
# "TRAININGS ON COUNTERING ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS IN NORTHERN UGANDA"

*NARRATIVE REPORT*

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GENDER TECH INITIATIVE UGANDA

# INTRODUCTION

Human rights defenders are a crucial link in the chain of protection that fight for and support the laws, institutions, and principles of democracy around the world. As the internet becomes a civic space for initiating and amplifying issues that finally get adopted on the policy agenda, it is important to ensure that everyone in society has the freedom to utilize the online space. While online spaces are important for ensuring the plurality of voices, women do not have the same freedom to participate in this space as their male counterparts. In fact, it often exposes them to the scathing attack that shrinks any opportunity that they could have accessed online.

In Uganda, women human rights defenders who are adopting the use of ICT and internet at their work, are the regular victims of digital insecurity and online attacks. The majority of them are exposed to the extreme brutality of online harassment in Uganda. Female journalists, bloggers and feminists are constantly being threatened with murder, rape, physical violence, and graphic imagery via email, commenting sections, and across all social media platforms. This has driven most female Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) out of work especially in the post-conflict regions of Northern Uganda. As female HRDs get kicked out of the online space, the presentation and representation of women's issues in decision making spaces is gradually shrinking.

Accordingly, Gender Tech Initiative-UGANDA ran a 2-month project to build the capacity of 30 female HRDs (journalists, bloggers, female civil head, Feminists and Activists) in Northern Uganda. The training was held in Gulu district but 10 of the participants came from the neighboring districts (Kitgum, Lira, Arua and Pader ) in Northern Uganda.

# OBJECTIVES

- Enhance Northern Uganda Human Rights defenders knowledge and awareness on the relationship between online Gender based violence and human rights work.
- Introduce the human rights defenders to best practices and tools that enable them to have appropriate responses against digital security threats and challenges.
- Increase the public's awareness through radio talk shows about online GBV, how it affects the work of many female HRDs and how they can be involved in helping to stop it.

# TRAININGS IN DETAILS

The training focused on a number of topics that aimed at increasing their digital safety knowledge, improving their internet experience, and creating prevention strategies for women human rights defenders & to protect themselves from any form of cyber harassment and develop cyber-risk management strategies so as to foster better digital experiences.

## Cyber Security Practices

The continuous emergence of new online communication platforms makes communication and work easy. But behind this lie; cyber harassment, cyberstalking, trolling, doxing, hate speech, and defamation, among others. Although cyber harassment targets both males and females, discussions in public, the media, and academia, indicate that cyber harassment tends to be gendered on women.

On the opening day of the training we invited Agnes Angee, the Gender Focal Person in Gulu who noted that although technology is great, it has come with some negative sides, especially for women, because of the way we use it.

“Sometimes we invite these crimes on us... for instance, someone might be traveling and because they want to “slay”, they give full updates on each location they have reached on social media. Supposing somebody was trailing you, what would happen?” Angee asked.

The perpetrators of cyber harassment, according to Angee, are always people we know or have crossed paths with, hence the need to be more security conscious around them.
“The nude photos that circulate are always leaked on social media by either ex-boyfriend, ex husband, workmates, or colleagues because they have the intention to humiliate,” she said.

“The IT technicians are only men. And if you refer a client to a lady technician, the reaction will be very bad because many still believe that we [women] cannot do it,” she added.

Christine Adero, the co-founder of GTI-U, reiterated that while gendered online harassment increasingly features on many discourse arenas, women need to check if they are not involuntarily attracting sexual harassment, or are perpetrators themselves.

“Majority of people giving negative comments on women are women themselves. If it is a scandal involving who has committed adultery, the blame will be shifted on the wife for failing to fulfill the man’s needs,” she said.

“And if she posts a political opinion which warrants a political counter/opinion, her fellow women will deviate from her point of debate, and start attacking her children or relationship history.”

What makes cyber-harassment more complex, she said, is the fact that it can overlap in both online and offline spaces. “A perpetrator can start harassing their victim online, and shift offline to cause physical harm,” she said.

Lucy Acii, a deputy news editor at Vision Group noted that although she knew about cyber harassment, the training made her realize its intensity, and how sometimes victims unknowingly bring it upon themselves.

