

WACC

Media Development

4/2023



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Rights Are
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Rights

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11 March 2022, Vyšné Nemecké, Slovakia: Refugee families from Ukraine walk across a road at the Vyšné Nemecké border crossing between Slovakia and Ukraine

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The theme of *Media Development* 1/2024 will be digital rights, governance, accessibility, related ethical challenges and AI.
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EDITORIAL

Media coverage of migration and migrants has been subjected to intense scrutiny by human rights activists, who see that news reporting has ranged from fair and balanced to biased and prejudiced, inciting a gamut of responses locally and nationally.

Blatantly negative reporting has increased anxiety and hostility among nationalist and populist politicians as well as among ordinary people who are led to believe that migrants are offered benefits and privileges they do not “deserve”. In the worst cases, populist political forces have scapegoated migrants for their own countries’ problems. Policies promising to curb migration are increasingly popular in places such as the United States, Italy, Hungary, Austria, and Brazil.

Much media coverage is good and well-intentioned. Many independent news outlets offer balanced opinions and points of view and try to include the voices of migrants themselves. At the same time, the ability of migrants and refugees to make themselves heard in their host societies and to contribute meaningfully to the discourse on migration is hampered by linguistic, cultural, economic, and political factors, which impoverish public debate.

In most cases, migrants have next to no means to contribute to the conversation on migration, despite being at the centre of it. And yet, as one expert has pointed out:

“Media and mediated environments define the terms, conditions and context in which migration is experienced, lived and contested. The dense entanglements between media cultures and global migration play a pivotal role in scripting the material experiences and politics of mobility. The term ‘mediation’ opens up an analytic space to understand and track these shifting intersections and assemblages of institutions and actors.”¹

Despite having the best of intentions,

speaking on behalf of migrants has the effect of sidelining and silencing them. In 2017, a study from the Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement (RCIS)² found that Canadian media had engaged in a process of “othering” Syrian refugees who were resettled in Canada in the period 2015-17:

“In all of the media sources we analyzed, Canadian citizens, politicians, and other public actors speak on behalf of refugees and exemplify a ‘saviour complex’ that marginalizes Syrian refugees while offering a narrative of humanitarian and generous Canadians.”

The study analyzed 456 stories from major Canadian news organizations over nine months, and concluded that while the media portrayed the “openness and generosity” of Canadians, they depicted refugees “along an inaccurate and misleading continuum between being needy and lacking agency, and as a possible threat.”

This example underlines several challenges for advocates of human rights and especially of communication rights. On what terms and in what ways can traditional media be engaged to give a stronger voice to refugees and migrants? How can refugees and migrants be enabled to challenge public perceptions? How can media and communication become vehicles to help migrants exercise their rights?

Taking a rights-based approach to migration issues would mean:

- * Promoting migrants’ right to access to information,
- * Advocating migrants’ right to freedom of expression,
- * Meeting migrants’ broader communication needs, such as the need to be listened to, to be able to tell their stories, and to participate in dialogue that provides them with physical, social and psychosocial support
- * Partnering with migrant groups to help develop their capacity to engage in advocacy, build relationships with media houses, and produce evidence to help them raise public awareness about the issues they face.

Many organisations and groups worldwide (see, for example, the article by Rey Asis in this issue of *Media Development*) have spent years creating help centres and networks for migrants and refugees who would otherwise lack basic information and resources to survive. A key realisation was that genuine empowerment also lies in enabling them to communicate both among themselves and with local communities using affordable and appropriate media.

Digital technologies have, of course, rendered this much easier as other contributions to this issue demonstrate and as José Luis Soto of the Dominican Republic underlines in his article (quotation translated from Spanish):

“In this sense, people’s main task consists in using all the media within their reach, among them journalism, every kind of technology, and the devices and tools of today’s information society, to safeguard ‘recognition of the intrinsic dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of the members of the human family’, in particular the right to the safe and orderly migration that States are under an obligation to guarantee, offering security and providing a human welcome as well as opportunities.”

Communication with, from, and by migrants and refugees is fundamental to their wellbeing and to strengthening the sense of self-worth and dignity that will enable them to survive and flourish during an exceedingly difficult time in their lives.

As UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated (Twitter, on 8 January 2023): “Migrant rights are human rights. Migrants must be respected without discrimination – and irrespective of whether their movement is forced, voluntary, or formally authorized.” ■

Notes

1. Hegde, Radha S. (2019, p.4). Mediation. *The Sage Handbook of Media and Migration*.
2. *The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Canadian Media*. Written by Vappu Tyyskä, Jenna Blower, Samantha DeBoer, Shunya Kawai, Ashley Walcott. RCIS Working Paper No. 2017/3.

Background: Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people

In 2020, there were about 281 million international migrants in the world, according to a recent report.¹ That figure equates to 3.6% of the global population. Displaced persons accounted for 89.4 million (including refugees, asylum seekers, displaced Venezuelans, and internally displaced people).

Some countries host greater shares of migrant population than others: the United States hosts the largest number of international migrants (51 million), about 19% of the world’s total. Germany and Saudi Arabia host the second largest numbers of migrants (13 million each), followed by the Russian Federation (12 million), the United Kingdom (10 million), the United Arab Emirates (9 million), France, Canada, and Australia (around 8 million each) and Italy (6 million).

Interestingly, from a contemporary communications perspective:

“Digital technology is becoming increasingly crucial throughout migration. People are able to gather information and advice in real time during migration journeys, an issue that has raised interest and, at times, concern. The use of apps to share information and connect geographically dispersed groups has raised valid questions concerning the extent to which digital technology has been used to support irregular migration, as well as to enable migrants to avoid abusive and exploitative migrant smugglers and human traffickers.”²

Migrants are also using the technology to build local support networks:

“Migrants have also developed applications to support better integration in receiving countries, while maintaining social links and financial support to their families and societies back home, including through the increasing prevalence of ‘mobile money’ apps. More recently, we have seen migrants develop online chatbots using machine-learning technologies to provide psychological support, as well as to help navigate complex migration policy and visa processing requirements, although digital capture in various migration systems of an increasing amount of personal information is raising concerns about privacy and other human rights issues.”³

Who is a migrant?

The term “migrant” is not officially defined under international law. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations agency for migration, defines the term migrant as “a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.” If the person moves across an international border, they become international migrants; if they do not, they are internal migrants.

Who is a refugee?

The term “refugee” is defined and protected under international law. A refugee is a person “who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion,” according to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a key legal document. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is responsible for refugees worldwide.

How much is migration reported by media?

While the migrant population is an important

percentage of the world population, it is by no means an overwhelming population. This may seem at odds with the perceived importance and controversy that the topic of migration sometimes appears in the news.

We know that news media follow events as they unfold. We are aware that the news cycle is fast, that events follow each other in rapid succession, and that equally fast, they become less relevant, and they disappear just as easily from our screens and newspapers.

A clear example of this was the so-called “refugee crisis” in Europe in 2015. In a relatively short period, thousands of refugees and migrants crossed from Turkey into Greece, on their way to other European countries. News organisations were quick to move their reporters to the ground, as developments unfolded daily. However, just as quickly, the interest faded, overtaken by other events on the continent.

A study by the European Journalism Observatory and the Otto Brenner Stiftung published in 2020 analysed media coverage of migration in 16 European countries (and the USA) between 2015/2016 and 2017/2018. It noted a remarkable difference between the two periods of analysis. The largest number of articles on migration was during the first period. By the time of the second period of observation, the interest had waned.⁴

What is the role of media?

Journalism is traditionally understood as the “gathering, reporting, dissemination of news and information in the public interest”. Journalism and the media have a fundamental responsibility to help people understand the world around them.

The advent of the internet, and of social media especially, has blurred the boundaries of traditional journalism – people can now participate in the production and sharing of information. However, journalism still plays a major role in helping people understand the world around them, and in shaping their perceptions.

How media presents migration has a strong influence on the public's perception of the topic. In other words, the ways media (and actors such as politicians or other influential persons) frame information can strongly influence and possibly change how society reacts to a certain topic or story.

As the Ethical Journalism Network wrote in a 2017 report, journalism can be as much a distorting lens as a magnifying glass: "On the one hand it can expose inhumanity and corruption in the way that migrants are treated, and on the other it is able to follow an agenda that inspires discrimination and hate that intensifies the suffering of the victims of migration."⁵

How do media cover migration?

The interest in media coverage of migration has spiked over the last 10 years, and numerous studies have been carried out to analyse the representation of migrants and refugees. The vast majority of these studies, however, focus on the "Global North", and especially on Western Europe. For other parts of the world, in-depth analyses are fewer.

The fact that the subject seems to be approached mostly from the point of view of so-called "countries of destination" can suggest that migrants and refugees are less present as topics in "countries of origin", possibly because they are not perceived as a newsworthy topic.

Research carried out in 2017 by WACC Europe and the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe, which analysed the media coverage of migration in seven European countries ([Refugees Reporting](#)) found that less than a quarter of the stories analysed referenced an actual refugee, migrant or asylum seeker. The 2020 study by the Otto Brenner Stiftung in collaboration with the European Journalism Observatory (note 4 below) produced a similar result: less than a third of the articles analysed in the study sample focus specifically on persons with refugee status, and even less on migrants. It also noted how refugees and migrants are more likely to be depicted as a group, rather than individuals.

A 2018 media monitoring study in Nigeria analysed the representation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country's print and online media and found similar patterns of low representation: stories about IDPs are few, and when journalists cover the issue, they do so from a rather superficial point of view, not providing context or background information, and avoiding explanation of the real issues affecting IDPs in the country, such as the lack of provision of basic amenities, access to health centres, sexual harassment and human right abuses. The study found:

"Sometimes IDPs are portrayed in media reports as helpless citizens who have no rights and who are left to the mercies of humanitarian and relief agencies. In most reports, the emphasis [emphases? Plural] are usually on the activities of the donors and government officials, with an assumption that whatever is being done, is fit and properly and adequately meet the needs of the IDPs."

When individuals are given a voice in news about migration or asylum, it is often those who are not migrants or refugees who speak. Politicians – whether at the national, regional or international level – are the majority of news sources who speak, and politics is usually the frame in which migration is addressed. . This finding is shared by Refugees Reporting as well as by the IDPs monitoring study from Nigeria, which found that "the use of government officials/spokespersons as main source of stories was predominant in virtually all the reports across the media monitored. Although there was diversity in the use of sources, the analysis clearly indicated that the media largely depended on government sources for information on what is reported as news about IDPs."

According to a [study by People in Need](#), "media coverage of migration is often biased, superficial, simplifying, using insufficient or bad sources, and only following the dominating narrative presented by political elites and expected by the audience". Media often misses the chance

to present the phenomenon of migration in its complexity, reporting it instead overwhelmingly as a problem.

The Otto Brenner Stiftung study found that the majority of articles do not specify the country of origin of migrants and refugees. Migrants and refugees are often only identified in terms of their migratory movement, as if that was everything the audience needs to know about them. Often media misses the chance to provide a background and a context for the migration, simplifying the narrative to create or perpetuate stereotypes.

Findings from [South Africa](#) paint a similar picture, with evidence that media in the country portrays immigration “as a threat to the livelihoods and economic well-being of local communities”. Media further appears to create strong associations of migration with “illegality”, “un-desirability”, and even “crime”.

Analysis from [South America](#) also found media representation of migrants as a “threat”. Examples are articles which highlight the nationality of a “foreigner” committing a crime, while media coverage of a similar crime by a citizen of the country will not mention their nationality. This type of representation belongs to a securitisation paradigm, where migrants are framed as a national security problem, a threat to the cultural, economic and social life of the countries where they arrive.

Speaking about a “migration crisis” sets off an alarm bell – among readers and in society. On the other hand, media could use the opportunity to frame migration as a global phenomenon which touches every country, and which is an indispensable component of the development of life, culture, language, and the economy. ■

Notes

1. [World Migration Report 2022](#).
2. Ibid. pp. 5–6.
3. Ibid. p. 6.
4. [Migration coverage in Europe’s media – A comparative analysis of coverage in 17 countries](#).
5. [How does the media on both sides of the Mediterranean report on Migration? A study by journalists, for journalists and policymakers. Executive Summary](#).

Background: Why accurate media coverage of migration is important

The world the media paint becomes the face of the societies we live in. The under-representation, or outright exclusion, of certain communities from the media, makes them invisible. And when people are invisible, their rights can much more easily be violated. Migrant and refugees, like all other under-represented and marginalised communities, should have an adequate space and accurate representation in the media.

We live in a complex world. When media reporting oversimplifies the subject matter, nuanced understandings of an issue can vanish. However, complexity does not mean complication. News reporting should aim to provide an overview of different facets of an issue or event. Providing context, and background is important to building knowledge and understanding of a complex issue.

In the case of migration, when media focus only on the moment of flight, on the trauma of the journey, it leaves out everything else that makes a person who they are, with their story, their abilities, their reasons for being in a particular situation. Most damagingly, it encourages an identification of migrants and refugees only with the movement of migration or flight. That movement is only a very small part of the experience of every migrant and refugee.

Nuanced coverage can help people understand that migration is a natural phenomenon, that people have been moving from one country

to another, from one place to another, for as long as humanity has been on the planet. Oversimplifications and sweeping generalisations such as “refugees are good” or “migrants are bad” leave no space for nuances, for the grey areas in between. And our lives are mostly made up of grey areas.

Migration is a complex phenomenon, and a fluid one. People who voluntarily decide to leave their countries may at some point realise that they cannot go back. Likewise, some people who would “technically” be refugees may choose not to be recognised as such. Migrants can be “voluntary” one moment and “forced” the next. Dividing people into “voluntary migrants” and ‘forced migrants’ is an artificial concept. People may move from one category to the other several times during their lifetime. The responsibility of media and communicators in portraying this complexity is enormous.

Colombian researcher Camila Esguerra Muelle has argued in relation to media representations of migration that “it is important to understand that the materials and language we use and produce, as researcher and journalists, have the capacity to create realities for those who read us. We need to know what realities we produce, and become responsible for them.”

Categories and definitions help us understand the world, but we also need to be aware that categories and definitions are fluid. Media can help break down contexts and backgrounds, so that we can understand complex concepts.

A [research on migration reporting in South Africa](#) argues that “the media typically present limited perspectives on cross-border migration, thereby leaving South Africans in the dark about the sheer complexities of this global and age-old phenomenon.” Over-simplification can contribute to xenophobia, and even have harmful consequences, such as actual violence against those perceived to be “foreign”.

Such findings are consistent with a [Reuters Digital News Report 2019](#) that across the countries sampled, “most people agree that the news media keeps them up to date with what’s happening (62%), but only half (51%) say news

media help them understand the news.” The lack of complexity in the news may be contributing to this result. The only way we can start to understand what migration – and any other complex phenomenon – really means is by bringing more complexity into the discourse.

