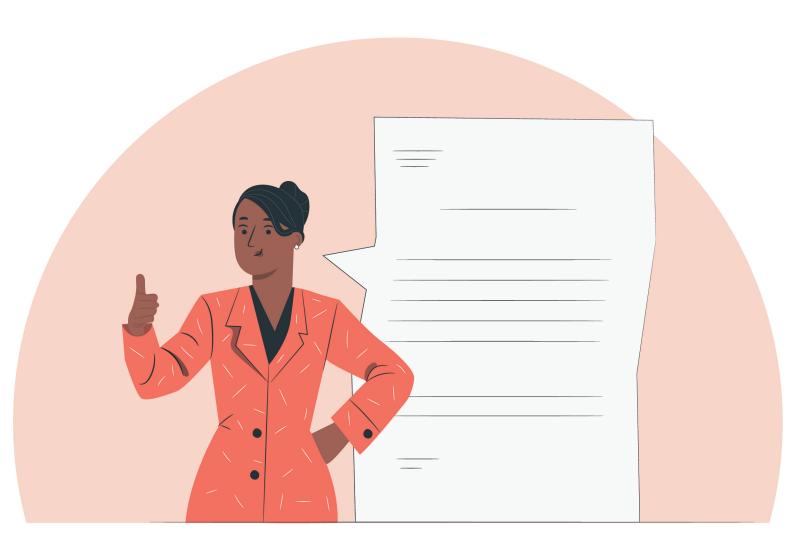# Women's Rights Online in Liberia: National Policy Gaps & Recommendations

Women's Rights Online in Liberia: National Policy Gaps and Recommendations

Appreciation

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Introduction

Liberia's total population was 5.24 million in January 2022. Data show that Liberia's population increased by 124 thousand (+2.4 percent) between 2021 and 2022. Liberia's population is made up of 49.7 percent female, and 50.3 male. At the start of 2022, 53.1 percent of Liberia's population lived in urban centers, while 46.9 percent lived in rural areas.[1] Internet penetration rates, social media use, and accessibility to affordable data services play a crucial role in shaping the digital landscape for women in Liberia. As technology becomes increasingly integrated into various aspects of life, it is essential to examine the challenges and opportunities it presents for women's rights. This section provides an overview of these key factors and highlights the issues of the gender digital divide.

Internet Penetration Rate: Liberia has made significant progress in increasing internet access in recent years. According to the latest available data, Liberia's internet penetration rate stood at 22.0 percent of the total population at the start of 2022. Kepios analysis indicates that internet users in Liberia increased by 27,000 (+2.4 percent) between 2021 and 2022. While this represents positive growth, it is important to address the disparities that exist in internet access between men and women. Women are more likely to face barriers such as limited connectivity, affordability, digital literacy, and social norms that discourage their participation online.

Social Media Use: Social media platforms have become essential tools for communication, information sharing, and advocacy. In Liberia, the use of social media has witnessed a steady rise, particularly among the younger population. However, gender disparities persist in social media usage, with men often having greater representation and influence. This highlights the need for targeted initiatives to encourage and support women's participation and leadership in online spaces. There were about 748,200 social media users in Liberia in January 2022. The number of social media users in Liberia at the start of 2022 was equivalent to 14.3 percent of the total population, but it's important to note that social media users may not represent unique individuals. According to Kepios analysis reveals that social media users in Liberia increased by 78 thousand (+11.7 percent) between 2021 and 2022. Data published in Meta's advertising resources indicates that Facebook had 709.7 thousand users in Liberia in early 2022. However, Meta made important changes to the way its advertising resources report audience reach data at the end of 2021 – including making significant revisions to its base audience data for Facebook – so the figures shown here are not directly comparable with figures published in our previous reports. The company's revised audience figures mean that Facebook's ad reach in Liberia was equivalent to 13.5 percent of the total population at the start of 2022. However, Facebook restricts the use of its platform to people aged 13 and above, so it is also worth highlighting that 20.8 percent of the "eligible" audience in Liberia uses Facebook. At the start of 2022, 44.4 percent of Facebook's ad audience in Liberia was female, while 55.6 percent was male.

