

Thomson Foundation

Annual review 2017



“Crucial to our 2017 activity was the support of a younger generation of journalists”

Extending our reach

It was a year when the foundation reached a wider audience than ever before – in terms of country, age and occupation.

The increased activity was driven by several factors. First, digital media brings an ever-changing approach to the training programmes run by the Thomson Foundation. The 2017 review shows that our universe now comprises all of those who participate in media – from professional journalists, to citizens seeking a voice for the public good, and governmental, and non-governmental, organisations in search of the best ways to engage with media.

Second, two major initiatives came to fruition during 2017. Our e-learning portal launched successfully in November, with more than 1,600 enrolments from over 100 countries in the first two months. At the same time, our new German partner organisation – Thomson Media gGmbH – opened in Berlin enabling a greater focus on programmes in central and eastern Europe.

Crucial to the 2017 activity was the support of a younger generation of aspiring journalists and content creators. Under the theme of “Being 20”, we have supported a large youth audience telling their stories in video, as part of our leadership of the OPEN Media Hub – a European Union project supporting independent media in 17 of its neighbouring countries.

In addition, nearly 500 journalists and media professionals from across the globe took part in three flagship competitions we sponsored. We were proud to run the Thomson Foundation

Young Journalist competition for a fifth year, and again sponsor an international competition to find the most creative mobile journalists.

For the first time, we ran the Commonwealth Digital Challenge under the banner of the Elizabeth R Media Fund. With the consent of Buckingham Palace we have taken over a smaller charity which is now directed at helping aspiring media managers in the Commonwealth tackle issues caused by the transformation to digital technology.

But from Honduras to Kazakhstan, and Ukraine to Sudan, we also continued with our traditional activity of providing high-quality training and consultancy to ensure the spread of the best contemporary media skills across the globe.

Lord Tom Chandos, chairman Thomson Foundation



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Registered charity: 313750

Published: February 2018



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THOMSONFOUNDATION.ORG/E-LEARNING



Journalism Now

OFFERING JOURNALISTS A LIFELONG PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

#TFJNOW

ILLUSTRATIONS: ELEANOR SHAKESPEARE



#T

In one of our boldest-ever initiatives, we have rolled out our e-learning project for journalists worldwide – Journalism Now.

It's already causing quite a stir, with more than 1,600 people signing up in the first two months to learn new skills and share their knowledge with others. Using a process called design thinking, we asked ourselves, how can we use online tools to better serve journalists and communicators?

The preparations took months, with several journalists and communicators approached to give their views on what a new virtual world should look like.

The overwhelming response was that it should get rid of the dry and flat approach to online courses, and come across as warm, snappy and interactive.



And if that wasn't enough, it shouldn't be a one-off, but a constantly evolving process, so that media professionals could return to it at different stages of their career.

Well, that's exactly what Hosam El Nagar, Thomson Foundation's director of innovation and learning, set out to create. He believes that the new e-learning programme, Journalism Now, is redefining journalism training internationally.

"Due to the variance in education and working standards across different countries around the world, it is not a level playing field for journalists. Talented individuals don't get the opportunity to express or develop their skills and often burn out or drop out of journalism altogether.



N

"Journalism Now is designed to provide access to the best training and latest ideas, but it is also a way to prove your ability to others and connect with a like-minded international community."

Journalism Now is an interactive community forum and a platform hosting interactive skills-focused courses which specifically take into account the different cultural contexts that our target audience comes from.

"There isn't a right or wrong answer" adds Hosam. "We use journalism standards in the UK and international best practices as examples, but always try to make them relative and ask the learners to research and share their own context with us and the community."



And the early days of the new e-learning programme are promising. Of the 1,600 enrolments initially, many completed the courses, rather than just browsed through them.

And there's more – Thomson Foundation has used the platform and its e-learning expertise to deliver online courses in Ukrainian, Russian, French as well as Arabic as part of two European Union-funded projects. They are Regional Voices in Ukraine (see pages 18 to 21) and the Open Media Hub in the EU's southern and eastern neighbours (turn to pages 12 to 17 for more on this project).

One of the keys to the e-learning project, believes Hosam, is its transparency.

"Not only can you measure how much users are engaging with your programme, but you can also design your learning to measure its impact. This is something that has been eluding the media development sector."

W

One of the Journalism Now trainers is Jamal Osman (turn to pages 10-11), a multi-award winning journalist and filmmaker whose popular course 'Building Trust & Reputation' is free for all. "People think I'm crazy, but I believe journalism can help change things for the better," he says.

www.thomsonfoundation.org/e-learning



“I tried to make the course as accessible as possible, always making it clear that impartiality is important”

Jamal Osman

A multi-award winning journalist and filmmaker specialising in sub-Saharan Africa, Jamal is now also a Journalism Now course leader

Jamal Osman's course, 'Building Trust & Reputation' helps journalists differentiate themselves and their organisations from other voices in our crowded media landscape.

"For me, journalism isn't just a way to feed my family, it's also something of an obsession," says the Africa reporter for the UK-based Channel 4 News.

"I'm obsessed with trust, transparency and the elimination of corruption.

"Journalism as we know it doesn't exist in Somalia, where I come from. There, journalists treat the public like fools, which they are not.

"Accepting payment for doing stories is the norm. When I see people abusing their position in this way, it makes me angry.

"That's why at our independent digital media organisation, Dal Soor, we have a mission

statement, which makes it clear that we are independent. We do stories that other journalists just don't do."

Jamal believes that articulating a mission statement provides journalists with an opportunity to reflect on and create a tool through which they can be transparent with their audience and win their trust.

More than 60 per cent of people who have enrolled for Jamal's course, have completed it. That's the highest percentage of any of the modules at Journalism Now.

