

SPEAK!.ng

SPEAK! CAMPAIGN REPORT 2019



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CONTEXT

The Citizens' Voice programme works towards a world where young people (15-30 years) have the civic agency to help create more inclusive societies that engage them in decisions and respond to their needs. To achieve this young people in restrictive settings need access to reliable, trusted information and multiple viewpoints on sensitive topics. They need to associate with whom they choose and have the freedom to express themselves and voice their needs and aspirations. They also need access to services responsive to their needs and the opportunity to participate in public debate. We believe young people will then be better able to challenge constraining socio-cultural norms and prejudices, actively participate in society, and influence formal and informal decision-making.

Citizens' Voice runs projects in Burundi, DRC, Mali, Libya, Yemen, Egypt and China.

TOGETHER, WE SPEAK!

The 2019 campaign built further on 2018's theme "Speaking with" which aimed to address increasing social and political polarisation, focusing on breaking down barriers between people and communities. SPEAK! 2019 took place in September and saw 179 events taking place in 55 countries around the world.

RNW Media and Citizens' Voice participation in SPEAK!

RNW Media's vision is to contribute to a world where young people in restrictive settings confidently claim their rights, assume their place in society and shape a better future. This vision aligns with the goals of Civicus and the SPEAK! campaign.

The Citizens' Voice programme works in restrictive settings where freedom of expression is limited and young people lack opportunities to participate in public debate. As a result, young people are divided and disempowered to challenge existing socio-cultural norms, make informed decisions, and influence formal and informal decision-making.

Citizens' Voice thus builds inclusive communities and creates alternate civic spaces where young people from disparate groups can come together and move from polarised discussion to constructive debate and dialogue. The SPEAK! Campaign thus resonates with the Citizens' Voice values and approach.

Citizens' Voice projects in DRC, Burundi, Mali, Yemen and Libya organised both online and offline campaigns and events for the 2019 SPEAK! Campaign, and RNW Media Head Office organised an offline event in the Dutch capital Amsterdam.

GO DARK

As part of the global SPEAK! campaign, RNW Media's regional platforms also participated by going dark online-in solidarity with those whose freedom of expression has been repressed. On the first day of the campaign, the Citizens' Voice platforms had a full-page dark banner with the message 'Today we go dark'. The banner then gave the option of clicking through to the website or clicking through to the SPEAK! Website.



OUTPUTS

- Number of countries participated in the campaign: **6** (Yemen, Libya, Mali, Burundi, DRC, The Netherlands).
- Number of events: **8 events** (3 in DRC and 1 in each of the other countries).
- Total of engagement (online interactions):
More than 56.000
- Number of participants (offline event attendees):
More than 200



