

Media Development

3/2026

WACC

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The 4/2026 issue of *Media Development* will continue to explore the relationship between communication justice, the UN Global Digital Compact, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.



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In his visionary book *La technique* published in 1954, French philosopher Jacques Ellul wrote, “Modern technology has become a total phenomenon for civilization, the defining force of a new social order in which efficiency is no longer an option, but a necessity imposed on all human activity.”

Those words were written before the arrival of the Internet, digital technologies, and Artificial Intelligence – whose rapid development in combination with global political and economic upheavals transformed communications and led to a contraction of public spaces for democratic dialogue.

Perversely, despite the technologies available today, many people are still unable to communicate their needs and concerns or, indeed, are forcibly prevented from doing so. The World Economic Forum’s [Global Risks Report 2025](#) draws attention (pp. 34-35) to the problems posed by digital technologies, social media platforms, and AI-generated content:

“The advent of new technologies and the increase in user-generated content platforms is leading to a corresponding rise in the volume of content online. Flows of misinformation and disinformation from those creating it are becoming more challenging to detect and remove in an increasingly fragmented media landscape.”

In particular, the report notes that:

“Differentiating between AI- and human-generated false or misleading content – in the form of video, images, voice or text – can be difficult. GenAI lowers the barriers for content production and distribution, and some of that content is inaccurate. Threat actors, state agencies in some countries, activist groups, and individuals who may or may not have criminal intentions can automate and expand disinformation campaigns, greatly increasing their

reach and impact.”

Muddying the waters further, between January and April 2025 the US government implemented massive cuts to foreign aid spending. Article 19’s recent report [Targeted](#) explored the global impact of those cuts on freedom of expression, the people working to defend it, and on tackling the harm done by misinformation and disinformation. Regarding information integrity, the report’s key findings were:

- * Disinformation will further proliferate worldwide: A result of the cuts widening the (already vast) discrepancy between investment in (a) countering disinformation, and (b) creating and disseminating it.
- * This proliferation of disinformation – coupled with the reduced capacity of civil society and the media to counter it – is a particular threat to three key areas that are highly vulnerable to disinformation: Free and fair elections; Action to tackle the climate crisis; and Access to life-saving information in conflict zones.
- * The cuts will boost Chinese disinformation and propaganda, at home and worldwide: Cuts to disinformation, media, and digital programming are also a major boon to China, increasing its control of the information environment.

The concepts of mis- and dis-information are controversial. Many commentators now prefer “harmful information”, defined by the International Red Cross Movement (ICRC and IFRC) as any information – whether false, misleading, or maliciously true – which endangers people, undermines trust, or hinders humanitarian action. A taxonomy of this kind of harm includes incitement to violence, physical attacks against protected groups, or the promotion of human rights violations; escalating fear, trauma, or distress among vulnerable populations; exploitation of crisis victims, fraud, or the obstruction of economic resources; fuelling discrimination, societal fragmentation, or the stigmatization of specific

groups; and obstructing humanitarian aid, undermining trust in life-saving health advice, or escalating armed conflict.

In today's world, dependency on digital technologies (Ellul's new social order) is a given. The issues now are how to use them for the common good, how to mitigate their dangers and potential for harm – especially AI – and how to harness them for democratic accountability, inclusion, and genuine social progress. Digital rights and AI accountability are not abstract concepts but rooted in questions of justice, power, and inclusion.

Only a systematic and transparent approach to tackling these questions can advance the shared vision of communication justice. As underlined by Carlos Baca Feldman, Global Learning and Mentorship Lead of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC)'s [LocNet Initiative](#), at the recent WACC [symposium](#) "Our Common Future: Advocating for Digital Rights and AI Accountability":

"Collaboration with civil society, and particularly with community communication and community network movements, offers concrete pathways to advance digital justice. These movements remind us that connectivity is not an end in itself, but a tool to strengthen community life, cultural identity, and democratic participation. Together, we can move toward a more inclusive digital future where no one is left behind – not only in access, but in agency and voice."

Why is it important for people and communities to have a say in the design and development of digital technologies and the policies that regulate them? To prevent governments and corporations from gaining exclusive and unregulated control – including their monetisation and weaponization – of technological advances that ought to be destined for the common good.

While absolute control of technology is not a formally codified human right, it is directly tied to a set of digital human rights

recognised by the UN in its Global Digital Compact (2024). In that respect, the role of civil society is critical. As Patrizia Scannella points out in "[Safeguarding Civil Society Space at the United Nations](#)" (March 2026):

"Civil society enables democratic participation by bringing independent information, marginalised perspectives and lived realities into multilateral decision-making, and by helping to strengthen transparency, the rule of law and accountability."

In short, our common digital future must be determined by the people, for the people: digital sovereignty, no less. That's the real meaning of communication justice today. ■

Recent issues of *Media Development*

2/2026 Other Technological Worlds Are Possible

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Weaving the digital web: Africa's sovereign AI, community networks, and the ethos of Ubuntu

Rebecca Ryakitimbo

The African continent stands at a technological crossroads. As the global race for Artificial Intelligence dominance intensifies, Africa is moving beyond the role of a passive consumer of algorithms. Instead, a continent-wide movement is emerging, one that seeks to reclaim sovereignty over data, language, and innovation. At the heart of this transformation is a fundamental realignment of technology with the foundational African values of Ubuntu (interconnectedness), Ujamaa (familyhood/cooperation), Harambee (pulling together), and the Kwanza principles of Umoja (unity) and Kujichagulia (self-determination).¹

Connectivity is part of the foundational infrastructure of AI. The Local Networks (LocNet) initiative, a collective effort anchored by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and Rhizomatica, serves as a powerful embodiment of the Ubuntu and Harambee spirit. LocNET is laying the ground for the basic infrastructure of AI to work in the global south by working with communities to build sovereign alternatives to connectivity that are commun-

ity-centred.² These initiatives are often called community networks but now carry the collective name of community-centred connectivity initiatives which thrive and embody the African ethos of *ubuntu*, *ujamaa* and *harambee*.

One of the innovative outcomes supported by this initiative was a microgrant for the development of a guide on “Offline AI” tools. In rural and remote areas where internet connectivity is sporadic or non-existent, these tools allow AI to run natively on local devices such as smartphones, desktops, or small PCs, without ever needing a cloud connection. Wakoma was supported to develop this guide that has introduced more ways for underserved communities to engage with AI including utilization of small language models. This project is not just a technical repository; it is a tool for digital liberation. It aligns perfectly with the goal of sovereign AI, allowing communities to build, optimize, and deploy AI models that are tailored to their unique local contexts, regardless of their proximity to a fibre-optic cable.³

In Kenya, this ethos was put to the test in the flood-prone Mavoko Sub-County of Machakos County (including Athi River, Kanani, and Jam City). Supported by LocNet, Digital Rurals strengthened community-centred connectivity by deploying an AI-enabled flood reporting platform integrated with IoT weather monitoring.⁴ This project embodies the African core principles of *Harambee* because it required the collective action of residents to build the mesh networks that carry these alerts. It also embodied *Ubuntu* by prioritizing the most vulnerable, ensuring that technology serves the collective security of the neighbourhood. Lastly it carried the principle of *Ujima* on collective responsibility by working with residents who became active participants in validating flood risks, turning local knowledge into actionable intelligence.

CASE STUDY IN SOVEREIGNTY: THE MASAKHANE NETWORK

To understand how these values are translat-

ed into practice, one need only look at the Masakhane Research Network. The name itself, “Masakhane”, is an isiZulu word meaning “we build together.” It is a pan-African, grassroots research network that has fundamentally altered the discourse around AI, shifting it from a top-down technological imposition to a bottom-up act of linguistic liberation.⁵

For decades, the digital landscape was a monolith of high-resource languages predominantly English, French, and Mandarin. When global tech giants developed AI, they utilized vast public and open internet data, which were overwhelmingly Western-centric. Consequently, African languages were largely ignored, given the status of “low-resource” languages. This was not merely an oversight; it was a form of algorithmic colonialism that effectively silenced millions of voices, ensuring that digital assistants, search engines, and automated educational tools could not interact with the nuances of local culture, idiom, or context.

Masakhane challenged this by mobilizing a decentralized collective of researchers, linguists, developers, and community members across the continent. Instead of waiting for Silicon Valley to include them, they began the process of curating their own datasets. Their methodology is an example of the *Harambee* spirit, pulling together resources, expertise, and time to achieve what no single entity could. They focus on Natural Language Processing (NLP) for languages like Luganda, Yoruba, Swahili, Wolof, and many others. Their work is a form of digital *Kujichagulia* (self-determination).

By building their own translation models and speech-recognition systems, Masakhane is ensuring that the digital future is not a mirror of Western values, but a reflection of African realities. They argue that if a language is not represented in the machine, it risks becoming obsolete in the digital economy. Through their research, they are proving that AI can be a tool for cultural preservation, ensuring that indigenous wisdom, oral histories, and local perspectives are not just stored, but understood by the technologies

shaping our world.

POLICY AS PHILOSOPHY: INSTITUTIONALIZING AFRICAN ETHOS

The transition from grassroots innovation to continental impact requires a robust policy framework. Africa is currently pioneering a governance model that embeds our traditional values into the digital regulatory landscape. The African Union’s Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2024) serves as the guiding manifesto for this transition. Unlike global counterparts the AU strategy emphasizes developmental AI, technology designed to solve specific continental challenges in health, education, and food security.⁶ It explicitly advocates for the harmonization of data regulations across borders, a direct application of the *Umoja* (Unity) principle. By viewing data as a collective resource, the AU is working to prevent the digital balkanization of the continent. At the national level, countries like Tanzania, Rwanda, and South Africa are deploying localized AI strategies that echo this communal ethos:

Regulatory Sandboxes for Co-Innovation, echoing the *Harambee* spirit, nations like Mozambique are championing regulatory sandboxes. These allow startups, academia, and the public sector to test AI solutions in controlled environments, ensuring that innovation is monitored collaboratively rather than being stifled by bureaucracy. This mirrors the pulling together of expertise to mitigate risks while fostering growth.

Ujamaa-inspired Data Governance, Rwanda’s National AI Policy (2023) emphasizes data ecosystems that support public good. By focusing on frameworks like the AI4Health data-sharing initiative, Rwanda is moving toward an *Ujamaa* model where data is not hoarded for private profit but managed as a shared resource to improve public service delivery and agricultural productivity.

Kujichagulia-driven Data Sovereignty, emerging frameworks in South Africa and Tanzania are centring on human accountability. By

mandating that high-risk AI deployments must maintain human oversight and utilize local data standards, these policies practice *Kujichagulia*. They ensure the intelligence governing public institutions is culturally congruent and ethically aligned with local societal norms, rejecting the one-size-fits-all standards imported from abroad.

THE UBUNTU ARCHITECTURE: CODING FOR COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING

In the Silicon Valley model, AI is often designed to optimize for an individual's needs, my personal shopping recommendations, my individual productivity, or my specific health metrics. *Ubuntu*-centred AI, however, views the individual as part of a web. If an algorithm is built to predict crop yields, an *Ubuntu*-informed model does not prioritize the high-tech farmer who can afford the most advanced sensors. Instead, it asks "How does this information benefit the local farming cooperative?". It prioritizes tools that strengthen the village's collective food security. It asks not how to make one person more efficient, but how to make the entire community more resilient against climate shocks.

The current global AI economy is built on a model of extraction, treating human data as a commodity to be harvested, sold, and used to train models that often serve the interests of distant corporations. *Ubuntu* stands in opposition to this. It views data as a communal asset. Under an *Ubuntu* framework, the data collected from a community such as health trends in a rural clinic or weather data from a local landscape, remains tethered to the community that provided it. It promotes data sovereignty, where the community has a say in how their digital collective is used, ensuring that AI serves their needs rather than being used to exploit them. *Ubuntu* emphasizes that harm to one member of the community is harm to all. In the context of AI, this provides a powerful framework for addressing algorithmic bias.

When a Western-trained AI system exhibits its bias for example, misidentifying faces from certain backgrounds or making unfair credit

assessments based on neighbourhood data, it is often treated as a technical bug. In an *Ubuntu* framework, this is a social failure. It is a failure to acknowledge the interconnectedness of society. *Ubuntu*-centred AI governance mandates that developers be held accountable to the real-world human impacts of their code. It forces a human-in-the-loop design where community elders, local experts, and those marginalized by the technology have the power to audit, critique, and veto systems. Finally, *Ubuntu* reframes inclusion not as a checkbox for social responsibility, but as a moral imperative. If we are all one, then a digital system that excludes the person with a disability, the rural farmer, or the speaker of a minority language is fundamentally broken.

This is why initiatives like Masakhane or the LocNet community networks are so powerful. They are not trying to add marginalized people to a pre-existing digital structure; they are building the structure from the perspective of those communities. **Ubuntu** teaches us that the quality of our future depends on the quality of our connections to the most vulnerable among us. If our AI systems do not work for them, they do not work at all.

In short, *Ubuntu* invites us to treat Artificial Intelligence not as a cold, objective tool, but as a member of our community. If we build our algorithms with the values of empathy, reciprocity, and shared destiny, we turn AI from a potential source of alienation into a powerful engine for collective flourishing.

THE PATH FORWARD

As we look toward the future of AI in Africa and the global south, the integration of AI must be seen as a profound moral choice. The journey we have traced from the linguistic decolonization led by Masakhane to the community-owned infrastructure by LocNet and the localized intelligence of the Offline AI projects provides a clear blueprint for Africa's technological evolution.

To move forward, we must synthesize these lessons into a unified strategy:

Prioritize Sovereignty through Infrastructure: We must continue to treat power and the internet as foundational human rights. Scaling community-owned networks is not just a technical solution, it is a political act of *Kujichagulia*. By owning the pipes of the digital age, we ensure that the intelligence flowing through them remains accountable to local communities.

Institutionalize Ubuntu in Design: We must move beyond the “Move fast and break things” mantra. The future of African AI lies in “Move together and heal things”. We must mandate that every major AI rollout be it in health-care, agriculture, or finance undergoes a social impact audit that measures success not by efficiency alone, but by how it bolsters the Ubuntu of the community it serves.

Invest in Frugal and Offline Intelligence: We must accept the reality of our current infrastructure and turn it into a strength. The development of offline-first, low-resource AI models should be a continental priority. This frugal AI creates a more robust, independent ecosystem that thrives regardless of the stability of international cloud connections.

Foster Regional Data Solidarity: Building on the *Harambee* spirit, we must establish cross-border data trusts. By sharing anonymized, ethically curated data across the continent, we can create AI models that understand the African context better than any external system ever could.

The movement toward sovereign AI is a testament to the resilience of the African spirit. By weaving the ancient values of *Ubuntu*, *Ujamaa*, *Harambee*, and *Kwanza* into AI, the continent is not just catching up; we are offering the world a new way to live with the machines we create. The servers are starting to hum, the community networks are growing, and the story of Africa’s future is, at long last, being written by Africans themselves. ■

2. Association for Progressive Communications & Rhizomatica. (2025). *Meaningful community-centred connectivity: The LocNet initiative*. <https://www.apc.org/en/partner/rhizomatica>
3. Wakoma. (2025). OfflineAI: Local/offline machine learning resources [GitHub repository]. <https://github.com/Wakoma/OfflineAI>
4. Digital Rurals. (2025). Community-centred connectivity and climate resilience in Mavoko Sub-County: A case study of IoT and AI-enabled flood reporting [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3bEtJbwbdg>
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6. African Union. (2024). Continental artificial intelligence strategy for Africa. <https://au.int/fr/node/43871>

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Notes

1. Karenga, M. (1966). *The seven principles of Kwanzaa: A collection of essays on the African cultural position*. US Organization.

