

# Gender and ICT Policy Playbook



**‘Digital technologies cannot be understood as autonomous, gender-neutral tools but rather as part of a wider, socio-political context that shapes their design, purpose and use’**

— The Digital Revolution: Implications for Gender Equality and Women’s Rights After Beijing, 2020

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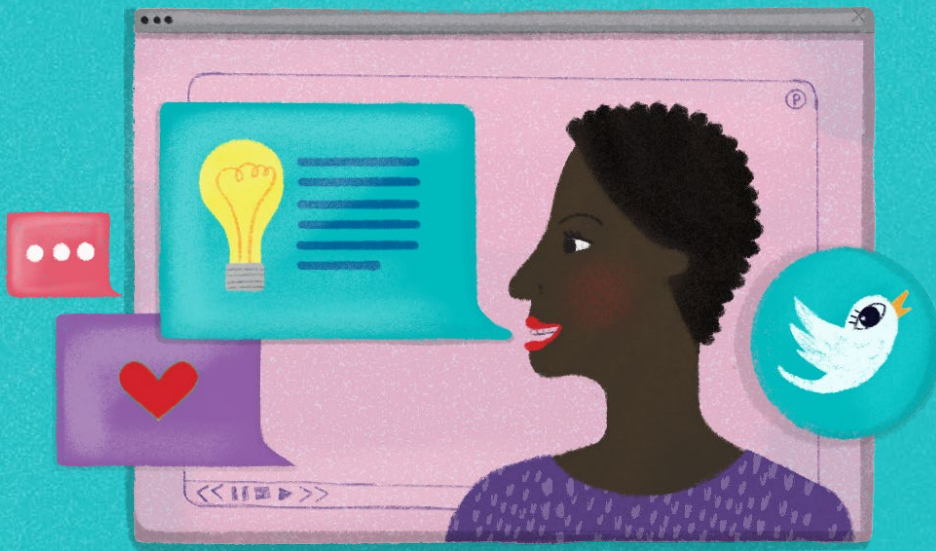
## Background

Over the years, the World Wide Web Foundation has partnered with women's rights and digital rights organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean to develop the one of the few global civil society networks focused on closing the gender digital divide under the name Women's Rights Online (WRO) Network.

The WRO Network has been at the forefront of advocating for the integration of gender in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) policy. With the exciting digital transformation brought by ICT comes challenges, some old, some new. It has changed the way we access information, products, services; how we work and access economic opportunities; how we run governments; how we play; how we communicate and how we express ourselves.

**Today, the internet mirrors the good and the bad in our societies, unfortunately this means that it also mirrors and magnifies existing social cultural and economic inequalities, including gender inequality.**

# What is the Gender and ICT Policy Playbook?



This Playbook draws from the experience and learnings from the work of World Wide Web Foundation and the [Women's Rights Online \(WRO\) Network](#) in advocating for gender-responsive ICT Policy.

It provides fundamental principles and approaches in advocating for and integrating gender into the policy development process, as well as actionable steps towards gender-responsive policy-making. Existing work of the Web Foundation and Women's Rights Online Network mostly centres on the experience of women and girls.



While the end goal of the Playbook is to provide guidelines in passing, and implementing policies, we note that the Playbook is not meant to be exhaustive but a useful starting and reference guide.

It is noteworthy that most references in this Playbook focus on the experiences of women and girls. Nevertheless, we recognise that there is more work to be done to be more gender-inclusive, so the publication of this Playbook is just a beginning.

## Who is it for?

The Playbook is designed for policymakers, authorities, civil society organisations, activists, and researchers who are engaged and interested in working to close the gender digital divide, and are interested in integrating gender into their policy advocacy and development processes.

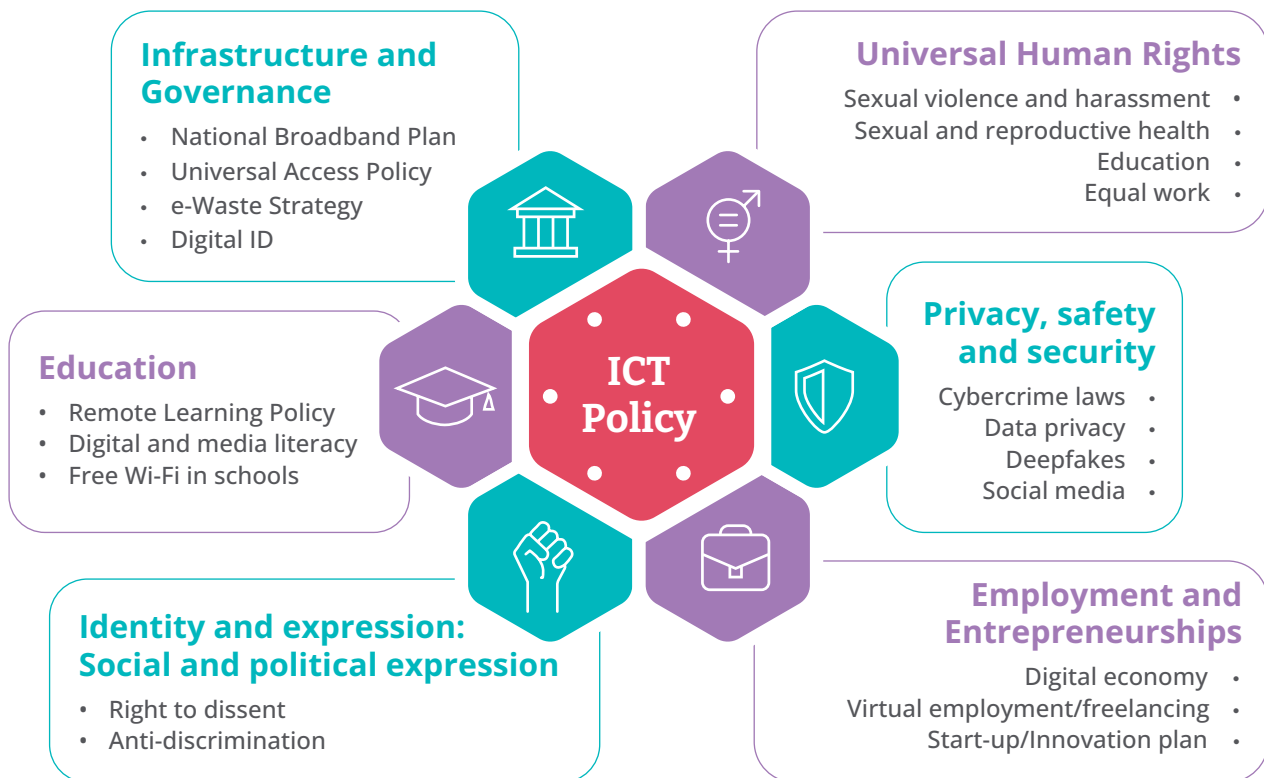
Private sector and other enterprises may benefit from these principles as well.

## What do we mean by ICT Policy?

We use the term *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy* to encompass a wide range of actions and interventions taken up by government and other stakeholders, such as the private sector, that impact the access and use of ICTs.

ICT policy intervention varies across countries, regions, and local context. In general, these policies may be developed at different levels, such as, broadband policy, e-Government policy, or legislation concerning cybersecurity and data protection.

Sometimes ICT policies may be integrated and/or intersect with other public policies, such as policies on education, health, amongst others. It is imperative to understand how public policy making is determined in your region, country, or context.



**Figure 1.** Examples of ICT Policy Across Sectors. Four categories adapted from the Foundation of Media Alternatives' [Filipino Women's Digital Agenda](#).

## Why Integrate Gender into ICT Policy?

The internet has provided opportunities for women and gender diverse groups to disrupt discriminatory social norms, access information, freely express their views and opinions, access jobs and other economic opportunities, develop relevant content for themselves and participate in public engagement and debates. At the same time, so many women and gender diverse people have been left behind, especially in middle- and low-income countries.

As of 2021, according to the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), across 32 countries, only a third of women globally are connected to the internet, compared to almost half of men. The gender gap in internet use is estimated to have only dropped from 30.9% to 30.4%.

This divide is rooted in the unequal distribution of power between men, women and gender diverse groups leading to sustained discrimination and exclusion which impacts how diverse women and girls access and use digital technologies. Even in contexts where the issues of gender equity in internet use are not clear, other forms of inequity emerge. This is illustrated in the 2022 report on [Advancing Meaningful Connectivity](#), which measured disparities in meaningful connectivity between men and women in countries such as Colombia and South Africa, where internet use has reached equity.

Evidently there are a number of barriers to digital gender inequality. The [2021 Costs of Exclusion Report](#) by the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), summarises some of them:

- **Affordability of handset costs and data tariffs.** Handset cost remains one of the most frequently cited reasons among mobile phone users in low- and middle-income countries for not using the internet.
- **Device gaps.** Women in low- and middle-income countries are estimated to be 15% less likely to own a smartphone than men. Lower rates of smartphone ownership among women forms a technical limitation to what women are able to do when connected to the internet.
- **Wage gaps.** Women globally earn around [77 cents for each dollar](#) a man earns, making device and data costs more expensive for women.
- **Privacy and security.** Women more frequently reported being afraid about personal data privacy. They mentioned the fear of being manipulated or targeted because of what they post on social media.
- **Literacy and skills.** As of 2019, 90% of adult men are literate, compared to only 83% of women. Differences in mean years of schooling also replicate into lower access to digital skill-building in an educational context.

