



CENTRE FOR INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY AND
DEVELOPMENT



APC
ASSOCIATION FOR
PROGRESSIVE
COMMUNICATIONS



TOWARDS DIGITAL RESILIENCE FOR WOMEN IN UNDERSERVED AND UNSERVED COMMUNITIES

Introduction

The cyberspace in Nigeria is characterized by a hierarchy of exclusion, in which women in general have lower access to the internet. In addition, women in rural areas are even multiply excluded because their communities are wholly excluded from the cyber landscape of the country. These women are seriously digitally wounded! Indeed, the experience of the COVID-19 lockdown had shown, those who had access and the skills to use the internet, continued to work and operate online, with far less disruption in their lives and businesses than those lacking either access or the skill or both as is the case of women in both the underserved and unserved settlements.

The persistence of the gender digital divide in particular is due to a number of factors which included: the relatively poor economic status of women, lower educational accomplishment, limited opportunities and access to learn digital skills, patriarchal control, cultural and religious sensitivities and above, the menace of sexual harassment and victimization online.

of particular importance is the fear of online sexual and gender harassment. This affects women and girl's ability to use the internet in two ways. Firstly, some internalized this fear and withdraw from the use of the internet. On the other hand, patriarchy leverage this negative narrative and try to deny women the opportunities to use the internet in addition to some men, even use the platform to frighten women.

Why Women Should Use the Digital Spaces

Digital technology and tools have permeated every aspect of our life today. They have become indispensable for us to live a socially meaningful and productive life. The necessity of the internet can be seen from its central place in many of our things that we have to do. Take education for example. The internet is a key tool for accessing educational opportunities and processes. Indeed, without digital literacy, one cannot proceed to higher education in the country.

Similarly, we rely on digital platforms for our news and for communication, without access to the internet today, our right to freedom of information,

that is the right to receive and impart information will be impossible. In other words, this right would be constrained for people who are digitally excluded. By the same token our ability to perform our civic duties and responsibilities such as voting, paying our taxes, etc, getting a passport or even voter's card, are done on access to the internet. The right to political participation and to access and internet with government is heavily dependent in our ability to access and use the internet.

Commerce and business transactions have migrated online. The current implementation of the cashless society is one example in which those who are digitally excluded also face being financially excluded and therefore constrained from engaging in commerce and other business transactions. To this extent they are also financially excluded.

Harmful behaviour online includes the following:

1. Making explicit threats, e.g. to kill or injure a



- person, or to discredit or humiliate them;
2. Making implicit threats – sometimes known as “dog-whistling”;
3. Sending distressing material, such as doctored images of women or explicit pornography;
4. Publishing private or semi-private information (“doxing”);
5. Denial of access to an online forum, by mass false reporting of co-ordinated complaints, or “message bombing” an individual's accounts intended to disrupt their ability to use that platform;
6. Cyber-stalking;
7. Online surveillance;
8. Impersonation and identity theft;
9. Cyber-mob attacks;
10. Orchestrated disinformation campaigns;
11. Persistent and/or high volumes of messages

How to Remain Safe Online for

- Don't share passwords. ...
- Don't leave your webcam connected. ...
- Don't share more than necessary. ...
- Don't meet online acquaintances alone. ...
- Reveal only as much as needed. ...
- Update all operating systems on your devices. ...
- Secure your devices with anti-virus software. ...
- There is no such thing as 'freebies'
- Regularly delete your metadata on your devices
- Block people you don't want to interact with



- When using Public Computers, ensure you log out all your accounts and delete browsing histories.
- Don't use public Wi-Fi unless necessary.
- Don't carry out private transactions when on public Wi-Fi.

Role of Government in Making the Internet Safe and Affordable for Women

Government has greater responsibility to promote digital inclusion. It can do this through implementing policies and programmes that will improve accessing and affordability while doing away with things that inhibit the use of the digital spaces by women and girls. Some of these include.

1. Should work with others extend infrastructure to ensure that communities that are currently either unserved or underserved are included
2. Take policies and initiatives to increase affordability of ICT goods and services in the country, including the adaption digital gender inclusion agenda
3. Ensure the diligent prosecution of all those who indulge in GBV online

4. Strengthen legal protections
5. Invest in digital literacy and education
6. To collaborate with technology companies to develop solutions that promote online safety for women and girls
7. To provide support services for victims of online abuse and harassment, such as counselling, legal support and helplines

Role of Community in making the internet Safe for Women and Girls

Often the people who harass women and girls online and make the internet unsafe for them are from within their communities. They are in some instance, people who the victims may personally know. To this extent, a community has large influence in the conduct of its members.

1. Address the root causes of online harassment and abuse by addressing systemic issues such as sexism, misogyny, and gender-based violence. This can involve advocating for policy changes, supporting organizations that work to end gender-based violence, and working to create a culture of equality and respect both online and offline
2. Hold perpetrators morally accountable for their action as well as encouraging positive behavior online
3. Contribute in educating women and girls about online safety about how to stay safe online by providing them with information about privacy settings, safe internet browsing habits, and ways to identify and report abuse or harassment.
4. Provide resources and support to women and girls who have experienced online abuse or harassment. how to report abusive behavior, legal resources, counselling services, and online



support groups

5. Support advocacy for policy changes that promote online safety for women and girls. calling for social media platforms to implement more effective and easy reporting and moderation systems, and pushing for greater representation of women and girls in technology

6. Condemn, isolate and apply moral sanctions against members of the community who act to make the internet an unsafe place for women and girls

7. Individual members of the community must not indulge or tolerate online harassment of women and girls and must raise their voice against it wherever and whenever it occurs

8. Parents should leverage every opportunity to make their daughters digitally literate and should offer parental guidance rather than authoritarian control

9. Husbands and spouses should offer support to their wives to maximally benefit from digitally technology rather than deprive them of the benefit of the digital systems

10. Communities should set up support group against online harassment of women and girls through which they can escalate reports of cases to relevant authorities for prosecution.

The Role of individual Women in Building their Digital Resilience

Ultimately, digital resilience is about the individual. Women and girls must bring to feel confident on the use of digital space by learning to be safe online,



know how to deal with potential perpetrators and generally keep a healthy habit online. Keeping a healthy habit online means internalizing and practicing the tips offered about. However, since technology is perpetually evolving and dynamic, women and girls must “contently and consistently” learn to be on top of their security concerns. They must learn new ways of addressing challengers and not to be complacent. Constant vigilance is the keyword.

They must also:

1. Report and expose all perpetrators of sexual harassment or gender violence online.
2. Do not condone or tolerate any act of online harassment
3. Offer solidarity, support and understanding to other victims of online harassment
4. Ensure you grab every opportunity to be digitally literate and learn new digital skills
5. Deploy your digital skills for productive and socially usefully purposes than just wasting time in endless chatting.
6. Join the campaign to make the internet a safe space for women and girls as well as the advocacy to get government to live to its responsibilities of making the internet safe for women and girls.

Produced for public education by **CITAD** with support from the **Digital Access Programme, (DAP of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)** through the **Association for Progressive Communications (APC)**

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