Meedan

CHECK GLOBAL

Final impact assessment report
Phases VI & VII
2019-2023

Executive summary

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Introduction

The following report offers a comprehensive retrospective spanning the last five years of the Check Global program, from 2019 to 2023.

In her foreword, Director of Programs and Impact Lead Dr. Dima Saber presents the most updated version of Meedan's Theory of Change and its anchoring across three strategic verticals: elections, crisis responses and safe and inclusive media ecosystems.

This report presents our key achievements over the past 24 months as mapped to the original logframes, as well as our strategies for mitigating challenges and a number of cross-regional insights from our Program Managers in our four areas of focus.

In his concluding remarks, Meedan CEO Ed Bice reflects on our evolving relationship with Sida over more than 10 years, the recent decision to shift from programs to core funding and the effects of this on both the growth and sustainability of our organization and our Larger World* programming.

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* Our team has gone through many discussions about the different ways we can talk about the people we work with and the regions where our programs are running. What we call things matter, so we have started using "Larger World" in 2023 — a term coined by our friends at Numun Fund. We use it here, and on our program website and in communications material, with their consent.

Foreword by Meedan Director of Programs and Impact Lead

We are focused on fighting for reliable, accessible information by improving the vector through which information travels today: the internet. Over the last ten years, as the internet evolved and changed, Meedan maintained a unique position as a trusted partner and collaborator working with both civil society organizations and technology companies. Our approach is consistent: we build collaborations, networks and digital tools that make it easier for hyperlocal community perspectives to be integrated into how global information challenges are met. We prioritize working with the communities that have been historically underserved so they are able to access the quality information they need to mobilize, organize and foster long-term social change.

I have led across 2022-2023 a series of team impact workshops which resulted in the latest iteration of our Organizational Theory of Change.

We see the core of our impact anchored across four key priorities:

1. **We co-design and implement large-scale community impact programs** by creating and sustaining high-impact multi-stakeholder coalitions to fill major information gaps in some of the world's most underserved contexts.

2. **We are developing our flagship software, Check, as a state-of-the-art technology service provider,** and making it available to beneficiaries across the world.

3. **We facilitate coordinated investigations and documentation** of mis- and disinformation, human rights violations and race, gender and class violence.

4. **We are growing Meedan into a sustainable and resilient organization** by designing and implementing better business strategies that drive our growth while staying faithful to our core values.

Our Sida-funded Check Global program has been at the intersection of these priorities for over a decade now. It has informed our evolution and supported our organizational growth. In 2023, we started to restructure our interventions in the Larger World across three main strategic objectives: 1. strengthening election and information integrity; 2. building preparedness and capacity for responding to crises; and 3. creating safe and inclusive ecosystems. The lessons we learned through running the Check Global program since 2011 continue to drive every new project we design and every new intervention we plan.

I am very grateful to be able to share with you, some of the most inspiring stories and insights from our regional Check Global program team.

Dr. Dima Saber

Theory of change

Core priorities

Community impact programs

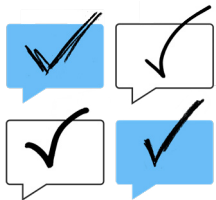**Check, our flagship product**

Context-informed research

Organizational health and sustainability

Strategic objectives

Information support in an unprecedented election year

In the lead-up to major political moments, we work alongside our partners to share information — questions, images, video clips, audio files and links — with relevant communities.

Preparedness and response during times of crisis

Crisis situations demand a rapid deployment of reliable information to the affected areas. Minutes matter, especially when it comes to supporting at-risk populations. When major crises and catastrophic disasters strike, we dispatch emergency information to the impacted audiences as soon as possible, thus enabling hyperlocal communities to organize and deploy fast and targeted crisis response efforts.
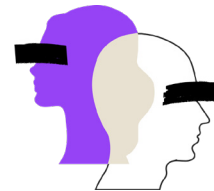
Safe and inclusive media ecosystems

Digital conversations inevitably impact our offline realities. Periodically, we launch targeted calls to address thematic and timely issues, such as violence against women and gender-diverse communities or online documentation of human rights violations.

A selection of key milestones since 2019

2019

In the eight years since the launch of the Checkdesk project in 2011 with four partners in the NAWA region, our network had grown to include 34 partners in 44 countries.

2019

Integrated Check with a third-party messaging service to host tiplines.

2019

VFRAME image similarity code integrated into Check.

2020

Meedan announced a Beirut Response Fund for independent media in Lebanon

View the project

2020

Meedan launched microgrants to support projects that addressed COVID-19 misinformation in emerging economies.

2020

Published the Check Global zine "Viral Politics: Tales from the Pandemia."

Read the zine

2021

The Media Credibility Index, developed in collaboration with a number of NAWA newsroom students, was published, offering a comprehensive assessment of the credibility of news websites in Syria, Yemen and Lebanon.

View the project
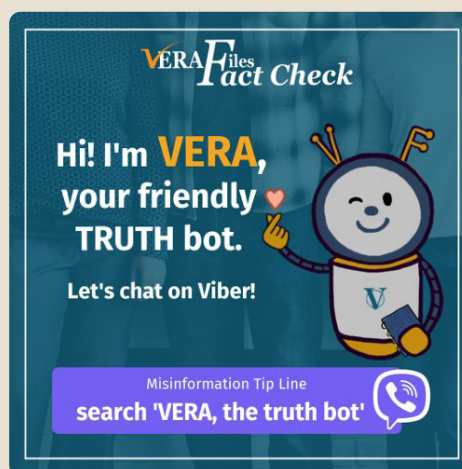
2021

In November 2021, VERA Files, our Check Global partner in the Philippines, launched VERA, the first public misinformation tipline on Viber in the Asia-Pacific region integrated with Check.

2022

In the lead-up to the 2022 Philippines elections, Rappler and Meedan launched #FactsFirstPH, a unique, multi-layered and multi-sectoral movement to address the problem of disinformation and harassment on social media.

2022

450+ applications were received from 68 countries in response to the Independent Media Response Fund's call for tackling misinformation.

View the project

2023

The Gendered Disinformation in Elections project was launched with three partners in Argentina, Togo and Pakistan.

View the project

2023

Meedan announced the Syria-Turkey earthquake response fund and partnered with Teyit and Fatabyyano to tackle crisis misinformation.

THE FUTURE IS OURS

Hyperlocal Action in the ~~Global South~~ Larger World*

Gender, Journalism, Communities

Meedan

2023

Published "The Future is Ours" zine highlighting our partners' achievements under the Check Global program.
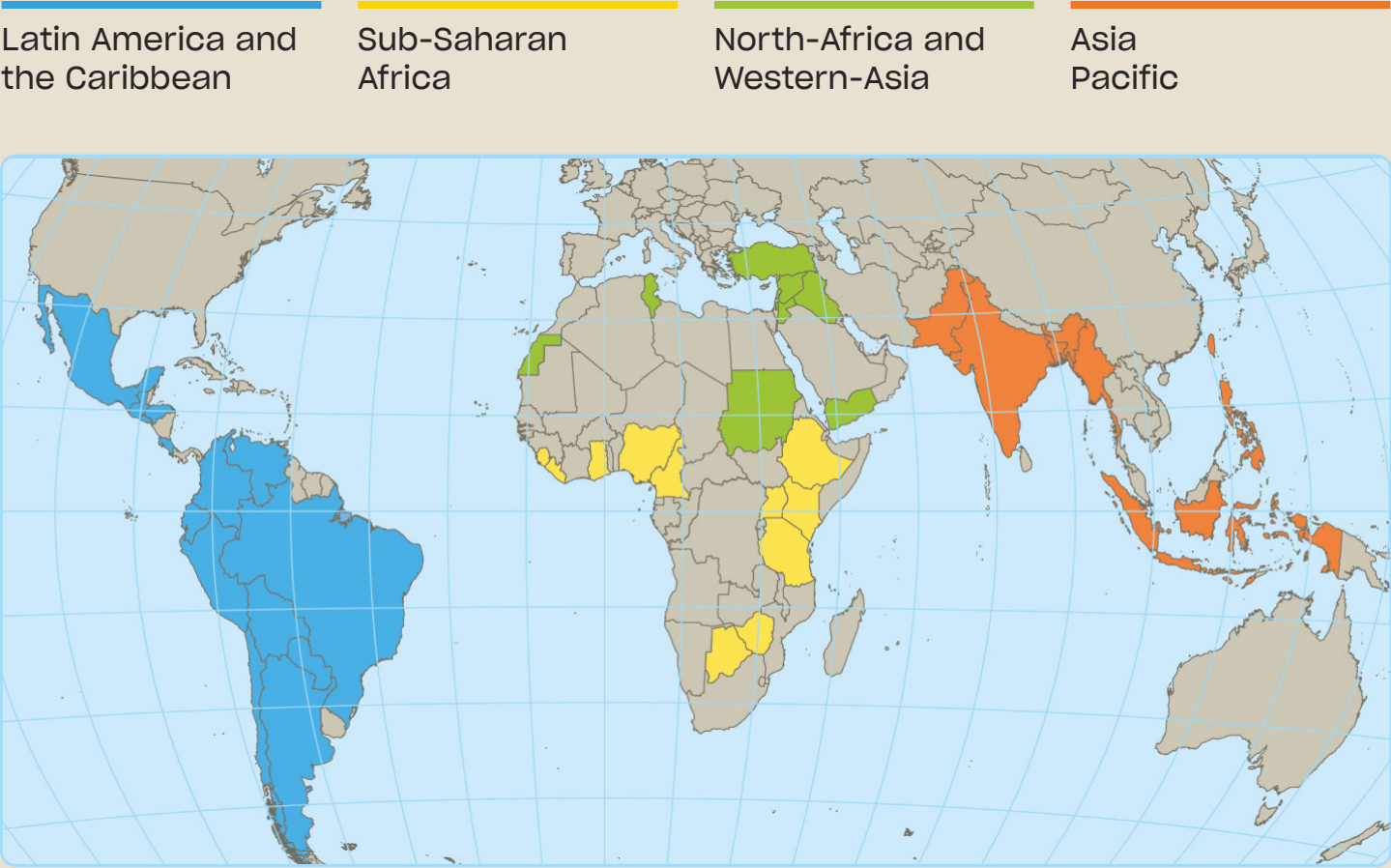
Read the zine