Diversity of representation, a driver of trust

The world’s societies are diverse and multi-faceted. Diversity has been part of who we are for a long time: young and old people, people of various faiths and beliefs, people with various sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, people with disabilities, people with various national, ethnic or racial origins have always been present in our societies.

Media reporting does not always reflect this diversity. Media regularly choose to focus on some specific groups. These groups vary from country to country, but they are invariably a representation of the most powerful in society.

A 2018 [study by WACC Latin America](#) on the representation of poverty in the border areas between Argentina and Brazil, and Argentina and Bolivia, found that poorer, marginalised people were scarcely represented in the media, even in areas in which they are visibly present in society. The issue of poverty, when present, was not approached from a point of view which allows frank discussion and constructive engagement, eliminating the possibility of finding common solutions.

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated that “by giving voice and visibility to all people – including and especially the poor, the marginalised and members of minorities – the media can help remedy the inequalities, the corruption, the ethnic tensions and the fundamental rights abuses that form the root causes of so many conflicts.” Diversity in the way media portrays societies is crucial to foster social cohesion and prevent conflict, according to a [study by the Media4Diversity project](#).

In the context of migration, [research in Europe](#) found that “most immigrant groups and

ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the media when compared to the respective number of people actually living in each country”, while at the same time coverage of immigrants in, for example the Netherlands and Germany, focused only on asylum seekers – a very specific “subset” of migrants – even before the “crisis” of 2015.

WACC’s 2017 [Refugees Reporting](#) study found that representation of refugees and migrants does not necessarily correspond to the actual presence of migrant communities in different countries. While a majority of refugees to Europe came from the Middle East during that period – a significant refugee population in Italy actually came from Western African countries, in particular, Nigeria. Yet, this population was completely invisible in the news of the country, and almost never mentioned.

The more diverse people are included in the news, the more people will feel represented by the media. Representation can help (re)build trust in the media, and this is particularly important in light of the steadily declining trust levels recorded by Reuters.

Ethical, responsible and balanced journalism

Ethical journalism is the baseline of all responsible reporting. A journalism that is based on facts, is impartial and accountable, and that is aware of its impact on the lives of others. In many countries around the world, journalists are asked to abide by a code of ethics or conduct which is meant to regulate the profession. In other countries, there are codes specific to the subject of migration: the Italian Charter of Rome is one example. It was developed jointly by journalists, civil society organisations and the UN Refugee Agency. It is based on four key principles:

- Adopt appropriate and legally accurate terminology.
- Use accurate, verified information.
- Protect sources.
- Consult experts.

At the international level, the [Ethical Journalism Network](#) offers five principles for ethical

reporting on migration:

1. Facts not bias

Are we accurate and have we been impartial, inclusive and fact-based in our reporting? Are we acting independently from narratives that stem from politics and emotion rather than facts? Are we fairly and transparently reporting the impact of migration on communities?”

2. Know the law

Asylum seeker? Refugee? Victim of trafficking? Migrant worker? Do we use irregular migrant? Do we understand and use migrant definitions correctly and do we articulate to our audience the rights migrants are due under international, regional and national law?

3. Show humanity

Humanity is the essence of ethical journalism. But we must keep our emotions in check, avoid victimization, over simplification and the framing of coverage in a narrow humanitarian context that takes no account of the bigger picture.

4. Speak for all

Do we have migrant voices? Are we listening to the communities they are passing through or joining? Question how representative self-appointed community and migrant spokespeople really are.

5. Challenge hate

Have we avoided extremism? Have we taken the time to judge whether inflammatory content about migrants or those who seek to limit migration can lead to hatred? Words like “swarms”, “floods” and “waves” should be treated with caution, as should indiscriminate use of “racism” and “xenophobia.”

Creating a more inclusive discussion

We live in particularly polarised and polarising times, where extreme opinions take centre stage, with little room for the middle ground. Sensationalism, inaccurate reporting and disinformation campaigns can contribute to the creation of toxic public debate, where migration is often brought up as a contentious issue. Media can,

however, play a different role. It can bring balance back into the discussion, it can enlarge the space for the middle ground.

There is clearly space for a more nuanced discussion in our societies, and media can play an important role in opening that space. This includes factual reporting, which underlines the complexities of migration, considers broader geopolitical and economic contexts, and focuses on balanced solutions. This can be a positive, constructive way forward.

Writing and reporting about migration in a responsible and accurate way, which follows the principles of ethical journalism, can help change perceptions and reshape conversations around migration. ■

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Background: The Global Compact for Migration

The Global Compact for Migration is the first-ever UN global agreement on a common approach to international migration in all its dimensions. The global compact is non-legally binding. It is grounded in values of state sovereignty, responsibility-sharing, non-discrimination, and human rights, and recognizes that a cooperative approach is needed to optimize the overall benefits of migration, while addressing its risks and challenges for individuals and communities in countries of origin, transit and destination.

Refugees and migrants are entitled to the same universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, which must be respected, protected and fulfilled at all times. However, migrants and refugees are distinct groups governed by separate legal frameworks. Only refugees are entitled to the specific international protection as defined by international refugee law. This Global Compact refers to migrants and presents a cooperative framework addressing migration in all its dimensions.

The compact comprises 23 objectives for better managing migration at local, national, regional and global levels. The compact:

- aims to mitigate the adverse drivers and structural factors that hinder people from building and maintaining sustainable livelihoods in their countries of origin;
- intends to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities migrants face at different stages of migration by respecting, protecting and fulfilling their human rights and providing

- them with care and assistance;
- seeks to address the legitimate concerns of states and communities, while recognizing that societies are undergoing demographic, economic, social and environmental changes at different scales that may have implications for and result from migration;
- strives to create conducive conditions that enable all migrants to enrich our societies through their human, economic and social capacities, and thus facilitate their contributions to sustainable development at the local, national, regional and global levels.

The Global Compact is based on a set of crosscutting and interdependent guiding principles:

People-centred: The Global Compact carries a strong human dimension to it, inherent to the migration experience itself. It promotes the well-being of migrants and the members of communities in countries of origin, transit and destination. As a result, the Global Compact places individuals at its core.

International cooperation: The Global Compact is a non-legally binding cooperative framework that recognizes that no State can address migration on its own due to the inherently trans-national nature of the phenomenon. It requires international, regional and bilateral cooperation and dialogue. Its authority rests on its consensual nature, credibility, collective ownership, joint implementation, follow-up and review.

National sovereignty: The Global Compact reaffirms the sovereign right of States to determine their national migration policy and their prerogative to govern migration within their jurisdiction, in conformity with international law. Within their sovereign jurisdiction, States may distinguish between regular and irregular migration status, including as they determine their legislative and policy measures for the implementation of the Global Compact, taking into account different national realities, policies, priorities and requirements for entry, residence and work, in accordance with international law.

Rule of law and due process: The Global

Compact recognizes that respect for the rule of law, due process and access to justice are fundamental to all aspects of migration governance. This means that the State, public and private institutions and entities, as well as persons themselves are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international law.

Sustainable development: The Global Compact is rooted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and builds upon its recognition that migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the sustainable development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses. Migration contributes to positive development outcomes and to realizing the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially when it is properly managed. The Global Compact aims to leverage the potential of migration for the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the impact this achievement will have on migration in the future.

Human rights: The Global Compact is based on international human rights law and upholds the principles of non-regression and non-discrimination. By implementing the Global Compact, we ensure effective respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, across all stages of the migration cycle. We also reaffirm the commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance against migrants and their families.

Gender-responsive: The Global Compact ensures that the human rights of women, men, girls and boys are respected at all stages of migration, their specific needs are properly understood and addressed and they are empowered as agents of change. It mainstreams a gender perspective, promotes gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, recognizing their independence, agency and leadership in order to move away from addressing migrant women pri-

marily through a lens of victimhood.

Child-sensitive: The Global Compact promotes existing international legal obligations in relation to the rights of the child, and upholds the principle of the best interests of the child at all times, as a primary consideration in all situations concerning children in the context of international migration, including unaccompanied and separated children.

Whole-of-government approach: The Global Compact considers that migration is a multi-dimensional reality that cannot be addressed by one government policy sector alone. To develop and implement effective migration policies and practices, a whole-of-government approach is needed to ensure horizontal and vertical policy coherence across all sectors and levels of government.

Whole-of-society approach: The Global Compact promotes broad multi-stakeholder partnerships to address migration in all its dimensions by including migrants, diasporas, local communities, civil society, academia, the private sector, parliamentarians, trade unions, National Human Rights Institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders in migration governance. ■

Source: https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf

Recommendations for journalists reporting on migration and minorities

- * *Choose the language you use carefully.* Consider the ideologies and connotations behind the words you use.
- * *Challenge stereotypes, and avoid sweeping generalisations.* There is no one single migrant/Muslim/Jewish/Roma “community”, but instead diverse communities of individuals who have more to offer than just their migrant, ethnic or religious background.
- * Acknowledge – to yourself and to your audience – that *stories about migration and ethnic & religious minorities are complex*. Don’t try to fit your reporting into accepted master narratives.
- * Remember that *context is essential*. Report not only immediate events and consequences, but also the root causes, which often have nothing to do with a person’s ethnicity or religious affiliation.
- * *Provide an appropriate range of points of view*, including those of migrants and members of minority communities themselves. But don’t include extremist perspectives just to “show the other side” and be alert to political and social actors who spread hate to promote their interests.
- * *Avoid directly reproducing hate speech*; when it is newsworthy to do so, mediate it by contextualising and challenging such speech, and exposing any false premises it relies on.
- * Keep in mind that *sensitive information* (e.g., racial/ethnic origin, religious, philosophical or other beliefs, political party or union affiliation, health and sexual information) should be mentioned only when necessary for the audience to understand the news.
- * *Ensure that the title of your article or programme*

does not sensationalise; often, it may be all that the audience remembers.

- * *Uphold the basic principles of journalism.* Verify the facts; respect the notion of “innocent until proven guilty” when reporting on crime; protect the rights of your sources, especially those in vulnerable situations.
- * The challenges of covering migration and minority issues are constantly evolving. *Take continual advantage of opportunities to develop your knowledge, skills and awareness.*

Recommendations for migration coverage

- * *Avoid oversimplification.* Migration is a complex topic, with many different causes and many effects, and deserves nuanced media coverage. Migrants themselves are neither victims nor heroes.
- * *Don't fall into the trap of focusing solely on possible negative aspects of large-scale migration.* It is also important to highlight positive contributions of migration and individual migrants.
- * *Strive to be accurate and free of bias.* Reporting should aim to be impartial, inclusive and fact-based.
- * When covering the impact of migration on areas such as the economy and crime, *don't fall prey to assumptions or narratives that stem from politics and emotion.* Stick to the facts – what do the statistics actually show?
- * *Avoid painting migrants with the same broad brush.* Keep in mind that within every large group of people – migrants and non-migrants alike – there are criminals and rule breakers. Take care not to use the actions of one individual to smear the reputation of all members of a group or cast suspicion on all migrants.
- * *Stay clear of sensationalism.* When problems inside the asylum system occur – e.g., migrants riot, or an increase in small-time criminality is noted – look critically for the root cause.
- * *Put migration movements in context.* Inform your audience about the reasons why people feel compelled to leave their homelands, and investigate what connections there may be to policies and practices of European states.
- * *Inform your readers, viewers or listeners where relevant about the right of asylum* (basic background and state obligations) and the process of applying for asylum.
- * *Include the voices of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants themselves* when reporting on the issue of migration.
- * *Keep in mind that there is no structural connection between migration and terrorism.* In cases where there may be a link between these two issues, stick to the facts and avoid generalisations.
- * *Avoid dehumanising language* that evokes imagery or invasions or natural disasters (“flood”, “horde”).
- * Differentiate among “asylum seekers”, “refugees”, “migrants” where it is reasonable and feasible to do so. Avoid making sweeping assumptions about migrants’ intentions.
- * *Don't use the adjective “illegal” to describe migrants.* Avoid terminology that is more appropriate when referring to objects.
- * When it comes to video or photo, *balance newsworthiness with migrants' right to privacy* (including cultural values regarding being photographed) and any potential for retribution against them. Ensure that photo captions are accurate.
- * *When using migrants as sources for stories, or in interviews, treat them with the same respect as any other source.* Be mindful, however, of particular sensitivities. Asylum seekers feeling persecution may fear retribution against them or their families back home, or fear prejudicing their asylum applications. Be clear about what you plan to do with the material they provide (use an interpreter where necessary), and respect requests for anonymity.
- * *Don't quote politicians or other public figures on migration topics without contextualising, substantiating and, where necessary, challenging their statements.* Seek the views of experts, advocacy groups and migrants themselves to help set the context and question politicians’ views and assumptions.
- * Where it is necessary and newsworthy to re-

port hateful and/or racist comments by groups or individuals, mediate their statements by challenging these comments and exposing any false premises they rely on. Don't simply reproduce such comments for their shock factor.

- * Don't rely on popular narratives, images and tropes about migrants; critically examine them instead. Familiarise yourself first-hand with the topic. *Talk to migrants yourself*. Visit migrant camps and asylum facilities. Ask experts and civil society groups for their views and experience.
- * *Question assumptions about who and who is not a migrant, and how a migrant is supposed to look and act.* Don't assume that a person is a migrant simply on the basis of his or her looks. Migrants are people who migrate; the children or grandchildren of migrants who are born in the country in question no longer fall into that category. ■

Source: www.respectwords.org (2017).

Recognizing and surmounting barriers to migrants' communication rights

Rey Asis

For the more than 95 million international migrants in Asia Pacific, many of whom are temporary migrant workers, exercising communication rights is vital for them to navigate their new environment, communicate well with employers, peers and community, or simply express themselves confidently, responsibly and freely.

Communication rights to migrants include a comprehensive set of rights that range from the right to free speech and assembly to the right to access or receive accurate information that affects them, from the right to learn and develop one's own media to the right to participate in decision-making processes that affect them and their rights, among many others.

Achieving migrants' free exercise of their communication rights, however, is not easy. In many host countries, migrants, especially temporary migrant workers, are considered second- or third-class people with limited rights and freedoms. Migrants' access to information, services and justice is close to absent while migrant organising is deemed illegal. In some countries, airing their concerns on social media, taking a selfie protest in a known landmark, or conducting advocacy with the host government is prohibited. Right wing leaders further instigated hatred and xenophobia towards migrants and people of col-

our during the Covid-19 pandemic and even after. Back in home countries of migrants, their pleas fall on deaf ears while their criticisms may render them liable to violating a cybercrime law.

However, grassroots migrant organisations continue to confront these many obstacles and assert migrants' communication rights. With ears on the ground, many effectively assisted their communities and distressed migrants through relief, welfare provision and information sharing using online means during the height of the pandemic. Online information programs, social media posters, or virtual mutual help groups that migrant organisations started during the pandemic continue to this day. Partnerships between migrant organisations and media networks were formed to combat misinformation and disinformation online. Migrants' campaigns for wage hikes, better working conditions, and introduction of better immigration policies remain vibrant amid restrictive policies.

