Social Justice in an Age of Uncertainty

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

WACC
communication for all
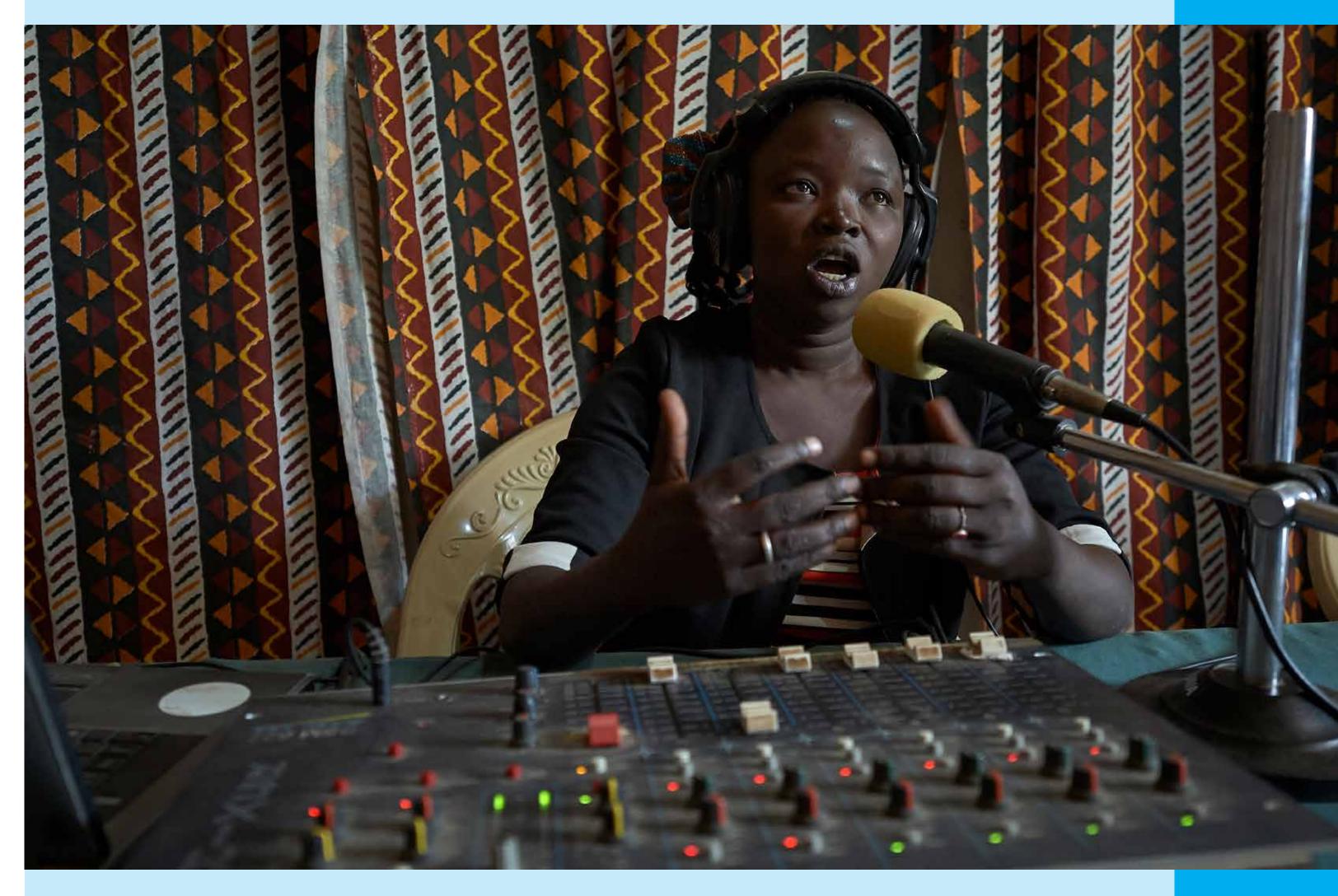
Vision

Communication for All

Mission

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) is an international non-governmental 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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Front cover: A migrant boy warms his feet by the fire at a makeshift camp with no electricity and no running water in Velika Kladusa, Bosnia, October 12, 2021. He is among dozens of children camping out with their families, awaiting their chance to slip through the Croatian border and travel on towards Western Europe. Media coverage of migrants are not always positive. WACC works to help migrants and refugees gain greater access to information, access communication platforms in order to have their voices heard, develop media literacy skills, and challenge dominant narratives about migration. Photo by the Associated Press

Top: Toma Konyono broadcasts from the studio of Voice for Peace Radio in Gidel, a village in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan. The Catholic station broadcasts news and other programmes designed to foster reconciliation and peace. Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ Life on Earth

Bottom: An Indonesian domestic worker keeps in touch with her family back home using a cell phone. Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ Life on Earth

Right: A boy walks with his radio in Las Flores Ixcan Guatemala. Photo by Paul Jeffrey/Life on Earth

Message from the General Secretary

Philip Lee
WACC General Secretary

What does WACC do? This question is often asked by people unfamiliar with the role that communication plays in building a better world. The answer is in the tagline on WACC's website: We enable people to be seen and heard. How so?

WACC enables by providing assistance, training, and networking to civil society organizations that wish to claim their right to communicate. It does so in the belief that no matter the issue – poverty, gender justice, conflict resolution, migration, health, land, the climate crisis – little can be done without effective communication.

WACC enables people, without discrimination but especially those who are underrepresented or misrepresented in the media, who have restricted access to relevant and accurate information and knowledge, are excluded from participation in decision-making processes, and live in contexts with limited media freedom.

WACC believes that addressing such communication and information deficits is critical to achieving the vision of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – for everyone but especially for the most marginalized in society. In fact, it argues for the missing 18th Goal: Communication for All.

WACC enables people to be seen when they are absent from the media and heard when their voices are silenced. This is characterized as communication and information poverty, a form of poverty that contributes to people's sense of powerlessness and inability to improve their lives and livelihoods.

WACC enables people to be seen and heard to restore their public voice in decisions affecting their communities. In the words of the United Nations Development Group's 2013 report A Million Voices: The World We Want, it is a question of "putting people – their rights, aspirations and opportunities – at the centre of development".

The exclusion of large numbers of people North and South from democratic political processes because they lack effective ways of participating is also a dimension of communication rights. In a digital age, this is exacerbated by social media platforms and the expansion of around-the-clock powers to monitor and intercept communications – all justified in the name of security but often abused.

Such attacks on people's communication rights and on freedom of expression, together with the rise of fake news, hate speech, and the unregulated power of Big Tech, need to be monitored and challenged and their impact made clear if people are to build more effective citizens' movements and more democratic systems.

Access to information and communication is, therefore, the starting point for public dialogue and exchange about the ideas and knowledge needed to reform social, political, and economic structures. In this way, communication rights play a vital role in enabling societies and communities to devise new and more just ways of organizing and running the world.

While this may sound Utopian, WACC can play a key part in strengthening the voices of people who are at risk of being excluded from genuine social progress. WACC can lobby for their inclusion, amplify their voices and – in a digital age – advocate for technologies that are affordable, accessible, and that affirm human dignity and social justice.

In 2022, WACC will seek a wide range of partnerships and financial support to enable it to carry out its mission. Please join us in this exciting and transformative endeavour.

Top: WACC is supporting a new project in Malawi that aims to contribute to a conducive policy and regulatory environment for establishing and developing Community Networks to help address the connectivity gap in the country.

