RNW media | digital communities for social change

# OVERARCHING ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

CV, EI & SRHR Programmes.

Author: Walied Khalid

June 2020

# WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT?

This document forms the basis of the engagement approach for the Citizens' Voice, Economic Inclusion and SRHR programmes. It frames engagement within an RNW Media context and serves as a guide for all internal stakeholders to build a solid, common understanding of what engagement is, its main pillars, objectives, and methods.

This common understanding will lead to strengthening the strategic alignment among P&I teams in the HQ and regions, as well as other departments in RNW Media such as Business Development and Communication & Stakeholders.

The Overarching Engagement Approach outlines the main pillars of engagement, what each of them means and why they are important. Separate documents will be developed for in-depth strategies for each pillar.

# WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT IN THE RNW MEDIA CONTEXT?

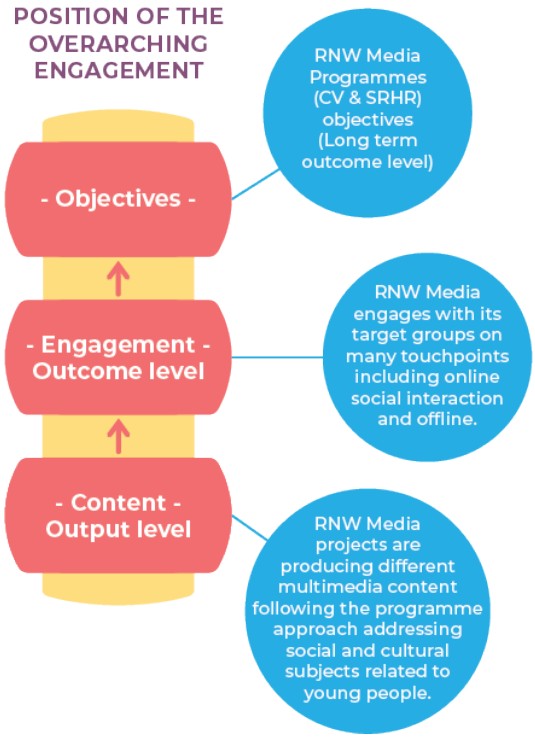
Engagement represents the two-way interaction between RNW Media online communities and their users as well as users among each other. Whereas most of the traditional media's "business-model" is based on broadcasting with users playing a passive role as "receivers", RNW Media's engagement approach positions users in the driving seat, giving them a highly active role in developing and deciding the direction of each discussion.

# THE POSITION OF ENGAGEMENT IN RNW MEDIA'S TOC

According to RNW Media's ToCs, the position of the overarching engagement approach is on the outcome level.

I.e. content per project represents our output (we publish content). Engagement represents the next layer which is on the outcome level (people engage with our content and we engage back - two-way interaction as well as users engage with each other) this process leads to achieving the programme's long-term outcome (see RNW Media ToC CV & SRHR).

This graphic illustrates the position of the overarching engagement approach within RNW Media based on the ToC.

