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| Speak Up 20 April |
| Male | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s community access radio station Plains FM 96.9 and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana, E ngā reo, E ngā hau e whāTēnā koutou katoaNau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Join the New Zealand Human Rights Commission as it engages in conversations around diversity in our country. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions... May you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.Nau mai haere ma ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. I’m Sally Carlton based here in Christchurch with the Human Rights Commission. We’re going to be discussing human rights online today and this is a pretty massive topic or it could be a pretty massive topic, We’re going to try and keep it slightly focused though thinking about researching, monitoring and activating human rights online specifically. I guess we’ll see where the conversation flows and see what we end up discussing. The people here in the studio, we’ve got Moana Eruera from the Human Rights Commission, Christina Halloway who is studying at the University of Canterbury, Wayne Reid, Refugee and Migrant Health Manager from Pegasus Health and Deborah Morris-Travers we’ve got beaming in from Wellington on the phone. So hi Deborah on the phone.  |
| Deborah | Hi.  |
| Sally | We thought we might just start with a round of introductions please, if you could tell us about yourselves and also the work that you do that would be fantastic.  |
| Deborah | So at UNICEF we are the United Nationals Children’s Emergency Fund and a lot of our work is focused on fundraising for humanitarian responses overseas but of course we also have a mandate from the United Nations General Assembly to promote children’s rights. So in terms of children’s rights we’re focused on the rights of children in New Zealand and also in the Pacific and we do a lot of strategic advocacy work so we’re working with all of the political parties and also with Government departments to promote understanding about ways that we can improve children’s wellbeing by upholding their human rights. We also do child rights education in schools and also in councils and communities and we have a youth programme that includes some sport for development programmes as well so we’ve got a variety of things that we do for New Zealand children. It’s very focused on ensuring that their human rights are uphold.  |
| Sally | And just to give a sense, Deborah, how many staff are there in the New Zealand UNICEF team?  |
| Deborah | So we have about 25 staff in Wellington, some are working part-time, some fulltime and then we also have a fundraising team in Auckland.  |
| Sally | Great thank you for that. How about the HRC reps, what have we got there?  |
| Moana | Kia ora everyone, my name is Moana Eruera, I’m a Human Rights Specialist with the Commission based in Wellington. Ostensibly the work that I’ve been doing that ties into this topic around human rights online is the New Zealand National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights which the Commission released last year. And this time around, rather than releasing it as a traditional doorstopper report, we’ve taken it online and used online as an innovation of being able to give the Plan great accessibility and greater visibility not only nationally within New Zealand but also internationally given that a lot of the international monitoring work that the Commission is involved with happens in the UN particularly in Geneva. And so being able to put the Plan online as an online resource and web tool increases its accessibility and also means that we’re able to update and use technology to update that. So that’s what I’ve been working on.  |
| Sally | And we’re looking forward to hearing a lot more about the National Plan of Action, the NPA, later in the show and the technical side of it I suppose.  |
| Sally | Christina?  |
| Christina | Hi everyone, I’m Christina Hallaway, I’m a student at the University of Canterbury studying towards a Bachelor of Law and Bachelor of Arts and Political Science in Sociology. As part of my law degree I’ve studied human rights law and part of that I had to do a Wikipedia article on an area of human rights last year. Plus for my Honours research paper last year I researched the justiciability of economic social and cultural rights in New Zealand.  |
| Sally | And it’s nice to have a young person’s perspective particularly talking about online rights which is such a youth space, isn’t it?  |
| Wayne | Hi I’m Wayne Reid, I’m the Refugee and Migrant Primary Health Care Manager for Pegasus Health that allows me to work with all the migrant and refugee communities in the wider Christchurch area.  |
| Sally | So we might just kick off the discussion today then, why is it important to be talking about human rights online? What are the various elements - and there are many of them - that make this an important topic for discussion?  |
