Appendix 1

FIRN research thematic areas: Proposed research questions/areas

As explained in the call, the following sections are more detailed outlines on the areas identified for research projects within these four themes, which emerged through the mapping study. *Please note that applications are not limited to the specific questions outlined below.* We recognise and value your knowledge and experience in the field, and welcome research questions and projects that go beyond the identified research questions within the thematic areas. However, research projects should fall within one or more of the four priority thematic areas identified.

For any questions about the thematic framework, please email firn@apcwomen.org (with the subject line "Query on research thematic areas 2018").

1. Access

From a global perspective, particularly in the so-called "Third World" countries, access to information and communications technologies (ICTs) is particularly important.[1] Over the years, research on issues of access have progressed from identifying gaps and gendered inequality to unravelling "meaningful use" as an equally political matter. An important criterion to determine meaningful access that emerged from the mapping study is the extent to which access to the internet can enable the exercise of agency and decision making, towards the realisation of rights. The agency of women can be measured through capacity to produce their own content, engagement in advocacy around issues relevant to them (economy, culture, sexual or reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, political participation, land ownership, etc.), control over resources and infrastructure, ability to negotiate in policy spaces around infrastructure, ability to develop technology and networking capacity.

It is evident from the projects and research mapped that the gender-disaggregated public data that is available is not generalisable as global findings on ensuring universal access. Data has to be coupled with qualitative and community-led research, and an understanding that local barriers to access (whether language, access to devices, affordability, etc.) vary. There is a need for granular and situated knowledge around access and barriers for marginalised groups of people, whether indigenous people, refugee women, women in urban slums, queer individuals, gender non-conforming people, people with disabilities, and so on. This will more accurately inform access policies and how usage differs for people from heterogenous locations.

Potential research questions/areas:

- To what extent does access facilitated through models of communication infrastructures – ranging from "Free Basics" to local and community networks – enable women to exercise agency and their rights (civil, political, social, economic, cultural)?

- How can research a) work with available datasets and make a case to advocate for gender-disaggregated data owned by telecommunication companies to be made available for research purposes, and b) integrate findings from household surveys and qualitative studies of gender in local community networks into the research questions and topics?

- How can policy makers and gender equality activists alike be provided with tangible evidence to support the prioritisation both of women's access in broadband plans and of ICTs and broadband in gender equality initiatives?

- Public access facilities (Wi-Fi, community networks, telecentres, libraries, etc.) and experiences of using them for people of different genders and gender expressions, location, class, ethnicity, ability, etc.

- The language of access and its uses in different policy forums, corporate agendas and civil society discourse: how to frame access within human rights discourse rather than development discourse, specifically in relation to economic empowerment of women.

- The relationship between education and access, and the role of online learning: how to understand the presence of women within technology education and examine how accessible and viable the educational system is; challenges especially for women in middle- and low-income countries, and from vulnerable communities.

- Disability and accessibility standards and what specific impact these have in relation to gender.

- The availability of relevant infrastructure to connect rural areas and areas in conflict; relations of gender and power in local community networks, and alternative projects around feminist infrastructures.

2. Online gender based-violence (GBV)

Gender-based attacks and violence online are increasingly recognised as a widespread phenomenon but occur differently in various contexts, depending on gender dynamics and social, cultural and language differences. Countries that have recognised online GBV as an offence or concern in policy have varied legislative approaches, but an opportunity for wider recognition and response is provided through three international policy processes currently underway.

These include a 2018 report of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women[2] that will focus on online GBV; the Canadian government-led annual resolution on VAW at the UN Human Rights Council, which will focus on online GBV in 2018; and the recently amended Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation 19 (now called General Recommendation 35)[3] that recognises technology-mediated VAW with recommendations to states to take action.

Potential research questions/areas:

- Conceptualisations of harm and rights online and offline/on-ground, especially for women; definitions and understandings of online violence; experience of gender in online spaces and forums in relation to violence but also pleasure, labour, relationships, body.

