

Human Rights in Digital Governance:

Protecting data and promoting rights in low- and middle-income countries



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Global Digital and Data Governance: Ownership, power and innovation


A/79/L.2

Global Digital Compact

1. Digital technologies are dramatically transforming our world. They offer immense potential benefits for the well-being and advancement of people and societies and for our planet. They hold out the promise of accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. We can only achieve this through strengthened international cooperation that closes all digital divides between and within countries. We recognize the challenges that these divides pose for many countries, in particular developing countries, which have pressing development needs and limited resources.
3. We recognize that the pace and power of emerging technology new possibilities but also new risks for humanity, some of which are known. We recognize the need to identify and mitigate risks and to exercise oversight of technology in ways that advance sustainable development and enjoyment of human rights.
4. Our goal is an inclusive, open, sustainable, fair, safe and secure digital world for all. This Global Digital Compact sets out the objectives, principles and actions we undertake to achieve it in the non-military domain.
5. We have strong foundations on which to build. Our digital cooperation is based on international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, international rights law and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹⁷ We refer to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action¹⁸ and the Tunis Declaration on the Information Society.¹⁹ The United Nations provides a critical platform for digital cooperation we need, and we will harness existing processes and mechanisms.
6. Our cooperation must be agile and adaptable to the rapidly changing digital landscape. As Governments, we will work in collaboration and partnership with the private sector, civil society, international organizations, the technical communities and all other stakeholders, within their respective responsibilities, to realize the digital future we seek.

Objectives

United Nations A/RES/80/173

 **General Assembly** Distr.: General
19 December 2025

Eightieth session
Agenda item 15
Information and communications technologies for sustainable development

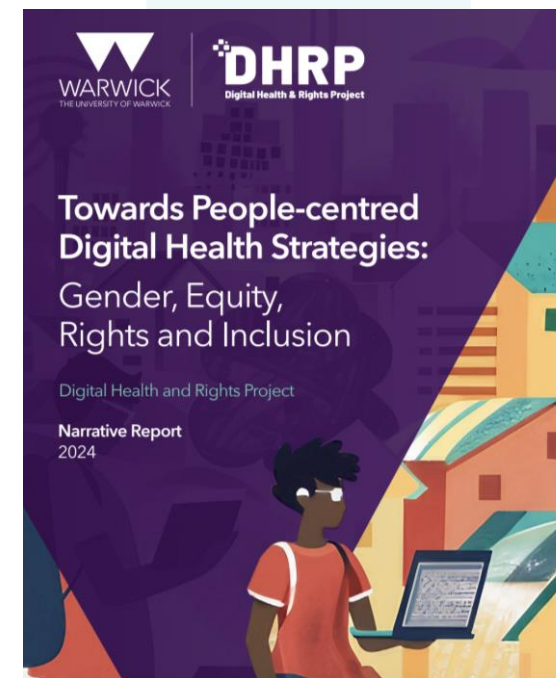
Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 2025

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/80/L.41)]

80/173. Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

The General Assembly
Adopts the following outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at its eightieth session:

Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society



The Digital Health and Rights Project: Research, advocacy and learning across borders



- Fundación Karisma
- GNP+
- KELIN (Kenya)
- NAP+ Ghana
- Privacy International
- Restless Development
- STOPAIDS
- Universidad de los Andes (Colombia)
- VNP+
- Host: University of Warwick

Digital Health and Rights Project

A network of 10 organizations spanning 10 countries. Our work focuses on collaboration and an anti-oppressive approach.

Our highly collaborative working style includes field study exchanges and cross-border coaching to maximize learning opportunities.

How is digital transformation of health affecting human rights of young adults in LMIC?

- How do young adults experience **multiple digital divides**?
- How do **criminalization, stigma** shape experience of digital surveillance, community mobilization?
- What kinds of **digital literacy** do young adults need and want?
- What lessons can be learned from the HIV movement for **future mobilization and advocacy**?
- **What is the future of human rights** in digital age?



Participatory action research with Community Advisory Teams (CATs)

- National teams co-design research

- Study participants helped shape the research questions, tools.