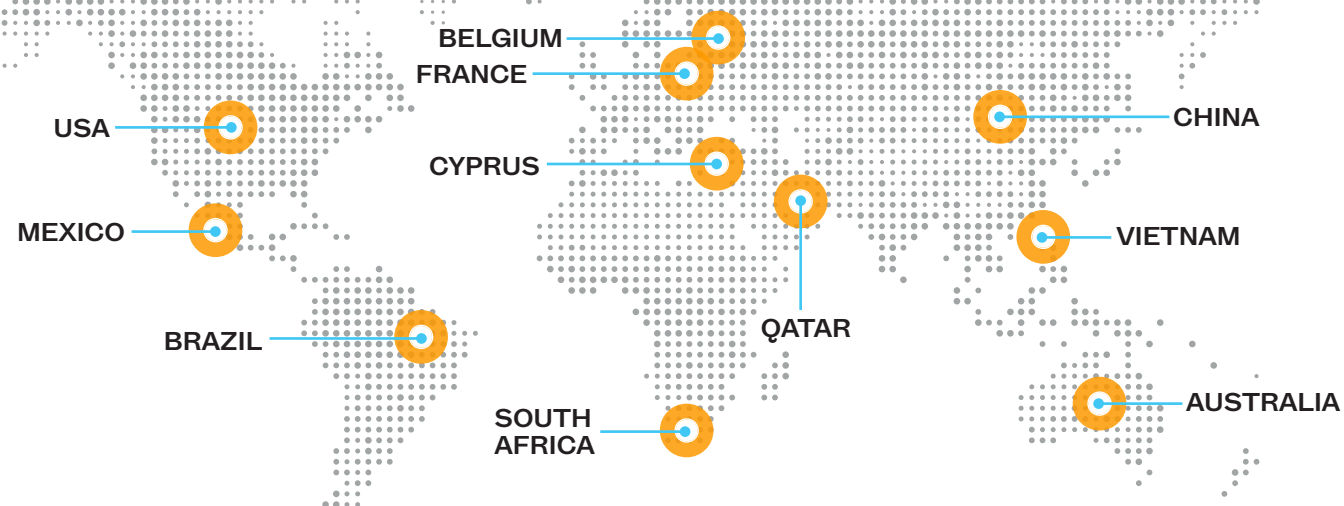
"I tried to make the course as accessible as possible, always making it clear that impartiality is important – it's for a practical reason too: without the trust of your sources and your audience, you are unlikely to be successful.

"People think I'm crazy, but I believe journalism can help change things for the better."

University challenge

The UK's Coventry University and Nigeria's Lagos State Polytechnic are using Journalism Now courses as part of their curriculum. 150 students have successfully completed the programme in 2017.

Getting noticed



Breaking through

Some 45 countries worldwide have transmitted stories produced by OPEN Media Hub journalists, including the above

The big breakthrough was always going to be when some of the many hundreds of stories produced by participating journalists with OPEN Media Hub would be good enough for broadcast outside of their countries of origin.

The ultimate goal of the training is to produce stories of sufficient quality that broadcasters in Asia, the Americas and Europe will sit up, take notice and transmit!

And that's exactly what's started to happen. The breakthrough for Thomson Foundation's largest ever project, funded by the European Union, came in 2017, with stories being broadcast throughout the globe, from Brazil to Belgium, and from Paris to Beijing.

With more than 1,300 journalists trained in the essential skills of newsgathering, storytelling, filming and editing – and over 2,000 broadcasts and publications produced to date – the quality is improving at a startling rate.

There's still a fair way to go, but the evidence shows that the instruction of a large number of journalists can go hand in hand with the production of stories of international quality.

For David Quin, director of development at Thomson Foundation, this could be the start of something big: "The bottom line is that this shows the theory in practice – you can train to produce content that works to an international standard. We're raising the bar whilst widening the audience at the same time. And hopefully it's just the beginning."

An excellent example of good stories being told well are the recent advanced production workshops held in Tunis. With the security situation in Libya too unstable to conduct journalism courses there, Libyan journalists were brought into the Tunisian capital to create web documentaries by 'knocking into shape' the material which the journalists had already filmed inside Libya.

Among the topics covered were copyright issues, verification of sources, interview techniques, creating shot lists and scripts, video editing and sound levelling – all geared towards the special needs of a web documentary rather than a TV news report.

Nine stories produced during the training were of sufficient quality to be shared on the exchange platform of the project's website, openmediahub.com.

In the future, it's hoped to continue this learning process inside Libya, although the security situation there doesn't allow for this at the moment.

"The way the programme is designed means that western media can reuse content that is created in countries which are the EU's neighbours," says David.

"Western media can't afford to have correspondents in countries bordering the south and east of the EU and we have seen a considerable uptake in reuse of content. More often now we are seeing that the content is of good enough quality for reuse outside the country of origin."

OPEN Media Hub: At the heart of the project is the idea that journalism at its best can improve understanding and ease tensions in times of international conflict. A key part of the programme is to build a media hub, a platform where journalists can share work with each other and with EU partners. >>

Being

Egypt

A blind man in his early 20s isn't letting his disability stop him from climbing mountains and diving in Dahab, a coastal city in the Sinai Peninsula. [By Mohamed Elgabbas](#)

Palestine

A 21 year-old Palestinian photographer documents parts of Palestine, so every Palestinian living abroad can reconnect with their homeland once again. [By Ameera Samarah/Diana Zakaria \(see page 17\)](#)

Armenia

The story of an artist who suffered through the war. [By Ani Rapyan](#)

Ukraine

After returning from the frontline, Roman took up cooking to escape the terrible memories and thoughts of war. [By Margaryta Korobova/Alina Olefir](#)

Lebanon

A young woman tries to revive cinema in her hometown Ba'albek, despite religious and political obstacles. [By Wassim Geagea \(see page 17\)](#)

Young journalists – most of whom have grown up with digital technology – were given the freedom to choose their subjects, and to choose the style in which they told their subjects' stories.

So, with both style and content offering up a youthful perspective, young viewers would – hopefully – be encouraged to watch. And so it's proved. There's an enthusiastic audience, not just in those countries where the stories have

been shot, but also within the EU itself, thereby giving people an understanding of young lives which they may otherwise not be aware of.

Achieving this kind of understanding and awareness is a prime aim of Thomson Foundation's work, especially among young people at a time of economic uncertainty, job insecurity and fragile hopes.

Already more than 30 video stories for BEING

20 have been shot in a variety of countries, including Ukraine, Armenia, Egypt and Lebanon. Many more are in the pipeline in other countries which border the EU.

Producers were provided with training in all aspects of TV production, including storytelling, filming, scripting, editing and post-production. Anthony Headley, who's leading the project for the foundation, says it's great to be opening up storytelling to young people and giving them an

Ukraine

The story of a 20 year-old woman, Daria Feldman, who dared to come out as gay. [By Oksana Necheporenko \(see page 17\)](#)

Lebanon

A Syrian refugee child stays in a Bekaa camp where he receives education that is a world apart from the ISIS school that he fled from. [By Ranim Bou Khzam](#)

Youth takes centre stage in the latest project from the Thomson Foundation's OPEN Media Hub.

It's called BEING 20 and the reasons behind it are simple enough: let's find out what life is really like for young people in 17 countries which border the EU on its eastern and southern sides.

Belarus

Documenting the story of a street musician and students from a Minsk conservatoire. [By Darya Sapranetskaya](#)

Jordan

Faisal didn't pursue education, but learned four languages from tourists visiting Petra. [By Layla Bashar Al Kloub](#)

Georgia

The story of a 21 year-old astro-photographer, Giorgi Chekurishvili, from Telavi. [By Maka Khaziuri](#)

opportunity to express themselves on topics which interest them: "This gives us a new window" says Anthony. "The topics are clearly of interest to young people inside the EU as well, and hopefully the broadcast quality is high enough to lead to the stories' reuse outside of their countries of origin.

