

ENVISIONING FEMINIST DIGITAL SPACES IN ASIA



OXFAM



CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
About this vision paper	4
Acronyms	5
INTRODUCTION	6
The internet is not fulfilling its potential to drive positive change	6
1. The challenging digital context	8
Neocolonialism and restricted rights in digital architecture	8
Access continues to be restricted for women and girls	8
Public services are moving into the digital sphere	9
Internet shutdowns in Asia disproportionately affect women	11
2. Our vision for feminist digital spaces in summary	12
3. Why do we need to rethink digital spaces?	16
There is hope	16
We envision a space where people can thrive	16
Critical parts of our lives are online	17
We envision that there is freedom to be online and offline	17
We envision there is nothing about us without us	18
We envision meaningful access over universal access	18
Femme bodies, technology facilitated gender-based violence and patriarchy	19
A precarious space for feminist activists	21
We envision a feminist space coded in love	23
We envision a safe and brave space	24
Labour and digital spaces	24
The widening gender gap in the digital economy	25
We envision a safe space to work	25
Technological innovation is outpacing regulation	25
We envision inclusive regulatory frameworks	27
Algorithms, terms of service and profit	28
We envision digital spaces as a public good	29
We envision transparent and accountable digital tools and spaces	29
We envision prioritizing the wellbeing of people and planet over profits	30
4. Existing efforts to expand, reimagine and	32

advocate for fair digital spaces	32
APWLD Media Fellowship on Digitalization and Feminist Digital Rights and Justice	32
DAKILA – Philippine Collective for Modern Heroism, the Philippines	32
Digital Narratives Studio, Hong Kong	32
Digital Rights Asia Pacific Assembly	33
Digital Rights Foundation’s Cyber Harassment Helpline, Pakistan	33
Don’t Stop Dream Team, Lao People’s Democratic Republic	33
Feminist Principles of the Internet	33
GenderIT.org	33
Hashtag Generation’s social media monitoring, Sri Lanka	34
Numun Fund	34
PurpleCode Collective, Indonesia	34
The Wikimedia Foundation: encouraging editorial diversity	34
4. Conclusion	35
ENDNOTES	36

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This vision paper has been collated by Myrah Nerine Butt, Lorenzo Urbinati and Amna Khan with editorial contributions from Camille Dancoisne, Diane Pueschel, Michael Borum and Inga Ferber. The cover illustration is by Haris Hidayat Ullah.

It was enabled by the valuable contributions of selected Asian feminist actors who generously shared their time, knowledge and experience through interviews and focus group discussions. This paper is based on the insights of:

- Aimen Bucha, Lahore University of Management Science (LUMS)
- Darika Bamrungchok, Independent Researcher
- Dulanjaya Mahagama, Hashtag Generation, Sri Lanka
- Gerimara Manuel, Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
- Hija Kamran and Smita V, Association for Progressive Communication (APC)
- Leni Velasco, DAKILA – Philippine Collective for Modern Heroism
- Nishant Shah, Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)
- Rachel Arinii Judhistari, Wikimedia Foundation
- Sara Pacia, EngageMedia
- Sushmita Lama, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)
- Thin Zar Myint Moh (Cho), Feminist Web Cartoonist
- Vanna Chomsavanh, Don't Stop Dream Team (DSDT) Laos

ABOUT THIS VISION PAPER

Driven by the urgent need to reshape digital spaces, we talked to 14 feminist actors in Asia and co-created a new vision for feminist digital spaces in the region. By exploring systemic barriers and discussing solutions that can lead to feminist digital spaces, this exercise enabled us to concretely visualize and imagine the changes that we collectively wish to see. It also helped us to map pathways towards achieving those changes and heightened our awareness of the challenges ahead of us.

We want to work towards feminist digital futures rooted in justice, care and community. This vision paper is a call to action that responds to both the challenging digital context that we face and the inspiring initiatives that are already being undertaken in Asia and beyond. Together, we can shape and nurture digital spaces that are safe, inclusive and empowering for all. This is an invitation to continue resisting authoritarianism, patriarchy, capitalism and ableism in digital spaces.

Our collective vision of supportive, brave and joyful digital spaces where everyone can thrive is presented in this document.

ACRONYMS

ADB: Asian Development Bank

AIPP: Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact

APC: Association for Progressive Communication

APWLD: Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development

CUHK: Chinese University of Hong Kong

DRAPAC: Digital Rights Asia Pacific Assembly

DSDT: Don't Stop Dream Team

ESCAP: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

HRIA: Human Rights Impact Assessment

ICTs: Information and Communication Technologies

ILO: International Labour Organization

IPS: Institute for Policy Studies and Media Development (Vietnam)

ISP: Internet Service Provider

LUMS: Lahore University of Management Science

NDID: National Digital ID (in Thailand)

OHCHR: Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

VNeID: Vietnam Electronic Identification

LGBTQIA+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual/Ally

INTRODUCTION

Originally, the internet was perceived as an effective means to democratize power. By providing equal access to information and the means to connect, its potential seemed transformative.

The internet still has the power to create fairer and more equal societies. By enhancing connectivity, financial inclusion, and access to trade and public services, technology can reduce inequality. It can bridge critical gender gaps around literacy and access to lifesaving information.¹ But its capacity to be a catalyst for progressive change is yet to be realized. Today, digital spaces are contested and present new threats as well as opportunities. The internet has become a complex blend of the public and the private; on one hand, it enables big corporations to control and use our data, while on the other, it creates new, safe spaces where we can express ourselves, find communities, and control our own narratives.²



“ In the early 2000s, we had this grand idea that the digital world is going to be a space of public good. Today, we see an extremely privatized, very neoliberal, and even very geopolitically governed space. ”

NISHANT SHAH
CUHK

The internet is not fulfilling its potential to drive positive change

Currently, neocolonialism, patriarchy and capitalism are all hyper-fuelled by digital spaces. Online environments bolster and spread dangerous counter-narratives; they can influence who we vote for, what we eat, wear and consume, and who is targeted by hate. **Dangerous narratives are spreading like wildfire, directly contributing to the profits of an elite few.** As a result, inequality and precarity are intensifying, and the power of anti-democratic and fascist forces is growing. In the extractive value chains of the data economy, dehumanized machine intelligence is supplanting embedded and embodied knowledge.³

While the mainstream narrative largely focuses on digital spaces as a panacea, the internet poses serious risks to populations who are already in positions of vulnerability. These risks are often obscured and, instead, we witness the rise of ‘techno-solutionism’⁴ with its promises of the transformative potential of digital technologies to overcome systemic issues such as poverty and injustice.

Technology evangelists often argue that information and communication technologies (ICTs) are not inherently good, evil or neutral; they simply exist, and it is how we use these technologies that matters most. **Digital spaces closely reflect real-life spaces and often exacerbate existing inequalities.** Moreover, they often mirror and amplify existing biases, as well as harmful social, cultural and gender norms; this disproportionately affects historically marginalized and oppressed groups, including young people, women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, migrants, rural communities, Indigenous Peoples, older people, and racial and ethnic groups in the Global South, as well as people with disabilities.

When viewed through a feminist lens, the potential for digital spaces to cause harm to individuals, groups, communities and nations is alarming. The unchecked and unquestioned impact of digital transformation on society and the planet contributes to the unabated growth of social and economic inequality. Digital technologies, whether intentionally or unintentionally, have introduced novel ways in which human rights, civil rights, physical and psychosocial security, social protection, and other aspects of human life, quality of life and livelihoods can be compromised or threatened without adequate protections, assurances and accountability.

