MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

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Concept Note on Mainstreaming Gender in Cyber Capacity Building

Gender[1] is a crosscutting issue with direct relevance to achieving international peace and security, and as such has become an increasingly important topic in the field of cybersecurity and cyber capacity building.

Stronger consideration of cybersecurity and digital policy from the perspective of gender equality, diversity, and social inclusion (GEDSI) can provide key insights into how specific stakeholder groups are differentially impacted by developments and activities in cyberspace. Similarly, better understanding and awareness of the gendered impacts of ICTs and cyber policies can lead to empowerment of specific communities and groups to participate in decision-making and take ownership of the process, contributing to more effective outcomes.

Understanding how gender considerations impact on and are impacted by behavior in cyberspace has become a major policy objective of states and non-state actors alike, which has encouraged many organizations to take action as a direct result. For example, in 2020 the UN First Committee adopted an unprecedented number of 18 resolutions that include gender references, representing 25 per cent out of all 72 adopted resolutions and decisions that year. The Internet Governance Forum established a Best Practice Forum on Gender and Digital Rights, which looks at the impact of regulatory practices from a gender justice perspective. Further, following a recommendation of the Gender Advisory Council, the G7 has established annual monitoring in the area of gender equality.

Alongside this growing trend there is acute awareness of the need for gender considerations to be integrated into capacity building activities and interventions. A key outcome of the 2021 OEWG was the set of principles that guide capacity-building activities of states, referencing the nature of capacity building as respecting human rights, gender-sensitive, inclusive, universal, and non-discriminatory. The GFCE's own Global Agenda for Cyber Capacity Building also recognizes the importance of these international commitments on gender equality and shared principles for the efficacy of capacity building.

However, whilst cyber capacity building is a foundational pillar in both building better technical cybersecurity for countries around the globe and achieving a more inclusive and coherent set of international cyber policies, it is unclear what a gender-sensitive approach to cyber capacity building entails. Further discussion and analysis on these issues can generate more nuanced understandings of the gender dynamics which shape cyber capacity building policy and practice.

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[1] Gender refers to the socially and culturally constructed roles, behaviors and attributes associated with masculinity and femininity in a given time and place. Gender norms are changeable over time; they inform individual identities, social relations, and the distribution of resources and power in society. Although gender is often socially understood as expressing expectations regarding appropriate behavior for men and women, gender is non-binary and diverse. It refers to people of all gender identities and expressions. Source: UN Women "Concepts and Definitions" and UNIDIR publication "Gender Approaches to Cybersecurity".

Scope

The Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) therefore intends to explore how its platform and community can support mainstreaming of gender in and through cyber capacity building. This concept note aims to catalyze discussion within the GFCE community on mainstreaming gender in CCB and provide the impetus for stakeholders to engage around implementing commitments.

These discussions will form the basis for the development of a specific community-driven agenda for mainstreaming gender equality, diversity, and social inclusion considerations in and through cyber capacity building, consistent with and advancing international commitments.

The development of an agenda would then foreseeably lead to a clear plan of action, to be taken up by the GFCE community and others in advocating for and implementing the activities & goals.

GFCE Objectives for Mainstreaming Gender in Cyber Capacity Building

Below, several objectives in mainstreaming gender in CCB are mentioned. Practical activities aimed at achieving these objectives are further elaborated in the table on the next page. The ideas mentioned below represent a non-exhaustive list and are meant to provide a basis for discussion. However, the intention is to ask the GFCE community to contribute to and prioritize a number of these milestones in forming an agenda to work towards over 2022-2024.

1.Promote references to and awareness of gender considerations in digital & security frameworks

Global awareness of the gendered nature of international cybersecurity and digital development has grown substantially. Gender dynamics shape and influence our online behavior, determine access and power, and are a factor in vulnerability, whether real or perceived. However, the gender dimensions of international cybersecurity and in particular capacity building remain underexplored.

At the same time, the cybersecurity landscape also becoming increasingly complex, with discussions on cyber capacity building and gender-sensitive approaches to cyber policy and practice taking place across various multistakeholder and multilateral fora.