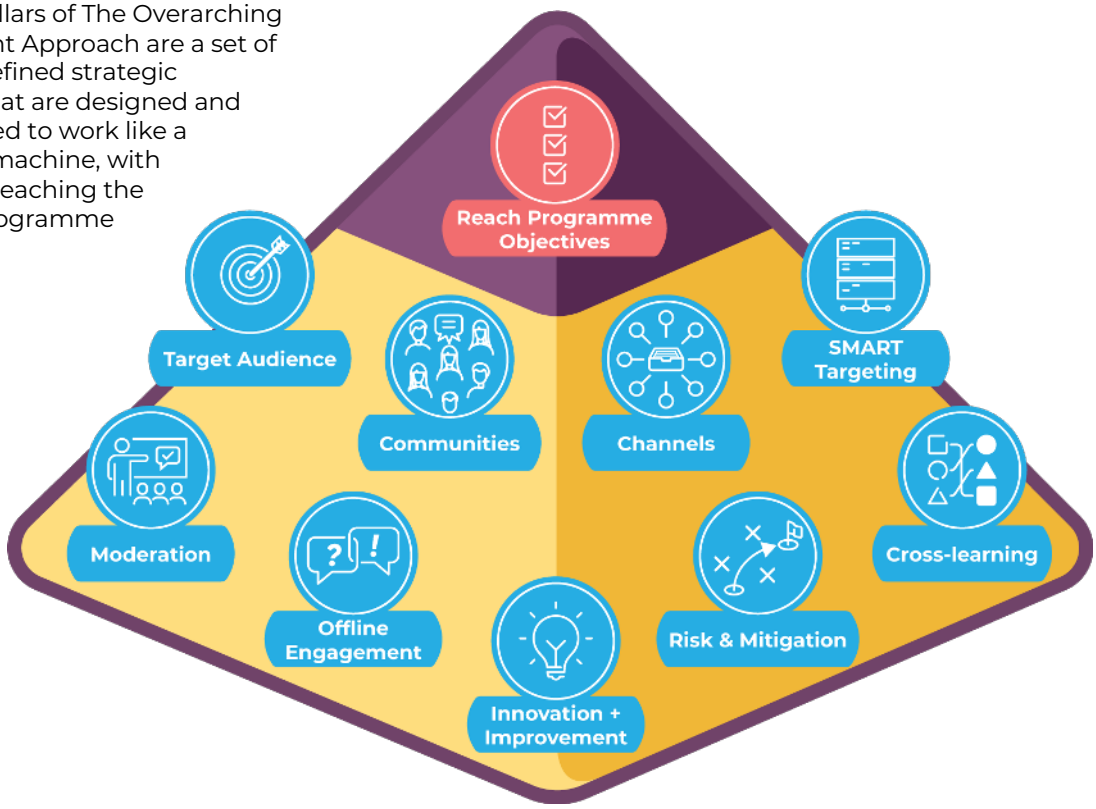


# OBJECTIVES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Reach short and long term programmes objectives.
- Build an effective, safe, and modern online and offline ecosystem that encourages young people to engage in topics that matter to them.
- Create strong strategic alignment between RNW Media's CV, EI and SRHR programmes.
- Create solid building-blocks for engagement; including processes and strategies that RNW Media can use to develop new programmes or generate new funding (see for example: Swedish Postcode Lottery Foundation project 2019-2020).
- Contribute to the long-term sustainability of the projects and the global network by offering strong engagement guidelines and strategies that ensure projects retain core values and brand identity after becoming independent.
- Increase efficiency, innovation and return on investments (ROI) across global operations by setting up global indicators with benchmarking criteria on engagement.
- Improve security and decrease risks for our community members as well as RNW Media's social media platforms.
- Enhance cross-learning and sharing of knowledge among global projects (south to south) as well as cross-programme.

# THE MAIN PILLARS OF THE OVERARCHING ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The main pillars of The Overarching Engagement Approach are a set of nine well-defined strategic elements that are designed and implemented to work like a fine-tuned machine, with the goal of reaching the strategic programme objectives.



# 1. TARGET AUDIENCE

Well-defined online and offline target audiences guide RNW Media in delivering relevant interventions including content, (social) platforms as well as offline events.

The success of our communities depend largely on content and engagement with our audience in both online and offline environments. In order to attract an audience, it is very important to have a well-defined target group as this will help us to meet young people where they are in terms of their key issues, language, technology and online access. Given that we target a specific age group, our communities must constantly evolve. To enable this process, we need to guarantee that our current community members remain connected and active, as well as ensure to continuously attract new users to our online spaces.

Therefore, it's important to develop interventions (content, activities, etc) to ensure that we maintain a diverse, well-balanced community that considers not just age but also other factors such as gender, location, background, etc. For example, a programmatic target could be: build an equal and diverse community (50% men - 50% women) age (15 - 30) location (#X rural vs #X urban areas).

