



Report on Webinar: Women's Political Participation in the Digital Age

Introduction

The webinar focused on the challenges and opportunities for women politicians in the digital space. Speakers discussed key issues such as **online harassment, technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and misinformation/disinformation**, all of which hinder women's participation in politics. The discussion also emphasized the importance of **digital literacy, legal safeguards**, and creating **safer online environments** for women in politics. Additionally, speakers highlighted the need to **engage men** in these discussions and support women at the grassroots level.

The invited speakers were:

- **Chikas Kumle** (Nigerian politician, Women Political Activist)
- **Gloria Anderson** (Founder & Executive Director at TEDI, Tanzania)
- **Juliane Muller** (Associate Programme Officer, Digitalization and Democracy, International IDEA)

Challenges faced by Women Politicians Online

One of the central issues discussed was the increasing prevalence of online harassment and technology-facilitated gender-based violence targeting women politicians. Panelists shared their experiences regarding strategic online attacks, misinformation campaigns, and reputational damage caused by fake news. These challenges discourage women from actively participating in politics and can lead to self-censorship.

Another key concern was the lack of strong digital safeguards and legal frameworks to address online violence against women in politics. Social media anonymity makes it difficult to track perpetrators, leading to limited accountability. The need for policy reforms and improved enforcement of gender-sensitive community guidelines on digital platforms was underscored.



Opportunities and Strategies for Improvement

Despite the challenges, digital technologies provide significant opportunities for women's political participation. Social media and digital tools lower entry barriers, allowing women to mobilize, campaign, and engage with constituents more directly and cost-effectively. Digital platforms help amplify their voices, build supportive networks, and challenge gender stereotypes in politics.

To ensure safer digital spaces for women politicians, panelists emphasized the need for stronger digital literacy programs to equip them with the skills necessary to navigate online spaces safely and effectively. They also highlighted the importance of legal frameworks and enforcement in establishing policies that protect women from online harassment and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Engaging political parties is crucial, as it encourages them to develop policies that support female candidates and publicly condemn online abuse. Additionally, involving men in advocacy efforts can help promote male allies in politics, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment. Lastly, encouraging civil society's engagement ensures that organizations working on gender issues contribute to developing online safety guidelines and advocating for policy changes.

Key Takeaways and Next Steps

Several action points were identified for different stakeholders.

- **Electoral commissions** should raise awareness among their staff about the challenges women face in digital political spaces, collaborate with civil society organizations and political parties to better understand and address these challenges, and advocate for and participate in policy reforms to protect women online.
- **Political parties** need to develop actionable policies and legal frameworks to support and protect female candidates. They should also publicly condemn online abuse against women and take disciplinary action against perpetrators within their parties.



- **Women's rights organizations** play a crucial role in advocating for stronger support for women in politics by political parties and electoral bodies. They should also push for digital literacy programs that incorporate a gender perspective.
- **Digital platforms** must implement and enforce gender-sensitive community guidelines to protect women in political spaces.
- **iKNOW Politics** in collaboration with civil society organizations should continue organizing webinars and discussions on women's political participation in the digital age while actively engaging in the development of online safety guidelines and policies for women politicians.

Conclusion

The webinar provided valuable insights into the digital challenges faced by women in politics and highlighted strategies to address them. The discussion underscored the importance of digital literacy, policy reforms, and collaborative efforts among electoral commissions, political parties, and civil society organizations. By taking these steps, stakeholders can create a safer and more inclusive digital space, empowering women to participate in politics without fear of online harassment and discrimination.