ONLINE ACTIVISM OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

Understanding Online Violence and Mitigating Strategies

THE SHE LEADS PROGRAM

Worldwide girls are raising their voices to defend their rights. And they have achieved a lot!

The **She Leads Program** is a consortium of organisations funded by the MoFA of the Netherlands. It is implemented in 9 countries across MENA and Africa where it supports girls and young women (GYW) to do lobby and advocacy.
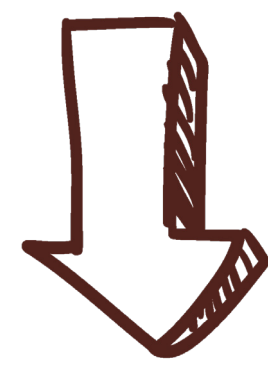
METHODOLOGY

Data collection
- FGDs conducted by GYW from She Leads and by program staff
- GYW testimonies

Countries: Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia

These are preliminary findings of an upcoming inter-regional research.

GIRLS' ASKS

- Digital literacy for GYW and parents
- Awareness creation to avoid normalisation and to identify risks
- Social media platforms to have more security features & respond better to reports
- Governments to design specific legislation and improve response mechanisms

Multiple-level interventions to ensure the right to participate

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

1 EXPERIENCES
Cyberstalking, hacking, catfishing, cyberbullying, sexualising, profiling, sextortion, grooming, and harassment are the most common.

"I have on multiple occasions been a victim of online accounts sending aggressive messages in an effort to bully me into communicating with them."
(Girl from Ethiopia)

2 IMPACT
- Girls see that online violence does not only affect advocates.
- They are aware of effects such as depression, suicidal thoughts, withdrawal symptoms, long term trauma, and, in some instances, rape (shows continuum online→ offline violence).
- Girls perceive a specific marginalizing and silencing effect towards gender advocates.
- Reinforces offline social exclusion and discrimination.

"The recent surge in hostility compelled me to reconsider even identifying as a feminist on my social media bios."
(Girl from Ethiopia)

3 STRATEGIES TO COPE
- GYW block, unfriend, do not share passwords or accounts, keep personal information private.
- Mostly they turn to friends (who in some instances break the trust).
- Girls do not turn to parents or the police because they feel they cannot help.

"Parents don't understand, (they) are from a different generation."
(Girl from Kenya)

CONCLUSIONS

- Girls have their own strategies to protect themselves. In most cases, they learned them on their own. Still, they don't know who to turn to for help.
- Despite their measures, girls are victimised online and this affects their activism.
- They demand more tools to be protected online.

Invest in prevention & response in line with Human Rights!

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