

Proposal to change the name of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC)

Thesis

Over many years and in a rapidly changing world, the words “Christian communication” have created confusion: that WACC’s purpose is to promote Christianity. Added to this is the perception, based on anecdotal evidence, that this confusion has obstructed funding opportunities with secular foundations and other donors even while WACC has been able to attract funding from ecumenical sources. In WACC’s own interest, challenging misperception and bias in relation to how WACC is perceived aligns with our attempts to guarantee future financial stability. Without denying WACC’s heritage and history, it is time to consider a change of name to one that more directly articulates WACC’s aims and purpose.

Background

1.1 The name of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) stems from 1968, with the merger of the *World Association for Christian Broadcasting* (WACB) and the *Co-ordinating Committee for Christian Broadcasting* (CCCB). Since that era, the world has been transformed in every conceivable way and WACC has had constantly to adjust to new realities politically, economically, socially, and culturally. These include radical challenges to the kinds of systemic colonialism, racism, and nationalism that maintain exclusion, inequality, and injustice. Over time, WACC began to realise that the “preferential option for the poor” could be interpreted as enabling the poor and downtrodden to be seen and heard in and through the media of communication. In the light of its Christian principles, WACC gradually transitioned away from what some saw as an exclusionary ethos towards one that included “people of other faiths and none”.

1.2 In this respect and after much deliberation, WACC chose the path of promoting communication rights through support for the *New World Information and Communication Order* (NWICO) (1970s), UNESCO’s International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (1980), and the civil society *Platform for Cooperation on Communication and Democratisation* (1996). Subsequently, WACC hosted the secretariat of the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) Campaign (2001-05), which set out to influence decisions at the UN-led *World Summit on the Information Society* (WSIS) taking place in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005). Twenty years later, WACC is revisiting those debates in the context of the digital era, the UN’s Summit of the Future, and WSIS+20.

1.3 The right to communicate is about enabling participation and empowering to create cultural environments of their choice. This shaping, making, and empowering of life-fulfilling communication is constrained in the many arenas of daily life where people have become objects of mediation, where an individual’s and a community’s inability to negotiate or take part in such processes, to access the technologies of mediation, or to

contribute to the socio-economic environments of their choice, profoundly impacts lives and livelihoods.

In other words, from a WACC perspective the right to communicate must be recognised as a fundamental human right. It affirms the right of all people, especially the excluded and vulnerable, to participate in public communication, and in the creation of more just political, economic, and social structures.

The Centre for Communication Rights

2.1 In 2017 WACC established the online *Centre for Communication Rights* (CCR) with the aim of advancing understanding, recognition, and implementation of communication rights in order to help bring about greater social justice, equality, sustainable development, and good governance.

2.2 For many if not most of the world's peoples and communities, communication rights remain a vision and an aspiration. In many countries, they are frequently and systematically violated. Full implementation of communication rights depends on democratic governance, government integrity, and independent oversight at the level of such bodies as the United Nations (UN), in which civil society should play a key role in terms of advocacy, monitoring, and media literacy.

2.3 It is widely accepted that the UN's Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can only be achieved through people's genuine participation in decision-making about their implementation. It is in this sense that the advancement of communication rights becomes crucial. Freedom, equality, and progress, which are at the heart of sustainable development and social justice, can only be realised by strengthening communication capabilities in terms of accessibility, affordability, and availability.

2.4 As WACC's alter ego, the CCR has focused on demonstrating how and why people's voices need to be heard in governance and democratic processes, and on advocating recognition for communication rights at local, national and global levels. It has also created an online repository of information and documents about communication rights; case studies from WACC's project work in the Global South; and advocacy, and research, especially relating to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) and to media monitoring of migration. The CCR is being further developed as a Learning Platform for courses and webinars highlighting the application of communication rights to key global issues.

Proposal

3.1 WACC has a 50+ year track record in advocating the democratisation of communications and advancing communication rights. Given the relevance and import of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) due to take place in 2025, going forward it would seem logical to cloak WACC in the mantle of the CCR and to change WACC's name in a way that reflects its collective achievements and that seeks to avoid future ambiguity. If that step is taken:

3.2 The new name must be acceptable to the UK Charities Commission and to Canada's Charities Directorate. Initial suggestions:

- * Centre for Communication Rights (CCR)
- * World Association for Communication Rights (WACR)
- * World Association for Participatory Communication (WAPC)
- * World Association for Communication in Community (WACC)
- * Global Network for Communication Rights
- * Global Network for Democratic Communication
- * Global Network for the Democratization of Communication
- * Global Network for Communication Justice
- * WACC – Communication Rights
- * WACC – Communication Justice

Process

- * Joint discussion by the Boards of WACC UK and WACC Canada.
- * Opinion survey of Regional Executive Committees and key donors.
- * Review of opinions by joint Board followed by decision and official Resolution.

Legal context

In the UK:

Under The Charities Act 2022, the formal or legal name of all registered charities is entered on the Register of Charities and those charities must notify the Charity Commission of any change of name. The Commission also encourages (but does not require) registration of any “working names” a charity uses and expects to be notified of any change to those.

The Charity Commission will not register a new charity and has power to direct a registered charity to change its formal name where its formal name:

- * is “too like” or the “same as” the name of another charity (registered or not);
- * is likely to mislead the public about the purposes of the charity’s trusts or the activities it carries on in pursuit of them;
- * includes word or expression specified in regulations and that inclusion is likely to mislead the public about the charity’s status;
- * is likely to give the impression that the charity is connected with government department, local authority or other body of persons or individual when it is not;
- * is offensive.

As WACC is a registered company, changes to its name must be reported in the following order:

1. [Tell Companies House.](#)
2. [Tell the Charity Commission.](#)
3. [Tell HMRC.](#)

In Canada:

A registered charity that changes its name must [provide documentation to the Charities Directorate](#) showing that its name has been *legally* changed. The charity will receive written confirmation of the change and the charity’s new name will be updated in the List of charities on the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) website. A registered charity should only issue receipts in its new name once the new name is reflected in the List of charities.

Depending on the charity's legal structure, different documentation must be submitted. Since WACC is incorporated, WACC must provide a copy of the *amended incorporation documents* (for example, supplementary letters patent, articles of amendment, or special resolution) bearing the seal, stamp, or signature of the incorporating authority.

Further considerations

A name change will imply a merger of the two currently separate identities (WACC and CCR) in terms of (i) a single web site; (ii) a single or unified logo. Existing urls can presumably be pointed to new locations, but we shall need a concise plan of action to implement the necessary changes. We need also to take into account the Who Makes the News platform and the GMMP.

If a name change is to take place, it will be important to think and plan strategically, and to take into account the cost of rebranding WACC and redeveloping its web sites.