



Striving for a healthy and inclusive society



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Knowledge
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Webinar Speaker

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TF-GBV) in East Africa



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Annonciata worked as a regional project coordinator of the Discriminatory Populations Support Project in the Great Lakes Region (PAFPD-GL): Rwanda-Burundi and DRC. She holds a Master's degree in International Development and coordinates the EU-funded project at HDI that focuses on capacity building for key populations in Rwanda. Annonciata likes working with HDI because she adheres to HDI's vision of promoting the health and rights of vulnerable people and marginalised groups for their well-being and self-promotion.



TF-GBV

Rwandan Context



Background and relevance.


Context in Rwanda

- **Overview of Rwanda's Digital Landscape.** Rwanda has seen a significant increase in internet and mobile phone usage. As of 2023, over 7 million Rwandans use the internet, with high social media engagement.

Background and relevance

- **Gender Dynamics:** Rwanda has made strides in gender equality, ranking highly in gender parity indices. However, socio-cultural norms still pose challenges for women and gender minorities, making them vulnerable to TF-GBV.

Forms of TF-GBV in Rwanda

- Online Harassment. Includes abusive messages, threats, and derogatory comments. Studies show that 35% of Rwandan women have experienced online harassment.
 - Cyberstalking. Persistent and intrusive monitoring of victims online. According to research, ex-partners frequently use social media to track and harass their victims.
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Forms of TF-GBV in Rwanda

- Non-consensual Sharing of Intimate Images. Also known as revenge porn, where private images are shared without consent. Victims often face severe emotional and social repercussions.
- Doxing :The release of personal information online with malicious intent. This can lead to physical harm, social ostracism, and economic losses.

Line institutions to prevent and counter TF-GBV

- National Cyber Security Authority (NCSA)
- Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB)
- Gender Monitoring Office (GMO)
- Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF)
- Gender Desk of the National Policy created in 2005
- Gender Desk of the Rwanda Defense Force created in 2008

Cases of online GBV towards LGBTcommunity in Rwanda.

- ❑ In a report conducted by the Feminist Internet Research Network, 2 participants reported having had pictures taken and nonconsensual shared online where they received a lot of backlash from the community. One said that she had experienced non-consensual sharing of images and that this led to harassment online when giving an interview to journalists: “Some journalists [...] took my pictures and they put them on Instagram. People shared it on other social media.” While another participant, said that “it was my queer friends. They took the photos and uploaded them [online],” and the photographs drew the attention of “many people in the community as a means of ridiculing the victims.

CASES OF ONLINE GBV TOWARDS LGBT COMMUNITY IN RWANDA

- ❑ In August 2022, a Rwandan was jailed after others posted an image of her dressed “inappropriately” to social media. The attention drawn to the post resulted in her being arrested for indecent dress. An event such as someone being jailed for expressing themselves through dress may result in self-censorship of other women and TNBGD people both online and offline, out of fear of similar actions being taken against them.
- ❑ In 2019, a Rwandan gospel musician, Albert Nabonibo, who came out as a gay man was harassed and abused by his friends, church mates as well as family when he announced it on YouTube channel.

Rwandan Legal Framework

Rwanda has several laws and institutions aimed at preventing and countering TFGBV:

- **Constitution of Rwanda:** Article 16 prohibits discrimination of any form.
- **National Cyber Security Authority (NCSA):** Established in 2017 to counter cyber threats and crimes.
- **Law No 26/2017:** Established NSCA, protecting the population against cyberbullying and threats.
- **Law No 058/2021:** Relating to the protection of personal data and privacy, it punishes unauthorized access, collection, and distribution of personal data.

Rwandan Legal Framework

- ❑ **Law No 60/2018:** On prevention and punishment of cyber crimes, specifically targeting the distribution of pornographic images and cyberstalking.
- ❑ **Article 121 of the Penal Code of 2018** prohibits and punishes anyone who wilfully commit violence of any nature.
- ❑ **GBV Law N°59/2008 of 10/09/2008** on Prevention and Punishment of Gender Based Violence (GBV)

NOTE: Rwanda has taken into consideration the TF-GBV in the GBV law under review

Persistent Challenges

- 1. Underreporting and Limited Recognition:** TFGBV is not widely recognized or systematically addressed as a form of GBV. Victims often do not report incidents due to fear of not being taken seriously, lack of awareness about digital rights, and mistrust in the legal system(Decoding-TFGBV-Report-2024).
- 2. Online-Offline Continuum:** Online violence often spills over into offline violence, causing physical, emotional, and economic harm. This continuum makes it difficult to contain and address TFGBV solely through digital measures(Decoding-TFGBV-Report-2024).


Persistent Challenges (cont')

- 1. Patriarchal Norms and Social Morality:** Deeply ingrained patriarchal norms and societal ideas of morality amplify TFGBV. These norms influence both the perpetration of and responses to TFGBV, often leading to victim-blaming and inadequate support systems for survivors(Decoding-TFGBV-Report-2024).
- 2. Ineffective Reporting Mechanisms:** The mechanisms for reporting TFGBV are often ineffective and disadvantageous for survivors. Complex, burdensome reporting processes and a lack of trust in authorities discourage victims from coming forward(Decoding-TFGBV-Report-2024).


Persistent Challenges (cont')

1. **Conflicting Legislation:** Existing laws aimed at protecting individuals from TFGBV sometimes conflict with other laws, resulting in a "legal double-edged sword" where victims might be criminalized for reporting incidents(Decoding-TFGBV-Report-2024).

Rwanda's commitments under National Cyber Security Authority

- Prevents cyber threats and attacks in order to protect Rwanda's citizens
 - Develops cybersecurity policies and strategies to ensure cyber resilience
 - Harmonisation and review of the existing legal framework relating to the protection of personal data and privacy to comply with international standards
 - Collaborate with different partners such as institutions in public and private sectors, law enforcement and security agencies, academia, CSOs and the public to raise awareness on cyber crimes
 - Works closely with law enforcement agencies and the public to fight cyber crimes
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HDI interventions

- Increase public awareness campaigns about TFGBV and its impact on disproportionately affected groups including the LGBTQ+ community. And feminist activists,
 - Engage local and global stakeholders when designing and implementing new TF-GBV programs.
 - Advocate for reviewing and strengthening national legal framework on cyber crimes
 - Involve country-level experts to ensure survivor-centered law enforcement.
 - Advocate for legal reforms that explicitly address and criminalize TFGBV
 - Place disproportionately affected groups at the center of programming.
 - Engage men and boys in awareness activities to challenge harmful social norms.
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Thank you!

