

# Thomson Foundation

Annual Review 2022



The background features a vibrant red color with a subtle, grainy texture. Overlaid on this are several sets of concentric, semi-circular arcs. The arcs are arranged in three main groups, each centered horizontally. The arcs in the left and right groups are a bright blue color, while the arcs in the middle group are a light, almost white color. The arcs vary in size, with the largest ones at the top and bottom of each group, and smaller ones in the middle, creating a sense of depth and movement.

**Access All Areas**

# Contents

## FOREWARD

**6-7**

Access all areas, how our pioneering work in blended learning is supporting and creating sustainable media organisations across the globe.

## DISARMING DISINFORMATION

**8-9**

**Bad news for false news: countering misinformation in Sudan**

The pioneering highly popular WhatsApp course helping to spot and counter false information in Sudan.

**10-11**

**Restoring Trust**

Our role at the heart of a global movement to restore public trust in the media.

## FRAGILE STATES – UKRAINE

**12-13**

**Access to advice**

Easy-to-access safety advice for Ukrainian journalists in the event of a chemical attack or exposure to radiation.

**12-13**

**War in Ukraine: Network of Voices**

Helping Ukrainian journalists to tell their story to a global audience.

**14-15**

**Collaboration in time of war**

City to city – linking independent journalists in Ukraine with their German counterparts.



6

## ACCESSING THE TRUTH

**16-17**

**“Holding the line”**

The law is increasingly used as a tool to silence journalists. The story of our Young Journalist Award winner Yashraj Sharma.

**18-19**

**London bound**

The powerful stories that led our Young Journalist Award finalists to London.

**20-21**

**Tales from Tajikistan**

Feeding the hunger for stories and information in Tajikistan.

## ACCESSING VOICES

**22-23**

**Accessing women’s voices**

The human stories of Pakistan’s devastating floods that no one else was telling.

**24-25**

**Valley Voices**

The woman reporter empowered to cover stories normally considered taboo in her society.

18



## ACCESS ALL

**26-27**

**Changing the narrative**

A ground-breaking course for a new generation of African storytellers.

**28-29**

**Q + A – a personal story**

The online learning course that led to covering Cop27.

## ACCESS TO MEDIA

**30-31**

**A media policy fit for the 21st century**

Defining a comprehensive media policy for the 21st century.

## VIRTUAL ACCESS

**32-33**

**Reflections: developing a course for investigative journalists in Rwanda**

Investigative journalist John-Allan Namu on how being a trainer has informed his work.

**34-35**

**Access all languages**

Unique access to e-learning for journalists in the Western Balkans.

**36-37**

**Environmental journalism: greater access**

Informing local journalists on how to tell stories about the biggest issue facing their region and the planet.

## LOOK AHEAD

**38-39**

**Access to the best**

The next chapter.



24



26



32

Foreward

# Welcome



The impact of the work that Thomson Foundation does with journalists and media organisations around the world is often best described by the beneficiaries themselves. Our board of trustees listened to Goran Igic of Vidi Vaka, a digital publication in North Macedonia about the work he did with the foundation in growing the reach of that publication especially with younger audiences. Vidi Vaka is gaining impressive engagement numbers on social media thanks to one-on-one mentoring by the foundation's regional experts and, of course, Igic and his team's drive and vision.

"The audience is our strength", he says.

The foundation's team has continued to look for new areas of expansion and funding. They have worked hard this year to raise the foundation's profile at industry events, especially around mis and disinformation, an area where we are

seeing increasing demand for training. The model of blended learning – online self-paced courses combined with face-to-face workshops and mentoring, is working well post the pandemic.

At the centre of the foundation's mission is a passion for accurate and trusted journalism. The team has been supporting Zahra Joya of Rukhshana Media, an Afghan digital publication dedicated to telling the stories of women and girls in Afghanistan. Zahra and her family were evacuated to the UK when the Taliban took over but she and her reporters in Afghanistan, have continued reporting, telling vital stories for the world to know. Pictures of Zahra, and other inspiring journalists like her greet visitors to the foundation's new offices in London – a great reminder of the value and importance of brave, trusted reporting.

Financially the foundation is on a sound footing diversifying donor funding to philanthropic funding and commercial work related to the overall mission. I would like to thank all our donors and partners for their support this year, my fellow trustees for their continued interest and the foundations teams in London and in Berlin where Thomson Media is based, for their dedicated and inspiring work.

**Lord Tom Chandos**  
Chairman  
Thomson Foundation

**"The foundation's team has continued to look for new areas of expansion and funding."**

**"Sustainable journalism is key to our work and it was wonderful to see the growth in revenue – sometimes up to 70% – and reach of our beneficiaries in the Western Balkans, Central Europe and Pakistan."**

2022 was a big year for Thomson Foundation – in more ways than one. We moved our London office to a new collaborative space in Camden Town, had the highest level of overall revenue in the history of the foundation, and reached our biggest audience with a single training course – a WhatsApp based course on disinformation for journalists in Sudan which was taken by more than ten thousand people.

At the heart of our organisation is the belief that factual and trusted journalism is a force for good. To this end, we work with journalists and their news organisations in some of the toughest places in the world to do this vital work – where their work is under threat, sometimes their lives as well, and often their livelihoods. We are inspired daily by the journalists we work with. Like our Young Journalist of the Year winner, Yashraj Sharma who is among a number of journalists who cannot leave Indian-administered Kashmir for

legal reasons, and said on receiving the award: "The responsibility of informing the society doesn't come easy, and it often takes the soul out of you. Be there and hold the line."

The impact of the catastrophic floods in north western Pakistan on the lives of women and children were told by a team of women journalists and bloggers who we have been training with Tribal News Network (TNN). The three-year Thomson Media programme has done much to enhance the voices of women in what remains a male-dominated society.