"We really want points of view that we wouldn't otherwise be hearing. And we're also seeing young people being very creative, and

exercising their freedom of speech."

More than 200 applications for grants were received by Anthony's team and 142 have been approved, so expect a lot more stories to come out of BEING 20 over the next few months.

"Many social issues were highlighted by the applicants and we noticed positive attitudes. That's in contrast to stories from within the EU, which often focus on negative aspects of life.

"For example, a young photographer wanted to highlight illegal garbage dumps around Algiers. She filmed them to raise people's awareness of the need to clean up their environment.

"And the film of a young swimmer in Egypt told us how he wants to dive in the Red Sea, and eventually become a diving trainer. Nothing unusual in that, except that he's blind."

Here are some examples of BEING 20 >>

OPEN Media Hub: a project
implemented by a consortium led
by Thomson Foundation

**"Performing art is like a candle. It changes every
minute. No instant is like the one before"
— The Struggle of an Artist in Lebanon**

opemediahub.com

Documenting home

"My name is Basma Maali. I study photography at Al Najah University. I started in 2015 during the uprising in Jerusalem.

"As the prolific writer and activist, Ghassan Kanafani, once said: "This country is what is left for you." I started a project called "A' Diarak" (to your country) that aims to show people in diaspora their lands. I want to document my beloved country and build an archive of photographs for all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and those in exile.

"It may not be enough, but this is a part that I contribute to."

Cinema reviver

"My name is May Abdul Sater, from Ba'albek, Lebanon. Ba'albek was always a refuge for artists. There used to be three movie theatres here. But a lot changed after the 1970s.

"Residents no longer tolerated cinema. For some, cinema was considered an insult. But last year, I decided to face the obstacles and organise the first international short film festival in Ba'albek, which became the first film festival in the city.

"We've changed people's perspectives about cinema. My ambition is to grow this festival.

"I studied cinema because I believe that a woman can achieve whatever she wishes. It's a revolution for myself rather than one for society."

Risking it all

"My name is Daria Feldman. I'm from Ukraine. The first 'coming out' a person does is to his or her self. That was the most difficult part for me, but being openly gay or a lesbian here is a risk.

"I dream that people of my age and of any age, gender and self-identity, can be free and happy in their country and not seek a better life abroad."

**"My name is Inna Buzilo, and I've always
dreamed of performing as a ballerina at
the Kyiv National Opera Theatre"**

Regional media really matter



IMAGE: DEBORAH KELLY

Two people highlighted in reports by journalists training with the EU-funded Regional Voices project in Ukraine illustrate the personal impact of the programme on some of the country's internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Pensioner, Leonid Polegnyki, was living in poverty in Odessa, having fled Crimea, and student Anton Moshchynskvi, from the Donetsk region, faced eviction from his university accommodation in Kyiv. Their plights were featured by journalists taking part in a two-year training programme aimed at regional media

organisations run by the Thomson Foundation and the International Institute for Regional Media and Information (Irmi). It focused on addressing social tensions resulting from the conflict in Ukraine through better, more ethically balanced coverage of the issues that affect the 1.7 million people who have fled their homes.

This emphasis on regional media was one of the strengths of the project noted in the conclusions of an evaluation report prepared for the foundation (available on thomsonfoundation.org).

"The ability for the media to serve their Fourth Estate function and hold its leaders and the state accountable requires regional voices as much,

if not more, than simply relying on 'Kyiv voices'," the report concludes.

Reporter, Marina Kud, was one of more than 1,000 regional journalists, media managers and communications specialists who are now part of a regional network formed during the project.

Whilst attending a Regional Voices workshop in Kyiv she interviewed Anton, a 21 year-old student at Kyiv polytechnic university who was facing eviction from his accommodation, along with 350 others who had fled from their homes in the Donbass region and Crimea.

A bureaucratic hold up had resulted in a delay

in them receiving special payments to help with accommodation and tuition fees.

Her report was followed up by other media organisations and after changes in the payment process many of the displaced students have been able to continue with their studies.

Pensioner Leonid Polegnyki's appearance on a talk show on national Ukrainian television was the result of a report by journalists attending a Regional Voices workshop in Odessa.

The local authorities were refusing to pay Leonid's pension because, in his hurry to flee, he had left his documents behind in Crimea and

was unable to retrieve them.

Following his appearance on national television, a group of leading lawyers took up his case. This case set a precedent and he along with thousands of other IDPs are now receiving their pensions.

These news stories were among 400 produced by journalists to address the sudden and very real humanitarian crises that was posed by the displaced persons for which Ukrainian media was unprepared.

Regional Voices aimed, amongst other objectives, to address issues around conflict

prevention through access to information, media credibility and public confidence, journalistic quality and inclusive content and regional and national coverage of IDP issues.

The Thomson Foundation is one of the few media development organisations working with regional media worldwide.

In Ukraine and in many other countries the media remains very capital city-centric – a point noted in the project's evaluation report which suggests that, without proper development of media organisations and support for journalists outside the capital, democratisation efforts and conflict resolutions in Ukraine are put at risk. >>

The results

The Regional Voices project has provided a very strong foundation for what could become a targeted and strategic future programme that would work with local and regional media – the same outlets and networks of journalists who are at the heart of this project.

