SPEAK! is a global campaign to help give a voice to everyone, everywhere.

Launched in 2017, the campaign has provided a platform for people across the world to "speak out" on the issues that matter most to them.

In 2018, in the face of increasing social and political polarisation, the campaign created opportunities for people and communities to come together across lines of division and "speak with" each other – helping resolve conflicts, create connections and build understanding.

This culminated in 3 days of global action from 16-18 November, with almost 200 events held in over 45 countries, attended by more than 10,000 people and reaching well over 4 million online.

Beyond the numbers were real and remarkable outcomes: peace agreements signed, prejudices confronted, relationships established.

This is the story of SPEAK! 2018 ...
PART 1: REACH

EVENTS:

At least 181 events were held as part of SPEAK! 2018. Many more were registered via the website but could not be verified.

The number was just short of our target of 200+ events and less than the 232 organised in 2017. With that said, almost 60 of last year’s event came via a partnership with the #Act4SDGs campaign, and so were not necessarily branded as "SPEAK!".

Several partners organised multiple events in 2018, the most significant being:

• Yemen Peace Mediators (35 events in Yemen, Egypt and USA);
• National Conversation Project (21 events in USA); and
• Civil College Foundation/DemNet (21 events in Hungary).

Case study: Civil College Foundation/DemNet

Under the rule of Viktor Orbán, Hungary has experienced a serious backsliding in free speech and the ability for citizens to contribute to the democratic process. In response, Civil College Foundation and DemNet, oversaw a two month campaign to create awareness and opportunities for better public participation in local decision-making. By joining forces with a range of Hungarian organisations, they mobilised over 500 people to attend existing public hearings across the country and convened a massive Citizen’s Assembly in Budapest – bridging the gap between ordinary Hungarians and local decision makers on issues like corruption, environmental protection and urban development.

COUNTRIES:

SPEAK! 2018 events were held in at least 45 countries.

In a positive development for the campaign, there was a relatively even spread across key geographic regions, including the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) and Latin America, where we sought to provide significant support for partner organisations.
The number of countries appears to be less than in 2017 (65 countries) but, again, #Act4SDGs events accounted for 34 countries, meaning there was a real increase in "SPEAK!" branded events from 31 to 45 (2017-18).

With that said, there is still significant work to do in future years if we are to reach our target of over 75 countries.

**Case study: URDA**

URDA – an organisation with branches in Lebanon, Spain and the Netherlands – organised events in all three countries, bringing together refugees and host community members to cook traditional dishes from their homeland and discuss the root causes of racism, discrimination and fear of the ‘other’. By engaging in the universal language of food, they were able to build connection and a shared understanding. Follow-up events are already being planned, and a new Facebook group has been set up to coordinate and share news.

**PARTNERS:**

As in 2017, over 200 organisations took part in the campaign. Specifically, SPEAK! 2018 events engaged **226 organisations**: 66 ‘core organisers’ + 160 ‘supporting partners’.

Of the core organisers, the vast majority came from formal civil society – 69% were CSOs, 17% were civil society networks/alliances, and only 10% were grassroots movements. This suggests the SPEAK! team has work to do in pushing beyond the ‘bubble’ of traditional civil society, rather than relying on our partners to do this.
Many organisations reported having established new relationships through their involvement in SPEAK! – particularly with government authorities. This suggests a broader disconnect between civil society and government that we will look to address in 2019 through collaborations with the Dutch Foreign Ministry and others.

Partners were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about their involvement in the campaign. The Net Promoter Score (NPS) was 73.62 based on 40 core organiser survey responses, which is generally regarded as "world class".

“We would definitely encourage people to participate in the SPEAK! campaign for the value that it holds, the message it delivers, and the impact it makes.”

“Because SPEAK! events run simultaneously in many countries it gets attention at all levels, and the issues being advocated are more likely to be addressed by authorities”

“Purposefully making an effort to open conversations with a group of people who are different from the crowd we usually engage is highly needed, and forms a base for further collaboration and activities.”

