



DIGITAL MEDIA IMPACT SUMMIT 2024

SUMMARY REPORT



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DMIS 2024 in Numbers

ATTENDANCE

88

Total participants

- RHRN2 23
- Masarouna 14
- WPS 1
- INNOVATION FUN-D 4
- Alumni 18
- Trainers 4
- Partners 24

34

Number of countries represented

RNW Media community members (Network + Trainers + Alumni)

55

Participants

OVERALL EXPERIENCE

8.8 ★

Internal Evaluation

9.1 ★

External Evaluation

90% CONSIDERED DMIS 2024 SUCCESSFUL



Space for **fruitful** conversations on **AI, digital and public interest media**, and **social impact**



Positive feedback from partners & participants

The sessions were **thought-provoking**



We **positioned** RNW Media as a **thought-leader & community builder**



FAVOURITE DMIS SESSIONS

External evaluation: All sessions were rated 4/5 or above

01

Thinking along:
Wicked problems
on AI

4.59 ★

02

The power of a
good question:
Critical prompting

4.50 ★

03

Sustainable AI:
the case of climate
change

4.47 ★

IMPACT OF DMIS ON OUR ORGANISATIONAL GOALS

1. Offered **clear insights** for the next steps on our **work on AI**
2. Helped **position RNW Media as a convener** in the field
3. Was **important for networking** with partners and funders
4. Helped **RNW Media's team** as a whole



INTRODUCTION

Public interest and independent Media are the backbone of Democracy. However, in the digital age, these essential pillars face an existential threat. As funding for media dwindles, journalism declines and leaves corruption unchallenged. Without credible, independent sources of information, misinformation spreads, societies divide, and political systems are challenged. Authoritarian regimes will, on their part, exploit these vulnerabilities to further their own cause.

In addition, it is concerning that a massive ecosystem of power with such deep impact on societies is run by a select few individuals. This alone undermines the main pillars of democracy. By controlling the tech scene, the leaders of the industry have too much influence on social and political decisions. Our political systems are heavily dependent on products offered by a few billion-dollar businesses. A former Whitehouse official recently told [New Yorker](#) that the influence of tech billionaires like Elon Musk on American politics is undeniable. Musk owns the SpaceX, and by extension the satellite internet that enables communication in Ukraine's war. As a result, he holds the decision-making power. The outcome of the 2024 American presidential elections is equally worrisome. As 'electoral authoritarianism' swipes over the world, the implications for global democracies are profound. Aside from a rhetoric that undermines trust in electoral processes, this trend threatens key institutions that uphold democracies, independent media being one of them.

In this context and while in fact ethical AI researchers are warning about the urgent risks of a runaway AI¹, policy makers are grasping at invisible threads in an attempt to contain tech. After almost a decade of advocacy, regulators finally see the urgent need to regulate the industry by demanding transparency and accountability. But tech is already intertwined with our lives, challenging independent media and affecting our information ecosystems, as a result shaping our realities.

To prevent the collapse of public interest and independent media, we urgently need innovative, locally relevant solutions and coordinated global action. RNW Media is committed to tackling those challenges.

The Digital Media Impact Summit

The Digital Media Impact Summit (DMIS) is RNW Media's signature international event. Held annually, DMIS serves as a platform for thought leaders, practitioners, and innovators to engage in dynamic discussions and collaborations addressing pressing challenges in digital media. This year, the summit was

¹ Gary Marcus, [the Urgent Risks of Runaway AI](#), 2023

particularly focused on the transformative intersection of artificial intelligence (AI), digital media, and social impact, spotlighting how AI can be harnessed to drive meaningful change but also looking at the potential risks and challenges it may pose to human rights.

DMIS united several members of the Vine, RNW Media's vibrant global community of public interest and independent digital media, media trainers and alumni from RNW Media's Training Centre (RNTC), and donor representatives, academic experts, and activists from over 34 countries. In multiple sessions, participants explored the ethical, social, and technological dimensions of AI in digital media, while considering its potential to both uplift and complicate global digital media ecosystems. We encouraged a groundbreaking dialogue that underscored the importance of inclusive and fair AI development.

RNW Media's Foundational Pillars of Media Development

The DMIS agenda is grounded in RNW Media's foundational pillars of media development, aligning with three main objectives: supporting global partners in building media partnerships for sustainable development, strengthening the capacities of local media (from infrastructure to media use for social impact) and sub-granting local journalism and digital media initiatives to safeguard information integrity.