The internet is a space where social norms are negotiated, performed and imposed, often acting as an extension of other spaces shaped by patriarchy. The struggle towards feminist digital spaces is one that forms part of a continuum of narratives in other spaces: public, private, and in-between.⁵ In recent years, for example, hate speech and other forms of online abuse and harassment, such as cyberbullying, online harassment, hate speech, doxxing,⁶ intimate image abuse, trolling or deepfakes, have spiked significantly.⁷ Marginalized groups are more likely to be targeted based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, sexuality, ability, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, faith, nationality and political affiliation, with women (including transwomen) being targeted most.

1. THE CHALLENGING DIGITAL CONTEXT

The digital spaces we encounter today are rarely characterized by the principles of inclusion, connection and democracy that the internet was initially believed to have the capacity to promote. In this section we examine the ways in which many of these spaces are falling short, taking these issues as the departure point for our envisioning of how digital spaces can be positively transformed.

Neocolonialism and restricted rights in digital architecture

Digital spaces are often designed in – and for – the Global North. Practitioners in the Global Majority have highlighted the urgent need to indigenize and localize these practices and tools.

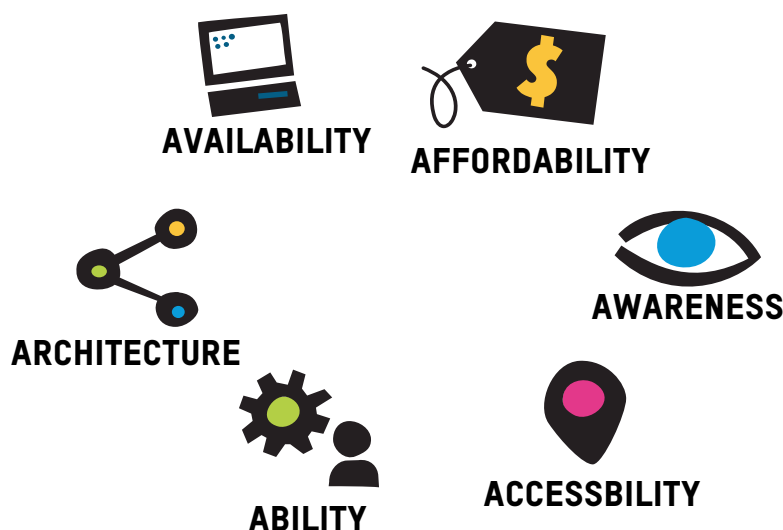
Internet intermediaries lack transparency on policies and practices affecting the rights to freedom of expression and privacy; this has led to concerns about digital governance, security, privacy and expression. A 2025 study by Ranking Digital Rights found that the world's largest tech companies are still failing to create the guardrails needed to protect the rights of billions of online users; it identified issues relating to the transparency of their governance and algorithms, as well as their failure to conduct regular human rights impact assessments (HRIAs).⁸

A 2023 report by Free Press shows how tech companies are also deprioritizing content moderation and other user trust and safety protections, at the same time as laying off critical staff and teams tasked with maintaining the integrity of platforms. This can create toxic online environments where hate, harassment and lies proliferate.⁹

There is also an acute lack of capacity to moderate content in local languages. The majority of social media users come from non-English speaking countries in the Global South, where most harmful content appears in local languages. Yet, current AI-driven moderation systems struggle with the low-resource languages spoken in these regions.¹⁰

Access continues to be restricted for women and girls

The issue of digital access should be viewed through a holistic lens encompassing the six As:¹¹



These elements are interrelated and interconnected, shaping a context in which women consistently lag behind men in accessing digital technologies. This trend can be seen in mobile phone adoption and internet use, as well as social media use and digital skills, among other areas.¹²

As we develop a vision for feminist digital spaces, it is important to recognize that basic access to the internet remains a challenge for many.

The majority of the estimated 2.6 billion people¹³ currently not connected to the internet are women and girls.¹⁴ Only 64% of women in the Asia-Pacific region use the internet, compared with 68% of men.¹⁵ The gap is even more striking in South Asia, where women are 41% less likely than men to use mobile internet.¹⁶

Women who also belong to other marginalized groups, such as rural populations and lower-socio-economic groups, are even less connected, and are therefore likely to be further disadvantaged than women on average. Several studies have shown – particularly in Asia – that once gender disparities in education and/or income have been statistically accounted for (along with other variables such as age and location), gender is still a statistically significant determinant of the likelihood of digital access. There is also evidence of women relying on the approval and support of men in their households to access digital devices.¹⁷

“ The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that people had to jump online and there was no other option. People had to work and study from home. Access to public services became automated and online. However, not everyone could access digital spaces. In Thailand – in spite of internet connectivity – not everyone has access. For example, women from marginalized communities did not have the same access to platforms or devices. ”

DARIKA BAMRUNGCHOK
Independent Researcher

In 2022, 43% of the male population in least-developed countries was online, compared to 30% of the female population.¹⁸ In Asia-Pacific, rural women are 7% less likely than men to own a mobile phone and 16% less likely to use smartphones.¹⁹ In developing countries in the region, men are twice as likely to use the internet than women.²⁰

According to a UNICEF study in 2023, around 90% of adolescent girls and young women did not use the internet in low-income countries.²¹ Simply put, being a woman makes it more likely that you will be digitally excluded.²²

When women and girls within the region do own digital devices, they often live in contexts where they do not have the autonomy to use them; therefore, they are unable to leverage digital tools to benefit themselves.²³ Research on girls' mobile access in seven countries highlighted that adolescent boys with mobile phones use them for a wider range of activities, from playing games to accessing financial services online, while adolescent girls tend to use only the basic functions (such as making phone calls or using the calculator).²⁴ Negative attitudes, low self-confidence and concerns about personal safety that limit online activity contribute to the digital exclusion of women and girls.²⁵

Public services are moving into the digital sphere

No or limited access means that there is an acute absence of women's – and diverse women's – voices in digital spaces. This is a cause for concern because an increasing number of government services

and facilities are adopting digital tools for ease of access.

1. E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES

To improve people's access to government services, Asian states are embracing the concept of e-government, employing technology to streamline public-sector processes.

For example, in Malaysia citizens can now apply for drivers' licences and marriage certificates online. Despite these initiatives, only about 15% of Malaysians have used the internet to access online government services over the past 12 months; this is approximately half the global average.²⁶

In 2019, the Thai government launched the National Digital ID (NDID) platform, an initiative that allows citizens (and eventually legal entities and foreign residents) to create digital identities with third-party digital identity providers (for example, banks and mobile network operators) for transactions and services. This digital ID also enables people to manage entitlements to access health facilities online. In addition, the Thai government has also opted for a face-and-iris recognition biometric system as part of efforts to tighten its control on the millions of migrant workers in the country, and to prevent the risk of diseases spreading.²⁷

In Indonesia, a mobile app, Mobile JKN, was developed as part of the Indonesian National Health Insurance programme (BPJS Kesehatan). Features that app users can access include selecting or changing primary healthcare provider, making appointments and filing complaints. According to an International Labour Organization (ILO) report, this digital solution has significantly helped to extend the coverage of the health insurance scheme.²⁸

Internet shutdowns in Asia disproportionately affect women

In 2025, the highest number of internet shutdowns recorded was in Asia.²⁹ Experts have defined internet shutdowns as the 'intentional disruption of internet or electronic communications, rendering them inaccessible or effectively unusable, for a specific population or within a location, often to exert control over the flow of information.'³⁰ They are usually ordered by state authorities and can take different forms, from 'blanket' shutdowns (which completely cut access) and slow access ('throttling') to the blocking of specific communication platforms such as messaging apps.

Internet shutdowns not only deny people fundamental freedoms enshrined in international human rights law and standards, such as the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, they have also been proven to exacerbate gender discrimination and injustice. Cases have been documented of internet shutdowns leading to women workers' loss of income; negatively impacting women's mental health and work-life balance; and denying them access to education, news³¹ and essential information related to their reproductive health.³²

2. OUR VISION FOR FEMINIST DIGITAL SPACES IN SUMMARY

Many inspiring ideas emerged when we asked 14 feminist actors in Asia to imagine an ideal digital space and describe it. This is a summary of the key criteria that shape our collective vision. In Section 3 we present a more expansive account of the digital spaces we want to create.



