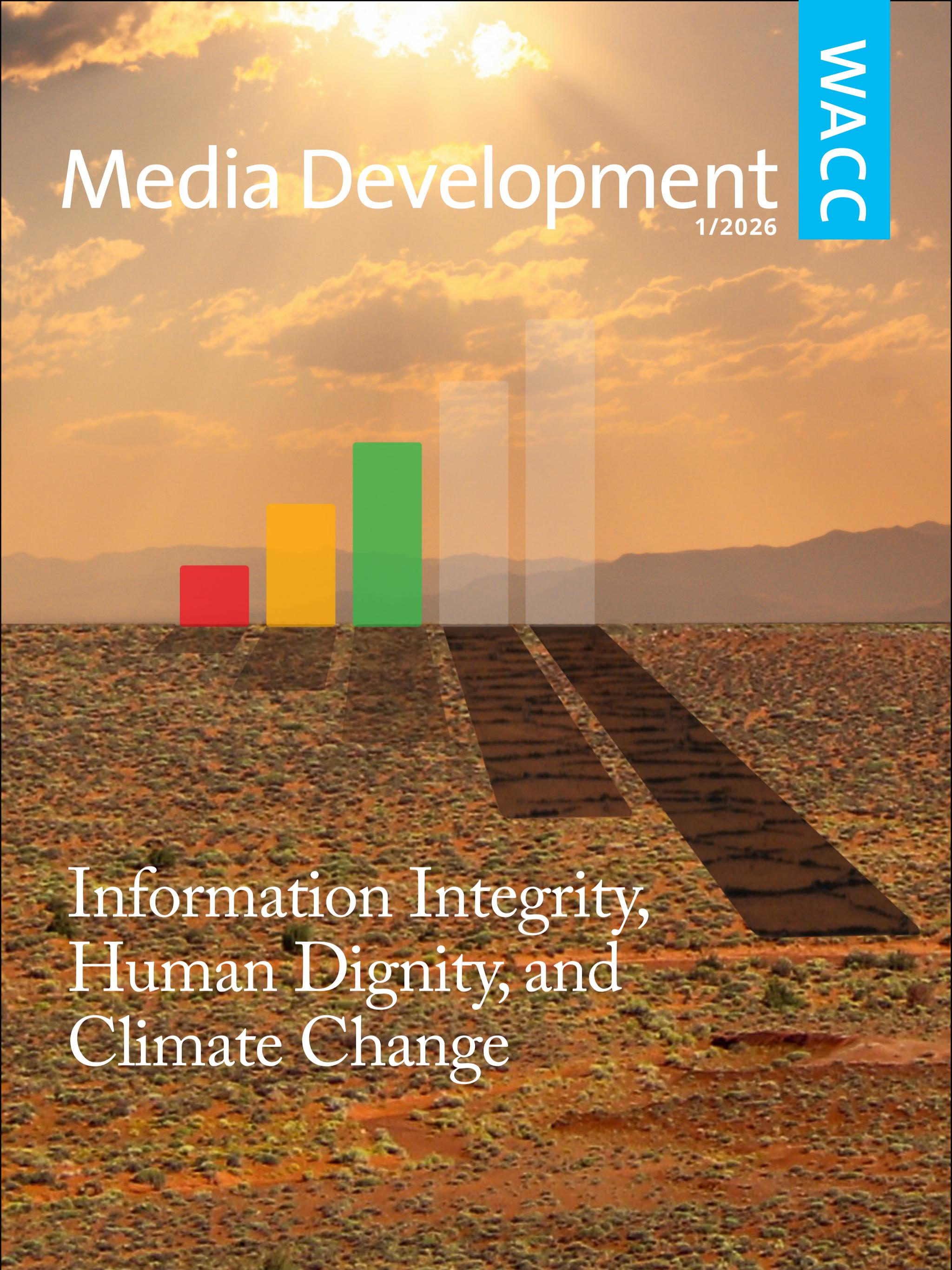


Media Development

1/2026

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Editor: Philip Lee

Assistant Editor: Lorenzo Vargas

Editorial Consultants

Embert Charles (*Chairperson of the Msgr. Patrick Anthony Folk Research Centre (FRC) of Saint Lucia*)
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IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The 2/2026 issue of *Media Development* will explore the notion that more attention must be given to cultural integrity and alternative voices when addressing issues of communication justice.



EDITORIAL

According to the UK's [Natural History Museum](#):

"Climate justice recognises that climate change will not affect everyone in the same way, and that this will lead to inequalities between places, people and even generations. It moves climate change conversations beyond the science and the physical impacts, to questions of politics and ethics, such as who should bear responsibility for paying for the damage caused by climate change, or how much developed countries should help the developing world increase their energy use in a sustainable way."

What this statement inadvertently omits is that, from the perspective of communication rights, the world also needs to pay attention to how communication and information deficits undermine the struggle for climate justice. Such deficits include limited access to information, a dearth of public interest journalism, a generalized lack of critical media literacy, and undemocratic media structures. Together they mean that the knowledge and ways of thinking of communities at the forefront of the climate crisis rarely form part of public debate and are, consequently, absent from policymaking.

As Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva observed before COP30, ([The Guardian](#), 6 November 2025):

"People must be at the centre of political decisions about climate and the energy transition. We must recognise that the most vulnerable sectors of our society are the most affected by the impacts of climate change, which is why just transition and adaptation plans must aim to combat inequality."

WACC's own work with project partners in the Amazon region has demonstrated that a local-first approach helps to bridge communication and information deficits. It enables them to exercise their right to freedom

of expression by sharing traditional knowledge and adaptation solutions. It helps to keep local decision-makers in check by enabling climate-oriented public interest journalism. It also challenges stereotypes about marginalized groups and creates avenues for people's participation in the formulation of climate policies. And, perhaps most importantly, it helps tackle the generalized sense of voicelessness and invisibility that many climate change-affected communities feel.

UN Women has highlighted how the climate crisis is not "gender neutral". Women and girls bear the brunt of its impacts, which amplify existing gender inequalities and pose unique threats to their livelihoods, health and safety. There is ample evidence that climate change is driving a surge in gender-based violence and is a "threat multiplier" worsening gender inequality in conflict affected-areas.

The Belém Gender Action Plan 2026-2034 approved at COP30 has responded with three key provisions:

(1) Promote the use of traditional media, social media, web resources and innovative communication tools to effectively communicate to all relevant stakeholders and the public about climate change and climate action, including their gendered aspects, targeting communications such that they reach different groups, particularly women and girls in vulnerable situations.

(2) Foster the full, meaningful and equal participation and leadership of all women and girls, particularly Indigenous women and women from local communities, taking into account multidimensional factors, by promoting capacity building initiatives for leadership and negotiation skills and by eliminating barriers for women in decision-making processes at all levels.

(3) Encourage gender-responsive climate policies, plans, strategies and actions.

There is a clear relationship between communication justice and climate justice. Writing in this issue of *Media Development*, Aniruddha Jena notes that the provisions of

the recent World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) and its Global Digital Compact – if implemented in affordable and efficient ways – constitute a blueprint for the information needs of the climate emergency:

“The next twelve months should be judged by whether climate services reach people every day, in languages and formats they use, and whether systems keep people safe and provide remedy when things break. Progress is measurable: earlywarning channels that function at low bandwidth and in minority languages; entrylevel mobile plans that meet minimum quality standards; accessible by default design across alerting and consultation platforms; public, rights-preserving protocols for climate-data sharing; language-wise safety capacity and transparent appeal routes on major platforms; and fast, multilingual grievance mechanisms that resolve cases within stated timelines, with independent oversight and annual reporting.”

Climate change is the most pressing and complex challenge of our times. It demands a concerted, proactive, and holistic response – one that crucially includes the full exercise of people’s communication rights. A people-centred approach to resilience and preparedness focuses on how communities need to understand threats in order to adapt to them. At the very least, people and communities need to be active receivers and disseminators of truthful and reliable information.

And strengthening the capacity of local communities to anticipate and to prepare for the varied impacts of climate change must be a key part of any communication outreach. It is undeniable that climate justice – in the shape of fair and effective actions in response to the climate emergency – can only be achieved via communication justice – the capacity of everyone to speak their minds, express their opinions, and be heard in public. ■

WSIS+20, COP30 and a just digital climate transition

Aniruddha Jena

WSIS+20 reaffirmed a people-centred digital future while COP30’s Belém outcomes pushed climate action toward implementation. This article maps their common ground and proposes a practical agenda where communication rights drive climate justice.

The 20-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) restated a core commitment: digital transformation must advance inclusion, participation, and human rights, with universal and meaningful connectivity as a baseline for development [1]. In parallel, the United Nations’ Global Digital Compact (GDC) set out guardrails for a shared digital future: close digital divides; ensure human rights online; improve trust and safety; govern data responsibly; and steer artificial intelligence toward public interest goals with accountability [2].

At COP30 in Belém, states and nonstate actors emphasised delivery. Across the official wrapups and expert syntheses, several through-lines stand out: a push to accelerate adaptation planning and finance, operational advances around lossanddamage arrangements, signals on a just transition away from fossil fuels, and the need to strengthen information flows and accountability so commitments translate into action [3][4][5][6][7]. The Belém Action Agenda catalogued initiatives meant to turn goals into practice, from locally led adaptation to naturepositive pathways and earlywarning capacities [6]. The convergence with WSIS+20 is practical rather than rhetorical: climate action succeeds only if people can access timely, intelligible, trustworthy information, speak and be heard in decisions,

and seek remedy when systems fail. That is the substance of communication justice.

WHERE THE AGENDAS MEET: COMMUNICATION JUSTICE AS CLIMATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Communication justice links WSIS+20 and COP30 along four interfaces. First is *meaningful connectivity*. Plans and warnings do not reach households that lack daily, private internet access on an appropriate device at adequate speed and data. Global analyses show that device costs and quality gaps remain binding constraints for the poorest users, even where data is relatively affordable [8]. WSIS+20's emphasis on universal, meaningful connectivity aligns with COP30's call to make adaptation practical, from heat health alerts to anticipatory action [1][3][6].

Second is *accessibility and language inclusion*. Climate information often fails to travel across languages and abilities. Interfaces are not consistently accessible to people who depend on screen readers or captions; many alerts and consultations are not available in minority languages. WSIS+20 and the GDC frame accessibility as a default obligation; climate action cannot be just if those most exposed cannot read, hear, or interact with the systems meant to protect them [1][2].

Third is *rights-preserving data governance*. Climate services rely on sensitive personal and community data, and on crossborder data flows. The GDC's stress on human rights, accountability, and responsible data governance provides a foundation for climate data sharing with consent, purpose limitation, and remedy. Without this spine, climate technologies risk reproducing surveillance and exclusion [2].

Fourth is *information integrity and participation*. Mis/disinformation and targeted online abuse distort climate debates and chill the voices of women, youth, Indigenous peoples and front-line communities. A people-centred digital order requires safer online spaces, multilingual moderation capacity, and transparent systems for appeal. Belém's emphasis on delivery invites strong-

Recent issues of *Media Development*

4/2025 Integrity and Trust Underpin the Democratic Sphere

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2/2025 WSIS+20: Last Chance for Communication Justice?

1/2025 Climate Justice and Digital Inclusion

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er measurement and public oversight; WSIS+20 offers the enabling norms for that oversight [1][3][4][5][7].

GLOBAL FAULT LINES THAT BLOCK DELIVERY

Despite the new momentum, several systemic gaps cut across regions and income levels.

Access and affordability gaps. Hundreds of millions still lack daily, reliable connectivity on a device they own and trust. The poorest 40% face the steepest device affordability barrier; speed, latency, and data allowances often fall below what earlywarning and publicservice platforms require [8].