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[1] datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-liberia

Average Costs of Data per Gigabyte: Affordability of data services is a significant factor affecting women's access to the internet in Liberia. High costs of data per gigabyte can create a financial burden, making it difficult for women, particularly those from marginalized communities, to stay connected. Addressing this issue requires collaboration between internet service providers, government entities, and civil society organisations to ensure affordable and accessible internet services for all.

Gender Digital Divide: The gender digital divide refers to the gap between men and women in terms of access, usage, and skills related to information and communication technologies (ICTs). In Liberia, this divide is perpetuated by various factors, including socioeconomic disparities, cultural norms, lack of digital literacy, and limited opportunities for women to engage in technology-related fields. Bridging the gender digital divide is crucial for promoting gender equality, empowerment, and inclusive development.

Methodology

In the analysis of the state of Women's Rights Online in Liberia, this research primarily employed a desk review approach. The researcher accurately examined a range of sources concerning women's online rights and policies, encompassing regulations related to women's online rights in Liberia. This review included online sources of information, and where applicable, physical documents obtained from government authorities were also scrutinized. To complete this report, desktop review was complemented with on-the-ground data gathering from key stakeholders, providing firsthand insights into the subject matter.

Regional and International Frameworks

Liberia is a party to several regional and international frameworks that recognize the importance of promoting women's rights in the context of the internet and ICTs. These frameworks include but are not limited to:

1. The African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection: This convention aims to create a safe and secure digital environment, protect personal data, and ensure women's rights online.
2. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: This landmark document addresses gender equality and women's empowerment, emphasizing the role of ICTs in advancing women's rights.
3. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 5 specifically focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, including through access to ICTs.

4. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): CEDAW recognises women's right to access and use ICTs as a means of empowerment and participation in public life.

In conclusion to ensure women's rights online in Liberia, concerted efforts are needed to bridge the gender digital divide and promote women's empowerment in the digital sphere. This includes addressing barriers to internet access, enhancing digital literacy programmes, promoting women's leadership in technology sectors, and advocating for affordable and inclusive internet services. It is crucial for policymakers, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders to collaborate and implement gender-responsive policies and programmes that enable women to fully participate in the digital world. By doing so, Liberia can harness the potential of the internet and ICTs to advance gender equality, foster economic growth, and promote sustainable development.

Policies, Regulatory Documents, and Frameworks in Liberia

This Report provides an overview of the policies, regulatory documents, and frameworks that govern the internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Liberia. It aims to assess the existing policy landscape and identify specific policy documents and frameworks that address women's rights online. Recognizing the importance of a comprehensive legal framework, this paper highlights the need for policies that safeguard women's rights, promote gender equality, and address the unique challenges faced by women in the digital sphere.

Policy and Regulatory Frameworks:

1. Telecommunications Act of 2007: The Telecommunications Act of 2007 is the primary legislation governing the telecommunications sector in Liberia. While the Act does not specifically address women's rights online, it sets the legal foundation for the regulation of ICTs, including internet service provision and telecommunications infrastructure development.
2. National ICT Policy (2019-2024): The National ICT Policy and Strategy provides a framework for ICT development in Liberia. While the policy does not explicitly focus on women's rights online, it recognizes the importance of gender equality in ICT access and usage. It highlights the need to address gender disparities in ICT access, promote digital literacy among women, and encourage women's participation in the ICT sector.
3. E-Government Master Plan (2014-2017): The E-Government Master Plan aims to enhance service delivery through the use of ICTs in Liberia. While not specifically targeting women's rights online, the plan emphasizes the need for inclusivity, equitable access to e-services, and the promotion of gender mainstreaming in e-governance initiatives.

4. National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy: The National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy provides a framework for addressing cybersecurity challenges in Liberia. While the policy does not explicitly focus on women's rights, it recognizes the need to protect individuals from online threats and ensure a secure digital environment for all, including women.

Frameworks Addressing Women's Rights Online: Liberia does not currently have specific policy documents or frameworks that solely focus on women's rights online. However, the existing policy landscape provides opportunities for integrating gender equality considerations and addressing the unique challenges faced by women in the digital space. To effectively promote women's rights online, it is important to consider the following:

1. Gender Mainstreaming: Integrating gender mainstreaming principles into existing policies and frameworks can ensure that women's rights and gender equality considerations are adequately addressed. This involves conducting gender analyses of existing policies, identifying gaps, and incorporating specific provisions to protect and promote women's rights online.
2. Awareness and Capacity Building: Developing targeted awareness and capacity building programmes is essential to address the gender digital divide. These programmes should focus on enhancing digital literacy among women, promoting their digital skills, and raising awareness about their rights and opportunities in the online world.
3. Stakeholder Collaboration: Collaboration among government agencies, civil society organisations, private sector entities, and international partners is crucial for effective policy formulation and implementation. Stakeholders should work together to advocate for women's rights online, share best practices, and support initiatives that promote gender equality in the digital sphere.