Sustainable journalism is key to our work and it was wonderful to see the growth in revenue – sometimes up to 70% – and reach of our beneficiaries in the Western Balkans, Central Europe and Pakistan.

Access All Areas is a fitting title for our annual review as we continue to pioneer messaging apps as a way to train journalists in hard-to-reach areas. Our team quickly created two courses accessible on Telegram on how to stay safe reporting the war in Ukraine for local journalists in that country after we were contacted by reporters in the war zone for help.

As ever, none of this would be possible without our donors, partners, journalist friends and of course the wonderful staff, contractors and trustees of Thomson Foundation. My deep thanks to all of you.

**Caro Kriel**  
Chief Executive.  
Thomson Foundation



Arguably the biggest issue facing journalists is tackling the constant stream of dis and misinformation. Thomson Foundation is helping journalists around the world provide accurate and trusted content.

Disarming disinformation

# Bad news for false news: countering misinformation in Sudan

**An astonishing 10,000 people have so far signed up to our pioneering WhatsApp course on how to spot and counter false information in Sudan.**

The free, easy-to-access course on the mobile messaging app which is aimed at both the media and civil society, went viral within just seven days of its launch. Many participants proudly displayed their completion certificates on social media.

Misinformation and disinformation are rife in Sudan with journalists and media organisations struggling to counter the onslaught. Public trust in the media is low following years of censorship and media house closures. Social media has filled the gap, providing news and information, much of which is unverified and designed to fuel tensions. It's why we are particularly pleased that those living in difficult to reach conflict areas of Darfur, Kordofan and the East were able

to access the course as well as people living in internal displacement camps.

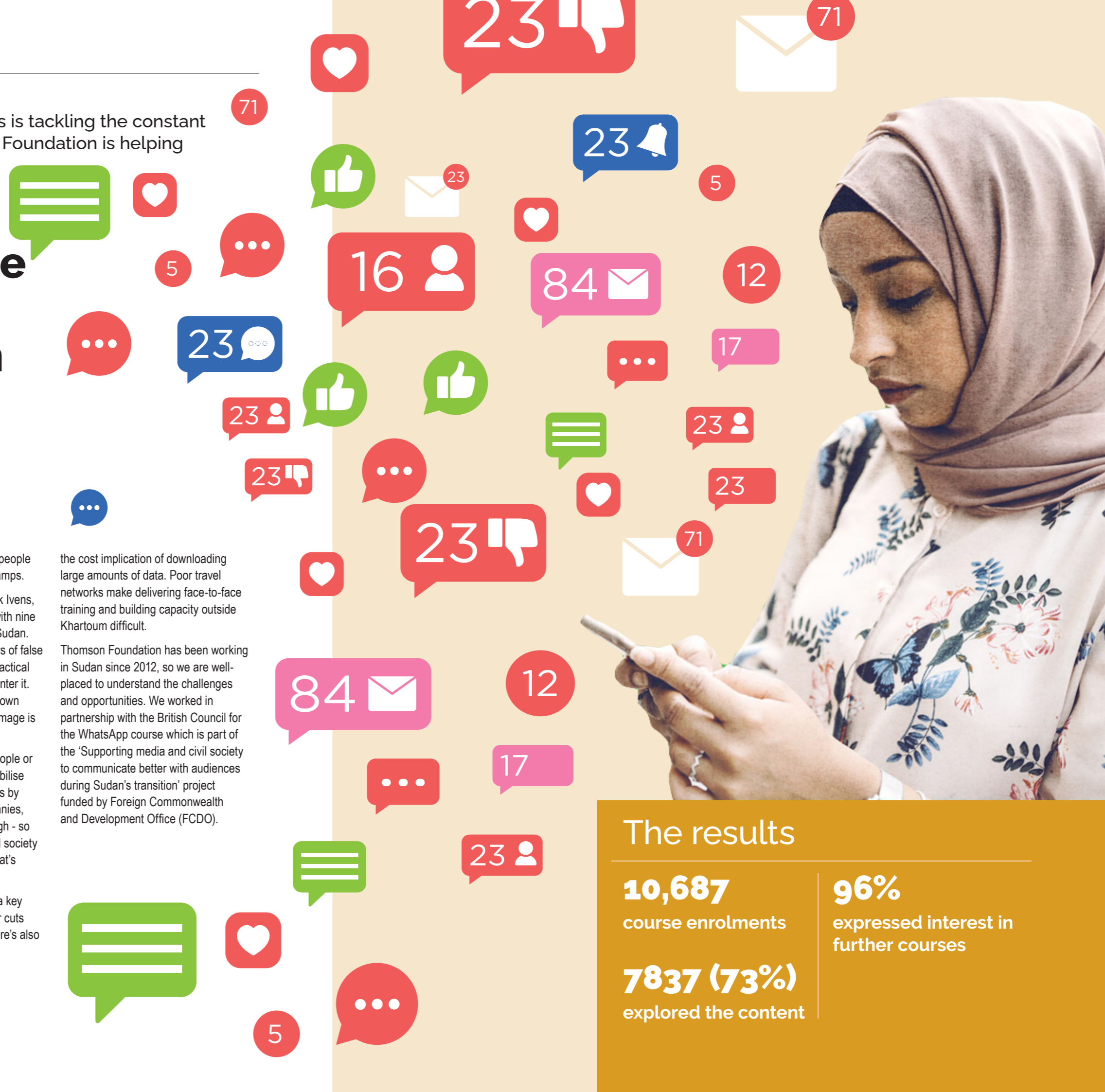
The course was written by Derek Ivens, a Thomson Foundation trainer with nine years' experience of training in Sudan. As well as explaining the dangers of false information, the course offers practical advice on how to spot it and counter it. For example, participants are shown simple ways to test whether an image is real or fake.

