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Overview of the project

As a network, the Feminist Internet Research Network (FIRN) focuses on facilitation and coordination of projects to produce quality research output that pay attention to contextual specificities and complex realities. We have put in place many practices, policies and spaces to help our partners produce research findings that are representative of the geopolitical context of the communities they belong to and conduct research within. Based on our intensive learning experience, observation, and continued interest in this research field, the following are our **key takeaways**:

1. There are few networks that focus on feminism and the internet, and **FIRN is one of these with an impressive record of research output creating opportunities to publish findings in diverse platforms on a wide range of topics**. It is imperative to continue having a network like this project, and similar others, to continue this important work to influence internet research, policy advocacy, and support more feminist researchers from across the Global South. FIRN is a forerunner in the field of feminist internet research. What is needed is also to develop the field of feminist internet research across a variety and depth of issues and concerns¹. What is essential for the development of the field is the foregrounding of processes, methodologies and learnings. In addition, there is need for consistent research across the global South on urgent and specific issues in relation to online gender-based violence, datafication, privacy, gender disinformation, organised circulation of homophobic, anti-gender, racist content online, that presently can be part of international or national policy advocacy.
2. The **mapping of the field research through aggregation and mapping of literature and resources** in the sub-field of feminist internet research has been of tremendous importance. Several partners have expressed interest to be part of the continuation of mapping of the field, which can be a dynamic effort of analysis and production of knowledge in this field. This builds the repositories present around Global South feminist internet research and demonstrates the wide range of work with regards to themes and subthemes happening in this region.
3. The **field of internet rights and gender-related research is emerging and needs stronger networks and interconnections**, and creation of opportunities for greater participation from geopolitical contexts and identities that are often overlooked. It is important to persist in our work towards the creation of spaces for exchange of knowledge and ideas, methodologies, research results and findings, both online and in gatherings of researchers, activists and others. Having FIRN has also created a space to share research and develop collaborations and learn from intersectional work in other contexts. Continuing to have spaces like FIRN would address three objectives that are important in the field:
 - Creation of potentially long-lasting networks of research and activism that have their roots in the Global South.

¹ See generally <https://firm.genderit.org/research/white-paper-feminist-internet-research>

- Critique of the precarious contexts and scarcity of funding resources for research in this sector.
 - Consolidation of the sub-field of feminist internet research and of gatherings and efforts geared towards making a feminist internet.
4. The **creation of the convening space that is a combination of workshop and presentation spaces around feminist internet research has been instrumental** in shaping our ideas around feminist internet research as a community. Having such gatherings of feminist researchers, artists, campaigners, scholars, philosophers at a sufficiently large scale has meant a congregation of diverse entry points into feminist internet research. This has also increased the possibility of specific tracks and/or themes being developed whether it is research on online GBV, collective reflections on methodology, AI, data and emerging areas. Due to COVID, the planned convening that would connect FIRN researchers to other researchers in the global South was dropped. But going forward, such a convening would be an essential part of developing the field, where there is a substantial congregation of researchers, scholars, activists, techies and others working towards making a feminist internet using research, knowledge, creative outputs. .
 5. **Promoting shared feminist values and ideas across the research projects:** Due to the emphasis FIRN puts on feminist research ethics and methodology as a process throughout the project instead of as only an initial or one-time requirement as part of the research plan,, we have had deep learnings and reflections from building a network with such unique defining values.
 6. **Facilitation of cross-collaboration opportunities:** We have been able to create opportunities between FIRN partners and other networks within APC and other networks in the sector. For instance, collaboration with other community network projects, such as LoCNeT;² and participating in different forums where feminist collectives work together on issues of online GBV, such as A+ Alliance network.³ Further facilitation and cross pollination of movements will expand and deepen our learnings.
 7. Creating opportunities for publication of **in-depth articles on GenderIT.org** on a wide range of issues, but particularly focused on the FIRN themes, and also movement-building, violence and feminism. There are few journals and spaces that focus on feminism and the internet, and the GenderIT.org platform is unique in that respect and therefore has substantial reach among policy advocates, researchers, activists, feminist groups and individuals across the Global South.
 8. **Facilitating capacity-building opportunities**, partners have adapted to using data analytics, digital security training, feminist theory and methodology in their research projects.
 9. **Collaboration with different publishers**, FIRN has managed to publish a special edition for APRIA journal in 2022. Our learnings from this experience is that such publications would be influential in sharing our research with both the community of researchers at large and those interested in feminist internet work. This is especially

² <https://www.apc.org/en/project/connecting-unconnected-supporting-community-networks-and-other-community-based-connectivity>

³ <https://aplusalliance.org/en/members>

instrumental for the dissemination of the results as well as consolidation of contributions towards establishing and growing the field of feminist internet research. Going forward we will plan to continue adapting such strategies either for book publication or towards another peer-reviewed journal to continue the feminist engagement with multiple and diverse stakeholders.

1. Introduction

The "Making a Feminist Internet: Research Network" project focuses on building an emerging field of internet research with a feminist approach. Fully funded by IDRC, the project was implemented from 1 September 2018 to 30 September 2022. It primarily focuses on creating knowledge on the making of a feminist internet to bring about transformation in gendered structures of power that exist online and offline. The objective is to ensure that the needs of women and people of diverse and marginalised gender expression and sexuality are considered in internet policy discussions and decision-making. To this end, the project was conceived with project activities centred around three specific objectives:

1. Develop a research network that builds the field and generates evidence on four thematic areas of access, online gender-based violence, datafication, and labour and the economy.
2. Facilitate exchanges of learning – knowledge, approaches and methodologies – to support learning and build capacity among researchers in the network members.
3. Engage in local and global debates to inform policy and practice.

These objectives were executed by subgranting and establishing a Feminist Internet Research Network (FIRN) where members undertake data-driven research that provides substantial evidence to drive change in policy and law, and in discourse around internet rights. , through the exploration of the eight IDRC-funded projects and four regrants, there have been interesting developments that deepen the initial mapping study findings⁴. Since the design of FIRN is both feminist knowledge making and establishing feminist research methodologies in the sector, the project have made an excellent efforts to maintain the engagement with technology from a feminist lens.

We have managed to complete all research projects; communication and dissemination of the research outputs were undertaken; and in some cases, some projects that had rich data were taken forward through a re-granting opportunity. A large part of this project was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic where we have witnessed shifts in the ways in which research practices were directly affected - how research fieldwork could be conducted and how outputs could be shared with communities. This unforeseen phenomenon provided us an opportunity to rethink research ethics and methods and readjust our project management to ensure

⁴ Based on the emerging [areas](#) and gaps in knowledge that were identified through the "Mapping Study of Research in Gender and Digital Technology" and [the white paper project](#) carried out by APC in partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)' FIRN focuses on four thematic areas: access, economy and labour, online gender-based violence (OGBV), and datafication.

continuation of feminist research principles and ethics⁵ and maintaining the integrity and quality of the research projects and knowledge production. It also allowed us to redirect travel funds towards a re-granting opportunity at the end of the cycle with some of our partners to continue analysis of the data they had collected.