| Deborah | Yeah so I think it is important to be discussing human rights online because obviously a lot more people are getting their information that way. At UNICEF we are actively using Facebook and Twitter to get information out and it’s really vital to be reaching as many people as possible to increase understanding of human rights because when people understand their own rights then they’re more likely to respect the rights of other people. And I think that particularly when it comes to the rights of children and young people, they’re not well understood so we’re always working to find innovative ways to promote understanding particularly among children and young people themselves. So last year for example, to mark the anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, we launched a website called [www.fairfuture.nz](http://www.fairfuture.nz) and there people can go in and look at some of the key issues that are impacting on children’s wellbeing, learn about the rights that are relevant and also the specific issues and take action as well. So we’re encouraging people to really get involved in the movement for children, understanding that there are human rights issues at stake but also there are very real social and economic issues related to those things. Part of our ‘Make My Future Fair’ campaign was that we created a timeline on the UNICEF website that tracks from 1993, when New Zealand signed up to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, right through to now, some of the key decisions and things that have happened in that time so that people can just track our progress when it comes to delivery of the promises in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.  |
| Sally | That sounds like a fantastic initiative, very similar I think to the NPA and this idea of the public actually being able to get involved in human rights and what are human rights but also kind of keeping an eye on how the Government is doing.  |
| Deborah | Yeah and I think that to some extent New Zealanders kind of take for granted that their human rights are being protected but that’s not always the case. I think there are a number of reasons why we need to continue to highlight the gaps in New Zealand’s performance and where we can improve, partly because we’re talking about the breaches of the rights of New Zealand citizens but also because globally there are a lot of other countries who look to nations like New Zealand for some leadership on these things. So there are both domestic and international reasons why we have to continue to improve our performance and uphold the rights of New Zealanders.  |
| Sally | Excellent. Has anyone got any thoughts as to why this sort of topic is important?  |
| Moana | Yeah so as more people are accessing the internet - and particularly young people - there’s the growing issues around the use and misuse of information on the net either by government private sector or by the general public and so there’s dangers around accessing personal information, surveillance, censorship, bullying online and those kinds of issues. So raising the awareness of those particular dangers and how people’s rights might be infringed upon through the internet is also a really important thing that needs to be highlighted and particularly for young people and users of the net - but not only young people, anybody there. Every time you download an app on your mobile phone, every time you respond to a post on Facebook and so on, that information is being gathered about you and it’s being used for purposes of which some people do or don’t actually realise where that information is going to. So there’s a real need to raise the awareness if you’re online and you are a user, what is happening with your information. It’s not simply just an exercise of “liking” things and clicking things but that there’s actually greater implications that go along with that as well. |
| Sally | We might take a break there and have our first song. Deborah, this was your choice, was there a reason why you wanted this one?  |
| Deborah | Yeah I love this song, its Shapeshifter playing their song “Bring Change” and I like it because it’s all about the need for people to connect in order to bring change and I’ve been working for a long time to bring about improvements in children’s wellbeing and I do believe that we can achieve that when everybody works together.  |
| Sally | Awesome, thank you very much, we’ll hear Shapeshifter. |
|  | **MUSIC BY SHAPESHIFTER – BRING CHANGE** |
| Sally  | Welcome back to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” here on Plains FM 96.9. We’re with Moana, Christina, Deborah and Wayne talking about researching human rights online, we’ve just been talking about why is the topic important and now we’re going to start thinking a little bit more about researching human rights online. Christina, you might be a good person to kick this off given the work you’ve been doing in your studies. How do you even begin when you’re thinking human rights online, you have a topic, how do you start?  |
| Christina | To be perfectly honest I just Google and see what comes up. That was kind of interesting with the process of writing a Wikipedia article for the human rights course I did because Wikipedia is quite often one of the first sources that does come up when you Google and being involved in that experience of having to publish something on there and realising that actually the quality of the articles on Wikipedia is actually a lot higher than a lot of people may assume. You sort of get taught, “Oh you shouldn’t reference Wikipedia, it’s not a reliable source” but they’ve actually got very high standards of what will actually stay on the site. So that was quite interesting to understand that and actually a lot of people who do write on Wikipedia are actually experts in their area that they’re writing on.  |
| Sally | How do they guarantee or monitor that?  |
| Christina | A lot of it is sort of checked online and other users can say OK, this is not right, this shouldn’t be on here so there’s an amount of peer review and then I suppose there is the issue too that you ultimately never know who has actually written it and especially since a lot of people write on Wikipedia under anonymous names so there is that issue too, you’re never 100% sure who has actually written it.  |
| Sally | So they don’t check the content as such?  |