A SAFE AND BRAVE PLACE

We envision a space safe for all people, particularly gender- and sexually diverse individuals. No one should feel unsafe or monitored in these spaces.



We want to centre love, pleasure and joy in digital spaces,³³ to create spaces that are open to people expressing pleasure rather than focusing on harm.



We want to create spaces where people can sustain their livelihoods using digital technology safely and with dignity.



INCLUSIVE REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

We want to ensure that there is adequate space for civil society, especially feminist civil society, to engage in tech-regulation policies.



NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

We envision community-led, equitable digital spaces shaped by the contributions of all stakeholders.



DIGITAL SPACES AS A PUBLIC GOOD

We believe that feminist digital spaces must be transparent, representative and democratic; they should be public goods shaped by a strong culture of collective care.



A SPACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN THRIVE

We envision spaces that foster conditions of living and thriving beyond basic survival.



TRANSPARENT & ACCOUNTABLE TOOLS AND SPACES

We imagine transparency and openness in how different tools, applications and platforms work.



PEOPLE AND PLANET OVER PROFIT

We envision accountable feminist digital spaces that prioritize people and the planet; these spaces fulfil the promise of technology's original purpose – to improve our lives and our labour.



MEANINGFUL ACCESS OVER UNIVERSAL ACCESS

We must work towards meaningful access over universal access; this requires locally relevant and context-specific solutions to make technology more meaningful.

FREEDOM TO BE ONLINE



AND OFFLINE

We imagine feminist digital spaces where people are not forced online, but instead have autonomy and control over which parts of their lives are digitized.

3. WHY DO WE NEED TO RETHINK DIGITAL SPACES?

There is hope

Many barriers currently obstruct the creation of truly feminist digital spaces in Asia, but we are hopeful that they can be dismantled and overcome. Inclusive, equitable and supportive online environments are possible if we work together to demand change. In this section, we present our visions of the internet that we want to see alongside some of the issues that we face.

“This is one of the internets! From the dial-up access of 2000 to the ways in which we are using Gen AI, we have experienced multiple forms of the internet over the years. The decision of what the expression of the internet is going to be has always been in the hands of Big Tech. To arrive at the internet or digital spaces we have today, a series of commercial and technological choices were made. Since active choices produced this form of the internet, it means that other choices are possible.”

NISHANT SHAH
CUHK

We envision a space where people can thrive

Powerful forces are constantly eroding human rights and living conditions, making it hard for people to focus on thriving and not simply surviving. However, survival should be the bare minimum. For a brighter future, we must collectively work towards better living conditions in which everyone can thrive. The idea of survival leads us to believe that we need to withdraw and do less. But if we create a new index of liveability and thriving within digital spaces, it allows us to reimagine the digital and our positionality within that in a very different space.³⁴

“I would want an internet where I can play, where I can have fun. It shouldn't be a space I am using for basic survival, but rather a space where we can exist as we like.”

SMITA V
APC

“It is a space marked by having access to information, having access to resources, having access to opportunities and technologies that can improve their livelihoods and their lives.”

LENI VELASCO
DAKILA

Critical parts of our lives are online

Having a digital identity is becoming increasingly critical for survival. Women who are unable to access digital spaces risk being doubly excluded – not just from digital services, but also from core government services and e-commerce, as well as other parts of modern life that rely on digital access to some extent.³⁵

We envision that there is freedom to be online and offline

We envision a space where people have the freedom to be online and offline. We imagine feminist digital spaces where being online is not essential and people can have autonomy and control over which parts of their life are digitized.

“I would want a world where access is not just about going online, but it should allow the option to also be offline. I shouldn't be forced to be online for my very survival, which is what is happening in all our countries, particularly after COVID-19.”

SMITA V
APC

We envision there is nothing about us without us

Technology includes all of us, but only a few of us are really represented in digital spaces. Making the digital sphere inclusive should be a community effort; all stakeholders should contribute to the development of this world. But at the same time, it is vital to focus on the most marginalized people.³⁶ We particularly need to centre Indigenous Peoples' knowledge in the creation of feminist digital spaces. There must be an equitable distribution of power between the government, tech companies and community users, as well as strong structures to ensure equal access and mutual accountability.

“ It is a space for mutual growth and learning, where people can connect at a human level beyond borders. ”

VANNA CHOMSAVANH
Don't Stop Dream Team

“ My utopian world will be cognizant of different cultures and languages. It will be inclusive to ensure that everyone can connect to the space. ”

THIN ZAR MYINT MO
Feminist Web Cartoonist

We envision meaningful access over universal access

We need to work towards meaningful access rather than universal access. We need to step away from fixating on scalability and tailoring online experiences to addressing the specific needs of targeted communities. **More locally relevant and context-specific solutions make technology more meaningful, while a universal solution overlooks the diversity and uniqueness of its users.** Rather than focusing on mass usage, our priority should be to grow and nurture spaces that embrace diversity. By introducing locally embedded experiences, we can create unique and relevant opportunities to improve the quality of engagement, which is directly related to improving quality of life. For example, as the marginalization of Indigenous communities in Taiwan increased due to misrepresentation, misinformation and disinformation, they responded by using AI to preserve and revitalize their languages through AI-based learning platforms.^{37 38}

“For Indigenous women, it would be very powerful to have a space that’s accessible safely in local languages. It can serve as a means to preserve our culture, identity and way of living.”

SUSHMITA
AIPP

Femme bodies, technology facilitated gender-based violence and patriarchy

It becomes increasingly difficult to advocate for digital security and safety in a world where women, LGBTQIA+ peoples and other marginalized populations are constantly made to bear the burden of the violence enacted against them. The rhetoric of safety and security is often used in Asia to police femme bodies, restrict their freedoms, and place the burden of ensuring safety on victims.

2. TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is any act that is committed, assisted, aggravated or amplified by the use of ICTs or other digital tools that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological, social, political or economic harm, or other infringements of rights and freedoms.

This violence can manifest in various forms including unwanted sexual remarks, non-consensual pornography, threats, doxxing, cyberstalking, harassment, and through gender-based discriminatory content such as memes and social media or blog posts. It can be perpetrated through multiple means, such as impersonation, hacking, spamming, tracking and surveillance, and the malicious distribution of intimate messages and images.³⁹

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence has the same roots as other forms of gender-based violence and is part of the same continuum. Online and offline gender-based violence does not happen in separate vacuums as women and gender-diverse people’s lives online intersect frequently and in various complex ways with other areas of their lives. Violence in any one domain can often produce harm across other domains.⁴⁰ Online environments are increasingly mirroring and amplifying the violence and discrimination that women, LGBTQIA+ peoples and other marginalized populations face offline. A study by The Economist Intelligence Unit reveals that the prevalence of technology-facilitated gender-based violence is as high as 88% in the Asia-Pacific region, with adolescent girls, women with disabilities, lower-caste women, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQIA+ women and migrant women especially at risk of violence.⁴¹ Women and marginalized groups are less likely to benefit from the opportunities that the internet offers for the enjoyment of their human rights, which therefore deepens gender inequality.

This violence contributes to serious human rights violations that disproportionately impact women and marginalized groups. Technological advancements provide abusers with continuous access to their victims that endangers their safety. Tools such as GPS tracking, spyware and social media monitoring allow abusers to easily surveil, harass and control victims remotely. The anonymity of online spaces also enables perpetrators to engage in cyberstalking, revenge porn and other forms of digital abuse with reduced accountability.

