



# WACC Strategic Plan 2022-2026

This strategy was developed through a consultative process in 2020 and 2021 that involved WACC members and partners, external advisors, consultation with regional executive committees and the WACC Secretariat and Board. It is intended as a foundation for the WACC network to take a leadership role that advances communication rights in a rapidly changing world.



**WACC**  
communication for all



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# Introduction

## Preamble

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## Preamble

Since its founding in 1968, the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) has sought to bring about societies in which all people everywhere are able to engage in transparent, informed, and democratic debate. WACC's Theory of Change articulates how a focus on communication – as a right, as a practice, as a skill, and as a profession – is fundamental to achieving dignity, inclusion, and informed and active participation, essential to sustainable development and to just and peaceful communities.

This vision of communication for all is underpinned by Principles of Communication, which WACC seeks to express among its members and network and through its programme and action:

- Communication is a spiritual exercise
- Communication builds and shapes community
- Communication enhances participation
- Communication promotes freedom and demands accountability
- Communication celebrates cultural diversity
- Communication builds connectedness
- Communication affirms justice and challenges injustice

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## Vision and Mission

### Vision

Communication for All

### Mission

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) is an international organization that promotes communication as a basic human right, essential to people's dignity and community.

Rooted in Christian faith, WACC works with all those denied the right to communicate

because of status, identity, or gender. It advocates full access to information and communication and promotes open and diverse media.

WACC strengthens networks of communicators to advance peace, understanding and justice.

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## The Communication Rights Mandate

“Believing that communication embodies respect for the dignity, integrity, equality and freedom of all human beings and their communities, WACC recognizes communication rights as inherent in all other human rights.

Communication rights claim spaces and resources in the public sphere for everyone to be able to engage in transparent, informed and democratic debate.

They claim unfettered access to the information and knowledge essential to democracy, empowerment, responsible citizenship and mutual accountability.

They claim political, social and cultural environments that encourage the free exchange of a diversity of creative ideas, knowledge and cultural products.

Finally, communication rights insist on the need to ensure a diversity of cultural identities that together enhance and enrich the common good.”\*

WACC aims to strengthen a movement for communication rights, which includes advocacy among our networks to expand public communication spaces, to support public interest media, and to promote media freedom, digital rights, linguistic diversity, and local sustainability.

\* From: *Communication for All: Sharing WACC's Principles*

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## The Global Environment

Overcoming inequality and poverty is fundamental to the UN's 2030 Agenda, which embraced "leaving no one behind" as the cardinal principle to guide all sustainable development efforts at local, national, regional and global levels. The diverse manifestations of inequality are expressed in all spheres – gender, geography, access to education, social protection, clean water and sanitation, technologies, land and natural resources – and need to be addressed in concert and through complementary measures.

Access to digital infrastructure is required for the over 50% of the world's population currently without Internet. Without affordable access, advances in digital technologies disproportionately benefit those already

connected, contributing to greater inequality. Growth in basic access continues to be slowest in lowest-income countries. Private, public and local sectors have been trialing a range of connectivity options, and digital cooperation could facilitate skill, resource and strategy sharing.

Steps to enable universal digital access must include special measures to remove barriers for those who are already marginalised – women, indigenous people, rural populations and others. There is continuing disparity in women's internet access in rich and poor countries alike. There is a lack of gender-oriented design, education, and resourcing of digital communications. These represent new kinds of injustice and exclusion that manifest themselves as misogyny and oppressive

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gender relations online. In our online and offline communication, we must be vigilant to include voices from developing countries and traditionally marginalised people and groups, women, youth, indigenous people, religious and ethnic minorities, rural populations and older people.

A key concept is “effective access”, which depends on the interrelationship between media and other closely related factors: literacy, language, and education. This is the central lesson from the “digital divide” debate: that simple availability of technology is insufficient for development or social progress. Effective access means that all individuals and communities should be able to use media infrastructures to produce content, access information and knowledge, and be active participants in the realms of politics, culture, and governance.

Media and information literacy are also vital prerequisites for effective access. Adequate levels of media use require training and education, democratic participation, accessibility of formats and technology for people with disabilities and other distinctive needs, diverse content in appropriate languages, freedom of expression, and opportunities for community and citizen-produced media. There is also the matter of technical competencies, linguistic diversity and capacity building as fundamentals of genuine access.

A further imbalance resides in the power of global corporations which control the Internet – which

is now required to mediate the basic tasks of our daily lives. Many people are excluded by the dominance of English and other colonial languages. Unequal influence over Internet governance, software localization and technical design, all make it a highly uneven playing field for diverse groups, especially cultural and linguistic minorities. In addition, in keeping with the current model of what has come to be called “surveillance capitalism”, most people’s daily activities are channelled through vast data-collection and data-processing procedures owned by major media companies that lie outside of the realm of public accountability.

The major platforms’ hold over this infrastructure, as well as cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI) and the “Internet of things” create growing challenges to citizens’ autonomy and global communications governance. In addition, control and censorship of the internet by authoritarian states seeking to restrict access to information and suppress views that differ from official ones is a growing phenomenon. Instead, the design of media infrastructures and digital platforms must respond to the needs of diverse language communities, individuals with different ability levels, learning styles, and financial resources.

