

GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH 2013

Women's rights, gender and ICTs



ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS (APC)
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Global Information Society Watch

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Hidden alphabets: An A-Z of women's rights online

Alan Finlay

A is for **ASH**: “This surgery is done in a non-clinical setting with only a knife and a handful of ash to seal the wound.” (Iraq)

B is for **BRIDE**: “Although the Nigerian Senate passed a law criminalising child marriage in 2003, only 24 out of the 36 states have adopted the law.” (Nigeria)

C is for **CHOICE**: “[T]he focus was on her honour rather than her choice, which defines the boundary between pleasure and violence...” (Philippines)

C is also for **CONCRETE**: “[W]omen who support the Islamists do have concrete plans. They are calling for women to retreat into the home, to leave the public arena, to live a more secluded life, to restore traditional moral values, to decrease the need for personal consumption and, by leaving work, to create employment for the thousands of young males.” (Egypt)

D is for **DECEPTION**: “Deception is the preferred method used by abductors...” (Argentina)

D is also for **DECAPITATION**: “Richards received several death threats (one accompanied by a grotesque tweet with a picture of a decapitated woman on a bed).” (United States)

E is for **EFFICIENCY**: “The fact that the government forced the ISWN on victims whose lives are threatened and are hiding in shelters shows that the administration values efficient work processes over the human rights of victims.” (Republic of Korea)

F is for **FACEBOOK**: “Another female Facebook user, Irene Akhter, married her classmate after a long affair. Soon after their marriage, they became estranged. Her husband, a vindictive man, posted indecent pictures of her on the internet in retaliation. After the incident, she suffered a mental collapse. Having being rejected by her own family, Irene now lives alone.” (Bangladesh)

G is for **GENDER**: “The gender digital divide adds to pre-existing gender inequalities. It interplays with economic and power relations, beliefs, prejudices and stereotypes and also reproduces and consolidates them. Specific initiatives to challenge this phenomenon are needed.” (Uruguay)

H is for **HUMMING**: “[F]our women [were] killed in the remote northern village of Gizar Alitray, for being exposed as having a good time (clapping to a song, humming) at a wedding function.” (Pakistan)

I is for **INVISIBILITY**: “The reality for many women victims of violence, in different spaces, is that they face multiple forms of invisibility.” (Ecuador)

J is for **JUDICIAL**: “[W]omen and girls who are the victims of this abuse are generally not aware of the judicial means available to them.” (DRC)

K is for **KNOW**: “[R]ecent surveys suggest that women are less likely to know and use the internet and that they are less likely to own mobile phones and cover the expenses of using them.” (Ethiopia)

L is for **LEASH**: “Radio Africa and their advertisers must sanction her rudeness and hold her on shorter leash.” (Kenya)

L is also for **LUCK**: “In America you should be killed by your husband with gun. This is real American way. You're so lucky to be in China!” (China)

M is for **MIRROR**: “Give a woman a CD-ROM and she will use it as a mirror.” (Romania)

N is for **NUCLEAR**: “Some governmental experts, magnifying its effects, even compared this technology to nuclear bombs.” (Iran)

N is also for **NAKED**: “Thai teens enjoy popularity and fame from posting sexy/half-naked photos of themselves on the internet as a way to gain acceptance.” (Thailand)

O is for **OPPORTUNITY**: “[The internet] gave me a huge and unprecedented opportunity to express my opinions and ideas to people who want to receive information...” (Jordan)

P is for PIN: “The website works with a concept it calls ‘Pin the Creeps’, allowing women to report incidents of harassment and abuse.” (India)

P is also for PRESENT: “The challenge for feminist activists is to find ways of remaining present in the digital sphere in order to transform online relations and advance ethical digital citizenship.” (New Zealand)

Q is for QUOTA: “Although the quota provides an opportunity for women to have a voice at the table, they are aware that ‘token’ females could be selected to run in constituencies where they have no chance of winning.” (Cook Islands)

R is for RELIGION: “Religion and culture should be used to empower a woman and not to prevent her from full self-actualisation and equal opportunities...” (Uganda)

S is for SUPERWOMEN: “Women are expected to perform like superwomen, juggling their responsibilities to their electorates as well as to their families.” (Cook Islands)

S is also for SEVEN: “Seven out of ten students accept unknown contacts in social networks and display themselves over the webcam or exchange photographs.” (Bolivia)

T is for TRAGEDY: “The insecurity faced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada is a national human rights tragedy.” (Canada)

T is also for TRIVIALISATION: “This trivialisation of harm is reminiscent of the many years domestic violence was downplayed in Kenya.” (Kenya)

U is for UNIVERSAL: “Communications must be universal. Everyone has a right to communications that are available, affordable and accessible.” (South Africa)

V is for VIOLENCE: “Violence against women is a violation of human rights, and an expression of power, domination and control over their bodies and lives.” (Peru)

W is for WARSHIP: “In October 2012 Women on Waves was in Morocco, at the invitation of local rights organisation MALI, to launch the Moroccan safe abortion hotline. Warned of their coming, a warship waited at sea, ready to block the entrance to the marina.” (The Netherlands)

X is for SEX: “Other women, often personalities from the world of politics, journalism or business, regularly see photographs of themselves circulated in photo montages of naked bodies in the sexual act.” (DRC)

Y is YASMINA: “Yasmina became a champion for online and offline communities in citizen engagement in legislative and democratic processes. She accepted the role, informing us via Twitter and Facebook of all the issues that she believes are important to the citizens.” (Côte d’Ivoire)

Z is for SILENZIO: “*Per uscire dal silenzio* (Stop the silence).” (Italy) ■