Social media platforms are often designed to prioritize engagement, and can in turn amplify abusive content. Negative comments encourage others to participate, especially when harmful behaviour is normalized. Victims often struggle to escape as technology ensures that abuse can follow them wherever they go, blurring the lines between their public and private lives. When individuals, especially women, are subjected to harassment, threats and doxxing, they withdraw from online discussions. This silences their voices and limits their participation in the digital world.

New technologies have further complicated cyberviolence. Tools such as deepfake pornography allow perpetrators to create fake explicit content, making it extremely difficult for victims to prove the inauthenticity of such content and seek justice.⁴²

“ We observe that with with the increase in tech and AI, a lot of harmful content is on the rise, especially targeting women. Gender-based violence is really high with new digital technologies. ”

DULANJAYA
Hashtag Generation

“ It is very difficult today to differentiate between human rights and digital rights because of how closely online spaces mirror the discrimination and biases of physical spaces. Work on digital spaces needs to be supported by meaningful efforts to tackle systemic bias and discrimination. ”

SARA PACIA
EngageMedia

With the rise of generative AI, the intersection of technology and gender has become more complex and multifaceted. AI has been used to create realistic yet fake non-consensual intimate images, disseminate disinformation, and fabricate audio and video content. This disproportionately affects women and gender-diverse individuals.

3. EMBODIED PEOPLE IN A DIGITAL AGE

“Mainstream narratives often treat “women and digital” or “queer people and digital” as two separate domains. They presume that there is a digital space, and then there are women or queer people who use these spaces – implying an externality, a disconnect. What we urgently need is an expanded understanding of what it means to be an embodied person in the digital age. We need a lexicon that weaves together these experiences, rather than treating them as add-ons.

What does it mean to be a woman, a queer person, a person of colour or a migrant when our subjectivities are profoundly shaped by the digital technologies we inhabit? The neoliberal rhetoric of Big Tech imagines users as neutral, homogenous individuals who simply “use” the internet. But in reality, we are shaped by our digital experiences in fundamental ways.

Many digital policies continue to reproduce the fallacy that women, especially from low-income backgrounds – such as factory workers, caregivers and informal labourers – exist outside digital spaces or are merely excluded from them. Yet these groups are deeply embedded within and transformed by digital systems: through platforms, biometric databases, digital cash, gig economies, surveillance infrastructures, and beyond. To engage with this complexity, we need both a new vocabulary and a broader policy imagination.”

NISHANT SHAH
CUHK

A precarious space for feminist activists

Digital spaces are being used to both reproduce and challenge sexist and misogynistic behaviours and systems. The ability to organize and leverage digital spaces is heavily dependent on context. Under autocratic government regimes, feminist groups in Asia face risks and are unable to fully leverage digital space to organize. Furthermore, as vulnerable women often experience restricted access to digital spaces, there are limits to digital activism.⁴³ With control over content regulation and censorship, we also see violations of the right to the freedom of expression, specifically the right to sexual expression.⁴⁴ But despite this, feminists are resisting and using digital tools and spaces creatively to overcome content regulation and censorship. For example, feminists in China have used emojis to avoid censorship.⁴⁵

4. DIGITAL SPACES CANNOT BE THE DEFAULT SPACES FOR ORGANIZING

“Until recently, we treated digital spaces as inherently safe and as the default arenas for mobilizing and organizing communities. The COVID-19 lockdowns disrupted that assumption. They revealed that while the digital can serve as a space for gathering, it cannot be the only space.

Today, those suffering most are communities that have lost access to physical spaces of being, belonging and collective action. In many cases, we've displaced them into digital environments that subject them to intense data extraction, surveillance, and the erasure of their labour and identities.

Communities that once had strong, rooted histories and shared emotional bonds have become fragmented and dispersed. Their collective energy – the emotional charge needed to act – has dissipated. As we've naturalized digital mobilization as the only viable mode of engagement, we've simultaneously eroded longstanding structures of support, care, and community. In embracing the digital as default, we risk forgetting what it means to truly be together.”

NISHANT SHAH
CUHK

Feminist activists are also being heavily surveilled. Surveillance states and their technologies have made it possible to use digital spaces to exclude those deemed unworthy; they discipline and dehumanize feminized bodies, hound women human rights defenders, and persecute migrant and refugee women, among other forms of exclusion.⁴⁶ **Surveillance has historically functioned as an oppressive tool to control the bodies of women, LGBTQIA+ peoples and other marginalized populations.** It is closely aligned with colonial and patriarchal inequalities.

“Information, how it's spreading and how it's used, matters. In spaces of organizing and movement-building, we have seen that disinformation online is amplified propaganda which impacts life offline. There is a serious risk of harm to those fighting for justice.”

AIMEN BUCHA
LUMS

In addition, feminist activists are operating in an environment in which misinformation and disinformation are skewing and degrading democracies and democratic processes, and fuelling authoritarianism.⁴⁷ Misinformation and disinformation are actively being used to manufacture consent for violence and conflict, serving capitalist interests.⁴⁸

Despite these barriers, sexual rights activists utilize digital platforms such as social networks, instant messaging and emails, as well as websites, blogs and hosting services to access, produce and/or share content regarding sexuality or sexual rights. The ICT innovations offered by social media platforms allow for the easy and rapid dissemination of digital material across multiple platforms and over various networks.

“ Indigenous women are unable to use digital spaces safely in Asia because of their context. All social media is heavily monitored by the state. A lot of the advocacy work, particularly around rights and hydropower projects, is high risk to be put online. We do not want to be visible or put ourselves out for risk. ”

SUSHMITA
AIPP

We envision a feminist space coded in love

We want to centre love, pleasure and joy in digital spaces;⁴⁹ to create spaces that are open to people expressing pleasure rather than focusing on harm.

“ We need a space that unites all types of women. Where Indigenous women and other women can have a conversation; where they can be loving, respectful and acknowledge other people's identities. ”

SUSHMITA
AIPP

“ I see it as a safe space where I can be vulnerable and people using these spaces have empathy. It is more humane in terms of how it functions, how it serves people. ”

LENI VELASCO
DAKILA

We envision a safe and brave space

We envision a space safe for all people, especially gender- and sexually diverse individuals. No one should feel unsafe or monitored in digital spaces.

Technology offers many ways of doing but technologies are also very powerful ways of being. We envision a digital space where resources are not just for people to do things, but where there are resources to enable people to be and express themselves in the ways they want.⁵⁰ We imagine a brave space where people have the freedom to express who they are; a space where they can safely express their politics and identities.⁵¹

“The utopian world I can think of is one that is free from online hate and abuse and where everyone feels safe. It is a world where everyone has access to digital platforms and is well equipped to utilize those platforms responsibly.”

THIN ZAR MYINT MOH
Feminist Web Cartoonist

“A safe space where Indigenous people are not judged or fetishized for preserving their practices and ways of living.”

SUSHMITA
AIPP

Labour and digital spaces

Digital platforms have enabled the reorganization of economic activity; much of the work that was traditionally done by full-time workers has now shifted to individual freelancers and on-demand workers. Workers are generally classified as independent in contrast with employees.⁵² National labour laws are rarely applied to digital workers, and digital work platforms attempt to minimize the external regulation of the relationship between employer and employee.

People have been forced into digital labour but there are no adequate safeguards to protect their labour from automation. Employment contracts on online platforms and within the gig economy fall short of the minimum standards expected in decent jobs.⁵³

There are no safety or protection mechanisms for gig workers or sex workers, or for the forms of feminized and queer labour that are happening within the digital space. The more that service workers are forced into our online spaces, the more that their rights are threatened. The goal of universal access is pushing people into a private corporate internet.

