awareness-raising (e.g. about the risks of exposure on the Internet and ways to defend themselves against violence) are key to fighting violence online. Another measure could be the creation of psychological support centers for those who are victims of online violence. On the

private sector side, actions could include establishing public policies for the production of the devices less vulnerable to attacks and invasions, and enhancing their privacy and data protection practices as a way to create a nurturing and welcoming online space.

1.1.4. IGF 2017

The 12th IGF meeting, themed “Shape your digital future!”, was structured around the following key themes: access, inclusion and diversity; critical Internet resources; cybersecurity; digital economy, digital work, trade and sustainable development; gender and youth; human rights online; multistakeholder cooperation and governance; and new technologies and emerging issues.

a) General overview of gender discussions

Out of the 187 analysed sessions, 13 tackled gender issues as their main topic, as indicated in their descriptions, and (where available) session reports and/or transcripts. Among these 13 sessions, **11 tackled issues that fit under the thematic focus of the BPF Gender** (most of them discussed issues related to gender-based violence and harm, but some also looked at aspects such as consent and self-expression online).

An analysis of session transcripts and reports indicates that, among the remaining sessions, 49 integrated gender issues in discussions on various Internet policy topics. Across these sessions, gender issues surfaced mostly in relation to **access, inclusion, and equality**. Other issues explored included g**ender-based bias and discrimination, and the empowerment of women and gender-diverse people and their representation in ICT professions, including in leadership positions**.

IGF 2017 saw the first ever **main session dedicated to discussing gender issues.** The key messages from the session[7] are also a reflection of most of the discussion held throughout the entire meeting in relation to gender. For instance, a recurrent topic was that gender should be understood through the lens of intersectionality, which integrates diversity, including on rural/urban locations, economic power, and sexual orientation and gender identities. It was also pointed out that digital divide facilitates discrimination of women and girls and as such, is a human rights issue that stakeholders should address in line with international human rights frameworks.

Out of the 49 sessions that integrated gender issues in discussions on other Internet policy topics, **14 touched on issues that form the focus of the 2020 BPF Gender.**

[7] IGF 2017, “Geneva Messages”, https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2017-geneva-messages#

b) How violence, harm, pleasure and/or consent featured at IGF 2017

Most of the sessions that tackled issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and/or consent were held under the themes gender and youth (11) and human rights (7). Others were included under access, inclusion and diversity; new technologies and emerging issues; cybersecurity; and multistakeholder cooperation and governance.

⇒ Consent, self-expression and pleasure

One session which looked at "body as data" shed light on the significance of and **connections between gender, sexual orientation, and data**. A key point raised was that women and gender-diverse people (including the LGBTQI community) need to be able to provide **meaningful consent** regarding the collection and processing of data in relation to various online services. The cultural dimension of gender and sexuality is key to understanding the power of data and its linkage to surveillance; for instance, teenage girls from low-income communities tend to experience surveillance more than boys, as their parents often check their phones to monitor their activities. There is also the issue of women being especially adamant about being registered in public databases/services organised around data. Whoever is not part of the dataset will not receive services, and this generates a chain effect that prevents marginalised communities such as women from a specific cast, class or race and gender non-conforming individuals from having a say in any decisions around data.

Consent was also discussed from the perspective of **making a difference between consent for producing something vs consent for distributing something**. As explained by the Dynamic Coalition on Gender and Internet Governance (DC Gender), a woman may consent to participating only in the creation of an image or a video (step 1), including one that is intimate or sexual – but not consent to its distribution (step 2).[8] Social media users often violate others' consent by publishing photos or videos that are consensually produced but are non-consensually distributed. Finding a way to embed consent in the design and architecture of platforms might be an issue interesting to explore.

When it comes to **legal aspects**, laws related to non-consensual sharing of intimate images must not be drawn so broadly that they suppress discourse about sexual rights. The right to justice should not be seen as more important than the right to sexual expression. And while non-consensual production and distribution need to be treated as rights violations, consensual creations need to be protected. Legal distinctions between what is consensual and what is non-consensual need to be strengthened to enable freedom of expression, including sexual expression. Without laws that firmly distinguish the consensual from the non-consensual, women who publish intimate digital images of themselves can be charged under laws statutes related to obscenity or indecency.

[8] Dynamic Coalition on Gender and Internet Governance, "An Internet For #YesAllWomen? Women's rights, gender and equality in digital spaces", https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/4486/1136

A discussion on women digital inclusion noted that women's access to the Internet should also be looked at from the perspective of **freedom of expression**, i.e. to what extent women can indeed use the Internet to express themselves freely. More needs to be done to protect the rights of women to express themselves and their opinions online. In the case of young women, for example, surveys found that the ability to express themselves online is very important, especially in cultural contexts with strict norms about what can and cannot be said.

One particular concern is the **criminalisation of certain behaviour in some societies** (for instance, expressing one's sexuality). As one participant argued, "the point of access is not simply to have access; it has to be around agency, and it has to be around empowerment". Moreover, **meaningful access** to the Internet is not only about education or economic empowerment, but also about pleasure and leisure.

⇒ Violence and harm

There seemed to be agreement across many sessions that women are subject to various forms of hate speech and harassment online more than men. For instance, **online misogyny and gender-based harassment** are not uncommon, and are often used in an attempt to intimidate or silence women active in professions such as journalisms or politics. And while some professions are more prone to digital violence than others (as is the case with journalists), women and men in these professions experience different forms of violence and threats. Recognising these differences should be a key element in addressing online violence and harm.

Stereotypes about women, especially within diverse ethnic or religious communities, also contribute to **online hate speech**. And while online sexist hate speech is often considered as harmless, it is yet rampant in many ways and part of a continuum of violence against women and a manifestation of multi-level attacks to women's rights. Potential action against hate speech includes protecting free speech without tolerating sexist hate speech, introducing legislative changes to include gender/sex in hate crime legislation, reviewing the responsibility of platform providers in relation to sexist hate speech, and using existing regulatory powers with respect to the media to combat the use of sexist hate speech.

Internet governance spaces and processes have an important role to play in tackling gender-based violence in the online space. As noted in one high-level session, "Internet governance [should address the] cyber threats that women face, the new form of violence, harassment, harmful stereotypes that the Internet is perpetrating".

An important point made in a discussion on gender inclusion was that the debates on gender and the Internet should not be overly focused on gender-based violence, but also address issues such as **women inclusion and participation in Internet governance processes and spaces, including in leadership roles**. It was pointed out that we need more representation of women across the ICT and Internet governance fields, including in leadership positions.

Empowering women to use the Internet as they wish (e.g. to share their pictures and explore their sexuality), in an environment of safety, privacy and security, is another aspect that needs to feature more prominently in debates.

Discussions on digital inclusion for women touched on the fact that women's access to and use of the Internet is not only a matter of having access to the infrastructure and technology itself. It is also an issue of **being able to exercise one's freedoms online**. Forms of discrimination, harrasment, and violence based on people's gender identity or sexual orientations act as barriers to (meaningful) Internet access and it make the promise of freedoms online elusive for many users. If, once online, women are exposed to misogynistic behaviour or cyber-bullying, they will then tend to limit or stop their online participation/presence. They will stop expressing themselves online to avoid forms of violence and hate speech.

