

## **WACC – a short history**

WACC's history spans several decades.

1968 – 1977: WACC held its first Assembly in Oslo in 1968. Two years later in 1971 the WACC secretariat was set up in London, followed four years later with the establishment of a Print Media Development Unit, an Electronic Media Development Unit and a Commission on Communication Education. In 1976 WACC established the Black Press Fund to support anti-apartheid newspapers in South Africa.

1978 – 1987: In 1978 WACC convened a study group to devise a programme to defend the interests of Third World nations to have adequate access to satellites and other technologies. In the same year WACC participated in the World Administrative Radio Conference where questions of access to the electromagnetic spectrum and satellite parking spaces were broached. A year later in 1980 the first issue of WACC's *Media Development Journal* was published. In 1984 "Women in Communication" became a new programme at WACC to promote justice and equality for women through existing communication projects. In 1986 WACC signed a contract with Sage Publications for what became a long-running series of books on "Communication and Human Values".

1988 – 1997: In 1988 WACC republished *Many Voices, One World: Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow* – the "MacBride Report" originally published by UNESCO in 1980. Shortly after, WACC commenced work on its first *Study and Action Programme* (1991-95), focusing on communication ethics, the right to communicate, women's perspectives, communication education, and communication, culture and social change. In 1994 WACC organised the "Women Empowering Communication" conference together with the feminist networks Isis International and the International Women's Tribune Centre, in Bangkok. The conference led to the *Bangkok Declaration*, which underlined the need to promote forms of communication that not only challenge the patriarchal nature of media but strive to decentralize and democratize them. In 1995 WACC carried out its first Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), a single day snapshot of gender representation in radio, television and print news. In 1996 WACC convened the Platform for Cooperation on Communication and Democratization, resulting in an agreement on the right to communicate to be recognized and guaranteed as fundamental to securing human rights founded on principles of genuine participation, social justice, plurality and diversity.

1998 – 2007: In 2000 WACC conducted its second Global Media Monitoring Project, generating new data to measure change in gender-related indicators in the world news media. Two years later the secretariat of the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) Campaign began operations at WACC. CRIS aimed to influence the UN World Summit on the Information Society in the light of a vision of an Information Society grounded in the right to communicate, as a means to enhance human rights and to strengthen the social, economic, and cultural lives of people and communities. In 2003 WACC joined civil society groups lobbying for communication rights at the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva and later in Tunis, an effort that succeeded in putting communication rights on the agenda of civil society organizations and governments. In 2006 WACC's office moved from London (U.K.) to Toronto.

2008 – 2017: WACC held its fourth international Congress on the theme "Communicating Peace: Building viable communities" in Cape Town. Acknowledging WACC's sustained support for communication projects challenging apartheid, keynote-speaker Archbishop Desmond Tutu noted that communicators are called to be peacemakers and to carry on the struggle for justice, dignity and peace for as long as communities remain divided, unviable and wracked by violence.

In 2013, WACC in collaboration with UNESCO and other partners organised the Global Forum on Media and Gender in Bangkok, an event that aimed at accelerating the implementation of provisions in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action related to gender and media. In 2016 WACC was named General Secretary (interim) of the Global Alliance on Gender and Media (GAMAG), a network established in Bangkok to coordinate the work of media organisations, civil society and academia to advance gender equality in and through the media and ICTs.

In 2018, WACC celebrated its 50th anniversary with a symposium on “Communication Rights Today” in Hamburg. It published two special issues of *Media Development*. The first issue contains a set of position papers arguing for the centrality of media in gender equality struggles, papers developed in preparation for deliberations at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Commission on the Status of Women; the second issue explores WACC’s role in a digital world. As well, this year the World Summit on the Information Society – International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has named WACC one of its Champions in the category “Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society”.