In addition, there is very little data at the global level on the experiences of gender diverse and non-binary people's access to aIn 2015, [all member states](#) of the United Nations collectively committed to promote gender equality including advancing the *'use of enabling technology, in particular, information and communication technology, to promote the empowerment of women.'*

In addition to addressing gender inequality in relation to ICTs, governments under [target 9c](#) of the SDGs also committed to *'significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in Least Developed Countries by 2020'*. For [Connecting the Other Half](#), the UN Broadband Commission is also targeting to reach broadband-internet user penetration by 75% worldwide, and 35% in least developed countries by 2025, wherein we might [fall short](#).

While the target 9c deadline has passed, the commitment and the targets remain relevant in achieving gender equality in ICTs. These commitments are a positive step towards closing the gender digital divide. On the flipside, the gender digital divide is also as a result of the failure to develop and implement gender responsive ICT policies that ensure the needs of women and gender diverse people are taken into account.

According to a study by A4AI in 72 countries, [29 of these countries \(40%\)](#) had no substantial policies [or programmes](#) addressing women's access to the internet. This tells us that while the intentions are there, we still have a long way to go in actually fulfilling these commitments.

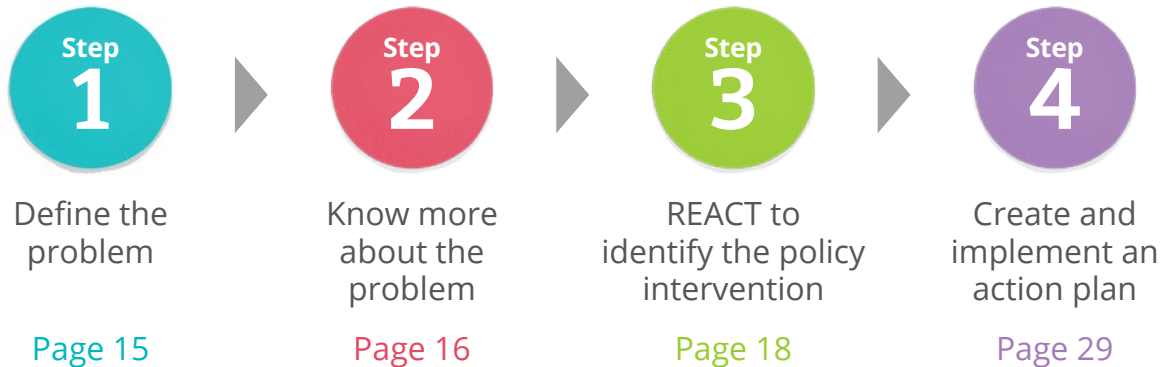
# How to use this Gender and ICT Policy Playbook





The Playbook is designed in an easy step-by-step format. We understand that, based on local context and expertise, not everyone will need to start in the beginning in their journey towards gender-responsive policy development.

Below is an outline diagram to help you easily and effectively navigate the Playbook. Feel free to pick the most relevant starting point for you:



For example, if you have data and are complete with data analysis, you may skip to Step 3 where you will develop policy interventions.

## Glossary of Terms

**Sex** refers to biological and physiological characteristics associated with being male, female, or both (intersex), such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, and hormone levels. Intersex individuals have both male and female reproductive organs.

**Gender** refers to socially constructed behaviour and expressions attached to being a girl, boy, man, woman, or gender-diverse individual. This influences how people identify themselves and each other and how they act and interact, as well as how a society distributes power and resources.

**Gender diverse** is used to refer to persons whose gender identity, including their gender expression, is at odds with what is perceived as being the gender norm in a particular context at a particular point in time, including those who do not place themselves in the male/female binary, according to [UNOCHR](#).

**Gender analysis** refers to the methodology used to understand the power dynamics and relationship between genders, their access to resources, their activities, their constraints and challenges. It provides information that defines gender and its relationship to other power dynamics such as race, class, caste, ethnicity, ability, culture, gender identity or sexual orientation, age, among others.

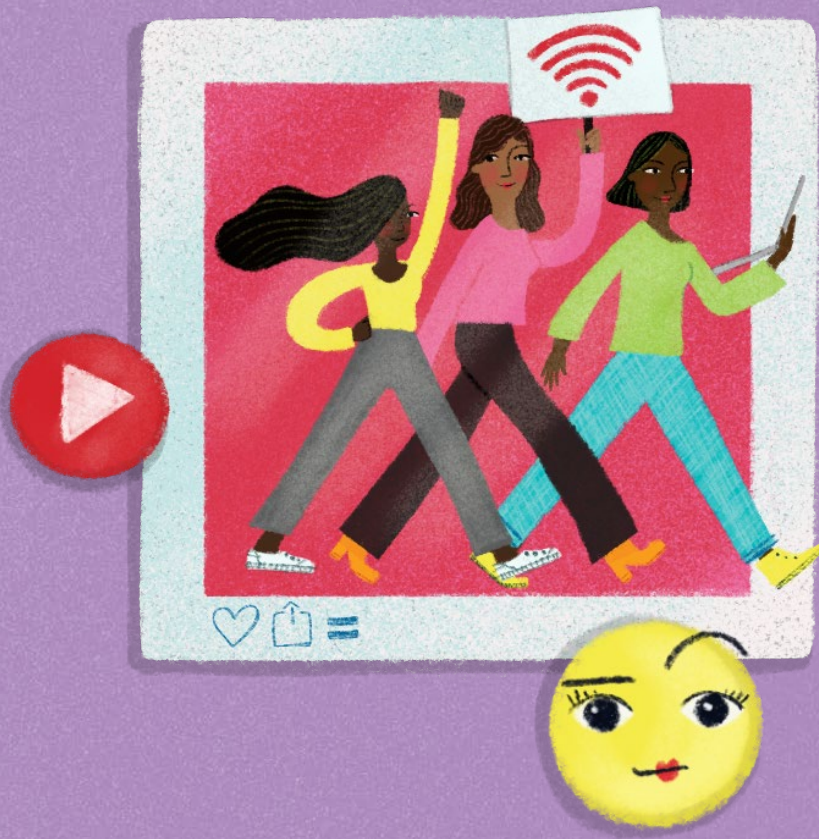
**Gender digital divide** refers to the difference across gender in terms of access, participation and use of information and communication technologies such as the internet and the Web.

**Gender equality** refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men and girls and boys and non-binary people. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women, men and non-binary people are taken into consideration, recognising their diversity and particular needs.

**LGBTQIA+** stands for *lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, and asexual*. The plus sign (+) signifies a wide range of sexual identities and expressions.

**Social norms** are shared beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour in a valued reference group. These can be defined as rules of behaviour that people in a specific group conform to because (a) they believe most other people in the group do conform to it and (b) most other people in the group believe they ought to conform to it. - Alexander-Scott, M. Bell, E. and Holden, J. (2016) [DFID Guidance Note: Shifting Social Norms to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\)](#). London: VAWG Helpdesk.

# Important Principles and Approaches



Closing the gender digital divide means that no woman, girl or gender diverse person is left behind or negatively impacted by continuous digital transformation. Embarking on this journey requires clear and concise intention based on human rights standards and gender justice.

This section discusses important principles and approaches that will be expounded in **Step 2**. These will guide you throughout the policy development process and set minimum standards for achieving gender equality.

Keep this section as a regular reference as you integrate gender into your ICT policies and regulations.

## Meaningful Connectivity

The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) launched the [Meaningful Connectivity](#) target to raise the bar on internet access. It proposes a holistic approach to internet access, adoption and use, where the minimum level of technical quality is fundamental for the full enjoyment of the digital society.

A4AI also released [a policy guide towards Meaningful Connectivity](#) for more in-depth discussion.

Importantly, each of the four pillars must be disaggregated by gender, allowing for indicator-level gender gaps to be measured and recorded. This can be helpful for policymakers to understand where the barriers to gender-equitable connectivity are and what more targeted policy interventions may be possible. This level of detail is important to closing the digital gender gap, where top-level digital divide measures suggest no disparity exists, but indicators, such as Meaningful Connectivity exposes deeper inequalities.

To assess if there is meaningful connectivity, women and other gender-diverse groups need the following:



**4G-LIKE  
INTERNET SPEEDS**



**SMARTPHONE  
OWNERSHIP**



**AN UNLIMITED BROADBAND  
CONNECTION AT HOME,  
WORK, OR PLACE OF STUDY**



**DAILY USE**

## Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)

Closing the gender digital divide is a human rights issue, which requires a [human rights-based approach](#) (HRBA). This is a conceptual framework based on international human rights standards aimed at promoting and protecting human rights for all, without discrimination.

