

Media Development

2/2025

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The 3/2025 issue of *Media Development* will explore Artificial Intelligence and its potential impacts on society.
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EDITORIAL

The much anticipated World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) takes place in Geneva, Switzerland, 7-11 July 2025. WSIS+20 is the second review of the outcomes of the original WSIS, which had two phases: Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005. At that time, WACC held the secretariat for the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) Campaign, which was instrumental in bringing perspectives from low and middle-income countries to the WSIS negotiating table – albeit with varying degrees of success.

According to [Global Partners Digital](#), the scope of WSIS+20 is likely to be broad:

“Given the significantly changed landscape and set of challenges – ranging from new, disruptive technologies, corresponding questions of how to regulate them, and shifting geopolitical dynamics – a number of topics could be brought to the table. At the very least, we anticipate discussions will cover the intersection of ICTs and development (the Sustainable Development Goals in particular), the Internet and digital technology governance, and the norms, structures and values that underpin it. These norms include multistakeholderism and human rights, while the structures include the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and question of its mandate renewal, and synergies with the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and the new structures evolving from it.”

Following a convoluted series of multistakeholder consultations (in which much of the exchange was highly technical and replete with jargon), and in the light of the UN’s Summit of the Future, its [Pact for the Future](#), and its [Global Digital Compact](#), many analysts believe that WSIS+20 offers:

“A rare opportunity to develop a *global progressive digital vision and movement* and to stake its claim to influence political decisions. Such

an opportunity may not come again for a long time. The vision we create must be structural and holistic, addressing all aspects of the digital landscape – media, digital platforms, data, and AI – as well as their governance, architecture, design, and applications. It’s essential that all sectors are involved, working alongside digital specialists and progressive techies. This emerging vision should be ambitious, anticipating future developments over decades, while also being specific enough to directly address current issues, such as the need for a new UN institution dedicated to Communication Rights and digital matters.”

Others believe that such a claim is based on a myopic view of what is really going on. Tim Unwin, specialist in Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D), [summarized his views](#) as follows:

- * “The Global Digital Compact is a result of the ways in which the ideologies and practices of digital tech companies have come to dominate UN rhetoric around digital tech;
- * The issues it addresses, the questions it asks, and the ways in which the consultation is constructed, largely serve the interests of those companies, rather than those of the world’s poorest and most marginalised individuals and communities; and
- * It fails to address the most significant issues pertaining to the role of digital tech and the science underlying it, notably the future relationships between machines and humans, the environmental harms caused by the design and use of digital tech, and the increasing enslavement (loss of freedoms) of the majority of the world’s people through and by the activities of digital tech companies of all sizes.”

It has become clear that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the world’s communication challenges, whose complexities defy simple analysis and are complicated by the sheer rapidity of technological change – including Artificial Intelligence (AI). Some 70% of the global popu-



of Article 19, [rang alarm bells](#):

“At no point in the last 20 years have so many people been denied the benefits of open societies, like the ability to voice opinions, access a free media or participate in free and open elections... Violations of freedoms happen every day and around the world, as leaders degrade our freedoms one by one. Many do so through subtle policy changes presented in the name of ‘public safety’, ‘morality’ or ‘national security’ – tightening the net until there is no room left to breathe.”

McKew pinpointed what needs to happen next, underlining the relevance and importance of WSIS+20: “This politics of convenience and obsessive narrative control must be replaced by a politics of possibility and diversity, one which recognises that our collective future depends on more voices being able to debate freely.”

Even with the expansion of digital technologies and social media platforms, government bodies and corporate entities still effectively control access to information and communication infrastructure and governance. The vision of open access has been dispelled by the use of digital platforms to spread disinformation and hate speech and to undermine democratic processes, the rule of law, and human rights. While digital platforms seem to provide greater opportunities for freedom of expression, digital technology monopolies limit a diversity of voices and perspectives, algorithms perpetuate colonisation, racism, and systemic power imbalances, and surveillance and militarization have become existential threats.

[LAST CHANCE FOR COMMUNICATION JUSTICE?](#)

For all these reasons and despite inherent flaws, WSIS+20 still offers the possibility of “a new more just and efficient world information and communication order” – the mantra of the 1980 MacBride Report that led to calls for a New World Information and Communication Order

lation today has the opportunity to access the Internet, and yet high-speed services are biased in favour of high income countries. In many low income countries, the majority of people remain either unconnected or lack meaningful connectivity. Affordability and Internet stability are two further obstacles. Barriers to Internet access such as high data costs and digital literacy tend to mirror social inequalities, disproportionately impacting the poor and marginalized, especially women and those living in rural areas.

Beyond digitalisation with its widespread societal impacts, the governance frameworks for digital technologies and the Internet – and now AI – have multiplied and become inextricably intertwined. And extreme far right and/or populist politics have made it increasingly difficult for ordinary people and the communities they represent to make their voices heard, with overt and covert attacks on freedom of opinion and expression.

Commenting on the [Global Expression Report 2024](#), Quinn McKew, Executive Director

(NWICO), the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) Campaign, and the first World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

Wolfgang Kleinwächter, currently Professor Emeritus at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, a pioneer of the WSIS process and a specialist in Internet governance, [notes](#) that regardless of all the political, economic, and technological changes since 2003-5, the basic WSIS message remains highly relevant:

“To build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life.”

With that in mind, he argues:

“There is no need for WSIS+20 to reinvent the wheel. There is no need to develop a new strategy or to establish new institutions. What is needed is to identify the barriers that hinder the full implementation of the eleven WSIS action lines. Innovative solutions are needed on how to bridge the digital divide, how to promote digital public infrastructure, how to enhance cybersecurity, how to safeguard human rights, how to avoid Internet fragmentation and how to make sure that the AI revolution does not move out of human control.” ■

WSIS+20 may be the last chance to establish a lasting and meaningful rights-based framework for global communications which is effective and which enables people everywhere to be seen and heard. A peaceful and just future for all depends on it. ■

Recommendations on the implementation of the Global Digital Compact

In September 2024, the United Nations adopted a “[Global Digital Compact](#)” at the Summit of the Future in New York City. The Compact is a non-binding international agreement that seeks to foster collaboration between governments, technology companies, the technical community, and civil society to help create a “an inclusive, open, sustainable, fair, safe and secure digital future for all” (Global Digital Compact, p. 1). The idea for the Compact came out of growing concerns about the risks of digital technology to democracy and peace that emerged within international institutions some seven years ago. In response, the UN sought to create a set of common principles that could help mitigate these risks and boost sustainable development efforts all over the world.

Given the importance of the Global Digital Compact, which covers topics as essential to communication rights as connectivity, digital public infrastructure, and information integrity, WACC invited 25 of its grassroots partners in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East to a week-long conference in Nepal to analyse the contents of the document and develop a series of recommendations on how the GDC could be made more relevant as UN member states and other stakeholder begin to implement it. The event in Nepal during which these recommendations were



WACC partners gathered in Kathmandu, Nepal, at a forum entitled “Communication Rights: Building Blocks for Digital Justice”. Photo Credit: AMARC AP/WACC

developed took place between the 22nd and the 25th of October in Kathmandu and was held in partnership with [AMARC-Asia Pacific](#).

This document presents the recommendations developed by WACC partners on the GDC. The full list of attendees and contributors can be found at the end of this document. This work builds on the advocacy WACC carried out in the lead up to the Summit of the Future along with organizations part of the [Global Forum on Media Development](#) and the [Global Digital Justice Forum](#).

A COMMUNICATION RIGHTS TAKE ON THE GDC

WACC and its partner are committed to the theory and practice of communication rights, which understands communication as an essential social process that impacts how societies organize themselves, how public agendas are set, and how decisions about common challenges are made. Given the impact of digital technologies on our communication and information ecosystems, WACC believes in advancing a view of the digital that upholds human rights and the public interest, democratizes public debate, and

contributes to positive social change.

It is important to underline that the GDC focuses on digital technologies and AI. It does not set out to relate communication rights to the GDC, nor is there any mention of communication rights, the right to communicate, or the democratization of communication. There is scant reference to freedom of expression and none to media and press freedom. Paradoxically, key terms that emerge are those that undergird communication rights: accessibility, affordability, participation, integrity, tolerance, respect, accuracy, reliability. Objective 7.3 of the GDC is emblematic: “Foster an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space that respects, protects and promote human rights.”

At the outset, the GDC establishes two key principles: one aimed at tying the GDC to the SDGs (somewhat akin to the emphasis at WSIS Tunis 2005 on ICTs being the solution to development problems) and the other at tying digital technologies to the protection of human rights online and offline (as if the observance of digital rights is the solution to political, economic, and social breaches of human rights law). The two key principles are:

- * 8 (b): “This Compact is development-oriented and rooted in the 2030 Agenda. Our cooperation will harness technologies to fast-track progress, eradicate poverty and leave no one behind. This includes targeted efforts to address the needs of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as the specific challenges facing middle-income countries.”
- * 8 (c): “This Compact is anchored in international law, including international human rights law. All human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and fundamental freedoms, must be respected, protected and promoted online and offline. Our cooperation will harness digital technologies to advance all human rights, including the rights of the child, the rights of persons with disabilities and the right to development.”

Where the GDC comes closest to communication rights principles (still without mentioning them) is in the section on information integrity:

- * 33. “Access to relevant, reliable and accurate information and knowledge is essential for an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space. We recognize that digital and emerging technologies can facilitate the manipulation of and interference with information in ways that are harmful to societies and individuals, and negatively affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.”
- * 34. “We will work together to promote information integrity, tolerance and respect in the digital space, as well as to protect the integrity of democratic processes. We will strengthen international cooperation to address the challenge of misinformation and disinformation and hate speech online and mitigate the risks of information manipulation in a manner consistent with international law.”

- * 35 (b). “Promote diverse and resilient information ecosystems, including by strengthening independent and public media and supporting journalists and media workers (SDGs 9 and 16).”

One criticism is that the GDC does not acknowledge that technology is a product of human labour in its design, production, and implementation. The GDC seems to promote “a sort of mysticism about technology as seen in its third paragraph: ‘We recognize that the pace and power of emerging technologies are creating new possibilities but also new risks for humanity, some of which are not yet fully known. We recognize the need to identify and mitigate risks and to ensure human oversight of technology in ways that advance sustainable development and the full enjoyment of human rights.’”

It is important to acknowledge tech as a product of human beings because this is crucial for accountability. Even for negative impacts of new tech that may not be intended, there should still be accountability, especially because testing and quality assurance are part of the development process. This is also relevant to environmental/climate impacts. Environmental impact studies should also be included in the development process.

As much as the drafting of the GDC was a contentious process at the global level where different visions of the digital played out, WACC and its partners believe that the extent to which the GDC is a success or a failure will depend on how it is implemented, especially at the local, national, and regional levels. As such, the paragraphs below list a number of general recommendations from a communication rights perspective as well as more specific thematic recommendations in relation to the areas of expertise of WACC partners: **gender justice, climate justice, and the rights of migrants.**

These recommendations are offered to UN members states and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of the GDC that go beyond the compromises that had to be made in New York to ensure the GDC was adopted and

that move towards a more progressive and social justice-oriented view of digital technologies.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM A COMMUNICATION RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

1. The idea that digital resources need to be democratized and that governance decisions about digital technologies must prioritize the public interest over private profits is mostly absent from the GDC. The implementation of the GDC should consider these two ideas as guiding concepts to avoid perpetuating the current market-oriented model, which is perpetuating social and economic inequality and has failed to connect half of humanity to the Internet.

2. Media viability, particularly from a financial perspective, is absent from the GDC despite the negative influence that digital platforms have had on the financial models of media outlets all over the world. The implementation of the GDC should take this issue seriously as it is essential for democracy and social cohesion and should consider new financial mechanisms to support public interest media.

3. Closing the digital divide is indeed a priority. But policymakers should consider solutions that place communities in control over their own communication rather than see people as mere users that can help telecom companies grow their profits. Connectivity policies should consider community-managed, non-profit telecommunication infrastructure, as well as efforts that strengthen local cultural and language.

4. The multistakeholder model that has governed international digital policymaking since WSIS 2005 needs to be reviewed to account for power differences between stakeholder groups. New funding and capacity building mechanisms are needed to enable civil society to have a stronger voice. Greater political will to open decision making spaces to civil society is also needed.

