



Google News Initiative

# Impact in the Middle East and Africa

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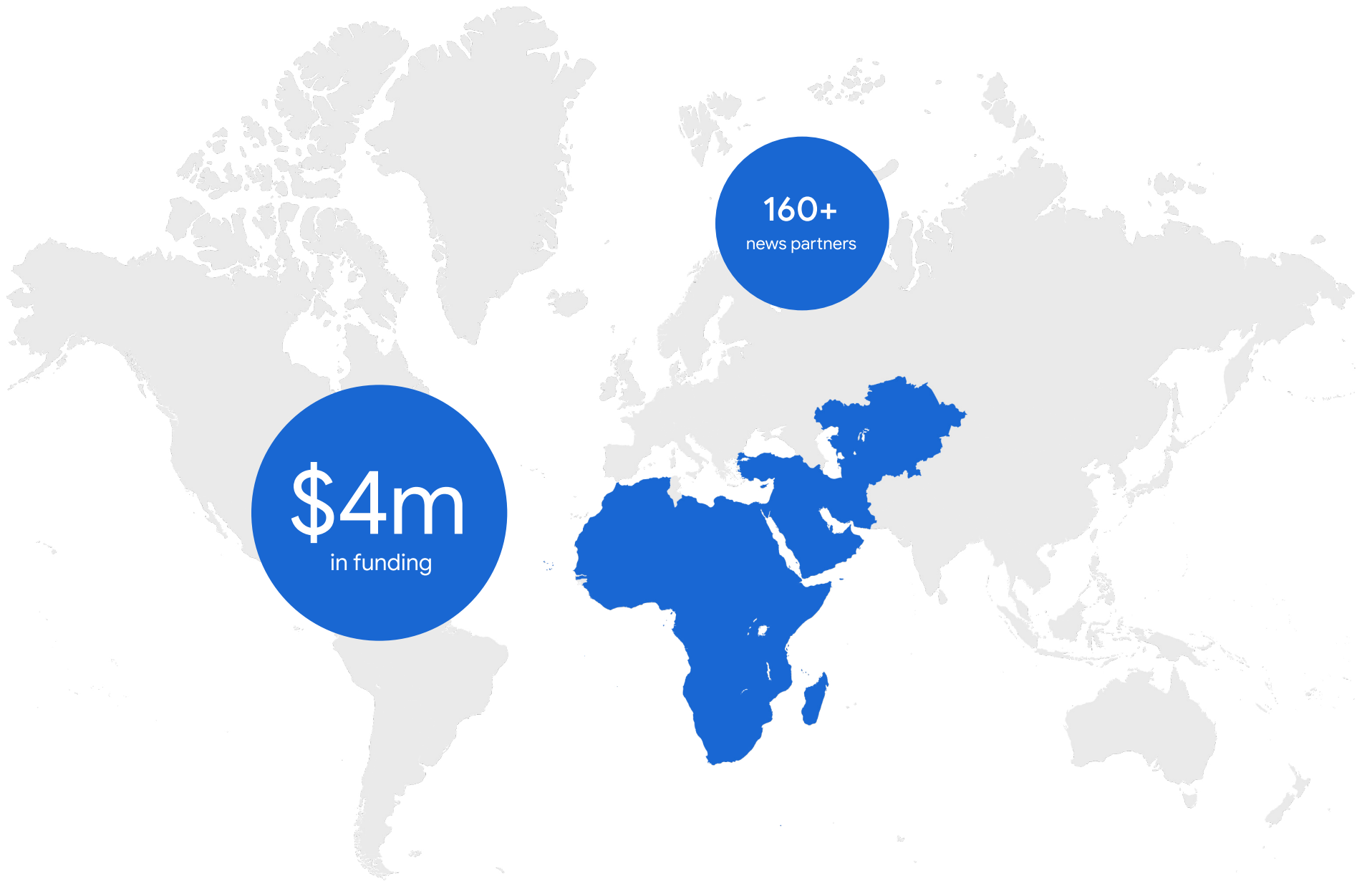
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# About this Report

This report is a summary of the activities conducted by the Google News Initiative in the Middle East and Africa between March 2018 and June 2020.

