

IGF 2018 Messages - Human Rights, Gender, and Youth

Overarching messages

The theme of “Human Rights, Gender, and Youth” saw sessions moving beyond the gender binary and focusing not only on women (as has traditionally been the case in past editions) 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), race, location (urban/rural), etc. It is crucial to examine emerging issues and technologies such as dataveillance and biases in artificial intelligence algorithms through gender and sexuality perspectives, particularly while analyzing policies to address them.

Approaches to combating child and youth online safety include strengthening efforts to raise awareness and sensitizing diverse stakeholders on these issues of urgency. Mental health and ability cannot be de-linked from similar challenges associated with Internet misuse.

While Internet access plays a pivotal role in helping refugees stay connected, challenges remain in accessing digital networks and infrastructure such as unaffordable connectivity and restrictions to full participation online.

Online communities can build effective systems of self-governance, potentially an important enabler of freedom of expression and democratic processes online. Decentralization of agency through proliferation of localized discourse around digital rights is an observed trend that also raises contestations relating to how digital rights should be protected.

Gender Equality

- Gender needs to be viewed as a cross-cutting theme requiring multi-stakeholder cooperation for addressing challenges. Similarly, gender inequality must be located at the intersection of other inequalities such as class (income/education), race, location (urban/rural), etc.
- Efforts need to be made to move beyond the gender binary and focus not only on women (as has traditionally been the case in the past) but also gender non-binary persons.
- Gender analysis must be an integral part of planning efforts of initiatives that support Internet access, rather than an “add-on” task.
- Since many Internet access initiatives tend to be gender-blind, targeted policy recommendations are required to develop specific initiatives that focus on women and gender non-binary persons.
- There is a need to deepen understanding of emerging issues such as dataveillance, and

algorithmic decision-making, and their influence in cyberspace through a gender and sexuality lens, along with strategies to address them.

- Many local access projects use ICTs to secure the rights of underrepresented populations of women, with a focus on the Global South.
- Relevant gender issues in the context of emerging technologies include biases in artificial intelligence algorithms, regressive regulatory practices, and commercially driven technology design – with a disproportionate and undesirable impact on the inclusion of and participation by women and politically marginalised groups and communities.

Child and Youth Online Safety

- Children face various online risks such as online child sexual exploitation. One approach to combat this threat are based on public-private sector models.
- The increasing call for responses to online youth radicalization and violent extremism highlight the need for the international community to cooperate and strengthen efforts to raise awareness and sensitize diverse stakeholders on these issues of urgency. These responses include the responsibility of Governments to implement violence prevention measures through national policies or dedicated action plans. International, regional and national stakeholders must also play an active role through consistent counter narratives to extremist ideas and education.
- There are clear interlinkages between Internet misuse and mental health. Proactive multistakeholder approaches to preventing suicide and minimizing detrimental mental health impacts of internet-related technologies must be sought.

Democracy and Digital Citizenship

- Methods of designing and implementing automated decision-making by digital platforms must be analyzed along with their potential benefits and risks. A positive example is the recent proposal of AI-based proactive detection and removal of abusive content.
- In the context of increased pressure on Internet platforms to act as proxy law enforcement, policymakers must keep in mind that online communities can build effective systems of self-governance, potentially an important enabler of freedom of expression and democratic processes online. Provisions could be made to allow for such models of self-governance and content moderation by Internet users, which promote the right to participation based on the cultural context.
- Digital rights declarations and other documents written to advocate for human rights protection in the digital age ("digital constitutionalism") are proliferating locally and on the level of the nation-state. This moves agency and discourse in this field away from international and global fora of Internet governance (like IGF) toward more decentralised arenas of public policy – which is an encouraging trend.
- The development of decentralised cryptographically organized infrastructure through blockchains raises new contestations relating to self-enforcing smart contracts, and considerations on which and how digital rights should be protected online (e.g., the issuance of automated fines if data is leaked by a data collector).
- Advocacy for digital rights at the local levels produces momentum for local realization of digital human rights, while blockchain-based smart contracts have the potential to permeate (national) borders and entrench certain norms transnationally, which may not take into consideration what political communities have decided locally/nationally.
- Drawing from other disciplines such as media, the effectiveness of self-regulation to assess complaints of hate speech online must be analyzed for the entire Internet

landscape. Self-regulation should address the needs of a democratic society by providing for effective protection of those targeted, quick procedures, and a clear understanding of the reasons for the takedown or non-takedown for users.

Refugees

- Internet access and mobile phones play a pivotal role in providing vital information to refugees, helping families to stay connected and giving newcomers the necessary tools for being able to start a new life in another part of the world.
- Despite the empowering potential of ICTs for refugees, challenges remain in accessing digital networks and infrastructure such as unaffordable connectivity and restrictions to full participation online.
- Efforts are being made by international organisations, civil society, private sector and members of the technical community to collect refugees' data to help respond to the daily needs of the growing community. These include developing digital tools such as blockchain technologies, biometric records, etc.
- Challenges arising through the use of ICTs for refugees are related to rights to privacy and data protection.

Youth Inclusion

- Factors that impact the participation of youth in the digital economy include inequities in terms of Internet access, gaps in levels of connectivity, socioeconomic status, quality of education, and the degree of Internet freedom in a particular region, among others. These, in turn, affect the visibility of youth engaging in online economic activities.
- Youth inclusion can be facilitated by increasing recruitment activities for IGF attendance in schools and universities, and designing best practices to implement these through establishing or accessing suitable education networks.

**For any questions or comments regarding the IGF 2018 Messages, please write to igf@un.org.*