Accessibility and language gaps. Many national alerting and consultation systems are not accessible by design, lack support for minority languages, or rely on bandwidthheavy formats that fail during power or network disruptions. This undermines "lastmile" adaptation and preparedness [1][3][6].

Rights and remedy gaps. Weak or fragmented dataprotection regimes and opaque sur-

veillance practices erode trust, while network disruptions or shutdowns during unrest or disasters can sever earlywarning and humanitarian coordination. Remedy pathways for digital harms remain slow and elitecentric in many jurisdictions [2][4][7].

Governance and financing gaps. Universal service funds and climate finance windows rarely prioritise community networks, publicinterest media, or multilingual earlywarning pipelines; monitoring often counts coverage, not use, comprehension, or actionability [6][7].

Knowledge and power gaps. Information-society scholarship shows that infrastructures stabilise power relations; people may be connected yet incorporated on adverse terms that reproduce inequality [12][13][14]. Climate technologies are no exception: without corrective design and accountability, new systems amplify old exclusions [12][14].

FIELD EVIDENCE: APPROACHES THAT TRAVEL

Across continents, a set of practical approaches has demonstrated value and can be embedded in climate delivery.

Community media and local networks for early warning.

Community radios and local connectivity initiatives have translated meteorological feeds into timely, trusted formats, improving preparedness for floods, cyclones, heatwaves, and wildfire smoke. These initiatives work best when co-produced with women's groups and Indigenous knowledge holders and when they are integrated with official alerting channels. WSIS+20's universalaccess ethos and COP30's delivery mindset converge here: earlywarning is only as effective as its uptake [1][3][6].

Open climate data with guardrails.

Rights-respecting data commons allow local innovators to build services, from climatesmart agriculture advisories to neighbourhood heat dashboards. The GDC's framing supports consent, purpose limitation, and grievance redress across borders, enabling use without ex-

traction [2][5].

Language technologies for public alerts.

Publicinterest language platforms and translation missions can lower barriers so heat advisories, evacuation instructions, and drought notices reach people in the languages they use. When paired with lowbandwidth channels (cell broadcast, USSD, IVR) and offline fallbacks, reach and comprehension increase [1][6].

Accountable AI for climate services.

Predictive models for extreme weather, health risks, or infrastructure stress can be powerful, but they require documented risk assessments, bias evaluation, and appeal rights for affected users. The GDC points to auditable, humancentred AI; COP30's focus on implementation and accountability aligns with that direction [2][3][7].

A TWELVEMONTH DELIVERY CHECKLIST FOR 2026

Governments and UNFCCC bodies.

Embed meaningful connectivity targets for climate services in adaptation plans and NDC updates; adopt accessibilitybydefault standards for all public alerting and consultation systems; prohibit blanket internet shutdowns during disasters; and publish annual delivery scorecards that track reach, comprehension, and remedy [1][3][6][7].

Regulators and public agencies (telecom, disaster, meteorological, dataprotection).

Enforce minimum quality of service for entrylevel mobile plans; require language-wise accessibility and lowbandwidth fallbacks for alerts; mandate rights-preserving APIs for public alert systems; and establish fast, multilingual grievance mechanisms with escalation to independent oversight [1][2][6].

Platforms and telcos/ISPs.

Resource language-specific safety and crisis response teams; provide voice first, low bandwidth channels for verified alerts; publish independent audits of contentmoderation capacity and response times by language; and implement

privacy protections for shared device and low-literacy users [2][5][7].

Cities, regions, and civil society.

Expand community networks and public-interest media in hazard prone regions; train local media and civic groups in climate literacy and verification; run safety clinics for at risk groups; and codesign feedback loops so agencies can correct alerting failures quickly [1][6].

Donors and climate funds.

Tie climate finance to communication justice enablers, including connectivity, accessibility retrofits, and safety systems; fund independent evaluations of earlywarning reach, comprehension, and actionability; and support public interest research in underresourced languages on climate and information integrity [4][6][7][10][11].

WHY THIS WORKS: THE ANALYTICAL SPINE

Information society research offers two clear cautions and one opportunity. First, technological determinism, assuming that more data or faster networks automatically yield equity, has repeatedly failed; institutions and power shape outcomes [12][13][14]. It is governance, market structure, language hierarchies, and design choices that determine who benefits from a new system and who is left to the margins, even when infrastructure expands [12][13][14]. Second, “adverse digital incorporation” describes how people may be connected but on terms that reproduce inequality, from unaffordable devices to interfaces that assume literacy or majority languages [15]. In practice this looks like one handset shared across a family, pay-as-you-go plans that ration access, and public portals that presume high literacy, all of which bend participation away from those most exposed to climate risk [15].

Against these cautions stands a practical opportunity. The opportunity is to treat communication rights, access, participation, pluralism, gender equality, safety, and accountability, as delivery mechanisms, not slogans. That means

specifying yardsticks that can be monitored in real time: reach into lowincome and remote communities, comprehension in relevant languages and accessible formats, timeliness during hazards, protection from online harms that silence participation, and remedy when systems fail [10][11].

Read this way, the WSIS+20/GDC digital track becomes the enabling layer for COP30’s implementation agenda, connecting climate finance and adaptation plans to everyday information conditions.

CONCLUSION: A JUST TRANSITION NEEDS A JUST INFORMATION ORDER

Belém placed a premium on delivery. WSIS+20 and the GDC supply an enabling blueprint for the information order that delivery requires. The next twelve months should be judged by whether climate services reach people every day, in languages and formats they use, and whether systems keep people safe and provide remedy when things break. Progress is measurable: earlywarning channels that function at low bandwidth and in minority languages; entrylevel mobile plans that meet minimum quality standards; accessible by default design across alerting and consultation platforms; public, rightspreserving protocols for climate data sharing; language wise safety capacity and transparent appeal routes on major platforms; and fast, multilingual grievance mechanisms that resolve cases within stated timelines, with independent oversight and annual reporting.

If these conditions are met, communication justice becomes climate infrastructure in practice, turning budgets and policies into lived protection for those at greatest risk. If they are not, finance and targets will remain numbers on a page, and the trust needed for collective action will continue to erode.

The opportunity is within reach: align WSIS+20’s people-centred digital commitments with COP30’s implementation agenda, fund the missing pieces, publish what is working and what is not, and coursecorrect quickly with affected

communities at the table. That is how summits move from words to the world. ■

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Aniruddha Jena (PhD) is Assistant Professor in the Communications Area at the Indian Institute of Management Kashipur. His work focuses on communication rights, alternative and community media, and communication for social change.

Climate adaptation for empowerment, inclusivity and justice

I. Arul Aram

The new interpretation of climate adaptation is not just to protect human lives and economies but also to put mechanisms in place for a better future.¹

This statement emphasises the importance of adaptation and resilience-building to empower communities and countries, the integration of adaptation into national development plans, and the urgent need for climate finance to support these efforts. It sees climate adaptation as a transformative process for enabling people, especially vulnerable groups, to live safe and dignified lives amid environmental upheaval.

Many countries face some of the most severe climate impacts – from rising sea levels threatening island nations (such as the Maldives, Tuvalu and Kiribati) and coastal megacities (Jakarta, Bangkok, New York, Miami, Manila, and Mumbai), to extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, and tropical cyclones affecting and disrupting the lives of millions. The urgency of effective climate adaptation is undeniable. However, true adaptation must extend beyond infrastructure or economic measures. It involves empowerment through inclusive climate justice and strong, clear communication to ensure that adaptation plans are realistic, equitable and actionable.

COMMUNICATION OVERLOOKED

Despite the critical importance of communication and climate justice, major global climate

action agendas – including the one prepared for COP30 – often give only passing mention to these elements. The “Pact for the Future” adopted at the 2024 UN Summit of the Future stresses sustainable development and innovation but falls short of emphasising the role of communication, independent journalism, and public engagement in climate adaptation and resilience.

Climate justice demands that the voices of marginalised and affected communities – many of whom are in the Global South – are heard and integrated into solutions. Achieving equity requires transparent awareness-raising, accurate information dissemination, and platforms for communities to share their lived experiences, needs, and solutions that may be adaptable for similarly affected groups. Effective communication is the bridge that connects policy with people, while turning government commitments into real-world resilience.

Narrative framing plays a crucial role in shaping how audiences understand and respond to climate change. When information is presented in ways that emphasise clarity, relevance, and proportionality, it becomes easier for the public to interpret risks and responsibilities meaningfully. Audiences engage more deeply when climate messages help them make sense of impacts in relation to their own lived contexts rather than through abstract or exaggerated depictions.

The challenge is compounded by diverse cultures, languages, and media access inequalities in the Global South. Many local communities rely on traditional media, local networks, or emerging digital platforms, which may or may not be effectively focusing on climate coverage.

CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE COMMUNICATION

There are many barriers hindering climate communication and justice. One includes a fragmented media landscape, where widely varying communication channels pose not just conceptual but also applicative challenges. While urban centres tend to have digital access, rural and remote communities often lack it, creating an in-

formation gap. Furthermore, many languages and cultures require tailored communication strategies that respect local contexts and traditions while effectively conveying scientific knowledge about climate change.

A balanced communication approach is essential in climate discourse, as overly dramatic or technical messaging can alienate audiences. Research suggests that communication which acknowledges both risks and possibilities enables a more grounded understanding of environmental change. Such an approach prevents emotional overload while still conveying the seriousness of climate impacts. By combining scientific accuracy with accessible framing, communicators can support more sustained public engagement without confusion or disengagement.

The rise of digital platforms also brings challenges of climate misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories that can undermine public trust and climate action efforts. Although tech innovation is diffusing, digital divides remain, particularly in rural or poorer regions. Limited digital literacy restricts the use of advanced tools, such as AI or GenAI, in spreading climate awareness and supporting adaptation. AI is becoming an indispensable tool for addressing climate adaptation and resilience. AI applications range from improved climate modelling and disaster risk prediction to targeted communication, data analysis, and the design of community-support tools. However, its role remains largely unrecognised and is also often undermined in global climate governance.

AI enhances the accuracy and timeliness of climate impact forecasts by analysing massive data sets. For instance, AI models can help predict flooding events in the densely populated Ganges Delta or drought patterns in Central Asia, enabling better preparedness and responses. AI-driven platforms can support local decision-making by translating climate forecasts into locally relevant advice or alerts in native languages. In some countries, mobile apps powered by AI provide farmers with real-time information on weather and crop conditions, improv-

ing and safeguarding livelihoods even as climate risks escalate.

AI IN JOURNALISM AND COMBATING MISINFORMATION

AI tools can also assist independent journalists by providing data-driven insights and quickly verifying facts, which is crucial for combating climate misinformation. Moreover, AI can be deployed to detect and mitigate the spread of false content on social media, thereby preserving public confidence in climate information.

However, to harness AI's benefits equitably, the Global South must address ethical concerns, data biases, infrastructure gaps, and capacity-building needs. Ensuring that AI-driven climate solutions respect privacy and inclusiveness is a fairly convoluted administrative challenge underlined by the UN's Global Digital Compact within the Pact for the Future.

Journalism carefully explains scientific uncertainty, debunks myths, and builds trust through transparency and data literacy – critical in a domain where misinformation spreads almost literally like a wildfire. In fact, AI tools are widely used to detect misinformation, particularly those propagated through social media.

CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM

Climate change unfolds slowly, often without the dramatic visuals that make other crises newsworthy. Constructive journalism helps overcome this challenge by shifting from alarmist, fearmongering, episodic coverage to sustained, solution-oriented storytelling with relatable narratives and adoptable measures that engages audiences rather than overwhelming them. There have been instances where solutions-based narratives in climate coverage not only aided the audience fight helplessness but also inspired them to participate in climate action.²

Constructive journalism highlights local, everyday impacts – heat stress, changing monsoon patterns, coastal erosion, water scarcity, etc – making slow-moving climate risks feel real and

relevant. This narrows the psychological distance that often makes climate change seem abstract or far away.

Traditional climate reporting can cause “climate fatigue” or helplessness through its problem-centric focus. Constructive journalism balances the seriousness of the problem with evidence-based solutions, showing what communities, scientists, and governments are doing, and what actually works. This encourages audiences to feel empowered rather than being helpless, while also inspiring them to adopt or even adapt similar measures.

When floods, wildfires, or heatwaves are framed as one-off events, people fail to connect the dots or grasp that these may all be different disasters but connected effects of climate change. Constructive journalism consistently links such events to long-term climate trends, helping audiences understand why the “creeping” nature of climate change matters. Because climate change is slow and layered, constructive journalism's commitment to long-term follow-up reporting ensures that the issue does not disappear between disasters. It treats climate change as a continuous beat, not a seasonal topic.

Coverage of adaptive strategies such as coastal zoning policies, heat action plans, drought-resistant crops, renewable energy innovations, and flood-resilient architecture helps confirm that climate action is not just possible but also adoptable and adaptable. Constructive journalism emphasises lived experiences from those affected: farmers, fisherfolk, urban workers, women's groups, informal settlers, scientists, etc. When people see stories of individuals like themselves navigating and overcoming climate pressures, the issue feels proximal, relatable and immediate.

COLLABORATION: GOVERNMENTS, PRIVATE SECTOR, AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The complex challenge of climate communication and justice can only be solved through co-ordinated efforts at all levels. The broader media ecosystem –spanning traditional outlets, digital

platforms, and community networks – plays a decisive role in determining public exposure to climate issues. Different platforms vary widely in their reach, depth, and framing of environmental stories, which influences how audiences perceive both urgency and relevance. Ensuring coherence across these platforms can help reduce misinformation and create more consistent pathways for awareness-building. This interconnected media environment underscores the need for communication strategies that recognise the diversity of channels through which people encounter climate-related information. Global South governments must place communication and justice firmly within climate adaptation policies. This includes:

- * Supporting independent journalism and climate education
- * Investing in ICT infrastructure to close digital divides
- * Creating multilingual, culturally appropriate communication strategies
- * Promoting transparency and accountability in climate finance and adaptation projects.

For example, the Philippines government strengthened its climate communication networks post-Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, working with media and community groups to deliver timely warnings and adaptation information.

Corporations, particularly in tech and media sectors, can play a crucial role. This includes the development and deployment of AI tools for climate prediction, misinformation control, and adaptive communication. Funding climate journalism and capacity-building in vulnerable regions is vital now more than ever. Therefore, it is necessary to innovate and propagate affordable digital access models for underserved communities.

Asian tech giants in South Korea, India, and China are pioneering AI research that could be tailored for climate resilience applications, but partnerships with governments and civil society are key for a broader reach and greater chances of adoptability.

Community engagement can ensure the

relevance of climate adaptation measures reaches the people and is shared among themselves. Indigenous knowledge and local expertise can not only enrich scientific data but also improve adaptation strategies. Community media outlets and grassroots networks are critical in areas with limited access to formal media and by empowering the youth and women as climate communicators can further strengthen the inclusivity of climate action.

In Bangladesh where nearly half of the country is flood-prone, local community radio stations have been pivotal in educating rural populations about flood risks and adaptation by merging traditional knowledge with scientific data.

SUCCESS STORIES

India's climate resilience initiatives include integration of communication strategies into massive rural adaptation programmes, such as AI-supported weather alerts for farmers and participatory platforms where marginalised groups can voice their adaptation needs.

Indonesia leverages digital platforms through AI-supported digital climate hubs to offer climate information in local languages, specifically targeting remote island communities that are extremely vulnerable to sea-level rise.

Independent media outlets in countries such as Vietnam and Myanmar are increasingly focusing on climate justice stories, though their work faces obstacles from political pressures and resource constraints.

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Climate communication and justice have become extremely critical but continue to remain under-emphasised, as observed during the COP30 climate conference. There are economic, political, and cultural barriers faced by vulnerable and indigenous groups in exercising their communication rights and having their lived experiences recognised in policy debates. This marginalisation leads to a climate governance system that

is disconnected from the realities of those most impacted, while undermining trust and relevance in global processes.

Furthermore, COP30 agendas have largely overlooked the indispensable role of independent journalism and communication justice in amplifying local voices and insights essential for equitable climate adaptation and mitigation. Additionally, the transformative potential of emerging technologies like AI in supporting adaptation, resilience, and capacity-building through predictive analytics and data-driven decision-making remains insufficiently integrated.

To overcome these obstacles, governments, the private sector, and local communities must collaborate in innovative ways. Governments need to create enabling policies and finance mechanisms that support inclusive communication platforms and independent media amplifying marginalised voices. The private sector can leverage its resources and technology, including AI tools, to enhance early warning systems, risk assessment, and climate-resilient infrastructure, while partnering with community media and NGOs to ensure localised needs are addressed. Local communities should be actively engaged not only as beneficiaries but also as co-creators in climate communication strategies, ensuring respect and inclusivity for indigenous knowledge and grassroots solutions. Cross-sector partnerships based on shared values and collaborative engagements can build trust, enhance transparency, and foster climate justice by recognising communication justice as integral to climate action.

Contemporary scholarship warns that relying on doomsday-oriented apocalyptic frames can undermine the very communication goals that climate action demands. Repeated exposure to catastrophic, end-focused narratives can intensify public fear to the point where the distinction between reasonable concern and irrational anxiety becomes blurred, sometimes even linking such heightened apprehension with harmful behavioural outcomes.³ Disaster-centric media environments magnify perceived risks far beyond

scientific assessments, contributing to a wider “culture of fear” that fosters paralysis rather than constructive civic engagement with environmental challenges.⁴

TOWARDS AN EQUITABLE FUTURE

The COP30 climate summit held in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025, included a commitment for the Global North to triple adaptation finance for the Global South by 2035, while it avoided a clear roadmap to phase out fossil fuels. COP30 decided to reverse deforestation and forest degradation in an equitable manner, in tropical countries particularly Brazil and Indonesia.

The UN’s Pact for the Future and Global Digital Compact provide a critical framework for integrating science, technology, human rights, and multilateral cooperation. However, actual progress in climate adaptation will depend heavily on addressing communication and climate justice gaps, especially in the diverse and vulnerable contexts of the Global South.

Empowering communities through transparent, inclusive, and innovative communication - supported by AI and flourishing independent media - can transform climate adaptation from a survival strategy into a path for growth and sustainability. Governments, private actors, and local communities must proactively collaborate, backed by the Pact’s ethical and practical commitments, to build a climate-resilient world. ■

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I. Arul Aram (PhD) is the Chief Academic Officer of the ICAT College of Design and Media. He is a former Chief Sub-Editor with *The Hindu* newspaper, Chennai. He specialises in communicating climate change.

When AI meets Indigenous Knowledge: Climate resilience in rural Zimbabwe

Kudzaiishe Ndawana and Ngoni Muchenje

In rural Zimbabwe, the first sign of a coming drought is not a warning from a satellite, a government bulletin, or a climate model. It is the wind. Or the behaviour of birds. Or the flowering or failure to flower of certain indigenous trees. Long before Artificial Intelligence promised hyper-local forecasts, communities relied on a web of ecological signals, passed down through generations, to understand when to plant, when to conserve water, and how to prepare for difficult seasons. This is knowledge carried in stories, in daily observation, and in the lived experience of people whose survival depends on reading the land accurately.

Today, the world is rushing to introduce a new kind of climate knowledge into these communities: AI-generated forecasts, crop-diagnostic apps, remote sensing analysis, and predictive drought models. At global platforms like COP30, these digital tools are hailed as the future of climate adaptation as they are precise, scalable, innovative. But for communities like those MeDRA works with in Buhera, Gokwe South, Bikita and Chipinge, AI is both a promise and a threat.

AI carries enormous potential, yet it arrives in places where network coverage drops with each passing kilometre from town, where data is expensive, where one smartphone may be shared by an entire household, and where local knowledge remains the first and most trusted early warning system.

Adaptation in Zimbabwe is increasingly shaped by this tension: the collision between high-tech climate solutions and deeply rooted indigenous knowledge systems. And, if not handled carefully, the digital divide risks turning the AI revolution into a source of new inequality.

TRANSFORMATION AND EXCLUSION

AI certainly offers transformative opportunities. In theory, it can generate hyper-local weather forecasts that could help farmers time their planting with precision. It can diagnose crop diseases through a simple phone camera, translate climate information into local languages, or feed humanitarians with predictive drought models that guide anticipatory financing. These tools could change lives.

But the cracks appear quickly. Most AI systems are trained on Western data that do not reflect African climatic behaviour, soil chemistry, or agricultural contexts. Incorrect advice is not just inconvenient as it can cost a season's harvest. And with the rise of AI-generated misinformation, some rural WhatsApp groups may be exposed to fabricated weather alerts, and deepfake videos presented as truth. For communities with limited digital literacy, misinformation spreads faster than evidence.

The deeper threat, however, lies in exclusion. AI tools assume connectivity, literacy, and stable digital access – none of which can be guaranteed in rural Zimbabwe. When adaptation policy ignores this reality, the most vulnerable are left behind.

Against this backdrop, MeDRA's work on climate resilience demonstrates a different, more grounded approach – one where technology is introduced carefully and only after strengthening

the communication and knowledge systems that communities already trust. At the heart of this approach are Zimbabwe's Village Business Units (VBUs) or Agricultural Business Hubs. These VBUs began as local marketplaces for small-scale produce, but over time they have evolved into informal climate information centres. On any given day, women and men gather under the shade of a tree or near a communal garden to exchange stories: rainfall patterns, pest attacks, the performance of drought-tolerant crops, or the price of tomatoes in the nearest town. Some share indigenous signals – like the late fruiting of wild trees – as indicators of a dry season ahead. Others bring updates from the radio, the Agricultural Business Advisory Officer, or a family member working in major towns.

These organic networks spread information quickly and reliably, especially where formal systems fall short. Their strength lies in trust. As one woman in Gokwe South explained, "At the VBU we don't just talk about money. We teach each other how to survive the drought."

The same dynamic is visible in MeDRA-supported borehole committees in Gokwe South. These committees help generate some of the most valuable climate data in the area – manually tracking water table levels, pump performance, and groundwater stress long before any satellite imagery captures the decline. Their reports, sent to MeDRA and district authorities, tell a human story behind the numbers: why certain boreholes dry first, how women shoulder more burden during droughts, or how cultural norms shape water use. No algorithm can interpret these dynamics without human insight.

Instead of replacing this knowledge, MeDRA is experimenting with ways to blend it with digital tools. If water committees can document their observations through simple mobile forms, their data can feed into broader predictive models. If WhatsApp channels are used strategically, early warnings can reach entire villages within minutes. And once Starlink internet is installed at the new Climate-Resilient Agribusiness Hub in Rambanepasi, communities will, for

the first time have stable broadband access to AI tools, digital marketplaces, and online training. But the difference is that technology will arrive at a community that already has strong local governance, active knowledge-sharing networks, and youth prepared to serve as digital intermediaries.

INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE

The Agribusiness Hub itself is a model of locally led innovation, blending climate-resilient agriculture, inclusive governance, digital marketing, indigenous knowledge, and youth leadership. A democratically elected Hub Management Committee ensures gender balance, youth representation, and community ownership. Meanwhile, local young people – trained as Digital Champions – will learn to create online catalogues for honey and garden produce, use AI to design marketing content, and manage farm bookkeeping digitally. For many, this will be their first chance to apply technology in a meaningful way. The hub becomes not just a climate adaptation tool, but a space of digital empowerment.

One of the hub's most visionary components is the systematic documentation of the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS). Through storytelling dialogues, MeDRA is working with elders, traditional leaders, and knowledge holders to record indicators that have guided communities for generations – such as bird migration patterns or the flowering of local trees that signal early rain. This material will be transcribed, digitised, and preserved. If AI systems are trained on this culturally rooted dataset, rather than relying solely on Western-centric climate indicators, the resulting forecasts could finally reflect the unique rhythms of Zimbabwe's environment. Algorithms alone cannot hear the wind, but with the right data, they can learn from those who do.

Of course, the digital future of climate adaptation depends not only on farmers: it depends on the journalists who interpret climate science, counter misinformation, and amplify rural voices. Zimbabwean journalists continue to work under severe constraints: minimal climate training, lack of transport to remote areas, political sensitivities,

and almost no access to climate datasets. Yet they remain the thin line between truth and misinformation in rural communication channels. As one journalist admitted, “Sometimes we see climate disasters before authorities do. But we have no money to travel.” If AI is to support adaptation, journalists must be resourced – not replaced.

Ultimately, Zimbabwe’s experience offers a powerful lesson for the rest of the world: AI cannot build climate resilience on its own. It must sit within a broader ecosystem where people, culture, and communication come first. Rural communities are not passive recipients of climate technology – they are co-creators of knowledge. They know their land intimately. They innovate constantly. They teach and learn from each other. And when given the right tools, they use technology in ways that reflect local priorities.

The future of climate adaptation in Zimbabwe and perhaps in much of the Global South lies in merging the best of both worlds: the precision of Artificial Intelligence and the wisdom of traditional ecological knowledge. But the order matters. Communities must lead, technology must serve and communication rights must be protected so that every person regardless of gender, age, literacy, or connectivity can access, understand, and shape the information that affects their survival.

As a MeDRA facilitator once noted during a drought preparedness dialogue, “AI can tell us it will be dry next month. But only our elders can tell us how to survive it.” The world would do well to listen. ■

Kudzaiishe Ndawana and Ngoni Muchenje serve as the National Director and Projects Officer respectively for the Methodist Development and Relief Agency (MEDRA) in Zimbabwe, specialising in climate adaptation, community resilience, and communication for development across rural communities specifically Buhera, Gokwe South, Chipinge, and Bikita Districts. Their work focuses on strengthening local participation, documenting climate resilience stories, and advancing communication rights in rural communities amongst other key thematic areas.

A economia do Brasil vai bem, mas os povos da Amazônia pagam alto preço

Edilberto Francisco Moura Sena

De repente a Amazônia se torna o centro do mundo por receber a COP30 em Belém, que se torna simbolicamente a capital do país. Alguns milhões de reais foram gastos para enfeitar a casa, mesmo que a periferia da capital de 1.3 milhões de moradores continue na pobreza sem saneamento básico.

Aqui é onde está a maior floresta tropical do planeta, mas nas 29 cops anteriores pouco foi realizado e vivemos hoje uma crise climática que se aproxima de catástrofe. Outro fato que justifica esta cop 30 acontecer na Amazônia, é que aqui está a maior floresta tropical do planeta e floresta é um dos principais filtros da poluição envenenada que está desestabilizando a convivência entre humanos e natureza. Para muitos, como eu, há um ceticismo quanto aos resultados da COP30 que possam frear a destruição do planeta.

Minha expectativa está fora da chamada linha azul da Cop onde só estão os chefes de Estado e seus assessores; fora da linha azul estão os vários movimentos sociais organizados em três grupos mais resistentes, a Cúpula dos Povos, a COP do Povo e a Associação dos povos indígenas do Brasil, APIB. Com a união das várias organizações da sociedade civil nacional e internacional, é que pode surgir pressão suficiente para as soluções da crise climática saiam das boas intenções para práticas estratégicas.

Por que parece tão difícil para o Estado

brasileiro tomar decisões que venham ao menos salvar a Amazônia para ajudar a salvar o planeta? Já que a Amazônia, além de ter a maior floresta tropical do planeta, possui também, uma imensa rede de bacias hidrográficas, tendo como raiz o maior rio do planeta, o Amazonas e cerca de 30 milhões demoradores aqui vivendo. Há alguns motivos para esse ceticismo sobre a COP30.

Primeiro, o Brasil, hoje décima economia mais potente do planeta, constrói essa riqueza dentro da visão colonialista de busca de desenvolvimento. A ideologia do desenvolvimentismo, que divide o mundo entre norte e sul, onde os países do sul são estimulados a seguir um caminho de crescimento para um dia chegar a ser desenvolvido. Assim, o Brasil ainda é um país subdesenvolvido, comparado com Canadá, Inglaterra e outros do Norte.

Iludido por essa ideologia do norte global, para alcançar o estágio sonhado de país desenvolvido, nossos governantes investem na economia extrativista predadora. Por exemplo, o financiamento do governo para a safra agrícola para 2025/26 é de 625 bilhões de reais (5,35 bilhões de dólares) para o agronegócio e apenas 78 bilhões de reais (14,79 bilhões de dólares) para agricultura familiar. Isto porque para sustentar a economia do país, a exportação de produtos primários, soja, milho, carnes, etc, para o mercado internacional, justifica para o governo a disparidade de apoio, mesmo sabendo que a agricultura familiar é que abastece as mesas dos brasileiros.

E aí voltamos para o resultado da COP 30 na Amazônia. Ao mesmo tempo que nosso governo tenta fazer algo positivo em defesa do clima, como propor o grande projeto TFFF Tropical forest forever facility, é contestado por ser um projeto que depende muito da “generosidade” dos outros países, além de depender de fundos de investimento, que farão negócio rentável com investimento na conservação de florestas alheias no sul do mundo. Outros se perguntam qual a diferença do TFFF do Crédito de carbono? Ainda mais que os recursos do fundo florestam para sempre serão administrados pelo Banco mundial.

OUTRO ASPECTO QUE NOS DEIXA DESCRENTE DO SUCESSO DE MAIS UMA COP EM DEFESA DO CLIMA

Pouco antes da Cop em Belém, o governo federal forçou o Instituto Brasileiro de meio ambiente e recursos naturais renováveis (IBAMA) a liberar a exploração de petróleo no mar na foz do rio Amazonas. Este é outro projeto contraditório na sua essência, por ampliar exploração do maior gerador de CO₂ na natureza, o petróleo. Poucos meses antes da cop30 o Ibama foi levado a aprovar teste de exploração de petróleo no mar próximo a foz do rio Amazonas. A afirmação do presidente Lula de que seria necessário explorar petróleo na costa do Estado do Amapá, para com o rendimento do petróleo cuidar do meio ambiente, revela exatamente a mentalidade subdesenvolvida de querer avançar no desenvolvimento, explorando a natureza.

Nós do Movimento Tapajós Vivo MTV, somos parte da resistência em busca de outro mundo alternativo. Como também nossa Rede de Notícias da Amazônia RNA, buscamos o caminho do Bem viver, herança de nossos ancestrais. Há 18 anos tanto o MTV como a RNA, vêm se juntando a outros movimentos de resistência a essa ideologia desenvolvimentista.

Primeiro, o Movimento Tapajós Vivo vem construindo uma estratégia de enfrentar os projetos que buscam renda e lucro, à custa da natureza. Tanto a exploração predatória de ouro nos garimpos e minerações na região do rio Tapajós, quanto explorar o rio tapajós como objeto de renda capitalista. Enquanto o governo federal planejava construir sete grandes hidroelétricas ao longo do rio Tapajós, um absurdo projeto violentador do grande rio tapajós com a desculpa de gerar energia limpa, o que era mentira. A resistência do povo munduruku e de nossos movimentos sociais conseguimos arquivar o desastrado projeto.

Vencemos aquela batalha, mas chegaram outras. Mais recente, com a rodovia Br 163 ligando o centro da plantação de grãos, soja e milho no Estado do Mato Grosso até o rio Tapajós aqui na cidade vizinha de Itaituba, abriu-se mais

fonte de enriquecimento dos exportadores do agronegócio. Já foi construído um imenso porto graneleiro em frente a cidade de Santarém pela multinacional CARGILL, e nos últimos 10 anos, as empresas exportadoras de grãos decidiram com silêncio do Estado brasileiro, construir sete grandes portos em frente a cidade de Itaituba, para de lá enviar em comboios de barcaças lotadas de grãos via rio Tapajós, rumo aos portos oceânicos para o mercado internacional.

Assim para os exportadores de grãos ficou mais econômico e mais lucro, se apossando do belo rio Tapajós. Pode imaginar sete empresas cada uma com seus comboios de barcaças empurradas por um rebocador, cada comboio com cerca de 200 metros de comprido e setenta metros de largura dominando o trajeto do rio, sem respeitar pescadores, barcos de passageiros, e moradores ribeirinhos. Tudo em nome do progresso e da economia nacional? Como a COP30 vai enfrentar o capital que usa e abusa do território amazônico?

O Movimento popular MTV junto com movimentos indígenas e outros movimentos de resistência, temos militado na resistência, utilizamos uma escola de pedagogia formadora de consciência, seguindo a metologia do grande mestre Paulo Freire, na tentativa de despertar consciências dos lutadores sociais que mais sofrem com essa invasão colonialista. Juntamos a prática de pressão sobre os poderes públicos e a escola de formação de consciência crítica de outros lutadores sociais da região.

Ao mesmo tempo militamos com outra estratégia comunicacional, a Rede de Notícias da Amazônia, RNA utilizando a comunicação como instrumento de partilha das lutas sociais e denúncia das agressões ao meio ambiente. Há 18 anos construímos coletivamente uma forma de gerar informações da Amazônia, para a Amazônia, a partir dos lutadores sociais, espalhados por sete dos nove Estados da região.

A RNA é uma associação de 20 emissoras de rádio comprometidas com descolonizar a informação. Para isso, os diretores das emissoras sócias construíram um manual de comunicação, onde ficaram definidos: a geração dos conteúdos,

a linguagem respeitando as culturas distintas nas várias regiões da Amazônia, procurando gerar notícias das lutas, pressões sofridas pelos lutadores/as das áreas das emissoras sócias e denunciando as agressões ao meio ambiente. Portanto a RNA não transmite notícias geradas pela internet, nem por emissoras do Sul, ou Nordeste do país.

Além de um noticiário de 30 minutos de segunda a sexta feira, concluído por um editorial específico, a RNA oferece uma rádio revista de 30 minutos uma vez por semana. Ambos os programas são transmitidos por todas as 20 emissoras. De acordo com nossos cálculos provisórios, por falta de uma pesquisa de audiência mais completa, mas levando em conta o alcance de cada uma das 20 emissoras sócias espalhadas por sete Estados da região, imaginamos ser possível que cerca de 3 milhões de moradores da Amazônia escutam notícias ou ouvem a rádio revista da RNA, ao menos uma vez por semana. Isto para nós militantes da Rede de Notícias da Amazônia é motivo de alegria e motivação para continuar essa luta.

