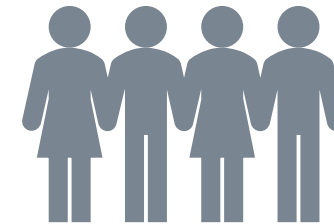


Programming Trust and Inclusion

Making TFGBV Tools Work for Everyone

Dr Khadijah D Mohammed

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Talk Structure

-  Part 1: Understanding the Users We Miss
-  Part 2: Interactive Workshop – Walk in user's shoes
-  Part 3: How Do We Bring Trust + Inclusion Back In?
-  Part 4: Interactive Workshop – Let's Co-create

Ethics & Standpoint

Critical clarification:
Low literacy $\neq$ low
intelligence



Dignity-centred
approach: These
are capable
people navigating
systems not
designed for them

Ethiopia's Context

- Adult literacy rate: 51.8%
- Gendered impact: 58.1% of low-literate adults are women
- **Double vulnerability:** Same women more likely excluded from digital platforms and support systems

Meet Liya Tadesse

- **Age:** 34, lives in Addis Ababa
- **Education:** Left school to help her family business
- **Daily Life:** Small shop owner, mother of two
- **Phone Skills:** Uses her phone mostly for entertainment (TikTok videos, music) and family communication.



What TFGBV Researchers Found

Research revealed three critical findings:

- **Missed abusive posts due to misspellings** - Detection systems fail to catch abuse in real time
- **Template-based abuse** - Abusers use pre-written templates, requiring minimal literacy
- **Failures in current platform reporting systems** - Complex reporting processes that sometimes dismisses reports

Research Insights: How Low-Literacy Users Navigate Online

- **Shame and self-blame:** Internalise system failures as personal fault - ("I must be doing something wrong/ this is not for me/ I knew it wouldn't work")
- **Skill fragility:** Forget steps easily, second-guess themselves, and avoid retrying after failure
- **Rote memorisation:** Learn specific sequences rather than flexible navigation
- **Audio/visual reliance:** Avoid text-heavy interactions
- **Trust dependence:** Rely heavily on community validation and familiar patterns

Liya Tadesse

Online Behaviour:

- Learns through repetition - "First I tap here, then here, and here"
- Asks her niece when stuck
- Struggles with complex menus and heavy text
- Gives up if something fails once