While Liberia does not currently have specific policy documents and frameworks solely dedicated to women's rights online, integrating gender considerations into existing policies and frameworks can effectively address the unique challenges faced by women in the digital sphere. It is important for policymakers, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders to recognize the importance of promoting gender equality, safeguarding women's rights, and bridging the gender digital divide. By adopting a comprehensive and inclusive approach, Liberia can create an enabling environment that ensures women's full and equal participation in the digital world.

Categorization of Policy Documents

This section examines policy documents from key public institutions involved in ICT regulation and women's empowerment. By categorizing these documents, we identify the

institutional efforts made to address women's rights online and assess the extent to which gender considerations are integrated into ICT policies.

Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications: The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications plays a vital role in overseeing the telecommunications sector and ICT development in Liberia. While the ministry's policy documents primarily focus on ICT infrastructure and connectivity, it is essential to examine the extent to which women's rights online are considered in these policies.

1. *National ICT Policy and Strategy (2010-2020):* The National ICT Policy and Strategy aims to guide ICT development in Liberia. While it does not explicitly address women's rights online, it recognizes the importance of gender equality in ICT access and usage. This policy could be further enhanced by incorporating specific provisions that promote women's rights, address the gender digital divide, and encourage women's participation in the digital sphere.

Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection: The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection is responsible for promoting gender equality and protecting the rights of women and vulnerable groups. The Ministry's policy documents play a crucial role in addressing gender issues and advancing women's rights in various domains, including the digital sphere.

1. *National Gender Policy*: The only National Gender Policy provides a framework for promoting gender equality in all sectors of society, including ICTs. This policy could be leveraged to include specific provisions related to women's rights online, such as addressing online gender-based violence, promoting digital literacy among women, and supporting women's entrepreneurship and leadership in the digital economy.

Ministry of Education: The Ministry of Education plays a vital role in promoting digital literacy and educational opportunities in Liberia. While its policy documents may not explicitly focus on women's rights online, they are crucial for addressing the digital gender divide and ensuring equal access to digital skills and education for women and girls.

1. *National Education Policy:* The National Education Policy sets out guidelines for the education sector in Liberia. While it may not directly address women's rights online, it can be leveraged to integrate digital literacy programmes targeted at women and girls, promote gender-responsive curricula that address online safety and digital citizenship, and encourage girls' participation in STEM education and ICT-related fields.

Other Relevant Institutions: In addition to the ministries mentioned above, other public institutions also have policy documents that indirectly or directly impact women's rights online. These institutions include:

i. **Ministry of Justice:** The Ministry of Justice have no policies related to cybercrime, data protection, and online privacy, which are crucial for safeguarding women's rights in the digital space.
ii. **Ministry of Commerce and Industry:** Policies related to e-commerce, digital entrepreneurship, and access to online markets can create opportunities for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship in the digital sphere.

Categorizing policy documents related to the internet and ICTs per public institutions provides insights into the institutional efforts made to promote women's rights online in Liberia. While some ministries may not have specific policies dedicated to women's rights online, existing policy frameworks can be enhanced by integrating gender considerations and addressing the gender digital divide. It is crucial for policymakers, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders to collaborate and advocate for gender-responsive policies that ensure women's full and equal participation in the digital world. By leveraging existing policy frameworks and developing targeted initiatives, Liberia can foster a safe, inclusive, and empowering digital environment for women.

Analysis of Policies and Documents

This advocacy paper examines existing policies on women's rights online in Liberia, assessing gender gaps, policy quality, implementation, and alignment with global standards. The gender gap in internet access and ICT usage is attributed to factors like socioeconomic status and cultural norms. While progress has been made, challenges persist, such as cyber harassment due to the rise of social media platforms. The paper emphasizes the need for policies that ensure equal access to technology, address digital forms of violence, and enforce regulations effectively. Collaboration among government bodies, private corporations, and other sectors is crucial for creating a safer online environment for everyone, irrespective of gender identity or expression. The importance of comprehensive strategies that address both individual challenges and systemic gaps within the Liberian context is highlighted.