Digital justice and Artificial Intelligence in Georgia: Who has a voice in the future?

Nino Todua

When we speak about the digital future, we often imagine technology first: fast internet, new platforms, artificial intelligence, automated systems, or applications that make everyday life easier. But from the perspective of Georgia, the digital future is not only a question of technological progress. It is also a question of justice, equality, language, participation, and who has the opportunity not only to use technology, but also to understand it, question it, and help shape it.

Georgia is a small country in the South Caucasus with a rich cultural, linguistic, and historical heritage. In recent years, digital services, online education, social media, and technological tools have become more widely used across the country. Citizens use the internet every day to receive information, communicate, study, access banking services, interact with public institutions, and participate in social life. At first glance, it may seem that digital development is moving forward quickly and that most people are already part of the digital world.

However, digital justice means much more than internet access. It also means quality access, relevant knowledge, safety, language, critical thinking, and the possibility to use technology

for personal development and for strengthening society. This is where the main question begins: Is digital progress equally available to everyone, or does it mostly empower those who already have resources, skills, and opportunities?

In Georgia, digital inequality is often invisible. Many young people use smartphones, are active on social media, and adapt quickly to new platforms. But if we look more deeply, we see that access and real opportunity are not the same thing. A young person may have a phone, but not a computer for educational or professional purposes. They may have internet access, but not enough digital skills to evaluate information, protect personal data, recognize manipulation, or use technology to develop their own ideas. They may have access to global platforms but still struggle to find high-quality resources in the Georgian language.

This is especially visible in the regions, where young people often have fewer opportunities to attend training sessions, receive mentoring, work in modern technological environments, or participate in international educational programmes. The difference between cities and rural areas is not only infrastructural. It is also about knowledge, confidence, environment, and whether a young person believes that they have the right and ability to be an active participant in the digital future.

GEORGIA'S DIGITAL CONTEXT: PROGRESS AND INEQUALITY AT THE SAME TIME

In recent years, many digital services have developed in Georgia. Citizens increasingly use online platforms, some public services are available electronically, digital tools are more frequently used in schools and universities, and since the pandemic, online learning and remote communication have become part of everyday life for many people. This experience was important because society quickly understood how essential digital skills are for education, employment, and maintaining social connections.

At the same time, the pandemic clearly re-

vealed the scale of digital inequality. Not every family had the necessary equipment. Not every student had a quiet space for online lessons. Not every teacher was ready for digital teaching. For many young people, online education was not only an opportunity, but also an additional barrier. This experience remains important today because it showed us that digital transformation cannot be achieved only by providing technology.

For digital justice, technology must be accompanied by the development of human capacity. Schools need not only internet access, but also trained teachers, practical resources in the Georgian language, safe digital environments, and educational approaches that help young people not only use platforms, but also critically understand their content.

Young people in Georgia often learn to use new digital tools very quickly, but this does not mean that they automatically have digital literacy. Using social media is not the same as verifying information. Using artificial intelligence is not the same as critically evaluating its outputs. Being online does not mean being safe. Therefore, digital education must go beyond technical skills and include media literacy, ethics, personal data protection, prevention of online violence, and civic participation.

THE GEORGIAN LANGUAGE CHALLENGE IN THE AGE OF AI

The development of artificial intelligence has made the importance of language even clearer. Many global AI tools work better in languages for which large amounts of data are available. English and other widely used languages are much more strongly represented in the digital space than Georgian. This means that for Georgian-speaking users, the possibilities of AI are often limited: translations may be inaccurate, context may be lost, cultural nuances may not be reflected, and Georgian-language knowledge may remain less visible.

The Georgian language is not only a means of communication. It is part of identity, culture,

history, memory, and social self-expression. If digital and AI systems do not learn Georgian properly, there is a risk that Georgian experience, local context, and knowledge will become secondary in the global digital space. This is not only a technical problem. It is a cultural and democratic issue.

Language inequality is especially important for young people. When a young person tries to study, create, find information, or use an AI tool in Georgian, they need high-quality and reliable tools. Otherwise, the digital space cannot become a space of full participation for them. For example, if an AI tool responds poorly in Georgian, translates inaccurately, or fails to understand local context, a young person is forced to switch to another language. This gives an advantage to those who know English or other major languages well, while leaving others in a more passive position.

This issue is also important for ethnic minorities. Georgia is home to communities for whom Georgian may not be the first language, and in digital spaces they may face even more complex language barriers. If artificial intelligence and digital services do not take multilingual and multicultural realities into account, technology may become a mechanism of exclusion rather than inclusion.

For this reason, the development of the Georgian language in the digital age should not be seen as a narrow academic or technological task. It should be understood as part of digital justice. Georgia needs high-quality Georgian-language data, local content creation, technological support for the Georgian language, and cooperation between academia, civil society, technology experts, and young people.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: OPPORTUNITY OR IMPOSED REALITY?

In Georgia, as in many other countries, artificial intelligence is entering everyday life very quickly. Young people use AI tools to prepare texts, translate materials, create visual content, study, and develop ideas. Organizations use it for com-

munication, project planning, data analysis, and administrative processes. However, AI often enters society faster than society has time to understand it.

This is one of the main challenges: technology is already in our lives, but rules, knowledge, and critical discussion often lag behind. People use AI, but do not always know how it works, what data it uses, what biases it may have, or how it can affect work, education, rights, and democratic processes.

AI can be a major opportunity for a small country. It can support education, simplify information processing, encourage innovation, strengthen civil society, and create new opportunities for young people. For small organizations, AI can become a tool that helps improve communication, translate resources, plan projects, or better understand data. For young people, it can support self-learning, creativity, and the development of new ideas.

But if AI is introduced only according to the logic of the market or global technology companies, without broad public participation, it can become a source of new inequalities. When technology arrives in small countries in a “ready-made” form, local society often does not have enough time, resources, or influence to ask critical questions: Whose values are embedded in this system? What data was it trained on? Does it understand our language, culture, and reality? Who is responsible for mistakes? How does it affect people’s rights?

In Georgia, it is especially important that AI policy is not shaped only by technical specialists or business interests. The voices of young people, teachers, people living in the regions, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, journalists, civil society organizations, and local communities must be heard. Digital policy cannot be fair if it does not take into account the experiences of those who are most affected by it.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION: WHO IS LEFT OUTSIDE THE DIGITAL FUTURE?

Digital exclusion in Georgia does not only mean not having internet access. It can appear in many forms: lack of devices, low digital skills, language barriers, lack of reliable information, safety risks, regional inequality, or the absence of spaces where young people can speak critically about technology.

The situation of young people living in the regions is particularly important. They are often active users of social media, but have less access to quality non-formal education, digital training, mentoring, or international experience. For this reason, digital justice in youth work should not be limited to teaching technology. It must also strengthen critical thinking, media literacy, online safety, responsible communication, and civic participation.

Another form of digital exclusion is lack of confidence. Many young people feel that technology is “for others” – for those who live in big cities, speak English well, have strong computers, or grow up in technological environments. This feeling is an invisible barrier. It is important for young people to see that the digital world is not only for programmers or large companies. It is also a space where they have a place, a voice, and opportunities.

The main task of digital justice is to notice these invisible barriers. Often, the most vulnerable groups are absent from digital discussions. People speak about them but rarely listen to them. Therefore, every policy, programme, or educational initiative should begin with listening. What do young people need? What are they afraid of? What opportunities do they see? What experiences do they have online? How do they interact with technology in their daily lives?

THE RESPONSE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society has a special role in Georgia. It often appears where the state system, school, or market cannot provide enough support to young people. Civil society organizations create spaces for non-formal education, organize training, work in

the regions, encourage youth participation, develop media and digital literacy, and strengthen local communities.

In the age of AI, this role becomes even more important. Civil society should act in three main directions. The first is *education*. People need to know what AI is, how it works, and what opportunities and risks it brings. This knowledge should be simple, understandable, and accessible not only to specialists, but also to young people, teachers, parents, journalists, and local activists. It is especially important to create educational materials in Georgian and based on local examples.

The second is *advocacy*. Decisions about AI and digital policy should be made transparently, with public participation, and based on human rights principles. We need to ask: Who benefits? Who owns the data? Who controls the process? Who has the right to know how an automated decision is made? Who can challenge an algorithmic mistake?

The third is *network-based cooperation*. Digital challenges change so quickly that one organization or one sector cannot respond to them alone. Cooperation is needed between civil society, the education sector, media, technology specialists, international partners, and local communities. Such cooperation can help ensure that digital justice does not remain only a slogan but becomes practical action.

Civil society's response should not be only criticism. It should also create alternatives: training courses, guides, youth programmes, public discussions, local initiatives, research, policy recommendations, and spaces where conversations about technology are held in language that everyone can understand.

HELPING HAND'S EXPERIENCE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

For Helping Hand, working with young people is one of the main parts of digital justice. Our experience shows that young people need not only information, but also a safe and supportive space where they can ask questions, share their fears

and ideas, develop practical skills, and see their own role in society.

In our work, we often see that young people use technology very actively, but they need support to make this use thoughtful, safe, and creative. They are interested in how to recognize disinformation, how to protect personal data, how to use AI for learning without losing their own thinking, how to create content responsibly, and how to use digital spaces for civic engagement.

Helping Hand's approach is based on non-formal education, practical learning, and active youth participation. For us, it is important that a young person is not only a participant in a training session. They should become a co-creator of the process. Young people should have the opportunity to identify problems, develop ideas, and implement initiatives in their own communities.

When working in the regions, it becomes especially clear how important it is to consider local context. The same programme cannot work in the same way everywhere. Some young people need more technical knowledge, others need more motivation and self-confidence, and others need a safe space where they can speak about their ideas for the first time. Therefore, digital education should be flexible, human-centred, and based on real needs.

From Helping Hand's perspective, artificial intelligence can become a powerful tool for young people if it is understood properly. AI can help them study, develop ideas, overcome language barriers, and work creatively. But at the same time, young people need to know that AI is not an unquestionable authority. It can make mistakes, be biased, misunderstand context, or produce superficial answers. That is why the use of AI must be accompanied by critical thinking, ethics, and responsibility.

Our vision is that young people should move from awareness to action. They need not only information, but also voice, space, and support to create change – in school, university, community, organization, or online.



Awards and certificate presentation for the participants at Helping Hand's "Superheroes" School'. Photo: Helping Hand

For Georgia, the role of young people is especially important. Young people are often seen as natural users of technology, as if they automatically have digital skills simply because they grew up with the internet. But this idea is superficial. Young people may easily use social media, but this does not mean that they are ready to understand the ethical, social, and political consequences of AI.

Young people should not be only users. They should be participants. They should have opportunities to speak about what kind of digital environment they want, how they see the use of AI in education, what risks they see for their generation, and how technology can become an instrument of public good.

Schools, families, civil society organizations, and media have a great responsibility in this process. We should not tell young people only that AI is “good” or “dangerous”. We should give them the opportunity to understand, test, think, and discuss. This is how responsible digital citizenship is formed.

GEORGIA'S PLACE IN THE GLOBAL DIALOGUE

Georgia's voice in the global digital dialogue is important because our country stands at the

intersection of development, democracy, language protection, youth participation, and technological change. Our experience shows that digital progress does not automatically mean justice. Justice requires intentional policy, education, participation, and ethical frameworks.

For small countries such as Georgia, participation in global digital policy is especially important. If decisions are made only according to the interests of large countries, major languages, and big technology companies, small languages and local experiences may be left behind. Therefore, it is important for Georgia not only to receive technology, but also to participate in international conversations about digital justice.

The WACC Digital Justice Symposium in Berlin once again underlined that AI and digital rights are not only technical issues. They are questions of power, justice, human rights, and the future. For Georgia, participation in this discussion means an opportunity to make our experiences, challenges, and needs more visible internationally.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

For Georgia's digital future to be fair, action is

needed in several directions.

First, digital and AI literacy must be strengthened among young people, teachers, parents, and civil society representatives. This knowledge should be practical, understandable, and adapted to the Georgian context.

Second, Georgian-language digital resources must be developed. The Georgian language should be fully represented in digital and AI systems. This requires quality content, data development, research, and cooperation between the technology sector and civil society.

Third, AI policy should be based on human rights, transparency, and accountability. Society should have the right to know how and where automated systems are used, what data they rely on, and how they can be monitored.

Fourth, young people should be included in decision-making. They should have spaces where they can express their views and implement practical initiatives.

Fifth, the regions must be strengthened. Digital justice cannot be achieved if opportunities are concentrated only in big cities. Digital education, technological resources, and innovative programmes must reach regions, villages, and communities that are often less visible.

THE DIGITAL FUTURE MUST BE HUMAN-CENTRED

Digital justice in Georgia means that technology should serve people, not the other way around. It means that AI should not be introduced as if it were a neutral and unavoidable force. Every technological system is created on the basis of specific people, interests, data, and values. That is why society must ask questions in time and demand answers.

For Georgia, the digital future should be Georgian-language, inclusive, ethical, and open to young people. It should strengthen education, local communities, democratic participation, and human dignity. Technology can become an instrument of development and justice, but only if conversations about it do not remain only in ex-

pert rooms.

We need a digital future where young people have not only internet access, but also knowledge, critical thinking, and influence. We need AI that does not erase small languages and local experiences, but strengthens them. We need policies that listen to those who are often invisible in discussions about digital progress.

The Digital Justice Symposium in Berlin highlighted one central idea: AI and digital rights are not abstract issues. They are questions of power, justice, and the human future. For Georgia, this is an opportunity to ensure that on the path of digital development, we do not lose what matters most – people, language, voice, and equality. ■

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Una mirada comunicativa a la IA. No hay nada de inteligencia, ¿o sí?, en utilizar la IA

J. Ignacio ‘Iñaki’ Chaves G.

“Los progresos científicos más extraordinarios, las proezas técnicas más sorprendentes, el crecimiento económico más prodigioso, si no van acompañados de un auténtico progreso social y moral, se vuelven, en definitiva, contra el hombre” (Pablo VI)

Entre tanta guerra, tanto odio y tanta inhumanidad, en estos tiempos poscovid-19 aparece con fuerza otra pandemia global. Se trata de una plaga tecnológica que está cambiando el panorama formativo e in-formativo de la población mundial.

Hoy es difícil encontrar un lugar en el que la llamada Inteligencia Artificial (IA) no esté presente. Invade la mayoría de los espacios de nuestro quehacer diario, siendo cada vez mayor el número de personas que “resuelven” su cotidianidad preguntándole a ella. El paisaje informativo se llena de IA y nos nubla poco a poco el horizonte y la utopía.

Por eso la mirada ha de ser comunicativa, dialógica y desde la razón, para no caer en el mismo error que flotó sobre medios y academias con aquella comunicación para el desarrollo que ni nos comunicó ni nos llevó al estado social que prometía. Abordar con criterio y mirada crítica el nuevo suelo que nos ha puesto la IA bajo los pies para no caer heridos por “cantos de sirena”.¹

PANORAMA ACTUAL

Lo de actual es casi obsoleto porque la velocidad de penetración de la IA, sus cambios y avances, son tan rápidos que lo que hoy es “A” mañana será “Z” sin haber asimilado su paso por “B” o “Y”. Pero podemos observar su ínclita presencia y sentir que, al menos en lo tocante al continente latinoamericano, la situación se percibe como una vuelta a aquellos ya “viejos” tiempos en los que la Teoría de la Dependencia marcaba el devenir de las naciones que lo conforman. La actual situación frente a la IA parece estar movida por los mismos hilos de subordinación y dependencia.

