Student Conference
on
„Gender Dimensions of Cybersecurity"

Concept Note

Date: 18 June (Tuesday), 2024

Organised by: UN Women Georgia Country Office, in cooperation with the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU), Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences

Venue: TSU, Tbilisi, Georgia, Ilia Chavchavadze Ave. 1, I Block, Room 115

Goal: The goal of the Conference on **"Gender Dimensions of Cybersecurity"** is to promote academic research, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience among participants concerning the gender aspects of cybersecurity. The conference will provide students and researchers with a platform to present their research papers, as well as allow the space for a discussion with experts of the field regarding the gender dimensions of cybersecurity. By bringing together diverse stakeholders, including academia, civil society, and international organisations, we aspire to foster collaboration and drive positive change in addressing gender disparities and promoting a more inclusive and safe cybersecurity infrastructure and landscape. Moreover, it will support dialogue on alternative and innovative approaches to addressing challenges in this domain. Ultimately, the conference aims to advance gender equality and inclusivity within the field of cybersecurity in Georgia.

Themes and Topics:

The conference will cover various themes and topics related to gender dimensions in cybersecurity, including but not limited to:

1. Gender Disparities in Cybersecurity: This theme will delve into the existing gender gaps in the cybersecurity workforce, including issues such as employment opportunities, career advancement, and representation in leadership roles.
2. Gender-Based Cyber Threats and Harassment: Exploring specific types of cyber threats and online harassment from a gender perspective, including cyberbullying, blackmail, stalking, and other forms of cyber-crimes. The focus will also be on the current situation in Georgia regarding such threats.
3. Intersectionality and Cybersecurity: Recognizing how gender intersects with other social identities such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religious identity, disability status, etc., and understanding its implications for cybersecurity risks and responses.

4. **Gender-Sensitive and Responsive Cybersecurity Policies and Practices:** Identifying strategies to promote gender sensitivity in cybersecurity policies, practices, and organizational cultures to create inclusive and supportive environments.
5. **Gender Aspects of Access to Information and Digital Resources:** Investigating barriers faced by individuals based on gender in accessing information and digital resources, including disparities in internet access, digital literacy, and technology adoption.
6. **Gendered Impacts of Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Incidents:** analysing the varying impacts of cybercrime and cybersecurity incidents on individuals based on gender, including psychological, social, and economic consequences.

Conference Format:

The conference will span two days and will include the face-to face panel discussions and presentations by the experts and subject professionals. This will be followed by the presentations of abstracts on research topics by students from various higher educational institutions.

Background:

Women's involvement in cybersecurity is increasingly recognized as a crucial component of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, which aims to address the disproportionate impact of cyberthreats on women and girls. Women are disproportionately affected by cyber violence, including online harassment, stalking, and exploitation. Integrating cybersecurity into the WPS agenda enables a more comprehensive approach to addressing gender-based violence, both offline and online. By implementing the measures to prevent and respond to cyber threats targeting women, the WPS agenda contributes to creating safer digital spaces and promoting women's rights in this area. Integrating women's cyber needs and priorities into cybersecurity initiatives contributes to the long-term sustainability of peace and security efforts. By addressing the root causes of conflict, including inequality and marginalization, the WPS agenda promotes holistic approaches to peacebuilding. Women's participation in cybersecurity not only strengthens resilience against cyber threats but also fosters social cohesion, trust, and cooperation, essential elements for sustainable peace.

Furthermore, including women in cybersecurity initiatives promotes their active participation in traditionally male-dominated fields. By breaking gender stereotypes and barriers, women can contribute diverse perspectives, skills, and expertise to cybersecurity strategies and improved practice in the field.

A 2023 study on Gender and Human Rights in National Level Approaches to Cybersecurity by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP)[1] underscores the significance of incorporating a

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[1] Study on Gender and Human Rights in National Level Approaches to Cybersecurity by GNWP, 2023, available at: Microsoft Word - DIL WPS and Cybersecurity Report (Updated March 2023).docx (ict4peace.org)

gender perspective into cybersecurity policymaking. This approach recognizes that women and women's rights organizations may encounter distinct challenges requiring tailored analyses and recommendations.