Consequently, if Liberia were to bolster its laws and policies concerning online abuse directed at women specifically, including providing training to law enforcement officials on the most effective methods for investigating cyber-harassment cases, it would be taking strides to enhance overall human welfare and improve life opportunities for Liberian citizens. By bridging the divide between international standards and the existing domestic policy frameworks related to internet-based abuses targeting females within society, a path

forward can be paved toward advancing greater peacebuilding efforts in the local context of the nation-state.

Gender Gaps and Internet/ICTs Gender Issues:
- **Gender Digital Divide:** An analysis of the policies reveals the persistence of a gender digital divide in Liberia. Women face barriers such as limited connectivity, affordability issues, digital literacy gaps, and social norms that discourage their participation online. These disparities lead to unequal access, opportunities, and benefits from internet and ICTs, reinforcing existing gender inequalities.

The analysis of policies in Liberia reveals the existence of a gender digital divide in several ways:

1. **Limited Connectivity:** One of the key aspects of the gender digital divide is limited access to the internet. Policies prioritize expanding internet infrastructure to rural or underserved areas where many women reside but lack of financial support . As a result, women in these areas often lack access to reliable internet connections, making it difficult for them to participate in online activities, access information, or engage in online economic opportunities.
2. **Affordability Issues:** Policies does not address the affordability of internet services. Even if internet infrastructure is available, the cost of accessing it may be prohibitive for many women. High data costs and expensive devices can be barriers to entry, leaving women with limited options for connecting to the digital world.
3. **Digital Literacy Gaps:** Gender-specific policies not adequately address the digital literacy gap. Women may not have the same level of access to digital skills training and education as men. This lack of digital literacy can make it challenging for women to use the internet effectively for various purposes, including education, employment, and social engagement.
4. **Social Norms and Discrimination:** Policies not explicitly tackle social norms and discrimination that discourage women from participating in online spaces. In some cases, women may face online harassment and gender-based violence, which can deter them from engaging in digital activities. Without policies that address such issues, the gender digital divide can persist.
5. **Unequal Opportunities and Benefits:** The policies not promoting gender-inclusive opportunities in the digital sector. This has resulted in women missing out on economic opportunities, online education, and access to information, reinforcing existing gender inequalities in society.

The policies in Liberia reveal the gender digital divide through their lack of emphasis on addressing these specific challenges faced by women. This divide is characterized by limited access to the internet, affordability issues, digital literacy gaps, and the presence of social norms and discrimination that hinder women's participation online. As a result, women in Liberia are often at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing the benefits and opportunities offered by the internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs).

- **Online Harassment and Violence:** Existing policies does not address the significant challenge of online harassment and violence faced by women. The policies should provide clear definitions, preventive measures, and appropriate legal remedies for victims. Efforts should be made to enhance reporting mechanisms, support services, and collaboration with law enforcement agencies to effectively address these issues.

Quality of Policies and Level of Implementation:
- **Policy Quality:** The quality of policies varies across different institutions. Some policies demonstrate a commitment to gender equality and women's rights online, while others lack specific provisions addressing these issues. Policy documents should be comprehensive, specific, and provide clear guidelines for implementation and monitoring.
- **Implementation:** The level of policy implementation by public institutions, ISPs, and ICTs corporate organisations varies. While some entities actively incorporate gender considerations into their operations, others may lack the necessary implementation mechanisms or prioritize other areas. It is crucial to monitor and evaluate the extent to which policies are effectively implemented to ensure tangible improvements in women's rights online.

Alignment with International Standards:
- International Standards on Internet Rights: Some existing policies does align with international standards on internet rights, such as the principles of freedom of expression, privacy, and access to information. Policies ensure that women's rights online are protected and promoted within this framework.
- Women's Protection Online: The policies (National Cybersecurity Strategy & Personal Data Protection Act) also meet international standards with portions on women's protection online, including addressing online harassment, cyberstalking, and non-consensual distribution of intimate images. The policies should align with relevant international conventions, declarations, and guidelines that emphasize the importance of protecting women's rights in the digital space.

