



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



Preventing and Disrupting the Spread of Gendered Disinformation in the Context of Electoral Processes and Democratic Rollback

Conference Report

Prepared by the [National Democratic Institute \(NDI\)](#)¹

I. Executive Summary

The National Democratic Institute was asked by the [Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse](#) to lead a series of consultations and to convene a 2.5 day conference in Nairobi, Kenya on **preventing and disrupting the spread of gendered disinformation in the context of electoral processes and democratic rollback**. The conference brought together pro-equality and pro-democratic actors from multiple disciplines and sectors and was designed to facilitate open, cross-disciplinary conversation, build relationships, inform common understanding of gendered disinformation (GD), and to workshop solutions. The conference had two primary objectives:

1. Develop a framework that would create a pathway for coordinated action to prevent and disrupt the spread of GD and democratic rollback in the context of electoral processes; and
2. Achieve a common understanding of the range of interventions that can be deployed to disrupt disinformation tactics in the context of electoral processes.

The key takeaways for each of these objectives are listed below and outlined in further detail throughout the report.

Conference Findings on a Framework for Coordinated Action:

- Emphasizing the nexus between individual harms, democracy, and rights reversals
- Situating the problem of gendered disinformation in the Elections and Political Processes context is an imperative. However, other contextual framing is compelling and relevant and can offer new institutional and cross-sectoral allies, approaches and tools to prevent and counter GD.
- Understanding the institutional reality of the public sector or government actors whose mandate touches on aspects of GD is increasingly important in designing both advocacy strategies and substantive recommendations for preventing and countering GD.
- Automated algorithms and artificial intelligence worsen existing patterns of perpetration and response by providing new tools for abuse and disinformation, which transmit harmful, violent rhetoric and attacks against women leaders at a scale and speed unmatched by analog communications methods.

¹ NDI was commissioned by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to organize and deliver this conference.

- Ensuring intersectionality is central to all tools and approaches to prevent and counter GD.
- Understanding and overcoming power imbalances is critical to preventing and countering GD.
- Women in politics and public leadership (WPPL) impacted by tech-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) and GD must be able to access immediate and urgent support.
- At the same time, while there may be some quick wins, the most impactful and systemic responses to prevent and counter GD are likely to take multi-stakeholder efforts implemented over time.

Conference Recommendations on Interventions:

- ***Legislation and regulation***
 - Regulate technology platforms
 - Engage diverse legal approaches
 - Support privacy legislation
- ***Taking back the tech***
 - Invest in evaluations and assessments
 - Support efforts to bolster access to platform data and transparency of platform policies
 - Governments should support independent research or collaborate with research institutions and civil society organizations focused on topics such as how GD is created and spread.
 - Create reputation-mending tools and services (e.g. bots) to address harms and advance pro-democracy messages.
- ***Addressing socio-cultural barriers***
 - Pro-democracy actors should aggregate and share resources in a multi-stakeholder framework
 - Governments should invest in education and capacity-building efforts by civil society organizations.
 - With funding from governments or private donors, CSOs can expand protections and services to women and girls.
- ***Promoting democratic renewal***
 - Hold political parties accountable
 - Support enhanced monitoring
 - Build broad, cross-sectoral collaborations and solidarity
 - Invest in tools that bolster transparency and accountability around financing and spyware
 - Invest in digitization and digital access
 - Invest in programs to support education and capacity-building of digital skills

II. Introduction

The active participation of women and girls in all their diversities, including LGBTQI+ and non-binary persons, is essential for healthy and prosperous democracies. Over the past two decades, a well-funded, transnational movement has been at work to simultaneously roll back gender equality and undermine democracy worldwide. It is characterized by the spread of anti-gender narratives and disinformation— both examples of TFGBV – that cause harms to individuals, works to directly challenge the hard-won rights of women, girls, and LGBTQI+ persons around the world, and undermines democratic norms, practice and culture at the national and multilateral levels. Actors within this movement, including authoritarian and anti-rights state and non-state actors, operate in cyberspace and through related digital technologies to: target and exclude individual women and their groups or to delegitimize campaigns of interest to them; amplify the scale and speed of their own political campaigns; and connect to global audiences with diverse interests either to join in common cause, influence their views and perspectives in a different direction, or to mobilize them to particular action.

At the same time and in response to this anti-equality and anti-democratic mobilization, like-minded pro-equality and democracy-affirming allies in the international community must address the harms to individuals and develop the capacity to counter and disrupt GD, particularly during elections and political processes. This coalition should support the further development of an internet that is open, free, global,

interoperable, reliable, secure and that reinforces democratic principles and human rights and fundamental freedoms. A contribution to achieving that overarching goal is the development of a shared framework for coordinated action to monitor, prevent and respond to gendered online violence and its intersecting threats, including GD, and to prevent and counter these threats more effectively in order to build resilient and sustainable democracies.

The [Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse](#) (Global Partnership) was formally launched at the 66th Commission on the Status of Women in March 2022. It has grown to 14 countries (Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Sweden, France, Kenya, Iceland, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States) that together have committed to prioritize, understand, prevent, and address the growing scourge of TFGBV. It works with a multi-stakeholder Advisory Group composed of survivors, leaders, and experts from civil society, research and academia, the private sector, and international organizations.

Focus of the Conference: At the end of March 2024, the Global Partnership, members of its Advisory Group and the Government of Kenya co-hosted an in-person, 2.5-day, multi-stakeholder conference in Nairobi, Kenya on **preventing and disrupting the spread of GD in the context of electoral processes and democratic rollback**. The conference brought together pro-equality and pro-democratic actors from multiple disciplines and sectors to work towards the conference's two objectives:

1. Develop a framework that would create a pathway for coordinated action to prevent and disrupt the spread of GD and democratic rollback in the context of electoral processes; and
2. Achieve a common understanding of the range of interventions that can be deployed to disrupt disinformation tactics in the context of electoral processes.