Bottom: Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong gather to discuss their rights using a study guide published by the Mission for Migrant Workers. There are roughly 370,000 foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong, mostly from the Philippines and Indonesia. Photo: Paul Jeffrey/Life on Earth

Year in Review 2021

January

WACC Global joined the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), an international network of about 200 journalism and media development organisations from more than 70 countries, which supports "the creation and strengthening of journalism and free, independent, sustainable, and pluralistic news ecosystems."

WACC is a formal member of a number of other international networks, such as the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), The Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network, and ACT Alliance – together connecting WACC and its work to hundreds of organisations in over 120 countries.

As WACC General Secretary Philip Lee noted, "It's really important to work in partnership with like-minded organisations, both to share knowledge and to avoid duplicating efforts."

February

Free Press Unlimited named Sarah Macharia, co-ordinator of WACC's Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), as its first Gender Equality Champion for its Media4Women Campaign, which shares the stories of women "who are already working towards gender equality in the media."

"We are not asking journalists and editors in newsrooms to be gender equality activists; we are simply asking for professionalism from a gender perspective…. Do the necessary work so you no longer need to rely on the same five men and their opinions."

Sarah Macharia, co-ordinator, Global Media Monitoring Project

March

Radio Silence (Silencio Radio), directed by Juliana Fanjul (Mexico, 2019), received the WACC-SIGNIS Human Rights Award 2020. A feature-length documentary, it highlights the essence of freedom of speech, human rights and democracy expressed by the courage of journalists in Mexico to fight against state corruption, drug crimes and injustice in this country where every year more than 30,000 inhabitants are killed.

Since 2010 the Human Rights Award has been given annually to documentaries reflecting the values and priorities of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communication.

April

In response to calls for a more balanced media representation of migration, WACC Global launched a special section on its website devoted to Migration Reporting, based on research and activities by its regional associations. Journalists, media and communications professionals, migrants/migrant NGOs, researchers, and anyone interested in migration can find reporting guidelines and toolkits, examples of good practice, and background data.

WACC representatives participated in two sessions during the Religion Communicators Convention, "Opening New Portals, Building Community". In "Enabling Migrants to Have Their Voices Heard," perspectives from Africa Asia, Europe and Latin America, sharing community projects seeking to address challenging contexts and societal attitudes. In a second session. WACC leaders urged religious communicators to assess their own gender sensitive reporting. The convention was organized online by the Associated Church Press, the Religion Communicators Council and the Canadian Christian Communicators Association. Glory Dharmaraj, WACC North America President noted that the pandemic has brought gender inequalities in sharp relief,

noting that "the face of poverty is still female, the face of victims of domestic violence is female, the face of caregiving is female, the face of the essential worker is female."

Indigenous media representatives from South Africa, the United States, Nepal, and Venezuela spoke at an online forum organized by the Indigenous Media Caucus, Cultural Survival and WACC as a side event during the 20th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The forum also discussed the results of "Are Indigenous voices being heard?" — a global study commissioned by these organizations, which looked at the state of Indigenous broadcasting around the world.

May

WACC's Climate Change and Communication Rights programme supported a documentary series dedicated to Indigenous knowledge on climate change adaptation and mitigation. Broadcast through Indigenous Television and ITV in Nepal, the programmes and an accompanying book documents indigenous knowledge on biodiversity and the protection of the environment and includes case studies of Indigenous Peoples' practices.

WACC was among the recipients of the 1st Lagerway Awards given by the Manila-based Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA) during its 53rd Foundation Day held online May 6. WACC was recognized for its commitment to "making a difference in the lives of people" in the field of development communication, according to CFA Communication and External Affairs' Mary Ann Crisostomo.

Responding to weeks of national protests in Colombia in which over 40 people were killed and hundreds missing, WACC joined the World Council of Churches, ACT Alliance, Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Anglican Communion, World Methodist Council, Latin American Episcopal Council and WACC in sending a letter on 18 May urging president Iván Duque Marquéz to

stop the spiral of violence that is doing terrible harm to the civilian population.

"While we acknowledge that the government is dealing with a very complex situation, we believe the focus now must not be on repressing popular protests, but rather to listen to the people's voices with empathy and without resorting to violence, and to begin to seriously address the root causes of the mass mobilisation of the Colombian people," the letter reads.

June

The Indigenous Community Radio Network (ICRN), an umbrella organization of 21 Indigenous radio stations in Nepal, and other Nepali media organizations have successfully lobbied their national and provincial governments to introduce new mass communication, media, information and technology bills that are "more inclusive of the rights of Indigenous peoples." ICRN said this came about as a result of a one-year project supported by WACC Global and Cultural Survival to strengthen community radio policy and voice through advocacy and programs.

July

The 6th Global Media Monitoring report was launched in an online event co-organized with Free Press Unlimited. The GMMP has taken the pulse of gender in the news every five years since 1995 and celebrated its 25th year of "media watching." Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, which struck just as the GMMP was planning its 6th global monitoring, "the project and the network that implements it did not only thrive, but we grew, expanding into 116 countries, monitoring more media and collecting a larger volume of data than ever," said Sarah Macharia, WACC's GMMP global coordinator.

Top: Alma Montoya, executive director of Grupo Comunicarte, a WACC partner in Colombia, during the global video marathon to highlight climate change

Bottom: Mario Kuraki of Fereiti Action Network, a WACC partner in Kenya, shares the impact of the climate crisis on pastoralists in northern Kenya during Hands Off our Rights, Hands off our Planet video marathon

August

The Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG) expressed deep concern about the situation of women, media professionals, and women journalists in Afghanistan as the Taliban gained control of the country, and called on governments across the world to facilitate and expedite the evacuation of women journalists. As GAMAG's general secretariat, WACC launched a campaign in September to support Afghan women journalists within the GAMAG network who were in urgent need of support.

September

WACC and the World Council of Churches, together with key ecumenical partners, hosted an international symposium on "Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age". The symposium brought a unique blend of sectors – from media and education to church and theological institutions – to raise awareness of digital justice issues as society becomes ever more dependent on technology.

"Civil society, churches included, have to be involved in finding what it means to have privacy, self-determination, security and ensure equality and justice in the digital space."

Dr Ellen Ueberschär,
President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation

October

"Changing the Narrative: Cross-regional training program on media coverage of refugees and migrants" sent out its call for applications. A joint project of three WACC regions – Africa, Europe and Middle East, the training program involves five online sessions starting in January 2022, building on WACC's migration reporting resources. The group of 12 journalists will then identify stories they would like to cover potentially as a team. The program will help strengthen media coverage of migration and refugee issues through skills building, networking, sharing of experiences, and learning more from experts in this field. [http://www.wacceurope.org/projects/changing-the-narrative-on-migration/]

Overall WACC supported almost 50 projects completing or starting in 2021, in 25 countries:

Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Senegal.

November

WACC warmly congratulated the winners of the Nobel Peace Prize, Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov, the first working journalists to win the Peace Prize in over 80 years.