5. All people have the right to affordable access to media, digital platforms, and AI; to receive and produce communication content; to ex-

Recent issues of *Media Development*

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press themselves freely; and to receive the training needed to use effectively all tools of human communication and interaction. In many ways the GDC does consider these issues, but WACC partners underlined that they should be seen as rights, not simply as nice-to-haves.

6. A media and tech sector regulated in the public interest must include public service, civil society (community) and the private sector, and must not be dominated by big tech and markets alone.

7. Media, computing, digital platforms, data, and AI must be made available as public utilities, and cannot be regarded solely or primarily as commodities given their impact on the realization of people's human rights. There should be a clear system of checks and balances for the people and institutions in control of those digital public goods.

8. The design and content of media, digital

platforms, data, and AI must mirror the complexity of human experience. Protective discrimination and affirmative action initiatives are essential to maintain cultural and linguistic diversity and to guarantee the active participation of communities of colour, gender minorities, LGBTIQ communities, disabled communities, particularly in the Global South.

9. Regulation of digital platforms and social media must mandate interoperability – meaning that users can easily design each interface; select what content they want to receive and share; and swap information and data seamlessly between different platforms.

10. Data subjects, individually and collectively, must own their data. Media and digital regulation need to protect users from state and/or corporate surveillance, and data extraction for control or marketing purposes. Useful application of data must be fair and equitable, and under the control of the respective individual/collective data subjects.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM A COMMUNICATION RIGHTS AND GENDER JUSTICE PERSPECTIVE

The GDC addresses gender inequality in several ways. It makes commitments to mainstreaming a gender perspective in digital connectivity strategies (Objective 1), addressing gender-related capacity gaps and participation in science (Objective 1), encourage digital entrepreneurship among women (Objective 2), tackling online gender-based violence (Objective 3), and begin to address gender inequality in relation to data (Objective 4). However, WACC partners made the following recommendations to advance gender equality as the GDC is implemented:

1. The GDC fails to unpack the category “women”, misses a clear recognition of women’s heterogeneity, clear actions for specific groups of women and a clear strategy to empower women and girls. This approach is needed for the successful implementation of the GDC.

2. Gender needs to be understood in an intersectional way to meet the needs of more

specific demographics, such as women with disabilities, rural women, Indigenous women, sexual and gender minorities, women living in poverty, etc.

3. The GDC should do more to tackle negative, violent, patriarchal, and hateful portrayals of women circulating on digital platforms by creating additional supports for women digital content producers, as well as for media organizations producing digital content seeking to advance gender equality.

4. The GDC fails to explicitly recognize that the starting point for women is bias. Gender biases should be addressed across the digital landscape in more tangible ways, for instance, through education on gender equality, gender rights, gender justice and critical digital literacy.

5. The leadership of women and diverse gender identities needs to be promoted within the tech sector to ensure the needs and concerns of these demographics are taken seriously.

6. The digital rights of women and girls need to be especially protected in contexts of war, armed conflict, and emergency situations. The GDC needs to underline the need for online protection of women and children living in these situations.

7. Digital technologies have sometimes fostered polarization and enabled backlash against gender justice activists. There is a need for additional safeguards for this demographic and for platforms to foster dialogue and understanding.

8. Financing for digital inclusion and support for women’s tech entrepreneurship needs to be increased.

9. While the GDC seems to be comprehensive and includes all the important issues raised and debated, it overlooks contextualities. One example is Pakistan, where communication rights are contested. What is happening on ground in Pakistan greatly impacts our take on the GDC. See for example <https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/social-issues/does-peca-law-empower-women> and <https://www.dawn.com/news/1888224>

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM A COMMUNICATION RIGHTS AND CLIMATE JUSTICE PERSPECTIVE

Climate and environmental issues are barely mentioned in the GDC. Under Objective 5, the text mentions the need to ensure that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is governed in the public interest, which includes addressing potential negative environmental impacts. And throughout the text, the GDC makes references to the role of digital technology in advancing sustainable development, which is understood to also include solutions to the climate crisis. However, WACC partners noted several gaps and made the following recommendations:

1. The GDC fails to acknowledge the massive environmental impact of digital technologies, especially in terms of energy and water consumption, as well as in relation to greenhouse emissions and mineral extraction. Any efforts to expand the reach of digital technologies, as is expected to happen with AI, needs to pursue net-zero emissions and little to no environmental impact while also upholding human rights and respecting the locations where digital infrastructure is installed.

2. Digital technologies should be seen as tools to ensure that those communities most impacted by the effects of climate change have

platforms to express their views and concerns, as well as to access relevant information. The implementation of the GDC should make specific efforts to ensure climate-impacted communities have meaningful access and that their voices are given the importance they deserve.

3. Many environmental and climate justice groups, as well as investigative journalists, have been targeted online, especially when their actions challenge dominant economic models. There is a need to establish additional safeguards for those voices and to find ways to make them heard among the cacophony of disinformation and misinformation online.

4. Digital platforms have amplified climate disinformation and misinformation. There is an urgent need to censor such content and to amplify science and human rights-based narratives.

5. Stakeholders responsible for implementing the GDC should establish rules to ensure that digital devices are not manufactured with planned obsolescence in mind and that contents are recyclable to reduce impacts on the environment. Industry needs to be held accountable. This is referred to under Objective 1 (d) but needs to be strengthened.

6. Implementation of the GDC needs to create support mechanisms for journalists and



Migrant citizen journalists in Colombia. Photo credit: WACC/ Grupo Comunicarte.

media, including the citizen journalism and community media sectors, to produce climate-related, solutions-oriented news and content.

7. There is an urgent need to include and/or amplify the role of Indigenous knowledge systems by using modern digital technology and AI to promote climate justice.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM A COMMUNICATION RIGHTS AND MIGRATION PERSPECTIVE

Migration and displacement do not feature prominently in the GDC. References are limited to digital inclusion surveys to identify digital needs among migrants (Objective 1), commitments to build the media literacy skills of migrant population (Objective 1), and efforts to collect development-oriented data that would help policy makers meet the needs of migrants (Objective 4). WACC partners identified several gaps and produced these recommendations:

1. Fear of migration, a phenomenon rooted in racism and aporophobia (negative feelings and attitudes towards people who are poor, disadvantaged, or helpless), has been one of the main drivers of polarization, the collapse of social cohesion and mutual trust in many countries, as well as digital hate speech. Primarily because they lack a public voice, migrants are often scapegoated in media and digital content for social ills as diverse as unemployment, crime, and drug use.

The root causes of migration are rarely explored. The implementation of the GDC needs to take this situation into account and make every effort possible to tackle xenophobic, racist, and anti-migrant discourse while promoting rights-based narratives of migration. This can be done in several ways:

- Providing support for migrant-led networks of digital content producers and citizen journalists so they are better equipped and positioned to advance their own narratives.

- Creating mechanisms for migrant organizations to partner with media outlets and digital platforms to inform public narratives of migration.

- Specific support for news media so that they have the capacity to produce balances and rights-based content on migration issues.

2. The GDC, especially under Objective 2: Digital Economy, needs to establish mechanisms to facilitate safe and secure financial transactions for migrants including the sending and receipt of remittances sent by overseas migrants to their home countries. It should support efforts to reduce transaction costs and to have governments “match” the amounts sent by migrants, which should be allocated towards development programs that do not depend on labour export and will meaningfully address forced migration.

To explain: (1) Beside remittances, there are multiple other financial transactions of migrants. There should be protection from fraudulent transactions and scams. (2) Remittance and development is a contentious topic. Many migrant organisations are critical of linking remittance to development as it perpetuates a development framework that is based on a current migration design that is exploitative and oppressive. The above formulation is intended to reflect a valid demand for migrants (safe and secure transactions, lowering of transaction costs) but also directs the “matching” in more strategic development direction.

3. Also under Objective 2: Digital Economy, the GDC needs to acknowledge the essential economic role of migration for the world’s economy, particularly in terms of labour, business innovation, and remittances. Along with such acknowledgement there should be mechanisms to support migrants in their efforts to participate in and benefit from the digital economy.

4. Migrants – particularly women – face several barriers, from high fees to limited time to linguistic barriers, in accessing digital platforms, completing paperwork online, and fully participating in the digital ecosystem. The GDC needs specific provisions to tackle those barriers.

5. Digital platforms have become enablers of human trafficking due to lack of regulation and the spread of misinformation. Governments and tech companies must step up their work to

prevent this crime and to persecute perpetrators

6. Digital platforms can be very useful tools to enable migrants to report abuse without facing retaliation. However, governments and tech platforms need to step up their work in this regard.

WACC encourages stakeholders from all sectors to consider these recommendations and to collaborate with civil society in their implementation. In line with its communication rights mandate, WACC will continue to contribute to the global conversation about digital justice sparked by initiatives such as the Global Digital Compact by highlighting the communication and information needs of the most vulnerable and by calling for a public interest approach to life in the digital era. ■

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Cross-community statement from civil society, the private sector and the technical community on WSIS, the IGF and the GDC

Association for Progressive Communications

At the conclusion of the 2024 Internet Governance Forum (IGF), organisations and individuals from civil society, the private sector and the technical community called on all governments, institutions and organisations to affirm the vision of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) of a people-centred and development-oriented inclusive information society.

As we confront the challenges of increasingly rapid digitalisation, climate change-related uncertainty and persisting economic, social and political inequalities and divides that are mirrored in digital divides, this vision and its emphasis on people and inclusion is even more relevant now than it was 20 years ago.

Multiple sessions at the 2024 IGF addressed links between the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and the WSIS 20-year review. The IGF 2024 messages summarise the emerging consensus on the relationship between these two processes:

- * “The Global Digital Compact (GDC) must transition from a vision document to an



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actionable framework, strengthening and aligning with existing structures like the WSIS process, the IGF and the STI Forum [UN Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals]. Enhanced coordination among these platforms is essential to avoid fragmentation, foster synergies, and ensure cohesive, inclusive policy-making.”

* “The IGF remains a pivotal agenda-setting platform, where critical issues like AI, cybersecurity, and digital inclusion are addressed, often before they gain traction in inter-governmental processes. Its agenda-setting power must deliver actionable outcomes to close gaps in connectivity, skills, and infrastructure, especially in developing countries and promote human-centric, rights-based digital governance.”

The work of the WSIS needs to continue, and the mandate of the IGF must be renewed. Resources must be allocated to strengthen the IGF’s capacity to continue as the foremost multi-stakeholder platform for digital cooperation. It is also clear that the Global Digital Compact complements the global and collective vision and agenda built by the two-phased WSIS process 20 years ago.

The value of WSIS lies in its track record and the ongoing engagement of governments and others in using its implementation framework in country-level actions. The Compact’s value lies in its powerful statement of principles

and objectives and its connection with the broader vision of the Pact for the Future.

We believe that the implementation of the GDC must be integrated into the next phase of the WSIS process to draw on and bring together their complementary strengths.

The GDC, on its own, does not provide a concrete and clear implementation framework that can be used by governments and other stakeholders. Conversely, WSIS, through the Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, provides a clear path for the actions that need to be taken. The WSIS system also identifies actors that have to be involved and the collaboration that needs to take place to achieve the WSIS vision. The WSIS emphasis on a decentralised implementation structure has contributed to the meaningful inclusion of all interested stakeholders. By integrating the GDC’s follow-up into the next phase of the WSIS process, its principles and objectives can be used to update and enrich the ongoing interpretation and implementation of the WSIS vision, using a ready-made action-oriented framework understood and used by states and other stakeholders worldwide.

A key benefit of this integration would be to allow member states to continue to explicitly link the WSIS framework to the SDGs. Drawing on the GDC in the next phase of the WSIS process can help provide a practical framework for utilising digitalisation to achieve the SDGs without creating new frameworks or duplicat-

ing existing efforts. Another benefit is that the GDC can rely on the trusted processes established through WSIS at national, regional and global levels.

As the [Geneva Declaration of Principles](#) stated unequivocally in 2003, “Building a people-centred Information Society is a joint effort which requires cooperation and partnership among all stakeholders.”

As a group of diverse non-state actors, we recognise that we have different approaches and perspectives, and different priorities. At times these interests diverge and may even conflict. However, we share a commitment to this vision and principle: **the vital importance of cooperation and partnership among all stakeholders articulated so clearly in the WSIS outcome documents**. This can only be achieved if we ensure the appropriate participation mechanisms for all non-state actors to not just join but have an active voice in shaping this conversation. There is no more effective way of achieving evidence-based digital policy and implementation that is robust and feasible, complies with international human rights, and protects and promotes the power of an open, global, secure, resilient and interoperable internet.