As a global multistakeholder platform, the GFCE is well placed to contribute to raising awareness on the need for a gender-sensitive approach to capacity building at the international level, and advocate for the inclusion of gender considerations in international frameworks based on common principles. For the GFCE to make an effective contribution in this area, further exploration of these issues and the linkages with cyber capacity building should be encouraged. A strong focus could also be placed on improving awareness and understanding of the various fora and frameworks where these issues are being discussed, as well as the outcomes and commitments that are being decided upon by the respective stakeholder groups.

2.Support activities & analysis that encourage gender-sensitive cyber capacity building

The GFCE is a platform and community made up of many different people, groups, structures and processes. In mainstreaming gender in CCB the GFCE must start with its own ecosystem. Each of these structures and groups could be mandated with assessing how gender considerations impact on and are impacted by their activities. The GFCE community could help in outlining an approach and how to follow up on this analysis. GFCE tools, in particular the Cybil Knowledge Portal and Global Research Agenda, could be operationalized towards these goals.

The GFCE can also support and/or facilitate projects and activities that promote gender mainstreaming. The GFCE itself has been supporting such capacity building projects and activities, for example the Women in International Security and Cyberspace Fellowship. The AU-GFCE collaboration project may also add the development of a gender equality knowledge module. If gender is to be a consideration in and across ongoing & new projects, clear guidelines could be developed on how gender mainstreaming can be conceptualized in the project establishment phase and measured through monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as well as key performance indicators (KPIs). The results of these activities should also feed back into the GFCE community.

3.Coordinate with and complement stakeholder efforts to mainstream gender in cyber capacity building

As mentioned above, there are many activities and initiatives being undertaken by states and non-state actors alike. As a multistakeholder platform for the advancement of capacity building through the sharing of knowledge and expertise, the GFCE should provide a space for stakeholders to share information on projects and initiatives, trends and developments with regards gender mainstreaming, to cooperate and to establish new partnerships based on common understanding and values. The GFCE Working Groups and the Women in Cyber Capacity Building (WiCCB) network platform could provide natural venues for these activities.

Draft Agenda for Gender-Sensitive Cyber Capacity Building

Objectives

I. Promote references to and awareness of gender considerations in digital and security frameworks
II. Support activities & analysis that encourage gender-sensitive cyber capacity building
III. Coordinate with and complement stakeholder efforts to mainstream gender in CCB

Aims

1. Improve awareness and understanding on the gender dimensions of international security and the relevance for cyber capacity building
2. Ensure meaningful participation and equal representation of stakeholders and groups, in particular women, in GFCE governance and decision-making processes
3. Develop & present an annual mapping and analysis of gender-sensitive capacity building activities and developments
4. Include a gender & capacity building component in the Global Research Agenda
5. Develop and facilitate (existing and/or specific) capacity building projects that promote GEDSI
6. Include regular opportunities for networking and discussion gender & CCB during GFCE events
7. Empower and promote the Women in CCB (WiCCB) group as a platform to steer and support this agenda

Proposed activities towards implementation of the Agenda

Aim 1
- Develop guidelines on gender-specific terminology
- Compile an overview of frameworks and initiatives that address gender and capacity building
- Encourage dialogue within the community on ways of highlighting how the GFCE contributes to these aims

Aim 2
- Improve data collection practices on participation and representation with regards to gender in the GFCE
- Review GFCE Terms of Reference to address gender considerations

Aim 3
- Use the dedicated tag "gender & security" on Cybil to raise awareness of projects, resources & tools
- Reach out to Members & Partners conducting gender security projects and initiatives to gather information on their activities
- Conduct a mapping of existing Women in Cyber networks and initiatives

Aim 4
- Solicit funding and research proposals on regional and cultural aspects of GEDSI related to capacity building
- Encourage discussion between the Research Committee and the Working Groups on how gender considerations affect or are affected by the respective thematic focus

Aim 5
- Develop guidelines for integrating GEDSI considerations in capacity building projects
- Share information and updates on project activities & results with the GFCE community

Aim 6
- Advocate for stronger participation of female representatives for GFCE events, including through sponsorship
- (Co-) Host roundtable discussions on thematic topics related to gender and security

Aim 7
- Establish a regular review of implementation of this agenda within the framework of the WiCCB group
- Connect with representatives of key networks and initiatives to encourage collaboration and participation of experts in the WiCCB group
- Create a calendar of relevant events and meetings for awareness and planning