

# Thomson Foundation



Annual review



**2019**

## THE POWER OF TRUTH

Ensuring journalists  
everywhere can report  
the facts

Pictured: Pesha Magid  
reports from Baghdad's  
Tahrir Square, the heart  
of popular protest

**#TFnothingbutthetruth**

**“We are proud to help thousands of journalists across the world every year to ensure they can provide the type of honest, factual media which can hold power to account.”**

– Viscount Chandos,  
chairman of the foundation

Thomson  
Foundation 

# 01

## ON THE COVER

Hundreds of frontline journalists have passed through Thomson Foundation's prestigious summer course in London, including Pasha Magid currently reporting from Iraq

Words: Beth Colson  
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# PS.

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### LOOKING AHEAD

We shall be running substantial projects in Sudan, Belarus, Tajikistan and Argentina, among others, in 2020

## “Our London and Berlin operations are pooling knowledge and resources for greater impact”



**During 2019 we started to see a gratifying payback on our recent investment in the expansion and future-proofing of our work to help more journalists acquire the skills needed to preserve and strengthen honest reporting.**

Since 2017 the foundation has launched its German partner organisation, Thomson Media gGmbH, and invested heavily in an e-learning platform – both serving to widen the reach of our offering.

We can report that, during 2019, our largest-ever project, OPEN Media Hub (OMH), was extended

for another 13 months and so will run for a fifth year, overseen from Berlin by Thomson Media.

This review details how it has helped to defend independent media in 17 countries around the European Union (pages 32-35).

Toward the back of this review is a look ahead to activity in 2020 (page 40), which shows that, as well as the OMH, Thomson Media will now also be running substantial projects in Belarus, Tajikistan and Argentina, among many others.

E-learning, meanwhile, is a growing component of our courses. It provides the ability to reach more beneficiaries, at low cost, and measure the results of training quickly and effectively. There is no better example than a case study in this review (pages 18-19) of our work in Rwanda in 2019 to train journalists in how to make the most of the country's Access to Information legislation.

An online course served as an entry qualification for the course, with successful completion depending on making a freedom of information request. The online component increased participation to more than 60 – six times the reach of a standard workshop – and clearly identified the gaps which needed to be filled in the journalists' knowledge.

Gratifyingly, our London and Berlin operations

are pooling knowledge and resources for greater impact.

The Thomson Foundation in London secured a substantial project from the UK's Department for International Development toward the end of 2019 to train journalists in Sudan to report on macro-economic issues affecting the country during the transition to democracy. Our expertise, and long track record, in the country is also helping Thomson Media to secure funding to help rebuild the media in Sudan following the uprising which led to a change of government.

And our similarly long track record in the Balkans means both the London and Berlin operations secured projects from the British government and European Union respectively to defend independent media in the region.

We are proud to help thousands of journalists across the world every year to ensure they can provide the type of honest, factual media which can hold power to account. In turn, we are able to do this because of the outstanding commitment of our teams in London and Berlin and of the many exceptional international journalists and trainers who work for us on a project basis.

**Viscount Chandos, chairman,  
Thomson Foundation**



**The "Power of Truth" is the theme of this review – a testament to our alumni and competition winners who report fearlessly from some of the world's toughest datelines.**

From Iraq to Sudan, South Africa and Sri Lanka, we relay examples of their work, and the invaluable skills learned from the Thomson Foundation which have helped them in their day-to-day jobs.

But the theme also encapsulates the spirit in which our trainers work in many countries to encourage journalists to seek out the truth as well as supporting those wishing to report honestly and factually.

Given that truth is currently under siege across the media, we are now working in more ways than ever to reach journalists who need our help and support to provide basic skills, advanced newsgathering techniques or advice on making news businesses more sustainable.

**The review illustrates the three basic channels through which we provide help:**

- We work at scale on large, multi-year programmes funded by governments to build journalism and business capacity in the news industry.
- We work directly as a social enterprise with media organisations to improve the skills of their staff – charging a fair rate for contemporary expertise.
- Through our e-learning platform, we now

reach thousands of individuals a year who do not receive training paid for by a larger organisation.

There is a growing demand for all three channels but the last one has shown that there is a seemingly-limitless appetite for professional storytelling skills in an age when anyone can find a voice by self-publishing online.

To that end we are examining the launch of a recognised online qualification – primarily for journalists in low-income countries – which will give them essential skills for multimedia storytelling, how to connect with an audience and any business knowledge which they may also require.

Technology may be blamed for facilitating attacks on truth through social media. But technology is also the solution to raising standards of journalism training globally through online learning as well as providing the tools, like smartphones, for multimedia storytelling.

We work in 30 to 40 countries a year – and acknowledge that each has its own journalistic culture. But we strive to make the common currency an understanding of what it takes to produce honest journalism and quality storytelling.