The conference was designed to facilitate open, cross-disciplinary conversation, build relationships, inform common understanding of GD, and to workshop solutions. While there is no single community-wide definition of GD,² the conference agreed that the key elements comprise: **the digital and online deployment of falsehood, with malign intent, using gender identities, tropes, and norms, working on existing social cleavages and fault lines, to achieve specific political ends, including deterring women from participating in the public sphere**. The conference focused on GD against women and girls in all their diversities, inclusive of LGBTQI+ and non-binary persons, who are engaged in politics and public life. This group includes activists, advocates, candidates, elected officials, government ministers and senior officials, electoral officials, journalists and media professionals, and human rights defenders.

The conference program (attached as Annex 2) included breakout sessions on four themes related to GD:

1. Prevention through increasing *digital security* capabilities;
2. Disruption through enhanced *monitoring, research, and advocacy* capabilities;
3. Developing a shared understanding of how to identify *narratives and negative gender norms* used in GD; and
4. Working within and through the *elections-specific architecture* to disrupt GD.

The consultation process and conference were held under Chatham House rules, and thus this report is non-attributed. Psychosocial support was provided to participants throughout the conference by Dr. Tanisha Kulola Mwashimba.

III. Pre-conference Consultations

NDI facilitated seven pre-conference consultations with multi-sector stakeholders working on GD. Three consultation sessions occurred in person, in Kenya, convening a range of civil society organizations,

² A sample of definitions of GD is attached as [Annex 1](#).

representatives of the LGBTQI+ community, and with adolescent girls and young women (AGYW). Three virtual consultation sessions were held with Global Partnership Member States, multilateral and civil society organizations that comprise the Advisory Group, and other civil society organizations. NDI also held an in-person consultation with technology companies in New York City, which representatives from Global Partnership member governments also attended. The emerging priorities from the consultations (attached as Annex 3) informed NDI's design of the final conference program, and were presented at the onset of the conference, laying the groundwork for the conference dialogue.³

Key themes from the consultations included: **Coordinated GD attacks on WPPL have an adverse impact on democracy.** These attacks are part of larger attempts to undermine democratic norms, culture, and practice and are being used to silence WPPL. Building an inclusive, safe, democratic process strengthens democratic resilience and outcomes. **Achieving freedom of expression depends on the ability to prevent threats online**, and among human and civic and political rights issues freedom of expression is at particular risk from GD. **There is a broad scope to this work**, in that the issue impacts a wide range of groups for example: women who are election candidates, women journalists covering the elections, and poll workers who are women. Beyond the electoral space, GD is **a particular risk for women in all their diversities, including LGBTQI+ and non-binary people, who work intersectorally on other issues**, especially sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), climate action, and social justice.

The consultations affirmed **the need to adopt new approaches in engaging with platforms.** Asking platforms to make small improvements has been tried, when systemic legal, regulatory, and institutional change is required and the business model of the tech private sector does not incentivize these kinds of actions. Many called for **more and better regulations**, and **the effective implementation of legislation** that is available. Specifically, **governments should boost regulatory efforts**, including in the area of privacy and data protection (ex. Kenya's Digital Privacy Act, which prohibits sharing photos of people without their consent).⁴ Others, including the group of Kenyan AGYW consulted, called for **more alignment of regulations and legislation** and that in this context **implementation should also include support to survivors**; for example, legal aid to pursue cases. **Greater internal coordination between information integrity, democracy and gender-based violence (GBV) teams within institutions and organizations** also emerged as a theme. This would realize more synergies between policy teams and the development of interlinking methods of challenging GD. There needs to be increased focus on **norm change to address the underlying cultures of misogyny** that feed and worsen through the scale, speed, and reach of digital technologies, much behind the cover of anonymity alongside insufficient legal, regulatory, and policy mechanisms to stop it. **Countering online abuse and hate speech** should be promoted through education - including in STEM, civics and digital literacy. There is a **role for governments and foundations to fund organizations working on social and behavioral change. Voluntary codes of conduct for parliamentarians and political parties are necessary, but insufficient.** The **use of micro-influencers**⁵ to spread GD was noted. GD campaigns are **coordinated and undertaken across multiple networks**, including WhatsApp, by state and non-state actors. These **online campaigns often have in-person components**, with physical threats to women. Importantly, **once WPPL who are attacked step back from the public square, the abuse halts immediately, which is a clear disincentive to others** from even engaging in the first place. **Automated algorithms and artificial intelligence worsens existing patterns of perpetration and response**, as adversarial actors can use generative AI maliciously to advance harms against WPPL, with false intimate images and AI-powered bots amplifying inauthentic messages. At the same time **more efforts should be made to use generative AI to publicize democracy-affirming messages and to counter and disrupt GD. Governments and legislators face their own capacity constraints**, including around funding streams, knowledge bases and internal coordination on priority-setting and cross-government collaboration, areas of emphasis, and policy enforcement.

³ The key themes from the consultations were consolidated into one review document and distributed to attendees before the conference. This document has been attached to this report as Annex 3.

⁴ Other examples of regulation include the [Digital Services Act](#) (DSA) and Australia's [e-Safety](#) approach.

⁵ Micro-influencers have a social media following that is larger than an average person but not as large as a celebrity.

IV. Conference Findings on a Framework for Coordinated Action

Emphasizing the nexus between individual harms, democracy, and rights reversals.