In addition to this, in Section 6, we will provide an overview of all the work we have accomplished since the beginning of this project. Since this is our last report, this documentation is also intended to build a rationale and encourage IDRC to continue funding of the FIRN project. More than ever, we strongly believe that this project is absolutely important for the field of internet research and policy advocacy.

2. The research problem

From the objective of realising and making a feminist internet, the **overarching research questions** for the Feminist Internet Research Network (FIRN) are:

- What are the contextual and intersecting forms of discrimination that women, gender-diverse and queer people face because of political, economic and social changes driven by digital technology and the internet?
- What are the challenges and opportunities in policy, infrastructure and socio-cultural norms for the making of a feminist internet?
- How does the feminist internet research project contribute to methodological, theoretical and ethical shifts that will impact research on the internet?

The role of the internet in the lives of women and people of diverse genders and sexualities is an undeniable reality, as is evident from the partners' data analysis and research reports. In each of the reports, the importance of a feminist analysis that surfaces in the experiences of women is underscored as it makes evident that technology is neither neutral nor is it a level playing field, especially when it comes to gender and sexuality.

Above mentioned research questions are necessary and essential scaffolding for a feminist inquiry of the internet. The questions were translated into multi-layered research questions that are pertinent to the geopolitical context of each of the eight partners that FIRN has selected. Looking at how these multiple research questions emerged and how they are mapped out with diverse yet overlapping feminist critiques of technology, makes it absolutely clear how the the internet has been experienced by many from the margins. Such heterogeneous representation of opportunities and challenges of technology are a great reminder of why the "global south" is not a homogeneous category. That said, we like to present summaries of these diverse research questions in the next section so that readers can observe the wider feminist interest and thematic framing of the internet

⁵ <https://genderit.org/resources/feminist-internet-ethical-research-practices>

2.1 Summary of research questions explored by FIRN partners

KRYSS Network

In the first round of the project KRYSS Network has done research that seeks to develop substantive evidence that could contribute to the development and refinement of arguments for women's equal access to freedom of expression on social media. It recognises how these online spaces can effectively restrict and limit women's public and political participation, and as a result, deny women the right to shape and reshape the dominant narrative. More importantly, the research calls for attention to the intersections of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and other social locations producing multiple standpoints. The research, therefore, focuses on unearthing the power dynamics of various forms of expressions and the intersecting identities of women; how our current understanding and practice of freedom of expression on social media have allowed online GBV to grow with impunity, normalising extremism and GBV, and how the freedom of expression is asserted by women and what the subsequent responses to it are.

Later on using the small regrant funding, KRYSS Network explored how algorithms impact freedom of expression. They were able to study the underlying economic logic of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to capture our data and in return, predict, manipulate, and shape our behaviours towards their end – be it for advertising, market research or improvement of business strategy. Their research in Malaysia showed us that social media algorithms present content that is likely to keep users more engaged and for longer periods, and this, in turn, enables data extraction. KRYSS argues, the presence of this logic is in direct conflict with the “need for constructive, open, diverse, and substantive dialogues for a thriving democratic society. The rise of performative influencers, and the growing gig economy and e-commerce also mean the increase of opportunists who try to ride on viral content to promote their services and products, and by doing so, further amplify the harm toward women and gender non-conforming persons.”

Latin American Center on Human Rights (CLAM)

The first round of CLAM's project focused on the increasing public legitimization of anti-feminist, anti-LGBTI+ and anti-human rights discourse over at least the past decade in Brazil. The research explores how anti-human rights discourses were created by means of moral panics and disinformation campaigns, produced hostility, and acts of violence against women and sexual minorities, feminists and LGBTI+ activists in particular. CLAM's research shows that hostility and violence are intersectional. As such the negative representations of women and of non-normative sexualities and gender expressions are always and primarily conceived within age, class and racialised hierarchies. This research aimed at generating a complex understanding of the particular role of social media use and architecture in the production and dissemination of anti-rights discourse, often under the form of hate speech, of its reception and of how the communities that are the targets of that hostility may articulate responses to those forms of violence.

Similar to KRYSS Network, after securing the regrant opportunity, CLAM focused on studying the experience of online violence by examining the patterns emerging in the kinds of actors

engaged in digital platforms in Brazil. They further analysed the role of online violence and of “new” feminisms mediated by Web 2.0 in this process. Here, the study attempts to identify institutional actors and the audiences who are engaged in responses to such violence, the vulnerabilities that these responses make visible, and the subjects that are made readable and the ones that are made audible.

Centre for Internet and Society (CIS)

In the first round of the project, by centring domestic worker’s experience, CIS’s research tries to answer the ways in which digital platforms are increasingly becoming intermediaries between so called “semi-skilled” or “low-skilled” workers from lower classes, and millions of middle and upper class employers. The research aimed at answering what impact has the entry of digital platforms had on the organisation of workers and employment relations? What can a feminist approach to digital labour reveal about the dynamics of platformisation in, and of domestic or reproductive care work? The research shows that platforms are reconfiguring labour conditions, which could either lead to further exploitation or potential empowerment of workers, differently from how this took place prior to the entry of digital platforms. Through the study, CIS discovered the configuration of gender, class and caste relations in the context of platform-mediated care and reproductive work.

In the regrant project, while focusing on an in-depth look at the issue of platformisation, and labour and economy in India, CIS studied the curtailing of workers’ rights in relation to platform designs, which has an inbuilt hierarchy of whom to favour. Looking at labour through the lens of FIRN meant that there was questioning of how domestic workers are treated in India and the way the domestic work sector is influenced by technology and design. The research findings show how created platforms are designed to continue and sustain the power relation between domestic workers and their employers. In this research, they particularly focused on studying the design and platform of an app - Urban Company - that has gained prominence and dominance in India. In this app, CIS explored the standardisation of domestic work through platform policies and design. Their work highlights how the processes of standardisation and tech design invisibilise workers even though they contribute heavily to the company’s earnings, and perform unpaid labour to further company goals while being vulnerable to exploitation. By putting forth a design critique and analysis of the app through conversations with the workers, the study identifies and enumerates specific design choices that lead to changes in working conditions for the workers. This path breaking work centres users in the design process and sees workers as primary users. It brings feminist perspectives into design and sees the power that technology and platformisation provide to creators of these apps, and not the direct users or workers.