**Nigel Baker, chief executive,  
Thomson Foundation**



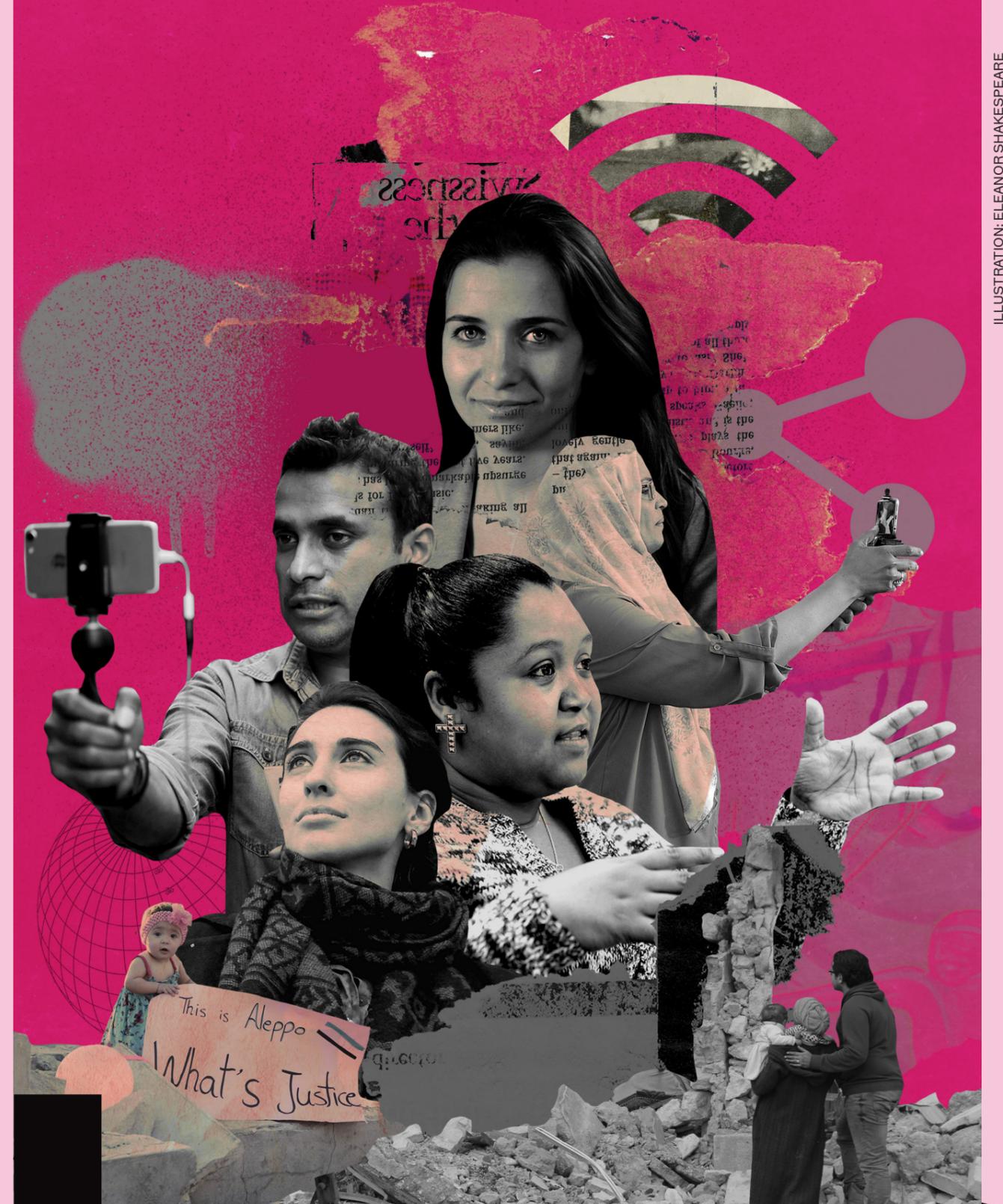
Hundreds of frontline journalists have passed through Thomson Foundation's prestigious summer course in London.

The course aims to sharpen reporting skills and teach the latest digital journalism techniques.

In 2019, alumni used the skills they acquired to report from the world's most challenging datelines – and pass their knowledge to others.

#TFnothingbutthetruth

# Truth Seekers



# Reporting from



## the heart of Iraq's deadly protests

**Pasha Magid** became the trusted voice from Baghdad for many of the world's broadcasters and newspapers after an outbreak of anti-government protests in 2019.

# W

orking as a freelancer, Pasha Magid spent months on the streets providing coverage for international news organisations unable to send their own journalists to the city.

Before taking part in Thomson Foundation's 2016 summer course in London— where participants undergo a month's intensive practical training, followed by a week's work placement at a leading UK news organisation — she saw herself primarily as a print journalist who had "just experimented" with different media formats.

But all that changed when the foundation's summer course helped her develop her multimedia skills – with mobile journalism (mojo) a major highlight.

"The course gave me the confidence to branch out into other types of media and experiment with the way I tell stories," she says.

It was pivotal to the work she did from Baghdad, making videos and reporting live on the French news channel, France 24, as well as the US network, PBS.



IMAGE: ED GILES/GETTY IMAGES

Other organisations that she's worked for include *The Independent* and *Sunday Times* in the UK, and *The National* in the UAE.

Pasha was selected to attend the summer course by her then editor at Mada Masr, an independent Egyptian news website.

The media outlet had been given funding by Index on Censorship, a London-based organisation campaigning for freedom of expression, and Open Society Foundations, an international grantmaking network, to send

a journalist who would transfer their skills to other journalists.

She was able to share what she had learned about creating good quality video content to help encourage colleagues in Egypt to think differently about storytelling.

Pasha also values how the course gave her the opportunity to connect with journalists from around the globe.

"Being able to sit, talk and learn from them is

something I'll always be grateful for," she says.

"I really deeply appreciated everything I learned on the Thomson Foundation summer course and can thank it for helping launch me to where I am today," she continues.

Pasha has been reporting in the Middle East since 2012, covering a wide variety of stories including the intensive 28-day campaign of civil resistance, as part of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, to gender, politics, culture, as well as business and economics in Turkey.



**“I had to do something to help the Sudanese people”**

# Sudan's people power

The skills that Sudanese broadcaster, **Rania Haroun**, learned on the foundation's summer course played a direct role in helping her — and others — report on the revolution which gripped her country in 2019.

**Rania had just moved to the UK with her family when she had the chance to take part in the 2018 summer course in London.**

She says the course was "transformative", enriching her practical experience as a journalist, as well as introducing her to top media industry experts.

Her work placement at London-based commercial broadcaster, ITV, gave her connections which later led to them broadcasting some of the videos she made about the protests in Sudan.

The deadly uprising in Sudan began a few months after the summer course, leading to the

fall of Sudan's long-time president, Omar al-Bashir, and a dramatic change in government.

It was then that Rania felt compelled to return home to pass on her knowledge of mobile journalism (mojo).

"I had to do something to help the Sudanese people, so I arranged to do some journalism workshops," she says.

"Having helped people report the Sudanese revolution is highly rewarding," Rania says, also describing Thomson Foundation's post-training supervision and guidance as "invaluable".

She continues to hold live mojo training sessions on Facebook, making short, compact,

shareable videos so they are easily viewable, given the country's limited internet connectivity.

Rania first came to the notice of the foundation in 2016 when she took part as a local TV journalist in its media capacity building programme in Sudan.

She says while her first Thomson Foundation experience "broadened her horizons", the London summer course took her abilities to deal with issues in her home country to a completely new level.

She says she felt "honoured to be taught by some of the most famous journalists worldwide" on the course, which inspired her both professionally and personally.

# “I never expected to reach this point for a film that started with a dream for freedom”

When **Waad Al Kateab** began filming in an Aleppo hospital being destroyed by government forces, little could she imagine that her work would one day be nominated for an Oscar.



**F**

ilming in her hometown of Aleppo, in Syria, was "an attempt to create hope and record the story of people who were suffering while death surrounded them," Waad says.