CONCLUSÃO

Realizar comunicação na Amazônia é um grande desafio, especialmente gerar informações que respeitem os direitos dos lutadores sociais e da mãe natureza, que também é sujeito de direitos. Mesmo assim estamos presentes comprometidos em juntar a prática de resistência pelos movimentos populares, como tentamos pelo Movimento Tapajós Vivo; e cultivando um modelo de comunicação com incidência nas vidas dos lutadores sociais da grande e desafiadora Amazônia. Nossa revolução em andamento não pretende mudar o sistema capitalista isolados, mas nos juntamos a outros movimentos da sociedade civil para incidir na arena em disputa pelo direito de viver de outro modo que não o sistema capitalista explorador. ■

Edilberto Francisco Moura Sena é membro da Rede de Notícias da Amazônia (RNA) e do Movimento popular socioambientalista Movimentos Tapajós Vivo.

Brazil's economy is doing well, but the people of the Amazon are paying a high price

Edilberto M. Sena

Suddenly, the Amazon becomes the centre of the world by hosting COP30 in Belém, which is symbolically declared the country's capital. Millions of reais were spent on decorating the venue, even though the outskirts of the capital, with 1.3 million inhabitants, remain in poverty without basic sanitation.

Amazonia is where the largest tropical rainforest on the planet is located, but in the previous 29 COPs little was accomplished, and today we are experiencing a climate crisis that is approaching catastrophe. Another fact that justifies this COP30 taking place in the Amazonia is that it is home to the largest tropical rainforest on the planet, and the forest is one of the main filters of the poisonous pollution that is destabilizing the coexistence between humans and nature. For many, like me, there is scepticism about the results of COP30 that can curb the destruction of the planet.

My expectation lies outside the so-called blue line of COP30, where only heads of state and their advisors are. Outside the blue line are the various social movements organized into three more resistant groups: the People's Summit, the People's COP, and the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil, APIB. It is with the union of various national and international civil society organizations that sufficient pressure can

arise for solutions to the climate crisis to move from good intentions to strategic practices.

Why does it seem so difficult for the Brazilian State to make decisions that will at least save the Amazonia and help save the planet? Since Amazonia, in addition to having the largest tropical forest on the planet, also has an immense network of hydrographic basins, rooted in the largest river on the planet, the Amazonas river, and about 30 million inhabitants living here. There are some reasons for this scepticism about COP30.

First, Brazil, today the tenth most powerful economy on the planet, follows the development ideology of the global north. This path builds our wealth within the colonialist vision of seeking development. The ideology of developmentalism, which divides the world between north and south, where countries in the South are encouraged to follow a path of growth to one day become developed. Thus, Brazil is still an underdeveloped country compared to Canada, the United Kingdom, and others in the North.

To reach the dreamed-of stage of a developed country, our country invests in a predatory extractive economy. For example, government funding for the 2025/26 agricultural harvest is 625 billion reais (5.35 billion dollars) for agribusiness and only 78 billion reais (14.79 billion dollars) for family farming. This is because, to sustain the country's economy, the export of primary products, soybeans, corn, meat, etc., to the international market justifies the disparity in support for the government, even knowing that family farming is what supplies the tables of Brazilians.

And then we return to the outcome of COP 30 in the Amazon. While our government attempts to do something positive in defence of the climate, such as proposing the large TFFF (Tropical Forest Forever Facility) project, it is contested because it is a project that depends heavily on the "generosity" of other countries, in addition to depending on investment funds that will make profitable business by investing in the conservation of other people's forests in the

global south. Others wonder what the difference is between TFFF and carbon credits? Especially since the resources of the Forest Forever Facility will be managed by the World Bank.

ANOTHER ASPECT THAT MAKES US SCEPTICAL OF THE SUCCESS OF YET ANOTHER COP

Shortly before the COP in Belém, the federal government forced the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) to authorize oil exploration in the sea at the mouth of the Amazon River. This is another project that is essentially contradictory, as it expands the exploitation of the largest generator of CO₂ in nature, oil. A few months before COP30, IBAMA was led to approve a test of oil exploration in the sea near the mouth of the Amazon River. President Lula's statement that it would be necessary to explore for oil off the coast of the state of Amapá and use the oil revenue to care for the environment, reveals exactly the underdeveloped mentality of wanting to advance development by exploiting nature.

We the Tapajós Vivo MTV Movement are part of the resistance in search of another alternative world. As our Amazon News Network association RNA, we seek the path of Good Living, a legacy of our ancestors. At the same time, we are active with the Amazon News Network (RNA), using communication as an instrument for sharing social struggles and denouncing attacks on the environment. For 18 years, we have collectively built a way to generate information from the Amazon, for the Amazon, from social activists spread across seven of the nine states in the region.

First, the Tapajós Vivo Movement has been building a strategy to confront projects that seek income and profit at the expense of nature. This includes both the predatory exploitation of gold in mining operations in the Tapajós River region, and the exploitation of the Tapajós River as an object of capitalist income. While the federal government planned to build seven large hydroelectric dams along the Tapajós River, an absurd project that violated the great Tapajós

River under the guise of generating clean energy, which was a lie. The resistance of the Munduruku people and our social movements managed to shelve this disastrous project.

We won that battle, but others followed. More recently, with the BR-163 highway connecting the centre of grain, soy, and corn plantations in the state of Mato Grosso to the Tapajós River here in the neighbouring city of Itaituba, another source of enrichment for agribusiness exporters has opened up. A huge grain port has already been built in front of the city of Santarém by the multinational CARGILL, and in the last 10 years, grain exporting companies have decided, complicit with the Brazilian State, to build seven large ports in front of the city of Itaituba, from where they send convoys of barges loaded with grain via the Tapajós River, heading to ocean ports for the international market.

Thus, it became more economical and more profitable for grain exporters, taking over the beautiful Tapajós River. Can you imagine seven companies, each with their convoys of barges pushed by a tugboat, each convoy about 200 meters long and 70 meters wide, dominating the river's route, without respecting fishermen, passenger boats, and riverside residents? All in the name of progress and the national economy? How will COP30 confront the capital that uses and abuses the Amazonian territory?

BUILDING AWARENESS AMONG ACTIVISTS

The MTV Popular Movement, along with indigenous movements and other resistance movements, has been active in resistance, utilizing a pedagogical approach focused on building awareness, following the methodology of the great master Paulo Freire, in an attempt to motivate social activists who suffer most from this colonialist invasion. We combine the practice of exerting pressure on public authorities with the critical consciousness-building program for other social activists in the region.

Simultaneously RNA is an association of 20 radio stations committed to decolonizing information. To this end, the directors of the radio

stations have created a communication manual, which defines: the generation of content, the language respecting the distinct cultures in the various regions of the Amazon, seeking to generate news of the struggles and pressures suffered by the activists in the areas of the member stations, and denouncing attacks on the environment. Therefore, RNA does not broadcast news generated by the internet, nor by stations in the South or Northeast of the country.

In addition to a 30-minute news program from Monday to Friday, concluded with a specific editorial, RNA offers a 30-minute radio magazine once a week. Both programs are broadcast by all 20 stations. According to our provisional calculations, due to a lack of more comprehensive audience research, but taking into account the reach of each of the 20 partner stations spread across seven states in the region, we imagine that around 3 million residents of the Amazon listen to news or hear the RNA radio magazine once a week. For us activists of the Amazon News Network, this is a source of joy and motivation to continue this struggle.

CONCLUSION

Conducting communication in the Amazonia is a great challenge, especially generating information that respects the rights of social activists and Mother Nature, who is also a subject of rights. Even so, we are present, committed to combining the practice of resistance by popular movements, as we tried with the Tapajós Vivo Movement; and cultivating a communication model with an impact on the lives of social activists in the vast and challenging Amazon. Our ongoing revolution does not intend to change the capitalist system in isolation, but we join other civil society movements to influence the arena in the struggle for the right to live in a way other than the exploitative capitalist system. ■

Edilberto Francisco Moura Sena is a member of the Amazon News Network and of the People's socio-environmental movement Tapajós Vivo.

COP 30, Belém: Declaration of the Peoples' Summit

Excerpt

We, the Peoples' Summit, gathered in Belém do Pará, in the Brazilian Amazon, from 12 to 16 November 2025, declare to the peoples of the world what we have accumulated in struggles, debates, studies, exchanges of experiences, cultural activities and testimonies, over several months of preparation and during these days gathered here.

After more than two years of collective construction and holding the People's Summit, we affirm:

1. The capitalist mode of production is the main cause of the growing climate crisis. The main environmental problems of our time are a consequence of the relations of production, circulation, and disposal of goods, under the logic and domination of financial capital and large capitalist corporations.

2. Peripheral communities are the most affected by extreme weather events and environmental racism. On the one hand, they face a lack of infrastructure and adaptation policies. On the other hand, they face a lack of justice and reparations, especially for women, young people, impoverished people, and people of colour.

3. Transnational corporations, in collusion with governments in the Global North, are at the centre of power in the capitalist, racist and patriarchal system, being the actors that most cause and benefit from the multiple crises we face. The mining, energy, arms, agribusiness and Big Tech industries are primarily responsible for the climate catastrophe we are experiencing.

4. We oppose any false solutions to the climate crisis, including in climate finance, that perpetuate harmful practices, create unpredictable risks, and divert attention from transformative solutions based on climate justice and the justice of peoples in all biomes and ecosystems. We warn that the TFFF, being a financialised programme, is not an adequate response. All financial projects must be subject to criteria of transparency, democratic access, participation and real benefit for affected populations.

5. The failure of the current model of multilateralism is evident. Environmental crimes and extreme weather events that cause death and destruction are becoming increasingly common. This demonstrates the failure of countless global conferences and meetings that promised to solve these problems but never addressed their structural causes.

6. The energy transition is being implemented under capitalist logic. Despite the expansion of renewable sources, there has been no reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The expansion of energy production sources has also become a new space for capital accumulation.

7. Finally, we affirm that the privatisation, commodification and financialization of commons and public services are directly contrary to the interests of the people. In this context, laws, state institutions and the vast majority of governments have been captured, shaped and subordinated to the pursuit of maximum profit by financial capital and transnational corporations. Public policies are needed to advance the recovery of states and tackle privatisation.

IN THE FACE OF THESE CHALLENGES, WE PROPOSE:

1. Confronting false market solutions. Air, forests, water, land, minerals, and energy sources cannot remain private property or be appropriated, because they are common goods of the people.

2. We demand the participation and leadership of peoples in the construction of climate solutions, recognising ancestral knowledge. The

multidiversity of cultures and worldviews carries ancestral wisdom and knowledge that states must recognise as references for solutions to the multiple crises afflicting humanity and Mother Nature.

3. We demand the demarcation and protection of the lands and territories of indigenous peoples and other local peoples and communities, as they are the ones who guarantee the survival of the forest. We demand that governments implement zero deforestation, end criminal burning, and adopt state policies for ecological restoration and recovery of areas degraded and affected by the climate crisis.

4. We demand the implementation of popular agrarian reform and the promotion of agroecology to guarantee food sovereignty and combat land concentration. Peoples produce healthy food to feed the people, in order to eliminate hunger in the world, based on cooperation and access to techniques and technologies under popular control.

5. We demand the fight against environmental racism and the construction of fair cities and living peripheries through the implementation of environmental policies and solutions. Housing, sanitation, water access and use, solid waste treatment, afforestation, and access to land and land regularisation programmes must consider integration with nature. We want investment in quality public and collective transport policies with zero fares. These are real alternatives for tackling the climate crisis in peripheral territories around the world, which must be implemented with adequate funding for climate adaptation.