One session offered examples of actions women take to avoid being harassed online based on gender, from not disclosing their gender identity online, to posting photos of their husbands and children in their online profile, and to choosing to use their husbands' account to access social media instead of opening their own.

Improving online safety and taking action to prevent cyber-harassment, cyber-bullying and other forms of gender-based violence is a key step towards a better inclusion of women in the online space. Moreover, it is important to understand the impact that online violence actually has on women, and the personal and social implications of the violence. What actions are women taking when they are exposed to online violence and what is the impact of these actions? Will this limit their educational or employment opportunities online? These are just some examples of questions that need to be looked into.

There were also discussions on the challenges of implementing legal protections around freedom of expression and **criminalising gender-based violence in the online space**. In many cases, obscenity is seen as the primary harm or crime, as opposed to violations of the right to privacy and consent. And the fact that obscenity is frequently not clearly defined in regulations creates space for interpretation and uncertainty. Moreover, law enforcement agencies often have difficulties in making a difference between consensual and non-consensual acts in the online space.

Another aspect raised in some discussions was related to ensuring that e**xisting laws are implemented properly to tackle gender-based violence, and not misused to limit freedom of expression**. If addressing online gender-based violence requires restrictions and limitations to freedom of expression, these have to be lawful, necessary, and proportionate. Addressing violence should not be used as an excuse to reduce people's right to freedom of expression, especially that of women and LGBTIQI people.

Some discussions touched on **violence against politically active women**. As illustrated in one session on gender equality, it is not rarely that women who express their political views online are attacked not based on those views, but on their gender or sexuality. Another session noted that gender-based online abuse and harassment against women active in politics is a challenge to

democracy and political participation. Approaches to combat such phenomena include raising awareness of online abuse, increasing the understanding of online rights, and encouraging women and men in politics to advocate for gender rights. An equally important aspect is to consider diversity when combatting violence against women in politics, as women belonging to different communities face different types of abuse and violence (for instance, black women may face misogyny but also rasism).

Policies and initiatives focused on addressing gender-based violence have to take into consideration cultural contexts. For instance, it is important to understand that some actions or behaviours in one specific context may be considered harassment or pose a safety risk for women or gender-diverse people. Likewise, some countries view the expression of LGBTQI rights as harmful content, while others consider it a lawful expression of identity.

One important point (raised in a discussion on access) was that **women and girls are not a homogenous group** and that barriers to access and inclusion, as well as issues related to discrimination, violence, harm, and self-expression are specific to specific communities (e.g. refugee women; indigenous women; women in rural areas; women with disabilities; young women; elderly women; and lesbian, bisexual, trans and queer women). This is why in debates on how to achieve gender equality and protect gender rights we have to be specific about what we mean by women and girls, and adapt the discussions to the specific needs and challenges of specific communities. There is also a need to develop different tools, strategies or advocacy campaigns to meet the needs of different groups of people.

1.1.5. IGF 2018

Held under the overarching theme “The Internet of trust”, IGF 2018 tackled Internet and digital policy issues under eight main themes: cybersecurity, trust and privacy; development, innovation and economic issues; human rights, gender and youth; digital inclusion and accessibility; evolution of Internet governance; emerging technologies; media and content; and technical and operational issues.

a) General overview of gender discussions

Out of the 149 analysed sessions, four (4) tackled gender issues as their main topic, as indicated in their descriptions, session reports (where available) and/or transcripts. Among these four sessions, **three tackled issues that fit under the thematic focus of the BPF Gender**, in particular with regard to violence and harm.

An analysis of session transcripts and reports indicates that, among the remaining session, 51 integrated gender issues in other discussions on various Internet policy topics. Across these sessions, gender issues surfaced mostly in relation to **access and inclusion;** other discussions touched on topics such as **gender bias and discrimination, participation of women in the digital economy and in policy-making processes, and gender equality**.

As indicated in the IGF 2018 Messages, the theme of "human rights, gender and youth" at IGF 2018 saw sessions moving beyond the gender binary and focusing not only on women, but also on gender non-binary and queer persons. Gender needs to be viewed as a cross-cutting theme, and gender inequality must be located at the intersection of other inequalities such as class (income/education), location (urban/rural), race and ethnicity, among others. It is crucial to examine emerging issues and technologies such as dataveillance and biases in artificial intelligence algorithms through the lens of gender and sexuality perspectives, particularly while analysing policies and strategies to address them.[9]

Nine sessions also touched on issues related to violence and harm from a gender perspective.

b) How violence, harm, pleasure and/or consent featured at IGF 2018

Most of the sessions that tackled issues related to violence and harm were held under the theme human rights, gender and youth (ten of them). Other sessions were included under digital inclusion and accessibility and emerging technologies.

Our analysis did not reveal any specific discussions on issues related to pleasure and consent online.

⇒ Violence and harm

One key point raised across several sessions was related to the **offline-online continuum:** "the same violence, the same gender-based discrimination, the same inequalities we have offline have [also] come online". And violence in the digital world affects different genders differently.

In the main session on human rights, a question was raised on t**he extent to which women trust the Internet**. In many instances, women who do have access to the Internet face various challenges that impacts trust, including discrimination and various forms of violence (e.g. hate speech, harassment, cyber-mobbing). Faced with these issues, many women choose to limit their use of the Internet/digital technologies or go completely offline/stop using them. Moreover, these forms of online harm have consequences beyond the online space, as those affected by such harm often also experience insecurities and choose to "shut down both physically and verbally". And there is also the issue of hate speech and online harassment preventing women from political participation.

Addressing online gender-based violence and ensuring online safety needs to be more carefully addressed as one of the many elements that would foster gender inclusion and equality in the digital space. The cyberspace needs to become more welcoming and safe; **a safer Internet means a more inclusive Internet**.

[9] "IGF 2018 Messages – Human Rights, Gender, and Youth", https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/6037/1414

Some discussions revolved around **whose responsibility it is to prevent online harassment and backlash**. Civil society has a role, for instance in flagging incidents. And corporate platforms also have a responsibility to protect women (e.g. they could implement digital literacy and safety training and make content available in local languages). Moreover, laws should define what is online harassment, and policy makers must address the difference between freedom of speech on the one hand, and sexism or hate speech targeting women on the other hand.

Gender-based violence (in various forms, including harassment and hate speech) is not only about women; they also occurs with regard to gender non-binary people. **The specific issues faced by the LGBTQI communities** also need to be considered when regulatory frameworks or self-regulatory content policies are put in place.

Issues related to gender-based online harm and violence were also brought up in discussions focused on children and youth. For instance, in a debate on addressing child sexual abuse it was noted that it affects four times more girls than boys. A call was made for Internet companies and social media platforms to play a more important role in the prevention of sexual abuse. Another discussion looked at youth and online violent radicalisation and briefly noted the importance of constructing a counter narrative against violent extremism targeting women. Similarly, a debate on technology, suicide and the mental health of youth discussed the different challenges that young women and men face when using technology. Each group has different risks and expectations when it comes to social media, including how they are targeted in instances of cyberbullying, bullying, sextortion, and other issues. It was pointed out that the suicide rate among girls has risen faster than among boys.