The global communications environment has been profoundly changed by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to learn lessons from increased reliance on digital platforms and to study its implications for society at all levels.



## Strategic Programme Priorities 2022-2026

The overall goal of WACC's programmes is to ensure that all its activities, projects and advocacy are focused on promoting, implementing and supporting the communication rights of all, especially the poorest, most excluded and most vulnerable people and communities.

WACC realizes its goal through a range of actions: community capacity building, media monitoring for education and advocacy, comprehensive analysis of media trends from local to international perspectives, and advocacy through a diverse network of activists, educators, media professionals and policy makers. These strategies are applied in five focus areas: digital communication rights; migrants, refugees and communication rights; communication rights and indigenous rights; communication rights and climate change; gender and communication rights.



# I. Programme Areas

## 1. Digital communication rights

## 2. Migrants, refugees and communication rights

## 3. Communication rights and Indigenous rights

## 4. Communication rights and climate change

## 5. Gender and communication rights



## 1. Digital communication rights

With digital communication growing rapidly and policymakers in many countries developing digital infrastructure and governance models, WACC believes that it is critical to move beyond the issue of access in order to address structural and social justice concerns.

Furthermore, existing communication rights that should ensure freedom of expression, linguistic rights, gender equality, media diversity and more, need to be applied in a digital communication sphere impacted by disinformation, hate speech and growing media monopolies.

The use of digital platforms must occur within

a framework of communication rights that help generate genuine opportunities for free and informed participation to promote true sustainable development. This is crucial amid the alarming trend of shrinking space for civil society, which often manifests itself online, as well in the form of online surveillance and Internet shutdowns.

Sustainable Development Goals 9 and 17 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda recognize the need to enable people everywhere to benefit from access to the Internet and to mobile telephony. However, questions about ownership, regulation, privacy, and surveillance of civil society actors must be central elements of the conversation about ICTs in

development. Access alone will not contribute to sustainable development.

In this context, WACC will work civil society organizations in the South seeking to address these issues by (a) promoting digital media literacy among marginalized populations, (b)

encouraging the development and use of open-source software, (c) supporting community-managed telecommunication initiatives (“community networks”) and (d) enabling the participation of civil society in policy making around digital issues.

## 1. Digital communication rights

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## 2. Migrants, refugees and communication rights

All over the world, the numbers of people forced to migrate continue to grow at an alarming pace. Globally, according to the UN Refugee Agency, there are almost 80 million forcibly displaced people. Of this number, some 46 million are internally displaced people, 26 million are refugees, and 4.2 million are asylum seekers. A host of concerns for people on the move need to be addressed: access to information, media representation, sharing their own news and participating in new communities and societies – all in an increasingly complex political, cultural, and digital communication landscape.

As forced migration and displacement of people has increased, so has media coverage.

Some coverage has led to increased hostility towards migrants. And, in an age of rampant misinformation and disinformation, migration has become a lightning rod for xenophobic groups seeking to undermine trust in public institutions, including the media. Now more than ever, migrants' rights and communication rights advocates must work together to help migrants and refugees gain greater access to information and to communication platforms in order to have their voices heard, develop media literacy skills, and challenge dominant narratives about migration.

The ability of migrants and refugees to make themselves heard in their host societies and to

contribute to public discourse on migration is severely curtailed by linguistic, cultural, economic, and political factors. The absence of their voices, in turn, impoverishes public debate. In most cases, migrants have next to no avenues to contribute to public conversations on migration, despite being at the centre of it.

Projects supported under this theme align with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, SDG 10 on Reduced Inequalities, as well as with the UN's 2030 Agenda. It also aligns with the goals of the UN Global Compact for Migration, particularly objective 17, "Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote

evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration."

WACC will work with civil society organizations in the South seeking to address some of these issues by (a) establishing networks of citizen journalists made up of migrants and host communities in order to tackle xenophobia and create grassroots rights-based narratives around migration, and (b) building the capacity of migrant groups to engage with large media houses through media monitoring and advocacy in order to advance rights-based narratives of migration at a societal level.

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### **3. Communication rights and Indigenous rights**

Media and communications are essential tools to create spaces for the expression of Indigenous voices and to share stories about the diversity of cultures, languages, and histories. Information, communication, and media have a power to educate, inform, and change society. Media can include and strengthen Indigenous voices, revitalize Indigenous languages, and contribute to education processes.

The ability of Indigenous people to claim their communication rights is critical to realizing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). In particular, the right to access Indigenous community media, especially community radio, is essential for Indigenous people to be able to exercise their broader human rights, to guarantee their distinct political,

economic, social and cultural development, and to help shape other sustainable development agendas. This is also aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 16- Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

WACC-supported projects will focus on supporting the establishment of Indigenous community radio stations in areas with limited access to other media; enhancing the participation of women in Indigenous community media at all levels; promoting the development of Indigenous community media networks and movements; and enabling advocacy efforts aimed at democratizing media structures in ways that benefit Indigenous communities.

