

Responses to online abuse of women in India

**DON'T LET IT STAND 2013-**

Internet Democracy Project

# Some findings of 'Don't Let It Stand' 2013

- Wide range of “abuse”
- Across political ideologies
- Hierarchy in types of harassment- images >>>> text
- Parallels between street harassment and online harassment, and lessons
  - Ignoring abuse does not make it go away
  - Female body as a site of attack
  - Women do not resort to legal measures, unless as a last resort

# Three years on...

- Draft National Policy for Women 2016 (Ministry of Women and Child Development)-

“The misuse of rapid advances in Information Technology (IT) and telephony has resulted in new and varied forms of sexual abuse such as cyber crimes and harassment of women through mobiles and Internet. The regulatory frameworks are not in pace with the growth in technology as yet.”

“With technological advancement, there has been incidence of frauds, misuse of information uploaded on the cyberspace and hence there is a need for developing protective measures for citizens keeping in view that victims of such frauds are largely women.”

- Female politicians who have been occupying online spaces have been targets
- #IAmTrolledHelp
- Commission on Status of Women 2013-

“(ww) Support the development and use of ICT and social media as a resource for the empowerment of women and girls, including access to information on the prevention of and response violence against women and girls; and develop mechanisms to combat the use of ICT and social media to perpetrate violence against women and girls, including the criminal misuse of ICT of sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, child pornography and trafficking in women and girls, and emerging forms of violence such as cyber stalking, cyber bullying and privacy violations that compromise women’s and girls’ safety”

# Laws cannot be the primary solution

- Legislative measures not equipped to deal with a wide range of abuse that should not be made illegal
- Until there is more clarity, it is better to be general than specific
- Law enforcement is not first port of call for women in India
- Can't always track abusers

# Intermediaries are not always reliable allies

- Often co-opt laws in the region for moderation
- Over-censor in moral panic; or have policies that do not take into account experiences/feedback
- Some intermediaries have been making more meaningful attempts- Riot Games as reported by Laura Hudson in the Wired
- Xbox user feedback

# Community-led approaches

- Community support and solidarity- similar to offline feminist movements
- But often, the community behind the target of abuse devolves into a similar mob

# Counter-speech

- Engaging with abusers, naming and shaming
- Option is not available to all women

# IGF 2015- Best Practices Forum on Online Abuse Gender-based violence against women

- Complex and multi-dimensional with no easy solution
- Neutral platform that is open, transparent and inclusive with mixed methodology
- Balancing of multiple rights
- While developing legislative responses, remedy and redress has to be prioritised over criminalisation
- Importance of awareness and literacy, along with the need for substantial investment in research and statistics

August 2016: Look out for our upcoming web resource that focuses on the other side of the story :-)