

Module 4 (Part 2)

Building Digital Bridges: Media's Power in Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion

Developed by Laura Magan, MMS, Ireland



www.includemedia.eu

This resource is licensed
under CC BY 4.0



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Finnish National Agency for Education. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them

* Note to manage waste please print this document in greyscale or black and white rather than in colour. Please print on both sides of the paper (duplex) and if you can print multiple slides or pages on one page.

M4 Part 2 – Focus Area 2

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives



www.includemedia.eu

This resource is licensed
under CC BY 4.0



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Finnish National Agency for Education. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them

* Note to manage waste please print this document in greyscale or black and white rather than in colour. Please print on both sides of the paper (duplex) and if you can print multiple slides or pages on one page.

Module 4

Building Digital Bridges: Media's Power in Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion

This Module explores how digital media can contribute to conflict resolution, reconciliation, and facilitate social unity. It highlights the role of storytelling, journalism, and digital platforms in peacebuilding efforts across Europe.

MODULE 4 (Part 1)

Topic 1

Digital Media as a Tool for Post-Conflict Reconciliation in Europe

*Examines how digital platforms help communities **heal from conflict, rebuild trust, and promote dialogue** to support long-term peace and cooperation.*



MODULE 4 (Part 2)

Topic 2

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

*Highlights the power of **narrative-driven content** in reshaping perspectives, reducing tensions, and promoting mutual understanding.*



MODULE 4 (Part 3)

Topic 3

European Digital Platforms Supporting Peace Journalism and Constructive Dialogue

*Analyses digital tools and media initiatives that **combat misinformation, encourage balanced reporting, and facilitate respectful conversations.***



MODULE 4 (Part 4)

Topic 4

The Role of Citizen Journalism in Strengthening Social Cohesion

*Explores how grassroots journalism and community-driven reporting **amplify marginalised voices and promote shared narratives** for a more unified society.*

YOU ARE HERE



Module 4 Snapshot



Focus Area: Peace Building in Communities

Aim: How Digital Media Supports Peace and Understanding in European Communities

Emphasises how storytelling and citizen journalism can facilitate peacebuilding and promote **post-conflict recovery** and **social change**. It teaches how digital media can be used as a tool for **empowering communities** in **peacebuilding**, to heal, connect and promote **peace reconciliation**, and **social cohesion** through **inclusive narratives** and **citizen participation**.

Key Words: Post-Conflict Reconciliation, Peacebuilding, Reconciliation, Social Cohesion, Storytelling for Social Change, Promoting Peace, Citizen Journalism, Constructive Dialogue, Post Conflict Recovery, Community Engagement.



Module Overview

This module explores how digital media contributes to conflict resolution, reconciliation, and facilitating social unity. It highlights the role of storytelling, journalism, and digital platforms in peacebuilding efforts across Europe.

Participants will examine how digital storytelling, online discourse, and media initiatives support post-conflict reconciliation, bridge social divides, and promote constructive dialogue.

Through case studies, ethical discussions, and interactive exercises, learners will develop skills to leverage digital media as a tool for promoting peace and social cohesion in diverse communities.

01

Digital Media as a Tool for Post-Conflict Reconciliation in Europe

*Examines how digital platforms help communities **heal from conflict, rebuild trust, and promote dialogue** to support long-term peace and cooperation.*

YOU ARE HERE

02

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

*Highlights the power of **narrative-driven content** in reshaping perspectives, reducing tensions, and promoting mutual understanding.*

03

European Digital Platforms Supporting Peace Journalism and Constructive Dialogue

*Analyses digital tools and media initiatives that **combat misinformation, encourage balanced reporting, and facilitate respectful conversations.***

04

The Role of Citizen Journalism in Strengthening Social Cohesion

*Explores how grassroots journalism and community-driven reporting **amplify marginalised voices and promote shared narratives** for a more unified society.*



02

Page 5

Module
Overview



04

Page 12

Topic 2
Storytelling for Social
Change: Using Digital
Media to Promote
Peace Initiatives

Module 4: Building Digital Bridges: Media's Power in Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion



01

Page 4

Module
Snapshot



03

Page 8

Learning
Outcomes



Module 4 (Part 2) Interactive Learning Elements

**86** Slides

**01** Exercises

**08** Videos

**06** Case Studies

**03** Digital Tools

**05** Toolkits & Guides

**07** Articles & Reports

Learning Outcomes

Topic 1: Digital Media as a Tool for Post-Conflict Reconciliation in Europe

- Examine how digital platforms help **communities heal from conflict, rebuild trust**, enable and engage in dialogue to support long-term peace and cooperation.
- Understand the role of digital media in **reconciliation efforts** and **truth-telling initiatives**.
- Identify challenges in using digital media for **post-conflict recovery**, including polarisation, misinformation, and media manipulation.

Learning Outcomes

Topic 2: Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

- Analyse the power of **narrative-driven content** in reshaping perspectives and promoting mutual understanding.
- Explore digital storytelling techniques used to **highlight reconciliation efforts** and **peacebuilding projects**.
- Understand the **ethical considerations** in storytelling for conflict resolution and social cohesion.

Learning Outcomes

Topic 3: European Digital Platforms Supporting Peace Journalism and Constructive Dialogue

- Examine digital tools and initiatives that **support peace journalism and conflict-sensitive reporting.**
- Investigate the role of online platforms in **facilitating dialogue between divided communities.**
- Explore case studies of **European media projects** focused on promoting **understanding and preventing violence.**

Learning Outcomes

Topic 4: The Role of Social Media in Conflict Prevention and Resolution

- Analyses how social media platforms influence **public discourse during conflicts** and **peace processes**.
- Investigate the impact of **online activism** and **grassroots digital campaigns** in promoting peace.
- Learn strategies to **counteract online hate speech** and **digital propaganda** that fuel conflicts.

Topic 2

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives



Overview

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

Storytelling has long been a powerful tool for social change, and digital media now expands its reach and impact.

This section examines how **personal narratives, multimedia campaigns, and user-generated content** promote peace initiatives, humanise conflict experiences, and inspire civic engagement.





Key Definitions and Concepts in Storytelling & Peacebuilding



Narrative Framing & Counter-Narratives:

Shaping digital discourse for positive impact.

User-Generated Content & Grassroots Storytelling:

Engaging communities in peace initiatives.

Visual Media & Documentary Filmmaking for Peace:

The role of video in conflict resolution.

Social Media for Digital Activism:

Leveraging platforms for awareness and action.

CONCEPT Narrative Framing & Counter-Narratives: Shaping digital discourse for positive impact.

IMPORTANCE Framing shapes belief. Reclaiming narratives can deconstruct prejudice, reduce radicalisation, and support peace.

DEFINITION Narrative framing is the way a story is structured to shape how people interpret an event. Counter-narratives challenge dominant or harmful discourses (e.g. stereotypes, enemy images) by offering alternative viewpoints and lived realities.

EXAMPLE The Council of Europe's "We CAN" project helps youth in conflict zones create counter-narratives to hate speech, promoting tolerance and inclusion online.



[Click To Read](#)

➔ **CONCEPT** **User-Generated Content & Grassroots Storytelling:** Engaging communities in peace initiatives.

➔ **IMPORTANCE** Peace narratives become stronger when they come from those directly affected. UGC builds ownership, trust, and community resilience.

➔ **DEFINITION** Stories, photos, or videos created by everyday people—often from marginalised or conflict-affected communities—shared through digital platforms. It amplifies underrepresented voices and makes peacebuilding participatory.

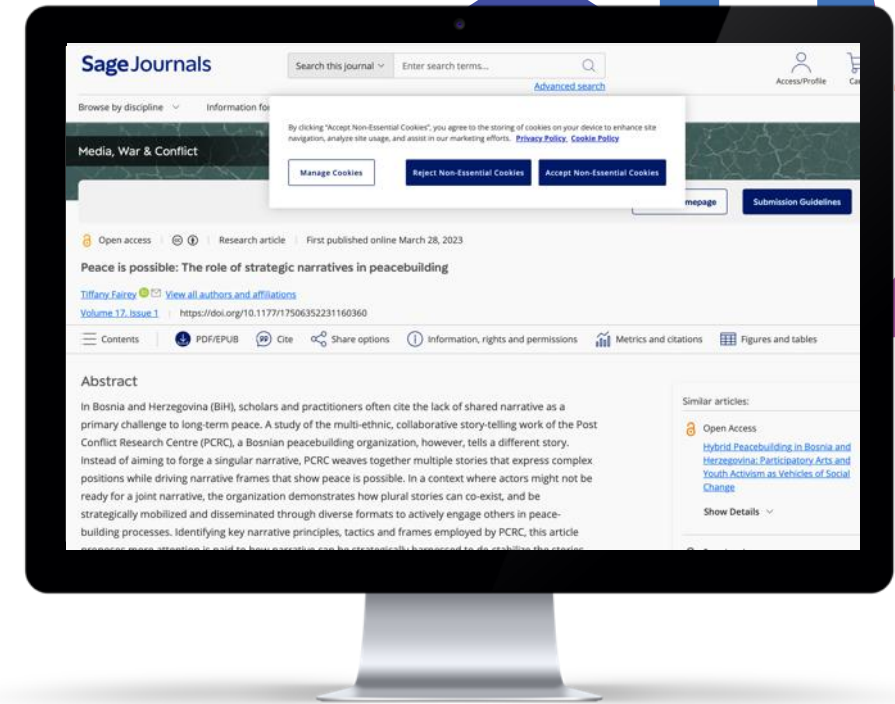
➔ **EXAMPLE** Voices of Syria: Refugees share their journeys and hopes through personal video diaries hosted on independent channels.



[Click To Read](#)

Peace is Possible: The Role of Strategic Narratives in Peacebuilding

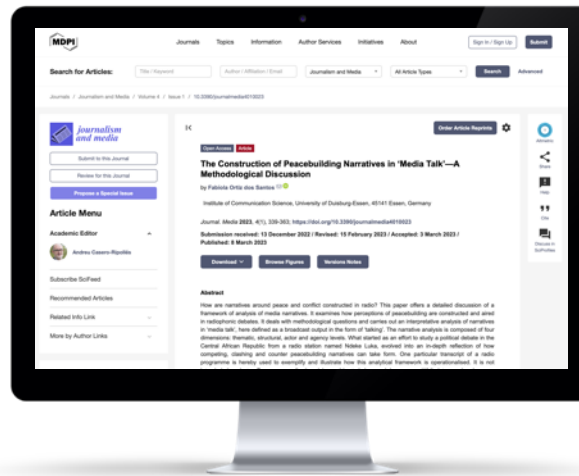
This article discusses how strategic narratives can be harnessed to destabilise divisive stories and promote peacebuilding efforts. Peace is Possible: The Role of Strategic Narratives in Peacebuilding



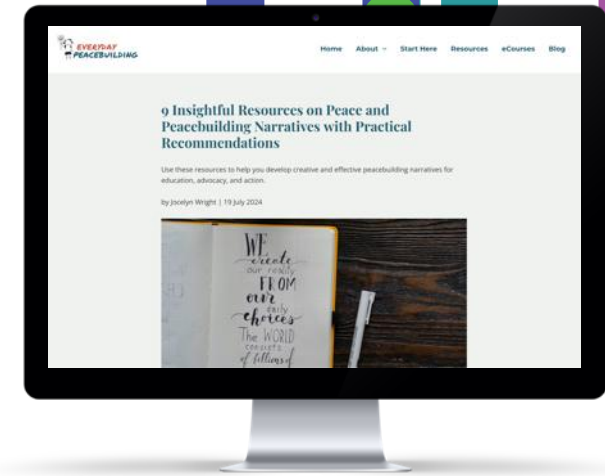
[Click To View](#)

The Construction of Peacebuilding Narratives in 'Media Talk'

This paper offers a framework for analysing media narratives, examining how perceptions of peacebuilding are constructed and aired in radiophonic debates.



[Click To View](#)



[Click To View](#)

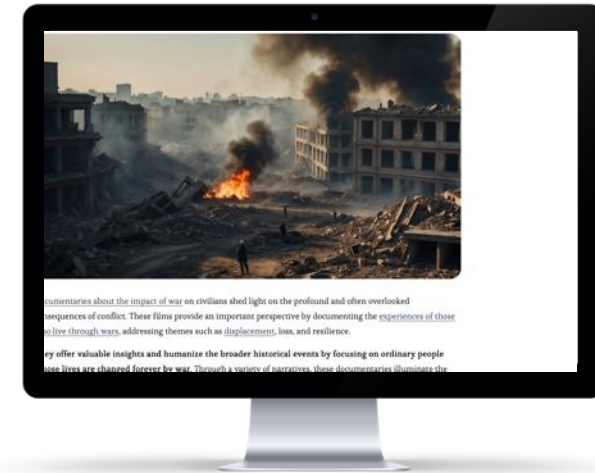


CONCEPT Visual Media & Documentary Filmmaking for Peace:
The role of video in conflict resolution

IMPORTANCE Film captures emotion, context, and complexity. It invites global audiences to engage with peace issues and challenges denial or apathy.

DEFINITION Online platforms and initiatives that bring people from different countries or communities together to talk, collaborate, and understand each other - especially in post-conflict or divided regions.

EXAMPLE *"For Sama" (Syria)* – a personal documentary by Waad Al-Kateab showing motherhood in a warzone, humanising the Syrian conflict.



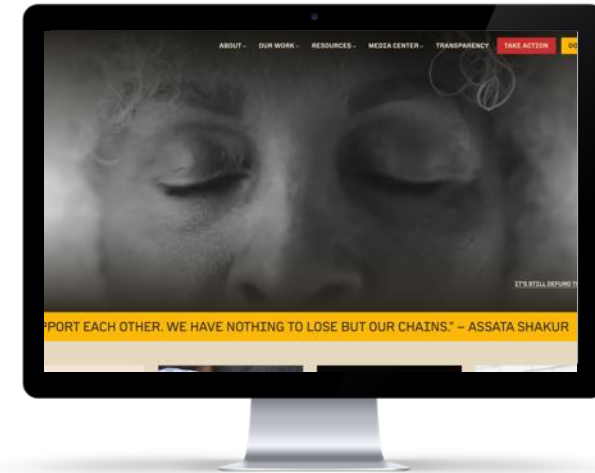
[Click To View](#)

➡ **CONCEPT** Social Media for Digital Activism: Leveraging platforms for awareness and action.

➡ **IMPORTANCE** Digital activism gives people with few resources a voice and platform. It democratizes advocacy and drives real-world change.

➡ **DEFINITION** Using platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, or Facebook to raise awareness, mobilise action, and hold power accountable—especially among youth and communities affected by injustice or conflict. [#BlueforSudan](#)

➡ **EXAMPLE** [#BlackLivesMatter](#) became a global movement through Twitter and Instagram. In Europe, it spurred activism around anti-racism, police accountability, and refugee rights.



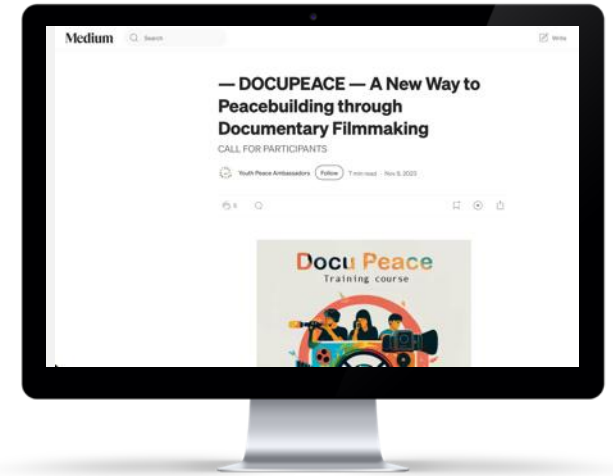
[Click To View](#)

Documentary Filmmaking

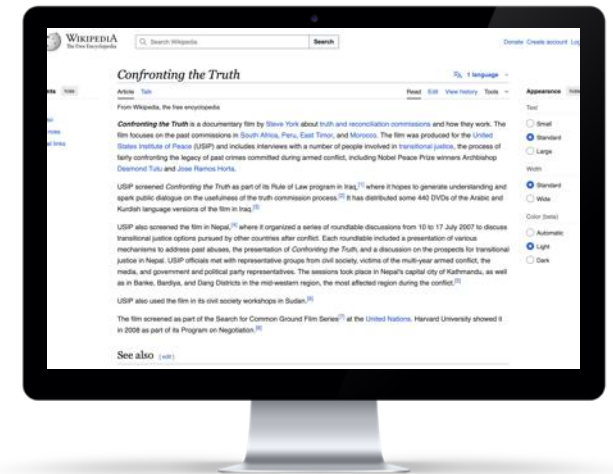
Documentary filmmaking captures the emotional depth and complexity of conflict, enabling empathy and understanding.