6. We advocate direct consultation, participation, and popular management of climate policies in cities to confront real estate corporations that have advanced the commodification of urban life. The city of climate and energy transition should be a city without segregation that embraces diversity. Finally, climate financing should be conditional on protocols that aim at housing permanence and, ultimately, fair compensation for people and communities with guaranteed

A WACC-supported team of 11 community media reporters was on the ground at the United Nations climate change conference COP30. Their mission? To unpack why communication justice must be at the heart of climate justice. Led by partners Latin American Network of Radio Education – ALER in Ecuador and Amazon Radio Network – RNA in Brazil, the reporters raised the voices of communities hardest hit by climate change. Photo: WACC.



land and housing, both in the countryside and in cities.

7. We demand an end to wars, we demand demilitarisation. That all financial resources allocated to wars and the war industry be redirected to the transformation of this world. That military spending be directed towards the repair and recovery of regions affected by climate disasters. That all necessary measures be taken to hold Israel accountable for the genocide committed against the Palestinian people.

8. We demand fair and full compensation for the losses and damages imposed on peoples by destructive investment projects, dams, mining, fossil fuel extraction, and climate disasters. We also demand that those guilty of economic and socio-environmental crimes that affect millions of communities and families around the world be tried and punished.

9. The work of reproducing life must be made visible, valued, understood for what it is – work – and shared by society as a whole and with the state. This work is essential for the continuity of human and non-human life on the planet. It also guarantees the autonomy of women, who cannot be held individually responsible for care, but whose contributions must be taken into account: our work sustains the economy.

10. We demand a just, sovereign and popular

transition that guarantees the rights of all workers, as well as the right to decent working conditions, freedom of association, collective bargaining and social protection. We consider energy to be a common good and advocate for the overcoming of poverty and energy dependence. Neither the energy model nor the transition itself can violate the sovereignty of any country in the world.

11. We demand an end to the exploitation of fossil fuels and call on governments to develop mechanisms to ensure the non-proliferation of fossil fuels, aiming for a just, popular and inclusive energy transition with sovereignty, protection and reparation for territories, particularly in the Amazon and other sensitive regions that are essential for life on the planet.

12. We fight for public financing and taxation of corporations and the wealthiest individuals. The costs of environmental degradation and losses imposed on populations must be paid by the sectors that benefit most from this model. This includes financial funds, banks, and corporations in agribusiness, hydrobusiness, aquaculture and industrial fishing, energy, and mining. These actors must also bear the necessary investments for a just transition focused on the needs of the people.

13. We demand that international climate financing not go through institutions that deepen

inequality between North and South, such as the IMF and the World Bank. It must be structured in a fair, transparent, and democratic manner. It is not the peoples and countries of the global South that should continue to pay debts to the dominant powers. It is these countries and their corporations that need to begin to pay off the socio-environmental debt accumulated through centuries of imperialist, colonialist and racist practices, through the appropriation of common goods and through the violence imposed on millions of people who have been killed and enslaved.

14. We denounce the ongoing criminalisation of movements, the persecution, murder and disappearance of our leaders who fight in defence of their territories, as well as political prisoners and Palestinian prisoners who fight for national liberation. We demand the expansion of protection for human and socio-environmental rights defenders in the global climate agenda, within the framework of the Escazú Agreement and other regional regulations. When a defender protects the territory and nature, they protect not only an individual, but an entire people, benefiting the entire global community.

15. We call for the strengthening of international instruments that defend the rights of peoples, their customary rights and the integrity of ecosystems. We need a legally binding international instrument on human rights and transnational corporations, which is built on the concrete reality of the struggles of communities affected by violations, demanding rights for peoples and rules for corporations. We also affirm that the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) should be one of the pillars of climate governance. The full implementation of peasants' rights returns people to their territories, directly contributing to their food security, soil care and the cooling of the planet.

Finally, we believe that it is time to unite our forces and face our common enemy. ■

Posted on 19 November 2025. Also available in [Español](#) and [Français](#).

Climate action requires truth: COP30 must codify information integrity

*“We must fight the coordinated disinformation campaigns impeding global progress on climate change.”
(Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General)*

This Open Letter with over 200 signatories was released on 12 November 2025, on the official thematic day on information integrity at COP30 in Belém. We, the undersigned individuals, civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples, governors, mayors, faith leaders, agencies and companies urge all national government delegations to champion a strong, ambitious, and mandatory decision at COP30 to uphold information integrity on climate change. This crucial window of opportunity must not be wasted, and the fossil fuel industry's manipulation of public discourse must be stopped.

While many extreme weather events worsen and the 2025 UNEP Emissions Gap Report warns we are on track to **dangerously exceed the 1.5°C goal**, vested economic and political interests – **chiefly those in the fossil fuel industry** – continue to organize and finance disinformation campaigns. While the **vast majority** of people globally demand climate action, the calculated production and dissemination of misinformation and disinformation is designed to hold back climate action. By creating a false perception of public division and apathy, these campaigns are derailing effective climate policy and actively discrediting renewable energy solutions, slowing

the essential energy transition.

The degradation and pollution in the information ecosystem is not merely a climate crisis; **it is a multi-faceted global emergency**. As demonstrated by recent studies from the International Panel on the Information Environment (IPIE) and Climate Social Science Network, organized climate obstruction activities are actively delaying the human response to the crisis, directly sabotaging international cooperation, making the Paris Agreement goals unattainable, and putting the lives of millions at risk. Disinformation is thus a direct and immediate threat to:

- * **Public Health:** Every falsehood delays climate action, translating into real harm: children breathing toxic air, families displaced by floods, and communities facing heatstroke and hunger. The same playbook once used by Big Tobacco is now weaponized by fossil fuel interests.
- * **Human Rights and Security:** Disinformation erodes trust in institutions, misleads the public during disasters, and obstructs rapid, life-saving transitions. It is a fundamental threat to the just, democratic, and science-based action required, and must be treated as a security and human rights concern.

These threats to the general public are exacerbated by the unregulated and unchecked power of Big Tech and vested-interest media, as the primary vehicles for mass-producing and disseminating the manipulative and divisive content that is hindering climate action and threatening freedom of speech, democracies, and human rights.

INFORMATION INTEGRITY IS Non-NEGOTIABLE

Access to accurate information is essential for effective climate action and the fulfilment of human rights. To secure the foundation of information integrity and accelerate climate action, national governments must move decisively from mere recognition to mandatory, verifiable action. We demand that all Parties at COP30 UN-

EQUIVOCALLY RECOGNIZE that upholding information integrity on climate change is a prerequisite for effective climate action, the protection of rule of law, people's health and the fulfilment of fundamental human rights.

Such an official acknowledgement will underpin all actions grounded in scientific evidence and reliable data, promoting trustworthy policies and increasing public confidence and building on the important progress already made. The **IPCC** now acknowledges the detrimental impact of climate disinformation, the **EU Parliament** has officially recognized the threat, and the launch of the **Global Principles for Information Integrity** underscores international consensus. This is a vital step towards realizing the goals of the **Global Digital Compact**, yet we must not stop at mere recognition. We must fundamentally change the structures, business models and incentives that create opaque, unfair, and unsafe communications systems.

A CALL FOR POLITICAL WILL AND ROBUST COMMITMENTS

The global community has a window of opportunity to codify this commitment. We welcome the historic inclusion of information integrity on the COP agenda, thanks in large part to the advocacy of the Brazilian Government and the Global Initiative on Information Integrity for Climate Change (co-led by the UN, UNESCO, and Brazil).

Now, COP30 must be used to amplify the Global Initiative and galvanize further international action on climate information integrity. We expect this COP to deliver a concrete direction that showcases the political will of all Parties to uphold information integrity on climate change and commit to taking robust, verifiable action for its safeguarding.

The threat to information integrity requires action across the entire ecosystem. Technology platforms, the media, and the advertising sector have profound responsibilities. We insist that these stakeholders must take robust, proactive,

and independently verifiable measures, including monitoring and evaluation, to uphold and improve the integrity of information on climate matters. Policymakers and national governments must use their legislative and regulatory powers to curb the power of platforms that profit from the spread of manipulative content. **Greenwashing, platform manipulation, and the monetization of disinformation must end immediately.**

FROM RECOGNITION TO ACTION

Brazil, your leadership is historic. We applaud your commitment to the Global Initiative on Information Integrity for Climate Change and for ensuring this critical issue is a central part of the COP agenda.

But now, the world is watching for an actionable outcome from COP30. We urge Brazil, alongside the entire coalition of supporting nations, to champion a strong, ambitious COP decision that moves decisively beyond mere recognition to mandatory, verifiable action from all Parties.

We also call on all Parties of the UNFCCC to actively use their influence to ensure a rapid and widespread adherence to the Global Initiative on Information Integrity for Climate Change. The momentum generated here must be accelerated and sustained through Belém and future COPs, ensuring that upholding information integrity becomes a commitment supported by a broad and powerful international coalition.

We demand swift and robust global action to uphold information integrity and take measures against these threats. This transformation should be ignited here in Belém with an official acknowledgement of the need to uphold information integrity and a signal to the digital media, legacy media, public relations and advertising sectors that governments are expecting them to carry out their responsibilities for information integrity on climate change. ■

L'Intelligence artificielle et la liberté de la presse à l'Est de la RDC

Serge Bisimwa

La liberté de la presse et l'accès à une information vérifiée sont un enjeu crucial dans le contexte de l'Est de la République Démocratique du Congo. Cette zone, est une région marquée par une instabilité chronique, où les conflits armés et l'exploitation des minerais se conjuguent pour façonner une réalité exceptionnelle pour le journaliste d'investigation.

Dans cet environnement sous tension, l'irruption de l'intelligence artificielle (IA) et la promulgation récente de la loi sur le numérique en RDC viennent bouleverser les pratiques médiatiques, exacerbant à la fois les risques de désinformation et les opportunités pour les journalistes et la société civile.

Dans le contexte actuel d'une guerre ouverte entre les FARDC (Armée gouvernementale de la RDC) et les rebelles du M23 (appuyés par le gouvernement du Rwanda), la vérification adéquate des multiples informations qui sont balancées dans les réseaux sociaux à longueur des journées est un travail à la fois pénible et risqué pour le journaliste. Que celui-ci soit dans une zone contrôlée par les rebelles ou le gouvernement.

Cette situation n'est pas nouvelle, car dans un contexte de paix apparente, il était déjà difficile pour les journalistes de l'Est de la RDC de

vérifier minutieusement les informations qui sont balancées dans les réseaux sociaux. Nombreux, à plus de 90 %, ont suivi une formation de journalisme en travaillant pour une radio communautaire, ou religieuse, ou en accompagnant un acteur politique lors d'une campagne électorale. Et une fois que la vérification est faite, le journaliste préfère se taire pour préserver sa vie.

A ce stade, l'IA devrait s'imposer comme un acteur clé dans la mutation des médias de l'Est de la RDC. Les rédactions locales, notamment à Goma, Bukavu ou encore dans le Katanga, devrait intégrer la technologie pour l'automatisation de tâches, l'analyse de données ou encore la modération de contenus sur les plateformes numériques. Cette transformation devrait permettre, d'une part, d'accroître la capacité des journalistes à traiter un volume croissant d'informations, notamment celles circulant sur les réseaux sociaux comme Facebook, Twitter ou WhatsApp. D'autre part, relever les défis en matière de vérification de l'information et de lutte contre les fakenews, dans un contexte où les moyens humains et techniques restent limités.

Malheureusement, les radios locales – piliers de l'information de proximité – utilisent les versions gratuites de vérification d'information, disponibles sur internet, moins puissantes et souvent, sans suffisamment des données locales; avec risque de baisser encore plus la qualité des informations discriminées dans la communauté.