1.1.6. IGF 2019

IGF 2019 marked a shift in the programme and structure of an IGF meeting, as it was organised around three main issues: data governance; security, safety, stability and resilience; and inclusion. Stakeholders were invited to submit session proposals fitting under these issues, with the overall goal of contributing to a more focused IGF.

a) General overview of gender discussions

Out of the 153 analysed sessions, 6 tackled gender issues as their main topic, as indicated in their descriptions, session reports (where available) and/or transcripts. Among these six sessions, **4 tackled issues that fit under the thematic focus of the BPF Gender**, in particular with regard to violence, harm, and consent.

Among the remaining sessions, 62 integrated gender issues in discussions on other Internet policy topics. Across these 62 sessions, gender issues surfaced mostly in relation to **gender equality and access of women and gender-diverse people** to the Internet and their inclusion into the digital economy. It was noted that women and gender-diverse people do not have the same opportunities, presence, or influence in the digital space as men. As a recommendation, it

was noted that connectivity issues must be viewed from a gender perspective to understand and respond to the need to foster better inclusion of women and gender-diverse people.[10]

Ten sessions also touched on issues related to violence, harm, pleasure or consent online.

b) How violence, harm, pleasure and/or consent featured at IGF 2019

Most of the sessions that tackled issues related to violence and harm were held under the theme Security, safety, stability and resiliency (five of them). One session that looked at issues related to consent and one session which discussed harm belonged to the Digital inclusion theme. Another session addressing violence and harm was included under the Data governance theme. There was also one main session that touched to some extent on issues under the BPF focus, which did not belong to a particular theme.

⇒ Consent, self-expression and pleasure

Consent was discussed in the framework of a debate on gender, body and data in the digital age (as part of the DC on Gender and Internet Governance session). It was noted during the debate that consent (with regard to the collection and processing of one's data) is an extremely important issue in the age of the so-called datafication. For **consent to be meaningful**, it has to be negotiable, and people have to have all information needed to be able to make an informed consent.

The **non-consensual sharing of sexual images** was brought up as a specific issue, with a focus on how it is dealt with in regulations and legal frameworks. Although such situations are increasingly perceived as a privacy or data protection violation, women or sexual minorities who have experienced such issues speak of them in terms of abuse or sexual assault. Unfortunately, the harm associated with such non-consensual sharing of data is rarely (if at all) addressed by laws.

⇒ Violence and harm

Some discussions on **hate speech** tackled issues of hate speech against women and gender diverse people. Participants in one session focused on hate speech noted that **experiences of hate speech online are gendered** and that women – including women journalists – are specifically targeted by perpetrators of hate speech online. This requires gendered responses taking into account the different experiences of men and women.

Observations were made that harassment and hate speech online tend to have women as the main target in general; online platforms should consider this when devising policies to address online hate speech, and they should also promote more equity in online participation. Another session emphasised that **women are disproportionately affected and intimidated by hate speech**. This makes it more likely that they avoid speaking about certain topics or completely

[10] "Consolidated IGF 2019 Thematic Overview and Berlin IGF Messages", https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/9615/1963

withdraw from online discussions.

Hate speech, harassment, and other online harms generate fear and can **prevent women and gender-diverse people from participating online**. And the reality is that the online space tends to amplify gender-based violence and can ultimately silence freedom of expression.

Women also tend to have more **vulnerability with regard to unsafe Internet of things (IoT) devices**, another session noted. This applies both with regard to data protection issues and the safety of the product itself, not to mention in relation to gender bias issues. Women must be more actively involved in policy discussions around the safety and security of IoT devices, and offer their perspectives on certain biases that may come with the design of IoT devices.

A session looked in particular at **online sexism and hate speech**, and it was noted that the attacks that women face in the online space (including manifestations of online sexism and misogyny) reflect social prejudice that is deeply based on context, as well as intersectional. An effective online content governance framework (both in terms of legislation and policies developed by online platforms) is needed to balance freedom of expression with the freedom from misogynistic speech.

During a discussion on human rights and digital platforms, a point was raised that **violence against women on the Internet remains largely unpunished** and this is an issue that both regulators, law enforcement authorities (LEAs), and online platforms have to pay more attention to. For instance, LEAs could consider creating special units and training people specifically on these issues.

There were also debates on **reducing online harm and violence against sex workers**, which can take various forms. Harm reduction in these cases would involve listening to them about their specific problems and supporting them in finding solutions to these problems.

A discussion on **online gaming and child protection** shed light on the fact that there are significantly more boys than girls that play games online. While the issue of online grooming is often discussed in relation to girls, the risk of being groomed in online games might more often occur with boys.

Emphasis was put on the fact that the **violence and abuse that women might experience online prevent some of them from using the Internet and from engaging with Internet governance processes**. There are cases, for instance, of verbal attacks and harassment against women journalists (more than against male journalists), and this results in women not feeling safe online. The same happens with LGBTQI communities, who also face threats online mostly because of their sexual identities. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to these problems; but one approach that could help empower women and gender minorities is to provide training and capacity building programmes on safe and effective communication and public participation online.

Last, but not least, it was emphasised that **digital technologies can and should be used to prevent some of the discrimination, bias, and violence against women and gender-diverse people**. As long as there is a careful balance, technology can serve to actually promote gender equality and not necessarily hamper it.

1.2. Insights from interviews

To gather more input for the report, the BPF conducted a series of interviews with members of the IGF community, the IGF Secretariat and the MAG Chair (Annexes B and C). The interviewees were asked to comment not only on whether and how the IGF has featured discussions on violence, harm, pleasure and consent, but also on the overall integration of gender issues within IGF discussions.

1.2.1. Integrating gender issues into the IGF programme

Interviews conducted by the BPF asked respondents to comment on the integration of gender issues into the IGF programme.

Respondents noted that the IGF seems to be **generally open to discussing gender issues**, but that improvements in this regard are always welcome. Some noted the need for a main session tackling gender issues only: "forcing" IGF participants to attend such a session while nothing else is happening in parallel could help raise the visibility of gender issues within the community.

One comment reiterated by several respondents was the need to **mainstream gender across all (or at least most) IGF sessions**, and ensure that various Internet and digital policy issues are looked at through gender lenses. There is a need, they noted, to break the gender discussions out of silos and adopt a more intersectional approach, while also avoiding a reductionist approach. One concrete recommendation was for IGF workshop proposal forms to include a question asking session organisers to indicate how they plan to approach the proposed topics from a gender diversity perspective.

While discussions dedicated only to gender issues should still happen, it is important to ensure that these discussions are **not only attracting the communities they are referring to**. IGF sessions on gender issues should actively look for more diverse participants themselves, as a way to avoid echo chambers among members of the same community.

One interview participant also highlighted the need for high-level champions on gender inclusion issues to expand the subject matter beyond the targeted and affected community.

Several participants noted that **the inclusion of gender in the debates is a two-way responsibility**: it has to be encouraged from the top (by the MAG, the IGF Secretariat, etc.), but the community also has to bring forward more gender-related discussions, if it feels these are needed.

1.2.2. Violence, harm, pleasure and consent online at the IGF

All interview participants agree that the IGF is and should remain an adequate space to discuss issues of violence, harm, and pleasure and consent online from a gender-diversity perspective.

Most of them also agree that there is a tendency for IGF discussions on gender issues to focus on negative aspects such as harm and violence, and that more focus on empowerment and self-expression would be beneficial. However, it was also noted that content at the IGF is community-driven, and the negative or harm-related focus could be just a reflection of issues that those submitting topics care about or feel are urgent.