  The alignment of policies with international standards can be a complex and nuanced process, and it often involves detailed legal and policy analysis.

Advantages and Disadvantages:
- **Advantages:**
  Existing policies (National Cybersecurity Strategy, Cybercrime Act and Personal Data Protection Act) provide a foundation for addressing women's rights online in Liberia. They acknowledge the importance of gender equality, access, and participation in the digital sphere. Some policies include provisions for promoting digital literacy, bridging the gender digital divide, and encouraging women's leadership in the ICT sector.

- **Disadvantages:**
  Some of the policies (National Gender Policy and National ICT Policy) lack specific provisions and clear targets related to women's rights online. Implementation efforts are inconsistent, resulting in limited impact on the ground. Additionally, the policies may not sufficiently address emerging issues, such as online gender-based violence and the impact of emerging technologies.

Missing Aspects in the Policies:
- **Comprehensive Approaches:** The policies should adopt a comprehensive approach to address the multiple dimensions of women's rights online, including access, digital literacy, online safety, privacy, economic empowerment, and participation in decision-making processes.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** The policies should promote collaboration among public institutions, ISPs, ICT corporate organisations, civil society, and international partners to strengthen efforts in promoting women's rights online. Partnerships can lead to coordinated actions, knowledge sharing, and resource mobilization.

Existing policies in Liberia acknowledge women's online rights, but improvements are needed to close gender gaps, enhance policy quality, and ensure effective implementation. Alignment with international standards on internet rights and women's protection online is crucial. The policies recognize gender equality, digital literacy, and women's leadership as advantages, yet challenges persist, requiring comprehensive approaches, stronger collaboration, and addressing emerging issues. To create an enabling environment that upholds women's rights, guarantees safety, and promotes equal participation in the digital world, Liberia must address these gaps. Existing policies fall short of international standards, lacking specific measures to counter harassment. Policymakers should revise policies, emphasizing awareness campaigns and robust enforcement mechanisms. This advocacy paper emphasizes the need for a safer digital space where everyone thrives without fear, discrimination, and with equal opportunities, urging stakeholders to collaborate for lasting change.

Impact of Policy Implementation on Women's Rights Online

This advocacy paper is a call to action for policymakers in Liberia to address critical issues affecting women's rights online through policy reforms. It assesses existing policies' quality and implementation, aiming to meet international standards on internet rights and women's protection online. The paper emphasizes the need to bridge the gender gap in digital access, training, and protection, highlighting challenges such as online harassment and unequal distribution of resources. Three key areas are identified for comprehensive

action: inclusive ICT training, combating online harassment, and addressing systemic gender inequalities.

The collaboration of stakeholders is essential to create an environment that offers equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender. While Liberia has policies in place, their effective implementation is lacking, and collaborative efforts involving government agencies, civil society, and private companies are required to ensure equitable digital access and safety for women.

The analysis of women's rights online policies in Liberia reveals a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. While some policies address gender gaps and ICT-related concerns, their quality and implementation by public institutions, ISPs, and ICT corporate entities are inconsistent. To align with international standards safeguarding women's online rights, Liberia must adopt a comprehensive strategy. This involves enhancing women's ICT training access, establishing accountability for online harassment, and rectifying systemic inequalities contributing to digital gender disparities. It is clear that collaborative action among stakeholders is imperative to establish an inclusive digital sphere, enabling women's unimpeded participation devoid of discrimination or violence. The benefits extend beyond individual empowerment, resonating with broader social progress. Yet, the journey ahead is arduous, necessitating united endeavors from policy-makers at all levels, civil society groups focused on gender equity, media influencers shaping positive narratives, and technology companies combating harmful content targeting vulnerable groups.

Liberia's commitment to advancing women's internet rights is pivotal. Failure risks lagging behind global strides in equal online opportunities. The time has come to earnestly establish an ethical cyberspace, offering equitable chances regardless of race or gender, alongside stringent measures against cybercriminals perpetuating harm, particularly towards females.