QUAND LA LOI SUR LE NUMÉRIQUE S'INVITE AU DÉBAT

Promulguée en mars 2023, la loi Muyaya – ministre de l'Information et des médias en RDC – sur le numérique vise à encadrer l'utilisation des technologies de l'information et de la communication, à protéger les données personnelles et à lutter contre la cybercriminalité. Malheureusement, dans les zones sous contrôle des rebelles du M23, cette loi n'est pas applicable. Il en va donc de soi que les journalistes dans ces zones ne peuvent ni bénéficier des avantages de cette loi, ni d'en faire appel auprès des autorités de facto, qui d'ailleurs ont l'habitude de diffuser leurs pro-

pres versions des faits sur terrain. Les journalistes dans les zones contrôlées par le gouvernement central n'en sont pas mieux servis que d'autres ; ils doivent relayer les versions officielles du gouvernement au nom du patriotisme, en temps de guerre.

Dans cet environnement, les journalistes se retrouvent entre le marteau et la « plume ». D'un côté l'obligation d'informer, et de l'autre le besoin de protéger sa vie. « On regarde deux fois avant de publier une information contenue dans les réseaux sociaux. On y trouve un peu de tout ; que l'on soit dans une zone occupée par des rebelles du M23 ou dans une zone sous contrôle du Gouvernement congolais », témoigne Honneur David Safari, Directeur du Journal en ligne LaPrunelle RDC.

LES RÉSEAUX SOCIAUX DANS LA DIFFUSION DE L'INFORMATION

Depuis la recrudescence de la guerre à l'Est de la RDC, les réseaux sociaux constituent des vecteurs essentiels pour la circulation rapide de l'information. Facebook, Twitter et WhatsApp sont utilisés tant par les journalistes que par les citoyens pour relayer des nouvelles, organiser des débats ou alerter sur des situations d'urgence. Toutefois, ces plateformes sont également le terrain privilégié de la désinformation et de la propagation de rumeurs, notamment lors des attaques du M23 ou des opérations menées par les FARDC. Dans ce tableau macabre, la première victime devient la vérité : des chiffres qui se contredisent, des collines récupérées qui deviennent des montagnes abandonnées, des localités occupées qui deviennent des agglomérations conquises, des hommes de troupe rendus tués qui deviennent des Colonels tués, ... une vraie guerre de communication, avec au centre, des journalistes sans mot.

« Nos auditeurs adorent des nouvelles sensationnelles. Que ce soit une information sur la prise ou la reprise d'une localité, d'un territoire ou d'une ville par les belligérants, un scandale d'une personnalité publique, etc. Ces nouvelles leur parviennent souvent, aussitôt que nos rédac-

tions. Ils attendent que nos journaux infirment ce qu'ils sont lus, pendant qu'ils s'empressent déjà de les publier dans leurs réseaux ; nos Radios quant à elles, préfèrent garder silence »; regrette Olivier Kiriza, Coordonnateur de RATECO, un Réseau des Radios et Télévisions Communautaires à l'Est de la RDC.

Le revers de ce silence, qui s'apparente à la lâcheté ou à la prudence, ce sont des populations qui se déplacent sans cesse. En avril 2025, le Bureau des Nations Unies pour la coordination des affaires humanitaires en RDC_OCHA, dénombre environ 6,82 millions des déplacés internes à l'Est de la RDC. Souvent, ces populations se déplacent à la suite des rumeurs d'une avancée ou d'un recul des hommes armés.

Les conflits armés, les enjeux miniers et les tensions ethniques dans la partie Est de la RDC alimentent la circulation de rumeurs et de fausses informations, relayées par les réseaux sociaux et parfois amplifiées par des acteurs extérieurs. Face à cela, les journalistes et les médias locaux devraient se doter de compétences en fact-checking et d'instruments juridiques de protection de leur travail pour contrer ces phénomènes. Il en va sans dire, que la propagation de ces fakenews représente l'un des défis majeurs pour la liberté de la presse et la cohésion sociale dans la région.

LA LIBERTÉ DE LA PRESSE DANS L'IMPASSE

La liberté de la presse à l'Est de la RDC est dans l'étau des affrontements récurrents entre les FARDC et les groupes armés soutenus par des armées étrangères. Les journalistes sont souvent exposés à des menaces, des intimidations ou des arrestations arbitraires lorsqu'ils couvrent des sujets sensibles liés aux opérations militaires, aux déplacements de population ou à l'exploitation des minerais. Reporters Sans Frontière en RDC enregistre chaque année, des cas des médias locaux qui sont contraints de fermer ou de limiter leur couverture, par peur de représailles ou en raison de pressions exercées par des groupes armés.

Entre février et mars 2025, environ la moitié des radios communautaires et rurales

dans les zones sous-occupation des de facto des rebelles du M23 soutenus par le Rwanda, ont été obligées de fermer leurs portes. Certaines pour des manques de moyen, d'autres à la suite des menaces, et d'autres encore pour la simple raison qu'elles ont été pillées par des rebelles. Ceci nous amène à une forte régression d'information. Dans plusieurs régions, on parle même des zones « sourdes » où presqu'aucune radio n'arrose encore les citoyens, à part des radios internationales sur ondes courtes.

Quelques ONGI d'appui aux médias telles que La Benevolencija, Internews, Search for Common Ground et la Coopération suisse, en collaboration avec des structures locales d'en-cadrement des médias comme RATECO, CORACON, REMED, SYMUF, UNPC, JED jouent un rôle crucial dans la lutte contre la désinformation et la promotion d'un journalisme responsable afin de lutter contre les rumeurs, la désinformation et les discours de haine.

La Benevolencija, par exemple, met l'accent sur la prévention des discours de haine et la promotion de la tolérance à travers des programmes radio et des productions audiovisuelles. Elle collabore avec des radios communautaires et des journalistes pour diffuser des messages de paix afin de déconstruire les stéréotypes qui alimentent les violences intercommunautaires. « Elle a développé plusieurs programmes qui s'adaptent aux réalités du terrain », nous dit Johan Deflander, Coordonnateur régional de cette organisation.

« Habari za mahali (les nouvelles de la zone) fait écho des informations humanitaires neutres et impartiales dans les zones sous contrôle des rebelles de M23; Ukweli ao uongo (vrai au faux) coupe court aux rumeurs qui circulent dans la région à travers RFI Swahili; CTFP (C'est le Ton qui Fait la Panique) diffusée sur Radio Okapi (Radio des Nations Unies en RDC) invite les communautés à adopter un langage courtois dénoué des stéréotypes.

L'UTILISATION DE L'IA DANS LES MÉDIAS

Plusieurs cas de fausses informations qu'on ne saurait tous recensés, ont été combattus par ces

organisations d'appui aux médias et leurs partenaires locaux. Par exemple, des rumeurs ont circulé sur les réseaux sociaux affirmant que certaines communautés locales collaboraient avec les rebelles du M23 appuyé par le Rwanda ; alimentant ainsi, la méfiance et les représailles contre des groupes ethniques spécifiques. Grâce à des enquêtes journalistiques et des démentis publics diffusés par les radios communautaires, ces informations ont pu être corrigées, évitant ainsi l'escalade de violence, tous azimuts et sans distinction.

Un autre exemple concerne la diffusion de fausses vidéos montrant prétendument des soldats congolais en train de commettre des exactions contre des civils. Les journalistes formés par Internews et Search for Common Ground ont mené des vérifications minutieuses, publié des démentis et sensibilisé la population à l'importance de la vérification des sources. Il a été démontré qu'il s'agissait pour la plupart des montages et des images extraites dans des contextes différents.

La Benevolencija et la CDJP quant à eux ont également joué un rôle important dans la lutte contre les discours de haine, notamment ceux qui visaient à stigmatiser les populations rwandophones de la région, accusées en bloc de soutenir le M23. Par leurs programmes éducatifs et des débats publics, elles ont contribué à apaiser les tensions et à déconstruire ces discours dangereux.

QUAND LA GUERRE À L'INFORMATION SE JOUE DANS LES MINES

L'Est de la RDC est riche en minerais stratégiques, dont le coltan, l'or, et l'étain. Des nombreux analystes politiques font un rapport direct entre ces minerais et la récurrence des conflits armés dans la zone. Le contrôle de ces gisements et la gestion des revenus miniers font l'objet d'une information souvent opaque, sujette à la désinformation et à la manipulation. Les journalistes qui enquêtent sur ces sujets sont régulièrement confrontés à des obstacles : refus d'accès aux sites, menaces, voire violences physiques.

Dans ce contexte, l'IA peut offrir de nouveaux outils d'investigation, notamment pour l'analyse de données ouvertes sur les flux miniers, la cartographie des exploitations ou la détection de réseaux de corruption. Cependant, sans un accompagnement solide des journalistes, ces avancées risquent de plus bénéficier aux médias urbains, et accentuer les inégalités d'accès à l'information locale.

L'IA AU SERVICE DE LA PRESSE À L'EST DE LA RDC

Afin que l'Intelligence artificielle soit un levier d'émancipation et non de contrôle ou d'exclusion pour la presse à l'Est de la RDC, certaines actions doivent être posées :

- * Renforcer la formation des journalistes et des acteurs des radios communautaires en fact-checking et en usage éthique de l'IA.
- * Assurer un accompagnement technique et financier pour l'adoption des outils numériques, en veillant à réduire la fracture entre zones urbaines et rurales.
- * Encadrer l'application de la loi sur le numérique afin de protéger à la fois la liberté d'expression et la sécurité des données journalistiques.
- * Développer des mécanismes de collaboration entre médias, plateformes numériques et organisations de fact-checking pour lutter efficacement contre la désinformation.
- * Protéger les journalistes couvrant les conflits armés et les enjeux miniers, notamment par la mise en place de dispositifs d'alerte et de soutien juridique.
- * Valoriser les informations locales et soutenir les radios communautaires comme vecteurs essentiels de la cohésion sociale et de la démocratie. ■

Serge Bisimwa est journaliste et ancien Coordonnateur de RATECO (Réseau des Radios et Télévisions Communautaires de l'Est de la RDC).

Statement to the UN General Assembly WSIS+20 High- Level Meeting

Association for Progressive Communications

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) is a civil society network dedicated to ICTs for development and human rights founded in 1990 and working in more than 70 countries around the world. APC has participated in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process since the first preparatory meeting in 2002.

While global internet penetration is projected to reach 74% in 2025, this figure masks a persistent connectivity gap and profound digital inequality. It includes anyone who has used the internet even once in a three-month period, giving a hyper-connected professional working on Wall Street the same statistical value as a farmer in rural Africa who buys a small data bundle a few times a year.

We cannot afford to underestimate this digital exclusion and we must also acknowledge that digitalisation alone does not create equity.

If economic and social development are not placed at the heart of the next phase of WSIS, we risk perpetuating a new, quality-based digital divide *and* missing the opportunity to harness connectivity for a more inclusive and just world.

From this perspective, APC offers the following reflections on the WSIS outcome document. We congratulate all involved but must also raise key concerns.

We value in particular:

- * The continuation of the WSIS process and its integration with the Global Digital Compact.
- * The expanded consideration given to human rights in the context of digital development.
- * The permanent mandate granted to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).
- * Recognition of the value of alternative connectivity models, including community networks.
- * The call for all WSIS Action Lines to address gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a core theme within their work.
- * Support for inclusive, multistakeholder implementation and governance and reference to the Sao Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines.