| Christina | Other users will check the content and you can sort of edit what other people have done or people can sort of report if something is inaccurate so there is that element to it and they actually grade the pages, you can submit… Once you’ve written an article you can submit it for grading and they’re actually really tough on how they grade the pages. So something that would get like an A at university they’ll say is a B or C on Wikipedia. So it’s quite interesting when you have a look at that, how fussy they are about the quality control.  |
| Sally | Interesting process to go through! And I thought it was particularly interesting that it was actually a university assignment to write a Wikipedia article.  |
| Christina | Yeah it’s quite different to anything else I’ve done at uni because usually you write your essay, you read it, the lecturer reads it and that’s it. So it was quite exciting, I thought, to be able to write something that people could actually go online and see and someone could actually be using what you’ve written and referring to your sources. So from a student point of view it’s actually quite exciting that your writing sees the light of day.  |
| Sally | Yes it doesn’t always happen. If we’re thinking researching human rights online, something else that occurred to me is the idea of human rights networks online and the power and perhaps the drawbacks of these sorts of ideas - coming together virtually, discussion boards or professional groups - these sorts of things. And there are definitely human rights elements in that as well. Any thoughts on those sorts of issues?  |
| Deborah | Yeah at UNICEF we use Loomio as a way of sharing information and discussing issues and making decisions but also more broadly people who are interested, for example, in how to give effect to children’s rights in their cities and communities through our Child Friendly Cities Initiative, we have groups of people working together around that on Loomio and there you can have either public groups or private ones. So most of the ones that I’m involved in are private but there are some quite large networks of human rights organisations working on things like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, by using Loomio to share information and kind of take that collective work forward without us having to meet so it can be a really effective and useful way for us to work.  |
| Sally | Are there any drawbacks, Deborah, that you can see?  |
| Deborah | Some people don’t feel as technically capable as others so there’s always that and the need to kind of… Sometimes you do need to have a variety of ways of working so that you can be really inclusive and some of those programmes may not be accessible to somebody who is partially sighted and things like that. So you’ve just got to make sure that whatever you’re using will be accessible and inclusive for the people who you want to be able to work with. And of course there are security considerations but so far we’ve had no problems with anything around the security of our work online so, so far it’s been a largely positive way of us to be able to work collaboratively with a variety of people.  |
| Wayne | How do you deal with the problem of language insofar as that most of these sites are actually in English and I’m aware that there a significant number of people out there for whom English is a second language and don’t feel that they can actually contribute because they don’t have the writing skills.  |
| Deborah | And so again I think if it becomes evident that it is a problem then we find alternative ways to work, quite often even just using Skype and other online video conferencing and those sorts of things can be useful. But Loomio has been used right around the world by a variety of different people to organise their social movement and I’m sure that things like the democratic movement that’s happening in South Korea and the Arab Spring and other things that there’s actually quite a lot of this kind of working going on around the world.  |
| Sally | You touched on two points I’d like to pick up Deborah, one of them is the access to the internet and the fundamental human right that the UN has actually been speaking about - the actual ability to access internet is now a fundamental human right - and also to touch on the idea of the internet as a tool for mobilising people for human rights. So I’d be keen to discuss both of those issues if anyone has got any comments on those.  |
| Wayne | Access to internet is as you say very important, if you’ve got countries like - do I mention it? - China where the access is actually extremely limited you’re actually cutting off a significant number of people who would like to impart information.  |
| Sally | Not just in China I think, here as well, if we think about certain demographics in New Zealand who have either no internet access or are far more limited than other groups. I just wonder, I guess, if we’re talking about the internet as enabling development, enabling education, enabling people to have a voice, these sorts of human rights - the people who don’t have that access, don’t have that ability, how much are they missing out?  |
| Moana | I think previously access to the internet was particularly if you had access through a home computer. That’s changed dramatically in the last two to three years with the advent of almost everybody having access to a Smartphone. There’s an infographic currently that’s on Facebook: if the world were made up of 100 people then 44 of those people would have access to the internet and 56 would not have access to the internet and quite surprised to see that the majority of those 100 people have access to the internet and that is through the use of Smartphone technology. So where we may have thought about having greater computer access within community libraries so that people could access those, in actual fact the number of people who now can access the net through Smartphone technology has absolutely skyrocketed.  |