'For Sama' takes the form of a love letter to her first child who was born during the brutal siege. The 95-minute documentary, commissioned by Channel 4 in the UK, where Waad now works as a producer, and PBS Frontline in the US, is the result of over 500 hours of Waad's footage.

It tells the story of her 'journey through love, motherhood, war and survival.' The film is Waad's attempt to explain to her daughter

why she chose to stay behind in Aleppo, while others chose to leave.

An Oscar nomination is just one of her many award successes of 2019. For Sama also picked up a BAFTA for "Best Documentary" and was nominated in three other categories.

Waad took part in the Thomson Foundation summer course in 2018 and received a special recognition award from the foundation in 2017 at the UK Foreign Press Association Awards for her coverage of the Syria conflict. She says the ongoing association she has with the foundation is invaluable.



At just 26, **Robin-Lee Francke** is no stranger to violence against women, having been pistol-whipped, beaten and shot at in the course of her work as a crime reporter in Cape Town, South Africa.



IMAGES: @DANZONGLOATR



Also on the **2019** summer course:



**Munira Al Rabiah, Kuwait**  
News editor,  
Kuwait News Agency



**William Boateng, Ghana**  
Radio broadcaster



**Abdulaziz Al Mamari, Oman**  
Online content specialist



**Musallam Al Mahri, Oman**  
Economics news editor,  
Oman News Agency

Her award-winning journalism for the *Daily Voice* newspaper earned Robin-Lee a place on the 2019 Thomson Foundation summer course – and a chance to highlight violence against South African women on a global platform.

*The Guardian* in London published two of her articles on the subject during her one-week work placement, which coincided with thousands of women marching on the South African parliament in Cape Town over government inaction.

Back home, Robin-Lee is part of an all-female reporting team. Her stories include the safeguarding needs of young people trapped between gangs and the law, and a former drug addict turned addiction counsellor's drive to reintegrate drug users back into society.

Robin-Lee says the course changed the way she sees stories. She finds it easier to consider subjects from different angles and it has helped her develop a stronger eye for images.

It also helped her realise the extent of her potential as a journalist. "It had me buzzing with excitement every day," she says.

For her, attending the London summer course was an entire "bucket list experience", as it combined leaving her home country for the first time with the opportunity to learn new skills as a young journalist.

Months later, she is still regularly referring to her notes, determined to put into practice what she had learned on the course.

She wants to use her work to make a difference and serve the public interest. Her editor describes her as "going places" and possessing "that winning quality of being passionate about both her job and her community."

"The Thomson Foundation course is a gem to someone like me," she enthuses.

**KC Saranga** returned to Sri Lanka after the summer course and promptly set up "Ada Derana TV Mojo Force" to cover the 2019 presidential elections.

He set up the project at Ada Derana TV news channel, where he works, to promote mobile journalism in Sri Lankan media. Previously, covering voting across the country had been too expensive but training journalists to use smartphones to report from often-remote polling stations gave a new dimension to coverage.

"We were able to create a new approach in television news reporting by obtaining information speedily through the mobile journalist network spread throughout Sri Lanka," he says.

But KC says it wasn't a one-off. TV Derana now regularly receives news reports made with mobiles from all over the country and used mojo to cover the South Asian Games in Nepal in December, 2019.

His wider aim is to "create a credible method for newsrooms to instantly obtain information about incidents occurring across the country."

As well as working with journalists and bloggers, KC is teaching mojo and storytelling skills to schoolchildren, university students, government institutions and non-governmental organisations with the aim of events being captured wherever they happen in Sri Lanka.

KC's first connection with the foundation was as a finalist in the international mojo competition in May 2019 for his report on one of the biggest environmental and socio-economic crises of rural Sri Lanka – the human-elephant conflict.



# Journalism after genocide

**When the Thomson Foundation showed Rwandan journalists how to make the most of their country's Access to Information Act, activity shot up.**

Journalists began to ask for information on everything from mining deaths to food safety – getting officials, as well as journalists, used to the idea that citizens have a right to know.

The course was a "first" for the Thomson Foundation in Africa, increasing impact by using "blended learning" – combining e-learning with in-person workshops in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, and a UK study tour.

Phase one saw more than 60 participants take part in an online learning course, where passing the course depended on successfully submitting a freedom of information request to a government body.

Phase two saw nine journalists, selected from the online participants, attending a week-long series of workshops in Kigali where the aim was to learn, through shared experience, about media freedom and storytelling.

Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist, Ewen MacAskill, formerly the defence and intelligence correspondent with *The Guardian* in the UK, was at the workshop to guide the Rwandan participants.

The journalists also heard from a wide range of other experts including officials from the office of the Freedom of Information Ombudsman, the Rwanda Media Commission, the National Bank of Rwanda and the Rwanda Civil Society.

Although Access to Information legislation had been in place in Rwanda for six years, few requests had previously been made.

The course was funded by the British High Commission in Kigali as part of a Foreign Office mission to support media freedom.

Journalism in Rwanda is still being rebuilt a quarter of a century after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi when an estimated one million

**“No one was denied the time to express his or her ideas”**

–Eric Bagiruwubusa, reporter, *Voice of America*

**“No one is killed anymore”**

**155/180**

**Press freedom ranking\***



people were killed – that's one in seven of the population.

It wiped out a whole generation of journalists. Many were killed, jailed or fled into exile, leaving a need to train a whole new generation in best practice.

Eric Bagiruwubusa, a reporter for *Voice of America* took part in the course.

"It was very fruitful in terms of the interaction among trainers and trainees," he explained. "No one was denied the time to express his or her ideas."

The final part of the course was a study tour to

London, with training courses and UK Foreign Office and parliamentary visits.

It was an opportunity for conversations with fellow journalists at *The Guardian*, BBC Africa, as well as Channel 4 News.



Discussions were lively and often emotional, and covered a wide range of subjects, including ethics, best practices and what it is really like to work in Rwanda after the genocide in 1994.

One of the causes of genocide in Rwanda was seen as a catastrophic failure by journalists, who abandoned objectivity and fairness for the propaganda of hate. It serves as a horrific reminder of what happens when journalists fail to provide factual information, which is free of bias and prejudice.

When Berna Namata, Thomson Foundation's Africa specialist – who is based in Rwanda – took the study group to meet London-based journalists from *The Guardian*, she was asked to tell them about the state of journalism in the country now. She said conditions had improved.

"No one is killed anymore," she said.