Announcing the award, the Nobel committee chair, Berit Reiss-Andersen, said: "Free, independent and fact-based journalism serves to protect against abuse of power, lies and war propaganda. Without freedom of expression and freedom of the press, it will be difficult to successfully promote fraternity between nations, disarmament and a better world order to succeed in our time."
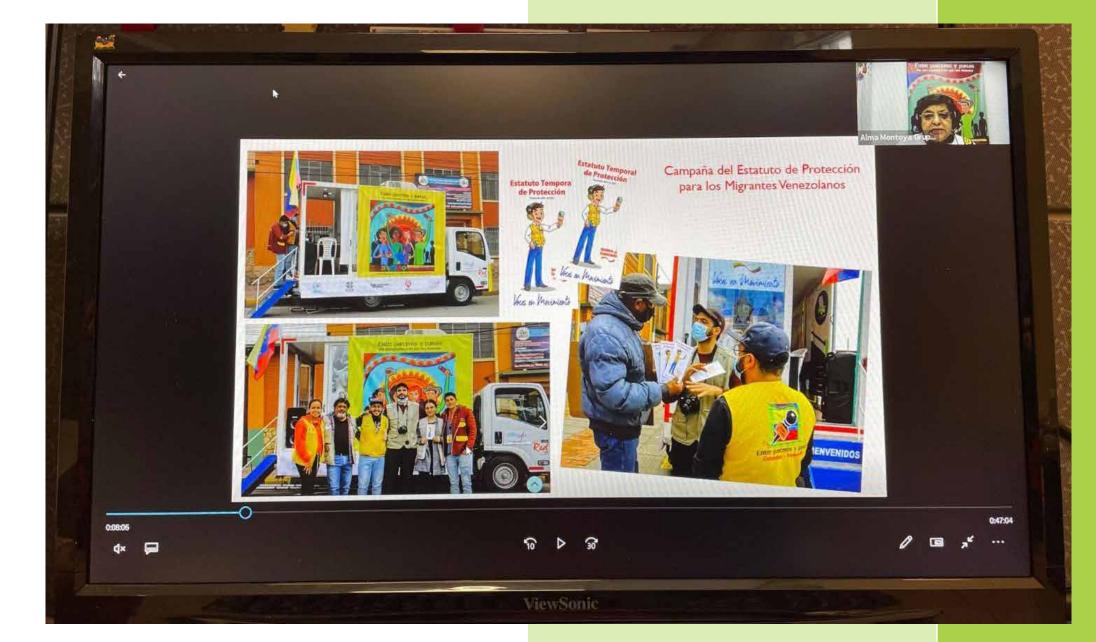
WACC and several of its project partners from Colombia and Kenya joined hundreds of organizations around the world in a 24-hour Video Marathon, Hands Off our Rights, Hands off our Planet!, which took place during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow. Organized by the Collective for Climate Rights, the video marathon highlighted the impact of the climate crisis on the lives and rights of oft-excluded voices and demanded that global leaders take immediate action.

December

Speaking at the Africa Women in Media Conference, GMMP global coordinator Sarah Macharia noted that the "concerns about the lack of respect for the integrity and dignity of women" identified in the 1994 Bangkok Declaration and the 1995 Beijing Platform "were not only still present but had crossed over into the digital media space."

Online media contents reproduce the exclusion and ghettoization of women, both within the media product and in the comments and responses of new interactive audiences that become co-authors of the process of promoting and legitimizing misogyny as public discourse," she stated.

Symposium on Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age

On September 13-15, WACC members joined theologians, church leaders, politicians, journalists, students, and professional communicators in exploring the challenges of digital communication with a social justice lens and identifying opportunities for concerted and collaborative actions to help map a more just digital future for all.

WACC organised the international symposium, Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age, along with the World Council of Churches. Co-organizers included Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World), Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church in Germany), Evangelische Mission Weltweit (Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany), and World Student Christian Federation.

The symposium ended with a manifesto and an invitation to contribute to an action plan for digital justice. "This exciting initiative requires the support of organisations and activists north, south, east and west if we are to bring about social progress in the digital age," said Philip Lee, WACC General Secretary. "Many voices are needed to ensure the kind of diversity and balance that genuinely leaves no one behind."

The manifesto presents the global context, issues, and challenges, as well as theological perspectives and principles that are essential to promote communication for social justice in the age of digital technology.

"To achieve digital justice, we need a transformative movement of individuals, communities, educational institutions, media agencies, and civil society –

including communities of faith," states the manifesto. "We need government policies and actions that are informed and supported by civil society, founded on human dignity, human rights, and democratic principles."

In her keynote speech, Dr Ellen Ueberschär, President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, urged faith-based communities and NGOs to "stand together in the fight to build credibility and trust" in both digital and offline spheres, saying it is not only social coherence but "human dignity itself" that is at stake.

Digital participation "is not a luxury or merely nice to have, but a prerequisite for the development of inclusive societies. Free access to information and unhindered opportunities to disseminate it form the backbone of democratic, open, and prosperous societies," she stressed.

The pandemic has demonstrated the advantages of digital communication, including the ability to celebrate services online, work from home and stay in touch with family, but it has also given governments the ability to install new surveillance apps in the guise of combatting Covid-19, said Ueberschär. Social media, she added, has amplified "ubiquitous disinformation and fake news," and given rise to an "infodemic," (an overabundance of information, some of which are false and meant to undermine public health response).

Goran Buldioski, director of the Open Society Foundation office in Berlin, noted that "platforms like Facebook and Google wield as much – or more – power than many nation-states over our public life. But they face no genuine accountability."

During a session on "Creating Democratic Public Spaces," WACC members and partners, called for a movement to "reclaim democratic public communication spaces." Dennis Smith, former WACC president, presented a paper by a WACC working group, which noted how today's communication channels and platforms are "dominated by neoliberal consumerist ideology that defines the value of human beings as a function of everyone's ability to consume ever-increasing amounts of goods and services."

The issue is not that that these new digital platforms such as social media are inherently destructive, said Smith. "The problem is not the social media per se, but that the driving force behind them is the maximization of profits and, thus, the monetization of all human attempts to create meaning in common," he said. "Instead of people being able to organically shape public spaces, including through trial and error, they are driven and deliberately manipulated by this consumerist ethic."

Speaking on the last day of the symposium, WACC General Secretary Philip Lee stressed the need to agree on ethical principles and regulation for digital communications and digital platforms. ""Applied fairly and equitably, responding to the urgent need for accessibility and affordability, and armed with functioning mechanisms at all levels for oversight and reform, a coalition of the willing could direct, monitor, and regulate the digital age in ways that benefit everyone."

Top: Digital participation is "a prerequisite for the development of inclusive socieites," says Dr. Ellen Ueberschär, President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Photo by Albin Hillert/WCC

Right: Dr. Sarah Macharia, WACC gender and communication program manager, discusses the "inbuilt racial and gender biases" of digital technologies. Photo by Albin Hillert/WCC

Bottom: WACC members and partners call for a movement to "reclaim democratic public communication spaces."

Global Media Monitoring Project
From Evidence to Action

Implemented once every five years since 1995, the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) is WACC's flagship initiative and the world's largest and longest-running research and advocacy project for gender equality in and through the news media. GMMP data are the key reference point for statistics on change over time of the comparative status of women and men as subjects, sources and journalists in print, broadcast, and web-published news content.

Building up to the Sixth GMMP Global Report launch, preliminary findings were presented at landmark international conferences including the 65th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the Generation Equality Forum hosted by the Government of Mexico to commemorate 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women, and regional events such as the Convention of Religion Communicators Council (North America).

In July, WACC in partnership with Free Press Unlimited (Netherlands) released the global report, setting off a series of regional and national report launches by GMMP participating country teams worldwide.

Publicity of the findings and applying them to advocacy are the initial GMMP follow-up tasks, collaboratively implemented with network partners in the different spaces in which they operate. The findings were presented at the International Association for Media and Communication Research

(IAMCR) conference and at UN Women's Media Compact Partners event. The GMMP process and results were discussed in universities and in academic journal articles (LatAm Journalism Review, the Journal of the Association for Journalism Education, Communication Research and Practice). The GMMP was profiled as a case study on the Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms (ALIGN) digital platform working to create "a global community of researchers, practitioners and thought leaders, all committed to gender justice and equality".