**A well-defined target group is a joint effort that requires a programmatic framework. The framework is developed by the programme team and supported by other teams such as PMEL and digital team.**

## 1.1 Target audience vs beneficiaries

When working on challenging social norms, advocacy campaigns, and sensitive topics we must look beyond just our core beneficiaries and design interventions directed at other target groups that influence our beneficiaries. This will expand our impact.
As an example, the table below illustrates the relationship between target audience vs beneficiaries in connection with content around female genital mutilation (FGM) in Mali.

| Content | Target Audience | Beneficiaries |
|---|---|---|
| FGM in Mali | Young People in Mali | Girls and women affected by FGM in Mali |
| FGM in Mali | Parents or grandparents | Girls and women affected by FGM in Mali |
| FGM in Mali | Religious leaders in Mali | Girls and women affected by FGM in Mali |

**Recommendation:** all three programmes, in collaboration with RNW Media's PMEL and digital team, are planning to build a better segmentation model for our target group with a clear definition between the target audience and beneficiaries, etc. This is our next step.

# 2. COMMUNITIES

RNW Media defines a community as much more than just fans or followers. We want our communities to contribute to a world where young people in restrictive settings confidently claim their rights, assume their place in society, and shape a better future.

We connect people and ideas, establishing and maintaining relationships among young people despite differences and adding value to each other's lives in the online and offline spaces. Communities aim to celebrate diversity, promote inclusion and become part of bigger communities or movements.

The core communities will lead the discussion on our platforms and beyond, as well as influence other community members in order to amplify messages, ideas or beliefs.

## 2.1 The dynamics of a community (core vs non-core community)

Think of the core community as the direct followers on any platform. These people are directly connected with RNW Media. They receive regular updates such as content, surveys, events, etc. They also engage in discussions with other community members.

Each individual community member has the potential to transfer knowledge and attitudes to other online and offline communities or individual. This member/s expands RNW Media's reach and spreads RNW Media's values and beliefs to wider communities in their social circles.

It's vital to understand these dynamics as they will bring RNW Media's value proposition to the next level. How does it work?

In its simplest form - it happens when people share our content with their social circles via Facebook or WhatsApp or any other social platform. Also, when people interact (like, love, etc) or participate in the discussion on RNW Media's topics as this will also appear in their other social circles.

In its advanced form - it happens when people participate in discussions or advocate for values or beliefs shared on RNW Media's platforms. They originally learned about these values or beliefs from RNW Media's interventions.

At this stage, RNW Media interventions have reached a higher level - people's mindset level (i.e. attitude change which might lead to behaviour change) which will allow people to use this knowledge and values in many different situations and circumstances.

## 2.2 Engaged community vs followers vs potential wider community

Having a clear break-down of the engaged community vs followers vs potential wider community allows RNW Media to fully assess opportunities and develop wisely and accurate plans of its approach.
It will also help to explain to external stakeholders and donors our strategic thinking and the impact we can achieve.

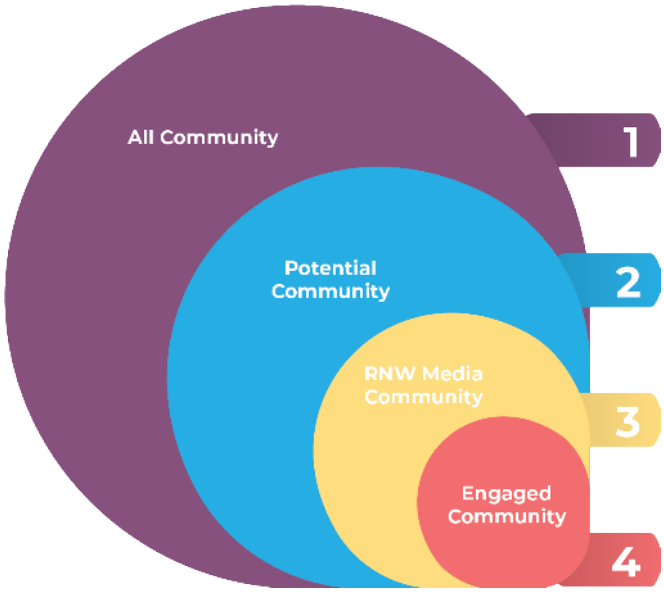
This graphic explains the different layers of community.

1 - In place X the total number of young people age 15 – 30 is 45% of the total society (**All community**).

2 - RNW Media "**potential community**" is 35% of the total society (external factors play roles in defining this number such as internet penetration, economy, etc).