# Big stories on the small screen

Digital storytelling in sub-Saharan Africa



**#TFnothingbutthetruth** Ugandan teens use smartphones to share their life stories

“

have never seen a TV," is not what you expect to hear from a teenager on a smartphone video course in 2019.

But that was the starting point for one young emerging filmmaker in Uganda. The Thomson Foundation was in Karamoja, in the remote northeastern region, delivering a social media content production course for UNICEF.

The project was ambitious – empowering participants to tell their own stories. They were from an area where many children leave school

early, get married and have children young.

Gender-based violence and female genital mutilation are common issues and disability is seen as shameful.

After six days of intensive training with Android phones, the youngsters had made their own films and became familiar with social media platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.

The UN Children's Fund, UNICEF, had

identified the group as having leadership potential and wanted to equip them with the skills to take part in community education campaigns.

UNICEF believes social media is transforming the way young people communicate, make decisions and influence people, despite a controversial tax on social media usage in the country.

"It will empower them to lead conversations both online and offline about subjects they and

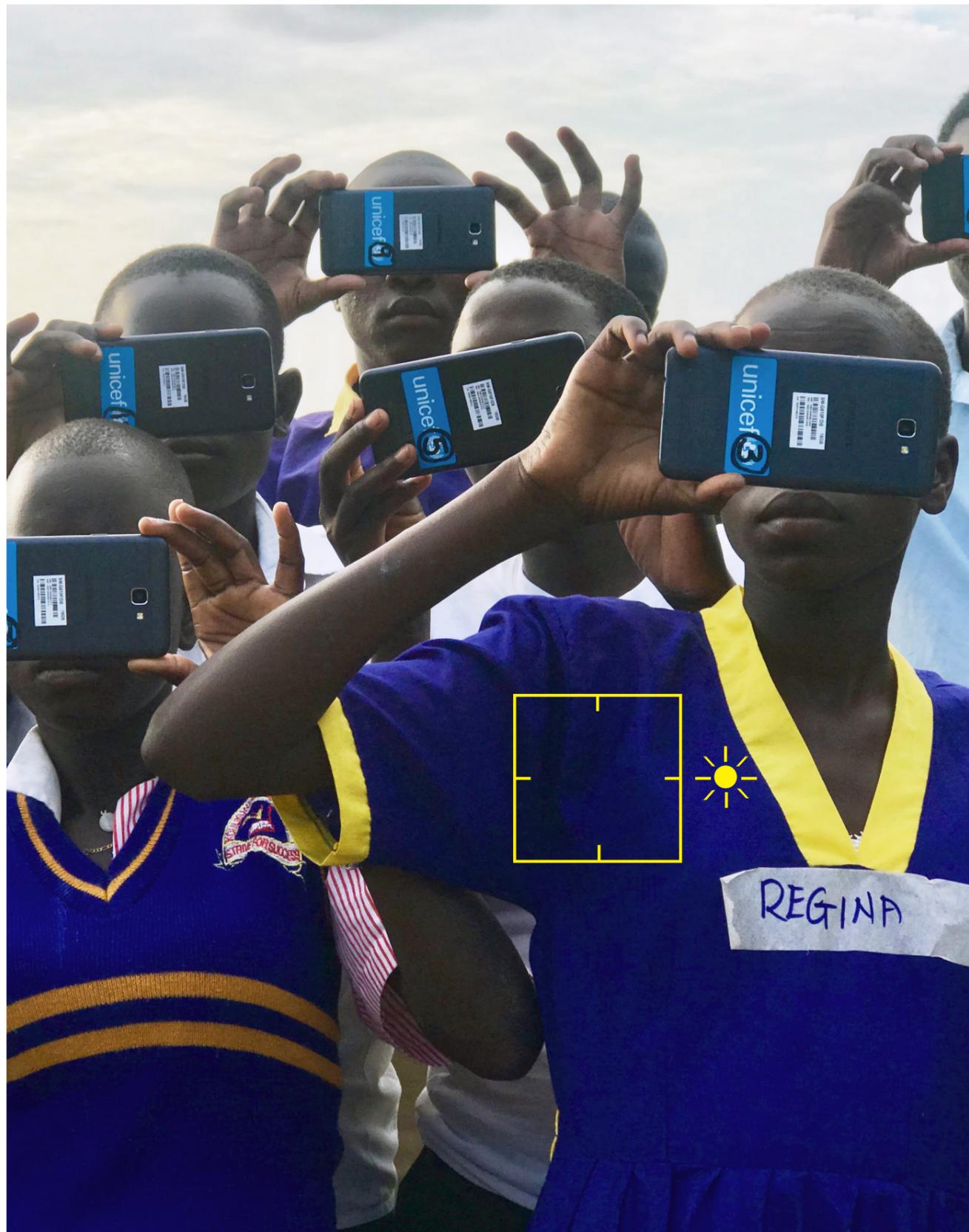
their peers are passionate about," says Kate Middleton, who led the training for the Thomson Foundation.

One of the students, Christine Ahurn, lost her right hand and was left with just one finger on her left hand after an accident as a small child.

Now 19, and the mother of a five-year-old child, she produced a short film about herself after Feras Saleh, another trainer for Thomson Foundation, adapted her equipment and mobile phone settings.

Editing on a mobile phone normally requires editors to "pinch" shots with their fingers to trim them, something she wouldn't normally be able to do. She now wants to document life in her region, stay in education and eventually become a nurse.

This course followed the Thomson Foundation/ UNICEF Africa regional workshops held in South Africa in September 2018, where 20 young people from 10 countries across sub-Saharan Africa were trained in mobile journalism and storytelling.



The Ugandan teens rising above adverse circumstances to tell stories on the issues impacting their lives



**“These skills will lay down foundations through life”**  
— Kate Middleton, trainer



## Climate in crisis

Lesotho was hit by drought in 2019 – with climate change also expected to make floods and other extreme weather more common.

But when trainer, James Stewart, went to the landlocked southern African country he found journalists struggling to cover the issue.

Reporters knew the term but found it hard to write about. Readers saw anything to do with it as negative and depressing, with the term misapplied to other environmental problems. And reporters knew little of the COP25 climate conference in Madrid – taking place at the same time as their three-day course.

The Thomson Foundation course was aimed at pointing journalists to reliable sources of accurate information about climate change and then to find interesting, relevant ways to engage and empower their audiences.

James delivered a similar course in Botswana, both funded by local British High Commissions.

Participants in Lesotho found it eye-opening. “I want to try to bring the human face to the story on how the drought is affecting,” says Limpho Sello.