GMMP findings were cited in the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression's report on gender justice and the right to freedom of opinion and expression presented to the 76th session of the UN General Assembly.

In Nigeria and Ecuador, partners carried out in-depth analysis of news reports on violence against women (VAW) and proposed guidelines to mainstream gender and strengthen journalism about VAW in times of crisis.

Work to apply the GMMP evidence to "build back better' with women at the centre of media policy and practice is planned in the post-monitoring follow-up phase. The plan seeks to strengthen and advance a media environment that is more equitable, sustainable and inclusive of girls, women, minority and marginalized groups.

Stories from Project Partners

Communication rights are essential to achieving sustainable development. Without efforts to address the communication and information needs of marginalized people and communities, it is nearly impossible to advance inclusion, human dignity, and democratic participation.

Promoting greater access to media platforms and transparent access to information, advancing media literacy and fair media representation, and advocating for democratic media and data ecosystems are critical to achieving these goals.
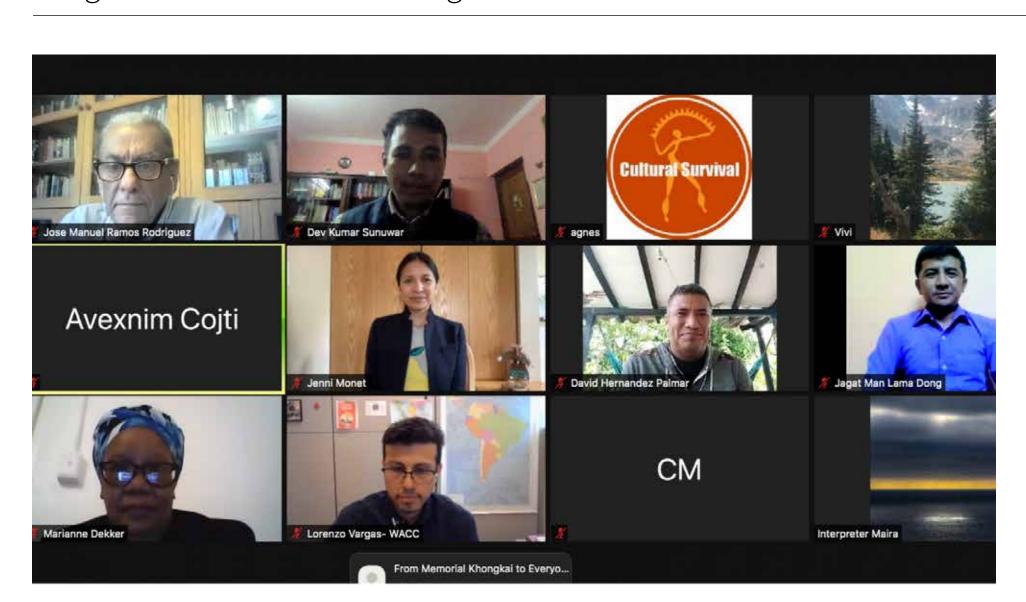
In this light, WACC is proud to collaborate each year with dozens of civil society organizations from across the world to turn our vision of communication rights into reality for people on the ground. Working under five programmatic themes (Indigenous Communication Rights, Migration and Communication

Rights, Digital Justice, Gender Justice and Communication Rights, and Climate Justice and Communication Rights), WACC provides technical and financial support to organizations in the Global South on the leading edge of transformational sustainable development and communication rights.

Above: Community communicators Mhe Phaa and Tun Savi during a training conducted by the Community Communication Research Center A.C, in Mexico. Photo by Yara Xadani

Indigenous Communication Rights

Guatemala-Ixil Radio: Asociación de Grupo de Mujeres Tejedoras Ixiles Q'imb'al created a community radio to "publicize the value of respect for our culture."

Indigenous radio: Some progress, but 'much remains to be done'

Indigenous community radio stations have been "gaining traction around the world," but many remain hamstrung by legal, financial, technical and administrative challenges, according to a study, Are Indigenous Voices Being Heard?, commissioned by WACC, Cultural Survival and the Indigenous Media Caucus.

The study examines the state of Indigenous broadcasting in 19 countries, including whether governments have complied with Indigenous Peoples' rights to their own media, as stated in Article 16 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It specifically looks into achievements, obstacles, and setbacks in implementing this right.

"Globally, Indigenous Peoples seem to be making efforts to establish Indigenous community radio stations in their own languages, in their communities, by and for their people," said Jose Manuel Ramos Rodriguez, researcher and author of the report. "However, they are weakened and threatened by antagonistic attitudes by government agents, community radio and commercial media."

The countries examined in the report are Kenya, Ghana, Namibia, South Africa, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Canada, Mexico, India, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand, and Australia.

Except for Guatemala, Nicaragua, Philippines, and Nepal, 15 of the 19 countries studied recognize the existence of community radio within their regulatory frameworks. However, only six – Canada, Australia, Bolivia, Mexico, Ecuador, and Colombia – have considered a specific Indigenous community radio sector in their regulatory frameworks that formally complies with Article 16 of UNDRIP

In a follow-up to the report, a side event was held April 29, 2021, during the 20th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, in which Indigenous media practitioners stressed the need to galvanize a movement that would ensure that Indigenous peoples worldwide can exercise to establish their own media and have access to non-Indigenous media "without discrimination."

Jagat Man Lama Dong, chairperson of Indigenous Community Radio Network, composed of 24 Indigenous community radio in Nepal, said lack of government

funding hinders Indigenous Peoples' right to access information, to communicate in their own language, and to fully participate in society. He noted that only a few media outlets provide programming in Indigenous languages, and 93% of newspapers and magazines are published in non-Indigenous languages. Indigenous People make up 36% of Nepal's population, but they only constitute 7% of subjects and sources in the news, he said.

Marianne Dekker, a media practitioner and descendant of South Africa's Khoi and San people, lamented how her country's Indigenous Peoples are invisible in mainstream media and how they are often treated with condescension. The voices of South Africa's Indigenous community members are not heard, and their views are often regarded as "not sophisticated enough" to be put forward, said Dekker.

In the United States, award-winning Indigenous journalist Jenni Monet described Indigenous radio as "a bright spot" in the American media landscape. About 60 Indigenous radio stations are organized by the Native Public Media, which works directly with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a non-profit corporation funded by the American taxpayer, while another 40 or so operate independently, she said.

Mexico: Self-reliance at the heart of Indigenous radio project

Six Indigenous community radio stations in Oaxaca, Guerrero and Mexico states were equipped with skills and tools that will help them become technologically self-sufficient, as part of a project co-funded by WACC and US-based NGO Cultural Survival.

Centro de Investigación en Comunicación Comunitaria A.C. (CICC), a Mexico City-based civil society organization focused on community communication and development, implemented the project, Developing Technology Ownership and Sovereignty Among Indigenous Broadcasters in Mexico.

Community radio stations in the country struggle with sustainability because of the high costs of buying and repairing broadcasting equipment, notes CICC. They also have a limited knowledge of new technologies.

In an earlier project supported by WACC and Cultural Survival, CICC succeeded in assembling a 300-watt radio transmitter using parts manufactured in Mexico,

instead of importing ready-made transmitters from overseas. The first of its kind "Made in Mexico" transmitter (TX FM 300 W MX), which has undergone trials, will reduce the capital costs of radio stations by about 400%.