3 - **RNW Media community** is all people who follow RNW Media projects on Facebook, YouTube, etc.

4 - **Engaged community** is the super users of RNW Media who engage constantly on many touchpoints / platforms.




## 2.3 Community guidelines

The community guidelines clearly reflect RNW Media's vision mission and core values of building inclusive communities for social change. The guidelines set up the rules of engagement between RNW Media moderators and community members, as well as between community members themselves.

RNW Media aims to build self-moderating communities where constructive, meaningful, and inclusive exchange is taking place. For in-depth information see community guidelines.

**Recommendation:** breakdown our work around "community" to gain better insight into the different aspects that are relevant/required in building/supporting online communities. Doing so will help us to develop comprehensive strategies and interventions that will bring our work to a higher level. This is our next step.

# 3. CHANNELS

As the digital landscape is growing rapidly with new channels emerging, and as young people's digital behaviors are also changing, it is now vital for brands to inject their unique voice in all or most of the communications channels used by the target groups.

This means that no matter when or where the audience chooses to engage with RNW Media content or services, whether it's via the website, mobile app, Facebook page, Twitter, etc, or at an offline event, they should have the same kind of experience.

## 3.1 Youth user-centered

A youth user-centered approach (putting young user first) helps to build a clear and optimal user journey for our target audiences. We optimise our platforms to align with the desired journey of users, based on analysis of how our target audience spends their time in RNW Media's spaces. It involves, for example, users starting in a mobile app, moving to the website and actually making contact or engaging via the discussion board or one of our social media channels. With this understanding in mind, all RNW Media channels are seamlessly integrated and the experience is fluid for the audience.

## 3.2 Channels strategy

Investing in developing individual strategies for each engagement channel will help RNW Media's projects move from general reach and engagement to more specific target sets that link to bigger programmatic objectives such as advocacy or challenging social norms.
A clear strategy should be in place not just for new emerging platforms but also for the existing ones, to help streamline our approachs (e.g. inclusive or gender approach) and make the most of each platform. RNW Media can then also explain its strategic use of each platform to stakeholders or donors and how our channels contribute to our various objectives. E.g. to show how we can influence government officials in XXX place by using Twitter. Or how we use Facebook to improve reach to the hardest-to-reach target group. Or using YouTube to challenge gender issues.

**Recommendation:** Build a clear channel strategy across projects, showing how the channel can be used and why? Then link it to programme thematic objectives e.g. gender, social norms, advocacy, etc. Please note: This is not reinventing the wheel, it's about capturing more clearly what our teams are doing best with channel/s then creating a standard strategy. This is not yet in place; this is our next step.

# 4. SMART TARGETING

The definition of SMART Targeting in the tech industry is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technology to predict the interests of website visitors and target them with relevant content and offers at optimal times in order to reach commercial objectives and goals.

RNW Media's CV, EI and SRHR programmes aim to use a SMART Targeting approach to build inclusive online communities by making clear decisions about what we want our members to be doing and then encouraging positive traits and stimulating constructive dialogue.

In this context, we can define SMART Targeting as: using a coherent integration of marketing tactics, digital channels, content and moderation to establish the desired conversation among the desired target group.

### 4.1 The importance of SMART targeting. And what is the added value?

In online discussions and particularly when content is controversial, sometimes one majority group dominates the discussion. Often this group is characterised by stereotyped or traditional conservative norms. The majority impose their point of view and undermine the opinion of other minority or marginalised groups. The result is a one-sided discussion which excludes a plurality of voices and discourages other (opposed) community members from participating in the discussion.

Applying SMART Targeting will help to build constructive and meaningful discussions driven by users. It's an innovative manner to seek social change among online communities in the current digital age. For in-depth information see Smart Targeting strategy.

## 5. MODERATION

For the majority of Silicon Valley, moderation explicitly refers to the process of identifying and deleting extremist comments/content. For RNW Media, moderation isn't just about removing the bad stuff, it's about generating a dialogue and making clear decisions about what we want our members to be doing and encouraging positive online behaviour.

