



Digital
Defenders
Partnership

Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Recommendations

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Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Recommendations

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The Digital Defenders Partnership (DDP) works towards the digital and holistic protection and empowerment of human rights defenders, and promotes the right to privacy, internet freedom, and the freedom of expression, among other rights. We seek to achieve these aims in collaboration with a diverse group of individuals, organisations, and networks.

Broadly speaking, the ecosystems that exist within the digital security and digital rights fields have historically been characterised by a lack of diversity in their makeup, and the consequent lack of nuanced understanding of the risks faced by human rights defenders. This is especially true where it pertains to human rights defenders who are women, LGBTQIA+ persons, persons with disabilities and racialised people, and individuals who occupy other minority or marginalised positions. These individuals and groups bear, in disproportionate degrees and ways, the effects of technologically-mediated inequalities and injustices, such as online gender-based violence, hate speech, algorithmic bias, and techno colonialism, among other phenomena.

However, recent years have seen positive developments with regard to creating regarding more equitable digital security and digital rights fields. These include the establishment of more research, programmes, and organisations for the protection of human rights defenders, that recognise the value of a gender- and culture-sensitive approach to protection and security. These initiatives have also included feminist approaches to technology, which assess the political, economic, and ecological impact of technology, and their intersection with mechanisms of oppression, discrimination, or liberation.

As part of this process, DDP aims to strengthen and mainstream a structured approach to Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, corresponding to the needs of human rights defenders, rapid responders, digital security trainers and facilitators, and DDP's partner organisations. We adopt a feminist and intersectional approach as the epistemological basis for the development of our programmes, and seek to make visible the existing and varied layers of structural and discursive discrimination that affect the digi-

tal security and overall protection of human rights defenders. We also have a strong internal commitment at DDP to create and enable changes that will cater to gender equity, diversity and inclusion within our team and organisational culture. We undergo internal training on topics related to our Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy, and through our working group composed by different DDP members located in all regions composing the DDP team we discuss internal topics that need to be addressed.

The marginalisation and repression of individuals and communities is often based on their perceived gender identity, sexual orientation, race identity, ethnicity, geography, language, culture, caste, socioeconomic status, employment, age, dis/ability, and neuro(a)typicality, among other things. Given our intersectional approach, we will not address gender discrimination in isolation from other forms of structural violence.

This document aims to improve Gender Equity and Diversity Inclusion in DDP grantees' programmes. It consists of three parts: (1) a set of recommendations for increasing gender sensitivity and diversity in all programmes; (2) a list of common barriers to the participation of women and girls in the fields of technology and digital security; and (3) recommended resources for further reading. We provide these guidelines as recommendations, with the understanding that they should be assessed, adapted, and localised to the type of event or activity held and the context in which it takes place.

We invite you to report any implementation of these recommendations in DDP's reporting frameworks, and contact us if you have questions, feedback, or suggestions about this note and its recommendations.

1. Recommendations and good practices for DDP grantees organising events or gatherings

If you are organising an event where participants will meet and spend time together (whether online or offline), we recommend implementing the following practices:

We encourage you to start with Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion already in the composition of and collaboration in your organisational/activity team. A diversity of people will bring a diversity of perspectives and can help you in thinking out-of-the-box in terms of necessary arrangements for a diverse programme, safety considerations and participation needs of the event attendees. Inclusion is when there are systems in place to ensure participation and collective decision making. We encourage you to be open to diverse ways in which people can participate and voice their knowledge in different spaces.

a. Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct should be used for the event, and participants should be required to read it before their application and participation. This document should include:

- Mention of the measures implemented to ensure that the event is a safe space. Include information on access to the space, what accommodations are already in place, including any provisions for personal assistance, accessibility for people with disabilities, use of sign language and captions. Particular attention should also be paid to the safety of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals, especially if they occupy other marginalised positions. General safety guidelines too often neglect gender-based violence, which requires specific planning. For example: *"[The country/city] is relatively liberal for the region, and has laws against gender-based harassment. However, migrant women and LGBTQIA+ people report common occurrences of racialised and sexualised harassment."*
- An explicit anti-harassment policy, that details how harassment during the event will be dealt with. This includes information on the members of the awareness team and avenues for reporting harassment. For example: *"[This event] aims to be inclusive and welcoming for everyone. All participants must read our Code of Conduct before attending. We do not tolerate harassment on the basis of gender identity, sexual orientation, racial identity, ethnicity, geography, language, culture, caste, socioeconomic status, employment, age, dis/ability, and neuro(a)typicality. If you experience or witness harassment, please contact _____. Our awareness team consists of _____."*
- Include a clear and simple avenue for complaints, that is victim-centric, demonstrates fairness, and allows for the possibility of anonymous complaints. In handling complaints, it is important to respect the autonomy of the victim-survivor.

b. In calls for application or participation

Your call for application or participation should avoid gendered stereotypes, be inclusive and non-sexist. Pay attention to:

- Including the Code of Conduct.
- Including a paragraph that explicitly encourages underrepresented communities to apply or attend. For example: *"[The organisation/event] is dedicated to strengthening diversity in the fields of digital security and digital rights. To this end, women, LGBTQIA+ persons, racial or ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and others traditionally underrepresented in these fields are encouraged to apply."*
- Allowing the use of pseudonyms or preferred names, and not just legal names.
- Not requiring participant information, such as gender and names, where collecting such information might jeopardise participants. In case you have to ask for participant's gender, avoid predefined lists of only two options for gender, and allowing participants to fill in an open field with gender identity or pronouns. However, we note that this practice is only applicable for languages that use gendered pronouns to signal gender identity.
- Asking only for the information needed for the purpose of your event. If it is unclear why the information is requested, it should be explained.
- Including a privacy and security policy, that details how data collected will be handled, and by whom. For example: *"[The organisation/event] commits to protecting data privacy. Information collected [through the application form/at the event] will be kept safe in [data storage location]*

and deleted when [data deletion date]. Your information will not be shared outside of the team coordinating and facilitating [the event].

c. At the event

At the event, consider:

- Normalising the use and indication of individuals' pronouns alongside their names. However, we note that this practice is only applicable for languages that use gendered pronouns to signal gender identity, such as English.
- Planning for different accessibility requirements, such as gender-neutral bathrooms, wheelchair access, sign language interpretation, and other accessibility needs.
- Providing a clear list indicating where participants might be able to access medical or other emergency needs, such as the locations of nearby pharmacies, hospitals, police stations, and so on.

Finally, as a matter of practice, we recommend that you and your organisation make safety a key consideration of your programmes. Read widely about making events safe spaces, and routinely assess if all aspects of your events cater to the needs of less privileged attendees.

2. Recommendations and good practices for Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in your activities, resources and guides

To inspire reflection on gender equity and diversity inclusion within technology-related domains, this section includes a list of resources and exercises that are aimed at facilitating the exploration and discussion of those topics within areas such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers, free and libre software, internet freedom, and digital and holistic security. Where resources are culturally situated, we encourage the exploration of those issues within other contexts.

2.1. Elements of reflection about gender, diversity and technology

a. Participation

Issue/Barrier: Technology-related fields can be spaces of economic wealth, and spaces that shape how societies function. Historically, women have been pushed out of well-paid jobs to lower income jobs within these fields. Studies also consistently show that women in STEM fields tend to leave the field earlier than their male counterparts.

Exercises/Make it visible: Look at the levels of female participation in STEM fields in your country.

Enablers/Good practices: Educate yourself about allyship, and use your privileges to denounce sexism where you witness it.

Inspirational resources/projects:

- “Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing” by Marie L. Hicks (2018).
- “Online Misogyny as Witch Hunt: Primitive Accumulation in the Age of Techno-capitalism” by Eugenia Siapera (2020).

b. Fairness

Issue/Barrier: Women and girls produce and assemble most electronic devices, and bear the violence that happens in these special economic zones.

Exercises/Make it visible: Identify technology produced under fair and just working conditions. Name initiatives that provide support to workers producing and assembling electronic devices.

Enablers/Good practices: Support local movements for fair and just working conditions, and extend the lifespan of your devices.