Supporting Global Partners in Building Media Partnerships for Sustainable Development

Building media partnerships with global allies is crucial in advancing SDG 17. By collaborating with global partners, media organisations can pool resources, share expertise, and reach wider audiences, which is especially important for addressing issues like migration, social inequality, and human rights. These partnerships foster a shared commitment to ethical storytelling, bringing attention to marginalised voices and underrepresented communities that often lack visibility in mainstream media. Collaborative initiatives also enhance the quality and credibility of digital media content, reinforcing public trust in media as a tool for social impact. Ultimately, fostering partnerships among global players creates a network that can respond rapidly to emerging challenges, ensuring that media remains a powerful driver for change within the sustainable development landscape. By bringing together our networks of independent media, journalists and media makers, we are creating an opportunity

for the members of our network to connect and learn from each other's expertise in media. Many common context-related challenges such as censorship of information and access to reliable information sources are put to debate during our network meetings.

Strengthening the Capacities of Local Media

Strengthening the capacity of public interest and independent media is fundamental to building resilient media ecosystems that can advance freedom of expression, plurality and diversity of media ecosystems and underpin human rights and democracy. When public interest and independent media have access to the necessary infrastructure, training, and tools, they are better equipped to leverage media for advocacy, community engagement, and information dissemination. In regions where media freedom is restricted or infrastructure is limited, empowering local voices can transform communities by providing platforms for open dialogue and accountability. Media capacity-building also helps local organisations adopt digital and social media innovations, broadening their reach and effectiveness in promoting social issues. This empowerment fosters media independence and sustainability, allowing public interest and independent media to serve their communities long-term without relying on external support. Supporting local media capacities is thus a crucial investment in fostering robust information networks that can withstand external pressures and continue to contribute to development agendas. At RNW Media we deliver a wide range of capacity building activities, from trainings on the use of digital media for social change to equipping local media partners with tailor-made assessment tools such as a digital media context analysis framework and media viability assessment maps.

Sub-granting Local Journalism and Digital Media Initiatives to Safeguard Information Integrity

Sub-granting to local journalism and digital media initiatives is vital for preserving information integrity in an era increasingly plagued by mis-, dis-, and mal-information. Grassroots journalists often operate on the frontlines of their communities, addressing local issues and providing critical insights that are frequently overlooked by larger media outlets. By funding these initiatives, organisations empower local voices to produce accurate, context-sensitive reporting that counters false narratives and promotes trust in media. Supporting independent media also helps mitigate

the harmful effects of disinformation campaigns, which often target vulnerable communities with limited access to verified information. Additionally, locally driven media initiatives are uniquely positioned to build resilience against mal-information by fostering media literacy and engaging directly with audiences in culturally relevant ways. Sub-granting is therefore not just an investment in journalism but a strategic effort to strengthen democratic values, ensure transparency, and combat the erosion of trust in media systems worldwide.

The Innovation Fun-D is RNW Media's initiative designed to unleash the transformative power of digital media changemakers globally, showcasing our commitment to supporting public interest and independent media to transform their innovative ideas into real world solutions. Through our sub-granting mechanism, we support digital media initiatives each year, helping them innovate and accelerating their impact.

The Ethical Use of AI in Digital Media

The DMIS agenda is also aligned with RNW Media's AI-supported strategy which leads our initiatives in supporting local public interest and independent media to build awareness and skills on AI and utilize AI ethically and responsibly in content creation, curation, recommendation, moderation, distribution, promotion and audience analytics, ensuring that human-centred goals remain the focus. By facilitating knowledge sharing on AI's role in content production and distribution, DMIS emphasised building resilient, viable media ecosystems.

At DMIS 2024, the [Haarlem Declaration](#) was introduced as a collaborative framework to guide the ethical use of AI in digital media. Participants were invited to actively engage in refining the Declaration by contributing feedback during a two-week open review period. This collaborative effort aims to finalize a comprehensive, inclusive document that reflects diverse perspectives and ensures robust ethical standards in AI use. Rooted in shared responsibility, the Declaration emphasizes key principles, including ensuring human oversight in AI systems to prevent unchecked automation and safeguarding accountability. A practical tool introduced alongside it was an ethical AI checklist, designed to support organisations in applying these principles universally and responsibly. Together, these elements reflect RNW Media's commitment to a digitally inclusive world where AI serves as a force for positive transformation, equipping professionals and communities with the tools needed to navigate and thrive in an evolving digital landscape.