| Sally | And Wayne and I, we participated in a webinar recently which is another tool for research and for education online, and that was interesting taking part, it was three different time zones, everybody beaming in and the capability that that offers to share ideas is quite amazing actually.  |
| Wayne | I mean the whole programme was so up-to-date that we were actually able to interact with people from so many of these other different time zones and for the work that we’re actually doing here in disaster, to be able to have access to people that we would never be able to access through normal channels was a major plus.  |
| Sally | Could you maybe tell us a little bit about it, Wayne?  |
| Wayne | The organisation is out at Geneva and it’s the Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative and it’s basically looking at the services that are available to people that are new to an environment as in Canterbury for example and the aftermath of major disasters like we’ve had over the last three/four years because although you would think that all of these sort of reactions and services would be the same in every country, they’re not. And we found that we were actually doing things here that people overseas had never even thought of and vice versa, people in California for example were doing things that we think oh, that’s a good idea, we need to think about that and build that into our planning as well. It goes back to the comment about not everybody speaks English and we need to actually include all of those people because they all have an input and it’s very important: if they don’t understand the basic premise of what they need to do in the event of an emergency then we’ve got problems. |
| Sally | Well it might be time to have short break, we’re going to listen to your song Moana which is Amy Winehouse, “Just Friends.” Was there a reason you chose this one?  |
| Moana | Not particularly, because I like it and I haven’t heard Amy Winehouse for a very long time.  |
| Sally | And that is a very valid reason.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY AMY WINEHOUSE – JUST FRIENDS** |
| Sally | Welcome back to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM 96.9. We’re with Deborah from UNICEF, Moana from the Human Rights Commission, Wayne from Pegasus and Christina from the University of Canterbury talking human rights online. We were just talking about researching human rights and the benefits that education can provide, or the internet can provide for education, and we thought we might move now to talk a little bit more about monitoring human rights online. Moana maybe if you could talk us through the National Plan of Action. What is it? Why was it set up? Those sorts of things.  |
| Moana | So the National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights – currently the Commission is the responsible agency for writing that. It comes out of the Universal Periodic Review Process before the Human Rights Council in Geneva. So every member state of the UN goes before the Council every four years and presents their human rights record. The Council and other member states then make recommendations to the state under review and then it is up to the state, or the government of that state, then to action those recommendations. So what we thought that we would do this time around with the National Plan of Action is make the Government’s actions to address UPR recommendations accessible and visible. And one thing that we looked at when we were developing this online National Plan of Action was how to hold the Government to account to address the recommendations that came from the review. And so we thought that accountability through transparency and by putting the information online and making it transparent and available to everybody was a good way to be able to monitor what the Government is doing. So we have done that. New Zealand accepted 121 of 155 recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review in 2014 and what we’ve done since is to identify with Government agencies what they are doing to address those 121 recommendations. The other thing that we’ve done is to put it online and to put a SMART criteria against each of those actions so that when it comes to monitoring what Government is doing we want to know that those actions are Specific, that they are Measurable, that they can be Assigned to a particular agency who will take responsibility for those actions, that they are Realistic and that they have Timeframes attached to them as well. By putting the NPA online and making it visible, as I said earlier, not only domestically but also internationally, it means that when we go before treaty bodies - United Nations treaty bodies - those bodies or committees are also able to access our NPA online and therefore they can see directly what it is that the Government is doing to address particular recommendations. It’s the first time that a NPA has been done in this way in the world which is great and we are working with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva to develop this online tool further and so that can be replicated by other member states as they go about also formulating their own national plans as well. So we think that this is a very good way to increase the transparency and therefore the accountability of states around the actions that they are taking to address particular human rights issues.  |
| Sally | Moana this is the first time a National Plan of Action has been put online or in this sort of a form, where did the idea come from?  |