We have also learned that multistakeholder collaboration is not easy – applying this principle effectively requires continued commitment, collaboration, critical reflection and evolution. The [NETmundial+10 Multistakeholder Statement: Strengthening Internet governance and digital policy](#), known as the São Paulo Guidelines, provides concrete suggestions that are of value to both multilateral and multistakeholder digital governance processes.

That is why the continuation of the mandate of the IGF, as the foremost multistakeholder platform for digital cooperation and governance, is vital. So is strengthening its capacity. “Looking ahead, strengthening the IGF model and ensuring its sustainability may require greater institutionalization of the IGF. The WSIS+20 review will be an opportunity to have these discussions and strengthen the position of the IGF

in relation to the rapidly shifting and developing landscape of relevant actors, bodies, and organizations. In practical terms, it is essential to look for ways to build on the current model of financing the IGF through voluntary contributions, ensuring a more predictable financial basis for the future evolution and sustainability of the IGF ecosystem.” (From the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group’s [Vision of the IGF Beyond 2025](#), released in late 2024).

CALL TO ACTION

We call on the UN Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, all other parts of the UN system, including the co-facilitators of the WSIS+20 review resolution, member states, and all other agencies and institutions participating in the review to:

- * Strengthen rather than duplicate existing mechanisms and processes that strive to achieve the SDGs and the WSIS vision.
- * Use the GDC to update and complement this vision by integrating GDC implementation into existing processes, specifically the next phase of the WSIS process, by using the WSIS review to make concrete recommendations on how this integration and non-duplication can be achieved.
- * Affirm the need to continue to commit to the multistakeholder approach and evolve it in such a manner that it strengthens collaboration between stakeholders as well as their collective and stakeholder-specific accountability for promoting and protecting human rights and commitment to the SDGs and the WSIS and GDC principles.
- * Recognise that the IGF has evolved into the world’s foremost and most inclusive forum for dialogue on not only the internet, but also broader digital governance, and establish it as a permanent forum and ensure that it has the resources needed to strengthen its capacity and reach.

Source: [APC. 28 January 2025.](#)

Now is the time to take action for digital justice

Global Digital Justice Forum

The Global Digital Justice Forum, a coalition of civil society organizations from the Global Majority, decries the tightening stranglehold of political and corporate authoritarianism on the internet. The unchecked power of the Broligarchy—a handful of Silicon Valley firms operating in sync with current US government leadership—signals a broader global threat to the international rules-based system, human rights, peace, sustainable development, and ecological justice.

Digital spaces, once the exemplar of human expression and creativity, have become tools of surveillance, oppression, and violence. Silicon Valley Big Tech has blatantly pursued profits over people, emboldened by self-serving US trade and foreign policies. The weaponization of data and AI has already seen widespread job precarity, misinformation, war crimes, the climate catastrophe and more. The current regime marks a new low in which the line between political and economic power is completely blurred. Companies like Meta, X, and Google have shed even the pretence of caring about democracy, peace, or human rights. Meanwhile, 2.5 billion people remain excluded from the real benefits of digital access, deepening global inequalities.

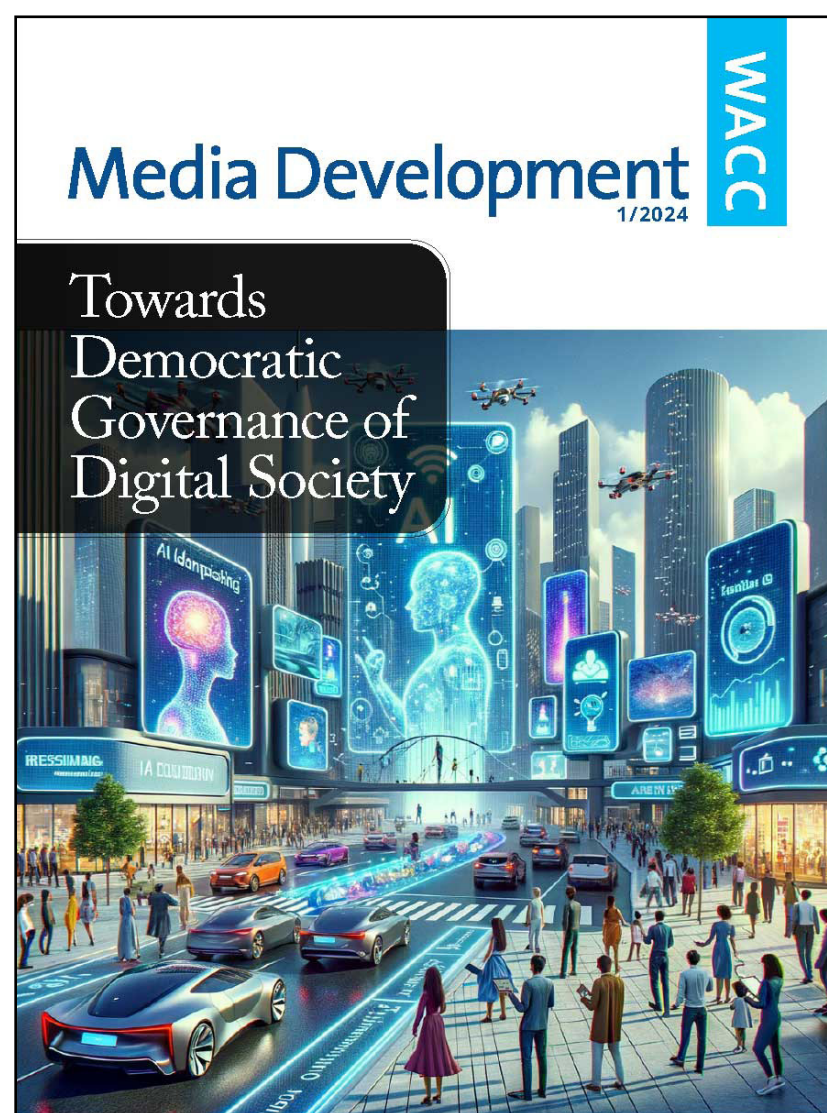
We refuse to accept a digital order dictated by corporate greed and state control. Instead, we demand a digital future that belongs to the people—one where digital infrastructures are not commodities, but the commons that individuals and communities nurture to determine their own technological destinies.

United in our commitment to global digital justice and rights, we claim this as a moment of opportunity. We call for:

- * International solidarity for a new global digital constitutionalism—a digital order that is democratic, participatory, humane, and cognizant of ecological justice.
- * Principled action from governments and international organizations to formulate and enforce policies and laws that curb the monopolistic and extractive powers of corporations, protect individual and collective freedoms, and guarantee the rights of nature.
- * Civic action worldwide to organize, speak out, and defend the values of democracy, equity, human rights, and justice.

We must build a future where technology is harnessed to empower people and protect the planet. ■

February 2025.



Many actors in civil society worry that digital technologies, including those based on AI, can be appropriated by governments, security services, and global corporations to repress, control, manipulate, and profit from ordinary people – who have their own, more just expectations of how these technologies could improve lives and livelihoods.

Es el momento de actuar por la justicia digital

Foro Global de Justicia Digital

El Foro Global de Justicia Digital, una coalición de organizaciones de sociedad civil del Sur global, denuncia el creciente dominio del autoritarismo político y corporativo sobre internet. El poder desenfrenado de la “Broligarquía” (un puñado de empresas de Silicon Valley que operan en sincronía con el actual liderazgo del gobierno de EE.UU.) representa una amenaza global para el sistema internacional basado en normas, derechos humanos, paz, desarrollo sostenible y justicia ecológica.

Los espacios digitales, que alguna vez fueron ejemplo de expresión humana y creatividad, se han convertido en herramientas de vigilancia, opresión y violencia. Las grandes empresas tecnológicas de Silicon Valley han priorizado sin tapujos las ganancias sobre las personas, alentadas por políticas comerciales y exteriores de EE.UU. que solo sirven a sus propios intereses. La utilización de datos e inteligencia artificial como armas ya ha causado precarización laboral, desinformación, crímenes de guerra, catástrofes climáticas, entre otras amenazas. El régimen actual marca un punto crítico en el que la frontera entre el poder político y económico desaparece por completo. Empresas como Meta, X y Google han abandonado incluso la apariencia de cierta preocupación por la democracia, la paz o los derechos humanos. Mientras tanto, 2.500 millones de personas siguen excluidas de los verdaderos beneficios del acceso digital, lo que profundiza las desigualdades globales.

Nos negamos a aceptar un orden digital dictado por la codicia corporativa y el control estatal. En su lugar, exigimos un futuro digital que pertenezca a la gente, en el que las infraestructuras digitales no sean mercancías, sino bienes comunes que las personas y comunidades

cultiven para determinar sus propios destinos tecnológicos.

Unidos en nuestro compromiso con la justicia y los derechos digitales globales, reconocemos este momento como una oportunidad. Hacemos un llamado a:

- * Solidaridad internacional para un nuevo constitucionalismo digital global: un orden digital que sea democrático, participativo, humano y consciente de la justicia ecológica.
- * Acción con principios por parte de los gobiernos y organizaciones internacionales para formular y aplicar políticas y leyes que limiten el poder de monopolio y extractivista de las corporaciones, que protejan las libertades individuales y colectivas y garanticen los derechos de la naturaleza.
- * Movilización cívica global para organizarse, alzar la voz y defender los valores de la democracia, la equidad, los derechos humanos y la justicia.

Debemos construir un futuro en el que la tecnología se aproveche para capacitar a las personas y proteger el planeta. ■

Febrero de 2025.

Il est temps d'agir pour la justice numérique

Forum mondial pour la justice numérique

Le Forum mondial pour la justice numérique, une coalition d'organisations de la société civile principalement issues du Sud Global, dénonce la mainmise de plus en plus étroite de l'autoritarisme étatique et des multinationales sur internet. Le pouvoir incontrôlé de la Broligarchie – une poignée d'entreprises de la Silicon Valley opérant en phase avec les dirigeants actuels du gouvernement américain – est le signe d'une

menace mondiale plus large qui pèse sur le système international fondé sur des règles, les droits humains, la paix, le développement durable et la justice environnementale.

Les espaces numériques autrefois à disposition de l'expression et de la créativité humaines, sont devenus des outils de surveillance, d'oppression et de violence. Les géants numériques de la Silicon Valley ont ouvertement placé les profits avant les personnes, encouragés par les politiques commerciales et étrangères égoïstes des États-Unis. L'utilisation des données et de l'IA comme instruments de pouvoir s'est déjà traduite par la généralisation de la précarité de l'emploi, de la désinformation, des crimes de guerre, de la catastrophe climatique et bien d'autres choses encore. Le contexte actuel marque un nouveau recul, dans lequel la ligne de démarcation entre le pouvoir politique et le pouvoir économique est complètement brouillée. Des entreprises comme Meta, X et Google ne font même plus semblant de se soucier de la démocratie, de la paix ou des droits humains. Pendant ce temps, 2,5 milliards de personnes restent exclues des avantages de l'accès aux technologies numériques, ce qui aggrave les inégalités dans le monde.

Nous refusons d'accepter un ordre numérique dicté par la cupidité des entreprises et le contrôle étatique. Nous exigeons, au contraire, un avenir numérique qui appartienne aux citoyennes – un avenir où les infrastructures numériques ne sont pas des marchandises, mais des biens communs que les individus et les communautés alimentent pour construire leur propre destin technologique.

Unis à travers notre engagement pour la justice et les droits numériques au niveau mondial, nous affirmons qu'il s'agit d'une occasion à saisir. Nous lançons un appel à :

- * Une solidarité internationale qui vise un nouveau constitutionnalisme numérique mondial – un ordre numérique qui soit démocratique, participatif, humain et conscient de la justice écologique.
- * Une action fondée sur des principes forts de la part des gouvernements et des organisa-

tions internationales afin de formuler et appliquer des politiques et des lois qui limitent les pouvoirs monopolistiques et extractifs des entreprises, qui protègent les libertés individuelles et collectives et qui garantissent les droits de la nature.

- * Une action civique dans le monde entier pour organiser, exprimer et défendre les valeurs de la démocratie, de l'équité, des droits humains et de la justice.

Nous devons construire un avenir où la technologie est mise au service de l'autonomie des personnes et de la protection de la planète. ■

Février 2025.

