

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence as an Attack on Women's Public Participation



Review of Global Evidence and Implications

Transform Digital Spaces (Transform) Activity

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) is a global threat to health, safety, and political and economic wellbeing—not just to those who experience it, but to society as a whole. [Transform](#) is a three-year global pilot initiative, which supports practical approaches to preventing, mitigating, and TFGBV, with a focus on addressing violence experienced by women in politics and public life. In 2023, Transform conducted a foundational landscape assessment that reviewed the global evidence of TFGBV against women in politics and public life and its implications for women's public and political participation.

This landscape assessment illuminated several findings:

- **There are significant gaps in the global evidence base around TFGBV.** TFGBV is increasing in frequency, form, and sophistication, yet there is still little global research available due to gaps in linguistic, geographic, and sector-specific data.
- **Significant regional differences exist and should not be ignored.** Societal norms, existing regulation and legislation, and the level of technology saturation all contribute to differences in the root causes and prevalence of TFGBV, and how it manifests.
- **Women in politics and public life face many individual level risks.** They are attacked with hate speech, manipulative information, and a range of online dangers, such as privacy violations and physical threats, all of which are used to reduce their participation in civic and political life. Many subsets of women, such as those with disabilities, face an even higher risk of TFGBV.
- **Impunity around TFGBV globally negatively impacts democracy and pluralism.** Because TFGBV is often committed anonymously and with impunity, women withdraw from both online and offline public settings, which reinforces obstacles to equal respect, dignity and opportunities for all.
- **Technology platforms and legal frameworks serve as an enabling environment for TFGBV.** There are gaps between legislation and policies and their execution due to enforcers' insufficient comprehension of TFGBV, a lack of instruments that are specifically suited for the job, and stakeholder self-interest.
- **TFGBV is a human problem, propelled by technology.** Societal rates of online and offline violence against women are often linked, due to features of digital platforms that enable the existence of TFGBV.
- **TFGBV is not seen as everyone's responsibility.** Most organizations battling TFGBV are run by women, which places the burden on individuals who are frequently attacked by this danger and leads to exhaustion and stagnation.
- **The threat of TFGBV is exacerbated by closing space for civil society worldwide.** Harassment of CSOs and NGOs who collaborate with international organizations is becoming more prevalent, making it difficult to work with local groups in many countries.

Implications for TFGBV Programs

Based on these findings, Transform identified several implications for the design and implementation of international initiatives and programs to address TFGBV against WIPPL.

- **Address human behavior:** by combating TFGBV and supporting women in politics and public life.
- **Center survivors:** by prioritizing their experiences, needs, and safety in combating TFGBV and promoting women's participation in politics and public life.
- **Support vulnerable individuals and organizations:** by providing resources, protection, and assistance in combating TFGBV and promoting women's engagement in politics and public life.
- **Incorporate women and girls from many different backgrounds as contributors in program design:** to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach in combating TFGBV and fostering women's involvement in politics and public life.
- **Engage broad coalitions:** of stakeholders to collaboratively address TFGBV and advance women's participation in politics and public life.
- **Build collective knowledge:** by fostering information-sharing, research, and collaboration to effectively tackle TFGBV and promote women's engagement in politics and public life.
- **Understand local nuances:** by recognizing cultural, social, and contextual differences to develop tailored strategies in addressing TFGBV and supporting women's involvement in politics and public life.

The reports on the impacts of TFGBV are troubling, showing that women and girls, regardless of their background, are likely to decrease their level of participation in online spaces after experiencing the impacts of this threat. Also troubling are the gaps in our knowledge about the extent and impact of TFGBV in specific local and national contexts and against women and girls who experience intersecting oppressions. Transform will contribute to our knowledge of TFGBV through its country-specific analyses, capacity building activities, and evaluation of the innovation grants program.

The full landscape assessment report is available [here](#).

Transform is an Associate Award (AA) carried out under the Civil Society and Media-Strengthened Together and Advancing in New Directions (CSM-STAND) Leader with Associates Award (LWA). It is implemented by the CSM-STAND consortium, with Pact as the holder of the leader award and recipient of the AA, and IREX as implementing lead. CSM-STAND is a five-year, USAID funded award that aims to foster independent civic forces; enhance civic engagement; and build vibrant, resilient, and self-reliant civil society and media sectors that cultivate more pluralistic, democratic societies.

