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Thank you Government of Finland for hosting this wonderful space today. I want to thank the YWCA of Finland for inviting me to this platform. Also I would like to thank my colleagues Casey Harden, World YWCA General secretary who is joining us virtually today to support me and Dr. suchi gaur who is present here today. Its and honor and privilege to be here and to provide my brief remarks on the keynote address of Mona Singh. I am Clara D'costa – a young YWCA leader from YWCA of Bangladesh. I work on advancing leadership of women and young women in Bangladesh through a global initiative called RiseUp!, supported by the Government of Australia.

I acknowledge and relate with many of your insights shared today. As a young women leader from Bangladesh, I would like share the barriers we face based on my experience of working with marginalized and underrepresented communities. Through using different forms of technology, we as privileged people with access are advancing with the world —- but the underrepresented and marginalized communities, especially the woman and young women I work with- ones with poor or no access to internet, gadgets, any form of technology- smart devices etc- remain aloof of this advancement. Very often they carry very negative opinion about smart technology. While world is going digital, women and young women in rural communities in Bangladesh still believe that face to face is better than any form of online engagement. We know that very often this stems from not just access but lack of awareness about the way technology can be used safely. And even though we are facing these difficulties working in communities, we are trying to introduce them with the benefits and use of technology. They still remain digitally unaware around issues of how to keep themselves safe, protected and their privacy not violated.

I agree with your statement where you mentioned of unregulated technology can be dangerous. The question you asked the audience who holds the power. And I think in current status quo power still lies in the hands of giant corporates while I strongly believe how should be held in hands of communities. In the hands of those who use the technology. In this profit driven world, safety and security of people in using tech is left behind the greedy interests of corporations and governments. We cannot even talk about making technology be used for mental health, reproductive rights and more- UNTIL we know that it is safe, and that data people share will be protected and not shared for selfish interests of those with political and social power.

Further I completely agree that Women and marginalized groups are underrepresented in this area. Women always have had access to technology either later, or not at all. For an example of mine in my life too growing up in my family my elder brother got computer whereas I was allowed to use that computer for few hours only much later. And I know this is privilege to even have access to. Many young women and women remain aloof of this access whole of their lives. And another statement you shared around discrimination online and privacy issues creating concerns resonates very well with me. As a YWCA, we try to provide digital and virtual safe space awareness by giving trainings to young women, we are making them aware about use of internet, pros and cons about many apps etc through the World YWCA's safe spaces standards- but reality is that the speed with which this awareness in communities is taking place is much slower than the speed with which technology is shifting. I want to ask a question in this case- WHOSE responsibility is it to ensure that as a technology comes, community is made aware of the pros and cons, of it being safe or not, of the data being protected or not? Why is there no regulation around this when we talk about technology explosion? Finally, I would like to repeat the three brilliant statements you made—-

Equal protection from persecution, oppression and abuse
Equal access to information, opportunity and community
Equal respect for privacy, identity and self-expression

I am sure not just me but the audience here completely agrees on that. It is a Utopian dream till it will be achieved. While we as the social movements continue to work for it, it is the responsibility of each and every element of our society to ensure we work towards this. Digital world, and use of it for sexual and reproductive rights, mental health and social issues can be challenging and will not be completely possible till we ensure that not just consumers of technology but creators of technology understand and abide by the above statements around privacy, community and protection.

I want to close by making a statement of my own. I truly believe that those for whom this technology is being created need to be part of the creation processes. If women and young women co-design technologies meant for them, on issues that matter to them, we can redesign a safer digital world. Not only will access be made better but ownership and usage will be for the betterment of humanity. Thank you for having me here. It was a pleasure and humbling experience to be part of this space today.