- The ramifications of the use of GD extend beyond the harms inflicted on the individuals targeted, striking at democracy and reversing the historical trend on the progressive realization of a range of rights, including sexual reproductive and health rights (SRHR) and freedom of expression.
- GD is used to attack individual WPPL often both because their demand to be in politics and public life is a threat to established patterns of male power distributions and because of the issues they raise. This is fundamentally anti-democratic and impacts democratic norms, processes and culture.
- Attacks which discredit women officials in electoral management bodies (EMBs) and election monitoring leaders are often linked to attempts to undermine confidence in electoral institutions and safeguards, and in the integrity of election outcomes more broadly.
- In the general context of democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism, legislation presented as offering protection to WPPL is often being co-opted to target and silence them. To address this aspect, a broader focus on democratic renewal, including accountability and efforts to address continuing gender power inequalities in political parties and women's ability to be autonomous political actors, is critical.

Situating the problem of GD in the Elections and Political Processes context is an imperative. However, other contextual framing is compelling and relevant and can offer new institutional and cross-sectoral allies, approaches and tools to prevent and counter GD.

- Outside of election cycles, GD still has a deleterious effect on security and stability: for example, [misogyny](#) can feed and be used in GD to breed extremist viewpoints, which are deployed by domestic and transnational extremist groups (e.g. "manosphere"), and state and state-aligned collectives. This dynamic can be seen in how US-based incel groups and MENA-based jihadists [influence each other](#).
- WPPL experience coordinated disinformation campaigns, often (but not exclusively) linked to states. As with all disinformation, GD is subject to international influence operations and transnational threats. For example, [in Ukraine](#), Russia spreads GD against refugees, women soldiers, and women journalists.
- The implication of states and governments in the perpetration of GD cannot be overlooked or understated. The reality that states and governments are often actors in advancing campaigns of GD sows distrust and can undermine cross-sectoral efforts to collaborate.
- The information landscape should be accurately mapped through network analysis, with key political relationships of power and/or influence between individuals, groups, and organizations clearly identified.

Understanding the institutional reality of the public sector or government actors whose mandate touches on aspects of GD is increasingly important in designing both advocacy strategies on and substantive recommendations for preventing and countering GD.

- GD and online violence against women in politics often spikes around elections and election-related events. Research and social media monitoring during and after elections is continually needed to observe these trends and to gather data on potential election results denialism that may be gendered.
- Disinformation campaigns are parasitic in that they take advantage of news, rumor, societal fault lines and flash points. For example, GD can use [both gendered tropes and religious framing](#). The latter can provide added legitimacy to the malign and false message being conveyed, which [can be hard to tackle](#).
- Systemic shocks such as political crises, conflict and natural or public health disasters shrink the political space for all citizens, and disproportionately impact the visibility, agency, access, and security of WPPL.
- WPPL are often simultaneously the target of disinformation and accused of being, themselves, the purveyors of falsehoods, lies, and disinformation. This dynamic of victim-blaming attributes the

abusive behavior to the target of the abuse.

- When WPPL are subject to harassment, it sends a chilling message to others with ambitions to be engaged in politics and public life—[particularly young women and girls](#)-- that speaking truth to power comes at a steep or deadly price.
- There is no longer an actual or emotionally relevant division between the digital and in-person life of WPPL: GD can translate into physical attacks. Laws and protections that exist to address defamation, libel and GBV in the offline space should be used to cover [the online space, as well](#).

Automated algorithms and artificial intelligence worsen existing patterns of perpetration and response by providing new tools for abuse and disinformation, which transmit harmful, violent rhetoric and attacks against women leaders at a scale and speed unmatched by analog communications methods.

- While GD reflects a continued manifestation of the tactics of patriarchal political power, the elements of virality and algorithmic clustering, which are hallmarks of the weaponization of digital technology, are new, and they complicate the development of responses to prevent and counter GD.
- There are documented cases where adversarial actors have used generative AI maliciously to advance harms against WPPL (ex. deepfake porn). This can include the large-scale and automated creation of falsified intimate images of the targets and using AI-powered bots to amplify inauthentic messages.
- The Global Partnership community should advance greater understanding between itself and the technical community, including product developers, designers, and engineers in the tech sector, using accessible language and framing. An example of this is the [Safety Showcase](#),⁶ which can help ensure that the perspectives of gender experts are introduced at the right moment in the design process.
- Humanities need to be introduced as core components of all computer science education and qualifications, to ensure technical staff have adequate training on human rights responsibilities.

Ensuring intersectionality is central to all tools and approaches to prevent and counter GD.

- GD gains further potency when it deploys and targets WPPL whose identities intersect with other determinants of power between different groups in society. This layering can include some, all or any of racial, age, ethnic, religious, disability, gender, and sexual identities.
- Given the unique harms queer and especially transgender women face, the framing of "women and girls in all their diversities" should be substituted with a broader and explicit definition which specifically names people with diverse SOGIESC⁷ characteristics. One definition proposed by interlocutors was: "women in all their diversities inclusive of LGBTQI+ and non-binary persons."
- GD must be tackled in such a way that recognizes how harms impact members of different communities and leaves no-one behind.

Understanding and overcoming power imbalances is critical to preventing and countering GD.

- There are critical and impactful power imbalances between women, the Global North and the Global Majority, individuals, states, and sectors.
- Women in and from North American and Western European countries typically have greater access to technology companies (including internet service providers in some cases) and staff due to location and language. Individuals from the Global Majority disproportionately find themselves underrepresented on, and distanced from, critical trust and safety teams. There are discrepancies within these regions, too. However, many technology companies are still unresponsive to women from North America and Western Europe, which means that women without access to technology

⁶ The Safety Showcase is a coalition of feminist tech leaders, government representatives, the United Nations, and civil society organizations calling for innovative submissions of tech-related solutions that inspire and support an industry shift towards safer technology for women and girls, in turn increasing their freedom of expression online. The eSafety Commissioner, Australia's online safety regulator, is contributing to this initiative, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Numun Fund and the UK Foreign Commonwealth Development Office.

⁷ Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

companies face even greater safety risks.

