

Gendered disinformation is a rapidly escalating threat globally. It is a tactic commonly used by **authoritarian regimes, extremist organizations, and malign political actors** to polarize public debate, reduce social cohesion, and undermine democratic processes. Gendered disinformation and the other forms of **technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)** that accompany it effectively reduce the public, political, and civic participation of women, threatening women's empowerment, gender equality, national security, and democracy.



Impact

Silencing Individuals:

Gendered disinformation silences women's voices—whether through censorship (externally or self-imposed) or withdrawal from public leadership roles—and reduces the political and civic participation of those who witness this abuse. The psychological toll it takes on its targets can be profound and deprives them of their ability to operate freely in online spaces that are today critical to most professional and personal lives. In addition, online violence often moves offline, threatening the physical safety of those targeted and their families.

Dividing Communities and Societies:

By reducing equal civic and political participation, gendered disinformation fundamentally undermines the representativeness and equity of public institutions. The entrenchment of these narratives in digital spaces normalizes misogyny and reinforces harmful norms, further driving women out of public life. These toxic gender narratives are also a vector for extremist and radicalized ideologies that intersect with other hateful beliefs like racism, xenophobia, and homophobia. Gendered disinformation often dehumanizes women and builds solidarity among those who spread these narratives.



IREX's Response

As an implementing organization that works globally **across diverse stakeholders** and that has cultivated technical expertise in **building resilience to manipulative information** and supporting **gender-inclusive programming**, IREX is positioned to take meaningful action to prevent, mitigate, and address gendered disinformation. IREX and our partners contribute by:

- » Raising awareness and engaging in cross-sectoral solutions diverse stakeholders – including civil society, governments, the tech sector, academia, media organizations, and political parties.
- » Collecting and using data to advance learning around gendered disinformation, including its impact, perpetrators, and successful mitigation strategies.
- » Empowering survivors with tools, resources, services, and networks for response, recovery, and resilience.
- » Equipping youth and adults with skills and tools for responsible online engagement that recognizes and rejects divisive, dangerous, and toxic narratives.
- » Collaborating with local media and civil society organizations to enable them to prevent, monitor, and respond to gendered disinformation.
- » Working with tech and civic tech to improve threat detection and mitigation tools and systems, like content moderation and safety-by-design features.
- » Equipping organizations and institutions, including political parties, with the digital, legal, physical, and psychosocial safety tools and knowledge to support women who are at risk of online abuse.
- » Empowering girls and women to participate in tech careers to enable equitable digital design and leadership.
- » Advocating for effective legislative, regulatory, and technological changes to improve the enabling environments that allow gendered disinformation to spread.
- » Working with norm-forming institutions, including education systems, workplaces, and cultural establishments, to foster equitable gender norms and reduce biases.
- » Integrating gender awareness across support to economic development, good governance, information integrity, anti-corruption, community leadership, and more.



Gendered Disinformation describes false or manipulative information that 1) attacks or undermines people (particularly public figures) based on their gender, or 2) that weaponizes gendered narratives and stereotypes to promote political, social, or economic objectives. [Examples of gendered disinformation](#) include fake or doctored images and audio, coordinated abuse denigrating a woman's character, and/or caricaturing and demonizing gender equality movements.

A study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union found that over 80% of women parliamentarians had experienced abuse on social media, and nearly 1/3 indicated that this had undermined their ability to effectively fulfil their mandates and express their opinions.



Initiative Highlights

Combatting manipulative information:

IREX's flagship media and information literacy approach, [Learn to Discern \(L2D\)](#), builds skills for individuals to safely navigate the information ecosystem and empowers communities to recognize and reject divisive narratives and hate speech. In Jordan, IREX's L2D pilot, [Families in the Digital Age \(FADA\)](#), tackled online harassment, blackmail, and online attacks against women, training them use the internet safely so they feel comfortable in online spaces.

Building resilience to online abuse:

IREX implements programs that address the root causes of online violence and support those vulnerable to abuse. [Transform](#) (Transform Digital Spaces) is a three-year USAID-funded global pilot initiative that is piloting approaches to preventing, mitigating, and responding to TFGBV. Through Transform, IREX has developed a curriculum of training modules to help organizations combat TFGBV, a [digital catalogue of resources](#) for survivors of TFGBV, and a slate of knowledge products to expand the evidence base of what works to address online abuse against women in public life.

Supporting digital and psychosocial safety and security:

The [Securing Access for Free Expression \(SAFE\)](#) and Enhancing Digital Security for Civil Society Organizations (DS360) programs provide physical and digital security training and psycho-social support for at-risk civil society activists and media professionals. These programs work with individuals and organizations to strengthen their digital security posture, practices, and policies with contextualized mentoring, training, and technical assistance to better protect themselves and their employees.



Additional Tools and Resources

- » [IREX's Global Framework for Addressing Online Threats to Women's Public Participation](#)
- » [Addressing Gendered Disinformation: Review of Current Recommendations and the Case for Broadening Responses](#)
- » [Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence as an Attack on Women's Public Participation: Review of Global Evidence and Implications](#)
- » The Transform Program's [Women's Digital Resource Catalogue](#)



About IREX

IREX is a global development and education organization. We strive for a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world—where individuals reach their full potential, governments serve their people, and communities thrive. With an annual portfolio of \$110 million and 650 staff worldwide, we work with partners in more than 120 countries in four areas essential to progress: cultivating leaders, empowering youth, strengthening institutions, and increasing access to quality education and information.

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