Internet Society
Namibia Chapter

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ONLINE

REPORT CARD

NAMIBIA

Measuring Progress, Driving Action
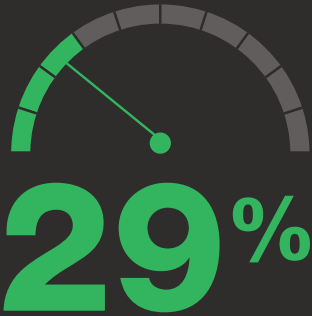
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NAMIBIA

OVERALL SCORE:

29%

INTERNET ACCESS & WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

SCORE: 4

Only 47% of Namibian women have access to the internet. No national policy, including the Gender Policy, recognizes ICTs as a tool for fighting gender inequalities. There are no clear set targets for using ICTs to empower women. Overall, no ICT sex-disaggregated data is collected regularly to inform policy or gender interventions at all levels.

RELEVANT CONTENT & SERVICES

SCORE: 3.5

Government and a few civil society organisations and private providers do provide information on legal rights, sexual and reproductive health rights and services through internet/ICT platforms but to a very little extent. Where information is available, it is largely about program reporting, not updated regularly nor easily accessible. About 15% of women personally use mobile financial services.

ONLINE SAFETY

SCORE: 2

The Namibia Police and its Women and Child Protection Units have not received any training on ICT based violence against women. There is no law criminalizing online cyber violence. Usage of existing laws to curb cyber violence has surfaced in the past, bringing little to no justice to victims. There is no data protection law in place to enable women to seek recourse when faced with instances of non-consensual image sharing, better known as 'revenge porn' and sexualized hate speech.

AFFORDABILITY

SCORE: 4

1GB of data in Namibia costs over 8% of average monthly income. National development plans promise 80% population coverage by broadband services by 2020 and universal access to ICT by 2022. Government has established multi-purpose community centers, but many are not fully functioning, equipment breakdowns and lack of connectivity are an ongoing concern. Public libraries are increasingly providing ICT access.

DIGITAL SKILLS & EDUCATION

SCORE: 4

70% of Namibian schools have no access to the internet. This inequality makes digital education uptake a challenge. The Harambee Prosperity Plan has targeted 80% broadband connection and usage in all schools to allow e-learning by 2020. A 2005 ICT Policy in Education previously faced implementation challenges. Additionally, data on women in technology, engineering, research and development (R&D) fields is not collected.

CLOSING THE GENDER GAP: A 5 POINT ACTION PLAN

1 IMPROVE DIGITAL SKILLS INTERVENTIONS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS. To digitally empower women, structured programs including adult ICT literacy, should be established to grow women enterprises, increase ICT use and avail opportunities. Regarding ICT in education, consider these 4 key steps for policy implementation. a) ensure access to a functioning and web connected ICT equipment in schools b) implement ICT skills and education for learners nationwide c) monitor and evaluate teacher training programs on digital skills and literacy d) monitor and evaluate programs that encourage women and girls to enter technology/ICTs, science, engineering and mathematics.

2 IMPROVE ICT ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY. Set policy targets aimed at subsidizing rural internet access, including operationalizing the Universal Access Service Fund as a long term mechanism to drive digital inclusion and access to web services especially for rural women. Targets should also offer support to women-led ICT initiatives such as community networks and prioritizing public access programs. Improve internet affordability to support women's access and use in order to advance their empowerment.

3 PRIORITISE RELEVANT ONLINE CONTENT FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATION. Create programs that train and support women's groups to create online content and use the internet to amplify women's voices. In order to increase digital financial inclusion, government needs to review its social grants distribution means to allow payments via digital platforms, to increase percentage of women partaking in digital skills.

4 ESTABLISH SPECIFIC TARGETS TO CLOSE ICT GENDER GAP. The proposed National ICT Policy should set targets for women and girls' ICT and internet access to bridge the digital gender gap. The national Broadband Policy and Plan should be revised to set gender-specific targets seeking to close the gender-digital gap. Data on women's internet access and use should be collected annually at all levels as evidence in meeting SDG targets.

5 ENSURE A SAFE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT THAT PROTECTS WOMEN'S DIGITAL RIGHTS Namibia must pass a law protecting private data and information online. The police and the judiciary's ability to address online gender-based violence needs to be strengthened through training and capacity building. Existing policies should be revised to address online violence against women (OVAW) and harness ICTs to fight GBV offline and online. Awareness campaigns should be prioritized to publicize legal processes available for seeking redress. There is an urgent need to uphold women's digital rights while also securing online freedoms.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

5 GENDER EQUALITY

The United Nations recently made gender-equitable access to information and communications technologies (ICTs) central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which set the global development agenda until 2030. Why? ICTs are powerful. They can help to deliver improved healthcare, quality education for all, financial inclusion, more accountable government, and much more. In adopting the SDGs, all countries have pledged to prioritise universal Internet access, and to use ICTs to empower women.

But much hard work lies ahead if we are to translate this vision into reality. A formidable gender gap in Internet access, digital skills and online rights exists - our Women's Rights Online research shows that in many communities, women are 50% less likely than men to be online and 30-50% less likely to use the Internet for economic and political empowerment. Women face many barriers - including high costs, lack of know-how, and a scarcity of relevant and empowering content - as well as social and legal obstacles to speaking freely and privately online.

The Web Foundation and partners have prepared these gender audits to help countries assess what they need to do to overcome the gender digital divide. Internet Society Namibia Chapter has taken the lead, in consultation with other national stakeholders, on identifying concrete steps that government can take in the next year to address the challenges and gaps identified. We hope that this report card and action plan will spark debate and galvanise policy change.

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY:

We based our scores on 14 simple indicators for which reliable empirical evidence exists, and grading was done in the first quarter of 2020. See the accompanying overview for a description of the indicators and sources used. A full methodology is available on our website.

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UN WOMEN
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