2023

Fatabyyano launched Kinan, the first tipline for Arabic speakers hosted on Meedan's Check platform.

The Check Global 2019-2023 Partners Map across the Larger World

Latin America and the Caribbean

Sub-Saharan Africa

North-Africa and Western-Asia

Asia Pacific

Latin America and the Caribbean	Sub-Saharan Africa	North-Africa and Western-Asia	Asia Pacific
Argentina	Botswana	Jordan	Bangladesh
Bolivia	Cameroon	Iraq	India
Brazil	Ethiopia	Lebanon	Indonesia
Chile	Ghana	Palestine	Hong Kong
Colombia	Kenya	Sudan	Pakistan
Costa Rica	Liberia	Syria	Philippines
Ecuador	Nigeria	Tunisia	Taiwan
El Salvador	Sierra Leone	Turkey	Myanmar
Guatemala	The Gambia	Western Sahara	
Honduras	Tanzania	Yemen	
Mexico	Uganda		
Paraguay	Zimbabwe		
Peru			
Venezuela			

Our impact in numbers 2019-2023

Countries we worked in 44	**Implementing partners** 34
Independent Media Response Fund beneficiaries including COVID-19 microgrant recipients 57	**Trainees** 6,663

Check in numbers 2019-2023

Tiplines on Check run by our partners and beneficiaries

15

Number of reports sent to users on Check

180,632

2019	2020
2,356	23,545
2021	2022-2023
26,943	127,788

Workspaces on Check run by our partners and beneficiaries

20

Number of unique reports published (2022-2023)

257,155

Number of unique users with at least one conversation (2022-2023)

383,134

Navigating challenges: strategies, solutions and insights

In this section, we have provided an overview of challenges from this period that we believe are significant and that have left an impact on our work.

In the last five years, our regions and partners have experienced multiple challenges that have been the result of shifts in political and economic agendas or crises caused by natural disasters. While it has been possible to plan mitigation strategies by providing greater flexibility in our plans, timelines and budgets, some challenges remain. And as we plan our strategy for the coming years, these shifts have provided learnings and insights for our team. Being ready to adapt and shift strategies regularly has become the norm for several partners in the Larger World, which has led us to find innovative ways to continue to support them and sustain our relationship.

With a **rise in authoritarian governments** in several countries and regions, the targeting of civil society and independent media groups has been a huge challenge. This has had an impact on media freedom and the work of some of our partners. In Myanmar, clear state-sponsored surveillance led to security risks for members of civil society groups. Our partners have had to abruptly move to more secure regions and pause their work due to the backlash by the state. In India, government scrutiny — and the cancellation of licenses that allow groups to receive foreign funds — has impacted our work. This has meant that we have had to pause work with a few partners in Myanmar and India. However, partnerships of this nature are important to us, and we have continued to nurture those relationships beyond the project phase. Learnings from our work with these partners have informed our current work on gendered disinformation and our election integrity initiatives in different regions. Our partner from Myanmar was a speaker and moderator for a workshop on gendered disinformation that we organized with a new set of partners. The speaker from Myanmar shared insights and learnings on documenting, annotating and archiving hateful and dangerous content. This experience was extremely valuable for partners who are attempting to document and analyze gendered disinformation in other contexts, such as Argentina, Pakistan and Togo.

Fundraising has been a challenge for small organizations with limited resources. With the organizational leadership being involved in the execution of planned work, it is not always possible to prioritize fundraising. This, along with some funders not honoring their contracts, has put our long-standing partner in the LAC region in a precarious position. To support them, we organized intensive exercises in grant writing, development, impact assessment and the process of implementing the Theory of Change to improve their efforts in capacity building while they sought new core funding. However, this remains a constant challenge for many of our partners, who are frequently small, fledgling groups working with hyperlocal communities.

In the last few years, we actively participated in **building coalitions of civil society groups and newsrooms**, taking on facilitation and leadership roles in several instances. These coalitions have been locally led, with Meedan providing support in programs, technology, capacity building and fundraising. Working with multi-stakeholder coalitions, we have realized that consensus-building is a slow process and is sometimes impossible. Groups have different institutional approaches and perspectives on issues, and these can sometimes cause friction and a breakdown of trust in collaborative processes. These issues have meant that, in some countries, we have worked with two coalitions instead of one. We have not been able to bring groups together in some places. And in some coalitions, we have had a secondary role, with local partners taking the lead in implementation. This is done out of respect for their need for space and their deeper knowledge of contexts and issues. We have been adaptive to the needs of partners and have always prioritized those, and we have done a great job of working around partners' chosen focus areas.

The discussion of challenges over the past five years would not be complete without addressing obstacles linked to the **COVID-19 pandemic**. The uncertainty during that period resulted in delays in the implementation of plans due to long lockdowns, restrictions in mobility and virtual fatigue as activities moved online. Overcoming this challenge required adaptation and flexibility from all of us. We encouraged partners to find online solutions and to put in place plans that had some flexibility factored in. We extended the project timeline, which provided flexibility to partners in the implementation of plans.

Activism work is inherently risky, particularly for some of our partners and fund recipients in NAWA. As a precaution, we have always maintained anonymity in our work for activists and journalists who would be at risk if their identity or the nature of their work were to be made public to authorities.

Some of our work in NAWA and the APAC region has been in countries that have experienced wars, coups and political unrest. This has impacted the work and mental health of those who were involved in directly responding to these situations. We have recognized that **mental health is a serious issue** and have extended space and support to our own team members and those of our partners' organizations.

We have consistently prioritized including sections in our reports that detail the challenges faced in various regions and within our own work under Check Global, alongside the mitigation strategies employed by us and our partners.

Cross-regional reflections: what we've learned

This section of the report focuses on Meedan's global impact on election initiatives, crisis response and the building of safe and inclusive media ecosystems under the Check Global program and other projects.

Fighting misinformation: Meedan's global impact on election initiatives

Shalini Joshi
Program Director

Since 2012, Meedan has supported newsrooms, fact-checking organizations and civil society groups on election initiatives designed to address misinformation and disinformation on social media and encrypted platforms. Check, our award-winning platform, has been at the center of most of these election initiatives. We have also provided programmatic support and shared research insights with groups and coalitions involved in these initiatives. Between 2019 and 2023, we launched and supported election initiatives in India, Indonesia, Kenya, Ghana, the United States, the Philippines and Brazil, among other countries.

We have been able to apply learnings and insights from each election project to interventions in other countries and regions. The scale and size of each election project has varied depending on the local context and resources available. A few insights that we have gathered in the last few years include:

Learning 1
Misinformation and disinformation do not start on election day and do not end when results are declared. In Kenya, the United States and Brazil, we have seen misleading information trending in the run-up to elections and after results are declared. It is therefore important to plan for and design election initiatives ahead of time and ensure their continuity after the declaration of results.

Learning 2
Multi-stakeholder coalitions can help in addressing misinformation at scale during elections. The **#FactsFirstPH coalition** in the Philippines brought together nearly 150 groups to address electoral misinformation ahead of the presidential elections. The coalition recognized that doing fact-checks and posting them online was not enough. The approach needed to be coordinated and efficient to share the truth and facts across various communities, platforms and regions.