Efforts by Public Institutions and Internet Service Providers

In today's interconnected world, gender equality in accessing online resources is crucial for empowerment. Liberia, like other nations, faces challenges such as limited connectivity, social norms inhibiting women's online participation, and gender-based digital violence. Addressing these requires collaboration among public institutions, ISPs, and civil society. Policies promoting equal cyberspace opportunities and widespread internet access are essential. Overcoming traditional biases is vital for inclusive digital spaces, enabling Liberian women's active engagement in economic opportunities driven by technology. This advocacy paper examines past efforts, challenges, and proposes solutions to foster an inclusive digital environment for women's rights online in Liberia.

It is imperative that governments prioritize bridging this digital divide by providing affordable access to technology alongside education programmes aimed at increasing digital literacy among marginalized groups such as young girls. More importantly than just providing physical infrastructure such as computers or Internet connectivity but also addressing social factors through awareness campaigns targeted specifically towards girls' empowerment can contribute greatly towards achieving greater gender equality in society. With more equitable access to these crucial resources for development opportunities presented in today's globalized world will become possible without discrimination based on one's sex.

Progress has been made in advancing women's online rights in Liberia, but challenges persist due to limited access, cultural norms, and digital literacy gaps. Efforts by public institutions and internet service providers are commendable, but inadequate infrastructure and awareness hinder comprehensive gender equality. Initiatives to provide digital literacy skills hold promise in bridging the gender gap. Collaboration among stakeholders is vital to create an environment where women have equal access to digital opportunities. The focus should extend beyond connectivity to address socio-cultural attitudes toward technology adoption among women. Achieving gender parity requires sustained efforts to ensure equitable participation from marginalized communities.

Technology-related Gender Discrimination

In today's technology-dependent world, understanding the impact of the digital landscape on women's rights is paramount. Background information on Women's Rights Online in Liberia highlights critical concerns surrounding gender discrimination in the virtual realm.

The technological landscape presents both opportunities and challenges for women, necessitating a proactive approach to address online-related issues. Regrettably, discriminatory practices persist, impeding women's access to information, education, and economic prospects. Focusing on the digital gender divide, we observe a growing discrepancy between men and women's online involvement and access to digital resources in Liberia. This imbalance sidelines women from acquiring essential knowledge and skills vital for personal development. In crafting this advocacy paper, we delve into comprehending not only the ramifications but also potential remedies to counter these biases perpetuated through technology platforms.

By identifying and addressing technology-related issues, we can work towards creating a safe, inclusive, and empowering online environment for women in Liberia.

- Online Harassment and Abuse: One of the most significant technology-related issues contributing to gender discrimination online is online harassment and abuse targeting women. Women face various forms of harassment, including cyberstalking,

online threats, non-consensual sharing of private images popularly known as "revenge porn," and hate speech. These acts perpetuate gender-based violence, silence women's voices, and create a hostile online environment.

- Online Gender-Based Violence: Gender-based violence extends to the online space, where women experience threats, intimidation, and abuse. This includes doxing (revealing personal information), non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and targeted campaigns to silence or discredit women activists and public figures. Online gender-based violence has a chilling effect on women's participation, freedom of expression, and personal safety online.
- Unequal Access and Digital Divide: Limited access to affordable and reliable internet services exacerbates gender inequalities. Women, especially those in rural areas and marginalized communities, face barriers such as limited connectivity, affordability issues, and lack of digital literacy. Unequal access prevents women from fully participating in the digital world and benefiting from the opportunities it offers.
- Lack of Representation and Gender Stereotyping: The underrepresentation of women in the technology sector and the broader online space contributes to gender discrimination. Limited female representation in decision-making positions and content creation perpetuates gender stereotypes and biases, limiting the diversity of perspectives and opportunities for women online.
- Online Privacy and Data Protection: Women's online privacy and data protection are critical concerns. The misuse and exploitation of personal data, particularly in cases of non-consensual data sharing or surveillance, can have severe consequences for women's safety, autonomy, and reputation.
- Digital Literacy and Skills Gap: The digital literacy and skills gap disproportionately affects women, limiting their ability to navigate online platforms, leverage technology for personal and professional growth, and fully exercise their rights online. Insufficient digital literacy programmes and limited access to digital skills training hinder women's participation and empowerment in the digital sphere.

Gender-based violence online is a pressing concern in Liberia, particularly cyberbullying, harassment, and hate speech targeting women. Despite progress by government and civil society, further action is needed to ensure women's online safety. Prevalence of such violence necessitates comprehensive measures, including protective policies, digital etiquette education, and robust victim support services.