Any policy or action for closing the gender digital gap and promoting digital equality should be redressing discriminatory laws and practices. Adopting a human rights based-approach also challenges unjust distributions of power that impede equitable progress.

Gender equality is a fundamental human right, enshrined in internal human rights treaties such as the [International Bill of Rights](#), the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) and other [regional and international human rights treaties](#).

Applying a human rights-based approach recognises that women and gender diverse people have a right to dignity and to enjoy their rights without discrimination. The promotion and protection of human rights should form the foundational basis for any policy aimed at closing the gender digital.

### RELATED READING AND REFERENCES:

[CEDAW and the Human Rights Based Approach to Programming by United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2009](#)

[Guide to Human Rights for Internet Users by the Council of Europe, 2014](#)

[Guiding Principles for Human Rights Based Approach to Public Services by the Portugal Ministry for Modernization of the State and Public Administration, 2021](#)

## Feminist Principles of the Internet (FPI)

Developed by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) through an open and consultative process with women and gender diverse communities across the world, the [Feminist Principles of the Internet](#) provides a framework for answering the question: How does a feminist internet look like?

The principles are a series of 17 statements that provide insight into some of the most challenging intersections of gender and technology across five themes: **Access, Movement, Economy, Expression, and Embodiment:**

- **Access** discusses access to the internet, information, and participation in the design of technology.
- **Movements** talks about ICTs power to build social movements, provide a space for resistance to the status quo, and democratising policymaking spaces and processes that control the internet.
- **Economy** challenges the corporatisation of the internet and calls for platforms that promote solidarity and community, environmental sustainability and openness (open-source, open knowledge, among others).
- **Expression** advocates for the freedom to express oneself, freedom to dissent, and freedom to create and explore alternative content on sexuality.
- **Embodiment** calls for the consideration of diverse experience and multiple identities of human beings across online spaces.

**SOME USEFUL TOOLS:**

[Intersectionality Guide and Toolkit: An Intersectional Approach to Leave No One Behind from UN Women and UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, n.d.](#)

[Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice from the Association for Women's Rights in Development, 2004](#)

[Gender Equality and Intersectionality Analysis Toolkit from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 2021](#)

## Intersectionality

Coined by American scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, [intersectionality](#) initially articulated how black women faced multiple levels of discrimination on the basis of gender and race. Intersectionality has been broadened to define how individuals experience different forms of discrimination based on *intersecting* identities or status, such as one's race, ethnicity, class, ability, gender identity and expression.

To fully illustrate this concept, poor rural older women in a low-income country may have particular challenges that differ from younger women in rural or peri-urban communities. Looking at socio-economic status, age, and lack of proximity to government and infrastructure and services, or the intersections of their identity, we understand that as a group, women do not have a homogeneous experience. Do note that this may be context-specific, and considerations may vary from one group to another.

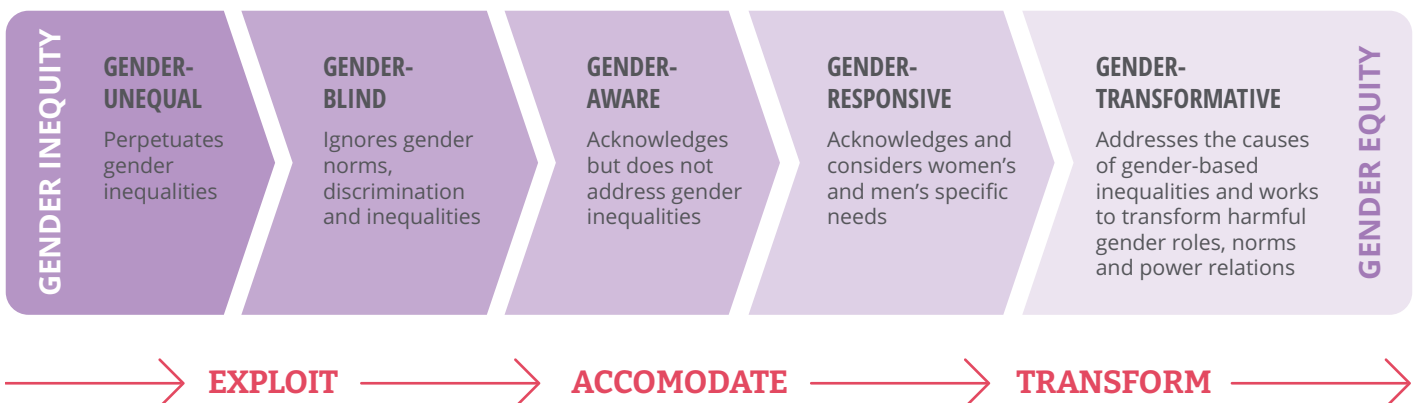
In developing gender-responsive policy, considering an intersectional lens ensures that no one is left behind.

## Gender Responsive 'vs' Gender Transformative Policy

The two approaches are complementary and part of a continuum towards gender equality. This is illustrated in the UNICEF [Gender Equity Continuum model](#). While this Playbook advises for gender responsive policy-making, the most ideal approach is gender transformative policy, which takes into consideration the root, societal causes of gender inequality. This challenges unequal power relationships, harmful gender roles, and social norms that reinforce gender inequality. Unfortunately, gender transformative policy making is still a nascent area in policymaking in many economies but worthy of recognition.

Gender transformative ICT policies would not only ensure that women and gender diverse peoples' needs are addressed but it would also focus on shifting the unequal distribution of power. This examines the discriminatory social norms and traditional gender roles that create and amplify barriers access and meaningful participation of women and gender diverse people online.

**Figure 2.** The gender equity continuum



# Creating a Gender-Responsive ICT Policy





## What is the problem?

The first and most important step in the process is documenting the problem.

Sometimes we are made aware of issues without prior knowledge; some are brought to our offices as people of authority, and sometimes we experience it ourselves.

For those unfamiliar with issues on the intersection of gender and ICTs, you may have heard variations of the following statements from friends, coworkers, or the media.

- “My daughter told me that she’s uncomfortable asking for help from computer teachers at school because they are all men and have said that ‘computers are for boys’.”
- “This journalist has been continuously harassed by online trolls. There is no law penalising distribution of sexually-compromising photos in our countries.”
- “I wanted to be a successful software engineer but men with less experience and expertise than me have been promoted consistently instead of me.”

Policymakers and government authorities are made aware of these issues from a number of sources, which include internal initiatives, community and activist groups, NGOs, research institutions and so on.

- “Female teachers, especially those with children, are struggling with conducting lessons from home.”
- “Only 36% of the population have internet access at home.”
- “All start-up founders I met at an incubator yesterday were male.”
- “We would like to develop more services and products for women. However, we found out that most government data are by age, geography, and occupation—there are no data differentiating by sex or gender.”

On a piece of paper, write down the problem you want to solve. It does not need to make sense at this point.



## What is causing the problem? How valid is the problem?

Most of the issues reflected in the statements above are usually collective problems, which mean that they are experienced by a large number of people at the same time. When you decide that this is a problem that you or your group would like to tackle, the next step is to figure out how valid and widespread the problem is, and what is causing it.

To further understand, we need data. To collect data, we need to conduct research. With any research endeavour, there is a need for funding and investment. There are times that because gender equality may not be regarded as a priority, there might be no budget allocated for it. If that is the case, we recommend prioritising initial research using a few indicators, platforms, and tools that would provide useful information, even if inexhaustive.

Some agencies and firms may also provide research funding based on initial results and findings from previous research. It is still helpful should you need to start small:

- If you would like to know the experience of female teachers with children on remote learning, you may start with working with a researcher and sending out an online survey to 10 elementary schools in your area.
- If you would like to know why there are little to no innovation projects led by women in your country, it might be good to start talking to start-up incubators and the people who manage them. Ask: What do founders need to provide to be able to pursue innovation? What skills are necessary?
- If you would like to know the difference between the experience of women, men, and gender-diverse people in using a particular e-government service, ensure that you are working towards gender-disaggregated data, meaning you do not look at a group of people as homogenous, regardless of other indicators such as age, location, and educational attainment. You want to be able to separate the results for women, men, and gender-diverse people, and compare them.

A helpful reference is the Toolkit for Researching Women's Internet Access and Use designed by the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), the Web Foundation, the Association for Progressive Communications, and GSMA. This provides a comprehensive guide in incorporating gender into research on access and use of ICTs. It also provides sample questions and strategies that can be adapted into any research context.

### CASE STUDY: Fundacion Karisma (Colombia)

A WRO partner, Fundacion Karisma, conducted research [ES] on the experience of women and gender-diverse journalists in the workplace. They found out that media agencies' workplace protocols and policies are not gender-sensitive, which as a result affect participation and representation. In the end, they were able to engage with media agencies and institutions to explore how to implement recommendations from the study to provide an equitable, safe and thriving workplace.