| Moana | As with most innovative creative ideas, it came from a few people sitting around having a cup of coffee thinking, “Good Lord, we have to write a National Plan of Action and if it’s going to be like the last one then that’s 400-500 pages of writing.” And so the genesis or the seed of it kind of came out of well, how do we get away from producing more doorstopper reports that are great tomes of paper? How is it that we might be able to produce this in a way that it can be cross referenced, that you can make all the intersectionalities around the recommendations, the actions, which treaty bodies they relate to, agencies and so on? And so it was really a way of thinking, How can we get out of the traditional sense of a plan? which is as I say a massive paper tome. And how might we be able to do that smarter and innovate it so that actually all of that referencing and cross referencing can be done almost instantaneously? Because of course if you think of a large paper report, if you cross reference it then that takes a lot of post-it notes and flags.  |
| Sally | I know, Christina, your class last year had a talk by Moana on the NPA, has there been much uptake from students of human rights or others?  |
| Christina | I know that the NPA did come out just after we finished our course last year so to be honest I haven’t heard too much but I imagine the class this year will be using it a lot more because it will be available now when they’re doing the course. I was actually on it looking at it last night myself and what I really liked about it was it was so easy to use and it was just a really nice format that anyone could look at, you didn’t have to have a lot of knowledge on human rights or how the UPR works to be able to use it.  |
| Sally | Do you think it works in terms of anybody being able to monitor if you want to call it that?  |
| Christina | I think you can, if you want to follow what’s going on it’s an easier way to do it and since it covers a range of human rights issues - like, I was looking at the economic social and cultural rights issues but there was also ones on the quota refugees - so it’s just a kind of easy tool where if you want to be engaged with different human rights issues affecting New Zealand you can.  |
| Sally | Have you had much of a sense of the uptake, Moana, even from the Government?  |
| Moana | Sure, we have received feedback from civil society here in New Zealand as well as from Government agencies about the use of the online tool. People find it incredibly easy to navigate. We worked with some developers in Wellington who design intuitive software and so it is very easy to use and to navigate and I was explaining it to a friend a couple of weeks ago who said to me I know nothing about human rights whatsoever but I understand exactly what’s going on here and it’s very easy to track. As an example, as an international example, in Australia’s UPR last year the Australian Government were asked a particular question and their officials didn’t have the answers ready on them. The Australian Human Rights Commission were also at the Committee Hearing and said well this is what New Zealand is doing with regards to accessing the actions that are going on and what we know now is that the Attorney General’s Office in Australia is very interested to replicate the NPA that we’ve put together. So we know that there’s interest internationally and also in Geneva from the Office of the High Commissioner as well to work alongside us to look at how we can further develop this so that it can be used by other member states.  |
| Sally | It’s exciting stuff Moana. Deborah I think you’ve got an example that ties in well with this, you were talking before about the website that UNICEF set up.  |
| Deborah | Yes we built fairfuture.nz website to help mark the anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child but also to bring to life children’s rights and to illustrate that when we uphold those rights then we get much better outcomes for children, that actually they’re healthier, they’re better educated and they’re safer and they’re able to participate more in our society so we really… Through that website people can go into the children’s world and as you scroll down through the website you’re actually helping the child to grow up and scrolling through some different issues that are impacting on children’s wellbeing in New Zealand and it’s really an effort to help people understand why rights matter. And coming off the back of that we’re also developing a number of new child rights education tools, some of which will be online. And we just want to make that information as widely available as possible and help people to understand why these things matter.  |
| Sally | Fantastic. I guess if we’re thinking about monitoring tools online, has anyone got any other examples?  |
| Deborah | Well when it comes to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in fact this year is the year that the Committee on the Rights of the Child examines New Zealand so one of the things that happens in support of that process is that the Government’s report is available online but also a number of alternative reports are submitted - so one from the Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Children’s Commissioner, one from the NGOs and that’s coordinated by Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa, the Law Society also did a report - and there is a group of organisations who monitor New Zealand’s performance under the Convention called the UNCROC Monitoring Group which UNICEF is part of. Those reports get put online so that people can see what we’re saying and of course you can also visit the website of the treaty bodies at the UN - so the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child - and you can see the recommendations that have been made to New Zealand and the reports that have been submitted by the Government, they’re all available there as well.  |
| Sally | It sounds from what you’re saying that these online tools are progressing in a way that’s trying to engage people more, might that be correct?  |