Case study: National Conversation Project

In the United States, where political polarisation between Democrats and Republicans is at record levels, the National Conversation Project (NCP) organised 12 online group discussions (see image on left) and 10 in-person conversations on topics like gun control, the future of America, and political differences within families. 14 partners were involved in organising the events and, in 2019, NCP will activate their national network of over 200 organisation to participate in SPEAK!.

Said one participant at an NCP event: “I now have a much better understanding of where people I disagree with may be coming from and that they have good intentions just like me.”
PARTICIPANTS:
A total of at least 10,477 people participated in SPEAK! 2018 events.

This was a significant and intentional reduction from 2017 (approx 41,000 participants) due to the theme of "speaking with" – which often requires smaller gatherings for meaningful dialogue – and the decision to prioritise depth of impact over breadth of engagement.

56% of the total participants were youth (under 30 y.o.), exceeding our objective of 50%. 48% of the total participants were female, which again exceeded our objective of 45%. It was particularly encouraging that many events were explicitly focused or actively sought to engage women, even in traditionally male-dominated cultures.

In line with the campaign objective of bringing people together across lines of division, many events featured highly diverse attendees, including those who normally wouldn't enter the same room.

With that said, more than half of the core organisers also identified perspectives that they would have liked to have present, suggesting more can be done to encourage genuinely diverse and inclusive participation.

Events included people of different:
- genders
- ages
- nationalities
- cultures
- political affiliations
- places (e.g. cities, rural areas)
- educational backgrounds
- languages
- religions
- economic backgrounds
- positions of power/authority
- mental health conditions

Case study: CRADDDES
In Benin, an intergenerational dialogue – the first of its kind – brought together religious leaders and young people from the three major faith groups to ease tension and build understanding of inter-religious marriage. This was followed by a film screening for over 1,000 university students to help sensitise them to the issue. The conclusions and recommendations of the dialogue will be used to advocate with religious leaders, youth, and the Benin Minister of the Interior to reduce the problems faced by young people in such marriages (i.e. stigma, suicide, and violence). The events received widespread media coverage, including 8 local newspapers and 1 radio station.
ONLINE:

The campaign continued its reputation for having a large online presence, with the hashtag #TogetherWeSpeak reaching almost 4 million across the course of November.

This peaked on November 16, in part because of the "hour of silence" that began the campaign – as people and organisations went 'dark' on social media and various websites to raise awareness of and stand in solidarity with those whose voices have been silenced. Online activity continued through the official days of action (16-18 November) and increased again during the following weekend (23-25 November), when several large events were held.

In addition, key partners sought to amplify their efforts online through a range of unique content and hashtags.

Case study: RNW Media

RNW's Citizens' Voice programme works in restrictive settings where freedom of expression is limited and young people often lack opportunities to participate in public debate or influence formal and informal decision-making. As part of SPEAK! 2018, RNW ran both offline and online campaigns across 5 countries in MENA and sub-Saharan Africa (Libya, Mali, DRC, Burundi & Yemen). Local organising teams produced social media content on issues including racism, social cohesion, gender equality, reaching a total of over 900,000 people online.
To help realise almost 200 high-quality events across the globe, the SPEAK! team committed to building the capacity of partner organisations and providing a range of resources in English, French, Spanish & Arabic, backed by a small multilingual team.

**TOOLS:**

On registering an event via the SPEAK! website, organisers were given access to a range of free tools to help bring their plans to life. These included:

a) **Event Organising Toolkit** – used by 58% of organisers (based on responses to the post-event survey)

b) **Social Media Guide** – used by 42% of organisers

c) **Conversation Guide** (developed specifically for SPEAK! in collaboration with the team from Living Room Conversations) – used by 25% of organisers

d) **Images, logos and posters** – used by 71% of organisers

“The toolkits and documents provided by the CIVICUS team were very useful for us in the preparation and organisation of the SPEAK! event.”

**DIRECT SUPPORT:**

For the first time in 2018, there was an exciting collaboration between SPEAK! and DataShift. DataShift is an initiative led by CIVICUS to build the capacity and confidence of civil society organisations to produce and use citizen-generated data.

As part of this collaboration, the SPEAK! team hired three Campaign Enablers. The role of the Enablers was to provide direct support for partner organisations in the design, delivery and evaluation of their events.

