



Statement on International Day of Democracy

Let's hear the voices of young people

On International Day of Democracy, WACC is calling on its worldwide network of members and partners to strengthen the voices of young people in the political, economic and social life of their countries.

The theme of this year's International Day of Democracy on 15 September 2014 is "Engaging young people on democracy", highlighting the challenges and opportunities of young people taking part in democratic processes.

People between the ages of 15 and 25 constitute a fifth of the world's population. In many developing countries, the proportion is even higher – with the majority of young people today living in low- and middle-income countries. There are more than 235 million youth in India and 225 million in China alone.

Yet study after study shows declining faith among young people in politics, with decreasing levels of participation in elections, political parties and traditional social organizations. At the same time, informal, youth-led movements for democratic change are on the rise in a number of countries – including in fragile states.

WACC believes that recognizing and building on communication rights uphold genuine democracies – in which people and communities can strive for greater equality and peace and full participation in decisions that affect their lives. Yet, in many places in the world, communication rights are under threat.

WACC members and partners are called to empower and encourage young people to voice their concerns for a better world. They can do so through such WACC-supported initiatives as the Creative Centre for Communication and Development (Zimbabwe), which is enabling girls to use citizen journalism and digital media platforms to change attitudes that perpetuate the practice of child marriage.

In Colombia, Grupo ComunicArte is helping young people to express themselves on radio. Specialising in "school radios", the group is working with teachers, community and traditional leaders to carry out a project that strengthens the participation of Indigenous Inga youth in genuine community development.

A recent report by the League of Young Voters in Europe – Addressing Youth Absenteeism in European Elections – says that lack of attention to youth issues and the existence of few young candidates for office contribute to political apathy. It also argues that young people are not necessarily disengaged from political processes, but that their preferred forms of activism are not recognized by parties and governments.

Genuine communication involves sharing information and knowledge, discussing, listening and being heard. “Engaging young people on democracy” means making young people the subjects of communication and – crucially – hearing their voices.

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