Partnering with nonpartisan electoral authorities can help expand the reach of fact-checks.
In Brazil, we partnered with the nonpartisan Brazilian electoral authority known as the Tribunal Superior Electoral (TSE). The TSE distributed coalition fact-checks to its massive WhatsApp audience, increasing the reach of fact-checkers and improving their impact on the information environment ahead of the election.
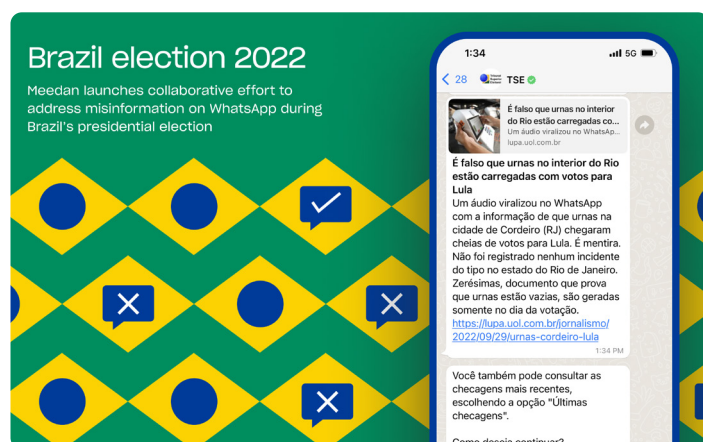
Meedan launches collaborative effort to address misinformation on WhatsApp during Brazil's presidential election

The use of technology and technological innovation in election initiatives can help in greater collaboration and sharing of information across different groups. In the Philippines, we introduced a new feature on Check called shared feeds, which enabled all participating groups to collaborate by sharing data and getting newer insights into misinformation trends during elections.

Training on trauma mitigation and addressing harassment is important during election periods.
Fact-checkers and journalists are exposed to hateful content and traumatic imagery on a regular basis. And during election cycles, this can get exacerbated due to the sheer volume of content they monitor and address. Providing resources and training support to journalists and fact-checkers to mitigate harm from online harassment, traumatic imagery and hateful content is extremely important. In Brazil and the Philippines, we introduced training sessions on mitigating vicarious trauma and addressing mental health issues.

Collectively, these insights underscore that a holistic approach is required to address misinformation and disinformation in the context of elections.

Navigating crisis information needs

Nat Gyenes
Program Director

Haramoun Hamieh
Senior Program Manager for
North Africa and Western Asia

Since Meedan's inception, we have been responsive to the needs of partners and collaborators in crisis situations, including armed conflict, acute disease outbreaks, global health crises, takeovers by authoritarian governments and natural calamities. Guided by a public health approach, Meedan's crisis response strategy prioritizes prevention, mitigation and harm reduction to address the impact that information has on population well-being in crisis contexts.

Through our efforts over the last five years, we have identified key learnings that inform our approach.

Learning 1

It is essential for human rights organizations, newsrooms and other key information stakeholders to determine whether they are providing resources that people actually need in a crisis setting. Over the last five years, we have designed programs and collaborations that involve the use of Meedan's Check platform as a pathway for community information leaders to source questions and requests from their communities. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, intergovernmental organizations and response teams developed resources, FAQs and explainer-style documentation to provide information to communities. However, in an **impact assessment our team conducted**, we found gaps between what content was available and the actual information needs communities had. So, in the early weeks of the epidemic, Meedan's team of researchers launched **Health Desk**, a project aimed at filling those gaps by bringing together a global network of experts dedicated to responding to health questions shared by journalists and fact-checkers.

Our goal is to continue building on this work, replicating a method for conducting gap analyses to understand and address discrepancies between the information provided by key sources in crisis contexts and the information that communities need. Further, we have learned that preparedness for deploying such approaches for collecting community questions can yield higher impacts if adopted at an early stage of a crisis, when demand for credible information is at its peak.

When a crisis hits, small organizations and their communities can get overwhelmed by a variety of immediate needs and requests, as well as false and misleading information.

As such, the aim of the Check Global Independent Media Response Fund has been to offer microgrant support to individual and grassroots media collectives, enabling them to expand their teams, use better technologies or cover urgent costs. The fund aspires to provide continuous, responsive support for participating individuals and groups even after the end of the acute phase of a crisis, allowing them to develop their work with their communities and benefit from cross-regional collaborations focusing on cooperation at the level of acquired experience and issues of shared interest. Our **efforts** have included the NAWA Investigative Fund (2017-2021), the COVID-19 Microgrants Fund (2020), the Beirut Explosion Response Fund (2020), the Turkey-Syria Earthquake Fund (2023) and the Climate Misinformation Fund (2023).

2017-21
NAWA Investigative Fund

2020
Beirut Explosion Response Fund

2020
COVID-19 Microgrants Fund

2023
Turkey-Syria Earthquake Fund

2023
Climate Misinformation Fund

Charting new pathways for safer and more inclusive media ecosystems: reflections by the Check Global Program Managers

Digital conversations, and the governing principles and norms they exist within, inevitably impact our offline reality. An equitable internet — one that is safe, inclusive and accessible — enables communities, especially those that have been historically underserved, to access the quality information needed to mobilize, organize and foster long-term social change. The Check Global team reflects on the different areas we at Meedan have been focused on to help create safer and more inclusive media ecosystems, including our work to counter gender-based misinformation and climate misinformation, as well as our network-building activities and the development of Meedan's Data Values.

Addressing gender-based inequalities online

Sneha Alexander
Program Manager for
Asia and the Pacific

Rooted in feminist approaches, the Check Global team is committed to running its program with a gender-focused lens. Our strongest partnerships have been with women-led newsrooms, fact-checking organizations and civil society groups.

To address the issue of gender-based inequalities online, which also exacerbate inequalities offline, and to equip communities to better navigate the intersections of gender and technology, Meedan has collaborated with community leaders to strengthen media literacy, fact-checking, digital safety, feminist reporting and networks.

Among the many partnerships built under the Check Global program over the past five years, I would like to highlight a few:

1. To address the gender gap in media, our partner trained and supported a network of women and LGBTTQI+ media professionals in Latin America.

2. To promote leadership among young girls and women in disadvantaged communities in India, one of our partners ran online campaigns and promoted stories about grassroots women leaders through their videos.

3. A women-led digital newsroom in India built a digital security toolkit for rural women journalists and audiences.

4. One of our partners was able to document stories of human rights abuses against the Sahrawi women while also exploring their resistance to Moroccan state-sponsored harassment.

5. Our partner in Uganda aimed at fostering digital resilience and empowering women in the workplace in seven countries of East Africa.

6. Across the Larger World, several women-led groups have also been a formidable force for protecting digital rights, countering disinformation and making the voices of women heard in the public domain.

Through our interactions with partners, we have identified a shared concern about how social media platforms have failed to tackle abuse and violence against women and nonbinary people on their platforms. During elections, pandemics, wars, crises and other events, women and gender-nonconforming people are affected disproportionately. In the online space, gender-based violence is exhibited in different forms, such as gendered disinformation, online harassment, hate speech, doxing and cyberattacks.
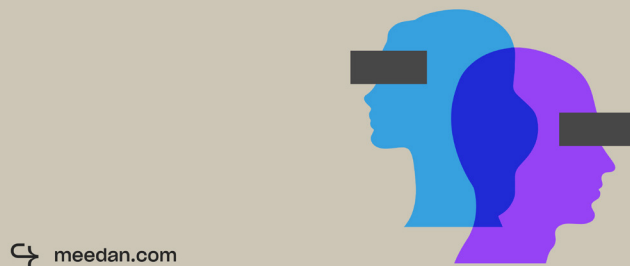
Digital safety practices, media literacy and fact-checking are just coping mechanisms; they are secondary to the need for digital technologies to demonstrate responsibility for building safe digital infrastructures. This has informed our content moderation efforts and our drive to build initiatives that can contribute to research and advocacy in the pursuit of greater accountability from platforms. For example, Kat Lo, Meedan's Content Moderation Lead, **highlights** how the process of reporting online abuse to social media platforms is like "shouting into the void," and she shares recommendations on how platforms can improve the reporting process and better address the issue of online harassment.
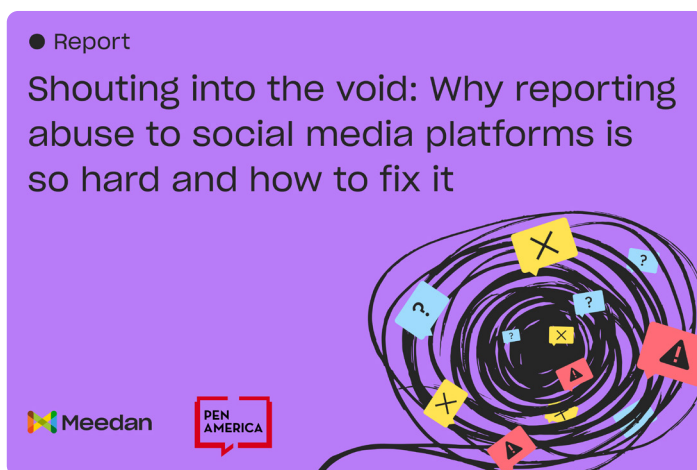
Shouting into the void: Why reporting abuse to social media platforms is so hard and how to fix it

More recently, and building on existing relations with Check Global partners, we have rolled out two cross-regional initiatives with women-led groups to document and capture gendered disinformation in our partners' communities. The first initiative, with a focus on South Asia, **aims to investigate the spread of gendered disinformation in India and Pakistan** with the support of the Sexual Violence and Research Initiative. We have partnered with leaders in the fields of digital safety, fact-checking and feminist reporting to define, identify, document and annotate a high-quality dataset of gendered disinformation in online spaces and to build case studies to develop a better understanding of the issue in the region.