**FURTHER READING:**

[White Paper on Feminist Internet Research by the Association for Progressive Communications, 2022](#)

[Feminist Internet Ethical Research Practices by Association for Progressive Communications, 2019](#)

[Engendering ICT Toolkit by the World Bank, n.d.](#)

[Gender and Information Communication Technology: Survey Toolkit by the US Agency for International Development, n.d](#)

[Gender Analysis by the European Institute for Gender Equality, 2011](#)

[Unpacking Intersectional Approaches to Data paper led by Inclusive Data Charter, n.d](#)

[The Gender Digital Divide Primer by USAID, 2020](#)

If you are working with your national government, as part of international coalitions, there might be access to more budget based on your country's commitment to agreed-upon statements, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In that case, we recommend using the following audits:

- **The Digital Gender Gap Audit Toolkit<sup>1</sup>**

The Digital Gender Gap Audit is a measure of 14 indicators that gather national data across five themes:

- Internet Access and Women's Empowerment
- Affordability
- Digital Skills and Education
- Relevant Content and Services for Women
- Online Safety

This toolkit will help you to develop evidence and monitor country progress towards closing the digital gender gap, and support the development and implementation of policy measures to achieve the SGDs on gender and technology: 5b, 9c, and 1.4. In partnership with the WRO Network, the Web Foundation has conducted [22 Digital Gender Gap Audits](#) across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

- **Meaningful Connectivity**

As introduced above, Meaningful Connectivity provides an accessible quantitative [methodology guide](#). This year, [A4AI](#) conducted [research in nine countries](#): Colombia, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Rwanda, India, and Indonesia.

To fully understand the results of your data, it is also helpful to do a historical and social review of the role of women and other gender-diverse people in your context. This might mean that you will need to engage with academics, women's rights and LGBTQIA+ groups, women in rural communities, think tanks, among many others. When combined, these will give a robust idea of the status of gender equality in your country, and eventually the gender digital gap.

**CASE STUDY:**

## Cooperativa Sula Batsu (Costa Rica)

Cooperativa Sula Batsu (or Sula Batsu) is another member of the WRO Network. The organisation conducted its digital gender audit in 2018, and quickly realised the lack of data to analyse the participation of women in the digital sector. As a result, Sula Batsu developed the [Gender and Technology Data Project](#), and has been working collectively with firms and other organisations in developing data models that capture women's experiences in their communities, universities, and workplaces. A summary of the methodological approach can be found [here](#).

<sup>1</sup> Although useful, this is under review so update a number of indicators and the methodology in general. It should be available by December 2022.

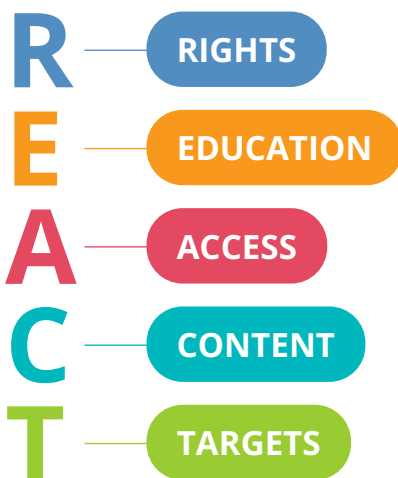


## What are examples of policy interventions?

Now that you have an idea of the status of gender digital equality from the identification of the problem and having a deeper understanding through research, what do you do next?

It would be recommended to use the **REACT framework** developed by the Web Foundation to guide in the design of policy interventions. It outlines policy steps that one can take to close the digital gender gap and ensure full digital inclusion.

The recommendations are divided in five categories:



### R for RIGHTS

#### Protect and enhance everyone's rights

Today the internet has become an important enabler for human rights. It is important that your policy promotes and protects human rights for women and other marginalised communities.

While there is no global consensus on whether access to the internet is a human right under international law, there is general agreement that the internet is fundamental to the exercise of human rights enshrined in the International Bill of Rights. In fact, in 2016, two UN Member States endorsed the [UN Human Rights Council resolution](#) which affirmed that *"the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, in particular freedom of expression which is applicable regardless of frontiers and through any media of one's choice, in accordance with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights."*

The UN Human Rights Council has also been categorical in calling for member states to address violations and abuses of women's rights online that hinder the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and usage and participation.

All human rights are indivisible, interrelated, and interdependent, meaning that one set of human rights cannot be enjoyed without the other.

**USEFUL REFERENCES:**

[Report on online violence against women \(2018\) by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences](#)

[Free to Be Online: A report on girls' and young women's experiences of online harassment \(2020\) by Plan international](#)

[Tech Policy Design Lab: Online Gender-Based Violence and Abuse \(2021\)](#)

[Alternate Realities, Alternate Internets: African Feminist Research for a Feminist Internet \(2020\) by Pollicy](#)

**WRO NETWORK COUNTRY REPORTS:**

[Gender Based Violence in Paraguay \(2020\) by TEDIC](#)

[Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria \(2021\) by Paradigm Initiative](#)

[Violencias Machistas Atacan La Libertad de Expresión de Periodistas y Comunicadoras en Colombia \(2021\) by Fundacion Karisma](#)

In some countries, there are existing policies that tackle gender and ICTs with poor implementation; while some countries do not have policies at all. For example, some countries have policies that protect citizens from online harassment, but not women specifically. Women experience online sexual harassment more than men, thus general policies that cater to women, men, and gender diverse groups as one homogenous group will not be as effective to tackling gender-based harassment. In fact, in the same report, lesbian, gay, and bisexual respondents are more likely to encounter harassment online due to their gender identity (54%) compared to their straight counterparts (31%). In addition, more than half of Black respondents and almost half of Hispanic respondents mentioned that they were harassed due to their race and ethnicity, compared to 17% of White respondents.

This is one of the reasons why it is helpful to have an intersectional lens (a framework mentioned earlier in this Playbook) in policymaking.

The most important question for us is: **What policies are in place and how are they being implemented?**

**The following are some of the human rights related to the internet and examples of the questions you could formulate in order to identify whether your country counts on the right policies to protect them:**

***Right to equal treatment, non-discrimination, and freedom from violence***

The following questions will guide you in identifying if your country has policies that protect women and gender diverse people's participation online without prejudice:

- Are there existing laws and policies that address equality, non-discrimination, and freedom from violence online?
- Do the policies enable or foster access of marginalised groups?
- Are there laws and policies that address online gender-based violence?

Online gender-based violence (OGBV) is a human rights violation and impacts the ways in which women and gender diverse people use the internet. OGBV has a chilling effect on women and gender diverse participation online. Online gender-based violence manifests in image based sexual abuse, harassment and bullying, doxing, or non-consensual distribution of intimate images among others.

- How are these policies being implemented? Which actors are responsible for implementing them?

**CASE STUDY:****Tech Policy Design Lab: Online Gender-Based Violence and Abuse**

From March 2020 to February 2021, the Web Foundation hosted four multi-stakeholder consultations that brought together tech platforms (Facebook/Instagram, Twitter, Google/YouTube, TikTok), civil society organisations, government representatives, and academics to generate evidence, build relationships, and engage with constructive dialogue around women's experience of online gender-based violence and abuse.

Insights and evidence from the consultations were used to develop a series of three policy design workshops that applied human-centred design and design-thinking to co-create platform prototypes that respond to the experience of women most affected by online abuse.

***Right to freedom of expression, opinion, and right to information***

According to the [Article 19](#) of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), it is important to ensure that women and gender diverse people can safely express their opinions and express themselves “regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of [their] choice”.

Policies should address barriers to freedom of expression and opinion in line with international human rights standards. Women and gender diverse people should also have access to information, especially about government services. For example, withholding information from women and gender diverse people about sexual and reproductive health is a violation of their right to information.

**Ask:**

- Are there laws and policies that safeguard women and gender-diverse people's freedom of expression online?
- Are there policies that promote and protect their right to information?
- How are these policies being implemented? Which actors are responsible for implementing them?

**FURTHER READING:**

[Report on Gender Justice and Freedom of Opinion and Expression \(2021\) by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom Opinion and Expression](#)

[Tackling Gender Inequality through Access to Information \(2020\) by Article19](#)

[Gender Justice & Freedom of Opinion and Expression \(2021\) by the Association for Progressive Communications](#)

[Acceso Denegado \(2020\) by Article19](#)

**FURTHER READING:**

[Report on privacy and technology from a gender perspective by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy, 2019](#)

[Resolution on the right to privacy in the digital age from the UN Human Rights Council, 2017](#)

[Data Protection and Privacy Legislation Worldwide by the UN Conference on Trade and Development, n.d](#)

[General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) from the European Union, n.d.](#)

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

[Contract for the Web \(2019\) by the Web Foundation](#)

[The Charter for Human Rights and Principles for the Internet \(2014\) by UN and the Internet Governance Forum](#)

[Guide to Human Rights for Internet Users \(2014\) by the Council of Europe](#)

[Digital Rights in Africa: Challenges and Policy Options \(2019\) by CIPESA](#)

**| Right to privacy and data protection**

The Article 17 of the ICCPR says that “[N]o one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.”

Privacy and data protection is a more significant concern for women than men. Women expressed concerns about having their personal data such as private messages, home addresses, and health care misused, suggesting that strong data protection guarantees are particularly important to increase trust in online services and to safeguard equality in rights and freedoms for women online.