The financials in the Impact Report reflect total spending for GNI programs, as well as commitments to the Journalism Emergency Relief Fund and [Google.org](https://www.google.org)'s global media literacy programs, in USD from March 2018 to June 2020. Amounts in other currencies are converted to USD when the work is performed. This report excludes Marketing, PR, and Travel overhead as well as payroll, benefit, and compensation to Google full-time and temporary employees who are involved in programming. Spend is assigned by key focus area based on the primary objective of each project.

The tally of news partners supported reflects the number of news organizations, industry associations, academic institutions and nonprofits that have been funded by or participated in GNI programs from March 2018-June 2020, including the Journalism Emergency Relief Fund. The total does not combine news organizations and their parent companies in cases where each has participated in separate GNI programs, and does not include operational partners and vendors, or news organizations reached through trainings.



Since 2018, we've committed \$4 million to support 160+ news partners in 30 countries in Middle East and Africa

# Elevating Quality Journalism

Enabling diverse sources of impactful journalism is critical for our societies and core to Google's mission. To this end, we've delivered regional training programmes focused on digital skills for journalism, partnered with industry organisations to combat misinformation, contributed to regional media literacy programmes in Europe, and implemented programmes to support a more diverse and inclusive news ecosystem.



## Journalist Trainings

Through both in-person sessions and an online Training Center, we help journalists develop knowledge and skills in digital journalism across a range of topics — from harnessing large datasets to enhance storytelling, to verification of videos and images, to an introduction to machine learning.

Since launching a global journalist training program through the News Lab in 2015, we've trained over 20,450+ journalists in-person in the Middle East and Africa, and have enabled an additional 104,000+ online trainings through the [GNI Training Center](#).

**20,450+**  
journalists trained  
in-person since 2015

### Digital Training Tools

We partnered with the [International Center for Journalists \(ICFJ\)](#) to train 4,000 journalists across the Middle East and North Africa and strengthen their digital know-how. Trainings focused on digital tools to gather and source information, enhance trust and verification, and support data-driven journalism and immersive storytelling.

This far-reaching program has equipped journalists in the Middle East to bring more and better digital news to their audiences.

Joyce Barnathan  
President, ICFJ

**104,200+**  
online trainings

## Combating Misinformation

Tackling misinformation is a complex challenge that requires coordinated action with a broad range of experts and organisations. We've worked together with newsrooms, fact-checkers, civil society organisations, and academic researchers in support of initiatives that help curb disinformation and elevate quality journalism.

As part of a \$6.5 million commitment to help [combat COVID-19 misinformation](#), we onboarded [Africa Check](#) to [Question Hub](#), a tool that surfaces unanswered user questions to content creators. This allowed them to see questions that users had about COVID-19 and where there might be a gap in the availability of good information online. The organizations also trained 1,000 journalists in India and Nigeria on fact-checking health misinformation.



# Journalism Emergency Relief Fund

In early 2020, the news industry dealt with job cuts, furloughs and cutbacks as a result of the economic downturn prompted by COVID-19. The [Journalism Emergency Relief Fund](#) was created to sustain essential reporting around the world by delivering emergency funding to local newsrooms in this time of need.

## LIBERIA

[The New Dawn](#) purchased essential materials and fuel to run an electricity generator during production, ensuring the continued production of hard copy newspapers.

## KENYA

[BarakaFM](#) focused on on-air campaigns to encourage listeners to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Bought personal protective equipment to keep reporters safe when conducting interviews and gave emergency stipends to reporters who traveled to cover special reports.

## SOUTH AFRICA

[Daily Dispatch](#) enabled this local news provider to keep paying the salaries journalists to avoid layoffs. Being the only dedicated and comprehensive outlet in the area meant they could be a safe source of credible balanced news about COVID-19.

The Google News Initiative Journalism Emergency Relief Fund came in at the right time. Our equipment was in dire need of repairs and generators completely down. And for this we remain grateful to the JERF fund, it really made an impact in our newspaper when we needed it most.

[Othello B. Garblah](#)  
Editor, The New Dawn

## ISRAEL

[Haaretz](#) built a reader recommendation engine for the website. Each article viewed on the site is meshed with both articles recommended currently by the editorial staff and an NLP-based recommendation of a similar article. This program then filters out articles that this specific user has already read, and creates a personalized list of articles.