Meedan wins grant to research gendered disinformation in South Asia

In the second initiative, "Understanding trends in gendered disinformation during elections," we are collaborating with three organizations to collate data from messaging tiplines hosted on our Check platform. The goal is to develop in-depth case studies across diverse countries and languages. This cross-regional approach is meant to bring feminist groups from the Larger World together to build a shared, yet layered, understanding of gendered disinformation in their communities and to cross-learn how technology can be adopted to address the issue.

Partners learn from each other, but there is no single blueprint for rolling out the strategies. Given that gendered disinformation is a complex topic, partners have been using different strategies, including offline training, network building, localization and video tutorials. In Togo, we identified a need for training volunteers offline, and in Pakistan, the partners have taken up targeted promotion of the tipline among their network. In Mexico, the biggest challenge was the limited time in rolling out the project ahead of the elections.

The risks associated with the projects in these countries were also different in some ways. Our partner in Pakistan anticipates greater digital safety and online harassment threats than other groups. The change in the election schedule has also been a challenge there.

We also constantly engage with networks to address the issue of gendered disinformation at the global level. Through all these efforts, and through collaboration in the community, we hope to level the ground for women and marginalized groups so they can protect their rights, uphold democratic principles and contribute to safer and more inclusive ecosystems for themselves, their families and their local communities.

Data Values Guide

Amaralina Rodrigues Xavier
Senior Program Manager for Latin
America and the Caribbean

As a matter of ethics and philosophy, we at Meedan always ensure compliance with the laws of the countries we work in and prioritize the security and privacy of the data collected in projects, tiplines and research, and we also recognize the need to delve deeper into this theme as a fundamental pillar of our interventions. This ensures that our team and our partners are clear about the values and processes we're guided by when dealing with data.

Based on this premise, we embarked on a project to develop the Meedan Data Values Guide:

1. Your data is yours.
You own your information, and only you get to tell us how you want it used. That means you'll always be in the driver's seat when it comes to sharing your data, monetizing your content, distributing your fact-checking and reporting to your audience. We follow your lead, not the other way around.

2.We care about the safety of your data.
At Meedan we prioritize safe storage and security of any information you choose to share with us, whether it's in-app through our software or as part of our program delivery. We know that so many of you work in contexts in which data leaks, outages and breaches can be catastrophic for your missions, jobs and sometimes even your physical safety. We stand with all our partners to keep data stored in ways that meet the highest global security standards, because we know that the security of your data promotes your overall safety and ability to do your meaningful work.

3. We want you to understand how we're using your data.
We practice radical and proactive transparency when it comes to showing you how we're using your data. In order for you to properly consent to us using your data, we believe that you need to know exactly how we're using it. We'll always make sure you know what you're opting into, and we'll use plain language to ensure your whole team can completely consent to data agreements. If our data policies or principles ever change along the way, we commit to making sure you know about those changes (big or small) early, so you can make an informed choice about how you use our services.

This text will serve as an internal working guide and, in the future, as an external guide for our partners and communities.

Countering climate misinformation

Haramoun Hamieh
Senior Program Manager for
North Africa and Western Asia

For decades, misinformation has been a key challenge to meaningful climate action. Fueled by false, distorted or inaccurate claims, as well as conspiracy theories, online misinformation is increasingly undermining efforts to tackle the global impact of climate change on humans and the environment, further exacerbating and accelerating its progression.

As a response to the ongoing climate crisis, Meedan has been drastically increasing its efforts to engage in and support initiatives that counter the impact of climate change, working with grassroots media, journalists, journalism students and activists.

In June 2022, Meedan announced a climate misinformation call under its Independent Media Response Fund to support hyperlocal media efforts to tackle climate misinformation and improve news coverage related to climate. Over 450 applications were received from 68 countries across the Larger World, and 29 media collectives and journalists were awarded funding to tackle climate misinformation.

As part of our NAWA Newsroom efforts in capacity building, media monitoring and data analysis, throughout 2023 we trained a new cohort of journalism students on advanced media monitoring, open-source intelligence and fact-checking. The journalism students and alumni have produced over 30 reports and other deliverables that focus on the impact of climate change.

Furthermore, a team of seven Egyptian students was selected to conduct a media and content analysis about the state of climate misinformation in their country. In their report, they concluded that the top spreader of climate misinformation was also the most-read online news publisher in Egypt.
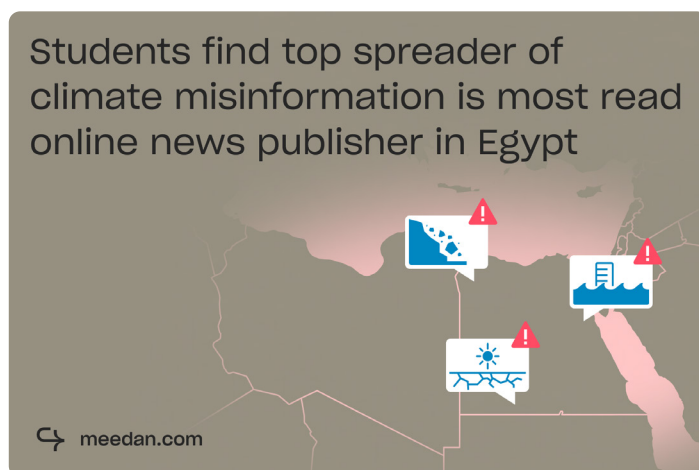
Students find top spreader of climate misinformation is most read online news publisher in Egypt

In August 2023, we teamed up with the University of Michigan School of Information to develop a data-driven model that monitors climate misinformation risk in each country. The central objective of this effort is to build a Global Climate Misinformation Risk Index.

Finally, it's crucial to support work that outlasts Meedan's direct contributions. For example, one beneficiary of our climate misinformation call earned the Earth Journalism Network fellowship to cover COP28 in the UAE in person. Their application featured stories supported by Meedan's climate misinformation fund.

Beyond borders: growing the Check Global Network

Yazmin Jamaali
Former Senior Program Manager
for sub-Saharan Africa

The Check Global Network is Meedan's main pathway for connecting organizations and individuals across the Larger World. We set an ambitious goal to enhance the quality and accessibility of online information, with a particular emphasis on aiding civil society organizations, feminist organizations, journalists and independent media. The network is particularly active in emerging economies across the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America, East Africa and the NAWA region, where it offers various capacity-building support structures to those working in challenging socio-political environments.

Key successes include impactful partnerships with women-led organizations and networks that bolster feminist leadership and rights. Our capacity-building efforts also encompass grant strategy, program management and organizational development — with a focus on promoting programs that foster a diverse and equitable culture — in conjunction with organizations like the Africa Women Journalism Project (SSA), Chicas Poderosas (LAC), the Digital Rights Foundation and Chambal Media (APAC). For instance, a collaboration between the Digital Rights Foundation and the Check Global Network has enhanced online safety for women in South Asia. Our partner trained journalists and activists in digital security, an effort that also involved India's Sadbhavana Trust and Chambal Media. This cross-border effort has strengthened shared goals and enhanced mutual learning, with Chambal Media now creating a digital toolkit for rural journalists.

Efforts to prioritize assistance to digitally excluded communities, and to those facing systemic barriers in media and technology, have proven challenging. Moving forward, the network is expanding, focusing on aiding groups in news deserts and underrepresented communities. We will offer training in journalism, fact-checking and open-source intelligence, alongside mentorship in gender inclusivity and leadership development.

Partnership selection is based on shared interests and values, with a commitment to active participation and clear, realistic project timelines. Our support also extends to recommending growth opportunities, connecting with funders, advocating with major platforms and featuring partner work in our communications.

In focus: Check Global VII (January 2023 to December 2023)

This section presents regional results, and it highlights projects and impact stories from the most recent year of the current iteration of the Check Global program.

Results framework

Indicators	Outputs			
	Planned	2022	2023	Total
Reports, articles published by partners	35	45	*78*	123
Training sessions	57	38	45	83
Beneficiaries involved in training sessions	321	270	613	883
Records of open-source content archived (reporting human rights violations)	2000	84,738	-	84,738
Sources of open-source content verified and archived	600	300,000	-	300,000
Fact-checked claims	585	393	410	803
Fact-checking, verification and debunking reports	268	269	388	657
Research outputs	3	2	1	3
Multimedia content	104	84	230	314

Program highlights

In this section, we showcase this year's key initiatives under the Check Global program that demonstrate Meedan's dedication to supporting independent media organizations and countering misinformation in the Larger World.

The Check Global Independent Media Response Fund

Meedan launched the Check Global Independent Media Response Fund to address global challenges and to focus on how they impact hyperlocal communities in our regions of operation. Through this fund, we offer microgrants, training and networking opportunities to support small and medium-sized media organizations and initiatives across various regions in the Larger World.

The first call in 2022-2023 focused on climate misinformation. We then launched the Gendered Disinformation in Elections project in Argentina, Togo and Pakistan. The project is ongoing in 2024, as described in the previous sections of this report. We also used this fund to support two media organizations in their fact-checking efforts in the aftermath of the Turkey-Syria earthquake.