It is also important to note that the collection, processing, use, and dissemination of data takes place amid existing structural inequalities that raise the risk of surveillance, violence, and other human rights violations. Policies need to address how the state and non-state actors conduct surveillance, decryption and data collection and distribution and how this impacts women and gender diverse peoples’ rights.

**Ask:**

- Are there laws and policies that protect the right to privacy and guarantee data protection for women and gender diverse people?
- How are these policies being implemented? Which actors are responsible for implementing them?

**ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Ensure that your policy protects women and gender diverse peoples’ rights in line with international human rights standards.
- Adopt and implement laws to curb online gender-based violence and other forms of discrimination.
- Ensure that privacy and data protection laws include women and gender diverse people’s concerns, and protect their right to privacy and access to information.
- Ensure that there are gender transformative policies, laws and programmes that shift negative cultural and social norms and discriminatory laws and practices that would curb enjoyment of the rights.

## E for EDUCATION

### Promote education to equip everyone—especially women—with the skills they need to access and use ICTs effectively

In the recognition that digital literacy is an essential life skill for today's reality, the UN SDG 4 called on governments to *“substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship by 2030 and set as a key target (4.4.1) which aims to increase the proportion of youth/adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill.”*

In addition, the [Women's Rights Online Network Report in 2020](#) described how women identified the lack of digital skills as a barrier to access and use of the internet. This is influenced by factors such as education, income inequality, access to digital services, and cultural biases discouraging women and girls from using technology. Digital skills and education help women and gender diverse people to not only access and use the internet but also create and shape new digital technologies that address their needs.

It is important to know the [level of digital literacy](#) of the women and gender diverse people in your context:

- **Higher-level skills** are advanced skills that allow women and gender-diverse people to become an ICT professional: programming, data analysis, processing, development; this may also include working on social media and working with a remote team efficiently
- **Generic skills** allow for handling communication and transactions online and creating digital content
- **Basic functional skills** are being able to operate mobile and computer devices, connect to the internet, set up accounts and profiles, and access information

#### FURTHER READING:

[Digital Skills: The Why, The What, The How by the World Bank, 2021](#)

[I'd blush if I could: Closing Gender Digital Divides in Digital Skills through Education by the EQUALS Global Partnership, 2019](#)

[Cracking the Code: Girls' and women's education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics \(STEM\) by UNESCO, 2017](#)

[‘Taking stock: Data and evidence on gender equality in digital access, skills and leadership’ by the EQUALS Global Partnership, 2019](#)

[Digital Skills for Life and Work by the UNESCO Working Group on Education, 2017](#)



### ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Support the schooling of all children with free primary and secondary education.
- Work with stakeholders, such as, ministries of education, in designing and rolling an up-to-date digital literacy curricula for all ages.
- Invest in teachers' continuous and regular training in ICT skills and development.
- Invest in providing long-term ICT and connectivity equipment in schools and communities.
- Ensure that training and other opportunities are also accessible to other marginalised groups, such as, people with disabilities, rural communities and so on.
- Ensure that educational content is translated and localised.
- Invest in challenging familial and community stereotypes about the participation and opportunities of women and girls in tech.
- Build partnerships with key actors, such as the private sector and other donors to implement trainings and other programs.
- Educate policymakers about ICT.

#### CASE STUDY:

### Digital Skills Fund

The Web Foundation, the [EQUALS Global Partnership](#), and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development ([BMZ](#)) launched the [Digital Skills Fund](#), which aimed to expand digital skills training for women and girls worldwide. From 2019 to 2020, the Fund supported 20 local organisations in Asia, Africa, Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean. Some initiatives include:

- **[SheLeadsIT](#)** (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago) conducted virtual trainings, events, and hackathons for almost 1,400 girls in the Caribbean.
- **[Ghana Code Club](#)** rolled out a community coding program, "Code on Wheels." Trainers travelled to communities across the country and hosted beginner-friendly, hands-on coding workshops for women and girls aged 12 to 24. They also trained volunteers and educators to establish Girls Code Clubs.
- **[Laboratoria Coding AC \(Mexico\)](#)** provided job-oriented digital skills education to women from vulnerable backgrounds. Focused on job placement, the organisation has reached more than 1,000 applicants in its bootcamp program, and worked with the technology sector to increase diversity in its recruitment and workforce.

## A for ACCESS

### Deliver affordable and meaningful access

In our research, the affordability of connectivity data emerged as one of the biggest factors of exclusion for both women and men in four low and middle income countries, with 22% of non-internet users saying the cost of data packages barred them from accessing the internet, while 25% of users said this limited their use. In fact, for many women, especially in low and middle income countries, the cost of mobile and computer devices, and data plans remains prohibitive due to their limited purchasing power.

Here are few questions to help you determine where to begin:

- **Is internet access affordable?**

A4AI has long advocated for the cost of 1GB of mobile broadband to not exceed more than 2% of the average monthly income. The longer-term goal is for countries to move towards 5GB of mobile broadband to not surpass 2% of average monthly income by 2026.

- **Are devices affordable?**

The global average cost of a smartphone is 26% of the average monthly income. However in some least developed countries, people would need to spend at least 70% of their average monthly income to purchase the cheapest available smartphone.

- **Do women and gender diverse people have meaningful connectivity?**

- Do they use the internet daily?
- Do they have access to a smartphone?
- Do they have unlimited broadband and mobile connection?
- Do they have at least 4G mobile connectivity?

- **Is there a national broadband plan that addresses barriers to access for women and gender diverse people?**

National broadband plans correlate positively with greater internet affordability. Therefore countries with a national broadband plan that sets clear, time-bound targets and interventions for reducing broadband cost and increasing penetration tend to have lower internet prices relative to average income. National broadband plans also heavily help guide the efforts of the government towards lowering prices and making the internet more accessible to a greater population.

- **Are there resources and investment in increasing access for women and gender-diverse people?**

One of the most promising paths for investments to increase access is the Universal Service & Access Fund (USAFs). This is a funding mechanism to incentivise the expansion of internet services in remote and underserved locations. These funds — typically financed through mandatory contributions from telecommunications service providers — are designed explicitly to address access and use gaps in communications services. To work for women and gender diverse people, USAFs should:

- Invest at least 50% of the budget in projects targeting access for women and girl;
- Increase transparency of fund financing, disbursements and operations (to guarantee there are non-discriminatory rules);
- Increase awareness of gender issues within USAFs (Universal Service and Access Funds);
- Measure impact.





### ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Reduce the cost of connectivity through policy strategies that seek to subsidise smartphone and laptop devices.
- Adopt, regularly review, and update the National Broadband Plan and the Universal Access Strategy/ Policy, including gender as part of its mandate.
- Invest in community networks.
- Invest in public Wi-Fi.
- Include gender and inclusivity as an evaluation criteria in public access projects and the operation of the Universal Service & Access Funds.

### CASE STUDY:

## Costa Rica

In 2015, Costa Rica launched a national plan called Hogares Conectados (connected homes), allowing eligible families to get up to 80% of the cost of internet connection, as well as up to 100% of laptop costs subsidised by the national telecommunications fund (FONATEL). Moreover, the cost-sharing approach to subsidies encouraged families to take excellent care of their ICT equipment since they were effectively part owners. Lastly, approximately 95% of the families who qualified to be part of the program to date are female-headed households, which implies that more women — especially those in rural areas — are benefiting from being connected.

## C for CONTENT

### Ensure relevant and empowering content for women is available and can be used

In addition to increasing access, it is important that women and gender diverse people have relevant and meaningful content and services, when they get online. The presence of quality content in local languages also provides women and girls with the opportunity to enjoy the benefits the internet has to offer, which include: access to government and other social services; sexual and reproductive health services; economic opportunities; and participate in democratic debate and decision making online.

In our research, we found that in some countries, women were less likely to be creators of content when they did get online and men were far more engaged in a range of online activities. According to UNESCO, only 35% of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) students in higher education

globally are women, thereby reinforcing male bias in how technology is designed and how content is developed. This under-representation of women and girls in STEM is deeply rooted in unequal gender norms that tell us that girls are not cut out for subjects that require problem solving and an inquisitive mind.

In addition, for women and gender diverse people in the low and lower-middle income countries, language is a huge barrier to accessing relevant content. While 16% of the world speaks English as a first or second language (native English speakers make up just 5% of the global population), estimates suggest almost 60% of websites are English-language. Additionally, internet shutdowns also disrupt the ways in which women, girls and gender diverse people are able to access and create content online.



### ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Prioritise the development of content in local languages and audio-visual content to increase participation in the digital economy.
- Provide fair and free information to women and girls on topics important to them, including sexual and reproductive health, legal rights, and financial opportunities.
- Support and invest in programmes that support women and gender diverse people to be content creators and builders of technology.
- Ensure that tech workplaces do not discriminate against women and gender diverse technologists.
- Advocate for the development of feminist technology and the adoption of the design justice framework.
- Advocate for more research and product development funding for women and gender-diverse-led organisations.
- Advocate for gender-disaggregated data to inform decision making.
- Call for a review of grant funding requirements for content production initiatives by local and marginalised communities.
- Support the creation of locally-relevant content through various mechanisms, such as, the Universal Service & Access Funds.