- Between sectors, there are power and resource discrepancies between technology companies, governments and states, and civil society organizations as well as varying prioritization of focus on the issue. Given the lack of proper regulation, tech companies have generally acted with impunity, with little to no accountability.
- Individuals also experience differential power based on their personal characteristics, including race, gender, and class.
- Further, inadequate language- and culture-sensitive automated moderation systems ultimately advantage communities that speak English and other Western languages in automated content moderation processes.

WPPL impacted by TFGBV and GD must be able to access immediate and urgent support. At the same time, while there may be some quick wins, the most impactful and systemic responses to prevent and counter GD are likely to take multi-stakeholder efforts implemented over time.

- These responses can include legislation and regulation, evaluations and assessments, data access and transparency, resource-sharing and monitoring, education, capacity-building, and broader societal norm change.
- Governments and donors should fund and develop rapid response mechanisms and resources able to provide immediate and differentiated services to WPPL impacted by GD campaigns, including safety planning.

V. Conference Recommendations on Interventions:

NDI's mandate focused on the delivery of recommendations that primarily can be undertaken by governments, but also interventions that civil society organizations and researchers can advance with funding from governments or other donors. Therefore, below is a summary record of potential actions to be taken by diverse stakeholders individually and collectively to prevent and counter GD.

Legislation and regulation

- **Regulate technology platforms**
 - Create an atlas that outlines all existing legislation on GD, TFGBV, and hate speech, and ideally include analysis, so civil society organizations can leverage the resource.
 - Require platforms to undertake human rights impact assessments before and during implementation. Enforce [DSA-style risk assessments](#) of GD through regulation.
 - Increase oversight into the ways AI models, including open source models, are being trained to reduce the risks that they can be used to make deepfake campaigns. Control open source systems that can develop nefarious applications.
 - Enforce independent, public interest researchers and civil society access to real-time API through regulation.
 - Apply learnings and best practices from enforcement in other industries that are well-documented, such as finance, to countering GD, given that enforcing laws is a critical piece.
 - Recognize that problems in the Global North can vary from those in the Global Majority, and strive for interoperable regulation, where appropriate, that fits various contexts along the scale from authoritarian to rights-respecting democracies. Regulation can be harmful in certain countries where it has been weaponized to target human rights defenders. At the same time, the failure to regulate Big Tech, particularly in countries where platforms are domiciled, has had damaging consequences for the operation of these platforms in Global Majority countries.
 - Advocate for gender-sensitive, intersectional approaches to the enforcement of laws and regulations intended to promote freedom of expression, which have been misconstrued to defend or protect hate speech, TFGBV, and GD.

- Create and enforce ethical codes of conduct for web developers, designers, and other big tech members in their jurisdiction.
- **Engage diverse legal approaches**
 - Impose hefty financial penalties on technology companies, linked to the number of complaints received and corresponding response times, to incentivize greater action.
 - Where possible, rather than creating new laws, use existing laws, precedence and case law and apply to online/digital contexts (strategic litigation). Expand the use of civil proceedings to hold perpetrators accountable.
 - Use a gendered freedom of expression analysis when developing any laws explicitly focused on preventing and/or criminalizing GD.
 - Add creating state-based GD and abusing state resources to deploy GD to the international sanctions and [visa restrictions](#) regime.
 - Create a list of legal resources for targets of online abuse.
- **Support privacy legislation**
 - Governments should advance privacy legislation through a civil society-driven process, especially amidst increasing concerns around surveillance and spyware. These mechanisms are critical for preventing data abuse, supporting free speech, and encouraging democratic participation.
 - For example, Kenya has a [Data Protection Act](#), which prohibits sharing photos of people without their consent, and can be used to hold accountable individuals who are using the names and faces of individuals without their consent.
 - Establish a network of trusted third party entities to engage in developing frameworks that balance the need for content moderation with privacy concerns of individuals.

Taking back the tech

- **Invest in evaluations and assessments**
 - Develop metrics and guidelines for technology engineers to ensure harms are not designed into products, such as the [eSafety Commissioner's Safety by Design](#) approach
 - Develop an evaluative approach such that states wishing to engage in anti-disinformation legislation can assess their existing policy and laws, and make modifications accordingly.
- **Support efforts to bolster access to platform data and transparency of platform policies**
 - Advocate for real-time API access for independent, public interest civil society organizations and researchers, without monetization or restrictions, and specifically on algorithmic transparency.
 - Make available better, disaggregated data to enable better trends analysis. One example is gender disaggregated analysis of results denialism to identify the impact of GD on post-election outcomes.
 - Require greater transparency around the metrics for technology company compliance and response to trust and safety issues.
 - Support an increase in public access and transparency to technology company reports of compliance and response on trust and safety issues, to include engagement with civil society organizations, to create standards that ensure privacy laws are created, understood, and enforced.
 - Invest in watermarking for provenance by demanding that AI companies watermark creations from their products, and news companies to watermark their images and videos.
 - Recognize and amplify platform practices, product design features or protocols that demonstrate safety and privacy by design and encourage their replication.
 - Governments should build the capacity to monitor company self-regulatory practices through platforms' own community guidelines, including adherence and response rates.
- **Governments should support independent research or collaborate with research institutions and civil society organizations focused on topics such as how GD is created and spread.**

- Ensure that relevant data is available to all actors and stakeholders working with GD, including through strategic collaborations.
- Governments should collaborate to build an international knowledge base and apply lessons from other industry experiences to the rapidly changing GD space. This would also help in developing a common lexicon and classifications.
- Collaborate at the regional level to develop nuanced and context-specific knowledge, best practices and model laws and instruments that can be used and replicated.
- Governments should formalize definitions, policies, and approaches to help shift from ad hoc, fragmented approaches in countering GD to more structured and strategic approaches.
- Governments should ensure that relevant knowledge about GD is accessible to all citizens.
- **Create reputation-mending tools and services (e.g. bots) to address harms and advance pro-democracy messages**
 - Build AI bots that can automate counter-responses. Specifically:
 - Fund the development of reputation-mending bots to serve as a response to individual harms.
 - Fund the development of pro-democracy messaging bots, which advances overall communications.

