



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission for Social Development

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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and  
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:  
Priority Theme: Socially just transition towards sustainable  
development: the role of digital technologies on social  
development and well-being of all**

### **Statement submitted by Red Dot Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Red Dot Foundation has been working in India and the USA to prevent sexual and gender-based violence through the use of technology, data and community engagement. Our Safecity platform is a reporting tool to anonymously document sexual and gender-based violence globally. This data is available open source and is collated as location-based trends to identify contributing factors that cause the violence. It also spotlights potential ways to address the problem at the neighbourhood level whilst encouraging individuals and communities to be situationally aware, incorporate preventive measures for their personal and collective safety and security and engage with institutional service providers like police, civic administration, educational institutions and others for better infrastructure and policies for safe spaces.

Our platform has the largest collection of personal stories and have engaged close to three quarter of a million people in finding localized solutions. We have worked with police, transport officials, college campuses, corporations and civic bodies for safe neighbourhoods, communities and public spaces.

Our work indicates that technology can be used to identify, address, respond and prevent sexual and gender-based violence. However, much needs to be done from a bottom up and top down level for it to be effective.

### **Some recommendations are:**

- **Access to digital technology** – According to the GSMA – Mobile Gender Gap report 2019, 59% of Indian women own a mobile phone (vs 80% men) and 16% women are mobile internet users (vs 36% men). This means that access to technology needs to be democratized and easily available. Our own programs in communities show that women and girls may not own a device or have access to one and in the household the male members are given first preference over them when access is needed. Digital access should be made a human right in this highly networked world. COVID19 has forced most of us to work from home and use digital technologies for work, education and more. Women and girls cannot be left behind.
- **Education in using the internet and digital devices** – Most women have poor digital literacy and do not necessarily know how to use the internet or navigate digital spaces or understand their digital rights. Further cyber bullying and harassment intimidates them from accessing digital services or information. Therefore, digital literacy education must be made mandatory at an early age and people should be upskilled to help them navigate the new normal.
- **Knowledge on Digital Rights** – Our CyberSaathi programs indicate that 95% of people do not know their digital rights, are not familiar with legislation or safety precautions online and do not know how to access remedial services. This should be part of the digital literacy education.
- **Collection of gender disaggregated data** – Women form 50% of the population but their lived experiences are different from men. Data should reflect a gender split so that it can be interpreted easily and effectively. We all are aware that efficacy of data is dependent on its quality otherwise it is a case of “garbage in, garbage out”. For policies and decisions to be effective we need to collect and interpret the data correctly.
- **Gender sensitization on part of technology creators and data scientists** – This is another important area where investment in education on gender and unconscious bias needs to be prioritized. Most technology creators and data

scientists are male and bring with them their unconscious bias. This is reflected in the design, development, deployment and use of the technology. No wonder, 97% of apps that are created are never used. We need to have a feminist outlook and a gender sensitivity in technology creation and data interpretation especially in a world where Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and new technologies are taking centre stage.

- **Ease of reporting for formal complaints** – In a digital world, reporting of sexual and gender-based violence should be made easy for the survivor and technology can assist in this endeavour. This is already available for cybercrimes in India and should be expanded to other crimes against women. It will certainly help in an environment where there is low trust with the police and the judicial system is quite lengthy in processing the crime.
- **Gender sensitization on part of law enforcement and judiciary** – There is low trust between women and law enforcement and judiciary. Most women do not report the crimes committed against them and when they do, often the law enforcement file it in the wrong category (non-cognizable offences in order not to go ahead with a formal investigation). The justice system is also long drawn out and makes a survivor relive her experience several times which is traumatic. Recently quite a few legal judgements were passed which were gender insensitive. Therefore, investment needs to be made in educating law enforcement and the judiciary in gender sensitivity and addressing their unconscious bias.

Red Dot Foundation believes that this is the starting point for developing a technology ecosystem that will provide a fair and just mechanism to identify, prevent, address and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. It has to be complemented with intention and investment, open access to data and community participation in decision making. Change does not take place overnight but putting a strong foundation for a fair and just technology ecosystem is critical in leap frogging some of the solutions that is possible with technology.

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