The widening gender gap in the digital economy

Gig work is often gender-segregated; men are more likely to dominate delivery and driving tasks while women are concentrated in caring, cleaning and clerical work. Gig work appeals to women for its perceived flexibility; it enables them to balance paid work with unpaid care responsibilities. However, in reality gender pay gaps remain and harassment is often inadequately addressed by platforms.⁵⁴

The persistent and widening gender gap in the digital economy is rooted in the historical feminization of labour. As AI automates affective labour, it is apparent that communication technologies are primed to continue excluding women from the digital economy.

Traditional gender norms have been embedded in digital systems and AI automates the labour historically performed by women; this intensifies their displacement from traditional forms of employment to precarious gig work and reinforces historical inequities. According to recent research by LinkedIn and UN Women, women workers are more likely to be employed in sectors and occupations that could be disrupted by generative AI. This includes roles such as administrative assistants, legal assistants and customer service representatives.⁵⁵

4. PAID CARE WORK AND DIGITAL SPACES

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, digital labour platforms for domestic work were rapidly rising in popularity. Because domestic workers continue to be excluded from labour protections, digital intermediaries, such as these online platforms, have attempted to capture the domestic work sector with sometimes misleading promises of formalization and bringing benefits to workers who had previously been out of reach.⁵⁶ While platforms do not recognize these workers as their employees, a 2022 study by Rodríguez-Modroño et al.⁵⁷ found that the flexibility of workers and their misclassification (as freelance workers instead of employees) favours platforms as they have a workforce available 24/7 who can be exploited without platforms having to provide any work-related and social security benefits.⁵⁸

Looking at the supply and demand of digital work, the demand comes from buyers from the Global North, while the majority of work is carried out in low-income countries. Workers from India and the Philippines perform much of the work on one major web-based employment platform.⁵⁹ One of the reasons for this is that median wages are low in low-income countries but significantly higher in medium- and high-income countries. The fierce competition between digital workers seeking earning opportunities through digital labour platforms has directly influenced many workers' strategies for securing work, often resulting in underbidding practices and a race to the bottom. Since employers are not limited to hiring labour in their local markets, they can easily buy labour from where it is cheapest. This reduces the market power of workers relative to employers and puts downwards pressure on labour prices.⁶⁰

We envision a safe space to work

A feminist digital space is where people can sustain their livelihoods using digital technology safely and with dignity. There are adequate labour protections in place and digital spaces are actively used to protect and value feminized labour.

Technological innovation is outpacing regulation

Technology is closely linked to issues that feminist actors work on in offline spaces. It exacerbates issues relating to inequalities, discrimination and biases that women, LGBTQIA+ peoples and other marginalized populations already face every day in offline spaces.

“ After the infamous Delhi case in 2012, there were around 70 or 80 safety apps put out by government alone. There is this idea that technology is the silver bullet which will solve all your problems. And right now, a lot of places are looking at AI as that silver bullet. But they forget that AI is trained on the existing internet, which is highly racist, very misogynist, very homophobic, very transphobic, very casteist. So, your technology which you think will be your saviour is modelled on existing social norms. ”

SMITA V
APC

There is room to increase meaningful participation and inclusion in digital spaces. The level of civil society engagement varies significantly across Asia. In some Asian countries, there is a narrow space for civil society inclusion in policymaking, and this space is even more restricted for feminist actors. Regulation in Asia often moves quickly towards overregulation. Technology-related policies are actively used to curb civic freedoms and limit access to information.⁶¹

“ AI is rapidly developing and all the money is going into AI right now – all around the world. My concern is that regulations can't keep up and that is primarily because of all the bureaucratic processes that are involved in policymaking. In these scenarios, we have to really keep an eye on how technology is being regulated and how lawmakers are referring to technology or referencing technologies in their policies or in their plans for future policymaking. There is an acute lack of multistakeholder consultation. ”

HIJA KAMRAN
APC

“ In the process of the policy formulation of digital laws, there are no voices from any civil society organization in Pakistan, from any movement or space, or any communities or community member. Especially from marginalized and subjugated communities: they have no voice in the creation of these [digital laws]. ”

AIMEN BUCHA
LUMS

We envision inclusive regulatory frameworks

There is adequate space for civil society, especially feminist civil society, to influence tech-regulation policies. Feminist actors are actively consulted and meaningfully included in governance and regulatory national and regional tech policies.

In this context, governments invest adequate time in understanding different forms of technology before creating thoughtful and appropriate regulatory policies. They recognize that technology is not a magic bullet that can solve persisting public policy issues but a tool that can partly address some issues. Policies are developed comprehensively applying the lenses of gender, sexuality, race, location, geography and accessibility. ⁶²They are effectively implemented and there are consequences for inaction.

We imagine digital spaces defined by participatory lawmaking. All communities are included, not just lawmakers, tech companies and selected parts of civil society. Stakeholders developing technology for public use must be accountable to everyone. The 'market' must not override any government's fundamental obligations to its people. Civil society must have the right to refuse.

“Despite the advancement from the internet to open up collaboration, freedom of expression and assembly, and access to the market, the control and governance of our internet commons are very skewed and further enforcing inequality. The majority of new billionaires are from the tech sector, and some people in Silicon Valley control and dominate our digital commons.”

RACHEL ARINII JUDHISTARI
Wikimedia Foundation

Algorithms, terms of service and profit

To perform their tasks, algorithms rely on data, which is often biased.⁶³ It is critical to understand that data – including our news feeds or search results – does not emerge in isolation but is contingent on human biases and power relations.

In this context, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and social media platforms can exacerbate existing heteronormative biases. This then creates a feedback loop of discrimination with opaque algorithmic decision-making and the aggregation of user data for sale to corporations and state agencies. Currently, we lack transparency in the development and deployment of algorithms. Feminists are opposing their use or misuse to promote and amplify hate speech or perpetuate existing biases that have been shown to harm historically marginalized and oppressed groups, intensifying social and political divisions.

“ I have worked with a wide variety of people; from homemakers to students to domestic workers to religious communities. When we talk to them about online spaces or technology, and whether they are aware of what kind of data is being collected, I always make reference to the terms of service and privacy policies. Predictably everybody says that we don't read these documents because language is obscure and the font is tiny. These are very, very long documents – like it would take a lot of time for us to read them, but then also the language is not something that they that they understand fully. ”

HIJA KAMRAN
APC

“ It is not that we need to be against profit per se but the lack of acknowledgement and accountability of the real world consequences of this pursuit for endless profit is damaging. Currently, there is no thought if how digital spaces are increasingly becoming racist and sexist as long as it does not affect the bottom line. ”

SARA PACIA
EngageMedia

“ Indigenous women, including leaders, are not particularly aware of how algorithms and the flow of data works. They take information on the internet to be neutral and objective. ”

SUSHMITA
AIPP

We envision digital spaces as a public good

Feminist digital spaces are truly transparent and democratic spaces available to the many and not to the few in terms of control and use. These spaces are essentially public goods. What is chosen to be for the public good will be based on our needs and our issues. There is a very strong sense of community in these spaces. Our community is the frontline of our protection. These spaces are shaped by a strong culture of collective care.

“I envision a digital space owned and created by our collective movement, our people and our friends. I think every part of it should be somehow discussed and decided by the people who will be using it, who created it and will be different per context. We will not take more than what we need. It starts with collective care.”

GERIMARA MANUEL
APWLD

“A feminist digital world is where the digital commons are controlled by a collective of users – and not by a Big Tech corporation. It will also allow Global South women, queer and marginalized communities to access as well as create the sum of knowledge. The future of feminist internet is public-interest internet.”