En el ensayo *The Adolescence of Technology*, Dario Amodei, director ejecutivo de Anthropic – la empresa productora de uno de los modelos de IA más potentes del planeta – plantea una serie de riesgos vinculados a los avances acelerados de la Inteligencia Artificial y nuestra escasa preparación frente a ellos. Esos riesgos serían: la pérdida de autonomía y soberanías nacionales, el mal uso de la IA con fines destructivos, los abusos de poder, las perturbaciones económicas y otros efectos indirectos. Nada nuevo, podríamos decir. Pero ahora con un poder “inteligente” que lo gobierna todo y a todos sin tener conciencia de ello “La humanidad está a punto de recibir un poder casi inimaginable, y no está claro si nuestros sistemas sociales, políticos y tecnológicos poseen la madurez necesaria para ejercerlo” (Amodei, 2026).

Esos riesgos se concentran con mayor fuerza e incidencia en los países del continente latinoamericano por sus condiciones políticas, económicas y sociales, agravadas por la recurrente inestabilidad política de sus gobiernos, tantas veces cuestionados como presionados casi siempre por el capital y por el poderoso “gran hermano”.

En la tercera edición del *Índice Latinoamericano de Inteligencia Artificial* (ILIA 2025), elaborado por el Centro Nacional de Inteligencia Artificial de Chile y la Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL), uno de los principales hallazgos es la confirmación de una tendencia ya visible en 2024: existe una profunda brecha entre el interés creciente de la

ciudadanía por la IA y la escasa urgencia con que los gobiernos están construyendo las capacidades institucionales necesarias para apoyarlo y aprovecharlo. Los gobiernos actúan como si sobrara tiempo.

Mientras que durante el primer semestre de 2025 América Latina concentró entre el 15 % y el 20 % de las descargas globales de aplicaciones relacionadas con la IA, tercera región del mundo por uso de esta herramienta –con Chile, Costa Rica y Perú entre los más activos–, más de la mitad de los gobiernos (10 de 19) no contaban con una estrategia nacional frente a la IA o, si la tenían, no la habían dotado de presupuesto. Una situación comprensible si tenemos en cuenta que casi todos los países tienen otras dificultades mucho más perentorias que afrontar.

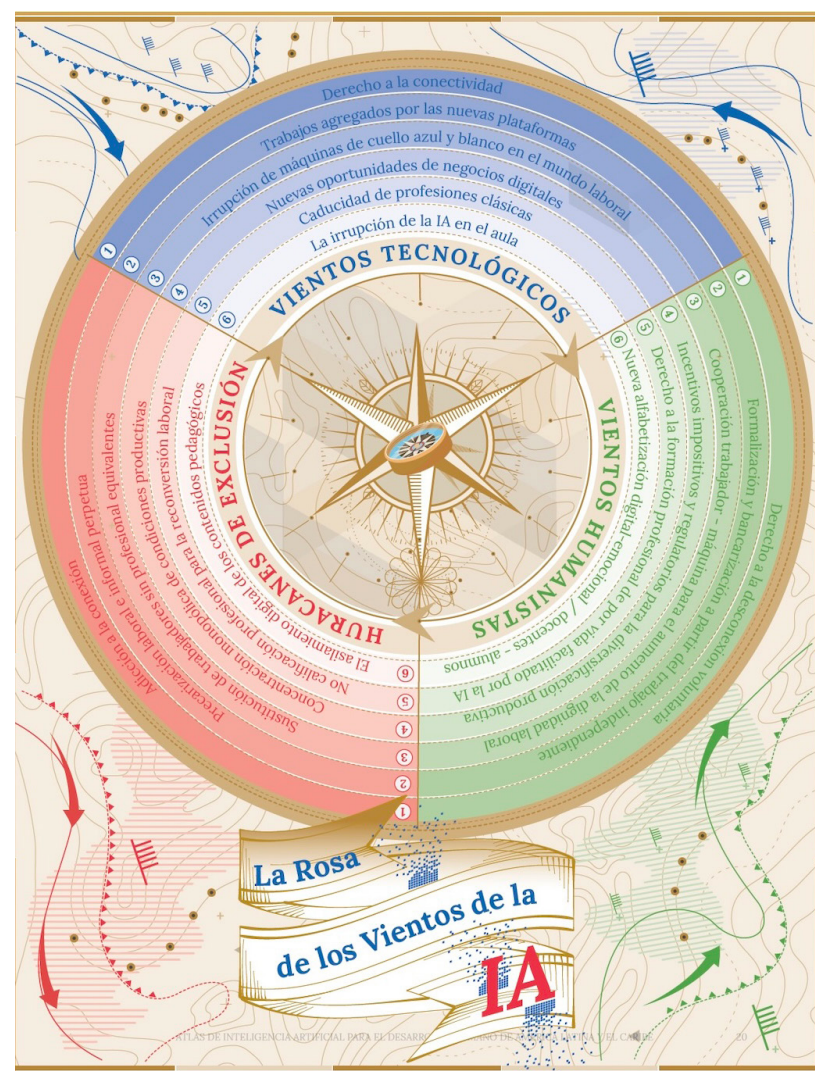
¿HAY INTELIGENCIA EN LA IA?

Podría afirmarse, con poco margen de error, que la “inteligencia” que hay detrás de la IA es la del negocio, la de los beneficios económicos de aquellas personas y entidades que la construyen y la hacen “casi imprescindible” para gran parte de la población que “cae en sus redes”. Y con ella, la “inteligencia” del poder, la del control de la información y los datos cuya manipulación gobierna el mundo y construye los imaginarios predominantes en la sociedad.

En 2023, cuando la IA todavía no se había difundido tanto ni llegado tan lejos, ya vivíamos determinados por las pantallas y deslumbrados por lo que nos ofrecían: “el espacio mediático se ha expandido y salido de rotativas, emisoras y estudios de grabación para estar presente, a cualquier hora y en cualquier lugar, en las pantallas de todos los dispositivos móviles existentes ocupando nuestra atención y distrayendo nuestras mentes” (Chaves, 2023, p. 7). A ello se ha añadido hoy la presión global de abandonar el pensamiento a las respuestas de la IA y dejar las acciones a lo que nos reboten sus “conocimientos”.

En el *Atlas de Inteligencia Artificial para el desarrollo humano de América Latina y el Caribe* (2025), el Programa de Naciones Unidas para el

Desarrollo (PNUD) introduce una nueva noción, surgida del cruce entre tres conceptos: el antropoceno, la solidaridad y la resiliencia, que denomina el IA-ceno, un nuevo vocablo para señalar cómo el planeta Tierra no está solamente sometido a



la acción humana, sino también a los efectos de “entes híbridos que pueden llegar a cuestionar o disminuir la noción de agencia humana como la conocemos hasta ahora”.

El PNUD nos advierte de que estamos viviendo “la transición de la inteligencia orgánica a la inteligencia ampliada y autónoma. El IA-Ceno ha dado nacimiento no a una nueva especie sino a nuevas especies, y nuevas agencias”. Pero esa “inteligencia ampliada y autónoma” está diseñada, programada y alimentada por la inteligencia humana.

Es innegable que la IA está redefiniendo el panorama social de la humanidad cambiando los paradigmas de la educación, la ciencia, el periodismo y las relaciones sociales. También pone en cuestión dilemas éticos que desde su artificialidad parece pasar por alto y jugar al “todo vale”.

Pero la IA no es inteligente *per se* porque es una construcción humana que, igual que sucedió con internet, nos promete facilitarnos la vida sin advertirnos de sus riesgos y de lo que hay detrás de ella y sus tecnócratas oligárquicos.

La IA es una serie de tecnologías basadas en algoritmos que “aprenden” una ingente cantidad de datos que procesan y que devuelven al responder. Es un instrumento, tal vez el más potente y avanzado –que se habrá desarrollado aún más cuando lean esto– programado para responder con base en lo que lo ha alimentado.

Mientras que la inteligencia humana sabe contextualizar, adaptarse, crear, pensar, sentir e interpretar. Como afirma el profesor e investigador Daniel Innerarity² “la inteligencia humana es creativa y adaptable, algo que la IA todavía no puede replicar”. La inteligencia humana es flexible, la IA es instrumental; la inteligencia humana interpreta y da sentido, la máquina solamente procesa y devuelve información. Además, el ser humano es capaz de comprender y aplicar juicios morales y éticos a sus planteamientos y acciones.

LA ÉTICA EN LA IA

Como ocurrió con la “educación” propagada por EE. UU. tras la II Guerra Mundial, y sobre lo que nos llamaron la atención en su momento Dorfman y Mattelart en *Para leer al pato Donald*, la IA uniformiza el tipo de conocimiento y con ello el pensamiento y el accionar.

Con la IA se confirma drásticamente el **sonambulismo tecnológico** que ya planteaba Winner (2008) en su libro *La ballena y el reactor* y que incide en la determinación que tienen las tecnologías sobre nuestra vida y nuestro comportamiento. La ausencia de “autorreflexión” frente al uso indiscriminado de las tecnologías modifica el papel que el ser humano desempeña en la sociedad, la actitud acrítica ante los impactos tecnológicos nos deja “desnudos” e indefensos.

No vamos a negar el valor de los avances tecnológicos, ni caer en enfrentar a apocalípticos contra integrados, pero sí es pertinente sustentar ciertos reparos ante un conjunto de elementos técnicos que está cambiando el escenario

mundial en cuanto a la manera de leer la realidad, de desenvolvernarnos en nuestras tareas cotidianas y que está afectando, especialmente, el periodismo que ejercemos y la información que producimos y recibimos.

La Organización de Naciones Unidas para la Educación y la Cultura (UNESCO) ya advirtió en *Recomendación sobre la ética de la inteligencia artificial* (2022) acerca de los “nuevos desafíos éticos por el potencial de los algoritmos de la IA para reproducir y reforzar los sesgos existentes, lo que puede exacerbar las formas ya existentes de discriminación, los prejuicios y los estereotipos”.

Cuando ni las redacciones ni las academias estaban preparadas para enfrentar esta nueva manera de obtener datos e información, la fuerza de la IA estaba ya transformando el mundo del periodismo y del conocimiento sin ser todavía conscientes de sus efectos y de cómo incide en la forma de pensar y hacer de la población.

La actual situación de derechos tecnológicos que no son tales y de información que nos deforma se da, según Echeverría (2026), en el momento en que la Cumbre Mundial de la Sociedad de la Información (ONU 2003-2005) cedió a las empresas privadas la gestión del ciberespacio y su arquitectura, lo que hizo que, pese a su masificación, “libre” acceso y uso, su estructura sea antidemocrática y esté controlada por los dueños de las tecnológicas, con las GAFAM a la cabeza.

IA Y PERIODISMO

La IA ha invadido las redacciones en un momento en el que el periodismo ya estaba en riesgo. Tal vez eran los medios y sus sistemas de negocio los que estaban más en el alambre, porque el trabajo periodístico seguirá, por suerte, siendo necesario. Lo innegable es que habrá que adaptarse más y mejor al nuevo panorama informativo.

Se escribe mucho sobre la IA y el periodismo, sobre quien gana y quien pierde en ese cruce, sobre si se está empobreciendo el lenguaje periodístico, sobre si la IA ocupará el lugar del profesional de la información, sobre si la tecnología es la que está construyendo los valores o sobre si es la IA la que decide sobre qué escriben

las y los periodistas y qué publican los medios. Hay respuestas de todo tipo y visiones distintas desde diferentes perspectivas.

Con la IA se produce en los medios una mayor automatización de las tareas, lo que puede afectar a su personal; se privilegian ciertos géneros periodísticos; se favorece el llamado ciberanzuelo (*clickbait*) para aumentar las visitas; se gana mecanización y se pierde creatividad; se denota una escritura sutilmente rutinaria, o se mejoran la eficiencia en la recolección y análisis de la información. También se ha potenciado con la IA un nuevo género: el periodismo de verificación, que busca cuestionar lo publicado y comprobar su veracidad. Se mire como se mire, la inteligencia artificial ha provocado una revolución en el periodismo acompañada de incertidumbres, riesgos y responsabilidades en el conocimiento y uso de tan ingente cantidad de datos en herramientas tan potentes.

La IA ha incidido, y mucho, en el periodismo. Porque con ella, tal como reconoce el Informe Mundial 2022/2025 de la Unesco, ha aumentado “la desinformación y la información errónea”. Por eso se requiere que los y las periodistas mantengan “una constante re-educación. El contraste de la información va a seguir teniendo un valor fundamental. Se tendrá que complementar con distintas herramientas y recursos, en pos de brindar credibilidad y ubicarse en su rol clave de arrojar luz a la sociedad” (Zuazo, 2023, p. 17).

UNA PUERTA ABIERTA AL DEBATE

Empezábamos escribiendo sobre la presencia de la IA en todos los aspectos de nuestra vida y terminamos asumiendo que la producción alrededor de ella es tal que es necesario poner aquí el punto y final, dejando la puerta abierta al debate sobre algo que apenas está iniciando, que no para de crecer y que no sabemos a dónde nos llevará.

De la referencia inicial a Pablo VI a la de León XIV al final: sus advertencias en la encíclica *Magnífica humanitas* van en la línea de prevenir, de no dejarse llevar por promesas que lo pintan todo de color de rosa con envoltura de

papel celofán. Con el sugerente subtítulo “sobre la custodia de la persona humana en el tiempo de la inteligencia artificial”, el papa afirma: “Me limito a recordar algunos elementos esenciales para un discernimiento moral y social que proteja el primado de la persona, con el fin de que sea siempre la inteligencia humana, con su conciencia y su libertad, la que guíe las innovaciones técnicas y establezca con responsabilidad su uso y sus límites”.

Así que no hay afirmaciones irrefutables. Palabra de ateo, descreído de religiones promisorias y de tecnologías salvadoras, incluida la que está subiendo al pedestal una herramienta que, hoy por hoy, parece destinada más a favorecer a los tecnooligarcas, a sus bolsillos y a sus “principios” tecnofascistas que a la sociedad civil.

Se trata de no caer en las fauces de la mentira y la manipulación para ganar seguidores y para beneficiar a los centros de poder que nos dirigen. El periodismo “no puede ser neutral ante los hechos ni indiferente ante sus consecuencias: tiene que ser riguroso, incómodo y honesto, y tomar partido por lo que lo justifica: la verdad comprobable, la rendición de cuentas y los derechos ciudadanos” (Alonso, 2026).

Porque no todo es IA, también sigue habiendo lugar para las utopías, pero no las de dioses en los cielos ni en los algoritmos, sino las de una humanidad que mantenga la ética y la coherencia, que entienda las tecnologías como herramientas para un mejor vivir, que tenga ganas de juntanzas para la vida digna y la justicia social, que practique una verdadera comunicación y que exija un buen periodismo y unos medios comprometidos con la información y con la verdad. ■

Notas

1. Este artículo no ha sido generado con la ayuda de la IA. Está escrito a partir del mínimo de sentido común e inteligencia que nos queda tras el exceso de pantallas, plataformas, redes virtuales y algoritmos, y del pequeño resquicio de libertad para seguir pensando y creyendo que el ser humano, y la comunicación que practiquemos, continuarán estando por encima de cualquier instrumento.
2. Daniel Innerarity: conferencia “Inteligencia humana e inteligencia artificial”, durante el EdTech Congress, Barcelona 2024 <https://impulsoeducacio.org/es/educacion-y-ventajas-de-la-inteligencia-humana-sobre-la-artificial/>

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A strategic window for digital justice

Christina Dahl-Jensen

Digital technologies have become central to political authority, economic organisation and social life worldwide. Artificial intelligence now accelerates this transformation, creating new opportunities for health, education and governance while simultaneously amplifying inequality, enabling surveillance and eroding civic space.