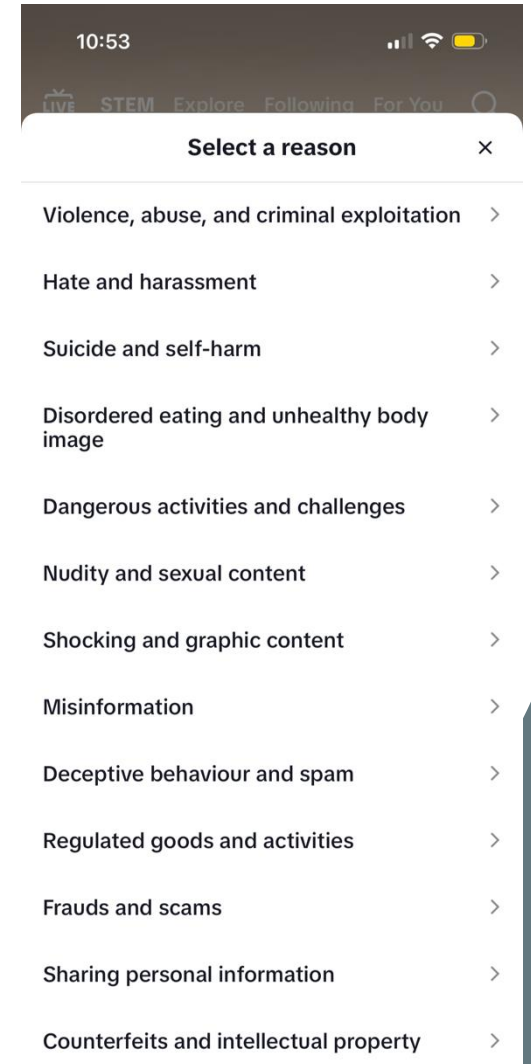
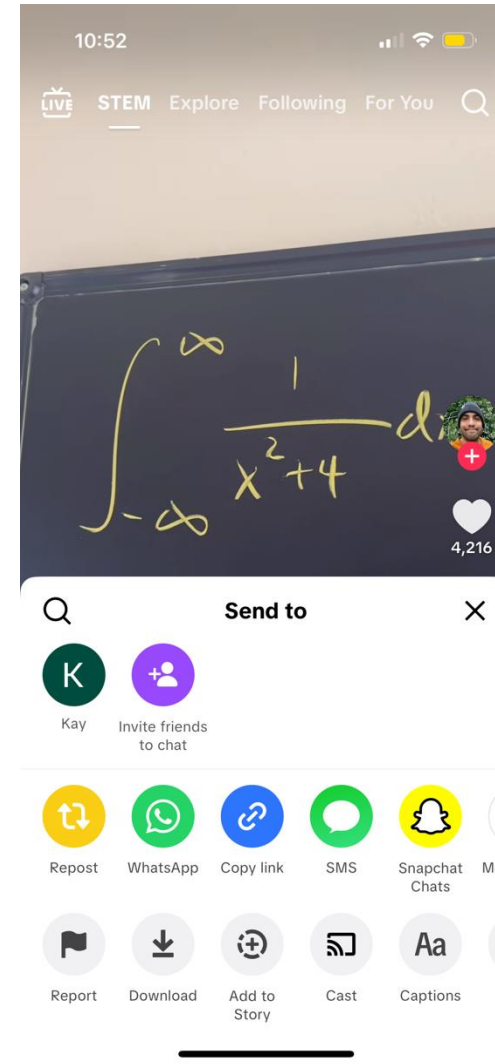
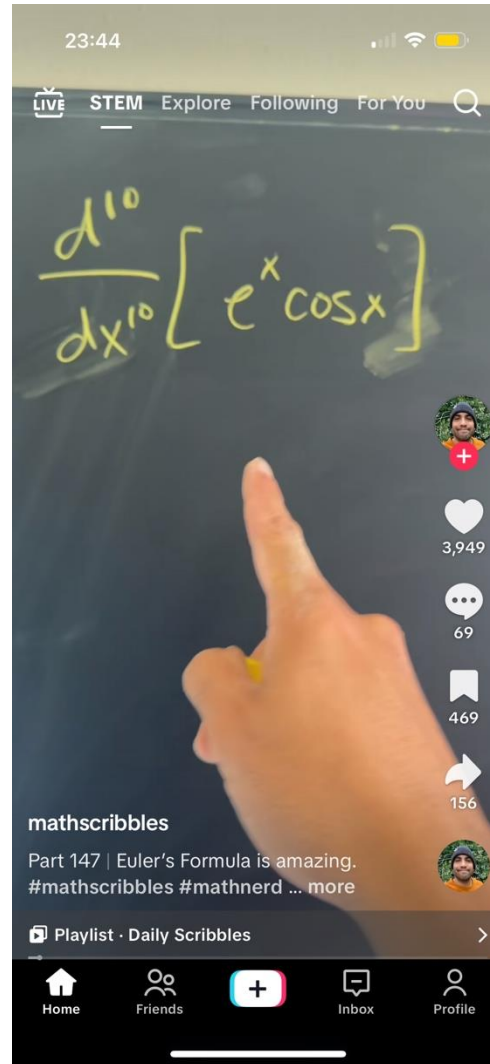
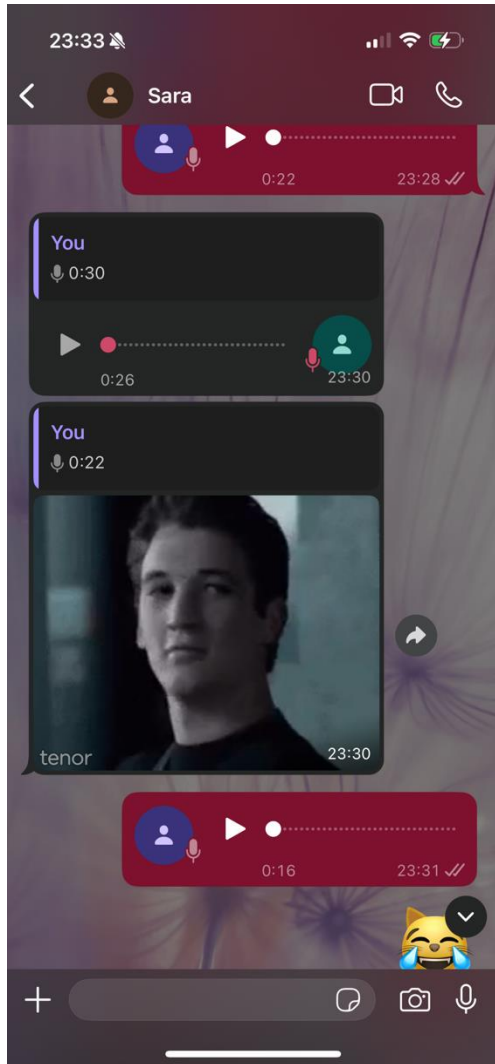
When Things Go Wrong: Assumes it's her fault, feels ashamed to ask for help again