One of the Enablers worked specifically to support larger events across the globe, while the other two Enablers focused on MENA and Latin America respectively. These regions were selected because they have been historically underrepresented in CIVICUS initiatives, and the eventual quantity and quality of events suggests the support was highly beneficial.

“The way the SPEAK team technically supported us was very good and professional in our opinion.”
TRAINING/WEBINARS:

A select group of organisers were invited to participate in trainings and webinars in the months prior to the days of action.

In collaboration with the Ukraine Digital Security Lab, the DataShift team developed an online digital security training to help SPEAK! organisers better understand and become champions for digital security.

The SPEAK! team also engaged Reos Partners, who specialise in the theory and practice of "stretch collaboration" (i.e. understanding and embracing the challenges of collaborating with people who think differently from one another). Reos developed 2 x two-hour interactive webinars, attended by more than 12 event organisers from 10 countries.

"I really appreciated the live webinars, I learnt a lot."

FUNDING:

A limited number of grants were offered to assist with the costs of organising events.

A small group of partners were awarded amounts of US$5,000-10,000 to run events in key regions or on key issues with the potential for significant impact.

Then, a larger group of partners were awarded micro-grants in the amount of US$1,000-2,000 via a competitive application process. Almost 150 organisations applied for micro-grant funding (three times as many as in 2017) and the limited funding available meant that only 20 were successful.

41% of the core organisers received financial support of some form (27 of 66).

"We highly value the partnership with SPEAK! ... [The] financial contribution allowed us to develop actions to strengthen our alliances and added value for small organisations when it comes to showing their work to other donors and networks"
PART 3: OUTCOMES

The SPEAK! team set a series of ambitious targets to help measure the effectiveness of the campaign in bridging divisions and building connections.

**POSITIVE EXPERIENCES:**

A wide body of research indicates that the first step in encouraging people to come together who wouldn't normally – and be willing to do so again in the future – is to create positive experiences of spending time with one another.

As such, a key outcome of success for the campaign was the extent to which participants enjoyed attending an event and would recommend it to others, captured via the Net Promoter Score (NPS).

**SPEAK! 2018 NPS Participants**

Based on responses from over 500 people across 21 countries, the participant NPS was 47.62, which is considered "very good". While this is clearly a biased sample – i.e. only 5% of total global attendees completed the NPS survey – it offers a strong foundation on which to build in 2019 and beyond.

This is further supported by data from events with high survey completion rates, many of which had a better NPS than the global average – e.g. in Morocco, FOMEJE collected responses from all 47 participants and the event NPS was 65 (considered "excellent").

Many participants expressed a desire to repeat/expand these type of events.

**Case study: TV Cultura**

In Peru, a group of young YouTubers, journalists and students from different backgrounds came together to debate challenges and opportunities in the fight against corruption. The reasons participants gave for why the event was so enjoyable included: "[It offered] the possibility of a genuine dialogue", "[It was a] gathering of different visions in the same room in a framework of respect", and "It [was] a space that allowed you to share ideas and express yourself".
**CONNECTION & UNDERSTANDING:**

Beyond creating positive experiences, the campaign aimed to increase connection and understanding between people of different backgrounds, identities and perspectives.

79% of those who responded to the participant survey said that, by attending a SPEAK! event, they spoke with someone they wouldn't normally. Again, this was a biased sample (based on approximately 5% of global attendees), however, the trend of responses was nonetheless very positive and exceeded our initial target of 60-70%.

Moreover, a large number of participants indicated that the connections formed would change the way they spoke about people different to themselves in the future. Reasons for this included: "because my level of tolerance has been improved", and "[I would] enlighten [my family/friends] about stigmatisation and ways to stop it".

**Case study: Build Green Group**

In Albania, a three-day workshop brought young people from the marginalised Roma community together with non-Roma youth, who rarely have the chance to interact. Using team-building exercises, open dialogues and artistic expression, they learned to confront their misperceptions of each other and spread messages of inclusion and non-discrimination in their communities. The event culminated in the painting of an outdoor graffiti mural in the capital Tirana. According to organisers: "Many of the participants stated they had never been face-to-face with one another; but mostly the event helped bring them face-to-face with themselves and their own prejudices".