This article examines migrants' communication rights, particularly their right to participate in decision-making that affects their lives and rights. It argues that Asia Pacific migrants faced and surmounted barriers to their communication rights in engaging with the United Nations' (UN) Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in March 2021. It presents the barriers that migrants faced, their efforts to surmount these barriers, and the results of these efforts.

The GCM is a non-legally binding international framework created by the United Nations to assist governments in addressing migration challenges. Signed by 160 Member States in 2018, the GCM and its implementation by governments will be reviewed through state-led processes like the regional reviews and the International Migration Review Forum.

A pandemic of barriers

Witnessing migrant workers' situation and their resilience especially during the pandemic, the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM) observed, however, the absence of grassroots mi-

grant worker leaders or their organisations in the Asia-Pacific regional review of the GCM and how the narratives made by governments in the said review contrasted with the migrants' realities.

Migrants and migrant organisations were identified in the list of stakeholders whom governments and the UN agencies can partner with, in the processes of consultations and monitoring of the progress of the GCM implementation. As primary stakeholders in the migration discourse, migrants deserve to be in the review, monitoring and implementation of the GCM process as any and all decisions agreed in the GCM will greatly affect them and their families. It begs the question then: where are the migrants?

The APMM and migrant organisations in the region immediately identified a number of barriers faced by migrants particularly in getting their voices heard in the GCM process.

Migrants' awareness of the GCM. Not many migrant organisations in the region were aware of the GCM or the regional review that was then just recently held. According to them, vital information that could help them through the pandemic were already either scarce, incomplete or difficult to access; and if there were anything on the GCM, they were unaware of it. There was little interaction between governments and the migrant communities who were calling for action on the latter's demands of inclusion, support and protection. If consultations on the GCM were held by governments at the local or national level, migrant groups were not informed about them.

Language justice. Language plays an important role in making migrants understand the global compact and enabling their participation in the process. Unfortunately, publications on the GCM were mainly in English and used formal language. Popular versions written in migrants' mother or native languages were unavailable whether in print or online. Furthermore, the medium of the regional review was English with limited language interpretations. English is not the main language spoken in Asia-Pacific where temporary migrant workers from the region speak their native language and the language of

their host countries.

Digital divide. As early as 2020, both APMM and migrant groups have identified and worked together in addressing digital challenges faced by migrants. First was understanding online platforms such as Zoom and learning how to navigate their many features. Zoom, which was the main platform in conducting virtual meetings like the GCM regional review, was fairly new to migrant workers who would have to learn about it if they were to participate using it. Capacity-building was not enough though. Many migrant workers have limited mobile data that got used up quickly when using Zoom. And even if Wi-Fi were available, they were not given access to it by their employers. Also, many have mobile phones that have limited storage hindering them from either upgrading or downloading the application.

Time, space and resources. Migrants' participation in the regional review would also be affected by: (a) time – the regional review's schedule conflicted with migrant workers' work time; (b) space – migrant workers would need to find a space conducive enough for them to participate. Many migrant domestic workers, for example, lived with their employers who were at home all the time during Covid-19. If migrants are in a space that is noisy and full of distractions, it would be difficult for them to listen and contribute to discussions; and (c) resources – which migrants would need to fill the many gaps.

Pursuing meaningful participation

These barriers that both APMM and migrant groups identified not only informed advocacies that they developed to enable migrants' meaningful participation in the GCM process but were addressed in a wide variety of activities they conducted to capacitate migrants on social and new media, the GCM and conducting virtual advocacy.

Media workers, both in social and traditional media, were invited in workshops on Zoom, social media and online broadcasting. Trainings were conducted mainly regionally and later on

were also done per country and per nationality.

As these trainings happened, migrants and CSOs were made acquainted with the GCM. Immediately after the regional review, two regional echo conferences were organised with the objectives of "echoing" or sharing the results of the review among migrants, gathering insights from them and civil society members, and developing advocacy strategies around the GCM. Cooperation was ensured with CSOs and migrant organisations in shaping the program, agreeing on a time that would be best for all those in the many time zones in Asia-Pacific, inviting migrants from their respective areas, and cascading learnings to their organisations and networks.

While it was difficult, effort was given to language interpretation. Resource generation was crucial to support volunteers who helped in interpretation and other technical support. CSOs were sought out to share their office spaces and Wi-Fi for migrant workers to use for free during the echo conferences. In countries where migrants gathered in gardens or in open spaces, internet gadgets like portable Wi-Fi devices were lent to migrant organisations and accessed by migrants for free. Transportation and food allowances, in some instances, were also provided.

Migrants shared how they had to be creative in participating, always giving feedbacks as they adjusted and adapted to ever-changing social distancing rules in their countries. Truly, the migrants' voice was crucial in conducting and shaping the activities to ensure they suited the needs of migrants and allow for them to participate effectively.

The APMM also worked with various regional and global organisations to bring migrant leaders to the IMRF in New York, USA, in May 2022 amid visa challenges, strict international border policies, and expensive airfares. Despite not having speaking slots in the formal IMRF, migrants utilised every avenue such as the interactive multistakeholder hearing, side events that they organised or attended, and surprise meetings with their respective governments to speak up, hold their governments to account, and

state that the GCM should be for, with, and by migrants.

Results of meaningful participation

The two regional echo conferences resulted in a comprehensive statement¹ which reflected the analysis, position and recommendations coming from the participants. Migrants together with CSOs helped formulate and finalise the said statement, which became an advocacy tool for them in engaging with the GCM and for migrant organisations, in linking it to their ongoing campaigns on the ground.

The advocacy points in the said statement would be articulated and further particularised by grassroots migrant organisations in what APMM would call migrant spotlight reports (MSRs). These are written by migrant organisations to “put a spotlight” on their urgent issues, link them to the GCM, and put forward policy recommendations. The MSRs were the end results of online trainings that capacitated migrant and advocate organisations on the GCM, relating it to their realities and seeing how their engagement in it would be useful in their ongoing campaigns. During the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), MSRs developed by migrant groups and their advocates from five Asian countries were presented to the UN special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, government representatives, and UN agencies.

Meaningful participation of migrants in the GCM was achieved through advocacy in combination with concrete commitments to realise it. APMM’s experience with migrants proved that if provided with information on the GCM, given the space to analyse, engage and speak up, their own initiatives resourced, and partnered, migrant workers can fully engage in the GCM process.

At the same time, the GCM process itself is a closed space. It is run and controlled by governments who have championed the neoliberal migration for development framework, hailed labour export as a solution to unemployment and impoverishment, and valued migrant workers solely for their economic contribution, not

for their person, rights and dignity. Migrants being invisible in these spaces and barriers to their meaningful participation will remain unless the systemic power imbalance is challenged.

Claiming rights, challenging narratives

Realising communication rights of migrants benefits both migrants and the society they live in. It raises awareness among migrants about the current conditions they are in, find commonalities with other fellow workers regardless of their status, age, or ethnicity, and explore common grounds to unite and collectively question, assert their rights and demand change.

When communication rights are fully exercised, the individualised culture by which the current system has instilled in both migrants and host peoples is challenged as mass consciousness and the value of working together is honed, encouraged, and celebrated.

We have seen this in victories celebrated by migrants and host peoples alike – in the case of Erwiana Sulistyaningsih² when she achieved justice against her employer in Hong Kong; in the case of Mary Jane Veloso,³ who was stayed on the day of her execution in Indonesia; and in the case of Evangeline Cayanan,⁴ who was allowed to remain and be with her daughter in Canada.

These victories are proof that by exercising communication rights, migrants’ participation becomes meaningful and effective and a step towards making the world a better place for all. ■

Notes

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“Entre duelos y anhelos, tomé la decisión”

Doris Falcón

La crisis en Venezuela se ha profundizado durante los años 2021, 2022 y lo que va de 2023, con lo cual se afirma que aún se mantienen las condiciones económicas, sociales y políticas que expulsaron a más de 7 millones de personas según informe de Naciones Unidas¹ en lo que ha sido catalogada una de las migraciones más importantes de los últimos tiempos en el mundo. Colombia es el país que ha experimentado el impacto mayor y ahora cuenta cerca de 3 millones de migrantes según un corte de Migración Colombia para octubre de 2022.²

Entre algunas de las razones para tomar la decisión de migrar, se cuenta el deterioro económico, la carencia de servicios públicos y la falta de oportunidades laborales. Según la encuesta PsicoData Venezuela, elaborada por la Escuela de Psicología de la Universidad Católica Andrés Bello,³ el principal estresor psicoemocional para el venezolano es el deterioro socioeconómico, el 75% de los encuestados indicó que en los últimos 2 años ha experimentado la falta de familiares o amigos cercanos por migración, el 34% dice que le ha costado retomar su cotidianidad después de experimentar esta falta, siendo más frecuente en mayores de 65 años (40.1%) y en las mujeres (32%).

La migración no solo tiene rostro de desgracia, también tiene rostro de oportunidad. Si se lograra mapear, por un lado, las características de los migrantes que viven en una determinada región del mundo, tales como: edades, sexo, grado

de estudios, habilidades entre otros y, por otra parte, las necesidades que tiene cada país receptor, faltarían la buena voluntad del Estado para hacer que coincida lo que se ofrece con lo que se demanda.

En este sentido, los medios de comunicación tienen el desafío de tender puentes para la promoción del derecho de los migrantes en dos sentidos: (1) acceso a información clara, precisa y útil; (2) participación activa de los migrantes en los medios como fuentes de información y denuncia de irregularidades. Valdría la pena el cuestionamiento, ¿pueden los medios de comunicación convertirse en puentes para ayudar a los migrantes a ejercer sus derechos?, para ilustrar una posible respuesta a continuación tres historias que, por cuidado y protección de las personas, se toman nombres ficticios.

Y tomé la decisión de irme en avión

Antonio Mavares, venezolano de 52 años, ingeniero mecánico, jubilado de la empresa hidrológica del estado venezolano, expresa con una sonrisa, entre consuelo y duelo que “*nunca estuve en mí la idea salir del país, por la situación económica que vivía en 2015, me vi en la necesidad de tomar la decisión de migrar desde Barquisimeto- Venezuela a Bogotá- Colombia. Dejé a mi familia, hijas y esposa*”.

Cuando decidió migrar, Antonio obtuvo un 80% de información relevante a través de los medios de comunicación y al respecto indica “*debo resaltar que parte de la información la encontré en cuentas de Instagram, Facebook y Twitter, además de la radio y televisión, la cual me fue útil e importante para tomar la decisión; allí encontré información clara en cuanto a los procesos legales para permisos de trabajo, beneficios laborales y de salud. Fue dura la travesía de migrar a Colombia, aunque somos muy parecidos en nuestra cultura, se destaca una diferencia importante en el trato laboral. Luego busqué información en las redes sociales sobre las posibilidades legales de trabajar en Estados Unidos y el beneficio de un estatus legal a los migrantes venezolanos. Afortunadamente entré legalmente a Estados Unidos y me beneficié del estatus migratorio que ofrecían. Lo más duro de todo mi recorrido mi-*

gratorio fue el duelo de dejar a la familia”.

Antonio, forma parte de los venezolanos que dejan atrás, no solo la familia, sino que llevan consigo una mochila cargada de ilusiones y esperanzas por una vida digna.

Y tomé la decisión de pasar el río

Paola Barboza, joven venezolana de 25 años, ingeniero industrial, graduada con honores universitarios cuenta, “cuando decidí migrar desde Maracaibo, Venezuela a Estados Unidos, la primera tarea fue buscar información, lamentablemente no la encontré en redes sociales, ni radio, ni televisión, no eran fuentes confiables para mí; necesitaba el paso a paso, las formas, los caminos; pues se dice mucho y poco al mismo tiempo. La fuente de información primordial para tomar la decisión fue “de boca en boca”, tenía un amigo, que tenía una amiga que se fue, me pasó los contactos y avancé como referida, ese fue el medio de comunicación”.

Los medios de comunicación son también responsables de crear muros con la divulgación de noticias falsas y silencios intencionados en temas con la migración, pues en muchos casos son considerados como temas poco relevantes en sus líneas editoriales y políticas informativas, con lo cual hace que personas como Paola se sientan poco o nada representadas en los medios.

Paola dijo tener un viaje afortunado desde Venezuela hasta México, lugar donde pasó la frontera cruzando el Río Grande, “gracias a varias personas generosas que me informaron del proceso, a través de grupos de mensajería fue posible que el miedo y la incertidumbre se minimizaran; en las redes sociales, televisión y radio hay información poco confiable”.

Y tomé la decisión de atravesar el Darién

Cristóbal Hernández, venezolano de 45 años, trabajó 28 años en la industria eléctrica del Estado, siendo representante del sindicato de trabajadores de una de las instituciones más pujantes y estables del país en los años 90 del siglo pasado. Cristóbal, cuenta “tomé la decisión de migrar a Estados Unidos, cuando no vi salidas económicas y con-

diciones de vida digna, para mi esposa y tres hijos de 10, 8 y 2 años; comencé mi travesía por tierra desde el estado Falcón- Venezuela, atravesando Colombia, Panamá, Costa Rica y México. Lo más duro fue atravesar el tapón del Darién en Panamá. Fuimos un grupo de cuatro personas del pueblo donde vivía y conseguimos la información de todo el viaje a través del amigo de un amigo; nos dio confianza viajar en grupo”.

Cristóbal, confiaba en la información que el grupo de amigos manejaba a través de conocidos, afirma “en la red social había noticias que en algunos momentos alentaba y animaba, pero en otros sencillamente daba miedo”. Al llegar a la selva del Darién- Panamá, Cristóbal nos cuenta que la única información que tenía era la de los “guías”, hombres que lideraban grupos de entre 15 y 20 personas para atravesar la peligrosa selva, “allí la gente pierde el sentido humano, la generosidad y la posibilidad de ayudar al otro. Vas caminando por la selva y te encuentras a una persona desmayada de hambre, enfermas por fracturas de tobillos, mujeres embarazadas, niños llorando... no podrás solucionar todo, pero pregunta si tiene hambre, pregunta si tiene dolor, pregunta si puedes dejar algo... el ser humano pierde el valor de ayudar a otro con tal de llegar...”