"Sudan has been targeted by people or organisations who want to destabilise the country. Despite some efforts by internet and social media companies, false information does get through - so it's important that journalists and society at large know the truth about what's happening," says Derek.

Easy access to the course was a key consideration with regular power cuts being a fact of life in Sudan. There's also

the cost implication of downloading large amounts of data. Poor travel networks make delivering face-to-face training and building capacity outside Khartoum difficult.

Thomson Foundation has been working in Sudan since 2012, so we are well-placed to understand the challenges and opportunities. We worked in partnership with the British Council for the WhatsApp course which is part of the 'Supporting media and civil society to communicate better with audiences during Sudan's transition' project funded by Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).



## The results

<b>10,687</b> course enrolments	<b>96%</b> expressed interest in further courses
<b>7837 (73%)</b> explored the content	

# Restoring TRUST

**Thomson Foundation is at the heart of a global movement to restore public trust in the media.**

We are leading a consortium of the world's foremost media development and journalism training providers tasked with designing innovative coaching and online resources to support media outlets hoping to attain JTI accreditation.

The Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI) which was launched by Reporters Without Borders in 2019, is a self-regulatory mechanism designed to promote trustworthy journalism. The 'JTI standard' is now an officially recognised standardisation deliverable under EU law. Thomson Foundation is a founding member of the JTI Campus who will provide media outlets with tools to upskill staff and put in place the right editorial policies and processes to reach the JTI standard.

A consortium led by the Thomson Foundation will create the core content for the Campus network across Africa, the Middle East, the Americas and Europe.

Media outlets can use the JTI app to self-assess their conformity, publish their transparency reports and get independently audited.

Hosam El Nagar, Thomson Foundation's director of innovation and learning calls the establishment of the JTI Campus 'an important milestone' in the fight against online disinformation.

He says: "Achieving the JTI standard should help those outlets attract advertising and subsidies and most importantly audiences, who will be able to recognise them as a trusted source of news."

The two-year project is being funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

## Checking the facts

Journalists in Argentina have been trained in skills to help stop the spread of false information which has engulfed the country.

Thomson Media partnered with Chequeado, the digital NGO dedicated to fighting disinformation, and the Forum for Argentine Journalism (FOPEA) to deliver vital training in verification. Through online training sessions and one-to-one mentoring, journalists learned fact-checking skills and ways to strengthen their newsroom by incorporating verification tools into daily coverage.

## The risk factor

The fog of war can make the truth difficult to see. For journalists covering 21st century conflicts like the war in Ukraine, opacity has been further increased by the online barrage.

To help journalists maintain their professionalism and the trust of their audiences, Thomson Foundation introduced Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI) training as part of a wider project addressing Ukrainian diaspora audience needs. The JTI component was a workshop attended by seven Ukrainian media outlets and centred on mitigating risk: how to set up checks and balances in a newsroom as well as in the newsgathering processes during a time of conflict.

As a result of the project, specialised training to help journalists in other conflict zones is now being developed.

Ukraine

## Access to advice

Hundreds of journalists in Ukraine have benefitted from vital safety training through two courses devised by Thomson Foundation and delivered via Telegram, the encrypted messaging app.

Reacting to a chemical attack was released in March with the second course, Safety advice: nuclear incident following in November.

The circumstances in Ukraine meant we had to adapt our training methods to allow for online safety concerns, time constraints and potential connectivity issues for journalists. The result was two interactive courses, offered in both English and Ukrainian, which take just 10 minutes each to complete on a smartphone. They provide access to essential safety advice for local and regional journalists who may not have specialist kit or help that journalists from international news organisations benefit from. Downloadable safety guides were also made available at the end of each course.



**“The simple course on the Telegram app is an inspired way to get a complex message across in a simple format to a wide audience”**

### Exceptional completion rates

Almost 700 journalists have so far enrolled on the two courses with more than 90 per cent rating them useful or very useful.

“These courses achieved exceptional completion rates averaging 50%”, says Hosam El Nagar who’s the Thomson Foundation’s director of innovation and learning.

The expert safety advice was provided by Hamish de Bretton-Gordon OBE, a former commander of NATO’s Rapid Reaction CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear) Battalion who now advises journalists through the International News Safety Institute.

“The simple course on the Telegram app is an inspired way to get a complex message across in a simple format to a wide audience,” he says.

Additional safety advice in the second course came from Gareth Davies, a former soldier with over 20 years of CBRN experience.

Ukraine

# War in Ukraine: Network of Voices



## Berlin

### Ukrainian Voices

Thomson Foundation trained more than 1500 regional journalists in Ukraine in recent years. In the war these journalists are playing a crucial role not only providing real-time lifesaving information for their communities but also telling the story of the conflict to the world. A number of these journalists joined a Thomson led panel at the International Journalism Festival in Perugia in Italy in April.

Despite the threat posed by the Russian advance, Olha Kyrylova, a journalist from Pokrovsk, Donetsk Oblast who

had relocated to Dnipro and Viktoriia Talashkevych, a journalist based in Kropyvnytskyi, a city in central Ukraine overcame the challenges of connectivity to join the panel live from their homes.

Viktoriia talked about feeling moved by the solidarity Ukrainian journalists had shown one another. "Our colleagues are inspiring us to be emotionally strong," she said.

Olha described the difficulty of turning off once she had finished her shift "Even when I have a day off, I stay in and monitor the news. I can't do this another way," she said.

Daryna Shevchenko, the CEO of the Kyiv Independent spent two days travelling to Italy from Ukraine for the conference. For her it was imperative that the world heard the story of what was happening in her country.