The period from 2026 to 2028 is a rare and strategic moment in which global digital governance norms can still be shaped. The WSIS+20 outcome document and the operationalisation of the Global Digital Compact together create an institutional opening in which civil society, governments and faith-based organisations can influence the direction of global digital governance before norms and mandates become entrenched. This report identifies practical avenues for shaping that trajectory and outlines how to contribute to a just and sustainable digital future.

1 SETTING THE SCENE

Digital technologies increasingly structure political authority, economic organisation and human dignity across all regions, from the Pacific Islands to Latin America, from Africa to Europe and across Asia. They enable connection, knowledge creation and new forms of participation, yet they also deepen inequality, intensify surveillance, reorganise labour markets and contribute to a global contraction of civic space. These developments unfold within a geopolitical environment characterised by rapid technological acceleration, weakening multilateral structures and strategic

competition among powerful states.

Artificial intelligence now sits at the centre of this transformation. Capabilities of the AI models evolve in cycles of months rather than years, increasingly influencing public administration, commercial markets, welfare provision, armed conflict and cultural life. This velocity challenges institutions that are designed for stability rather than speed. Analysts of global Internet governance have warned that the current architecture is drifting towards fragmentation, with overlapping initiatives emerging from states, corporations and technical bodies. The lack of a coherent governance architecture amplifies pressures on established frameworks such as WSIS and increases risks of forum shopping, divergent standards and the dilution of rights based approaches.

Inequality remains a defining feature of the digital era. Much of Africa and the Pacific continue to be constrained by limited access to high performance computing and sovereign cloud infrastructure, creating what several global analyses describe as “compute deserts”. Latin America faces intensifying extraction pressures linked to lithium, cobalt and copper, with implications for both ecological stability and geopolitical dependency. Across Asia, digital identity policies, broad cybersecurity legislation and expanding biometric systems are reshaping the boundaries of civic participation. In all regions, data extractivism continues to shift economic value away from the communities that generate it, while the cultural and linguistic hierarchies embedded within automated systems reinforce epistemic inequality.

Together, these dynamics illustrate the global “morality gap” described in the Club of Rome’s *Earth for All* (2023), in which extreme inequality, ecological degradation and exploitative resource use erode trust and social cohesion. The report’s proposals to treat minerals, data and knowledge as commons, and to develop fee and dividend models for shared benefit, offer a relevant conceptual framework for digital governance.

Geopolitics and militarisation further intensify the stakes of digital transformation. Strategic competition between major powers increasingly shapes decisions about fibre networks, satellite systems, computing supply chains and AI safety standards. Communications infrastructure, cloud platforms and emerging autonomous systems have become entangled with military planning, particularly in the Pacific and parts of Asia. The blurring of boundaries between civilian and military technologies raises concerns about automated escalation, machine speed conflict and the erosion of space for human deliberation. There is broad global consensus that autonomy must never be integrated into nuclear command structures. Growing public concern about the trajectory of frontier AI models is reflected in the Future of Life Institute’s 2025 call for a prohibition on the development of superintelligence until safety mechanisms and democratic consent are in place. These concerns underline the urgency of governance frameworks that ensure meaningful human control, accountability and the preservation of peace.

The environmental footprint of digital technologies adds further complexity. Mineral extraction for semiconductors and batteries affects fragile ecosystems and frontline communities, particularly in Latin America and Africa. Data centres exert growing pressure on water supplies and energy systems, while the global accumulation of electronic waste continues to accelerate. The climate crisis amplifies these vulnerabilities. Extreme weather events undermine infrastructure resilience, disrupt connectivity and heighten exposure to disinformation and digital exclusion. Digital justice and climate justice are therefore interdependent agendas that cannot be treated separately.

A people-centred and development-oriented information society

Yet the period 2026 to 2028 presents a significant governance opportunity. The WSIS+20 outcome document adopted in December 2025 reaffirmed the principles of a people-centred and develop-

ment-oriented information society, granted the Internet Governance Forum permanent status within the United Nations system and initiated a new implementation cycle. The Global Digital Compact, endorsed in 2024 and annexed to the Pact for the Future, has now entered operationalisation. Key mechanisms such as the Independent Scientific Panel on AI, the United Nations Global Dialogue on AI Governance and strengthened roles for UNESCO, OHCHR, UNDP and the ITU will shape normative and institutional pathways for years ahead. At the regional level, the African Union, European Union, ASEAN, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Inter American system are simultaneously revising or expanding their digital governance strategies, creating multiple sites where global commitments may be interpreted and embedded.

The direction these developments take remains open. Without coordinated and justice-centred engagement, governance risks drifting towards securitisation, technocratic managerialism or fragmented national approaches that leave questions of dignity, accountability and equity at the margins. Conversely, grounding the interpretation of the Global Digital Compact in the WSIS principles of inclusion, openness, human rights and development oriented governance offers a path toward an institutional architecture capable of addressing the social, environmental and ethical consequences of digital transformation.

Faith based organisations and ecumenical bodies have a distinctive role within this landscape. They remain among the most trusted civic institutions globally, with the ability to operate where civic space is restricted, document harms, protect vulnerable communities and articulate ethical framings rooted in relationality, stewardship and justice. Their networks link local contexts to regional and multilateral debates, enabling them to translate lived experience into evidence that informs policy making. Their tradition of moral discernment and prophetic critique positions them to contribute perspectives often missing from technical or market domin-

ated governance arenas.

The complexity and pace of contemporary technological change require advocacy that is coordinated, grounded in values and capable of operating at the speed of AI development. This report responds to that need by identifying strategic opportunities across the United Nations system and regional bodies, clarifying where influence is possible, and outlining how a mission driven and portfolio based approach can support effective, ethically grounded digital justice advocacy during this critical period.

2 THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE WSIS+20 OUTCOME DOCUMENT

The United Nations General Assembly remains the primary political arena where the relationship between the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the Global Digital Compact (GDC) will be interpreted. Discussions in 2025 highlighted the need to clarify the interaction between the two processes, particularly regarding institutional roles and how overlaps should be managed. These concerns informed the WSIS+20 outcome document adopted in December 2025.

The outcome document positions WSIS as the established institutional framework for implementing digital commitments, while the GDC provides the overarching political vision endorsed through the Pact for the Future. It reaffirms the WSIS principle that rights offline must be protected online and allocates responsibilities across ITU, UNGIS, the Internet Governance Forum, UNESCO, OHCHR and UNDP. The Compact, supported by ninety-three states, expresses a shared commitment to an open, safe, inclusive and sustainable digital future aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Member States held differing views on the degree of alignment required between WSIS and the Compact. Some argued for closer integration to enhance coherence and reduce fragmentation, whereas others preferred parallel processes out of concern for sovereignty and perceived over

emphasis on human rights. The final outcome reflects a compromise: the political relevance of the Compact is recognised, but WSIS structures remain unchanged, and no formal hierarchy is introduced.

The WSIS+20 outcome launches a renewed implementation cycle with the following elements:

- * ITU and UNGIS will lead a task force to assess global financing gaps.
- * The IGF is confirmed as a permanent multistakeholder governance forum.
- * UNESCO, OHCHR and UNDP have thematic responsibilities relating to rights, AI ethics, digital public infrastructure and media literacy.
- * Member States are expected to embed WSIS+20 commitments in national digital strategies.
- * The private sector is reminded of its responsibility to respect human rights.

An important advocacy opening lies in the decision to leave digital development financing unresolved. Rather than defining a financing mechanism, the outcome mandates a technical assessment of financing gaps. In other governance domains, including climate, such technical exercises have significantly shaped political negotiations. This is particularly relevant as the United Nations continues to face financial strain due to Member State arrears.

Potential advocacy avenues

Influencing the emerging financing architecture

The financing mandate assigned to ITU and UNGIS creates a rare opportunity to shape the logic of future investment in digital development. Civil society and faith actors can intervene in the technical assessment phase to influence how financing gaps are defined, which models are considered legitimate, and whether new financing mechanisms are opened. Ethical concerns, equity considerations and sustainability principles drawn from WSIS and the Compact can be embedded at this formative stage. As seen in cli-

mate governance, early engagement in technical financing workstreams can decisively shape later political negotiations.

Which processes can we learn from?

Civil society and faith actors can draw on established precedents to shape the emerging ITU and UNGIS financing mandate. The WSIS Tunis Agenda (WSIS 2005) and the Secretary General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (UNSG 2020) both emphasise equity and rights in digital development, providing a normative basis for a global financing facility similar to the Global Environment Facility (GEF 1994). Blended finance models already used in climate investment by the Green Climate Fund (GCF Governing Instrument 2011) show how concessional public capital can mobilise private investment while retaining social safeguards. The Digital Solidarity Fund proposed by Senegal during WSIS Phase II (WSIS PrepCom 2005) offers a clear historical reference for renewed discussion of a Digital Solidarity Contribution.

Debt for climate swaps implemented through IMF mechanisms and supported by the GCF in cooperation with Small Island Developing States (IMF 2022) provide a transferable structure for debt for digital rights swaps in low income contexts. Ethical investment screens can be grounded in the due diligence frameworks advanced by the OHCHR B Tech Project (OHCHR 2020 2023) and in the updated OECD Guidelines for Responsible Business Conduct (OECD 2023). As observers such as Wolfgang Kleinwächter have argued in their analysis of digital governance trajectories (Kleinwächter 2025), that interventions at the technical assessment stage are decisive because they set the financing logic that later political negotiations will inherit.

Building a values based governance architecture between WSIS and the Global Digital Compact

A central advocacy priority is to ensure that the General Assembly interprets the relationship between WSIS and the Global Digital Compact in

a way that creates a coherent, values based governance architecture rather than parallel tracks that can be exploited by powerful states and corporations. While the WSIS+20 outcome document confirms that WSIS structures remain the institutional pathway for implementing digital commitments and the Compact provides the overarching political vision, the precise articulation between these frameworks remains open. As observers of internet governance dynamics have underlined, the coming years will determine whether the system evolves towards coordination and inclusion or towards fragmentation and forum shopping.

What actions could be taken?

Faith communities and civil society organisations can work with supportive delegations to promote General Assembly language that explicitly mandates WSIS bodies, and in particular the Internet Governance Forum, to serve as core platforms for dialogue, monitoring and implementation of GDC digital commitments. This would mean that the Independent Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance, envisaged in the Compact and to be launched in Geneva in July 2026, are institutionally connected to the WSIS architecture rather than treated as separate expert processes. Such an approach would help to anchor emerging AI and data governance debates in the long standing WSIS principles that rights offline must be protected online and that governance should be inclusive, development oriented and people centred (Tunis Agenda, WSIS 2005).

From a digital justice perspective, this governance architecture should be explicitly tasked with addressing structural inequality, digital extractivism and shrinking civic space, not only connectivity and innovation. Advocacy can therefore push for General Assembly resolutions to request that the IGF and related WSIS follow up processes systematically report on issues such as surveillance, discrimination in automated systems, the safety of human rights defenders online and the protection of children and marginalised

communities. Faith actors, whose transnational networks often reach where secular civil society cannot safely operate, are particularly well placed to bring grounded testimonies and ethical framing into these discussions. By insisting that WSIS mechanisms operationalise the GDC through a justice centred lens, advocates can help prevent the Compact from being interpreted narrowly as a technical or security agenda and instead ensure that it strengthens global commitments to dignity, participation and accountability.

Establishing a participatory digital justice review mechanism

Given that neither WSIS nor the Global Digital Compact creates binding legal obligations, a key gap in the current architecture is the absence of a structured, participatory review mechanism that can generate public accountability. Rather than focusing only on general reporting obligations, advocacy can be more ambitious and call for the General Assembly to establish a regular digital justice review process modelled on successful UN mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review in the Human Rights Council and the voluntary national reviews under the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Under such a mechanism, states would periodically present, in an accessible format, how they are implementing their WSIS+20 and GDC commitments, including on issues such as data governance, platform accountability, civic space online, algorithmic discrimination, environmental impacts of digital infrastructures and the protection of human rights defenders and journalists. UN entities with thematic responsibilities in the WSIS outcomes, including UNESCO, OHCHR and UNDP, could be invited to submit analytical inputs drawing on their country level work, while the Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Technology could provide an overview of systemic trends, following the approach of the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (UNSG 2020).

Crucially, the review should institutionalise the participation of civil society, faith commun-

ities and affected groups. Building on precedents where faith-based organisations have submitted shadow reports to human rights mechanisms, the General Assembly could encourage the submission of independent community reports that document digital harms, as well as good practices in rights respecting governance. In contexts where civic space is severely restricted, churches and other faith actors, who often remain among the most trusted institutions, could serve as safe intermediaries for testimonies that cannot be voiced openly. This would make visible the lived experiences of those most affected by surveillance, online harassment, biometric control and exclusion from digital services.

By framing the review explicitly as a digital justice exercise rather than a narrow technology assessment, such a mechanism would help to bridge the current morality gap described in analyses such as the Club of Rome's *Earth for All* (2023), where extreme inequality and eroding trust fuel instability. It would create a structured space where states must publicly engage with ethical concerns about superintelligent AI, autonomous weapons and the securitisation of digital infrastructures, in dialogue with communities and experts. Over time, this participatory review could generate a body of practice and expectations that, while not legally binding, would carry significant political and moral weight in guiding how WSIS and GDC commitments are interpreted and implemented across the UN system.

Consolidating the human rights foundation of General Assembly follow up

The Global Digital Compact places significant emphasis on a rights based digital future, but this commitment will only influence institutional practice if it is repeatedly affirmed through General Assembly resolutions. Advocacy can therefore focus on ensuring that forthcoming digital governance resolutions explicitly reference the Compact's human rights commitments and require UN bodies to integrate them into their implementation work. Doing so would help create continuity between the WSIS principle of rights

offline and online and the broader UN human rights framework. It could also counterbalance narratives that prioritise sovereignty or security at the expense of accountability and participation. Strengthening this interpretative baseline at the General Assembly level is essential for guiding how agencies such as UNESCO, OHCHR, UNDP and the ITU understand their mandates during the new implementation cycle.

3 GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT

The adoption of the Global Digital Compact at the 2024 Summit of the Future (A/RES/79/1) marked a significant consolidation of the United Nations digital governance landscape. It reaffirmed the normative foundations established by the World Summit on the Information Society and introduced new commitments on rights, accountability and institutional coordination for the next phase of global digital cooperation. For organisations working on digital justice, the period between the adoption of the Compact and its high-level review in 2028 represents a concentrated window in which to influence both interpretation and implementation.

The Compact establishes several institutional mechanisms intended to bring greater coherence and scientific grounding to global digital governance. Among the most consequential is the Independent Scientific Panel on AI, tasked with providing evidence based analysis to support the implementation of the Compact's artificial intelligence commitments. Its annual reports and thematic briefs will form part of the formal preparatory record for the 2028 review at the eighty second session of the General Assembly. This offers an important opportunity for civil society and expert organisations to shape the analytical and normative basis for future UN deliberations on AI.

A second key mechanism is the United Nations Global Dialogue on AI Governance. Mandated by the Compact, it is designed as an inclusive venue for governments and stakeholders to address governance challenges arising from rapid AI development. The first meeting of the Dia-

logue will take place in 2026 in Geneva, aligned with the ITU AI for Good Global Summit, followed by a 2027 session in New York alongside the Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals. These meetings are expected to be early political sites where the interpretation of the Compact's AI provisions begins to take shape.