Trust: Suspicious of official systems after past disappointments

The Harassment: Receiving cruel comments on her business TikTok videos, mostly in local slang with intentional misspellings



- **Age:** 34, lives in Addis Ababa
- **Education:** Left school to help her family business
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- **Phone Skills:** Can navigate TikTok, WhatsApp, & calling



The Structural Imbalance

Connecting TFGBV findings with user characteristics reveals:



The Paradox: Template hate speech (requires minimal literacy) vs. complex reporting systems (demands high literacy + digital confidence)



The Gap: Platforms designed for visual engagement (TikTok, YouTube - audio/visual) vs. reporting (text-heavy, hierarchical menu-driven)

Break in Trust & Compounding Effects

- Harm occurs where detection is hardest
- Reporting requires unavailable skills
- Educational outreach misses the excluded
- Shame ensures no second attempts

Critical Question:

*Did participants actually know
how to report abuse?*



Interactive Session

Walk In Her Shoes – Liya's Story

Task: Choose a platform tool and try to report content as abuse

Think about:

- Where would Liya get stuck?
- What aspect requires skills she doesn't have?
- Does she even know where to start?
- If you had to explain this process to Liya, what would be impossible to explain?

Liya Tadesse



Online Behaviour:

- Learns through repetition - "First I tap here, then here, and here"
- Asks her niece when stuck
- Struggles with complex menus and English text
- Gives up if something fails once

When Things Go Wrong: Assumes it's her fault, feels ashamed to ask for help again

Trust: Suspicious of official systems after past disappointments

The Harassment: Receiving cruel comments on her business TikTok videos, mostly in local slang with intentional misspellings