"Kyiv became so silent so dark and only the crows would cry out and in the silence it became like a Hitchcock nightmare," she told the audience. "It's something you would never expect in Kyiv. And that is why the Kyiv story touches everybody but then this happened to a lot of places in Ukraine and we have also not just to talk about the victims but also talk about those places what they were like before."

Thomson Media's City to City project links independent regional journalists in Ukraine with their German counterparts to help them produce content for the Ukrainian diaspora but also people remaining in the war-torn state.



## Kyiv

### Collaboration in time of war

One million refugees have been welcomed into Germany since the Russian invasion who aside from being far from home have lost contact with their community and information in their native language.

Thomson Media's City to City project links independent regional journalists in Ukraine with their German counterparts to help them produce content for the Ukrainian diaspora but also people remaining in the war-torn state.

Research suggests that there is a large appetite from Ukrainians living in Germany for news that isn't focussed solely on the devastating consequences of war but

about everyday life in Ukraine.

A requirement also shared by those still living in the country.

The main focus is on audio journalists, those producing podcasts, working on radio shows or music productions and blogs.

Expertise is being provided by staff from Germany's largest radio group RTL who will share their insights on audience reach, measurements and analytics as well as content production.

Media City to City is a programme run in partnership with the Lviv Media Forum (LMF) and funded by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

**Thomson Foundation trained more than 1500 regional journalists in Ukraine in recent years.**



## Accessing Truth

In 2016 the Oxford Dictionaries declared 'post-truth' to be its international word of the year. Put simply, it means that objective facts have less influence than an appeal to emotions. Six years on and for journalists working in fragile states, accessing the truth and trying to inform their audiences with objective facts is becoming more difficult and dangerous as political polarisation increases. Thomson Foundation has been supporting some of these journalists in different regions around the world through training and mentorship. One of those journalists is Yashraj Sharma in Kashmir who's the winner of the 2022 Thomson Foundation Young Journalist of the Year award. Yashraj's story is a stark illustration of the challenges facing journalists working in the post-truth age.

FPA Finalists

# 'Holding the line'

**The first story Yashraj Sharma wrote for The Kashmir Walla didn't go well. His editor Fahad Shah sent it back with a curt message: "Don't be Hemingway, write news."**

The young intern didn't make the same mistake again. In fact, he learned to write news so well that he was named the 2022 Thomson Foundation Young Journalist of the Year at the Foreign Press Association (FPA) Awards in London.

"From my inability to hold 300 words to this award...all of this belongs to Fahad – and Kashmir Walla!", he wrote on Twitter after the win.

When that same editor Fahad Shah was jailed under anti-terrorism laws, Yashraj took over the job. At an age when most journalists are in junior roles, the then 22-year-old found himself running a newsroom and, like his editor before him, running up against the authorities in Indian-administered Kashmir.

After reporting that Kashmiri school children were being forced to celebrate India's Republic Day, Yashraj was accused of inciting riots. He's one of many journalists who've seen the law used against them since the region's special status was revoked in 2019. Some, like Fahad, are in jail or facing travel bans. The situation meant that Yashraj was unable to travel to the UK to collect his award.

"Pursuing independent journalism is more important than ever. Right now, we are not just facing one or two crises. The crises that journalists are facing are not binary, they are multi-dimensional", Yashraj told us.

Yet despite the pressure and uncertainty, Yashraj remains committed to journalism. His passion grew from watching Vice News at home in a small village in Rajasthan. "I thought that this is what

I want to do with my life." So, when the current affairs outlet offered him an internship, he dropped out of his journalism degree to join them.

The stories which so impressed the FPA judges were written when Yashraj took time out to travel around India and work as a freelance journalist. He covered issues from female foeticide for The Guardian, to working-class social media creators for Rest of the World and Myanmar refugees for NBC News.

Yashraj finished his degree through distance learning, returning to the Kashmir Walla when Fahad Shah was arrested. In his acceptance speech he dedicated his award to 'every journalist in prison today for their reporting and holding the power accountable'. He admits it's not easy being responsible for informing society, but he hopes journalists will continue to 'be there and hold the line'.



FPA Finalists

# London bound



## Young Journalist of the year award

The Thomson Foundation Young Journalist of the Year Award is in partnership with the UK Foreign Press Association (FPA). The annual award enables journalists aged 30 and under from countries with a Gross National Income per capita of less than US\$20,000 to submit their best stories.

### What do a London bus, traditional fish and chips and the Houses of Parliament all have in common?

They were all on the list of must-do activities for two of our young finalists on a whistle-stop visit to London for the Thomson Foundation Young Journalist of the Year award 2022.

Jyoti Yadav from India, and fellow finalist Carlos Raúl Kestler from Guatemala, spent an action-packed three days visiting the capital's sites as well as meeting senior journalists at Channel 4 News and The Guardian.

They beat almost 300 entries from 60 countries to make it to the final three for the prestigious award. It was an outstanding year for submissions with so many young journalists showing their ability to break down boundaries, demand answers from the powerful and give voice to the marginalised through exceptional storytelling.

**Action-packed three days visiting the capital's sites as well as meeting senior journalists at Channel 4 News and The Guardian.**

Jyoti's stories chronicle the lives of three gang rape survivors and their pursuit of justice and a new life, long after their stories have fallen out of the headlines.

"A powerful story can create empathy, shift the public conversations and priorities, and most importantly, it gives voice to those who are deliberately silenced," says Jyoti, whose trip to London was her first time outside of India.

Carlos spent four months travelling around Guatemala to investigate the condition of the roads and highways and how this affects society. The result was a series of multimedia stories called Broken Connectivity which the competition judges called 'completely captivating'.

"Right now, these Guatemalans don't have access to good education and health and justice because they live extremely far away...at the end of the day, roads are the bridges that connect us and society," says Carlos.