VEDETAS

This action-research project considered how to expand the reach of community network technologies among women and traditional populations. Considering the power relations that transverse the prospect of autonomous connectivity and communication, VEDATAS worked on the implementation of a Wi-Fi community network in *quilombo Ribeirão Grande/Terra Seca*. In the research process, they discovered the main shifts when a technological infrastructure is developed through an intersectional feminist perspective. The project helped

expand a set of reflections from the encounter between different ways of living and of building knowledge and techniques that escape normative models in the field of digital technologies, such as white male predominance in this field and the processes of concentration of power on the internet by large corporations that use manipulative and non-transparent models of relations with these technologies. In doing so, they managed, in practice and theory, to show how feminist infrastructures for this community network are meaningful and reflect on their learning in the process of attempting to translate intersectional principles and intentions into practice, while facing the constant presence of the unforeseen.

In the small regrant project, learning from their research experience as to how internet access helped in the Ribeirão Grande/Terra Seca quilombo, Vedetas aimed to provide access to children and adolescents for remote study during the pandemic. Their work strengthened the solidarity economy in the territory, allowing for the possibility of women to sell their products, through the internet they organise themselves to manage orders and also communicate with consumers) and focused on the increase in political organisation (being able to participate, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the meetings of the council of the conservation unit that they were all online, with important decisions about the territory). It also brought forth a niche discussion on questions regarding whiteness, patriarchy and colonialist relations within the community network groups in the region. It not only brought to attention to the importance of a space being created for political organisation and income generation but also improved the political capital of the Perobas (RAMA – Agroecological Network of Agricultural Women –group from the quilombo) in the community by strengthening the group of women who benefitted from this community network. This action research shone a light on the ways in which access can determine the ability of women to negotiate with others in the system.

POLLICY

Pollicy conducted a study on the online lived experiences of women in five countries in sub-Saharan Africa, namely Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Senegal and South Africa were studied. The study also sought to document the prevalence, experiences, and responses to online GBV, also known as technology-facilitated violence against women. The study illustrates how the repeated negative encounters impact how women navigate and utilise the internet and strengthens the argument for a radical shift in developing alternate digital networks grounded in feminist theory. The paper looks at the specific experiences of African women while making a case for research in general to contextualise who these platforms are built for and how African women are impacted when platforms aren't built keeping their identities, experiences and engagement in mind. This research aimed at filling this gap in the knowledge production in the African context, and provide alternative possibilities by centering African women's experiences of the internet.

Coding Rights

The research conducted by Coding Rights aims to contribute to the development of an anti-colonial feminist framework to question artificial intelligence (AI) systems that are being deployed by the public sector, particularly focused on social welfare programmes. As machines are designed and operated by the very same humans in power, these AI systems are mostly likely to cause or propagate harm and discrimination based on gender and all its

intersectionalities of race, class, sexuality, age, territoriality, etc., therefore posing worrisome trends that should be of concern to feminist movements. The study does a mapping of AI systems being deployed by the public sector in Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay to determine the provision of social benefits and other public services, and assess the harm through a feminist lens. It also reviews thinking around AI used in the so-called Digital Welfare Systems and works towards drafting a feminist framework to grasp what would constitute an oppressive AI.

Blue Link

The research focuses on the effects of the heated campaign against the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Bulgaria in terms of gender-based violence. This research project focuses on the effects of the anti-gender campaign in Bulgaria in terms of GBV. What Blue Link observed is that, since 2018, advocacy and policy-making against GBV have been seriously hampered. The research is designed to answer the questions of whether internet technologies (including social networks and online media) facilitate or prevent GBV in Bulgaria and how dominant anti-gender rights attitudes could be reversed with the help of internet communications. The paper cultivates a perspective to restore policy dialogue and build up supportive discourse against GBV in the country.

Research ICT Africa

In this study, Research ICT Africa explored what factors affect internet access for women and men, and what issues need to be addressed to ensure equitable digital access and use. These questions were examined in the context of the very high gender internet access and use gap found in Rwanda in the 2017/18 After Access survey. The findings are counterintuitive since the policy and telecom industry environment seemed to have put in place the relevant components to foster gender digital equality. This discrepancy highlighted the need to investigate other issues besides infrastructural and supply-side constraints to digital equality which was done through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the research questions. Analysis of the After Access survey data was complemented with urban and rural, male and female focus group discussions, providing a more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of both those connected and those currently marginalised from internet services. The combined analyses provided insights into gender-related power dynamics, which quantitative data alone could not illuminate.

3. Progress towards milestones

All projects have been completed. Our partners have kept their part of contractual responsibilities; and as subgrantees, WRP (Women's Rights Program) and FIRN team have worked towards supportive partnerships and research process. We have been able to complete all the milestones imagined for this period. Altogether we have funded 12 feminist research projects and published their research findings on FIRN website. We have also published over 135 GenderIT articles (Annex 2 for full list), and an edited journal in

collaboration with APRIA⁶, a META-research study⁷ that explores the experiences of our partners in engaging with feminist research practices. Other publications include the white paper on feminist internet research that outlines key areas of analysis, boundary issues and opportunities for further research. The white paper takes further the mapping study on gender and digital technologies done in 2018. There is also an upcoming journal edition by CLAM that focuses on the LAC area.

Our partners, drawing on their research findings, have been actively engaged in advocacy through multiple national and international platforms around a wide range of issues including access, online GBV, datafication, and economy and labour. POLLICY, BlueLink, CIS, KRYSS, CLAM, and VEDATAS have also organised includes conferences and webinars with their constituencies and communities.

The overall experience of the process shows that the governing feminist principle was reflected beyond the methodological, theoretical and ethical instruments that FIRN wants to build in the field of internet research. As the meta-research finding shows, many of our partners were appreciative of being introduced to feminist research principles and values. The commitment that the FIRN team has shown to working in this field, even with the uncertainties that emerge from categorising one's research as "feminist", was seen in a positive light and encouraged our partners to boldly claim their research projects as feminist.

We have also listed all the completed milestones throughout the project period in Annex 1 that shows in detail what we have accomplished in each reporting period. Additionally, as a spillover from this work, we are, in the months after, continuing to engage in dissemination activities with the partners to ensure their work reaches diverse audiences through our social media channels and through GenderIT. However, for the purpose of providing a snapshot of the project's milestone, the following three major project coordination tasks are useful - (1) Developing research network ; (2) Facilitating exchange of learning; and (3) Producing critical analysis of the field of technology from a feminist perspective.

1. Developing research network

As a research network, FIRN has primarily focused on developing evidence-based research practices and knowledge making among the eight selected partners. The project attempted to build the capacity of our partners to have knowledge on feminist-ways-of knowing as an integral part of research practices. Such design of the project provided an intimate and regular engagement between partners, peer-advisors and FIRN team. The check-ins based on milestones in research allowed for shifts and changes in research questions and methods to transpire within the project and across partners through incremental developments.

