



Normative Advances on Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls

Introduction and context

Agreed by 189 governments in 1995, the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** (BPfA) remains the most comprehensive, visionary set of commitments to advance gender equality and women's and girls' human rights. Ahead of its time, the BPfA recognized that technological advances had the potential to expand opportunities for women's participation in economic and public life but also warned that it could be used to spread harmful gender stereotypes. The BPfA addressed the role of technology across various critical areas of concern and recognized that it is essential that women not only benefit from technology but also participate in the process of its development from design to application, monitoring and evaluation.¹

The BPfA was the first set of global commitments from Member States to explicitly consider the role of technology in achieving gender equality. However, since 1995, rapid technological advances have transformed the lives of people across the world. Technology and online spaces continue to be important levers for gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly for women's economic empowerment and participation in public life. Online spaces are also important platforms for women's collective action and organizing. However, online misogyny and intensifying violence against women and girls in digital contexts, also known as technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (TF VAWG), are causing significant harm to women and girls and are barriers to gender equality.

Since 1995, there has been an emerging normative framework at the international and regional levels to guide action to ensure that technological advances do not create new risks of violence and harm for women and girls and instead can be leveraged to achieve gender equality.

Most recently, on the opening day of its 69th session, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) adopted by consensus the **Beijing+30 Political Declaration**. Marking the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Declaration renews Member States' commitment to "the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action." The Declaration had a strong focus on actions to accelerate progress towards the commitments made in Beijing to end violence against

women and girls including adopting, funding and implementing National Action Plans, adopting a comprehensive approach to eliminating violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology, ensuring victims and survivors have prompt and universal access to services, and mobilizing all stakeholders to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. UN Women's **Beijing+30-Action Agenda** for ALL women and girls also has a strong focus on ending violence against women and girls and ensuring women and girls reap the benefits of the digital revolution. In the context of the 30th anniversary of the BPfA, this document provides an overview of key normative advances on TF VAWG at global and regional levels, highlighting ongoing gaps and challenges and examples of promising practices of translating commitments into action.



PHOTO: UN WOMEN/RYAN BROWN

¹UN Women (2023). Innovation and Technological Change, and Education in the Digital Age for Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls. Available as a PDF at <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/CSW67-Expert-Group-Meeting-report-en.pdf>

Key Global and Regional Normative Developments on Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls (TF VAWG)

Global

Year	Normative instrument or report	Key elements related to TF VAWG
2011	<u>UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes corporate responsibility to respect human rights globally and across all business activities. Requires companies to conduct human rights due diligence. Due diligence must address VAWG, including TF VAWG, within corporate value chains.
2016	<u>Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution A/HRC/RES/32/13</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notes that human rights should apply in online spaces as they do offline, reinforcing the importance of safeguarding rights of women and girls against gender-based violence in all areas of life.
2017	<u>Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation No. 35</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises gender-based violence against women as a continuum that includes digital, online, and tech-mediated violence. Expands States' obligations to include technology-mediated settings in prevention and response efforts. Recommends data collection and international cooperation to combat digital forms of violence against women.
2018	<u>Special Rapporteur Report on Online VAWG & Human Rights Council Resolution 38/5</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First UN thematic report on VAWG in digital contexts; defines cyber harassment, doxing, sextortion, and non-consensual image sharing as human rights violations. Highlights psychological, social, and economic consequences of violence in digital contexts. Calls for States to act urgently to prevent and respond to VAWG in digital contexts.
2023	<u>Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) Agreed Conclusions</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on the priority theme: Innovation, technological change, and digital education for gender equality. Expresses deep concern at the scale and impact of violence against women and girls that occurs or is amplified by the use of technology. Calls for comprehensive preventive and eliminatory measures targeting gender-based violence in technology-mediated environments.
	<u>UN General Assembly Resolution A/78/213: Human Rights in the Context of Digital Technologies</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises sexual exploitation, harassment, stalking, bullying, non-consensual image sharing as forms of gender-based violence. Urges States, platforms, and stakeholders to uphold due diligence obligations for preventing harm, especially in artificial intelligence (AI) contexts.
2024	<u>UN General Assembly Resolution A/78/L.49: Safe, Secure and Trustworthy AI</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endorses development of safe and inclusive AI systems. Identifies malicious use of AI as a risk factor for reinforcing discrimination and structural inequalities, including in relation to gender.

Year	Normative instrument or report	Key elements related to TF VAWG
2024	<u>Global Digital Compact (Annex to Pact for the Future)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulates shared principles for inclusive, fair, and safe global digital governance. • Explicitly includes the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence that occurs or is amplified by the use of technology as a core principle. • Emphasises the need for gender mainstreaming across digital policy.
	<u>UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/79/152: Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate VAWG in Digital Environments</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises the continued prevalence of VAWG across offline and online settings, as well as the interrelation of these settings. • Urges States to take immediate, effective action to prevent and eliminate VAWG that occurs or is amplified by the use of digital technologies, through strengthened legislation, investigation, prosecution and enhanced protection and support for all victims. • Calls for strengthened prevention, regulation of platforms, safety by design and accountability.
	<u>Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/56/19 on TF GBV</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests a Human Rights Council Advisory Committee study on the impacts of technology-facilitated gender-based violence and global good practices. • Calls for comprehensive legal responses and cross-sector collaboration. • Emphasises coordinated global action involving States, UN entities, civil society, victims, and private sector.
	<u>UN Convention against Cybercrime</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes an international legal framework to combat cybercrime. • Addresses crimes including unauthorised access, fraud, malware, as well as gender-based violence that occurs or is amplified through the use of an information and communications technology system. • Calls for the criminalization of the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images. • Supports international cooperation, cross-border evidence sharing, and digital law enforcement coordination.