#### CASE STUDY:

### IT for Change (India)

IT for Change, a member of the WRO Network, created the Feminist Observatory of the Internet, a space to deepen reflections on emerging debates in platform society. They also developed Bot Populi, an alternative media platform dedicated to looking at all things digital from a social justice and Global South perspective. IT for Change also started Feminist Digital Futures, dedicated to publishing content on feminist imaginations of social media with scholars, activists, and leaders from the Global South.

#### CASE STUDY:

### Open Data Lab Jakarta

The Open Data Lab Jakarta (Indonesia) designed a project to build the capacity of young girls to understand data, design visualisations, write data-based narratives, and create content on the web about women and girls' rights. The project had three phases based on the Lab's innovation framework — understand, design and test, learn and reflect. The training was designed to give students the skills to produce posters tackling an issue of their choice using data available through online portals and from their own research. The topics selected were mental health, the use of libraries, the history of female empowerment in Indonesia, electronic government, violence against women, child labour, and unemployment among graduates. The students developed their own content and where needed were able to source necessary information and develop visual infographics. Lessons from the project are available.

## T for TARGETS

### Set and measure concrete gender-equity targets

To be effective, policies should be measurable, timebound, and with specific budgetary allocations.

- **Measurable** implies that data collection to support policy analysis can be done feasibly and on a regular basis. There is also a need to invest in a monitoring and evaluation process that allows for timely collection of data to determine whether the policy is achieving set targets over the course of implementation (may be per phase or per month/year), and if the policy is achieving impact over time.
- **Time-bound** implies that targets and end-goals are linked to specific dates. An example would be, "Achieve 80% internet use among all adult women in 2028." The SDGs also provides some global targets which are time-bound for measuring the impact of gender responsive ICT policy intervention.

#### FURTHER READING:

[Monitoring and Evaluation: Action Plan to Close the Gender Digital Divide by the International Communications Union, 2016](#)

[Gender Responsive Budgeting : Analysis of Budget Programmes from a Gender Perspective by UNWomen, 2016](#)

[Universal Service and Access Funds: An Untapped Resource to Close the Gender Digital Divide, 2018](#)

#### ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Set clear targets, including indicators on meaningful connectivity.
- Regularly collect gender-disaggregated data, specifically ICT indicators, through standard statistical practices to track progress and monitor any other emerging gender gaps.
- Make targets and data publicly available for other stakeholders to engage and create accountability.
- Allocate adequate resources towards implementation of gender responsive policies or interventions.
- Advocate for finalising an accessible national action plan, with a clear monitoring and evaluation process, that determines how the new policy and its targets will be implemented.

**CASE STUDY:****Senegal**

In their National Digital Strategic Plan (SN 2025), Senegal identified the exclusion of women from earlier ICT policies and now includes women and girls, sets targets and allocates resources toward implementation of the strategy. Importantly, the Strategic Plan considers women in the rural and urban areas and their role in the economy. It recognises the intersecting challenges that different women can have depending on their age, (dis)ability and care work, which is reflected in a disposition to adapt the tariffs of telecommunication services. The targets are tailored for women both as users and (potential) producers of technology.

**CASE STUDY:****Costa Rica**

Costa Rica's National Telecommunications Development Plan 2015-2021 outlined its priorities, including to: close the digital divide; develop universal access, universal service, and solidarity projects; improve fixed and mobile broadband services; democratise the use of radio spectrum; modernise radio services; deploy modern infrastructure; and boost e-government. It defined its three main pillars as (1) Digital Inclusion, (2) Transparent Electronic Government, and (3) Digital Economy.

Each of these three pillars has seven action plans. In addition, it created the National Telecommunications Fund (FONATEL), the State mechanism and fund to promote closing the digital divide and guarantee access and universal use of Telecommunications/ICTs. The Fund supports the implementation of projects such as delivery of devices to low-income families, or providing free internet access in different access points across the country, among others.

# Step 4

## Creating and implementing an action plan

Now that you have explored the gender digital gaps in your context (Step 1), deepened your understanding of such gaps (Step 2), and identified specific potential goals of our policy (Step 3), we can now plan our next steps, tools and platforms we can utilise to materialise and achieve our goals.

It is important to understand that advocating for and developing policy is complex and does not follow a linear trajectory. Policies are influenced by national, economic, political, cultural, institutional, and social environments and structures.

**There are three parts to producing an Action Plan:**

- 1 Creating a Summary of Your Policy Needs
- 2 Surveying the policy landscape and identifying external factors
- 3 Identifying Tactics

**For each step above, we have created a Worksheet wherein you will be asked specific questions that aim to be compiled later on when you draft an Action Plan.**



## Part 1 Creating A Summary of Your Policy Needs

As you have gone through the questions, you may now develop an action plan by using the worksheet table in your preferred platform (which may be paper or a collaborative online document), that will allow you to have an overview of your policy goals.

The following is a sample worksheet with guidelines for answering each question.

### Worksheet 1. Summary Worksheet

<p><b>1</b> What is the problem?</p>	<p>This refers to your first understanding of the issue at hand.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>"There are 40% less female enrollees in the state university's engineering program."</i></li> <li>- <i>"The local mobile shop was asking for a certification from my husband allowing the purchase."</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>1.1</b> How did you hear about the problem?</p>	<p>Whether you experienced or read about the problem, put it here.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>"I experienced it myself."</i></li> <li>- <i>"My office was sent an advocacy brief from the local women's rights organisation."</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b> How deep is the problem? (Results of data gathering)</p>	<p>After documenting the problem, you are expected to gather data, quantitatively and/or qualitatively.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>"In my interview of 15 public school teachers, 14 of them mentioned that they are struggling teaching at home due to limited connectivity and outdated devices."</i></li> <li>- <i>"The 2021 census reported that only 10% of older women in my community have access to a smartphone."</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b> What policies exist that cater to the issue you'd like to work on?</p>	<p>Put here the policy (whether passed or proposed) that you have encountered in your research. It is important to note that policies can utilise a bit of jargon.</p> <p>Possible answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anti-Voyeurism Act</li> <li>- Freelance Workers Protection Law</li> <li>- Magna Carta for Women</li> <li>- Anti-Cyberflashing</li> </ul>

<p><b>4 Do you need to push for a new policy? Or better implementation?</b></p>	<p>Reading through the policy, are there gaps? Some would realise in this part that existing policies are comprehensive on paper. It is important to remember that policies can be revised.</p> <p>In policy advocacy, there are then three options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Propose a new one</li> <li>- Revise the existing one</li> <li>- Ensure that implementation is effective</li> </ul> <p>Possible answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>“We only have the Anti-Voyeurism Act that protects unconsented recording. We do not have a law that tackles online gender-based violence. As there are different dynamics between online harassment between women and men, we need to propose a new one.”</i></li> <li>- <i>“Freelance Workers Protection Law was used by virtual assistants who was sexually harassed by their off-shore American boss. They won their case, but they have mentioned some limitations of the law. We need to propose revisions.”</i></li> <li>- <i>“Magna Carta for Women covers discrimination and harassment across all platforms and media. The issue is the ineffective implementation of the monitoring ministry/agency. We should call for a review of the implementing mechanisms.”</i></li> <li>- <i>“With the help of Bumble, Texas now has a state law that criminalises cyberflashing.”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>5 Which Right/s does it touch upon?</b></p> <p>(A) Right to equal treatment, non-discrimination, and freedom of violence</p> <p>(B) Right to freedom of expression, opinion, and right to information</p> <p>(C) Right to privacy and data protection</p> <p>Why?</p>	<p>As an exercise, it is good to identify which type of universal human right is touched by the policy.</p> <p>Sample:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anti-Voyeurism touches on B.</li> <li>- Freelance Workers Protection Law touches on A.</li> <li>- Magna Carta for Women touches on A, B, and C.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5.1 Who is/will be responsible for implementing the policy?</b></p>	<p>Sample:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ministry of Education</li> <li>- ICT Rights Working Group</li> <li>- Department of Labour and Employment</li> </ul>