Number of
participants trained

1,180

Number of media
outlets helped



Number of multimedia
stories produced

400

Key outcomes from
Regional Voices



73%

said the training
broadened their
perspective and
world view



183



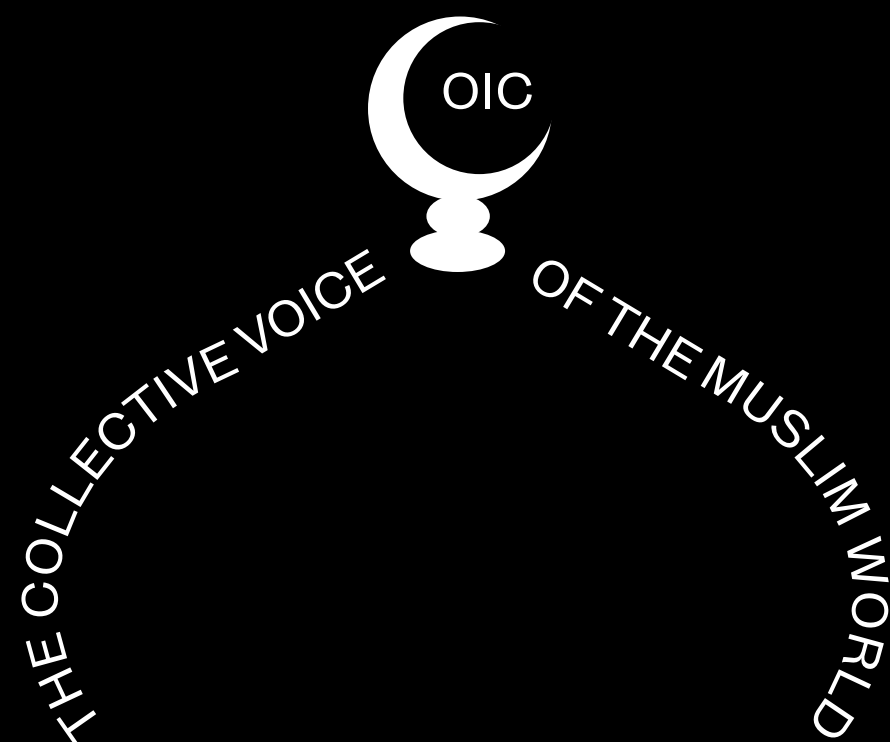
95%

said their coverage
of IDP issues
improved



60%

said their understanding
of conflict-sensitive
journalism improved



We've been working with journalists in the Muslim world to help them tackle challenges in reporting on tension and violence, whether it be in conflict or acts of terrorism.

TACKLING TENSIONS AND HATE-SPEECH

With 57 member countries spread across four continents, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the world's second largest inter-governmental organisation, after the United Nations.

Thomson Foundation has been working with the OIC to improve understanding of the role of media, and the positive contribution journalists can make to easing tensions in society.

We started by training the OIC media and communications staff in the use of social and digital media, and in mobile and video filming.

One of the 18 priority areas included in the organisation's 10-year programme, 'OIC – 2025', is the empowerment of women. The foundation's trainer, Dr Zahera Harb, has

discussed the role of women in the media at OIC conferences.

Our most recent project has been directed at helping the journalists working within its member states to tackle the challenges they face in reporting on tension and violence, whether it be in conflict or acts of terrorism.

The initial phase is the preparation of a manual with guidelines designed to help journalists report on issues around political violence.

It is being compiled following a three-day workshop attended by representatives from 15 of the OIC member states most affected by conflict and violence including Iraq, Yemen, Tunisia, Lebanon and Afghanistan in response to a call from a meeting of OIC Information

Ministers held in Jeddah in December 2016.

The guide builds on the themes discussed at the workshop, including: international perspective, balance and fairness, countering bias, combating Islamophobia, avoiding unwitting publicity for terrorist propaganda, verifying events published on the web as well as their sources and narratives, practices and tools for social media verification and the anticipated role of media in combating hate-speech.

It was compiled for the foundation by Dr James Rodgers, the head of international journalism studies at City University, London, and a former BBC correspondent. There are contributions from Christiaan Treibert, a digital forensics researcher with the online investigative organisation, Bellingcat.



DEEPENING

Thomson Foundation's project in Kazakhstan aims to smooth the lines of communication between journalists and government and other official bodies.

The goal is more openness, creating a free flow of information, which can lead to better stories told in more interesting ways.

DIGITAL

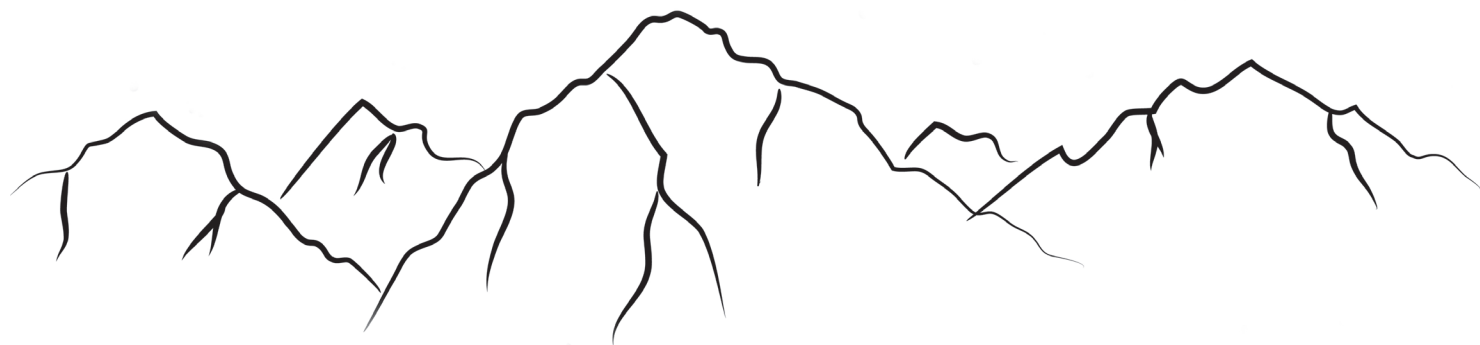


IMAGE: DEBORAH KELLY

Journalists in Kazakhstan are going mobile as part of the Deepening Digital project.

They're using their smartphones to shoot and edit reports for social media platforms. They post their work for comments from their fellow enthusiasts on the newly formed Facebook group Mobile Journalism – Kazakhstan.

The group came out of workshops run in three cities – Astana, Aktobe and Almaty – as part of a project launched in October 2017. It's funded by the British Embassy and run in partnership by Thomson Foundation and the Legal Media Centre based in Kazakhstan.

The Centre's Marat Sadykov believes this digital revolution is here to stay: "One thing is clear,

these guys are the future."

Nearly 50 journalists took part in the workshops. Most had neither filmed nor edited material before, and none had ever used a smartphone to produce their news reports.

In the four-day workshops, they learned the basics of mobile journalism and then they put the theory into practice, producing reports which incorporated interviews with relevant regional officials. In Astana, the workshop coincided with the reopening of the pavilion which was the venue for Expo 2017.

"Before the workshop I could only film a short piece on my smartphone and with shaky hands, upload it to Youtube," says Svetlana Voronova.

"I couldn't imagine editing on a smartphone."

In Aktobe, it was the mausoleum of the Kazakh war leader, Eset Batyr, which prompted journalists to develop stories about the benefits and drawbacks of tourism.

The high levels of air pollution in Almaty and the development of a nearby national park were the subjects tackled by journalists in the final workshop, in Kazakhstan's largest city.

The mobile journalism aspect of the Deepening Digital project enabled several conversations to take place between reporters and regional government press secretaries. It's hoped this could help lead to a greater understanding between them in the future.



"As journalists, we have the possibility to change our society and improve the lives of ordinary Ukrainians"

— Mariana Motrunych

For Mariana, an intrepid reporter whose stories have uncovered corruption in high places in Ukraine, winning the Thomson Foundation Young Journalist Award makes little difference to her professional life: "I am delighted and my parents are very happy, but generally people in power don't care how many awards you win, they just see you as a nuisance."