With the new project, CICC was able to undertake technical assessments at participating radio stations to maximize the potential of the transmitter and to upgrade it to a newer, more portable version. The project also included production of media content about the importance of becoming technologically self-sufficient to achieve sustainability and workshops to build the capacity of radio stations to build their own wireless local area networks (WLAN) antennas, which would allow them to broadcast via the Internet.

Nepal: Promoting health on Indigenous airwaves

As the Covid-19 pandemic stretched into its second year, and new "variants of concern" continued to circulate worldwide, there were heightened concerns that Indigenous communities such as those in Nepal would continue to be disproportionately affected because of their vulnerability and lack of visibility.

To help address the challenge, WACC and Cultural Survival co-funded a project to enable the Indigenous Rights Foundation and the Indigenous Community Radio Network (ICRN) to document best practices on health communication during the pandemic and share them with other communities.

The project trained 50 Indigenous journalists, produced 20 radio programs on health rights, held interactive meetings focused on policy, and published best practices around the use of Indigenous communication to advance access to health.

The Indigenous Rights Foundation is a Nepalese civil society organization founded by Indigenous journalists that runs and manages ITV Nepal, a satellite television channel that reaches Indigenous communities in different Indigenous languages. ICRN is an umbrella organization of 21 Indigenous radio across Nepal.

Above: A woman washes dishes at a communal water tap in the Tamang village of Goljung, in the Rasuwa district of Nepal near the country's border with Tibet. Photo by Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance/2016

Right: A Tamang woman uses a drop spindle in the village of Gatlang, in the Rasuwa District of Nepal near the country's border with Tibet. Photo by Paul Jeffrey/ ACT Alliance/2016

Below: Pasang Bri Ghale winnows grain at her home in the Tamang village of Goljung, in the Rasuwa District of Nepal near the country's border in Tibet. Photo by Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance/2016

Migration and Communication Rights

Above and Below: Community communicators Mhe Phaa and Tun Savi during a training conducted by the Community Communication Research Center A.C, in Mexico. Photo by Yara Xadani

Colombia: Community radio network stands up for migrants

Considering the many health and economic challenges affecting migrants everywhere, WACC continued its support for a network of community radio stations working to meet the information and communication needs of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia. Venezuelan migration represents the biggest humanitarian crisis in the Western Hemisphere with an estimated 5.4 million people having been forced to leave their country since 2015.

The network, with 25 citizen reporters linked to community radio stations from both sides of the Colombia-Venezuela border, has an estimated reach of five million people in both countries. Since 2019 the network has collectively produced hundreds of media products focused on the needs of both migrants and host communities. It has become a key source of information for the 1.7 million Venezuelan migrants now residing in Colombia, particularly among those with limited access to digital platforms.

The efforts of the network to create a rights-based and people-centred narrative of migration come at a time when hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans become eligible to obtain legal status. In early 2021, thanks in part to the advocacy efforts of civil society like WACC partner Grupo Comunicarte, the Colombian government announced legislation to grant temporary legal status to one million Venezuelans residing in Colombia. This will allow migrants to stay in Colombia for up to 10 years and to access the labour market as well as health, education, and financial services.

Mexico: Podcast for and by refugees on Spotify

With support from WACC, La Sandía Digital launched "Emergency Exits," a new podcast about the lives and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Mexico.

The innovative podcast features the voices and perspectives of people on the move and aims to strengthen their communication rights and to combat xenophobia.

"Emergency Exits" offers a prologue and six episodes in which 15 men, women and adolescents from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, explain why they had to flee from their countries of origin and how they were received in Mexico.

These stories were produced between October 2020 and April 2021 during script workshops organized in two shelters: the House for the reception, training, and empowerment of migrant women (CAFEMIN), and the Casa Mambré, coordinated by the Scalabrinians: Mission with migrants and refugees.

They are available on Spotify and other audio streaming services.

In these podcasts, refugees, and asylum seekers "speak about their own experiences without an intermediary; they don't answer to any journalist, they are not being interviewed, they just talk about themselves, so that they become more than a number and a report," said Marie-Pia Rieublanc, project manager at La Sandia Digital, a Mexico City-based civil society organization focused on gender justice, environmental justice, and communication for social change.

The stories focus on what each of them brings from their home country — "from their education, their cultural heritage, their inner strengths and what they would like to provide, what dreams they have for their future in Mexico or in the United States," said Rieublanc.

"The skills and knowledge they will gain, particularly on their right to information and freedom of expression, will also enable them and other migrants to access vital information about services (especially related to healthcare, food and shelter, and safe migration pathways) and legal entitlements," said WACC program manager Lorenzo Vargas. It will help them exercise other rights such as freedom of movement, right to seek asylum, right to access consular services, right to healthcare, right to justice, and to security of the person.

Cabécar women and men. Photo: Courtesy of Cooperative Sula Batsu

Digital Justice

Costa Rica: Nurturing Cabecar culture and language

With Western-style education and the Internet taking over traditional learning processes in many parts of Costa Rica, the Indigenous people of the Cabeca nation, in Talamanca province, have expressed concern about threats to Cabecar culture and language, including their broad cosmovision.

A WACC-supported project, La antena de las mujeres (Women's Antenna), sought to address this challenge by establishing a local community network that will provide Cabecar women with the tools to engage young people in knowledge exchange processes using digital technologies.

Cooperativa Sulá Batsú, a Costa Rican is civil society organization and co-operative established in 2005, is implementing the project that will directly benefit 50 Cabecar women. Cabecar culture is matrilineal, the guiding force of the Cabecar people, and the transmission of knowledge is done from woman to woman through verbal communication.

The network will be led by the Asociación de Mujeres Cabécares de Alto Pacuare with the support of Cooperativa Sulá Batsú. Community networks are a clear example of communication rights in action. They enable communities with limited access to telecommunication services, such as those living in remote or rural areas, to take meet their own communication needs instead of relying on corporate or public telecommunication services.

This project is co-funded by WACC, with the support of Bread for the World-Germany and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) under their Connecting the Unconnected initiative.

Georgia: Empowering youth to fight disinformation

WACC supported a project in Georgia that aims to empower disadvantaged youth from 25 secondary schools and universities by helping them acquire and develop digital skills to help them address social challenges faced by their communities.

The Digital Solutions for Social Challenges project is being implemented by Helping Hand, an NGO which has implemented various projects focusing on volunteerism, women's rights, and gender equality in every region of Georgia since it was established in 2009.

Helping Hand will conduct 24 participatory projects on media literacy and misinformation, a participant-led social media campaign, 10 community "Ideathon" brainstorming sessions, and an advocacy campaign to encourage the government to expand media literacy training in schools. Helping Hand will partner with the Media Development Foundation, an NGO founded by a group of journalists, which aims to promote the professional and institutional development of news media in Georgia.

"We believe adolescents and youth are the crucial demographic to achieve change towards a healthier and more equitable society," says Helping Hand. "Young people should not be considered just an affected population, but also as highly effective partners in the efforts to fight disinformation and misinformation."

About 300 students (75% females) ages 16-29 will take part in the workshops, which will indirectly benefit the entire student body and teachers from 24 secondary schools and universities.

Workshop teaches disadvantaged youth how to navigate digital media platforms. Photo: Helping Hand

Gender Justice and Communication Rights

Argentina: Shattering the glass screen

WACC supported "Feminist Journalism for a Better World," a project that seeks to generate greater awareness in Argentina about the need for inclusive, non-sexist coverage and fair representation and remuneration in the news media.

