

Addressing Gendered Disinformation:

Review of Current Recommendations and the Case for Broadening Responses

Summary of Review and Analysis

Disinformation is widely recognized as a threat to individuals, communities, and institutions across the globe.¹ **Gendered disinformation**, however, disproportionately affects women and girls, especially those from marginalized groups for whom gender intersects with other social identities targeted by malevolent actors (e.g. LGBTQI+ and racialized minorities) and those active in public life (e.g. politicians, journalists, and human rights defenders). It is a tactic commonly used by authoritarian regimes to fuel divisive public debate, undermine democratic principles, institutions, and human rights,² and silence women's voices in digital spaces,³ threatening both individual well-being and democracy globally.

This report summarizes and groups the most common recommendations to address gendered disinformation and analyzes gaps between the evidence base and the recommendations made to date. This review is aimed toward those who seek to develop solutions to gendered disinformation in its different forms, although stakeholders across sectors should consider how they can operationalize these recommendations. While reviewers found many actionable recommendations, they also noticed significant gaps and missed opportunities for impact and collaboration.

1. Pérez-Escobar, M., Lilleker, D., & Tapia-Frade, A. (2023). A Systematic Literature Review of the Phenomenon of Disinformation and Misinformation. *Media and Communication*, 11(2), 76–87. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i2.6453>
2. U.S. Department of State Global Engagement Center. (2023). *Gendered Disinformation: Tactics, Themes, and Trends by Foreign Malign Actors*. <https://www.state.gov/gendered-disinformation-tactics-themes-and-trends-by-foreign-malign-actors/>
3. She Persisted. (2023). *Monetizing Misogyny: Gendered Disinformation and the Undermining of Women's Rights and Democracy Globally*. https://she-persisted.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ShePersisted_MonetizingMisogyny.pdf

Common Recommendations by Stakeholder



Government and Government Engagement Activities

- » Support the collection of data to better understand the threat of gendered disinformation
- » Establish and promote shared principles to address gendered disinformation
- » Raise awareness of gendered disinformation and its impact
- » Fund programs focused on training to combat gendered disinformation
- » Support improved regulation to address and prevent gendered disinformation
- » Advance national legislation to address gendered disinformation



NGOs, Civil Society, and other Organizations' Actions

- » Invest in understanding the context behind gendered disinformation
- » Engage women and women-led partners in addressing gendered disinformation
- » Raise awareness of the threat of gendered disinformation
- » Design and deliver capacity building and training programs for different audiences
- » Invest in internal capacity strengthening to improve policies and tools to support employees facing gendered disinformation
- » Engage in cross-sectoral collaboration and stakeholder engagement on the topic of gendered disinformation
- » Dialogue and engage with social media platforms to address gendered disinformation online



Social Media Platforms and Actions Engaging Social Media and Technology Sector

- » Develop base standards for prevention of and response to gendered disinformation

- » Raise awareness via social media platforms to reach broader audiences
- » Provide support for digital, media, and information literacy trainings
- » Content moderation of gendered disinformation and related harms
- » Improve reporting mechanisms for women experiencing gendered disinformation and other online attacks
- » Integrate safety by design principles into platform design
- » Punish perpetrators who produce and disseminate gendered disinformation
- » Engage in cross-sectoral collaboration



Academia, Research, and Think Tanks

- » Support the collection of data and evidence to expand the evidence base of gendered disinformation and its impacts
- » Engage in cross-sectoral collaboration to raise awareness of gendered disinformation
- » Improve institutional policies and procedures to support women experiencing abuse



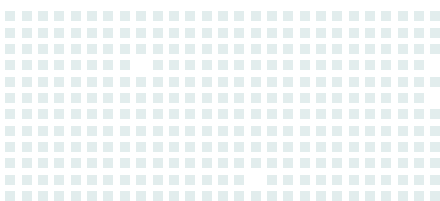
Media Organizations and the Media Sector

- » Invest in organizational capacity strengthening to protect staff against online attacks
- » Strengthen media stakeholders' capacity to address gendered disinformation
- » Serve as a watchdog for gendered disinformation topics and trends
- » Engage in cross-sectoral collaboration to amplify impact



Political Parties

- » Increase awareness
- » Improve institutional policies and procedures



Analysis of Recommendations

Taken together, the above list represents a comprehensive summary of the most common recommendations among existing reports for addressing gendered disinformation. Across the nearly twenty reports reviewed, some clear patterns – and gaps – emerge:

- » **Several stakeholders are consistently cited as leading players in addressing gendered disinformation**— including government, tech platforms, and civil society. Others were cited, but not as consistently. While these stakeholders are critical players, **many stakeholders are missing** from these recommendations.
- » Investing in **understanding the problem of gendered disinformation** is a common recommendation, but notably, the tech sector, social media platforms, and the media sector are not called out as stakeholders in understanding the problem, **which creates blind spots**.
- » **Raising awareness of gendered disinformation** is a common call to action, but more **nuance and tactics on how to do that in a survivor-centered and impactful way** would strengthen this recommendation, as would more comprehensive guidance on what kinds of awareness raising would work for different audiences.
- » **Funding and implementation of training and capacity strengthening initiatives** to build skills for prevention is often recommended. Notable however is **the absence of specific education, culture, religious, and other sector stakeholders** positioned to address several root causes of the problem.
- » A recommendation to **develop base standards and shared principles** when discussing and designing solutions to gendered disinformation would be greatly strengthened if **the voices of women and their experiences online were more prominently centered**, in addition to the many other diverse stakeholders who can contribute to developing principles and standards.
- » Support for **improved regulation and increased legislation** to address and prevent gendered disinformation does emerge frequently as a recommendation for governments, but **more research is needed** on the potential impact of these interventions.
- » Recommendations to **strengthen institutional policies, tools, and resources** for supporting women from abuse within institutions have also been recorded. This recommendation is critical for maintaining the ability

of all these stakeholders to persevere and develop effective responses.

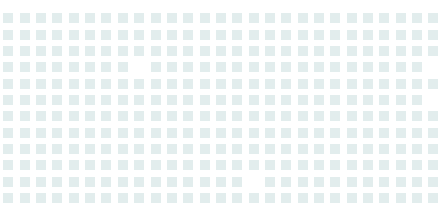
- » The most cited recommendation across sources is to **engage in cross-sectoral collaboration and engagement** to advance effective solutions. This is sorely needed as **none of these interventions— or stakeholders—alone will be able to solve the pernicious problem of gendered disinformation**.

What's missing from the recommendations?

- » Overall insufficient focus on prevention; lack of recognition and recommended action that get to the roots of the problem
- » Lack of connection to the education sector and other norm-formative institutions
- » Lack of specificity on how to productively engage men and boys
- » Lack of distinction between types of gendered disinformation and how different solutions are best suited to address them
- » Inadequate actions to target bystanders and perpetrators

All proposed mitigation actions should recognize that gendered disinformation, more so than other types of disinformation, creates offline consequences for its subjects. Therefore, responses should require:

- » Deliberate inclusion of survivor-focused, trauma-informed approaches
- » Explicit mitigation strategies to redress the intersectional nature of abusive content
- » Differentiated solutions for the evolving types of gendered disinformation
- » Strong connection to digital citizenship and digital ethics education
- » Attention to creating incentives for those who create and share gendered disinformation
- » Addition of comprehensive follow-through on the connection between digital and physical harm that gendered disinformation carries
- » Linkage to the broader impact that gendered disinformation has on communities, governance, democracy, economy (and more), to engage relevant power-holders and organizations in solutions



Conclusion

While there are many recommendations for addressing gendered disinformation, most are siloed and do not leverage the breadth of stakeholders who could and should be involved in gendered disinformation prevention and response. The authors of this report suggest that common recommended actions would be strengthened by adding evidence and best practices from adjacent relevant sectors, such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence, offline gender-based violence, violence against women in politics, countering/preventing violent extremism and radicalization, and behavior change communications, as well as responses to other forms of identity-based disinformation. A more nuanced understanding and

expansion of research and recommendations to different contexts through collaboration with organizations across the globe would also help elevate awareness of the threat and urgency of response, as well as provide a larger set of tested approaches and innovative solutions.

It is important to reiterate that none of these actors or interventions alone will prevent or remedy the harm done by gendered disinformation. To meaningfully address this threat, diverse stakeholders will need to coordinate, partner, and share learnings to build upon and replicate solutions that work.

“ Gendered disinformation is a new threat and is taking a significant toll on the mental health and physical safety of women, girls, trans, and LGBTQ+ people all over the world.”

MARIA RESSA, [NOBEL PRIZE LECTURE 2021](#)

[Full report here](#)

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