| Deborah | Yeah I think so and I do think that much like the National Plan of Action having increased transparency around these things is really important because it’s vital for Governments to be accountable for what they are or are not doing in this space and it makes it very democratic if it’s available broadly to the public.  |
| Moana | I think that we’ve started on this journey of putting the National Plan but also other monitoring tools online and the availability of the Government’s submissions, the Commissions, NGOs and so on. I think we should seize upon the opportunity to further develop that so that in actual fact when you look at those submissions that they can also be cross referenced with each other so that you might have the Government’s report, the Human Rights Commission’s report, a number of NGO reports as well including from UNICEF or from the Office of the Children’s Commission and through the use of technology and the innovations that you can get from it we should be able to cross reference all of those reports together so that if you wanted to look at a particular topic that you could actually pick up that issue or that topic across any number of submissions that are available online as well. So I think that we’re kind of at the start of this process and I know that the UN would certainly be interested in progressing that so that we actually end up building a massive human rights database within New Zealand where you can cross reference through the use of the technology. Which you can also do currently, but as I say it’s normally a very long and laborious task to be able to have to cross reference across reports. Through the use of the technology I think we can achieve that.  |
| Sally | And wouldn’t that be nice in terms of researching human rights online?!  |
| Christina | Definitely.  |
| Sally | Christina we’re going to play your song now, was there a reason why you chose this one?  |
| Christina | I chose “The Refugee” by U2 due to the refugee crisis in Europe at the moment and the issues of the quota here in New Zealand, obviously the plight of refugees is a huge global issue at the moment that needs resolving.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY U2 – THE REFUGEE** |
| Sally  | Welcome back to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. We’re with Moana, Wayne, Christina and Deborah talking about human rights online. We’ve been talking about how people can start to get involved a little bit through researching or through monitoring human rights online. One of the next steps in that process is - How do you take human rights from that online space and kind of enact them in your daily life? And the internet is playing a part in this as well. In terms of this kind of idea of activism online or activating human rights online there’s a lot of things we could talk about. Maybe Deborah - you might be a good person to kick this off. Does UNICEF coordinate online petitions, online campaigns, these sorts of things?  |
| Deborah | Yes we do, we normally do it in partnership with other organisations. A recent example was when we worked with ActionStation and other partners to encourage people to make submissions on housing issues because there was a Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill before Parliament and it’s been really interesting because the feedback we’re having is that by enabling people to make submissions to Parliament online through a mechanism like ActionStation people are realising how easy it is actually to make a submission to Parliament. So we were able to generate 600 submissions through that process and I’m pretty sure that if we were doing that in a traditional way with printed materials we probably would not get that many submissions. We also send out a weekly e-newsletter to UNICEF supporters and through that we’re able to link them into the opportunities to be activists and to walk alongside us in our advocacy for children. So we do use online mechanisms to engage people and enable people to be part of the work that we’re doing.  |
| Wayne | This type of research area, it depends on people though who are actually or have access to being online. CERA, the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, has been doing a lot of research around wellbeing in Christchurch since the February earthquakes and one of the areas that we’ve been working in is the fact that all of this research up until recently has been done with people who actually speak English, who have access to online and who actually answer the phone in English. And we found that by following this up for people from non-English speaking backgrounds we’ve had to actually get them into a room, face-to-face, with interpreters, to be able to get their point of view across. And I just wonder, when we depend on so much online stuff these days, how much we are missing from those people who would like to contribute but who can’t because they don’t have the ability to do so.  |
| Deborah | Yes I think that’s a really important point and so one of the things we do, for example when we’re consulting with children and youth, is to have a variety of ways that they can participate and we always find if we’re consulting on a particular topic for example we’re asking children about their views so we can present those views to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the majority of that has to be done face-to-face and in fact the whole consultation has been designed by young people and is being facilitated by young people in a face-to-face setting in schools and churches and marae and that kind of thing.  |
| Sally | As a young person, Christina, do you get involved in these sorts of online campaigns, petitions, click a button take action type things?  |
