

Call for Proposals

Online Gender-Based Violence and the Impact on the Civic Freedoms of Women Human Rights Defenders in the Indo-Pacific

The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) seeks individuals or organizations to undertake a research consultancy on online gender-based violence¹ (OGBV) and its impact on the civic freedoms of women human rights defenders in the Indo-Pacific.² The consultancy period is from April 15, 2022 through July 15, 2022. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until the position is filled or the call withdrawn, but are due no later than April 8, 2022.

Scope of Research

In her 2021 report, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Irene Khan, wrote:

In the digital age, the Internet has become a new battleground in the struggle for women's rights, amplifying opportunities for women to express themselves but also multiplying possibilities for repression.³

With the increasing shift of civic activities to virtual spaces, internet freedoms have become closely interconnected with civic freedoms. While online spaces and tools have democratized the exercise of civic freedoms for many and enhanced opportunities for assembly, association, and expression, online gender-based violence has hindered access and, in many instances, prevented the meaningful participation of women in online spaces.

Online gender-based violence (OGBV) can take various forms, from sexual harassment, doxing, and non-consensual dissemination of intimate images, to cyber-

¹ According to the [Explanatory report to the Istanbul Convention](#), "Gender-based violence refers to any type of harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity." While we understand that gender-based violence encompasses diverse categories of individuals, in order to narrow the scope of the research and examine the impacts of OGBV in a more comprehensive way, for the purposes of this report we are focusing on victims and survivors of GBV who identify as women, regardless of their sex assigned at birth.

² For the purposes of this call, the Indo-Pacific includes most countries in Asia (East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia) and the Pacific Islands, but does not include Pakistan or Afghanistan. To verify eligibility, please email asia@icnl.org. Not-for-profit organizations are preferred applicants. For-profit organizations carrying out public benefit activities, civic space work, or with relevant expertise interested in applying should contact ICNL to verify eligibility.

³ United Nations Human Rights Council, A/76/258, "Report of UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Irene Khan" July 30, 2021, para. 4.

flashing, cyber-stalking, and threats of rape or other forms of violence. In many cases, OGBV and offline gender-based violence are a continuum, with online harassment and threats that violate or chill the exercise of civic freedoms translating into actual physical violence. Women human rights defenders,⁴ in particular, suffer disproportionate adverse impacts from online gender-based violence.

As the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders has highlighted:

[M]any women defenders continue to face significant risks in their human rights practice. They often face the same risks that defenders who are men face, for women defenders, too, are subject to restrictions on rights and fundamental freedoms and live in the same social, cultural and political milieu that shape responses to human rights. However, women defenders often face additional and different risks and obstacles that are gendered, intersectional and shaped by entrenched gender stereotypes and deeply held ideas and norms about who women are and how women should be.⁵

Among other forms of threats and violence faced, women human rights defenders are often subjected to online harassment, violence, and attacks. The cases of journalist Rana Ayyub in India and activist Alia Affendy in Malaysia exemplify the types of OGBV routinely experienced by women human rights defenders in the Indo-Pacific. [Rana Ayyub](#), an investigative journalist who had been critical of the BJP government, was subjected to an online hate campaign that included doxing, sexual harassment and threats of sexual violence via social media, and circulation of a pornographic deepfake video with her face. The [psychological effects](#) on her have included insomnia, inability to eat, thoughts of self-harm, and symptoms of dissociative disorder. [Alia Affendy](#), an activist who had previously worked with NGO Sisters in Islam (itself the subject of ongoing misogynistic attacks) and who had aired views that were critical of Malaysia's 2020 change of government, was doxed and harassed online to the point where she felt physically unsafe and had to deactivate all of her online profiles. Unfortunately, Ayyub's and Affendy's experiences are by no means isolated instances, but are indicative of the types of OGBV regularly experienced by women human rights defenders.

This research seeks to undertake a cross-cutting analysis and to identify trends in the Indo-Pacific related to OGBV as an obstacle to the exercise of civic freedoms by

⁴ According to the [UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights](#), "To be a human rights defender, a person can act to address any human right (or rights) on behalf of individuals or groups. Human rights defenders seek the promotion and protection of civil and political rights as well as the promotion, protection and realization of economic, social and cultural rights." In the context of this call for proposals, human rights defenders may include journalists, civil society activists, and other individuals working to promote human rights.