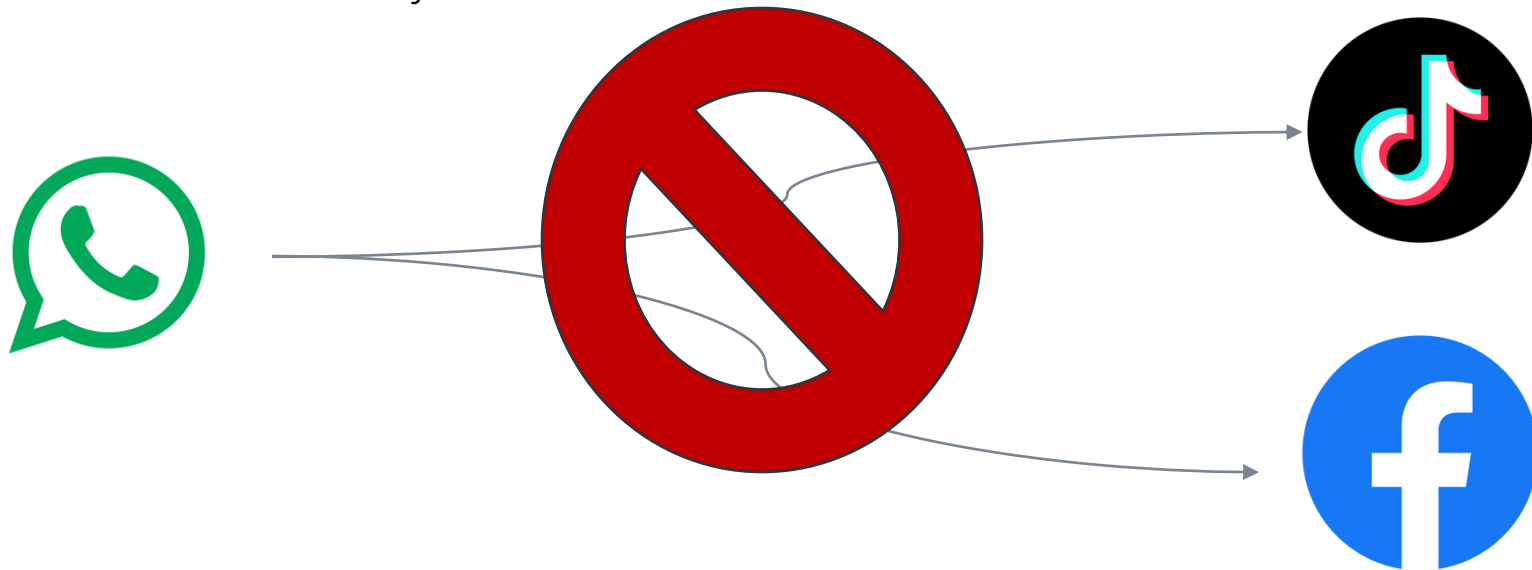


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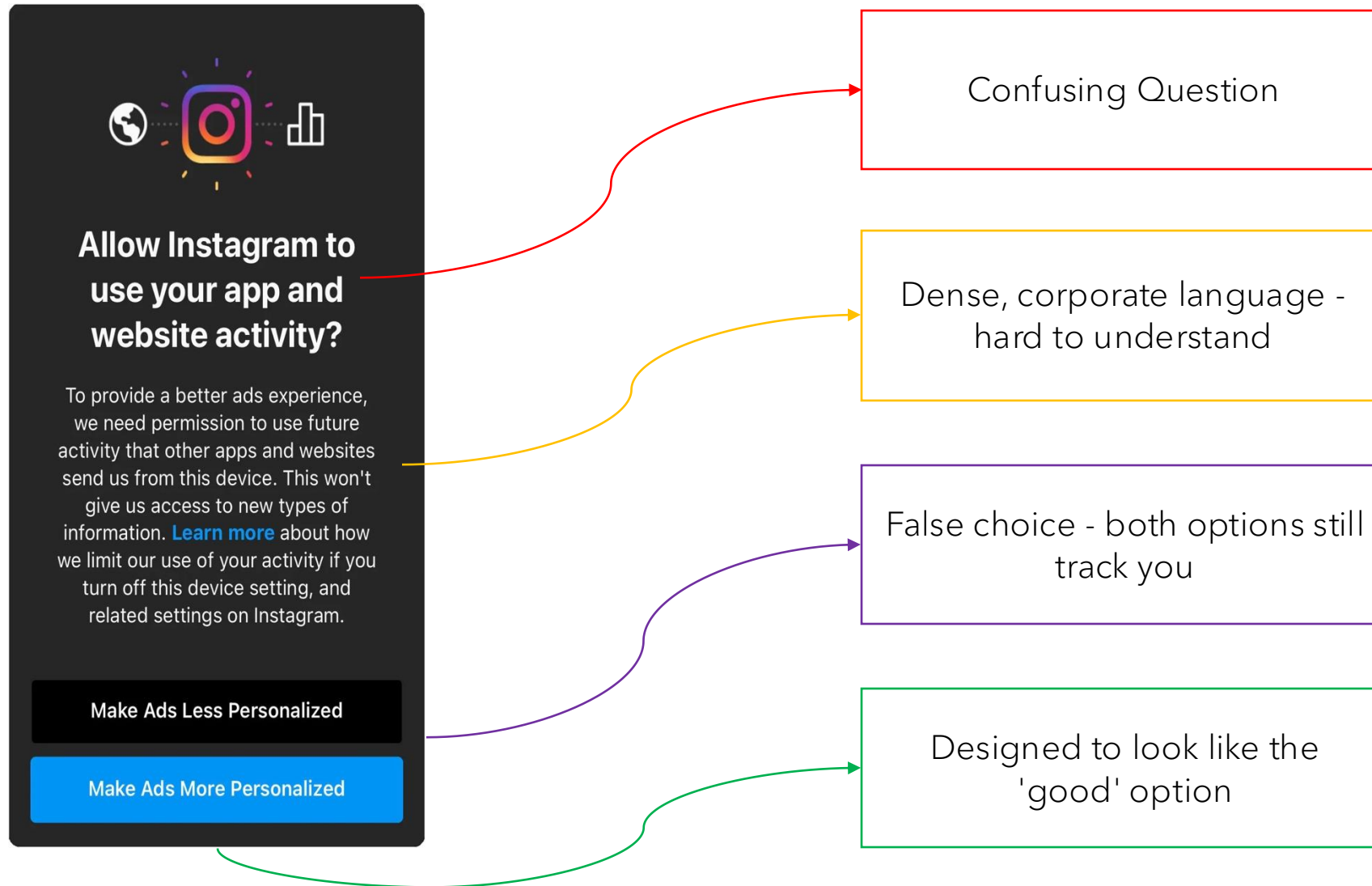
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Not all users transfer skills between apps