Inspirational resources/projects:

- GoodElectronics Network

c. Care labour

Issue/Barrier: Domestic and care labour are typically left to women and not men, leaving women the primary caregivers for children or other family members and relatives. The 'second shift' has been used to describe the gendered burden of taking on domestic and care work on top of women's jobs. This added burden makes women's participation in technology-related fields more difficult.

Exercises/Make it visible: Ask: At your event, which are the individuals who will be cleaning, cooking, and providing care to children and the elderly?

Enablers/Good practices: When organising an event that women will attend, provide support for women with care duties. For example, provide childcare and eldercare support at the event.

Inspirational resources/projects:

- Mothership hackermoms.

d. Stereotypes

Issue/Barrier: Tropes and stereotypes can generate discrimination, and lead to the exclusion of women and and LGBTQIA+ people from technology-related fields. This can happen in different domains, including the family; education; work; leisure; the arts; media; entertainment. Gendered socialisation and stereotypes tend to associate men with technical pursuits and women with social endeavours, resulting in a lack of support to women, girls, and LGBTQIA+ persons interested in technology-related fields.

Exercises/Make it visible:

- Identify gendered tropes, stereotypes and prejudices within your context.
- Run the Bechdel test, or its variants.

Enablers/Good practices: Review all visual and textual imagery of humans using technology that your project has generated, and assess if they perpetuate or challenge gendered and racialised tropes. What kinds of bodies are there? Of what races? Are there physical or cultural traits that signify these humans as being part of a minority group?

Inspirational resources/projects:

- Tropes vs Women in Movies by Feminist Frequency.
- Tropes vs Women in Video Games by Feminist Frequency.

e. Herstory

Issue/Barrier: The lack of a herstory has erased the contributions of women and LGBTQIA+ persons from the creation, development and maintenance of technologies, and elided the existence of female and non-binary role models. A *herstory* of technology must be written, from a feminist, anticolonialist, and intersectional civil society perspective.

Exercises/Make it visible: Name six women or LGBTQIA+ persons who invented technologies in your country or region. Explore the *herstory* of STEM fields in your region.

Enablers/Good practices: Make women and LGBTQIA+ experiences in the management and development of technologies visible. Support the research, production and dissemination of *herstories*.

Inspirational resources/projects:

- "Broad Band: The Untold Story of the Women Who Made the Internet" by Claire L. Evans (2019).
- Collective Memories by AnarchaServer.

- Guide for Cultural and Memory Institutions to Make Women Visible on Wikipedia by Whose Knowledge.

f. Access

Issue/Barrier: Many women and LGBTQIA+ persons around the world are forbidden to access technologies, or to own devices or social media accounts.

Exercises/Make it visible: Investigate the ways in which women and LGBTQIA+ persons in different contexts find ways of accessing technologies, and consider how they can protect themselves and others in the process. **Enablers/Good practices:** Imagine liberating technologies that enable the full realisation and exercise of human rights, and that are inclusive, decentralised, accessible, friendly, safe, and feminist. Research practices such as feminist hacklabs, or resources on privacy and digital security that use a gender and intersectional lens.

Inspirational resources/projects:

- Gendersec Training Curricula by the Tactical Technology Collective.

g. Sexist language

Issue/Barrier: Discrimination and gender-based violence are structural and discursive in the way they are embedded in language, narratives, social structures, and laws. This deeply influences BIPOC, women, girls, LGBTQIA+ persons and racialised groups, and their access to and experience with technology and the internet.

Exercises/Make it visible: Pay attention to the distribution of speaking time between majority and minority group participants. Who speaks more? Who is listening? Who is silent or silenced? Are there gendered or cultural dimensions affecting how people navigate the event space? Expose sexist and

racist biases of search engines, by typing "She/He is..." or "Women/Men should..." into them, and examining the differences in auto-complete suggestions.

Enablers/Good practices: Avoid the use of oppressive and sexist language in any type of communication, including in technology and software development.

