

Thomson Foundation



16

Hidden stories from the
Middle East

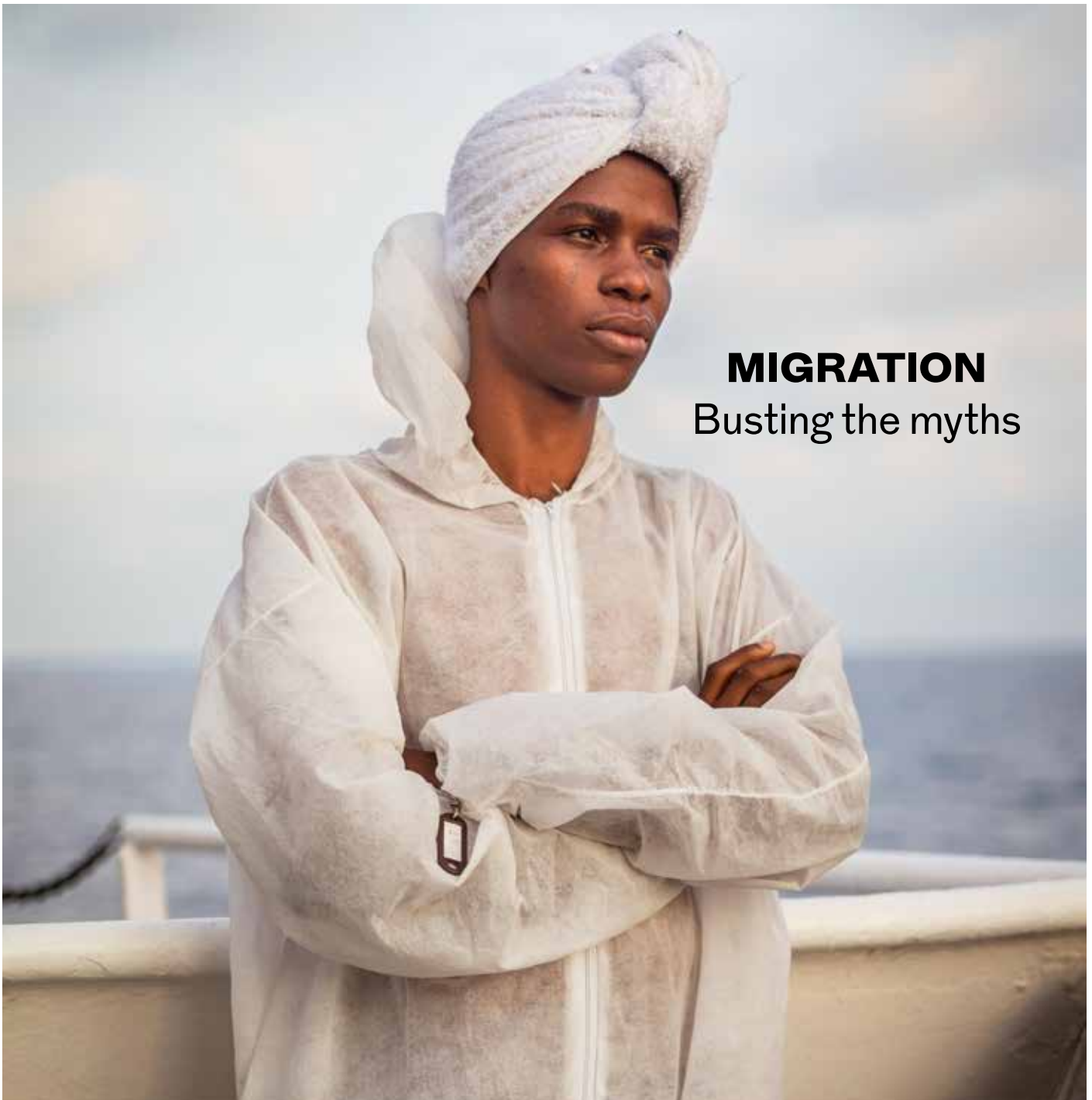
24

Transcending the
classroom



32

Hand in hand in the
Western Balkans



MIGRATION
Busting the myths

“The values of the Thomson Foundation have never been more needed... Another word that now needs adding to our vision: sustainability”

— Lord Tom Chandos, chairman,
Thomson Foundation



The values of the Thomson Foundation have never been more needed. Our vision that everyone should have the right to an honest and factual account of what is really happening in the world is of paramount importance in combating fake news and hate speech.

Nowhere is that more relevant than in telling one of the biggest stories of our time – international migration. From Burkino Faso to the UN General Assembly in New York, we used our expertise in 2018 to encourage the truthful telling of stories about migrants, from their own perspective, free from prejudice and preconceptions.

As civil strife flared in Sudan at the end of the year, local journalists trained by Thomson Foundation over a five-year period have been helping to pass on their skills to others to ensure that the story is told with coverage that is fair, accurate and verifiable.

Encouraging engaging journalism with impact has created prize-winners across the globe – from Honduras to Russia and photojournalists from Yemen, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon.

Another word that now needs adding to our vision: sustainability. For responsible coverage to thrive requires media organisations to have the right business models and content to keep, or attract, audiences.

Work on inspiring business models to support independent media was put in place in Kazakhstan and Belarus during 2018, while we also helped the Georgian Film Cluster to thrive by gaining wider international and domestic support.

We also commissioned a survey of Serbia's digital economy to understand the business strategies required to help support media plurality in a country where there is historic mistrust of media, fostered by political interference and corruption. We shall be working more in the Western Balkans in the coming year.

2018 was a memorable year with unprecedented activity for the foundation. None of it could have been achieved without the support of our many funders and clients, coupled with the immense efforts and dedication of our consultants, trainers, project partners and staff. My profound thanks to all.

