



POLICY GUIDELINES ON TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

KEARNEY

مجلس الإمارات للتوازن بين الجنسين
UAE GENDER BALANCE COUNCIL



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FORWARD

The UAE Gender Balance Council and the Global Council for Sustainable Development Goal 5, which is part of the UAE National Committee on SDGs, has been channelling a lot of efforts into addressing the topic of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). Today a new milestone has been achieved. In partnership with the leading global consulting firm Kearney, we introduce a new set of guidelines for this pressing topic that has been acting as a significant barrier to building an inclusive and safe digital ecosystem. These guidelines have been developed to reflect the UAE's commitment to fostering an inclusive digital environment.

As technology continues to reshape our lives, it is vital that digital platforms serve as tools for inclusion and progress. These guidelines provide a practical framework for technology companies and stakeholders to prevent and mitigate TFGBV. The document highlights the multifaceted nature of TFGBV, offering mechanisms that can help stakeholders integrate these considerations into their strategies and policies.

We thank Kearney and the Global Council for SDG 5 members for their valuable inputs to this document. By adopting these guidelines, organisations have the opportunity to help shape a safer, more inclusive digital future. This not only advances the UAE's vision but also supports the global movement for equality and inclusion in the digital world.

**HER EXCELLENCY MONA AL MARRI
VICE PRESIDENT, UAE GENDER BALANCE COUNCIL**

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BACKGROUND

The digital ecosystem plays an integral role in modern society, offering platforms for social interaction, economic engagement, and information sharing. However, alongside the countless benefits of digital services, there exists a growing concern about the prevalence of gender-based violence within online spaces. This troubling trend encompasses various forms of harassment, abuse, and dissemination of harmful content, specifically targeting individuals based on their gender identities.

This document serves as a guideline aimed at addressing and mitigating technology-related gender-based violence. The document explores different aspects to be considered in policymaking whilst maintaining a balance between ensuring safety within online spaces and upholding fundamental rights, including the right to free expression, access to information, and participation in digital communities.

In addition, the document highlights measures for tech companies and digital service providers to identify, evaluate, and mitigate tech-based gender violence. The measures aim to foster transparency, accountability, and continual improvement in practices across the digital landscape, particularly in areas of product development, governance, enforcement, improvement, and transparent documentation of digital services.

SCOPE OF DOCUMENT

This document serves as a reference for tech firms to integrate considerations addressing Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) within their digital environments, products, and services. The scope encompasses key aspects necessary for addressing TFGBV effectively:

DEFINITION AND TYPES OF TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GBV:

Define technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) and its various forms, including online harassment, cyberstalking, doxing, and revenge porn.

PREVENTION MECHANISMS:

Outline preventive measures for individuals and organizations to mitigate the risk of TFGBV, derived from workshop findings and interviews.

REPORTING MECHANISMS:

Explain the process of reporting TFGBV incidents to relevant authorities and online platforms, ensuring clarity and ease of understanding.

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES:

Detail available support services for TFGBV victims, including helplines, counseling, legal aid, and community organizations.

Intersectionality:

Address the intersecting aspects of gender-based violence concerning race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, acknowledging their impact on TFGBV victims.

DIGITAL LITERACY AND EDUCATION:

Emphasize the importance of digital literacy and educate users on safe online practices, privacy settings, and recognizing and avoiding potential risks.

TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS:

Provide guidance for professionals, such as law enforcement, educators, and mental health practitioners, on recognizing and responding to technology facilitated TFGBV.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Encourage community involvement and collaboration to create a supportive environment and raise awareness about the impact of technology facilitated GBV.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS:

Highlight the need for international collaboration to address the global nature of TFGBV and share best practices.

RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION:

Encourage research on the prevalence and impact of TFGBV, as well as the effectiveness of interventions.

CONTINUOUS UPDATING:

Stress the importance of regular guideline updates to reflect the evolving technological impacts on TFGBV, ensuring relevance and efficacy in addressing emerging challenges.

KEY DEFINITIONS

TFGBV

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) refers to any form of gender-based violence that is perpetrated, facilitated, or exacerbated through the use of technology or digital means.

DIGITAL ABUSE

Digital Abuse involves the use of technology to control, harass, intimidate, or coerce an individual in a relationship. It encompasses various forms of online harassment and technological coercive control.

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is the use of digital technologies, such as social media, websites, or text messages, to harass, threaten, or intimidate someone.