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## 4. Communication rights and climate change

The climate crisis is exacerbating existing inequalities within and among communities and is having a disproportionate effect on marginalized and isolated communities, particularly those whose culture and community, lives and livelihoods, health and wellbeing are directly affected by the climate crisis by uplifting traditional knowledge, voice and experiences.

In many developing countries, a gendered division of labour, restricted access to land, capital, technologies, and other financial resources, as well as limited access to political decision-making spheres, have also hindered women from playing a full role in tackling climate change and other environmental challenges.

A report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the impacts of global warming has warned about the risk of environmental

catastrophe unless societies around the world radically change their ways of life. Effective responses partly depend on the extent to which climate-related issues receive public attention, particularly in terms of media content. Scientific knowledge also needs to be communicated in local languages by trusted sources. Furthermore, given that the effects of climate change have a disproportionate impact on people and communities in vulnerable situations, enabling those communities to put their communication rights into practice is essential if they are to tell their own stories, organize for change, and advance their own solutions to the climate crisis.

Projects supported under this theme align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, SDG 13 on Climate Action, and the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

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## 5. Gender and communication rights

WACC promotes women's communication rights and advances gender equality in and through the media. Partners apply gender-focussed news media monitoring to generate the evidence needed to support education, awareness, training, advocacy, and engagement with media professionals about media policy and practice. Gender-focussed media monitoring has a significant role to play in building the evidence to advance gender equality and empower all women and girls.

WACC advocates the right of women and girls to full and equal participation in public communication so that their multiple and complex interests, experiences and realities become part of the public agenda. It also supports civil society evidence-building on media and marginalized

sectors of society in order to advance social justice goals for all in and through the media.

Projects supported align with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality, and SDG 16 on Justice, Peace, and Strong Institutions. They also align with the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, especially section J- Women and the Media.

In addition, a major WACC enterprise is the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), the largest and longest-running research and advocacy initiative on gender in the world's news media.

GMMP findings are important because they reveal the extent to which women's communication

rights are ignored, denied or diminished. These findings provide the evidence that gender and communication groups at all levels can use to urge policy change in media houses around the world. They have also been an important tool in national and international advocacy work for gender equality and women's rights. Activists throughout the world use GMMP research reports and toolkits.

GMMP findings are integrated into journalism

training curricula to build gender awareness of media professionals and in media literacy programmes targeting general audiences.

The United Nations has officially recognized the relevance of the GMMP media monitoring. WACC carries out this work in partnership with UN Women, UNESCO, and the Global Alliance on Gender and Media (GAMAG) as well as women-led media and communications initiatives and networks and the wider women's rights and feminist movement.



## II. Building Bridges, Networks and Partnerships



### Goal

To build and develop networks and partnerships as a rights-based organization that works with both faith-based and secular organizations to promote dialogue that advances the cause of communication rights.

WACC will extend and strengthen its contribution as a faith-based international organization and network to the advancement of sustainable development and communication rights.

Through its global network of members and partners, WACC will continue to seek opportunities to share its wealth of grassroots experience and expertise in the struggle for social progress. In doing so, it will promote dialogue and exchange in a fair and balanced way, especially in regard to linguistic diversity and inclusion.

### III. Communications



#### Goal

To maintain appropriate, flexible and effective communication structures, systems and platforms to build networks, share information and knowledge, and promote joint action among members and partners.

*External communications goal:* to increase the visibility and salience of communication rights and the work of the WACC network across all its fields of activity.

*Internal communications goal:* to enhance the quality, transparency, interactive capability and relational dimension of WACC's communications within the organization and across its network.

WACC will increase its presence and visibility among global institutions working on rights-based and development issues. It will strengthen interregional contact and networking to support and promote WACC's vision and mission.

## IV. Organizational and Management Systems and Resources

To support WACC's Programme Goals it is necessary continuously to adapt WACC's organizational and management systems to make sure that they are flexible and responsive to the demands of a rapidly changing environment.

The overall goal is to strengthen and adapt WACC's systems (financial, human resources, technological, organizational) to enable it to sustain and better fulfil its mission. WACC will focus on enhancing the capacity of its organizational and management systems in three main areas:

### Funding Development



#### Goal

To achieve a financially sustainable WACC that will have the required resources to achieve its vision, mission and programme priorities

WACC will expand its donor base and diversify its revenue sources.

WACC will strengthen joint collaborations with partners and donors, expand its global network and outreach through identifying and building relations with like-minded organizations and foundations, increase WACC's visibility, and facilitate fundraising efforts within and amongst its global membership.

## Operational Structure



### Goal

To support a clear and efficient management and working structure that enables WACC's effective presence and engagement in international processes aligned with its vision and mission.

WACC will review its human resource needs in line with this Strategic Plan and explore opportunities to enhance its representation at and involvement in international forums and processes, such as the United Nations.

## Collaboration and Relationships



WACC will strengthen its regional outreach both at the level of membership and its network of project partners, paying particular attention to capacity-building and financial sustainability.

### Goal

To strengthen relationships among, and collaboration between, members, partners, supporters and staff in order to achieve WACC's mission and programme priorities more effectively.



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