**Lord Tom Chandos, chairman
Thomson Foundation**

Contents

01

ON THE COVER

Ensuring stories on migration are shared truthfully through the OPEN Media Hub project

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16-21

PICTURE THIS

Photojournalists from Yemen, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon reveal hidden stories from the Middle East

24-27

TRANSCENDING THE CLASSROOM

A new approach to training and skills development beyond the single medium of the classroom

22-23

SPOTLIGHT ON SUDAN

The journalists working to ensure reporting of stories in their country is fair, accurate and verifiable



03

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Another word that now needs adding to our vision: sustainability

06-10

MIGRATION

Encouraging the truthful telling of stories about migrants, free from prejudice and preconceptions

28-29

LATIN SUCCESS

Committed to working in Latin America to improve digital journalism and access to information

30-31

DEEPENING DIGITAL

Developing independent, sustainable and modern media in Belarus and Kazakhstan

11

DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Telling stories to young Africans which are important to their lives



12-15

THE ONES TO WATCH

Profile of our first Russian Young Journalist Award winner, plus past winners, from Syria and Sudan, take on new challenges

28-29

LATIN SUCCESS

Committed to working in Latin America to improve digital journalism and access to information

30-31

DEEPENING DIGITAL

Developing independent, sustainable and modern media in Belarus and Kazakhstan

32-33

HAND IN HAND IN SERBIA

A long-held commitment to help strengthen quality journalism in the Western Balkans

34

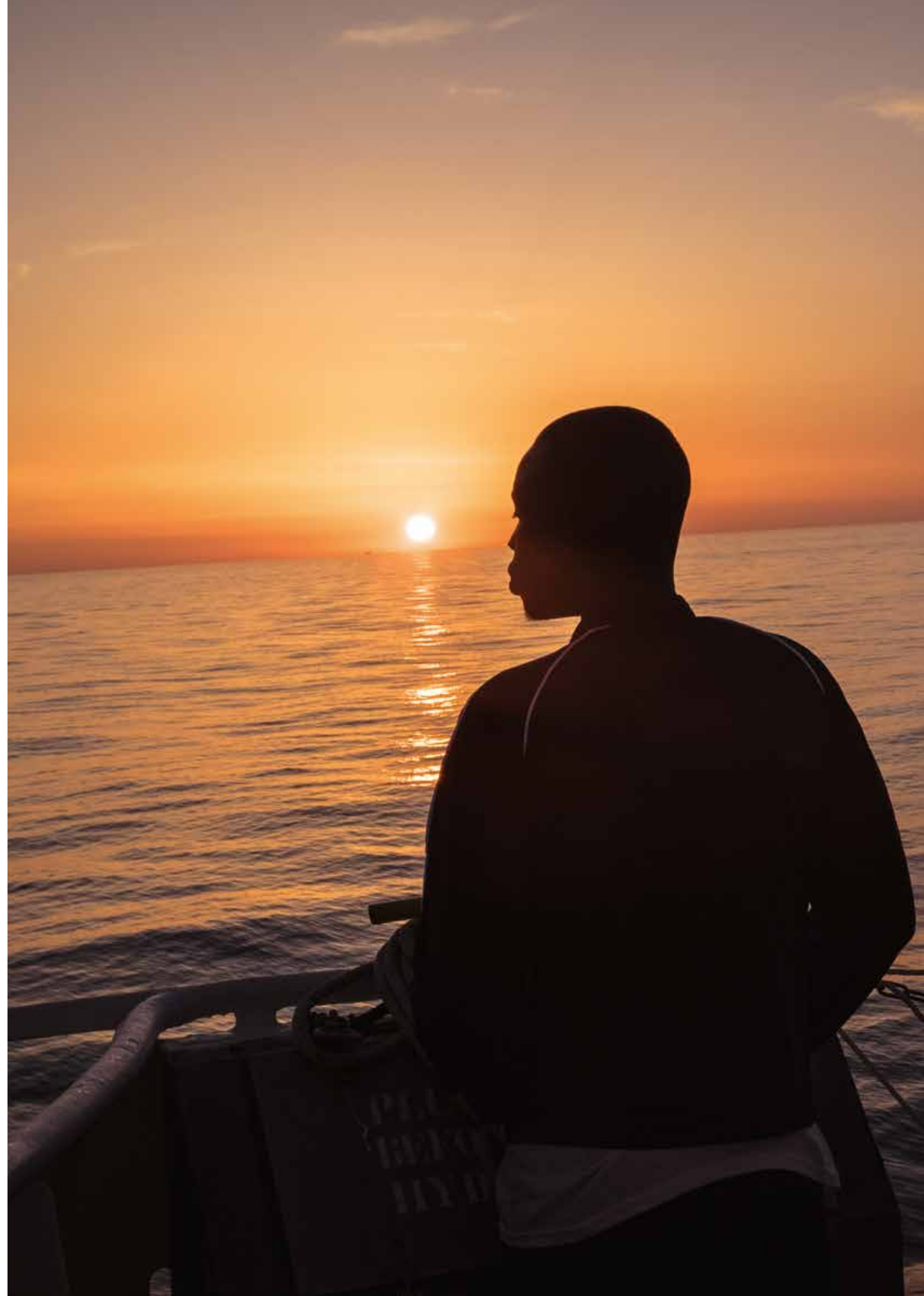
LIGHTS, CAMERA, SUSTAINABILITY

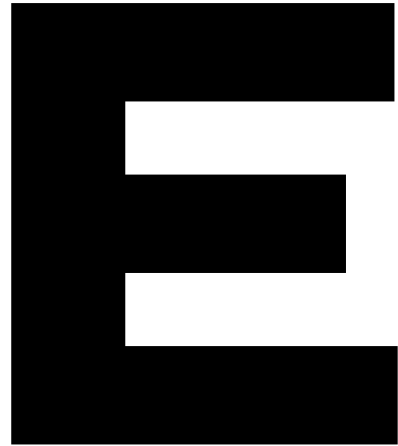
A look at Thomson Media's first-ever project with the Georgian film industry



MIGRATION
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IMAGES: MARCO PANZETTI





lections and World Cup matches came and went in 2018, but the migration crisis isn't going anywhere.

Current estimates are that there are 244 million international migrants globally (or 3.3 per cent of the world's population). Global displacement is at a record high, according to the International Organisation for Migration, with the number of internally displaced at more than 40 million, and the number of refugees more than 22 million. It has become the biggest story of our time, and in Europe alone, has swayed elections in France, Germany, Austria and Italy.