Ruth Kedikiwe, who took part in the Botswana course, says that with the right information, the media can have a positive impact. “We need to embed the messages into the people, so that they can change their behaviour,” she says.

# Malawi goes to the polls

**A forum for journalists from six African nations on how to achieve fair election coverage was led by the Thomson Foundation.**

The discussion was part of a conference on democracy and freedom of expression staged in November, 2019, in Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi, with journalists and experts also present from Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique, Namibia and Lesotho.

Everyone agreed that fake news was a major problem across Africa, with political activists and foreign powers accused of spreading lies via social media and messaging platforms.

The discussion was particularly relevant to Malawi, which had undergone controversial presidential elections in May. The result was later annulled because of voting irregularities, with a fresh vote expected in 2020.

Journalists were concerned that fake news gives governments an excuse to clamp down on media freedoms.

Thomson Foundation consultant Derek Ivens led discussion about the importance of balanced coverage from the media.

"Voters need accurate information so they can make informed choices about their country's future," he says. "This won't happen without strong, impartial media outlets and professional journalists who can analyse the issues and hold candidates to account."

The British High Commissioner in Malawi, Holly Tett, spoke about the media's key role in democracies, despite "a new and dangerous global trend of journalists being targeted simply for doing their jobs."

The conference was sponsored by the British High Commission in Malawi.



IMAGE: AMOS GUMULIRA/GETTY IMAGES

**Fighting fake news and keeping election coverage balanced in Africa**



# “No society or democracy can function without an informed public” —

## Meiryum Ali

**A viral video, which detailed allegations of money laundering by a former president of Pakistan, secured the 2019 Thomson Foundation Young Journalist Award for producer, Meiryum Ali.**

In "The Zardari System", Meiryum explained how former Pakistani president, Asif Ali Zardari, was alleged to have siphoned money out of the country.

Using investigative, data journalism she turned a 128-page legal document, which she called "an extremely dense and complicated financial read" into gripping video using a mix of graphics, traditional storytelling skills, as well as humour.

It was shown on Pakistan-based online news platform Soch Videos – a multilingual news community which champions "a free, vibrant, and courageous press as the most effective safeguard of democratic systems and values."

Meiryum thought the public would not be interested in sifting through large amounts of data and that, without her analysis, the report by Pakistan's Supreme Court-appointed Joint Investigations Team, may have gone unread.

Her work made a difference. "It was released shortly before Zardari was expected to appear in court and quickly went viral. Surprisingly, it

was also tweeted by the current ruling party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and became the second most-watched video on Soch Videos," Meiryum says.

Meiryum's competition entry included a mixture of traditional and data-driven stories.

In one of her video reports, she talks to distressed shop owners in Karachi's Empress Market, who were evicted when money they paid to the local authority was deemed bribery not rent. In another, she looks at how more than 3,000 families found themselves living in tents after their homes were demolished to make way for large infrastructure projects.

The Thomson Foundation Young Journalist Award is a highlight of the UK's Foreign Press Association (FPA) Awards. The competition is open to journalists aged 30 and under from developing countries and emerging economies. The foundation selects a shortlist of 12, and an independent jury selected by the FPA then selects the final three, including the winner.

The two other finalists in the competition in 2019, Sarita Santoshini from India and Damilola Banjo, from Nigeria, were also commended at the gala awards night in London hosted by British satirist, Rory Bremner.

The FPA judging committee praised Meiryum's "creative freshness" and described her work as "very impressive" and "quirky".

# Journalism Now

**“It is our turn to empower other people’s voices”**

**— Shereen Nanish, team leader**



**The inaugural "Journalism Now Team Challenge" encouraged practising and aspiring journalists around the globe to develop a deep understanding of how to connect with an audience.**

They worked collaboratively in teams of between three and five across borders, with the course providing mentoring on storytelling as well as digital skills.

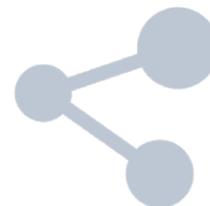
The measurable outcomes included improvement in skill levels and the reach and impact of the content generated.

#### **The learning process**

- Entrants were divided into groups across borders, choosing collaborative tools like WhatsApp to share work between team members and complete tasks.
- They were tasked with creating a media brand, getting to know their target audience and engaging with it by creating innovative content and soliciting feedback.
- Using the foundation's online learning community, "Journalism Now", entrants were guided by interactive courses and webinars on reporting skills, audience research, mobile journalism and how to grow a brand.
- Peer-to-peer learning and feedback from competing groups were also encouraged.

Hosam El Nagar, the foundation's director of innovation, says: "The challenge was to get the participants to understand their audience, and learn how to convey their mission or message to them.

"We aimed to show journalists that they are better placed to find solutions that work in their media landscape than people who don't know their market well. And there is no better way to learn than by actually doing it."



# Media

An online programme to provide skills to launch a successful digital media brand brought together 700 entrants from 74 countries across the globe.

**In many parts of the world, aspiring journalists lack the opportunities and resources to be able to develop digital skills.**

But the winning team, called **Youth Media**, was proof that geography doesn't have to be an obstacle to good storytelling.

The team consists of four journalists from different countries: Shereen Nanish (Jordan); Amine Belfatmi (Morocco); Hussein Eddeb (Libya) and Anthony Chibueze (Nigeria).

Their team was formed specifically to take part in the Team Challenge – establishing a brand to show the positive aspects of youth, and identify stories missed by mainstream media.

**7** journalists joined the **Team Challenge** across the globe for three months in 2019.

**700**

Their outstanding piece – published in the site they created for the competition, on Facebook and Instagram – told the story of a mother in Jordan who opened a bakery so that her son with Down's syndrome could earn a living. She was determined to challenge societal norms that he would not be hidden away from everyday life because of his disabilities.

Shereen Nanish, the "captain" of the group, believes the next step is to pass on what they have learned.

"It is a huge privilege, yet a great responsibility as well. This competition empowered our voices as young journalists," she says. "Now it is our turn to empower others to seek the truth, justice and real changes."

Youth Media visited London for a week's study tour as part of their prize.

The judges said the Team Challenge exceeded expectations.

Engagement levels were high and strong community spirit developed. And it led to the production of some very compelling content.

The competition ran from February through to June 2019, attracting entrants from China to Uruguay and the Netherlands to Malawi.