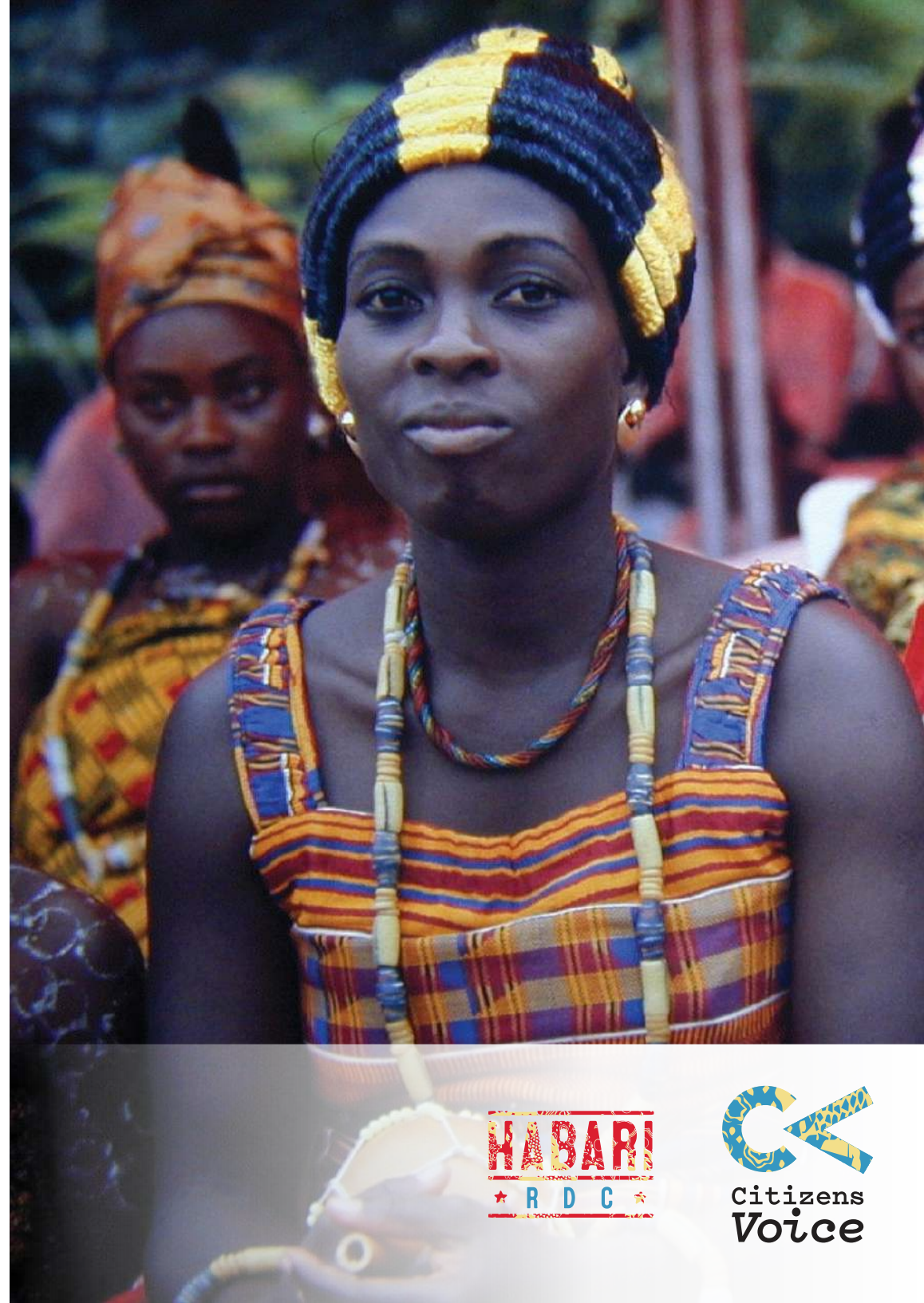
DRC

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, **Habari DRC** organised offline events in three cities: Kinshasa, Goma and Lubumbashi. Different topics were chosen in each city, relevant to the local context and aligned with the overall theme of SPEAK!2019. The campaign attracted a total of **21.665** online engagements (impressions, likes, comments, shares, tweets, and retweets).

Across the cities, 291 young people participated in different events, including 192 men and 99 women. The events also saw the participation of **12 decision-makers** and **20 young changemakers** from universities, companies, and religious institutes. Four representatives of civil society organisations and four local media outlets were present.

The theme of the event in Lubumbashi was 'Together we can succeed'. In Goma, an event at the city's university addressed Science and Study as Unifying Factors and in Kinshasa the focus was on how to fight tribalism.

The events encouraged young people to express themselves and engage in direct discussions with each other about subjects such as diversity, peace, freedom, and coexistence. They also addressed issues related to political radicalisation and ideology and raised awareness about the importance of social cohesion and inclusion among different ethnic and political groups living together. Open dialogue on such topics is rare in DRC but participants were highly engaged and expressed a variety of ideas and opinions.



BURUNDI

In Burundi, **Yaga** participated in the SPEAK! campaign with an offline event aimed at facilitating dialogue between young people and the older generation. Desk research done by the Yaga team shows that traditionally in Burundi, education, morals, and values, were transmitted orally from generation to generation. Over the past decades, the amount of time spent in discussion between children and adults has declined considerably. This has resulted in the growth of a gap between generations that no longer understand each other. On the one hand, young people no longer benefit from the wisdom and experience of their elders and on the other hand, older people no longer benefit from the innovation and creativity of youth.

More than 60% of Burundi's population is under 25 years old so engaging with the country's youth is essential for the future. But young Burundians accuse their elders of having done nothing to build a better future and the older generation condemns today's youth for being lazy and distracted. As a step towards reconciling these differences, the Yaga team organised a panel discussion where people from both groups come together to exchange experiences and thoughts. The main message was the need to promote a culture of dialogue, tolerance, and respect for diversity of opinion within society regardless of age or background.



MALI

Mali is a deeply divided country and social cohesion is a key theme for the **Benbere** platform. Benbere's SPEAK! 2019 campaign focused on the central region of Mopti with the theme of "peace and cohesion between communities of the center region". Escalating violence in Mopti this year has seen a number of savage attacks driven by ethnic tensions between the Fulani and Dogon communities. These tensions are manipulated by extremist groups and exacerbated by weak governance. Benbere organised a series of activities in the Mopti region itself to involve direct contact with those affected by the surge in violence. Activities included a training for 15 young local bloggers, a sporting and cultural event involving both communities, a debate and a series of articles and videos.