With this in mind, it is more important than ever that the reporting of issues around migration is accurate, fair and balanced.



“We don't just sit in rooms discussing policy. We are at the sharp end, where the journeys begin and end”

– David Quin

The Migration Media Awards (MMA), which were presented at a ceremony in Tunisia in September, encourage the truthful telling of stories about migrants, from their own perspective, free from prejudice and preconceptions.

The awards are sponsored by the foundation's OPEN Media Hub project, which is funded by the European Union, and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

Forty-one journalists from 18 countries were

rewarded for excellence in the way they reported on migration. Among the more striking entries were a written article on a Sicilian police inspector who tries to identify the bodies of migrants washed up on shore, so death certificates can be issued to their families; a video of a football team of refugees in Morocco who have dreams of one day playing in Europe; and a multimedia tale exploring the minds of Syrian children, through bedtime stories.

No fewer than 50 governments worldwide are



members of the ICMPD, and the foundation has signed a memorandum of understanding with them. A lot of research carried out by the ICMPD is incorporated by Thomson into its programming.

"We are acting as a bridge between the coverage of migration and policies which are formulated about migration," says the foundation's director of development, David Quin. "Our role is to be a player in the conversation about policy and coverage, and the connection between the two" he adds. "The debate can at times be polarising, failing to reflect the multiplicity of opinions."

David says Thomson Foundation made a conscious decision at the beginning of 2018 to continue with its long-established focus on the topic of migration. This experience has made the organisation determined to "do even more in 2019." This will be done in conjunction with partners and "...with the migrants themselves to ensure their stories are shared truthfully."

A few days after the MMAs, representatives from the foundation attended a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, examining the issue of migration. Moderated by the foundation's OPEN Media Hub team leader, Dominique Thierry, the high-level debate brought together speakers including the UN special representative for international migration, Louise Arbour, and director general of the International Centre for Migration Policy, Michael Spindelegger.

Up for discussion were issues such as the

constraints on world leaders on the migration policies that they can propose, the role of the media in the migration debate and how to ensure that all migrants have access to the protection and assistance they need.

The key to many of the speeches was giving migrants back their dignity through positive journalism, like the story of Bangladeshi migrants who settled in Palermo, Italy, and bravely took on racketeers. "With a migration-reporting curriculum, online course, workshops and mentoring, the OPEN Media Hub has led to award-winning stories bringing about an awakening among policymakers" says Dominique. "This was highlighted at the UNGA discussion."

Thomson Foundation also supported a programme in Cyprus, in association with UNHCR, where young migrants recorded their experiences. The high-level partnerships on migration reporting didn't end there – Thomson teamed up with the International Organisation for Migration to organise workshops in Burkina Faso and Mauritania, where the theme was how to cover migration stories ethically. What made these field workshops stand out was that the tutors took winners of Thomson Foundation journalism awards to help with the teaching, thereby ensuring that the hands-on mentoring can continue with students becoming teachers of the next generation of storytellers. "We don't just sit in rooms discussing policy," says David Quin. "We are at the sharp end, where the journeys begin and where they end."



Marco Panzetti's posed portrait of a pregnant woman at the entrance of a Red Cross tent in Settimo Torinese, Italy, was enduring (see previous page).

"I saw the red, the silhouette, the tent and I thought: that's the picture I have been looking for."

Learn more about Marco on page 10.

MIGRATION MIGRATION MIGRATION

A picture of migrants fleeing to a new life can sometimes be worth a thousand words. That's where the work of award-winning photographer **Marco Panzetti** (pictured right) comes in. His photographs of migration were exhibited in Tunis, Tunisia in November 2018 as part of Thomson Foundation's OPEN Media Hub-led International Convention of Journalism, where 800 people gathered to discuss the role of the media.

The exhibition, called 'The Idea of Europe', was Marco's attempt to show the human side of migrants, with simple images of quiet scenes and the regular habits of daily life. He wanted to move away from scenes of suffering and obvious distress, which he feels have a certain predictability and can lead to emotional overload on the part of the viewer.

"For me it's about the human story – giving names, voices and faces to the refugees who have faced horror in their journeys to Europe."

The exhibited photographs formed part of Marco's 2017 reportage series 'Life After Hell', a follow-up to 'Troubled Waters', which won him first place in the video category in the OPEN Media Hub-supported Migration Media Award.



IMAGE: SEBASTIAN LISTE / NOOR

"It's about the human story – giving names, voices and faces to the refugees"

– Marco Panzetti

Marco's long experience covering migrants has given him a keen appreciation of the desperation that fuels their journey. "But, sometimes, you get too attached to some of the migrants and their stories and you lose the bigger picture... you reach saturation point and you cannot stand more suffering."

He also sees photography as having a special problem in the mainstream media.

"There is a certain predictability in the media. Migrants in boats struggling to get life jackets and waving their arms in desperation are the images that really sell.

"You could present 100 images to a newspaper or magazine editor, and these are the ones that would most often get selected.

When asked how he would define the different types of migrant, Marco says:

"At some point a distinction must be made between migrants and refugees, but who can say that fleeing from the persecution of war is worse than starvation at home?"

"Both migrants and refugees deserve better lives and a better future."

Follow Marco on Twitter and Instagram: @m_panzetti. See more of his work on migration here: marcopanzetti.com

Find out more about the Migration Media Award on the OPEN Media Hub website: openmediahub.com

"They are already passing on their new digital skills to other young people in their communities"

– Kate Middleton

Telling stories to young Africans which are relevant to their lives, and learning how to use digital tools to maximise the impact of those stories, was the theme of a five-day Thomson Foundation workshop in South Africa.

As well as teaching the students how to use their own voices, the workshop taught them how to deliver similar lessons to other young people, so increasing the number and the variety of stories by and about young people.

All students are now part of a WhatsApp group, where they showcase the films they are making and share advice with each other. UNICEF staff and Thomson Foundation trainer Kate Middleton also took part in this group.

"They are being encouraged to develop their story ideas further," says Kate. "And are already passing on their new digital skills to other young people in their communities."