- Support data-gathering

- Community members mobilized peers, helped to gather data.

- Validate findings

- Participants reviewed and confirmed research conclusions.

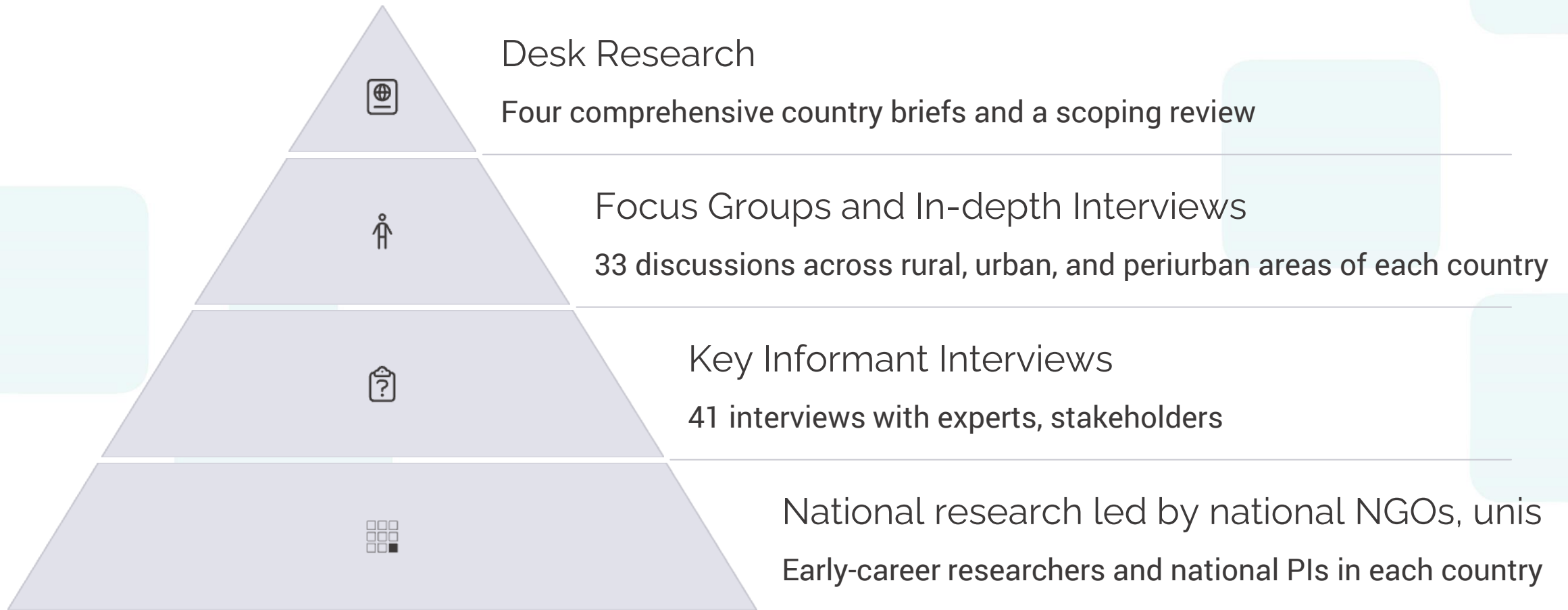
- Drive advocacy

- With STOPAIDS, Privacy International, CATs will lead policy change.

Youth members received leadership training, digital rights training, and will lead our #MakeITSafe social media campaign



Qualitative research to explore lived experiences



Translation of 4,000+ pages of transcripts in six languages (English, Sheng, Spanish, Swahili, Twi, Vietnamese) enabled rigorous collaborative analysis using Dedoose.