Supporting hyperlocal efforts to tackle climate misinformation

Announcing Media Response Fund 2022-2023 grant recipients

↳ meedan.com

Meedan supports hyperlocal efforts to tackle climate misinformation

Tackling climate misinformation

Meedan introduced the recipients of the 2022-2023 Check Global Independent Media Response Fund back in December 2022. We were delighted to receive more than 450 applications, demonstrating the dedication of journalists, media groups and independent media organizations to uncover local impacts of climate change.

Beneficiaries	Articles, reports and investigations	Videos
28	114	54
Podcasts and audio productions	Training sessions	Trainees
28	19	233
Websites	Focus groups	Radio appearances
1	6	13
MOOCs	Social media posts	
1	59	

A diverse range of initiatives was implemented to combat climate misinformation and to promote accurate information. The projects involved:

- Investigative journalism
- Media capacity building
- Citizen journalism
- Social media advocacy
- Documentary storytelling
- Community awareness

Turkey and Syria earthquake response

The spread of misinformation in the aftermath of the earthquake made it harder to coordinate relief efforts, including the distribution of food, shelter and medicine. Meedan's crisis response included technical assistance for teams seeking critical information distribution, as well as networking and financial support for partners in Turkey, Syria and other countries in the region.

Teyit, a fact-checking initiative from Turkey, received core financial support and networking opportunities from Meedan, allowing them to continue producing critical fact-checks as well as localizing the content to make it available for Arabic-speaking communities.

Meedan announces earthquake crisis response for media covering Turkey and Syria

Meedan partner Fatabyyano launches tipline for earthquake crisis response

Fatabyyano, a fact-checking initiative covering over 19 Arabic-speaking countries, disseminated the material translated by Teyit and shared this info with its audience of more than 1 million Arabic speakers. Additionally, the Turkey and Syria Earthquake Response Fund helped Fatabyyano launch Kinan, its emergency tipline, on WhatsApp and Messenger, using Meedan's Check software.

This collaboration between Meedan and Fatabyyano is an important milestone: the first Check tipline made for an Arabic-speaking audience.

'Tabletop Games Against Fake News': Meedan's collaborative initiative in Brazil

Meedan collaborated with academics at six institutions in Brazil, and with long-time partner Birmingham City University (BCU), on a pilot project titled "Tabletop Games Against Fake News." The effort aimed to test the use of analog games — including board, card and role-playing games, as well as other formats — in discussing media literacy and critical thinking.

An event took place on August 25 and 26, 2023, at Fiocruz in Rio de Janeiro. In collaboration with 22 scholars and researchers from the Brazilian partner universities, six workshop sessions were organized covering topics ranging from game creation to dynamics for debunking fake news. The event was attended by 12 educators and students from public schools in Duque de Caxias and in the Baixada Fluminense, as well as 13 external observers who evaluated the model for potential replication.

The next step will be to collaborate with BCU to scale the project in 2024, allowing it to reach more countries and regions.

Event flyer for 'Jogos de mesa contra fake news' event, Brazil.

The NAWA student newsroom

Over the past seven years, the NAWA media newsroom witnessed — through multiple cycles of training, observation and iteration — the ways in which well-trained journalism graduates can better engage in innovative projects to serve the public interest while also improving their skills.

Journalism students trained by NAWA Newsroom established a Credibility Index of media outlets in their countries, ranking their credibility using a set of agreed-upon parameters. This is one of the real-world applications of the skills they learned as part of our NAWA Newsroom training program.

We are now relaunching the newsroom as NAWA Media Lab to increase digital and data literacy among journalism students and independent journalists in the region — through a tailored and hands-on skill-building curriculum.

By executing our Theory of Change, our lab will equip a new generation of journalists with the tools and resources to transform their local media landscapes.

2023 impact stories

These impact stories showcase the strength of journalism and emphasize the crucial role of localized, innovative solutions in protecting information ecosystems globally.

Digital safety toolkit for rural journalists: lessons on localization from Chambal Media, India

Chambal Media, a women-led digital newsroom that covers stories from the hinterlands of India, developed a **digital security toolkit** for rural journalists. Their work focuses on rural, first-time internet users, particularly young girls from the Hindi Belt, stemming from the organization's commitment to bridging the digital divide and empowering a demographic that may face unique challenges in accessing and navigating the online world.

The digital security toolkit is a comprehensive approach to digital literacy in which reporters from Chambal Media explain digital safety by breaking down basic concepts, such as privacy and passwords, using relatable analogies and stories. The toolkit is not necessarily a list of tools. Instead, it's meant to build an understanding of digital safety in a way that makes sense for the rural community and that is in sync with rural usage of the internet. Priya Thuvassery, Director at Chambal Media, explains that "the vision for the toolkit was for it to be interactive and to have real-life instances to make it more relatable and engaging."

The ultimate purpose of the digital security toolkit was to emphasize the need to cultivate a secure online environment for women without instilling fear or discouragement.
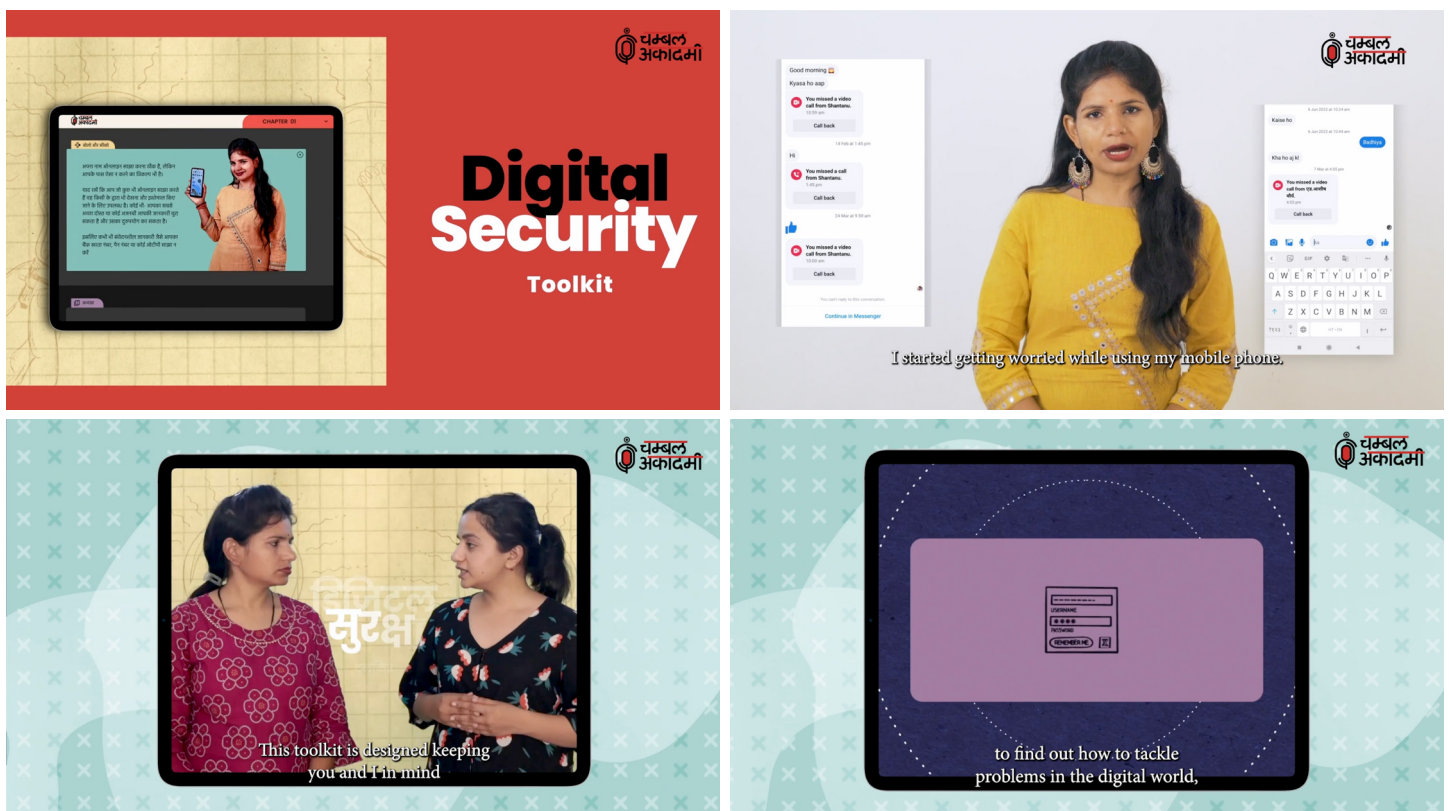
Introductory video from Chambal Media's **Digital Security Toolkit**

Combating digital mercenaries and disinformation in Latin America and the Caribbean

A group of journalists from various Latin American countries discovered a new phenomenon in digital politics and the media known as "**Digital Mercenaries**." These individuals create misleading content for political candidates, aiming to influence public opinion and election results.