Addressing socio-cultural barriers

- **Pro-democracy actors should aggregate and share resources in a multi-stakeholder framework**
 - Governments or donors can fund CSO efforts to create an open source dataset for an observatory on GD and online harassment and abuse.
 - With funding, CSOs and researchers can also add new indicators on the targets, perpetrators, and prevalence of GD into elections-related early warning systems.
- **Governments should invest in education and capacity-building efforts by civil society organizations**
 - Integrate civics, digital citizenship, and critical thinking education into school (from primary) and university curriculums, particularly around civic education.
 - Close the digital fitness gap experienced by government officials, legislators, and members of election management bodies in particular on online engagement, and the drivers and counters to online abuse and GD.
 - Facilitate workshops and campaigns for men and boys on digital citizenship to raise awareness of active allyship, positive masculinities, and preventing all forms of gender-based violence, in person and online.
 - Fund information integrity capacity training for journalists and media professionals, particularly during the context of elections and political processes.
 - Develop a trainer-of-trainers cadre of facilitators to provide gender- and inclusion- informed training on [cyber security for political candidates](#), in collaboration with electoral authorities. The training should not burden women, and should involve platforms and communities.
 - Develop a digital security psyche from a very young age.
 - The advancement of cultural changes around privacy and safety by design would foster an environment in which all stakeholders appreciate the importance of privacy and can further privacy legislation.
 - Develop training programs to educate male allies, especially among youth.
- **With funding from governments or private donors, CSOs can expand protections and services to women and girls**
 - Expand child safety and psychosocial services, including to provide support for those who have experienced GD.
 - Use known good practice to minimize trauma to survivors by streamlining reporting requirements between state helplines and those of the platform. Survivors should only be required to submit one report to the state helpline.

- All WPPL should be treated equally before the law, and states should provide appropriate, differentiated responses to women and girls' experiences of GD.

Promoting democratic renewal

- **Hold political parties accountable**
 - Authorities responsible for political party registration or election management should ensure that political parties abide by a common code of conduct, with their online presence monitored, and that any established sanctions are enforced - like suspension and or expulsion for repeated offenses - for any breaches by leadership or party members of the code.
 - Political parties should develop democracy- and gender-affirming inclusive communications strategies and proactively deploy these to prevent GD.
 - Political parties should develop [internal policy](#) to address the impact of GD on its members and staff, and more broadly make greater investments in providing mental well-being and psycho-social support.
- **Support enhanced monitoring**
 - Where within their mandates and legal status, electoral institutions should support monitoring by trusted third parties of public and open channels and platforms to identify problematic content and emerging narratives, to develop effective communication responses during the electoral cycle.
 - Mapping the institutional landscape at international level could enable governments to collaborate and exchange information threat/risk analysis on actions to prevent and counter GD, which moves transnationally and through completely permeable digital borders.
 - Support watchdog mechanisms and commissions.
- **Build broad, cross-sectoral collaborations and solidarity**
 - Engage a wider range of stakeholders in digital security, to increase a higher number of cases surfaced. Recognizing that everyone can be a micro-influencer, identify new partners for amplifying important messaging.
 - Develop targeted campaigns and approaches to engage men as gender equality and rights-affirming advocates supporting WPPL in all their diversities, and accountable to the women's rights movements.
 - Support convening and collaboration of women's rights/women-led organizations across politics, media, and human rights defenders.
 - Support the integration of digital literacy and civics education in all empowerment and social justice work. For example, [NairoBits](#) uses technology in its work to address inequalities in low-income communities; [Sakhi](#) is a WhatsApp chatbot that talks to users about menstrual health and hygiene in Bangla, English, and Beng-lish.
 - Support a strong and diverse media sector. Competitive, high-quality investigative journalism can help debunk or produce counternarratives to GD.
 - Legislative chambers should provide channels for engagement with organizations representing WPPL, civi-tech and researchers to present data on and solutions to GD.
 - During electoral cycles, establish multi-stakeholder committees to review and respond to monitored reports of GD.
- **Invest in tools that bolster transparency and accountability around financing and spyware**
 - Develop and share tools to "follow the money" and identify GD campaign coordinators.
 - Reinforce gendered harms as a component of existing international frameworks and agreements such as the [growing effort](#) to counter the proliferation and misuse of commercial spyware.
- **Invest in digitization and digital access**
 - Support digitization efforts, as they increase employment and allow for greater data measurement on GD. What gets measured, gets managed.
 - Support meaningful connectivity for women in all their diversities to close the gender digital

divide. The digital gap restricts access to information, and in the case of WPPL, this includes what is being said about themselves.

- Build the capacity of the public communication function to promote and support a healthy information ecosystem. By providing proactive, timely, and transparent communication, governments can both react to and prevent the spread of GD.
- In this context of growing digitization, governments must ensure mechanisms are in place to prevent the abuse of citizens' personal data, restrictions on or threats to freedom of expression, infringement of privacy, or limitations on democratic participation.
- **Invest in programs to support education and capacity building of digital skills**
 - Develop communication and education strategies around digital literacy such as pre-bunking, or [attempting to "inoculate" the public](#) against [misleading messages](#).
 - Contribute to building long-term resilience to information manipulation at the level of society through awareness campaigns and civic education as part of media and digital literacy.
 - While recognizing that governments may co-opt "protection" to silence criticism, dissent or opposition, they should adopt survivor-based strategies and build capacity to provide response and referral services for actors likely to be targeted for GD campaigns.