Focus Groups: 302 Diverse Young Adults in Four Countries

Participant Demographics

- Ages 18-30
- Seven gender identities (self-described)
- All had primary education

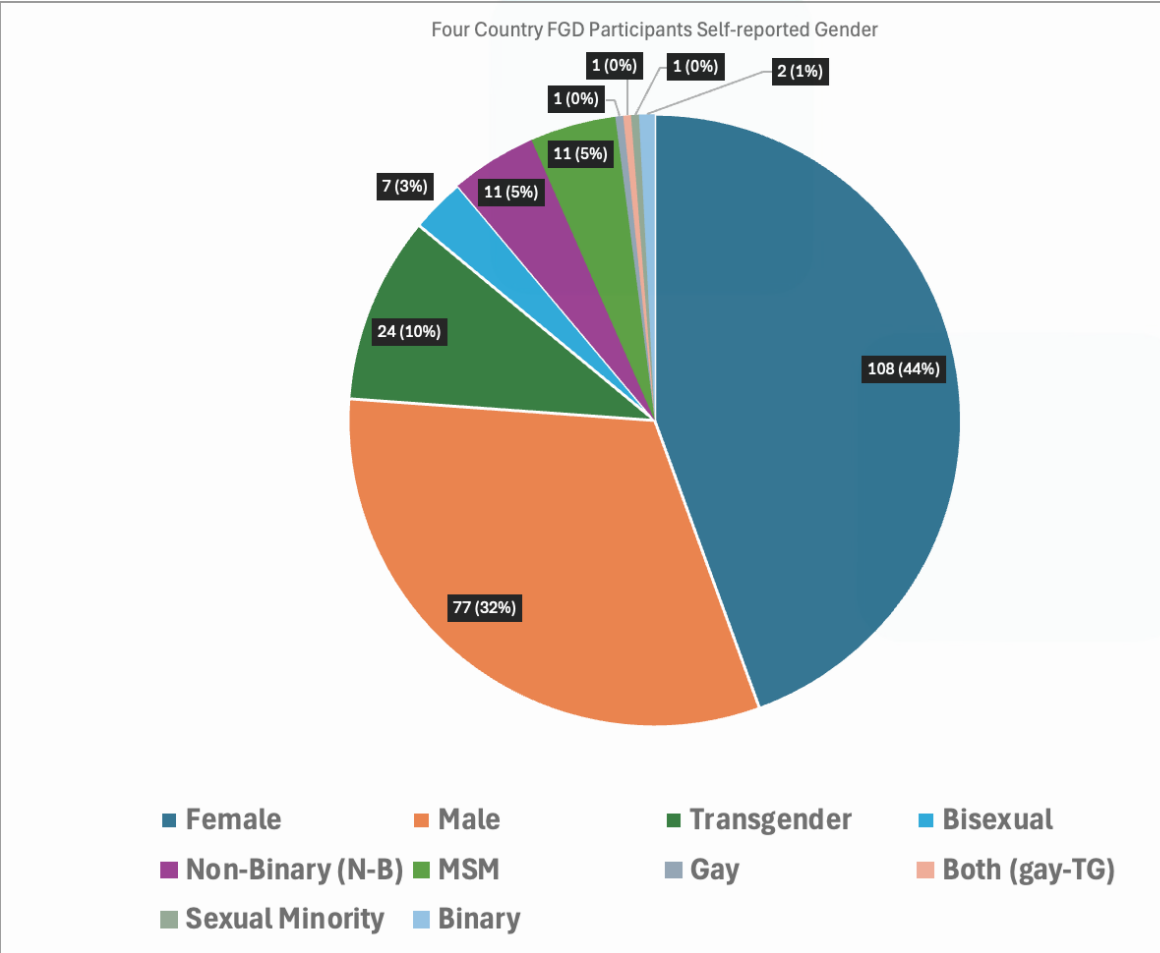
Represented Groups

- People living with HIV
- Sex workers
- Sexual minorities
- Trans people
- Rural women

Geographic Distribution

- 27% rural
- 50% urban
- 23% peri-urban

Participants were recruited from multiple locations across each country, ensuring diverse perspectives and experiences.



Privacy and stigma: Shared concern in four countries



Fear of Being Outed

Browser searches, messages, and social media activity could reveal HIV status, LGBTQ+ identity, or sex work.



Data Security Concerns

Fears about hacks, leaks, and companies selling data to third parties.