In an attempt to mitigate the negative impacts of this disinformation wave, we expanded our network of partners in the region, focusing primarily on countries where elections would be held that year (2023). **EcoFeminita** and **DataGenero** were two new partners in Argentina addressing feminist issues during elections. **Agencia Mural**, our new partner in Brazil, fights misinformation by enhancing media literacy and journalists' skills in the outskirts of São Paulo. Their workshops facilitate the development of critical thinking while spotlighting stories from vulnerable and marginalized communities. Diverse narratives and perspectives are key to a healthy information environment.

Mercenarios Digitais

Disinformation campaigns also focus on the climate crisis, scientific topics and the anti-vaccination movement. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, we have observed the rise of denialist discourses in these spheres. These issues have intensified to the extent that we are witnessing the **resurgence of diseases like the measles** and growing skepticism regarding the **reality of the Amazon region's drought**. We recognized the need to amplify the voices of scientists, journalists and activists who are working tirelessly to produce accurate content about the situation in this biome. Through our **Independent Media Response Fund Microgrant**, we allocated resources to seven Latin American organizations so they could create content, provide training and conduct reporting on climate issues.

Our partnership with **Sleeping Giants Brazil** has helped the group develop a methodology for mapping, identifying and categorizing profiles that disseminate fake news, both on fake profiles and real ones. Their goal is to work toward demonetizing such accounts, ensuring that even in the absence of regulation in the country, civil society can stem the flow of resources and power to these actors.

Championing critical journalism: The Public Source, Lebanon

In 2022, **The Public Source** published **their most-read investigation**, which was also accepted into the Global Investigative Journalism Network, a first for Lebanese journalism. The group won first place in the Small Media category of the Katherine Schneider Journalism Award for Excellence in Reporting on Disability. The winning story — "**'And What Would You Like Me to Do About It': How the Lebanese Government Disabled Hundreds of People – And Left Them to Pay for Its Crime**" — was an investigative feature about survivors of the Beirut Port explosion who were disabled by the blast. It was also shortlisted by the Fetisov Journalism Awards in the "Contribution to Civil Rights" category. Lebanon was ranked 130th out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' 2022 World Press Freedom Index.

In April 2023, the Editor-in-Chief of The Public Source, Lara Bitar, was summoned by Lebanon's Anti-Cybercrime Bureau following a complaint from a Lebanese party about an article on environmental crimes committed by the then-militia during the Lebanon civil war. The investigative feature, "The 'Ecological Time Bombs' Unloaded at the Beirut Port Decades Ago," was listed as one of the Global Investigative Journalism Network's Best Investigative Stories from the region in 2022. The summoning by a security apparatus testifies to the impact of The Public Source's investigative work.

Meedan is proud to be one of the first backers of The Public Source and will continue to support rigorous journalism that serves the public interest.

The Public Source - **Intra Investment Company: The "Lebanese State's Best Kept Secret"**

The Public Source - **"And What Would You Like Me to Do About It?": How the Lebanese Government Disabled Hundreds of People — and Then Left Them to Pay for Its Crime**

Bridging innovation and activism: Centre for Innovation and Technology, Zimbabwe

Our partnership has led **CITE** to enhance its fact-checking processes, to diversify content generation with mediums like TikTok and podcasts and to bolster the platform's credibility. In the 2022-2023 period, CITE exceeded its fact-checking targets by publishing 186 articles, including a notable increase between July and September 2023 during the Zimbabwe elections. They also established a situation room during the elections, serving as a command center for information verification and dissemination.

This strong commitment to ensuring citizens' access to accurate information, which enables individuals to make informed decisions, can also be seen in incidental outcomes that CITE generates as a result of the collaboration with Meedan. For instance, CITE has developed innovative tools like an election dashboard and the Election Buzz newsletter, directly reaching over 1,000 readers on WhatsApp. These initiatives, alongside the promise tracker platform, which has been supported by Meedan since 2019, aim to enhance political transparency and accountability.

In SSA, AI is emerging as a solution for various sectors, including media. Journalists and other experts are exploring the possibilities and challenges of AI in newsrooms. While there's a general lack of clarity about AI's role in media, its potential to simplify and enhance journalistic work is becoming increasingly recognized. CITE's AI presenter, Alice, reads the daily news bulletin and hosts programs like "Rate Your Councillor," a series that encourages community engagement and oversight of elected officials. To address gender disparities in media, CITE, inspired by Meedan's strategy, has initiated new educational programs, such as We the Future with the National University of Science and Technology, focusing on misinformation literacy for young women aged 18-35 years old.

Despite CITE's success as a leading factual information provider, financial sustainability remains a challenge. As a result, CITE is now exploring revenue-generating models that would enable them to independently raise at least 45% of their annual budget in the next four years.

Regional partner results for 2023

This section presents an evaluation of the 2023 results for our partners under the Check Global program. We also explain how the different interventions map against the global challenges we had set out to address with our partners during this reporting period.

Interventions mapped against the global challenges

i **Access to information**

Our partner in Botswana has defended public interest journalism and investigative reporting through its work on skills training with a total of 132 local journalists and journalism students over a period of 18 months.

Similarly, our partner in Ethiopia focused on human capacity building this year. A total of 23 journalists and human rights defenders were trained. Four interns received on-the-job training and were offered permanent positions. These training sessions have been transformative, equipping participants with essential skills to navigate the complex media and information landscape.

To help plug a gap in which influencers and journalists were used to amplify misinformation on various topics — including public health concerns such as COVID-19 — our partner in Ghana organized two misinformation literacy and fact-checking training programs for 25 social media influencers and 30 journalists.

To maintain and elevate their editorial standards, one of our partners in Kenya now emphasizes training as a core component of its growth strategy. The group works with local, regional and international experts to ensure a consistent supply of skilled talent and to ease the training burden on its editors. Indeed, the organization's work with Meedan has allowed its newsroom the space, time and resources needed to build on its internal training program.

Another partner of ours works in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. In a recent series, this organization successfully trained 80 participants. Sessions focused on media information literacy support for 25 Kenyan female politicians, enhancing their interactions with journalists by centering discussions on facts and issues. Additionally, 25 women journalists received training on crucial topics such as gender, politics, bias and constructive journalism approaches. The initiative extended to community radio journalists, who participated in specialized skills training sessions covering editorial values, data utilization, storytelling techniques and anti-bias training. Collaborating with Meedan and another partner from Pakistan, a three-day investigative fact-checking skills session was conducted for 12 journalists from Senegal, Togo and Burkina Faso, resulting in the production of four impactful investigative reports on gender-based violence.

Due to the work of one of our partners, college students and recent graduates from low-income communities in the Grande São Paulo metropolitan region of Brazil were trained on journalistic

basics and community engagement. Additionally, participants attended six live sessions that addressed various journalistic skills and themes. The young reporters were closely guided by editors, participating in group and one-on-one meetings throughout the program. By the conclusion of the initiative, 41 stories were published on Agência Mural's website and 30 participants were expected to join their local correspondents' network.

In India, one of our partners has developed and launched a digital security toolkit, an interactive and user-friendly resource divided into four informative chapters, each addressing key aspects of digital security. The team plans to share the digital security toolkit with like-minded organizations to reach a wider audience base. They also want to take the toolkit to over 500 young girls across North India and introduce it to the existing school curriculum in the Hindi Belt.

Our partner in Pakistan organized a regional webinar titled "Inclusive and Intersectional Digital Safety in South Asia," hosting a panel of experts in digital rights and security. They delved into the difficulties encountered by marginalized communities in the area, stressing the importance of comprehensive approaches to digital security. Topics discussed included the digital gender gap, online harassment, disinformation and the responsibility of platforms to safeguard women online. The participants were provided with examples of content moderation policies, platform reporting and methods for addressing digital security challenges.

Our partner in Iraq published an investigative report titled "Masculinity of society or religion? Who is behind the obstruction of the legislation of a child protection law in Iraq?" The report was circulated on social media, mostly by parents who expressed their support for the media to put pressure on the Iraqi government and the House of Representatives to pass a stalled child protection law. There were also calls to prevent the use of children in hard labor and to prosecute criminal gangs that use them in begging and the sex trade.

They also published a report on Iraq's losing battle against drugs, garnering praise from local officials, academics and police, who acknowledged the report's boldness in highlighting the widespread issue of drugs, especially among youth and even in some children's schools. This prompted calls to focus on the escalating problem in future projects and to urge increased state efforts to address it.

On social media, several Iraqi activists circulated another report published by our partner. This time the piece focused on corruption linked to projects and institutions in Nineveh during the post-ISIS period. The responses were mixed. There were those who saw that corruption was a general condition in all of Iraq, not just Nineveh, but there were others who believed the post-ISIS phase in Nineveh was still an outlier. Those in the latter camp supported the report's conclusions and called for the corrupt be held accountable.

Big tech and media freedom

In Brazil, one of our partners has been actively engaged in the domestic development and regulation of AI throughout 2023. The organization participated in consultations with the temporary commission of justices in the Federal Senate, submitted technical contributions and engaged with policymakers and civil society organizations. The team also launched a new website and published analytical texts on AI.