Programs like DOCUPEACE train individuals to use documentaries to combat violence and promote peace.

Films such as Confronting the Truth and The Peacekeepers document truth and reconciliation processes, aiding in transitional justice and public dialogue.



[Click To View](#)



[Click To View](#)



Social Media for Digital Activism

Social media platforms empower individuals with limited resources to raise awareness and drive change. Movements like **#NoDAPL** and **#BlueforSudan** utilized hashtags to mobilise support and bring global attention to local issues.

Initiatives like **#iamhere** use counterspeech to combat online hate and misinformation, promoting respectful discourse.

While social media can be a tool for peace, it also has the potential to incite conflict. Understanding its dual nature is crucial for effective peacebuilding.

Exploring **4 Focus Areas** in Digital Storytelling for Peacebuilding

1 Digital Storytelling as a Method for Conflict Prevention and Resolution

Case Studies of Impactful Digital Campaigns for Peace and Reconciliation **2**

3 Strategies for Crafting Compelling and Ethical Peace-Focused Narratives

The Intersection of Activism, Media, and Digital Advocacy for Social Cohesion **4**



Focus Area 1

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

Digital storytelling as a method for conflict prevention and resolution.

Storytelling helps people process trauma, share experiences, and connect across divides. In digital form, it becomes an accessible and scalable tool for peace—reaching thousands beyond local communities. When conflict is dehumanising, stories rehumanise. Digital storytelling empowers people to reclaim narratives that promote inclusion and truth. It gives voice to lived experiences and supports dialogue in post-conflict or divided communities.

Ukrainian woman Rusya Danilkina's journey. At only 21, she filmed the aftermath of the blast that changed her life and, incredibly, is now empowered by it.

Digital storytelling as a method for conflict prevention and resolution.

Example: Mstyslav Chernov, a video journalist for the Associated Press, documented the early days of the Russian invasion in Mariupol, Ukraine. His footage was compiled into the documentary "20 Days in Mariupol," which has received critical acclaim capturing the relentless bombing and suffering of civilians contributing to the global discourse of war.

Focus Area 1

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

Tool that can be used Story Center:

<https://www.storycenter.org/>

[Guide To Communicating The Importance Of Peacebuilding: What It Is And Why It Matters](#)

Case Study: True Story Rusya Danilkina's and Olena Levytska's Journey

Ukrainian woman Rusya Danilkina's journey. At only 21, she filmed the aftermath of the blast that changed her life and, incredibly, is now empowered by it. She was a radio operator in the Ukrainian army in February 2023 when she was hit by shrapnel from one of Vladimir Putin's glide bombs in Kherson.

Two years later, she has told her story and documented her recovery to 125,000 Instagram followers. That includes the nine seconds of horrific footage from Kherson.



www.thesun.co.uk

[Click To Watch](#)

Case Study: True Story Rusya Danilkina's and Olena Levytska's Journey

She didn't get bitter but changed her life and now helps other affected victims working at Superhumans, helping other veterans adapt to civilian life. Most patients at Superhumans are soldiers but civilians such as Olena Levytska, 38, are also treated. She fell under a train and lost a leg as crowds fled a shell attack in Kryvyi Rih.

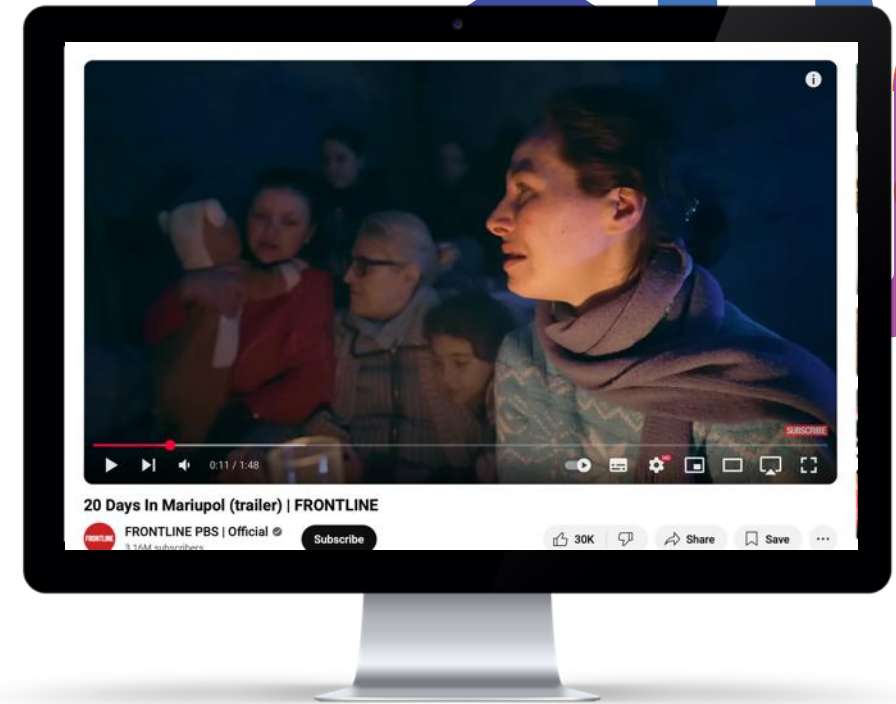


www.thesun.co.uk

[Click To Watch](#)

Case Study: True Story Mstyslav Chernov – "20 Days in Mariupol"

Ukrainian journalist Mstyslav Chernov offers a powerful window into the harrowing realities of reporting from a war zone. His documentary chronicles the 20 agonising days he and his Associated Press colleagues spent trapped in the besieged city of Mariupol during the early days of the Russian invasion.

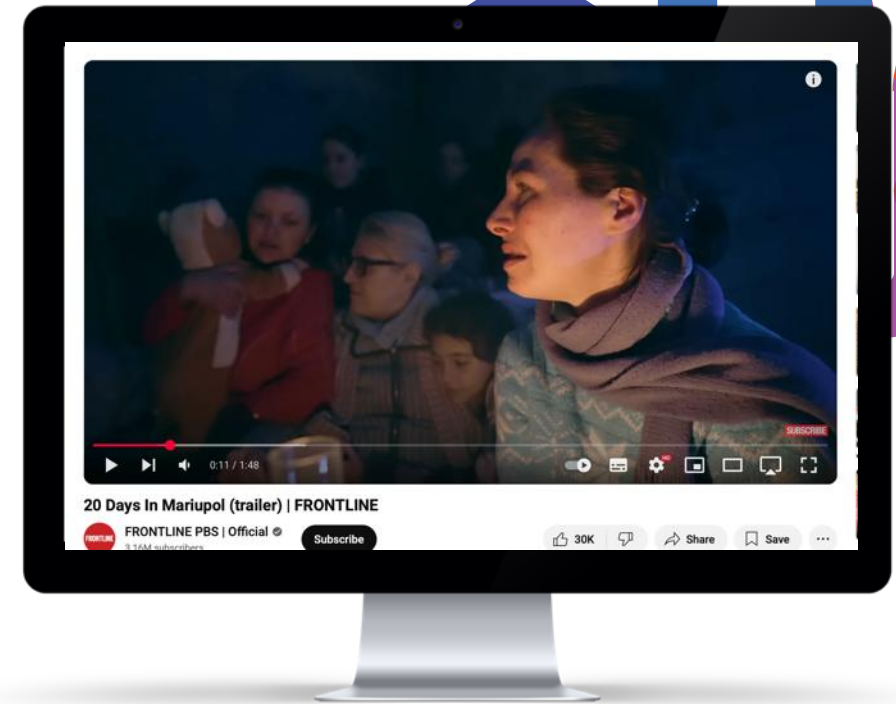


[News Read: Documentary 20 Days in Mariupol](#)

[Click To Watch](#)

Case Study: True Story Mstyslav Chernov – "20 Days in Mariupol"

Chernov risked his life to document the atrocities unfolding around him—images that would become some of the most defining of the war, including dying children, mass graves, and the bombing of a maternity hospital. Drawing from his daily news dispatches and deeply personal footage, the film is both a searing record of civilian suffering and a raw exploration of the role and burden of conflict journalism.



[News Read: Documentary 20 Days in Mariupol](#)

[Click To Watch](#)



Focus Area 2

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

Case studies of impactful digital campaigns for peace and reconciliation.

Reconciliation in this context is the process of restoring relationships between individuals or groups after conflict, division, or violence. It involves acknowledging harm or injustice, listening to each other's stories, building trust over time and working toward a more inclusive, peaceful future.





Focus Area 2

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

Case studies of impactful digital campaigns for peace and reconciliation.

A digital campaign for peace and reconciliation is a coordinated effort using online tools, such as social media, videos, websites, or digital art, to promote healing, dialogue, inclusion, and non-violence in response to conflict, division, or injustice. These campaigns often involve:

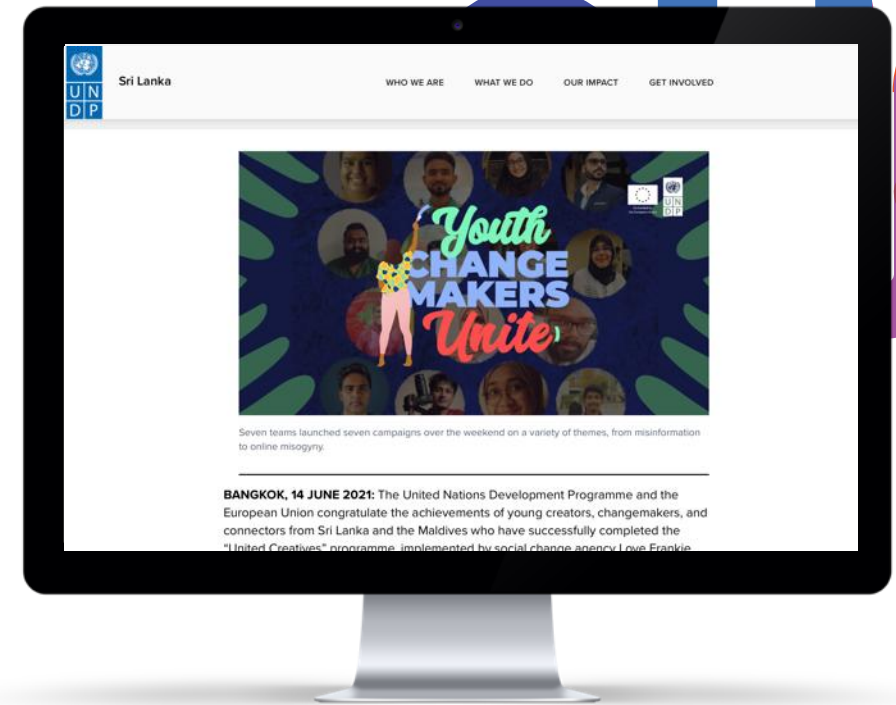
- Personal storytelling (to humanise issues)
- Calls to action (such as petitions or education)
- Visuals or videos (that speak across cultures)
- Community participation (especially youth)

Why Are Digital Campaigns Important in Peacebuilding?

They reach wide audiences quickly. One video or hashtag can go viral, sparking global awareness of a local conflict or injustice. Online campaigns can mobilise global audiences to support peace initiatives, challenge stereotypes, and promote coexistence.

They challenge harmful narratives. Campaigns can counter misinformation, stereotypes, and hate speech with truth, empathy, and lived experiences.

[UNDP & EU Youth Digital Peace Campaigns collaborated with youth leaders to launch digital peace campaigns.](#)



[Click To View](#)

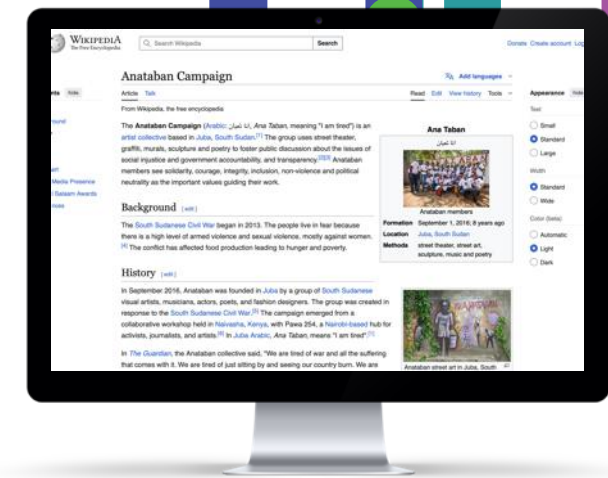
Why Are Digital Campaigns Important in Peacebuilding?

They empower youth and marginalized voices.

Digital storytelling platforms give space for individuals—especially those affected by conflict—to reclaim their narratives and be heard.

They support healing and connection. Storytelling in digital campaigns can bridge communities, allow survivors to be believed, and create online spaces for solidarity and shared healing.

[The Anataban Campaign is a South Sudanese artist collective that employs street theater, graffiti, murals, sculpture, and poetry to foster public discussion about social injustice and government accountability.](#)



[Click To View](#)

Elements of A Peacebuilding Digital Media Campaign

 **CONCEPT** Digital Campaign

 **SIMPLE EXPLANATION** Online storytelling or activism with a message

 **CONCEPT** Peacebuilding

 **SIMPLE EXPLANATION** Actions that reduce conflict and build understanding

 **EXAMPLE** Instagram series on refugee stories

 **EXAMPLE** Youth videos countering hate speech

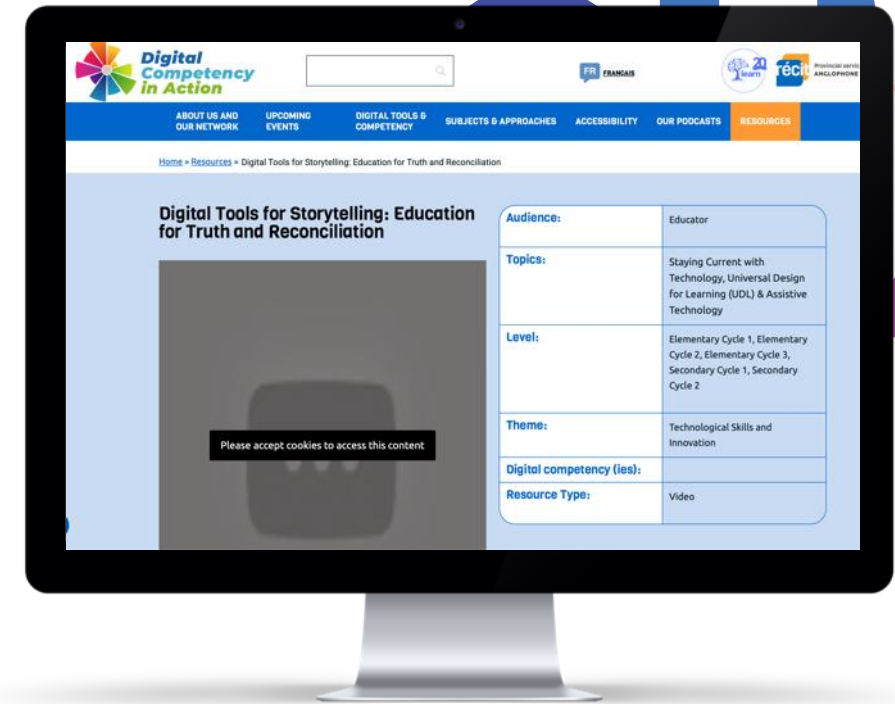
Elements of A Peacebuilding Digital Media Campaign

CONCEPT Reconciliation

SIMPLE EXPLANATION Rebuilding trust between divided communities

EXAMPLE Shared photo project between two sides of a conflict

[Learn Quebec offers resources on using digital storytelling as an educational tool for truth and reconciliation](#)



[Click To View](#)

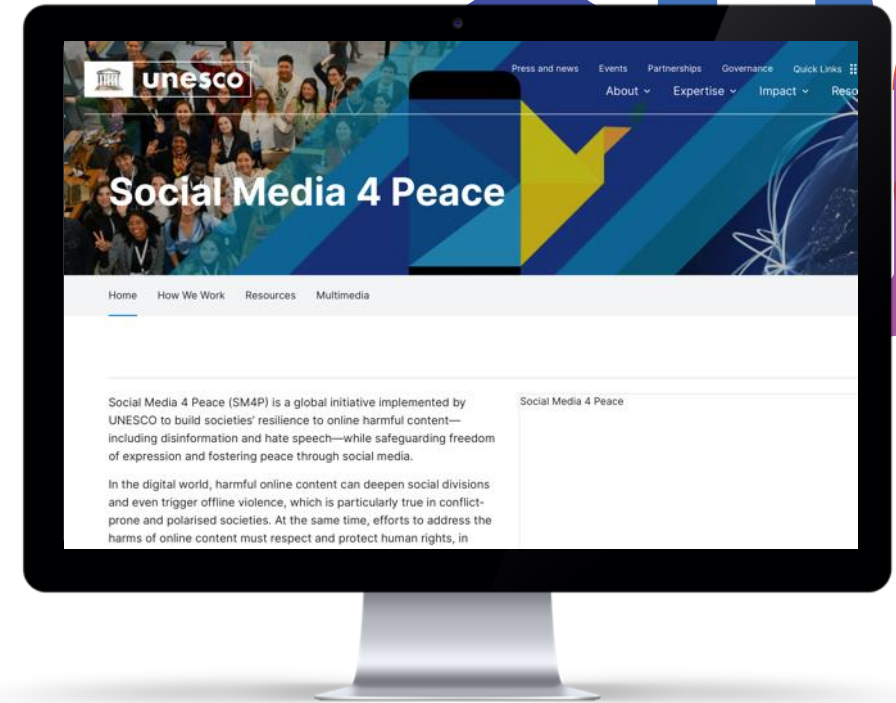
Elements of A Peacebuilding Digital Media Campaign

CONCEPT Impact

SIMPLE EXPLANATION Real-world outcomes like awareness, empathy, or action

EXAMPLE 10k views, media coverage, classroom use

UNESCO's Social Media 4 Peace initiative seeks to strengthen the resilience of societies to potentially harmful content spread online.