The exposure of corruption is central to Mariana's work as a journalist with Channel 24. "I find it more interesting than many other forms of news. I like to dig, I like to analyse. That's why I do this. As journalists, we have the possibility to change our society, and to improve the lives of ordinary Ukrainians. Unfortunately, corruption is part of normality here."

Mariana is remarkably matter-of-fact about her work uncovering the misdeeds of the powerful: "I don't see it as out of the ordinary. I have been threatened with court actions, but so far these are just words. I am helped by working with the best investigative team in Ukraine. We have a really strong team, who have formed strong bonds with one another."

She sees the need for the work she does to continue: "I am working on another story about corruption right now. Ukraine is stuck with the cancer of corruption. Although journalists perform good work, the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies is still very low. An anti-corruption court has not yet been established here, so we do not have any officials convicted for corruption crimes. The maximum that can be done as the result of journalistic investigations is that they are dismissed from their job."

Nigel Baker, chief executive of the Thomson Foundation said: "We are delighted that this award has attracted entries from 60 countries. "The stories submitted provide us with an extraordinary window on the world and give us insight into a variety of issues brought to the attention of the public by enquiring and courageous young journalists."

"Their ability to deliver meaningful and in many cases, influential, stories through tenacious investigation, gives us, as one of the judges noted, great hope for journalism in the future."

Mariana was one of three finalists. The other two were Katerina Sergatskova, a freelance reporter, also from Ukraine, and Maham Javaid from Pakistan's *News on Sunday*.

Now in its fifth year, the Young Journalist Award is one of the highlights of the UK's Foreign Press Association Awards and this year attracted 236 entries.

Since its inception the Thomson Foundation Young Journalist Award has focused on the work of reporters who have provided a portfolio of stories aimed at creating impact on audiences in their own countries.

"There was no time to think that I was brave" — Waad Al Kateab



"It took us right inside a woman's perspective of what it's like to be inside Syria" — Jon Snow, presenter, Channel 4 News

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD

One entry for the Young Journalist Award 2017 stood apart from the others. Filmmaker, Waad Al Kateab, working for the UK's Channel 4 News, shone a light on those suffering under siege in the Syrian city of Aleppo. To mark this, the Thomson Foundation dedicated a one-off Special Recognition Award for Outstanding Coverage of a Continuing Story to Waad.

Waad Al Kateab's films for Channel 4 News, drew the world's attention to the horrors of the siege of Aleppo. Much of the filming took place in the emergency room of the hospital where her husband worked as a doctor.

Here she captured dazed, bloodstained children, families learning of the deaths of loved ones, and exhausted medics trying to cope under unimaginable pressure.

She achieved all of this without intrusion – a skill that can take journalists many years to master. It's this skill which was recognised by the Thomson Foundation at the UK Foreign Press Association (FPA) Awards 2017.

The judges felt that the bravery and insight of her video storytelling, which provided a unique perspective on the suffering of civilians caught up in shelling, deserved the one-off award.

"I was studying in Aleppo University... and, like many people who dream of change and freedom, I found myself in filming and journalism.

"There was no time to think that I was brave when I was there, but always I found a strength that I never knew before. Belief in a cause gives you the courage.

"Thomson Foundation's Special Recognition Award gives me hope to complete my work and highlight the suffering of my people which deserves attention and assistance."

Waad, currently based in Turkey, hopes to one day return to her homeland of Syria.

Follow Waad on Twitter @waadalkateab



IMAGES: CHANNEL 4 NEWS

"The foundation's Special Recognition Award gives me hope to complete my work and highlight the suffering of my people, which deserves attention and assistance"



The year brought growing success for many of our Africa alumni. Here we share some of the stories which show their skill, courage and creativity



A

"An all-female team wondering around Jordan and Kurdistan trying to film a show in under three weeks needed to be a documentary itself"

— Yousra Elbagir



Yousra Elbagir, who's from Khartoum in Sudan, and now based in London, won the Thomson Foundation Young Journalist Award in 2016. She has become part of a movement putting a developing world perspective into international media.

Yousra has continued the debate about natural beauty standards in Sudan which she started in her award-winning report which focused on the practice of black women bleaching their skin to conform with dominant Arab notions of beauty.

As part of the BBC series of letters from African journalists, she reveals a newer and potentially life threatening craze where women turn to the black market for prescription drugs in order to put on weight to try to gain the curvaceous figures they see as the standard of beauty.

Her documentary *Rebuilding Generation War*, part of the *Unreported World* series for the UK's Channel 4, focused on life-changing treatment received by war-wounded civilians in the Middle East. Yousra followed the work of surgeons at

the Mowasah hospital in Jordan as they reached out to help some of the tens of thousands of people injured in conflicts in Iraq, Yemen and Syria. Many are children and teenagers from a generation who've known nothing but war.

"An all-female team wondering around Jordan and Kurdistan trying to film a 24-minute show in under three weeks needed to be a documentary in and of itself," says Yousra.

"My director, Jessica Kelly, was extraordinary. She taught me how to get comfortable on camera and allow the authenticity of my conversations and relationships with the film's characters to shine through."

Yousra's latest project is a documentary for BBC Radio 4 on the Sudanese musicians returning to public spaces and building bridges between people. "They're managing – in a conservative society – to play everything from classical Sudanese music to modern funk and jazz."

Follow Yousra on Twitter: @YousraElbagir

F

“The greatest skill we have is the ability to acquire more skills”

— Yusuf Omar



Yusuf Omar, is a multi-award winning journalist based in Durban, South Africa. Together with his wife, Sumaiya, he runs Hashtag Our Stories, which empowers local communities around the world to video their stories for a global audience.

He's a former CNN senior social media reporter on Snapchat and former mobile editor at the *Hindustan Times* in India.

Yusuf attended the Thomson Foundation summer

course in 2016 and was joint winner of the 2016 Thomson Foundation/RTÉ Mojocon mobile journalism competition. He has been named amongst the top 20 innovators in digital media for 2017 by the online MediaShift network.

"Leaving CNN to set up Hashtag Our Stories wasn't easy, but I love this. We want to empower other storytellers, people who are overlooked by mainstream media. Brexit and the rise of Trump were missed because traditional media aren't in

touch with the voices on the ground.

"We go to conferences around the world, and talk about how the media landscape is being transformed. We sometimes get laughed at. But we always make an impression.

"We're encouraging the use of mobile phones to tell stories. Each community has its own pages, and will make its own shows. Our stories run for a maximum of a minute, and we can always

change direction – so, if a particular topic becomes hot, we can switch to covering it.