<p>6 What kind of Education is needed for the desired policy?</p>	<p>Who needs to be educated further? It is important to remember that education can also be applicable to the policymakers and implementing agencies.</p> <p>If your policy wants to advocate for better ICT skills for female school children, you may answer with “we need a policy to strengthen and call for investment of school-based ICT skills training for girls.”</p> <p>As digital rights and ICT policy are relatively new concepts, it is important to learn at what awareness and knowledge level your policymakers and implementing agencies. As an example, the Web Foundation through the support of the German Development Cooperation hosted <a href="#">#eSkills4PolicyMakers</a> workshops in Maputo, Accra, and Jakarta training policymakers on gender responsive ICT policy development.</p>
<p>7 What changes in Internet Access are needed for this policy to be effective?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are internet access (2% of average monthly income for 1 GB) and devices (at most 26% of average monthly income) affordable?</li> <li>- Do women and gender diverse people have meaningful connectivity?</li> <li>- Is there a national broadband plan?</li> <li>- Is there access to Universal Service and Access Funds?</li> </ul> <p>Guided by the questions above, possible answers are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>“Women in my community spend 80% of their monthly income to be able to buy the cheapest entry-level smartphone. How do we make that more affordable?”</i></li> <li>- <i>“Only 11% of girls in the local school have accessed the internet in the past two months. Is it an issue of connectivity or access to devices?”</i></li> <li>- <i>“Wired connections are unavailable in this province.”</i></li> </ul> <p>If you cannot think of changes related to internet access, you may mention so as well.</p>
<p>8 What kind of Content is needed for meaningful access?</p>	<p>Localised content, especially for smaller communities and groups, not only complements what is readily available online but it ensures that such groups are able to use the internet meaningfully. This would also encourage them to produce more content in their own language to cater to other members of their groups.</p> <p>Possible answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>“We need more content for women and gender diverse people to increase their knowledge on their rights and benefits in ICTs.”</i></li> <li>- <i>“There is a shortage of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) content available for indigenous peoples in my area.”</i></li> <li>- <i>“We should expound why women are most affected by the proliferation of deepfakes.”</i></li> <li>- <i>“We need to articulate the dangers of the metaverse for women and gender diverse people.”</i></li> <li>- <i>“There is little to no localised content available for indigenous peoples and other rural marginalised groups over the internet.”</i></li> <li>- <i>“We need to provide funds and other types of support to encourage women and gender diverse people in producing content.”</i></li> </ul>



<p><b>9</b> What is your main Target?</p>	<p>Setting a target is basically articulating your goal and ensuring it is measurable and time-bound.</p> <p>As is with all metrics in this summary worksheet, targets are discussed, negotiated, and finalised with a team.</p> <p>Sample:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>"We need to increase smartphone ownership amongst women and gender diverse people from 8% to 50% in 2032 in this locality."</i></li> <li>- <i>"We need to increase the number of women and gender diverse content creators by 60% by 2027."</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>9.1</b> What do you hope to achieve in 1 year?</p>	<p>Sample:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>"As we are starting from 8% smartphone ownership, we can work towards increasing this to 10% increase for 2023."</i></li> <li>- <i>"We currently have 100 content creators who produce localised content. With the right support, we may be able to increase this to 120 by next year."</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>9.1</b> ...in 3 years?</p>	<p>Sample:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>"We are targeting 10% for 2023. It is reasonable to work towards 30% for 2025."</i></li> <li>- <i>"With 120 content creators in 2023, in 2025, we may be able to have 140."</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>9.3</b> ...in 5 years?</p>	<p>Sample:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>"We are targeting 10% for 2023; 15% for 2025, and 20% for 2027. We believe this sets us up to achieve 50% by 2032."</i></li> <li>- <i>"Our targets for 2023 is 120, 2025 is 140, and at the end of the advocacy project, we need to be able to provide good support and funding that we have recorded for 160 content creators in 2027."</i></li> </ul>

## Part 2 Surveying the policy landscape and identifying external factors

We will now identify external actors that might be involved in your policymaking process and/or policy advocacy.

It is important to have a good grasp of the policy landscape, your power or the depth of your influence in the process, and who are the actors who might be affected by developments in this particular policy issue.

### Worksheet 2. External Factors Worksheet

<p>10 How are policy decisions made in my context/country?</p>	<p>This touches into the whole policymaking processes of your government. Answer the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who deliberates on proposed bills?</li> <li>- Who can veto them?</li> <li>- How are they finalised?</li> </ul>
<p>11 Do I have power to influence the process?</p>	<p>Reflect on your position and social capital in your context:</p> <p>If you're a policymaker who is involved in deliberations of related bills, you may say that you have the power to influence the process <b>directly</b>.</p> <p>If you're part of civil society organisations (CSO) with a longstanding relationship with influential policymakers, you may also say that you have the power to influence the process <b>directly</b>.</p> <p>If you are part of CSOs that are new and without connections with these policymakers, one option is to find other organisations to partner with. Or if you are within a context that takes into consideration constituent opinion having mechanisms such as people's councils, you may say that you have <b>indirect</b> influence.</p>
<p>12 What resources do I need to pursue this policy process?</p>	<p>Policy advocacy is expensive, time and money-wise. You need time and funds to do research, set up meetings, pay salaries, go to policymakers' offices, amongst others.</p>
<p>12.1 Do I have financial support?</p>	<p>Do you have access to funding? Or will you need to do this out of pocket?</p>
<p>12.2 Do I have social capital?</p>	<p>Do you have connections with policymakers and other influential actors? If you ask for a meeting, will they agree to meet you?</p>
<p>12.3 What are my human resources?</p>	<p>Who will be running this policy advocacy? Who needs to be given salaries and allowances?</p>

<p><b>13 Which groups or individuals outside the government are working on this issue? (Activists/Non-profit Organisations/Unions/Academe)</b></p>	<p>In your research, list down organisations, key activists, community organisers, and academics whose names you have encountered.</p>
<p><b>13.1 What resources from them will be helpful in my policymaking and policy advocacy?</b></p>	<p>Do you need their expertise to advise your policy advocacy efforts? Or do you need them to help you campaign for it?</p>
<p><b>13.2 What are my degrees of separation of these groups and individuals?</b></p>	<p>See if a local activist will be helpful in your policy advocacy. If you are not in close proximity to them, research if there are people within your circle who may help with introductions.</p>
<p><b>14 Who is/are the key actor(s) who will be influential in the finalisation of this policy? (Policymakers/ Heads of ministries and agencies)</b></p>	<p>List down policymakers and heads of ministries and agencies who will be deliberating the bill or doing the implementation.</p>
<p><b>14.1 What do I think about these policymaker/s?</b></p>	<p>Next to each name, it is also helpful to mention how we perceive them, their characteristics, personality, among others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- [Head of Ministry of Women], known to advocate women's rights since university; have been regarded as kind and stern.</li> <li>- [Head of ICT working group], indifferent, dealt with corporation and businesses their entire private life</li> </ul>
<p><b>14.1.1 What are my degrees of separation from these policymakers/ authorities?</b></p>	<p>Similar mechanism with question 13.2.</p>
<p><b>15 Which companies will benefit from this policy? (Private sector)</b></p>	<p>Will it be helpful to engage broadband companies in this policy advocacy? Are my plans aligned with their corporate social responsibility (CSR) vision? What opportunities are available for them here: tax breaks, larger market share, etc? How would this policy benefit these companies' covert interests: monopolistic interests, market dominance, etc?</p>

## Part 3 Identifying Tactics

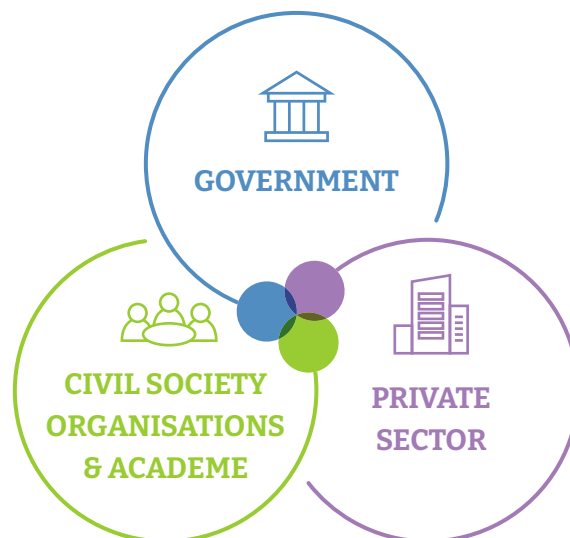
Now that we know what we want to advocate for (Worksheet 1) and who makes the important decisions (Worksheet 2), it is now time to strategise and plan how to achieve our goal.

The main goal of this Playbook is to have policy passed and implemented. As this is our goal, our main target is to influence the policymaking process, with policymakers and governments at the centre. There is the option to do public interest or strategic litigation, which challenges policy decisions by judicial review. In strategic litigation, we challenge authority and the government in a court of law. While this is a useful strategy that it engages with the government

using the same language it uses, it requires time and resources to pursue. A helpful reference is CIPESA's Advancing Strategic Litigation on Internet Shutdowns cases in Africa: Promises and Pitfalls.

If you decide that you are in no position pursuing strategic litigation, it is important to employ a multistakeholder approach. **Who are the stakeholders?**

**Figure 3.** These are the general stakeholders: Government includes working groups and specialised authorities; Civil Society Organisations and Academe covers multi sectoral groups, research institutions, universities, etc; and Private Sector covers business and other corporate interests.



### CASE STUDY:

## Women on Web

In Spain, the website for Women on Web (WOW), a non-profit organisation that disseminates information on the human right to safe medical abortions, was blocked by Spanish authorities. This coincided with an increase in barriers faced by women and girls when accessing sexual and reproductive health services because of the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Women's Link Worldwide together with the Women on Web took up strategic litigation in Spain to challenge the blocking of Women on Web's website. Additionally, they asked for the courts to recognise access to information on sexual and reproductive health services, including during the pandemic, as a key part of the right to abortion and the right to information in Spain.