Regional

Year	Normative Instrument	Key Provisions Related to TF VAWG
1994	<u>Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belém do Pará Convention)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022, MESECVI issued a report clarifying the original Convention's application to online gender-based violence against women and girls. • MESECVI is developing a Model Law to address online gender-based violence against women and girls through legislative tools.
2011	<u>Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) – GREVIO General Recommendation 1 (2021)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First binding European instrument focused on four pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution and co-ordinated policies. • GREVIO General Recommendation No. 1 (2021) on the digital dimension of violence against women defines online and technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, including non-consensual image sharing or taking/producing, exploitation, coercion and threats, sexualized bullying, online harassment, stalking, and cyberflashing.
2022	<u>European Union (EU) Digital Services Act</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out new rules for online platforms and digital services operating in the EU • Requires platforms, small and large, to prevent and address illegal and harmful content, remove non-consensual images that are disseminated online, the spread of disinformation improve transparency around content moderation and algorithmic processes.

Year	Normative Instrument	Key Provisions Related to TF VAWG
2022	<u>African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Resolution ACHPR/Res. 522 (LXXII) on the Protection of Women Against Digital Violence in Africa</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls on States to expand in their legislation the definition of gender-based violence to include digital violence against women including cyber-harassment, cyberstalking, sexist hate speech amongst other ICT-related violations. • Covers needs for research, awareness-raising programmes, women's and girls' access to digital education, service providers' training, law enforcement and service providers cooperation. • Calls for special measures to protect women journalists from digital violence.
2024	<u>European Union (EU) AI Act</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires creators of deepfakes to inform the public about the artificial nature of their work • Requires providers of general-purpose AI tools to tag AI-generated content and identify manipulations, aiding transparency.
	<u>African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU CEVAWG)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises violence against women and girls in digital spaces as a growing threat. • Establishes legally-binding obligations to address VAWG on online platforms. • Requires States to implement legislative, institutional, and policy measures. • Aligns with regional and global standards to address violence in physical and digital environments.



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Turning commitments into action: promising practices

Mexico's Olimpia Law (2021)

Mexico's Olimpia Law is aimed at addressing digital violence and online abuse against women. Named after activist Olimpia de la Cruz, the law criminalizes the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and videos, as well as other forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Enacted at the federal level in 2021, the law provides for prison sentences (up to six years) and fines for perpetrators and requires authorities to take action against digital violence. It recognizes online harassment, cyberstalking, and digital threats as serious crimes, emphasizing the right to a life free from violence, on- and offline. One of the first laws on TF VAWG in the region, it has inspired similar laws in other countries in Latin America such as **Argentina** and **Panama**.

Australia's e-Safety Commission and Commissioner (2015)

Established in 2015, the eSafety Commission and Commissioner is Australia's national independent regulator and educator for online safety. The eSafety Commission addresses TF VAWG by facilitating the swift removal of cyber abuse content, image-based abuse content, deepfakes, and online harassment. Under the Online Safety Act (2021), the Commissioner has powers to order takedowns, issue

fines, and hold tech platforms accountable for harmful content. It also provides victim support, legal guidance, and education programmes to promote digital safety. The Commission has recently established a new reporting scheme for adult cyber abuse, which gives adult victims of serious and harmful online abuse somewhere to turn to when online platforms fail to act. The powers of the Commissioner have recently been enhanced to address violence across all platforms, including video gaming platforms, dating websites and private messaging apps.

South Africa's Cybercrimes Act (2020)

The Cybercrimes Act of South Africa protects women and girls by criminalizing cyber harassment, cyberstalking, trolling, threats, image based sexual abuse and online hate speech, ensuring perpetrators face legal consequences. The Act makes it an offence to send or share messages incites violence against a person or group, which constitutes 'malicious communications'. The Act strengthens law enforcement's ability to investigate these offences and mandates social media platforms and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to report cybercrimes and cooperate in removing harmful content. Sharing intimate images without consent can lead to imprisonment of up to 2 years or a fine.



Key normative priorities for TF VAWG

While these normative frameworks have laid important groundwork for future work to address technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, urgent action is needed now to close implementation gaps. The Secretary General's report on the 30 year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action found that while

65%
of countries



have prioritised TF VAWG in recent years

with

76.8% launching awareness campaigns,
67.6% introducing legal reforms,
47.2% strengthening institutional capacity

only

28.2%
report collaboration



with technology providers to integrate human rights-based design and governance.²

This signals a critical need for deeper engagement with digital platforms and more consistent enforcement of standards across jurisdictions.

Priority should be given to strengthening legal clarity and coherence, ensuring that frameworks keep pace with evolving technologies and emerging forms of TF VAWG. Internet intermediaries must be held accountable through clear, enforceable standards and independent oversight. The rise of generative AI heightens the urgency of these efforts, requiring States to uphold their due diligence obligations and regulate the conduct of private actors involved in content generation and distribution.

Finally, closing the global data gap is essential. The **2024 mandate from the UN Statistical Commission**—requesting UN Women, WHO, UNFPA and partners to develop a statistical framework on TF VAWG—should be treated as a core implementation priority. Comparable, disaggregated data is vital for designing effective policies, measuring impact, and ensuring accountability. Coordinated, multi-stakeholder action across these priority areas will be essential to translating normative advances into real-world protection for women and girls in digital spaces.



PHOTO: UN WOMEN/MECH SEREYRATH

² United Nations Economic and Social Council (2024). Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Report of the Secretary General. E/CN.6/2025/3

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