PUBLISHED STORIES

**180**

PAGE VIEWS

**213,000**

**13,000**

PLATFORM INTERACTIONS



## Shortlisted teams

**Campus Crime Watch** focused on stories about the high rate of student suicide and rape. They put a human face to the statistics with personal accounts and offered positive advice to problems and information to suicidal students on where to find help. The group managed to build a big audience in a short time.

**Inklusive Voices** built a busy news site. They carried out on-the-ground reporting and made more use of images and video. One story that stood out was their reporting of the Shona community on the margins in Kenya.

**Mobile Journalism Africa** is an exciting template for journalism in the digital age with stories told at ground level. One of the best is a video of a man, frustrated at all the wasted potential, offering coaching in rugby to youths in Nairobi's Kibera slum.

**Across the Atlantic** came up with a good breadth of stories, from pirate buskers on buses in Uruguay to a divided village on the border between Belgium and the Netherlands.

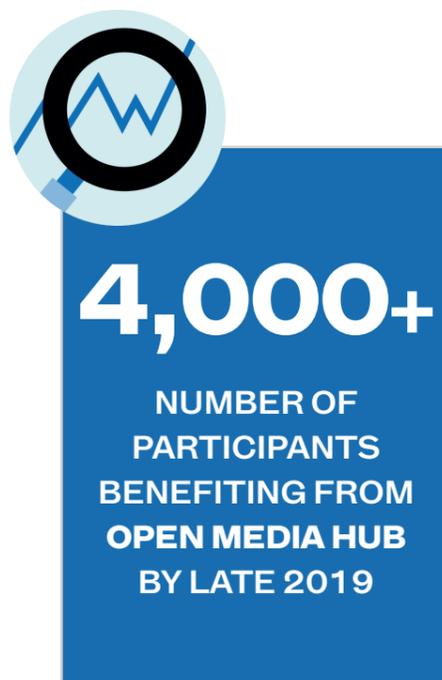
**Global Gate** focused on environmental issues using graphics and data to get their global, relevant message across. Stories included the scourge of plastic bags and air pollution.

IMAGES: CHEOLAN JEONG

# As a matter of fact

Supporting independent media

in 17 countries bordering the European Union.



**A landmark project to support independent media in 17 countries bordering the European Union (EU) has been extended, as journalists tackle increasing threats to media freedoms.**

The OPEN Media Hub (OMH), which was established as a four-year programme at the end of 2015, will now run for a further 13 months, until early 2021.

Thomson Media leads a consortium of organisations which offers training, mentoring and networking events, funded by the EU.

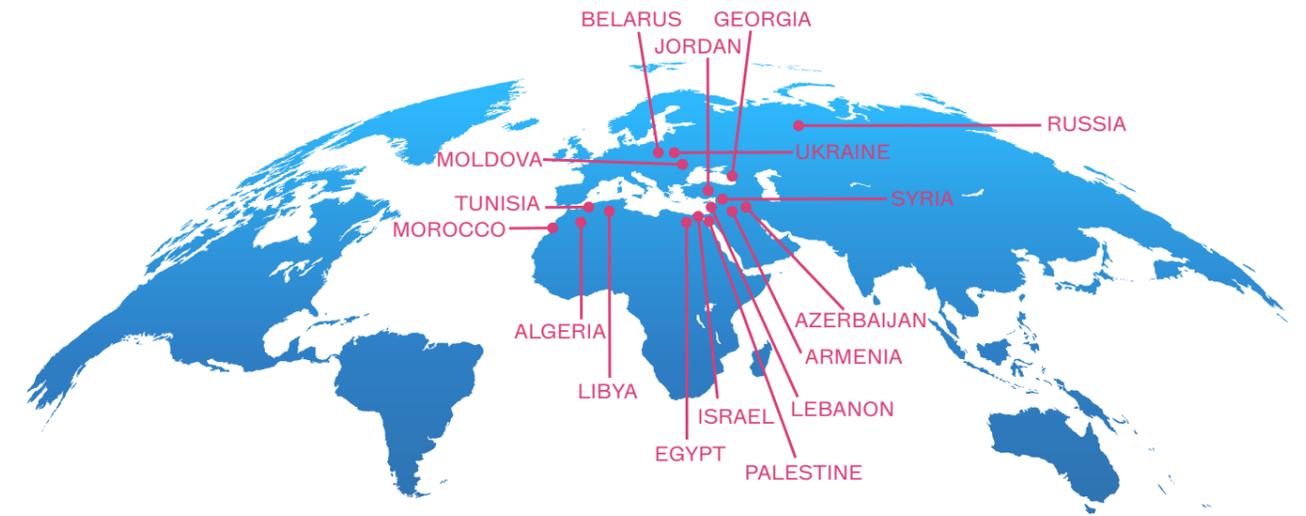
By the end of 2019, more than 3,000 participants had benefitted from the OMH, 657 of whom received production support. A total of 1,600 stories were produced and 35 days' worth of content was re-used by broadcasters.

Online training modules had been accessed by 2,643 reporters, and nearly 800 media organisations mentored to help improve content production and sustainability.

### Making media matter

The programme has tackled the biggest news stories of our times – including migration.

Balanced reporting across all platforms was



encouraged by the Migration Media Awards, sponsored by the OMH and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

The competition ran for three years, shining a light on a complex and challenging issue – with some of the coverage from refugees.

One of the 2019 winners was Syrian Daham Alasaad, with a film "One Way Ticket: Forced Repatriation for Denmark's Syrian Refugees?"

He captured the emotions of a family of fellow refugees who feared they were going to be sent back to an uncertain fate in Damascus, and then their relief when they were allowed to stay in Denmark.

During the pitching and mentoring process, Daham's work caught the eye of Loick Berrou, a judge from French broadcaster, France 24.

"The mentoring improved the quality of entries. With a compelling treatment, good storytelling, filming and editing, we were able to use the Denmark film on our international channel and online, along with some of the other entries," says Loick.

### Media with a human face

An overriding goal was to encourage stories with a human dimension, of sufficient quality for re-use by media across Asia, the Americas and Europe.

An example was "Being 20" – a challenge to journalists to create short-form, innovative films profiling a generation of young people living on the borders of Europe.

A film made by Lakome2, one of Morocco's remaining independent media outlets, told the story of 21-year-old Ikram from Casablanca, who was born without hands.

She explained how overcoming her disability gives meaning to her life. The video was broadcast on Moroccan television, used by France Info TV, translated into Russian by Georgian TOK TV and downloaded for use from the OMH's portal 44 times.

By the end of 2019, 316 "Being 20" videos had been made, with 100 more still in production.