Entre el 2022 y el 2023, según un informe del gobierno de Panamá, unos 250 mil venezolanos han atravesado la selva del Darién y se estima que 400 mil pasarían al cierre del 2023.⁴

Una gota de agua en un océano

En América Latina y el Caribe se vienen fortaleciendo experiencias de Comunicación y Migración que son como una gota de agua en un océano. Estas buenas prácticas se vienen promocionando a través de espacios virtuales, en la que se intentan articular redes a favor de los derechos de comunicación y migración. El reciente mes de julio, se realizó un encuentro virtual organizado por **WACC-AL** (Asociación Mundial para la Comunicación Cristiana - América Latina), y se destacan dos experiencias.⁵

Monitor Migración y Radio Migrante

Esta experiencia intenta recoger las voces de

los migrantes en todo el mundo a través de una aproximación desde las herramientas periodísticas y sus narrativas, así lo señala Andrés Cañizalez, investigador y periodista venezolano, quien en los últimos dos años ha estado al frente de este proyecto de comunicación y migración, desde la investigación y comunicación, poniendo en línea estas dos iniciativas: [Monitor Migración \(@migramonitor\)](#) y [Radio Migrante \(@radio_migrante\)](#).

Explica el investigador que “se trata de hablar de la migración, no solo desde la cifra o desde el dolor que implica la migración forzada, sino, además, contar historias y vivencias de resiliencia y adaptación a través de entrevistas cortas sobre el aprendizaje migratorio, enfocados en mostrar su vida, la realidad a la que se enfrentan, entre ellas: costumbres, alimentación, música y habla, en países muy particulares como Noruega, China, África e Islandia”.

Las casi 120 entrevistas son publicadas en redes sociales y en señal radio a nivel nacional a través de la red de Radio Fe y Alegría Venezuela. Es así como se reivindica la labor del periodismo y la comunicación que no es solo el dato y la cifra, sino que detrás hay historias y vivencias contadas de primera mano por sus protagonistas, las cuales son escuchadas.

Caminantes, vidas que se mueven

Esta iniciativa comunicacional es producida desde el año 2016 por el equipo de la Red de Migración de ALER y sus afiliadas en América Latina,⁶ Inmer Chevez es periodista de Radio Progreso en Honduras, con experiencia en la cobertura de 7 caravanas de migrantes que salieron de Honduras hacia Estados Unidos y forma parte de esta red.

Desde el 2018, en Honduras se comenzaron a organizar las caravanas de migrantes, con un éxodo masivo de personas que huyen de la pobreza, en las mismas se juntaban un promedio de entre 8 mil y hasta 15 mil personas que salían caminando en la noche y podían durar entre 20 y 30 días para llegar a Estados Unidos.

Según datos recientes del [Instituto Migración de Honduras](#), en el año 2022 transitaron 13 mil 500 personas, mientras que entre enero y marzo del 2023 transitaron 55 mil personas migrantes.⁷ De igual modo, según una encuesta realizada por la Organización Internacional para las Migraciones,⁸ a los migrantes que pasan por Honduras, se tiene que de cada 10 encuestados, 5 son venezolanos, 3 ecuatorianos y 2 de Cuba.

Cuenta Chevez, que “desde Radio Progreso se acompaña a la población migrante en esa ruta, llevando sus voces, publicando sus denuncias y abordando a las autoridades cuando hay violación de Derechos Humanos a la población migrante. El enfoque del tema migratorio por parte de los medios de comunicación debe ser ético y empático, las palabras sí importan, luego es el respeto a la dignidad de quienes migran, porque van en momentos tristes y precarios de su vida”.

A modo de cierre

El principal objetivo de los testimonios fue identificar el rol de los medios de comunicación y su utilidad en la decisión de migrar, con lo cual se observa que algunos logran obtener información confiable, útil y clara a través de los medios digitales, radio y televisión y otros obtuvieron información a través de referencia. Todos han tenido que sortear la valoración de manejar dentro del duelo de migrar el anhelo de encontrar una vida digna.

Otro dato importante a resaltar es la “pobreza de comunicación e información” definida como un conjunto de situaciones en las cuales las personas carecen de acceso a plataformas de comunicación, que tienen un acceso restringido a información y conocimiento relevante y fehaciente, están excluidos de la participación en procesos de toma de decisiones.⁹ Esta pobreza comunicacional se caracteriza por la exclusión de las personas de participar activamente con su voz en los medios de comunicación.

Y finalmente, subrayar que los medios de comunicación, son consecuencia de los intereses de sus dueños y gestores con lo cual también, estos medios responden a intereses particulares. Siendo que muchas veces pudieran ser funcional

a una visión favorable al hecho migratorio y servir de puentes o a una visión desfavorable sirviendo de muros de indiferencia.

“Es necesario comunicar el bien, para construir intercambios, para escuchar a los demás, para dar testimonio” J. Mujica. ■

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Forcibly displaced in West Papua

Juan Patricio Gavilán

Since the 1960s, the indigenous people of West Papua have endured a repressive colonial occupation by Indonesia, heavily militarised and extractivist, it has been called “Indonesia’s Palestine” and a “slow motion genocide”. Foreign journalists have been banned from the region and UN bodies, human rights and humanitarian organisations have also been expelled.

In West Papua, human rights - including fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression - are denied. Local journalists understand the severity of risks in criticising the authorities or talking about self-determination. The result is a veil of silence over a massive long-term humanitarian crisis that is still unfolding.

Rahel Taplo’s story is not uncommon. She lived with her family in a village called Kiwi in the central highlands. “The village was attacked from helicopters” she says. “Four helicopters were dropping mortars onto the houses and we could hear shots, so we all just ran, we ran up into the forest.”

The attacks by Indonesian forces destroyed and damaged housing and public buildings in the village. Rahel Taplo and everyone else from the village ran into remote areas of the surrounding jungles where they have been hiding to avoid detection since the attack in September 2021.

Other eyewitnesses from the village added that two drones were seen during the attack, one dropped mortars, and the other they presumed was for surveillance. Unexploded 81mm mortar rounds were later recovered from across the village as well as flashbangs and M16 bullet casings used during the attack. Indonesian Special

When the villages of Kiwi and Kiwirok – in Pegunungan Bintang Regency, near the PNG border – were attacked by helicopters and mortar fire from the Indonesian Army and Special Forces, many houses and building were destroyed or damaged and the inhabitants fled into the surrounding jungle for safety. Alut Bakon is one of the jungle areas where Internally Displaced People have taken refuge. There is no education and no health service and there is no access for humanitarian organisations or support. Photo: © Juan Patricio Gavilán.



Forces now occupy positions within sight of Kiwi village and have set up a sniper post which scans the village area with visible green laser sights day and night. Three people from Kiwi have been shot dead by the snipers while trying to recover food or animals from their farms.

In the jungle refuge where Taplo lives, there are over 200 other people who fled from Kiwi, but this is just one of seven similar refuges in the area. The villagers remain too afraid to return to their village houses and farms, the constant in-

timidation means they can't think of returning, so they have no choice but to forage for food in the jungle, growing some taro root near streams and hunting for wild pigs. They live in makeshift huts made from palms.

Rahel speaks of how they miss their homes, the health clinic and the school. "Men and women and children all suffer" she says, "but without access to health services women in childbirth and infants suffer a lot." Despite there being significant need, there is no access for humanitarian



Men sit around a fire in a jungle camp hut where IDPs hide from Indonesian forces. People living here fled from Kiwi, Pegunungan Bintang regency, West Papua. Photo: © Juan Patricio Gavilán.



Kiwi, Pegunungan Bintang regency, West Papua. Children who are former residents of the village and eyewitnesses of an attack on the village stand in front of the pastor's house that was hit by mortar fire and now stands unoccupied. Photo: © Juan Patricio Gavilán.

support to be provided. Taplo says simply, “We’re on our own.”

Exclusion and repression

The true scale of displacement from violence is difficult to determine as statistics from the government of Indonesia are not available and organisations that normally create such data, such as UNHCR, are refused access. The Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights recently put the number of IDPs between 60,000 and 100,000.

When indigenous Papuans are forced off their land in military operations, it makes way for extractive industries - mining, palm plantations and logging by Indonesian and international companies - and also for Indonesian settlers mainly from Java and Sulawesi. Though the Indonesian government statistics are secret, in excess of a million Indonesians are thought to have been brought into the region under the state-sponsored transmigrasi programme, and uncontrolled spontaneous immigration continues to substantially reduce the proportion of indigenous population West Papua. Some experts are calling this systematic reduction of indigenous Papuans a “slow motion genocide”. The impact on demographics also has a destructive impact on language and culture in the region.

Racism against West Papuans goes from common insults such as “monyet”, meaning monkey, to more active forms of discrimination. Immigrants own most of the stores and businesses across West Papua, very few Papuans do, and Papuans are hugely outnumbered by immigrants as employees. Papuans are refused loans by banks for starting businesses, limiting their business opportunities, and many Papuans feel they don’t get equal treatment from government officials. In short, Papuans feel they are second-class citizens in their own land.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have condemned the violent attacks on protestors in West Papua. There are many documented instances of excessive use of force by Indonesian security forces against peaceful protesters, including instances of fatal shootings, beatings, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions. Even raising the Morning Star Flag, a symbol of West Papuan cultural identity, is an offence of treason, punishable by lengthy prison sentences.

The United Nations have expressed concerns about access for human rights monitors to West Papua, as they have faced challenges and restrictions in their efforts to investigate human rights abuses and provide assistance to the local population. The UN has repeatedly called for the

Indonesian government to allow for independent and impartial monitoring and investigate allegations of human rights violations in the region.

Building a unified movement for opposition to Indonesian occupation, a movement for self-determination from Indonesian rule, in a region with 276 languages as well as extremely



difficult access to many communities, has special challenges. Any progress in discussing autonomy or independence is also hampered by a lack of understanding between factions with different histories and approaches, leaving many young people to feel that the only way forward is with the West Papua Liberation Army (TPN-PB), a poorly armed barefoot separatist movement. The situation in West Papua remains tense and as exclusion and repression continue, a sense of desperation builds.

The case of Rahel Taplo in Kiwi is mirrored across the regencies of Nduga, Puncak, Intan Jaya, Maybrat, Pegunungan Bintang, and Yahukimo. Tens of thousands of Papuans are abandoned in remote camps for displaced people without basic services or adequate housing, without access to healthcare, education, or employment.

As exiled West Papuan independence leader Benny Wenda has often said, “West Papua is a colony and it’s time for us to be free. Our people are suffering every day. The world must listen to our cry for help.” ■

*Human Rights Monitor has recently published an investigation into the bombing of indigenous villages around Kiwirok. [More info here](#).
Photo: © Juan Patricio Gavilán.*

Media reporting of displaced persons in Nigeria

Lekan Otufodunrin

Zara Mustapha, an 18-year-old girl has lived with her parents and siblings in an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Doron Baga, Borno State in Northern Nigeria for about five years. The family had been displaced from their hometown in the Kodunga Local Government area of the state following attacks by Islamic Boko Haram insurgents on their community and others. They were forced to take refuge in the initially temporary camp that has become their permanent abode.

Unable to continue her secondary school education due to the displacement and to avoid being exploited along with other girls in the camp, Zara decided to learn Cap knitting and is gradually growing the business in support of her family.

Zara was the focus of a feature by *Yelwa Express* published on May 16, 2022, one of several special media reports on the hopes, aspirations and struggles of IDPs in Nigeria. It formed part of the Advancing the Rights and Welfare of IDPs through media monitoring, investigative journalism and media-driven advocacy project implemented by Journalists for Christ International Outreach.

“If people will buy our caps at their true value, I think things will be better and I can also achieve my dream of going back to school,” Zara said in the interview, which was one of the few occasions when migrants are given the oppor-

tunities to share their plight.

As of January 2022, there were 79,365 registered asylum seekers and refugees in Nigeria accompanied by roughly three million internally displaced persons (IDPs) (UNHCR, 2022). Both the Monitoring Media Reportage and Portrayal of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa project in 2019 and the Advancing the Rights and Welfare of IDPs project in 2022 indicated that displaced persons in Nigeria are unable to exercise their communications rights, in part due to a lack of accurate and sympathetic coverage by the media.

Among others, the conclusion on media trends in reporting IDP issues in Nigeria in the two IDP-focused projects was that the stories on IDPs lacked depth, and topics in the newspapers generally focused on issues relating to the unfortunate circumstances of the situation of IDPs rather than on the underlying issues affecting them. Sources in the reports also tended to be government officials. Women and children, who constitute a large percentage of displaced persons, were hardly quoted in reports.

However, with media monitoring highlighting gaps in media coverage, followed by consultative meetings with key IDP persons and training on best practices for journalists and support for field trips, 20 selected journalists were able to produce a range of displaced/migrant reports on their own welfare, rights and needs - including the one about Zara in the Advancing the Rights and Welfare of IDPs project.

Other special reports by the journalists published in media outlets across the country covered the call for boosting the Food Chain supply for IDPs, recollections of the days back in their communities from which they were displaced, requests for urgent medical assistance and survival strategies to counter the lack of necessary facilities in the camps.

Apart from the commissioned stories, the consultations with journalists and stakeholders' engagements – an interface for IDP representatives and journalists/development writers and IDP-supportive NGOs – provided first-hand

information and additional insights on the living conditions and state of welfare of displaced persons in the country which formed the basis for many other media reports.

Beyond the project, the journalists who produced the commissioned projects and those who participated in the round-table discussions in Lagos and Abuja have continued to be members of a network of more than 40 journalists devoted to covering IDP issues in the way they have been trained.

Platform for interaction

Training by an experienced journalist who has reported extensively on humanitarian issues affecting migrants in parts of Africa enhanced the ability of the journalists to move beyond the routine points many use to write about. The main platform for interaction is a WhatsApp group where members share links to their new IDP-focused reports, get feedback from colleagues, ask for contacts and get story ideas.

To get media organisations more interested in reporting about IDP issues, the findings of the media monitoring and recommendations were shared with media managers, many of whom did not realise the worrisome state of displacements in the country and consequently promised to allow for more coverage of the issues affecting migrants.

With the publication of the reports of the two projects – Muffled Voices and Silent Cries – we have provided evidence-based engagement tools and best practice guidelines to solicit support and commitments towards further advancing the rights and welfare issues of IDPs in Nigeria.

Additionally, we now have a dedicated website www.idpreportng.info and a Twitter (X) handle @IDPmonitor to amplify IDPs/migrants media reports, publish commission stories based on our monitoring of the situation across the country and to advocate for necessary actions to be taken.

Based on our assessment of media coverage of IDP issues in the country, our recommen-

dations to persuade traditional media to give a stronger voice to migrants, enable migrants to challenge public perceptions and how the media and communication can become vehicles to help migrants exercise their rights include:

* The media, as agents for setting the development agenda, should continue to highlight issues and bring to the fore concerns of persons affected by hostilities and conflicts, especially on the provision of welfare amenities, facilities and safe shelter as part of the media's social obligations to society.

* Women and children, who are the most vulnerable, should be given more space to air their concerns in media reportage, in fulfilment of the media's obligation as a voice of the voiceless and in amplifying the "Silent Cries" of IDPs or persons affected by conflict, hostilities, disasters, etc.