In 2023, utilizing 3D-rendered synthetic data for object detection algorithm training, a longtime partner of ours successfully developed an application focused on recognizing military aircraft in videos. Current efforts involve integrating contextual information into an interactive web app and creating a benchmark aircraft dataset for detector evaluation.

Misinformation

Our partner in Zimbabwe has automated its fact-checking process to be more efficient and effective. This means that journalists can now identify and verify information more quickly and easily, which ultimately helps to ensure the team publishes accurate and reliable news. In addition to this, and through the ongoing partnership with Meedan, the team has developed a promise tracker — a platform that holds those in power accountable.

Our partner in Ethiopia published an impressive array of more than 220 fact-checking stories, 72 weekly summaries, 16 monthly reports and a comprehensive annual report. These publications have been crucial in enhancing the organization's capacity to verify content, debunk false claims and produce credible online content. A significant highlight was when the group hosted an online regional event that brought together fact-checkers from Ethiopia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Sudan and Kenya. The event fostered discussions and facilitated the sharing of valuable insights about each region's prevailing disinformation trends. The team also conducted research aimed at assessing the responsiveness of government offices in Ethiopia and the implications of these findings for countering disinformation. The results of this work have been invaluable, revealing gaps in government communication and providing recommendations for improvement. This research has been crucial for understanding the disinformation landscape in Ethiopia and has offered valuable insights for future initiatives.

In Ghana, our partner produced 81 fact-checks and factsheets over an 18-month project period. As part of an effort to increase the reach of their work, they deployed a multimedia strategy that resulted in 15 web videos and 24 graphics being produced from their text-heavy fact-checks.

By making fact-checking accessible to their audience, one of our partners in Mexico reached a broader user base and connected with younger generations. During the reporting period, this organization published 35 resources related to climate change, energy, fuel and the environment, including fact-checks, explainers, verifications and TikTok videos, impacting 71,000 website visitors. Through a platform the group operates, this partner formed an editorial alliance with

Mexico's leading communications company to launch the Museum of Lies. Furthermore, the Newsroom Audience Development Incubator workshop, which was delivered by Meedan, helped this team to develop a strategic plan designed to increase the use of their platform. Promoting the platform across all social media channels resulted in a 66% growth in the audience. This plan will be extended into 2024, guiding the team as they focus on the presidential elections in Mexico.

In 2022, our partners in Taiwan and the Philippines launched a media literacy program to empower Filipino migrant workers in Taiwan. Their efforts expanded to the Indonesian project in 2023, drawing on the experience gained from the Filipino initiative, to reach over 700 people. This effort included activities such as launching a Facebook group, hosting training sessions on media literacy, conducting street campaigns in Taipei, Taoyuan and Kaohsiung, producing podcast programs on Indonesian misinformation and creating 30 social media posts focused on media literacy. Following the success of these two projects, our Taiwanese partners are currently planning to advance similar migrant projects in 2024, aiming to extend their impact beyond Filipino and Indonesian communities.

Our longtime partner in the Philippines conducted two fact-checking and online verification training sessions for Filipino migrant workers at a shelter managed by the Serve the People Association in Taiwan, aiming to empower this vulnerable sector against mis- and disinformation. The sessions emphasized the importance of turning the Filipino migrant community into allies of truth. The team also hosted a webinar featuring six speakers who discussed initiatives affecting Filipino migrant communities globally. The production emphasized media literacy, fact-checking and the Viber misinformation tipline. Attendees, including trainees from the migrant community, expressed continuous interest in the partner's projects.

Democracy at risk

In October 2021, our partner in Kenya collaborated with South Africa's The Continent to publish a popular long-read about Nairobi's former governor Mike Sonko, earning an honorable mention for the True Story Award. The piece delves into the life of this controversial politician and explores the hidden side of Nairobi. This success led the team to expand its podcast offerings, planning a four-part podcast series to be spun out from the 8,000-word story. The series should be released soon.

Our partner in Zimbabwe launched an election newsletter that provided in-depth coverage and analysis of the election. The newsletter published in-house news stories on elections as well as adverts, feature stories, election-related opinion pieces, cartoons on elections and pictures of the day. The series was also released in a PDF format and circulated on a WhatsApp group with 1,005 participants. The newsletter also had 145 online subscribers.

With a group of Sahrawi and international human rights defenders and lawyers, our partners in Western Sahara have conducted extensive reporting as part of the Geneva Support Group, participating in the production of human rights reports, press releases and investigations. This work includes campaigns and reports produced on behalf of political prisoners, human rights activists and journalists inside the Morocco-occupied Western Sahara. Some of the issues the group is

researching require protracted investigations. One example is the documentation of Moroccan land grabs from Sahrawi communities in Western Sahara. Most of these are ancestral lands stolen from Sahrawi families who do not possess land titles, as neither Spain — the initial colonizer — nor Morocco — the current one — issued land titles to Sahrawis, except for those who aligned themselves with the regime. Even those who do have titles are now being subject to eviction. The team also launched a multimedia, mobile human rights storytelling project designed and led by Sahrawis that aims to open up new spaces for learning and dialogue and to contribute to wider knowledge of Western Sahara and its people. The project explores the spatial realities of people from Western Sahara in the context of colonialism, occupation and exile, and it celebrates their resilience and their ability to preserve, protect and readapt the jaima (Sahrawi tent) despite these daunting obstacles.

Our partner in Tunisia produced several in-depth journalistic articles covering a range of critical issues in the country and providing comprehensive insights and analysis. One of these articles criticized Tunisian economic policy for undervaluing the country's olive oil, often referred to as "liquid gold." Another article discussed the exceptional measures announced in July 2021 and the presidential decree issued in September of the same year. The article focused on the issue of corruption and the need to recover embezzled funds through plea bargaining. A series of articles about the grain sector in Tunisia highlighted colonial laws related to water resources, the establishment of a customs union between France and Tunisia in 1904 and the subsequent agricultural policies that led to a 163% increase in the grain deficit between 1985 and 2015.

In 2023, our partner in Colombia prioritized the safeguarding of domestic environmental defenders through targeted digital security training sessions. The group's aim was to enhance the digital security skills of leaders, human rights defenders, activists and environmental organizations, utilizing a methodology developed in 2022 to assess risks related to digital tool usage in contexts of violence and surveillance. Conducting five awareness sessions across different regions, the partner expanded the project's reach, resulting in a comprehensive digital security guide for environmental defenders. Notably, training participants have become advocates, amplifying the project's impact and promoting a broader understanding of digital security within the community.

♥ Gender equality and inequalities

Over the past year, our partner in Uganda has developed a program aimed at empowering African women in the workplace. This program seeks to foster digital resilience and collaboration among women in seven countries — namely Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Senegal, DRC and Cameroon — to advance a feminist internet. The partner plans to organize an awards ceremony to recognize women journalists and activists. They also hope to establish an annual Feminist Internet Scorecard to track progress. The team has collaborated with women journalists across various media platforms to address digital safety and gender discrimination in the hybrid workplace, strengthening partnerships with East African professional bodies in women's media. The organization has also enhanced support for women in media to tackle digital threats and improve internet governance reporting.

Our partner in Zimbabwe is dedicated to empowering young women through workshops and training programs, and the group has a specific focus on training young women in media literacy and fact-checking. Some program participants have even become correspondents for the organization's fact-checking platform while simultaneously mentoring university students. The team strives to achieve gender parity in their training programs and workshops by ensuring that at least 50% of the participants are female, spanning in age from 18 to 35.

Our partner in Kenya has focused on amplifying voices from marginalized segments of the population, including women, intersex voters and youth. Their podcast project nurtured a broader perspective on the experiences of women in country, influencing the group's overall editorial strategies. However, during the previous year's election, many women politicians were unavailable for interviews due to campaign commitments. To address this, the team tracked candidates on the campaign trail, but this approach wasn't sustainable for a full podcast season. In early 2023, the partner anticipated an easier time securing interviews with elected and aspiring women politicians, but nationwide protests disrupted plans. As a result, the series adopted a longer-term production approach, continuing to interview women politicians for the remaining episodes.

There remains a long-standing gender balance and equality issue in many newsrooms in Ghana. However — after actively encouraging media managers to nominate female journalists who could benefit from the program — our partner in the country worked with 38 men and 12 women over the course of two training programs.

Our partner in Pakistan published an article titled "Feminist Approaches to Digital Safety: Perspectives from the Global South." The piece focused on digital insecurity issues faced by marginalized groups in South Asia concerning technology-facilitated, gender-based violence.

Our partner in Indonesia pursued two extensive journalistic projects that brought together data journalism, social media campaigns and constructive journalism. One of these initiatives addresses gender biases across diverse sectors, utilizing a robust social media strategy. The other project critically examines the impact of the beauty industry and digital media on perceptions of beauty, employing in-depth, data-driven campaigns and a strong social media presence. The partner also focused on gendered dimensions of AI and social media algorithms, exploring women's vulnerability to gender-based violence and biases in perceptions of beauty. The group's collaboration with a local news organization further extends its commitment to fostering awareness and inclusivity in gender-related conversations.