- Rote memorisation dominates – not mental models
- Systems must adapt to user reality, not the other way around
- Expected transfer vs reality:



Deceptive Patterns & Design Barriers



How Do We Bring Trust + Inclusion Back In?



Trauma-Informed Design Principles

Transparency: Clear feedback, no mysterious processes

Choice: Multiple pathways, optional features

Safety: No shaming language, privacy protection

Collaboration + Policy: User-tested with excluded communities; Accessibility requirements in platform regulation

Cultural Responsiveness: Local languages, familiar interaction patterns

Integration with Existing Recommendations

Recommendation Area	Further Considerations
Education	Most excluded may never access formal education. Create materials that support non-text-reliant users: e.g., using storytelling, radio, visuals, and trusted community voices.
Law and Policy	Advocate for interface accessibility to be part of tech regulation and platform policy: the ability to report shouldn't require high literacy, hidden menus or English fluency.
Community-Led Responses	Ensure community tools (e.g. guidance documents) are interaction-aware: will people actually be able to follow them if they can't read well?
Platform Accountability	Provide UI/UX audit frameworks: assess visibility, simplicity, tone, and language of reporting tools; check for dark patterns and inaccessible flows. Ask: Is reporting buried? Text-heavy? Shame-inducing? English-only?
Support Systems	If building new tools (like the Setawee portal), use trauma-informed design: clear feedback, no shaming language, optional audio/visual walkthroughs.
Ongoing Research	Test with excluded users before rolling out new systems. Design for the lowest common denominator of digital skills. Consider "skill fragility". Include cultural and emotional cues to build trust and legitimacy.

Interactive Session

Let's Build a Checklist Together



Individual Reflection

- One specific barrier you now recognise in your current work
- One concrete change you could implement in the next month
- How might we actively rebuild trust with women affected by past digital harms?
- What support do you need to make that change?

- Is it understandable without needing to read?
- Can someone complete this without prior digital skills?
- Is there a way to try again without shame?
- Are there multiple pathways to the same outcome?
- Is feedback given clearly (audio/visual, not just text)?
- Are local languages or familiar visuals used?
- Does it account for skill fragility (forgetting steps, second-guessing)?

Closing: Key Takeaways

- Design shapes who can participate - Reporting screens aren't neutral
- Start with the excluded - Design for lowest common denominator of digital skills
- Trust must be actively rebuilt - Especially for women excluded by past harms
- Consider the structural imbalance - Can you make reporting as easy as template abuse?
- Test early, test often - With the communities you aim to serve
- Think ecosystem, not just tool - Community voices, policy, and culture matter

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