* Media organisations should endeavour to collaborate with media support groups and related stakeholders for journalists to visit IDP camps independently to produce feature articles, including objective reports on the situation of life of IDPs in the camp.

* The media should report IDPs with empathy by focussing on positive stories with respect to individual experiences and productive activities, i.e. creative skills, good conduct, income-generating activities, survival efforts, exemplary services and socio-economic engagements that support enhance their acceptance, despite the circumstances that have made them IDPs.

* Media reports on IDPs should be solutions-driven such that they highlight legislative, policy, administrative and institutional gaps requiring the attention of democratic institutions and political functionaries in order to address highlighted gaps.

* Media reports should prioritise emerging issues of the state of hygiene, sanitation and conditions of IDP camps; particularly affecting the plight of women and children and Persons Living With Disabilities (PLWDs) in the camps.

* There is a need to consider the use of audio-visual content including animations to bring about sustained interest in issues affecting inter-

nally displaced persons, particularly on online and citizen journalism platforms.

* Journalists should see themselves as agents of social change, especially in advancing the rights and welfare of IDPs, and other persons affected by related adverse situations.

Dialogue with media houses

An international award-winning journalist, Innocent Duru, who is also the publisher of Voice for African Migrants noted that traditional media can be persuaded to give a stronger voice to IDPs/Migrants by sensitizing them about the global relevance of IDPs, refugees and migration issues. According to him, many editors are ignorant of these issues and often ask "What is new about it? Is it not the same issue of rape, hunger and murder?" This is crass ignorance and a myopic view of migration issues unlike The Guardian, AP, Reuters, and Aljazeera among other international media organisations that devote massive space to migration issues.

Duru, who is an Assistant News Editor with *The Nation Newspaper* in Nigeria, stated that the quality of reports can get editors more interested in migration issues.

"When reporters keep doing predictable stories of how migrants sold their houses, travelled through the desert, got raped, died and all that, editors would always turn them down. There are more to these issues than the usual report of return of migrants by IOM. Since I have been working on these issues, not once has any editor rejected my reports because the stories always offer something new."

Duru is an example of how journalists can be willing advocates of the rights of migrants and ensure maximum media access for them. The web site Voice for African Migrants was primarily born out of his passion for reporting issues affecting migrants, refugees, IDPs etc. Winning UNESCO, IOM, and other awards on migration has also acted as a morale booster for him.

To change public perception of migrants,

Elizabeth Jah of Bauchi State Television urged the media to project positive aspects of their lives, encourage them to interact with society and get involved in meaningful ventures. The media, she said, should also give them a platform to communicate their situation to the public and other stakeholders.

As much as they may be disadvantaged, migrants should be informed of their rights and of the benefits to which they are entitled. Folake Ruth Sokoya of FAS News Media said the media should provide accessible information in multiple languages and collaborate with legal experts to create content that educates migrants about their rights, entitlements, and available support services.

In terms of limitations, feedback from our network indicates that getting access to displaced persons camps is restricted and they sometimes need to get approval from camp officials who usually do not want journalists to know the true state of the camps. Some of the migrants are also reluctant to speak to the media to avoid the stigmatization that comes with being featured in media reports, especially when they are in any form of distress.

Due to limited funds, many media houses are unable to fund investigative reports involving travel to locations of displaced persons. Many wait for visits by government agencies and international organisations to the camps, during which they may not be able to determine the actual state of the centre or have the opportunity to speak with the IDPs. ■

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Derechos a la comunicación y migración mundial

José Luis Soto

El fenómeno de la migración mundial adquiere hoy día dimensiones y caracterizaciones llamadas a investigar, en la búsqueda de soluciones conjuntas como se ha estado planteando en el Pacto Mundial para la Migración Segura, Ordenada y Regular.

El tema de la migración es que no se ha querido ver como fenómeno, cuya solución a corto, mediano y largo plazo debe ser desde un enfoque integral, por las profundas causas que provocan que las personas migren, dejando atrás con dolor y nostalgia a sus familiares fundamentalmente a sus madres, padres, hijos, hijas, esposos, esposas, en fin, abandonan sus vidas en la tierra en que nacieron inspirados en el sueño de un mejor porvenir.

La migración es una realidad global. Se estima existe entre 281 y cerca de 300 millones de migrantes internacionales. La mayoría de los y las migrantes se desplazan de forma insegura entre países. Desde luego también existen millones de migrantes que se han establecido en naciones y comunidades de acogida.

Lo se plantea desde el Pacto Mundial para la Migración Segura, Ordenada y Regular es un compromiso de Estado para en común como lo expresaron con su firma 193 Estados miembros de las Naciones Unidas, que reconocieron la necesidad de adoptar un enfoque integral para la movilidad humana, así como promover una mayor cooperación a nivel universal.

Señalaremos, sin entrar en detalles, seis puntos del Pacto que a nuestra consideración son

importantes para el enfoque de una comunicación y un periodismo de derechos y el derecho de las personas a migrar.

Los Estados se comprometieron a:

- * “Proteger los derechos humanos de todos los refugiados y migrantes, independientemente de su condición. Esto incluye los derechos de las mujeres y las niñas, así como promover su participación plena, fructífera e igualitaria en la búsqueda de soluciones.”
- * Asegurar que todos los niños refugiados y migrantes estén estudiando en un plazo de unos meses después de su llegada.
- * Prevenir la violencia sexual y por razón de género, y responder ante ella.
- * Prestar apoyo a los países que rescaten, reciban y acojan a un gran número de refugiados y migrantes.
- * Trabajar para poner fin a la práctica de detener a los niños a los efectos de determinar su estatus migratorio.
- * Condenar enérgicamente la xenofobia contra los refugiados y los migrantes, y respaldar una campaña mundial para combatirla”.¹

El derecho a la migración organizada y segura

Sin embargo, el Pacto para una Migración Segura y Organizada fue una iniciativa que puso el tema de la migración en el centro del debate mundial. Fue un convenio de extraordinarias buenas intenciones, pero solo de buenas intenciones. El compromiso solo fue eso... El pacto carecía de vinculante que hiciera posible que los Estados cumplieran con los acuerdos firmados.

El balance de las migraciones mundiales desde la firma del pacto en el 2016 hasta este año 2023, es que las crisis migratorias se han acentuado. La pobreza, los conflictos militares, las persecuciones políticas y la crisis climática, están expulsando millones de personas de sus territorios.

La humanidad está viviendo la gran crisis de la migración y la movilidad humana, sin precedentes y sin soluciones a la vista a corto, mediano y a largo plazo, es lo que señalan expertos y

expertas.

Desde luego hay que recordar que la migración y la movilidad humana han existido siempre. No es un fenómeno de ahora, la movilidad de las personas como señala la Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM) en el Informe sobre las Migraciones 2022:

“La migración y la movilidad humanas son ciertamente fenómenos milenarios que han afectado, casi sin excepción, a todas las sociedades del mundo, pero con el tiempo han experimentado cambios importantes. El examen de esos cambios en sus aspectos demográficos y en lo referente a la escala, dirección y frecuencia de los movimientos puede ayudarnos a entender la evolución de la migración y darnos pautas para el establecimiento de políticas, programas y respuestas operacionales eficaces en el terreno”.²

En el mismo informe del 2022, la OIM señala que:

“La estimación mundial actual de las Naciones Unidas, en 2020 había unos 281 millones de migrantes internacionales en el mundo, lo que equivale al 3,6 % de la población mundial. Esta es una pequeña minoría de la población total, lo que significa que permanecer en el país natal sigue siendo la norma casi universal. La gran mayoría de las personas que migran no cruzan fronteras internacionales; la cifra de los migrantes internos es mucho mayor, aunque se observa una disminución en los dos últimos años, a medida que la inmovilidad relacionada con la COVID-19 paralizó a las comunidades de todo el mundo.”³

Los refugiados es uno de los colectivos de los desplazamientos, que engloba a más de 100 millones de personas que vivían en países “azotados por los conflictos, la persecución, el hambre y el caos climático” y se vieron forzados a abandonar sus hogares. El pasado 20 de junio en ocasión Mundial de los Refugiados, António Guterres,

llamó la atención a la comunidad internacional a no ver a este grupo de personas como simples cifras y señaló “No son una cifra en un papel: son mujeres, niñas, niños y hombres que recorren un duro camino en el que a menudo son objeto de violencia, explotación, discriminación y abusos”.

“Como se pide en el Pacto Mundial para los Refugiados, los países de acogida necesitan más apoyo internacional para impulsar el acceso a la educación de calidad, el trabajo decente, la atención de la salud, la vivienda y la protección social”,⁴ alertó el secretario general de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas (ONU).

Crisis migratoria en las Américas y el Caribe

La agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados (ACNUR) en su informe de junio de 2023, advierte que el número de personas desplazadas a nivel mundial alcanzó una cifra récord en 2022, donde se destaca la grave crisis migratoria y de desplazamientos en Las Américas especialmente en Venezuela y Haití.

“La situación en Venezuela sigue impulsando la movilidad humana en la región, y sigue siendo de las más preocupantes. Hemos llegado a más o menos 5,5 millones de venezolanos refugiados o con necesidades de protección internacional”,⁵ declaró Giovanni Bassu, Representante Residente de la ACNUR en Ecuador, en un comunicado de prensa publicado por Noticias Naciones Unidas el 13 de junio de 2023.

En 2022 los desplazamientos en Las Américas, especialmente, utilizando el llamado “tapón del Darién” (Panamá), en la frontera con Colombia, se duplicaron. Migrantes venezolanos, haitianos, africanos, dominicanos, caminaron a pie miles de kilómetros atravesando fronteras para llegar a México y de ahí llegar a la frontera en un intento por llegar a Estados Unidos. El número de migrantes que emprendió la peligrosa travesía hacia Panamá a través de la Selva del Darién se duplicó el año pasado creciendo de 133.000 personas en 2021 a cerca de 250.000 en 2022, según cifras del Gobierno de Panamá recogidas por la Organización Internacional para las Migraciones.

El número de venezolanos que emprendió esta ruta el año pasado creció unas 50 veces en comparación con 2021 -150.327 venezolanos-. A los nacionales de Venezuela le siguieron en cantidad los ecuatorianos (29.356), los haitianos (22.435), y los cubanos (5.961).⁶

Pero lo cierto es que el éxodo de los y las que huyen de las crisis económicas, de los conflictos políticos y las persecuciones políticas en nuestros países de América Latina y el Caribe continuará. Las perspectivas de soluciones a los problemas que originan estos desplazamientos no están a la vista, no se ven a la vuelta de la esquina.

Comunicación y migración

Ante los retos y desafíos que se nos presentan con la crisis migratoria actual y que según expertos de Naciones Unidas, en el 2024, continuará el éxodo masivo de seres humanos en todo el mundo, debido al fracaso de las políticas públicas que dan origen a los flujos migratorios, cabe recordar la responsabilidad humana, ante la complejidad de la presente y futura crisis.

En este sentido, la principal tarea del ser humano consiste en utilizar todos los medios a su alcance, entre ellos el periodismo, todas las tecnologías, los dispositivos y los medios de la actual sociedad de la información, para salvaguardar “el reconocimiento de la dignidad intrínseca y de los derechos iguales e inalienables de todos los miembros de la familia humana”, en particular, el derecho a la migración segura y ordenada y que los estados están en la obligación de garantizar, ofrecer seguridad y contribuir con una acogida humana y de oportunidades.

Y de eso trata parte de los postulados del Pacto por una Migración Segura y Ordenada que citamos anteriormente y que además va en consonancia con los derechos a la comunicación y el periodismo de derechos.

Como muy bien señala la WACC (Asociación Mundial para la Comunicación Cristiana) sobre los derechos a la comunicación estos “les permiten a todas las personas expresarse individual y colectivamente a través de cualquier medio o forma de comunicación. Los derechos a

la comunicación son vitales para la participación social y son, por lo tanto, derechos humanos universales que protegen a todo hombre, mujer, y niño o niña”.

Dos colegas con vasta experiencia en el trabajo con organizaciones de la sociedad civil que trabajan con poblaciones migrantes en capacitación en comunicación y migración coinciden en señalar sobre la necesidad de empoderar más a los y las migrantes sobre los derechos a la comunicación para que ejerzan esos derechos para visibilizar la realidad en la que viven.

Riamny Méndez Félix y Bienvenido Scharboy, dominicanos ambos, consideran que con el ejercicio de la comunicación podemos contribuir a visibilizar la realidad de poblaciones vulnerables, marginadas o excluidas, dentro de éstas las comunidades migrantes, víctimas en los países de acogidas o de tránsito, de la violación o vulneración de sus derechos como personas obligadas a migrar a otras tierras en busca de mejores condiciones de vida.⁷

“A través de la comunicación podemos orientar a las comunidades migrantes sobre sus derechos a estar organizadas para demandar respeto a sus derechos y a los de sus descendientes. También, los deberes a los que están sujetos en el país de acogida, consagrados en nuestro caso en la Constitución y leyes que rigen la materia o el tema migratorio. Esto sería parte del derecho de la comunidad migrante a ser informada tanto de sus derechos como de sus deberes y a no ser discriminada por su origen, color de piel y las prerrogativas que les garantizan el derecho al trabajo, educación y salud”, considera Scharboy.

La comunicación Alternativa: Una vía para dar voz a los y las migrantes

Mientras, la periodista Méndez Félix cree que los y las migrantes necesitan de medios alternativos para hacer oír sus voces:

“Creo que los migrantes necesitan medios más enfocados en ellos mismos, quizás sea importante que un medio alternativo pueda dedicar esfuerzos a informar a los migrantes, espe-

cialmente a los haitianos. Hablo de un medio alternativo, porque en este momento político concreto no creo que esto sea posible desde un medio tradicional. Los venezolanos cuentan con Globalízate Radio, que es un esfuerzo importante para informar a su propia comunidad, la comunidad haitiana necesitaría algo semejante para poder organizarse y autoorganizarse, necesita reporteros que hablen en su lengua materna”.

Que se abran las puertas de las corporaciones mediáticas a escuchar las historias de los y las migrantes no es tarea fácil. Más si se toma en cuenta el auge de políticas hostiles a migrantes y las migraciones. El discurso de odio, la xenofobia y el racismo han ido ganando terreno en los medios de comunicación no solo de América Latina, y el Caribe, sino de todo el mundo.

Hay que insistir en contar la otra historia del cuento de las migraciones. En ese sentido, si los medios tradicionales no dan acceso a las voces de los y las migrantes una alternativa son los nuevos medios de comunicación como las llamadas redes sociales como una forma de hacer escuchar las historias humanas, las vidas de las personas que migran.