### Making a difference

Of many important investigations carried out by journalists supported by the OPEN Media Hub, one by a group of Syrian investigative journalists stands out for its global impact.

The group, Siraj, revealed how women living in shelters in Damascus were being forced to give sexual favours in return for food. "Sex for Aid in the Suburbs" was published in the Lebanese online magazine, *Deraj*, and translated into several languages to reach a bigger audience.

The story was read by aid workers and the women's plight became the subject of a United Nations inquiry into alleged violations of human rights in Syria.

### Making media sustainable

Creating and maintaining a media business in a digital world is a challenge for even the biggest brands. For independent media without major financial backers, it can be overwhelming.

Nearly 800 have received mentoring, with 229 in 2019. Ukraine's Novoye Vremya produces a weekly magazine, news website and talk radio show. Founded in 2014 by a team of prominent journalists following the Ukrainian revolution, it quickly became a trusted voice.

OMH worked with them to help introduce a paywall to increase revenue and, with the newsroom, encouraged them to switch focus from print to digital. The foundation's trainers introduced up-to-date storytelling formats to develop their video strategy, sell new products and increase revenue.

"OPEN Media Hub has delivered an extensive opportunity to learn about vital ways of developing and monetising our media. It is probably the most precious contribution that we could expect in the hyperdynamic industry," says Vitaliy Sych, chief editor of Ukrainian weekly magazine, *Novoye Vremya*.

### Shrinking media freedoms

Since the OPEN Media Hub began, journalists have found themselves facing greater challenges – from fake news, to "alternative facts", to independent news organisations "captured" by individuals using the media for their own ends.

"Journalists in 11 of the 17 countries served by the programme have been imprisoned, media outlets have closed, and restrictive laws on freedom have been adopted, making it a tough environment," says Dominique Thierry, project leader for the OPEN Media Hub.

**"It is probably the most precious contribution that we could expect"**

# The moment of truth

# 275

STORIES SUPPORTED IN 2019

OPEN Media Hub provided a springboard for journalism from outside Europe to tell the story of neighbouring countries. More original stories from Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia than any other neighbouring countries were made in 2019 as a result of the OPEN Media Hub.

# 559

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS IN 2019

More individuals took part in Ukraine than anywhere else. Restrictive media conditions in Egypt didn't stop journalists from looking to the OPEN Media Hub for resources to help them realise their stories. Participants from Moldova, Azerbaijan and Armenia also used the expertise to develop their skills.



# 229

MEDIA SUPPORTED IN 2019

OPEN Media Hub works to provide expertise to media outlets to help protect independent journalism along European borders. Production houses in Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova were particularly in focus in 2019, to bring strong editorial production support and a robust independent media to the region.

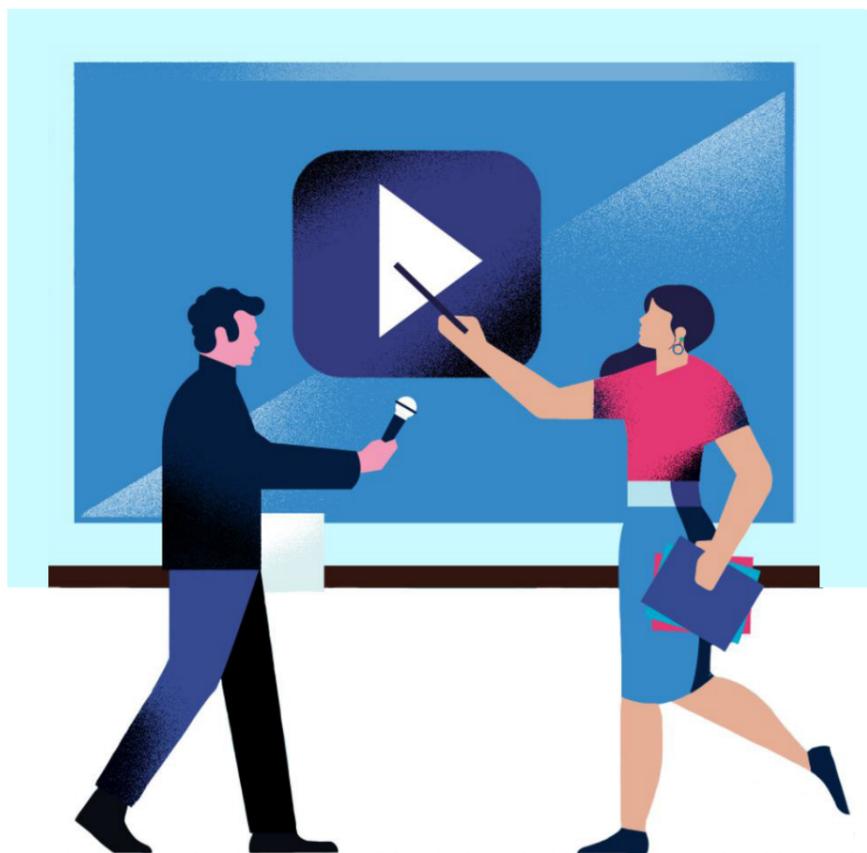


ILLUSTRATION: NATHALIE LEES

# €500,386

The production expenditure in 2019, resulting in 275 stories produced and mentored\*

\*Selected stories led to inter alia **35 days of airtime** on France Info for OPEN Media Hub's "Being 20" series (see page 33)



# 17

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES SUPPORTED BY OMH (see map, page 33)



# 1,600



NUMBER OF STORIES CREATED (available on openmediahub.com)

2015-2019



# 4,577

TOTAL NUMBER OF OMH PARTICIPANTS



At the heart of the project sits the idea that good journalism at its best can **improve understanding and ease tensions** in times of conflict and war



# 781

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEDIA OUTLETS SUPPORTED



# 3,180

TOTAL NUMBER OF ONLINE LEARNING PARTICIPANTS



It's the **single biggest contract** in the history of the Thomson Foundation, worth nearly **€10million** over the life of the programme



The OPEN Media Hub project is funded by the European Union.





# Truth

**Storytelling has become a crucial skill for NGOs and civil society bodies wanting their voices to be heard.**

In 2019 we taught groups in Thailand and Ukraine how to produce their own films using smartphones – so they can communicate their messages effectively and accurately on their websites and social media.

### Country: Thailand

Most participants were communications officers for human rights organisations, whose work highlights sensitive issues in Thailand.

Some looked at problems associated with land rights: there have been a number of murders and arrests in the south of the country where forests are being cleared by loggers or for crops.