Agora é hora de agir em prol da justiça digital

O Fórum Global de Justiça Digital

O Fórum Global de Justiça Digital, uma coalizão de organizações da sociedade civil de alcance global, condena o domínio cada vez maior do autoritarismo político e corporativo na Internet. O poder descontrolado da Broligarquia – um punhado de empresas do Vale do Silício operando em sincronia com a atual liderança do governo dos EUA – sinaliza uma ameaça global mais ampla ao sistema internacional baseado em regras, direitos humanos, paz, desenvolvimento sustentável e justiça ecológica.

Os espaços digitais, outrora exemplares da expressão e criatividade humanas, tornaram-se ferramentas de vigilância, opressão e violência. As Big Techs do Vale do Silício buscam des-

caradamamente lucros em detrimento das pessoas, encorajadas pelas políticas comerciais e externas egoístas dos EUA. A militarização de dados e inteligência artificial já dá margem à precariedade generalizada de empregos, desinformação, crimes de guerra, catástrofe climática e muito mais.

O regime atual marca um novo ponto baixo no qual a linha divisória entre poder político e econômico está completamente borrada. Empresas como Meta, X e Google abandonaram até mesmo a pretensão de se importar com democracia, paz ou direitos humanos. Enquanto isso, 2,5 bilhões de pessoas continuam excluídas dos benefícios reais do acesso digital, aprofundando as desigualdades globais.

Nós nos recusamos a aceitar uma ordem digital ditada pela ganância corporativa e pelo controle estatal. Em vez disso, exigimos um futuro digital que pertença ao povo – onde as infraestruturas digitais não sejam commodities, mas os bens comuns que indivíduos e comunidades nutrem para determinar seus próprios destinos tecnológicos.

Unidos em nosso compromisso com a justiça e os direitos digitais globais, reivindicamos este como um momento de oportunidade. Apela-mos para:

- * Solidariedade internacional por um novo constitucionalismo digital global – uma ordem digital que seja democrática, participativa, humana e consciente da justiça ecológica.
- * Ação baseada em princípios de governos e organizações internacionais para formular e aplicar políticas e leis que restrinjam os poderes monopolistas e extrativistas das corporações, protejam as liberdades individuais e coletivas e garantam os direitos da natureza.
- * Ação cívica em todo o mundo para organizar, falar e defender os valores da democracia, equidade, direitos humanos e justiça.

Precisamos construir um futuro em que a tecnologia seja aproveitada para empoderar as pessoas e proteger o planeta. ■

Fevereiro de 2025

Women and the media: Stocktaking, realigning and reigniting Section J at Beijing+30

Sarah Macharia

“It is not enough to just reflect on progress, we must reignite the process.”

– ECOSOC president, H.E. Bob Rae.
Speech at the opening of the 69th CSW.
10 March 2025

Political declarations adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the decade milestones of the 1995 Fourth UN World Conference on Women emphatically underscore the Beijing Platform for Action¹ as the most significant and comprehensive gender policy blueprint ever created. At the Platform’s 30-year anniversary in 2025, the Commission recognized that new challenges have emerged and implementation gaps are evident in all 12 critical areas of concern, including “women and the media”.²

Relevant to the media theme, the Commission recommitted to take “further concrete action by combatting the use of digital tools and artificial intelligence for causing harm to women and girls” (para 15 j pg.6). The Commission cited women journalists and media professionals among those actors working to defend, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms”, promising to support safe and enabling environments for them (para 15 p. pg.7).

“Women and the Media” (Section J) is one of the 12 critical areas in the Platform for Action (PfA). Section J recognized both the transform-

ative potential and challenges of media and information technologies for advancing gender equality. The text groups several recommendations under two strategic objectives. The first, to enhance women's participation in media (obj. J.1), the second, to promote balanced media portrayals of women (obj. J.2).

Section J underlines the media's potential transformative power for women's progress if certain conditions are fulfilled: that structural inequalities, harmful representations and unequal access to media and communication technologies, are addressed. The range of duty bearers named include governments, media organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions. The recommendations balance regulatory approaches with respect for freedom of expression, calling for policy change and voluntary industry measures to create more inclusive and representative media systems.

While not all the current dimensions of the women and media experience were reflected in the analysis contained in Section J, the transformations and emerging gender issues of the last three decades make it important to take stock and suggest a way forward if intervention strategies on media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) are to be relevant.

THE GLOBAL PICTURE 1995 – 2025

The media landscape has undergone dramatic transformation in the period since Beijing, largely due to technological advancement. The same is not true of the status of women in global and regional communication and media ecosystems; the position of women has stagnated, worsened on some dimensions, and where improvements are registered, they have come at a glacial pace.

Three decades ago, news was curated by professional journalists working in structured media houses. Today, digital platforms and social media have democratized content creation, but women's visibility as reporters and news subjects has barely improved. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), women constitute just 25% of news subjects and interviewees – a mere

8-point increase since 1995 (Macharia, 2021). At this rate, closing the gender gap in legacy media would take a further seven decades or so.

Women from marginalized groups – indigenous women, migrants, ethnic minorities, and women with disabilities – face even greater exclusion. While disparities vary by country (ranging from -44% to 92%, regional averages reveal consistent global imbalances. Even in regions and nations with relatively better performance on media and gender metrics, progress remains uneven and insufficient.

A review of media regulation across almost 200 countries (Macharia & Barata, 2022) found that one-third of media laws contain no gender equality provisions. Nearly half of these capture gender issues under general non-discrimination clauses but are often vague and weak. Most treat gender as one characteristic in a list of identities rather than raising its importance as a concern affecting half of the population. Transnational, regional and national regulatory frameworks have not led to the structural change hoped for in Beijing. Compliance with industry ethics codes and standards is spotty, varying across regions and nation States but nevertheless have not resulted in systemic transformation.

Thirty years after Beijing, global gender and media metrics indicate that the status quo has shifted only slightly. Present day political rhetoric railing against “gender” as a concept, as policy and as practice has heightened the risk of reversal of the hard-won small gains.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Discussions about the role of information and communication technologies in women's human rights have been on the feminist agenda for a few decades. This agenda has expanded with the proliferation of media and platforms brought about by digital transformation. While the digital ecosystem has made the challenge more complex, the debates still revolve around power, discrimination, inequality, and violence against women.

Evidence indicates that digital entrants into the media and communication space such as social media platforms have followed the example of governments and legacy media companies. They too have failed to adopt effective strategies to protect women's human rights online. On the one hand, the gender gap in Internet use is slowly closing. "Globally, 70 per cent of men are using the Internet, compared with 65 per cent of women. This means there are 189 million more men than women using the Internet in 2024. This difference has been decreasing since 2021, when it stood at 277 million". (International Telecommunication Union, 2024).

On the other hand, technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) is a growing global problem. Most governments do not systematically collect the data and, depending on how the question is framed, prevalence rates of girls and women reporting having experienced some form of online violence vary significantly (see the UN Secretary-General's report, 2024). Violence against women journalists, online and offline, has increased dramatically the world over. They continue to face disproportionate risks of physical, psychological and sexual violence. This violence often happens with the consent of the States, which results in a cycle of impunity, and in contexts where news media companies do not guarantee safe working conditions for their female staff.

The heart of women's rights violations online lies in non-compliance by States with UN human rights treaties, as well as non-compliance of media companies with laws and regulations enacted at global, national and industry levels. Media and telecommunications sectors habitually oppose regulation that attempts to protect women's communication rights in all spaces. Feminist analyses link the downgrading of these rights in the digital world to the rise of misogyny and anti-gender equality discourse offline and online.

REGIONAL REFLECTIONS

Africa

Over the past three decades at least, the African region has consistently set the lowest bar in com-

parison to the rest of the world with respect to gender equality measures in the news. GMMP data reveal the region's rate of change towards parity in portrayal and representation to be the slowest in comparison to the rest of the world. In legacy media, African women are only one out of five of the people in the stories, that is those who are the subjects of the articles or are interviewed. The patterns of women's relative invisibility, lack of voice and underrepresentation as active participants in economic and political life are mirrored in online news platforms. The quality of African journalism from a gender perspective declined in the period between 2010 and 2020, with a smaller proportion of stories clearly challenging gender stereotypes and fewer with women as the central protagonists.

This downward trend emerged despite a slight (+2 point) improvement in the proportion of stories reported by women. One exception is South Africa, an outlier on the continent in almost all gender equality in news performance measures. However "the challenges for women in the South African media are becoming less about numbers, and more about the underlying sexism in the media, with new threats like cyber misogyny emerging" (Daniels & Nyamweda, 2019). Insights on change in the status of different groups of women differentiated by ethnicity, class, ability, and other cultural, social, economic and political strata are lacking due to a dearth of nuanced intersectional studies on this theme.

Media employment for women has changed dramatically. Today, jobs are scarcer and more precarious for those working in mainstream media. Underfunding of public media and donor dependency of independent media have inject a new precarity to all jobs and particularly for women workers who are characteristically treated as more dispensable and the first to be let go when jobs shrink. Community and online media outlets owned, managed and single-handedly run by women are numerous but their nature mirrors women's micro enterprises in the sprawling informal economy; they are established with meagre capital from owners, benevolent family

members and friends, and rarely, if ever, advance from subsistence into profitability.

Positive developments since Beijing include the adoption of gender language in media spaces, leading to sustained coverage of women's rights issues and fostering unprecedented collaboration between media houses, NGOs, and government agencies. Educational reforms have been particularly noteworthy, with journalism schools across the continent integrating gender modules and establishing specialized graduate study programs. This academic evolution has contributed to destabilizing the idea that technical broadcasting and production roles can only be fulfilled by men.

Policy frameworks on the continent have benefitted from landmark instruments, notably the Maputo Protocol (2003) and various national parity laws. Media monitoring initiatives inspired largely by the GMMP have created new accountability measures, while women's increasing presence in media leadership roles – though still limited – represents an important cultural shift. The gains however remain fragile and unevenly distributed across nations.

The digital revolution introduced new dimensions of inequality, with women journalists facing escalating online harassment and systemic exclusion from emerging technologies. As newsrooms rapidly adopt AI-driven journalism, male-dominated decision-making structures risk embedding new forms of bias that could reverse hard-won progress. The threats extend beyond the professional sphere, with misinformation campaigns increasingly targeting women activists and marginalized groups with potentially deadly consequences.

Asia-Pacific

The region has witnessed an evolution of general gender regulatory frameworks at national and transnational levels. Media monitoring has provided a tool to build evidence and drive advocacy, build the capacity of journalists on gender-sensitive reporting, and enhance journalism training to include gender modules. At the same time technology has reinforced inequality. Women in

rural and marginalized communities face limited access to phones, computers, and the internet. Even when online, they confront TFGBV which silences dissent and stifles participation. Algorithmic biases in AI and automation disproportionately exclude women from platform jobs or “gig work”, replicating offline discrimination in the tech-driven world of work.

Latin America

Latin America has made notable progress in gender representation in media since Beijing, yet systemic barriers and violence against women journalists remain severe. GMMP data reveals that the region leads on numerous gender in media dimension, perhaps manifesting the links and feedbacks between vibrant women's rights activism, transformation of everyday gender politics and media practice. However, indigenous women remain severely underrepresented, accounting for just 3% of news coverage despite making up 8% of the population, half of whom are women.

Women's experiences in the media follow the general patterns of structural discrimination. Women journalists are paid less for the same work as men. A 2018 report from the International Federation of Journalists indicates that women were concentrated in lower-paid media jobs and only 25% held media leadership positions. Glass ceilings, inflexible schedules, and poor parental leave policies stifle career advancement. Sexual harassment by their male colleagues and superiors has led many to leave the profession. In 2024 alone, 204 women journalists were attacked – one every two days – primarily while covering news on politics, corruption, and human rights.

Despite constitutional protections, governments have failed to prosecute aggressors who are often state officials. They have failed to enforce applicable laws such as Mexico's general law on women's right to a life free of violence.

Middle East – the Palestine case

In the Middle East, the Palestine case presents one

of the most extreme examples of gendered media suppression. Palestinian women journalists and activists face targeted violence, censorship, and systemic erasure for challenging the narrative of occupation. A non-profit organisation based in Bethlehem attests to the threats to women journalists when reporting on the dominant story – that of Israel’s war on Gaza. Among the well-known cases are Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, *Origin of the Story* host Eman Hatem Shanti, Palestinian News Agency journalist Alaa Alhams and filmmaker Wala Sadah.³ The source reports on arbitrary arrests, sexual violence, and psychological torture that women journalists are subjected to for speaking out. Their phones are searched at checkpoints and women in general are detained for social media activism.