Eleven students, aged between 15 and 23, were

on the UNICEF-funded course, which took place in Maropeng, Johannesburg, in September 2018. They were taught to use Android smartphones to shoot and edit short films or longer-form documentaries.

The aim is to encourage young people to make films in their own communities and reflect their experiences. The subjects are connected to the themes of the UNICEF report 'Generation 2030', which highlights – among other topics – the need for action plans in Africa to expand access to reproductive health services, and to improve education and empowerment for girls.

The students have been taught the whole process of storytelling, from pitching their ideas, filming, directing and use of light to interview techniques, editing, scripting and voiceover.

The stories must be made safely and ethically and engage the audience.

The young people were from eight countries in Eastern and Southern Africa: Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

“With each new story, I wanted to reach the roots of the problem more” – Alisa Kustikova

A series of hard-hitting investigative reports has won Alisa Kustikova the 2018 Thomson Foundation Young Journalist Award.

Often operating in extremely difficult circumstances, Alisa exposed corruption in high places, and the effect of that corruption on ordinary families. She is the first Russian to win the prize, which is part of the UK Foreign Press Association (FPA) Awards.

The result followed the assessment of 130 entries from 40 countries, and scrutiny of the final 12 by independent judges chosen by the FPA. The award examines work from journalists aged 30 and under from countries with a Gross National Income per capita of less than US\$20,000. One of the stories in Alisa's portfolio highlighted the activities of a loan company,

which tricked thousands of people. The story begins with the suicide of a father of four young children, who was unable to live with the shame of his family's eviction from their apartment due to his inability to pay back a loan. The links between the loan company and local government officials are explored and heartless evictions exposed.

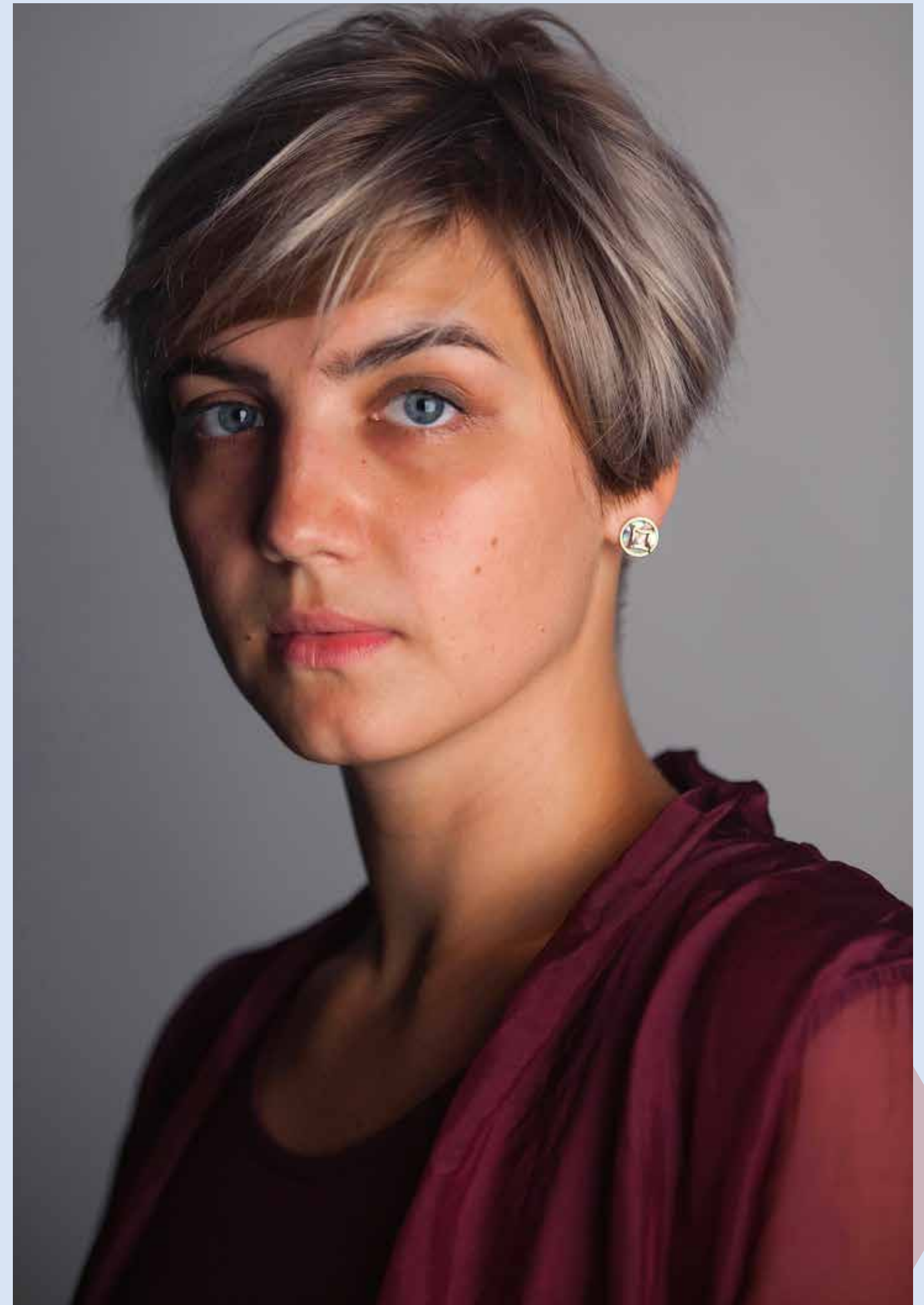
Another of Alisa's articles revealed the astonishing practice of 'carousel voting' on election day in St Petersburg. Her investigations uncovered a well-organised scheme to influence the result of elections, involving 'voters' depositing several ballot papers in different polling stations. A list of corrupt officials who collaborated in the scheme was published in Alisa's newspaper, Novaya Gazeta.