NCDII

Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images (NCDII) is the unauthorized sharing or distribution of intimate images or videos of individuals without their consent, often with the intention to cause harm or embarrassment.

TECH-ENABLED STALKING

Tech-Enabled Stalking involves the use of digital tools or technology to monitor, track, or harass someone persistently, causing fear or distress.

INTERSECTIONAL HARASSMENT

Intersectional Harassment refers to instances where multiple aspects of an individual's identity, such as race, gender, or socio-economic status, intersect and contribute to the experience of harassment or violence.

DOXING

Doxing is a form of cyberbullying that uses sensitive or secret information, statements, or records for the harassment, exposure, financial harm, or other exploitation of targeted individuals.

DEEPPAKES

Deepfakes refer to photos and videos that are digitally manipulated to replace one person's likeness convincingly with that of another, that can be released to intimidate, mock, or tarnish a person's reputation.

KEY

CONSIDERATIONS

To address gender-based violence (GBV) within the digital landscape, which is complex, varied, and continually evolving the following key considerations outlining a set of essential points to look out for whilst combatting GBV, within the digital environment, need to be evaluated:

CULTURAL AND REGIONAL NUANCES:

Acknowledge the diversity in cultural norms and regional perspectives towards gender-based violence (GBV) in the tech space. Understand that definitions and responses to GBV might vary based on cultural beliefs and practices.

DEVELOPMENT DISPARITIES:

Recognize the varying levels of technological infrastructure and resources between different regions, influencing the readiness and capacity to address GBV in digital environments.

ACCESSIBILITY IN DESIGN:

Emphasize the importance of designing guidelines that are accessible to a wide range of users, considering diverse linguistic, cognitive, and physical needs.

PRIVACY PROTECTION:

Prioritize privacy and confidentiality in reporting mechanisms, ensuring robust data protection measures to safeguard the information of individuals reporting instances of GBV.

ETHICAL USE OF AI:

Ensure that AI-driven tools for content moderation or detection of GBV-related content adhere to ethical standards, minimizing biases and ensuring accuracy and fairness.

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY:

Adopt a principle-based approach that allows for flexibility and adaptability. This approach enables the policy to respond to changing circumstances and emerging challenges effectively. This flexibility is crucial to ensure the relevance and efficacy of the policy in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION:

Encourage collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including tech companies, policymakers, law enforcement, academia, and users to collectively combat GBV online.

A compendium of Initiatives to combat TFGBV and other gender-based violence worldwide.



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

UAE Gender Balance Council: The UAE Gender Balance Council works towards advancing gender balance in the country. The council's efforts may contribute to a broader societal context that addresses gender-based issues, including those facilitated by technology.

National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT): the NCCHT in the UAE works on addressing various forms of exploitation, including online exploitation and trafficking. This committee plays a role in developing policies and strategies to combat gender-based violence.



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)

Cyber Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI): Focused on combatting online abuse, particularly non-consensual pornography, with a global reach but based in the United States.

Without My Consent: A U.S.-based organization addressing online privacy violations, including non-consensual distribution of intimate images.



INDIA

SHE Teams (India): Several states in India have established SHE (Safety, Health, and Environment) Teams to address and prevent cybercrimes against women, including online harassment.

Cyber Peace Foundation: Actively involved in promoting cybersecurity and digital literacy, with a focus on preventing online crimes, including those against women.



EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE): EIGE works on gender equality issues in Europe, including initiatives addressing online violence and harassment.

European Cybercrime Centre (EC3): The European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) works to combat various forms of cybercrime, including online harassment and abuse. It collaborates with law enforcement agencies across Europe.

POLICY ENABLERS

RESOURCES

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE:

Facilitating the involvement of various stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector actors, and affected communities, is indispensable. Engaging these entities ensures a comprehensive approach that addresses all aspects of TFGBV. Provision of resources facilitates active participation, considering the diverse perspectives and experiences these stakeholders bring to the table for a more holistic policy framework.