Results of the 6th Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) in Argentina, which show losses in the presence, voice, and representation of women in the news, underline the importance of the project, said the Asociación Civil Comunicación para la Igualdad (CI) in its project description.

The percentage of women as news subjects in the country dropped from 29% in 2015 to 24% in 2020, while women accounted for only 21% of experts consulted by journalists, according to the report.

While there has been some progress in recent years, including the appointment of gender editors in at least eight media outlets and the approval of a law on gender equality in the media, there is still a lot of resistance among media companies to implement gender policies.

Project activities will include a "campaign for public opinion", which will promote feminist journalism, disseminate the GMMP results, and promote gender policies in the media; training for journalists and faith-based communicators; a campaign to urge news media organizations to adopt gender policies; and evaluation and expansion of the Media Commitment Agreement on Gender Policies promoted by CI in 2019 for the journalism and advertising industries of Argentina.

Gaza Strip: Leveraging social media for digital literacy

Women and girls in the Gaza Strip were given pointers and reminders about safe browsing on digital platforms, including how they can protect themselves and their data through a social media campaign launched by the Community Media Center, a Palestinian NGO and WACC partner.

A series of 30 colorful infographics reminded them, for instance, about how digital security should be a habit and what they can do to determine who gets to see their content.

The social media campaign was part of a WACC-supported year-long campaign, "Promoting Digital Literacy among

Palestinian women learn how to navigate the Internet safely during a digital literacy workshop in July 2020. Photo by Community Media Center

Vulnerable Women in the Gaza Strip," which sought to improve the cognitive and practical skills of 25 female journalists on digital security, privacy, and networking through a series of workshops.

They, in turn, conducted 25 peer-to-peer workshops on digital security across the Gaza Strip. More than 500 Palestinian women between 18 to 35 attended these workshops, which also offered practical sessions on issues such as privacy settings and safe browsing online. They were given lessons on how to analyse various types and sources of online information and how to use digital media platforms as competent media consumers and contributors to promote their rights. The sessions had a high turnout despite the Covid-19 pandemic and there was significant interaction with participants.

CMC also produced a guidebook on digital media literacy and an educational video on digital security and privacy protection, both of which were used during the trainings.

Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) volunteers from Argentina during monitoring day, September 2020

A social media post reminds women and girls to practice digital safety. Image by CMC

Philippines: Building eco-literacy via local knowledge

The Philippines has been identified as one of the top 10 countries most at risk from the effects of climate change, and yet millions of marginalized Filipinos who will be hit the hardest are not aware of it, according to the Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC), an NGO and WACC project partner in the Philippines.

To help address this challenge, WACC supported a CEC project that will develop a community-based curriculum centred on local and traditional knowledge in relation to climate change, as well as teaching aids and protocols for effective communication of climate disaster threats and impacts.

The project, Community-based Climate Change Educ-Action Training and Enrichment (CREATE), is also designed to explain the connection between climate change and the communities' socio-economic and political situation, and to "empower them to use their collective strengths and traditional practices to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate disasters."

CEC found that the "one in five Filipinos are considered extremely poor, rendering millions doubly vulnerable and exposed to climate disaster," but its manifestations and impacts are not effectively communicated.

Beneficiaries will include 20 representatives of national grassroots from farmers, urban poor, Indigenous peoples, and fisher folk sectors; indirect beneficiaries will include 400,000 members of these organization's local community chapters nationwide.

Above: Filipino farmer in flooded rice fields. Photo by Nonie Reyes/World Bank

Below: A girl, duck in hand, wades through the flooded streets in R wanga, May 2020. Photo by Climate Centre.

Uganda: Grassroots storytellers cover the climate

WACC supported a project in Uganda that will establish a network of specialized climate and environmental reporters for community radio stations who have limited resources and are unable to hire journalists trained in climate sciences and environmental disciplines.

Implemented by the Community Media Network of Uganda (COMNETU), the project aims to improve reporters' climate and environment reporting skills, increase their knowledge of local and traditional climate and environmental information, and increase the quantity and quality of climate radio programs.

The absence of reporters with knowledge about climate and environment issues has meant that communities "are often unaware of the environmental issues affecting them as a result of climate change," said COMNETU. Uganda has experienced shifting weather patterns: prolonged droughts, devastating floods, rising temperatures, and rainfall increases during the dry seasons which have threatened the country's agriculture sector, among other things. The recently released sixth report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has noted that these extreme weather conditions, including heatwaves and rising sea levels are projected to increase "almost everywhere in Africa."

The project aims to train 40 grassroots reporters affiliated with community radio, at least 50% of them women. These reporters hail from villages and districts where they operate from and are members of tribes within the area of coverage.

Project activities will include a workshop to come up with guidelines on reporting about climate change, climate justice and environmental management, and training workshops on the fundamentals of climate and environment; reporting climate change; production of climate and environment programs; and setting up a grassroots networking platform.

WACC and COMNETU, one of the leaders of the community movement in Africa, have been strategic partners for several years.

The project, Strengthening the network of radio reporters to use Indigenous knowledge to mitigate climate change, falls under WACC's Climate and Communication Rights Programme.

Strategic Plan 2022-26

WACC developed its new Strategic Plan in a lengthy and wide-ranging process of consultation with members and partners, advisors, regional executive committees, and its Secretariat and Board. The resulting document provides a foundation for the WACC network to take a leadership role in advancing communication rights in today's rapidly changing world.

In the words of its principles, "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."

WACC's aim is to strengthen a communication rights movement, which includes advocacy among its different networks to expand public communication spaces, to support public interest media, and to promote media freedoms, digital rights, linguistic diversity, and local sustainability.

WACC realizes its goal through a range of activities that include capacity building, media monitoring for training and advocacy, analysis of media trends with local and international perspectives, and actions undertaken by a diverse network of communicators, educators, media professionals, and policy makers.

During 2022-26, this strategy will be applied via 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.

WACC will place particular emphasis on issues of digital justice, digital inclusion, and the concept of "effective access" so that all individuals and communities can use media infrastructures to produce content, obtain information and knowledge, and be active participants in the realms of politics, society, and governance.

Media and information literacy are vital prerequisites for effective access. Adequate levels of media use require training and education, democratic participation, accessibility to 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.

In solidarity with its global network of members and partners, WACC will continue to seek opportunities to share its combined 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 regarding linguistic diversity and inclusion to carry out its activities and programmes as effectively as possible.