Others worked in the north of the country where refugees have fled across the border with Myanmar.

The training took part in stages over two, one-week courses. The first stage focused on the technical aspects of using a smartphone for filming and editing, as well as basic storytelling techniques.

The participants then had to conceive an idea for a film, before returning for a second week where they were helped to develop the idea into a professional-quality video.

The programme, funded by the British Embassy in Bangkok, covered a range of topics, including:

- Bo, who works for a not-for-profit, online newspaper *Prachatai*, was making a film called 'The Jeans' about student protesters killed in a university massacre in 1976. He interviewed a victim's sister at an exhibition where the jeans her brother was wearing when he died were on show. The emotional interview captured the loss and anguish over the deaths.

- Plot works for the Cross Cultural Foundation, an organisation which works on justice and the protection, promotion and monitoring of human rights in Thailand. He told the story of a grandmother who had always lived in a neighbourhood of Bangkok that was about to be demolished to make way for luxury housing.

IMAGE: DEBORAH KELLY

# be told.

She talked movingly about her joy at being able to look after her granddaughter after school in the tight-knit community but how the destruction would change that forever.

- Neung works for Triple H Music, an organisation that makes music for social change. Her film looked at refugees from Myanmar through interviewing a singer-songwriter and activist from the 'Commoners Band' about his dream and passion to use his music to shape the society he lives in.

An e-learning course has also been developed in the Thai language to help those unable to attend become filmmakers.

### Country: Ukraine

Smartphones found a new role in Ukraine – as a tool to help peacebuilding.

A series of mobile journalism courses were held for civil society organisations in three cities across Ukraine so they could share videos about dealing with the stresses of living in a society suffering the effects of conflict.

The workshops concentrated on creating content based around those who have been most affected by the recent conflict – war veterans and the internally displaced.

Specialist speakers with expertise in issues such as post-traumatic stress syndrome worked



alongside the trainers, with expertise in smartphone filming, to help understanding of the sensitivities in producing films involving vulnerable people.

There was a strong emphasis on "learning through doing", with each participant producing a short video at the end of a course.

With many returning veterans living with disabilities – both physical and mental – the filmmakers chose to report on the impact of their injuries on daily life and the rehabilitation help

needed. Others looked at businesses set up by the veterans and individual stories of how they were coping with the traumas witnessed during the conflict.

The workshops were run through Thomson Media and were part of an 18-month programme which also involved working with regional journalists in Ukraine.

The project was led by UK peacebuilding organisation, International Alert, and funded by the European Union.



IMAGE: GLEN MULCAHY

## Mojo on tour

Mobile journalism went "on tour" with Thomson Foundation, delivering training sessions to 90 journalists in 90 days for international broadcaster, Al Jazeera.

The channel was keen for its staff to make mobile journalism (mojo) – using a smartphone to record and edit video and audio – a primary newsgathering and production tool.

The foundation's long-standing mojo trainer, Glen Mulcahy, delivered 11 courses at Al Jazeera's headquarters in Qatar and broadcast centres in Kuala Lumpur, Gaziantep in Turkey, Sarajevo, Washington and London.

Courses ran for up to five days and covered a mixture of theory, demonstrations, practical exercises and feedback sessions.

Glen covered best practice for capturing images, ensuring high-quality audio and

explored podcasting. Crucial to the programme was ensuring journalists could produce good-quality video at speed to satisfy broadcast deadlines. They were also required to spend two of the days working as a team to film and edit a news report.

"I was conscious that I was speaking predominantly to professional television journalists," he said.

"The course was designed to inform them of the evolution of the practice of mojo, with notable examples, and then proceed to the core learning.

"I was truly blown away by the talent of the trainees and advised many of them to submit their images to some of the big international smartphone photography events."

Glen began teaching mobile journalism as a Thomson Foundation trainer at the Al Jazeera Media Institute in Qatar in 2013.

The technique was initially seen by the broadcaster as suitable for online storytelling and covering conflict and breaking news.

Now it is considering the technology for use across all its platforms in all formats and how it could be fully integrated into workflows.

Thomson Foundation has been working with the Al Jazeera Media Institute since 2004 and runs an average 15 to 20 workshops a year, covering a wide range of subjects from TV reporting, newsroom management and social media newsgathering to TV presenting.

Mobile journalism has now become one of its most popular courses.



“The course is designed to inform journalists of the evolution of the practice of mojo, with notable examples, and then proceed to the core learning.”

– Glen Mulcahy, Thomson Foundation trainer and mobile journalism expert

# PPSS

A small handful of big stories to come in 2020

**The foundation is back in Sudan with a year-long project to build the capacity of the media to report macro-economic issues during the country's transition to democracy.**

The project, funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development, DFID, will support participants with training, networking and mentorship. The programme aims to give journalists an ability to report economic issues in a clear, direct and fair way to their audiences. The project builds on the foundation's track record in Sudan made during the 2012-17 media capacity building project and work in 2018 with civil society organisations in partnership with the British Council.

**We shall begin implementing a programme to support greater media independence in the Western Balkans.**

Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office is funding a four-year programme to support innovative, sustainable media development solutions for the six countries in the region – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

The foundation will deliver a wide range of business development, grant management, micro-finance support, e-learning and professional development networking. We are part of a consortium led by the British Council and including local partners.

**2020 sees the launch of CTRL+ALT+COMPETE, a programme designed to support media sustainability by bringing it closer to the thriving tech sector in Belarus.**

Digital innovators will be brought into contact with journalists and media leaders with a view to maximising audience relationships to help create sustainable businesses. Thomson Media in Berlin will lead a consortium on this multi-year programme in partnership with the Belarus Press Club. The project is funded by the European Union.

**Thomson Media in Berlin will be launching a two-year programme in Tajikistan to train journalists on how to use "access to information" laws in their reporting.**

Our experts will work in-house at media organisations, training journalists on data management, safety and security. We shall partner with the National Association of Independent Mass Media in Tajikistan, NAMSIT. The funder is the European Union.

**A programme on digital ethics will be delivered in Argentina by Thomson Media.**

It will support the use, and management, of ethical social media within regional newsrooms. It is funded by the EU's European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

**Journalists in Tunisia will continue to receive courses in mobile journalism and digital and physical security.**

The practical skills to reporters in the capital, Tunis, and the regions will enable them to film and develop cost-effective content on engaging social issues, with well-sourced and secure research. The training is funded by the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office and part of its Media Freedoms programme.

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