CAPABILITY ENHANCEMENT AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES:

Enhancing corporate-level training and awareness programs is essential to heighten awareness concerning the inadvertent facilitation of TFGBV through technology. Establishing robust management structures and coordination mechanisms is crucial for collective efforts aimed at meeting anti-TFGBV requirements. Providing resources and capacity-building tools play a pivotal role in fostering accountability for effectively addressing TFGBV incidents.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES:

Allocation of adequate financial resources is vital for implementing measures to effectively combat TFGBV. Investment in training programs, awareness campaigns, and support services is essential to prevent and respond to TFGBV incidents. Adequate financial backing ensures the establishment of robust mechanisms and capacities to tackle TFGBV effectively.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION RESOURCES:

Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is imperative to assess the effectiveness of policies in addressing TFGBV. Access to dedicated resources, technological tools, and expert evaluations can help identify gaps, evaluate impact, and refine strategies to better combat TFGBV in the tech space.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY RESOURCES:

Establishing legal and regulatory frameworks is imperative to mandate gender-based considerations within technology companies' safeguarding protocols. These frameworks should impose clear guidelines and responsibilities on tech entities to proactively address and mitigate TFGBV risks within their digital environments.

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SUPPORT RESOURCES:

Developing robust communication strategies and public engagement initiatives is vital to garner public support and cooperation in combatting TFGBV. Implementing comprehensive educational programs within digital platforms is pivotal in raising awareness among users about the various forms of TFGBV. It should also elucidate the available reporting mechanisms, fostering a culture of collective responsibility and mutual respect within online communities.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The collaboration between technology companies and various stakeholders plays a pivotal role in combating TFGBV. Strategic partnerships can contribute to addressing and mitigating incidents of TFGBV. These collaborations extend across support services, civil society, academia, international entities, and community engagement initiatives. Here are some key areas where partnerships can be fostered to effectively tackle TFGBV within the digital sphere:

COLLABORATION WITH SUPPORT SERVICES:

Tech companies should actively engage in partnerships with support services for victims/survivors of GBV. This includes collaborating with law enforcement, justice institutions, and healthcare providers to ensure a comprehensive response to incidents of TFGBV. By partnering with these entities, tech companies can facilitate access to support systems, legal assistance, healthcare, and justice mechanisms for victims/survivors affected by TFGBV incidents.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND ADVOCACY GROUPS:

Collaborating with civil society organizations and advocacy groups focused on gender equality and anti-violence initiatives is crucial. Tech companies can support these organizations by providing resources, expertise, and platforms to amplify their efforts in combatting TFGBV. Building strategic alliances with such entities strengthens the overall impact and reach of anti-TFGBV initiatives.

ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS:

Partnering with academic institutions and research organizations can foster a deeper understanding of TFGBV trends, contributing to evidence-based policymaking and innovative solutions. Collaboration in research efforts helps in identifying emerging risks and developing effective mitigation strategies.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION:

Facilitating international cooperation and collaboration among tech companies, governments, and international organizations is essential. Sharing best practices, experiences, and resources on a global scale can significantly enhance the collective ability to address TFGBV comprehensively.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS:

Establishing community engagement programs and initiatives within digital platforms can foster a culture of respect, inclusion, and mutual support among users. Collaborating with community leaders and influencers can amplify the impact of awareness campaigns and educational programs aimed at preventing TFGBV.

PREVENTION AND PROTECTION MECHANISMS

This section includes potential mechanisms tech firms can adopt in their products, services and platforms to accommodate mitigating and minimizing TFGBV.

INCLUSIVE IDEATION AND USER-CENTRIC DESIGN:

ENGAGING DISPROPORTIONATELY TARGETED GROUPS:

Collaborate directly with groups significantly affected by TFGBV during the initial phase of tech product development.

Gather detailed insights, experiences, and concerns of these communities.

This approach ensures a holistic understanding and tailoring of products to address diverse needs and vulnerabilities.

DESIGNING FOR INCLUSIVITY:

Center the design process around accommodating varied experiences, particularly those vulnerable to TFGBV.

Prioritize inclusivity and accessibility in tech solutions, reflecting the diversity of users' backgrounds and challenges faced.

Incorporate feedback loops to continuously refine and adapt products based on user experiences.

INTEGRATION OF USER-FRIENDLY REPORTING MECHANISMS:

ACCESSIBLE REPORTING TOOLS:

Integrate simple and easy-to-use reporting mechanisms within digital platforms to encourage swift reporting of TFGBV incidents.

Empower users by providing clear guidelines on how to report, ensuring ease of use and immediate action against perpetrators.

SUPPORTIVE RESPONSE SYSTEMS:

Implement responsive systems that guarantee immediate support to victims upon reporting TFGBV cases.

Ensure privacy and confidentiality for those reporting incidents, fostering a safe environment for disclosure.