RACHEL ARINII JUDHISTARI
Wikimedia Foundation

We envision transparent and accountable digital tools and spaces

There is transparency and openness in how different tools, applications and platforms work. Data is open source, and people are informed about how their data is being collected, stored and transmitted. The terms and conditions are actively understood by the end users. Accountability is promoted in online spaces, specifically for tech companies and their monitoring and enforcement of anti-misinformation and anti-disinformation policies. Community-led, multistakeholder governance of content moderation is vital, as are progressive laws that respect everyone's rights.⁶⁴

“ A feminist digital space is not governed by an algorithm. So as a user, within a feminist digital space, if I was to imagine that space I wouldn't want to feel that powerless. I would want transparency. I would want to know who is using my data, where is my data going. I would want to know how the algorithm works.”

AIMEN BUCHA
LUMS

“ For policy advocacy we need to see if we can include the people who are least represented and most affected because, more often than not, when you talk about policy, it's really easy to get the people who are already there, who are in the periphery. But the impact of these policies is not just in the periphery. It's also felt much more by marginalized communities and depending on where you're working. It's important to try and get in the room and make sure they understand what we're talking about. A good rule of thumb is to really start by looking at who has the least power in a geography, in a location.”

SMITA V
APC

We envision prioritizing the wellbeing of people and planet over profits

A feminist digital space can be motivated by profit and growth but not at the expense of people and the planet. This space is guided by a strong ethos of accountability of the real-world consequences of online behaviour. It actively works towards dismantling racist and sexist structures and ideas. Technology is co-created with women, LGBTQIA+ peoples and other marginalized populations. Innovations are designed to address the specific challenges faced by these communities; they prioritize the wellbeing of people and the planet over profits.⁶⁵ We must end the extractive practice of tech companies profiting from our data⁶⁶ and return to technology's original purpose – to improve our lives and our labour.

“ We need to put humanity first and tech second.”

DULANJAYA
Hashtag Generation

“ I think there was something beautiful about an internet which wasn't governed by algorithms. So, I would want an internet where I can find the things I want. I find the communities I want without worrying about algorithms and focusing on who is making money out of it. ”

SMITA V
APC

“ I hope for a space that works to lessen exploitation and oppression. No technology is being weaponized with surveillance, war or lack of access. People can access the internet freely and afford the internet. I hope for a digital world devoid of capitalism and militarism. ”

GERIMARA MANUEL
APWLD

“ In reimagining the internet, the real question is how we engage with the humanities, the arts, culture and speculative futures to continually envision other kinds of internets – and to ask whether they can be built. And the answer is: they can. These alternatives might not scale or generate profit in conventional ways, but they can still hold deep value for specific communities. We cannot simply keep tweaking existing technologies and expect them to become better. Instead, we must consider how the same infrastructure and resources could be redirected to build a fundamentally different kind of internet. That possibility exists – but it demands a different approach, a different framing, and a willingness to imagine beyond the logics of scale and capital. ”

NISHANT SHAH
CUHK

4. EXISTING EFFORTS TO EXPAND, REIMAGINE AND ADVOCATE FOR FAIR DIGITAL SPACES

As we imagine a feminist future for the digital world, several organizations and actors are proactively working to turn it into a reality. In our conversations with feminist digital actors, we asked them to share examples of transformative initiatives in digital spaces. This section presents the inspirational examples that they shared. They provide a snapshot of a wider context in which many people and groups across the region – and beyond – are working together to build more democratic, inclusive and equitable digital spaces.

APWLD Media Fellowship on Digitalization and Feminist Digital Rights and Justice

The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) invites women media professionals, journalists, data and visual journalists across Asia and the Pacific region to participate in the APWLD Media Fellowship on Digitalization and Feminist Digital Rights and Justice.

The APWLD Media Fellowship was launched in 2018 to respond to the pressing need to amplify the voices and stories of women from marginalized communities. It aims to increase space for and the influence of feminist narratives and demands in diverse media platforms to advance women's human rights, feminist digital rights and development justice. It engages media professionals to tackle grassroots women's issues, analyse structural inequalities, and promote feminist collective action and solidarity through a feminist and human rights lens. This year's media fellowship seeks to deepen the media, data and visual reportage on the rise of digitalization in the region and its gendered impact on women and their communities.⁶⁷

DAKILA – Philippine Collective for Modern Heroism, the Philippines

DAKILA is a group of artists and activists who are building a movement of heroism towards social transformation.⁶⁸ The collective is at the forefront of campaigns for human rights and democracy in the Philippines. It has pioneered groundbreaking campaigns and advocacy on the promotion of human rights, specifically on issues such as state-sponsored killings, press freedom, the freedom of expression, shrinking civic spaces, disinformation and authoritarianism.

DIGITAL NARRATIVES STUDIO, HONG KONG

The Digital Narratives Studio is a collaborative, iterative and provocative space in which to research, produce and amplify the possibilities of hopeful action through narrative change.⁶⁹ Housed at the School of Journalism and Communication at the CUHK, it examines the politics of digital care; builds resources to counter the weaponization of information against gender, sexuality, the freedom of expression and climate justice work; and initiates narrative-change practices that centre hope and care as feminist practices of being and coming together.

Digital Rights Asia Pacific Assembly

The DRAPAC⁷⁰ aims to foster resilience and solidarity within the digital rights movement. It brings together digital and human rights advocates, journalists, media-makers, artists, designers, technologists, youth advocates and representatives from marginalized communities. It is a platform for networking, learning and collaboration, with a focus on amplifying the voices of those often unheard in digital rights spaces. The reports of DRAPAC23⁷¹, DRAPAC24⁷² and DRAPAC25⁷³ are available online, and there is a dedicated website for DRAPAC26.⁷⁴

Digital Rights Foundation's Cyber Harassment Helpline, Pakistan

An organization with ten years of experience working in Pakistan on technology-facilitated gender-based violence and digital safety through flagship programmes such as the Cyber Harassment Helpline and Hamara Internet, the Digital Rights Foundation's starting point has always been the lived experience of those most impacted by digital insecurity. By centring the experiences of marginalized communities, they create accessible practices that acknowledge the realities of the people they want to serve.⁷⁵

Don't Stop Dream Team, Lao People's Democratic Republic

Two years ago, the team at Don't Stop Dream Team⁷⁶ started a podcast to use digital platforms to raise awareness around the issue of violence. They invited women to claim digital spaces and share their stories of resilience to empower others who are facing violence in different spaces.

Feminist Principles of the Internet

The Feminist Principles of the Internet are a series of statements that offer a gender- and sexual-rights lens on critical internet-related rights.⁷⁷ They were drafted at the first Imagine a Feminist Internet meeting that took place in Malaysia in April 2014.⁷⁸ The meeting was organized by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and brought together 50 activists and advocates working in sexual rights, women's rights, violence against women, and internet rights. Currently there are 17 principles in total, organized in five clusters: access, movements, economy, expression and embodiment. Together, they aim to provide a framework for women's movements to articulate and explore issues related to technology.

GenderIT.org

GenderIT.org⁷⁹ is a project of the Women's Rights Programme of the Association for Progressive Communications. GenderIT.org provides a space for reflection, influence and advocacy on internet policy in relation to the rights and demands of women and gender-diverse people on issues related to sexuality. It features articles, news, podcasts, videos, comics and blogs on internet policies and cultures from a feminist and intersectional perspective, privileging voices and expressions from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Arabic-speaking countries and Eastern Europe.

Hashtag Generation's social media monitoring, Sri Lanka

Hashtag Generation is a movement led and run by a group of young, tech-savvy, socially conscious Sri Lankans advocating for meaningful civic and political youth participation, especially of young women and young people from minority groups.⁸⁰ Hashtag Generation currently runs multiple initiatives, including a day-to-day exercise called social media monitoring. This exercise involves monitoring harmful content on social media, particularly on Facebook, TikTok and YouTube. They analyse the findings and use them in two ways. Firstly, they escalate contents to the social media platforms through their transfer partnership; secondly, they have an initiative called system reports, in which they use the data to design trainings for young people in Sri Lanka to protect communities against these harmful narratives.