⁶ <https://apria.artez.nl/issue/feminist-by-design/>

⁷ <https://firn.genderit.org/research/feminist-internet-research-network-meta-research-project-report>

The quality of research not only changes and expands the perspective of chosen project from a feminist angle, it has also shifted researchers' attitude towards research values and knowledge-making that puts the researcher as part of the process equally as the participants. Most of these works have primarily engaged with the community that the research was located in, have entered many policy advocacy rooms and contributed in the re-imagining of the internet Research from FIRN and by the FIRN partners has been showcased in panels at the Internet Governance Forum 2019, 2020, 2021 including the Best Practices Forum on online violence in 2020, at the Rights Con 2020, 2021, Internet Freedom Festival 2019, International Association for Media Communications Research 2020, and as supporting research to the submission to the Special Rapporteur on domestic violence during the pandemic in 2020.

In the context of the pandemic and lack of platforms for presentation and sharing of research results, FIRN strategised to participate in online forums and to have effective dissemination of research results. Therefore, after a successful completion of each project, FIRN provides a small dissemination contract that provides an opportunity to design participatory project dissemination plans with the partners. The important task here is that to create activities that will publicise the research finding among civil society organisation working in the area of technology, and policy makers and advocates; and to influence political decision-making from a feminist internet perspective at a local, regional and global level. This was achieved through accessing multiple digital platforms beyond the GenderIT platform, but using various means of sharing research results on social media and partners project websites.

2. Facilitating exchange of learning

Another milestone worth mentioning during the project period is the FIRN convenings. The project's objective has been to facilitate the exchange of knowledge among broader networks of researchers. Aside from our broader outreach for making partners' research accessible via the FIRN website and multiple publications on the GenderIT platform, we also organised three FIRN convenings during this period:

1. The first FIRN network face-to-face convening took place from **26 February to 1 March 2019 in Anani Villa in Janda Baik, Malaysia**. The convening was attended by **23 participants**. This included nine representatives of the research projects selected (there were two representatives from KRYSS Network), four out of five active peer advisors (one cancelled due to health reasons), five representatives of APC (FIRN team, Association for Progressive Communications Women's Rights Programme (APCWRP) manager, and a representative of the APC communication team to support the development of the visual identity and communications plans for the FIRN network), and Ruhiya Seward from IDRC. At the end of two and a half days, the eight projects post-revision were presented and discussed in terms of what changed and why, what the participants had learned, what was useful and what they would need more help with. The peer advisory committee that we have put together and FIRN team also presented and requested

feedback on the first draft of the document on **Feminist internet ethical research practices**, which reflects feminist research practices, politics and values relevant to the members in the FIRN network, and more broadly, to researchers in the field of feminism, gender and digital technology. This is a collaboratively created tool for ethics and reflexivity that outlines the concepts that were repeatedly emphasised and seemed to resonate with most people. These concepts are: consent, accountability, situatedness, intersectionality, connection, memory, care and safety. Another output of the convening is a tool that maps the **Feminist internet domains of change**, as working towards transformation and change is central to feminist politics of research. This tool was developed at the convening to help research partners plan research outcomes. In particular, the tool assists in mapping how to make research more effectively translate into local transformation, research and field-building, policy and law, institutional change, change in technology, and infrastructure. **The three-day meeting concluded** with discussions around the FIRN network, how it would operate, its guiding principles and values. Participants shared their expectations of the network.

2. From 15 to 22 June 2020, the FIRN team convened the **second online partners meeting** with the primary focus to exchange experiences and research findings. The network had a series of online meeting sessions with the participation of researchers, peer advisors, APCWRP team as network coordinator, and IDRC as project funder. The main objective of this convening was to create a space and centre the feminist research knowledge and evidence that FIRN partners had produced, and influenced activism and policy reforms in their local and regional contexts. Hence, all eight research projects located in different regions of the Global South had the opportunity to present their work to the network. All panel discussions centred on the work of partners. Additionally, the FIRN team organised an open webinar on 22 June 2020 for the final session to create a dialogue around the importance of engaging with the policy advocacy centre locally, regionally and internationally. The session was titled "Policy reform: Working towards feminist transformation and change". A panel of speakers from different regions and backgrounds shared their thoughts, experiences and stories around internet policy advocacy. A GenderIT piece was written by Mariana Fosatti, former editor of the site.⁸
3. The third convening was a closed one, organised on 28 and 29 June 2022 only for partners. It involved the four IDRC re-granted partners and four new FIRN partners. These four new FIRN partners are supported partially by core funds of APCWRP. Over the two days, the FIRN partners had an opportunity to reflect on their research findings, creating ethics of care in line with our principles, and on the questions emerging from the process of research. With four new partners joining the network and four others completing their projects, the convening became an interesting engagement with feminist research principle and values.

⁸ <https://genderit.org/articles/policy-reform-working-towards-feminist-transformation-and-change>

The new partners were empowered to continue with their work in the coming months focusing on OGBV (online gender-based violence) as FIRN is attempting to explore, expand and deepen the understanding on this theme. By welcoming a new partner from the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region and from other under-researched locations like Sudan and DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) we were able to grow our network. A GenderIT piece⁹ written by Srinidhi Raghavan explored the discussions from the convening. It was also an opportunity to introduce FIRN partners to the findings from the meta-research project and the white paper, which provided more material and brought more discussion on the connections between research projects across locations.

3. Producing critical analysis of the field of technology from a feminist perspective

While coordinating these projects, FIRN team have been designing different modes of knowledge production to continue building content and engaging on critical analysis of the internet from a feminist lens. One of the main sites, and the backbone of FIRN, is GenderIT.org¹⁰ that is accessible to and widely shared and recognised. The team continue to come up with diverse feminist issues on tech, create an open the call for submissions, and invite FIRN partners and other writers to share their research results and use of the internet and technology. Please see annex 2 to see the publications of GenderIT throughout the life of this project.

Towards the end of the second year of the project, we have launched the FIRN website¹¹ as a landing base for the research projects. All our partners have their own page where we present full research reports, executive summary, visuals and related research publication. Additionally, the website is designed to centre the four thematic areas that FIRN have been exploring and feature intersectional feminist analysis by bring forth research that exhibit interesting feminist issues.

Centring feminist research principles and values in internet research and the impact of research process, FIRN designed a META level research¹² that looks into these dynamics. The methodological framework of this project was to have an in-depth interview with FIRN partners to learn more about their experience of conducting research using feminist perspectives. All research partners, except RIA, have participated in this project. The analysis and finding of the research is directly on matters of power dynamics in research process, tension that emerges while re/shaping languages of feminism in to tech research, and opportunities that emerges from engaging feminist reflexive work. Many partners reported

⁹<https://genderit.org/feminist-talk/discussing-ethics-care-intersectionality-and-power-dynamics-feminist-research-work>

¹⁰ <https://genderit.org/>

¹¹ <https://firn.genderit.org/>

¹² <https://firn.genderit.org/research/feminist-internet-research-network-meta-research-project-report>

that the process was new and uncomfortable. Particularly they reflected on the challenges of learning and practicing standpoint theory; intersectionality; reflexivity; and a feminist ethics of care. At the same time, all partners have explained that having gone through this process has changed the ways in which they conduct research and their understanding of the power and positionality of researchers. Part of this research project also assesses the impact of COVID-19 on research partners and lessons they may have learned or guidance they could offer up to other researchers when coping during a pandemic.

