

Girl Effect India Launches CTRL+SHIFT+RESPECT: An Initiative to Combat Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in India

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Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) has emerged as one of the most widespread threats to young women's digital lives in India. From cyberstalking and impersonation to unsolicited harassment, online abuse is silencing voices,

curbing opportunities, and deepening inequality. Responding to this urgent challenge, Girl Effect India has launched CTRL+SHIFT+RESPECT, an ambitious initiative to counter TFGBV and make India's digital spaces safe, empowering, and respectful environments for adolescent girls and young women.



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As more young people access digital platforms for learning, social connection, and self-expression, girls face a disproportionate burden of online harassment, cyberbullying, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). The issue calls for urgent and collaborative action across education, media, technology platforms, and youth and women's organizations.

Recent research highlights the urgency of this issue. 54.8% of

women in India have faced some form of TFGBV(#BreaktheSilo: Empirical Insights into Tech-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in India, The Dialogue and ACTS, 2025). The most common forms reported by victim-survivors are cyberstalking (61.77%) and impersonation (61.02%). The consequences are far-reaching, with 65% of victim-survivors reporting severe mental health repercussions such as anxiety, depression, and fear of digital spaces. Many also face career disruptions, reputational damage, and social isolation. Yet systemic gaps in redressal persist only 30% reported cases to law enforcement, while 42% turned to family and 26% to tech platforms, underscoring the lack of trust in formal justice mechanisms.

Kavita Ayyagari, Country Director, Girl Effect India, said, *"As our world becomes more and more digital, so do the spaces where harm can occur. Just as technology has the power to connect, educate, and empower, it is also being misused to harm, shame, troll and perpetrate gender-based violence, especially against women and girls. CTRL + SHIFT + RESPECT is our youth-powered program challenging online abuse and tech-facilitated gender-based violence by shifting mindsets, sparking conversations, and demanding a digital culture rooted in respect."*

A youth champion from Girl Effect's Gully Youth Lab added, *"We see girls around us silenced every day because of online abuse. Programs like CTRL+SHIFT+RESPECT give us the power to not only speak up but also to help rewrite the rules of the internet."*

The CTRL+SHIFT+RESPECT program has been designed to respond to these challenges through a comprehensive approach. The initiative will equip adolescent girls with digital literacy and awareness of their rights, engage boys, parents, and educators to shift mindsets and behaviours, and strengthen survivor support systems in collaboration with government agencies, civil society organizations, and community leaders. Central to the initiative is the launch of the CTRL + SHIFT +

HELP, a trusted resource for young girls and women, India's first comprehensive resource to connect victim-survivors with verified legal, psychosocial, and community-based support services. Girl Effect also showcased Bol Behen, a whatsapp chatbot, that provides 24x7 access to reliable information on TFGBV, and has been built for girls to enable them to navigate online spaces with confidence.

The meeting was attended by CBSE who emphasised the importance of socio-emotional wellbeing of young children and the vital role of parents and educators in navigating digital spaces safely.

The launch brought 20 organisations, including UN Women, Laadli Foundation, RATI Foundation, Point of View, Center for Social Research, Restless Development, The Quantum Hub, ChildFund India, Radio Mirchi, and youth from Girl Effect's Gully Youth Lab who pledged their support to tackling TFGBV.

This marks the beginning of a movement to recognize TFGBV as a national priority and to build stronger protection and support systems for victim-survivors across the country. CTRL+SHIFT+RESPECT is a commitment to systemic change, built on evidence, youth leadership, and collective accountability. It places girls at the center of shaping solutions and influencing policy, with a clear vision of a future where digital spaces are rooted in equality, safety, and respect.

To ground the initiative in lived realities, Girl Effect conducted formative research in Delhi and Mumbai with young people, parents, and experts. The findings revealed that girls often knew when something was wrong online but lacked the vocabulary and confidence to define their experiences as violence. Many chose silence over disclosure, fearing blame or loss of access to digital devices. This silence came at a significant cost, leading to isolation, withdrawal, and a widening of the gender digital divide. Boys expressed a desire to do better but lacked the supportive spaces to challenge

peers or express allyship. Parents, while aware of the risks, often responded with restrictive measures due to limited digital literacy, leaving girls feeling further constrained. For real change, families and communities must be engaged to protect and empower girls with trust and understanding.

About Girl Effect

Girl Effect is an independent, global non-profit organization dedicated to unlocking the potential of adolescent girls and young women across the Global South. We advance their health, education, and economic opportunities by connecting them with life-changing information, digital tools, and trusted support. Whether its helping girls stay in school, access vaccines, make informed reproductive choices, or engage with safe, relevant media and technology our mission is to empower them to thrive and redefine what's possible. Through locally rooted media brands, two-way digital platforms, chatbots, dramas, and peer networks, Girl Effect creates safe and resonant spaces for girls to gain confidence, knowledge, and agency. In the past year alone, we reached more than 62 million individuals across Africa and Asia, including 23 million in India, and delivered over 1 million messages through digital health chatbots. Founded by the Nike Foundation in 2004 and independent since 2015, Girl Effect has evolved into a creative social enterprise committed to systemic change. Today, our highly diverse team 90% of whom are women, with 81% based in focus markets across Africa and Asia leverages evidence, partnerships, and youth leadership to build safer, more inclusive digital ecosystems for girls. CTRL+SHIFT+RESPECT is supported by the Kering Foundation and is implemented By Girl Effect India.