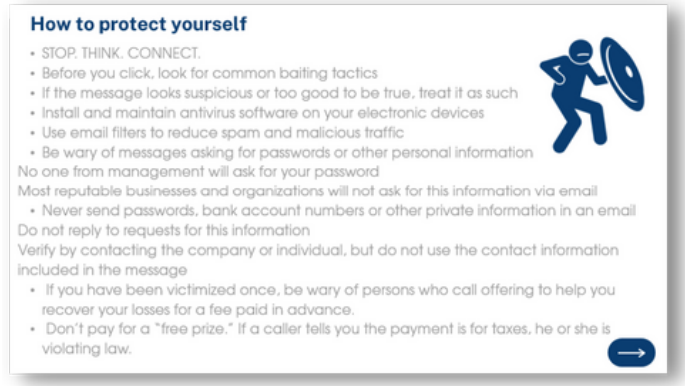
“I think it is high time we started getting careful on what we put online and also to report when we feel threatened or harassed, block such people, or even ignore them,but most important is that we always have to report such harassment because we now know that cyber harassment can progress to physical harassment or violence.”

## Phishing and Data Management

Phishing is identity theft used by hackers through fake websites or emails, in an attempt to steal their target’s data, credit card information, password, or bank account details, with the aim of stealing money or sensitive information. Led by Christine Adero, trainees learnt about the different phishing types like clone phishing, link manipulation, voice phishing and more.

Journalists are always in possession of massive data, video clips, and photographs, for present or future use. Such data can however be lost unintentionally or otherwise, when not kept safely. This calls for best practices to ensure that such information, both online and offline, is secured, using some tools and Apps.



Willy Chowoo , an IT enthusiast and a staff at Gender Tech Initiative-Uganda, took the trainees through a number of ways that they can secure their information offline like Partitioning the hard drive to protect one's entire data in a computer/laptop from virus attacks, to keep the computer working faster, classifying your data, and easy management , backing up all information on memory cards and keeping it elsewhere at home.

The principle is to have three different positions to store the same information and keep them in different places.

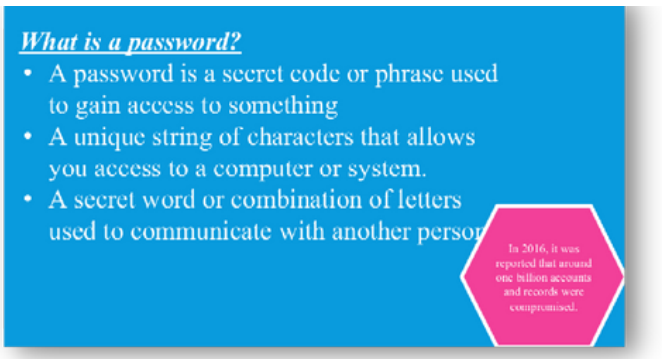
Other tips included how to make the data secure using encryption tools like Axcrypt App and password manager plus incorporating practices like having strong passwords, periodics updates of the passwords, maintaining updated antivirus and making sure the computer or device with the data is physically secure and in your presence at all times.

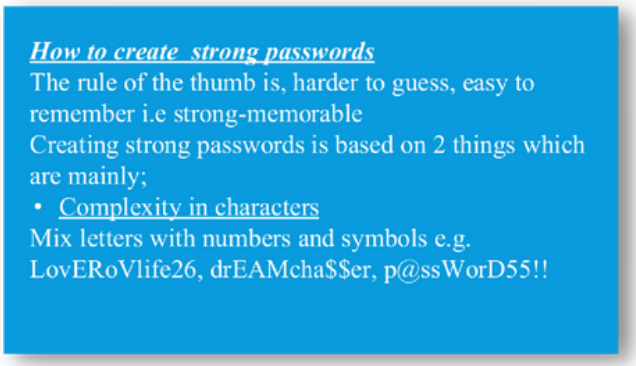
## Digital Safety Online

Armed with skills to dig or access sensitive information, journalists are on constant surveillance by people against the publication of such information. Besides, there are cybercriminals who are always on the lookout for individuals to defraud or malice. Although there are digital devices and safety tools that can help journalists keep such information, as well as themselves from such threats, tech geeks keep "app-novating" or inventing other tools that compromise the security of information or persons in cyberspace.

While being facilitated by Ruth Atim, the trainees learnt how to; Generate and setup strong passwords for the different online services they were using, Use location blocking and manipulating software like VPN that made it impossible for their physical locations to be tracked while online.

Managing social media settings to make it difficult for harassers to bully them and also easily be in position to easily block or delete.