**\$1.2 million**

in funding offered to **115 newsrooms**  
across the Middle East and Africa



# Evolving Business Models

As the business of news continues to fundamentally evolve, we've designed programs and resources to address the business challenges at the core of that evolution. We've enabled publishers to grow advertising and reader revenue, increase readership and engagement, and find new models and technology to support local news.

Most recently, we worked with industry experts to combine many of these efforts under the [GNI Digital Growth Program](#) to help news organizations across the world grow their digital businesses.



## Nigeria: GNI Digital Growth Programme

Piloting the [GNI Digital Growth Programme](#) in Nigeria to support news publishers in growing their digital business. Offering free, interactive online workshops to news publishers of all sizes on topics including reader revenue, audience development, advertising revenue, data management and business strategy. Launched in Nov 2020.



Launched in

November  
2020

# Empowering Newsrooms Through Innovation

As we work with publishers to navigate challenges for elevating quality journalism and evolving business models, it's clear that innovative thinking and approaches will be vital in developing and scaling solutions for the digital future. We've enabled news organizations around the world to demonstrate and test new ideas by investing in efforts to accelerate innovation in the news ecosystem, and partnering with news organizations to expand their journalism to new formats.



## Middle East, Africa & Turkey Innovation Challenge

The GNI Innovation Challenge is an application-based program open to organizations of all sizes that produce original journalism. Each Challenge is designed around a theme that meets that region's unique requirements, enabling diverse approaches that publishers have emphasized are needed to address specific needs in each region.

Through the Middle East, Africa & Turkey Challenge, we received **over 500 applications**, and **funded 21 projects** in 13 countries, totaling **\$2 million**.

**\$2 million**  
in funding

**21**  
projects

ISRAEL

### Haaretz:

Built a reader recommendation engine for the website that recommends articles based on a combination of editorial judgment and machine learning technology. The program also filters out articles that the user has already read to create a personalized list of articles. Once implemented, Haaretz saw an increase in readers following the recommendations, generating more traffic.

COTE D'IVOIRE

### Association 3535:

Launched a micropayment system using WhatsApp accounts for a WhatsApp-based news delivery platform for multiple partner publishers. It allows users to access a daily selection of the most interesting news and the front pages of the main news outlets, integrating mobile money payment via dedicated short codes.



## Middle East, Africa & Turkey Innovation Challenge

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### SOUTH AFRICA

#### Food for Mzansi:

Took gamification to citizen reporting in some of the most remote parts of South Africa by developing an engagement and incentives plan used to empower a cohort of agricultural workers to tell the stories of their communities on a national news platform. A simple games format enables the 'games master' engagement officer to motivate participants and internalise the information needed to be shared.

- Drove online recruitment across all 9 South African provinces.
- Turnout was so great that they increased the project and accepted 61 candidates rather than the planned 50.

- Received several industry awards for innovation: Three categories of the WAN-IFRA 2020 African Digital Media Awards and was previously named Africa's best digital start up in 2019.



# YouTube Innovation Funding

The YouTube Innovation Fund supported 5 publishers in Africa on projects to strengthen their online video capabilities, try out new formats for video journalism, and experiment with new business models.

NIGERIA

## Channels

Built a dedicated digital video studio, hired new staff, purchased cutting-edge equipment, and overhauled its internal operations and workflows. Then it started creating digital-first news videos.

- Reached one million YouTube channel subscribers

NIGERIA

## The Guardian Nigeria

Built up their digital video operations, including hiring a new digital video team, creating a dedicated studio, and experimenting with digital-first formats.

- 4x increase in YouTube channel subscribers

Our improved capacities helped extend our reach to an underserved demographic and push us forward in our fight for high-quality news to combat misinformation online.