The fact that the IGF has less discussions on pleasure and consent should also be seen as part of a broader policy issue of how to create more positive content around sexuality and self-expression without dismissing the focus on violence and harm.

There is also a challenge in the fact that there is still some sensitivity about discussing issues of self-expression, pleasure and consent. Just as in the physical space the discussions on gender and diversity tend to stop at safety, the same narrative is translated into IG discussions (not only at the IGF, but in other spaces too). Often, the conservation is not nuanced enough: Do we discuss security and safety issues because they are easier and more comfortable to tackle? If so, shouldn't we go beyond this and find out what other topics women and gender-diversity people want to talk about? These were key questions asked during one of the interviews.

Participants tended to agree that **there has to be some balance between the negative and positive issues being discussed at the IGF**. One participant noted that the IGF has an opportunity to become the main space that fosters discussions on how to empower and uplift women and gender-diverse people in the online space, and this opportunity should not be missed. Gender discussions should go beyond the "poor women/gender-diverse people" rhetoric and instead look at how to uplift and empower these communities.

Finally, it was pointed out that Issues such as pleasure and consent could also get more visibility by being integrated into other discussions on umbrella topics such as freedom of expression and freedom of association.

1.3. Survey results

The BPF conducted an online survey to collect public input on whether and how the BPF thematic issues (violence, harm, pleasure and consent online) have been brought up at the IGF between 2016 and 2019. The survey received 30 responses. Below is a summary of the input provided.

1.3.1. General perceptions on whether and how the IGF has discussed issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online

Survey respondents were invited to indicate the extent to which the IGF has engaged with the following issues in relation to women and gender-diverse people: limiting violence and harm in the online space, and acknowledging that the Internet can be empowering and used as a space for consent-based self-expression, sexuality, and pleasure.

The IGF engaging with	1 – no extent at all	2 – a little	3 – somewhat	4 – to a good extent	5 – a great extent
Limiting violence and harm in the online space	0	6	10	10	4
Acknowledging that the Internet can be empowering and used as a space for consent-based self-expression, sexuality, and pleasure	2	4	12	10	2

Most respondents (80%) think that **the IGF has been quite inclusive when it comes to discussing issues related to violence and harm** (from a gender diversity perspective): 33% to a good extent, 33% somewhat, and 14% to a great extent. The rest of respondents (20%) noted that the IGF has only marginally discussed such issues.

When it comes to acknowledging that the Internet can be empowering and used as a space for consent-based self-expression, sexuality, and pleasure, **40% of the respondents noted that the IGF has only somewhat featured such discussions**. A further 13% noted that the IGF has engaged with such topics only to a little extent, while 7% considered that there have been no such discussions at all at the IGF. At the opposite side of the spectrum, **33% of the respondents found the IGF to be featuring such discussions to a good extent**, while only 7% chose the "to a great extent" option.

These responses are also more or less consistent with the findings of our analysis: we observed that, while the IGF has constantly featured discussions on gender and violence, there have not been too many discussions focusing on pleasure and consent.

1.3.2. Hosting or attending an IGF session focused on issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online

Of the total of 30 respondents, 7 (23%) indicated that they have submitted a session proposal for an IGF annual meeting that focused on, or was in any way related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online, in relation to women and gender-diverse people. It seems that all proposals submitted by these respondents have made it to the IGF programme, as none of them answered the question related to the reasons provided by the MAG when rejecting a proposal.

Respondents who hosted such sessions at the IGF between 2019 and 2020 indicated that their sessions looked at issues such as digital inclusion, online risks and harms, gender and access, and gender-based violence and freedom of expression. Asked to assess their overall experience with these sessions, three respondents (43%) indicated that they were somewhat satisfied, two (28.5%) were highly satisfied, and other two (28.5%) had a rather neutral experience. Asked to rate the level of engagement within the sessions they hosted, three respondents (43%) found this to be genuine, two (28.5%) assessed the engagement as highly meaningful, one (14.25%) noted there has been no engagement at all, while another one (14.25%) noted that the engagement was limited to empty politeness and tokenism.

The same questions were also addressed to all respondents who attended IGF sessions that discussed issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online (a total of 28). Most of them (54%) found the overall experience to be somewhat satisfying, while 28% reported a neutral experience. Only 18% were highly satisfied with the sessions. Most respondents (72%) found the level of engagement within the sessions to be genuine, while 14% reported that the sessions were mostly about empty politeness and tokenism. At opposite sides of the spectrum, 7% of the respondents noted there has been no engagement at all in the sessions, while another 7% found the sessions to be highly engaging.

Rating	Hosted a session that discussed issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online		Attended a session that discussed issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online	
	Overall experience	Level of engagement	Overall experience	Level of engagement
Somewhat unsatisfied	0		0	
Neutral	2		8	
Somewhat satisfied	3		15	
Highly satisfied	2		5	

No engagement		1		2
Empty politeness/tokenism		1		4
Genuine		3		20
Highly meaningful		2		2

2. Inclusion of women and gender-diverse people

The BPF has also looked at the inclusion of women and gender-diverse people at the IGF. The main goal was to see the extent to which IGF discussions on the thematic issues (violence, harm, pleasure and consent) have included women and gender-diverse people; we tried to provide an answer to this question following the analysis of IGF sessions. In addition, the survey and interviews conducted by the BPF have also looked into the broader issue of gender participation and diversity within the overall IGF.

2.1. Analysis of IGF sessions that discussed violence, harm, pleasure and/or consent

As part of our analysis of IGF sessions between 2016 and 2019, we also wanted to see how the IGF discussions on the BPF thematic issues have included women and gender-diverse people. For this, we looked at those sessions that tackled the BPF thematic issues (either as main topic or within the framework of other discussions) and analysed:

- Session descriptions to see the gender diversity on panels
- Session reports (where available) to get information on the gender diversity among participants.

Key findings

- IGF discussions on violence, harm, pleasure and/or consent do exceptionally well in terms of gender diversity among speakers, moderators and participants. This, however, is only valid in terms of women-men diversity. The inclusion of gender-diverse people could not be measured.

2.1.1. Gender diversity among session speakers and moderators

When submitting a session proposal for an IGF meeting, organisers are invited to consider gender diversity in their sessions. When reviewing session proposals, MAG members also evaluate – among other elements – the gender diversity among the proposed speakers/moderators.

In our analysis, we have looked at the overall number of speakers and moderators for the analysed sessions, to determine the men:women ratio. While conducting the analysis, **we have noted that it would be impossible to go beyond this binary analysis, as the IGF has no mechanism in place to measure the inclusion and participation of gender non-binary people**.

	Gender diversity among session speakers and moderators						
	Sessions analysed	**Sessions for which data was available**	**Only women**	**More women than men**	**Equal number of women and men**	**More men than women**	**Only men**
Sessions at IGF 2019	14	12	0	7	2	3	0
Sessions at IGF 2018	12	12	2	5	1	3	1
Sessions at IGF 2017	25	20	5	11	0	4	0
Sessions at IGF 2016	15	14	3	7	3	1	0

As it can be noticed in the table above, we were not able to analyse the gender diversity among speakers and moderators for all sessions that addressed the BPF focus issues because in some instances the session descriptions can no longer be found on the IGF website.