"When a cat was rescued from a well in India, the filming of the rescue provided useful information to other communities around the world who are worried about their animals, and also about contaminated water.

"And we have now trained 200 people from Serbia to South Korea to reach communities who

are just not heard by the mainstream media.

"We boost circulation by paying Facebook to target audiences. We fund our operation by training and consulting. The stories we create are our own marketing tools.

"The five-week mobile and multimedia summer course that I did at the Thomson Foundation's London offices pushed me hard. I wasn't comfortable with data journalism, or investigative

journalism, but I had to try them. It's important to understand as much as possible. The greatest skill we have is the ability to acquire more skills.

"Our next ambition is to be able to start our own news channel on Facebook."

Follow Yusuf and his Hashtag Our Stories project on Twitter: @YusufOmarSA and @HashtagOurStory.

The Somali blogger **Farah Abdi** staged an overnight vigil with her mobile phone outside government offices in Malta to video the plight of fellow refugees having to sleep rough to renew their identity cards.

Her work won her the Thomson Foundation/RTÉ Mojocon mobile journalism competition in 2017, against very stiff competition from almost 100 other entries.

Farah had to brave cold and difficult conditions to spend the night using her iPhone 5s to film refugees queuing for up to two days for an ID card, because officials only dealt with them one day a week. Without this card, migrants could not access public services such as benefits, work permits, or even open a bank account.

R

“Identity is a human right”

— Farah Abdi

"I had passed through this same nightmare years ago upon getting refugee protection. I was shocked to realise that migrants have to sleep overnight on Thursday so as to access the service on Friday morning – while the office is open to the public Monday to Friday" says Farah.

In her film, migrants describe the situation as 'unfair'. Fighting breaks out in the morning, as an official tells them that only 40 people will be seen. It struck a chord with Farah, who arrived in Malta from Libya by boat in 2012 after fleeing Somalia due to fear of persecution because of her gender identity as a trans woman.

She travelled thousands of miles through sub-Saharan Africa, the Sahara and Libya. A non-swimmer, she had never seen the sea before crossing the Mediterranean in a small dinghy crammed with fellow refugees. The human rights violations she witnessed are documented in her autobiography, *Never Arrive*.

She says that "the highest of human rights violations" is to deprive someone of their identity. "Identity is a human right." Her struggle to establish her own identity as a trans woman and as a refugee, led to her identifying with the subjects of her film, in their simple quest for an identity card.

When he was made aware of the situation, Malta's home affairs minister described it as "inhumane". The rules were changed, allowing refugees access to the office five days a week.

"I wanted to show the world the difficulties refugees were facing in a European state which was supposed to protect their rights," says Farah. "As a blogger and a refugee myself, I was tired of this injustice."

Farah now lives in Germany, where she continues to blog. She is starting to explore producing podcasts and radio broadcasts using her competition prize, an iPhone 7 Plus.



Toyosi Ogunseye, a former Thomson Foundation Young Journalist Award finalist, has just been appointed head of the BBC's Language Services for West Africa.

Based in Lagos, Nigeria, Toyosi will manage programmes in Afrique, Hausa, Igbo, Pidgin and Yoruba. She's immensely pleased with her new job: "This is a huge honour. I'm so excited about this new role with the BBC and I look forward to working with its amazing journalists in the region."

"I have no doubt that we will continue to produce quality journalism that our audiences love us for."

For six years, Toyosi has been editor of the *Sunday Punch*, one of Nigeria's most widely read newspapers. In a three-part series for the newspaper, she showed that residents in a Lagos community had high levels of toxins in their blood caused by pollutants from a nearby steel plant. The coverage prompted the government to shut down the plant, and to allow it to reopen only under strict new regulations.

And her story on how newborns were dying at a top Nigerian hospital, due to a lack of adequate facilities, forced the hospital to buy more incubators for high-risk infants.

Toyosi is studying for a PhD in politics and international relations from Leicester University.

Follow Toyosi on Twitter @OgunseyeToyosi



"I am so excited about this role with the BBC"

— Toyosi Ogunseye

Caroline Ariba, who's from Uganda, won the 2015 Thomson Foundation Young Journalist Award and attended the foundation's summer multimedia course in summer 2017. She is a journalist and blogger, specialising in health and human rights issues.

"The mobile phone has never felt the same ever since. Coming from a print journalism background, I kept wondering what was going on. But the Thomson Foundation trainers were prepared for that kind of reaction and they repeatedly reminded me that I could do it."

"Besides data interpretation, video editing was my favourite, and I thought I wouldn't do it at first."

Every time I find that I can't remember a thing they taught, I go back to the notes and it feels

like they are all still with me. And after doing that summer course, a lot that was foggy cleared out.

"What I liked about the training is that it accommodated all aspects of audience engagement that is essential for conventional journalism and blogging. One thing was clear, though. It was mostly about mobile journalism, a thing every journalist, blogger and communicator ought to grasp very quickly!"