Inspirational resources/projects:

- "Terminology, Power and Oppressive Language" by Mallory Knodel and Niels ten Oever (2018).
- "Lipstick on a Pig: Debiasing Methods Cover up Systematic Gender Biases in Word Embeddings But do not Remove Them" by Hila Gonen and Yoav Goldberg (2019).
- Algorithmic Justice League.
- Retext-equity Plugin.

h. Diversity

Issue/Barrier: Women and marginalised groups such as Indigenous Peoples, whose first or main languages are not a privileged language form (such as standard English) are usually shamed or left behind for speaking with an accent or speaking slowly. Access to a standard or formal language form is often used as a marker of capacity or intellect.

Exercises/Make it visible: Ask about and honour the diversity of languages spoken by participants at your event.

Enablers/Good practices: Ensure that people whose first languages are not widely used are still given an opportunity to speak. In general, avoiding jargon, avoiding unnecessarily complex or unusual vocabulary, avoiding culturally-specific onomatopoeia

and abbreviations, speaking slowly, and engaging interpreters is encouraged. Whenever possible, plan for interpretation (including sign language interpretation) so that all can participate.

Inspirational resources/projects:

- Simultaneous Interpreting Using Radio Frequencies by the Colectivo para la Autogestión de las Tecnologías de la Interpretación.

i. Discrimination

Issue/Barrier: Microaggressions are brief 'everyday' verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes about marginalised groups.

Exercises/Make it visible: Examine the materials that you have created. Are there subtle, unintentional, or ambiguous messages that perpetuate discriminatory beliefs about marginalised individuals? Challenge yourself and/or your participants to create a tool on recognising microaggressions, with particu-

lar attention to the themes that microaggressions play off. An example can be found here.

Enablers/Good practices: Be an ally and speak up or call it out when you see microaggressions or other discrimination taking place in plain sight.

Inspirational resources/projects:

- How to Respond to Microaggressions by Hahna Yoon.
- When and How to Respond to Microaggressions by Ella F. Washington, Alison Hall Birch, and Laura Morgan Roberts.
- Microaggressions Are A Big Deal: How To Talk Them Out And When To Walk Away by Andrew Limbong.

This list is not exhaustive, and many other issues and barriers need to be addressed. Please feel free to suggest new issues, exercises, good practices, and inspirational resources to us. We would be happy to learn from you!

3. Recommended resources for further reading

3.1. On Codes of Conduct

- DDP CoC and external complaint mechanism.
- Code of Conducts 101 + FAQ by Ashe Dryden.
- Code of Conduct from the Internet Freedom Festival.
- Code of Practice from RaReNet.
- Code of Conduct for Trainers by the Tor Project.
- Code of Conduct from CryptoRave (in Portuguese).
- Code of Conduct Resources by the Citizen Lab.

3.2. On Creating Safe Spaces

- Community Culture by the Internet Freedom Festival.
- Pronouns by the Internet Freedom Festival.
- Participation and Privacy by RightsCon.
- Creating Safe Spaces for Digital Security Trainings by Level Up.
- Before an Event by Level Up.

3.3. On Including a Gender Lens in Digital Security

- Our Data Bodies contains popular education activities focused on data, surveillance, and community safety, and is also available in Spanish.
- Gendersec Training Curricula provides training curricula with a gender perspective, and is also available in Spanish and Portuguese.
- Cyberwomen Training Curriculum provides a training curriculum with a gender perspective, and is also available in Arabic and Spanish.
- Gender Approaches to Cybersecurity by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research explores how gender norms shape cybersecurity design, defence and response.

3.4. On conflict Transformation and Resolution

- TransformHarm is a resource hub on ending violence.
- Funding Healing Justice by the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice includes recommended practices for funders supporting healing justice programmes.

- Community Accountability by Incite! discusses addressing violence within our communities.

3.5. Other resources

- Am I the Right Person to Train from the Security Education Companion by the Electronic Frontier Foundation.
- Teaching Community Technology Handbook by the Detroit Community Technology Project.

- Decolonising Technology: A Reading List by Beatrice Martini.

- Our Stories, Our Knowledges by Whose Knowledge?

- Resources for Liberation by the Allied Media People network.

