



Engagement



Women's Regional
Consortium

**Quarterly Zine
July-September
2024**



INTRODUCING OUR QUARTERLY ZINE ENGAGEMENT EDITION

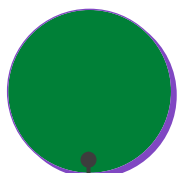
By Megan McClure | WRDA

Several pieces in this Zine reflect on the vitalness of engagement. As funding pressures crowd in and the global outlook for peace looks bleak, the work of enabling our member's activism has never been more important.

Our first piece from FWIN tackles this head on with a guide for ensuring our organisation's communications are as effective as they can be. looks at the impact of the Spring Budget and offers a brief analysis. The piece from WRDA offers a practical way for women to have their voice heard on what our response to war and conflict should be. Women's Centre Derry reflects on how Engagement is the glue that keeps us all together. We end this zine with a piece from WomensTec celebrating their involvement in a cross-border initiative involving 70 women tackling gender stereotypes through a series of community engagement activities and workshops focused on non-traditional skills.

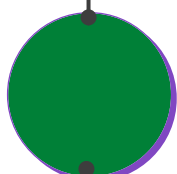
We hope you find the information contained in this edition useful as we continue to ensure a voice for women from disadvantaged and rural areas.

IN THIS EDITION



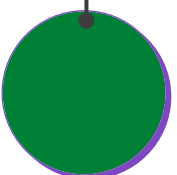
FWIN

Creating an Engagement-First Communications Strategy For Your Organization



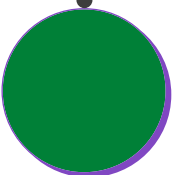
WRDA

How should Feminists Respond to War and Conflict? Have Your Say.



Women's Centre Derry

Engagement is the Glue that keeps us together



WomensTec

Cross border initiative tackles women's gender stereotypes



CREATING AN ENGAGEMENT-FIRST COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

By Cassie Jane | Foyle Women's Information Network

When I stepped into the role of Communications, Policy, and Engagement Officer at Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN), **I knew that one of my first priorities would be to rebuild our communications approach from the ground up.** Communication is at the heart of what FWIN does—it connects our members, empowers their voices, and amplifies our impact across the community. But like many organizations, we were facing the challenge of keeping our engagement dynamic and relevant in an ever-evolving digital landscape.

For those of you who might be reviewing or refreshing your own strategies, **I want to share some of the key steps we've taken at FWIN and how we've moved toward an engagement-first communications strategy.** My hope is that this overview will offer some ideas and inspiration for how you can rethink your approach to engaging your audiences.

Step 1: Assessing the Landscape

The first step in building any strong strategy is understanding where you currently stand. For FWIN, this meant looking at how we were using our existing communications channels and identifying areas for growth.

We had some strong foundations—our Facebook engagement was high, and our weekly bulletin reached over 1,000 women. However, other channels, such as Instagram and Twitter, were underutilized, and our website felt outdated and lacked interactivity. It became clear that we needed to focus on both revitalizing the platforms that were lagging and optimizing the ones that were already performing well.

This review process is something I'd recommend for any organization. Take the time to look critically at your platforms: where are you seeing engagement, where is it falling off, and how can you better serve your audiences across different demographics?

Step 2: Tailoring Content to Maximize Engagement

Once we had a clearer view of our communications landscape, the next step was tailoring our content to ensure we were reaching and engaging the right audiences on each platform. Every channel serves a different purpose, and one of the biggest lessons we've learned is the importance of **creating platform-specific content**.

For example, **Instagram** offers an opportunity to engage younger audiences, so we're shifting toward more visual and video content to tap into that demographic. On **Facebook**, we're reintroducing the highly successful **Chatty Women** live feature, a godsend for members during Covid-19, which allows members to engage in real-time conversations. Meanwhile, **LinkedIn** will become our professional front, showcasing our impact and fostering relationships with funders and partners.

The key takeaway here is that **one-size-fits-all content doesn't work**. Different platforms attract different users, and it's crucial to tailor your messaging accordingly to keep those audiences engaged.