[Click To View](#)

Elements of a Peacebuilding Digital Media Campaign

CLEAR PURPOSE & PEACE OBJECTIVE

- Define the issue your campaign addresses (e.g., reconciliation, inclusion, truth-telling).
- Align the messaging with peacebuilding goals: healing, dialogue, justice, or solidarity.

EXAMPLE UNESCO's
#SocialMedia4Peace



[Click To View](#)

Elements of a Peacebuilding Digital Media Campaign

TARGET AUDIENCE & INCLUSIVITY

- Identify who you want to reach (e.g., youth, diaspora, victims, policymakers).
- Ensure your content is accessible and culturally relevant across divides.

EXAMPLE Search for Common Ground's Youth-Led Campaigns



[Click To View](#)

Elements of a Peacebuilding Digital Media Campaign

COMPELLING NARRATIVES

- Use personal storytelling to humanise the issue and build empathy.
- Integrate counter-narratives to challenge hate, stereotypes, and misinformation.

RESOURCE Narrative Power for Social Change by JustLabs



[Click To View](#)

Elements of a Peacebuilding Digital Media Campaign

CREATIVE & VISUAL CONTENT

- Employ videos, images, infographics, animations, or digital art to engage emotionally.
- Visual content helps transcend language barriers and connect audiences globally.

TOOL WITNESS Video for Change Guide



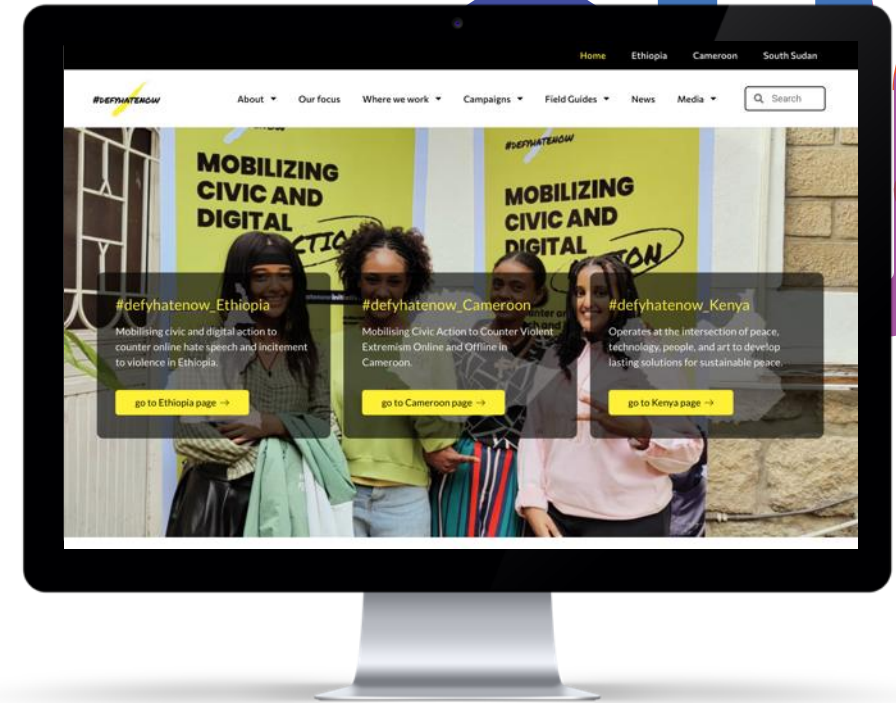
[Click To View](#)

Elements of a Peacebuilding Digital Media Campaign

CALLS TO ACTION

→ Invite participation: online pledges, petitions, storytelling, peace challenges, or educational actions. Use hashtags, polls, or comment sections to spark engagement.

EXAMPLE #DefyHateNow – Digital Peace Campaign



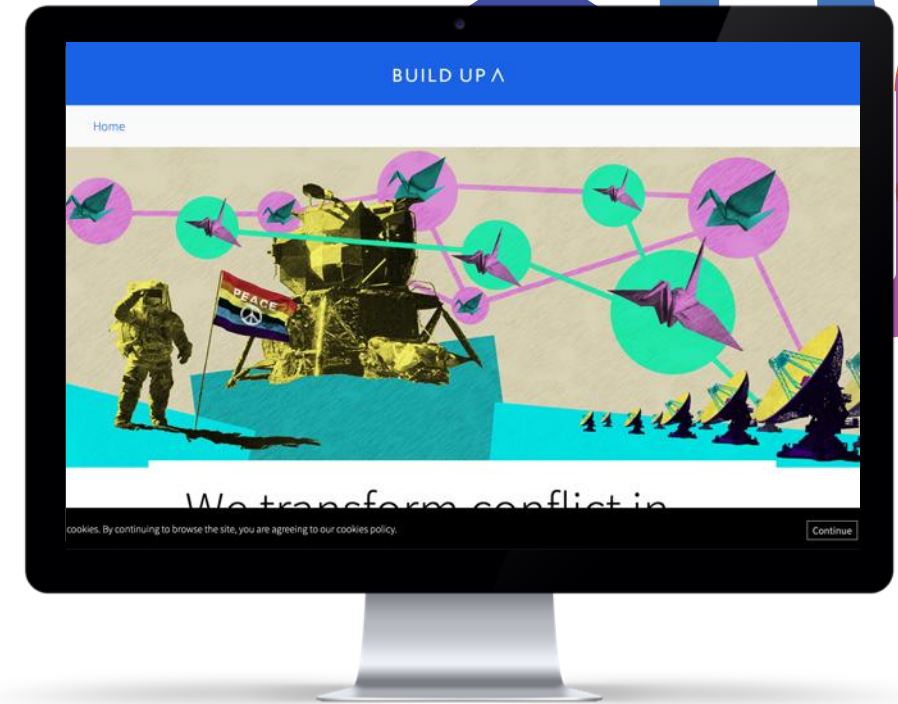
[Click To View](#)

Elements of a Peacebuilding Digital Media Campaign

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

→ Involve local voices, youth leaders, artists, or survivors. Build digital spaces for interaction, co-creation, and feedback.

FRAMEWORK Digital Peacebuilding by Build Up



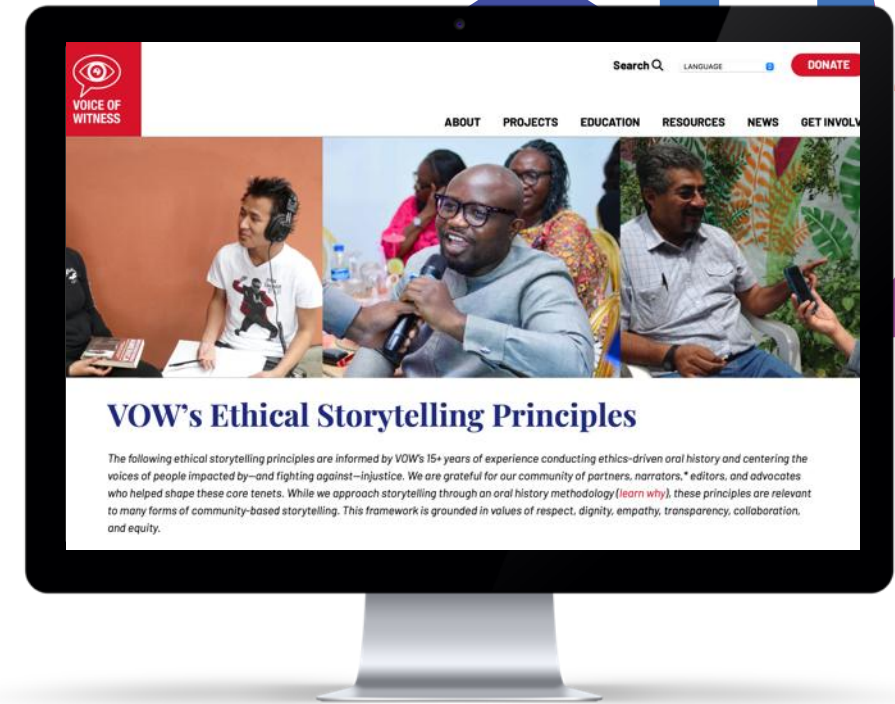
[Click To View](#)

Elements of a Peacebuilding Digital Media Campaign

DIGITAL SAFETY & ETHICAL GUIDELINES

- Ensure storytelling is informed by consent and avoids retraumatization.
- Moderate discussions to prevent trolling, hate speech, or doxxing.

REFERENCE Voice of Witness – Ethical Storytelling Principles



[Click To View](#)

Elements of a Peacebuilding Digital Media Campaign

MONITORING & IMPACT MEASUREMENT

- Use analytics to assess reach, engagement, and behavior change.
- Collect stories or feedback to demonstrate the campaign's influence.

GUIDE UNDP Peacebuilding Campaign Evaluation Toolkit



[Click To Read](#)



Strategies for Crafting Peace Narratives



Center the Human Experience, Not the Headlines. Focus on people, not politics. Tell personal stories, daily life, small acts of kindness during conflict.



Use First-Person Voice or Testimony. Let people speak for themselves. Use quotes, interviews, or personal reflection if you're not the one who lived it. Avoid rewriting someone's story—be a platform, not a filter.



Balance Emotion with Respect. Aim for empathy, not pity. Show resilience, not just trauma. Avoid sensational images or language—dignity matters.



Include Context, But Keep It Clear. Help your audience understand why the story matters. Briefly explain the background of a conflict or injustice without taking sides. Example: "This story takes place in Bosnia, 25 years after the war that divided families across ethnic lines."



Strategies for Crafting Peace Narratives



Follow Ethical Storytelling Guidelines. Consent, accuracy, safety, and care. Get permission if using someone's image or voice. Don't share identities that could put someone in danger. Ask: Who benefits from this story? Who might be harmed?

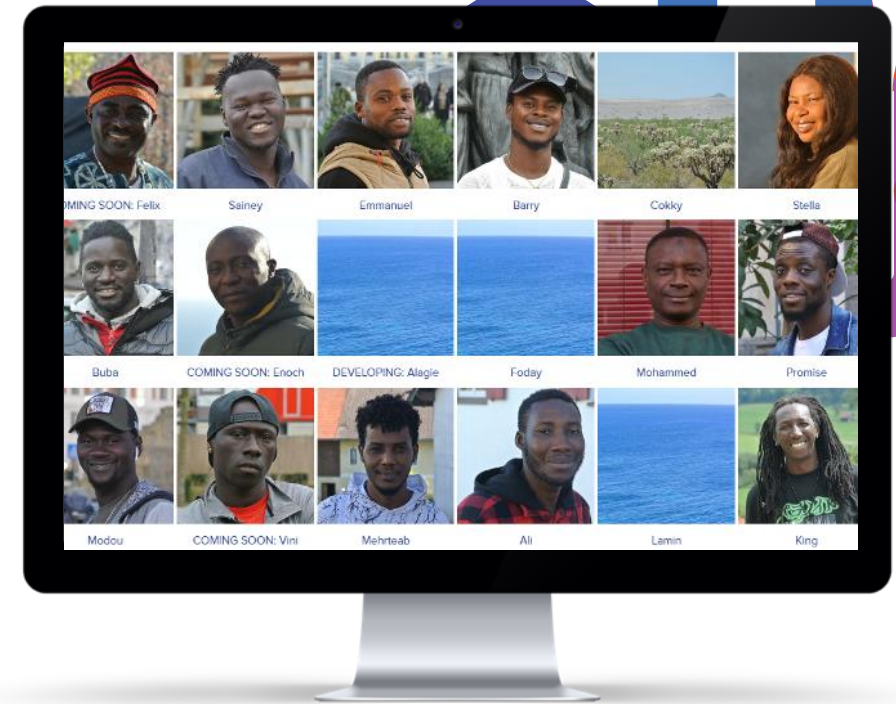
Bonus Tips:

- **Use metaphor and imagery** – to convey emotion without triggering trauma.
- **Keep it short but powerful** – a strong opening sentence matters.
- **End with hope** – even in painful stories, highlight strength or change.

Case Study: Digital Stories

War Journalism Versus Peace Journalism and What Role Should Media Play?

Migrants of the Mediterranean is a global Humanitarian Storytelling™ NGO documenting the Journey Stories of people in the migrant community using digital media platforms. The Humanitarian Storytelling methodology is a hybrid of humanitarianism, journalism and contemporary history, creating a platform to dignify and give voice to people who are unheard in the migrant community.

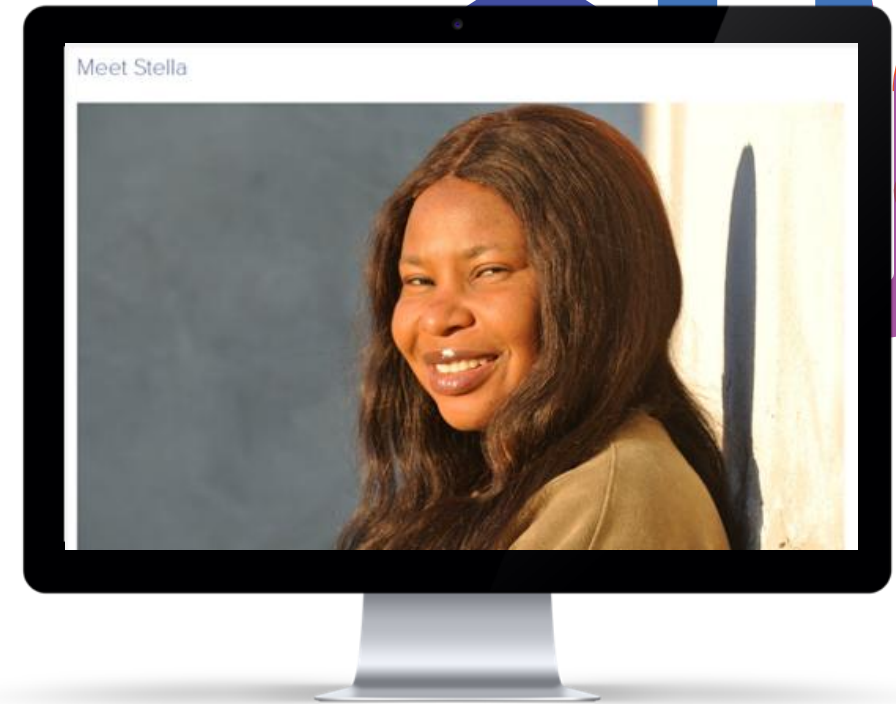


[Click To View](#)

Case Study: Digital Stories

Stella's Story

22 years old and from Delta State, Nigeria. To reach Italy she crossed multiple countries: Nigeria, Mali, Libya and others. When she became pregnant her tribal traditions at home dictated she be subjected to genital mutilation, “circumcision,” she said, but she wanted no part of it. “I ran away,” said Stella, and that’s when she contacted her friend in Benin. In total her journey took about three months.



[Click To View](#)

Case Study: 'Migrant Tales of Ireland' Project

Join 9 People From Near and Far –
As They Bring The Irish Storytelling
To Life.

The Migrant Tales of Ireland (IOM) Digital Collection exhibition showcases the lived realities of people, who found their home in Ireland beyond their migration status, conveying the complexity and depth of an individual.