Participants at the training rated it very highly. They said they had a better understanding of the strength of social networking and blogging and will take full advantage of it. Five participants have already started producing articles on their own blogs which they created during the training. One young blogger has already had a post published by Benbere and other proposals are being considered.

The sporting and cultural event included a football match and performances by traditional Peulh and Dogon dancers / singers. Those present, from all different communities, danced together during the performances. The football match was played by two teams of young people from the different communities of the Central region. They were dressed in the national colours of Mali - yellow white and green - the colours of the jerseys sending the message of all belonging to the same country.

The debate focused on the role of young people in consolidating social cohesion. A panel of speakers included representatives of a number of local authorities and youth groups representing the various communities. **Sixty-three people participated, 19 of them young women.** Participants praised Benbere for organising the debate and the region's most popular radio station, Saghan Mopti, broadcast it live. Other localities have since contacted Benbere asking them to hold more debates in their areas.

ben bere

#TogetherWeSpeak

Du **17** au **22**
SEPTEMBRE
2019

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MOPTI

RAW
CIVICUS



YEMEN

In Yemen, **Mansati30** dedicated one of its series of online debates to the SPEAK! Campaign. The theme was *Can women work in any profession?* Employment opportunities for young Yemeni women are often restricted by social and cultural norms which dictate that some jobs and professions are men-only. In some of Yemen's communities even discussing the issue is taboo.

The debate was organised together with Mansati30's partner in Sana'a, the [Basement Cultural Foundation](#). Two young activists debated the topic in front of 50 people at an offline event. The debate was also posted online via social media and watched by 6,500 unique viewers with a total of 1,218 engagements (reactions, comments and shares).

Online and offline discussion was stimulated in the run-up to, during and after the debate and a significant percentage of engagement came from female users. Mansati30 created 10 posts between 18-23 September discussing the topic of women's role in the labour force and promoting the debate. One of those posts was a poll asking if fans were for or against woman working in any profession. Of the 1,700 responses, 52% voted for and 48% voted against. Total engagement for the 10 posts was 3,958 reactions, comments or shares. Fans were also able to vote for their favorite debater and the male debater who was in favour of the hypothesis "woman can work in any profession" won with 53% of the votes.



منصتي
30

Citizens
Voice

LIBYA

In Libya, **Huna Libya** built its SPEAK! Campaign around the topic of mental health. This is a taboo issue in Libya where stigma is attached to mental illness and many people choose to avoid any public acknowledgement of the problem. The Huna Libya team felt it was especially important to address the issue at a time of conflict when many people are affected by trauma related to the violence. The campaign started with a survey on the needs of young people in relation to mental health which attracted a high level of engagement. More than **7,727 participants completed the survey** where they expressed freely what they think and feel about mental and psychological health.

The team created different formats of messaging to raise awareness about the subject, including multimedia content production (text, video), social media posts, and working with 10 twitter change-makers. As well as the engagement of Huna Libya moderators directly with the audience to ensure safe and constructive dialogue. The campaign used two hashtags: #TogetherWeSpeak (the official SPEAK! hashtag) and #فضفض, (FadFad) meaning "speak freely to me", it is a term expressing trust, compassion and empathy in the Libyan context and used to encourage someone to speak if they are sad or in pain.

In total the campaign content was viewed more than 120,000 times via various channels and generated almost 23,000 engagements.



THE NETHERLANDS

RNW Media hosted an offline event in Amsterdam, the Netherlands focusing on digital access in restrictive settings. Access Denied: Click to claim your civic space, which was organised in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The event brought together a panel of experts to discuss the challenges and potential solutions while RNW Media colleagues from Africa and MENA shared on-the-ground realities of digital rights violations.

