

GENDER, HEALTH, & SURVEILLANCE IN INDIA

A Panel Discussion

Women and LGBTHIAQ-identifying persons face intensive and varied forms of surveillance as they access reproductive health systems. The Indian state has placed some identities under scrutiny because it is uncomfortable with their bodies, others because it wants to control and selectively legalise their identities, still others because they are crucial to meeting its policy objectives.

While these forms of scrutiny are not new, digital systems have increasingly been introduced to streamline these processes and make them more 'efficient'. The impact of these forms of surveillance, new and old, is felt while accessing any reproductive health service, including welfare schemes associated with reproductive health.

These processes are closely associated with the treatment of different groups in identity documents, which mediate access to public health as well as associated welfare programmes. These have differential impact on different groups—manual labourers can be excluded because of failures in verification, transgender groups can be excluded by being forced to undergo complex processes of

verification, while single women can be excluded for being unable to submit Aadhaar credentials of a spouse. What becomes clear is that the public health system, including for reproductive health, is designed on a template of heteropatriarchal families with two children or less.

State surveillance of citizens accessing public health systems is also a point of focus for Digital India, as has become evident through the covid-19 pandemic, and the announcement of the National Digital Health Mission. This is the latest in a host of policy measures being introduced by the central government to collect and process data about the health of citizens, which is to be consolidated using a recently announced health ID number.

This panel discussion will discuss these and other policy issues relating to the impact of data and digitalisation on access to public health and welfare systems by women and LGBTHIAQ-identifying persons in India. Speakers will present studies undertaken as part of two projects at CIS, one of which is supported by **Privacy International**, UK, and the other by Big Data for Development network established by **International Development Research Centre**, Canada. These studies are at various stages of publication, and we will share relevant reading materials prior to the panel discussion.

We will focus on the right to privacy and its conception in *Puttaswamy*—encompassing bodily autonomy, decisional privacy, and informational privacy. We aim to bring together organisations and individuals working on reproductive rights, queer and transgender rights, and technology policy to contribute to this discussion, with the aim of collectively shaping the advocacy agenda for this emergent space of reproductive rights and digital surveillance.

NOVEMBER
20, 2020
/ 5-6:30 PM

AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

5:00 PM

*Aayush Rathi,
the Centre for Internet and Society*

GENDERING OF DEVELOPMENT DATA IN INDIA: BEYOND THE BINARY

5:05 PM

*Brindaalakshmi K
Independent Researcher*

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AMONG TRANS, AND ASEXUAL GROUPS IN INDIA

5:15 PM

*Shreya Ila Anasuya in conversation
with J.D., trans activist and
Aryan Somaiya, trainer, author,
and activist on gender and sexuality*

TECHNOLOGIES OF (TRANS)GENDER IN INDIA: UNDERSTANDING MECHANISMS OF SECURITY, SURVEILLANCE, AND WELFARE

5:30 PM

*Kaushal Bodwal,
Research scholar, Department of
Sociology, Delhi School of Economics*

PRIVACY AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH: CURTAILING RIGHTS AND CHOICES

5:40 PM

*Ambika Tandon,
the Centre for Internet and Society*

CITIZEN DATA AND FREEDOM: THE FEARS OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV IN INDIA

5:50 PM

*Rosamma Thomas,
Independent Journalist*

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

**6
TO
6:30PM**

EVENT MODERATION

BY

*Radhika Radhakrishnan,
the Internet Democracy Project*