Globally, over 2.8 billion people use social media monthly. Digital spaces can offer an alternative, private and anonymous setting to discuss sensitive or taboo subjects such as LGBT issues, women's rights, political issues or the aspirations of young people.

RNW Media is specialised in building such inclusive digital communities of young people for social change and moderation is one of its key USPs.

### 5.1 Moderation: thinking globally, acting locally

The moderation guidelines explain RNW Media's vision and set the boundaries that allow RNW Media's global team and partners to operate and make decisions for the benefit of the target group and the organisation, without having to seek a supervisor's approval every time.

The moderation strategy provides an overall strategic programmatic direction to RNW Media's global projects and contributes directly to the ToCs. For in-depth information see moderation strategy.

## 6. OFFLINE ENGAGEMENT

To ensure that the inclusive community objectives are met, it's vital to develop offline interventions that are fully integrated with the online activities. These offline interventions will complete the engagement circle (online and offline) and offer a good opportunity to reach the hardest to reach target group and encourage them to become a member of RNW Media online community.

Also, these offline events are a very important opportunity to bring young people's needs and interests directly to the attention of the decision and policymakers who attend. We see evidence of this in the youth-led debates in Yemen for instance and other RNW Media target countries such as DRC, Mali and Burundi, countries where young people's voices are rarely heard in public discourse.

# 7. INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Innovation in its modern meaning is a new idea, creative thought, or new imagining in the form of a device or method. Such innovation takes place through the provision of more effective products, processes, services, technologies, or business models that are made available to markets, governments, and society.

In the context of engagement, innovation for RNW Media's programmes is not limited to using or implementing a new digital tool, platform, technique or organising online or offline activities. It goes further to the creation of a new concept or approach or improvement in current processes as a whole. The goal of innovation is to create a positive and meaningful impact in the real life of young people which will be reflected, at the first stage, in their online and offline behaviors and, at a later stage, in the wider society.

**So far, RNW Media's programmes have no strategic framework for innovation (engagement related).**

This is the next step.

# 8. RISK AND MITIGATION

RNW Media works in restrictive settings where digital and physical security risks are present. Risks can come from various sources including government or gatekeepers' restrictions, financial or credit risk, lack of knowledge or experience, or weak processes and monitoring.

Each of these risks can damage or threaten RNW Media's global operations (engagement related) and lead to greater and more serious danger if we don't take the right measures or mitigations in time.

## 8.1 Government or gatekeepers' restrictions

Engagement plays an important role in addressing and amplifying sensitive or controversial themes. While content or platforms can be removed or blocked, interaction with and among people can't be easily stopped or eliminated.

Some of the topics RNW Media addresses such as politics, GBV, FGM, or abortion can be seen by the authorities as a threat to their power or influence on society. This could put projects at great risk and threaten team members and/or platforms.

Also, new and present threats have emerged from some of the global digital gatekeepers of ICT companies. Changing algorithms or controlling how information is distributed are some of the modern threats that could have a direct effect on reach and engagement. Measures and actions should take place in a timely fashion to mitigate such threats.

## 8.2 Financial or credit risk

As a global operation, it's important for RNW Media to have a good system in place that is fully transparent and well-organised for optimal operation. Marketing budget spends should be monitored by regional managers, engagement specialists, and finance, to ensure the annual marketing budget is fully spent on relevant content and activities.

The local marketing plans including activities and budget will be classified in separate documents, as each of RNW Media's projects has different fund resources, annual budgets, and objectives.

# 9. CROSS-LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Engagement with our target group is changing constantly. Technology is advancing quickly, user behaviours change rapidly, and communities' shape and size fluctuate. This means we must be flexible and able to adapt our approach based on shared knowledge and experience.

Cross-learning benefits the organisation as well as its individual employees by promoting diversity and enhancing company culture. It allows RNW Media's global engagement teams to explore new possibilities as they gain a better understanding of where they fit into the big picture and can lead to greater sharing, engagement and productivity.

The regional teams will learn from each other's experience and knowledge which will contribute to south to south exchanges / learning. Hilversum teams will learn more about local activities and planning. That will enable us to link local activities more closely to the overall programmatic approaches and strategies. For in-depth information see cross-learning.