Civil Society Organisations Promoting Women's Rights Online

Prominent civil society organisations (CSOs) have actively championed women's rights online, facing challenges while achieving remarkable successes in Liberia. Their efforts offer valuable lessons and best practices for inclusive digital spaces. Analyzing their achievements and policy strategies sheds light on advancing women's online rights. This section examines

CSOs in Liberia dedicated to gender equality advocacy, combating online violence, and empowering women digitally. It further delves into challenges, successes, lessons learned, and policy strategies. Despite societal norms restricting women's access to technology, promoting women's online rights is vital for societal transformation. The internet becomes a platform for advocacy, raising awareness, and economic empowerment. Access to information fosters self-confidence, challenging discrimination.

Civil Society Organisations Working on Women's Rights Online: Several CSOs in Liberia are actively engaged in promoting women's rights online. Some prominent organisations include:

1. Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL): WONGOSOL is an umbrella organisation that brings together various women-focused CSOs in Liberia. It works towards advancing women's rights in all areas, including the digital space. WONGOSOL collaborates with member organisations to advocate for policies, raise awareness, and provide capacity-building programmes for women on digital literacy and online safety.
2. Liberia Information Technology Student Union (LITSU): LITSU is a youth-led organisation that focuses on promoting digital literacy and technology skills among young women. It offers training programmes, mentorship, and networking opportunities to empower young women to actively participate in the digital economy.
3. Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI): FCI works on gender equality, women's empowerment, and digital rights issues. It conducts research, advocacy, and awareness campaigns to address gender-based violence online and promote women's digital inclusion.
4. Women's Media and Policy Network (WMPN): WMPN is a network of media and policy organisations that advocate for gender equality in the media and digital spaces. It works to ensure that women's voices are heard, their stories are represented accurately, and gender biases are challenged.

Efforts in Promoting Women's Rights Online and Achievements:

CSOs in Liberia have made significant efforts to promote women's rights online. Some of their key initiatives include:

- Advocacy and Policy Engagement: CSOs actively engage in policy advocacy to influence the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies and legislation. They collaborate with government institutions, ISPs, and other stakeholders to address gender gaps, combat online violence, and promote women's digital rights.
- Digital Literacy and Skills Development: CSOs provide training programmes and workshops to enhance digital literacy and skills among women and girls. These

initiatives aim to bridge the digital divide, empower women to utilize digital technologies, and participate fully in the online world.

- Online Safety and Support Services: CSOs work to raise awareness about online safety and provide support services for women who experience online violence. They offer helplines, counseling, and legal aid to survivors of gender-based online abuse and harassment

Challenges:

CSOs working on women's rights online in Liberia encounter various challenges, including:

1. Limited Resources: Insufficient funding and resources pose challenges for CSOs to implement their programmes effectively and sustain their initiatives in the long term.
2. Social and Cultural Barriers: Deep-rooted social norms and cultural attitudes towards women can hinder the progress of CSOs' efforts. Resistance to gender equality, victim-blaming, and lack of support from some community members may impede the advancement of women's rights online.

Successes, Lessons Learned, and Best Practices:

Best Practices and Policies strategies deployed during campaigns incorporated legal frameworks that prohibit cyber-victimization or discrimination against women. It is clear that continued efforts must be made to advance women's rights online while acknowledging existing barriers and limitations hampering their quest for equity in accessing digital technologies fully. Understanding these complexities will help stakeholders design more sustainable interventions targeted at empowering Liberian Women digitally. It is now time for everyone across all sectors—government officials; entrepreneurs; academics—to join forces towards building an inclusive future where every woman can equally participate in shaping her destiny within Liberia's developing economy using technology.

CSOs in Liberia have achieved notable successes in promoting women's rights online. Some notable successes, lessons learned, and best practices include:

- Collaboration and Partnerships: Successful CSOs have recognized the importance of collaboration and partnerships. Engaging with government institutions, ISPs, and international organisations amplifies their impact and strengthens their advocacy efforts.
- Intersectionality and Inclusivity: CSOs have learned the importance of addressing the intersectional aspects of women's experiences online, considering factors such as age, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation. They strive to create inclusive spaces that amplify the voices of marginalized women.