Numun Fund

The Numun Fund is a groundbreaking initiative that aims to seed, resource and sustain a feminist technology ecosystem.⁸¹ It contributes to shifting power and resources to feminist and women/trans-led groups, organizations and networks who use technology to advance social justice and build technology for the world we want.

It looks at funding structures through a feminist lens. With shrinking spaces and resources, Numun Fund have mapped the landscape of the funding ecosystem to support feminist perspectives in the digital world. In Asia, they support a range of efforts focused on digital intersections with bodily autonomy, caste discrimination and human rights.

PurpleCode Collective, Indonesia

PurpleCode Collective is a women's collective focused on technology issues. They promote a feminist internet as a safe space for expression and gathering, as well as accessing other basic rights such as privacy, distribution and the accessibility of information.

They promote women's leadership to reclaim technology that has been dominated by the patriarchy. One manifestation of their vision is the mainstreaming of feminist internet principles in the use and development of technology.⁸²

The Wikimedia Foundation: encouraging editorial diversity

Since 2021, Wikipedia editors and the Wikimedia Foundation are working towards greater editorial representation of women, Indigenous Peoples and queer editors from the Global South. This is a response to their acknowledgement that the majority of their editors are white men and this can affect editorial framing. They have created a feminist editors' group who are making articles about feminist leaders and artists, and they are also trying to foster gendered approaches and analysis within their work.⁸³

4. CONCLUSION

This visioning exercise is a catalyst for our collective regional advocacy work. We recognize that it builds on decades of mobilization and advocacy by feminist movements and digital rights groups across Asia and beyond. Our contribution is not to reinvent these struggles but to amplify, connect and strengthen them as part of a long-term, collective effort.

The vision outlined in this paper is a call to action: a call for us to collectively shape digital spaces that are safe, inclusive and empowering for all. It lays the groundwork for feminist digital futures rooted in justice, care and community. It is a collective invitation to continue resisting authoritarianism, patriarchy, capitalism and ableism in digital spaces.

Some of the pathways that have emerged include lobbying for more community-driven digital spaces that serve a local need in a local context, working with communities to enable them to have more control over their data and their interaction with digital spaces. Another significant pathway involves engaging state authorities to ensure that policies prioritize people and planet over the private sector.

We hope to move from advocating from feminist digital spaces towards a feminist digital paradigm where stakeholders can engage and reflect on the basis for how we use and interact with digital tools and technologies, and where we can collectively advocate for a new way of living and being in a digital world.

ENDNOTES

- 1 UN. (n.d.). The Impact of Digital Technologies. Accessed 16 November 2025. <https://www.un.org/en/un75/impact-digital-technologies#:~:text=Digital%20advances%20can%20support%20and,work%2C%20and%20achieving%20universal%20literacy>
- 2 AWID. (7 December 2017). The Makings of a Feminist Internet. Accessed 16 November 2025. <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/makings-feminist-Internet>
- 3 Dawn and IT for Change. (2023). The Declaration of Feminist Digital Justice. Accessed 16 November 2025. https://www.dawnfeminist.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/FDJ-declaration_EN.pdf
- 4 The Cambridge Dictionary defines techno-solutionism as ‘the idea that all problems can be solved by technology, although the truth may be more complicated’. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/techno-solutionism>
- 5 Feminist Principles of the Internet. Accessed 16 November 2025. <https://www.feministInternet.org>
- 6 Access Now. (7 March 2022). What is doxxing, and how does it endanger women? Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://www.accessnow.org/what-is-doxxing-women-human-rights/>
- 7 UN Women. (28 June 2024). Creating safe digital spaces free of trolls, doxing, and hate speech. Accessed 16 November 2025. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2023/11/creating-safe-digital-spaces-free-of-trolls-doxing-and-hate-speech>
- 8 APC. (2018). Providing a gender lens in the digital age. Accessed 16 November 2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Business/Gender/APC.pdf>
- 9 N. Benavidez. (2023). Big Tech Backslide. Free Press. Accessed 16 November 2025. https://freepress.net/sites/default/files/2023-12/big_tech_backslide_free_press_report_final.pdf
- 10 F. Shahid et al. ‘Think Outside the Data: Colonial Biases and Systemic Issues in Automated Moderation Pipelines for Low-Resource Languages’. arXiv. Accessed 16 November 2025. <https://arxiv.org/html/2501.13836v2>
- 11 The ‘Five As’ were first proposed in the following article: T. Roberts. (28 May 2016). ICT Access is NOT Equal to Development. Appropriating Technology. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://appropriatingtechnology.org/ict-access-is-not-equal-to-development>. The sixth ‘A’ – ‘architecture’, was proposed by Oxfam: it argues that people impacted by a technology must have a voice in its design.
- 12 H. Galpaya and A. Zainudeen. (2022). Gender and digital access gaps and barriers in Asia: But what about after access? UN Women. Accessed 16 November 2025. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/EP.2_Helani%20Galpaya.pdf
- 13 ITU. (2023). Population of global offline continues steady decline to 2.6 billion people in 2023. Accessed 16 November 2025. <https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/Pages/PR-2023-09-12-universal-and-meaningful-connectivity-by-2030.aspx>
- 14 World Economic Forum. (26 September 2024). How closing South Asia’s digital gender divide could unleash billions. Accessed 16 November 2025. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/09/south-asia-digital-gender-divide/#:~:text=The%20majority%20of%20the%20estimated,likely%20to%20use%20mobile%20Internet>
- 15 ITU. (2024). Measuring digital development –Facts and Figures 2024. Accessed 16 November 2025. https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/D-IND-ICT_MDD-2024-4/.
- 16 N. Jeffrie. (16 October 2025). The mobile gender gap in South Asia is now widening. GSMA. Accessed 16 November 2025. <https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/blog/the-mobile-gender-gap-in-south-asia-is-now-widening>
- 17 C. Ferri. Digital Inclusion: Unlocking Opportunities for Women and Girls. Global Digital Inclusion Partnership. Accessed 16 November 2025. <https://globaldigitalinclusion.org/2025/03/13/digital-inclusion-unlocking-opportunities-for-women-and-girls/>.
- 18 ITU. (2023). Facts and Figures: Focus on Least Developed Countries. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/facts-figures-for-ldc>
- 19 IFAD. (2023). A digital divide is holding rural women back. Here is what we can do to change this. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.ifad.org/en/w/rural-voices/a-digital-divide-is-holding-rural-women-back.-here-is-what-we-can-do-to-change-this>
- 20 ADB. (2023). Accelerating Digital Inclusion for Women and Girls in Asia and the Pacific. Accessed 17

November 2025. <https://www.adb.org/news/infographics/accelerating-digital-inclusion-women-girls-asia-pacific>

21 UN News. (2023). New report shows that 90 per cent of adolescent girls in low-income countries are offline. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/04/1136072>

22 H. Galpaya and A. Zainudeen. (2022). Gender and digital access gaps and barriers in Asia: But what about after access? Op. cit.

