



INTERPOL

WOMEN IN CYBER

ADVANCING
GENDER INCLUSIVITY
IN CYBER LAW ENFORCEMENT

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OVERVIEW

Background

The **INTERPOL Global Cybercrime Conference (IGCC)**, held from 15 to 17 October 2023 in Singapore, delivered the first INTERPOL workshop on **Women in Cyber (WIC)** aimed at opening discussions on how to advance gender inclusivity in cyber law enforcement. The event saw the participation of key speakers and panelists shared their thoughts and experiences on the meaning of gender diversity in the realm of cyber and law enforcement.



Introduction

Cyber law enforcement agencies face many challenges in today's digital world. The cyber threat landscape is always changing, influenced by global criminal networks and the rise of new technologies. To address these threats, police have to work with both public and private stakeholders to bring together the best talents and the most efficient responses to national and international cyber issues.

At the same time, people's expectations are also rising. They want better services, more transparency, and a workforce that reflects the community. With these expectations, agencies are supposed to become more and more inclusive.

Based on this context, a pressing question emerges: why are women still under-represented in cyber law enforcement, and how does this impact their experiences and longevity in the field?

The report is composed of three sections: **Challenges, Opportunities, and Best Practices**. It is derived from the insights, expertise, and shared experiences of speakers and panelists of the inaugural INTERPOL Workshop on Women in Cyber - complemented by the active engagement and discussion among participants of the event.

In essence, this report encapsulates the collective wisdom, concerns, and aspirations of many at the forefront of championing the cause of women in cyber law enforcement.



PRIORITY 1: CHALLENGES

“Not enough cooks in the kitchen”

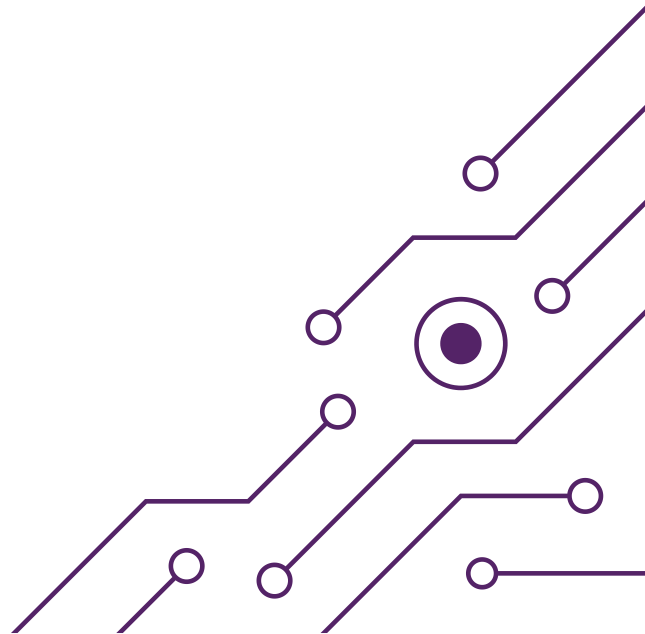
In recent times, the importance of gender diversity in the realm of cyber law enforcement has taken centre stage. Notwithstanding commendable efforts, a palpable void remains in the representation of women in this sector.

During the INTERPOL workshop on Women in Cyber, many challenges were identified and discussed. Amongst them:

Representation Deficit: The under-representation of women in cyber law enforcement not only affects the numbers but limits the potential range of strategies to combat cyber threats. Diverse teams bring in richer perspectives which are crucial in identifying and combating multifaceted cyber threats.

Technological Stagnation: Despite the rapid pace of technological advancements, there is an evident lag in the domain of cyber breach control. This gap heightens vulnerabilities, underscoring the need for diverse thinkers to bridge the disconnect between technological progress and its security applications.

Leadership Disparity: While society advocates for gender equality in leadership, a noticeable gap exists in women’s representation in leadership roles within cybersecurity. This disparity robs the sector of unique perspectives that women leaders can offer.



Myth and Misconception: Cybersecurity is often misconceived as a purely technical field, sidelining potential talents who could offer different insights. Additionally, viewing gender challenges as solely women's issues detracts from the collective responsibility needed to address them.

Cultural and Regional Barriers: Regional disparities, like the notable lack of women in cyber law enforcement roles in Africa, emphasize the complexities of gender challenges in different parts of the world. Strategies should be designed considering these regional and cultural nuances.