- Broad-based monitoring and evidence gathering of online GBV data to support policy processes at national levels to feed into a global response. This includes taking into account common variables, such as intersectional identities and structural injustices, consent, dissemination of material and platforms involved, types of impact/harm. The datasets, however, must also include and be read in conjunction with case studies to provide situated and contextual readings of data collected.

- What does accountability looks like for corporations and internet intermediaries to address online GBV, what policy changes can and should be made by the state, what impact can these have, how accessible are they to people affected, and what are the potential/actual impacts of proposed technological solutions towards ending online GBV? This research must also include and be read in conjunction with case studies to provide situated and contextual readings of data collected.

- What is the complex role that the internet has played for many communities – including gender diverse people, Black women, Dalit women, Muslim women speaking about sexuality and against tradition, women challenging nationalism, lesbian, trans*, bisexual and queer women – in relation to invisibility and hyper-visibility, vulnerability and empowerment, targeted violence and harassment online and on-ground? How does this intersect with the work for resistance and movements, solidarity, celebration and pleasure through the internet as a site? How can policy changes take such specificities into account? And what is the role of the internet here in providing resources, building relations, imagined communities, and connections?

- What are the intersecting concerns and contradictions between hate speech, online GBV, sexual expression, communication rights and human rights, going beyond freedom of expression as a framework, and internet rights discourse that prioritises the right of expression as more primary than that of privacy and protection against online GBV?

- The connection between online GBV and nationalist sentiments, state hegemony, masculinity, state feminism, and the impact on the formation of communities and networks that engage in online violence and hate speech towards women.

- How to better enable people, including women with fewer digital literacy skills, to use security measures like encryption and anonymity; how to reframe questions around digital security and safety.

- The role of pleasure and safe spaces – How do you think about security from the point of view of pleasure? – and the ways in which online violence and harassment limit forms of expression for women and other marginalised groups (for instance, through self-censorship).

- How the internet and ICTs broadly are/can be used to organise in formal and informal ways by women, transgender and gender non-conforming persons – particularly online and using social media; the efficacy of informal online mechanisms of justice, naming and shaming tactics and other such methods in changing discourse and creating change and movements; the risk of defamation, the right to privacy, the precarity of using corporate platforms and questions of ethics, accountability and due process.

3. Datafication

Development and economic goals in the global South are often linked to big data-driven governance. National identity cards work in conjunction with access to welfare benefits, pension schemes, housing and other entitlements. This extends to the impact of projects such as "smart cities" and "paperless economy" on particular bodies and people. However, data bias and datafication[4] impact unevenly on the autonomy, privacy and livelihoods of women, gender diverse and queer people. Gender stereotypes (and also stereotypes around community, race, caste, ethnicity, ability, etc.) are embedded into technology and data-dependent processes and algorithms, resulting in people having decreasing individual control over decisions related to employability, insurance and credit cover, and their likely choices as consumers or voters. How much is safe to reveal and what must remain hidden is not equal for all.

What is important is to determine who among those impacted by big data and machine learning-driven governance – whether coalitions of sex workers, migrants, trans* and gender diverse people – is not part of the current conversations around these phenomena, and to find ways through research and collaboration to include their concerns in discussions.

Potential research questions/areas:

- How are interactions, relationships, identity data-points and narratives used, analysed and reconfigured through various datafication processes?

- How does machine learning-driven governance impact women, gender diverse and queer people in particular?

- The impact of datafication on different bodies, non-normative bodies in particular (in terms of race, religion, gender expression, caste, ability, etc.); articulation of a different kind of violence against marginalised bodies.

- Definitions and investigations of the online surveillance of women in ongoing research that encapsulates both social and state surveillance; how privacy,

surveillance and related concerns affect women in diverse circumstances, using case studies or similar anthropological approaches; the effects of self-surveillance or "quantified self" developments (including the use of big data) on women's human rights

- Algorithmic discrimination, e.g. the algorithms which define women's health and cycle monitoring apps, welfare schemes by states that use algorithms, body scanners and the normative body type they could produce, and what impact this has on the rights of people.