- Engaging Men and Boys: CSOs have realized the significance of engaging men and boys as allies in promoting gender equality online. Initiatives that involve men and boys in conversations about gender norms, consent, and respectful online behavior have proven effective.
- Empowering Women Leaders: CSOs have focused on empowering women leaders and fostering their leadership in the digital sphere. This includes providing mentorship, leadership training, and platforms for women to share their experiences and insights.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) in Liberia play a pivotal role in advocating for women's rights online, focusing on capacity-building, awareness, and combating online violence. Their efforts have led to awareness-raising, reducing the digital gender gap, and addressing online violence. Despite challenges, CSOs have achieved successes and learned valuable lessons, emphasizing collaboration, inclusivity, engaging men and empowering women leaders. Continued support, resources, and partnerships with stakeholders are essential for further progress. CSOs strive to create an empowering digital environment for Liberian women.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Promoting and Protecting Women's Rights Online in Liberia

The promotion and protection of women's rights online in Liberia require a collective effort from relevant stakeholders, including the government, parliament, ministries, government agencies, ISPs, telecommunication companies, civil society, and the media. While progress has been made, there is still work to be done to address gender disparities, combat online violence, and ensure equal opportunities for women in the digital sphere. This advocacy paper highlights key recommendations to promote gender-responsive ICT policies and practices and protect women's rights online in Liberia.

Recommendations:

Government and National Legislature:
a. Develop and implement comprehensive legislation that explicitly addresses online gender-based violence and harassment, ensuring effective legal remedies and penalties for perpetrators.
b. Strengthen and enforce existing laws and regulations to protect women's privacy, data, and personal information in the online space.

c. Allocate sufficient resources for capacity building programmes that enhance digital literacy and skills among women, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. d. Incorporate gender-responsive indicators and targets into national

development plans and ICT strategies to address the gender digital divide and promote women's inclusion in the digital economy.

Ministries and Government Agencies:
a. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to develop and implement gender-responsive ICT policies and guidelines that address online violence, gender disparities, and ensure women's equal access to digital opportunities.
b. Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the implementation and impact of policies and programmes aimed at promoting women's rights online.

c. Foster partnerships with civil society organisations and telecommunication companies to provide support services, including helplines and counseling, for women who experience online violence.

d. Develop and implement awareness campaigns that challenge gender stereotypes, promote positive online behavior, and educate the public on the importance of respecting women's rights online.

Internet Service Providers and Telecommunication Companies:
a. Develop gender-responsive policies that ensure affordable and accessible internet services for women, including discounted data plans and targeted initiatives for women in underserved areas.
b. Enhance online safety measures, including robust content moderation, reporting mechanisms, and cooperation with relevant stakeholders to address online harassment and violence targeting women.

c. Provide digital literacy and skills training programmes that specifically target women, focusing on empowering them to navigate the online world safely and utilize digital technologies effectively.

Civil Society Organisations:
a. Continue advocating for gender-responsive ICT policies and programmes, working closely with the government and other stakeholders to address women's rights online.
b. Provide capacity-building programmes, training, and support services that empower women to fully participate in the digital sphere and address the challenges they face online.

c. Foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among CSOs, sharing best practices, and strengthening the collective voice in advocating for women's rights online.

d. Monitor and document cases of online gender-based violence, contributing to data collection and analysis for evidence-based policy development and advocacy.

Media:
a. Promote gender equality and women's rights in media coverage and online platforms, challenging harmful stereotypes and biases.
b. Engage in responsible reporting on cases of online gender-based violence, raising awareness about the issue and amplifying the voices of survivors.

c. Collaborate with CSOs and government agencies to develop media guidelines and ethical standards that ensure fair and respectful representation of women in digital media.

Promoting and protecting women's rights online in Liberia requires a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach. By implementing the recommended actions, stakeholders can address gender disparities, combat online violence, enhance digital inclusion, and create a safe and empowering digital environment for women. Collaboration, policy reform, capacity building, and awareness raising are key to achieving gender-responsive ICT policies and practices that uphold women's rights in the digital age.

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MEDIA FOUNDATION FOR WEST AFRICA

Aar-Bakor Street, Ogbojo

Telephone: +233 (0) 302 555 327

Twitter: @TheMFWA

Facebook: Media Foundation for West Africa

info@mfwa.org

www.mfwa.org