In the beginning of 2021, IDRC/ Ruhiya Seward invited FIRN team to reshape and update the Feminist internet research mapping study that was produced in 2018. The rationale behind this collaboration is to respond to gender biases and stereotypes that are embedded in technology, and that reproduce the existing problems around gender parity, gender-based violence, discrimination and exclusion on the internet. The white paper¹³ was designed to explore gaps, shifts, and new developments in the area of feminist internet research. This project provided FIRN to continue updating the feminist knowledge production and advocate for an internet that is empowering more women and people of diverse and marginalised genders and sexualities – in all our diversities – to fully enjoy our rights, engage in pleasure and play, and dismantle patriarchy.

Last but not least, FIRN team have collaborated with APRIA journal on a special journal issue with a title - Feminist by design¹⁴. The journal explored interwoven strands in relation to feminist ways of knowing and epistemic approaches. In particular, the question of feminist designs, intentions, motivations and “starting points” and how these feminist practices inform research and knowledge projects. Beyond critical views of feminist infrastructures, through diverse researchers contributions the edition have shown the impact of frameworks such as the feminist principles of the internet, feminist internet research, and other feminist designs on the world.

4. Synthesis of research results and development outcomes

Each of the partner’s themes and outcomes align strongly with the goals set out at the beginning of this project and of FIRN which was to produce evidence-based research and challenge the biases that are prevalent in the field of internet research, particularly in the Global South. These projects have managed to provide us with a nuanced understanding of the complexities that continue to exist in access and usage of the internet and tech environment. Each of these projects underscores the need for feminist analysis and how contextual and relational unpacking of the power dynamics is essential to our understanding of feminist internet research. In this section, we cover the results and outcomes of each project and the network at large.

Some of the outcomes of this project:

¹³ <https://firm.genderit.org/research/white-paper-feminist-internet-research>

¹⁴ <https://apria.artez.nl/issue/feminist-by-design/>

- Building a nuanced understanding of concerns within feminist internet research located in the Global South and creating a repository of research with feminist principles in mind
- Explored complexities of doing feminist internet research by deepening our understanding of feminist ethics of care, designing feminist methodology and learning the multi-faceted ways of doing feminist research in varied contexts
- Nurturing a space for researchers to learn from each other through a peer network that met to discuss findings but also processes of feminist internet research, positionality as researchers and the political implications of the location of our identities within the community
- Reckoning with reality of feminist research including its dynamic and messy nature, the safety of participants when they share experiences of online violence and name the perpetrator, the subsequent impact of trauma of narrating the incidents on the participants. Additionally, needing to acknowledge the impact of vicarious trauma on researchers
- Filling gaps in understanding around feminist internet in Global South locations through evidence-based research on pertinent topics like online gender based violence, economy and labour, access

Beyond the broader achievements of FIRN, below are synthesised research results of the eight partners that are used for advocacy and policy recommendations in their respective regional and national context.

1. The research done by KRYSS Network offers preliminary insights into how the priorities and economic logic of algorithms have inevitably led to the amplification and monetisation of OGBV. Under such circumstances, incendiary content, that is, among others, racist, misogynist, and trans- and homophobic, is prioritised for its ability to capture attention and encourage engagement. On the contrary, feminists and rights-based expressions are suppressed and ignored for their “non-marketability”. Though the research participants demonstrated their resilience in hacking/navigating social media algorithms, social media companies are still very much in a privileged position to rewrite their algorithms to serve their profitability agenda, but at the same time, address the harms that these can cause in relation to human rights and the resulting OGBV. This feminist research provides us an insight into the impact of social media algorithms and the current data economy on our freedom of expression, and how they intersect with our bodily autonomy and right to self-determination, and by extension of that, the consequence they have on our public and political discourse.
2. The CIS (Centre for Internet and Society) project focuses deeply on the process of platform design and how it is experienced by the end users. In this research, we see how Urban Company, a dominant platform in the domestic work and personal services sector, uses design to aid the company rather than the workers who are at the heart of the company’s profits. The study utilised a “walk-through” approach to analyse the design features of Urban Company throughout the life cycle of workers’ engagements – from onboarding to work

allocation and monitoring. These were then corroborated through in-depth interviews with workers. Through using a feminist lens, the study was able to deconstruct the ideologies governing platform design and highlighted the role of technological and design choices in shaping workers' experiences of the platforms. The results from the study provide us with recommendations to improve workers' experiences and work toward aligning the platform's design with FPIs (Feminist Principles of the Internet). One of the chief outcomes of the project is to imagine and inform the design alternatives for digital platforms that benefit workers. Along with the previous project, we see that collectively CIS's work has contributed to the economy principle in the FPI and highlight the power asymmetries being perpetuated and amplified by these platforms.

3. By highlighting both the everyday and the structural, and by bringing forth feminist discourse on language and technology through an intersectional exploration of race, gender, sexuality, CLAM (Latin American Center on Sexuality and Human Rights) has created space for in-depth thinking in this relatively new space in Latin America. Through their dossier on feminism, gender, sexuality and digital technology, they will engage in critical thinking in this space. Ranging from menstrual apps and big data and biopolitics to nudes, from decolonial feminist digital practices of naming to cellphones as women's own "portable churches", from male self-entrepreneurship to toxic masculinity as an online political language, from anti-gender politics online to digital violence in Brazil's *favelas*, from digital gender violence in the COVID-19 pandemic to online networks of female migrants, their dossier, due to be released by the end of this year, will be an indispensable resource to students and researchers as well as to activists and policymakers who are in dire need of looking at digital technology through a feminist lens.
4. Two major outcomes we see in the research with Vedetas have been with regards to access and online gender-based violence (OGBV). Economy has been a focus of the research since the community network was created as a demand from RAMA (Agroecological Network of Agricultural Women) for forms of connectivity to organise the logistics of organic products delivery, to support the communication with partners in other cities to sell their products and to fortify their political bounds in order to defend their territory by participating in online political events. The community network has been used directly for the economic activities of women there, so it is supporting their financial autonomy and promoting the local economy. Online gender-based violence has been addressed by a demand from the community for us to approach digital security and online OGBV. With the connection with the internet, it was deemed important to open discussions about digital security and OGBV. Also, because the community network installation process was based on feminist principles, it permeated the discussion of gender roles and more equal relations that also could contribute in the creation of behaviour changes online, in order to prevent OGBV. This was done through creative projects such as zines, which many of the younger people in the community highly appreciated.
5. The research done by Pollicy sought to inform evidence-based policy to push for digital equality. Previous research from countries tells us that there is a

close linkage between offline and online violence but the data/evidence from African countries is limited. This research takes us closer to filling this gap and provides us with more information on the imaginations of a feminist internet by African women. Critically looking at how the internet in many contexts is subsumed within social media brings important reflections on rebuilding or building safer spaces online within a system that seems to not work for so many people. Research on topics such as online violence bring forth many discussions both around the findings themselves as well as the impact of such research on the researchers and the participants. These reflections¹⁵ that arose from the study were also important outcomes in furthering feminist internet research in this area.

