

Women Aspirants Under Attack

Do's and Don'ts for the Gender Disinformation Social Listening Analysis

This memo spells out the do's and don'ts of how to make the best use of this report, to defend women in politics and leadership without spreading the disinformation further, causing more harm to women and groups being targeted and carrying the dangerous narratives forward.

Please consider: Most of the recommendations contained herein are mainly adopted from the #ShePersisted [Digital Resilience Toolkit](#). Please refer to this toolkit for more tips on how to build your digital resilience online. However, keep in mind that while digital resilience is necessary, unless we shift social media companies' accountability, social media remains an unsafe place for women in politics. The burden of solving this problem should be on the companies - not on the targets of hate and disinformation.

The value of this research: This is valuable information that provides insights into the gendered nature of online attacks targeted towards women candidates, but research is NOT your message. This report confirms that indeed gendered disinformation attacks, especially those targeting women in elected positions or seeking elected positions is rampant in Kenya, and like in many other parts of the world, typically assumes the 4Us attack on women, i.e. “Unqualified, Unlikeable, Unintelligent and Untrustworthy”. There is no doubt that these attacks are aided by lack of content moderation by the major big tech companies, in direct violation of their own established terms of service and enhanced by their algorithms. We must do more to hold big tech accountable to their own terms of service and promote a safer environment online for women candidates.

Who is this Report for?

Women elected leaders/women campaigning for elected positions, activists, election consultants working with women's campaigns, journalists, women's rights organizations, civil society organizations working in elections and gender equity sectors, election observers, those studying women in politics and gender, state agencies working on gender and governance issues, Parliament and Senate, Council of Governors, state departments responsible for ICT, state regulators like CAK and NCIC, Law enforcement agencies like Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) and National Police Service (NPS) and the broader international women's community and those shedding more light on the harms of big tech for women and women in leadership. .

What Actions should this report activate? (Do's)

Preemptive

In line with the report's findings that gendered online disinformation traditionally assumes the 4Us attack on women, i.e. “Unqualified, Unlikeable, Unintelligent and Untrustworthy”, efforts should be made by women elected leaders/women campaigning for elected

positions, campaign managers, election consultants working with women's campaigns, journalists, women's rights organizations, civil society organizations working in elections and gender equity sectors.

Women candidates and high profile leaders should **adopt** comprehensive cybersecurity measures and **tighten** their digital hygiene as a proactive measure to minimize the exposure and impact of online attacks. Comprehensive tips are provided in the She Persisted Digital Resilience Toolkit.

Reporting

The trend analysis indicates significantly high volumes of hate speech and other hateful content. Recipients of this report can draw on the specific sections speaking of this to issue joint statements and direct public pressure to the big tech platforms to observe their own terms of service; and to regulatory agencies like CAK and NCIC to act to enforce their mandates.

Further advocacy/campaigns should also be run to encourage and build capacity of women candidates running for office to document this online abuse, observe patterns in abuse and with the evidence by perpetrators, report the abuse to employers, the platforms and law enforcement.

This report can also serve as an evidence base for reporting content violations to platforms.

Responding

What is the best way to respond to online harassment and abuse? Women elected leaders/women campaigning for elected positions, activists, election consultants working with women's campaigns, journalists, women's rights organizations, civil society organizations working in elections and gender equity sectors can run joint campaigns that respond to online gendered disinformation using letters, petitions and creative media. The campaigns should target the perpetrators, platforms, and general misogynistic narratives.

- Election groups - in this pre election moment, get organized and highlight the cost of gender disinformation on women's political participation and democracy in Kenya
- Election observers - include the term gendered disinformation in short and long term observer reports and pull extracts of this report to highlight the attacks against women candidates in this pre election environment.
- CSOs - Highlight the system at work and the platform's culpability rather than personalized examples of online attacks against women
- Speak to the ways in which the gendered nature of attacks are weaponized to keep women out of politics or leadership positions, such as attacking their appearance or tribe or undermining their qualifications.

What not to do (Don'ts)

- **Do not retweet or repost disinformation against women candidates.** You will give more attention to the lie and help spread the messages and images of the attacks on women when retweeting or responding directly to it. You can better correct the

record by directly speaking to your members, target audiences, or the media to spread true and accurate information about women running for office and their qualifications.

- **Do not share this report without disabling sensitive hyperlinks:** Sharing this report with the references to the online gendered attacks is one way of spreading disinformation on the same. One should also share the memo/guide on how to use the report effectively when sharing the report within their circles.
- **Make it Political:** Even though the substance of this report is mostly political and features women victims from different political divides, this report spells out major failures on the parts of the platforms and regulators. As such, this should remain the purpose of this report and not advance any political narratives.
- **Make it Personal:** Politics is a divisive concept, especially so during a closely contested election campaign which is perceived as polarizing on many fronts – gender, religion, ethnicity, values and history. This report touches on issues which are both cross cutting and polarizing, but are national and important in our political and democratic development.