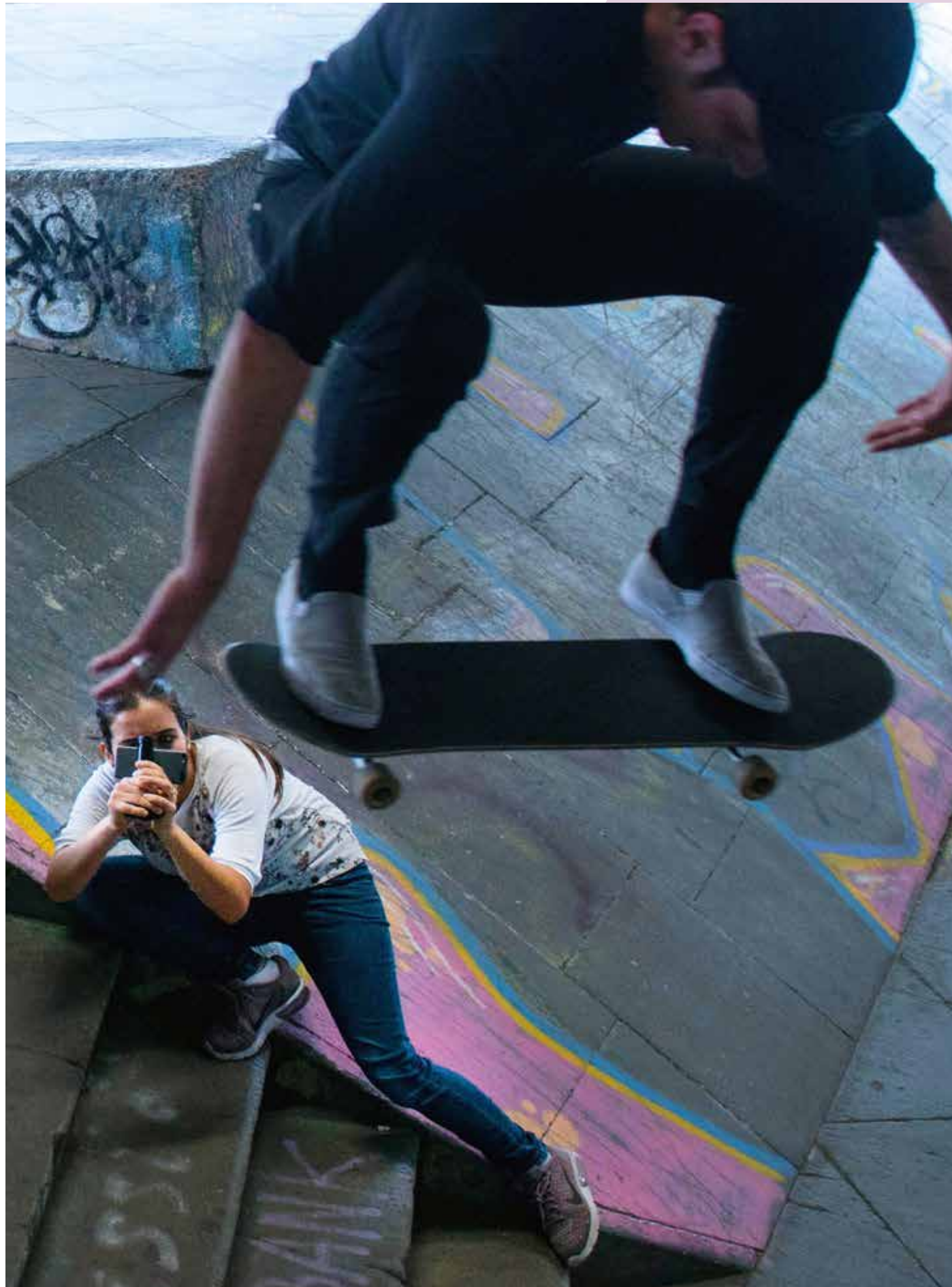
Alisa has moved from the St Petersburg office of the newspaper to its Moscow bureau. She is following an honourable tradition. "Since 2001, six Novaya Gazeta journalists, including

Yury Shchekochikhin, Anna Politkovskaya and Anastasia Baburova, have been murdered because of their investigations. It is a great honour for me to continue their work," says Alisa.

Her passion for uncovering corruption is evident from her winning entries. "With each new story I wanted to reach the roots of the problem more and more," she says. "There are a lot of cases of injustice in Russia. There are people in power (and businessmen connected with them) who can do anything they wish."

Also present at the awards ceremony in London in November 2018, were the two runners up. Vietnamese journalist Yen Duong Do Bao's stories included an article about young women who were kidnapped and sold to China. And, from Pakistan, one of Asad Pabani's stories examined the abduction of 24 Christian men by law enforcement agencies from an economically-deprived locality of Karachi.





TURN TO PAGE 22 FOR
YOUSRA'S REPORTING ON THE
SUDAN UPRISING

Yousra Elbagir

"The confidence boost that the Young Journalist Award gave me propelled my early career as I started to come out of my comfort zone"

In 2017, young Syrian filmmaker Waad Al Kateab (pictured left) received a special award from the Thomson Foundation to recognise her "outstanding coverage" of the suffering in the city of Aleppo. The award was given because Waad's storytelling for the UK's Channel 4 News "provided a unique perspective" into the horror of the Syrian conflict.

Twelve months later, Waad, her husband, and their two young daughters are living in London, having been granted asylum. Now Waad's documentary 'For Sama' has been commissioned by Channel 4 and PBS Frontline. It tells the story of her 'journey through love, motherhood, war and survival'. The film is Waad's attempt to explain to her daughter why they chose to stay behind in Aleppo, while others left. "It's our story, our voices and I'm proud of it," says Waad. "This film is also for the people we lost – a testament to their sacrifices."

Waad is still working for Channel 4 News, learning about reporting, production, and digital journalism. "We finally have a normal life as a family," she says. Waad misses Syria and desperately wants the country to find peace. "I don't see any life for us in Syria in the immediate future, but perhaps in the long term."



"It's our story, our voices and I'm proud of it"
— Waad Al Kateab



Picture this

Photographs from the Middle East
that dig beneath the surface

IMAGE: MOHAMMED SALEH AL MAKHLAFI
– AL BARA DANCE, A TRADITION OF YEMEN

“From traditional dance and the rituals of Ramadan, to secret groups of Yemeni women who meet to enjoy music and smoke khat, the photographers have given us a glimpse of life away from the frontline”

— Glenn Edwards

Photographs revealing hidden stories about communities in the Middle East were exhibited in Beirut, Lebanon, in summer 2018, showcasing the work of the foundation's photojournalism trainees.