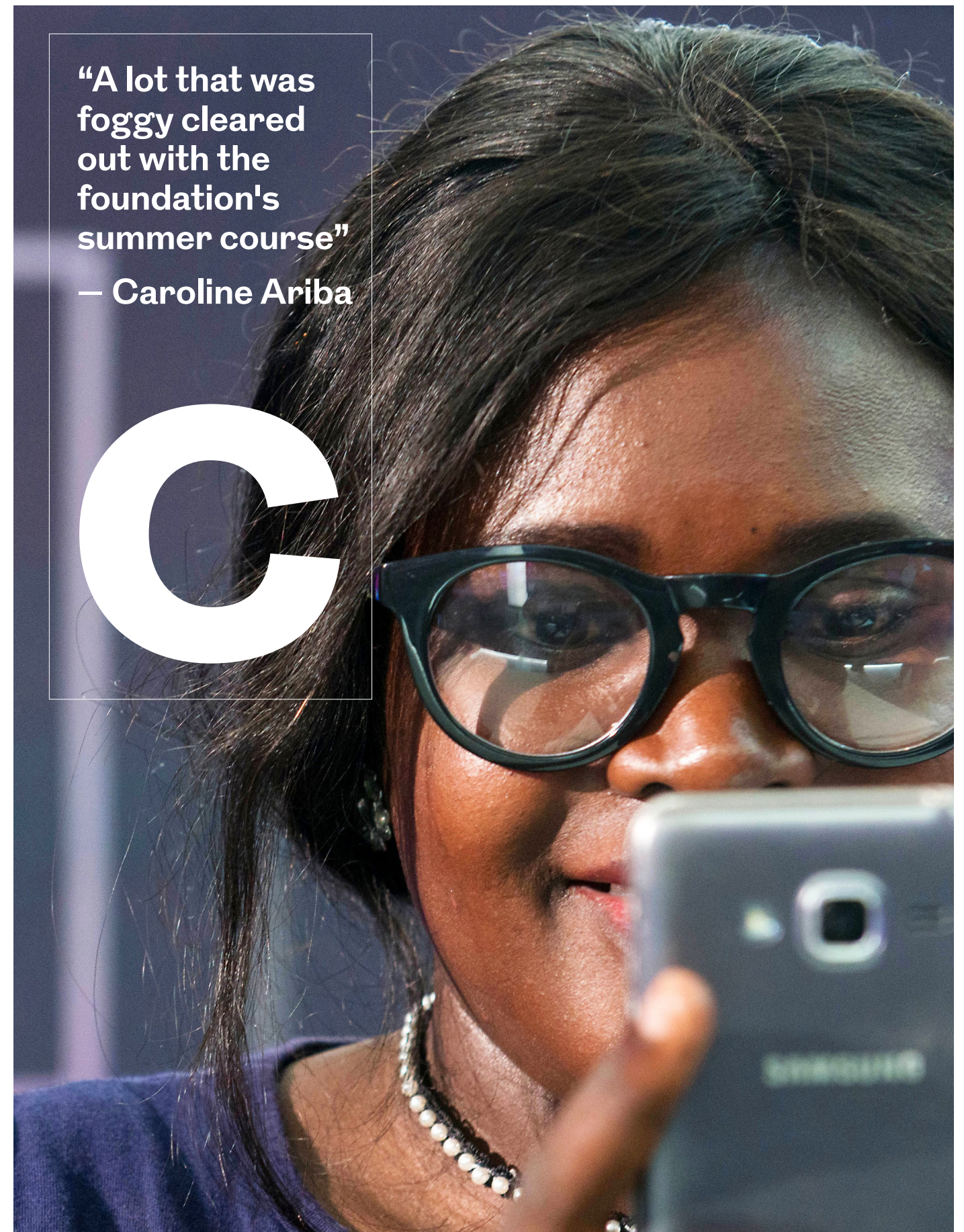
"I'm now starting a health and human rights blog. I also hope to get journalists who feel like the stories they want to pursue don't materialise, to send them my way. I hope to find the relevant audiences for them."

Follow Caroline on Twitter @CarolAriba

"A lot that was foggy cleared out with the foundation's summer course"

— Caroline Ariba

C





A

“Everything I am is because of the Thomson Foundation summer course”

– Viasen Soobramoney

Viasen Soobramoney, who's based in Cape Town, is head of digital content for business news, at Independent Media South Africa.

He attended the Thomson Foundation summer course in 2014 and, although he's only 30, has already trained a 500-strong newsroom in digital storytelling.

"At the Thomson Foundation summer course, I was taught all about digital storytelling, and mobile journalism. Afterwards, my employer, Independent Media, asked me to pioneer Africa's first mobile journalism newsroom, which involved an exchange of ideas between everyone here, young and old.

"Because they showed confidence in me, I had the confidence to make it a success. And I have now trained an incredibly large newsroom in

digital news, to diversify and improve the ways in which we tell stories.

"I have put in place a multimedia strategy for our media group, which is one of the largest in the country. When people think of us now, they no longer think of us as just newspapers, but as a multimedia organisation with excellent mobile journalism, website and video content, too.

"At the moment I am specialising in the digital content of our business news, but if all goes well I hope to move to other areas, perhaps entertainment or another specialist subject.

"I was equipped to do what I do by the Thomson Foundation. It all started there. Everything I am is because of that summer course."

Follow Viasen on Twitter @ViasenS

Images courtesy of @CamPics, Channel 4 and Glenn Edwards

Elizabeth



A prestigious competition aimed at helping media managers in the Commonwealth navigate the challenges of digital technology was launched during 2017.

The Elizabeth R Media Fund attracted more than 100 entries from 23 countries for the Commonwealth Digital Challenge, established with the consent of Buckingham Palace.

The competition evolved from a charity, recently taken over by the Thomson Foundation, called the Elizabeth R Broadcasting Fund. It was set up in 1995 to assist the development of broadcasting skills in the Commonwealth with royalties from "Elizabeth R", the 1992 BBC documentary which marked the 40th anniversary of the reign of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II.

The new competition is aimed at existing, and aspiring, media managers aged between 25 and 35 who need support with digital skills.

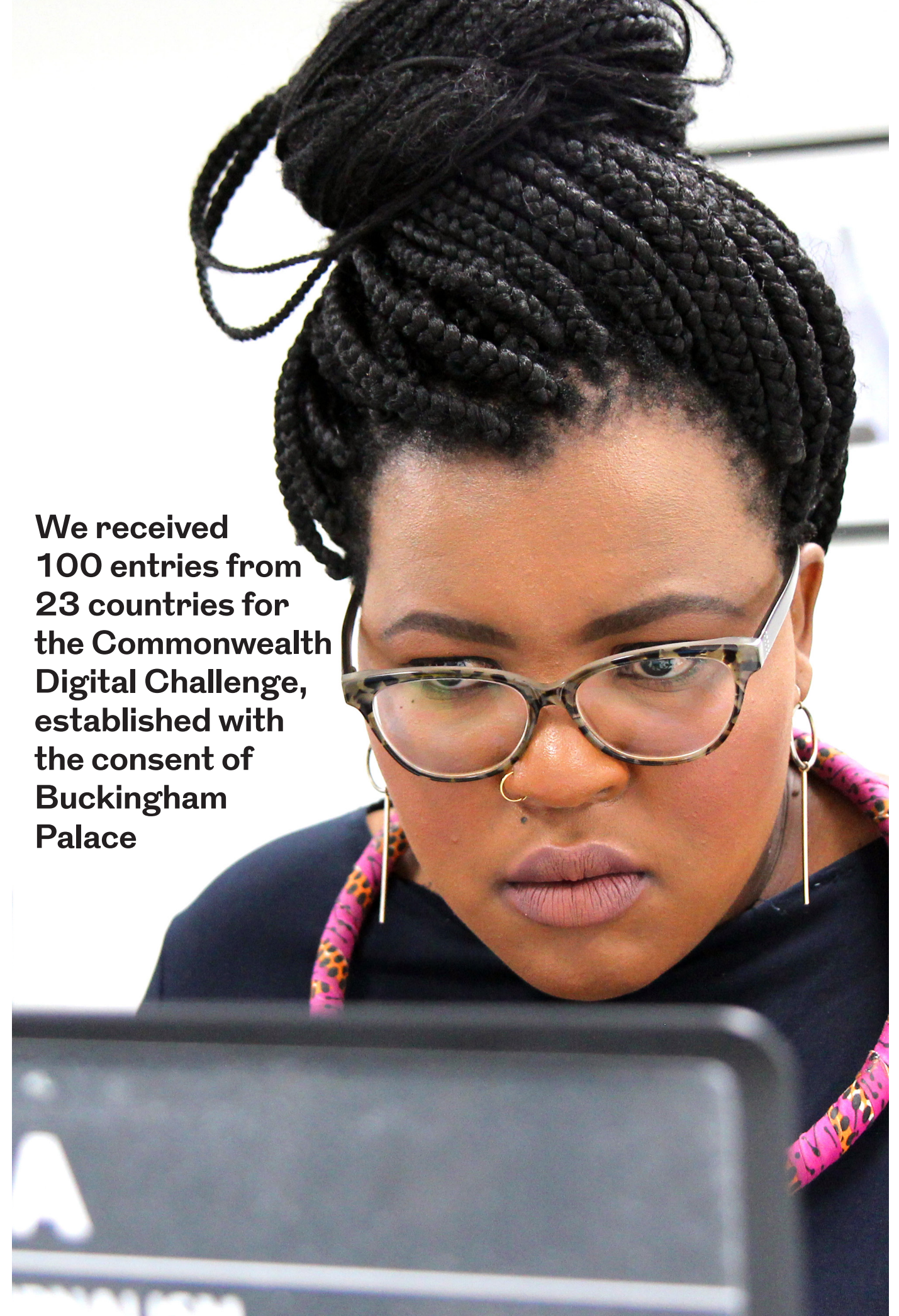
Entrants were asked to outline a digital challenge – and a potential solution. The 15 shortlisted entries ranged from how to increase audience engagement with news websites to help with developing a mobile app, to training rural journalists in Africa and digital campaigns to reach a young audience for government health campaigns in the Caribbean.