PREVENTION AND PROTECTION MECHANISMS

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ESTABLISHMENT OF CLEAR PENALTIES AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES:

TRANSPARENCY IN CONSEQUENCES:

Clearly outline penalties, such as account suspension or legal consequences, for individuals perpetrating TFGBV. Establish a transparent framework to ensure perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

EDUCATION ON ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICIES:

Disseminate information about zero-tolerance policies against TFGBV to deter potential perpetrators. Educate users and communities about the serious repercussions of engaging in such behavior.

ADVANCEMENTS IN AI AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES:

ADVANCED DETECTION TOOLS:

Invest in AI-driven tools capable of detecting and preemptively addressing patterns associated with TFGBV. Leverage AI algorithms to scan and identify problematic content, complementing human moderation for a comprehensive approach.

CONTINUOUS INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT:

Foster continuous research and development in AI technologies to adapt to evolving methods of TFGBV perpetration. Regularly update and refine AI algorithms to effectively tackle emerging threats.

ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS

This document serves as a reference for tech firms to integrate considerations addressing Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) within their digital environments, products, and services. The scope encompasses key aspects necessary for addressing TFGBV effectively:

REGULATORY OVERSIGHT:

Role of Regulator: Mandates licenses or certifications for entities in digital spaces, ensuring compliance with TFGBV policies

ESTABLISHMENT OF REGULATORY BODY:

Dedicated regulator specializing in TFGBV policies ensures consistent enforcement and compliance.

Incentives and Rewards:

Regulator's Involvement: Collaborates to create incentives for sustained TFGBV policy compliance.

Monitoring and Recognition: Assesses and rewards entities demonstrating exemplary adherence, like a conformity brand or certification issued by the regulator.

INSPECTIONS AND AUDITS:

Regulatory Audits: Conducts regular and surprise checks to examine TFGBV practices.

Monitoring Mechanisms: Evaluates compliance and ensures corrective actions for violations.

ADMINISTRATIVE SANCTIONS:

Regulator's Authority: Empowered to impose non-financial penalties for TFGBV policy breaches.

Implementation of Sanctions: Swift actions against violators, reinforcing consequences of non-compliance

FINES AND PENALTIES:

Regulatory Guidelines: Establishes a framework for financial penalties for TFGBV violations.

ENFORCEMENT OF PENALTIES:

Monitors and imposes fines according to the severity of offenses.

Collaborations and Partnerships:

Regulator as Coordinator: Acts as a central coordinator, fostering collaborations among stakeholders.

Extending Regulatory Reach: Collaborative efforts expand enforcement across different domains and jurisdictions.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This section underscores the significance of a rigorous and technically informed monitoring and evaluation framework to comprehensively track TFGBV instances and evaluate the effectiveness of preventive measures. By leveraging technical metrics, continuous research, transparent reporting, and collaborative engagements, the goal is to ensure a proactive and adaptive approach to combating TFGBV within digital spaces. Tracking and assessing instances of TFGBV require a structured and technical approach to measure the impact and effectiveness of preventive measures. This section proposes methods to monitor and evaluate TFGBV instances while establishing continuous assessment systems.

ESTABLISHING COMPREHENSIVE METRICS:

Develop a set of clear, standardized metrics and indicators to systematically monitor and quantify TFGBV occurrences across digital platforms. These metrics should encompass the frequency, nature, and impact of incidents, aiding in the comprehensive assessment of TFGBV trends.

CONTINUOUS RESEARCH FOR ADAPTATION:

Commit to ongoing research and development initiatives aimed at understanding evolving forms of TFGBV. This entails staying abreast of technological advancements and emerging trends through data-driven analysis and proactive measures.

MANDATING TRANSPARENT REPORTING:

Mandate TFGBV transparency reports from tech companies, outlining comprehensive details on reported incidents, actions taken, and outcomes. These reports should also encompass preventive measures, educational programs, and responses to incidents to ensure transparency and accountability.

COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK:

Encourage open dialogues and feedback mechanisms involving tech companies, users, advocacy groups, and NGOs. This collaborative approach fosters an exchange of insights, ensuring that diverse perspectives contribute to the evaluation and refinement of TFGBV prevention strategies.

ADAPTIVE MONITORING FRAMEWORK:

Develop a dynamic monitoring framework that adapts to the ever-evolving landscape of TFGBV. This framework should encompass flexible methodologies to measure the effectiveness of prevention and protection tools, enabling swift adjustments to emerging threats.