Safety Threats

In Ghana, fears of vigilante violence or arrest under anti-homosexuality bill.



Mental Health Impact

Reluctance to engage online creates social isolation and anxiety.

“Hospitals have tablets that ask your sexuality, your gender...you’ll be scared. What if the person you are giving information to reports you?”

23-year-old woman,
Kumasi, Ghana

Cost of Getting Online Deepens Exclusion in Ghana, Kenya



Prohibitive Costs

High price of smartphones, airtime, and data forces impossible choices between connectivity and basic needs.



Mobile Debt Spiral

Microloans for airtime trap sex workers and informal sector employees in cycles of debt.



Forced Device Sharing

Economic necessity forces phone sharing with family or friends, dramatically increasing privacy risks.

“After my sister read [a doctor’s text message to refill an ART prescription], my sister told my father. I had to move out, because he told me that I was no longer his child.”

25-year-old woman living with HIV, Nairobi, Kenya

“Who would be the greatest threat if they had access to your health data?”

Family Concerns

“I think I am most worried about my family.” - 22-year-old man, Kitui, Kenya

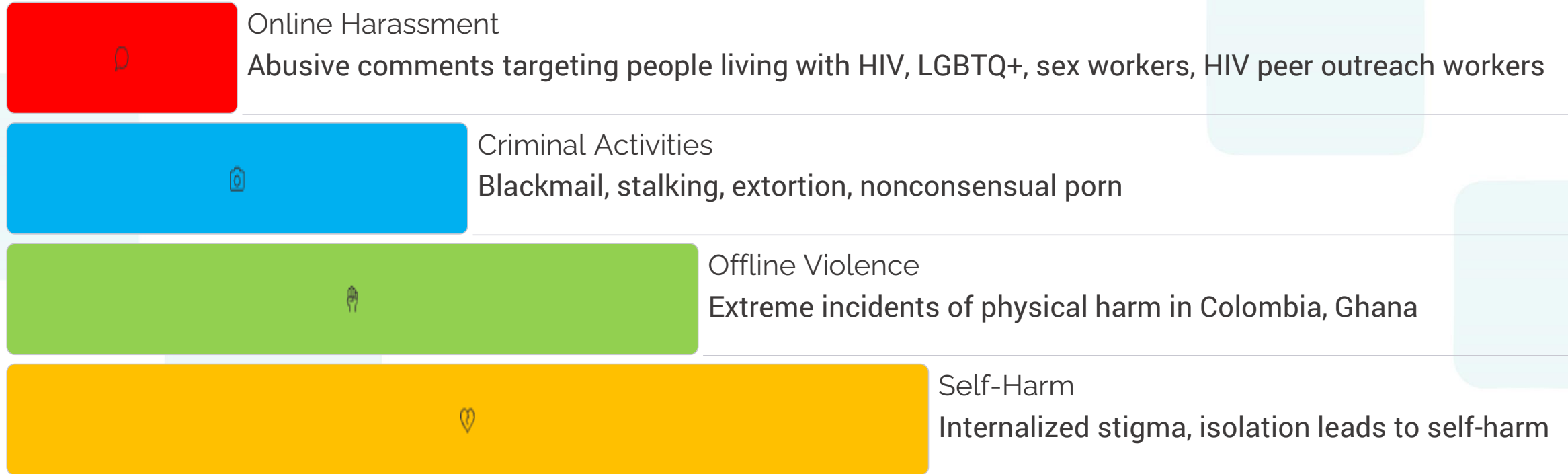
Government Distrust

“I would say the State, definitely. Their health databases aren't very private.” - 30-year-old man, Cali, Colombia

Health App Privacy

“It's possible the app will expose patient information.” - 23-year-old trans person, Hanoi, Vietnam

3/4 of study participants described Technology-Facilitated Abuse against selves or peers

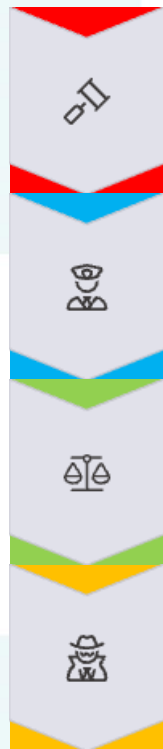


“Let's say for example as a person who is living with HIV, if I'm talking about my daily life and how I take my meds, on the Internet...People say: 'you will just die', 'you are cursed'...You are an outcast.”