The exhibition called 'Looking for the Truth' was the culmination of work done by photojournalists from Yemen, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon who attended two workshops and spent months being mentored to build portfolios.

"These workshops are not just about pressing a button for a single image, but thinking carefully about the story we are trying to tell," says photojournalism trainer, Glenn Edwards.

The workshops helped build technical skills but also encouraged participants to develop and find picture stories which revealed something surprising about their communities and culture.

The images produced showed another side to the participants' communities, with some photographers gaining access to previously undocumented groups.

One photographer, Eman Al Awami from Yemen, subsequently had her pictures exhibited in Cardiff, Wales, at the Made In Roath festival.

Called 'Secret Society' the pictures showed women gathering at weekends at each other's

houses to relax – talking, listening to music, smoking and taking khat on occasions – showing a world previously unseen.

"From traditional dance and the rituals of Ramadan, to secret groups of Yemeni women who meet to enjoy music and smoke khat, the photographers have given us a glimpse of life away from the frontline.

"They should be congratulated," says Glenn.

The project was delivered by Thomson Foundation in partnership with photography centre Dar Al Mussawir in Lebanon and the British Council.



**EMAN AL AWAMI,
YEMEN**

Yemen's fondness for chewing khat (an amphetamine-like stimulant) is drawing larger numbers of women. But many keep their social habit a closely-guarded secret as the practice is considered culturally taboo.



**ROLA JAWED,
LEBANON**

The performance of the Sufi whirling dervishes is charged with symbolism – even as their practices come under threat across the Islamic world. The dervishes are meditation in movement, prayer as dance.



**HASSAN BILAL,
SYRIA:**

The bath of King Daher dates back to the second half of the 10th century. Despite the difficult conditions in Syria in recent years, the bath has remained an oasis for many people in the capital, Damascus.



DIA ARIF ADIMI, YEMEN:

The old city of Sana'a is famous for its Bab Al Hara traditional oil press. The method is more than 200 years old and the camel leads this primitive method due to its strength and tolerance. During the process of the pressing, the camel's eyes are covered so it feels like it is on a journey while it rotates.



REINE CHAHINE, LEBANON:

Traditional instruments such as riqq, oud and santur are still widespread among musicians specialising in Arabic music and oriental arrangements. The handmade instruments are now gradually starting to be replaced by factory-manufactured items.



NABIHA HAJAIG, LEBANON:

Lebanese women are believed to have a wider margin of freedom compared to women elsewhere in the region. But more and more of these women are now actively trying to break predefined gender roles.



Spotlight on Sudan



RANIA HAROUN

"I felt I had to do something to help the Sudanese people... I have been focusing on training women who want media skills"

Young journalists who were trained on the Thomson Foundation's Sudan media programme have been passing on their skills to help make sure that reporting of stories in their country is fair, accurate and verifiable.

The journalists – Rania Haroun, Salah Nasser (pictured right) and Wael Jamal Addeen – banded together to help train citizen journalists, especially in the use of mobiles to film and record. After training together in 2016, they created a WhatsApp group to stay in touch and share knowledge. That has now expanded to offer services to groups interested in learning about and documenting what is happening in Sudan.

The trio started citizen journalist workshops when an uprising began in December 2018.

People took to the streets over price increases in essential goods. The protests escalated and were later aimed at removing president Omar al-Bashir from office.

Rania had moved to London where she upgraded her digital skills by attending the Thomson Foundation's 2018 summer school. But she felt compelled to return to Sudan to pass on her knowledge to others when the protests erupted.

"I felt I had to do something to help the Sudanese people, so I arranged to do some workshops with Salah and Wael," she says.

"I have also been using Facebook Live and focusing on training women who want media skills, particularly filming on mobile phones."

YOUSRA ELBAGIR

"My work would not have been possible without the network of local journalists supporting my coverage"



Wael adds: "Sharing knowledge is a great way to build and improve our country. It is a pleasure to pass on tips and techniques to colleagues in Sudan, on how to use a mobile phone as a powerful tool for filming... Thanks Thomson Foundation for your great courses in Sudan."

Thomson Foundation's 2016 Young Journalist Award winner, Yusra Elbagir, has also returned to Sudan to report on the protests for the UK's Channel 4 News, as well as helping to verify user-generated video and photographic content.



ENTISAR OMER

"Being a good trainer means preparing yourself to deal with all sorts of difficult situations"

All of this work – in difficult conditions – has helped ensure coverage of a story which has been under-reported globally, with many journalists targeted by the Sudanese government.

Two other graduates from the Sudan Media Capacity Building Project have also been sharing their skills and acting as co-trainers in the foundation's work in Sudan in 2018.

Entisar Omer and Dodi Gamaa, who both successfully completed the Training of Trainers programme over five years, worked alongside the foundation's trainers, Derek Ivens and Diana Muir, in a project to help civil society organisations (CSOs) improve their media and communications skills. The media strand was part of a bigger project to build capacity in civil society organisations, funded by the British government's Department for International Development, and delivered by the British Council.

Entisar worked alongside Derek in workshops for citizen journalists from CSOs and in a senior media managers' programme designed to build leadership skills and broaden the editorial agenda.

"Many Sudanese journalists show great courage in covering sensitive issues. From child marriage and racism, to the crippling cost of fuel and the lack of jobs for young people, I believe we've helped a generation of reporters to highlight the stories which affect peoples' lives," says Derek.

"Entisar's story proves that if you build long-term relationships and nurture talent, you can give individuals the skills and confidence to make a difference."



“We teach people to think of storytelling beyond a single medium... we are now teaching ourselves to approach skills development beyond the single medium of the classroom”

— Hosam El Nagar

ILLUSTRATIONS: NATHALIE LEEES



Blended learning

The growing percentage of journalists and communicators having affordable access to smartphones and the internet means they no longer have to wait for classroom learning opportunities to be able to develop their skills. In fact, more of them are now regularly going online to find out how to do things better.