[Click To View](#)

"A tree doesn't forget its roots"
Jamalida

Case Study: ‘Migrant Tales of Ireland’ Project

Explore and connect with these **9 stories** and narratives of joy, fear, humour, pain and delight.

“We are not defined by our migratory status, we are defined by our unique stories, aspirations, and contributions. This exhibition invites us to see beyond stereotypes, celebrating the individuality and humanity of each person while fostering understanding and connection across communities.” –

Zuzana Vatrlova, Chief of Mission at IOM Ireland.



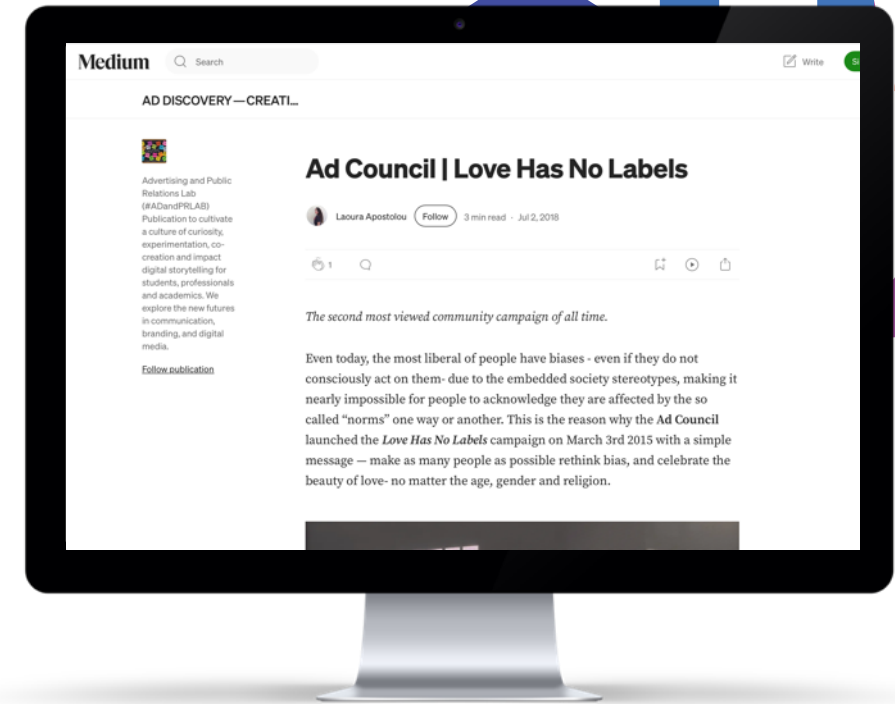
[Click To View](#)

*“A tree doesn’t forget its roots”
Jamalida*

Case Study: 'Love Has No Labels' Campaign

Ad Council launched the **Love Has No Labels** campaign in 2015 with a simple message — make as many people as possible rethink bias, and celebrate the beauty of love- no matter the age, gender and religion.

To launch the campaign, the Ad Council decided to set up an X-ray installation on a busy promenade on Valentine's Day, displaying skeletons kissing, hugging and dancing. When the “skeletons” would step out and reveal themselves to the thousands of passersby, to the audience's surprise, aiming to educate people and examine their own biases.

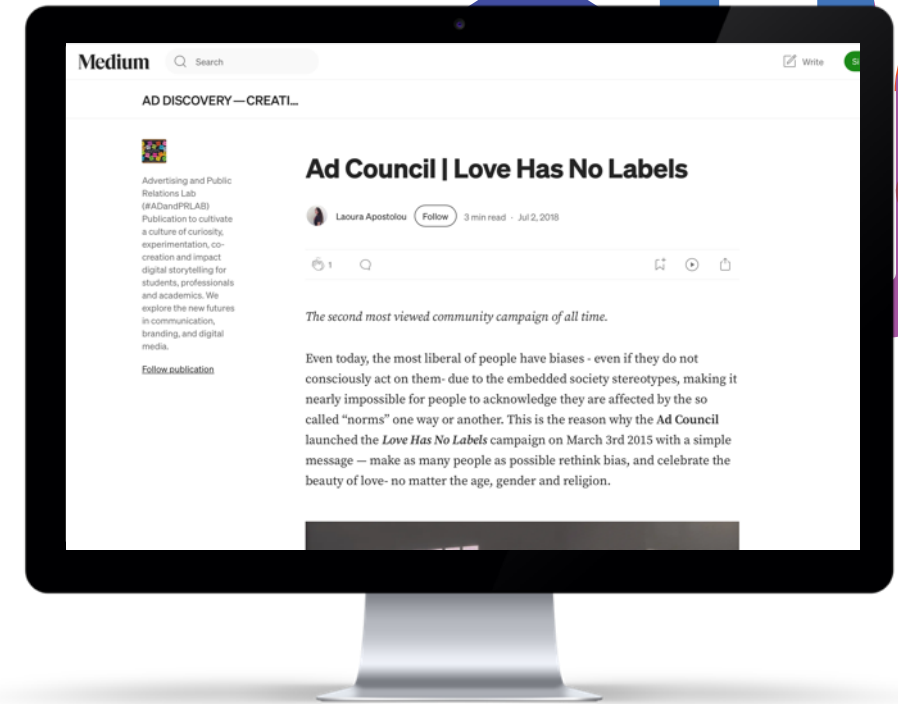


[Click To View](#)

The second most viewed community campaign of all time!

Case Study: 'Love Has No Labels' Campaign

The ultimate goal was to promote acceptance and appreciation of all communities regardless of race, religion, gender, sexuality, age and ability/disability by raising awareness about the issue.



[Click To View](#)

The second most viewed community campaign of all time!



What Makes a Digital Campaign ‘Impactful’?



 **An impactful campaign is one that:**

- 1** Changes people’s attitudes or perceptions
- 2** Encourages action or conversation
- 3** Includes authentic voices—especially those with lived experience
- 4** Uses digital tools creatively to build empathy, educate, or advocate
- 5** Builds connection rather than conflict

#DISINFO 2025

Focus Area 3

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

Strategies for Crafting Compelling and Ethical Peace-focused Narratives.

A **peace-focused narrative** is a story—shared through writing, video, image, podcast, or spoken word—that **promotes understanding, empathy, reconciliation, and social healing** in response to conflict or injustice.

Crafting these stories ethically and effectively means they must be truthful and respectful, empower the people they're about and aim to build bridges, not reinforce divisions

#DISINFO 2025

Focus Area 3

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

Strategies for Crafting Compelling and Ethical Peace-focused Narratives.

Ethical storytelling ensures, promotes and reinforces accuracy, respect, and dignity in narratives about conflict-affected individuals and communities.

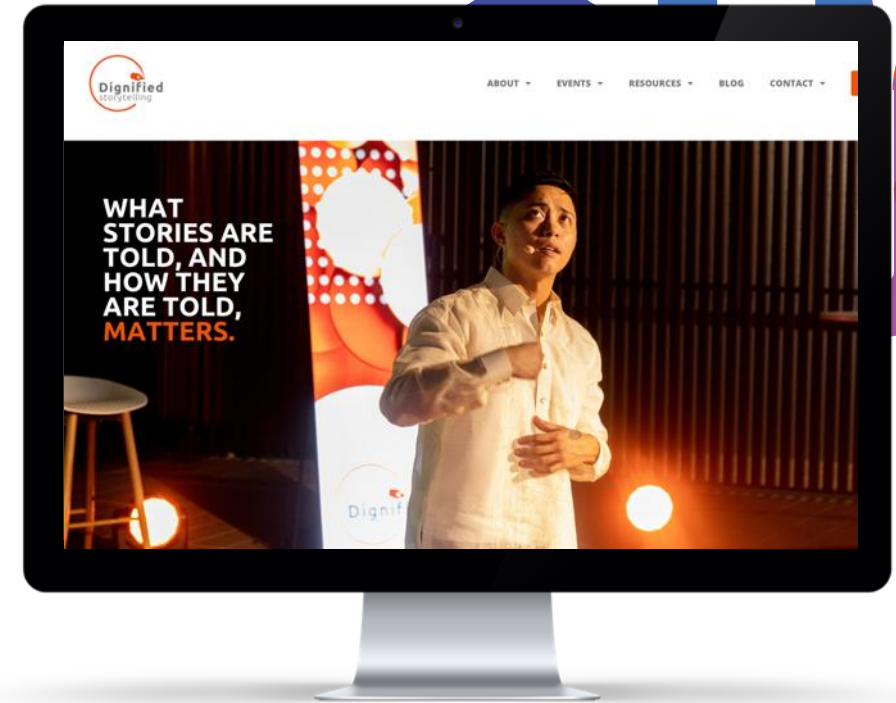
Avoiding sensationalism, focusing on **agency** rather than **victimhood**, and **seeking consent** from those whose **stories are told** are key elements of responsible digital storytelling.

Dignified Storytelling Initiative – UNDP, Expo 2020 Dubai & UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Focuses on storytelling with ethics, inclusion, and authenticity

Peace-Focused Narratives & Ethical Digital Storytelling

A **peace-focused narrative** is a story—told through writing, video, photography, podcast, or spoken word—that promotes **understanding, empathy, reconciliation, and social healing** in response to conflict or injustice. To craft these stories effectively and ethically, they must:

- Be **truthful** and **respectful**
- **Empower** the people they represent
- Seek to **build bridges**, not reinforce stereotypes or divisions



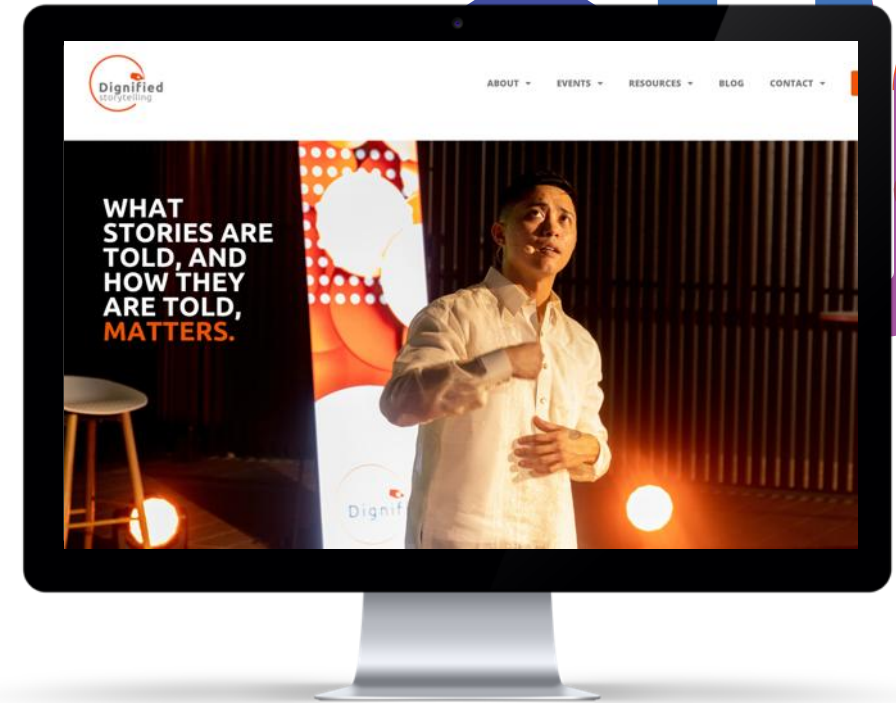
[Click To View](#)

Peace-Focused Narratives & Ethical Digital Storytelling

Ethical storytelling ensures accuracy, promotes dignity, and reinforces respect in how conflict-affected individuals and communities are portrayed. Key principles include:

This approach supports peacebuilding by enabling empathy, reducing harmful narratives, and encouraging constructive dialogue across divides.

- **Avoiding sensationalism**
- **Focusing on agency** rather than victimhood
- **Seeking informed consent** from those whose stories are shared



[Click To View](#)

Why Crafting Compelling and Ethical Peace-focused Narratives is Important



In the digital age, these stories travel fast—so what we say and how we say it matters.

- **Change minds** by showing another perspective – you must be able to write or produce ethical, emotional, and effective digital stories
- **Challenge stereotypes** and polarising media
- **Inspire action** for nonviolence, dialogue, and unity – you must be able to understand how storytelling can support reconciliation and inclusion
- **Amplify unheard voices** and support community healing - by using media tools to build narratives that heal, not harm

[UNESCO – How Narratives Influence Peacebuilding: Highlights how digital stories can disrupt harmful frames and promote reconciliation](#)

Ethical Storytelling in Conflict Resolution: Principles for responsible reporting and content creation.

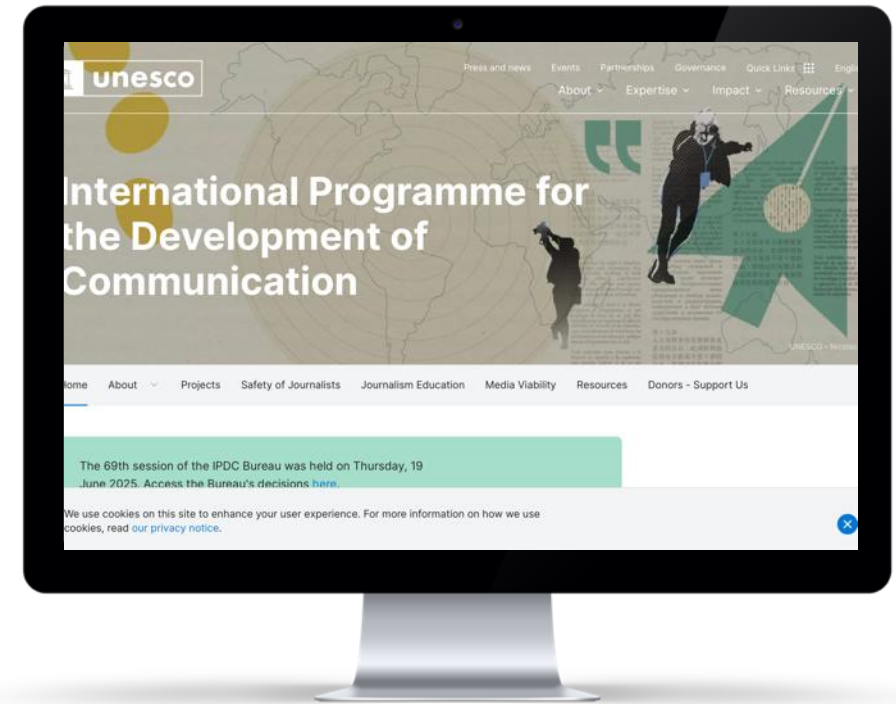
Note: To use digital media for mediation and peacebuilding people need to be responsible digital storytellers who contribute to inclusion, healing, and societal resilience, not further division or harm.

Example UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication

Ethical storytelling means telling stories with consent, dignity, and accuracy - especially when covering trauma, conflict, or marginalised communities. This includes verifying information, avoiding sensationalism, respecting participants' agency, and being sensitive to the consequences of public exposure.

Ethical Storytelling in Conflict Resolution: Principles for responsible reporting and content creation.