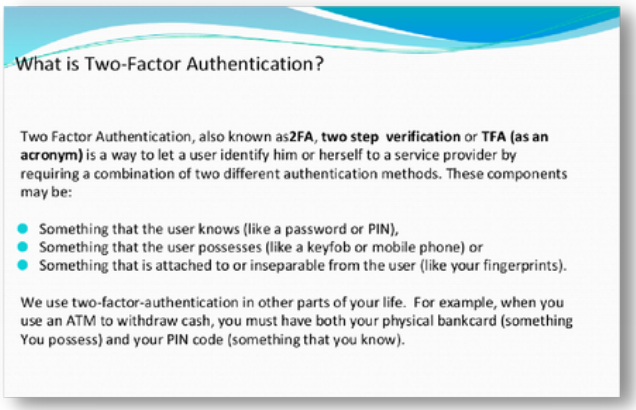
When invited to share personal ways they stay online, trainees mentioned;

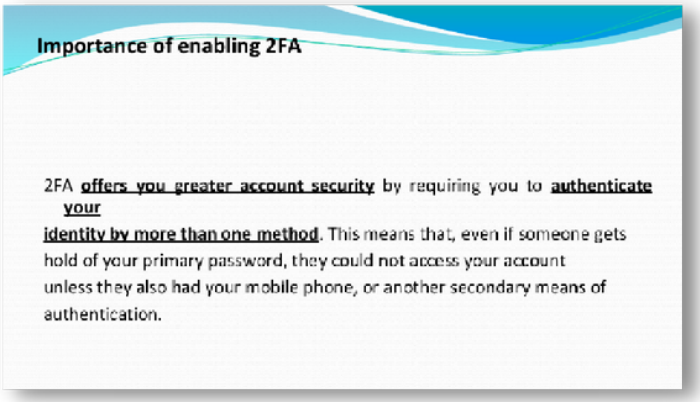
- Having a strong password.
- Blocking, reporting, or ignoring bullies.
- Verifying sites/links before downloading apps or data (advised to download from google play store because of its safety guarantee.
- Keeping password secret (not sharing)
- Using VPN when using public Wifi.
- Using two-factor authentication.
- Changing social media settings to control who views friends' lists.
- Having control over who tags you in their online posts.

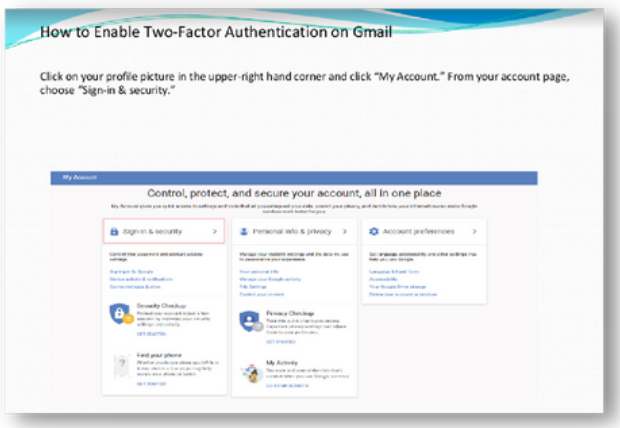
## Two Factor Authentication

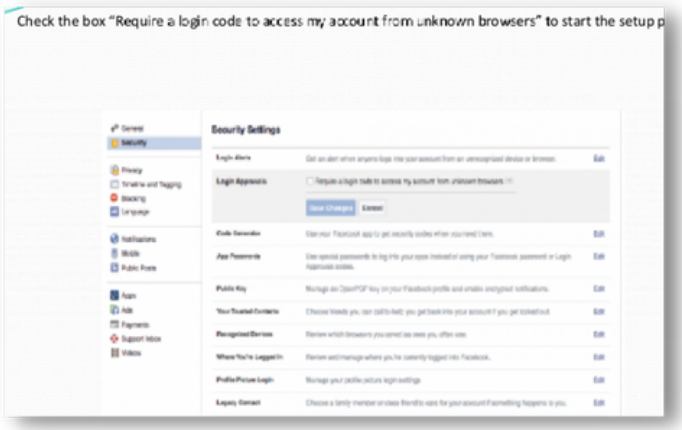
Hackers working overtime to steal our online information always render our passwords weak. So, for journalists to keep their online information secure, they must use two-factor authentication. Also known as 2FA, two-step verification, it allows a user to identify themselves to a service provider by requiring a combination of two different authentication methods.

The components of 2FA may be; something a user knows such as a password or a pin; something a user possesses like a keyfob or mobile phone, or something attached to, or inseparable from the user like a fingerprint. Two-factor authentications are also used in other transactions like in banks. When you use an ATM to withdraw cash, you must have both a physical bank card (something you possess) and a PIN code (something you know).
Online services such as; Facebook, Twitter, and Google offer 2FA as an alternative to password verification.