La clave, la organización

“En este momento histórico concreto creo que es muy difícil convencer, porque hay muchos intereses influyendo, no es solo desconocimiento. Pero si los migrantes se organizan mejor, pueden conquistar algunos espacios y lograr alguna incidencia eventualmente, sin embargo, no veo posible que tengan una presencia constante en los principales medios tradicionales. Ahora bien, hay otros espacios, las redes sociales, contactos con las universidades, medios locales, etc. Quizás deban enfocarse en eso y en construir algunos espacios de comunicación alternativa con otros grupos vulnerables,” sugiere la colega Riamny Méndez Félix, periodista feminista y gestora comunicacional.

Pero pese a que cada vez más los espacios son más reducidos para los y las migrantes en los

medios tradicionales, debemos seguir insistiendo. Hay que tratar de hacer alianzas con periodistas amigos y amigos para que se interesen sobre historias de vida sobre las poblaciones migrantes. Scharboy está consciente que la concentración mediática en manos de sectores empresariales y grupos financieros es una retranca no solo para hacer escuchar las voces de los migrantes, sino de otros sectores sociales marginados.

“Es una tarea que siempre ha sido difícil; pero que en algunos momentos ha encontrado un pequeño espacio, por la sensibilidad de algunos ejecutivos, que se pueden contar con los dedos de las manos. No obstante, hay que insistir por medio de campañas, talleres y otras acciones de sensibilización, que ayuden a cambiar la percepción de los directores y jefes de redacción de los grandes medios de comunicación sobre el derecho a que se escuche la voz de la población migrante y se le abran los espacios donde puedan expresar su realidad, limitaciones y obstáculos para una vida digna, acompañada del respeto a sus derechos.”, expresa Scharboy.

Pero hay esperanza que los medios masivos de comunicación se abran a migrantes o todo está perdido

Los migrantes son noticias cuando ocurren tragedias en alta mar, en las fronteras. Son noticias por la cantidad de muertos, heridos, las travesías que hacen en búsqueda del sueño americano, por ejemplo, con relación a los y las migrantes que intentan llegar a Estados Unidos por la frontera con México.

Ayudar a construir comunidad

“La ayuda fundamental para lograr los objetivos planteados es el acompañamiento a esta comunidad, en el que fundamentalmente se haga énfasis en los derechos que les consignan y garantizan las leyes nacionales y los tratados y convenios internacionales, porque nadie puede defenderse si no conoce sus derechos y deberes y si ignora los mecanismos legales que puede utilizar para hacer respetar sus derechos”, considera el period-

ista Bienvenido Scharboy.

“Lo primero es que formen una comunidad más fuerte entre ellos mismos, y luego necesitan un plan para dar a conocer la diversidad de los aportes que realizan a través de distintos medios, esto incluye a medios tradicionales pero también a otros espacios alternativos, algunos habrá que construirlos. Informando con un enfoque en derechos humanos, informando de los procesos y recursos disponibles para la legalización, regularización de los migrantes, etc. Y sobre todo, evitando los estereotipos y la estigmatización.”, matiza la colega Riamny Méndez Félix, que apuesta por las redes sociales como medios alternativos para visibilizar otras historias posibles sobre la migración internacional y local.

Un reto es ganar más espacios para los y las migrantes en los medios tradicionales y desarrollar estrategias de comunicación en los nuevos medios (redes sociales) Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, las radios digitales, hacer televisión comunitaria a través de Youtube, es una alternativa viable para hacer llegar el mensaje de los y las migrantes.

Y las políticas públicas

Lo primero sería abrirle espacios que puedan utilizar para que la población del país de acogida conozca los aportes de las comunidades migrantes al desarrollo económico y cultural de la nación donde viven como exiliados económicos y contribuir a evitar la discriminación y la xenofobia. También buscar sensibilizar a los actores encargados de elaborar y ejecutar políticas públicas para que promuevan la convivencia pacífica entre la comunidad migrante y la población del país que la acoge, sugiere el periodista Bienvenido Scharboy.

A modo de conclusión

Se necesita más promoción de los derechos a la comunicación y la defensa de los derechos humanos entre las organizaciones cívicas y los y las periodistas para hacer más efectiva la labor de acompañamiento de las poblaciones migrantes, desplazados y refugiados en los países de acogida.

Desde la sociedad civil tiene que promoverse el diálogo permanente entre Gobierno-Estado y las entidades que acompañan a las poblaciones migrantes. Se necesita incidir en los tomadores de decisiones sobre la necesidad de que se garantice la protección y la seguridad de las poblaciones migrantes en los países de acogida. Que los Gobiernos-Estados vean más ventajas que problemas en las migraciones. Resaltar los aportes que estas minorías hacen no solo en materia laboral, sino también en la diversidad cultural que representan.

Es una tarea a seguir profundizando que se vean y asuman los derechos a la comunicación como un conjunto de elementos jurídicos de protección que no solo reclama el acceso de las personas en condiciones de igual a la información y el conocimiento, sino que también tienen por objetivo la construcción de ciudadanía.

Las organizaciones que trabajan con poblaciones migrantes, desplazados y refugiados tienen que mejorar la comunicación con los y las periodistas, directores/as y otros ejecutivos de las corporaciones periodísticas, con el fin de lograr mayor visibilidad de estos grupos. Es fundamental superar la invisibilidad de la migración global, desde una perspectiva de una comunicación más humana, solidaria y del buen vivir.

Finalmente, es otro pendiente la construcción de un periodismo que tenga como base o fundamento los derechos a la comunicación, a comunicar, garante y/o vigilante del libre acceso a la información en igualdad de condiciones y al respeto a la libertad de expresión del pensamiento.

Es ese periodismo que proponemos para ganar y garantizar derechos, ganar la palabra con justicia y la democratización de los medios de comunicación. ■

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3. Informe sobre las Migraciones en el mundo 2022 (pag.1)
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José Luis Soto Rodríguez estudió Ciencia de la Comunicación Social en la Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo (UASD). Estudió Comunicación y Pastoral en la Universidad Autónoma Popular del Estado de Puebla, México. Con Diplomado en Ciencias Políticas y Comunicación y Comunicación e Investigación en Internet en la Universidad de Austin, Texas, Estados Unidos. Ha dedicado más de 25 años al estudio y seguimiento del tema comunicación y migración. Ha laborado en medios impresos, radio y digital. La mayor parte de su ejercicio ha sido como responsable de prensa y comunicación en instituciones de la sociedad civil como el Centro de Estudios Sociales Padre Juan Montalvo, sj, Niños del Camino y el Centro Bonó, sj y del Proyecto Hacia una Cultura de Derechos Humanos y Coexistencia Pacífica en la Frontera Dominicano-Haitiana, con el apoyo de la Unión Europea. De igual forma sirvió durante varios años en el área de prensa del Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales. Fundador del Espacio de Comunicación Insular (ESPACINSULAR) y de Radio Cimarrona. Miembro por más de 20 años de la Asociación Mundial para la Comunicación Cristiana (WACC) - Región WACC Caribe.

Fomentar discursos de derechos humanos como alternativa a los discursos nacionalistas, discriminatorios y de odio

Solange De La Cruz Matos

El discurso, como suceso de comunicación, es utilizado por las personas para transmitir ideas, creencias y expresar emociones, o cuando se lee o escribe una noticia periodística.¹ Los medios de comunicación desempeñan un rol de primer orden en la construcción y reconstrucción de la realidad; y en los temas referidos a las migraciones suelen subrayar diferencias entre la población autóctona y el mundo inmigrante, creando mitos y estereotipos sobre este último.

El Espacio de Comunicación Insular (Espacinsular), en el marco del proyecto “Promoción de una cultura democrática, de cero tolerancias al racismo y a la xenofobia en los medios de comunicación”, desarrolló la investigación “Nacionalismo, xenofobia, racismo y discriminación en medios de comunicación y redes sociales en República Dominicana. 2014 – 2018. Análisis del discurso en publicaciones que abordan la migración haitiana, sus descendientes nacidos en el país y otras temáticas alusivas a la relación con Haití”. Mediante ese es-

tudio, Espacinsular tuvo el claro propósito de formular propuestas para promover, a través de la comunicación, el respeto a los derechos y a la dignidad de las personas y el buen vivir.

En este artículo, que recoge parte de esa investigación, nos enfocamos en el discurso nacionalista, que “refleja una percepción de la superioridad nacional y una orientación hacia la dominación nacional”,² en el discurso de discriminación o de incitación al odio, que tiene la función de degradar y deshumanizar al individuo y al colectivo vulnerabilizado al que pertenece, reforzando y generando la sensación de pertenencia a quienes divultan esos contenidos, sintiéndose legitimados,³ y en el discurso de derechos humanos, que pone en primer plano a la persona y sus derechos intrínsecos, exigiendo la inclusión y la no discriminación.

Algunos estudiosos de estos temas plantean que la imagen que se tiene de los inmigrantes puede ser el resultado de una selección y de una organización previa de la información por parte de los medios de comunicación,⁴ y le atribuyen responsabilidad en el desarrollo de la xenofobia, al presentar las costumbres y culturas extranjeras como dimensiones extrañas y ajenas a la identidad nacional.⁵ En ese tenor, el antropólogo dominicano Carlos Andújar asegura que “el periodismo dominicano está cargado de prejuicios”,⁶ mientras que la psicóloga dominicana Sergia Galván afirma que los medios de comunicación han sido por excelencia estructuras que permanentemente expresan estereotipos: “... desde la publicidad, los tipos de programa que se producen, las imágenes que se transmiten, los mensajes explícitos y subliminales, los anuncios, los modelos, las personas, expresan el prejuicio racial.”⁷

Para ilustrar cómo desde los medios se fomenta la xenofobia, el sacerdote dominicano Regino Martínez, quien tiene una vida de trabajo pastoral y social en la frontera dominico-haitiana, relata que en el año 2005 ocurrió el asesinato de dos militares que estaban de servicio en la frontera: “A partir de ese hecho, instituciones oficiales comenzaron a generar cohesión dominicana en contra de los haitianos. Se quería presentar esa

acción aislada como una acción del pueblo haitiano en contra del pueblo dominicano. Y eso se hizo a través de los medios de comunicación hablados.”⁸

Como parte de esta investigación de Espacinsular, se realizaron cuatro entrevistas a especialistas dominicanos, dos con investigadores del área de la sociología, Rosario Espinal y Wilfredo Lozano, ambos con amplia exposición en los medios de comunicación nacionales, y dos con profesionales de la comunicación que desempeñan posiciones ejecutivas en medios nacionales, Marien Aristy Capitán y Gustavo Olivo Peña.

Para Lozano, en la actualidad, en los medios de comunicación y en el liderazgo político hay una exacerbación de ciertas lecturas ideológicas de la relación con Haití, citando la falta de una coherente política de Estado y una visión de la “peligrosidad de Haití” que sustenta la necesidad de medidas duras frente a esa inmigración. En tanto, Espinal advierte que el discurso de discriminación, dependiendo de su intensidad y de su forma, puede ser un discurso de odio activo, o puede ser un discurso para denigrar, sin generar la otra parte, que es el efecto del odio.”

Para el periodista Olivo, hay medios de comunicación que contribuyen a exacerbar las relaciones entre las poblaciones dominicana y haitiana: “Hay mucha beligerancia, porque los medios le han metido esa beligerancia en la cabeza a la gente. La han manipulado.” En tanto, la periodista Aristy, sobre el discurso de discriminación considera que “tuvo un resurgir a partir de la Sentencia 168-13 (a la que llama “camiona constitucional”): “Yo creo que eso ha promovido ese discurso de odio que antes, si existía, no era tan latente... yo creo que esa Sentencia sacó lo peor de todos nosotros”. La sentencia en cuestión fue dictada por el Tribunal Constitucional el 23 de septiembre de 2013, mediante la cual desnacionalizó a generaciones de personas dominicanas de ascendencia haitiana nacidas entre el 1929 y el 2007.

Una lupa sobre los discursos de la muestra

El análisis del discurso tiene por objeto el estu-

dio del uso oral y escrito que hacen las personas de éste.⁹ Ese ejercicio permitió identificar, en el período y los temas seleccionados, los discursos predominantes en las informaciones publicadas en medios nacionales tradicionales y en nuevos medios digitales referidas a la migración haitiana en el país, a la población dominicana de ascendencia haitiana y a otras temáticas alusivas a las relaciones entre ambos países.

El discurso que se identificó como dominante en las diferentes coberturas periodísticas y artículos de opinión que formaron parte de la muestra fue el nacionalista, sustentado, fundamentalmente, en expresiones de cuestionamiento a la presencia de la inmigración haitiana en el país. Por ejemplo, uno de los temas de cobertura analizados fue el referido a la firma del pacto mundial para una acogida cálida a las migraciones por parte de las naciones receptoras, el que fue abordado en los medios nacionales como si con ese pacto, concebido por la Organización de las Naciones Unidas (ONU) con un alcance global, se persiguiese de manera particular la unificación de esta isla compartida.

En otro de los temas examinados, la desnacionalización de población dominicana de ascendencia haitiana, la cobertura estuvo centrada en el Proyecto de Ley que procuraba una solución a la situación que se había generado a raíz de que el Tribunal Constitucional dictaminara una sentencia anulando la nacionalidad a un número importante de población dominicana de ascendencia haitiana, dejándola en un limbo jurídico, y en la cual el discurso nacionalista también fue dominante. Los argumentos del discurso nacionalista se sustentaron en la inconstitucionalidad tanto del proyecto de Ley y de la legislación ya promulgada, como de su reglamento de aplicación, argumentando que lesionaban mandatos patrios y de soberanía, y advirtiendo del peligro que representa para el país la migración haitiana.

En la cobertura sobre una agresión sexual atribuida a tres ciudadanos haitianos, que generó actos de violencia contra población migrante haitiana y un crimen de odio contra un migrante de esa nacionalidad, nuevamente el dis-

curso nacionalista alcanzó primacía, resaltándose un abordaje como si se tratase de una confrontación con el vecino país, y no actos criminales con responsabilidades individualizadas. Ese enfoque dio paso a que en algunas publicaciones periodísticas no fueran citados los nombres de las víctimas, haciendo alusión a ellas solo por sus nacionalidades, atribuyendo a toda la población haitiana tener una naturaleza violenta y delictiva.

En términos generales, el discurso nacionalista que se reprodujo de manera predominante le atribuye a la inmigración haitiana, mayoritariamente negra y empobrecida, ser “mísera”, “incivilizada”, “bárbara”, “insalubre”, “promiscua”, “depredadora”, “ilegal”, caótica, ser una “plaga”, “invasora” y generadora de “arrabalización” y de “inseguridad”, entre otros calificativos denigrantes, llamando de manera reiterada a no permitir la “haitianización” del país y reclamando la expulsión de esa migración a su territorio, que denominan “estado fallido” y “estado colapsado”.

Se evidencia que en los temas referidos al vecino país y a su población migrante, en medios de comunicación se reproducen discursos que podría estar contribuyendo a incentivar la xenofobia y los prejuicios.

