



Empowering Women and Girls in the Digital Age: Strategies to Combat Technology- Facilitated Violence

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Counselling Line for Women and Girls
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Who are we?

Since 2008, the IAMANEH Switzerland and Counselling for Women and Girls (CLWG) have established a powerful partnership dedicated to eliminating entrenched obstacles to the health and rights of women and girls in Albania. Together, they have been steadfastly committed to breaking down systemic barriers that hinder gender equality, envisioning a world where all individuals, particularly women and girls, can access sexual and reproductive health services, and rights thrive autonomously in good health, free from violence and exploitation.



Understanding digital and technology-facilitated violence against women and girls



Online is the new frontline for violence against women and girls

- Abuse of women in the public eye/with a public profile
- As an extension of coercive control by intimate (ex) partners and family members
- Specific issues of concern to children and young people including child sexual exploitation, grooming, etc.
- Coerced sexting, revenge porn, including sharing images, videos without consent
- Online sexual exploitation, including prostitution and pornography
- Compounds multiple forms of violence against women and girls
- Lack of institutional capacity and legal framework



The case of Albania

LUFTO PËR TË DREJTAT E TUA!
BASHKË KUNDËR BULLIZMIT!

Bashkohemi jo vetëm për t'u sensibilizuar për rastin e trishtë të gruas 41 vjeçare, por edhe për t'i dhënë fund njëherë e mirë këtij fenomeni dashakeq!



They shared intimate photos and videos on Telegram, one of the administrators of the 'Albkings' group was arrested


A person suspected of being one of the members of the "Albkings" group, who shared intimate photos and videos of women on the Telegram platform, has been detained by the Kosovo police.



42% of women in Albania experienced some form of digital or technology-facilitated violence in their lifetime

During the first 2 months of 2024, 8 women and girls in Albania lost their lives because of online and digital violence.

Country	Criminal code	Specialized law on GE, VAW/DV	Gender Equality Strategy	Specialized VAW/DV strategy
Western Balkans				
Albania	↓	↓	↓	—



**Analysis of
mechanisms to identify
and respond to digital
and technology-
facilitated violence**

Analysis highlighted a systemic blind spot, exacerbated by the disconnect between the digital security sector and digital and technology -related GBV, resulting in the neglect of the human rights dimension.

Reviewing existing laws and policies

Significant gap in existing legislation, with digital violence not being adequately addressed or defined within current legal frameworks.

Identifying gaps and challenges

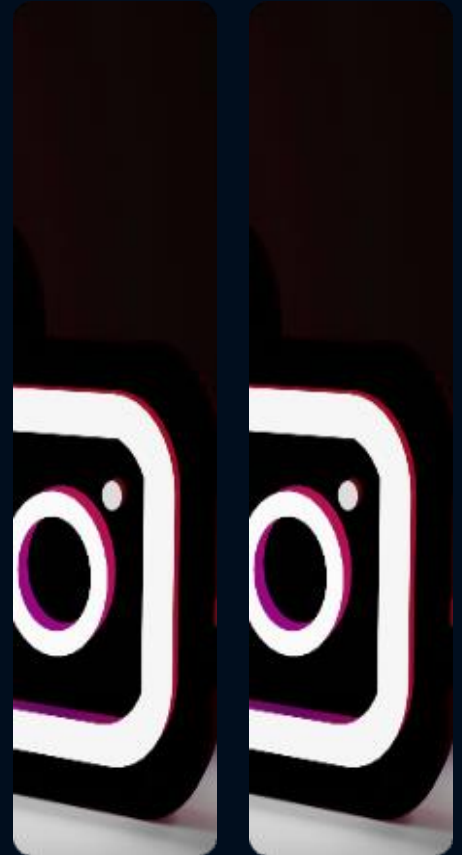
Law enforcement agencies reported challenges in enforcing even existing laws due to the evolving nature of digital violence and the difficulty in distinguishing it from other forms of harassment or abuse. Gaps were in infrastructure, knowledge of human resources, identification, reporting and referral tools.

Capacity-building of stakeholders

Representatives of the media, psychologists, women's rights CSOs and human right defenders, the Coordinated Referral Mechanism System for Cases of Abuse, all agreed that they are unable to identify and treat cases of violence. In many cases they expressed fear for their own safety as professionals.

