



# ***EGM on "Technology as a Renewed Hope to Achieving Gender Equality in the Arab Region: A Fact or Illusion?"***

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اللجنة الاقتصادية والاجتماعية لغربي آسيا

## **Technology and Combatting Violence Against Women and Girls**

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# Outline

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- **Targets of Focus**
  - **VAW: Regional Situation**
  - **ICT as an enabler for VAW**
  - **ICT as a tool to Combat VAW**
  - **Guiding questions**
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# Targets of Focus



**Target 5.2.** Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;

**Target 5.3.** Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

- *Eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls presents a two-way relationship with many SDGs. Eliminating gender-based violence is a prerequisite to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls that hence are able to fully contribute sustainable development.*
- *The SDG framework stresses the importance of eliminating gender-based violence in the context of sustainable development as it specifies several measures that aim at reducing this violence including through promoting a culture of peace and non-violence, providing safe public spaces and transport.*
- *The SDG framework seeks also to strengthen the administrative and legal measures related to registering girls at birth and recording their marriages which contribute to protecting them against harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage.*

# Regional Situation : Targets 5.3 and 5.4

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- VAW is widely recognized as **a critical human rights violation** with a wide-ranging impact on public health, societal well-being and economic development
- In the Arab region, VAW takes many forms such as **domestic violence, honour killings, child marriage, forced prostitution and trafficking, sexual harassment and female genital mutilation** and others
- VAW requires political commitment and leadership to prevent it, protect those at risk, mitigate its consequences and prosecute its perpetrators

# Regional Situation : Targets 5.3 and 5.4



# Regional Situation : Targets 5.2 and 5.4

- **Child marriage** exists in all Arab countries with higher prevalence in the poorest and conflict affected countries.
  - In **Egypt**, teenage childbearing follows an increasing pattern rising from 9% in 2005, to 10 % in 2008, and to 11 % in 2014.
  - In **Yemen**, in 2013, nearly 32% of women, aged 20 to 24, were married before reaching 18, and more than 9% were married younger than 15.
  - In **Somalia** these rates are respectively 45 and 8 per cent.
- **Female genital mutilation/cutting** continue to prevail in a number of Arab countries
  - Highest prevalence in Egypt, Somalia and the Sudan,
  - Followed by Mauritania with relatively moderate prevalence and
  - low prevalence in Iraq, Oman and Yemen where it is practiced by certain groups or in certain regions.
- Evidence from the region proves that the prevalence of VAW significantly increases in conflict-affected and war-ravaged countries (SDG 16) where reported cases of violence including rape, sexual harassment and child marriage increase



# ICT as an enabler for VAW

- The United Nations has identified new technologies as generating new forms of violence against women, such as Internet or mobile telephone stalking (*United Nations General Assembly, 2006*).
- Forms of violence and aggression through ICT include **online harassment, cyber stalking, privacy invasions, blackmail, viral ‘rape videos’** and for young women in particular, the **distribution of ‘sex videos’, ‘sexting’, and ‘trolling**
- Technology-related VAW causes psychological and emotional harm, reinforces prejudice, damages reputation, causes economic loss and poses barriers to participation in public life, and may lead to sexual and other forms of physical violence

# ICT as an enabler for VAW

- Social media and video can expand the audience and spread of bullying
- Mobile phones can incite marital tension, sexual harassment, and even violence through mobile texting by men who get hold of women's phone numbers (India, Egypt, etc.)
- ICT to control or constrain women's independence or mobility and to increase surveillance (Cambodia and Zambia)
- Women who have a well-known profile online, such as bloggers, journalists, activists and leaders, often experience online abuse and threats (GamerGate)



# ICT as tool to Combat VAW

- Use of blogging to highlight honor crimes and stereotypes (Case of Jordan) and can help women and girls counteract prevailing assumptions and keep an issue alive (blogs, twitter, chat, facebook, Youtube, etc.
- **#MeToo movement** – 17.7 million reported sexual assault to this feed since 1998) (until it was picked up globally and changed prevailing norms about what is acceptable interaction between women and men in the workplace)
- ICT for awareness raising on VAW ( Female genital mutilation – Case of Wadi – Iraq), talking about private matters (Senegal), female circumcision (Sudan) / National and Global Campaigns



# ICT as tool to Combat VAW

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- ICT (Owning a mobile phone)
  - increases women's sense of security as it provides a way to keep in touch with family and friends
  - Provides a way to combat sexual harassment (HarassMap in Egypt and Safetipin in India are phone apps that allow users to map sexual harassment in their areas)
- ICT used to make available emergency call phone apps that tracks users' location and connect to police for help (In India, police forces in Kerala (Rashka) and Delhi (Himmat) )
- ICTs support women to cope in the face of armed conflict (SMS and calls were used to mobilize support, negotiate safe passage with marauding youths and community elders, and to spread information about outbreaks of violence.)

# Guiding Questions

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- What are the prevalent new forms of violence generated by ICT in the Arab region?
- What challenges restrain the use of ICT for combatting violence against all women and girls?
- How can ICT contribute to increasing women security in conflict situations?
- What are the factors to consider when localizing a global initiative on combatting violence against women to the regional context?
- What are the recommendations on using ICT for achieving targets 5.2 and 5.3 in the Arab region?

**STOP  
VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
WOMEN**





# Thank You



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