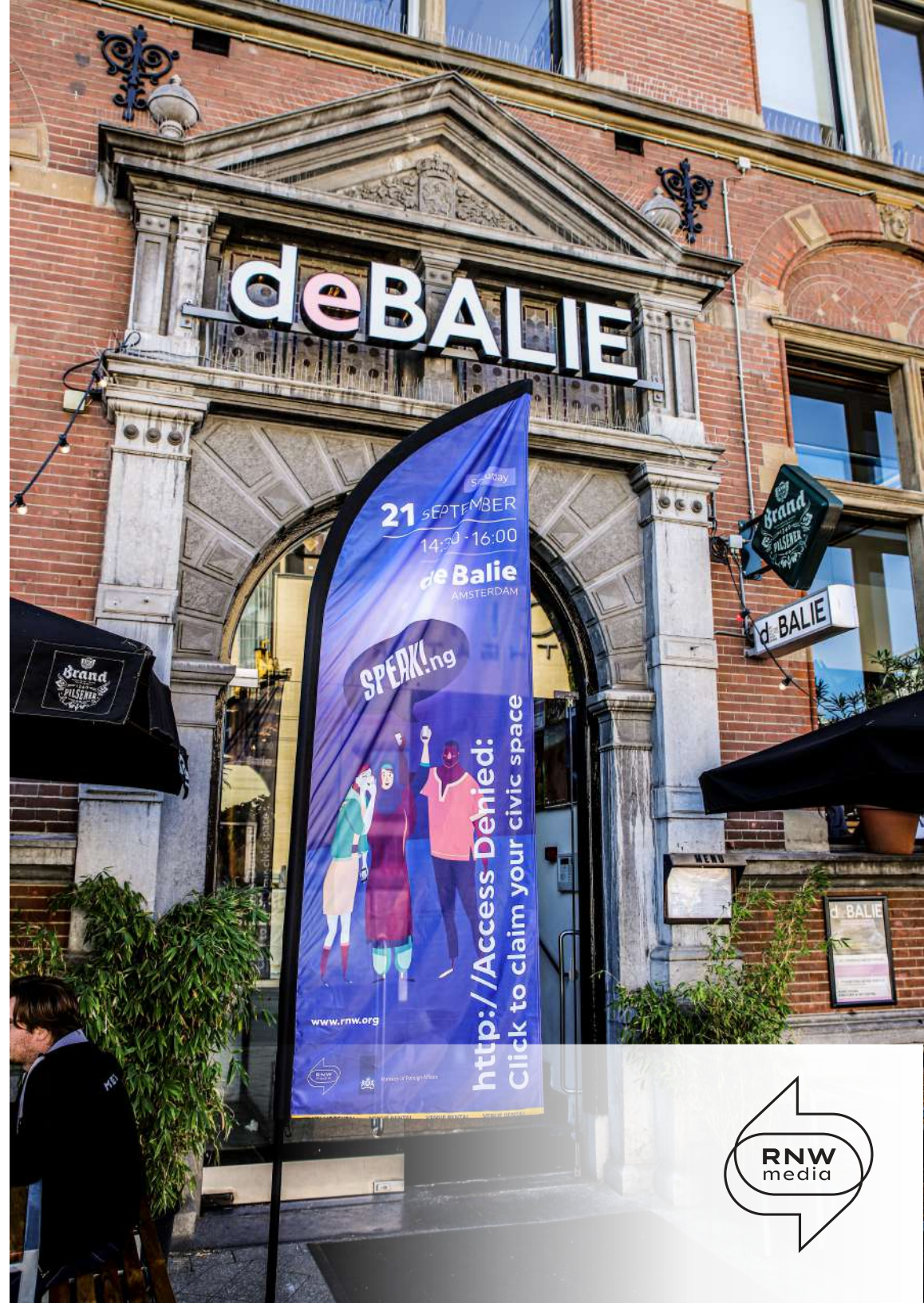
Keynote speaker was the Human Rights Ambassador of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Her Excellency , who stressed that digital rights are human rights saying: "Everyone should have access to safe and secure space online... women and men across religious, racial, ethnic and regional divides should be able to come together online and express themselves freely". Other speakers included Guillermo Beltrà, Policy Director of digital rights NGO Access Now, Leon Willems, Director of Free Press Unlimited and Clara Bosco, Senior Advisor on Civil Society Resourcing for CIVICUS.



The impact of government imposed internet shutdowns was made vividly clear with a video recorded in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in which Congolese journalist Lemien Sakalunga reflects on life during the 3-week period at the beginning of 2019 when the government cut off all internet access to 'prevent a popular uprising' after contested elections. Rodriguez Katsuva, editor for RNW Media's projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo, was also present at the event and he emphasised the very human, personal side of the internet shutdown experience:

We are talking about human rights, human lives. This woman, this beautiful woman, she is sick. We do not know what is happening, because there is not enough money to go to the hospital, but her first-born son worked hard and got a fellowship to do a Master's programme, in Paris, in Europe. This woman, every evening, when she calls her son on Messenger or WhatsApp, she said, my son, hearing your voice is a kind of medicine. During the 21 days of the shutdown she could not talk to her son. This woman is my mother.

Fifty people attended the event.





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