

Together in Life-flourishing Communication

During a Council for World Mission (CWM) communications workshop held 16-20 January 2024 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 30 communicators from member churches in Africa, East Asia, Europe, the Pacific, and South Asia, as well as ecumenical partners United Evangelical Mission and the World Association for Christian Communication, gathered to reflect on the CWM Assembly theme “Rise to Life: Together in Transformation”.

The CWM Assembly will be held in Durban, South Africa, from 12-19 June 2024.

The following statement summarizes the current communications context as it relates to the assembly theme, offers an overview of the theological foundation of communications, acknowledges some concerns and challenges, and concludes with a call to action.

Rising Together

A world facing conflict, climate change, and increasing social and economic inequalities, as well as uneven access to digital technologies, calls us to rise together to foster communication that is both life-affirming and transformative.

Implementing new and traditional communication, CWM communicators are honing their messages and telling the stories that illustrate the assembly theme in everyday life amid the many spaces in which we live and move.

More than ever, we need communication that supports human dignity, advances human rights, and speaks truth to power. We need communication that harnesses digital technologies and artificial intelligence for positive change while, at the same time, enhances person-to-person relationships. Only by fostering communication that strengthens inclusion, awareness, and genuine encounter can we hope to rise together.

Engagement With God's Mission

The CWM Assembly theme “Rise to Life: Together in Transformation” is an expression of confessing witness to the unwavering commitment of the CWM to engaging with God's mission.

Life-flourishing communication is essential to creating communities that reflect the fullness of life for all creation, linking humans and nature.

It is a holistic call to action, urging followers of Jesus to rise up against oppressive systems, embrace radical discipleship and prophetic witness, and form life-flourishing communities.

Advocating Life, Dignity, and Justice

In today's world, fair and balanced communication for all requires accessible and affordable technologies and the skills to use them. It also demands gender justice, digital justice, and a diversity of voices – especially those from the margins of society.

A holistic, inclusive approach to communication is needed—one that advocates fullness of life, dignity, and respect for all.

In this way, people everywhere can be empowered to engage in transparent, informed, and open debate, with unfettered access to the information and knowledge essential to peaceful coexistence, responsible civic engagement, and mutual accountability.

This is especially urgent in a world where digital technologies and artificial intelligence are being dominated by some governments and organisations for political and social control or profit. It is a world in which people are increasingly vulnerable to the manipulative effects of fake news and disinformation.

Communication is a basic human right that should not be bought and sold or used to mislead and coerce.

We need a world in which:

- Everyone can communicate, inform, and share knowledge or perspectives.
- Everyone can participate in society with particular consideration for marginalised and vulnerable groups.
- Everyone can benefit from fair and unbiased public communication.
- Everyone can receive dignity, respect, and fullness of life.

Call to Action

On behalf of communicators from CWM member churches and ecumenical partners, we call for:

1. Greater understanding of ethical questions surrounding digital technologies; rights-based approaches to digital technologies; and media and digital literacy.
2. Awareness-building regarding:
 - online and offline harm related to disinformation, cyberbullying, lack of data protection, digital security;
 - digital surveillance and surveillance capitalism;
 - the digital divide both between and within countries, especially the gender and age divides;
 - the role of the churches in promoting digital equality/justice.
3. Encouraging and embracing cultural and language diversity within the CWM. As far as possible, use new technologies to include other language in relevant aspects of CWM's work.
4. Ensuring women's voices are heard and the perspectives of youth are valued in all aspects of communication in the CWM and its member churches.
5. Strengthen collaboration among regional communicators to address concerns.

Conclusion

We respectfully submit this call to action with the hope that CWM will contextualize and implement these recommendations locally, regionally, and globally.