PERIODIC REVIEWS AND UPDATES

This section guides the periodic review and updating process of the policy itself. Embracing these suggestions ensures the policy's ongoing relevance and effectiveness in addressing TFGBV by adapting to changing technological landscapes and societal norms.

SCHEDULED EVALUATIONS:

Establish a structured timetable for routine reviews of the policy guidelines document. Scheduled assessments or surveys at defined intervals allow for comprehensive evaluations and necessary updates to address emerging challenges and evolving technology-related gender-based violence issues.

COMMITMENT TO ONGOING RELEVANCE:

Stakeholders involved in the implementation and adoption of the policy, including international bodies, governments, organizations, and tech entities, must commit to participating in and conducting these periodic reviews. This collective commitment ensures the policy's continued responsiveness to technological and societal changes.

ALIGNMENT WITH TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS:

Keep the policy aligned with contemporary technological advancements while adhering to ethical and regulatory frameworks. Embrace emerging insights and trends to enhance the policy's effectiveness in mitigating technology-facilitated gender-based violence across digital platforms.

DYNAMIC ADAPTATION:

Embrace a dynamic and adaptive approach during reviews to swiftly integrate necessary changes. Ensure that these updates align with the evolving landscape of technology and social norms, preserving the policy's effectiveness.

TRANSPARENT DOCUMENTATION:

Document all revisions, updates, and the rationale behind each modification in the policy document. This transparent approach ensures accountability and maintains the document's integrity and relevance.

Periodic reviews and updates of the policy document emphasizes its proactive stance in adapting to evolving technological landscapes. Stakeholders' engagement in scheduled assessments ensures the document remains responsive, robust, and aligned with contemporary technological and social standards in combating technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Implementing policies effectively is crucial for combatting TFGBV within digital environments. To assist companies and entities in translating the outlined strategies into actionable policies, the following implementation guidelines offer a step-by-step approach:

1. ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

Internal Assessment: Conduct an in-depth assessment of current policies, practices, and existing vulnerabilities regarding TFGBV.

Risk Analysis: Identify potential risks and gaps within digital environments that may contribute to or facilitate TFGBV.

Policy Objectives: Establish clear and concise objectives for the policy, aligning them with the company's vision and goals and identifying clearly the scope of the policy and which elements of this document will it cover.

2. POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Inclusion and Collaboration: Involve diverse stakeholders, including legal, human resources, IT, and relevant departments in policy development.

Clear Policy Framework: Develop a comprehensive policy framework explicitly addressing TFGBV prevention, reporting, and response.

Accessibility: Ensure the policy is accessible and understandable to all employees, users, and relevant stakeholders.

Legal accountability: Ensure the policy is aligned with other relevant public policies and adherent to operating country rules and regulations.

3. TRAINING AND AWARENESS

Educational Programs: Implement mandatory training programs on TFGBV for employees at all levels, emphasizing prevention, reporting, and support.

External Awareness: Create public awareness campaigns highlighting TFGBV risks, preventive measures, and available support systems.

4. REPORTING MECHANISMS

User-Friendly Reporting Tools: Integrate straightforward and easily accessible reporting mechanisms within digital platforms for swift incident reporting.

Confidentiality Assurance: Guarantee confidentiality and privacy for individuals reporting TFGBV incidents.

5. RESPONSE AND SUPPORT

Victim Support Services: Establish support services, including counseling and legal aid, for victims/survivors of TFGBV.

Immediate Response: Develop a responsive system ensuring immediate support and action upon reporting TFGBV incidents.

CONCLUSION

This comprehensive guideline for addressing (TFGBV) within digital environments stands as a testament to collective efforts and a call to action. Crafted from diverse insights gleaned from extensive interviews, workshops, and an array of sources, this document is an imperative step toward a safer digital future.

It reveals the multifaceted nature of TFGBV, from its various forms to the intricacies of cultural nuances and technological disparities. The enablers, and mechanisms outlined are a guide for stakeholders to collaborate, to embed TFGBV considerations into their strategies, and to engage in continuous improvement.

However, it's crucial to acknowledge that this document serves as a guideline, a compass that points the way. While it highlights key measures, its effectiveness is truly realized when complemented by a robust and actionable policy. This guideline, while comprehensive, requires translation into actionable policy by entities committed to championing a safer and more inclusive digital sphere.

In a summary this document is a call for action, a foundation upon which impactful policy can be built. By embracing the essence of this guideline and translating it into actionable policy, stakeholders pave the way toward a digital landscape that champions safety for the society against TFGBV.

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