"I thought my community [the Nuer people] was no longer wanted in South Sudan, and so I used to stay in isolation from others. My neighbour and I haven't spoken or eaten together for five years. But today's event has broken the yoke and we have started eating with him again."

– Philip, from the Yei region of South Sudan, where civil war has sparked ethnic cleansing and one of the world's worst refugee crises

"I have never known that not tolerating others was rather hurting me and society."

– Nadine, after participating in a film screening and discussion on an intercity bus trip in Cameroon to bridge division between Francophone and Anglophone communities
RESULTS & COMMITMENTS:
The most important objective of all was to have **events that resulted in real change**.

Based on feedback from 48 core organisers, **over 50% of events led to tangible results and commitments** – far exceeding our ambition of 10%.

This included: **communiques** to be distributed to stakeholders and media; **written pacts** to defend, protect and strengthen peace and human rights; the establishment of **new youth councils** and citizenship clubs; and commitments to run **training workshops**, organise **follow-up events**, and launch **advocacy campaigns** on key event recommendations.

**Case study: Benbere**
Inter-community violence is rife in Mali, with tensions rising between the Dogon and Fulani communities. Determined to tackle the issue head-on, Benbere hosted a conference that brought representatives from the communities face-to-face for the first time. The conference was live streamed and the outcomes were broadcast by 3 radio stations. Following the event, the UN’s peacekeeping mission in Mali invited Benbere to a meeting at which they agreed to finance a peace forum in 2019, co-hosted by Benbere, to build on the success of the conference. Former Prime Minister, Moussa Mara, also offered his congratulations: “It is important to multiply this kind of activity to strengthen social cohesion and avoid inter-communal conflicts between Malians.”

**Case study: Yemen Peace Mediators**
The creation of an independent group of highly-respected Yemeni dignitaries, now known as the Yemen Peace Mediators (YPM), has led to remarkable breakthroughs. It is not an exaggeration to say the UN peace accord negotiated in Stockholm in December 2018 – hailed as a “landmark” moment – would not have happened without the YPM group. Not only did the group shape the format of the talks, they helped secure agreement on key issues by conducting their own mini-negotiations outside the venue to align on solutions, which were then proposed inside the formal talks. The group is continuing to support the UN, and pursuing all avenues to bring an end to the four-year war that has resulted in the world’s largest humanitarian crisis.
DATA & SECURITY:

Thanks to the collaboration with CIVICUS’ DataShift initiative, data management and digital security formed a key part of SPEAK! 2018.

SPEAK! Enablers used a loose script of questions to get selected partners talking about how they work with data, and to help design support that would meet their needs.

46% of organisers surveyed said they changed the way they collected, used or submitted data during the campaign, compared to their previous work.

Case study: Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative

In Nigeria, a series of ‘conversation cafés’ were held across the country for youth with and without mental health issues, to get young people talking about this taboo topic. At the start and end of the event, participants answered 10 simple questions, like: "List the first 3 words that come to your mind when you hear ‘mental health.’" and "Can you work in the same place as someone with a mental illness?" The answers allowed organisers to track changes in perspectives across the course of the event, and fed into the organisation’s knowledge of mental health stigma to improve future work. The act of providing the data also prompted participants to reconsider their own preconceptions, making data collection a key part of the change process.

CONTRIBUTING TO SDG 16:

DataShift supports civil society’s ability to use data to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With SPEAK!, there was a unique opportunity to address the lack of data on SDG 16.7.2, which measures citizens’ ability to participate in decision-making at all levels, and to do so in a way that benefited the people and organisations providing that data.

This was achieved through the development of an ‘icebreaker’ exercise for use at the start of SPEAK! events, where participants asked each other questions about their ability to influence decision-making and participate in politics in their country. This helped create an atmosphere of active listening at the events, and supported organisers to think about how data can be used to serve their broader goals.
The exercise revealed that most participants across regions had high confidence in their ability to participate in politics, but few reported strong feelings of “having a say” in what the government does. Notably, many event organizers in MENA expressed reservations about using the icebreaker, due to sensitivities regarding political debate, especially among strangers. However, those that did found it contributed to useful and meaningful dialogue.