Expressing Gratitude to RNW Media's Partners and Donors

None of this would have been possible without the unwavering support and collaboration of our valued partners and donors, particularly the Nationale Postcode Loterij, and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which funds the Right Here Right Now 2 and Masarouna programmes in partnership with consortia led by Oxfam Novib and Rutgers International. Your shared commitment to fostering independent voices and championing safe, inclusive and reliable online spaces for young people, ensures that together, we can tackle the challenges threatening human rights globally. By combining expertise, resources, and a shared vision, you have enabled RNW Media and the broader DMIS community to amplify voices, safeguard information integrity, and promote human rights.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the first day, participants of DMIS had the opportunity to hear from global voices implementing AI-driven initiatives across diverse sectors. These sessions highlighted the importance of including underrepresented perspectives in AI, broadening the scope of the conversation beyond dominant narratives to ensure a holistic understanding of AI's potential and its limitations. Finalists of RNW Media's Innovation Fun-D – the annual sub-granting mechanism offered by RNW Media as a solution to support public interest and independent media – showcased their pioneering projects that demonstrate the real-world application of AI for social impact and with that we concluded the first day.

Day two of DMIS '24 built upon these discussions with a forward-looking vision for an ethical, equitable AI landscape. This involved assessing both the societal and environmental ramifications of AI adoption and exploring guidelines to foster responsible AI practices. Through collaborative workshops, participants aimed to develop actionable strategies for integrating AI in ways that advance human rights, support media viability and prioritise inclusivity.

This section outlines consolidated insights and recommendations gathered from various sessions and discussions that occurred during DMIS 2024. Content is classified into three main categories:

- **AI in Practice:** Application and implementation in media development, campaigns, digital content creation, and prompting strategies.
- **Ethics and Governance:** Collective AI narratives, inclusive AI governance, and digital literacy.
- **AI's Broader Impact:** social, environmental, and economic implications.

AI in Practice: Application and Implementation

AI is increasingly transforming sectors like media, campaigns, and digital content creation, offering opportunities to enhance efficiency, personalization, and engagement. In media, AI can streamline content creation, automate moderation, and personalize user experiences, while in campaigns, it enables targeted messaging, real-time analytics, and audience optimization. However, as AI becomes more embedded in these sectors, it is critical to apply ethical practices throughout its implementation.

Consolidated Insights:

- **AI for Social Impact:** AI tools like chatbots, content moderation tools, and educational platforms are effectively used to improve public health education, especially in sexual and reproductive health (SRH), by creating safe digital spaces, enhancing communication, and providing tailored information to underserved communities.
- **AI in Education and Socio-Economic Development:** AI integration in education (e.g., lesson planning and game recommendations) contributes to socio-economic transformation by improving access to learning and fostering better online safety and communication strategies.
- **Improving Campaigns with AI:** AI enhances campaign effectiveness by enabling personalized messaging, streamlining multimedia content creation, and utilizing real-time data analytics to track performance and optimize strategies.
- **Bias and Transparency in AI Use:** A critical challenge is addressing AI bias through diverse prompting techniques and performing “bias checks” to expose algorithmic bias. Transparency in data sources is also crucial for ensuring the reliability and accountability of AI responses.

Summary of Recommendations:

1. **Expand AI for Social Good:** Promote the use of AI tools to enhance public health education and socio-economic development, focusing on tailored content and digital safety, particularly in underserved regions.
2. **Leverage AI for Campaign Optimization:** Encourage the use of AI for personalized messaging, content creation, and real-time performance analytics to improve campaign effectiveness and audience engagement.
3. **Mitigate AI Bias:** Adopt diverse prompting techniques to expose biases, conduct bias checks on AI-generated content, and ensure transparency about data sources to improve the reliability of AI systems.

Ethics and Governance: Shaping Responsible AI Development

The ethics of AI are central to shaping a responsible governance ecosystem that ensures technology serves the common good. To achieve this, it is essential to establish inclusive frameworks that promote transparency, accountability, and fairness in AI development and deployment. One key element is fostering digital literacy, empowering individuals with the knowledge to understand, navigate, and critically assess AI's impact on their lives. Additionally, Ethical AI governance requires active collaboration among all stakeholders to create policies that prioritize social justice, data privacy, and environmental sustainability.

