

Annex: Strengthening Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion



Digital
Defenders
Partnership



1. Context and Purpose of this Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to guide DDP's adoption and strengthening of a structured approach to Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion, corresponding to the needs of HRDs, DDP's collaborators and partner organisations that work to support HRDs, and DDP internal policies, strategies and staff capacity needs.

DDP essentially adopts a feminist and intersectional approach as the epistemological basis for our analysis and the development of our internal and external programmes. That is to say, we are actively looking to make visible and ponder power relations taking place in our strategies, the way HRD and holistic responders work and how DDP relate to partners and donors. Our positioning is complemented with an approach to digital security and overall protection of HRDs, and work with other Holistic Responders, that is developed through a lens which seeks to make the various layers of structural and discursive discrimination visible. As these leads to the marginalisation and repression of people and communities based on their gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, caste, culture, disabilities, age, or socio-economic status, among other aspects. The means by which this discrimination is realised and perpetuated are pervasive in political, economic, social, and technological structures and are relevant to DDP's work in at least the following respects that will be explored more in-depth below:

- With respect to the risks faced by Human Rights Defenders and the different ways of accessing protection and security;
- With respect to the capacities and characteristics of Holistic Responders to Digital Emergencies, and other partner organisations of DDP;
- With respect to DDP's internal operations.

Therefore, while gender orientation is a key element of this strategy - gender-based violence being a particularly pervasive issue globally - we do not intend to treat it in isolation from other forms of structural violence based on the categories mentioned above, and more.

1.1 Human Rights Defenders

A gender-justice and intersectional analysis is of fundamental importance in order for DDP to achieve its goal of responding holistically to digital threats faced by human rights defenders. First of all, it helps to understand the risks themselves that human rights defenders face: HRDs – including women, LGBTIQ people, antiracist activists, land rights defenders, and so many more – are often, through their actions, challenging deeply embedded power structures based on gender, caste, ethnicity, race, and many others. HRDs themselves often represent women and marginalised groups. As such, the violence they face is also part of a continuum of discrimination against these groups.

Adopting an intersectional approach to understanding the risks faced by HRDs, online and offline, implies that we seek to establish and visibilise the ways in which women, LGBTIQ+ people and other marginalised groups are affected by forms of violence which are otherwise invisible or overlooked. Taking into account Gender, Sexual Orientation and Race is a way to acknowledge mechanisms enabling stereotyping, exclusion and marginalisation and which result in prejudice, racism, misogyny, phobia, hate speech and gender-based violences.

The last decade we have seen a significant rise in harassment and gender-based violence against Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD), LGTBIQ+ and cultural minorities. The increased use of the internet and media platforms have mirrored, complemented and amplified old and new forms of violence against them. These groups are too often trapped between the need, on the one hand, to use the internet as a crucial tool for their work and activism, but also for shaping and displaying their identities and culture, and, on the other hand, the obligation to constantly navigate their exposure to surveillance, harassment, censorship and judicial harassment. Online and offline gender-based violence exists in a continuum. In many cases, different violent actions and attacks overlap, creating a complex matrix of harm with solutions that can only be assessed in a multilayered approach that involves technical knowledge, legal expertise, strategic communications, psychological support and networks of support and solidarity.

Because of this specific challenges and the sexualised, gendered and racist aspects of digital attacks oriented at women, LGTBIQ+ and other marginalised groups, over the past years DDP has supported individuals, groups and initiatives tackling these issues through Funding, the Digital Integrity Fellowship, Rapid Responder Networks and other Linking and Learning activities.

Nevertheless, DDP strives to reach out to HRDs and groups still currently underrepresented such as land rights defenders, indigenous communities, sex workers, or LGBTQ+ located in rural areas, for instance. Because of this, this strategy aims at facilitating DDP's support to the most heavily targeted and underprivileged groups and ensure our impact in strengthening gender equality and diversity inclusion throughout its program.

While much of what DDP has done in this regard has been a result of an informal approach, we will seek through this strategy to adopt a more consistent and structured intersectional approach to our understanding of the risks faced by HRDs and the different ways they access protection and security.

1.2 Holistic Responders

DDP seeks to achieve its aims in active collaboration with a diverse set of individuals, collectives, organisations and networks worldwide, focused on digital security as well as overall protection and empowerment of HRDs, freedom of expression, promotion of the right to privacy, Internet governance and Internet freedom, among others.