Shared Responsibility: There is a need to move beyond viewing gender-related challenges as exclusive to women, and recognize them as an industry-wide issue demanding collective action.



FOCUS AREA 2: OPPORTUNITIES

“The only way parity will increase is if we talk about diversity as a business problem and give it the same rigor and cadence that we do for other business ”

The domain of cyber law enforcement, though riddled with challenges, presents also an array of opportunities to enhance gender inclusivity. With the right strategies and perspectives, these opportunities can revolutionize the way women partake in this sector.

During the INTERPOL workshop on Women in Cyber, many opportunities were identified and discussed. Amongst them:

Behavioural Insights in Recruitment: The shift towards considering behavioural attributes in hiring brings about a refreshing change from the traditional technical-focused approach. This ensures that teams consist of individuals who are not only technically skilled but also possess crucial behavioral attributes like empathy, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. Embracing this avenue opens the door for a holistic and effective cybersecurity team.

Strategic On-The-Job Training: The growing emphasis on training as opposed to pre-existing technical knowledge offers a substantial opportunity. Tailored training programmes, especially for women, can mitigate knowledge and confidence disparities. Supported by mentorship and guidance, women can adeptly transition into and excel within cybersecurity roles. These are offered by national, regional, and international authorities and organisations, like the Women, Peace and Cybersecurity in Asia Pacific.

Gender-Integrated Toolkits: With institutions like Chatham House leading the charge, there is a rise in gender-centric frameworks designed specifically for cybersecurity. These standardized toolkits provide actionable guidelines, promoting the integration of gender-conscious perspectives in all stages of cybersecurity endeavours. Adoption of these can inherently weave gender inclusivity into the fabric of organizations.

Community Engagement and Networking: Engaging in community-driven educational platforms serves as a dual advantage. On one hand, it provides an avenue for continuous learning and upskilling. On the other, it offers a robust networking platform. Immersing in these communities allows women to connect with peers, mentors, and industry experts, fostering a supportive environment. Such interactions amplify collective growth and underscore the importance of women in cyber roles.



FOCUS AREA 3: BEST PRACTICES

“Empower cybercrime response with the power of women”

The intricate tapestry of cyber law enforcement demands a multi-pronged approach to ensure gender inclusivity. During the INTERPOL workshop on Women in Cyber, many best practices that were identified and discussed have the potential to carve a path that welcomes, uplifts, and amplifies the contributions of women and ensures a holistic, diversified approach to challenges.

Gender Analysis: At the crux of change lies understanding. By implementing comprehensive gender analyses, institutions can illuminate the current gender dynamics, pinpointing areas of disparities and opportunities for improvement. This analysis serves as the bedrock for informed decision-making, ensuring that strategies and interventions are tailored based on real data and grounded insights.

Job Descriptions: A subtle yet profound shift can be achieved by re-evaluating job descriptions. Crafting these descriptions with gender-neutral and inclusive language eliminates unconscious biases and ensures that potential candidates are evaluated based on merit and skill, rather than societal gender norms. This practice fosters a more diverse applicant pool and levels the playing field.

Promote Flexibility: In a demanding field like cyber law enforcement, the emphasis on altruism and resilience is paramount. Mechanisms that recognize and reward such traits not only boost morale but also lead to better team dynamics. Coupled with strategies to manage fatigue, institutions can create an environment where work-life balance is not a luxury but a norm. Such flexibility is instrumental in retaining talent and ensuring their well-being.

Encourage Critical Thinking: A dynamic environment calls for dynamic problem-solving. Cultivating a workspace that encourages creativity, challenges status quo thinking, and promotes innovative solutions ensures that challenges are met head-on with fresh perspectives. It is not just about finding a solution; it is about finding the best one.

Diverse Training Modules: Training is not a one-size-fits-all solution. A robust training framework incorporates modules that cater to diverse backgrounds, ensuring that every individual, irrespective of their prior knowledge or experience, finds value and growth. This inclusive approach to training ensures that everyone has the tools and knowledge to excel.

Male Allyship: The journey towards gender inclusivity is a collaborative endeavour. Engaging men as active participants and allies in this journey is crucial. Through education, dialogue, and collaborative initiatives, male professionals can play a pivotal role in bridging the gender divide. By fostering a sense of shared responsibility and collective action, the entire sector stands to benefit.