Tajikistan

# Tales from Tajikistan

**Millions of people in Tajikistan have read, watched and listened to an extraordinary social media campaign which has clearly shown the population's hunger for stories about their lives and their communities.**

The campaign has so far attracted more than 2.1 million views and garnered almost 20,000 reactions and shares on social media platforms. All this in a country with a population of just 9.75 million people.

The content creation project which tells stories about marginalised people and communities, is the culmination of a two-year programme to bolster independent media in Tajikistan. Righting the Balance: Building the Resilience and Relevance of Independent media in Tajikistan was run in conjunction with our local partner the National Association of Independent Mass Media in Tajikistan (NANSMIT).

More than 60 pieces of social media content were produced by journalists and leaders from civil society organisations (CSOs) who worked in pairs to produce 35 digital videos, talk shows, podcasts and TV documentaries.

With themes ranging from disabled women in the workplace, domestic violence,

military conscription and young, male unemployment levels, the stories told came from across the country, including hard-to-reach rural areas as well as larger, urban centres.

Thomson Media's managing director, David Quin says: "The unprecedented engagement figures on social media and the scale of the outreach involved prove that relatable, engaging and previously untold human-interest stories are high in demand among Tajik audiences."

The successful social media campaign was part of a larger initiative to foster cooperation between media and civil society in the country. Training was provided through bespoke self-paced online courses, as well as in-person workshops with local trainers and an international trainer who joined remotely.

As we reported in 2020, particular focus was on challenging the lack of public information being made available to the media with training provided around the right to information (RTI) procedures. During the project's lifespan, journalists submitted 280 RTI requests. Of those, 57.1 per cent were successful, a rise of more than 12 per cent from before the start of the project. Although accessing information remains difficult, NANSMIT is continuing

to work on its platform to help journalists navigate the process.

"Working together, journalists and representatives of NGOs can more effectively seek solutions to particular social issues." Lawyer Khurshed Kurbonshoev, who was paired with journalist Abdullo Gurbati, whose hard-hitting social affairs coverage earned both public praise and state criticism.

Abdullo is currently appealing against a seven-and-half year sentence after being convicted of assaulting a police officer and participation in a banned extremist group, charges he denied.

Pressure on media and civil society intensified during the two years of our programme with complaints that the authorities have used vaguely worded criminal legislation on "extremism" and other offences to stifle dissent.

Self-censorship is now a reality for some journalists and CSO workers. But the door has been opened and the huge public response to stories on conflict-sensitive subjects indicates a growth of trust in journalism in Tajikistan.

**"Working together, journalists and representatives of NGOs can more effectively seek solutions to particular social issues"**

–Khurshed Kurbonshoev (Lawyer)

# TAJIKISTAN

## 9.75 MILLION PEOPLE

## 2.1 MILLION VIEWS



Pakistan

# Accessing women's Voices

**It's August in Pakistan and much of the country is underwater. Catastrophic flooding has killed hundreds, left millions homeless and destroyed infrastructure. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province in Pakistan's northwest is one of the areas worst affected.**

Amid the destruction in KP is a group of women journalists together with a group of women bloggers who are telling stories that no-one else is telling. It's the culmination of a three-year Thomson Media programme to enhance the voices of women in public discourse in what remains a male-dominated society.

The project called Valley Voices, has been so successful in terms of audience engagement in particular, that it was extended in 2022. Working alongside Tribal News Network (TNN), a radio and online news platform, we trained a

team of women journalists on advanced mobile journalism skills including filming, editing, storytelling and safety. The result has been stories from the field during and after the flood including the impact primarily on women and children, the lack of clean drinking water and the urgent need for facilities for pregnant women.

"I think we are becoming role models for the rest of the media here in Pakistan and the audience is also getting unique content", says Said Nazir, the executive director of TNN.

Eight women bloggers have also provided content for TNN about the flooding which is remarkable considering some are unable to leave home to work because of the strict rules preventing them from working alongside male journalists.

This unique concept saw the women being mentored and trained to provide 48 blogs over six months on topics ranging

from the lack of say for a woman in marriage, domestic violence and dealing with periods.

"Normally you don't see articles like this in society," says Said Nazir.

For the bloggers themselves, it has given them a chance to participate in public discourse, and judging from their response, it's been a liberating experience.

One blogger, Hudaibia Iftikhar, wrote an article on why Pakistan needs more female leaders in which she argues: "If [women] are responsible caretakers of their families, then why not for their nation?"

Another, economics graduate Nazia Salarzai, says the project has given her 'a platform'. "I am representing a population of 1.2 million in the Bajaur tribal district bordering Afghanistan where there is no single woman blogger and journalist except me," she says. Writing in a blog about the flooding she makes an impassioned plea for urgent work to stop the spread of disease including 'the provision of lady doctors, their access to women and their safety.'

Said Nazir called the training for bloggers 'a fascinating idea'. "We are pushing the boundaries and bringing new realities to the media", he says.



**...we trained a team of women journalists on advanced mobile journalism skills including filming, editing, storytelling and safety**

# Valley Voices



How do you measure success? Well, such was the phenomenal response to our Valley Voices project, it was extended twice. Funded by the German Federal Foreign Office through ifa (Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations) as part of the zivik funding programme, the result, after three years, is that many more women living in a traditional, male-dominated remote district of Pakistan have found their voice.

Women have been able to access journalism training and management roles as well as news which relates to them. We're not just talking about the women journalists we helped to train with our partner Tribal News Network (TNN), but the audience themselves. Women living in KP's Mardan district were asked directly what stories they wanted and needed to hear. The result included radio shows for women on issues like health and education and a wealth of everyday stories that included a woman's point of view.