Broadly reflecting, this "ecosystem" has also struggled with a lack of diversity in its makeup and a subsequent lack of nuanced understanding of the risks faced by HRDs, especially women and marginalised groups, and therefore in providing an adequate response. There has been also a lack of reflection and action to understand how some members of these support networks have been more vulnerable due to sex and gender, age, location or socioeconomic status. However, recent years have also seen several positive developments. These developments include the establishment of more research, programmes and organisations dedicated to the protection of HRDs that recognise the value of a cultural, gender-sensitive and intersectional understanding of protection and security. Some of these initiatives have also included a feminist approach to technologies by assessing their economic, political and ecological impact and how they enable mechanisms of oppression, discrimination or liberation for WHRD, LGBTQ+ persons and other marginalised groups.

An overall trend has been the increasing development of tailored resources about hate speech and gender-based violence, and a recognition of the need for a holistic approach - considering the

intersection of the psychosocial, legal, physical, and digital aspects in analysing violences against women, LGBTQ+ and cultural minorities, and in the construction of protection strategies. Accordingly, there has also been an increase in feminists, women and LGBTQ+ people that are providing digital security training or rapid responses for tackling gender-based violence online and other digital emergencies. Similarly, initiatives that deal with feminist infrastructure, encompassing internet protocols to hosting and servers solutions, have grown and helped to shape an active scene that interacts and overlaps with the feminist digital security scene.

All these are very positive trends that should be taken into account for creating more equity and diversity inside the field of digital and holistic security. Nonetheless, it should also be understood that these trends are still largely localised in reduced pockets which often struggle with precarity, lack of sustainable models and/or criminalisation processes. They represent a drop of hope that should be nurtured against the global trend of technologies enabling more hate speech and gender-based violence.

We believe that the trajectory of DDP in supporting and working with different individuals, organisations and initiatives dealing with women, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated groups can inform our strategy for strengthening Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion in the broader DDP ecosystem. We intend to facilitate further contact and collaboration between interdisciplinary groups focused on protection of WHRDs, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated groups, as well as promoting resilience and building awareness and capacities within our grantees, partners, rapid responders networks and Digital Integrity Fellows.

1.3 DDP's Internal Operations

The DDP core staff and our Digital Integrity Fellows are characterised by cultural diversity. This diversity is cherished and enriches both our personal and professional relationships and our work. At the time of writing, our team, including staff and fellows, is composed of 16 persons and identify predominantly as female and some also self-identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. However, we also recognise that various dynamics of privilege and power are always present, and are perhaps sustained by the makeup of the group itself. We recognise that in regard to the HRDs we support, we are in a position of great privilege that comes with working for an international development organisation and must act in a manner which is mindful of this dynamic.

To do so, establishing steering processes (for monitoring, budgeting, performance review processes, family/work conciliation) and analyzing how DDP targets, strategies and measures can be also viewed through a gender and diversity lens will be mainstreamed across our internal operations. As noted further below, our intention is to continue to diversify the composition of the programme through expansion of our Digital Integrity Fellowship in three regions and on the subsequent recruitment of new staff members in each geography to support them. Of special importance for the field building project, we will shape decision making processes that take gender and diversity into account. Decisions should be informed by an intersectional analysis, and decision makers should be gender-balanced and diverse.

2. Strategy Rationale

Departing from the specific challenges detailed in the above context, DDP will mainstream a gender equality and diversity perspective in our internal operations, programmes and key activities in line with the Hivos Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion (GEDI) strategy and will complement it with an analysis of lessons learned in the gender and tech field. Our main targets for this strategy are DDP team, fellows, partners, grantees, rapid responders and funders.

We do this by acknowledging that our activities can affect people differently and that race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, disability and age are key factors in these differences. And by acknowledging how these structures are embedded and played out in our everyday practices and in our interactions with technology, we can also honor the diversity of positioning and self-inclusion happening among our target publics in relation to protection and digital security.

Our view is that DDP's strategy should adopt a gender transformative approach to identify, tackle and remove barriers faced by women, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated groups around the world in relation to their possibilities of accessing security and protection and taking advantage of internet and technologies for advancing and exercising their Human Rights and digital freedoms. The strategy should provide room for DDP partners and the overall ecosystem to better support women, LGBTQ+ and cultural minorities in their inclusion, and self-inclusion, in technology related spaces (online and offline) that support their protection and security.

Enabling inclusion is a question of gender social justice and equality but also of economic and political justice. The increasingly diverse representation in digital security and holistic fields, rapid responders networks, privacy and security tools development, also increases the pool of skilled trainers and developers, among other critical roles. Including women, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated groups also creates more diversity of profiles using and developing technologies. It enables to oppose the current trend of “digital colonialism” by reflecting a diversity of voices, perspectives and needs. It can also create more opportunities for technologies that are extensive, adaptable and appropriated by many.

Therefore, our strategy for enabling more gender equality and cultural diversity for women, LGBTQ+ and cultural minorities will encompass learning to analyse our field, programmes and activities through a gender and intersectional lens and also supporting knowledge production and the development of initiatives that are gender and culturally sensitive and appropriated.