Together, these mechanisms form part of a broader post-Compact governance ecosystem that brings scientific expertise, multistakeholder engagement and intergovernmental negotiation into closer alignment. For actors working on digital justice, the priority is to identify where meaningful influence can be exerted on agenda setting, normative development and evidence generation, and to engage strategically across the UN system and regional bodies to ensure that rights, accountability and equitable digital development remain central to the implementation of the Compact.

Potential advocacy avenues

The Independent Scientific Panel on AI

The Independent Scientific Panel on AI is one of the central mechanisms created to implement the Global Digital Compact (A/RES/79/1). It is mandated to provide evidence-based analysis on artificial intelligence and related digital technologies, and its outputs, including annual reports and thematic briefs, will form part of the official record for the 2028 high level review at the eighty second session of the General Assembly. This creates a structured channel through which civil society, academic institutions and faith-based organisations can influence the knowledge base on which political decisions will rest.

Engagement will primarily take the form of responding to calls for input, contributing case material on harms and good practices, and participating in expert consultations. Submissions that document discrimination, impacts on workers, environmental costs, and risks to civic space are particularly important, as they can help ensure that the Panel's analysis reflects the lived real-

ities of vulnerable communities rather than only the perspectives of states and industry. In practice, this means preparing well-sourced evidence, developed in partnership with existing digital rights organisations and research institutes, and explicitly linking it to the Compact's commitments on rights, accountability and sustainable development.

United Nations Global Dialogue on AI Governance

The United Nations Global Digital Compact mandates the establishment of a Global Dialogue on AI Governance as an inclusive space for governments and stakeholders to address pressing governance challenges arising from rapid advances in artificial intelligence. The first meeting of the Global Dialogue on AI Governance is scheduled to take place in Geneva from 7 to 10 July 2026, in the margins of the International Telecommunication Union AI for Good Global Summit. A second meeting is planned for May 2027 in New York alongside the Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals. The Dialogue is co-chaired by Ambassador Egriselda López of El Salvador and Ambassador Rein Tammsaar of Estonia.

Although the Dialogue does not adopt binding instruments, it will be one of the first political arenas in which early interpretations of the Compact's AI provisions are negotiated. It therefore offers an important advocacy opportunity to bring forward perspectives on human rights, labour protection, environmental impact and inequality. Participation will involve engaging in preparatory consultations, organising or joining side events in Geneva and New York, and coordinating with supportive states and civil society coalitions to promote language that reflects justice oriented approaches to AI governance. In combination with contributions to the Independent Scientific Panel on AI, the Global Dialogue provides a complementary political track where evidence and normative argument can converge and begin to shape the overall dir-

ection of implementation.

4 THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

The IGF remains a space where DGC implementation can be scrutinised informally. Advocates can use the IGF main sessions, dynamic coalitions and best practice fora to produce community-endorsed guidance on how the Compact should be operationalised, drawing on the WSIS principles of a people centred and development-oriented information society. The WSIS forum annually sets out practical recommendations for digital cooperation. Because the WSIS+20 outcome document reiterates the value of continued implementation of the WSIS vision by these mechanisms, advocates can shape their agendas and outcomes to push for alignment with rights protective interpretations of the Compact. Past processes have shown that cross-community statements, such as those produced at IGF 2024, can influence UN discussions by articulating widely supported positions. Advocates can build on these models to formulate expectations regarding compact implementation and WSIS integration.

The GDC creates political commitments but no formal enforcement. This makes regional bodies such as the regional IGFs particularly important implementation sites. There is advocacy value in aligning regional instruments with Compact principles and in using them to set higher standards that can inform UN level debates.

5 UN HUMAN RIGHTS ARCHITECTURE

The UN human rights system remains one of the most influential arenas for determining how the Global Digital Compact (A/RES/79/1) will be interpreted during its first implementation cycle. Unlike other digital governance fora, the human rights machinery produces authoritative guidance and jurisprudence that directly shapes state practice. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), mandated by the Compact to support follow up on rights, safe-

guards and accountability, is already expanding its work through the B Tech project (2020 to 2023), recent Human Rights Council reports on artificial intelligence and privacy, and new thematic analyses on biometric systems, discrimination by algorithm and platform governance.

Treaty bodies and Special Procedures have moved quickly to address digital harms. The Human Rights Committee has clarified obligations on surveillance under articles 17 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has issued guidance on profiling and online exploitation, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has assessed technology-facilitated gender based violence. Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression, privacy and violence against women have also produced detailed analyses on platform governance, biometric databases and the use of automated systems in policing. These outputs will influence the interpretive basis of the Compact's high level review in 2028.

Major civil society organisations are already using these mechanisms to shape norms. Access Now, Article 19, the Association for Progressive Communications and Privacy International submit evidence to treaty bodies, contribute to Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycles and support Special Procedure investigations into online repression, surveillance, internet shutdowns and discriminatory algorithmic systems. Their sustained engagement has contributed to Human Rights Council resolutions on rights online, disinformation and reprisals against defenders. Their methodologies and strategic use of UN mechanisms provide a clear pathway for other actors seeking influence.

Faith based organisations can complement these efforts in concrete and practical ways. They often operate in contexts where civic space is restricted, and where secular NGOs cannot safely document digital harms. Their community proximity makes them well positioned to collect verifiable evidence on issues such as biometric registration abuses, censorship of religious minorities,

internet shutdowns during elections and online targeting of human rights defenders. Many are already experienced in submitting shadow reports to UPR cycles or supporting local communities in preparing treaty body submissions. Their added value lies not in broad moral claims but in providing grounded documentation from regions that are otherwise under-reported.

Potential advocacy avenues

Prioritise OHCHR-led consultations linked to the Compact

OHCHR will be central to interpreting the Compact's commitments on rights, safeguards and accountability. Consultations for its forthcoming guidance provide the most direct entry point for shaping how states understand obligations on surveillance, artificial intelligence and communication rights. Submissions should draw on community-level evidence and connect clearly to Compact provisions on non-discrimination, transparency and remedy. Coordination with organisations such as Access Now, Article 19 and the Association for Progressive Communications can strengthen the technical and legal robustness of submissions.

Use treaty body reviews to embed Compact commitments in binding human rights law

Treaty bodies increasingly interrogate state use of automated systems, data governance and online civic space. Shadow reports that draw explicit links between the Compact and obligations under instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights or the Convention on the Rights of the Child provide treaty bodies with the basis to question states on digital policies. This approach, long used by Privacy International and other digital rights groups, is one of the most effective ways to create durable normative expectations.

Engage selectively with Special Rapporteurs whose mandates shape digital governance debates

The Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expres-

sion, privacy, racism and violence against women consistently set analytical baselines for UN discussions on digital rights. Targeted submissions influence their thematic reports to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, which in turn inform broader follow up to the Compact. Faith based organisations can add value by providing verified community level evidence, especially from regions where digital harms are under reported.

Ensure coordinated interventions at the Human Rights Council

Digital issues appear regularly in Human Rights Council resolutions, including on the right to privacy in the digital age, freedom of expression and civic space. These resolutions shape how states subsequently implement the Compact's human rights language. Coordinated contributions from civil society, including digital rights NGOs and faith actors, can help maintain a focus on surveillance, discrimination, platform accountability and the protection of human rights defenders in online spaces.

6 INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION (ITU)

The International Telecommunication Union remains one of the most consequential inter-governmental bodies shaping the technical and regulatory foundations of global digital systems. Although its mandate is rooted in telecommunications and radiocommunications, the ITU has progressively expanded its activities into standardisation and policy fields relating to artificial intelligence, digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity and network management. This is particularly evident in the work of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU T) and in high profile platforms such as the AI for Good Global Summit.

The Global Digital Compact makes explicit reference to the need for coherence between normative human rights commitments and technical standard setting processes. ITU

engagement is therefore critical for a digital justice alliance that seeks to contest over-centralisation, surveillance risks and the embedding of inequitable governance logics at the level of international standards.

Potential advocacy avenues

Engage early in ITU T Study Groups developing standards relevant to AI, data and digital public infrastructure

Study Groups 13 (Future Networks including cloud computing), 16 (Multimedia including AI based systems) and 17 (Security) continue to draft standards with significant governance implications. Civil society participation is limited but possible through member state delegations and academic institutions. Targeted interventions can help prevent the adoption of standards that normalise surveillance, opaque risk scoring systems or exclusionary network architectures.

Monitor and influence preparatory work for the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA)

WTSA sets the work programme and mandates for all ITU T Study Groups. Influencing WTSA preparatory positions at regional telecommunication bodies is often more effective than engagement at the global meeting itself. Aligning these discussions with the Compact's emphasis on rights, openness and safeguards is essential.

Use the AI for Good Global Summit as a strategic political entry point

Although the Summit is not a decision-making space, it has become a major agenda setting arena where narratives around AI governance are shaped. The Global Dialogue on AI Governance mandated by the Compact will convene back to back with the Summit in 2026, making this a critical political moment for digital justice engagement.

Promote normative coherence between WSIS principles and technical standardisation

The risk of misaligned institutional development is high when technical bodies adopt governance-relevant standards without reference to human rights commitments. Advocacy should emphasise the WSIS Tunis Agenda principles of openness, accessibility and inclusive governance as guiding norms for ITU technical standardisation.

Support transparency and public interest safeguards in ITU cybersecurity processes

The ITU T cybersecurity work, including standards and guidelines, frequently intersect with national security agendas. Advocates should push for explicit references to the Compact's commitments on accountability, proportionality and oversight.

7 UNESCO

UNESCO has become one of the central normative bodies in the UN system for digital governance, particularly on the ethical, societal and informational dimensions of artificial intelligence and online platforms. Its recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, adopted by acclamation in 2021, is the first global standard setting instrument on AI endorsed by all 194 Member States. UNESCO has also taken the lead on information integrity through the 2023 Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms and continues to anchor digital governance debates in the WSIS principles of openness, inclusion and human centred development. The Global Digital Compact explicitly draws on these UNESCO instruments when setting commitments on rights, transparency and risk mitigation. For a digital justice alliance, UNESCO is therefore a central normative gateway, offering opportunities to shape standards that states subsequently cite when implementing the Compact.

Potential advocacy avenues

Influence the implementation of the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI

UNESCO is supporting national implementa-

tion across more than fifty states. Engaging with national working groups and UNESCO regional offices can ensure that implementation aligns with the Compact's focus on non-discrimination, accountability and equitable digital development.

Shape the evolving work on platform governance
UNESCO's Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms form the most widely referenced UN soft law instrument in this area. Submissions to UNESCO consultations can help embed principles from the Compact on transparency, independent auditing and user rights.

Engage in the follow up to the Internet Universality ROAM X indicators

These indicators operationalise human rights, openness, accessibility and multi stakeholder participation in the digital environment. They remain deeply connected to the WSIS legacy and provide an important channel for grounding the Compact's commitments in measurable frameworks.

Strengthen the interface between UNESCO's normative work and the Independent Scientific Panel on AI

The Panel will draw on UNESCO's expertise in AI ethics and information integrity. Coordinating advocacy across both spaces can ensure alignment between the Panel's scientific assessments and UNESCO's rights based normative guidance.

Ensure that UNESCO's work on media and information literacy integrates Compact commitments.

Digital literacy is a central element of the Compact's inclusion and empowerment agenda. UNESCO's programmes in this area shape national strategies and are a key point for embedding digital justice considerations.

8 KEY REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL DYNAMICS

Regional digital governance ecosystems have become increasingly important arenas for shaping norms, institutional expectations and cultures of

enforcement relevant to the implementation of global commitments such as the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) action lines and the emerging norms from the UN Global Digital Compact negotiations. Across all continents, existing regulatory pathways, judicial bodies and regional political institutions provide both constraints and opportunities for embedding rights-based, development-oriented and interoperable approaches to digital governance. The following provides a brief overview of the most significant regional tracks.

Africa

Africa's engagement in global digital governance is shaped both by growing institutional consolidation and persistent structural asymmetry. The African Union has made considerable progress in establishing a coherent continental governance framework through the AU Data Policy Framework, the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa 2020 to 2030 and the Malabo Convention. These frameworks articulate a rights-based, development-oriented and sovereignty-minded approach to digital policy.

Africa, however, continues to confront deep structural disparities. The majority of countries operate in what global analyses describe as a compute desert, with limited access to high performance computing, sovereign cloud infrastructure or advanced semiconductor capacity. This deficit restricts Africa's ability to participate in artificial intelligence development, influence global narratives or enforce regulatory decisions that depend on technical capability.

Data extractivism remains a significant concern. Much of the continent's data enables global AI models and platform ecosystems without generating corresponding economic value or public benefit. Digital identity systems, biometric programmes and cybersecurity laws are expanding, sometimes without adequate safeguards, oversight or remedy mechanisms. These risks are magnified in contexts where civic space is restricted and where surveillance may be used against journalists, political opponents and hu-

man rights defenders.

Environmental and ecological pressures further complicate Africa's digital landscape. E-waste burdens continue to rise, informal recycling practices remain hazardous and mineral extraction required for global AI supply chains places pressure on fragile ecosystems. These extractive demands intersect with conflict dynamics in several regions.

Despite these challenges, Africa is an increasingly important governance actor. The AU Commission, ECOWAS, SADC and regional telecommunications bodies influence the continent's collective positions in WSIS related forums, UN General Assembly debates, ITU processes and UNESCO dialogues. Engagement with these institutions is vital for embedding rights, accountability, environmental sustainability and compute equity into global implementation pathways.

Europe

Europe remains one of the most influential norm setting regions for global digital governance. The European Union's regulatory instruments and the Council of Europe's binding treaty on artificial intelligence establish a comprehensive and rights-grounded approach. Europe has become a global reference point for regulatory ambition.

However, internal tensions are growing. The emerging Omnibus initiative, aimed at reducing regulatory burdens and accelerating European competitiveness, risks diluting protections relating to privacy, algorithmic accountability, worker rights and environmental standards. The shift reflects a broader geopolitical concern that Europe is losing ground in frontier AI innovation and digital industrial capacity, prompting political pressure for regulatory relaxation.

This tension sits alongside risks posed by shifting global supply chains, increasing reliance on foreign compute capacity and the need to secure access to critical minerals. These factors influence the extent to which Europe can maintain its commitment to WSIS principles, the Global Digital Compact and broader human rights obli-

gations.

Nevertheless, Europe's jurisprudence and oversight mechanisms remain essential for anchoring global norms related to transparency, non-discrimination, meaningful human control, environmental responsibility and protection of civic space. Influencing Europe's internal debates, including Omnibus reforms, is therefore a vital strategy for sustaining a values-driven global governance architecture.

Latin America

Latin America is characterised by a historically strong human rights ecosystem, active regional courts and a diverse civil society that engages deeply with questions of power, extractivism and digital sovereignty. The region has enacted some of the strongest data protection laws in the Global South and is developing AI governance frameworks that foreground rights, transparency and democratic participation.

Regional dynamics are shaped by the economic and ecological pressures associated with critical minerals. Global demand for lithium, cobalt and copper places significant strain on indigenous communities, land rights systems and regional ecosystems. These extractive pressures intersect with broader geopolitical interest in resource access, resulting in complex negotiations between states, corporations and communities.

The region is also an emerging site of innovation in alternative digital models. Community-based AI projects, open technologies and feminist digital justice initiatives illustrate how artificial intelligence can be developed in ways that reflect collective values, linguistic diversity and environmental responsibility. This experimentation stands in contrast to dominant commercial AI models that concentrate power and reinforce inequalities.

