

2020 Annual Report

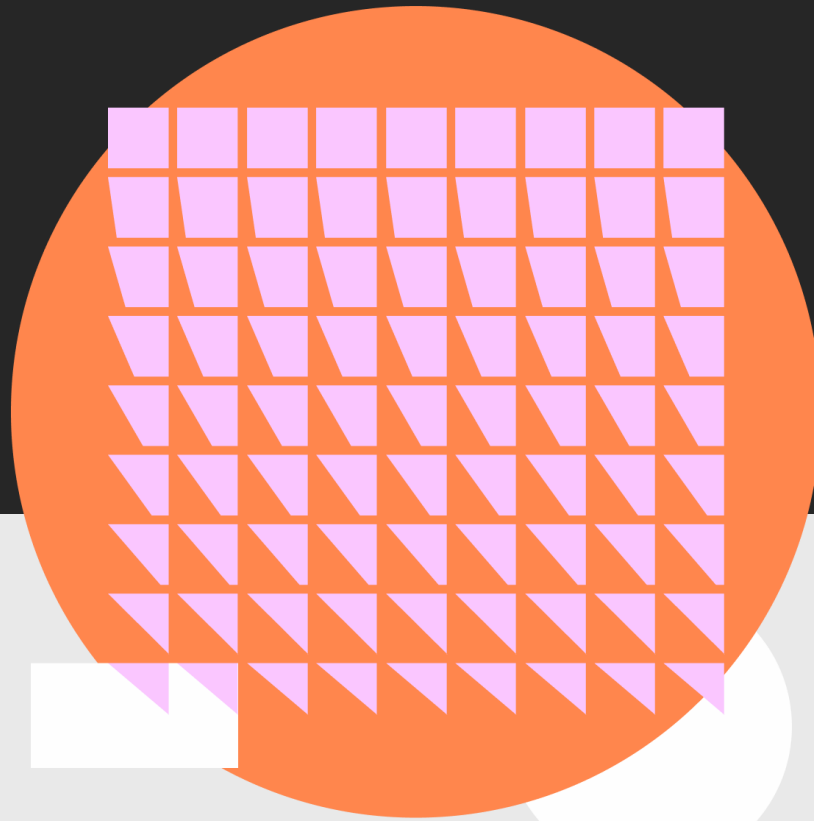
Meedan is a global technology not-for-profit that develops open-source tools for creating and sharing context on digital media through annotation, verification, archival, and translation. We co-create programmatic initiatives with technologists, newsrooms, fact-checkers, public health professionals, NGOs and academic institutions on award-winning projects from election monitoring to pandemic response to human rights documentation.

[CEO's Note](#)[In Numbers](#)[What are people saying](#)[Financials](#)

This Annual Report reflects the state of Meedan.org and its financial health. Meedan.org is a US registered, San Francisco based, 501(c) 3 non-profit organization established in 2006 that works on projects to support global journalism and cross-cultural education.



1. CEO's Note



In April 2018 Nat Gyenes bought a plane ticket to San Francisco. She wanted to come to the Meedan office to pitch a new vision for digital health literacy that she

thought might resonate with our team. Nat had come to know our work through her fellow Berkman Fellow An Xiao Mina. We did not dream how surreal it might sound to simply get on a plane, go to an office, fill up a whiteboard in a room with other people, and ideate the future of the internet as a public health resource. Nor did we ever dream that just three years later everything that we took as hypothetical would play out into the world.

You see, what Nat came to SF to discuss was the creation of a Digital Health Lab at Meedan working on the issue of health misinformation fueling an epidemic, an idea that she and An would express in an August 2018 Atlantic piece entitled *How Misinfodemics Spread Disease*. We loved the idea so much that we submitted a grant to the RWJF Pioneer team to create a framework around the idea.

To an organization that identifies itself as a context company, any combination of words I might choose to come behind the phrase ‘2020 was’ is an exercise in self-defeating futility. We can say, though, without qualification that the year of the COVID-19 global pandemic and social reckoning with systemic racism and misinformation as a political ideology was horrible and difficult and heartbreaking.

‘2020 was’ also the context into which we were six months into delivering on a grant to RWJF. So, within a month of the announcement of the global pandemic, we transitioned from theory to practice, bringing in support from existing donors we assembled a remarkable woman-led and -staffed team to serve as a COVID-19 context and information response team for our global fact-checking and independent media partners.

Everything has changed in this last year. We have been sad, separated, and sick. But as a team, Meedan has also been given the opportunity to do work that helps people during a time of crisis. And, maybe this is the essential form of public healing — the instinct to try to help.

This has played out through all of our efforts. As the global impact of COVID-19 became more clear, the Check Global team made an extraordinary effort to route more than \$45,000 of funds to microgrants for journalists and independent media organizations on five continents and support the COVID-19 Misinfodemic Report, which commissioned insights from top researchers and partners. We also developed the Beirut Response Fund to support independent media workers in Lebanon in the wake of the August 4 port explosion.

In 2020, our third-party fact-checking program with WhatsApp was just getting started when we pivoted operations almost entirely to focus on supporting our partners’ response to COVID-19 misinformation on private messaging platforms. We learned quickly that misinformation crosses borders and languages, and we grew Check, our collaborative verification and fact-checking tool, to support 5,700 fact-checks across 5 languages in our first implementation stage. This laid the groundwork for our efforts to build share fact-check databases and cross-lingual claim detection to help fact-checkers work both efficiently and effectively, regardless of the language they work in.

It is my job, generally, to end these annual letters on a hopeful note. But, this year, I write this as our teams in India and Brazil are suffering the very darkest days of their pandemic. So, I will only say that we must do better. Our people and our planet and our internets need to heal.

