



Women in Cyber Capacity Building – Breakfast Session – “Sharing Regional Perspectives ”

November 28th 2023

Summary Report

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Session – *The Women in Cyber Capacity Building (WiCCB) Breakfast: Sharing Regional Perspectives* served as an informal gathering of all gender equality promoters in cyberspace. It sought to connect all relevant actors across cyber and development to ensure long-term and sustainable cooperation for gender equality in the field.

This event was designed to allow women and equality supporters to connect and/or create stronger ties. Within this informal setting, participants enthusiastically seized this opportunity to share and connect with one another.

Context

Gender inequality, including women’s underrepresentation, is ever so present in CCB. Ranging from education, cyber-crime to policies, young girls and women do not benefit equal opportunities. Keeping in mind that CCB is recent, it is now important for gender equality supporters to delineate the problematic, further the discussions and share best solutions & practices with the community. Additionally, inequalities have different proportions based on a regional scale. As such, and for these solutions and best practices to be efficient, a regional perspective on gender equality needs to be adopted.

Overview

Master of ceremony (MC)

- **Ms. Klara Stankova** – GFCE Advisor

Speakers

- **Ms. Marjo Baayen** - GFCE Secretariat Director
- **Dr. Aida Oposu-Mensah** - Founder and MD of Centric Digital Ltd and co-director/executive member of the Network of African Women in Cybersecurity (NAWC)

- **Dr. Margaret Nyambura Ndung'u** - Founding member and Co-Executive Director of the Network of African Women in Cybersecurity (NAWC)
- **Dr. Ekaterina Dorodnykh** - Evaluation Data Specialist, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
- **Ms. Pelenita Milika Atoa** - Executive member of the Tonga Women in ICT (TWICT) and a Get Safe Online Ambassador for Tonga
- **Ms. Cherie Lagakali** - Secretary for PICISOC Board and GFCE Pacific Liaison Officer
- **H.E. Ms. Slavica Grkovska** - Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Good Governance Policies at the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia

Presentation and Discussion

The session was introduced by *Klara Stankova*, GFCE Advisor. She welcomed all supporters of gender equality in CCB, and opened the floor to the speakers.

The lack of women representation and opportunities for female roles in CCB exacerbates pre-existing gender inequalities. Equality supporters therefore find themselves with the task of defining the root causes of inequality in the scope of CCB. *Margaret Nyambura Ndung'u* explored the roots of the problem through a process of contextualisation of the CCB realm. She highlighted the necessary differentiation between equal opportunity policies and equality-focused policies. The former allows for a greater contextualisation of the systemic biases leaving men and women with different tools, whereas the latter focuses on a broader, vaguer contextualisation of gender inequalities.

Delineating the roots of the problem requires to put into context numerous factors, including institutions' systemic roots and opportunities for women enabled by policies. However, as policy attention is lacking, this brings additional challenges to the supporters of gender equality, argued by *Ekatarina Dorodnykh*. Indeed, while an urgent action is necessary, policies are yet to be contextualised and policy attention on unequal opportunities is yet to be raised. As such, a first step toward contextualise policies would be to multiply awareness raising efforts. These efforts, however common to all women in CCB, should be differentiated by regions, argued by *Marjo Baayen*. A special focus should therefore be put in knowledge sharing built on a regional basis. The contextualisation of CCB in terms of opportunities and institutions' systemic roots should also be built on a regional perspective. Lastly, this contextualisation should be facilitated through increased communication between all female professionals and gender equality supporters within CCB.

To achieve gender equality, there must be a link made with the emergence of new technologies, and the expansion of online platforms. *Cherie Lagakali* stressed that with the transition from a reality to virtual reality, it becomes clear that a discussion on the fundamentals of safety is needed. How do we keep communities safe? How do we keep children safe? These questions are ever so important as girls and women are, highlighted by *Ekatarina Dorodnykh*, even more exposed to discrimination and prejudices due to the ongoing context, and increasingly so in Latin America, Africa and the Caribbeans. How do we make

sure that women are included in the policy processes to keep young girls and women safe? One thing is sure, a structural change needs to happen, and it will only be reached with women's inclusion in high level roles in CCB.

Gender equality promoters in the CCB have already explored some ways to tackle gender inequality in the field. Solutions vary from theoretical reflections, structural policy changes and concrete infrastructure reforms. *Aida Oposu-Mensah* shared some of her thoughts on solutions to include women in the debate. She argued that structural changes are to be made through innovation and within infrastructures. As such, the United Nations Sustainable Goals (SDGs) provide a guideline with SDG 10, calling for reduced inequality, and SDG 17, calling for partnerships to implement all other SDGs. She further explained how improving the quality of education should be the primary focus of the establishment of SDG 10 and SDG 17 in a CCB context. Kids at the age of fifteen and below are indeed more prone to be the main recipients of cyberviolence and gender inequality related issues, furthered *Pelenita Milika Atoa*. To that effect, Tonga Women in ICT (TWICT) has been expanding partnerships with international organisations. This allows for the establishment of female-led institutions, to flag areas that require urgent attention such as education, and overall allows to overcome the male dominant concepts and ideas in CCB.

Such dominant concepts and ideas are not only present in CCB, but also predominantly present within the politics world. *H.E. Slavica Grkovska* has experienced the double standards present in both the politics and CCB policy world. As such, her work seeks to engrave policies for the digital transformation of society. Such policies will be built around the principles of gender equality, transparency and anti-corruption. She also seeks to establish a council for the digital transformation of society, which would primarily focus on the legal framework and mindset of CCB. These solutions, inspired by her position as Prime Deputy Minister, rely on systemic changes and regional cooperation.

Key takeaways

Attendees and speakers agreed that real-time change in CCB will be made through the implementation of certain elements and concepts. First, it was noted that it must be recognised that men and women have different tools available to them, and that this is a result of systematic biases. To address this, there must be equal opportunities and venues for women in CCB. Such opportunities should be based on a clear understanding of the inequalities within CCB. Most important is the creation of educational opportunities, with a special focus on educating young girls. It was also highlighted that such action should not only focus on women's empowerment but should also include awareness raising mechanisms. Finally, this awareness of systematic biases should be built into policies, and policies should be designed to reflect a mindset of gender equality in CCB.