6. One of the key outcomes of the work done by Coding Rights as part of FIRN was to ask the crucial question of: Can we develop technologies based on a feminist concept of consent? Their research pointed towards how algorithms maintain the status quo and asked us important questions on what a feminist algorithm could look like. Through infusing AI analysis with feminist values, an analysis of power relations, the research brings us to a cross roads of how AI behaves, performs, changes within a feminist activist perspective. It also brings us important discussions around values that could be used to draft a feminist framework to question AI. The outcome of this was highlighting what the feminist and human rights implications of using algorithmic decision-making to determine the provision of social benefits and other public services can be by mapping projects doing so in Latin America.
7. Through RIA's work in Rwanda, we see one of the key results is observing the intersectional perspective that is needed and the experiences of women (and men) are not homogeneous. It posits that an accurate reflection of the state of gender equality with regards to internet access and use will be better observed keeping in mind a wide range of situations. The research results show us that it will be imperative for us to assess the existing factors impacting gender digital equality such as employment, income, education, demands of unpaid domestic labour, perception of internet, relevance, perception of skills, gender norms and stereotypes, misconceptions about the internet. These are connected to social structures. And that in order to address digital inequality, we will require transforming the structural inequalities that exacerbate economic and social exclusion and that are simply mirrored, and sometimes amplified in the digital world.
8. The project by Bluelink pointed towards the complex journey of reversing anti-gender rights attitudes through the use of information and communications technologies and how it is challenging and problematic. One of the outcomes of the research was grappling with the instruments producing hate and violence which are powerful. Juxtaposed against the constant efforts of activists, NGOs, experts and journalists which are under constant attack. Bluelink also undertook an analysis of the legal landscape around online GBV, including

¹⁵ <https://genderit.org/feminist-talk/digging-trauma-survivor-porn-and-other-ethical-concerns-about-research>

analysing cases as well as legislative gaps. The most important work, according to the research results, is to be done offline, in face-to-face communications through lobbying, making allies, grassroots activism, providing support to victims of GBV, educating, debunking prejudices – the internet could be used as a supplementary tool here but not the only one.

5. Methodology

FIRN project was designed to create feminist internet research that primarily focuses on women and gender diverse communities within the larger Global South context. The design of the project, from the very beginning, was feminist by its nature. The research questions asked, the methodological framework, ethical considerations and theoretical lens all emerged from feminist principles of knowledge-making. Selected projects have also used these methodological processes in their research. It is true that there is no single feminist methodology, as feminism recognises and works with different innovative methodologies. However, what makes any research feminist is the approach taken and the interrogation of social injustice and politics of power that determine individuals and groups access to internet. Our partners have used diverse methodological frameworks – qualitative, quantitative, mixed method, social media mapping, and secondary data gathering methods. And all partners have used thematic data analysis method to analyse and present collected data.

In terms of theoretical framing, many have used intersectionality theory and feminist standpoint theory. It is worth mentioning here that the level of understanding and commitment to these frameworks is different. Here, the role of peer advisors that FIRN has worked with to support and guide the partners was extremely significant. We selected these peer-advisors based on their expertise and knowledge in the area of internet research, policy advocacy and feminist politics that they carry to influence the civil society sector. Each partner had two peer advisors, and these advisors, together with the FIRN team, looked at each research milestone and gave feedback. This productive engagement with the research process has helped to sharpen research skills and strengthen the research quality.

Furthermore, during the process of data collection, after careful consideration and conversation with the eight partners, FIRN implemented a risk assessment strategy. We found out that three partners, in Malaysia, Brazil and Bulgaria, needed such support and requested a risk assessment training. FIRN facilitated hiring trainers who are experts in digital security training. This process was highly appreciated by the three partners as it provided them with an understanding of nuanced ethical concerns that researchers need to be aware of when working on the digital sphere.

Even though we planned the research project in the traditional framing of fieldwork that assumes human connections, face-to-face conversations and research site visits, the emergence COVID-19 pandemic drastically shifted what we know as standard research practice. Luckily, most of our partners' fieldwork was completed just before the pandemic hit the world. Nevertheless, for a few projects, prepared trips, interview guides, planned participant observation and connections, had to be reframed to suit digital platform

conversations. For all of us, it was quite an interesting learning curve, especially in the context of research ethics and care. More of these reflections have been analysed and documented in the meta-research.¹⁶

6. Project outputs

All partners have completed their research project and have submitted the research report. We have also created a FIRN website that is dedicated to publish each partner’s research and their various publications. Please visit <https://firn.genderit.org/> to review the publications of each project. The table below presents a summarised analysis of all the research outputs that have been conducted and published throughout the reporting period of September 2018 to August 2022.

Title	Summary
<p><u>Platforms, power, and politics: Perspectives from domestic and care work in India</u> by <u>Centre for Internet and Society</u></p>	<p>Domestic and care work industries in India have been the site of rapid platformisation over the past decade or so. Domestic workers are particularly vulnerable and unprotected, which makes their work qualitatively different than most other sectors in the gig or sharing economy.</p> <p>The objective of the project is to use a feminist lens to critique platform modalities and orient platformisation dynamics in radically different, worker-first ways. Outputs included one research report, one journal article, GenderIT articles.</p>

¹⁶ <https://firn.genderit.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/firn-meta.pdf>

<p><u>Alternate realities, alternate internets: African feminist research for a feminist internet</u></p> <p>By Pollicy</p>	<p>For the past decade, internet connectivity has been praised for its potential to close the gender gap in Africa. Among the many benefits of digitalisation, digital tools enable groups that are marginalised across the intersections of gender, race, sex, class, religion, ability and nationality to produce and access new forms of knowledge and conceive counter-discourses. However, the internet is also proving to be the embodiment of old systems of oppression and violence.</p> <p>Focused on OGBV, this research argues that as discriminatory gendered practices are shaped by social, economic, and cultural, OGBV must be viewed on a continuum rather than as isolated incidents removed from existing structural frameworks. Outputs included one research report, Gender IT article</p>
<p><u>Gender norms, gendered work and intersectional digital inequalities in Rwanda</u></p> <p>By Research ICT Africa (RIA)</p>	<p>RIA’s research project primarily focused on issue of access to internet from a feminist perspective and brought to light the gap that exists in Rwanda.</p> <p>Internet use is still relatively low in the sub-Saharan Africa region. In some of the less developed countries like Rwanda, Tanzania and Mozambique, internet use is still below 15% for both sexes. It is in this context that RIA’s research explored Rwanda’s gender gap that seems to be much higher than other least developed economies. The research argues about 12% of men use the internet, as opposed to only 4.8% of women. This knowledge provides more insight into how women often find themselves in a situation of multiple marginalities, and this is translated in the digital realm also.</p> <p>Outputs included one research report, Gender IT article</p>