| Christina | Yeah I’m a big fan of the online petition and I think for young people it’s an easy way to engage and if something comes up on people’s Facebook newsfeeds or websites they go on regularly, “like” new sites they kind of become informed and it’s an easy way to engage and be involved and you can be in the comfort of your own home yet you’re sort of taking a role in being involved in human rights activism.  |
| Sally | I guess the question, though, is can you be effective sitting in your own home clicking a button? I think that’s the next question. Will it kind of replace getting out on the street?  |
| Christina | I guess it’s better than people doing nothing at all. But then I know a lot of students at uni who have been very involved with the TPPA protests and going out on a Saturday morning down Riccarton Road protesting as well so I think even though people seem to be quite involved online they are still getting out there as well. I guess there is that risk too that people just hide behind the computer screen and it can end at that point.  |
| Deborah | Yeah I think that certainly the online mechanisms are useful and will continue to be so but they can’t replace old fashioned political organising and there’s something really important about having a room full of people talking together face-to-face about some of these important issues that we’re all working on. So we at UNICEF find that we need both.  |
| Sally | I think that seems to be the main message coming out from today, isn’t it? These tools are powerful but they might not end up replacing face-to-face connections, whether that be because of language barriers or pure access to internet, whatever it might be.  |
| Wayne | It maybe that people who go online are more committed. It’s a lot harder to actually sit down and write a report or a question or a statement than it is to actually get off your backside, so to speak, and go out into the street and protest. There’s a lot more thought that goes into something like that. So if you have got access you might get answers that are a little bit more meaningful perhaps, I’m not sure if that’s correct but it’s a thought.  |
| Sally | Another thought I think is the idea of whether you go online as yourself or whether you go online anonymously and the power that being anonymous can bring and that can be both positive and incredibly harmful as well, and I think that’s something else that maybe we should think about if anyone has any comments? |
| Wayne | Again it goes back to countries where there is no privacy and the issue that we found here in Christchurch is that people are sometimes reluctant to actually put something in writing or online because they don’t know who is going to be looking at it. Here we don’t have internet censors but many countries do and if they’ve come from that sort of background then they’re less likely to actually put themselves out there online so doing it anonymously might be a way around that.  |
| Moana | I was just thinking of the example of… So how people might participate online and I know that here in New Zealand we’ve been looking whether or not, when it comes to local body elections and even the general election, whether or not we should actually allow people to be able to vote online. And the example internationally of where they’ve tried that it in actual fact that hasn’t increased the number of people voting and the idea is that it would engage more younger votes to participate but that actually putting those kinds of things online doesn’t increase that participation. And so I agree with the rest of the panel that it’s going to have to be a mix between being able to participate online but then also actually getting off your… using your legs to get down to the voting poll to actually put in your ballot paper and so on. So I don’t think we’re going to find the answer just in one or the other, it’ll be a hybrid.  |
| Sally | One of my final thoughts, for contemplation perhaps, is we’re thinking about online here and online is reaching a global audience if you want it to I suppose, it doesn’t have to but it’s got the potential to do so and if that’s having any particular impacts on human rights or human rights activism in the local space, and I guess how those two work in tandem. Deborah, you might have some thoughts on that with UNICEF being an international organisation but you’re particularly within the New Zealand context. Have you seen any repercussions of using more online tools in this kind of global/local dichotomy?  |
| Deborah | Well certainly for us it enables us to more readily share evidence and information internationally so that we can draw on the work that UNICEF is doing around the world and use that information in our local advocacy. That’s probably the extent of my kind of experience of kind of tapping into the global work but I’m very focused on the domestic scene so I’m kind of drawing on the information and strategies internationally more than anything.  |
| Wayne | One of the positives that came out of that webinar we did a couple of weeks ago was that we had a global audience and that global audience had the ability to actually fire questions into the central organisers for us to answer, there were too many for us to actually answer in the time but we had that space afterwards so actually having that global audience was a major plus to disseminating the information.  |
| Sally | And getting that local story told more broadly. Well we’re probably running out of time for today so I’d like to say kia ora, thank you very, very much to all of our guests. Deborah thank you for beaming in from Wellington and for our listeners, please tune in again the third Wednesday of May which is the 18th of May or the following Sunday the 22nd of May and keep an eye on our Facebook page, we’ll be posting up links to the various online tools we’ve been talking about, the NPA, the UNICEF tools, maybe even Christina’s Wikipedia article, this is a show that works well in terms of Facebook promotion so keep an eye on that. Thank you very much.  |