The source states that western media and tech platforms actively suppress Palestinian voices through shadow-banning, geo-blocking and ad restrictions. Posts about Gaza have seen engagement drop from thousands to just hundreds, Instagram’s *Eye on Palestine* is hidden in Western countries, and humanitarian stories are blocked from promotion, even after removing keywords like “Palestine”.

Representation in western media often dehumanizes Palestinian women and girls, dismissing them as collateral damage and portraying them as passive victims rather than leaders and agents of resistance.

POST BEIJING+30: REALIGNING SECTION J

Section J is an important policy foundation, but it needs radical updating to reflect present-day realities. The 1995 recommendations hold true in some respects. Women remain underrepresented in media leadership, harmful gender stereotypes endure to the same extent as three decades ago and the gender digital gap persists particularly for rural women, indigenous and low-income women who face the steepest barriers.

Section J’s analysis and recommendations are dated as far as various issues are concerned. Notably, the text lacks foresight on digital harms

to women, imagining ICTs to be inherently empowering. The possibility of new frontiers was not captured, artificial intelligence for example, algorithmic discrimination against women, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. The text strongly emphasizes self-regulation as an intervention measure, but the reality today indicates this to be insufficient. Section J falls short on integrating intersectionality, that is, underlining how factors such as race, class, ethnicity or disability compound gender-based discrimination and exclusion. The case of Palestine points to a gap in recognizing the possibility of weaponisation of media and today’s censorship tactics that further compound harms to women and women journalists in war zones.

Therefore, while several recommended actions remain relevant, the following revisions are proposed to the respective strategic objectives.

On strategic objective J.1. which aims to “increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication”, adjust to include:

Governments and as appropriate, regulatory bodies in State, media and tech industries must:

- * Establish stronger accountability mechanisms and gender-responsive policies in media and the technology sectors.
- * Collect gender-disaggregated data for inclusive law for data-driven policymaking.
- * Centre women’s voices in newsrooms and in development of artificial intelligence.
- * Expand partnerships to include regional cooperation blocs such as ECOWAS and SADC to enable structural collaboration.
- * End use of media as a weapon of war to stop intensifying women’s suffering and address disinformation.

On strategic objective J.2. which seeks to “promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media”, revise the recommendation regarding violence against women and children in the media. **Governments, media**

and tech industries must:

- * Strengthen protections against online violence for instance by promoting digital literacy. Such reframing incorporates online threats to women and girls and combines safety and education for a holistic approach.

A new strategic objective J.3. is proposed to build a digital world that promotes and respects the human rights of women and girls in and through technology.

Governments and as appropriate, regulatory bodies in State, media and tech industries must:

- * Establish and enforce global digital safety standards for prevention of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). Regulations must be binding and compliance mandatory.
- * Address AI-driven discrimination and algorithmic bias.
- * Publish reports on TFGBV case resolution rates, for transparency.
- * Create monitoring systems on TFGBV. This action introduces platform accountability as a requirement.
- * Establish feminist-informed online safety protocols for women journalists.
- * End shadow-banning, as algorithmic suppression of women's voices and content relevant to them flouts women's digital rights.

Governments and donors must:

- * Fund women in tech innovation, recognizing the need to support women's technology entrepreneurship.

While incremental, the progress on Section J since Beijing suggests that change is possible. Threats to gender equality and women's rights are more pressing than they ever were. To quote UN Secretary-General António Guterres, "Three decades on, the promise [of Beijing] feels more distant than we might ever have imagined. The poison of patriarchy is back – and it is back with a vengeance. [...] But there is an antidote. That antidote is action."⁴

Notes

1. United Nations Specialised Conferences, Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, -, United Nations, 27 October 1995, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/un/1995/en/73680> [accessed 02 April 2025]
2. Political declaration on the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-ninth session. New York, 10–21 March 2025. <https://docs.un.org/en/E/CN.6/2025/L.1> (Commission on the Status of Women, 2025).
3. Shireen Abu Akleh was shot dead by Israeli forces despite wearing a press vest on 11 May 2022. Eman Hatem Shanti was killed in an airstrike alongside her family on 11 December 2024. Alaa Alhams died in a second bombing on 12 February 2024 after surviving an initial strike that killed 10 relatives. Wala Sadah was killed in an attack on a displacement tent on 2 March 2024.
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Interdependencias comunicacionales y antipatriarcales

Irene León

La niña de los ojos del capitalismo del siglo XXI se llama inteligencia artificial -IA-. En ella los poderes corporativos han depositado sendas expectativas, atribuyéndole un papel central en el guion de la recomposición capitalista, especialmente en la conceptualización del capitalismo digital.¹

La IA ya es omnipresente en el campo de la comunicación, hasta se especula que más temprano que tarde tomará el relevo en la producción de información y que, con la “neutralidad” resultante de la gestión de los datos, producirá informaciones “objetivas”, desvinculadas de los afectos y desafectos que caracterizan a los humanos.

Pero, además de las múltiples controversias que este escenario suscita, también genera interrogantes desde el ángulo de las relaciones de poder patriarcal: ¿Tendrá la inteligencia artificial un sesgo sexista? ¿Estará ella involucrada en la reproducción del patriarcado, como ya lo están la mayoría de las plataformas digitales y los medios de comunicación convencionales? Y, por otro lado, ¿qué interdependencias entre comunicación y perspectiva antipatriarcal podrían conducir hacia sociedades en las que la comunicación, que fue siempre uno de los primeros actos humanos, gane sentidos de humanidad?

“Surgida en un contexto patriarcal y capitalista, la nueva realidad comunicacional arrastra todas las sinrazones de ambos sistemas, lo que se refleja en particular en su edificación androcéntrica que marca límites entre quienes deciden, poseen y diseñan, y quienes apenas ac-

ceden. Las brechas de desigualdad histórica, los actuales refuerzos de exclusión que impone el modelo, más el remozamiento de la ideología y prácticas sexistas, constituyen elementos clave para prefigurar los matices de género del mapa comunicacional actual que es extenso y complejo.”²

Más aún si con la comunicación interactiva todo hecho social tiene una dimensión tecnológico-comunicacional.

Similares características se expresan en las áreas de la tecnología donde, camuflado en una presunta neutralidad, avanza vertiginoso el diseño de una sociedad digitalizada, perfilada bajo el cuño de los intereses del capital y con la impronta de la jerarquía patriarcal. No obstante, hay una tendencia a tratar los productos tecnológicos e incluso los comunicacionales como si fueran independientes de las sociedades que los producen y de los humanos que los desarrollan, al punto que en el Sur están en pie sendos programas de adaptación a la llamada cultura digital, nombrada en singular, como para dejar constancia de que se la proyecta desde una línea de pensamiento único.

Pero hay diversas perspectivas desde las cuales se puede desarrollar tecnologías, pues toda tecnología está interrelacionada con un proyecto de sociedad y con sus correlativas relaciones de poder. Además, son humanos quienes programan los implementos tecnológicos según los valores y relaciones de poder dominantes. Un ejemplo: un reciente estudio realizado en España por Lourdes Muñoz, especialista en open data, pone en evidencia que los valores patriarcales están incorporados en las respuestas de la inteligencia artificial, que es desarrollada por humanos³ e insistimos bajo valores predominantes en la sociedad capitalista y patriarcal. Similares constataciones se evidencian en materia de racismo, homofobia y otras formas de discriminación.

Siendo así, si las orientaciones de la comunicación tanto como las de la producción de tecnologías se mantienen en los parámetros ideológicos patriarcales, el resultado invariablemente reflejará los preceptos sexados que fun-

damentan ese sistema. Más aún, las aspiraciones de igualdad y diversidades podrían neutralizarse en un contexto en el que la comunicación y las tecnologías están monopolizadas por corporaciones privadas -principalmente las GAFAM⁴ - que son negocios transnacionales cuyo accionar se rige casi exclusivamente por el “orden basado en reglas”, es decir por su propia “autorregulación” y no por políticas de género ni por la legislación internacional y menos aún por el derecho ciudadano o de las mujeres a la comunicación.

Bajo esos parámetros, la concentración del poder y la propiedad de las telecomunicaciones y del ciberespacio, en un contexto de ascenso de corrientes ultraconservadoras e incluso del neofascismo, donde se fusiona el autoritarismo de mercado con el reposicionamiento de valores patriarcales, podría robustecer el ímpetu de manifestaciones autoritarias, tales como la censura contra países, colectividades y personas, que imponen los propietarios de las plataformas en función de sus criterios personales o afinidades políticas.

Asimismo, la adhesión de los propietarios de las plataformas a la extrema derecha, como es el caso de Elon Musk, podría exponencialmente influir en la diseminación de postulados contrapuestos a los derechos de las mujeres y de la diversidad sexogenérica, tales como los que exhibe el conservadurismo republicano estadounidense o el libertarismo argentino.

Y justamente, en la búsqueda de generar escenarios comunicacionales alternativos a estas dinámicas, se ubica la interrelación entre las perspectivas de soberanías -geopolítica, cultural, económica y tecnológica- y la propuesta política del feminismo, que plantea transformaciones tanto en lo relacional como en lo estructural, para generar cambios de raíz en la convivencia humana, con formas de comunicación multidireccional y descentralizada, como elemento ineludible para la construcción de sociedades alternativas.

Nuevos escenarios comunicacionales levantados en espacios lo más independientes posible del capital y sus reglas, con software y hardware libres, ofrecen posibilidades de human-

izar las culturas comunicacionales, impregnándolas de contenidos y estéticas post capitalistas y post patriarcales. Una mudanza colectiva de los movimientos antisistémicos -e incluso de países- hacia espacios propios, con tecnologías y éticas de comunicación compartidas, con una gestión colectiva de los datos, sería un gran punto de dinamización de formas de comunicación humanizada.

En ese sentido, las alternativas comunicacionales pueden concebirse como un modo de desconexión del capitalismo⁵ y del patriarcado, en la búsqueda de defender la dignidad inherente a la calidad humana, ante la arremetida del capital para imponer el mercado total y sus correlativos mecanismos de control y vigilancia, compendiados en el concepto de “capitalismo de la vigilancia”,⁶ acuñado para caracterizar la presente etapa.

En otras palabras, así como no hay proyecto de sociedad sin un proyecto comunicacional, tampoco hay producto tecnológico que no resulte de un proyecto de sociedad y de las relaciones de poder subyacentes y tanto estas últimas como todo lo demás son hechos humanos que pueden y deben ser cambiados. ■

Fuente: Internet Ciudadana Marzo/Abril 2025.

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Mediated violence: What price accountability?

Philip Lee

Is there a connection between sustained exposure to representations of violence in the media – as one factor among many complex societal influences – and violence against women? If so, what can be done to transform attitudes and policies? And what about social media platforms and digital technologies?

In 2007, an article published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* assessed some 45 years of research suggesting that exposure to violence in television, movies, video games, cell phones, and on the Internet increases the risk of violent behaviour on the viewer's part – just as growing up in an environment filled with real violence increases the risk of behaving violently.¹ Its conclusion was unequivocal:

“Exposure to electronic media violence increases the risk of children and adults behaving aggressively in the short-run and of children behaving aggressively in the long-run. It increases the risk significantly, and it increases it as much as many other factors that are considered public health threats. As with many other public health threats, not every child who is exposed to this threat will acquire the affliction of violent behavior, and many will acquire the affliction who are not exposed to the threat. However, *that does not diminish the need to address the threat* [emphasis added].”

The following year, the American psychologist John P. Murray summarized decades of

research on children's social development stating, “Fifty years of research on the effect of TV violence on children leads to the inescapable conclusion that viewing media violence is related to increases in aggressive attitudes, values, and behaviours.”² The article argued that changes in aggression are both short-term and long-term and may be affected by neurological changes in the young viewer. Research evidence by various scientific and professional organizations concerned with children's mental health and development has confirmed the effects of violence portrayed in the media.

In 2013, the US not-for-profit Common Sense Media (CSM) published a summary report reviewing scientific research about violence in the media and its possible effects on aggressive behaviour.³ CSM provides parents, educators, health organizations, and policymakers with reliable, independent data on children's use of media and technology and the impact it has on their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development.