Consolidated Insights:

- **Ethical and Inclusive AI Reporting:** independent media play a vital role in ensuring AI narratives are transparent, inclusive, and focused on real-world problem-solving. It's crucial to amplify voices from marginalized communities, especially in the Global South, to ensure diverse perspectives are heard in AI discussions.
- **Building Ethical AI Frameworks:** Developing multi-stakeholder frameworks, ethical guidelines, and assessments is essential to guarantee transparency, fairness, and human agency in AI applications. Addressing algorithmic biases and promoting accountability is key to ensuring AI serves society equitably.
- **AI Literacy and Consumer Awareness:** Increasing public understanding of AI's impact, privacy concerns, and data ownership is critical. Media literacy programs should be tailored to local contexts and demographics, fostering critical thinking and digital literacy to combat disinformation and strengthen trust.
- **Promoting a Healthy Information Ecosystem:** In the face of disinformation, promoting accurate information through consensus messaging and active community engagement is vital. Ensuring that AI tools and media narratives promote truth, transparency, and inclusivity will help counter manipulation and provide a more informed public.

Summary of Recommendations:

1. **Enhance Media Responsibility in AI Reporting:** Journalists should prioritize transparency and inclusivity in AI stories, amplifying ethical AI initiatives and fostering positive

narratives that address real-world problems, especially from marginalized communities.

- 2. Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Foster partnerships between governments, corporations, NGOs, and communities to address ethical issues, promote accountability, and enhance digital literacy. Support local communities through community-based testing and political support for grassroots organisations.
- 3. Empower Consumer and Audience Engagement:** Increase consumer awareness of AI's societal impact and demand ethical standards in AI tools. Engage audiences in solution planning and foster active participation to ensure relevance, improve accountability, and reduce blind spots in AI development.
- 4. Advocate for Robust Regulations:** Push for globally-recognised regulations, such as the EU AI Act, to ensure AI governance is comprehensive and addresses gaps in both local and international policy-making.
- 5. Encourage Dialogue and Trust-Building:** Engage in open, respectful dialogues to promote critical thinking and media literacy, which will help combat disinformation and create a more informed society.

AI's Broader Impact: Social, Environmental, and Economic Consequences

AI's wider impact on society, the economy, and the environment is profound, with the potential to drive both positive change and significant challenges. However, AI should be harnessed to advance sustainable development, reduce environmental footprints, and foster economic growth that benefits all sectors of society. AI's impact must be aligned with global development objectives, addressing pressing challenges like poverty, climate change, and social justice, ensuring that its benefits are shared equitably and sustainably across generations.

Consolidated Insight:

- **Responsible Development and Deployment of AI:** requires transparent frameworks that address social, environmental, and economic impacts, particularly on vulnerable communities.
- **Collective Advocacy for Corporate Accountability:** Affected communities play an active role in shaping AI practices through partnerships with media and NGOs. Collective

advocacy for corporate accountability in AI's environmental impact is necessary, calling for policy changes.

- **Cross-sector Collaboration in Business Development:** should be encouraged to allow for shared resources, funding, and expertise, ensuring AI-driven initiatives are sustainable.
- **Enhancing capacity-building networks and providing training on critical skills:** like AI and community engagement will strengthen organisations' operational capabilities.
- **Flexible funding models:** are essential to support long-term stability and strategic growth for AI-focused initiatives, rather than just short-term project funding.

Summary of Recommendations:

1. **Sustainability in AI Practices:** Encouraging sustainable AI practices, such as using "eco-mode" prompting, advocating for regular model updates to ensure AI continues to evolve in line with ethical and environmental considerations, reduction of non-renewable resource usage in AI operations, particularly data centres.
2. **Promote Collaborative Business Development:** Support multi-stakeholder approaches for business development, allowing organisations to pool resources and collectively seek funding and support.
3. **Facilitate Talent Exchange and Capacity Building:** Establish networks for sharing expertise and providing training on AI, digital content creation, and community engagement to strengthen operational capacities.
4. **Encourage Flexible Funding Structures:** Advocate for funders to offer more flexible funding options that support long-term strategic capacity-building rather than just project-based funding, ensuring the sustainability of AI-driven initiatives.
5. **Funding Flexibility:** An appeal to funders for more flexible funding structures that allow for organisational costs and strategic capacity-building rather than project-only funding could enable long-term stability for media organisations.