Among the sessions for which data was available, **most of them had more women than men as speakers and moderators**. **There were also several sessions which featured only women as both speakers and moderators. A few sessions reported an equal number of men and women as speakers and moderators. And only a minority of sessions had more men than women among the speakers and moderators.** This could be explained by the fact that many of these sessions tackled gender issues as their main topics and there seems to be a tendency that such sessions traditionally feature more women than men among the main participants (speakers and moderators).

It is interesting to note that reviews conducted by DC Gender in 2016 and 2018 found that, across the analysed sessions within the respective IGF annual meetings (basically all that submitted gender report cards), men tended to account for more panellists and moderators than women.

2.1.2. Gender diversity among session participants

As part of their reporting duties, IGF session organisers are asked to complete a "gender report card" to estimate the number of participants in their sessions, as well as the number of women present. This exercise relies solely on the judgement of session organisers and rapporteurs and its accuracy can be questioned. In fact, one report card included a note saying that asking session organisers to estimate how many women are on a session is hardly effective, as one cannot be expected to simply guess the gender identity a person chooses to be associated with.

Other limitations with the gender report cards are related to: (1) the fact that not all session organisers submit them, and (2) they only look at women – men diversity. In 2018, there was an attempt to go beyond the gender binary logic, as session organisers were asked to estimate the "total number of women and gender-variant individuals present". This, however, has proven not to be working, as, again, session organisers cannot be simply expected to guess the gender identity of a person sitting in a room.

Despite these limitations, the gender report cards – where available – were the only tools the BPF could use to try to assess gender diversity among IGF session participants.

IGF	Sessions		Gender diversity among session participants (as percentage of women participants)				
	Sessions analysed	Sessions for which data was available	More than 75%	Between 51% and 74%	50%	Between 26% and 49%	25% and less
Sessions at IGF 2019	14	8	1	1	5	1	0
Sessions at IGF 2018	12	11	0	2	7	1	1
Sessions at IGF 2017	25	13	5	2	4	2	0
Sessions at IGF 2016	15	1	1	0	0	0	0

Among the sessions for which data was available, **most of them estimated equal numbers of women and men among participants, followed by sessions which estimated more women than men among participants. A minority of sessions estimated more men than women as participants.** This, again, could be explained by the fact that many of these sessions tackled gender issues as their main topics and there seems to be a tendency that such sessions traditionally attract more women among the participants.

Here too it is interesting to note that reviews conducted by DC Gender in 2016 and 2018 found that, across all sessions that submitted gender report cards, there was a tendency to have more men than women participants. This is also consistent with the general statistics from IGF annual meetings, which consistently show that more men than women as participants.

2.1.3. Conclusions

IGF sessions that discuss issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online from a gender-diversity perspective feature a good degree of gender diversity among speakers, moderators, and participants. Based on available data, this observation is valid if we consider gender diversity only from the perspective of the women vs men.

The IGF has taken steps to encourage gender diversity among session speakers and moderators and to measure gender diversity among overall session participants. However, the IGF tends to approach gender diversity in terms of the women - men binary and little is being done to both assess and encourage the participation of non-binary people. Beyond the numbers shown above, one key finding was that there are limitations in terms of information the IGF collects on gender participation. As illustrated above, we were only able to look at the women-men diversity in panels and among session participants, but there was no way to determine the extent to which the sessions we looked at also included other gender-diverse participants.

Key finding

- There is no mechanism in place to measure the inclusion and participation of gender non-binary people.

More disaggregated data is needed in order to be able to fully assess the degree of gender diversity across the overall IGF and within sessions. Collecting disaggregated data is, however, a difficult task. It is encouraging that the general IGF registration form allows participants to also select “other” as a gender choice (beyond male and female). A next step could be to integrate this approach within other IGF elements; for instance, encouraging session oganisers to offer speakers an opportunity to identify themselves as gender non-binary (if they wish to) and include that info in the session descriptions (with their permission).

Regarding the gender report cards, we acknowledge that simply relying on session organisers/rapporteurs to estimate the number of men and women attending their sessions is not a source of accurate information. And that expecting them to estimate the number of non-binary people on their sessions is even more challenging, if not simply impossible. The IGF may want to reconsider these sections in the gender report cards and try to identify other ways to collect data on gender diversity within sessions. One way could be to hand out simple forms to session participants asking them to indicate their gender (if they wish to) in an anonymous manner and leave those forms behind when they leave a session, for the rapporteurs to collect and reflect on.

2.2. Insights from interviews: gender diversity at the IGF

The BPF interviewed participants to gain insights regarding their perceived effectiveness on the inclusion of women and gender-diverse people at IGF. Interview subjects were also asked to comment on the level and quality of engagement with women and gender-diverse people.

Overall, all respondents agree that **progress has been made at IGF over the years to foster better gender diversity**, but more work still needs to be done (especially with regard to gender-diverse people).

Some participants noted that one major stumbling block in having more gender diversity is the assumption that there are not enough women with expertise to talk about various IG issues. But it was acknowledged that some session organisers may face difficulties in getting more gender diversity on their session. To deal with this, the IGF Secretariat's list of resource persons could be more actively promoted and used when a session struggles with diversity.

It was noted that one challenge remains in **moving from only ticking the gender diversity box to having meaningful participation**. It is not enough to simply have women or gender-diverse people in sessions; their participation should not be tokenised. Sometimes people feel they have only been invited to a session to tick a box. We need to avoid making people feel like they are being tokenised and are only invited to a session because they represent a certain community and not necessarily because of the value they can bring to a discussion. They should be given an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to a discussion and they should be made feel that their input really matters.

Engagement, it was noted, is more than just having people to come at an IGF. Getting someone on a session should not be the end of the engagement. Instead, the IGF should encourage women and gender-diverse people to engage with other work, participate, voice their concerns, etc.

Several respondents suggested that the IGF should **get to the local and regional level,** where there are communities/groups/people working on gender issues, and get them to engage with the IGF, at the global level. We do not only need global expertise; we need to look at the grass root level too.

Some participants commented on the **entry points to the IGF** and how they may inhibit the participation of gender-diverse people. For instance, if a form is only listing women and men as gender options, this is not welcoming for gender non-binary people. Recommendations were made for various IGF forms to be made sensitive with regard to gender diversity.

Several interview participants also note the **shortcomings of gender report cards**. While gender report cards remain an available instrument to measure and ensure diversity among speakers, session organisers often miss to respond to the question related to how their discussions included gender issues. Moreover, as these reports are not compulsory, not all session organisers fill them out, which, in turn, limits their efficiency.

Regarding the level and quality of engagement of women and gender-diverse people within the IGF, interview participants agree that while there is constant improvement, more can be done. One common output from interview participants is the need to support workshop proposals from women and gender-diverse people so that they can actually have a platform at the IGF. Finally, all interview participants mention the need to adopt an intersectional lens to gender issues and push for more integration of gender topics within IGF discussions on other IG topics.

2.3. Survey results: gender diversity at the IGF

The public survey conducted by the BPF has also collected input on **how the community perceives the inclusion of women and gender-diverse people at the IGF**. Below are the main findings.

Increasingly, the IGF has put more efforts into strengthening the inclusion of women and gender-diverse people in its annual meetings (for instance, through encouraging session organisers to have gender diversity in their sessions, introducing gender report cards, etc.). Considering these elements, the community was invited to comment on how inclusive the IGF is towards women and the gender-diverse community.