This is not just an opportunity but also a gap that the Thomson Foundation believes it can fill.

B

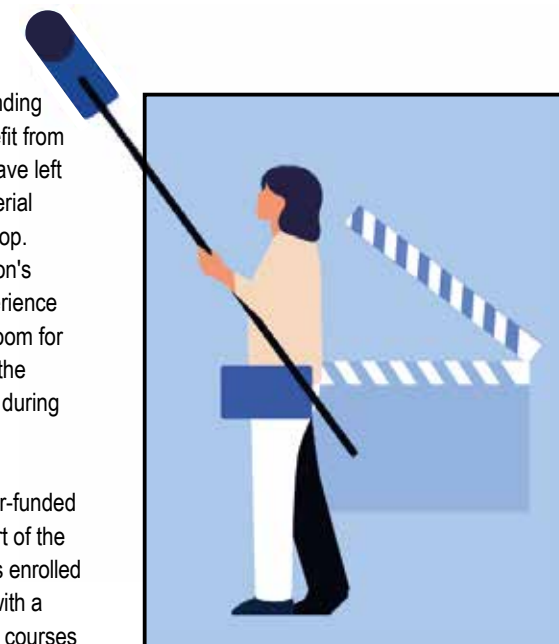
lended learning is the combination of different modes of training, such as face-to-face and online interactions. Being in a room with experts is great, but the use of online touchpoints can transform the way these same experts help learners outside of the classroom.

"The teaching and the experts are the same, but the opportunities and the ways that we can share them have multiplied," says Hosam El Nagar, the foundation's director of innovation and learning.

"Through our online platform and app, you can now engage with our experts, access their tutorials and do practical exercises similar to those you would do in one of our workshops, anytime, anywhere."

All of this means that the journalists attending the workshops can now continue to benefit from the programmes long after the trainers have left their location. They can also access material which helps them prepare for the workshop. For example, participants in the foundation's 2018 summer course all started the experience online freeing up more time in the classroom for practical exercises. They could also use the online platform to access course content during and after the workshops.

In 2018, several of the foundation's donor-funded projects included online elements. As part of the OPEN Media Hub project, 815 journalists enrolled – on average – in 2.2 courses per head, with a completion rate of 30 per cent. The online courses



were designed to complement the workshops so that the media managers and practitioners could continue to engage with the learning content, and also share it with their colleagues.

Before the move into blended learning, a journalist's experience of the foundation was a one-off workshop. Now the 5,000 journalists who enrolled on its e-learning courses or registered with its online community will remain within the network, and they will have access to a growing menu of learning experiences. "The idea is that as you progress from student to senior manager or entrepreneur in your career, you will always find the course or support that you need," says Hosam. The foundation's network is expected to double in 2019 as it expands its offerings.

Experts
100+
Journalism experts with specialist knowledge

Registered users
5,548
From 159 countries

Online courses
50+

Number of available courses

Live videos
50

Interactive live chats with experts

Course enrolments
6,508
With 4,151 unique users enrolled on average in 1.6 courses



Certification
1,841

The number of certificates issued

Of 1,700 survey respondents
70%
... found the courses extremely useful for their work and careers

Languages

4

Courses offered in four languages

Success in access to information



“... a courageous female voice, writing in a corrupt and violent society... where woman are often killed”

“My heart beats faster when I have a story”



Wendy Funes

Honduran journalist Wendy Funes received special recognition at the Index 'Freedom of Expression' Awards in 2018 for her hard-hitting investigative journalism.

A year earlier, she had completed a data journalism course run by the Thomson Foundation and was then mentored as part of the programme.

Index, which campaigns against censorship, describes Wendy as "...a courageous female voice, writing in a corrupt and violent society... where women are regularly subjected to severe domestic violence, and often killed."

The situation for Honduran media has worsened steadily over the past decade. The foundation's courses, run there as part of the Media4Democracy programme funded by the European Union, cover freedom of expression, access to government digital platforms and ethical data usage.

Wendy feels the training she received from the foundation was invaluable to her work as an investigative reporter with her newspaper Reporteros de Investigacion: "One of the foundations of our editorial policy is that we want

to focus on data journalism," she says. "We took the first steps thanks to Thomson Foundation."

It's not easy being a journalist in Honduras. "There are many crimes against journalists, and the perpetrators get away with it," she says. "Seventy-five journalists were killed in Honduras in 2018."

For one article, Wendy had her own death certificate issued so that she could reveal the corruption in the civil registration office. For another, she accessed public data and, using her data journalism skills, she discovered that a higher number of corpses are discovered in the capital city's main river at points close to police or military stations. She is continuing her investigations.

"My heart beats faster when I have a story," she says. "I am always asking God for strength to challenge media censorship."

Thomson Foundation is committed to working in Latin America to improve digital journalism and access to information.

The latest course was in Paraguay called 'Digital Convergence: Quality, Information and Immediacy'. Its aim was to increase the quality of coverage of current affairs in the country's

digital media and ensure a quick response to the audience's demand to know the news as it is happening.

Among the topics covered by the journalists were: the creation of accessible stories for the web; identification of different types of fake news; and understanding of verification tools. Strong emphasis was placed on building an audience and understanding how to generate income.

This commitment to Latin America will continue in 2019, initially in Bolivia and in Argentina. A general election will take place in Bolivia in October, and the foundation's course for journalists on verification techniques in digital media – funded by the British Embassy in La Paz – is aimed at helping the electorate receive balanced, accurate and informed coverage.

More than seven million people, which is almost two thirds of the population, now regularly use the internet in Bolivia according to recent figures, encouraging media organisations to focus on a digital strategy to reach their audience.

In Argentina, Thomson Foundation's "Ethics in Digital Media" course, which is funded by the European Union, will focus on quality of coverage, transparency, fact-checking, data journalism and investigative reporting.

“Deepening Digital emerged at the time when leading positions at many regional media in Belarus had been taken up by young managers. Their ultimate challenges are to transform the most old-fashioned Soviet-style media so they can meet interests of a largely rejuvenated readership.”