## Radio Talk Shows

The final activity carried out for the first training was a Radio Talk Show at Choice FM Radio Station where we informed the public on the importance of fighting online GBV targeted towards Human rights defenders. Choice FM has a large coverage in Northern Uganda. Listeners were also able to call in and ask questions and offer their comments/ suggestions in regards to the topics of discussion.

## Project Highlights and Achievements.

The project provided a unique opportunity for Women Rights Defender to come together and discuss strategies that can counter online Gender Based Violence Against women. The project contributed to significant increase in their knowledge on online GBV, including adopting the best strategies to protect themselves and develop cyber-risk management skills so as to foster a better digital experience.

Some highlights and achievements of the 2 months project included:

- Conducting 10 project related workshops in digital safety and security which attracted 30 women rights defenders that included (bloggers and journalists).
- Project participants created platforms such as WhatsApp groups where they continue to share knowledge, information and opportunities while supporting each other in their digital safety journey.
- Participants committed to passing on the knowledge they attained to their networks such as workmates through inhouse training.
- Project beneficiaries also vowed to bring back fellow female journalists to the newsroom who had left the profession because of the online violence they faced.

## Project Outcomes

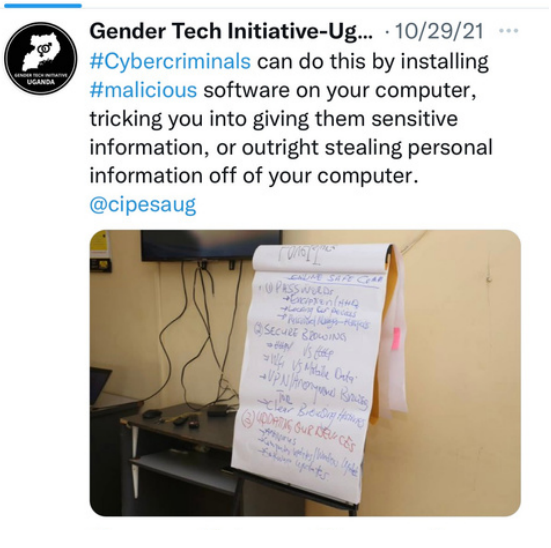
An increased awareness of online Gender Based Violence against women rights defenders contributed to the following outcomes:

- Resilient and empowered Women Human Rights Defenders who are better informed and demand their digital rights. There was improved knowledge, attitudes and practices of WHRD relating to Online Gender Based Violence and DIgital Safety.
- Project participants were able to promote improved digital practices, mental health, wellbeing and digital rights of other WHRDs and support their access to Digital safety information and prevention strategies to protect themselves from any form of cyber harassment.
- Increased access to, use of the available information and resources on Online Gender Based Violence that were provided during the training, that are responsive to the specific needs of WHRDs.

# Media Coverage

The project received visibility on social media and broadcast media. Most of the journalists that we trained wrote radio stories that aired on their different media houses. GlimUG, an online news Media published an article about the project.

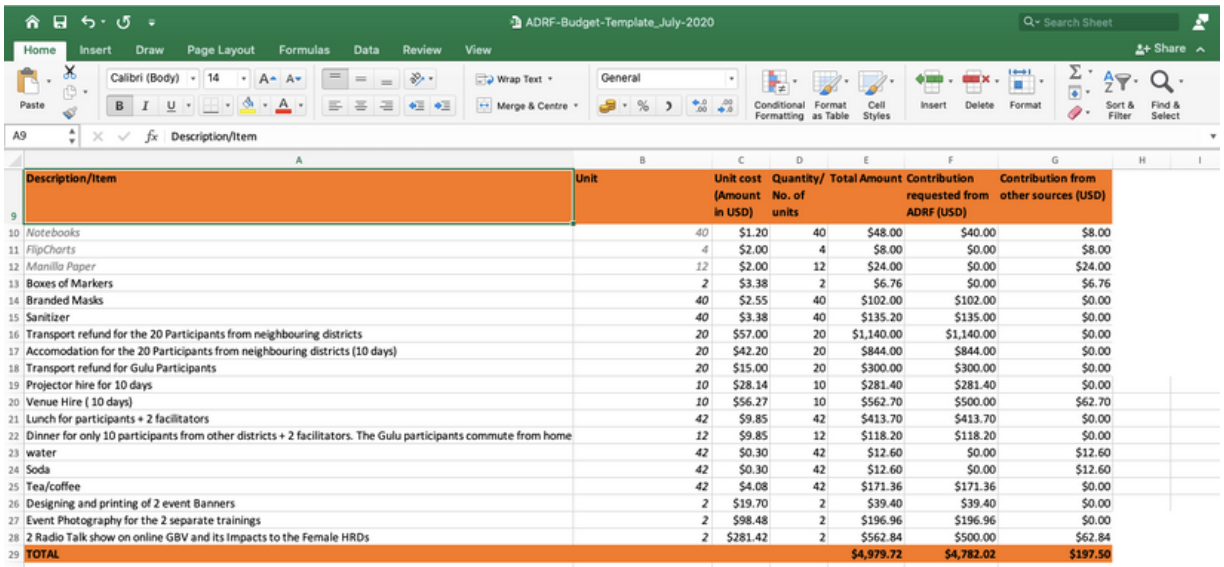
https://glimug.com/gender-tech-initiative-uganda-launches-5-day-training-for-female-journalists/