Above: "Fridays for Future" March for climate justice in Bonn, Germany. Photo by Mika Baumeister on Unsplash

Right: A Yazidi man sits with his child in a camp for internally displaced persons at Dawodiya in Iraq's Kurdistan region. In 2018, the Lutheran World Federation, a member of the ACT Alliance, provided water, sanitation, garbage collection, and psycho-social support for the families in the camp. Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance

Above: Tupá Mirim Joyan, a Guaraní from Sao Paulo sings a traditional chant, bringing testimony of his indigenous roots and culture, as people of faith gather in a 'Prayer for the Rainforest' as part of the Cumbre Social por el Clima, on the fringes of COP25 in Madrid. Photo: Albin Hillert/ Life on Earth
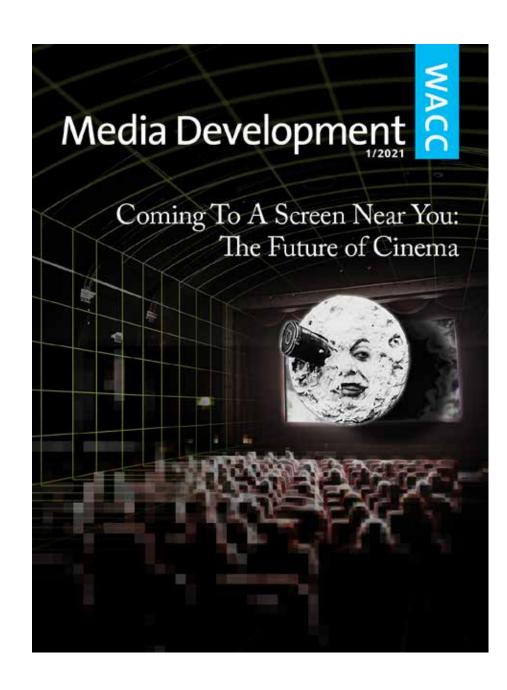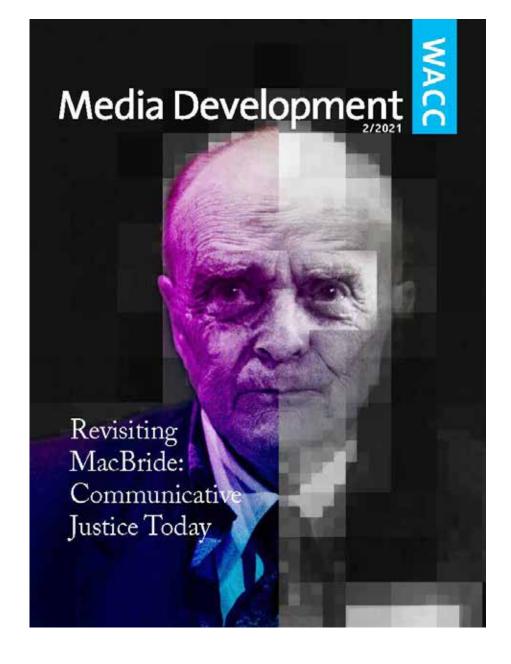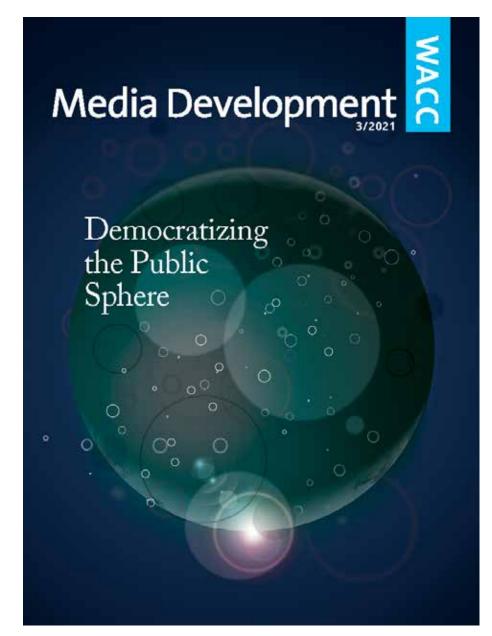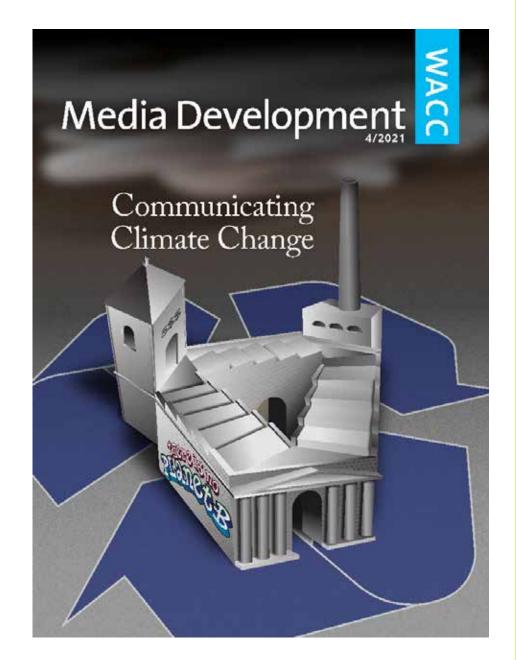

Above: Women and girls from marginalized communities in New Delhi take part in a WACC-supported digital literacy training run by local NGO Ideosync Media Combine. Photo courtesy of Ideosync Media Combine

Media Development 2021

Media Development 1/2021

Coming to A Screen Near You: The Future of Cinema

Why do we need cinema? Is it simply a form of escapism from the day-to-day problems that beset us – personal, familial, financial, moral, spiritual? Articles explore different aspects of cinema's future, recognising that people need art, drama, literature, music, and film to help make sense of the world.

Media Development 2/2021

Revisiting MacBride: Communicative Justice Today

If the 1980s MacBride Commission were to sit today, what might its members have to say about inclusion, exclusion, and social progress in a world taken over by digital technologies of all kinds? Experts contribute to the debate.

Media Development 3/2021

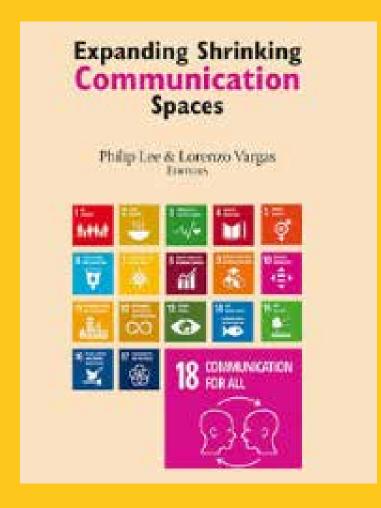### Democratizing the Public Sphere

The "public sphere" is made up of overlapping influences, pressures, dominant and less dominant voices. It is also subject to technological change, marked most recently by the digital. An equitable, accessible, and balanced public communication sphere, underpinned by principles of human rights and social justice, will only be achieved in close consultation with civil society.
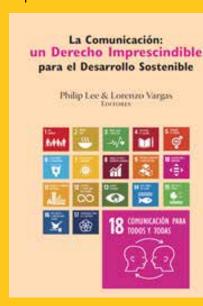
Media Development 4/2021

Communicating Climate Change

The basic premise of public interest journalism is that people should be informed in a fair and balanced way about crucial matters that affect their understanding of the world they live in and that could affect their lives. As climate change becomes more and more evident, it is urgent for communicators to continue tackling these matters from all perspectives.

Expanding Shrinking Communication Spaces

Spanish and Arabic translations of Expanding Shrinking Communication Spaces are now available.

Co-published by WACC and Southbound publishing house in Malaysia, the e-book explores communication rights and sustainable development in the digital age.

The 130-page book takes a historic look at communication and communication rights and their continuing relevance in today's world. "No matter the issue – poverty, conflict resolution, self-determination, migration, health, land, housing, the climate crisis – little can be done without effective communication," the book stresses.

"A framework is needed that enables, empowers, and transforms; that challenges power structures and sociocultural traditions to guarantee the public voices and genuine participation of everyone — especially poor, marginalized, excluded and dispossessed people and communities."

Financial Overview

WACC Global raised C$2.1 million in 2021 to fund programme activities. This was lower than the C$2.3 million raised in 2020 as donors focused on Covid-19 relief work.

Over 86% of this revenue came in the form of grants from long-standing contributors. The remaining 14% was self-generated from hosting fees, rental and other income. For comparison purposes, in 2020, self-generated income accounted for 12% of total revenues.

WACC's board, management and staff remain very prudent financially and did everything possible to minimize costs, while maximizing social impact around the globe in 2021.