Una comunicación de derechos

¿Desde la comunicación, cómo se podría aportar para que las relaciones entre los pueblos de República Dominicana y de Haití estén sustentadas en el respeto a los derechos humanos y el buen vivir? Al hablar del buen vivir, se hace referencia a una forma de convivencia ciudadana, en diversidad y armonía con la naturaleza, que tiene como uno de sus pilares el acceso a una comunicación libre, intercultural, incluyente, diversa y participativa, en todos los ámbitos de la interacción social, por cualquier medio y forma, libre de estereotipos y prejuicios, respetuosa de la sociedad en su conjunto y especialmente de aquellas personas oprimidas y/o vulnerabilizadas.¹⁰

Tomando en cuenta que los medios, como agentes socializadores, desempeñan un rol activo en la construcción de una sociedad de derechos, a continuación, compartimos algunas pistas para

contribuir, desde la comunicación, al predominio de unas relaciones de buena vecindad entre ambos pueblos.

Uno de los resultados más relevantes del estudio documenta la presencia dominante del discurso nacionalista, vinculado con ideologías conservadoras que entrañan una percepción de la superioridad nacional y actitudes hostiles hacia los exogrupos (representados en la investigación por la migración haitiana y la población dominicana de ascendencia haitiana), concibiéndose la dominicanidad en función de su diferenciación con la haitianidad.

Evitar un abordaje periodístico sensacionalista podría contribuir a una mejor convivencia; consultar fuentes primarias, preferiblemente aquellas que tienen participación o han sido testigos presenciales, lo que facilita un enfoque y una redacción periodística con apego a los hechos, cuidándose de no contribuir a propagar rumores que con frecuencia van cargados de prejuicios.

La presencia mayoritaria del discurso nacionalista tiene estrecha relación con las fuentes consultadas. Las fuentes que reproducen ese discurso, con frecuencia, propagan una narrativa enfocada en infundir temor y en asentar en la psiquis el miedo a la pérdida de la soberanía nacional y de la nacionalidad dominicana, denunciando las pretensiones foráneas de fusionar el país con Haití e incentivando el rechazo hacia la migración haitiana y a su descendencia nacida en República Dominicana. El tema de las fuentes es altamente relevante puesto que un discurso nacionalista con un enfoque xenófobo, racista o de incitación al odio, encuentra en los medios de comunicación y en redes sociales vías idóneas para ir sembrando su mensaje de exclusión y rechazo. Al momento de pautar una cobertura, el medio ofrecería un equilibrio en la representación de los discursos de las fuentes si toma el cuidado de incluir la consulta de voces que reproduzcan un discurso de derechos humanos.

Por la carga semántica de algunos conceptos localizados tanto en noticias, editoriales, artículos de opinión y en redes sociales, y que son identificados como discriminatorios, racistas y/o

xenófobos, se realizaron las siguientes reflexiones y recomendaciones:

* Al hacer alusión a personas migrantes que no tienen en orden sus papeles de permanencia en el país de acogida se habla de ellas como “ilegales”. Si bien una situación de ilegalidad es aquella contraria a la ley, su asociación inmediata es con hechos delictivos y/o criminales. Al utilizar el calificativo ilegal, se trata indistintamente a quienes delinquen o cometan actos criminales y a aquellas personas migrantes que se han visto obligadas a salir de su patria para procurar su sobrevivencia y la de su familia, y que trabajan ardua y honradamente en el país de acogida haciendo a esa colectividad aportes inestimables. En el ámbito migratorio, por lo complejo del tema, el concepto indocumentado es más consecuente con un discurso de derechos humanos.

* La resistencia a reconocer las contribuciones de la población migrante haitiana a la sociedad de acogida hace que el discurso se centre en los gastos en que incurre el país para garantizarle servicios básicos, y en acusaciones de deprimir los salarios, exonerando de esa responsabilidad a quienes realmente la tienen: los grupos económicos que se aprovechan de su vulnerabilidad, por su estado de indocumentación, para pagarle los más bajos salarios, incurriendo en violaciones laborales. En ese tenor, se propone la realización de investigaciones periodísticas sobre sus aportes a la economía dominicana.

* Se sugiere no utilizar términos como avalancha, marea, oleada y ola para referirse al fenómeno migratorio, debido a que su uso contribuye a reforzar la idea de la existencia de caos en la frontera y a sobredimensionar la inmigración irregular, creando alarma social y contribuyendo a reforzar en la opinión pública la idea de invasión. Otros conceptos cuyo uso se debería obviar, debido a su carga fundamentalmente negativa en esta materia, son “el problema haitiano”, “masa de haitianos”, “haitianización”, “estado fallido” y “estado colapsado”. Al insistir, desde los medios de comunicación y las redes sociales, en la utilización de los conceptos señalados para referirnos a la migración haitiana, se levanta “un

muro” que dificulta que dos países vecinos que comparten una misma isla mantengan una convivencia armoniosa, constructiva y colaborativa. Otra expresión considerada racista y discriminatoria es la de “extranjeros indocumentados nacidos en el país”, para referirse a hijas e hijos de población migrante haitiana que nacieron en República Dominicana, negándose a reconocer su derecho a la nacionalidad dominicana que está amparado por la Constitución Dominicana antes de la modificación realizada en 2010, y por la Ley 169-14. Esa frase forma parte del discurso que vulnera el derecho humano a una nacionalidad, condenando a la apatridia a un importante número de personas.

Durante las entrevistas con sociólogos y periodistas, en relación con los temas que aborda esta investigación, se les preguntó: ¿qué considera que puede hacer un medio y un/a periodista para contribuir a la construcción de una sociedad de derechos desde la comunicación? A continuación, sus consideraciones.

Wilfredo Lozano: “Lo primero es conocer el problema. Lo que menos conoce el periodista es el problema de la inmigración, los sistemas internacionales a los cuales nosotros pertenecemos desde el punto de vista de las obligaciones de nuestro Estado con el respeto a los derechos de los individuos. Lo que menos entienden los periodistas es que el sistema mundial se ha organizado de una forma que los estados se han visto forzados a perder algo de su soberanía para asegurarle a los individuos concretos, independientes, aislados, la posibilidad de poderse defender frente a la arbitrariedad del Estado... es importante que los periodistas comprendan cómo funciona la democracia hoy en el mundo, que conozcan la complejidad de la migración... algo que es elemental, si usted no dialoga con el otro, no conversa civilizadamente con el que tiene un punto de vista contrario a usted, si usted no lo toma en serio, no lo respeta, en el entendido de que el punto de vista de ese otro que yo no comparto es tan legítimo como mi punto de vista, si eso yo no lo tengo, entonces no hay posibilidad de nada. Ese punto de diálogo es condición cen-

tral de la tolerancia. Yo lo vería de esa manera.”

Rosario Espinal: “... para tú cambiar esa situación tú necesitarías que los medios de comunicación o mucha gente en los medios de comunicación, que el sistema educativo, o sea que todas las instancias principales de socialización de la sociedad, pues, socialicen con una noción de derechos, de comprensión del derecho a la igualdad, de los derechos humanos. Esa es una gran inversión, y que siempre va a encontrar de frente a los otros, a los anti derechos, a los xenófobos, a los misóginos, a los homofóbicos. La sociedad siempre va a tener esos grupos, entonces el desafío es, ¿dónde se construye el discurso dominante? ¿Se construye del lado de la xenofobia o no? ¿Se construye del lado del racismo o no? ¿Se construye del lado del machismo o no? O sea, dónde construimos los discursos. Y todos somos responsables en la producción de discursos, pero es un proceso complejo. Es un trabajo que hay que hacerlo continuamente.”

Marien Aristy Capitán: “Quizás través de reportajes o de trabajos que sensibilicen a la gente, buscar la manera de llevar ese mensaje a través de ejemplos de gente que pueda tocar el corazón de otros, porque es la única manera de, creo, que podría funcionar. Dedicar un poco más de tiempo a eso.”

Gustavo Olivo Peña: “Yo pienso que haciendo el medio más tolerante e inclusivo... Aprendamos (sobre la inclusión) y hagamos conciencia; igual debemos saber sobre el respeto a las mujeres, rechazar la violencia, educar en la equidad, en la no violencia, pero igual, en el respeto a los demás, no importa de donde venga, si es dominicano o no, si habla tu idioma o si no lo habla, no importa el color de la piel, no importa su tamaño, o si es obeso o delgado. Es el ser humano lo importante. Uno tiene que educar en eso y los medios debemos insistir.”

Finalmente, citamos recomendaciones extraídas de la *Guía para una Comunicación Inclusiva: Pautas para un Periodismo de Derechos*, preparada y editada por Espacinsular:

* Humanizar el proceso de comunicar. Medios y periodistas deben esforzarse en hacer

más cercana la comunicación.

* Se recomienda que los y las periodistas investiguen más sobre los temas raciales y que consulten a personas e instituciones expertas: acercarse a los grupos que trabajan los temas.

* Reflexionar antes de redactar: Tener claro qué comunicar (el mensaje), para qué, para quién.

* Evitar revictimizar a las personas afectadas por discriminación.

* En los relatos e historias, utilizar cifras basadas en hechos y estadísticas (datos de censos y encuestas), y evitar los rumores, prejuicios y estereotipos.

* Fomentar las interacciones sociales interétnicas entre vecinas y vecinos de República Dominicana y de Haití a través de los medios de comunicación. ■

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El derecho humano a la comunicación en la era digital

Javier Tolcachier

El contexto de una digitalización acelerada revoluciona el funcionamiento de la interrelación social, afectando todos los campos de actividad humana y por supuesto, al campo específico de la comunicación.

La internet y sus tecnologías conexas, que idealmente pudieran servir para una mayor democratización del conocimiento y del quehacer político, que pudieran contribuir a una mejor distribución del bienestar y el patrimonio colectivo de la humanidad, se encuentran intervenidas por intenciones monopólicas particulares, que impiden o dificultan que aquello se realice.

El modelo impuesto en las últimas décadas a los espacios virtuales y las tecnologías digitales responde principalmente a intereses corporativos, promoviendo la centralización, el monopolio, la mercantilización, la vigilancia, el tráfico de datos, el control, los sesgos informativos, entre otras características.

Los movimientos sociales y los defensores de los derechos humanos, preocupados por asuntos quizás más acuciantes como la violencia física y económica o la discriminación de mayorías y minorías, no reivindican todavía con igual intensidad la necesidad de una internet igualitaria, abierta, solidaria, no sujeta a las apetencias del mercado. Una tecnología que sea comprendida y defendida como derecho humano universal.

El mundo virtual, que hoy impacta en esferas cada vez más amplias de nuestras vidas, al igual que el mundo físico, requiere de derechos, prometidos a la humanidad en la teoría, pero en

la práctica largamente negados a las mayorías.

Estos derechos, tendientes a la ampliación de la autodeterminación personal y colectiva, deben ser construidos desde la arquitectura misma de la red internet, hoy de carácter neocolonial, hacia modelos descentralizados y orientados al bien común.

Se trata de promover estructuras democráticas, abiertas y desconcentradas de las tecnologías digitales, impedir toda forma de vigilancia y control social y fomentar la distribución equitativa de sus beneficios, la no discriminación, la descolonización y la soberanía.

Obviamente, esto no puede estar desligado de proyectos políticos y sociales motivados por la justicia social y el desarrollo inclusivo e integral, proyectos que tengan como núcleo una poderosa participación e incidencia desde los mismos pueblos.

Para avanzar en la sensibilización sobre este tema y dar pasos concretos hacia la democratización digital, viene creciendo en América Latina y el Caribe desde hace algunos años un espacio integrado por diferentes actores sociales cuyo nombre es Internet Ciudadana. Este espacio intenta articular la acción de organizaciones de comunicadores, activistas digitales, campesinado, educadores, sindicatos, productores de tecnología y académicos, entre otros sectores y trabaja aliado a espacios afines de la sociedad civil a nivel internacional.

Desde este espacio hemos elaborado una “Agenda de 20 puntos hacia una Internet justa y soberana”, que postula en sus primeros enunciados a la Internet como un bien universal común inajenable y el acceso a la red como derecho humano y servicio público esencial.

Junto a otras consideraciones de detalle, esta agenda insta a establecer estrictas regulaciones y políticas públicas a nivel nacional, regional e internacional para proteger de manera efectiva la privacidad, fomentando el uso de la criptografía y la inhibición de técnicas de rastreo en los entornos digitales.

Por otra parte, consideramos urgente la instauración de marcos legales que reconozcan

que los datos de carácter íntimo y personalizado son inviolables, que los datos anonimizados deben ser considerados bienes comunes y que los derechos patrimoniales y económicos sobre los datos pertenecen por defecto a la comunidad de la que provienen. ¡Nuestros datos son nuestros! Y no de las empresas.

Para defender la democracia, afirmamos que es preciso limitar el poder empresarial, mediante políticas públicas y medidas regulatorias que impidan la concentración monopólica de poder en manos de corporaciones digitales, promoviendo y fortaleciendo el desarrollo de múltiples aplicaciones y plataformas que privilegien las lógicas de la cultura libre.

En ese sentido, es coherente priorizar en la administración pública la utilización de herramientas digitales libres e interoperables, impulsando la creación y el fortalecimiento de cooperativas y pequeñas y medianas empresas de producción y servicios tecnológicos, aportando así a la generación de trabajo de calidad y la disminución de la dependencia tecnológica.

Es imperativo regular las nuevas relaciones laborales, en especial el teletrabajo y el trabajo en plataformas digitales, para salvaguardar los derechos de las y los trabajadores, como así también insertar en los programas educativos la alfabetización digital crítica, no permitiendo la penetración de plataformas corporativas en el ámbito educacional, garantizando el respeto por la privacidad y la no mercantilización de los datos de la comunidad educativa.

También es muy importante asegurar que la tecnología llegue al campo según un modelo de gestión pública o comunitaria y construir capacidad de evaluación participativa de las tecnologías por parte de las comunidades rurales y/o campesinas, en defensa de la soberanía alimentaria, la justicia social y el cuidado agroecológico y medioambiental.

Del mismo modo, la agenda propone abordar la cuestión digital desde una óptica de integración regional, profundizando la cooperación y la asociatividad de las naciones de América Latina y el Caribe en estas materias, para sumar al ree-

mplazo de la matriz económica de exportación primaria depredadora por modelos colaborativos con alto valor agregado y cuidado medioambiental.

Incorporar la soberanía digital en la agenda de la integración regional significa avanzar hacia la descolonización y el multilateralismo en términos tecnológicos y poder incidir de manera concertada como región en el ámbito de la gobernanza global de internet.

En ese ámbito internacional, es preciso impedir la cooptación de los espacios multilaterales y de gobernanza de Internet por parte de las corporaciones tecnológicas multinacionales que utilizan el sistema vigente de «múltiples partes interesadas» para decidir en la práctica de modo unilateral, favoreciendo sus propios intereses.