Pakistan

## My story Valley Voices

**I decided to become a journalist in 2019 after finishing secondary education.**

At the start it was quite tough because I come from an extremely conservative background. Whilst my parents were very supportive, my uncle, aunts and grandparents were all against my decision.

For the last four years I've worked as a multimedia journalist, covering major topics which are considered taboo in our society such as interfaith harmony, women, land inheritance and female heroes. I've also covered climate change, recently working on the issue of flooding and how it's affecting the lives of women.

Now, when my family see my stories on social media, they are proud and everyone in the family has started supporting me. I like being a journalist because the job has introduced me to people and communities I would never have met otherwise. I like telling their stories and feel honoured that they trust me to do so.

**Amna Istemraj,**  
Journalist, TNN



**“For the last four years I've worked as a multimedia journalist, covering major topics which are considered taboo in our society”**



# changing



**“I loved the course. It made me look at telling the African story in a different light.” Irene, journalist, Zimbabwe**

One of the highlights of our year was the collaboration with the organisation Africa No Filter about changing the narrative about Africa through storytelling with the ground-breaking course – African stories: A guide for journalists on how to tell better stories about Africa.

Thousands of journalists from across the continent – from Sierra Leone to Ethiopia, Nigeria to Botswana, signed up for the course which aims to encourage a fresh approach to storytelling. That means a move away from political, male-dominated news where nuance, accessible language and a human face are too often missing and to a wide mix of stories about the lives, struggles and achievements of ordinary people.

We were also able to offer a further incentive to take the free self-paced online course. Working in collaboration with bird, a story agency from Africa No Filter which produces multimedia stories designed for an African, mobile-first audience, we were able to offer course participants the chance to pitch a story and if successful, get paid for their work.

The result? bird has so far received more than 300 story pitches from journalists on topics ranging from Lagos's elevated rail system, challenging gender stereotypes in Morocco and water conservation in Ghana.

Tom Kirkwood, the managing director and founding editor of bird story agency says the guide has 'played a key role in our success'. He says contributors from over 35 countries across Africa have been 'delivering more focused and finished writing...and ultimately helped us deliver more stories that really change the narrative on Africa'.

“Like bird story agency, and through this course, the Thomson Foundation is helping build a dynamic media ecosystem in Africa. An ecosystem that has full agency and is able to represent the continent with authenticity and nuance, across multiple platforms”, says Tom.

The course breaks down into accessible, clearly-defined sections. Journalists are guided through the whole process from sourcing stories and verification to the importance of getting out and meeting people.

“Internationally generated news doesn't always connect with people on the ground. News needs to go back to its roots, to be more local, personal and human. Then we'd start to see more engagement, impact and transformation,” says Ras Mutabaruka, the founder of TAP Media Ltd and another expert on the course.

Ras who was born in Rwanda but grew up in refugee camps in Congo and later in the slums of Nairobi has dedicated his work to changing the way the world sees and thinks about Africa. His words and the 'changing narrative' objective are clearly resonating.

A new generation of African journalists have taken to social media to share screenshots of their end-of-course certificates whilst praising the course contents.

“I liked everything about this course. Connecting with a global audience stood out for me. I'm still talking about it now.” says Dorcas, journalist, Nigeria.

“This course was designed to change the way people think about Africa,” says Catherine Mackie, Thomson Foundation editorial associate. “It's not about ignoring problems or pretending there are quick fixes, but about reassessing how we tell stories in a more constructive and nuanced way and offer a more balanced picture of the lives of people.”



# the



images © bird story agency

**“I liked everything about this course. Connecting with a global audience stood out for me. I'm still talking about it now.”**

–Dorcas, journalist, Nigeria.

# narrative

**May 10 2022**

Course launch

**May 12 2022**

First story pitch received by bird

**300**

Story pitches received by bird

**195**

Features published by bird from pitches in 2022

**35**

African countries, journalists submit pitches from

Africa

Q+A



image © bird story agency

## “Attending Cop27 in Egypt was a defining moment for me” –Kate Okorie

**Kate Okorie pitched a story to bird after taking the African stories: A guide for journalists on how to tell better stories about Africa online course.**

Kate was so successful that bird agency made the 25-year-old who lives in Lagos their science writer, sending her to cover Cop27 in Egypt. Kate studied pharmacy and has been working as a freelance journalist for three years.

**Why did you do the storytelling course?**

I wanted to work with bird story agency and the course seemed like a straightforward path to get started. I began it just wanting to get a certificate to get closer to that goal but by the end of the course, I had become an advocate for better African stories i.e., telling the story of Africa from an African perspective.

**What story did you pitch?**

My debut story for bird was about the crucial role of young African researchers in advancing public health interventions in rural communities.

**Did taking the course change the way you approached the storytelling?**

Definitely – it made a significant difference. It introduced me to the concept of solutions journalism and how to identify sources to ensure informed storytelling. This course helped me understand that while gathering my sources for interviews, it is important to prioritise the voice of everyone involved because the underrepresentation of any group results in a one-dimensional narrative. For the story about the young African researchers, I also ensured gender balance while choosing my sources.

**What types of stories do you like to tell?**

I like to write stories about innovation within Africa’s public health space. There is hardly ever ‘good news’ from the sector, so any story about interventions providing solutions to health challenges is a welcome relief. Lately, I have also been exploring stories around climate change and environmental health.

**What was it like attending Cop27 for bird?**

Attending Cop27 in Egypt was a defining moment for me in many ways. I had never covered such a large event before nor done such fast-paced reporting. Feature-writing is my strong point and I like to mull over stories before submitting them. So, I struggled on my first day at Cop27 but quickly grew into the role. Working with an experienced team was crucial to this.