One of our partners in India conducted research with 150 Lucknow and Faizabad women political leaders to better understand their journeys. The group then selected 10 finalists with diverse backgrounds and documented their journeys in a film that showcased the entire spectrum of emotions these women experienced, from the day they decided to be a part of politics to the present moment — a time in which they are independently and fiercely leading their parties and issues. The partner launched a trailer to generate excitement about women in politics, hosted a webinar — with over 500 participants — to discuss the importance of this topic, created individual posters featuring relevant quotes and collaborated with a university for a successful film screening. The project has had a significant impact by encouraging youth and women to consider politics as a viable career option, breaking stereotypes around the image of women political leaders, revealing the challenges of power and patriarchy, enhancing technical skills and building a stronger knowledge base about women's experiences in politics.

Asia-Pacific region logical framework

Countries of Focus

India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Taiwan

Overall goal

Strengthen democratic processes by promoting independent and marginalized voices in the media and by enhancing gender equality in news and information creation through fact-checking, investigative reporting and content moderation initiatives.

Objectives

- Support women-led newsrooms to produce independent and feminist content.
- Create opportunities to strengthen online security skills for journalists and activists.
- Seek greater accountability from social media platforms.
- Enhance media literacy skills through training and networking initiatives.
- Support newsrooms and civil society groups in building records of human rights violations by governments and other actors.

Indicators and results

Indicators	Outputs			
	Planned output	2022 results	2023 results	Results (Total)
Number of reports, articles and videos published by partners capturing current issues in the region	9	27	11	38
Number of fact-check claims	585	393	410	803
Number of students, journalists and activists trained in media literacy and digital security	200	148	154	302
Number of media literacy and digital security training sessions	6	5	3	8
Number of regional Check Global Network events highlighting partners' work and sharing best practices	6	-	7	7
Number of multimedia content pieces	2	-	101	101

Latin America and the Caribbean logical framework

Countries of Focus

Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, Argentina, Costa Rica and Uruguay

Overall goal

Support partners at the forefronts of battles for democracy, information and media freedom, with a focus on independent media and diverse communities, including women, LGBTQ+ people, periferias (urban, rural) and Indigenous populations across the region.

Objectives

- Train the next generation of independent journalists and media activists working in news deserts and with Indigenous communities on media literacy skills and tools.
- Support activists' and journalists' safety in the region by sharing digital security training opportunities and best practices.
- Strengthen verification practices and fact-checking initiatives.
- Support policymaking efforts as a response to misinformation.

Indicators and results

Indicators	Outputs			
	Planned output	2022 results	2023 results	Results (Total)
Number of training sessions on digital security, media literacy and social media archival practices	7	14	12	26
Number of MOOCs	1	-	-	-
Number of trainees in the MOOC	500	-	-	-
Number of journalists, activists and civil society personnel trained on digital security, media literacy and social media archival practices	120	60	77	137
Number of fact-checking, verification and debunking reports in target countries	12	12	33	45
Number of research outputs	1	-	1	1
Number of trainees	30	-	38	38
Number of reports, articles and videos published by partners capturing current issues in the region	30	-	41	41

North Africa and Western Asia logical framework

Countries of Focus

Yemen, Syria, Tunisia, Iraq, Western Sahara, Sudan, Lebanon

Overall goal

Strengthen the role of civil society and independent media organizations to seek greater accountability from governments, and also strengthen the role of women and LGBTQ+ individuals to promote more active participation in democratic processes through media literacy training and access to verified information.

Objectives

- Support media literacy, verification and fact-checking work and efforts.
- Develop media monitoring expertise in the region.
- Support civil society efforts to counter the effects of content moderation policies from big tech.
- Strengthen the voices of women and LGBTQ+ communities through providing media literacy and fact-checking support.
- Support documentation efforts of human rights violations in contexts of war and social turmoil.

Indicators and results

Indicators	Outputs			
	Planned output	2022 results	2023 results	Results (Total)
Number of NAWA newsroom training sessions	1	1	-	1
Number of articles and reports produced by NAWA newsroom students after the completion of the training sessions	10	3	8	11
Number of reports and articles published by partners capturing current issues in the region	16	18	16	34
Number of training sessions	24	11	15	26
Number of beneficiaries involved in training sessions	-	62	-	62
Number of fact-checks	8	17	-	17
Number of research outputs	2	2	-	2
Number of records of open-source content reporting on human rights violations archived	2,000	84,738	-	84,738
Number of sources of open-source content archived	600	300,000	-	300,000
Number of regional Check Global Network events highlighting partners' and students' work and sharing best practices	5	8	-	8
Number of multimedia content pieces	-	-	8	8

Sub-Saharan Africa logical framework

Countries of Focus

Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Ethiopia, Botswana
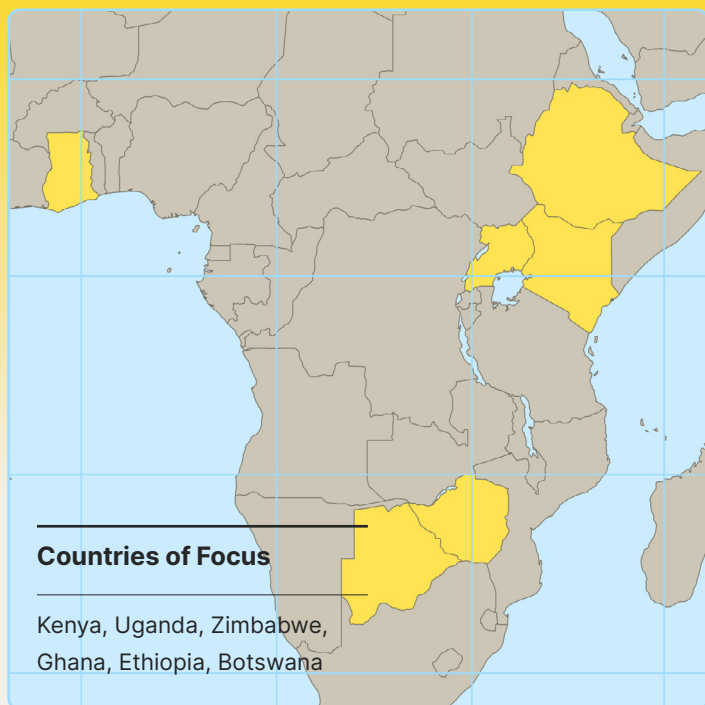
Overall goal

Enhance knowledge and skills in media and information literacy across the region by supporting independent media, journalism programs, activists and human rights defenders working on open-source investigations, fact-checking and debunking, especially in unrepresented and underrepresented communities.

Objectives

- Strengthen verification, fact-checking and content moderation work being undertaken by independent journalists on various platforms and in different formats across the region.
- Support grassroots media organizations and independent journalists conducting open-source investigative work.
- Support election-monitoring initiatives from organizations working to strengthen democracy and the role of civil society in the region.

Indicators and results

Indicators	Outputs			
	Planned output	2022 results	2023 results	Results (Total)
Number of articles and investigations published	10	-	10	10
Number of training sessions	19	7	15	22
Number of fact-checking, verification and debunking reports	248	240	355	595
Number of multimedia content pieces	102	84	121	205
Number of regional Check Global Network events highlighting partners' work and sharing best practices	6	-	7	7
Number of beneficiaries involved in training sessions	-	-	344	344

Concluding remarks by Meedan CEO

It is worth noting that the term of this grant, from 2019 through 2023, encompassed one of the most impactful global events of our lifetimes: the COVID-19 pandemic. This global pandemic played out as an "infodemic" in digital spaces. As the world shifted its patterns in work, education and public gatherings, Meedan was able, with the support of Sida, to quickly evolve our work with civil society partners across the Larger World, bringing in programming centered on COVID-19 and public health. This was critical to both our partners' ability to meet the information needs in their communities and to our organizational development, as these pandemic response programs brought forward additional funders — including Omidyar Network, the National Science Foundation and the Skoll Foundation — to enable us to expand our work on the Check Global project.

Of course these five years also held continuing challenges across the portfolio of our work — in crisis, in the digital rights and in media literacy and fact-checking. In our crisis work, we were able to deploy a fund in response to the August 4, 2020, Beirut port explosion, and we established a microgrants program to support innovation in global climate reporting, which generated hundreds of applications. Our work to support communities at risk has brought forward a range of projects that seek to address gendered disinformation as a socio-technical challenge requiring data and knowledge-sharing across linguistic and national boundaries.

Across all this work, we see distinct advantages in having a global network of partners and contributors, and in bringing these partners to a range of collaborations, from designing and delivering open-source technologies to shaping the programmatic and policy initiatives that express our desire to create a more empathic, equitable and open internet.

Ed Bice

The Checklist
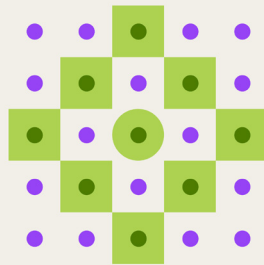
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