2.1 Learning to analyse our field, programs and activities through a gender and intersectional lens

We introduce below key ideas for building a common ground and shared understanding of how gender interplays with our levels of access, uses and practices with technologies. The aim is to understand the specific implications of our activities from a gender and intersectional approach by:

- Acknowledging that gender gaps, discrimination and gender-based violence are both structural and discursive in the way they are deeply embedded in language, narratives, definitions, social structures and laws. These deeply influence the conditions of women, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated groups in relation to their access to and experience with technology and the Internet.
- Taking into account the economic, political and ecological impact of technologies and how they enable mechanisms of oppression, discrimination or liberation.
- Understanding who DDP actors and partners are on a gender and diversity basis, to monitor for unintended bias in terms of identity factors.

- Understanding how women, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated groups in different conditions find ways of accessing technologies, and a consideration of how they can protect themselves and others in the process.
- Recognising it is important to make women, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated groups' experiences and contribution in the development and maintenance of technologies visible.

2.2 Supporting knowledge production and development of gender and culturally sensitive and appropriate initiatives

We introduce below key ideas for areas, initiatives and contents that could be further explored and/or prioritised for enabling more gender equality and cultural diversity in DDP's programs and activities:

- Initiatives that assess and highlight those different contributions and self-inclusion processes in relation to technology access, use and development.
- Initiatives, trainings and programmes that enable women, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated communities to engage with protection and holistic security.
- Initiatives, trainings and programmes that enable women, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated communities to engage in the holistic ecosystem of responders to digital emergencies and that contributes to the support and accompaniment of HRDs and Civil Society Organisations.
- Initiatives, trainings and programmes that enable women, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated communities to engage with free software, internet freedom and infrastructure communities.
- Initiatives, trainings and programmes that are led by women, LGBTQ+ and cultural minorities themselves and in which these groups are in control of their own protection strategies.
- Initiatives, trainings and learning resources that are culturally and gender-sensitive and contribute to breaking stereotypes and prejudices, through the circulation of new imaginaries and references in relation to gender and tech, the provision of counter-arguments to hate speech, the nurturing of networks of support and solidarity against gender-based violence.

- Initiatives, trainings and programmes that are accessible and open licensed so that more women, LGBTQ+ and discriminated groups can strengthen their access to trainings and contents that support their Human Rights and digital freedoms (speech, expression, opinion).
- Projects that are oriented towards mid and long term development, as these have more possibilities to generate a positive impact in the sustainability of projects led by women, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated groups.
- Mechanisms of support for projects and initiatives led by LGBTQ+, women and discriminated groups that are not registered as legal entities due to increased difficulty in accessing resources or heightened insecurity.

3. Implementation

In order to achieve these different aims and priorities for mainstreaming Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion into DDP related activities, we will move forward with the creation of the following focus groups and related tasks:

- **Set up a DDP focus group on Strengthening Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion** during the second quarter of 2019 comprising DDP partners and staff who have experience working on racism, gender and sexual orientation issues. The mandate of this group is to review and update this strategy, recommend us more Sexual Orientation Gender Identities (SOGI) experts included in the DDP vetting and referrals systems and also discuss and inform the implementation of the Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion strategy recommendations. This will be achieved through regular calls the frequency of which to be defined.
- **Enabling DDP staff to attend a SOGI/GEDI training** in order to implement this strategy in a consistent way with Hivos GEDI policy throughout the DDP programme.
- **Assessing the implications of DDP interventions from a gender and diversity perspective.** DDP will incorporate an assessment of the implications of our interventions for different people, paying special attention to women, LGBTQ+ and other discriminated groups, in order to address

these differences and other power structures that might create inequality for individuals and communities with regard to their access to security and protection. It is highly recommended to develop formal measures for gender and diversity inclusion built into DDP monitoring and evaluation strategy for the different type of activities supported by DDP (trainings, events, DIF, grants, RRN, etc). Besides, these assessments should be consistent with our Do Not Harm and outreach & impact analysis.

- **Sharing and pushing forward good practices for Gender Equality and Diversity to our partners when planning or coordinating DDP supported activities.** This will be achieved by creating links and partnerships with feminist led holistic security networks and technological infrastructure providers initiatives. As it will be achieved by making our Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion explicit on our call for proposal, jobs, or any submission to DDP (funding, training or fellowship opportunities). Finally, we will provide to DDP supported events and activities, a set of recommendations regarding gender and cultural sensitive criteria (for selecting participants or creating rapid response networks, use of gender identity descriptions and preferred gender pronouns in events and forms, adoption of explicit code of conducts and anti-harassment policies).