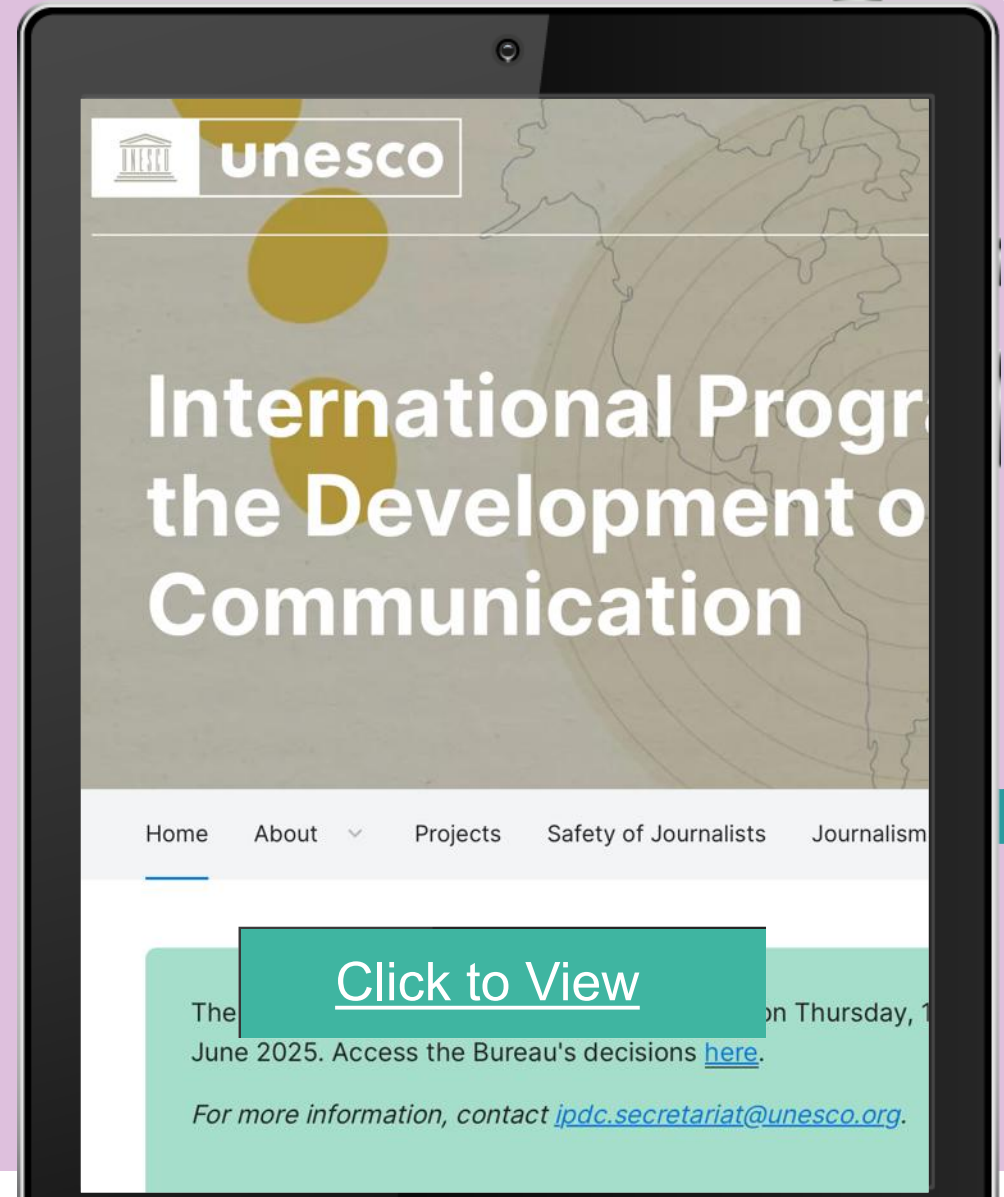
Example The International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) promotes media development within developing countries, countries in transition, and countries in conflict and post-conflict situations. The UNESCO Ethical Journalism Guide provides clear guidelines for conflict-sensitive reporting, such as avoiding "bothsidesism" when one side is oppressing the other, and prioritising human dignity over shock value.



[Click To View](#)

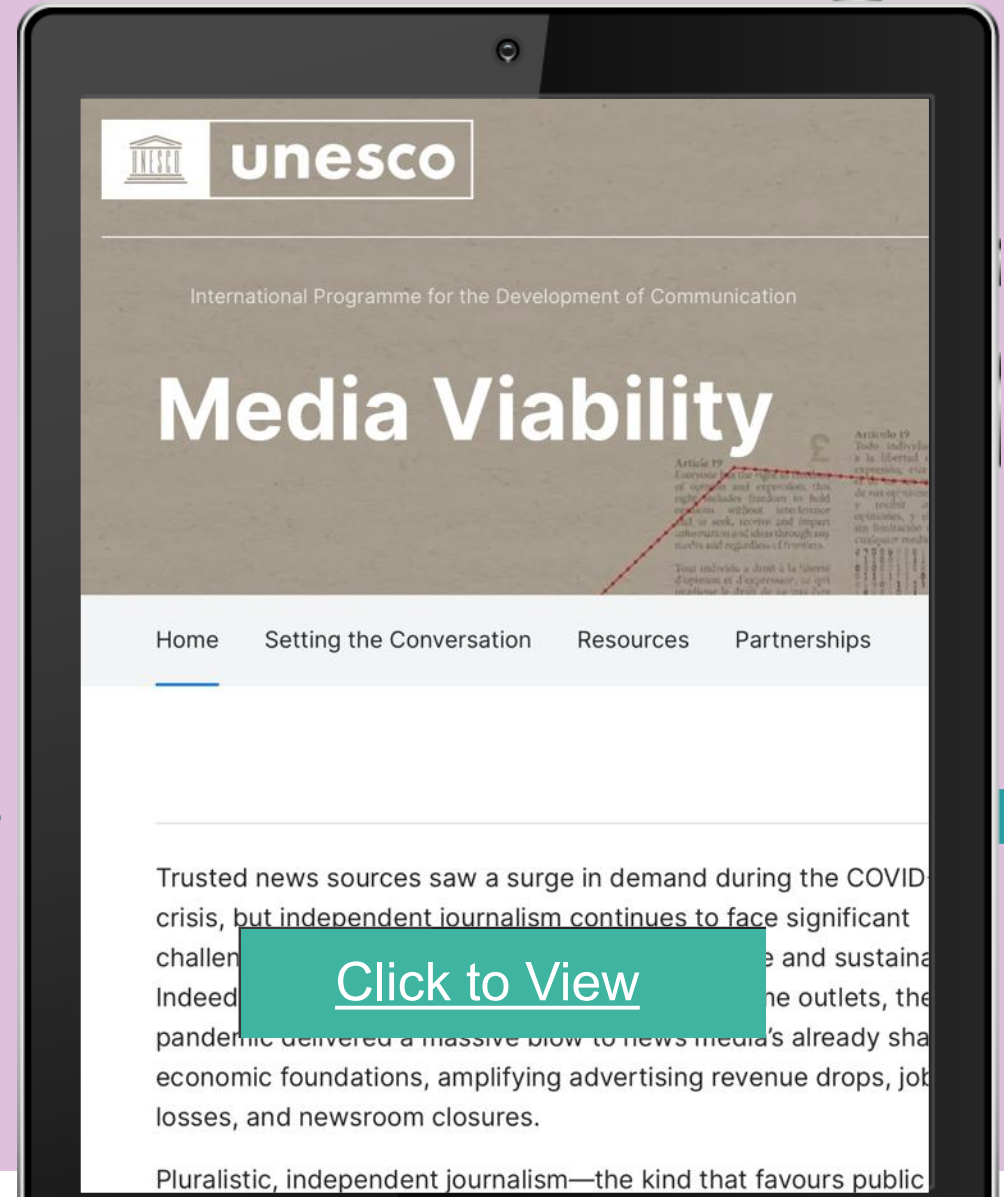
The International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)

→ **Journalism Education** – an online antidote against disinformation. The IPDC's Journalism Education initiative and online resources seek to raise journalism's quality and credibility worldwide.

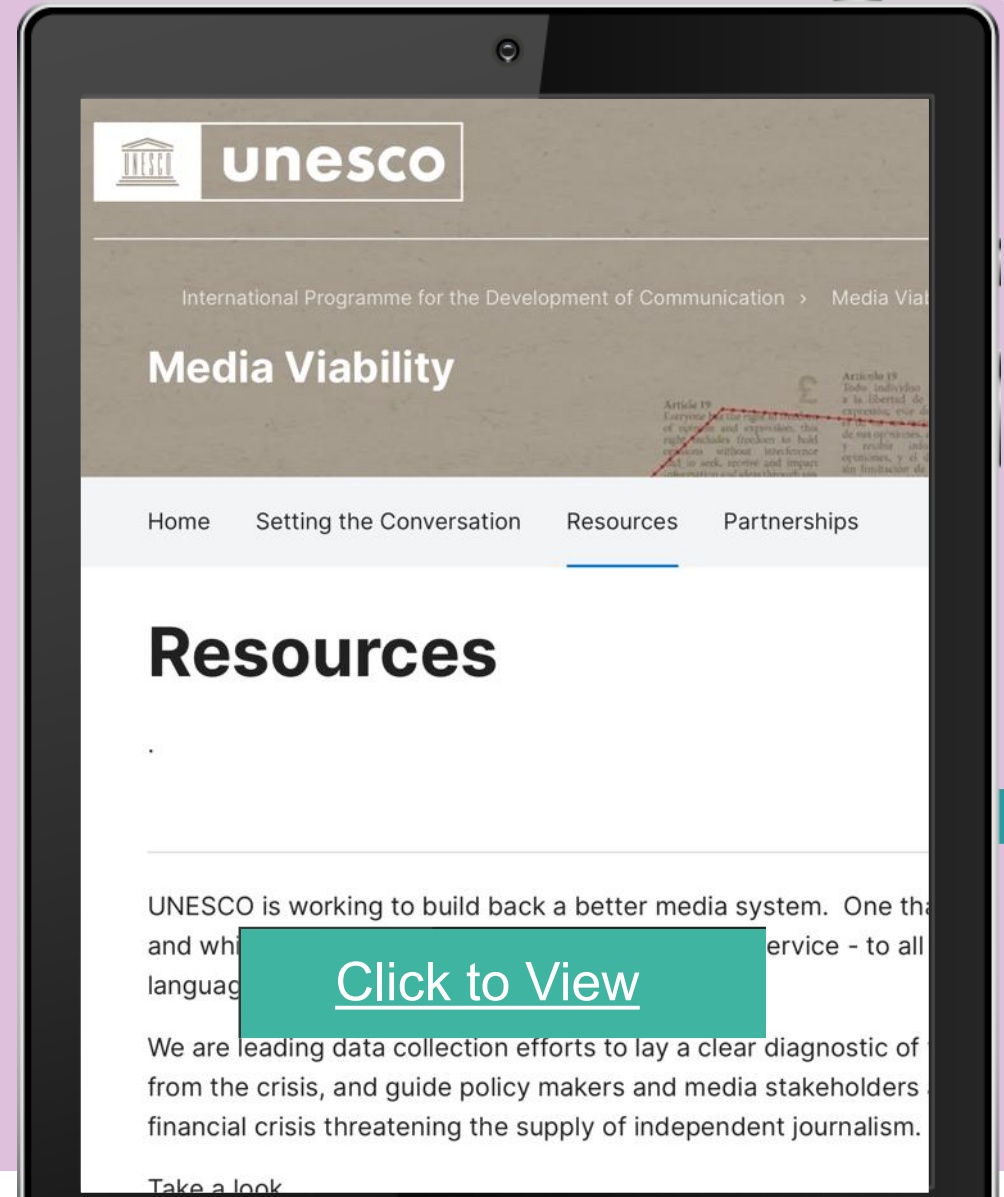


Activity

→ **Media Viability Initiative:** Working to build back a stronger media system. One that has secure economic foundations, and which has improved innovation, diversity, and service to all audiences, and in their preferred languages. UNESCO IPDC has actively engaged in the drafting and finalisation of the “**Media Viability Manifesto**”, a global initiative confronting challenges to the viability of free, independent, and pluralistic press. This initiative is led by a coalition of **13 media development and media support organisations**, providing an urgently needed **common framework** for joint action from the global media development community.



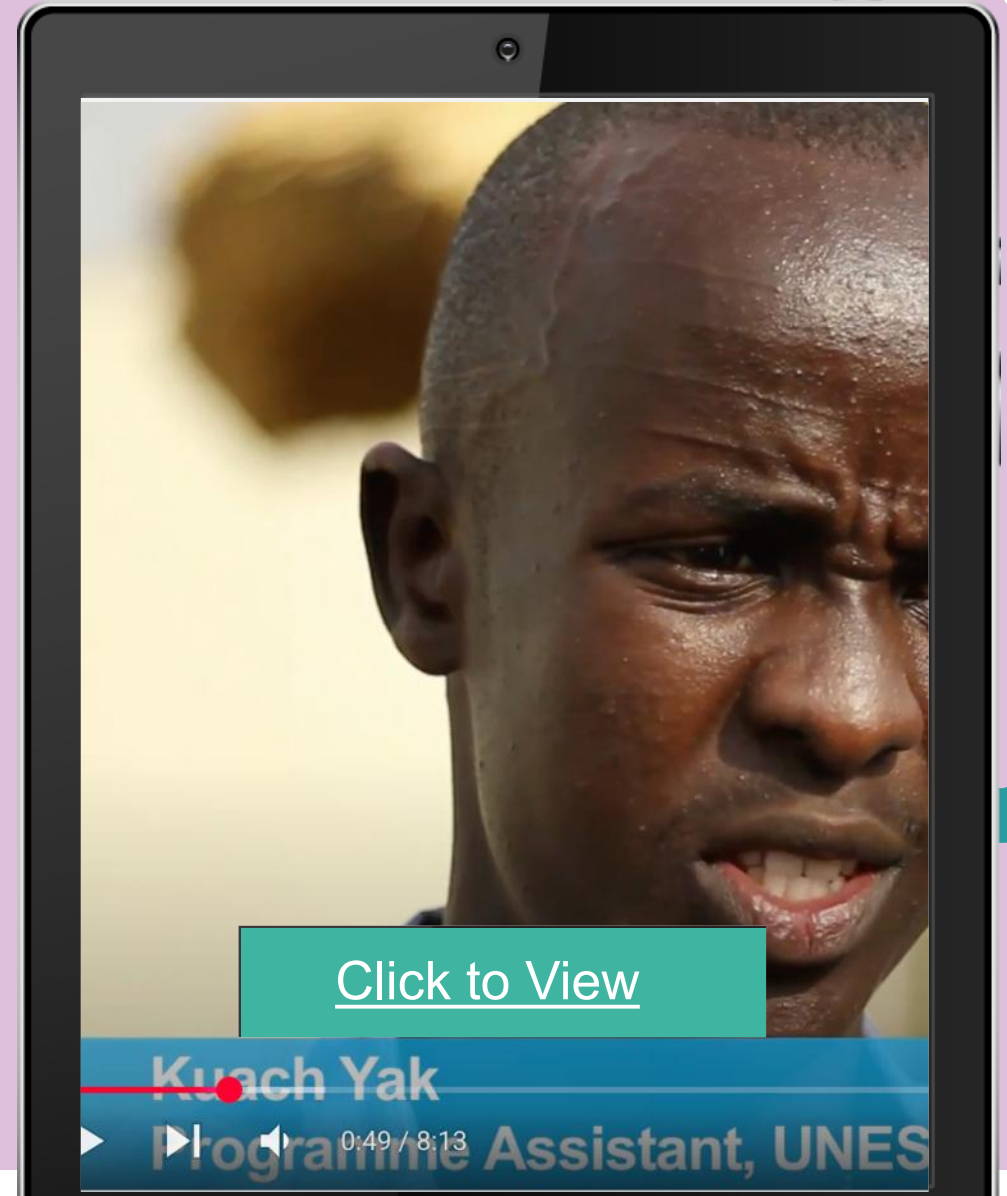
→ **Resources and Publications.** Leads efforts to **collect data, map lessons learned, and guide policymakers and media stakeholders** in their responses to different crises threatening independent journalism.