Latin America benefits from a robust regional human rights framework. The Inter American Commission on Human Rights and its special mechanisms have issued authoritative guidance on surveillance, platform responsibility, biometric governance and algorithmic dis-

crimination. These bodies shape state practice and provide a strong normative foundation for influencing the implementation of the Global Digital Compact.

The region is well placed to develop coordinated positions that emphasise transparency, equitable financing, environmental protections, the rights of marginalised groups and public interest oversight. Such regional positions could carry significant weight in UN General Assembly debates and WSIS-related processes.

Asia Pacific

The Asia Pacific region exhibits the greatest diversity in institutional capacity, governance approaches and political contexts. It includes highly regulated states with advanced digital infrastructures as well as regions where regulatory fragmentation, political instability and limited institutional capacity hinder the development of consistent digital rights frameworks.

Across much of Asia, digital policy is shaped by national security priorities. Mandatory SIM registration, biometric digital identity systems, expansive cybersecurity laws and restrictions on online expression are increasingly common. These measures often operate without independent oversight and pose significant risks to privacy, civic participation and media freedom.

In contrast, some jurisdictions in the region are developing sophisticated digital governance frameworks, including privacy protections, AI guidelines and oversight mechanisms. However, regional coherence remains limited. ASEAN has published several digital frameworks, but their implementation varies significantly due to the organisation's consensus driven structure.

The Pacific Islands face a unique combination of vulnerability and systemic exclusion. Climate change threatens infrastructure and connectivity. Reliance on foreign technology providers, limited fiscal space, geopolitical competition in the region and barriers related to cost and time zones restrict the ability of Pacific states to participate in global processes. Cultural, linguistic and epistemic erosion is emerging as a

key concern in a digital ecosystem dominated by external actors.

Despite these constraints, Asia Pacific civil society remains highly active. Regional networks advance feminist digital justice frameworks, community-governed digital tools, decolonial data governance and culturally grounded digital literacy. Platforms such as the Asia Pacific Internet Governance Forum and the Digital Rights Asia Conference offer critical convening spaces where WSIS principles and GDC commitments can be embedded into national and regional governance processes.

Asia Pacific remains an essential region for advancing digital justice, particularly at the intersection of climate vulnerability, security legislation, data sovereignty and cultural survival. Strengthening inclusive governance mechanisms in this region is essential for a balanced implementation of the Global Digital Compact.

Caribbean

The Caribbean's digital governance environment is shaped by structural vulnerability, regional cooperation and increasing exposure to geopolitical competition. CARICOM and the Caribbean Telecommunications Union remain the primary institutional anchors through instruments such as the CARICOM Digital Transformation Strategy and the CTU's Model Harmonised ICT Policy, which emphasise resilience, rights-based data governance and regional interoperability. These frameworks reflect the region's longstanding engagement with WSIS action lines and its contributions to UN level processes. Additional regional bodies reinforce these efforts. The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States is implementing a multi country digital transformation programme focused on inclusive service delivery, while the Caribbean Development Bank has begun integrating rights enabling language into its digital transformation action plans. Regulatory actors such as ECTEL contribute to regional coordination on transparency and consumer protection across telecommunications markets.

Despite these institutional pathways, struc-

tural asymmetries persist. Many Caribbean states remain reliant on foreign cloud services, external technical capacity and imported digital infrastructure, leaving them vulnerable to regulatory capture and external shocks. Climate related disruptions amplify these risks by undermining network resilience and constraining participation in global debates on compute equity, AI development and data governance. Regional courts, including the Caribbean Court of Justice, are increasingly relevant for adjudicating issues connected to expression, data protection and mediated discrimination, although jurisprudence remains nascent. Civil society and regional networks participate actively in the Caribbean Internet Governance Forum and contribute to WSIS and IGF processes, often foregrounding climate vulnerability, cultural preservation and equitable access to digital public goods. Strengthening these regional mechanisms is essential for embedding rights, environmental responsibility and inclusive governance into the interpretation and implementation of the Global Digital Compact.

Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa region presents a complex governance landscape marked by rapid digital investment, institutional fragmentation and constrained civic space. Several Gulf states have adopted ambitious data protection laws and national AI strategies, positioning themselves as emerging hubs for frontier technologies. The Arab League's Arab Digital Agenda, together with technical coordination facilitated by entities such as the Arab ICT Organisation and the Arab Regulators Network for Telecommunications and ICT, provides a regional framework for standard setting on cybersecurity, data policies and digital identity systems. The Gulf Cooperation Council adds a parallel layer of coordination, particularly in areas of cybersecurity and digital market integration, while the Islamic Development Bank increasingly shapes national digital ecosystems through financing and capacity building programmes that intersect with questions of digital inclusion and development.

These institutional efforts coexist with entrenched structural risks. Across much of the region, expansive surveillance infrastructures, biometric registration systems and security driven cybersecurity laws operate with limited independent oversight, creating acute vulnerabilities for journalists, civil society and human rights defenders. North African states engage both with Arab regional bodies and with African Union mechanisms, producing hybrid governance trajectories that affect the regional interpretation of WSIS and GDC commitments. Human rights oversight within the region remains weak but not irrelevant.

The Arab Human Rights Committee has begun to address issues related to online expression and discrimination, offering a modest channel for rights based engagement. At the same time, regional multistakeholder spaces such as the revived MENA Internet Governance Forum provide critical venues for debate on data justice, platform governance, labour rights in digital economies and the impacts of biometric systems. Together, these dynamics shape the region's capacity to influence global governance discussions and highlight the importance of grounding emerging digital policies in rights, safeguards and meaningful participation.

9 HOW TO AMPLIFY INFLUENCE THROUGH NEW TYPES OF COORDINATION

Coordinating mission-driven advocacy across a portfolio of actors

Mission-driven approaches, as developed in the OECD's work on strategic governance and public value, emphasise the need for coordinated portfolios of interventions rather than isolated actions. They recognise that complex challenges require many actors working towards a shared mission, each bringing different strengths, legitimacy and operational capacities. Applying this logic to digital governance allows the ecumenical community and its partners to structure their advocacy in a coherent and strategic manner. It makes it possible to link local experience, global policy debates and value-driven framing within

one coordinated effort.

The mission in this context is clear: to shape global and regional digital governance so that it advances dignity, justice and the common good, in line with the 2021 “Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age” Manifesto. To pursue this mission, the advocacy ecosystem must function as a portfolio, with each actor playing a specific role that reinforces the others.

Faith institutions, because of their moral authority, societal reach and narrative influence, are essential components of this portfolio. They complement and amplify the work of secular civil society rather than replace it. In many countries they remain among the most trusted institutions, capable of shifting public opinion and public behaviour at scale. This capacity enables them to elevate digital justice concerns in ways that resonate broadly and that ground global policy debates in lived experience.

The mission-driven roles

The Advocate

Bodies such as the World Council of Churches can engage directly in formal governance arenas including the General Assembly, the Internet Governance Forum, the Human Rights Council, the ITU and UNESCO. Their interventions can translate ethical principles into policy language and help ensure that WSIS+20 and GDC commitments are understood through justice-centred frames. Their presence also signals to governments that faith actors expect accountability and rights-based implementation.

The Knowledge Contributor

WACC and its partners can gather lived evidence from communities most affected by digital exclusion, discrimination, disinformation and labour precarity. This evidence is essential for informing global bodies such as the Independent Scientific Panel on AI, treaty bodies and UNESCO’s monitoring processes. It also strengthens the legitimacy of the portfolio by ensuring that advocacy is grounded in real experience.

The Narrative Builder

Churches, ecumenical academies and faith based media possess an exceptional ability to influence public opinion. Through sermons, publications, study circles and digital literacy initiatives, they can frame digital governance as a question of human dignity, relationality and the common good. This narrative work supports secular civil society advocacy by helping broaden public understanding and by creating public support for rights-based reforms.

The Convenor

Faith networks have an unparalleled ability to bring together diverse actors who might otherwise not meet. Regional councils and diocesan structures can convene community groups, civil society organisations and policy makers in safe and trusted settings. These convenings provide space for dialogue, alignment and shared strategy across sectors. Secular partners often rely on faith networks to gain access to communities and stakeholders who are otherwise difficult to reach.

The Protector

In contexts where civic space is restricted, faith communities often act as protectors of vulnerable groups. Parishes and faith-based organisations provide physical and social sanctuary for human rights defenders, women facing online abuse, linguistic minorities and others who are targeted by digital harms. This protective role allows advocacy portfolios to continue functioning even when other spaces close. It also brings ethical weight to calls for stronger safeguards in AI governance, platform regulation and surveillance oversight.

10 FROM MANIFESTO TO ACTION

The 2021 “Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age” Manifesto sets out a principled commitment to dignity, participation, justice and the protection of vulnerable communities in digital environments. The coming implementation cycle for WSIS+20 and the Global Digital

Compact creates a period in which its ideas can be translated into concrete institutional gains. The advocacy opportunities identified across this report provide direct pathways for turning the Manifesto's values into implementable positions within UN and regional governance processes.

Pillar 1: Protecting Rights, Participation and Accountability in Digital Governance

This report identifies several practical points at which the Manifesto's call for participatory and rights-centred governance can shape institutional decisions. The UN General Assembly's interpretation of the relationship between WSIS and the Compact will define which bodies monitor accountability. Advocacy at this level can help ensure that the Internet Governance Forum is recognised as a venue where implementation of Compact commitments can be scrutinised by civil society. The financing mandate given to ITU and UNGIS offers another entry point. Faith-based actors and civil society partners can intervene in the early technical work on financing gaps, drawing attention to transparency, equity and accountability. OHCHR's new responsibilities under the Compact provide a further route for influencing state behaviour. Contributing evidence to its consultations on surveillance, platform regulation and artificial intelligence ensures that decisions reflect lived experience rather than abstract policy debates.

Pillar 2: Meaningful Connectivity, Inclusion and Communication Justice

The Manifesto's insistence that communication is a public good aligns with the connectivity and inclusion agenda in WSIS and the Compact. Opportunities identified in this report include engaging at the World Telecommunication Development Conference to support community-led connectivity models, influencing universal service fund transparency at African Union and Pacific Island forums, and using the WSIS Forum to build alliances around affordability, linguistic inclusion and culturally grounded digital access. Regional IGFs in Africa, Asia Pacific

and Latin America provide pragmatic platforms for shaping stakeholder expectations before they reach global processes.

Pillar 3: AI Justice, Worker Protection and Ethical Innovation

The Manifesto's ethical commitments can be connected directly to the institutional mechanisms set out in the Compact. The Independent Scientific Panel on AI will shape how risks, safeguards and accountability are interpreted before the 2028 review. Engagement with its calls for evidence can influence the Panel's analytical framing. UNESCO's ongoing work on national implementation of the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI offers another route for embedding the Manifesto's concerns about discrimination and vulnerability. Treaty body reviews under ICCPR, CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child remain key spaces for raising issues such as algorithmic discrimination, biometric misuse and automated worker surveillance. The report also highlights the need to follow standards discussions in ITU T Study Groups 13, 16 and 17, where technical standards with governance impact are being drafted. These interventions are tangible and align with the operational nature of the Manifesto.

Pillar 4: Truth, Freedom, Safety and the Information Environment

The Manifesto's focus on truth, safe participation and media pluralism corresponds directly with UNESCO's 2023 Guidelines on platform governance and the WSIS+20 commitments on media development. The opportunities identified in this report provide routes for shaping these norms. Contributions to UNESCO's information integrity consultations can support multilingual moderation, transparency requirements and independent oversight. Human Rights Council resolutions on privacy and freedom of expression provide a normative anchor for how states implement the Compact. Submissions to the Special Rapporteurs on expression, privacy and violence against women offer concrete chan-

nels for addressing online targeting, hate speech, gender-based harms and disinformation practices. Regional mechanisms in Africa and the Americas also present opportunities for reinforcing remedies and oversight.

Pillar 5: Environmental Digital Justice

The report identifies practical spaces where environmental stewardship can be integrated into digital governance in line with the Manifesto. Advocacy within ITU on procurement standards related to repairability, energy use and e-waste can influence major markets. UNDP digital public infrastructure processes provide an entry for integrating climate concerns into national digitisation plans. WSIS and IGF environmental tracks offer spaces for shaping narratives about environmental digital justice and directing attention to community-based climate data and circular economy models

CONCLUSION

Several developments identified in this report now exceed the conceptual scope of the 2021 “Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age” Manifesto. The Manifesto offers a strong moral grounding for communication rights and digital justice, but it was drafted before the current governance landscape took shape and therefore does not explicitly address several issues that have since become central to global negotiations. These include the rapid emergence of superintelligent and autonomous systems as a matter of geopolitical concern, the integration of digital governance into military strategy, and the accelerating securitisation that characterises the present institutional environment. The Manifesto also predates the financing debates opened up by WSIS+20 and the Global Digital Compact, including the possibility of new global financing mechanisms, digital solidarity contributions and the treatment of data as a commons.

Furthermore, while the Manifesto addresses justice and inclusion in broad terms, it does not set out positions on the procedural mechanisms

now available, such as the Independent Scientific Panel on AI, the Global Dialogue on AI Governance or the technical standardisation arenas of the ITU. These developments raise substantive and procedural questions that the original text does not fully anticipate, suggesting that a short addendum may be warranted to clarify positions on high-risk AI, digital financing, environmental digital justice and the institutional architecture through which these issues will be decided. ■

This report was commissioned by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and authored by Christina Dahl Jensen, Senior Consultant and AI Strategist, Tinkr. March 2026

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III Festival Juntanza: Por la comunicación desde Nuestra América

Gissela Dávila Cobo

El debate, la reflexión y el intercambio de experiencias fue la tónica del III Festival JUNTANZA, desarrollado en Quito, en las instalaciones del Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de Comunicación para América Latina, CIESPAL, evento en el que se pudo colocar en su verdadera dimensión, la importancia y vigencia de la comunicación comunitaria, popular y alternativa en Nuestra América.

Cerca de 500 participantes, representantes de 20 países de América y Europa; comunicadores comunitarios; docentes y estudiantes universitarios; y, organizaciones de comunicación, fueron protagonistas del Festival en el que se desarrollaron 4 foros temáticos, 5 mesas colaborativas, 12 talleres, 32 podcast, 12 webinarios académicos, se compartieron 87 experiencias de comunicación comunitaria y popular, se presentaron 3 libros especializados, una exposición fotográfica, rituales afro-andinos de celebración y concluyó con la Declaración del Equinoccio.

Hace 30 años, en noviembre de 1995, se celebró en Quito el Primer Festival de Radioapasionados y Televisionarios. Fue un encuentro inolvidable. Compañeras y compañeros de toda América Latina y El Caribe nos reunimos en CIESPAL, la Casa de la Comunicación, para intercambiar, entender y comprender, desde una perspectiva de la comunicación comunitaria, las

realidades en las que se comunicaba, informaba y dialogaba sobre los saberes y experiencias que en esa época vivimos. El Radioapasionados y Televisionarios, marcó un hito y colocó muchas luces para el desarrollo de proyectos democratizadores de la comunicación.

Colombia tomó la posta y, en el 98 replicó el Festival en Bogotá. Cuba hizo otro tanto. Y en varios países latinoamericanos se realizaron encuentros nacionales y regionales de comunicación popular, comunitaria, participativa, alternativa, alterativa... denominaciones unificadas por el empeño de conseguir condiciones de vida dignas para buscar el vivir bien de las comunidades de nuestros países.