- Practices of responsible and ethical data gathering and use, i.e. what feminist praxis around data could be, what a feminist algorithm would look like.

- How ICTs and big data can be harnessed in a responsible manner to support sustainable development without infringing upon women's human rights and while adopting responsible data practices.

- Unpacking projects of national identity cards and biometric voter cards through the lens of gender and feminist analysis.

4. Economy and labour

The internet is a high-cost space for marginalised people because of how gendered labour operates in manufacturing and in mining and extractive industries, but also in new economic models such as crowdsourcing and AI-driven, sharing and gig economies. Cheap labour in middle- and low-income countries, where labour regulations are not as stringent, is essential for the global information economy. This includes industries that are largely gendered, such as business process outsourcing and call centres, nursing and care work, and also the inclusion of women and other vulnerable groups into precarious and "new" forms of work (e.g. Uber hiring women cab drivers, digital janitors).

A large portion of immaterial labour extracted in the global digital economy is also affective labour on social media, especially done by women, gender diverse and transgender people and other vulnerable groups to raise and sustain political and radical projects of change. These efforts (including the recent #metoo movement) are about addressing behaviour and widespread attitudes around gender and patriarchy and are often part of larger movements and ongoing struggles. The difficulties in measuring the value of this labour are also connected to the difficulties in measuring cultural production, shadow labour or care work.

Potential research questions/areas are:

- How labour has been or will be transformed in the digital economy, especially gendered labour at the lowest rungs (contract workers, precarious labour, unsafe conditions, long working hours) and how this varies for people, particularly women, from heterogeneous locations.

- In the field of feminist digital economics, how can we build from existing work on feminist economics that looks at how shadow work and unpaid work by women and others in the domestic sphere and outside, including reproductive and care work, forms of affective labour online and other gendered labour, are essential to how the information economy functions?

- Feminist commons and infrastructure – what does a feminist platform economy that recognises affective labour and equity in labour relations in a digital economy look like?

- Digital economy and work cultures: sexual harassment, sexual violence, sexism, "gaslighting" and the professional undermining of women, trans* and gender non-conforming persons in technology-related spaces (companies, start-ups, content generators, freelance work for coders and designers) and allegedly progressive movement spaces around free/libre and open source software (FOSS) and technology.

- Local challenges and intersectional factors that impact women's ability to develop their digital capacities and skills; supporting women's labour at various stages in the production and sustenance of network economies; how women can be better involved as both consumers and producers of content and technologies; and the connection between women in governance roles and STEM.

- The impact of ICT for development-oriented projects using the language of social change, empowerment and agency (especially for women) deployed by different actors – run by public private partnerships, civil society, corporate entities and governments.

- Automation, the future of work and the impact that this will have on specific industries including business process outsourcing in Asia and Africa, and manufacturing and electronics industries in Asia where women and other vulnerable groups/people have been employed.

- How to change the model of extractive research or methodology and build better ethical practices around knowledge making and sharing – addressing appropriation of labour in various domains including academia.

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[1] Meaningful access is defined as people's freedom to choose and curate their experience online, which is for example curtailed by zero-rating schemes. Source: IGF. (2016). Policy Options for Connecting and Enabling the Next Billion(s) – Phase II. Geneva: IGF. www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/3416/412

[2] OHCHR News. (2017, 8 March). UN experts urge States and companies to address online gender-based abuse but warn against censorship: David Kaye (SR on on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression) and Dubravka Šimonović (SR on violence against women).
http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21317&LangID=E; OHCHR. (2017). Call for submission on online violence against women.
http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/OnlineViolence.aspx

[3] CEDAW. (2017, 14 July). General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19.
http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CEDAW_C_GC_35_8267_E.pdf

[4] Datafication refers to the ways in which our habits, illness, abilities, relations, etc. are abstracted and our bodies made into data by an intersecting range of institutions and processes. Source: Shephard, N. (2016). *Big data and sexual surveillance*. APC.
https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/BigDataSexualSurveillance_0.pdf