Drafting and implementing new regulations

The findings underscored the urgent need for lawmakers to draft and pass comprehensive legislation specifically targeting digital violence.



Quotes from frontliners, policymakers and decision makers in Albania



CRMS staff

Online violence is underreported because it is not specified in forms (referrers to fill in forms/templates). However, during work with victims of family violence, individual counseling sessions report instances of stalking on social networks, phone tapping, or tracking their location."



Social worker

For vulnerable groups, digital violence is not just an isolated incident—it is a manifestation of broader societal inequalities and injustices that take place in real life



Shelter worker


"As a new phenomenon, is not well-recognized, and generally people are not well-informed about how to protect themselves, where to report, or how to recognize that they are experiencing this type of violence."

Police officer


"We often find ourselves un-equipped to handle cases of digital violence," shares one police officer. "The laws and regulations are somehow outdated, and there's a general lack of awareness among officers about how to navigate this rapidly evolving issue."




Voices of Survivors



It's like my privacy was stolen from me," shares one survivor. "Seeing my most intimate moments shared across the internet made me feel exposed and vulnerable, like I had no control over my own body."



"I was constantly being harassed via WhatsApp, I was threatened by my ex-boyfriend, that he would kill me," stated one of the survivors. In a society where gender-based violence is often softened and considered an personal matters, victims of digital abuse find themselves battling not only their perpetrators but also societal attitudes that minimize their suffering. "It's as if online violence isn't considered real violence," reflects one survivor.



I thought TikTok was supposed to be fun and entertaining," reflects one survivor. "But instead, it became a nightmare."

The intervention of CLWG



Target groups

Direct services for survivors

- Legal technical advice for cases of cyberbullying and digital gender violence
- Expertise in computer equipment (Computers, Laptops, smartphones)
- Recovery and preservation of digital evidence
- Hard drive data recovery
- Recovery of images, videos, call logs, contacts, WhatsApp on mobiles
- Email Privacy Infringement
- Tracking profiles on social networks for possible cases of cyberbullying
- Analysis of improper use of computer and mobile equipment by third parties
- Tracking possible online thefts

Primary Beneficiaries	Secondary beneficiaries
Women and girls (starting from 18 years of age)	General Public
Judges	Members of Parliament
Prosecutors	Ministry of Internal Affairs
Journalists	Ministry of Justice
CRMs Members	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
Other CSOs	
Digital Application Creators	
IT Students	
Counsellors	
Front Line Practitioners	

3-year intervention focusing on:

Advocacy and lobbying

Advocacy and lobbying for approval of a new legal initiative that will recognize digital violence as one of the forms of violence against women and will accurately identify the repercussions it has on women and girls, gender equality in the country and society as a whole. **Law to be passed in 2024.**

Capacity-building of institutions

The police, judges, prosecutors, local referral mechanism systems, civil society organisations working with survivors and the CLWG staff to allow them to properly respond to all types of violence, including digital violence, and to offer high quality support and referrals to victims.

Counselling and support services

Offered by the CLWG to victims of violence for survivors of digital violence. Counselling will be provided online. The CLWG will also carry out mentoring and coaching sessions for survivors on how to use technology and online mediums in a safe and secure way. Peer support groups will be established with survivors, facilitated by CLWG staff. **More than 500 women benefiting from services.**

Awareness-raising activities with the general public, focusing on marginalised communities

Voices and stories of change of survivors of violence will take the spotlight to raise awareness of the gravity and impact all types of violence, including digital violence have on the lives of women, including women with disabilities, Roma women and rural women.



Outcomes

Outcome 1

The justice system is better prepared to effectively respond to violence against women and girls, including digital and technology-related violence.

Outcome 2

Protection of survivors and accountability of perpetrators is enhanced through the increased capacities of the national institutions and service providers to recognize and respond to the digital dimension of violence against women.

Outcome 3

Survivors of violence are empowered to seek help and escape violent situations, including those happening in the digital domain, through provision of continuous high-quality and tailored service provision.

Outcome 4

The general public, especially young people and women from marginalized communities have improved attitudes regarding violence against women and girls, including digital and technology-related violence.





Thank you!