¿POR QUÉ EL FESTIVAL JUNTANZA EN 2026?

Treinta años después, nuestra Región sigue enfrentando contextos complejos en lo político, ambiental, social, tecnológico y en muchos casos retrocesos en derechos humanos ya conquistados que afectan la vida cotidiana de las especies que habitamos esta casa común. En este contexto era necesario, quizá indispensable, abrir un espacio de unidad y trabajo colectivo, para que los debates, posicionamientos, experiencias territoriales, que cada movimiento y red de comunicación comunitaria, popular y alternativa realiza por su cuenta, se conozca, articule y genere procesos colectivos desde otras miradas.

El III Festival JUNTANZA por la comunicación desde Nuestra América, nace como una propuesta desde CIESPAL, para juntar a quienes hacen comunicación desde una óptica comunitaria, popular y alternativa en América Latina y El Caribe, como WACC, ALER, AMARC, SIGNIS ALC, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Grupo Comunicarte, Universidad Javeriana, Radialistas Apasionados y Apasionadas y CORAPE, con el fin de compartir experiencias, repensar y reflexionar sobre la comunicación en la Región, considerando la dialéctica de cambios constantes en las condiciones del quehacer comunicativo y en las prácticas determinadas por el desarrollo de la tecnología, la globalización, la gestión

política, los escenarios geopolíticos mundiales, la ecotransición, las tendencias en la formación de comunicadores/as y su incidencia en el ejercicio del derecho a la comunicación y a comunicar.

Esta unidad, desde la voluntad política y personal de las diez organizaciones, hizo posible un encuentro histórico, que marca un antes y después en la forma de pensarnos como movimiento de comunicación comunitaria, popular y alternativa en nuestra América. Demostrando que los objetivos comunes son más que las diferencias y que en ellas, en las diferencias, también se encuentran espacios para debatir y construir. Solo esta unidad pudo conseguir la presencia de más de cuatrocientas personas en Quito y un impacto mucho mayor en línea y redes digitales.

En este marco, convocamos a una fiesta de la comunicación, del intercambio de experiencias y la construcción colectiva de saberes y sueños. Una fiesta de brazos abiertos, para ¡esperanzar la vida!

¿QUÉ SE PROPUSO LA JUNTANZA?

- * **Generar un espacio de encuentro e intercambio** de experiencias, conceptos y nuevas perspectivas, desde diferentes actores de los procesos sociales de la comunicación comunitaria, popular y alternativa.
- * **Impulsar propuestas innovadoras** desde nuestras prácticas en comunicación comunitaria, popular y alternativa en América Latina y El Caribe, proyectando acuerdos colectivos que fortalezcan nuestras luchas y visiones compartidas.
- * **Construir metodologías desde lo popular y comunitario.** Aprender todas y todos, de todos y todas; encontrarnos, reconocernos, intercambiar utopías, soñar nuevas ideas y proyectos.

Temáticas

La temática principal del III Festival es la **COMUNICACIÓN COMUNITARIA, POPULAR Y ALTERNATIVA** en relación con el desarrollo del mundo contemporáneo digit-

al, globalizado y multipolar, para el ejercicio del derecho a la comunicación y a comunicar.

Bajo este gran paraguas, trabajaremos en los siguientes **ejes temáticos**:

Comunicación comunitaria, popular y alternativa (experiencias prácticas y propuestas teóricas), entendida como una forma de comunicación que prioriza la participación ciudadana, la producción colectiva de contenidos, la reivindicación de culturas locales y la defensa de los intereses de sectores populares, construyendo estrategias de diálogo, solidaridad y empoderamiento para transformar la lógica del sistema capitalista y visibilizar a grupos marginados.

Ejes temáticos:

Eje Temático 1: Educomunicación, como campo teórico-práctico que integra la comunicación y la educación, enfocándose en el uso crítico de los medios de comunicación como herramientas para el aprendizaje y la participación ciudadana. El propósito en el Festival, fue fomentar el desarrollo de habilidades críticas, la creación de conocimiento a través de la actividad participativa y el uso democrático de los medios para formar ciudadanos responsables y participativos.

Eje Temático 2: Transición Ecosocial, entendida como un proceso de transformación del modelo industrial, de consumo y vida desde una consideración ética de respeto y convivencia humana en los ecosistemas, abordando la crisis climática y el agotamiento de recursos. El objetivo fue debatir el papel de la comunicación y pensar el bien común desde un sentir biocéntrico, es decir en alianza cooperativa con la naturaleza.

Eje Temático 3: Justicia digital y tecnología, entendiendo que, la lucha por el Derecho Humano a la Comunicación en los entornos digitales, hoy por hoy, se caracteriza por ser un enfrentamiento desigual, que sigue los patrones de concentración de los medios tradicionales, sean estos escritos, audiovisuales y multimedia.

Las plataformas digitales, que aparecieron como una posibilidad de democratizar la

comunicación, se han vuelto instrumentos de dominación e instancias controladas por las grandes corporaciones. Esto determina que la comunicación digital, se halla ante el dilema de someterse a lógicas mercantiles o migrar hacia espacios alternativos más libres y democráticos.

Enfoques: Dentro de estos ejes temáticas se abordaron categorías como: Derechos Humanos; género; interculturalidad; justicia ambiental; experiencias contemporáneas; derechos de pueblos originarios y nacionalidades; movilidad social; tecnología e inteligencia artificial; democratización de la comunicación; medios comunitarios, redes digitales, medios emergentes, entre otros.

Luego de dos días de un riquísimo intercambio y de un hermanamiento comprometido por el movimiento de comunicación comunitaria, popular y alternativa en nuestra América, el resultado se plasmó en la Declaración del Equinoccio, que marca una hoja de ruta para seguir fortaleciendo y reconociendo esta otra comunicación, estas otras miradas y, sobre todo, la posibilidad de un trabajo colectivo, cooperativo y articulado.

DECLARACIÓN DEL EQUINOCIO

Por la comunicación desde Nuestra América. Un compromiso renovado con el derecho a comunicar, firmado en la Mitad del Mundo.

A los veintiún días del mes de marzo del 2026, bajo el sol de la mitad del mundo, en la celebración Mushuk Nina (Fiesta del Fuego Nuevo), nos reconocemos como un movimiento de comunicación vivo, ecuménico, vigente e incidente, por lo que renovamos nuestros principios de unidad, trabajo mancomunado, comprometido con los territorios que nos sustentan y desde donde mantenemos la esperanza, la alegría y las voluntades para construir la lucha que transforma con justicia, la realidad.

El mundo de hoy vive en medio de una crisis existencial. En contextos de retroceso y vulneración de derechos humanos, de capitalismo salvaje, discursos de odio, fundamentalismos religiosos, desinformación, extractivismo, intervencionismo militar, injerencias imperiales



y coloniales, proscripción de líderes políticos y concentración de la propiedad de las plataformas mediáticas, la democracia y la vida misma está en peligro.

En estos tiempos aciagos, el amor es un acto político de cuidado común que rechaza toda forma de violencia.

La **comunicación comunitaria**, popular, alternativa, feminista y ciudadana es fuente y origen de las realidades de los territorios, valora las culturas originarias y se declara guardiana de sus memorias. Es una comunicación protagonizada por mujeres, infancias, juventudes, comunidades afrodescendientes, indígenas, campesinas, rurales y urbanas, personas adultas mayores, personas con discapacidad, personas LGBTIQ+. **Por ello, quienes firmamos este documento, declaramos que:**

1. La defensa y el ejercicio del derecho a la comunicación y a comunicar es indispensable para construir sociedades que se sustenten en el bien común y sean habilitantes de otros derechos, desde la equidad, pluralidad, diversidad y la libertad de expresión.

2. La defensa y el ejercicio del derecho a la comunicación y a comunicar es indispensable

para construir sociedades que se sustenten en el bien común y sean habilitantes de otros derechos, desde la equidad, pluralidad, diversidad y la libertad de expresión.

3. Los territorios son el sustento vital que da sentido a esta comunicación, contribuyendo a la conformación de sujetos sociales con identidades diversas, que valoran sus idiomas, culturas y formas de vida.

4. Comunicar y exigir paz con justicia social es una necesidad dictada por nuestra propia historia de lucha, como componente esencial para construir el nuevo mundo que queremos, basado en la escucha y la denuncia de la desinformación.

5. Reconocemos que la tecnología no es neutra y es un bien común; la defendemos desde un enfoque de derechos frente a intereses hegemónicos donde grandes corporaciones controlan la información y las narrativas digitales.

6. Creamos espacios libres de saturación tecnológica y privilegiamos la inteligencia artesanal como una alternativa para cuidar la salud mental.

En este marco, nos comprometemos a:

1. Continuar fomentando la formación de pensamiento crítico y la construcción colectiva

de conocimiento.

2. Seguir organizándonos y articulando redes que nos lleven a habitar un espacio común, a través de proyectos políticos educomunicativos que fortalezcan la democracia, la justicia social y las diversidades.

3. Seguir aportando a la construcción de la paz con justicia social y buenos vivires, rechazando todas las formas de violencia y restableciendo vínculos con sentido de comunidad, acercamiento y diálogo.

4. Formarnos, capacitarnos y experimentar con las plataformas libres y la Inteligencia Artificial como opción política.

5. Construir narrativas rebeldes desde el poder de la esperanza, reconociendo nuestra memoria histórica y la relación entre comunidad, territorio y naturaleza.

6. Fomentar medios en los que se hablen las lenguas originarias y se expresen sus modos de comprender el mundo.

7. Participar de manera activa en los procesos de gobernanza global del internet, la inteligencia artificial y las tecnologías digitales, con visión del bien común sobre el lucro particular.

8. Trabajar de la mano con movimientos sociales del Norte y del Sur, para promover la justicia digital y el derecho a la comunicación.

Por lo tanto, exigimos:

1. Que los Estados aseguren el no retroceso de los derechos ya adquiridos y garanticen mecanismos de exigibilidad en políticas públicas para medios comunitarios, populares, alternativos y ciudadanos.

2. Que los Estados protejan el ejercicio de la comunicación comunitaria, hoy una de las profesiones más riesgosas de la región.

3. Que el acceso y la redistribución del espectro radioeléctrico sean garantizados para una mayor democratización de los medios, con pluralidad y diversidad de voces.

4. Que los Estados impulsen el desarrollo e investigación pública y soberana de las tecnologías digitales, con enfoque eco-social y de derechos.

5. Que los Estados de Nuestra América garanticen la privacidad de nuestros datos.

6. Que se rechace la falacia de que las redes digitales garantizan, por sí solas, nuestro derecho a la comunicación.

7. Que las universidades de América Latina y el Caribe actualicen sus programas educativos e incorporen las memorias y saberes de la comunicación comunitaria, popular y alternativa.

8. Que los Estados respeten el derecho humano a la libre movilidad, sin criminalizar a las personas migrantes, y que los medios las presenten con dignidad.

9. Que los Estados promuevan regulaciones de las tecnologías digitales en la gobernanza global de internet y la IA, para que sean democráticas, transparentes y sirvan al bien común.

Desde la comunicación comunitaria, popular, alternativa, feminista y ciudadana, nos comprometemos con la transformación para el bien común. Con nuestro trabajo, voluntad y apuesta política nos mantenemos firmes, activas en la esperanza y en el respeto irrestricto de los derechos humanos, al cuidado de las personas en situación de vulnerabilidad y la protección de los derechos de la naturaleza.

Nos reconocemos como legado vigente de las luchas populares por la democratización de la palabra y nos sumamos al impulso de las juventudes por el presente y futuro de las formas de crear narrativas y lenguajes que esperancen al mundo. ■

Dado y firmado por el III Festival Juntanza, por la comunicación desde Nuestra América. En la Mitad del Mundo, 21 de marzo de 2026.

Gissela Dávila Cobo es Directora General del Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de Comunicación para América Latina – CIESPAL. Magíster en Comunicación y Opinión Pública, por FLACSO Ecuador; Licenciada en Comunicación Social para el Desarrollo con énfasis en Radio, por UPS. Ocupó el cargo de Primera Directora de la Junta Directiva de ALER (2016- 2019) y fue Secretaria Ejecutiva de CORAPE (2002 – 2018). Ha participado en la planificación, ejecución y coordinación de seminarios sobre comunicación comunitaria; democratización de la comunicación; gestión y sostenibilidad de medios comunitarios; así como elaboración y gestión de proyectos.

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2026

The following summary of the WSIS Forum 2026 outcomes, held in Geneva, Switzerland, 6–10 July, was issued by the ITU Secretariat.

The first Forum since the WSIS+20 Review carried a single, unmistakable message: the time for commitments has passed, and the decade of implementation has begun.

Across the week, a few big ideas kept surfacing. Inclusion emerged as the true measure of progress. Connectivity alone is not enough; people need affordable access, digital skills, relevant content, and safe online spaces. Youth demanded genuine partnership rather than token seats, and speakers insisted women and girls belong in the rooms where AI and data standards are set.

Artificial intelligence dominated discussions, but with a development lens. Leaders pushed for interoperable systems rather than identical ones, warned of a widening AI divide as infrastructure funding concentrates in a few private firms, and championed local languages, regional data, and human-centered design. The financing challenge was made concrete: a \$2.66 trillion investment gap, met by early pledges including Microsoft's \$50 billion for AI in the Global South.

Above all, the Forum embraced a new metric of success: not technology deployed but lives improved.

TAKEAWAYS FROM THE CHAIR'S SUMMARY

Egypt's Chair distilled the week into five priorities: digital inclusion as the central goal, AI in service of development, digital finance as a tool

for opportunity, youth as partners, and closing the gender divide. He called for better measurement of real-world impact and pointed to the WSIS Prizes, 18 winners from 1,595 submissions across 122 countries, as proof the Action Lines deliver.

The Forum's worth will be proven between now and 2027. Road maps, indicators, pledges, and toolkits must become services, skills, and jobs. WSIS stays relevant because it brings people together; it stays powerful only if that togetherness turns into action. The year ahead is where dialogue becomes delivery."

WACC PANEL DISCUSSION AT THE FORUM

WACC organised a hybrid session on "Access, Agency, Voice. How communities in the Global South are shaping another technological world". Key questions discussed were:

- * Digital sovereignty – the collective ability of nations and communities to shape, govern, and safeguard the digital infrastructures, data, and standards that underpin their societies, including Artificial Intelligence – is a principle of the UN's Global Digital Compact.
- * For this to happen, the Minority World will have to relinquish its grip on the development and deployment of digital technologies and encourage the Majority World to develop and deploy its own. The World Summit on the Information Society's principles of inclusion, openness, and people-centred governance offer a clear path towards a global architecture which is more balanced and capable of addressing the thorny issues of decolonization and digital sovereignty.
- * What does the WSIS process need to do concretely to strengthen cultural integrity and community resilience in the context of digital communication and AI?
- * What do concrete examples of how "other technological worlds" are possible and already being created by local communities and indigenous peoples of the global South tell us about what works.



Photo: ITU/Pierre Albouy

INSIGHTS AND FINDINGS

- * There is no single technological world or one technological future. Multiple technological worlds are possible.
- * Digital transformation will only succeed if communities are not merely connected, but empowered to shape, use, and benefit from digital technologies
- * Connectivity is not an end in itself: it is a tool to strengthen community development, culture, and participation.
- * Concrete examples in Africa, Asia, and Latin America show that communities can be protagonists of digital change and, with the necessary support, are capable of managing and sustaining their own connectivity projects
- * Technology must reflect the diversity of communities.
- * The challenge now is to articulate public, private, and community efforts to ensure that no one is left behind.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The organizations participating in the WACC

session highlighted their ongoing collaboration and reaffirmed their commitment to continue working together to strengthen capacity-building efforts and create enabling conditions for communities to create, operate, maintain, and sustain their own communication media, connectivity infrastructure, and meaningful digital inclusion initiatives.