The report identified six broad areas of concern: television content, video game content, social media and other online content, music content, movie content, and advertising violent media to children. Published in the aftermath of the 2012 mass shootings in Aurora, Colorado, and Sandy Hook, Connecticut, the report paid particular attention to the role that violent media might have played in such tragic incidents:

“Most researchers... reject the idea that any single factor can ‘cause’ an otherwise nonviolent individual to become violent, particularly when it comes to violence on the scale of a massacre. Rather, they speak in terms of a variety of factors that increase the risk that an individual will behave violently” (p. 11).

At the same time, the report cautions that cross-media studies – controlled for age, gender, and several other variables but not for exposure to family violence – indicate that children who watch violent movies and TV or who play violent video games imitate aggressive scripts, condone

violence, believe the world is a hostile place, become emotionally desensitized to violence, and lose empathy for victims.

There are, of course, multiple factors in play (called moderators or interaction effects) that influence whether and to what extent violent media affect viewers. These are also impacted by “reciprocal” relationships in which those with aggressive tendencies seek out more violent media content, leading over time to a “cycle of influence” or “downward spiral”. The report underlines that such risk factors do not operate in isolation and usually exist in clusters.

The report concludes that longitudinal studies have shown that there are “reasons to be concerned that viewing (or playing) violent content increases the chance that a child will engage in violent behaviour in later life – especially if the child is aggressive to begin with and especially if other risk factors are present” (p. 17).

Several interesting points are made in an article in the British medical journal *The Lancet* published in 2017, which argued that the link between violent media and aggression among children and teenagers is both well established and widely misunderstood.⁴ It noted research on youth communication using social media, “where real-world trauma often plays out online and online aggression can trigger real-world violence” (p. 92).

The article advises clinicians, parents, and teachers who wish to help reduce the negative effects of violent media on children and adolescents to start “by becoming educated about the research evidence” since the entertainment industry knows it is marketing a harmful product and – like the tobacco industry – wants people to believe that the scientific evidence is inconclusive.

Nevertheless, many scholars of media and human behaviour agree that media violence – film, TV, video games – increases *aggression*, but they disagree about its impact on *violent* or *criminal* behaviour. Pinpointing a direct causal relationship between media and violent crime remains elusive. Sociologists and criminologists are sceptical that those who commit violent crimes are

motivated solely by media violence, but they are apt to concede that media may be influential in shaping how some offenders commit a crime.

In a lengthy review of whether media portrayals of violence are a serious problem and, if so, how society should respond, Nickie D. Phillips writes:

“Criminologists and sociologists are generally reluctant to attribute violence and criminal behaviour directly to exposure to violence media. They are, however, not dismissive of the impact of media on attitudes, social policies, and social control as evidenced by the myriad of studies on moral panics and other research that addresses the relationship between media, social anxieties, gender, race, and class inequalities.”⁵

This is the well-trodden ground of the potential links between violence in media content and violent behaviour in society, including the usual caveats regarding correlation vs causation, complex social factors etc. Today, however, there are powerfully direct influences in the form of digital platforms and social media, which operate differently from the “legacy media” with which communicators and sociologists were previously concerned.

We now know that social media have the potential to damage, for example, democratic processes, public understanding of social issues, and gender relationships. Algorithms skew content towards whatever corporate promoters think will gain them the most profit. As a result, people’s views of what is “normal” or “acceptable” are often dictated by what gets the most hits or “clicks”, including what is extreme and/or violent. In this way social media serve to amplify or reinforce prejudice and hatred.

In the context of digitalisation today, we need to revisit the connections between sustained exposure to representations of violence on mediated platforms and both online and offline violence, especially violence against women. In this respect, we also need to challenge and transform public attitudes and national policies.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The media's role in perpetuating gender-based violence against women (VAW) is acknowledged in international instruments such as the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), which recommends, among other actions aimed at eliminating such violence, awareness-raising on the important role of the media in informing and educating people about the causes and effects of violence against women and in stimulating public debate on the topic. According to UN Women:

“The Platform for Action imagines a world where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and realize all her rights, such as to live free from violence, to go to school, to participate in decisions and to earn equal pay for equal work.”⁶

The BPfA's Section J called on government agencies and civil society to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication; and to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

Section D of the Beijing Platform for Action called for integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women (VAW); research into the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures; and the elimination of trafficking in women and assistance for victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking. However, both sections J and D of the BPfA, despite occasional references to information and communication technologies (ICTs), were essentially concerned with the same “legacy” media that provoked concerns about violent content and its likely impact.

In May 2022, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organiza-

tion of American States (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information issued a *Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Gender Justice*.

The Declaration noted that, “eliminating discrimination against women requires a ‘whole of society’ approach. States, the private sector and civil society should work together to address discrimination, stereotyping and interpretations of culture, religion and tradition that subordinate and disempower women and are a root cause of sexual and gender-based violence as well as gendered censorship.”

The Declaration underlined that, “The prohibition against sexual and gender-based violence applies online as well as offline. Online violence against women has particular significance for freedom of expression as it encompasses harmful speech as well as behaviour facilitated by digital technology, including threats of physical or sexual violence, online bullying and stalking, doxing, harassment, targeted electronic surveillance, coercion and non-consensual exposure of intimate images.”

It also stated that, “Gendered disinformation that does not constitute incitement to violence or hatred should be addressed through non-legal and multi-stakeholder strategies implemented by States, companies and civil society, including public education, community awareness, digital, media and information literacy, de-incentivising the spread of disinformation on social media platforms, fact-checking and fostering of diverse and credible sources of information including independent media, and legal, social and digital safety support to empower and build the resilience of those at risk.”

The contemporary “information environment” – those places people see and hear themselves and discover information/disinformation – is more interconnected, more pervasive, and more open to abuse than it ever was in the past because of the prevalence of digital technologies.

It offers a confusing ambience of news, films, documentaries, novels, reality TV, soap operas, magazines, advertisements, and a perplexity of social media platforms. How are issues of gender (in)equality represented in these media and how do they influence each other to contribute to violence against women?

A recent scientific study concluded:

“The level of gender equality in the media is to some extent linked to gender equality in the society as a whole, specifically gender equality legislation and gender awareness in general within societies... In media legal frameworks where gender equality is referred to, the focus is most often on women’s representation in media content, particularly when it comes to combatting or avoiding sexist prejudices and stereotypes. Proper and proportionate provisions might be considered in this area provided they do not interfere with media freedom in the right to freedom of expression.”⁷

Many studies and articles have appeared on digital/social media, especially in relation to the safety of journalists, hate speech, and harassment. In 2021, the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) published *The Chilling: A global study of online violence against women journalists*.⁸ It stated unequivocally:

“Online violence against women journalists is one of the most serious contemporary threats to press freedom internationally. It aids and abets impunity for crimes against journalists, including physical assault and murder. It is designed to silence, humiliate, and discredit. It inflicts very real psychological injury, chills public interest journalism, kills women’s careers and deprives society of important voices and perspectives” (p.8).

Such research demonstrates that the problem of online violence has been repeatedly identified, but that the implementation of corrective measures has been painfully slow. In today’s so-

cieties, the many ways violence (physical, psychological, hate speech, disinformation) against women are mediated (traditional media, social media, and digital platforms) – need to be monitored and remedies (legal, regulatory, and public pressure) formulated for what Lucina Di Meo calls “actionable steps and evidence-based recommendations for traditional and social media outlets, policy-makers, political parties and women politicians for changing the narrative around women and power and promoting more gender-inclusive democracies.”⁹

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The UN Pact for the Future, finalised in September 2024, commits to ensuring that science, technology and innovation improve gender equality and the lives of all women and girls. It pledges to “Address gender-related risks and challenges emerging from the use of technologies, including all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking in persons, harassment, bias and discrimination against all women and girls that occur through or are amplified by the use of technology, including against women migrant workers” (p. 22).

The Pact’s annexed “Global Digital Compact” is more specific. “We must urgently counter and address all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, which occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology, all forms of hate speech and discrimination, misinformation and disinformation, cyberbullying and child sexual exploitation and abuse. We will establish and maintain robust risk mitigation and redress measures that also protect privacy and freedom of expression” (p. 44).

Similarly, the Pact’s annexed “Declaration on Future Generations” calls for “policies and programmes to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence, harassment and abuse against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, and ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all lev-

els of decision-making in all spheres of society” (p. 54).

Despite these laudable aims, there are major gaps in research, legislation, and regulation in relation to violence in the media, particularly regarding the role of social media platforms, and digital technologies. Many countries are taking positive – if contested – steps in response. The UK’s “Online Safety Act 2023” aims to protect children and adults online, imposing new duties on social media companies and search services to make them more responsible for users’ safety on their platforms. Australia has passed the “Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024”, mandating a minimum age of 16 for social media accounts, and requiring platforms to take “reasonable steps” to prevent users under 16 from having accounts. Non-compliance can result in fines of up to AUD \$50 million.

Media companies are beginning to take the issue seriously. In the United Kingdom, the television series *Adolescence* (2025) has provoked public debate about what happens when boys – vulnerable, isolated, and struggling to understand their role in a rapidly changing world – fall prey to the toxic ideas peddled by influencers and online communities. In the USA, *Can’t Look Away: The Case Against Social Media* (2025) is a two-part documentary exposing the real-life consequences of the algorithms of Big Tech companies and their impact on children and teens. It explores “How social media addiction can harm – even kill – kids”, and online safety “The dark side of social media”.

Media literacy for children, adolescents, and adults is vital in tackling the potential harm that social media platforms can encourage. But that leaves the larger question of a media environment that extols and, therefore, normalises violence on screen and in society. It also begs the question of today’s agents of moral formation. They used to be parents, schools, and societal norms, but in an age when political leaders have abandoned moral precepts, when corporate entities have placed profit above lives, when religions have lost moral credibility, we have to ask, “What price account-

ability?”

What is lacking are:

- * evidence-based policy ideas and reforms to tackle these challenges and to support positive change;
- * new frameworks for making the beneficiaries of the digital media economies accountable;
- * open conversations between adults and young people, together with increased social media literacy among parents so they can better understand the pressures their children face online.

There is an urgent need for legislation and policies to halt the unchecked spread of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, to regulate depictions of violence against women, and to guarantee the future psychological and physical safety of children and adolescents. These aspirations will ring hollow if another decade is allowed to pass without concrete actions and measurable results by organizations and governments the world over. ■

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Escuela Común: Fortaleciendo el derecho a la comunicación con tecnologías libres

Por Laura Salas (Witness LAC) y Nicolás Tapia (Laboratorio Popular de Medios Libres)

Ya es 2025 y las tecnologías digitales (TICs) se han convertido en un recurso estratégico para quienes defienden la vida a través de la comunicación, pero también en un espacio de control y vigilancia por parte de grandes corporaciones y gobiernos. En este contexto, Escuela Común es trabajo colaborativo desde Abya Yala, que, a través de encuentros, capacitaciones y desarrollo tecnológico, fortalece el derecho a las comunidades de ejercer una comunicación digital libre, segura y privada.

Las comunidades que enfrentan megaproyectos extractivos, hidroeléctricos o de infraestructura no solo resisten en el territorio, sino también en el plano de la comunicación y la documentación. Cuando empresas y gobiernos imponen estos proyectos sin consulta ni consentimiento, la comunicación se vuelve una herramienta clave para informar al resto de la comunidad, articular redes de apoyo y visibilizar lo que sucede a nivel nacional e internacional. Al mismo tiempo, el monitoreo y la documentación de los impactos permiten generar pruebas que pueden ser utilizadas en tribunales y en instancias de denuncia

pública, fortaleciendo la defensa legal del territorio.

El monitoreo comunitario, que puede incluir la recolección de testimonios, registro fotográfico y audiovisual, y la documentación de daños ambientales o violaciones de derechos humanos, es una estrategia fundamental en estos procesos. Sin embargo, almacenar y compartir esta información en plataformas de grandes corporaciones tecnológicas puede ser riesgoso. Empresas como Google, Facebook o WhatsApp tienen políticas opacas sobre el manejo de datos y pueden restringir o eliminar información sin previo aviso, además de facilitar el rastreo y la vigilancia de quienes defienden el territorio. Al depender de estas plataformas, las comunidades no solo pierden el control sobre su información, sino que también se exponen a represalias, censura o manipulación de sus contenidos.