WACC's total expenses decreased from C$2.4 million to C$2.1 million. Of this, programme expenses increased by 1% to 97% of the total expenditure for the year over 2020.

Our members, boards and staff continue to work closely with our friends and partners to raise funds and to diversify our donor base to ensure the financial sustainability of WACC. With adequate funding and careful management, we will continue to promote communication as an essential aspect of all people's right to a life of liberty and dignity, with full participation in the issues that affect their communities.

Note: Financial figures provided are pre-audit. Audited accounts are available upon request .

	FY2021		FY2020	
Income by Source				
Governmental	$ 4,559	0%	$ 4,370	0%
International Grants	$ 1,476,562	71%	$ 1,710,904	74%
Non-Governmental	$ 600,186	29%	$ 596,716	26%
Grand Total	**$ 2,081,307**	**100%**	**$ 2,311,990**	**100%**
Income by Type				
Grants & Contributions	$ 1,791,730	86%	$ 2,032,387	88%
Self-Generated	$ 289,576	14%	$ 279,602	12%
Grand Total	**$ 2,081,307**	**100%**	**$ 2,311,990**	**100%**
Expenses by Type				
Programmes & Projects	$ 2,053,921	97%	$ 2,259,231	96%
Governance	$ 21,174	1%	$ 27,147	1%
Fundraising	$ 42,349	2%	$ 77,531	3%
Grand Total	**$ 2,117,444**	**100%**	**$ 2,363,909**	**100%**

2021
2020

71% International Grants
29% Non-Governmental

2021
2020

86% Grants & Contributions
14% Self-generated Income

2021
2020

97% Programmes & Projects
1% Governance
2% Fundraising

Funding Partners

The current and most recent funding partners are:

Bread for the World

World Council of Churches

Centre for Communication Rights

Otto per Mille of the Waldensian Church

Service Canada Summer Jobs

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Primate's World Relief and Development Fund

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

United Church of Canada

UNESCO-IPDC

UN Women

Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

FreePress

World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)

Cultural Survival

Food and Agriculture Organization
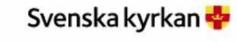
Witness

Karibu Foundation

Association for Progressive Communications

AMARC Asia Pacific

European Commission

Church of Sweden

CECI

International Indigenous Women Forum (IIWF)

WACC Network and Organization

WACC's members and partner networks reach across the globe in over 100 countries. From dedicated gender justice and media activists to organizational communicators, they share a common commitment to open and truthful communication that enables all people to be seen and heard.

Membership in WACC is available to both organizations and individuals. Members form part of eight regional associations – Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, Middle Est, North America, and Pacific – for networking and regional projects. Representatives of the regional associations serve on WACC's Board of Directors and ensure that organizational governance is grounded in regional concerns as well as international trends and opportunities.

The WACC UK Board of Directors has oversight of the global organisation, its policies, and priorities. The WACC Canada Board ensures WACC's viability and compliance with Canadian regulations.

Join Us

waccglobal.org/join

WACC UK Board of Directors

President, Embert Charles

Treasurer, Stephen Brown

Vice-President, Mathilde Kpalla , Africa

Vice-President, Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, Pacific (until October 2021)

Vincent Rajkumar, Asia

Ary Régis, Caribbean

Alba Sabaté Gauxachs, Europe

David Morales Alba, Latin America

Rania Rashad William, Middle East

Gregg Brekke, North America

Netani Rika, Pacific (appointed November 2021)

Philip Lee, General Secretary (Ex Officio)

Jim McDonnell , Director Resident in England and Wales

WACC Canada Board of Directors

Embert Charles, President

Stephen Brown, Treasurer

Philip Lee, General Secretary, (Ex Officio)

Glory Dharmaraj, USA

Kristine Greenaway, Canada

(L to R): Lorenzo Vargas, WACC program manager; Alba Sabate Gauxachs, WACC Board member and professor at the Ramon Llull University in Barcelona, Lekan Otufodunrin, Secretary of WACC Africa, and Gregg Brekke, WACC Board member, during a presentation on "Enabling Migrants to Have Their Voices Heard." The session was part of "Opening New Portals, Building Community," the joint online convention of the Associated Church Press, the Religion Communicators Council and the Canadian Christian Communicators Association.

(L to R): GMMP Global Co-ordinator Sarah Macharia, Presbyterian Women Executive Director Susan Jackson-Dowd, WACC General Secretary Philip Lee, and WACC North America President and US GMMP Co-ordinator Glory Dharmaraj at the Religion Communicators Convention in April.

Stephen Brown, WACC Treasurer, at the Communication for Social Justice in the Digital Age symposium in Berlin last September. Photo by Albin Hillert/WCC

WACC Staff 2021

Philip Lee
General Secretary

Sara Speicher
Deputy General Secretary

Joseph Patterson
Financial Controller

Sarah Macharia
Programme Manager – Gender and Communication;
Monitoring Rural Poverty Reporting

Lorenzo Vargas
Programme Manager – Communication for Social Change

Gisèle Langendries
Programmes and Funding Officer

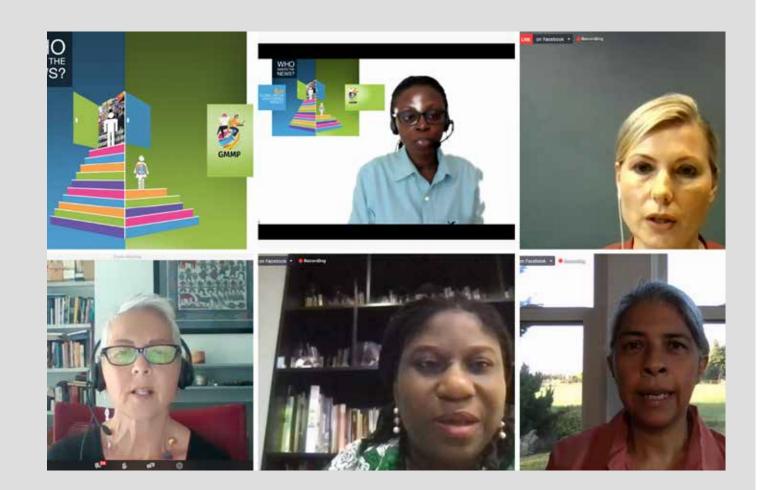**Shari McMaster**
Administrative Coordinator
and Board Liaison

Consultants

Marites (Tess) Sison	*Communications Consultant*
Saskia Rowley	*Design Consultant*
Keith Nunn	*IT Consultant*

Top: WACC Progamme Manager Sarah Macharia, top left, at the global launch of the 6th Global Media Monitoring Project on July 2021

Middle: WACC Programme Manager Lorenzo Vargas, right, at the University of Toronto Hart House's Changemaker Series, November 2021

Bottom: WACC General Secretary Philip Lee at the Lutheran World Federation webinar on "Hope Speech, not Hate Speech: Addressing hostility and overcoming divisiveness in the public space" May 2021

Connect with us

WACC Global

Tel: +1 (416) 691-1999
E-mail: wacc@waccglobal.org
Website: waccglobal.org

linkedin.com/
company/world-association-
for-christian-communication-
wacc-

@waccglobal

Global Media Monitoring Project

Website: whomakesthenews.org

@Global.Media.Monitoring.Project

@gmmpglobal

@whomakesthenews

Centre for Communication Rights

Website: ccrvoices.org

@ccrvoices

WACC is a member of ACT Alliance

actalliance

WACC has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council

ECOSOC