We regret:

- * The lack of a serious framework for financing digital development. We welcome the planned inter-agency task force to be convened by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in its capacity as the Secretariat of the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), but are disappointed that it will not be multistakeholder and will not explicitly include member states and financial institutions. Financing is a critical, non-negotiable part of the solution. We urgently need financial ecosystems that support viable, innovative demand-driven initiatives – drawing on public, private and community-based sources
- * That the call for government participation in the IGF appears to focus only on developing countries. We need open dialogue among *all* governments on an equal footing with participation from other stakeholders for a strong and sustainable IGF.

Going forward, we urge member states, Action Line facilitators and all stakeholders to:

1. Remember that WSIS is about harnessing digital tools *for* people-centred development,

not about developing digital tools and processes.

2. Work with UNGIS and the ITU to convene a truly inclusive financing task force – involving all stakeholder groups, member states and relevant financial institutions – co-locating its meetings with major events on the WSIS calendar, like the WSIS Forum, the IGF, and meetings of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD).

3. Approach the IGF's permanent mandate with creativity and courage, not complacency.

In closing, APC and its members commit to remaining constructive partners in this process, working collaboratively – and when necessary, critically – with governments and all other stakeholders. ■

The High-Level Meeting on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) took place at UN Headquarters in New York on 16 and 17 December 2025. APC's statement was presented by Anriette Esterhuysen, 17 December 2025.

WSIS+20 Outcomes

United Nations

This document is an AI summary of the draft resolution (16 December 2025) to the United Nations General Assembly addressing the review and implementation of outcomes from the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS+20), focusing on the role of information and communication technologies in sustainable development.

COMMITMENT TO INFORMATION SOCIETY VISION

- * Reaffirmation of the World Summit's vision for a people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented information society.
- * Emphasis on the importance of multi-stakeholder cooperation and the sovereign equality of all states in achieving these goals.

ADDRESSING DIGITAL DIVIDES

- * Recognition of significant digital divides, with 1/3 of the global population lacking Internet access.
- * Gender digital divide: 78% of women use mobile phones compared to 87% of men; 71% of women use the Internet compared to 77% of men.
- * Urgent need for international cooperation to close these divides, particularly in developing countries.

DIGITAL ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT

- * The digital economy is crucial for global trade and economic development, creating new markets and employment opportunities.
- * Emphasis on fostering an open and fair en-

vironment for digital development to integrate developing countries into global value chains.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ICT

- * ICTs enhance social welfare and inclusion, providing new channels for participation in decision-making.
- * Commitment to connecting every school to the Internet by 2030 to improve educational access.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF DIGITALIZATION

- * Digital technologies support environmental sustainability through improved monitoring and resource management.
- * Concerns about energy consumption and electronic waste, urging stakeholders to promote sustainable practices.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

- * Importance of a positive enabling environment for investment and innovation in digital development.
- * Call for technical assistance to developing countries to build capacity and bridge digital divides.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY IN ICT

- * Emphasis on the need for confidence and security in ICT use to drive innovation and sustainable development.
- * Recognition of the rising threats from malicious activities and the need for robust risk mitigation measures.

COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

- * Acknowledgment of the unique challenges faced by vulnerable groups, including persons

with disabilities and marginalized communities.

- * Commitment to ensuring equitable access to digital resources and addressing the needs of underserved populations

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

- * Lack of capacity is a significant barrier to closing digital divides.
- * Emphasis on empowering local experts and communities to leverage ICT for development.
- * International cooperation and financing are essential for digital capacity development in developing countries.
- * Importance of building policy and technical expertise to support innovation and governance challenges.
- * Digital skills and lifelong learning opportunities should cater to diverse social, cultural, and linguistic needs.

FINANCIAL MECHANISMS FOR ICT INVESTMENT

- * Significant growth in financial investment in ICT infrastructure since the World Summit.
- * Sustained investment is necessary to bridge digital divides and enhance ICT applications.
- * Public-private partnerships are crucial for sustainable investment in ICT infrastructure and services.
- * Innovative financing mechanisms, such as universal access funds, are vital for extending connectivity.
- * Development partners should mainstream ICT in their work and support national e-strategies.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

- * Commitment to uphold human rights in the context of digital technologies.
- * The same offline rights must be protected

online, including freedom of expression and privacy.

- * Call for safeguards against human rights violations arising from digital technologies.
- * Private sector responsibility to incorporate human rights in technology development and deployment.
- * Emphasis on protecting the rights of women, children, and marginalized groups in the digital space.

MONITORING AND MEASUREMENT OF ICT PROGRESS

- * Importance of data and statistics for evidence-based decision-making in ICT development.
- * Call for strengthening international cooperation to close data gaps for development.
- * Emphasis on developing indicators and metrics for meaningful connectivity and digital development.

DATA GOVERNANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

- * Responsible data governance is essential for advancing development and protecting human rights.
- * Recognition of approaches to data governance adopted by the General Assembly.
- * Establishment of a working group for inclusive dialogue on equitable data governance arrangements.

INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

- * Support for international partnerships to build AI capacity and education.
- * Focus on increasing access to AI resources and promoting participation of small enterprises.
- * Call for mapping existing UN initiatives to identify gaps in AI capacity-building.

INTERNET GOVERNANCE AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- * Reaffirmation of the multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance.
- * Need for greater participation from developing countries and underrepresented groups.
- * Recognition of the Internet as a critical global facility for inclusive digital transformation.
- * Commitment to prevent Internet fragmentation and promote international cooperation.

FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW OF SUMMIT OUTCOMES

- * Ongoing commitment from all stakeholders is essential for implementing Summit outcomes.
- * Need for coherence between World Summit outcomes and the Global Digital Compact.
- * Biennial reviews of progress will be crucial for achieving the Summit's vision.
- * High-level meetings planned to assess progress and challenges in digital cooperation. ■

The outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society was adopted by consensus on 17 December 2025. The resolution (A/RES/80/173) can be found [here](#) in all official United Nations languages.

Leipzig (Germany) 2025

At DOK Leipzig – 68th International Film Festival for Documentary and Animated Film October 27 - November 2, 2025 – the Interreligious Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize of € 2.000, donated by the Hotel Michaelis (VCH Hotels) in Leipzig as well as the Interreligious Round Table and the Oratorium Leipzig to *The Thing to Be Done* directed by Srđan Kovačević (Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, 2025).

Motivation: This film offers a poignant and timely portrait of migrant workers in Slovenia, while resonating far beyond its borders. It speaks to all nations grappling with the realities of migration and the universal search for dignity and a better life. With sensitivity, subtle humour, and an urgent sense of purpose, the film reminds us that dignity is the cornerstone of human rights. In a world marked by growing inequality, the Interreligious Jury recognizes this work as a vital and deeply human call to action.

In addition, the Jury awarded a Commendation to *Clan of the Painted Lady* directed by Jennifer Chiu (Canada, 2025)

Motivation: For its delicate and poetic reconstruction of a fragmented family – a universal metaphor for uprooted identities – *Clan of the Painted Lady* moves us through time, memory and belonging. The film's classical visual style, like living photographs, captures the quiet emotion of rediscovery. Through cooking and the evocative taste of food, the director redefines connection and identity with rare sensitivity.

Members of the 2025 Jury: András Bőhm, Hungary; Elias Ferchin Musuret, Romania; Mia Lund Rao, Denmark; Eduardo Ramos Möking,

Germany (President of the Jury).

Luebeck (Germany) 2025

At the 67th Nordic Film Days (5-9 November), the INTERFILM Jury awarded the Church Film Prize, endowed with €5,000 by the Evangelical Church District Luebeck-Lauenburg, to the film *Renovacija* (Renovation) directed by Gabrielė Urbonaitė (Lithuania, Latvia, Belgium, 2025).

Motivation: The film depicts in a sensitive way the inner development of a young woman from indecisiveness to the ability to catch her life. This inner renewal correlates with the renovation of her tenement house. The film is dealing with the present in showing Ukrainian workers renovating a Soviet building in Lithuania.

Members of the 2025 Jury: Stefan Affolter, Switzerland; Petra Kallies, Germany (President of the Jury); Inga Purina, Latvia; Sylvester Roepstorff, Denmark.

Cottbus (Germany) 2025

At the 35th Festival of East European Cinema (1-11 November), the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize to *Pipás* (Mayflies) directed by Emília Goldberg (Hungary, 2025).

Motivation: Emília Goldberg's film poignantly portrays two women trapped in contrasting prisons, delving deeply into mercy and compassion. It challenges conventional views by eliciting sympathy for a murderer, showcasing love's profound power to transform lives. Her nuanced direction casts a redemptive light that inspires hope amid darkness. This work stands as a compelling testament to human resilience and the potential for change.

In addition, the jury awarded a Commendation to *Ida, ki je pela tako grdo, da so šemrtvi*

vstali od mrtvih in zapeli z njo (Ida Who Sang So Badly Even the Dead Rose Up and Joined Her in Song) directed by Ester Ivakič (Slovenia, Croatia, 2025).

Motivation: Slovenia in the 1970s. Under the masterful direction of Ester Ivakič, the film stands as a profoundly honest and poetic exploration of a young girl's soul. It delicately captures the pure and unfiltered relationship between children and the divine, offering audiences an evocative and sincere cinematic experience. Ivakič's work resonates with authenticity and lyrical beauty, making it a compelling testament to innocence and spirituality that deeply moves and inspires.

Members of the 2025 Jury: Aida Schläpfer Al Hassani, Switzerland (President of the Jury); Andraž Arko, Slovenia; Rainer Bätzing, Germany; Agoston Gőbel, Hungary.

Mannheim-Heidelberg (Germany) 2025

At the 74th International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg (6-16 November 2025), the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize, endowed with €2500 by the Catholic German Bishops' Conference (DBK) and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), to the film *Gharaq* (Sink) directed by Zain Duraie (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, France, 2025).

Motivation: A devoted mother of three who would do anything for her son, even if it means not facing the possible consequences of his mental illness. This Middle Eastern feature debut thoughtfully explores the complex dilemmas faced by families raising a child with special needs. A thrilling story filled with powerful scenes.

In addition, the jury awarded a Commendation to *L'intérêt d'Adam* (Adam's Sake) directed by Laura Wandel (Belgium, France, 2025).

Motivation: The complex network of social institutions often casts an impersonal gaze

on individuals facing difficult situations. However, a nurse at work in a hospital finds a way to transcend this maze, gaining insight into a reality that remains concealed from others. This journey unfolds in a cinematic portrayal that emphasizes compassion and hope.

Members of the 2025 Jury: Edgar Octavio Rubio Hernandez, Mexico (President of the Jury); Kjell Riise, Norway; Marcsi Tóth, Hungary.

The Berlin Film Festival 2026 kicks off with the world premiere of *No Good Men*, the third feature film by award-winning Afghan director Shahrbanoo Sadat. *No Good Men* will open the festival on February 12, 2026 at the Berlinale Palast.

Berlinale Director Tricia Tuttle comments: "Shahrbanoo Sadat is one of the most exciting voices in world cinema and *No Good Men* really delivers on the promise of her first two features. Sadat continues her vital work spotlighting Afghan women's lives, here bringing romance and touches of humour to a rousing political story. That it is based on real events, and the director risked so much to get this film made makes *No Good Men* even more meaningful as our Opening Gala of the 76th Berlinale."

No Good Men follows Shahrbanoo Sadat's acclaimed works *Wolf and Sheep* (2016) and *Parwareshgah* (The Orphanage, 2019). Both films screened at Cannes' Directors' Fortnight and The Orphanage was supported by the Berlinale World Cinema Fund. Shahrbanoo Sadat continues her unique cinematic journey as a director, writer, and actor with a film that is both personal and political. The film is also the third of five planned films based on the autobiographical writings of author and actor Anwar Hashimi.