Por ello, muchas comunidades han optado por construir sus propias herramientas de comunicación y almacenamiento de datos, utilizando servidores autónomos y sistemas de archivo seguros. Esto no solo fortalece su soberanía digital, sino que también garantiza que la información recabada en el territorio llegue a quienes la necesitan sin ser interceptada o manipulada. La lucha contra los megaproyectos no se da solo en el campo físico, sino también en el control de la información. Ejercer el derecho a la comunicación con autonomía y documentar con seguridad son pasos esenciales para defender los territorios y sostener las luchas comunitarias.

EL ADVENIMIENTO DEL “CAPITALISMO DE LA VIGILANCIA”

El impacto de Internet y las tecnologías de la información (TICs) no dejan de ser asombrosas. Más de **5.44 mil millones de personas**, es decir, el **67.1% de la población mundial**, ya son usuarias de Internet. Por su parte, los teléfonos móviles han alcanzado una penetración aún mayor, con **5.65 mil millones de usuarios únicos**, lo que equivale al **69.7%** de la población global.

Este auge no solo se refleja en cómo las

TICs moldean nuestra vida cotidiana, sino también en su poderío económico. Las grandes corporaciones tecnológicas, conocidas como las Big Tech, ahora representan cerca del **21.5% del mercado bursátil mundial**. Su influencia no para de crecer, y el desarrollo de nuevas herramientas como la inteligencia artificial parece estar alimentando aún más su expansión.

Actualmente es fácil documentar con un celular, almacenar en la nube lo que está sucediendo; editar video ya no es algo exclusivo de un profesional del cine o televisión y llevar esa información a los demás pareciera no requerir más que un posteo en una red social. Es indudable que las **plataformas digitales** ofrecen enormes oportunidades para amplificar las voces de las comunidades. Pero como toda herramienta, puede ser esgrimida para más de un uso.

Las tecnologías de la información que con gran éxito comercial han logrado colarse en casi todos los aspectos de nuestra vida cotidiana, son también herramientas de control y vigilancia; como lo devela Shoshana Zuboff en *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (La era del capitalismo de la vigilancia). La minuciosa investigación de la autora describe cómo los datos personales se han convertido en un recurso estratégico para la extracción de valor económico. Las grandes corporaciones tecnológicas, al recopilar y comercializar datos con y sin el consentimiento informado de los y las usuarias, contribuyen a una forma de explotación que va más allá del ámbito económico, afectando la privacidad, la autonomía y los derechos fundamentales de las personas.

A pesar de las leyes de protección de datos en varios países, como el Reglamento General de Protección de Datos (GDPR) en la Unión Europea, numerosas empresas tecnológicas continúan recopilando información personal sin el consentimiento explícito de los usuarios. Un ejemplo reciente involucra a Amazon y su asistente virtual Alexa, que ha sido acusado de recopilar datos personales, incluidas grabaciones de voz de infantes, sin el debido consentimiento. En 2023, Amazon fue multado con 25 millones de dólares en Estados Unidos por violar la privacidad infan-

til, al conservar indebidamente estas grabaciones y usarlas para mejorar sus sistemas de inteligencia artificial, incluso después de que los padres intentaron eliminarlas. Este caso pone de manifiesto cómo las prácticas de extracción de datos afectan y cómo las sanciones económicas, aunque significativas, rara vez modifican estas dinámicas de explotación ya que el valor extraído es mucho mayor.

Estos y otros factores han permitido un auge de la tecnología digital y su modelo económico impulsado por el almacenamiento y procesamiento de cantidades colosales de datos, que está asociado también al significativo aumento de las cantidades de agua consumida por estas empresas, principalmente para la refrigeración de sus sistemas. Sin embargo, obtener una cifra exacta del consumo total de agua a nivel global es desafiante debido a la falta de transparencia y a la variabilidad en los reportes de cada corporación. En Estados Unidos, un reportaje del *Financial Times* estima que en 2023 los centros de datos de ese país consumieron más de 75 mil millones de galones de agua, aproximadamente el equivalente a lo que la ciudad de Londres consume en cuatro meses. Empresas como Google han reportado un aumento del 14% en su consumo de agua en 2023, utilizado principalmente para la refrigeración de sus centros de datos.

UN “ARMA” CON DOBLE FILO

La importancia de la soberanía digital en la lucha por la justicia social no puede subestimarse. En un mundo donde las grandes corporaciones controlan el acceso a la información, los datos y las plataformas de comunicación, las comunidades deben ser las protagonistas de su propio destino digital. El vínculo entre las grandes empresas tecnológicas y los gobiernos refuerza aún más la vulnerabilidad de los usuarios frente a la explotación de sus datos.

Informes recientes, como el publicado por el Proyecto de Transparencia de Solicitudes de Datos de Google, revelan que solo en 2022, la compañía recibió más de 125,000 solicitudes de acceso a datos por parte de gobiernos de todo el



mundo, de las cuales cumplió con más del 60%. En el caso de Amazon, documentos filtrados han mostrado que la empresa proporcionó información almacenada en Ring, su sistema de cámaras de vigilancia, a autoridades sin necesidad de una orden judicial en al menos 11 ocasiones durante un periodo de seis meses en 2022. Estas prácticas no solo normalizan la entrega de datos personales sin el consentimiento informado de los usuarios, sino que también refuerzan dinámicas de vigilancia estatal que pueden ser usadas para el control social y la represión política, especialmente en contextos de regímenes autoritarios o débiles sistemas democráticos.

En este contexto, paradójicamente lo digital ha emergido como una herramienta clave para la resistencia medioambiental, permitiendo a comunidades y defensores coordinar acciones, documentar impactos, denunciar violaciones de derechos y visibilizar conflictos socioambientales a nivel global. donde el poder de veto, vigilancia y la capacidad de silenciar voces recaen exclusivamente en sus propietarios. Esta dinámica genera un entorno frágil para la organización social, con una dependencia peligrosa de estructuras que no priorizan el bien común.

Durante las protestas en Colombia en 2021 (foto arriba), las redes sociales jugaron un papel crucial para documentar la violencia policial y coordinar las movilizaciones del Paro Nacional. Sin embargo, también se registraron casos de censura y limitaciones en estas plataformas. Instagram y Facebook eliminaron transmisiones en vivo y publicaciones que mostraban abusos de derechos humanos, atribuyendo estas acciones a “fallos técnicos” o incumplimiento de políticas comunitarias, como pudieron constatar Amnistía Internacional y el Comité de Protección de Periodistas (CPJ). Además, en países como Chile, activistas y periodistas han denunciado bloqueos selectivos en Instagram y otras redes sociales. Estas acciones evidencian cómo las plataformas digitales, aunque esenciales para las luchas sociales, pueden ser manipuladas o limitadas, restringiendo el acceso a información crucial.

LAS LUCHAS MEDIOAMBIENTALES EN AMÉRICA LATINA

América Latina es un claro ejemplo de esta dualidad. Según el informe de Witness, en 2023 se documentaron 85% de los asesinatos de defen-

sores ambientales a nivel mundial en esta región, con Colombia, Brasil y México a la cabeza del ranking. Mientras que el asesinato sigue siendo la estrategia más brutal para silenciar a los defensores, las mismas herramientas esgrimidas para la organización y la denuncia posibilitan al mismo tiempo la vigilancia y el acceso no autorizado a datos personales, aumentando la persecución y criminalización de quienes luchan por proteger sus territorios.

Frente a esta amenaza, la seguridad digital se vuelve una prioridad para la defensa medioambiental. Pero no se trata sólo de evitar ataques o pérdidas de información a través de buenas prácticas y el uso de sistemas securizados, sino de garantizar que las comunidades puedan mantener **el control sobre sus datos y sus comunicaciones**. El uso de software libre y de plataformas de comunicación digital propias, es crucial en este contexto para protegerse de las vulnerabilidades de los sistemas cerrados que son explotados por grandes empresas privadas para monitorear y monetizar las actividades de los usuarios. La transparencia y la auditoría abierta, el control total sobre las herramientas que se utilizan, es un futuro que tenemos que construir si queremos que estas tecnologías no sean utilizadas en nuestra contra constantemente.

¿Pero cómo construimos ese futuro? Es una pregunta que nos hemos hecho los últimos años un grupo en una región con crecientes amenazas a sus derechos y territorios debido a megaproyectos, extractivismo y violencia sistémica. Estas organizaciones han trabajado de manera colectiva para responder a estos y otros desafíos en la búsqueda de identificar las necesidades de formación tecnológica, metodologías de documentación de derechos humanos y seguridad digital.

EDUCACIÓN POPULAR Y SOFTWARE LIBRE PARA EJERCER NUESTROS DERECHOS

Escuela Común es el resultado de años de trabajo conjunto entre organizaciones que han venido impulsando procesos de resistencia digital y defensa territorial. Organizaciones como WIT-

NESS LAC, el Laboratorio Popular de Medios Libres, Cefo Indígena, Guardian Project y Lanceros Digitales han sido fundamentales en este proyecto.

Además, el proceso contó con el apoyo de WACC, Cultural Survival, Sutti, Numérica Latina, Centro de Autonomía Digital, Colnodo, Espora, COMPPA, Radios Libres y la nación Pakkiru de Ecuador, que contribuyeron a la creación de recursos y estrategias para fortalecer las capacidades de las comunidades en defensa de sus territorios. Para el desarrollo y la implementación de este proceso, se formó un Comité Organizador, compuesto por representantes de las organizaciones convocantes. El trabajo conjunto entre estos actores se yergue como un ejemplo concreto y desde Abya Yala en la construcción de la soberanía digital en los territorios de los pueblos originarios y las comunidades en lucha.

La *Escuela de Comunicación y Tecnologías Libres para la Defensa Común del Territorio (Escuela Común)* es un proceso de formación participativa y popular que este 2024 empoderó a 43 participantes y formadores de 10 países de América Latina y otras regiones del mundo. Las personas participantes fueron seleccionadas, de las más de 150 postulaciones recibidas, reflejando un amplio interés en la iniciativa.

Este proceso se centró en capacitar a las comunidades en el uso de herramientas digitales seguras para la defensa territorial y la advoca-cia por los derechos humanos, acompañado de técnicas como la documentación para procesos judiciales en video, audio e imagen, la archivística digital y el uso de servidores propios para la creación de plataformas de comunicación digitales autónomas.

Un pilar fundamental de esta formación fue el uso del software libre, una alternativa ética que garantiza transparencia, seguridad y control sobre las herramientas tecnológicas. A diferencia de las soluciones propietarias, el software libre permite que las comunidades puedan ver cómo funcionan las herramientas digitales, modificarlas para adaptarlas a sus necesidades y compartirlas sin restricciones. Este enfoque fomenta la colab-



oración abierta y garantiza que las herramientas no sean utilizadas para el control o la explotación de datos, sino para fortalecer la resistencia y la autonomía comunitaria.

Pero no solo se trata de enseñar a usar herramientas (foto arriba), sino de generar una apropiación crítica y colectiva de las tecnologías, siguiendo las prácticas de la Educación Popular. En este sentido, la formación no fue solo técnica, sino que promovió un sentido de propiedad colectiva sobre las herramientas, creando un compromiso profundo con la defensa del territorio y la justicia social. Los participantes no sólo adquirieron habilidades tecnológicas, sino que también adoptaron una visión crítica al uso de éstas mismas nuevas herramientas y habilidades.

HACIA UNA RESISTENCIA DIGITAL COLECTIVA

El uso de tecnologías libres y abiertas no solo es una cuestión de seguridad y privacidad, sino también una herramienta de resistencia frente al control global de la información. En este sentido, el hackeo de los sistemas de poder no es solo una cuestión de modificar el código informático, sino también en buscar alternativas a las estructuras

de poder que controlan la información, los recursos y las vidas de las comunidades.

Escuela Común inició en agosto de 2024 con sesiones virtuales que reunieron a participantes de distintos países de Abya Yala. Estas sesiones abordaron problemáticas territoriales, herramientas tecnológicas y estrategias de comunicación comunitaria, sentando las bases para un intercambio más profundo durante el encuentro presencial en Puyo, Ecuador. Con la participación de iniciativas y organizaciones de México, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Guatemala, Brasil, Colombia, Perú, Bolivia e Inglaterra, la experiencia destacó por su diversidad y el enfoque en las luchas territoriales.