– Olga Tomashevskaya, Press Club Belarus

“This project has shown Belarusian regional media the path to building their own strategies. Journalists have learned the best practices of producing good quality mobile videos. We're sure the series of trainings will make Belarusian local media stronger, more sustainable and more competitive in the digital world.”

– Olga Tomashevskaya

Challenges for the media in Belarus are many – not least foreign interference. In order to help develop an independent, sustainable and modern regional media, Thomson Foundation has developed a scheme to help newspapers and websites improve their digital content and reach a younger audience.

In the state-owned newspapers there is often little integration between journalists on newspapers and those on their websites and social media.

Thomson Foundation's 'Deepening Digital' programme took a two-phase approach: providing in-house mentoring to help news organisations develop a strategy for integrated newsrooms, followed by training journalists to use smartphones to provide eye-catching and cost-effective content.

"Deepening Digital has shown the Belarusian regional media the path to building their own strategies, and the given tools and instruments to do so," says Olga Tomashevskaya from the Press Club of Belarus. "We're sure the series of trainings will make Belarusian local media stronger, more sustainable and competitive in the digital world."

The foundation ran in-house mentoring workshops for journalists, introducing them to key aspects of digital best practice across desktop, mobile and social media. The aims were to deepen the digital involvement of all staff and users, improve audience engagement and attract new audiences and revenue.

The second phase concentrated on mobile journalism, where reporters used their smartphones to film and edit videos for their websites. Thomson Foundation's head of training, Deborah Kelly, worked with camera operator Siarhei Isakov from the Press Club of Belarus to provide four-day workshops in video story construction and technical skills.

The workshops ended with a screening of the video news packages which the journalists researched, shot and edited on smartphones to ensure they had grasped the basics. Thirty-six videos were produced by journalists from the six news organisations participating in the programme, which was run in partnership with the Press Club of Belarus and funded by the British Embassy in Minsk.

Another 'Deepening Digital' project continued the productive work of the foundation with journalists in Kazakhstan. Funded by the British Embassy in Astana, the aim of the project was to enhance the role of independent media by delivering a

cost-effective media management model.

The courses – across six Kazakh cities – trained media executives in generation of revenue, media management, audience research methodology and the creation of a sustainable media business.

One-hundred and forty-nine media professionals were taught how to explore different means of funding to diversify and make a profit without relying on state support.

A business plan competition was held, with the winners receiving mentoring to ensure a successful implementation of their ideas. At the final event, a lively discussion took place, with the audience joining in, on 'Digital Dialogues – the Kazakh Media Future.'

The courses will now stay online on the Thomson Foundation e-learning platform, Journalism Now, allowing more media professionals to enrol and learn these valuable digital skills.

With wide access among journalists to the foundation's online courses, it's hoped Kazakhstan may rise from its position of 158 out of 180 countries in the 2018 World Press Freedom Index.

thomsonfoundation.org/e-learning

Hand in hand in Serbia

Thomson Foundation has long had a commitment to help strengthen quality journalism in the Western Balkans, and this will continue in 2019 with an expanded programme.

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erbia is seen as a strategically significant country, with more and more young people obtaining their news digitally. But a 2018 study of Serbia's digital economy – commissioned by the foundation – found a high level of mistrust in the media, along with widespread concern that freedom of expression was difficult when political interference and corruption were rife.

Thomson Foundation wants to support media plurality by helping to set up independent media houses. And it wants to ensure this goes hand in hand with plausible business strategies.

David Quin, its director of development, stresses the importance of a judicious use of funding. "We and our financial partners have to ensure the money is wisely used as our involvement in the Western Balkans is as much from a business development perspective as it is from an editorial one."

The new EU-funded programme in the region is seen as a step-change for the foundation, with its clear commitment to independent journalism which is self-sustaining financially and free from political interference. The long-term plan is to strengthen investigative journalism, develop further e-learning platforms and help cross-border co-operation with the aim of reaching larger audiences. "A business plan is essential to all of this," says David. "It goes along with the development of an independent media.

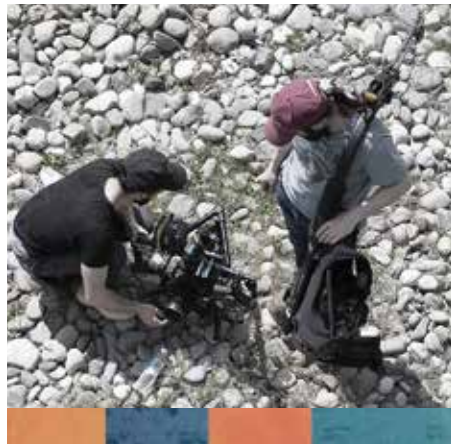
"Sustainability is crucial here. There is a strong link for us between editorial independence and business development."

ILLUSTRATION: ELEANOR SHAKESPEARE

"Sustainability is crucial here. There is a strong link for us between editorial independence and business development"

– David Quin





IMAGES: EUROPEAN UNION

Sustainability is a key aim of Thomson Media and is a critical part of its first-ever project with the film industry in Georgia.

Profitable growth in the media industry increasingly depends on having more than one revenue stream. Successful players have portfolios extending beyond traditional sources, and into growing markets. So it's no surprise that film studios are now developing streaming video services. Thomson Media's experts teamed up with the Georgian Film Cluster in January 2018, which consists of 34 film producers and other industry professionals.

An early success has been reaching agreement with the association Bridging the Dragon, which connects European and Chinese film professionals. It is hoped that international co-productions will follow.

In July 2018, a two-day workshop was held in Tbilisi for the working group on sustainability, about awareness of corporate social responsibility and accessing EU financing. The experts introduced the participants to a funding environment, showed them financing schemes and outlined future strategic approaches.

A three-year strategy for the cluster was developed and Thomson Media's contract has now been extended until May 2019. It's hoped that some of the strategic plans can become a reality for the Film Cluster, which is part of a wider programme, co-funded by the European Union and implemented by the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

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orking closely with the Georgian Film Cluster has meant understanding the unique challenges, legacies and opportunities of their industry while helping them get organised to attract wider international and domestic support. The programme is part of Thomson Media's wider strategy for development of the media industry.

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