How inclusive do you think the IGF is towards	1 – not at all	2 – a little	3 – somewhat	4 – pretty inclusive	5 – highly inclusive
Women	0	0	4	19	7
The gender-diverse community	1	6	12	10	1

Most respondents (64%) found the IGF to be "pretty inclusive" towards women. About a quarter of all respondents (23%) indicated that the IGF has been highly inclusive towards women. And a small percentage (13%) consider the IGF to be only a little inclusive when it comes to integrating women in annual meetings.

The situation was rather different with regard to the inclusion of gender-diverse people, as t**he IGF was found to be less inclusive towards this category**. The largest percentage of respondents (40%) indicated that the IGF has been only somewhat inclusive towards the gender-diverse community, while 34% thought the IGF to be pretty inclusive. A further 20% of the respondents believe that the IGF is only a little inclusive when it comes to gender-diverse people. At opposite ends, 3% of the respondents think the IGF is not at all inclusive towards this community, while another 3% think the IGF is, on the contrary, highly inclusive.

Invited to provide comments in support of their ratings, some respondents noted that the IGF, and the IG space in general tend to be dominated by men, but that **women are increasingly coming to the forefront.** Suggestions were made for more efforts to be put into initiatives that foster more women participation and engagement in the IGF and in the broader IG ecosystem (e.g. training, capacity development, etc.).

Some respondents indicated that, while it is relatively easy to observe the participation of women in IGF meetings, **it is rather difficult to assess how much the IGF has been inclusive towards the gender-diverse community**. A few comments indicated that, often, the gender diversity requirement only takes into account the inclusion of women and girls, but is less sensitive towards other gender-diverse communities. For instance, various IGF forms tend to only include men and women as options when gender questions are asked, and this situation has to be changed.

A few respondents made reference to projects and initiatives that focus on the inclusion of women and the LGBTQI community in Internet governance, which should be more prominent at the IGF too. One reference was made to the experience of a trans woman who was invited as a panelist to an IGF session: "she felt that she was invited to fill a space, not because they would be interested in learning about her experience". This pointed to the need for the IG space to be genuinely more inclusive towards this community.

One comment noted that the discussion on gender inclusion should not be limited to how gender-diverse people are joining the IGF as speakers, moderators or participants. Instead, we should also be looking at whether and how the gender-diverse community is represented in leadership positions within the MAG or in other IGF leadership positions: "It is great to tick gender report cards in terms of speakers and contributors at the annual event, but this needs to go higher", it was noted.

One respondent noted that gender inclusiveness is not only about bringing women and gender-diverse people to an annual IGF meeting, but also about **bringing gender perspective to all issues that are being discussed**. In their view, this has only been partially achieved at the IGF, and there seems to be a tendency for IGF sessions dedicated to gender issues to be decreasing.

Another respondent commented that the fact that the BPF Gender is looking into gender inclusion issues is in itself a proof that the IGF is inclusive towards gender.

The survey then moved on to ask participants that identify themselves as women of belonging to other gender-diverse communities to comment on the gender receptiveness of the IGF space from their own perspectives. Many respondents who identified themselves as women noted that they have met no gender-related barriers when joining an IGF meeting and that they have felt heard and secure when participating in the IGF. A few respondents identifying themselves as belonging to the gender non-binary group provided similar answers, but also noted that, in general, there tends to be little representation of gender diverse people at the IGF and that their participants tends to only be observed in discussions on gender-related topics, and not necessarily in each thematic area of the IGF.

One recommendation was made to implement a mandatory usage of pronouns to address people and avoid misgendering issues. “All participants should be treated with decency”, it was commented.

2.4. Insights from taking stock submissions

At the end of each IGF cycle, a call for public input is launched, inviting the community to take stock of the recently concluded annual IGF meeting and make suggestions for the upcoming meeting. These annual calls for input generally gathered between 20 and 40 submissions which reflect on the content, format, and structure of IGF programmes, as well as on logistical issues.

As part of our analysis, we have looked at individual submissions reflecting on IGF 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019, to see if the community made reference to gender-related issues in their comments. We found that at least three (3) submissions every year mention gender issues. Below is an overview of the main points raised.

Cycle	Total no of submissions	Submissions that made reference to gender issues	Gender issues referred to
2016 – 2017	31	7	One contribution noted that issues of gender equality and sexuality need to be more mainstreamed. Another contribution, however, argued that the depth and breath of the gender equality discussions was positive. Gender issues were brought up consistently and were fairly visible across workshops and main sessions, with new actors organising sessions in this area. There were several workshops on gender-based online violence,

			which indicates that the issue is being taken seriously and being discussed. Unfortunately, it is still mostly women and other gender/sexual minorities participating in these sessions and raising questions of inclusion at the IGF. More diversity in such sessions should be encouraged. The IGF needs to address gender as more than just women and men. Gender diversity needs to be ensured across all sessions. BPF Gender should continue. Some noted that the gender report cards contributed to bringing more gender diversity to sessions. Others argued that this is a challenging formality, that does not contribute effectively to having gender balance at sessions.
2017 – 2018	32	4	Gender balance needs to be ensured across all sessions, and gender equality needs to be a guiding principle in the planning of an IGF meeting. There is still a need to strengthen the participation of women in the Forum. The organisation of a main session on gender was welcome.
2018 – 2019	22	3	Continue to pay attention to gender balance in sessions. The BPF Gender was praised for looking at the needs of underserved populations of women and gender non-binary persons.
2019 – 2020	41	7	The participation of women in the overall IGF and in sessions should be further encouraged. In addition, it should be noted that gender diversity should not be only about women, but also about other gender-diverse people. Gender issues could have been more prominent in the overall IGF programme.

			Inclusive and diverse participation at IGF, requires safety that starts at the registration. The real name policy for registration can pose a threat to participants of diverse genders and sexualities. Alternative approaches to identity verification should be explored in consultation with affected individuals and communities, including the DC on Gender and Internet Governance.

A recurrent topic across submissions to the taking stock process has been the need to foster more gender diversity within the IGF as a whole and in IGF sessions. Most submissions mentioning this issue made reference to the need to have more women participate in the IGF. But there have also been observations that **gender diversity is not only about women, and that more inclusion of gender non-binary people is also needed**. Moreover, it has also been emphasised that efforts for more gender inclusion should not stop at ensuring gender diversity, but instead aim at gender balance.

One submission noted that inclusive and diverse participation at IGF requires safety that starts at the registration. The real name policy for registration can pose a threat to participants of diverse genders and sexualities. A call was made for the IGF to look into alternative approaches to identity verification.

References were made to the gender report card: while some noted that the card has helped foster more gender diversity in sessions, others argued that the card is a challenging formality that does not contribute effectively to ensuring gender balance.

In terms of how gender issues have featured in IGF discussions, the comments received were diverse. Some praised the depth and breath of discussions on gender equality issues, and welcomed the inclusion of debates on gender-based violence topics. Others noted that such issues need to be more mainstreamed. And a concern was raised that it is mostly women and gender/sexual minorities that participate in sessions discussing issues of gender inclusion. Some contributions praised the work of the BPF Gender, as well as the holding of a main session on gender at IGF 2017.