23 ESCAP. (2023). Digital gender divide prevents the Asia-Pacific region benefiting from the untapped talent in women and girls. Press release. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.unescap.org/news/digital-gender-divide-prevents-asia-pacific-region-benefiting-untapped-talent-women-and-girls>

24 Girl Effect and Vodafone Foundation. (2018). Real girls, real lives, connected. Accessed 17 November 2025. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b8d51837c9327d89d936a30/t/5bbe7bd-6085229cf6860f582/1539210418583/GE_VO_Full_Report.pdf

25 UNICEF. (2024). Digital Solution for Empowering Adolescent Girls in South Asia. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/reports/digital-solutions-empowering-adolescent-girls-south-asia>

26 P. Ross et al. (2004). Revolutionary e-government strategies across Asia-Pacific. Alcatel. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.unapcict.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/E-Government-Strategies-Asia-Pacific.PDF>

27 BiometricUpdate.com. (7 April 2025). Thailand integrates biometric 1D management into public health ecosystem. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.biometricupdate.com/202504/thailand-integrates-biometric-id-management-into-public-health-ecosystem>

28 Asian Development Bank (ADB). (2021). Digital technologies for government-supported health insurance systems in Asia and the Pacific. Accessed 16 November 2025. https://books.google.com/books/about/Digital_Technologies_for_Government_Supp.html?id=k3pZEAAQBAJ

29 <https://www.accessnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/KeepItOn-Internet-Shutdowns-2025-Annual-Report.pdf>

30 Access Now. (30 March 2016). No more internet shutdowns! Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.accessnow.org/no-internet-shutdowns-lets-keepiton/>

31 M. Zubaide. (30 September 2025). Afghan women lose their ‘last hope’ as Taliban shut down internet. BBC. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c98dmq03n92o>; OHCHR. (10 October 2025). Afghanistan: New restrictions on telecommunications raise further rights concerns, say UN experts. Press release. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/afghanistan-new-restrictions-telecommunications-raise-further-rights>

32 Access Now. (17 March 2022). Why internet shutdowns are even worse for women. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.accessnow.org/internet-shutdowns-international-womens-day/>

33 Based on discussions with Nishant Shah (CUHK).

34 Based on discussions with Nishant Shah (CUHK).

35 World Economic Forum. (26 September 2024). How closing South Asia’s digital gender divide could unleash billions, op. cit.

36 Based on discussions with Gerimara Manuel (APWLD) and Smita V (APC).

37 Technology Inclusion Project. (n.d.). Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.ttfi.com.tw/project02-item/aboriginal-language>

38 East Asia Forum. (25 April 2025). AI, algorithms and Indigenous agency in Taiwan. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://eastasiaforum.org/2025/04/25/ai-algorithms-and-indigenous-agency-in-taiwan/>

39 A. Vasileiadou. (7 April 2025). The Digital Age and the Escalation of Cyber Gender-Based Violence. Human Rights Research Center. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://www.humanrightsresearch.org/post/the-digital-age-and-the-escalation-of-cyber-gender-based-violence>

40 K. Velasco. A call to action to effectively address technology-facilitated gender-based violence. APC. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.apc.org/en/news/call-action-effectively-address-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence>

41 The Economist Intelligence Unit. (2021). Measuring the prevalence of online violence against women. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://onlineviolencewomen.eiu.com>

42 A. Vasileiadou. (7 April 2025). The Digital Age and the Escalation of Cyber Gender-Based Violence, op. cit.

- 43 Andersen, M. (2018, March 30). How feminists in China are using emoji to avoid censorship. WIRED. Accessed 16 November 2025. <https://www.wired.com/story/china-feminism-emoji-censorship/>
- 44 APC. (2018). Providing a gender lens in the digital age, op. cit.
- 45 M. Andersen. (30 March 2018). How Feminists in China Are Using Emoji to Avoid Censorship. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.wired.com/story/china-feminism-emoji-censorship/>
- 46 Dawn and IT for Change. (2023). The Declaration of Feminist Digital Justice, op. cit.
- 47 Misinformation is not always deliberate. Due to the way in which social media functions, for example, misunderstandings, exaggerations, half-truths, misinterpretations and information taken out of context – intentionally or not – can be shared innocently by people who believe it to be true. Disinformation, on the other hand, is intentional and deliberate. In many cases, of course, ‘misinformation’ can be shared intentionally with the goal of disinforming, but misinformation and disinformation are not the same.
- 48 Based on discussions with Smita V and Hija (APC).
- 49 Based on discussions with Nishant Shah (CUHK).
- 50 Based on discussions with Nishant Shah (CUHK).
- 51 Based on discussions with Smita V and Hija (APC).
- 52 Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. (16 October 2018). Managing the labour market in an integrated ASEAN in the digital era. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://asia.fes.de/news/managing-the-labour-market-in-an-integrated-asean-in-the-digital-era.html>
- 53 ESCAP. (2024). Summary of Protecting our Future Today: Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2024/social-outlook-asia-and-pacific-protecting-our-future-today-social-protection-asia-and>
- 54 B. Churchill. (2025). ‘Gendering the gig worker: a critical review of gender inequalities in the gig economy’. In Research Handbook on Gender, Work and Employment Relations, 314–24. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- 55 LinkedIn and UN Women. (2025). Women and Future Jobs. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/ap-20250395577-women-and-future-jobs-v12.pdf>
- 56 A. Tandon and A. Rathi. (2021). Fault Lines at the Front Lines. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/singapur/17840.pdf>
- 57 P. Rodríguez-Modroño et al. (2022). ‘Platform work in the domestic and home care sector: new mechanisms of invisibility and exploitation of women migrant workers’. *Gender & Development*, 30(3), 619–35. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13552074.2022.2121060>
- 58 U. Rani et al. (2022). ‘Women, work, and the digital economy’. *Gender & Development*, 30(3), 421–35. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2022.2151729>
- 59 ILO. (2021). Digital platforms and the world of work in G20 countries: Status and Policy Action. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/digital-platforms-and-world-work-g20-countries-status-and-policy-action>
- 60 M. Graham et al. (2017). ‘Digital labour and development: impacts of global digital labour platforms and the gig economy on worker livelihoods’. *Transfer (Bruss)*, 23(2), 135–62. Accessed 17 November 2025. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5518998/>
- 61 Based on discussions with Smita V and Hija (APC).
- 62 Based on discussions with Smita V and Hija (APC).
- 63 K.L. Williams. (2025). The Role of Data in Artificial Intelligence: Informing, Training, and Enhancing AI Systems. Conference paper. Accessed 20 November 2025. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-89063-5_10
- 64 Based on discussions with Rachel Arinii Judhistari (Wikimedia Foundation).
- 65 Based on discussions with Sara Pacia (Engage Media).
- 66 Based on discussions with Aimen Bucha (LUMS).
- 67 APWLD. (2025). APWLD Media Fellowship on Digitalisation and Feminist Digital Rights and Justice. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://apwld.org/apwld-media-fellowship-on-digitalisation-and-feminist-digital-rights-and-justice/>
- 68 DAKILA. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://dakila.org.ph/>
- 69 The Digital Narratives Studio. CHUK. Accessed 20 November. <https://digitalnarratives.com.cuhk.edu.hk/>

- 70 EngageMedia. (n.d.). DRAPAC webpage. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://engagemedia.org/?s=DRAPAC>
- 71 EngageMedia. (2023). DRAPAC23 Assembly: Public Report. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://engagemedia.org/2023/drapac23-public-report/>
- 72 EngageMedia. (2024). DRAPAC24 Assembly: Public Report. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://engagemedia.org/2024/drapac24-public-report/>
- 73 <https://engagemedia.org/2026/drapac25-public-report/>
- 74 <https://engagemedia.org/2026/lets-build-a-village-drapac26-call-for-sessions-and-fellowships-now-open/>
- 75 Digital Rights Foundation. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk>
- 76 Don't Stop Dream Team. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://www.facebook.com/DSDTVolunteer-CommunityLead#>
- 77 Feminist Principles of the Internet. Accessed 16 November 2025, op. cit.
- 78 GenderIT.org. (2014). Feminist Principles of the Internet. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://www.genderit.org/articles/feminist-principles-internet>
- 79 GenderIT.org. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://www.genderit.org>
- 80 Hashtag Generation. About Us. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://hashtaggeneration.org/about-us/>
- 81 Numun Fund. About Us. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://numun.fund/who-we-are/>
- 82 PurpleCode Collective. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://home.purplecodecollective.net/wp/ten-tang/>
- 83 Wikimedia Foundation. Research. Accessed 20 November 2025. <https://wikimediafoundation.org/research/>