Del 20 al 26 de septiembre, en las instalaciones de la CONFENAIE en Puyo, los participantes se organizaron en dos grupos: “Documentación - Archivo” y “Huertas Digitales”. Las actividades incluyeron talleres, análisis y desarrollo de proyectos enfocados en la documentación de resistencias territoriales y el uso de tecnologías comunitarias. La ceremonia de bienvenida, liderada por la comunidad indígena Kichwa, marcó el inicio del encuentro con una profunda conexión cultural y espiritual a través

de ofrendas y rituales.

El grupo de Documentación y archivo trabajó en la visibilización de las luchas ambientales, abordando el caso de la minería ilegal en Ecuador. Durante la Tercera Asamblea Antimimera, documentaron testimonios, capturaron imágenes con drones y analizaron el impacto en el río Jatunyacu. Dicha información fue sistematizada con la metodología de archivo compartida WITNESS para su uso en estrategia de litigio legal o de impactos en medios de comunicación. Además, se exploró el uso de herramientas como OSINT, análisis de imágenes satelitales y plataformas colaborativas como OpenStreetMap, ejercicio liderado por Cefo Indígena.

El encuentro incluyó talleres sobre seguridad digital, herramientas como ProofMode para la verificación de contenidos multimedia y Tainacan para la organización de repositorios digitales. Estos conocimientos técnicos se combinaron con visitas culturales a la comunidad de Cotococha y al Parque Etnobotánico, así como espacios de intercambio cultural donde se compartieron canciones, historias y saberes en diferentes lenguas, fortaleciendo los lazos entre los participantes y el espacio donde se desarrolló la actividad.

Por su parte, el objetivo del grupo de “Huertas Digitales” fue dotar a las organizaciones de herramientas para gestionar su documentación de manera segura y autónoma, entregando computadoras configuradas como servidores autónomos. Estos equipos permiten a las comunidades manejar su información sin depender de servicios comerciales ni nubes centralizadas. Durante las sesiones, los participantes aprendieron a administrar plataformas, utilizar herramientas como CoopCloud para instalar servicios como Nextcloud y WordPress, y aplicar medidas clave de seguridad, como la gestión de contraseñas, llaves SSH y protección física de los servidores.

El uso de servidores autónomos no sólo promueve la soberanía tecnológica, sino que también representa una alternativa más ecológica. Al descentralizar las infraestructuras y mantener los datos en servidores locales, se reduce significativamente la necesidad de grandes centros

de datos, que consumen enormes cantidades de energía para su funcionamiento y refrigeración. Además, los servidores autónomos pueden optimizarse para operar con energía renovable a pequeña escala, como paneles solares, adaptándose a las necesidades reales de las comunidades. Su uso eficiente permite incluso ajustar su consumo energético a los horarios de actividad local, apagándose cuando no se utilizan, lo que contribuye aún más a disminuir la huella de carbono asociada a las tecnologías digitales.

A pesar de los enormes desafíos logísticos enfrentados en esta formación pedagógica, se logró que personas con poca experiencia previa en el uso de estas tecnologías de 12 comunidades de América fueran capaces de instalar programas y plataformas digitales en pleno corazón de la Amazonía ecuatoriana. La selección de Puyo como sede no fue casual: se eligió pensando en ofrecer un entorno adecuado y accesible para las comunidades participantes, garantizando que el aprendizaje estuviera conectado con su realidad. Esta experiencia no sólo permitió el desarrollo de habilidades técnicas, sino que también fortaleció una comunidad de técnicos y técnicas comprometidos con la autonomía tecnológica y la defensa de sus territorios.

Como parte de este esfuerzo, se estableció la red de apoyo “Abya Yala” mediante una [página web](#), [foro](#) y un canal en Signal, diseñados para intercambiar conocimientos y brindar asistencia técnica. Esta nueva comunidad es un pilar fundamental para que las organizaciones gestionen sus infraestructuras de forma segura, eficiente y colaborativa, asegurando la sostenibilidad y expansión de las iniciativas comunitarias a largo plazo.

CONCLUSIÓN: UN FUTURO DE JUSTICIA Y AUTONOMÍA DIGITAL

El proceso formativo de la Escuela Común continuó en modalidad virtual y abierta durante octubre y noviembre de 2024, ofreciendo un espacio inclusivo y accesible para participantes de otras regiones. A lo largo de casi 15 horas de charlas, presentaciones y ejercicios prácticos, se profund-

izaron y reforzaron los contenidos trabajados en la fase presencial, garantizando una continuidad en el aprendizaje. Este valioso material está disponible de manera abierta y gratuita en la plataforma libre [Wacha Punks](#), facilitando el acceso a recursos educativos para quienes deseen profundizar en los temas tratados y seguir avanzando en su proceso de apropiación tecnológica.

Este esfuerzo conjunto marca el inicio de un camino hacia una autonomía digital y soberanía territorial más sólida. El objetivo no únicamente es capacitar a las comunidades en el uso de herramientas tecnológicas y en una comprensión crítica del software y la seguridad digital, sino también reforzar la capacidad de estas comunidades para archivar de manera adecuada las pruebas que son clave en procesos jurídicos y de comunicación. Una correcta gestión de estas evidencias puede ser determinante en la defensa de derechos, la visibilización de luchas territoriales y la exigencia de justicia en los espacios públicos y legales.

La formación ofrecida permitió a las y los participantes construir redes de apoyo locales, regionales y globales, fortaleciendo su capacidad de resistencia colectiva y compartiendo experiencias enriquecedoras. Este intercambio no sólo amplió su visión sobre los desafíos comunes que enfrentan, sino que también fomentó la colaboración para encontrar soluciones desde la autonomía y el trabajo comunitario.

La implementación de servidores autónomos (**huertas digitales**) y el uso de plataformas descentralizadas representan un pilar fundamental para las defensoras y defensores del territorio. Estas herramientas no sólo otorgan independencia frente a las grandes corporaciones tecnológicas, sino que garantizan que los datos, historias y luchas de las comunidades permanezcan bajo su control, protegidos de manipulaciones o usos indebidos. Además, permiten desarrollar sistemas de archivo seguros, confiables y accesibles, esenciales para documentar procesos, preservar memorias y respaldar las causas de quienes defienden sus territorios. Estas tecnologías, diseñadas y gestionadas desde y para las comuni-

dades, son clave para fortalecer su autonomía digital y su capacidad de resistencia en contextos adversos.

Fortalecer estas redes de solidaridad digital es más urgente que nunca. La lucha por la soberanía digital es una extensión directa de las luchas por la justicia social y ambiental, y medios comunitarios y libres. En este sentido, la comunidad de activistas, técnicos y organizaciones que crece en torno a la **Escuela Común** es un pilar indispensable en la región. Este tejido colectivo no sólo impulsa el uso ético y transformador de la tecnología, sino que también crea espacios donde las voces silenciadas pueden ser amplificadas y las luchas invisibilizadas pueden encontrar apoyo y eco.

Creemos firmemente que a través del trabajo conjunto y el compromiso con la educación popular y las tecnologías libres podemos hackear las estructuras de poder y construir un futuro más justo, sostenible y autónomo, donde las comunidades sean protagonistas de sus propias historias. ■

Witness y el Laboratorio Popular de Medios Libres, junto a Lanceros Digitales, CEFO indígena y Guardian Project forman parte del comité organizador de Escuela Común, junto a la colaboración de Cultural Survival y WACC.

Créditos fotográficos. *Pá 34: Durante las protestas en Ecuador contra Lenin Moreno, la organización Usuarios Digitales reportó que servicios como WhatsApp y Twitter presentaron fallas en la descarga de videos e imágenes. Esta información fue reforzada a través del reporte publicado por la organización Netblocks, que señaló que los servidores de imágenes y contenido (CDN) de Facebook y WhatsApp estuvieron inaccesibles a través del operador de telecomunicaciones estatal -Corporación Nacional de Telecomunicaciones (CNT) Imagen: Protestas en Ecuador, Lanceros Digitales.*

Pá. 36: ¿Y si las organizaciones sociales de América Latina pudieran crear su propia alternativa a Google y Facebook? Este es uno de los grandes desafíos que aborda la Escuela Común, promoviendo la autonomía tecnológica y la soberanía digital en la región. Imagen: Escuela Común.

Fribourg (Switzerland) 2025

The Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, at the 39th Festival international du Film de Fribourg (21-30 March 2025) awarded its Prize of 5'000 CHF, donated by the Church Aid Organisations in Switzerland "Lenten Offering" and "HEKS/EPER/bread for all", to the film *My Friend An Delie* directed by Dong Zijian (China, 2024).

Motivation of the Jury: A man is on his way to his father's funeral in a faraway town. On the way, he meets his childhood friend. The past catches up with them, and traumas and guilt re-surface. Dong Zijian's Chinese road-movie *My Friend An Delie* is staged with precise images. Among the excellent cast, the little boy who plays An Delie deserves a special mention. This relatively simple story opens up a wide range of existential questions, reflecting on courage and the inability to defend oneself against injustice.

Members of the 2025 Jury: Jean-Claude Boillat, Courrendlin (Switzerland); Bénédicte Cuny, Versailles (France); Christa Miranda, Zürich (Switzerland); Bernd Wolpert, Tübingen (Germany).

Saarbruecken (Germany) 2025

At the 46th Film Festival Max Ophuels Prize held in Saarbruecken 20-26 January 2025, the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, endowed with € 2500 by the Katholische Erwachsenenbildung Saarland - Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft e.V. and the Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Evangelische Erwachsenenbildung im Saarland e.V., represented by the Evangelische Akademie im Saar-

land, was awarded to *Scham* (Shame) directed by Lukas Röder (Germany, 2025).

Motivation: This film is an imposition. It shows the struggle of mother and son for mutual understanding between their own guilt and reproachful accusations. The film oscillates between coldness of feeling and heated arguments over a lack of recognition. With merciless directness, the film puts its finger in the wounds of our society: excessive demands, (sexualised) violence, disappointed life models and biographical entanglements are the breeding ground for this existential conflict, which is as painful as it is versatile. Last but not least, the whole range of human need for redemption is revealed in this courageous, brittle and disturbing film. Like punk ...

The film treats the audience as ruthlessly as the characters treat each other: A film that needs to be talked about!

Members of the 2025 Jury: Barbora Cihelková, Czech Republic (President of the Jury) Gerhard Alt, Germany Katja Bury, Switzerland Anke Jung, Germany.

Berlin (Germany) 2025

At the 75th International Film Festival Berlin, held 13-23 February 2025, the Ecumenical Jury appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize in the International Competition to *O último azul* (The Blue Trail) directed by Gabriel Mascaro (Brasil, Mexico, Chile, Netherlands, 2025).

Motivation: This Brazilian dystopic fable (photo sill next page) follows an unlikely hero in a search for freedom. A 77 year-old woman escapes from a future that has been written for her by an authoritarian state. In the beautifully shot fierce landscape of the Amazonas river, her adventure, full of challenges but also unexpected friendships and humour, warns of the dangers of exclusion in our modern societies today and fosters the hope of finding a way out.



In the Panorama, the jury awarded its Prize, endowed with € 2.500 by the Catholic German Bishops' Conference, to *The Heart is a Muscle* directed by Imran Hamdulay (South Africa, 2025).

Motivation: Hearts as muscles can be trained. In Imran Hamdulay's film, a young father from a violent family background, starts with the training. After violently assaulting a man and discovering that the victim also has a son, he learns two things: Forgiveness cannot be bought but only come from mutual understanding. Facing the future needs facing justice as well. With beautiful and realistic cinematography and Afrikaans rap music the director opens the doors to the little-known world and culture of Cape Town outskirts where violence and poverty rub shoulders with friendship, loyalty and love. With some chance to find a gym for hearts.

In the Forum, the Jury awarded its Prize, endowed with € 2.500 by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), to *Holding Liat* directed by Brandon Kramer (USA, 2025).

Motivation: The film deals with the fate of an Israeli woman who has been abducted by

Hamas on October 7, 2023. Without knowing the outcome of the hostage crisis, the filmmakers started a respectful and focused chronicle of a family in anguish. This documentary shows exactly what our time so desperately needs: the willingness to have differentiated conversations and to endure complexities and controversies, without breaking off the discussion.

Members of the 2025 Jury: Peter Ciaccio, Italy (President of the Jury); Brigitta Rotach, Switzerland; Christian Olding, Germany; Stefanie Schardien, Germany; Valérie de Marnhac, France; Juan Carlos Carillo Cal y Mayor, Mexico.