IMPACT

DMIS engaged 88 participants from 34 countries, representing diverse groups such as RHRN2, Masarouna, and RNW Media community members. Interviews and participant feedback indicate changes in perceptions around AI and digitalization. This was a good opportunity for partners and members from the Vine to connect, share, and learn how AI can be adapted to address local realities. Nearly 77% of attendees that were interviewed referenced AI as a transformative tool, signifying a notable shift from general curiosity to informed discourse. 62% of attendees interviewed reported a shift in attitude toward AI, moving from skepticism or unfamiliarity to recognising its potential for driving social impact

This collaborative space also allowed partners to showcase how RNW Media's training and technical support has enhanced their work. For instance, Lulit Yonas, Programme Coordinator from TaYA, a RNW Media partner in Right Here Right Now 2 in Ethiopia, shared that integrating AI "has helped us to quicken our reach to young people," adding, "by using these digital tools, we'll reach young people at a faster pace and in larger numbers." Others praised and shared with other DMIS attendees about how capacity-building workshops conducted by RNW Media had tangible benefits in the work that they, especially around campaign strategies and combating misinformation. Bringing together members of the RNTC alumni and partners also offered an opportunity for colleagues at RNW Media to understand what might be some localized needs that need to be incorporated in their capacity strengthening interventions.

Testimonials highlighted the diversity of voices and perspectives, with Miguel Morachimo from the Mozilla Foundation observing, "I think no one has the right answers in this space, but coming from a media environment where AI seems to be such a divisive topic...being in a space where people are critical in a healthy way about AI and its implications is a change of environment." Morachimo's words were shared by other partners who acknowledged a heightened awareness of AI's potential and challenges, particularly its ethical implications and application for social change. There was a curiosity and critical thinking of participants, showcasing a shift from scepticism to informed exploration of AI. For instance, Christine Mahana from Raseef22 in Lebanon emphasized AI's dual role in empowering communities while warning against its misuse in online narratives.

Participants engaged in panels and workshops that explored AI as an ethical tool for translation, storytelling, and media creation, all contributing to an environment where social change can flourish. One takeaway was aptly summarized by Kevin Oyugi from Centre for the Study of the Adolescent (CSA), a Right Here

Right Now 2 partner in Kenya, who noted that AI tools “can help you brainstorm ideas for the work you want to do...[and] automate functions for you, but it will never replace you.” This insight, echoed by many attendees, underscored the importance of thoughtful, responsible AI use—an idea that found space for nuanced discussion at DMIS.

The summit’s collaborative platform facilitated discussions on data ethics, digital literacy, and the environmental impacts of digital media. For example, Line Itani from Raseef22, an RNW Media partner in the Masarouna programme in Lebanon, shared that exploring the environmental effects of AI was “eye-opening,” encouraging her to reconsider her team’s digital consumption. This collective reflection underscores RNW Media’s commitment to sustainability, promoting responsible digital practices as part of a broader, community-driven approach to ethical media transformation.

The summit highlighted RNW Media’s focus on Media Viability and Digital Transformation. Jacob Brunner from RFSU in Sweden, who collaborates with RNW Media through the Digital Sexuality Education (DSE) programme in Georgia, remarked on the critical need to “put content where young people actually are” to ensure their engagement. Brunner’s insight points to RNW Media’s adaptable, data-driven approach, where partners create accessible, youth-oriented content to bridge information gaps in restrictive settings. Brunner’s renewed perspective on creating context-sensitive digital solutions for SRHR education is the cornerstone of a convening like DMIS, where an evolving mindset underscores an attitudinal shift towards embracing technology with caution and purpose.

This commitment to safe, relevant digital spaces was echoed by Elyas Khan, Director at Manasati30, RNW Media’s partner in the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) programme in Yemen, who noted, “we provide a safe space for women where they can interact and work out with our social workers.” For RNW Media, enabling partners like Manasati30 to create secure digital environments is a key strategic outcome, offering individuals in high-risk regions the means to access essential services and information.

“Thinking more broadly as a philanthropy and as funders, we also need to acknowledge that AI is a field where it’s really expensive to participate for a lot of our partners. So, this puts the weight on us to precisely contribute to those efforts. And it’s even more pressing for us to join forces and act collectively in trying to support this” - Miguel, Mozilla Foundation



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



RIGHT HERE
RIGHT NOW



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