Source: Digital Freedom Fund

**CASE STUDY:**  
**WOUGNET**

WOUGNET, a WRO partner in Uganda, hosted a series of multi stakeholder engagements with civil society organisations to develop a position paper on ‘Promoting Smart Policy Options in Closing the Gender Digital Divide in Uganda’, the position paper sought to consolidate views from different civil society actors and policy makers and create a cohesive movement towards closing the gender digital divide in Uganda. After identifying key policy interventions collectively, WOUGNET coordinated a policy roundtable with policymakers from different ministries and departments, as well as with civil society where they discussed the priorities identified and identified areas for collaboration following the R.E.A.C.T Framework model. WOUGNET further organised a workshop on gender sensitive monitoring and evolution of ICTs for Policy makers to equip them with the relevant tools to make smart policy decisions. As a result of this engagement, Policy makers have asked the Government to develop meaningful indicators and targets on gender and ICT. WOUGNET continues working with the different stakeholders to advocate for smart policies on gender and ICT.



## Government and Power Matrix: What do you need?

	If you have <b>direct</b> power to influence the process, you need to <b>utilise your power</b> and....	If you have <b>indirect</b> power to influence the process, you need to <b>build coalitions with who have direct power</b> and....	If you have <b>no</b> power to influence the process, you need to <b>reach out and build relationships with those who do</b> and....
<b>Government is receptive and willing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have accurate data on the problem</li> <li>- Sustain conversations</li> <li>- Maintain relationships with other policymakers who might be interested in the issue</li> <li>- Be able to communicate its benefits to the state and to the economy</li> <li>- Lead capacity-building of policymakers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have accurate data on the problem</li> <li>- Continue partnership with organisations who has good relationships with the policymakers and private sector and co-design next steps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have accurate data on the problem</li> <li>- Reach out to civil society organisations who have been working directly with policymakers and the private sector to see what you can contribute</li> </ul>
<b>Government is neutral/ indifferent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have accurate data on the problem</li> <li>- Sustain conversations</li> <li>- Maintain relationships with other policymakers who might be interested in the issue</li> <li>- Be able to communicate its benefits to the state and to the economy</li> <li>- Find opportunities for capacity-building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have accurate data on the problem</li> <li>- Continue partnership with organisations who has good relationships with the policymakers and private sector and co-design next steps</li> <li>- Compile case studies across similar countries who have welcome the policy you are advocating for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have accurate data on the problem</li> <li>- Reach out to civil society organisations who have been working directly with policymakers and the private sector to see what you can contribute</li> <li>- Brainstorm on how to draw attention to the issue through the use of effective campaign strategies online and on the ground</li> </ul>
<b>Government is resistant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have accurate data on the problem</li> <li>- Communicate its benefits to the state</li> <li>- Remind the state of its commitment in the international human rights space</li> <li>- Build coalitions with international networks</li> <li>- Call unto the government publicly via interviews and op-eds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have accurate data on the problem</li> <li>- Be able to communicate its benefits to the state</li> <li>- Push and aid actors with direct power to remind the state of its commitment in the international human rights space</li> <li>- Join coalitions with international networks</li> <li>- Sign international statements</li> <li>- Lead communications campaigns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have accurate data on the problem</li> <li>- Help civil society organisations and other multi stakeholder coalitions in getting attention towards the issue</li> <li>- Participate and digital the ground campaigning</li> <li>- Sign citizen statements and share it within your local sphere of influence</li> <li>- Join coalitions</li> </ul>

Reviewing the matrix above will guide us in filling out the worksheet for planning for tactics below.

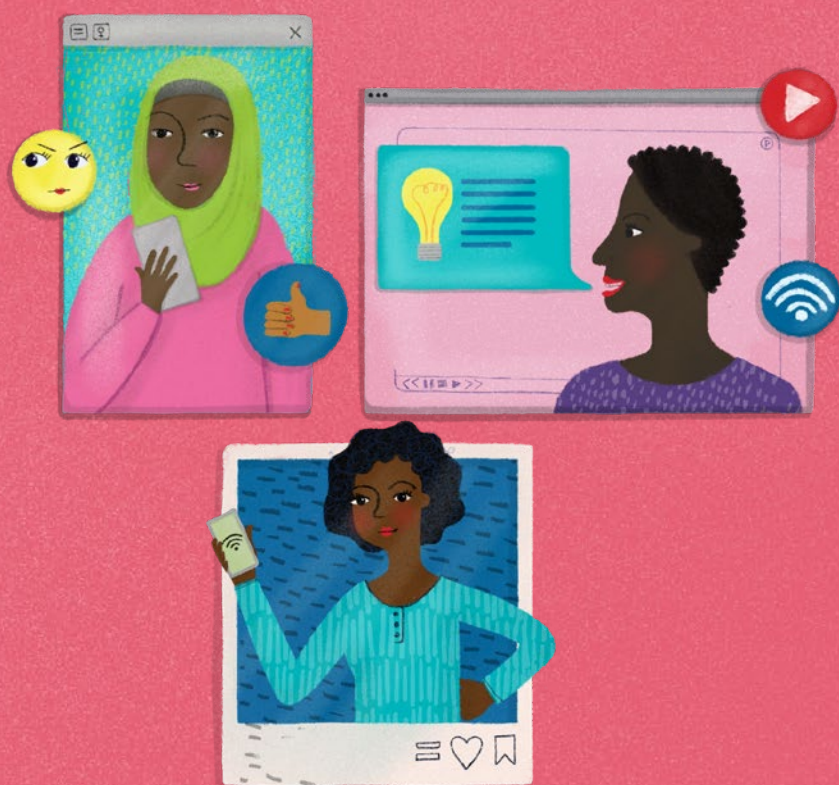
### Worksheet 3. Tactics

<p><b>16</b> What is the government's perception of the problem? Why do you think so?</p> <p>A) Receptive and willing B) Indifferent/neutral C) Resistant</p>	<p>Sample answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>A. Our government and policymakers are happily engaging with this issue and have passed several related bills previously.</i></li> <li>- <i>C. Policymakers in my country do not believe it is urgent to specifically plan for women in the development agenda.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>17</b> What is your level of influence in the policymaking process?</p> <p>A) I have direct power to influence the process B) I have indirect power to influence the process C) I have no power at all to influence this process</p>	<p>Sample answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>A. I am a policymaker myself. It is just a matter of partnering with other policymakers.</i></li> <li>- <i>B. I am an expert on this issue and the government has sought my scientific and objective advice when making related decisions.</i></li> <li>- <i>C. I am from a small organisation who is just starting in the space</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>18</b> Based on the list of examples of tactics above, what do you think you should urgently do next?</p>	<p>Here you'll identify actual tactics based on the government's attitude towards the issue and your influence. Feel free to add what you identified on your own, or those who are integral to your process (such as logistics, etc) that were not listed down.</p> <p>Sample answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I need to get funding to pursue this plan.</i></li> <li>- <i>I need to set up a meeting for key actors in my organisation as I believe that the issue calls for urgent intervention.</i></li> <li>- <i>I need to list down organisations working on this issue</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>19</b> Following above, what important, non-urgent tactics should you employ?</p>	<p>Sample answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I need to ensure that everyone in the organisation is aligned with the goals for the next few months.</i></li> <li>- <i>I need to set up a digital workspace for all needed documents</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>20</b> What other tactics should you take into your plan?</p>	<p>Feel free to dump here all other tactics that you want to list down. You can categorise them on your own later.</p>

## Congratulations!

**You now have an Action Plan! Frequently go back to these three (3) documents as you will need them as reference.**

# Implementing your action plan





As we tackled urgent and important tactics, you now have an idea of what to do next to implement your action plan. Remember that your action plan worksheets are living documents, so we suggest having multiple copies, and saving old copies when you update. This will be extremely helpful when you want to review how far you have come.

To implement your action plan, it is important to **integrate** it into your current context. You are less likely to implement an action plan that does not take into consideration your organisation's habits, time, culture, infrastructure, and budget.

As an example, when you created your action plan you may have realised the need for funding first to work on this policy advocacy. If you have a limited budget, you may have to identify actions that will not expend funds first. For example, you could start with virtual meetings with civil society organisations who are working on the same issue.

It is therefore important to look at your context, behaviour, needs, and wants to review the feasibility and viability of your action plan.

We will leave you to draft your new, contextualised Action Plan.

## Next steps

Now that you have documented and expanded the problem (Step 1), researched how extensive the issue is and who it affects (Step 2), learnt about policy interventions and guidelines to explore them (Step 3), and created an action plan that takes into consideration the policy landscape, other stakeholders, your level of power and influence, and your context (Step 4), it is time to take the most important step you have identified in your plan on the ground.

We hope that our suggestions, insights, and worksheets are helpful in your gender and ICT policy making. All worksheet templates are available for download.

We would be glad to hear from you if you have suggestions or questions on this Playbook, please feel free to reach out to us by email on [press@webfoundation.org](mailto:press@webfoundation.org).



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