| Challenges | Action Point |
|---|---|
| Because of an error during the budgeting on our end, we had a deficit in the activity funds which means the implementation of the 2nd ctivity was affected. | This was addressed by reducing the number of trainees in the 2nd cohort from 20 to 10 so as to fit within thebudget. |

# Explanation for Budget error.



ADRF-Budget-Template_July-2020

| Description/Item | Unit | Unit cost (Amount in USD) | Quantity/ No. of units | Total Amount | Contribution requested from ADRF (USD) | Contribution from other sources (USD) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Notebooks | 40 | $1.20 | 40 | $48.00 | $40.00 | $8.00 |
| FlipCharts | 4 | $2.00 | 4 | $8.00 | $0.00 | $8.00 |
| Manilla Paper | 12 | $2.00 | 12 | $24.00 | $0.00 | $24.00 |
| Boxes of Markers | 2 | $3.38 | 2 | $6.76 | $0.00 | $6.76 |
| Branded Masks | 40 | $2.55 | 40 | $102.00 | $102.00 | $0.00 |
| Sanitizer | 40 | $3.38 | 40 | $135.20 | $135.00 | $0.00 |
| Transport refund for the 20 Participants from neighbouring districts | 20 | $57.00 | 20 | $1,140.00 | $1,140.00 | $0.00 |
| Accomodation for the 20 Participants from neighbouring districts (10 days) | 20 | $42.20 | 20 | $844.00 | $844.00 | $0.00 |
| Transport refund for Gulu Participants | 20 | $15.00 | 20 | $300.00 | $300.00 | $0.00 |
| Projector hire for 10 days | 10 | $28.14 | 10 | $281.40 | $281.40 | $0.00 |
| Venue Hire ( 10 days) | 10 | $56.27 | 10 | $562.70 | $500.00 | $62.70 |
| Lunch for participants + 2 facilitators | 42 | $9.85 | 42 | $413.70 | $413.70 | $0.00 |
| Dinner for only 10 participants from other districts + 2 facilitators. The Gulu participants commute from home | 12 | $9.85 | 12 | $118.20 | $118.20 | $0.00 |
| water | 42 | $0.30 | 42 | $12.60 | $0.00 | $12.60 |
| Soda | 42 | $0.30 | 42 | $12.60 | $0.00 | $12.60 |
| Tea/coffee | 42 | $4.08 | 42 | $171.36 | $171.36 | $0.00 |
| Designing and printing of 2 event Banners | 2 | $19.70 | 2 | $39.40 | $39.40 | $0.00 |
| Event Photography for the 2 separate trainings | 2 | $98.48 | 2 | $196.96 | $196.96 | $0.00 |
| 2 Radio Talk show on online GBV and its Impacts to the Female HRDs | 2 | $281.42 | 2 | $562.84 | $500.00 | $62.84 |
| TOTAL | | | | $4,979.72 | $4,782.02 | $197.50 |

Items like Lunch, Breakfast and accommodation were supposed to be multiplied by 10, which is the number of days for the two activities with 5 days for each activity, but we erred and only calculated for 1 day. This affected our second activity and ended up reducing the participants for the second training from 20 to 10 and also we couldn't do the second radio talk show.

## Conclusion

Based on feedback obtained from the trainees and facilitators, we have a strong belief that the knowledge gained from the training will have a great impact one the journalists's professional and personal work which will contribute a lot in the fight against online safety and Gender based Violence and advancement of Human rights in Northern Uganda

## Activities in pictures