The benefits of applying a gender lens to cybersecurity promote acknowledging differential impact: **women and marginalized groups utilize the internet differently and are disproportionately harmed by cyber-attacks.** However, their specific needs and representation in cybersecurity policymaking and technology development are often overlooked. Furthermore, incorporating a gendered perspective can enhance access to cybersecurity provisions for women and other marginalized groups, addressing limitations in emergency response and legal remedies due to pre-existing discriminatory societal structures.

Cyber-attacks certainly affect women in Georgia, manifesting in forms such as cyber bullying, cyber stalking, and grooming for sexual purposes. These actions curtail women's rights to freedom of expression, eroding confidence, and self-esteem. In 2022, UN Women, in collaboration with Georgia's National Statistics Office (GEOSTAT), conducted the nationwide study[2] on violence against women in the country. The study unveiled alarming data on the prevalence of violence against women and girls; the forms of gender-based violence include cyber-harassment and cyber-stalking.

Responding to the situation of violence against women in the country, the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia initiated the legislative amendments targeting the prevention and response to sexual harassment. In May 2019, a comprehensive sexual harassment law was enacted,[3] regulating incidents in both public spaces and workplaces, with specified fines for those found guilty of making unsolicited sexual advances. This was followed by the adoption of the State Strategy and Action Plan of Georgia on Cybersecurity, 2021-2024.[4] The intersection of cybersecurity and gender rights demands sustained attention and action to create a safer digital space for women at national level, as well as globally. Ongoing gender-focused research and cybersecurity initiatives are crucial for understanding the specific impact on women within the Georgian context.

Promoting multidisciplinary academic research through this student conference and facilitated discussion will contribute to advancing gender equality and equity and women's rights within the cybersecurity infrastructure in Georgia. By bringing the insights from fields such as social and political studies, law, technology, etc. the experts and students together can comprehensively examine the multifaceted challenges faced by women in the cybersecurity domain in the country. This conference therefore will enable a deeper understanding of the societal, cultural, and institutional factors contributing to gender disparities in the field, thereby facilitating the development of more effective and innovative strategies and interventions.

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[2] National study on Violence against Women in Georgia 2022; Summary report, available at: updated_vaw_eng_web4-2.pdf (unwomen.org)

[3] ORGANIC LAW OF GEORGIA – LABOUR CODE OF GEORGIA, available at: ORGANIC LAW OF GEORGIA – LABOUR CODE OF GEORGIA | სსიპ "საქართველოს საკანონმდებლო მაცნე" (matsne.gov.ge)

[4] State Strategy and Action Plan of Georgia on Cybersecurity, 2021-2024, Available at: საქართველოს კიბერუსაფრთხოების 2021 – 2024 წლების ეროვნული სტრატეგიისა და მისი სამოქმედო გეგმის დამტკიცების შესახებ | სსიპ "საქართველოს საკანონმდებლო მაცნე" (matsne.gov.ge)

Agenda

Opening Session

- **Prof. Manana Khachidze,** Head of Department of Computer Science, the Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences, TSU
- **Ms. Tamar Lobjanidze**, Women, Peace and Security Programme Analyst, UN Women
- **Mr. Chris Reilly**, Head of Georgia Programmes, British Embassy Tbilisi

Panel I – Women, Peace and Cybersecurity

Facilitated by Medea Gugeshashvili, Women, Peace and Security Project Analyst, UN Women

- **Ms. Nino Vadakaria**, Cyber Programme Manager, British Embassy Tbilisi

Presentation of the findings of the study on: "The Experience of Cybercrime in Georgia: Awareness, Victimization and Reporting"

- **Ms. Natia Seskuria,** Director, Regional Institute for Security Studies; Co-Founder, Women in Cyber Initiative
- **Mr. Joseph Jarnecki**, Research Fellow in Cyber Threats and Cyber Security, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)