IV. Recommendations

Throughout its work, the BPF has collected and developed a series of recommendations on how the IGF can foster greater gender diversity and how the discussions on gender-related issues in general could be more mainstreamed. Some of these recommendations are based on the research conducted by the BPF, while others have resulted from input and insights collected through the public survey and interviews (in the latter case, the BPF has prioritised recommendations that were recurrent across survey and interview responses).

1. Gender mainstreaming at the IGF

- The IGF should continue to encourage the integration of gender-related issues within discussions on other Internet and digital policy issues, building on the positive trend observed over the past four years. The percentage can increase from 41% in 2019 to much more.
    - One concrete proposal in this regard is for MAG to consider including a question in IGF workshop proposal forms asking session organisers to indicate whether and how they plan to approach the proposed topics from a gender diversity perspective.
    - Another proposal is for gender report cards to be more consistenly analysed after each IGF to better understand the degree of integrating gender issues into the discussions. This analysis should then serve as input for when a new call for proposals is issued.
- While discussions dedicated only to gender issues should still happen, it is important to ensure that these discussions are not only attracting the communities they are referring to. IGF sessions on gender issues should actively look for more diverse participants themselves, as a way to avoid echo chambers among members of the same community.
- The inclusion of gender into the debates is a two-way responsibility: it has to be encouraged from the top (by the MAG, the IGF Secretariat, etc.), but the community should also be more proactive in requesting more gender-related discussions or more gender mainstreaming, if it feels these are needed.
- The IGF intersessional work should promote more discussions and linkages between the Best Practice Forums and Dynamic Coalitions in order to allow for more interdisciplinarity.

2. Integration of discussions on violence, harm, pleasure and consent

- The IGF should encourage more discussions on empowerment, self-expression, pleasure and consent as well, as women's and gender-diverse people's experiences online are not and should not be limited to harm and violence issues.

- The IGF has an opportunity to become the main space that fosters discussions on how to empower and uplift women and gender-diverse people in the online space, and this opportunity should not be missed.

- The IGF should make sure that discussions on these issues do not happen "inside bubbles", but that they reach and include the wider IGF community. At the same time, efforts should be made to bring to the debate stakeholders whose work is related to these issues, but who have so far been missing from IGF discussions.

- Strategic thinking is needed to identify where and in what way these issues should be further addressed within the IGF. A Dynamic Coalition, for instance, could be considered.

3. Gender diversity at the IGF

- More disaggregated data is needed in order to be able to fully assess the degree of gender diversity across the overall IGF. The MAG and the IGF Secretariat should consider developing a mechanism to measure the inclusion and participation of gender non-binary people. The BPF acknowledges that this is not an easy task and it suggests including gender-diverse people in a conversation of whether and how such a mechanism could be built.

    - It is encouraging that the general IGF registration form allows participants to also select "other" as a gender choice (beyond male and female). A further improvement could be to include a blank space next to "other" to be filled out by participants who wish to be specific about their gender identity.

    - Another next step could be to integrate this approach within other IGF elements; for instance, encouraging session oganisers to offer speakers an opportunity to identify themselves as gender non-binary (if they wish to) and include that info in the session descriptions (with their permission).

- The gender diversity principle should apply across all sessions. It is extremely important that discussions focused on gender issues are not only or mainly including the communities whose issues they aim to address.

- Having women and gender-diverse people in sessions should not be the end goal. Their participation should not be tokenised. Nor should participation stop once the session ends; instead, the IGF should encourage women and gender-diverse people to engage with other work, participate, voice their concerns, etc.
    - The IGF should try to go beyond capacity building to also develop confidence building for those working on gender issues at IGF. This means supporting the presenters and participants beyond a submission and all the way to the delivery at the IGF.
- The IGF should work more closely with other organisations which are active on gender issues. It should also cooperate with national and regional IGF initiatives (NRIs) to reach out at the local level to organisations and individuals who do grassroot work on gender diversity and participation, and encourage them to participate in IGF activities.
- The list of IGF resource persons should be more actively promoted and used to help session organisers have more gender diversity in their sessions.
    - The list of resource persons could include specific tags allowing experts who are women and gender-diverse people to identify themselves as such if they wish to.
- When discussing approaches for fostering more gender diversity at the IGF, the MAG and the Secretariat should seek input from the targeted community directly and involve them in these discussions.
- In general, IGF Best Practice Forums, Dynamic Coalitions and various working groups would also benefit from having a gender assessment in terms of how they are thinking of and addressing gender participation and topics of gender in their work.
- Allocating more funds to foster the participation of less represented gender communities should be encouraged.
- The MAG could look into encouraging IGF sessions that experiment with innovative formats, where more people from different groups/communities/ can actively listen to each other and be exposed to each others' views. Discussing issues through a performance, a role play or an interactive exercise, for instance, could foster cross-pollination and break the silos in which the same people have the same conversations.
- The MAG should consider the efficiency and effectiveness of gender report cards and assess whether changes to this mechanism are needed. This report outlines several shortcomings that could be addressed.
    - One way to collect more accurate information regarding gender diversity in sessions could be to hand out simple forms to session participants asking them to

indicate their gender (if they wish to) in an anonymous manner, and leave those forms behind at the end of the session, for the rapporteurs to collect and reflect on.

- When it comes to the MAG itself, it is encouraging that there is balance between men and women. But improvements could be brought here as well:
  - When appointing MAG members, the UN Secretary-General should also look at whether there are candidates who have expertise on gender issues. Simply having women on the MAG does not necessarily mean that expertise on gender issues is present.
  - When a call for nominations for MAG is open, it could be made somehow more clear that gender diversity is about all genders. That might encourage gender-diverse people to get into the process.

4. Beyond the IGF

The BPF's initial plan was to also look at other Internet-related policy processes and spaces and how they foster the participation of women and gender-diverse people when discussing issues of violence, harm, pleasure and consent online.

Throughout the work, the BPF has realised that, while various Internet-related policy processes and spaces may discuss the thematic issues, this is usually done in the context or on the margins of other discussions, and there is no such process exclusively dedicated to looking at gender-related issues in an Internet context. At the same time, there are broader policy processes and spaces that look at least at some of the BPF thematic issues, but not necessarily from an Internet-related perspective. The BPF did not have sufficient capacity to conduct a mapping of such processes, but it recommends that the IGF (either through the BPF or through other activity) takes up this issue and:

- Maps policy processes and spaces that discuss issues of violence, harm, pleasure and consent in the digital space, from a gender-diversity perspective;
- Maps policy processes and space that discuss issues of violence, harm, pleasure and consent from a gender-diversity perspective, but not necessarily in an Internet/digital context;
- Tries to foster linkages between these processes, by inviting them to contribute to IGF discussions and activities focused on the thematic issues.

V. Annexes

Annex A: BPF Gender public survey

This year, the BPF on Gender and Access is looking at Internet-related policy processes and spaces through a femminist approach, to determine whether and how they protect and foster participation of women and gender-diverse people. The focus is placed on Internet-related policy processes and spaces that foster discussions or develop policies, recommendations, and/or guidelines that focus on (a) limiting violence and harm in the online space and (b) fostering the use of the Internet for self-expression and pleasure with consent as a guiding principle. In line with this, we intend to:

- Look at whether and how the BPF thematic issues (violence, harm, pleasure and consent online) have been brought up at the IGF since IGF 2016
- Identify regional policy processes and spaces (if any) that tackle the BPF thematic issues (from a gender-diversity perspective)

Section 1: IGF

1. Increasingly, the IGF has put more efforts into strengthening the inclusion of women and gender-diverse people in its annual meetings (for instance, through encouraging session organisers to have gender diversity in their sessions, introducing gender report cards, etc.).