Case study: Mira Organisation for Youth and Development

In Iraq, event organizers had serious misgivings about the nature of the SDG icebreaker – unsurprising given the country’s history of political repression. With that said, they chose to attempt the activity. Before beginning, they reassured attendees that participation was entirely voluntary, and they were pleasantly surprised at the fruitful and enthusiastic nature of the discussions that followed. This suggests that while such conversations may be controversial, they are much needed, and a safe and structured means to have them can be welcomed.

The icebreaker also ensured the voice of participants’ was heard at the UN. The data collected from the exercise – including regional trends, comparisons and experience – will help guide the UN review of SDG.16.7.2 methodology to decide how it measures future progress. It will also be included in the SDG16+ Report for the High Level Political Forum in New York in July 2019.

In addition, the SPEAK! SDG methodology is now being used in several in-depth case studies in Chile, Tanzania, El Salvador, South Africa and Cameroon. The DataShift team was asked to present on the work at the UN Regional SDG16 meeting in Mongolia in February 2019, following which, the methodology was profiled on the SDG16+ Hub.
The feedback from event organisers on their involvement in campaigns and their interaction with the SPEAK! team was very positive. In particular, they seemed to appreciate the support and resources that were offered.

With that said, partners identified several challenges in organising high-quality events, including:

- attracting the right participants (made even harder in communities facing urgent material needs, where dialogue can appear unimportant)
- creating an environment in which taboo topics can be openly discussed without fear of arrest or reprisal
- securing funding to cover expenses like venue hire and transportation (particularly for those organisation that did not receive a SPEAK! grant)

Partners also highlighted areas of improvement for the SPEAK! team – e.g. ensuring that resources/funding are made available well in advance of the days of action (feedback that was also given after the 2017 campaign), and reducing the reporting requirements on the details/outcomes of events.

““The SPEAK! team was very cooperative and clear in their communication though some information came a bit late, which made the event planning look urgent”

“I do think that the reporting is a bit too much for a micro-grant”

“SPEAK! Enablers helped and guided us through the event. They were very collaborative. We would recommend highly working with them.”

“Breaking down barriers is easier than expected when dialogue is calm, quiet and well-organised.”
Overall, the SPEAK! team identified the following learnings from 2018:

**What went well?**

1. The theme of ‘speaking with’ was relevant and timely in many countries (this was a key recommendation from 2017)
2. Many events engaged diverse communities beyond the bubble of civil society (a recommendation from 2017)
3. All key materials and resources were translated into French, Spanish and Arabic (a recommendation from 2017)
4. The M&E framework was robust and integrated from the start, and included direct data collection from attendees (a recommendation from 2017)
5. A high level of resourcing/enabling support was provided to organising partners, (reflected in the quality of many events – particularly in Latin America)
6. The collaboration with DataShift was open, honest, flexible and resulted in a range of mutually beneficial outcomes
7. The dynamics and coordination of the SPEAK! team worked well (i.e. induction process, weekly meetings, team culture), particularly given the addition of Enablers

**What can be improved?**

1. Prioritise outreach to media to increase campaign awareness and help shape global narrative of 'common humanity' (partly a recommendation from 2017)
2. Secure celebrities and other influencers to take part in key online actions (a recommendation from 2017)
3. Design a global call-to-action that enables engagement beyond physical events and can result in viral online content (a recommendation from 2017)
4. Overhaul the micro-grants process to enable earlier disbursal, less paperwork, and a higher number of small grants (partly a recommendation from 2017)
5. Apply digital security and data management principles to the campaign itself (e.g. streamline collection, simplify M&E requirements, plan for access control)
6. Set clear long-term vision for the campaign (i.e. What is our theory of change? What does success look like?)
7. Re-think outreach to MENA and flagship events so effort equates to results; prioritise Asia Pacific
8. Increase direct support for government participation in SPEAK!
9. Front-load internal planning and coordination, so communications and resource distribution occurs much earlier
10. Revamp campaign website, including alignment with data management, manual translation in key languages, and increased control of visual elements