Participants emphasized the importance of continued cooperation among community actors, civil society organizations, governments, academia, and international institutions to advance local agency, digital sovereignty, cultural integrity, and inclusive digital transformation towards 2035. The following actions were proposed:

Action 1: Invest in community-driven digital ecosystems.

Action 2: Put communities at the centre of technology design.

Action 3: Respect diverse solutions – respect the agency of communities and protect the community governance of their own technology.

Action 4: Build digital capacities that foster empowerment and enable autonomy.

Action 5: Establish funding sources to support community-centred sustainability. ■

Women's Human Rights, Gender Equality and AI

Statement

The Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG), the UNESCO UniTWIN Network on Gender, Media and ICT and the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) urge the UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance and the AI for Good Summit to commit to an AI for women and girls.

Debates on AI and women's human rights are not new. The original discussions and the present-day ones still revolve around power, inequality and discrimination. In the 1990s, sociologist Judy Wajcman warned that technologies are not neutral spaces, but spaces mediated by power, which perpetuate inequality between women and women. She underlined technology as male-dominated and a patriarchal territory, which explains why inequalities are reproduced and reinforced in and through ICTs.

Anita Gurumurthy of IT for Change (India) argues that the digital social organization should be understood as a new phase of capitalism – one that restructures social and economic processes through data-driven digital intelligence. The “digital”, as the contemporary techno-paradigm, seems aligned with a deeper and more troubling trend for gender justice, particularly in the developing world. According to her, the age of intelligence is proving to be the age of centralization, consolidation, and monopolization of the market economy. Therefore, feminist thought and action must deepen its critique of technology.

Artificial Intelligence is presented as the new paradigm that will address problems that neither States nor societies have solved regard-

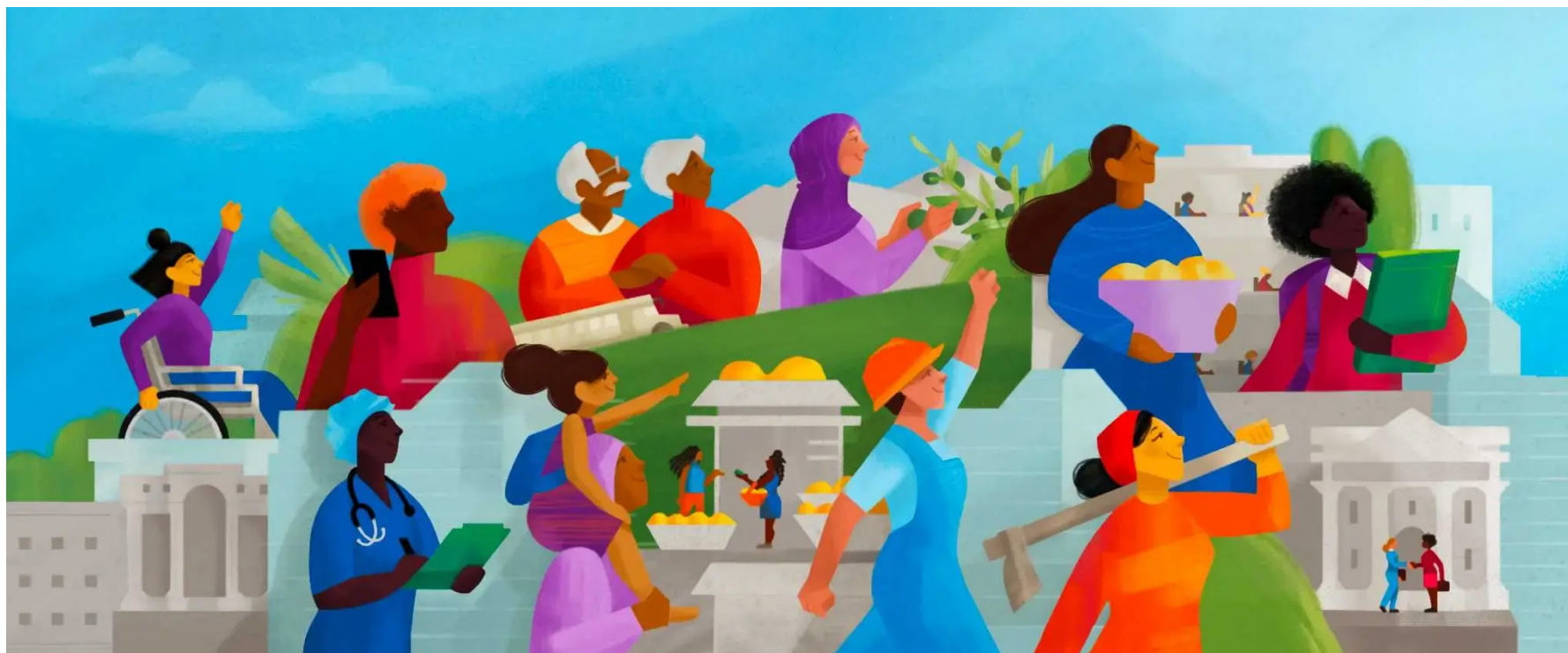
ing human rights. To the contrary, AI has deepened social inequality. These technologies create significant pressures on the human rights framework by spanning a broad set of concerns and revealing the intricate links between technological systems and human rights. As digital tools, AI systems can influence the full spectrum of human rights because those rights are indivisible, interdependent, and interconnected.

Some of the main challenges include erosion of the right to privacy, deepening of discrimination and social inequalities, risks to freedom of expression and access to information, threats to transparency and accountability, structural harms to autonomy and self-determination and collective and societal harms.

A CRITICAL TURNING POINT

Concerning women's human rights, AI marks a critical turning point with effects on:

- 1. Algorithmic bias and discrimination** – Systems trained on historical datasets frequently reproduce gendered inequality instead of correcting it. This results in discriminatory outcomes for women in key areas such as employment screening, access to credit, medical diagnosis, and resource allocation.
- 2. Economic inequality** – Automation driven by AI disproportionately impacts sectors where women are overrepresented, including administrative and service roles. This dynamic risks widening existing gendered economic divides and limiting women's access to well-paid work.
- 3. Surveillance and privacy harms** – Technologies such as facial recognition exhibit lower accuracy rates for women. These inaccuracies increase the likelihood of misidentification in policing and other high-stakes contexts, undermining women's right to privacy and due process.
- 4. Gender-based violence and online harassment** – AI tools are increasingly used to generate deepfake images, automate misogynistic content, and amplify targeted harassment. These practices threaten women's safety, dignity, and participation in digital spaces. Deepened effects



have been documented on women politicians, human rights defenders and journalists. This escalation creates far-reaching consequences for democratic participation, freedom of expression, and gender equality.

5. A key problem faced is the **lack of data and accountability**, which challenges the governance of AI, whose principles should include placing women's human rights at the core. In this context, attention to innovation and human rights is lacking – when innovation should mean how human rights should be protected.

The problems are linked to non-compliance by States of Human Rights conventions and instruments to ensure basic human rights of all women, and non-compliance of media companies to laws and regulations enacted. The algorithmic structure is widening oppression, exploitation and subordination of women and girls.

For these reasons, women scholars and activists call for a gender revolution of AI and future technologies, to advance AI for women and girls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Informed by the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other historical instruments as road maps, it is urgent to interrogate existing

norms and to reinforce mechanisms to strengthen gender equality within Artificial Intelligence.

We urge the UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance and the AI for Good Summit to commit to an AI for women and girls by providing directions for various stakeholders to respond to urgent needs, including to:

1. Conduct research to inform policy;
2. Promote co-regulatory mechanisms;
3. Implement frameworks for algorithmic transparency with a gender approach, incorporating methods such as third-party audits;
4. Promote AI literacy with a gender component that specifically focuses on building the information literacy of women and girls;
5. Encourage efforts by women's organisations to use ai tools;
6. Ensure safe conditions for women and girls to participate in all aspects of the digital ecosystem; and,
7. Tackle gender-based violence, and immunity from the law. Corporations must place human rights at the centre of algorithmic designs and not after applications and other technology innovations are published. ■

July 6, 2026

Oberhausen (Germany) 2026

At the 72nd International Short Film Festival Oberhausen 28 April to 3 May 2026 two ecumenical juries, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded prizes in the International Competition and the International Children's and Youth Film Competition. The Prize in the International Competition is endowed with € 2,000 and the prize in the Children's and Youth Film Competition with € 1,500 donated equally by the Protestant Church District of Oberhausen, and Katholische Filmarbeit in Germany.

The Ecumenical Jury of the International Competition awarded its Prize to *Hei Dong Dong* (Dark Channel) directed by Yu Zhe (China, 2025).

Motivation: Film theorist Siegfried Kracauer once used the phrase "ordinary invisible things" to describe aspects of reality that are technically visible, but usually go unnoticed in everyday life. Cinema at its best captures these fleeting, everyday, seemingly mundane moments we tend to overlook or ignore. The Ecumenical Jury would like to award its prize to a film that is at the same time seemingly simple and incredibly poetic, layered and emotionally involving. The filmmaker creates a filmic space, uses light to reflect on light and makes it a lifeline or, if you wish to see it, the spiritual presence of the flow of life.

In addition, the jury awarded a Commendation to *wolno, szybko, wolno* (slow, fast, slow) directed by Jagoda Czarnek (Poland, 2025).

Motivation: Speaking about subverting expectations: it is very rare to find a young filmmaker who has such a feeling for timing and dark humour that she can show both Memento Mori and Carpe Diem in just four shots and 1 minute.

The Ecumenical Jury of the Children's and Youth Film Competition awarded its Prize to *Just Jools* directed by Ezra Verbist (Belgium, 2025).

Motivation: A documentary that tackles a difficult subject in a deeply loving way, managing to make a particular issue feel universal. The main character finds her strength in settling into herself and feeling the dance, rather than in the gaze and judgment of others. The film portrays this journey through authentic characters and a storyline that almost gives the documentary the feel of bordering on a fictional drama. The director's gentle eye ensures it remains personal without getting too private. The dance comes to life for the girl not just through the music, but in collaboration with the dance teacher, in nature, and through her imagination.

In addition, the jury awarded a Commendation to *Jésus Marie Joseph* directed by Patxi Meerman (France, 2025).

Motivation: At once a deeply loving, handheld film and razor-sharp in its exploration of life's fundamental "why" – a question just as valid for a 3-year-old boy running through a Greek village as for an old man. It manages to tell a full story in 3 minutes without explaining or oversimplifying.

Members of the 2026 Jury in the International Competition: Rinke Dellebeke-van Hell (Netherlands), Iva Folajárová (Czech Republic), Daniel Hercenberger (Germany). Members of the Jury of the Children's and Youth Film Competition: Irina Grassmann (Germany), Lars Karmark Obel (Denmark), Balázs Szövényi-Lux (Hungary).

Cannes (France) 2026

At the 79th Cannes Film Festival (12-23 May 2026), the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize to *Fjord* directed by Cristian Mungiu (Romania, France, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, 2026).

Motivation: The Jury chose a film that, above all, stands out for the artistic excellence of its cinematic form in every respect. We believe that the award-winning film serves as a powerful warning against the risks posed by the ideological drift of both faith and the necessary denunciation of any form of violence against the most vulnerable. Both are hopeful approaches which

Norway); Jakob Hoffmann (Germany); Vincent Miéville (France); Ruben de la Prida Caballero (Spain).

Zlin (Czech Republic) 2026

At the 66th International Film Festival for Children and Youth in Zlín (28 May to 3 June 2026), the Ecumenical Jury appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize to *The Altar Boys* directed by Piotr Domalewski (Poland, 2025).

Motivation: The ecumenical jury awarded its prize for the way the film raises the timeless question of what it means to do good. The film approaches this theme with lightness, authenticity, and without narrow-minded moralizing. Although the main characters are Polish Catholic altar boys, the film's universal message will resonate with audiences regardless of their religious, national, or other identities.

The story reminds us that the path to becoming a good person is often arduous, meets with misunderstanding, and requires leaving behind comfortable structures. However, if we want to live authentically and take our lives seriously, it is a necessary journey. The film gives us courage on this path and affirms its profound meaning.

In addition, the jury awarded a Commendation to the film *Gugu's World* directed by Allan Deberton (Brazil, 2026). *Motivation:* We would like to award a commendation to a film that taught us about identity and the importance of being ourselves in a world where we don't always fit in. Being surrounded by loved ones who encourage us to express ourselves is part of the beauty of life, and we hope that the message from this film will go beyond Brazil's borders and into the souls of young people everywhere around the globe.

Members of the 2026 Jury: Peter Dietz (Switzerland), Maria Dobre (Romanie), Petr Hasan, (Czech Republic).



can become corrupted when, reduced to a mere set of rules, they prevent us from seeing the humanity of others – and perhaps our own.

In its exploration of the central conflict between different convictions, the award-winning film not only questions the boundaries between the public and private spheres but does so with great narrative skill, interweaving the individual stories of complex and profound characters. Finally, it should be noted that this is a film that raises many questions and appeals to the viewer's experience to answer them, thus constituting a rich work of art for debate and reflection.

Members of the 2026 Jury: Adrian Baccaro (Argentina); Catherine Escribe (France); Annette Gjerde-Hansen (President of the Jury,

Cluj-Napoca (Romania) 2026

At the 25th Transylvania International Film Festival (12-21 June 2026), the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, endowed with € 1.000 by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, was awarded to *Truly Naked* (Gol Golut) directed by Muriel d'Ansembourg (Netherlands, Belgium, France, 2026).

Motivation: The film sharply distinguishes between sex abuse, pure love and tenderness. It successfully unmasks the porn universe while following the ambivalent relation of one father and his son. The film leads to transformative perception of the explicit photos and videos in which we see – often desperate – human beings.

At the heart of the film lies a profound reflection on the difference between performance and authentic encounter, between observing intimacy and truly experiencing it. Through its sensitive and deeply human storytelling, the film reminds us that

genuine connection cannot be manufactured or performed, but grows through trust, vulnerability, and mutual encounter and recognition. The film invites to look beyond labels, prejudice, and social stigma in order to recognize the dignity of every human person.

The Ecumenical jury recommends this film for screening and debates specially with young people to enhance their discernment concerning what is proposing in the online media.

Members of the 2026 Jury: Olimpia Melinte, president, Romania; Heinz-Martin Krauss, Germany; Gianna Urizio, Italy; Stanislav Zeman, Czech Republic.

Karlovy-Vary (Poland) 2026

At the 60th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (3-11 July 2026), the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize to *The Lion at My Back* (still below) directed by Tonia Mishiali (Cyprus, Luxembourg, Greece, 2026).

Motivation: In dense, realistic imagery that turns metaphorical at key moments, the film tells the story of eighteen-year-old refugee Mariama



and the forty-year-old Cypriot woman Stella, with whom she forms an ever-closer bond. Surprisingly, Mariama becomes a Christ figure for Stella and others who, by their own strength alone, cannot find their way out of destructive domination.

Synopsis: Mariama, an asylum-seeker from Senegal, has just turned eighteen. Stella, at first glance a withdrawn woman in her forties, has recently decided to break free from the clutches of addiction and to give her life a fresh start. *Members of the 2026 Jury:* Lukáš Jirsa (Czech Republic, Jury President); Hans-Martin Gutmann (Germany); Valérie de Marnhac (France).