Comunicación y plataformas digitales

En lo relativo a la comunicación, entendida como un derecho humano prioritario e inalienable, es imprescindible denunciar los usos y abusos de las mal llamadas «redes sociales» corporativas que, a través de la manipulación de algoritmos opacos, se convierten en árbitros de facto de los contenidos que circulan en la red, afectando severamente su neutralidad.

Pero desinformar de manera interesada, sembrar sospechas, descontextualizar expresiones o acciones, no es nada nuevo, ni característica exclusiva de estas redes, sino práctica habitual del género periodístico de nuestros días en los medios manejados por el capital. Incluso, y sobre todo en sus secciones más “serias”, la mentira y el amarillismo son moneda común.

¿Qué cambia entonces con las redes? Nada y todo. Nada, porque la clasificación, discriminación, deformación y censura de la información según sea su tinte político o intención social, continúa existiendo, trasladando sus formatos a la arena digital. Todo, porque la manipulación se introduce de manera permanente a través de dispositivos que nunca dejamos a más de un metro de distancia y que anuncian de manera sonora o vibrátil su intromisión. Y también, porque el tipo y cantidad de información almacenada sobre

cada quien, permite enviar misiles teledirigidos de desinformación perfectamente segmentada, en tiempo real y de manera continuada.

Conscientes o no de esto y ante el avance inexorable de las modalidades digitales en el campo comunicacional, los actores sociales de la comunicación comunitaria y alternativa intentan organizar buena parte de su esfuerzo de difusión a través de estas plataformas, logrando conectar al menos con franjas contiguas de sensibilidad.

Así, se multiplican las transmisiones, los encuentros virtuales, las convocatorias de eventos y movilizaciones, la difusión periodística, permitiendo incrementar cierto diálogo entre emisor y receptor, elemento que constituye un pilar de la comunicación popular en contrapunto a las ya desgastadas formas unidireccionales.

Sin embargo, para no caer en la ingenuidad, pensar en el uso de las plataformas corporativas para alcanzar la justicia social es como intentar ganar un partido en una cancha inclinada. Es casi inevitable hoy estar en ellas, pero a sabiendas que es un territorio dominado y controlado por grandes capitales concentrados en los principales fondos de inversión.

Un simple ejemplo de esto es que el enorme esfuerzo por acumular “seguidores” y ampliar teóricamente la llegada de un mensaje, puede ser desbaratado en un segundo por la suspensión o eliminación de una cuenta, sin que las compañías estén obligadas a justificar su accionar.

Por este hecho, es preciso diversificar las posibilidades, abriéndose a alternativas que ya existen y cuya lógica no permite su apropiación por parte de las compañías de negocios monopólicas.

Una forma de ayudar a democratizar el espectro digital es a través de la utilización de aplicaciones libres y plataformas digitales federadas y descentralizadas, respetuosas con los usuarios y su privacidad e interoperables, cuyo fin no es monetizar sino promover un efectivo contacto entre las personas y las culturas.

Pero además de aportar una visión crítica y una práctica alternativa en los sistemas de difusión, tenemos que insistir en ser capaces de producir contenidos con calidad desde los sec-

tores populares y para los sectores populares. No es únicamente una cuestión de tecnologías y comunicaciones sino de valorar y proteger identidades, tiene que ver con la defensa de la diversidad de los bienes culturales, otro derecho humano fundamental.

Para lograr reparar las asimetrías existentes por la previa concentración en la propiedad de los medios, se hace necesaria la mediación del estado, sin la cual es imposible redistribuir los recursos públicos con el fin de apuntalar el desarrollo de un concierto mediático diverso.

Para asegurar el carácter participativo, autogestivo, colectivo, articulador y multidireccional propio de la comunicación popular y democrática es preciso fortalecer el concepto de asociación entre lo público y lo comunitario, una suerte de alianza público-comunitaria, permitiendo el empoderamiento de la comunicación popular en reemplazo de la indebida interferencia e injerencia del sector privado.

En definitiva, estamos ante una clara bifurcación de caminos. Un camino corto y veloz, el de una tecnologización digital acrítica, que conduce a una mayor dependencia de poderes concentrados, una disminución de las calidades democráticas y un aumento de la desigualdad y la exclusión social.

El otro camino, con la mirada puesta en el interés común y la participación social, es quizás más largo y lento, pero conduce a más autonomía, equidad, inclusión y complementación social. La defensa de los Derechos Humanos exige que tomemos esta segunda senda. ■

El autor expuso esta ponencia en el Panel «Derecho a la Comunicación. Nuevas agendas y desafíos», que tuvo lugar el 22/3/2023 en el marco del III Foro Mundial de Derechos Humanos en Buenos Aires, Argentina. Fuente: [Mundo digital corporativo, Poco inteligente, muy artificial. Internet Ciudadana. Revista Digital #9. Abril 2023.](#)

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Advocacy and Action Agenda on Digital Rights/Justice: Towards WSIS+20

At a WACC Partners' Consultation held in Nairobi, Kenya, 3 August 2023, participants agreed on the following Agenda in preparation for WSIS+20 due to take place in 2025.

Digital communication rights include the right to access the Internet; the right to not have internet shutdowns; the right to freedom of expression and association online; the right to online privacy and data protection; the right to cyber-security; the right to be forgotten; the right to net neutrality; the right to network equality and non-discrimination; and the right not to be a victim of an automated decision.

The range of digital rights continues to expand as technology advances and awareness of rights violations grows. Digital justice is the redress of harms to individuals and groups resulting from human rights violations on and through the Internet.

A. At the 20-year review of the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS) in 2025, we want to see commitment to a digital transformation that ensures:

- i. Everyone can feel included, and can access and contribute to relevant Internet content in their own language.
- ii. Everyone knows their digital rights.
- iii. The Internet, its technologies, the global digital architecture and all elements of local and global tech ecosystems are gender sensitive, inclusive and empowering for all people regardless of any form of difference.

iv. All barriers to equality and empowerment in the digital sphere are eliminated.

v. The digital sphere is equal and empowering for all, without distinction.

vi. Respect for the diversity of cultures and values in all societies.

vii. The digital technologies complement rather than replace non-digital forms of communication, service delivery and welfare delivery.

viii. The internet is recognized as a public good, and essential for the enjoyment of human rights. All people should be able to safely, securely, and reliably access digital public goods.

ix. The digital sphere is flexible, dynamic, and adaptable.

x. The digital sphere is responsive to the diversity of needs of communities.

xi. Informed consent is standard across all digital platforms.

xii. People's access to public data in an accessible format.

xiii. Better grievance redressal institutions.

xiv. An education system and curriculum that is responsive to the advancement in digital and technology space and one that enhances closing the digital gap with a gender lens among teachers.

B. We want the process of digital transformation to recognize and create room for participation of the multiple stakeholders, including:

1. The State, its policy makers, regulators and administrators.
2. Academia, technology experts, tech institutions.
3. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and actors: including organizations whose work is not primarily in tech, grassroots groups, faith-based CSOs, and human rights defenders.
4. The public, marginalized communities, unrepresented and disadvantaged groups experiencing digital injustice.
5. Global big tech companies and the private sector.

6. Telecom and Internet Service Providers.

C. We want the process towards the digital transformation to:

1. Be issue-based.
2. Be collaborative across stakeholder groups.
3. Involve all stakeholders in policy enactment and policy reform.
4. Adopt proactive rather than reactive approaches to governance, anticipatory rather than lagging behind technological evolution.
5. Be consultative, using online and offline methods with impacted communities.
6. Leverage on a variety of methods including scenario simulations, surveys, education and awareness campaigns.
7. Promote State ratification and implementation of policies which are at present voluntary rather than binding.
8. Public-private partnership in realizing a reliable connectivity and digital infrastructure.
9. Training and sensitization of digital rights, laws and policies to the law enforcement agencies.

D. We want following to be underscored as essential digital rights:

1. The right to be forgotten.
2. The right not to be subjected to fake news, disinformation and misinformation.
3. The right to freedom of expression online, with limits and respect for the rights of historically oppressed communities.
4. The right to be heard.
5. The right to access knowledge.
6. The right to timely and accurate information.
7. The right to human dignity online.
8. The right to privacy online.
9. The right to data protection.
10. The right to digital education.

11. The right to equal participation and access.

12. The right to personal agency with respect to access to content disseminated on the Internet.

13. The right to own our data as individuals, communities and nations.

14. The right to accessible and comprehensive digital education.

15. The right to opt out of the digital sphere; The right to participate in, to access citizenship entitlements and conduct everyday life offline.

16. The right to access grievance redress mechanisms.

In summary

We want a digital future that is gender sensitive, in which human rights are respected, that is safe and secure, equitable, free, unbiased, accessible, transparent, inclusive, not exploitative, oppressive or discriminatory.

We want a digital future that is free from misogyny, hate, violence and all forms of harm to girls, women and gender minorities.

We want a digital future in which tech investment is accessible to innovators from all cultures and backgrounds, one that is focused on the common good rather than on profit, one that is localized, respects and complements the values of communities. ■

Karlovy Vary (Czech Republic) 2023

At the 57th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (June 30 – July 8, 2023), the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize to *Blaga's Lessons* directed by Stephan Komandarev (Bulgaria, Germany, 2023).

Motivation: As if that weren't enough, a 70-year-old widow literally throws her money over the balcony into the hands of scammers who pressured her over the phone. The woman now also lacks the urgently needed money to finance the tomb for her recently deceased husband and herself. She, who has fought hard all her life, does not lose sight of this goal and in the process becomes a perpetrator herself: in a criminal way, she inflicts what she has experienced on others. Until the very last minute of the film, we viewers believe that the protagonist is experiencing a cathartic moment and regrets her actions.

Yet Blaga remains true to her strong beliefs and seems to have no choice but to act immorally. The fate of that woman reflects the plight of older people in post-communist or market-economy-capitalist Bulgaria, who often no longer know who they can rely on between their struggle for survival, corruption, and exploitation. This is exacerbated by a religiously motivated fear for her husband's salvation. This film convinced the jury because it tells of the relationship between individual responsibility and social norms with a poignancy that makes it difficult for us to feel sympathy for the protagonist, played outstandingly by Eli Skorcheva, and yet makes us want to ask if we would act like her.

In addition, the jury awarded a Commendation to *Mokalake Tsmindani (Citizen Saint)* directed by Tinatin Kajrishvili (Georgia, France,

Bulgaria, 2023).

Motivation: A village in a barren Georgian mining region worships a heavily weathered saint. Suddenly it seems to have come alive. Miracles happen, the lame walk, lost miners appear to their relatives and every Bible-savvy viewer believes they have seen or heard all of this before. But this film is not simply a retelling of the New Testament. Rather, it raises an essential and quite self-critical question of Christian religion: Why do we worship the dead, immobile, interchangeable instead of the living? Do we want to live or survive? For this and for its exceptional visual, aesthetic and musical design, the Ecumenical Jury awarded a Special Mention to "Citizen Saint".

Members of the 2023 Jury: Hana Ducho (Czech Republic); Anna Grebe (Germany); Hermann Kocher (President of the Jury, Switzerland).

Locarno (Switzerland) 2023

At the Locarno International Film Festival (August 2–12, 2023) the Ecumenical Jury of SIGNIS and INTERFILM awarded its Prize to the film *Patagonia* directed by Simone Bozzelli, (Italy, 2023).

Motivation: Where is the line between dependence and freedom? Between love and submission? Between empathy and responsibility? When innocent Yuri leaves his sheltered life to follow the alluring energy of Agostino onto the open road, both must confront the open wounds and scarred histories that have made them who they are and attempt a dangerous journey toward a new horizon. Patagonia hovers precariously between violence and tenderness, obsessiveness and self-discovery, inviting viewers into a space of ambiguity, a place where transgression just might lead to transformation.

In addition, the jury awarded a Commendation to the film *Nu aștepta prea mult de la sfârșitul lumii (Do Not Expect Too Much of the End of the*

World) directed by Radu Jude (Romania, Luxembourg, France 2023).

The film centres on Angela, a casting assistant who drives around Bucharest day and night for a production company looking for authentic actors for an image film. In the process, she records aggressively obscene TikTok videos to channel her frustration. The result is a film production in which exploited people are instrumentalized for the whitewashing of a Western European insurance company.

Director Radu Jude brilliantly combines different time periods and media formats. The sequences of the central plot line, shot in black and white, are interrupted by a historical Romanian color film, which also centers on a female taxi driver with her existential questions. The film impresses with its concise critique of capitalism and its self-reflexive mode. The Eastern European protagonists retain their cultural sovereignty despite the repressive working conditions.

Since 1973, the Ecumenical Jury has awarded its Prize to film directors whose artistic talents have been most successful in raising viewers' awareness of religious, human, and social values. The Jury looks at the vision of creative film directors who demonstrate an affinity with justice, peace and respect, as well as spiritual dimensions. The Prize consists of a sum of CHF 10,000 for the film director, donated by the Reformed Churches and the Catholic Church in Switzerland.

Members of the 2023 Ecumenical Jury: Petra Bahr, Germany (President); Micah Bucey, USA; Marie-Therese Mäder, Switzerland; Joachim Valentin, Germany.

Miskolc (Hungary) 2023

At the 19th Cinefest – International Film Festival Miskolc held September 1-9, 2023, the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize to *Libertate '89 (Freedom)* directed by Tudor Giurgiu (Romania,

Hungary, 2023).

Motivation: Through the eye of a handheld camera viewers are confronted with a chaotic choreography of people running for their lives and finding their way in a moral vacuum after the toppling of a dictatorship. The film asks the question: what values will we fall back on when we are put to the test in a political and existential crisis? Are we willing to bring a sacrifice for the common good or are we only serving our personal interests?

Despite the collapse of the state, we see individuals making efforts to follow ethical values wanting to reconstruct a society based on justice, peace and reconciliation. We are witnessing the historical situation in Romania 1989 and at the same time this film offers us a story people all over the world can relate to. By telling stories like this, Tudor Giurgiu invites cinema audiences to remember that you don't have to be a hero to make a difference.

Members of the 2023 Jury: Rolf Deen, Netherlands; Beata Golenska, Italy (President of the Jury); László Réti, Hungary; Esther Vigh, Hungary.

Venice (Italy) 2023

The 12th INTERFILM Award for Promoting Interreligious Dialogue went to *Io capitano* directed by Matteo Garrone (Italy, Belgium, 2023).

Motivation: The award goes to a film of high aesthetic and artistic quality. An odyssey of two young boys from Senegal to Europe. They fight for freedom, equality and justice in face of dehumanization. Through their pure naivety they expose the evil and manage to overcome. Seydou takes responsibility claiming God is with us and grows from boy to man. He becomes the master of his own life and the captain of his soul.

Members of the 2023 Jury: Carolina Bertello, Italy; Annette Gjerde-Hansen, Norway; Inge Kirsner, Germany (President of the Jury); Robert Lafaye de Micheaux, France. ■