Channels TV



**1 million**  
YouTube channel  
subscribers

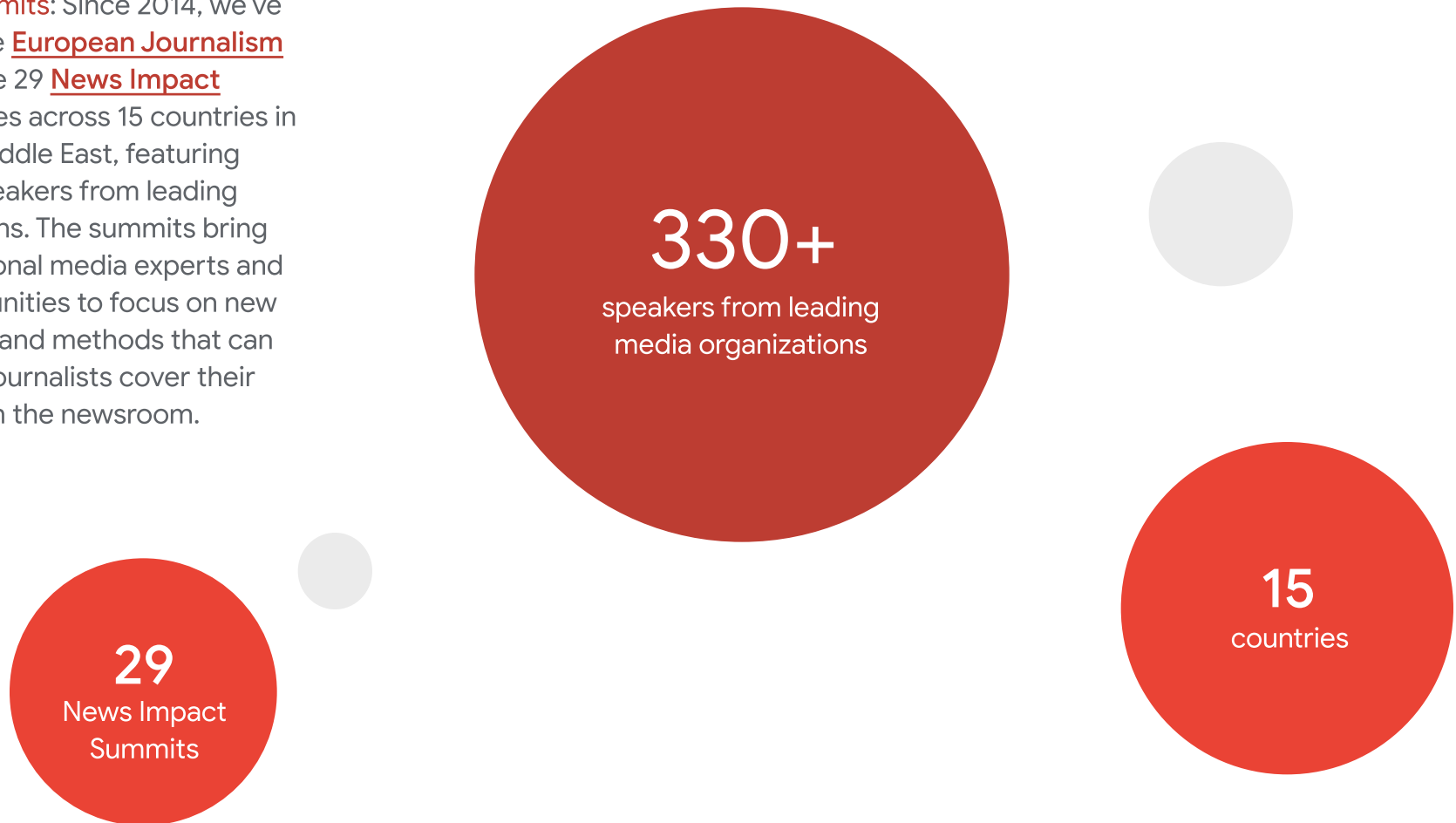
# Engaging the News Community in the Middle East and Africa



## Engaging the News Community in the Middle East and Africa

All of our work can only be accomplished through broad collaboration, through building connections among publishers, journalists, academics, and associations through events, working groups, research, and program support.

**News Impact Summits:** Since 2014, we've partnered with the [European Journalism Centre](#) to organize 29 [News Impact Summits](#) in 23 cities across 15 countries in Europe and the Middle East, featuring more than 330 speakers from leading media organizations. The summits bring together international media experts and local news communities to focus on new technology, tools, and methods that can improve the way journalists cover their stories and work in the newsroom.





# What's next?

As we continue to learn, we're consolidating insights from the work we've done, and finding ways to scale those learnings to publishers globally through efforts like the [Digital Growth Program](#).

The news industry is still in the midst of a difficult transition. But this period of evolution presents opportunities to rethink the role news plays in people's lives and how it should evolve to meet our changing information needs.

We'll continue to collaborate with organizations around the world working to create a healthy, diverse and sustainable news ecosystem, and we're excited to share more in the coming year.

[View Global Report](#)