<p><u>Encounters, coffees and conflicts: Reflections from action-research on a feminist autonomous network</u></p> <p>by Vedetas</p>	<p>This feminist action-research project envisages the implementation of a Wi-Fi community network in the Terra Seca <i>quilombo</i> community in the Vale do Ribeirão region of the state of São Paulo, Brazil, while conducting a participatory research process on information and communication technologies, more specifically community networks, through an intersectional feminist lens. Outputs included one research reports, one journal article, GenderIT article.</p>
<p><u>Not My AI: A feminist framework to challenge algorithmic decision-making systems deployed by the public sector</u></p> <p>by Coding Rights</p>	<p>In the context of Latin American region, the research conducted by Coding Rights asks what are the feminist and human rights implications in relation to the impacts of AI. The research shows how machines are designed and operated by the very same humans in power, and these AI systems are mostly likely to cause or propagate harm and discrimination based on gender and all its intersectionalities of race, class, sexuality, age, territoriality, etc., therefore posing worrisome trends that should be of concern to feminist movements. Outputs included one research report</p>
<p><u>Anti-rights discourse in Brazilian social media: Digital networks, violence and sex politics</u></p> <p>by Latin American Center on Sexuality and Human Rights (CLAM)</p>	<p>CLAM explores how moral panics towards feminism and minority rights shape imagination and articulation of gender, sexual difference, race and class. This research addresses the role of social media use and architecture in the production and dissemination of hate speech and anti-rights discourse as a fundamental aspect of the current right turn in Brazilian politics. In that context, it also explores emergent feminist and LGBTIQ intersectional responses and struggles to define online violence.</p> <p>Outputs included one research reports, one journal article</p>

<p><u>After the storm: How to restore policy dialogue and supportive discourse against GBV online in Bulgaria</u></p> <p>by BlueLink Foundation</p>	<p>After the heated campaign against the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2018, Bulgaria experienced a stormy anti-gender rights backlash. And the internet played a key role.</p> <p>BlueLink’s research shows that gender-phobic hate speech was generated largely on social media, mostly on Facebook, as well as on some popular news sites. This has had a double negative effect. First, it crucially amplified negative public attitudes against gender rights. And second, the proliferation of hateful rhetoric incited online gender-based violence (OGBV). Outputs included one research report, Gender IT article</p>
<p><u>Power X Expression X Violence: Women’s freedom of expression on social media in Malaysia</u></p> <p>by KRYSS Network</p>	<p>In Malaysia, and to some extent, globally, gender inequality is often and rightly addressed in terms of GBV and gender discriminatory impacts. However, the impact of gender inequality in relation to freedom of opinion and expression is largely unaddressed. A framework for an unrestrained freedom of opinion and expression means very little to women if it ignores the inherent unequal power dynamics in our access to human rights and equal protection under the law.</p> <p>Outputs included one research report, GenderIT article.</p>

<p><u>Designing domestic work platforms: A case study of Urban Company</u></p> <p>by Centre for Internet and Society (CIS)</p>	<p>Platformisation of domestic and personal services work has changed how tech-savvy, urban middle- and upper-class customers find workers, but it has changed little the dynamic of the work being conducted. Using the re-granting opportunity, CIS narrowed the focus down to the app design and considers the interface and context of platformised work by using a feminist lens.</p> <p>Using the Urban Company app as a case study, the research shows how platform design affects working conditions for workers and how workers navigate the rules and restrictions placed on them by the app’s design and company policies. Outputs included one research report, GenderIT articles.</p>
<p><u>Brazilian feminist responses to online hate speech: Seeing online violence through an intersectional lens</u></p> <p>By Horacio Sívori and Lorena Mochel, CLAM</p>	<p>Focusing on a segment of previous research, in the re-granted project, CLAM looks at current struggles and transformations on the meanings of online violence in Brazil. More specifically, the research interrogates how impactful feminist research and interventions are in digital technologies with regards to online violence against LGBTIQ in the contemporary political scenario. The data gathered on feminist responses to online hate speech as political violence shed new light on the intersections of gender, race, sexuality and gender expression at its basis. Outputs included one research report</p>
<p><u>The hidden codes that shape our expression: Understanding how social media algorithms obstruct feminist expression and how Malaysian women and navigate the challenge</u></p> <p>by Serene Lim, KRYSS Network</p>	<p>In this re-granted research project This KRYSS research seeks to understand how online gender-based violence might be facilitated in particular ways by the algorithm and design of social media platforms. Through re-examination of interviews with 23 young women, this research explores the impact of this violence on women’s expression online. The research also shows how these women subvert the flaws of the algorithm and hack the system to continue occupying the social media space. Outputs included one research report</p>

**Cultivating a feminist community network:
Reflections of practices in the quilombo of
Ribeirão Grande/Terra Seca**

by Bruna Zanolli and Bruna Vasconcellos

This re-granted project provides an insight into some developments of an action-research project cultivated with the quilombolas residents from Ribeirão Grande/Terra Seca, which aimed at initiating a community network with an organisation of women farmers to help foster their agroecological product sales.

The work begins with contextualising the quilombos, the actors involved in the project, as well as their political and methodological perspectives. In such community-centred practice, the researchers learned the importance of considering gender, race and colonialism as axes of oppressions present during community networks building. The project also implemented a feminist reflexivity technique to look deeply into the positive and negative aspects of community network projects. This also led to some introspection among network activists, advocates and tech groups. Outputs included one research report and Gender IT article

White Paper

by Sachini Perera

As part of the [Feminist Internet Research Network \(FIRN\)](#) project, supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), this white paper aims to assess feminist internet research in relation to internet governance and policy, with a particular focus on scholarship in the Global South.

In order to better understand a feminist approach to the field of internet research, this white paper explores in depth eight topics. These are access, expression, pleasure, online gender-based violence (OGBV), surveillance, data and datafication, artificial intelligence and the digital economy. These subjects are considered to be key area of analysis and boundary pushing by feminist internet research.

The paper also outlines how, in the Global South, gender and related thematic areas are discussed in internet policy spaces, with a focus on the global Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and offers recommendations for further research that centres around and engages with the Global South with all nuances that are needed. It has recommendations for organisers of these spaces to make dissemination of such projects possible; it deals with accountability of policymakers to engage with feminist internet researches; and pushes to make access to funding a priority for feminist knowledge-building in tech environment.

Meta Research Report

by Nyx McLean

This was another in-house project initiated by the FIRN team. This meta-research created a feminist space for dialogue to explore the complexities of doing internet research. This was done through the critical exploration of the research methodological processes and ethical practices of the eight FIRN research projects. The aim was to bring FIRN project partners into conversation with each other through this report.