– 24-year-old non-binary person, Mombasa, Kenya



Lack of Support & Remedy



Legal Gaps

Unclear laws on technology-facilitated abuse

Enforcement Issues

Police disregard or perpetuate abuse

Victim/Survivor Blame

Survivors face additional stigma when reporting

Community Solutions

Paralegals, rights training, specialized tribunals needed

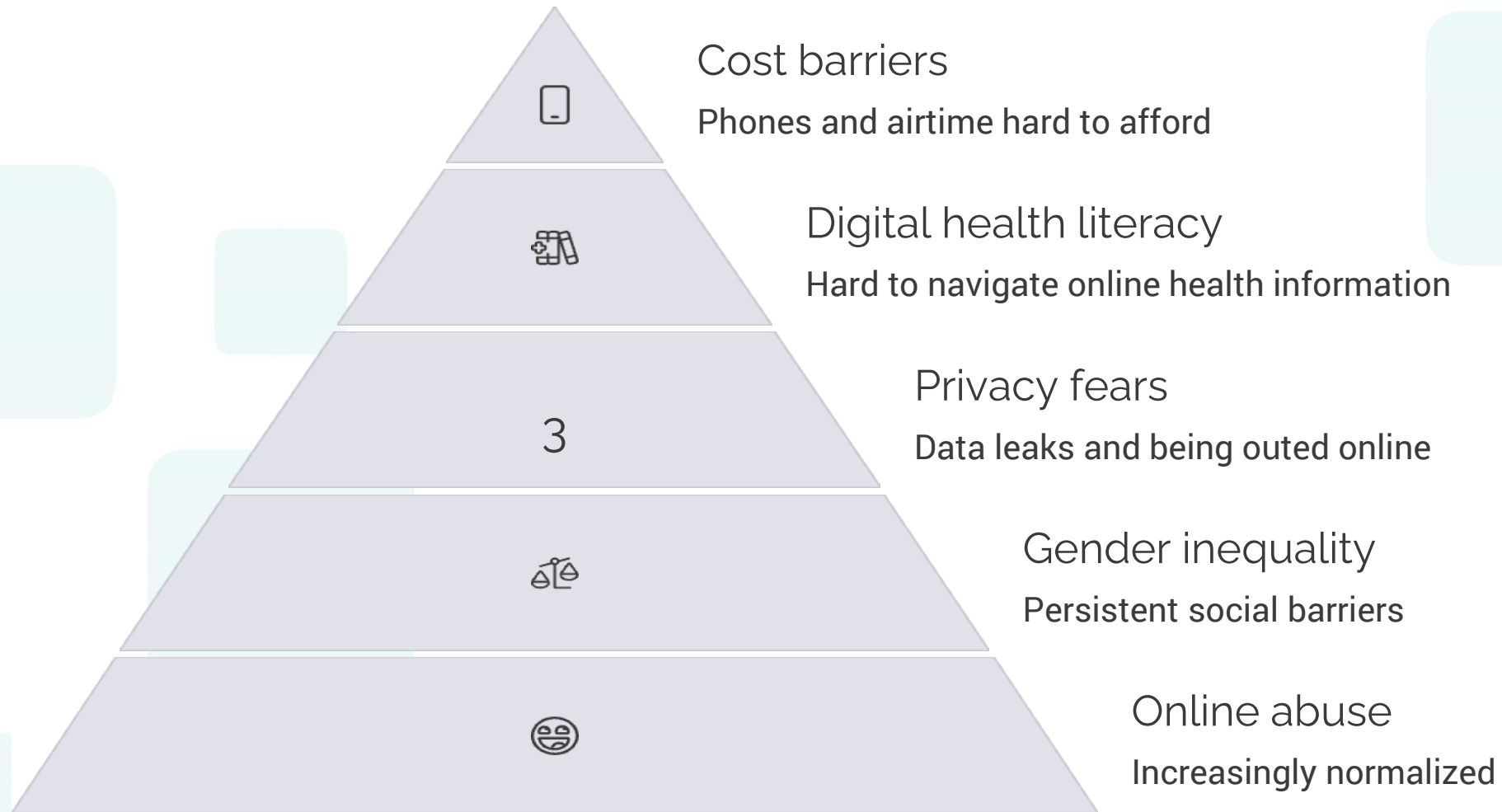
"I think that all of us have denounced at some point, we have complained, and most of the time, nothing happens."