THE WAY FORWARD

Conclusion

The Workshop on Women in Cyber, held within the framework of the INTERPOL Global Cybercrime Conference (IGCC), represented a very first step for the INTERPOL Cybercrime Programme to open discussions on the need to advance gender perspective in cyber law enforcement.

At the same time, this event represented for the Programme an opportunity to collect ideas and hopes from the Organization's member countries, partners, and fellow international organizations on how to position itself in the larger scheme of ongoing initiatives that foster gender inclusivity in law enforcement and in cyber security.

The INTERPOL Cybercrime Programme is currently working on the development of a dedicated strategy to promote the role of women in cyber law enforcement within its current and future operational activities - and will include this important topic in the next IGCC (October 2024).

“Creating Communities to Protect Communities”



About INTERPOL

Today's crimes are interconnected and global. More than ever, there is a need for multilateral police cooperation to address the security challenges facing the world. INTERPOL's role is to enable police in our 196 member countries to work together to make the world a safer place.

We provide secure access to global databases of police information on criminals and crime, operational and forensic support, analysis services and training. Our colour-coded INTERPOL Notices are used to alert police worldwide to wanted persons, security threats and modus operandi.

All these policing capabilities are delivered worldwide and support four global programmes against the issues that we consider to be the most pressing today: cybercrime; counter-terrorism; organized and emerging crime; and financial crime and anti-corruption.

The INTERPOL General Secretariat is based in Lyon, France, supported by the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore, six regional bureaus, three liaison offices, as well as special representative offices at the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations.

Each member country runs an INTERPOL National Central Bureau, staffed by national law enforcement officials, which connects them and their frontline officers to our global network.



About the INTERPOL Cybercrime Programme

In a dynamic digital age, where over half the global population is at potential risk from cybercrime, the **INTERPOL Global Cybercrime Programme** stands in support of the international law enforcement community. We are dedicated to developing and leading a global response to prevent, detect, investigate and disrupt cybercrime – with the ultimate mandate to reduce its global impact and protect communities for a safer world.

The **INTERPOL Global Cybercrime Strategy** focuses on four main objectives:

1. Enable a proactive and agile posture in the prevention and disruption of cybercrime by developing an in-depth understanding of the cybercrime threat landscape through information sharing and intelligence analysis.
2. Effectively prevent, detect, investigate and disrupt cybercrime that causes a significant harm on a national, regional and global scale by leading, coordinating and supporting member countries in transnational operational activities.
3. Support the development of strategies and capabilities of member countries in combating cybercrime by cultivating open, inclusive and diverse partnerships and building trust in the global cybersecurity ecosystem.
4. Promote INTERPOL's role and capabilities in shaping global security by engaging with international forums in the field of cybercrime.

We implement our Strategy and objectives via a simple and constructive delivery model, which consists of three core pillars:

- **Cybercrime Threat Response:** Addressing immediate and emerging cyber threats with a rapid and coordinated response.
- **Cybercrime Operations:** Implementing a regionally-focused operational strategy to combat cybercrime effectively.
- **Cyber Capabilities Development:** Enhancing strategies and capabilities through innovative projects and platforms.

Underpinning these pillars is our extensive public-private partnership, fostering collaboration and leveraging collective expertise to fight cybercrime.

For any further information, you are encouraged to contact us at the following email address: EDPS-CD@interpol.int

About the INTERPOL Capacity Building and Training Directorate

For the past four years, the Capacity Building and Training Directorate (CBT) worked to systematically and meaningfully integrate gender considerations throughout all its activities and projects, and to put in place internal policies and frameworks to guide gender mainstreaming efforts. CBT has available learning and professional development tools for officers interested to advance their knowledge in this area. CBT also conducted research on Women in Law Enforcement in the ASEAN region, working to map possible gaps in training and capacity building that it could contribute to fill. To mark the 100 years of INTERPOL, we have compiled practices from over 30 countries on how they work towards Policing with a Gender Perspective. Throughout all our work we have strived to set up and nurture networks among officers interested to advance gender equality and support the role of female officers in law enforcement. To keep in touch with our global network and feature efforts from this varied membership, the Policing with a Gender Perspective newsletter (available also on the NCB dashboard) is published three times a year, featuring latest resources and information on new initiatives or upcoming events.

If you wish to be kept informed of our work in this area, send us an email to gendermainstreaming@interpol.int so we can share with you relevant resources and information.





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