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ANNEX 1: Definitions of Gendered Disinformation

Organization / Institution	Definition
Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GD references online narrative campaigns against women in public life, including politicians, activists, and journalists. ● GD is <u>one form</u> of online violence against women that uses false or misleading gender and sex-based narratives, often with some degree of coordination, to deter women from participating in the public sphere. ● These campaigns have a chilling effect on women’s political participation and put at risk hard-fought progress on women’s rights, human rights, and democracy around the world.
National Democratic Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GD is the use of false information to confuse or mislead by manipulating gender as a social cleavage to attack women and/or to sway political outcomes. ● It has three primary goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1. To keep women out of politics; ○ 2. To change the views of women and men about women’s political participation; and ○ 3. Specifically to change party policies or political outcomes. In short, it aims to undermine women’s free and equal participation in politics to the detriment of inclusive, resilient democracy.
Internet Governance Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disinformation can be defined as false information deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country . The false character of the information can also result from ‘manipulated information’ - disinformation campaigns often rely on true, distorted, or emotional content that doesn’t have a truth value. ● GD then attacks or undermines people based on their gender, or weaponizes gendered narratives for political, social or economic objectives.
Wilson Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GD is the use of false or misleading gender and sex-based narratives [deployed] against women against women, often with some degree of coordination, aimed at detering women from participating in the public sphere. ● It combines three defining characteristics of online disinformation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1. Falsity ■ 2. Malign intent ■ 3. Coordination
Digital Rights Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nature: GD is a manifestation of online gender based violence with offline and online interactions. ● Modus operandi: Uses false and deceptive information drawn on and to drive misogyny and sexualized narratives based on different intersectional social identities such as

	<p>caste, religion, sect and gender.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Target: GD targets individuals based on gender, especially women and gender diverse people who resist and are perceived to resist power structures or social norms.● Objective: These online and offline attacks aim to discredit and eliminate the target groups by spreading false narratives or encouraging self-censorship, resulting in the restriction of their participation in public spaces in their voices being drowned out.● Harms: Apart from these objectives, GD can also cause or trigger psychological, physical, social and historical harm and abuse to the target and/or other individuals who associate themselves with that identity.
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ANNEX 2: Conference Program (as delivered)

DAY 1 March 25, 2024

Desired outcome from the day: A common understanding of the range of interventions that can be deployed to disrupt GD tactics in the context of electoral processes amidst democratic backsliding, rights reversals, and setbacks for women in all their diversities, including LGBTQ and non-binary persons.

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:30 - 9:00 AM	Registration and networking
9:00 - 9:30 AM	Call to Order and Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moderator: Sandra Pepera, National Democratic Institute (NDI)• Self-care and Wellness Advice: Dr. Tanisha Kulola• Survivor's Voice: Ghada Oueiss, Al Jazeera
9:30 - 10:30 AM	Conference Briefing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sandra Pepera, NDI:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Conference framing and scope on GD in elections contexts• Theo Skeadas, NDI:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Readout from pre-conference consultation process• Q&A
10:30 - 10:45 AM	Tea and coffee break
10:45 - 12:00 PM	Session 1: GD tactics, interventions, and gaps <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moderator: Sandra Pepera, NDI• Video Address: Stephanie Mikkelson, UNFPA• Speaker: Julie Posetti, Australian journalist and researcher• Speaker: Hyra Basit, Digital Rights Foundation• Q&A and moderated discussion
12:00 - 12:15 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of the Breakout Sessions: Kaleigh Schwalbe, NDI• The breakout groups will be two, one-hour sessions covering four different themes reflecting the core focus and intended outcomes of the conference.• Participants will be invited to attend two of the four themes each afternoon, so that all participants will attend each session over the course of the conference.• The themes are:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prevention through increasing digital security capabilities.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Facilitators: Catalina Moreno (Fundacion Karisma) and Marwa Hanna (7amleh)• Disruption through enhanced monitoring, research, and advocacy capabilities.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Facilitators: Fernanda Martins (Internet Lab) and Leah Kimathi (Council for Responsible Media)• Developing a shared understanding of how to identify narratives, negative gender norms, with attention to intersectionality.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Facilitators: Jennifer Butler (Faith in Democracy) and Dr. Enoch Opuka (Africa International University)• Working within and through the elections-specific architecture to disrupt GD.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Facilitators: Amanda Domingues (NDI) and Ona Carritos (LENTE)
12:15 - 1:15 PM	Lunch break

1:15 - 1:30 PM	<p>Opening Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker: Mark Billera, Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) at the US Agency for International Development (USAID) • Speaker: Colin Sykes, Counsellor, Science, Innovation, Tech & Digital, British High Commission Nairobi
1:30 - 2:30 PM	Breakout session #1
2:30 - 2:45 PM	Tea and coffee break
2:45 - 3:45 PM	Breakout session #2
3:45 - 4:00 PM	Tea and coffee break
4:00 - 5:00 PM	<p>Session 2: Opportunities and constraints of legislation and regulation to counter and disrupt GD.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator: Kaleigh Schwalbe, NDI • Video Address: Julie Inman Grant, eSafety Commissioner, Australia • Speaker: Lucina Di Meo, #ShePersisted • Speaker: Mercy Mutemi, Nzili & Sumbi Advocates • Speaker: Cherie Oyier, KICTANet • Q&A and moderated discussion
5:00 - 7:00 PM	Conference Break
7:00 PM	Dinner for all conference participants at the Argyle Grand Hotel

DAY 2 March 26, 2024

Desired outcome from the day: Development of a framework that would create a pathway for coordinated action to prevent and disrupt the spread of GD amidst democratic backsliding, rights reversals, and electoral processes

