Internet governance and Exclusion/Inclusion: Gender

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Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion is the use of technology to create social inclusion. This came as a response to the growing exclusion of marginalized communities specifically women, youth and sexual minorities from benefitting from digital technologies.

To achieve digital inclusion, our societies should address four important aspects:

Digital Access

Connectivity

Digital Literacy And Skills

Digital Capability

Digital Exclusion

It is the lack of opportunities and capabilities for individuals and communities to use technology for the betterment of their lives.
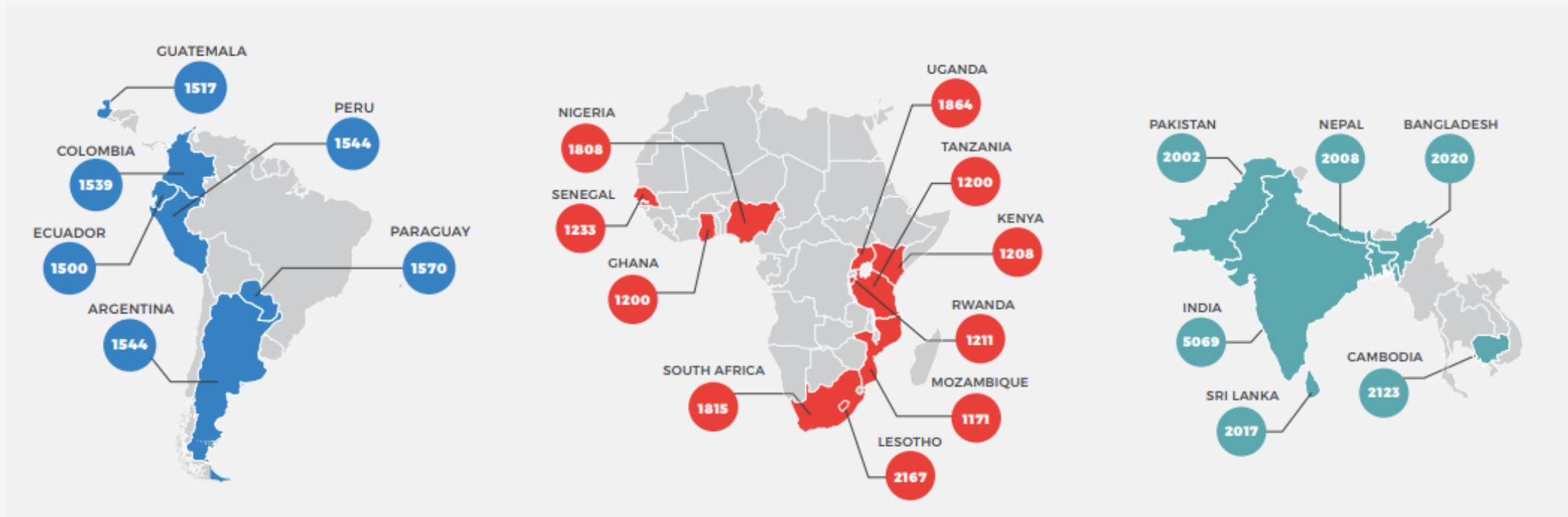
Factors Contributing to Digital Exclusion

- **The digital gender divide**

- **Affordability** - As technological sophistication and functionality grows, so does the cost of ownership and connectivity.

- **Education** - (or lack thereof)

- **Lack of technological literacy**

- **Biases and socio-cultural norms**

- **Market-related Factors:** e.g. investment dynamics, regulations, and competition, especially in rural areas.

Gender & Internet Governance

If digitization is to realize transformational impact for all, there is need to transform these spaces of decision making traditionally occupied by men to meaningfully engage with issues of exclusion from a gender and sexual minorities perspective APC (2019).

Participation of women and sexual rights advocates on internet governance is still limited hence the need to push for active and equal engagement of women and sexual minorities in internet governance policy.

The Feminist Principles of the Internet
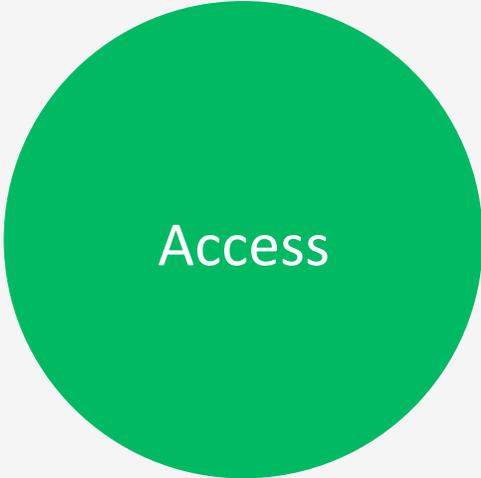
Access

- Access to the Internet
- Access to information
- Access to usage of technology

Movement and Public Participation

- Resistance
- Movement building
- Decision making in Internet Governance

Agency

- Consent
- Privacy and data
- Anonymity
- Children & Youth
- Online Violence

The Feminist Principles of the Internet

Economy

- Alternative economies
- Free and Open Source

Expression

- Amplifying feminist discourse
- Freedom of expression
- Pornography and harmful content

# Factors contributing to gender and sexual minority exclusion

- **Lack of Respect and Representation** - of women and sexual minorities.

- **Political environment** – The political playing field in most African countries is not only uneven but very risk and dangerous.

Throughout Zimbabwe's pre-election period for the harmonised election, there was an upsurge in attacks against women in public office, running for election and those seeking to exercise their democratic right to public space.

- **Digital Security and connectivity** - Due to lack of guaranteed online protection sexual minorities have limited free connectivity. A lot of issues may contribute to this:
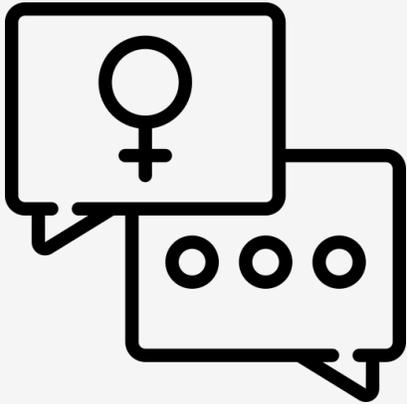

Hate Speech

Hacking

Self-Policing
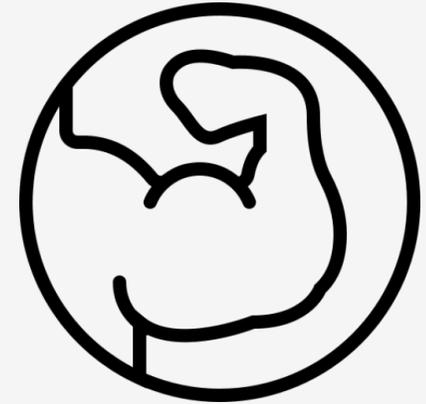
Cyberbullying

Policy Recommendations

- Countries to develop digital financial services that are accessible and appropriate for women

- Promote equal access to education to both girls and boys.

- Encourage greater female enrolment in STEM studies

- Establish legislation which promotes equality between men and women

- Initiate digital skills and literacy among women

- Governments should work to increase the access and affordability of digital technologies.

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Thank You