Activity

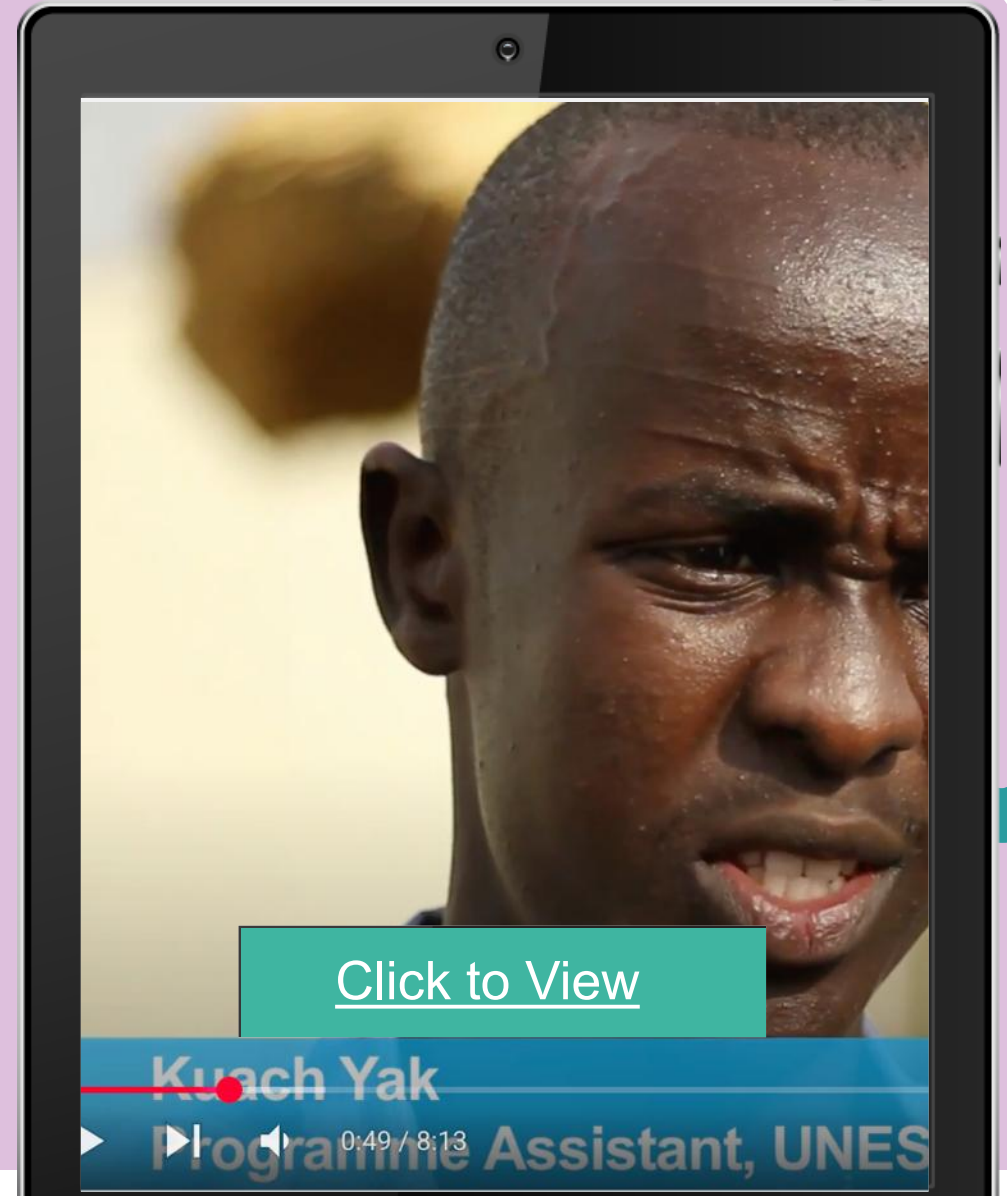
Youth Peacemaker Network - a joint media peacemaking project of Forest Whitaker, UNESCO & Ericsson in South Sudan

"Reconciliation is a slow process, and it often takes as much time to get out of a conflict as it took to get in one. That's why it is so important to work with youth to promote the significance of education, personal empowerment and leadership to build peaceful conflict resolution skills and techniques." Forest Whitaker



Activity

The Youth Peacemaker Network encompasses young people originating from the ten States of South Sudan who are motivated to be pioneers in peace-building and agents of positive change within their communities. This programme educates youth in media conflict resolution, leadership, community-building, ICT, and social media skills so that youth can spearhead peace and development.





Focus Area 4

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

The Intersection of Activism, Media, and Digital Advocacy for Social Cohesion.

This concept explores how **activism, media tools, and digital advocacy** come together to promote **unity, inclusion, and peaceful co-existence** in communities—especially those affected by conflict, division, or discrimination.

At its core, this intersection is about **using digital storytelling and online platforms** to raise awareness about injustice, give a voice to marginalised groups, advocate for equality and mutual respect and mobilise communities for social change



The Intersection of Activism, Media, and Digital Advocacy for Social Cohesion.

Focus Area 4

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

Digital media and platforms are particularly important to empower activists to raise awareness, influence policy, and empower and promote collective action for peace.

Activism means taking action (often public or creative) to bring social or political change.

Media and digital media are channels of communication like news, social media, blogs, podcasts, videos, etc.



Focus Area 4

Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

The Intersection of Activism, Media, and Digital Advocacy for Social Cohesion.

Digital Advocacy is about using digital tools (social platforms, campaigns, content) to push for change, influence public opinion, or support causes.

Social Cohesion is the bonds that bring people together in peaceful, respectful, and inclusive communities.

It is important because in post-conflict or divided societies, misinformation, fear, or exclusion often worsen tensions. Digital activism and media-based advocacy can **challenge hate speech, promote diverse voices, celebrate shared identity and values and build empathy and allyship.**

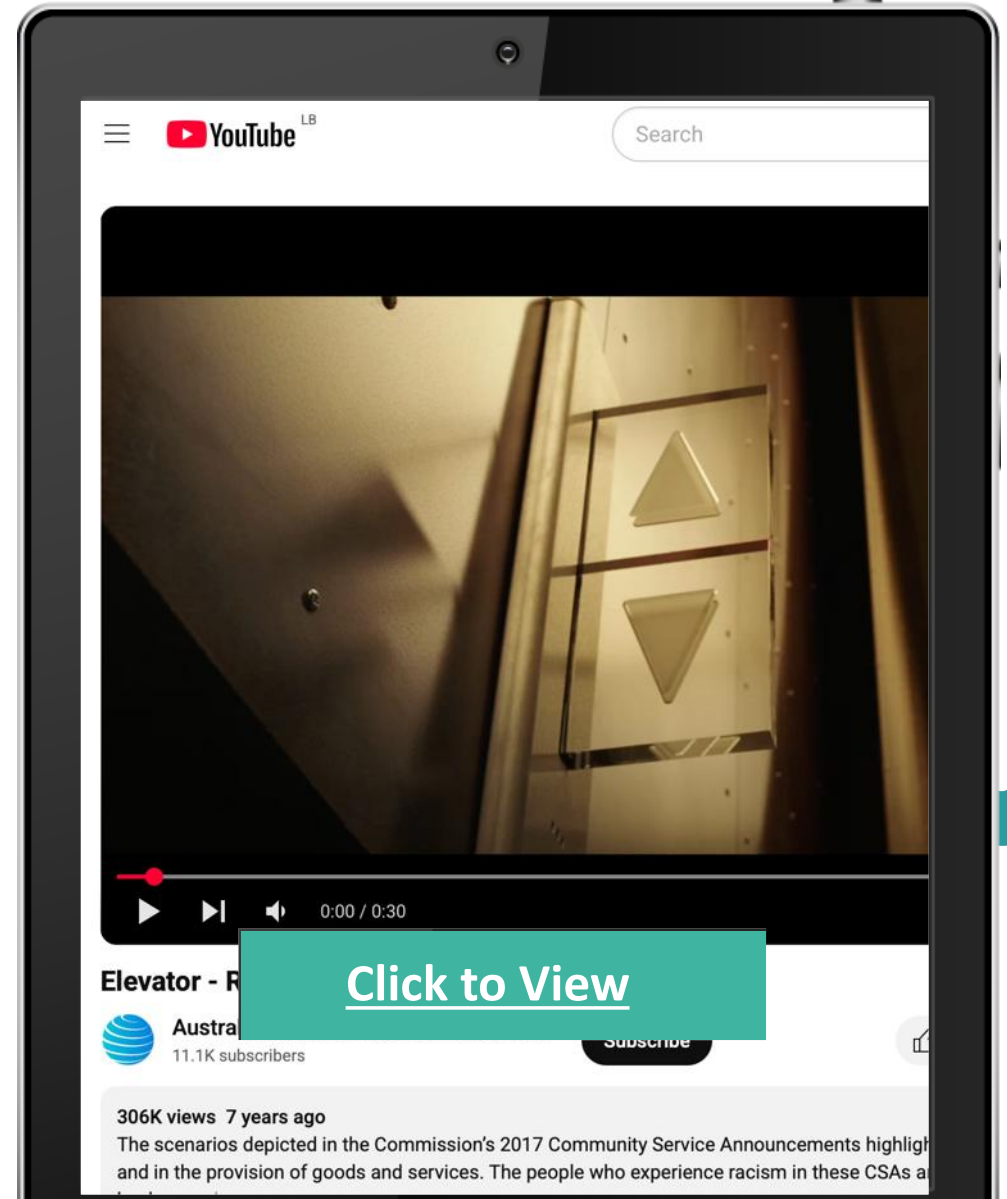
This is especially relevant for young people—who are **digital natives** and powerful agents for peace if given the tools and platforms.

The Intersection of Activism, Media, and Digital Advocacy for Social Cohesion.

Research found that coloured people of colour frequently experience racism at work or while using public services such as transport.

The intersection of digital media, advocacy and social cohesion is important to communicate this and how it can be rectified.

[Elevator Racism. It Stops with Me](#)

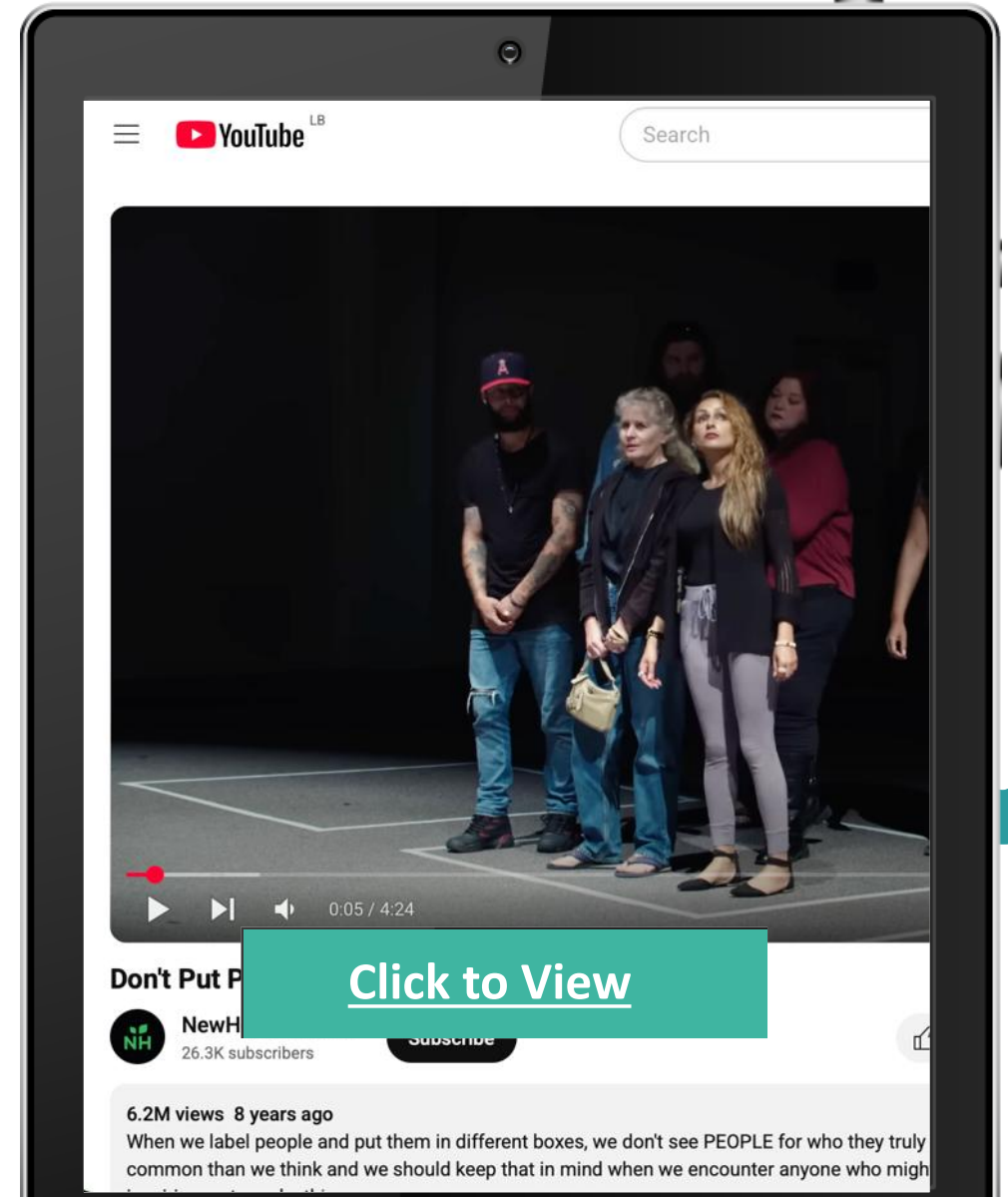


The Intersection of Activism, Media, and Digital Advocacy for Social Cohesion.

Digital media helps us to communicate and help others understand when we label people and put them in different boxes, we don't see PEOPLE for who they truly are.

This video proves that we have a lot more in common than we think, and we should keep that in mind when we encounter anyone who might seem different from we are.

[Don't Put People in Boxes](#)





Topic 2

Resources
Section

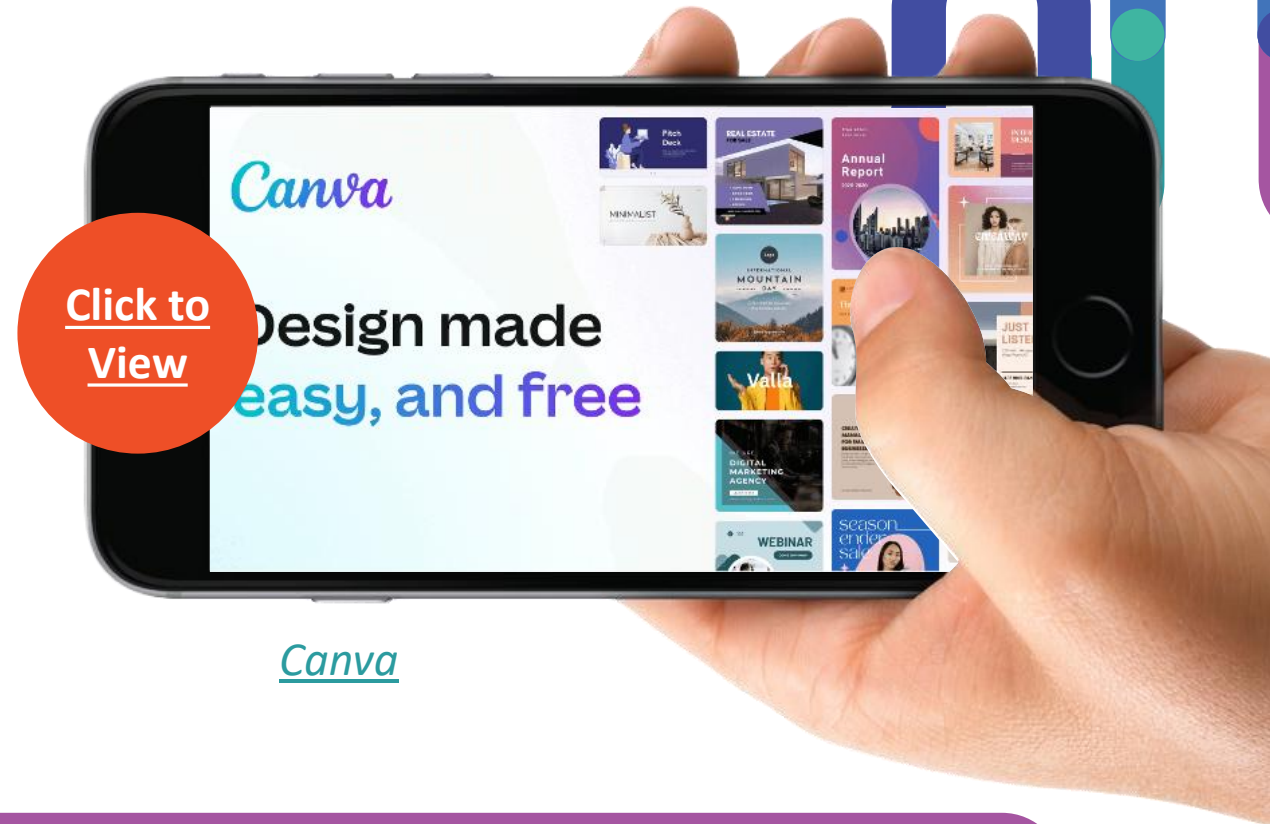
Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

- **Digital Tools:** Inshot, Canva, Padlet
- **Exercise:** Case Studies of Impactful Digital Campaigns
- **Resources:** Guides, Toolkits, Articles etc.