22-year-old trans person,
Bogota, Colombia

Vietnam:

Greater optimism about using laws:
calls for better enforcement, legal aid

Overlapping inequalities can deepen digital exclusion



Digital resilience, digital literacy and the future

Many young adults were positive about the future Calls for training in AI, digital literacy in Ghana, Vietnam

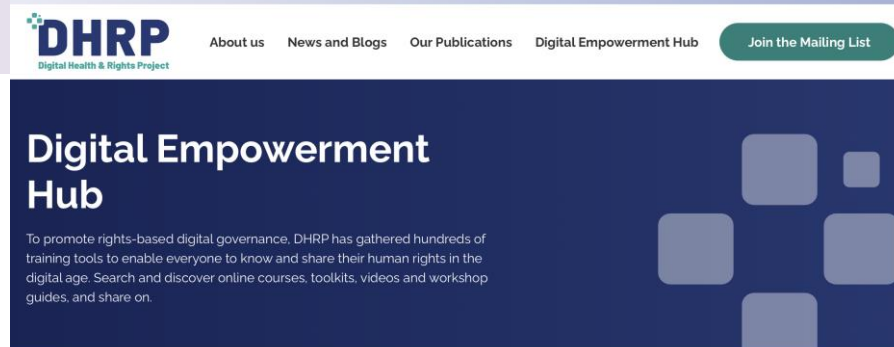
Participants curious about AI

- Use it for searches, “friendship”
- Mistaken belief that AI “more private”

Accra, Ghana:

“In the near future, I’m hoping to see room open for **transparency and accountability.**”

Digital empowerment is: building knowledge of human rights in relation to digital technologies and spaces, and supporting people to mobilise and contribute to digital governance and decision-making.



DHRP
Digital Health & Rights Project

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Digital Empowerment Hub

To promote rights-based digital governance, DHRP has gathered hundreds of training tools to enable everyone to know and share their human rights in the digital age. Search and discover online courses, toolkits, videos and workshop guides, and share on.

Advocating to protect data privacy and human rights: from communities to global institutions

Universidad de los Andes

Rights and Health in the Digital Age: Protection and Advocacy

Instructor: Catalina González Uribe

Enroll for free
Starts Apr 13

5 modules
Gain insight into a topic and learn the fundamentals.

Literacy and Empowerment

Digital health literacy comprises "the ability to search, find, understand and evaluate health information from electronic resources ... to solve health-related problems."⁴ High digital literacy, as measured by tools such as the eHealth Literacy Scale (eHEALS), is associated with increased participation in medical decisions, improved mental health, and a higher overall quality of life.⁵ Alongside digital literacy, the Digital Health and Rights Project emphasizes the need for digital empowerment. This refers to the "process of enabling individuals and communities to effectively use digital technologies to enhance their knowledge, access opportunities, exercise rights, and participate fully in society and the economy."⁶ Elevating digital literacy and empowerment advances the rights to health, science, information, and non-discrimination.

Key Considerations

- 1 Have you assessed whether the participants possess the digital health literacy and skills needed to use the intervention's technologies safely and effectively, such as through a validated assessment tool?
- 2 Does the program include digital empowerment initiatives and activities to enhance participants' digital health literacy, such as capacity-building workshops, community-based digital advisors, peer-to-peer mentoring, access to online courses, and "training of trainers"?



Thank you!