TIME	ACTIVITY
9:00 - 9:10 AM	<p>Call to Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-care and Wellness Advice: Dr. Tanisha Kulola • Survivor's Voice: Iryna Tyshko, Political Action Women's Platform, Ukraine
9:10 - 9:30 AM	<p>Recap of Day 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator: Sandra Pepera, NDI • Discussants: Rachel Grant, Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (UK), and Cailin Crockett, National Security Council/Gender Policy Council (US) • Q&A and moderated discussion
9:30 - 11:00 AM	<p>Session 3: Research on GD and data-backed interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator: Sandra Pepera, NDI • Speaker: Suki Capobianco-Meinell, Apolitical Foundation • Speaker: Rita Singh, Carnegie Mellon University • Speaker: Elayne Deleen, IREX • Speaker: Irene Mwendwa, Pollicy • Q&A and moderated discussion

11:00 - 11:15 AM	Tea and coffee break
11:15 - 12:45 PM	<p>Session 4: Developing a common framework for/that enables coordinated action to prevent and disrupt the spread of GD amidst democratic backsliding, rights reversals, and electoral processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moderator: Amanda Domingues, NDI ● Speaker: Agniete Pocyte, Center for Information Resilience ● Speaker: Paulina Ibarra, Fundacion Multitudes ● Speaker: Kalliopi Mingeirou, UN Women ● Speaker: Cynthia Lorraine, Center for Independent Journalism ● Q&A and moderated discussion
1:00 - 2:00 PM	Lunch
	<p>The breakout groups will be two, one-hour sessions covering four different themes reflecting the core focus and intended outcomes of the conference. Participants will be invited to attend two of the four themes each afternoon, so that all participants will attend each session over the course of the conference.</p> <p>The themes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prevention through increasing digital security capabilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitators: Catalina Moreno (Fundacion Karisma) and Marwa Hanna (7amleh) ● Disruption through enhanced monitoring, research, and advocacy capabilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitators: Fernanda Martins (Internet Lab) and Leah Kimathi (Council for Responsible Media) ● Developing a shared understanding of how to identify narratives, negative gender norms, with attention to intersectionality. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitators: Jennifer Butler (Faith in Democracy) and Dr. Enoch Opuka (Africa International University) ● Working within and through the elections-specific architecture to disrupt GD. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitators: Amanda Domingues (NDI) and Ona Carritos (LENTE)
2:00 - 3:00 PM	Breakout session #1
3:00 - 3:15 PM	Tea and coffee break
3:15 - 4:15 PM	Breakout session #2
4:15 - 4:30 PM	Tea and coffee break
4:30 - 5:30 PM	<p>Session 5: Facilitators' feedback from breakout groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Each of the breakout group leads will provide an overview of the discussions from the breakout sessions, highlighting areas of consensus around top actions and recommendations. ● Q&A and moderated discussion
5:30 - 7:00 PM	Conference Break
7:00 PM	Dinner for all conference participants at the Argyle Grand Hotel

DAY 3 March 27, 2024

Desired outcome from the day: Next steps: to identify emerging political and development policies to tackle GD globally.

TIME	ACTIVITY
9:00 - 9:10 AM	Call to Order <ul style="list-style-type: none">Self-care and Wellness Advice: Dr. Tanisha Kulola
9:10 - 9:45 AM	Recap of Day 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Moderator: Sandra Pepera, NDIDiscussant: Luna Abadia, Plan InternationalQ&A and moderated discussion
9:30 - 11:00 AM	Session 6: Funding and rapid response, and the role of policymakers <ul style="list-style-type: none">Moderator: Sandra Pepera, NDISpeaker: Theresa Puhr, Secretary's Office for Global Women's Issues, US State DepartmentSpeaker: Nerima Wako, Siasa PlaceSpeaker: Paula Martins, Association for Progressive CommunicationsQ&A and moderated discussion
11:00 - 11:15 AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conference Survey Completion
11:15 - 12:15 PM	Session 7: Key conference takeaways <ul style="list-style-type: none">Moderator: Sandra Pepera, NDISpeaker: Theo Skeadas, NDISpeaker: Chenai Chair, Mozilla FoundationSpeaker: Sofia Brito, Dialogo DiversoQ&A and moderated discussion
12:15 - 1:00 PM	Closing Session and Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none">Moderator: Sandra Pepera, NDIRachel Grant, Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (UK),Speaker: Cailin Crockett, National Security Council/Gender Policy Council (US)Speaker: Alejandra Ríos Cázares, Deputy Director General of Development, Analysis, and Government Indicators, National Institute of Statistics and Geography, Government of Mexico. Survivor's Voice: Farida Nabourema, human rights activist and writer
1:00 - 2:00 PM	Lunch Conference Close

ANNEX 3: Summary of the Key Themes from the Pre-Conference Consultations

Disclaimer: These are some key points for reflection that arose during our consultations. However, they do not necessarily reflect consensus points. We recognize that there isn't consistent agreement between all stakeholders on these sensitive issues.

Table of contents:

- Key themes
- Emerging priorities

Key themes

- **Adverse impact of GD on democracy:**
 - This is a major issue for democracy, not just women who are attacked. They are attacked as part of larger attempts to undermine democracy. The journalists covering politics are attacked the most (compared to other journalists). This isn't just about misogyny and people disliking women; these are targeted political attacks. They were being silenced for what they represented.
 - Framing this as democracy and support for the democratic process is critical. In the same way as the term "equal pay" makes the entire family richer and we all get more money, including the men, this frames the issue as one that makes everyone stronger. This is an inclusive framing with wider applicability.
 - Building an inclusive, safe, democratic process includes everyone. This allows us to enter a broader set of conversations, then when we focus exclusively on gender (women only).
 - We need cross-sectoral capacity building.
 - We need to move from developing principles to making sure GD is integrated in policy; not just a gender equality issue, but a tech policy issue, cybersecurity and information integrity work, elections work. This is all a barrier to women's political participation, economic security, and digital inclusion.
 - Freedom of expression depends on our ability to prevent threats online; otherwise, people burn out on platforms. Freedom of expression is a major risk, amongst human rights issues. This needs to be situated in the context of larger issues, the responsibility to ensure that election integrity remains strong. Freedom of expression is a bipartisan issue, which increases its appeal as a framing.
- **Broad scope:**
 - This issue impacts a wide range of groups, including women journalists covering the elections and poll workers who are women.
- **New approaches:**
 - Increasingly, engagement cannot consist in asking platforms to make small improvements; this tactic has been tried, and it is not a successful one. Unfortunately, the business model does not incentivize these kinds of actions. Yes, engagement is important, but alone it is inadequate. Better regulations are needed here.
 - We need to align efforts. There are often "disinformation" policy teams and "violence against women" policy teams. GD gets put in one box or the other which means the overlaps and interlinking methods of challenging it are missed.
 - Compelling business cases for companies include: (1) Bolstering trust in brand and products; (2) Democracy is good for business. Therefore, business should be good for democracy as well; and (3) Secure legal regimes, economic environments that promote competition create stable conditions for businesses to thrive.
 - Government enforcement is generally lacking, which undermines efforts to meaningfully tackle GD.