Digital Tools:

Canva

Description: A drag-and-drop design tool for creating social media graphics, posters, presentations, videos, infographics, and more. Youth can co-design a visual campaign on empathy in multicultural classrooms, using Canva to create posts and a digital pledge wall. Free for education, intuitive, collaborative



[Canva](#)

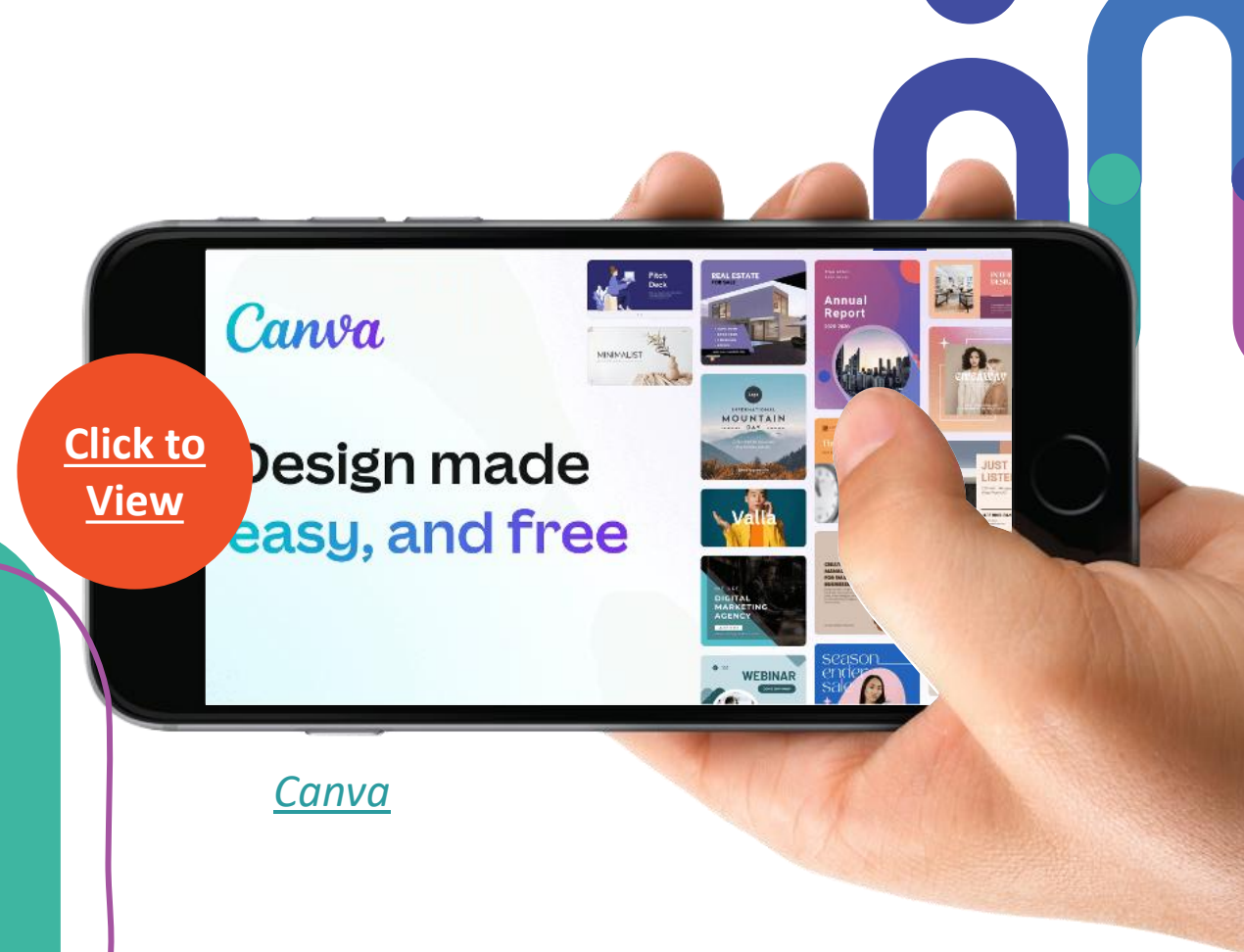
Example Uses: Inclusivity Canva's templates make professional-looking designs accessible to all, even those with no design experience.

Digital Tools:

Canva

Example Uses:

- **Visual storytelling:** Youth can use Canva to create digital posters, “story cards,” or infographics that highlight peace stories, social issues, or facts about conflict.
- **Campaign design:** Canva is perfect for building cohesive peace campaigns across platforms—Instagram carousels, Reels, TikToks, flyers, etc.



Canva

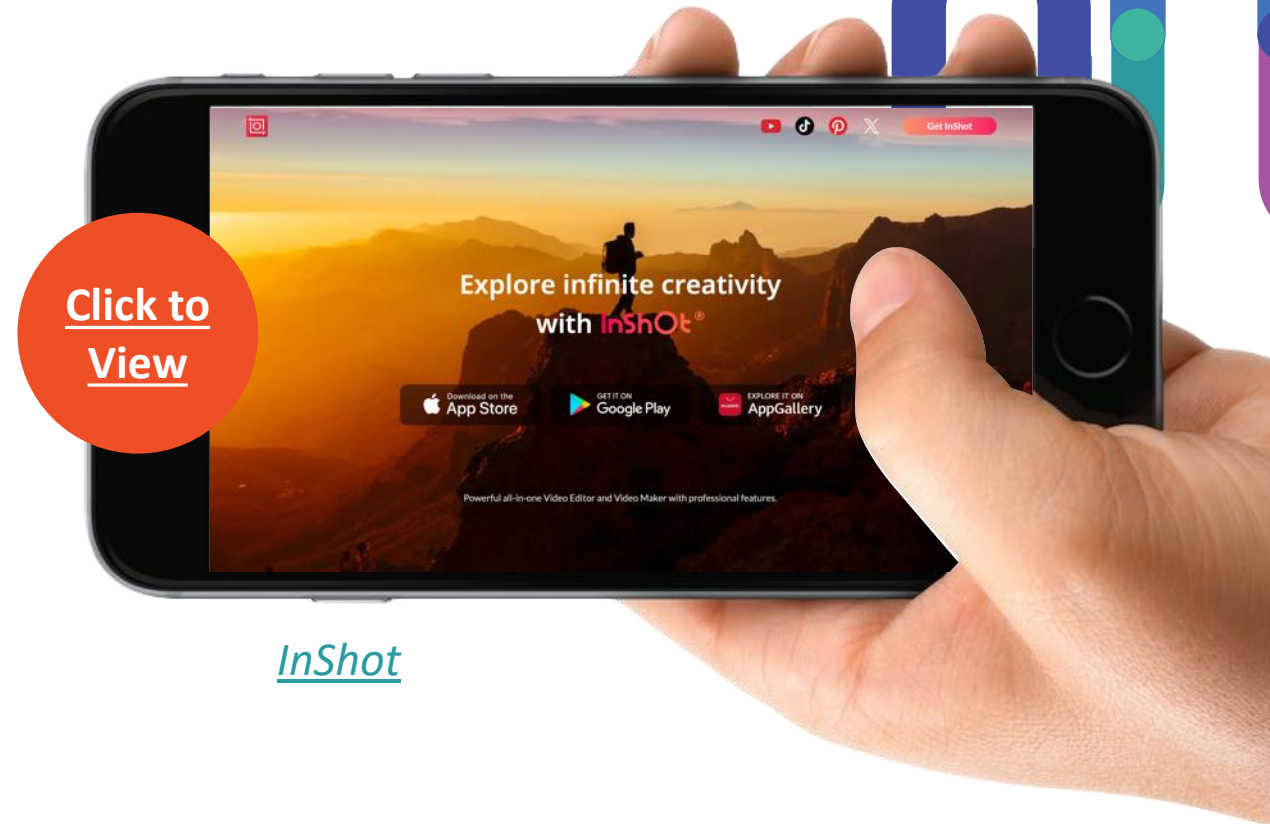
Digital Tools:

InShot

Description: A mobile-friendly video editing app that allows users to edit, trim, caption, and add music or effects to short videos. Free, accessible, easy export to social media

Empowers youth voices: Learners can tell their story, document local peace actions, or interview someone from their community.

Mobile-first: Ideal for regions with limited access to desktop editing tools.



[InShot](#)

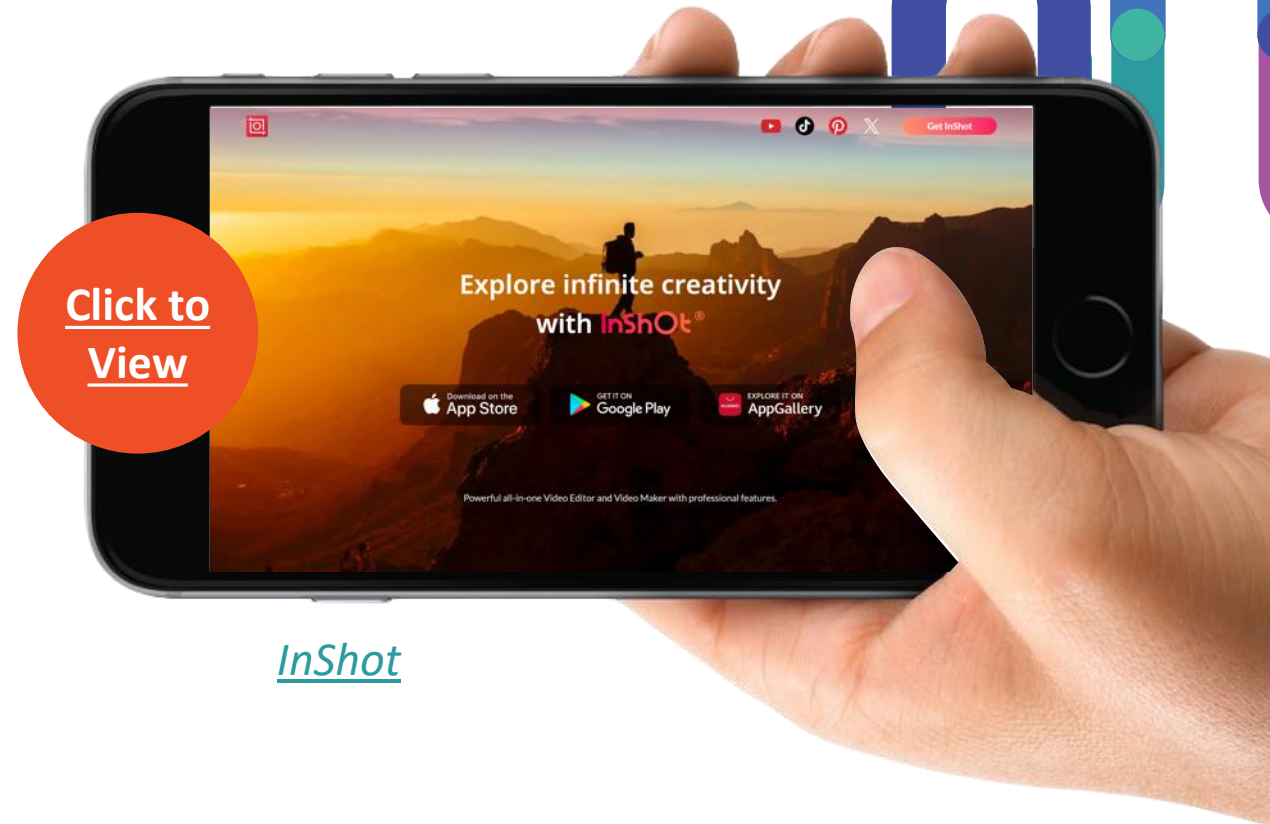
Rapid creation: Users can quickly assemble impactful videos for Reels, TikTok, or workshops.

Digital Tools:

InShot

Example:

A youth participant creates a 90-second “My Story of Change” video explaining how their community overcame religious tension.



InShot

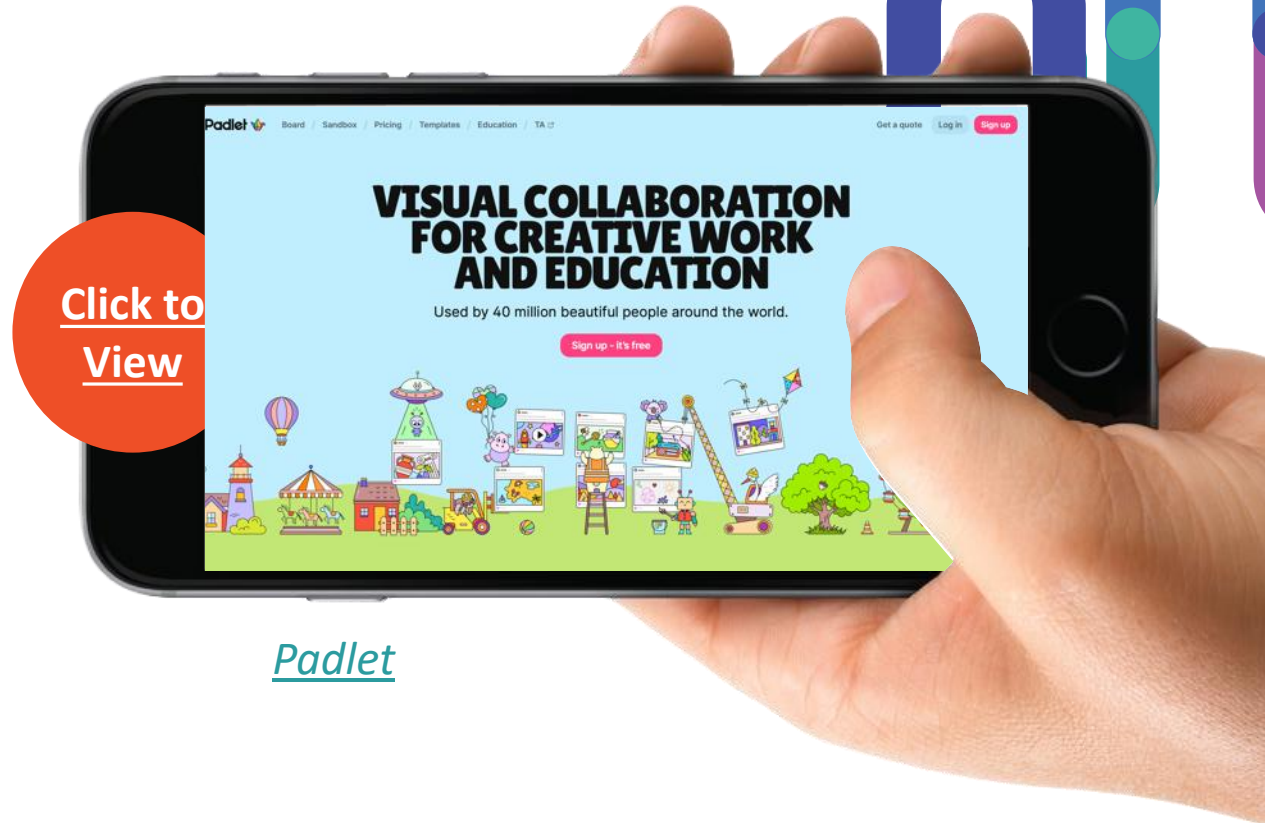
Digital Tools:

Padlet

Description: An interactive, digital wall where users can post text, links, images, videos, or voice recordings. Easy to use, visual, collaborative

Collaborative dialogue: Learners can post peace stories, react to each other, or co-curate digital exhibitions.

Safe space: Anonymity options support vulnerable voices who may not speak in person.



[Padlet](#)

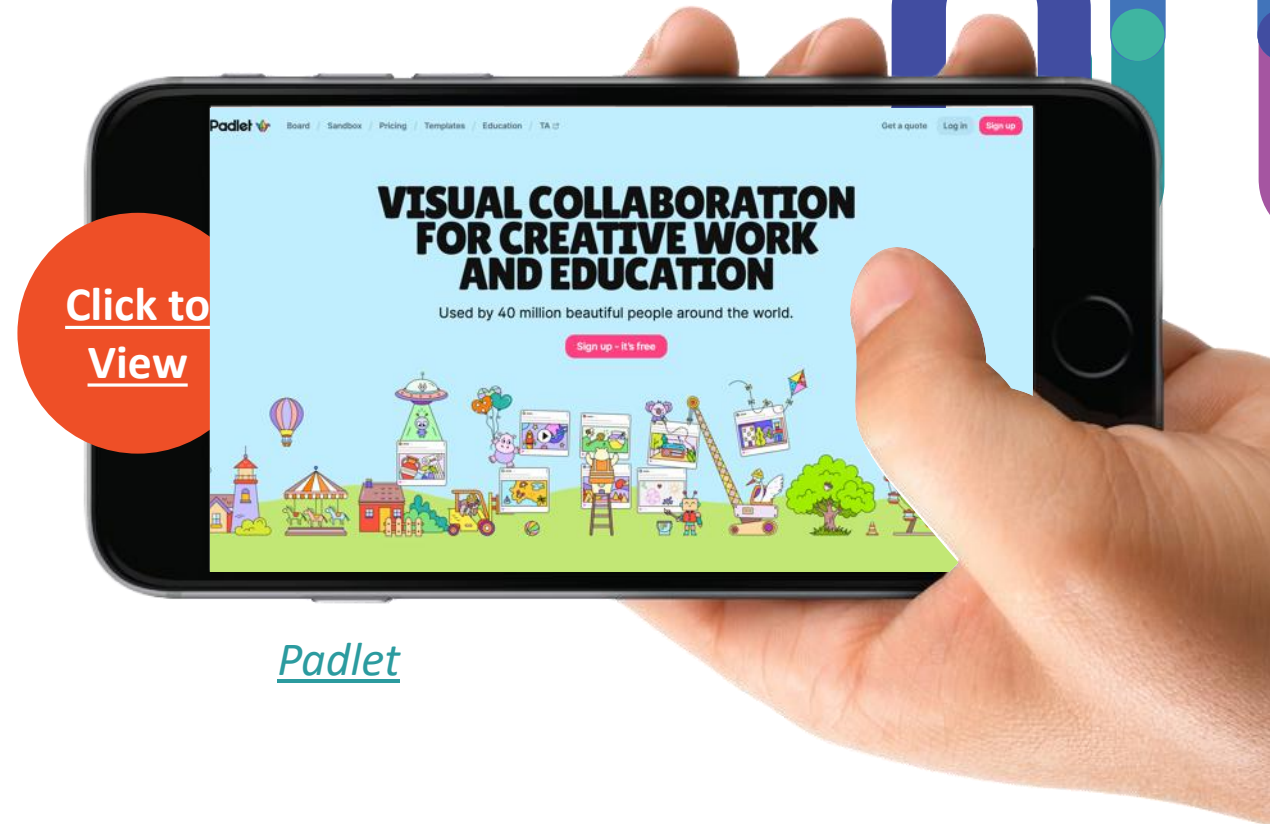
Real-time sharing: Great for collecting perspectives across countries, cultures, or languages.