Step 3: Revamping Traditional Communication Tools

In addition to our social media efforts, we also recognized the need to refresh some of our more traditional communication tools. While digital channels are essential, there are still members who rely on **offline communications**. This is where our **weekly bulletin and bi-monthly newsletter** come in. However, we quickly realized there was some overlap between these channels, so we've streamlined the content to ensure each serves a specific purpose. Moving forward, the newsletter will transition to being entirely offline for our older members, allowing us to focus our digital energy on the weekly bulletin and website. We're also introducing a subscription renewal process to make sure we're only sending postal updates to those who really want them. This is a simple way to keep costs down while ensuring our resources are used effectively.

For any organization, it's worth considering how your traditional and digital communications can work together. You don't want duplication, but rather complementarity between channels that allows you to serve all your audiences—whether they're online or not.

Step 4: A Dynamic, Interactive Website

A modern communication strategy can't thrive without an engaging website. Ours was functional but static, so we're in the process of transforming it into a more dynamic platform where members can access real-time updates, register for events, and even contribute to a new **member blog**.

We're moving to a platform that allows us to make these changes in-house, giving us more flexibility and control. Our goal is to turn the website into an **interactive hub** for our members—something more than just an informational resource, but a space where they feel connected to FWIN in real time.

This leads to an important consideration: **your website should reflect the vibrancy of your organization**. If it's static or difficult to navigate, it could be disengaging your audience. Investing time and resources in improving your website's functionality and design will pay off in member engagement.

Step 5: Measure and Refine

A strategy is only as strong as the feedback you receive. That's why, at FWIN, we're committed to regularly reviewing our communications efforts through **quarterly analytical reports**. By monitoring engagement levels across platforms, we can see what's working and what isn't—and we're not afraid to make changes when necessary.

For any organization, it's vital to **track your progress and remain flexible**. What works today might not work in six months, so continuously evolving your strategy based on real-time feedback is key to maintaining engagement.

As I continue my journey as FWIN's Communications, Policy, and Engagement Officer, I'm excited to see how these changes unfold. Engagement is more than just a buzzword—it's the foundation for meaningful connection and community building. By focusing on engagement-first communications, we hope to better serve our members and continue to grow FWIN's reach and impact.



HOW SHOULD FEMINISTS RESPOND TO WAR AND CONFLICT? HAVE YOUR SAY.

By Megan McClure | WRDA

Our members are a key part of WRDA, they keep us relevant and ensure we are working on the issues which really matter to grass roots women. We keep our members up to date with the latest developments in the wider women's sector and provide them with opportunities to publicise their own work in our [ezone](#), [newsletter](#) and [blog](#). Through our [member's events](#) and organised campaigning we create an accessible path for women to engage in activism.

Enabling women to engage in activism is vital to the health of the feminist movement but also to society in general. **Feminist perspectives on war and conflict put women at the heart of conflict resolution and build lasting peace by building gender equality.** As conflicts rage around us, providing avenues for these views has never been more important.

If you have a feminist view on war and conflict we want to hear from you!

What should the feminist response to war and conflict be?

Genocides are currently occurring in Gaza and Xinjiang, with conflicts raging in Ukraine, Yemen, Sudan and South Sudan to name only a few. In Northern Ireland we are still dealing with the legacy of the Troubles Conflict quarter of a century after the signing of the Agreement. In all cases women are disproportionately impacted. WRDA are keen to host different feminist perspectives on this pressing issue.

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Guidelines for contributing:

- Should be between 300-1500 words
- Should be in Microsoft Word format or a format compatible with Microsoft Word
- If you have any images you would like to use in your piece please check the copyright
- Please send images in JPEG or PNG format
- Must align with WRDA's ethos and values

Send your piece to info@wrda.net. **If you have an idea for the series but aren't sure how to start or would like help, please contact our Communications and Membership Worker, Megan, who will be happy to assist you.** You can contact her on info@wrda.net.



ENGAGEMENT IS THE GLUE THAT KEEPS US TOGETHER

By Rayna Downey | Women's Centre Derry

Engagement is the glue that keeps us all together without it, communities, families and governments would cease to exist, but engagement in the current climate is not easy. It's getting harder and harder for people to engage services such as Respite Care, SEN Services, Domiciliary Care, Educational Services, Mental Health Services and Social Work Support. All of these services have been dramatically reduced due to a lack of funding, causing long waiting lists and limited resources, for these already overworked and over stretched sectors.