The result of the meta-research project indicates that research on the internet is complex and that current methodological approaches and research tools are not sufficiently reflexive to account for feminist thinking around the dynamics of power, politics of location, relationship with participants, access to digital data and so on. Hence, projects such as FIRN are extremely important to reimagine research values and principles in the internet and tech field.

7. Problems and challenges

Throughout this project cycle, we have been documenting challenges that we have experienced in relation to the research process. Some of these challenges were addressed: such as risk assessment and digital security; and challenges of project management during the COVID pandemic. However, there are challenges that we have observed that have to do with feminist knowledge production that governs FIRN as a project that is politically located in South-South feminist collaboration. Below are some of our reflections that we hope to address as we continue working in this network.

- (1) **Organisational relationships in time of pandemic:** During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, FIRN team experienced a challenge of balancing labour, ethics, and morality required to practise our feminist principles while meeting the expectations of IDRC and FIRN partners. We were affected by the intensity of unrecognised, care-oriented administrative work that demanded – and continues to demand – our attention, particularly in relation to adhering to project timeline while fully aware of the impacts of the pandemic. We feel the effects even today. The team has felt the burden of keeping projects afloat by working case-by-case and with individual partners. Oftentimes these are silenced territories that remain

untouched in the process of reporting back to donors or compiling reflections on the experience of project management.

- (2) **Geopolitical location and challenges of transnational feminist work:** Feminist tech research and advocacy undeniably suffer from the asymmetric knowledge production and visibility as the ideological and theoretical connections are largely located within the Global North feminist intellectual terrain. It is in this context that FIRN is attempting to focus and prioritise feminist knowledge-making between South-South research network, which is a political feminist work on its own. That said, shifting the “geographical location” and re-centring the Global South is only one part of the job; the FIRN team has to work hard to create mediums for an effective job in representing and consolidating the work of feminists from marginalised locations. The FIRN website and the White Paper is only the beginning; going forward, we will build diverse infrastructures for future projects that make transnational feminist conversation and tech exchange even more possible.
- (3) One of the larger reflections on holding the research network together is the deepening of our understanding of **what Global South really means**. The vastness and diversity of the region can be seen in the work undertaken as well as the numbers of applications received. Access to resources, feminist literature, and grounding also vary widely in the region.
- (4) **Balancing a rights-based approach with a feminist approach** was another challenge. Some partners’ research arguments are dominantly grounded in talking back against the rights-based approach; their recommendations are largely within the legal framework. Others rely on a feminist approach and refer to constitutional and international legal frameworks as a background framing. Only very few partners attempted to use a combination of both approaches in their analysis. The question that we hope to explore about these differences in the future is when, and how, do we ensure that aside from normative legal analysis, partners can be confident about taking on and centring feminist analysis.
- (5) The other difference we have noticed among our partners is the **level of engagement with feminist concepts** and ideas of reflexivity, intersectionality and standpoint as frameworks. Although feminist activism and scholarship aspire to engage with diverse communities and connect with everyday experiences of individuals, there are also hegemonies of knowledge production that have ensured that feminists are largely located within academic circuits of circulation, and therefore is inaccessible to the wider community of feminists positioned outside of academia or beyond the feminist circle.
- (6) Overall, there is an emphasis on gender as a parameter for analysis, but there is insufficient intersectional analysis. In relation to the challenge for GBV-related research in particular is that women are referred to as a homogeneous category

without breaking down the specificities of their experience in relation to who they are. Caste, class, race and language are mentioned as relevant factors, but there is not enough in-depth analysis in relation to them. Intersectional analysis in relation to online GBV is therefore not an additional facet but has to be a core component of methodology.

8. Administrative Reflections and Recommendations

Reporting on project progress twice a year proved to be challenging for the small FIRN team. In the context of capacity constraints, and managing the team-wide knock-on effect of Covid19 on individuals and their families, the reporting proved arduous. While the biannual reporting is certainly useful as a milestone for the purposes of monitoring, APCs experience in implementing the FIRN project, is that the reflection required for monitoring and evaluative processes to be integrated into a learning practice must be ongoing.

As such, we would like to recommend that IDRC establish a reporting process that relies on regular, real-time voice check-ins and updates by grantees, in addition to an annual written report. Given that IDRC supports research projects at various institutions, this process can potentially build in moments of cross-project learning and so that cross-collaboration of research could happen. Such practice will provide a meta-level analysis of these topics by using the rich data that have been collected by all these parallel institutions

9. A way forward: Feminist imaginaries

APC WRP is one of the leading civil society institutions that has been creating an impact on the field of technology and internet usage and access, particularly for women and gender diverse communities. It is also the politics of WRP to prioritise transnational movement building with feminist organisations that are working towards tackling issue of access, AI, OGBV, and gig-economy. Our collaborative work primarily focuses on the global south - the majority of the world. In addition to feminist activism and advocacy work, WRP have been known for pathbreaking research ideas that creates important feminist knowledge and impact policy regulations. For instance, projects such as Feminist principle of the internet, and EROTICS can be mentioned here.

It is, therefore within this context that FIRN is established. In its first cycle, as we have attempted to report here, FIRN has accomplished the research plan by working closely with the eight partners from LAC, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. At the moment, while closing this chapter, by raising funds from our core budget, we are working with 4 other new research partners from Africa and the MENA region. We strongly believe that the work we are doing is extremely significant and valuable. It is also our belief that we can only influence policy regulations through research and knowledge produced from research.

As shown in this report, we continue to centre our presentation and representation of FIRN through our partners' work and the network in general. The reason for this is that, since the inception of FIRN, APC WRP has been and continues to explore and experiment the ways in which we can impact the domain of change¹⁷ at individual, community, and global level engagements. We continue to evaluate our work in relation to how effectively we have provided a framework for a feminist research design and planning; identify strategies towards creating a space to collaborate with feminist internet researchers; our strategies of advocacy at a national and global level; and plot pathways for strategies to move between domains of change and field of impact that can be responsive to opportunities. The accomplishment of FIRN cycle one is purely due to such intersectional and overlapping exercises and commitments from APC WRP.

Thus, the feminist imagination of the future for FIRN will be carving opportunities and possibilities to have more collaboration with many feminist researchers from global south and continue growing the mapping for internet research as widely as possible. For us, the team, research is how we do feminist activism by continuously trying to recenter feminist knowledge production from the margins. That said, we will continue working hard to raise funds for field building, convenings/gatherings, further research in and led by the global South. More resources, financial and academic and infrastructural are needed and there needs to be more investment by donor/s funders in feminist internet research, including IDRC.

¹⁷A document compiled and created by Jac sm Kee, with inputs from Tigist S. Hussen, Namita Aavriti, and Katerina Fialova <https://genderit.org/resources/feminist-internet-research-domains-change-planning-and-assessment>