- We need to recognize, address, and change the culture in which misogyny happens. We need to fund organizations that work to change cultural norms. This will be transformational for companies. There is a rise in extremism among young boys and men; we need to address this cultural issue, in partnership with government stakeholders.
- Governments should boost regulatory efforts, including around national privacy legislation. Voluntary codes of conduct are helpful, but inadequate.
- Education is critical. Governments need to remain current in their understanding of harms. Companies need partnership from the government to elevate issues.
- **Common tactics**
 - GD is more pronounced around elections, or other democratic events.
 - The abuse is focused on women in public life. Once women have stepped back out of the public eye, the abuse drops completely, incentivizing them to not participate in public life.
 - The use of micro influencers to spread GD.
 - GD happens intersectionality with other issues, including climate action and climate justice.

Emerging priorities

Regulation and legislation

- **Atlas:** Create an atlas that outlines all existing legislation on GD, and ideally analysis, so civil society organizations can leverage the resource.
- **Include CSOs** in the legislative process.
- **Legal resources:** Create a list of legal resources for targets of online abuse.
- **Human rights impact assessments:** Undertake human rights impact assessments before and during implementation.
- **Increase regulation of all AI systems:** We need more oversight into the ways AI models (including open source) are being trained to reduce the risks that they can be used to make deepfake campaigns. Control open source systems that can develop nefarious applications.
- **Risk assessments:** Support DSA-style risk assessments of GD.
- **Data access:** Ensure that researchers are granted direct API access, given that data access for researchers is challenging.
- **Enforcement:** Apply learnings and best practices from enforcement in other industries here, given that enforcing laws is a critical piece.
- **Global majority appropriate fit:** Consider how problems in the Global North vary from those in the Global Majority, and create interoperable regulation that fits both conservative / authoritarian country contexts *and* liberal democracy contexts. Regulation can be harmful in countries like Pakistan and India, where over-regulation has been used problematically. When a UN body advances a certain regulation, authoritarian states leverage that as spying, controlling information access to the internet, free speech, and controlling the activism and behaviors of women, human rights defenders, and journalists.

Code of conduct

- **Sustainability:** Advance codes of conduct that are sustained and embedded into institutional processes as part of the culture and practice, for all institutions, including political organizations and media organizations, rather than limited only to elections contexts.
- **Watchdog:** Ensure that enforcement mechanisms are not focused on proving or disproving disinformation, which can result in further harm. A multi-stakeholder watchdog organization can be helpful here.
- **Incorporate best practices:** Explore best practices from media, industry, specifically around conditions that support efficacy and limitations.

Enforcement

- **Capacity-building on enforcement:** Support awareness-raising, training, and capacity-building efforts that are survivor-centered and trauma-informed for implementers, including law enforcement.

Evidence collection, and ethics in data storage and management over time, is a critical piece. Train courts on gender disinformation and sexism online.

- **Multi-stakeholder efforts:**
 - Advance a coalition of politicians to push authorities to enforce these laws.
 - Encourage political parties to make internal policy to support female candidates against GD.
 - Support and encourage an enforcement environment that engages stakeholders across sectors.
- **Localization:** Incorporate cultural and linguistic contexts and complexities into enforcement strategies.
- **Citizen access:** Prioritize access by citizens to information about rights and protections and how to go about achieving rights and to financial assistance to take legal cases.
- **Accountability:** Explore monitoring and accountability around enforcement. Policymakers should establish participatory monitoring and evaluation processes. Use global, regional frameworks to draw down towards accountability. Survivor-centered processes and mechanisms should impact the enforcement experience.

Electoral politics

- **Civil society engagement:** Electoral management bodies (EMBs) should consult with civil society organizations to hear their reports and post-election recommendations. Broaden the points of discussion in terms of electoral management. Create systems and channels for listening to feminist and LGBTQI+ organizations and tech companies.
- **Accountability:** Investigate financial activities of major donors and undertake forensic auditing, to foster strong accountability measures.
- **Reporting mechanisms:** EMBs should have reporting mechanisms for candidates, and set policies to proactively address online disinformation. Update electoral codes of conduct.

Global multi-stakeholder engagement

- **Definition building:** Support efforts to build a global definition and shared understanding of these different terms, with careful attention paid to geographic/regional diversity, as this should be an ecosystem-wide approach.
- **Watermarking for provenance:** Demand AI companies watermark creations from their products, and news companies to watermark their images and videos.
- **Research:** Invest in gender-sensitive AI research.
- **Deepen the [Global Partnership](#)'s reach by:**
 - a. Embedding work at the national level, to include discussing delivery with participatory action design.
 - b. Creating a multi-stakeholder research sharing system that inventories the core problem and definitions.
 - c. Including tech companies in the multi-stakeholder approach, with clear strategy and awareness of disparate power dynamics.