Overview of Guidebook on "Cyber Resilience for Women's Rights Organizations"

- **Ms. Nino Pachuashvili,** Institute for War and Peace Reporting

Panel II – Gendered Cybersecurity Threats, Vulnerabilities and Resilience Among Women Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society in Georgia

Facilitated by Medea Gugeshashvili, Women, Peace and Security Project Analyst, UN Women

Presentation of the studies on:

"Cyber women workforce in Georgia" and

"Cyber security as a growing career and educational opportunity in Georgia and the world"

- **Dr. Tatia Chikhladze**, Senior Research Fellow at RISS and Associate Professor at British Teaching University in Georgia, WIC team member

Presentation of the study on: "Cybersecurity Threats, Vulnerabilities and Resilience Among Women Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society in South-East Asia"

- **Ms. Alexandra Håkansson Schmidt,** Governance, Peace and Security, UN Women Regional Office for Asia, and the Pacific

Presentation of the study on: Women in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Georgia - Participation and Challenges
- **Ms. Lili Dopidze,** Project Analyst, UN Women (TBC)

Panel III - Presentation of abstracts of the research papers by students - Part I

Facilitated by Manana Khachidze, Head of Department of Computer Science, the Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences, TSU

1. **Ketevan Khuturidze**, TSU, Department of Computer Sciences
   Topic: The Invisible Threat of Digital Face Theft for Women

2. **Salome Sanadiradze, Nino Ghonghadze**, TSU, Department of Computer Sciences
   Topic: Gender-Based Cyber Threats and Harassment

3. **Mate Gumberidze, Giorgi Mikeladze**, TSU, Department of Computer Sciences
   Topic: Gender Aspects of Cyber Security and Harassment

4. **Davit Devdariani**, TSU, Department of Computer Sciences
   Topic: Unveiling Gendered Gates: Exploring Barriers to Information and Digital Resources

5. **Mariam Khobelia, Salome Petriashvili**, TSU, Department of Computer Sciences
   Topic: Gender-Based Cybersecurity Skills Gap

6. **Irakli Khasaia, Mariam Chiburdanidze,** TSU, Law Faculty
   Topic: Internet shutdowns and their gendered impact - What makes them worse for women?

7. **Tornike Tordua,** TSU, Department of Computer Sciences
   Topic: Addressing Gender Disparities in Cybersecurity: A Critical Examination

8. **Knarik Nordukian, Lilit Ghazarian, Arpine Khanbekia**n, TSU, Department of Computer Sciences
   Topic: Advancing Gender Equality in Cybersecurity

Panel III - Presentation of abstracts of the research papers by students - Part II

Facilitated by Manana Khachidze, Head of Department of Computer Science, the Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences, TSU

9. **Mariam Janjghava**, Georgian Technical University (GTU), Faculty of Biomedical Engineering (Online Presentation)
   Topic: Bridging the Gender Gap in Cybersecurity: Safeguarding Digital Healthcare in Georgia

10. **Nazibrola Naskidashvili,** TSU,

Topic: Gendered Impacts of Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Incidents

11. **Lizi Tvalabeishvi**li, TSU, Law Faculty
Topic: Harmful Impact of Cyber-attacks on Women's Security and Education During Armed Conflicts

12. **Nino Gergidze**, TSU, Department of Computer Sciences
Topic: Gender-Based Cyber Violence and Harassment

13. **Zurab Lebanidze, Tekla Parkosadze**, TSU, Law Faculty
Topic: Legal Protection for Women in Cybersecurity

14. **Ani Mosiashvili,** TSU, Department of Computer Sciences
Topic: Cyber Gender Lens: Unveiling Differential Impacts of Cybercrime

15. **Lizi Baramidze, Tata Tkeshelashvili,** TSU, Law Faculty
Topic: Beyond the Screen: Gendered Perspectives on Cyberstalking

Closing remarks and ceremony of awarding participation certificates