The overall winner was due to be selected in time to attend the 2018 Commonwealth summit in Britain, as well as receiving a week's intensive training in London, followed by a year's mentoring by Thomson Foundation consultants.

The winner will lead an online conference of the top 15 applicants, focusing on key topics identified by their entries.



We received 100 entries from 23 countries for the Commonwealth Digital Challenge, established with the consent of Buckingham Palace





To say life can be tough for journalists in Honduras would be an understatement.

Reporters Without Borders lists the country as 140th out of 180 in its World Press Freedom Index 2017. This is why Media4Democracy, of which Thomson Foundation is a prominent member, has become involved in a new digital freedom project, designed to help journalists, academics and human rights groups access the digital platforms of government and other public institutions.

Although this information is available online, very few media organisations in Honduras know how to get at it. It's one of many projects from the EU-funded Media4Democracy, designed to promote freedom of expression, online and offline, around the world.

"It's never been more important that the national media cover social and investigative issues responsibly, and try to tackle the issues that matter most to people"
—David Quin

"We have been delivering programmes on ethical data usage, freedom of expression and the coverage of elections in Latin America" says David Quin, Thomson Foundation's director of development. "We hope to do more work in these areas to encourage access to information for the media and the general public. This is a big test for our team and a testament to our strong partnerships in the region."

It's becoming increasingly important that journalists and human rights groups gain access to digital platforms, because of crackdowns on the free flow of information.

As Reporters Without Borders says: "The situation of the Honduran media has worsened steadily for almost a decade – especially since the 2009 coup. Steeped in corruption, Honduras has one of the hemisphere's highest rates of impunity. Journalists with opposition media and community media are often physically attacked, threatened or forced to flee abroad."

In Paraguay, which is listed as 110th on the Reporters Without Borders Index, the foundation has also been active in promoting open access to information for journalists.

Street children forced into crime, collapsing schools and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases were just some of the topics covered with Paraguay's leading journalists in a series of workshops led by the foundation's investigations specialist, David Harrison.

David worked with more than 40 reporters at three major national newspapers to plan strategies for covering stories as part of a project backed by the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

"There is a great degree of self-censorship because of vested interests," says David. "Information in the papers often reflects their views on politics and business, making it difficult for journalists to provide independent coverage."

Despite the restrictions that journalists have to face, all three news outlets were keen on working with the foundation on improving their coverage, with promising ideas emerging during the two-day courses, mainly on social issues.

Recent unrest in the streets of Paraguay's capital Asuncion over changes to the presidential term shows how tense the political climate has become.



Defending free speech



THOMSONMEDIA.DE

Berlin beginnings

"Much of what is happening [in Berlin] is shaping the media technology landscape around the world"

— Christoph Lanz

After two years of careful planning, 2018 sees the opening of Thomson Media gGmbH, the German partner of the Thomson Foundation.

The launch means the Thomson group now also has a home in one of the world's most exciting digital landscapes from which to help strengthen media skills worldwide.

Working with governments, and philanthropic and institutional donors, Thomson Media brings innovative approaches to how media can help to tackle critical issues from regional security to migration and economic growth.

"Germany is forging ahead with its digital economy," says David Quin, managing director of the German partner. "And Berlin's digital media often have a philanthropic aim, with a strong civic purpose, which chimes with the Thomson tradition."

An advisory board headed up by Deutsche Welle's former managing director of multimedia, Christoph Lanz, gives Thomson Media strong insights on which to build for the future. >>



"Many of the challenges we face internationally, such as involving diaspora groups in public debates, have become realities for newsrooms in countries like Germany since the migration crisis"

— Christine Liehr



“It’s an exciting prospect to help Thomson Media get off the ground,” says Christoph. “Germany’s media landscape is changing fast, led by the sort of innovators found here in Berlin. Much of what is happening here is shaping the media technology landscape around the world.”

“Being in Berlin will lead to an expansion of Thomson’s network throughout Europe and build on long-established regional partnerships with media houses and donors,” says David.

“We are continually learning from media markets in transition – how are they dealing with the new world? And that’s where Berlin comes in, at the core of an increasingly digital landscape.”

Helping the foundation achieve this will be Stuttgart-born Christine Liehr, the new development manager for Thomson Media. Having worked mainly in south-east Asia, Africa and the Middle East, on a range of media development programmes, she is keen to deepen industry links to projects.

“Many of the challenges we face internationally, such as involving diaspora groups in the public debates, have become realities for newsrooms in countries like Germany since the migration crisis,” says Christine. “Developing and adapting projects so that they work in their local media contexts, but build on sustainable business models, will be one of our challenges.”

Thomson Media’s first project for 2018 involves working with the film industry in Georgia as part of a programme funded by the German development agency, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), in collaboration with the European Union.

Renowned filmmakers Nana Ekvimishvili and Simon Gross will be joined by film expert Marjorie Bendeck, for the project, aimed at boosting Georgia’s presence in international markets with a sustainable growth strategy.

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Registered charity: 313750

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