⁵ United Nations Human Rights Council, A/HRC./40/60, "Report of UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michael Forst" Jan 10, 2019, para. 6.

women human rights defenders. The major questions to be addressed by this research are:

- 1) What types/forms of OGBV (i.e., doxing, sexual harassment, deepfakes, threats of violence, etc.) are most commonly experienced by women human rights defenders in the Indo-Pacific?
- 2) What are the most common impacts (e.g., diminished physical safety, diminished economic security, silencing of defenders, and adverse effects on psychological and physical well-being) of OGBV on the exercise of civic freedoms by women human rights defenders?
- 3) What resources or strategies have women human rights defenders found helpful in preventing and responding to the threat of OGBV?

ICNL is seeking an individual or organizational researcher to conduct primary research employing varied techniques such as surveys, case studies, and interviews/fieldwork, to gather information around the impact of OGBV on the civic freedoms of women human rights defenders in the Indo-Pacific region. This study will examine at least 6 countries in the Indo-Pacific (including at least 2 countries in South Asia and at least 2 countries in Southeast Asia). ICNL will conduct a literature review that includes an examination of the relevant legal framework in each country, and of data around prevalence, while the consultant will focus on primary research around trends with regard to types/forms and the impact of OGBV on the exercise of civic freedoms by women human rights defenders (including, but not limited to, threats to physical safety, threats to economic security, silencing of defenders, and adverse effects on psychological and physical well-being).

The final report will aim to present trends related to the forms of OGBV frequently experienced by women HRDs (including through survey data and illustrative case studies); discuss the most common impacts of OGBV on women HRDs (including through survey data and illustrative case studies); provide an overview of the legal frameworks across the focus countries; and identify policy gaps and make corresponding recommendations for policy reform as well as responsive tools and strategies.

Proposed research methodologies should be included in the proposal, and can be finalized in consultation with ICNL.

Scope of Work

The individual or organizational consultant will be responsible for:

1. Conducting comprehensive primary research on the impact of online gender-based violence on the civic freedoms of women human rights defenders. Research should include primary research, including through surveys to quantify prevalence among and

impact of OGBV on women human rights defenders, as well as interviews with women human rights defenders to gain qualitative insights. Surveys should be conducted among a minimum of 25 women human rights defenders in each of six different countries.

2. Providing to ICNL a report synthesizing the key findings of the research and highlighting regional trends—to be incorporated by ICNL into a final research product—including case studies of the experiences of at least 3 women human rights defenders in at least 6 countries (with a minimum of three case studies per country).

Content of Proposal

Interested applicants should submit a proposal addressing the following topics:

- Describe the scope of the research to be undertaken, including all research methodologies to be employed. Please include any revisions to the Scope of Research presented above, the methodology for conducting the research, and the timeline, recognizing that activities must be completed no later than July 15, 2022.
- Describe applicant's experience relevant to online gender-based violence, as well as undertaking qualitative research, including the specific trauma-informed methods they will use when interviewing or engaging with victims/survivors.
- If more than one person will be involved in this project, describe who will undertake different aspects of the project. ICNL reserves the right to approve or reject the use of any personnel.
- The cost proposal/line-item budget for this consultancy. The pricing for the cost proposal must be in USD and fully itemized. For personnel costs, please list each person to be involved in this project, the proposed daily rate(s) and number of days. All other costs, if any, should be listed and explained. The proposed price should be inclusive of all taxes. ICNL expects to issue one Firm Fixed Price contract with a ceiling of no more than USD \$5,000.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following factors:

- Compliance with eligibility requirements and application procedures.
- Demonstrated experience of the applicant in conducting quantitative and qualitative research.
- Quality of proposed project, including the project's innovations, the proposed methodology/design, and feasibility of the project (e.g., activities are targeted to achieve stated results, and anticipated results are realistic and attainable).
- Proposed budget and value for money.

- Inclusion of reasonable indicators to measure project success.

How to Apply

To apply for this consultancy, applicants must submit the following items by April 8, 2022:

- Proposal of not more than four pages, including line-item budget;
- Resume or curriculum vitae (cv) for individuals undertaking the research and writing the report; and/or
- Background information about the applicant organization if relevant (e.g., website links or informational materials).

Applications should be sent to digital@icnl.org, with reference made to “Online GBV Consultancy Application 2022” in the subject line. All application materials should be submitted in English. Questions related to this consultancy can be emailed to digital@icnl.org.

Deadline

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until April 8, 2022. Due to the number of expected applications, only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.