Digital Tools:

Padlet

Example:

Create a virtual “Peace Wall” where participants post one thing they learned or one action they commit to after a digital peace workshop.



[Padlet](#)



Exercise



Case Studies of Impactful Digital Campaigns

Explore and recognise the different parts of a digital peace campaign. Use media literacy and decide what works and why. Learn what works and doesn't work to communicate digital peace activism. Start by exploring a real-world digital campaign (e.g. #Defyhatenow, #SafeHands during COVID, or an Amnesty youth campaign) and break it down into components:

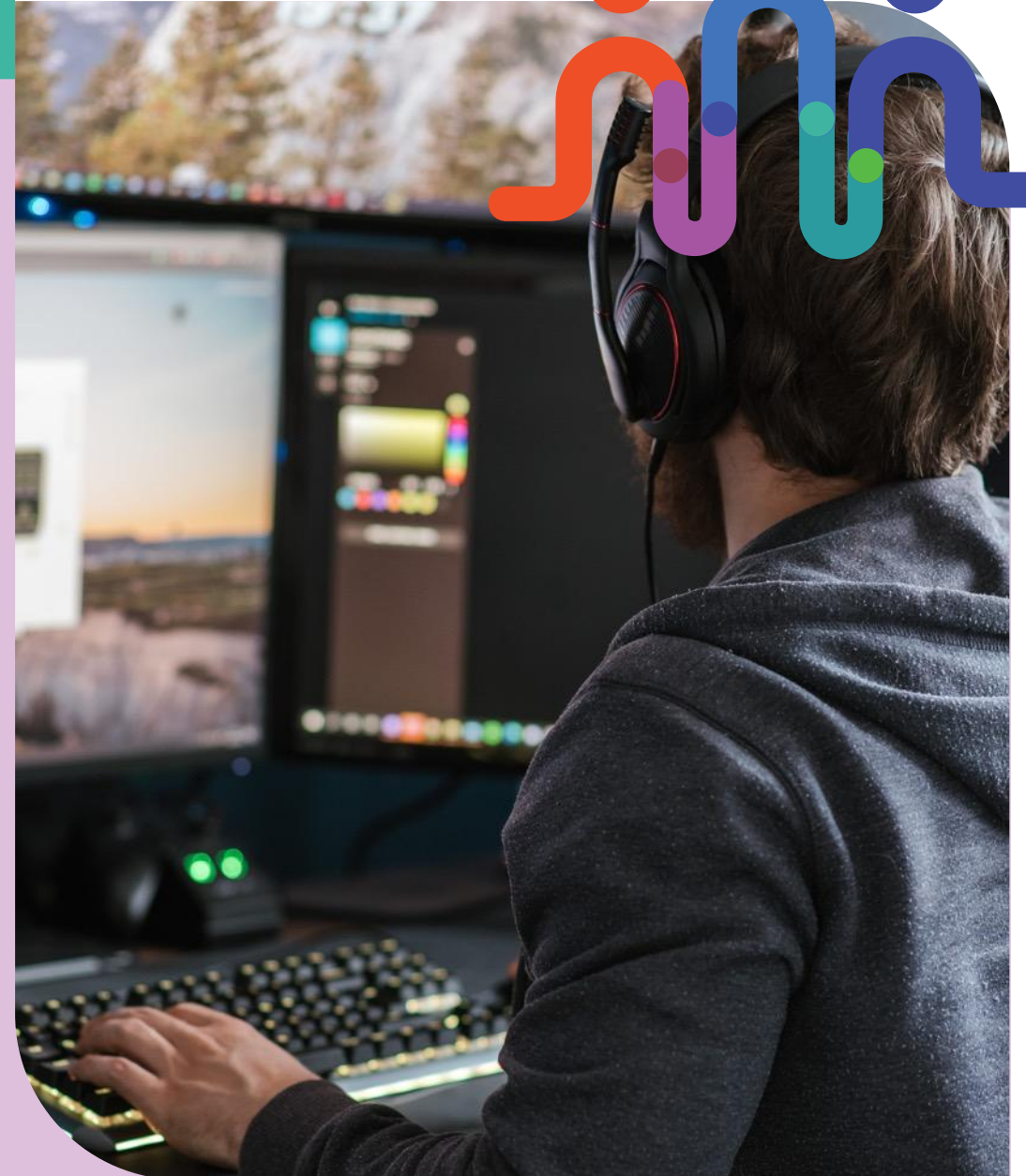
- Goal
- Target audience
- Messaging style
- Visual assets
- Engagement tactics (polls, hashtags, videos)



Exercise

Methodology Tips:

- 1** Use a case study template (e.g. SWOT analysis, or 5Ws + H: Who, What, Where...)
- 2** Compare two campaigns and discuss strengths/weaknesses
- 3** Ask: “How did this campaign promote peace? How could it do better?”





Resources

Storycenter

Webinars and Workshops in Digital Storytelling

We Support Organisations and Individuals Around The World In Exploring The Value Of Story Facilitation And Participatory Media.

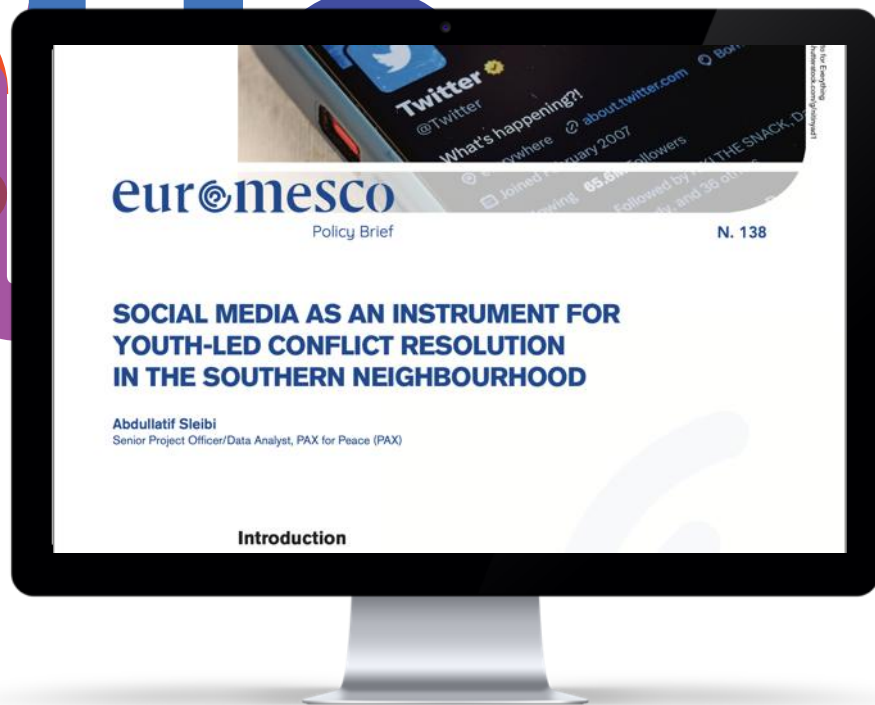
StoryCenter is an innovative participatory media organisation committed to the power of personal narratives for equity, wellness and social action.



Our workshops foster reflection, connection, creativity, agency and joy. We value knowledge generated through lived experience.



Resources



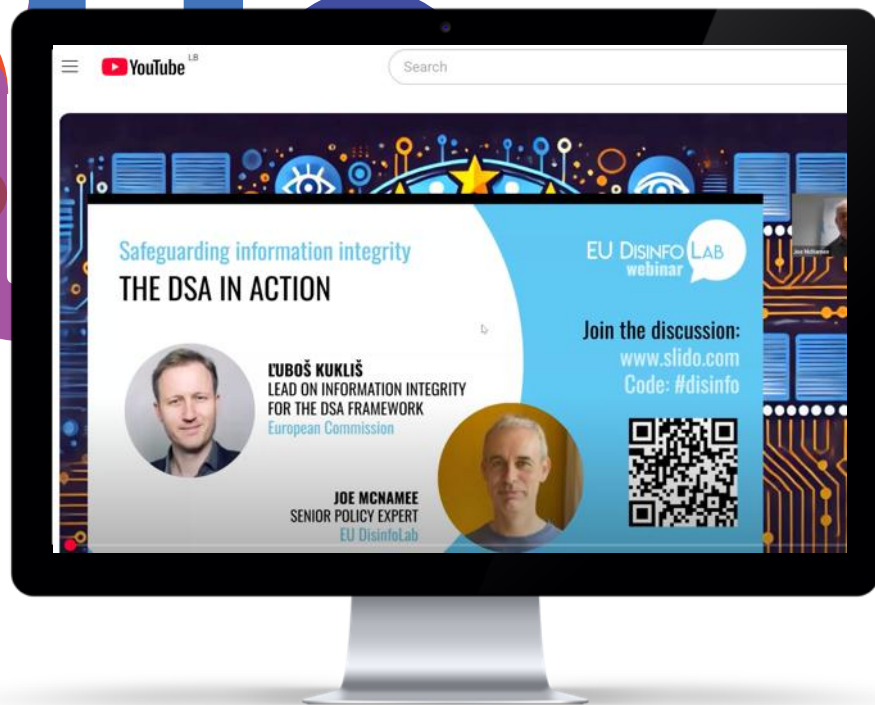
[Click To View](#)

Social Media As An Instrument For Youth-led Conflict Resolution

“Social Media as an Instrument for Youth-Led Conflict Resolution in the Southern Neighbourhood”, explores how social media can empower young people in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to engage in peacebuilding and counteract misinformation actively. This is exemplified by cases such as the violence in Syria that resulted from the false online portrayal of White Helmets as a terrorist rather than a humanitarian group (Mercy Corps, 2019)



Resources



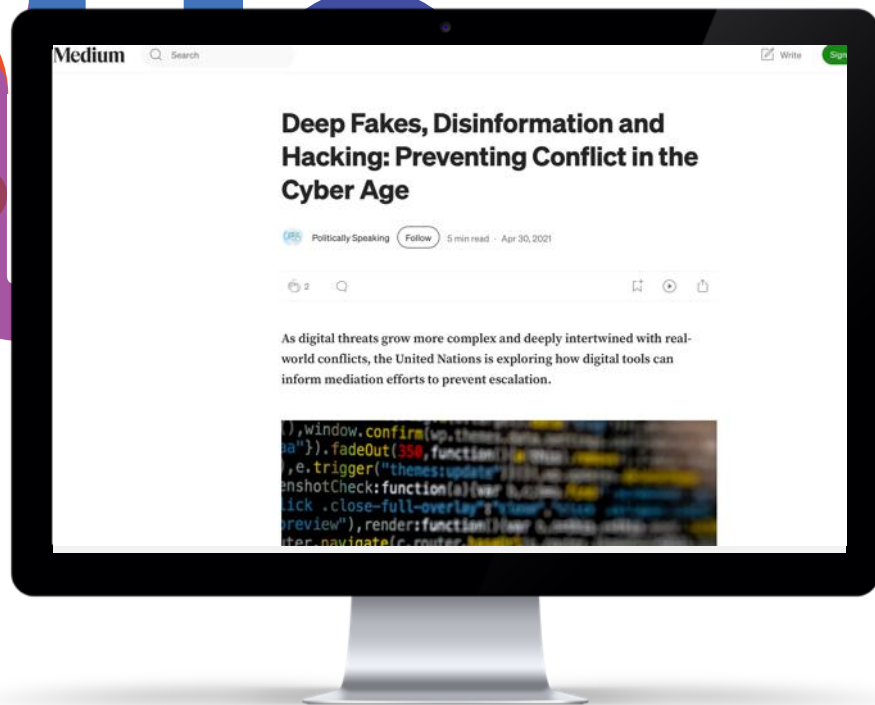
[Click To View](#)

Safeguarding information integrity – the DSA Digital Services Act in action

Watch this webinar for an insider's look at how the European Commission is putting the Digital Services Act (DSA) into action. Ľuboš Kukliš, Lead on Information Integrity for the DSA framework at the Commission, shares the latest developments around the DSA's implementation, specifically in the area of information integrity.



Resources



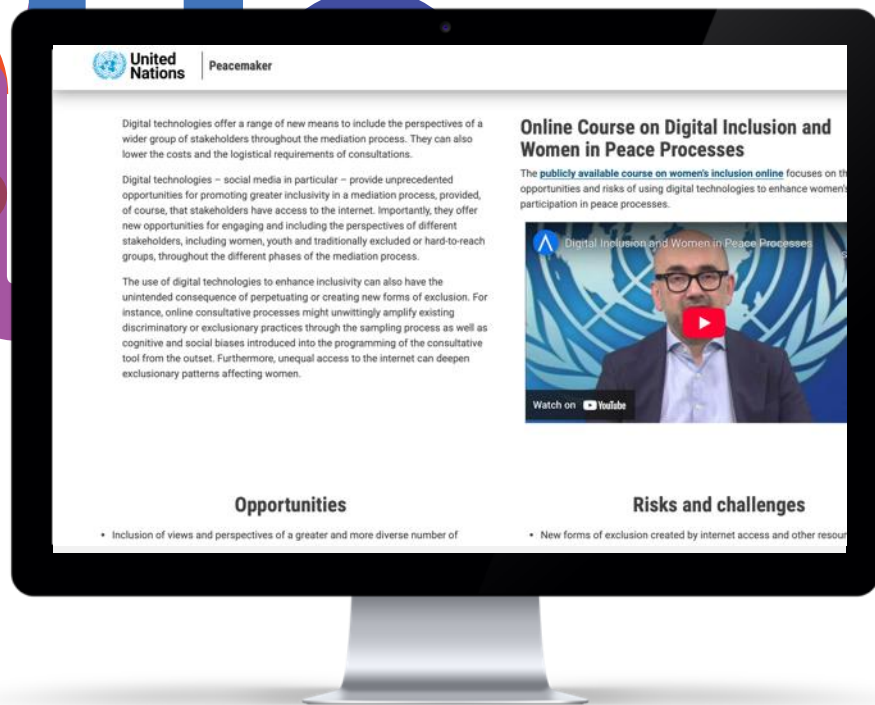
[Click To View](#)

[Deep Fakes, Disinformation and Hacking: Preventing Conflict in the Cyber Age](#)

As digital threats grow more complex and deeply intertwined with real-world conflicts, the United Nations is exploring how digital tools can inform mediation efforts to prevent escalation.



Resources



[Click To View](#)

Online Course on Digital Inclusion and Women in Peace Processes

Digital technologies – social media in particular – provide unprecedented opportunities for promoting greater inclusivity in a mediation process. Importantly, they offer new opportunities for engaging women, youth and traditionally excluded or hard-to-reach groups, throughout the different phases of the mediation process.

Module 4: Building Digital Bridges: Media's Power in Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion

You have completed **Part 2 - Focus Area 2**
Storytelling for Social Change: Using Digital
Media to Promote Peace Initiatives

Next is **Part 3 - Focus Area 3**
European Digital Platforms Supporting Peace
Journalism and Constructive Dialogue

www.includememedia.eu

This resource is licensed
under CC BY 4.0



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Finnish National Agency for Education. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them

* Note to manage waste please print this document in greyscale or black and white rather than in colour. Please print on both sides of the paper (duplex) and if you can print multiple slides or pages on one page.