The Community and Voluntary Sector have a front row seat to the carnage that this lack of funding has created. We are seeing women and families struggling to provide the basic essentials for their families, changes to the benefits system are creating poverty and distress. We have more people than ever using food banks, the Winter fuel payments

for pensioners is being taken away for a lot of our elderly and we are still very much in a Cost of Living Crisis.

Women's Regional Consortium recognises this and works tirelessly with Policy Makers, Elected Officials and Government Agencies to show the impact of this on Women and Families. We rally, we campaign, we respond to consultations, we create impact reports to influence change. **We are the voice of these families, we have to ensure that their stories and their struggles are being heard and understood by the government officials that they have elected.**



CROSS BORDER INITIATIVE TACKLES WOMEN'S GENDER STEREOTYPES

By Amy Nolan | WomensTec

WOMEN'STEC were delighted to have been involved in a cross-border initiative involving 70 women from County Louth, Newry & Down, and surrounding regions. The project has successfully tackled gender stereotypes through a series of community engagement activities and workshops focused on non-traditional skills.

Funded by the International Fund for Ireland's Communities in Partnership Programme and coordinated by the Centre for Cross Border Studies, the Cross-Border: enACTing cooperation (CBenACT) project has facilitated a new collaboration between Creative Spark in Dundalk and WOMEN'STEC in Newry.

This 18-month initiative aimed to bring women from both sides of the border together to discuss common challenges and interests. Workshops were held in Creative Spark's FabLab in Dundalk, led by its skilled technicians, as well as in the Lislea Community Centre, facilitated by tutors from WOMEN'STEC.

One of the key outcomes of the project was the establishment of a strong partnership between Creative Spark and WOMEN'STEC, who worked closely to identify the necessary skills to deliver impactful cross-border initiatives. Both organisations are eager to expand their collaboration and explore new long-term cross-border projects.

The project culminated in a showcase event at the Four Seasons Hotel in Carlingford, where stakeholders from both communities gathered to celebrate the project's achievements and discuss the potential for future partnerships. The event emphasised the importance of ongoing cross-border collaboration, inspiring participants to continue fostering cooperation across the border.

Additionally, the project introduced an innovative online training program, aimed at promoting best practices in cross-border initiatives and ensuring the sustained success of the CBenACT project. The program has generated significant interest and will serve as a resource for other organisations looking to undertake similar cross-border efforts.

WOMEN'STEC is dedicated to promoting gender equality in the workforce by providing women with the skills and confidence to pursue careers in non-traditional sectors.

Helen Kerr, Head of Business Development at WOMEN'STEC, commented: "This project has provided WOMEN'STEC with an excellent opportunity to strengthen our capacity for cross-border collaboration. Our work with Creative Spark opened up numerous possibilities for women in remote border communities, allowing them to forge relationships and gain skills that would otherwise be out of reach." She added, "The groundwork laid by this project will lead to lasting, impactful cooperation, bringing more opportunities to empower women and communities on both sides of the border. We have exciting plans to continue building on this partnership with Creative Spark."

Ciara Breen, Creative Spark Downtown Hub Manager, remarked: "This initiative has been a major milestone for Creative Spark. We've long admired the work of WOMEN'STEC, and this project gave us the chance to solidify our relationship and pilot joint cross-border programs. We're excited about the future of this partnership."

Anthony Soares, Director of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, also praised the collaboration, saying: "The CBenACT project has allowed us to advance our mission of enhancing cross-border cooperation. We're thrilled with the results, especially the new partnership between Creative Spark and WOMEN'STEC. We look forward to launching a unique online training program that will help other organisations establish sustainable cross-border collaborations to benefit communities across the region."

To celebrate the successful conclusion of our collaboration, three special celebration events were hosted for all participants. These gatherings took place in Lislea Community Centre, Creative Spark in Dundalk, and at WOMEN'STEC's headquarters in North Belfast. Each event offered participants the opportunity to showcase the DIY skills they've acquired in joinery, demonstrating their newfound confidence and expertise. The celebrations also provided a chance for everyone to reflect on the journey they've taken throughout the program, sharing experiences and stories of personal growth and achievement. It was a fitting tribute to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved.

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