Rwanda

# A media policy fit for the 21st century

*What does a 21st century comprehensive media policy look like? A policy that encompasses rapid technological changes as well as addressing the age-old need to protect the rights and freedoms of journalists to do their job? That was the purpose of a research study commissioned by Thomson Foundation which has made 57 recommendations to help inform future policy and media law reviews in Rwanda. The study was led by Henry Omusundi Maina, a*

convergence, digital switchover, and the globalisation of communication technology have blurred the traditional technical and regulatory distinctions. Existing media policies and laws must be reviewed to come up with a regulatory framework that is dynamic and responsive to this new media landscape.

Digitalisation has also made it necessary for traditional media (newspapers, radio, and television) to transform and incorporate new ways of working; ensuring they remain relevant and viable. These changes call for a review of the old media policies to make sure they are fit for purpose.

four east African countries. In practice this means that states are expected to repeal criminal offences like criminal defamation, sedition, undermining public authority and the publication of false news, not least because these 'crimes' can be used to silence journalists who are exposing wrongdoing by governments and big business. Instead, states are now required to enact defamation and data protection laws that provide civil remedies for those who claim that reputational and/or privacy rights have been breached.

Fourthly, policies that have, in the past, prioritised statutory regulation in the

**Existing media policies and laws must be reviewed to come up with a regulatory framework that is dynamic and responsive to this new media landscape.**

*public and social policy analyst and commissioner for the Kenya Media Complaints Commission.*

Advocates for media reform are working across East Africa but for the purposes of this research we focused on just four of those seven countries: Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania.

What people want by way of reform differs in each of those countries but little or no comparative research has been done across the region, until now.

Thomson's in-depth research found similarities in media policies and the need for reform in each of those four countries. Firstly, advocacy for media policy reforms has been influenced by extensive changes in the media landscape. Rapid technological advancements,

Secondly, the democratisation process in each of the four countries has highlighted the need to reform state broadcasters into public service media providers. It's also led to increasing efforts to liberalise the media sector, away from the stranglehold of state broadcasters who operated as monopolies for many years.

Thirdly, there are legal issues which need to be addressed when formulating any future media policy. International and regional rulings require member states to meet certain minimum thresholds when it comes to protecting fundamental human rights, as well as decriminalising freedom of expression and prohibiting incitement to hatred, discrimination and violence. These ideas were reiterated during the universal periodic review, a review of the human rights records by the United Nations of the

broadcasting and film industry should be changed to allow self-regulation and co-regulatory approaches. This will help enforce standards across the many players operating on digital platforms.

"Media law and policy advocates now have a comprehensive report to draw from as they inform their country specific needs to spur the media sector," says Bernadette Namata, the East Africa programmes manager for Thomson Foundation.

**The research study was part of the, 'Contributing to the changing Media, Legal, Regulatory and Policy Environment in Rwanda' project funded by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office**



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– Bernadette Namata  
East Africa programmes manager  
for Thomson Foundation



When I started out as an investigative journalist, there were few practising journalists in Kenya to learn from or manuals that I could read to sharpen my skills and prepare me for what lay ahead. Often my colleagues and I learnt through observing the work of other journalists outside Kenya, trying out some of the techniques in their stories and hoping for the best.

So, when the folks at the Thomson Foundation reached out and asked me to develop a journalism course for reporters in Rwanda, I thought to myself "What is it that I needed when I was starting out but never had access to as a course?". So began a lengthy process of writing and putting in order some of the skills and approaches that I use in my everyday reporting.

In my experience, every important piece of investigative work largely relies on a journalist's extensive understanding of the foundations of investigative journalism and how to practice it.

By understanding what kind of investigative story they are looking to produce and comparing it with what they actually find, a journalist can be more focused and manage their time, energy and resources well. This is crucial, because the amount of research involved in producing one story can be so much that it can be tempting to give up or go down a rabbit hole of interesting facts that are good to know but ultimately do not contribute to the story they are looking to produce.

Preparing the course allowed me to reflect on whether I am using these techniques in my own career. It reminded me of the many times that I have stuck to the beaten path of rules, skills and methods that was laid by others who worked from first principles, and the consequences from the few times that I deviated, attracted by fancier, newer tools and tricks that I saw others using. Often, journalists get over-awed by the attraction of high impact investigative journalism that uses emerging technology or practices but forget that the underlying power of these

stories is the successful use of tried and tested practices that have built journalism for decades. Identifying the right sources for one's story, for instance, may seem obvious, but sometimes, especially with stories that trigger emotions, we can forget that we still need to check the veracity of claims made.

Rwanda

## Reflections: developing a course for investigative journalists in Rwanda.

**John-Allan Namu Kenyan investigative journalist**  
CEO and co-founder of Africa Uncensored.

I didn't think that preparing the course would be difficult, but it turned out that writing down and sequencing my own process was much harder than I expected! I have newfound respect for curriculum developers. It was a great learning experience, one that I am very grateful to have had. I hope that through this course, young journalists who have a passion for investigative journalism find a few tips to send them on their way.

John-Allan's course, Investigative journalism in Rwanda is available on our Journalism Now e-learning platform in Kinyarwanda language. It was developed with our partners Legal Aid Forum as part of the Rwandan Inquirer, a project funded by the US embassy in Kigali.



Western Balkans

# Access all languages

Journalists in the Western Balkans have been given access to free resources and training in their own languages thanks to a unique platform launched by Thomson Foundation.

Journalift is a multi-lingual, digital platform providing up-to-date news on the latest media developments in Albanian, Macedonian, the Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian-Montenegrin languages as well as English.

It has enabled journalists to participate in webinars, access free courses, read the latest industry research and interact with their peers about common workplace struggles and potential solutions, without the foreign language barrier.

"I think it is the best website covering the media industry that I know of", says Igor Stojanov, editor-in-chief of the Macedonian youth media portal, Goce.mk.