Considering these elements, how inclusive do you think the IGF is towards:

a) women

b) the gender diverse community?

(For each option: Scale 1-5: 1- not at all, 2 - a little, 3 - somewhat, 4 - pretty inclusive, to 5 - highly inclusive)

2. Would you like to provide any comments in support of your response to question 1?

[text field]

3. If you identify yourself as a woman or belong to other gender communities, would you like to comment on the gender receptiveness of the IGF space? E.g.: Have you faced barriers in joining an IGF meeting? Do you feel secure enough and heard when contributing to IGF discussions?

[text field]

4. To what extent do you think that the IGF space has engaged with the following issues, in relation to women and gender-diverse people:

a. Limiting violence and harm in the online space

b. Acknowledging that the Internet can be empowering and used as a space for consent-based self-expression, sexuality, and pleasure

(For each option: Scale 1-5 with 1- no extent at all, 2 - a little, 3 - somewhat, 4 - to a good extent, to 5 - a great extent)

5. Over the past five years (IGF 2016 – IGF 2020), have you submitted a session proposal for an IGF annual meeting that focused on, or was in any way related with, any of the the four thematic issues that the BPF is focusing on this year (violence, harm, pleasure and consent online - in relation to women and gender-diverse people)?

a. Yes

b. No

5.1. If your session proposal focused on/related with one of the previously mentioned four topics was rejected, what reasons has the MAG offered?

5.2. If you hosted such a session at the IGF between 2016 and 2019, please provide details about the session (when it was held, who organised it, what was the focus and the result, etc.). If still available, please provide a link to the session on the IGF website. If you are hosting such a session in 2020, provide details on the scope of the session and a link.

[This is a follow-up to question 5 and it relates to sessions that focused on, or were in any way related with, any of the four thematic issues that the BPF is focusing on this year (violence, harm, pleasure and consent online - in relation to women and gender-diverse people).]

5.3. If you hosted such a session at the IGF between 2016 and 2019, please rate:

a. Your overall experience with the session.

   Scale 1-5: 1 - unsatisfied / 2 - 3 - neutral / 5 highly satisfied

b. Level of engagement

   Scale 1-4: 1- no engagement 2 - Empty politeness/tokenism 3 - genuine / 4 - highly meaningful

[This is a follow-up to question 5 and it relates to sessions that focused on, or were in any way related with, any of the four thematic issues that the BPF is focusing on this year (violence, harm, pleasure and consent online - in relation to women and gender-diverse people).]

6 & 7. If you attended an IGF session that focused on, or was in any way related with, any of the four thematic issues that the BPF is focusing on this year (violence, harm, pleasure and consent online - in relation to women and gender-diverse people), please rate:

c. Your overall experience with the session.

Scale 1-5: 1 - unsatisfied / 3 - neutral / 5 highly satisfied

d. Level of engagement

Scale 1-4: 1- no engagement 2 - Empty politeness/tokenism 3 - genuine / 4 - highly meaningful

8. If you have suggestions on what else the IGF could do to foster (a) greater participation of women in its work and (b) a stronger integration of women perspectives into its discussions, please add them below.

9. If you have suggestions on what else the IGF could do to foster (a) greater participation of gender-diverse people in its work and (b) a stronger integration of gender-diverse perspectives into its discussions, please add them below.

10. Should you have any recommendations on how the IGF could mainstream discussions on the BPF's thematic issues (violence, harm, pleasure, consent online - in relation to women and gender-diverse people), please add them below.

Section 2: Other processes/spaces

11. Are you aware of any regional Internet-related policy process or space that fosters discussions or develops policies, recommendations, and/or guidelines focused on the BPF's thematic issues (violence, harm, pleasure and consent online - in relation to women and gender-diverse people)?

Please provide links and explain in short how the identified process/space is addressing the BPF thematic issues.

12. To what extent is the identified process or space including women and gender-diverse people in its policy discussions and/or decision-making processes?

(Scale 1-5 with 1-being no extent all, 2 - a little, 3 - somewhat, 4 - to an extent, to 5 - a great extent)

13. Would you like to comment on how the identified process or space is including women and gender-diverse people in its policy discussions and/or decision-making processes?

14. Do you have any (other) examples of processes or spaces that take into consideration the BPF's thematic issues (violence, harm, pleasure and consent online - in relation to women and gender-diverse people) in their work? Please tell us more about these and provide relevant links.

Annex B: BPF Gender interviews – questionnaire

1. Increasingly, the IGF has put more efforts into strengthening the inclusion of women and gender-diverse people in its annual meetings (for instance, through encouraging session organisers to have gender diversity in their sessions, introducing gender report cards, etc.). How effective and efficient would you say these efforts have been? What were the challenges and opportunities in widening these efforts?

2. How would describe the level and quality of engagement when it comes to women and gender-diverse peoples engagement within the IGF?

3. What do you think the IGF can still do to foster greater participation of women and gender-diverse people in its activities?

4. Over the past years, the IGF has featured some discussions on gender-related issues. What were the main challenges and opportunities in integrating gender issues into the IGF programme? Would you say that the IGF needs to put more effort into fostering in-depth discussions around gender issues (beyond, for instance, the dedicated BPF and DC) or are current activities sufficient?

5. One of the BPF's tasks this year is to look at whether and how the IGF has been discussing issues related to violence, harm, pleasure and consent online. We have undertaken an analysis of session transcripts and reports since IGF 2016 and one of the main findings is that, while discussions on violence and harm were featured at the IGF, this has not so much been the case when it comes to pleasure and consent. It seems there is a tendency to focus more on problems and negative issues and not emphasise what still needs to be done to promote the Internet as a space for self-expression. How would you comment on these findings? And do you think the IGF is the best space/an adequate space for discussions on violence, harm, pleasure and consent online (from a gender-diversity perspective)? Why?

Annex C: BPF Gender interviews – participants

The BPF Gender interviews were conducted with:

- Anriette Esterhuysen, MAG Chair
- Ayesha Hassan
- Mallory Knodel
- Koliwe Majama
- Chengetai Masango, IGF Secretariat
- Valentina Pellizzer
- Lynn St. Amour
- Smita V
- Mary Uduma

The interviews were conducted by:

- Debora Albu
- Marwa Azelmat
- Amrita Choudhury
- Sorina Teleanu

Annex D: Contributions to this report

The following individuals have contributed to this report:

- Marwa Azelmat, BPF co-facilitator
- Zoey Barthelemy
- Maria-Paz Canales, BPF co-facilitator
- Chenai Chair, BPF co-facilitator
- Bruna Martins dos Santos, BPF co-facilitator
- Sorina Teleanu, IGF Secretariat consultant (editor)

Panellists in the BPF Gender session at IGF 2020 also provided additional input that is reflected in the report:

- Jennifer Chung, Dot.Asia
- Avri Doria, Technicalities
- Anri van der Spuy, Research ICT Africa

The BPF would also like to thank all participants in the interviews (see Annex C), as well as all those who have taken the time to respond to the public survey. Their input has been considered in the preparation of this report.