"It feels like my whole journalism studies are inside that website."

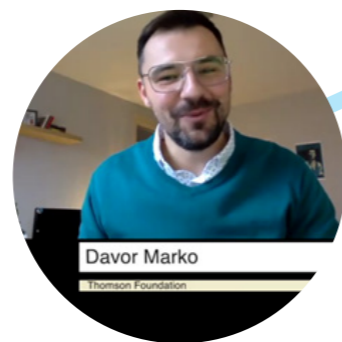
Many media workers in local and small news outlets in the Western Balkans are often not fluent in English. This can be an obstacle when it comes to accessing further training and prevents them from upgrading their knowledge in areas such as business development, audience engagement, newsroom management and safety. So Journalift has played a vital role.

Since its launch, Journalift has published more than 150 original articles written by more than 60 international and regional experts. With many media outlets in the region struggling to achieve financial sustainability, it's no surprise that the platform's most-read stories focus on ways media can monetise their communities and crowdfunding campaigns for media, and also training courses on e-payment solutions and newsroom management.

Vladimir Trkulja, who is a trainer on the Business models and monetisation for media outlets course, says it's not just professional journalists who are benefitting from what's on offer.

"The platform provides a range of very useful online courses for everyone who is considering a media career," says Vladimir, who has also written several articles for website. "It's a great starting point, not least because it's free."

Journalift will continue to grow in 2023. A new course is planned on newsroom innovation, with training on digital security being adapted and translated.



Global

## Environmental journalism: Greater access

**From the Middle East to the Balkans, the Thomson Foundation's three landmark environmental training courses are now being delivered to journalists in Arabic and the BCSM (Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian-Montenegrin) language.**

It means that training on sourcing, storytelling and safety is being presented directly to journalists in their own languages. The courses were also adapted to include expert advice from experienced environmental journalists working within those regions.

The Arabic translation for the three free self-paced online courses was done in collaboration with Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ). Their release coincided with Cop27, the inter-governmental climate change conference in Egypt. With reports that the Middle

East region is now warming twice as much as the global average, the idea of the translation is to guide and inform local journalists on how to tell stories about the biggest issue facing their region and indeed the planet.

"The momentum is building because politicians and decision-makers are paying attention to such stories and realising they need to do something about it because it's a global issue", says Rawan Damen, the Director General of ARIJ.

In the Balkans, we also worked with specialist environmental journalists keen to improve the skillset within newsrooms across that region. Dina Đorđević is a journalist with the Centre for Investigative Journalism of Serbia (CINS). For too long she told us environmental stories weren't taken seriously enough by the media. She believes more and better training will help journalists and editors understand the breadth of the storytelling on offer.

"It would become clear that such stories are about current and pressing political decisions, abuse of funds, accountability, corruption, and – most importantly – the high price that people and the planet are paying as a result," says Dina.

### Powering up Perugia

Widespread interest in our environmental training courses resulted in a packed house at the International Journalism Festival in Perugia where we hosted a debate on how to engage local audiences in climate crisis coverage. Thomson editorial associate Catherine Mackie who moderated the discussion was joined on stage by the Guardian's biodiversity and environment reporter Patrick Greenfield, Angela Dewan who's CNN's International Climate Editor and Monika Mondal, winner of our special Thomson Foundation Young Journalist Award for Environmental Journalism.




...the Middle East region is now warming twice as much as the global average...

...the idea of the translation is to guide and inform local journalists on how to tell stories about the biggest issue facing the planet.

Look Ahead

## Access to the best

2023 sees the launch of our exciting new world-class mentoring programme in which we connect six of the brightest young journalists with six of the best in the industry worldwide.

We've invested in the programme called 'Connect 6' to mark our 60th year of nurturing, educating and training journalists. Over the next six months, six of the shortlisted applicants for the Thomson Foundation Young Journalist of the Year 2022 award, including the winner and two finalists, will receive one-to-one mentoring with their own journalism expert.

They'll be sharing the wisdom learned with us at the end of the programme.

Also this year, we will be unveiling a new-look Journalism Now e-learning platform.

The move will continue to give users access to our online academy with its free training courses but will provide more advanced interactive ways to learn.

"The platform move in 2023 is the beginning of the next chapter in our vision to be the go-to solution for journalists throughout their careers and for the organisations that employ them and support them," says Hosam El Nagar, director of innovation and learning at Thomson Foundation. "We are excited: whether it is going to be a webinar, an e-learning course, a face-to-face workshop, or a combination of these, our learners will be able to access our programs seamlessly through our platform, and continue to benefit from our resources beyond any specific program and throughout their careers."

[www.journalismnow.org](http://www.journalismnow.org)

mentor

mentee

**'...the next chapter in our vision to be the go-to solution for journalists throughout their careers and for the organisations that employ them...'**

## Connect 6 mentorship programme



**Ewen MacAskill (mentor)**  
Pulitzer prize-winning journalist



**Yashraj Sharma (mentee)**  
Journalist, Kashmir



**Patrick Greenfield (mentor)**  
Environment reporter, The Guardian



**Choon Chyuan Low (mentee)**  
Journalist, Malaysia



**Julie Shapiro (mentor)**  
Executive creative director, Novel podcast company



**Carlos Raúl Kestler (mentee)**  
Journalist, Guatemala



**Saptarshi Ray (mentor)**  
Freelance journalist



**Jyoti Yadav (mentee)**  
Journalist, India



**Amber Rahim Shamsi (mentor)**  
Director, Centre of Excellence in Journalism, Karachi



**Jamaima Afridi (mentee)**  
Journalist, Pakistan



**Mohammed Komani (mentor)**  
Senior data editor and coach, ARIJ



**Najm aldain Qasem (mentee)**  
Journalist, Yemen

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