Yours,
Ed

Woodacre, CA April 22, 2021

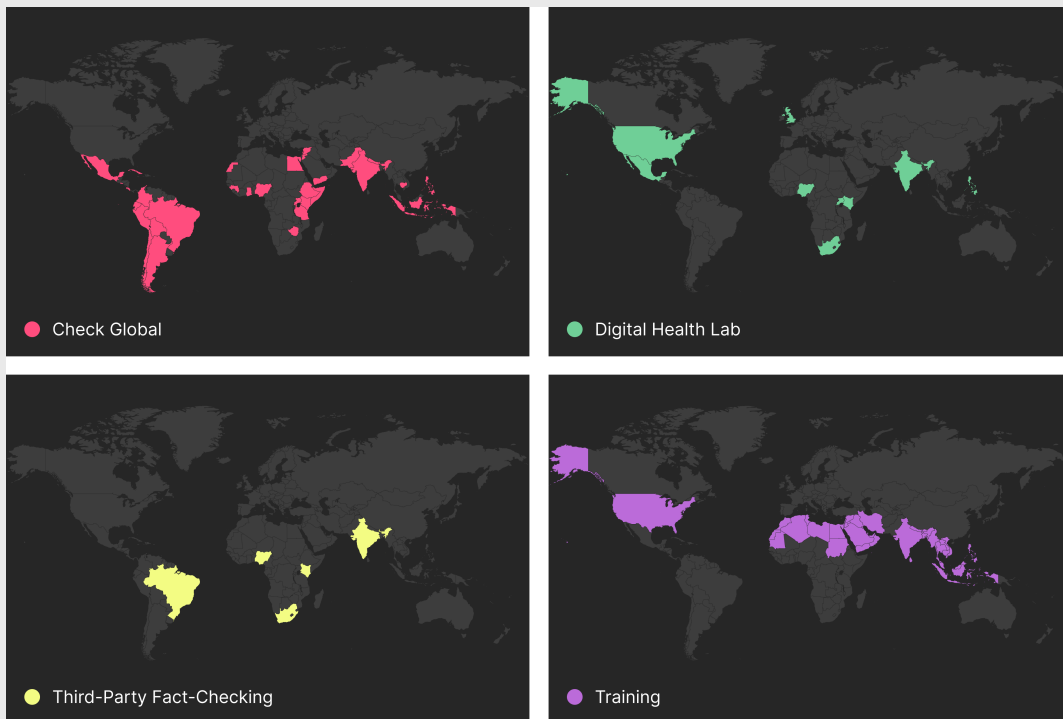


The enabling factor is something that all of us have to deal with as fact-checkers, and that factor is technology. We need to fight technology with technology. That's the reason we're here with Meedan.



Maria Ressa

Founder and CEO, Rappler; Board Member, Meedan



Program Regions

Program Names

- [Check Global](#)
- [Digital Health Lab](#)
- [Content Moderation Project](#)

Mission Statement

Meedan is a technology not-for-profit that builds tools and develops programs to strengthen global journalism, digital literacy, and accessibility of information.



Meedan Zoom call

Event Highlights

March 02

Digital Humanities and NLP Workshop

April 03

Tech and Check 2020

May 05

Check Global Network Launch

June 18

Maria Ressa & Seema Yasmin: Reporting Barriers During COVID

June 24

Countering the COVID-19 Misinfodemic with Text Similarity and Social Data Science

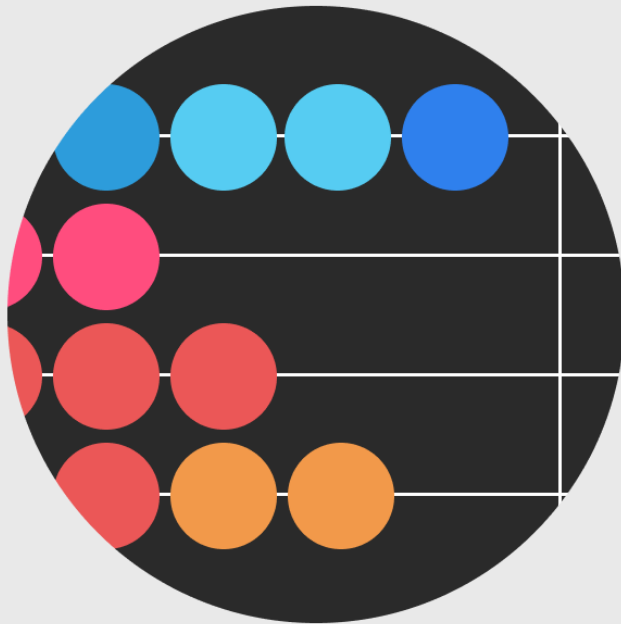
July 29

National Academy of Sciences Presents:
Addressing Health Misinformation Through Health Literacy Practices

September
18

SwitchPoint 2020: The Global Fund Virtual
Switchpoint Exchange

2.
In Numbers



Here are some important numbers that show how our year went:

Check Global

New languages **6**

Bengali, Filipino, Hindi, Malayalam, Swahili and Telugu

Check reports **290,319**

Total number of countries where Check is used so far on projects **24**

At least 24; 9 countries used Check during elections and democratic transition

Open-source MOOCs created **3**

People trained by Check Global partners **3,545**

Number of organisations supported through NAWA Investigative Fund **10**

Total funding of \$49,650

Number of grassroots projects awarded **24**

Through the Check Global Covid-19 Fund in NAWA, Latin America, East and Western Africa and the APAC region



The Check Global project has opened opportunities for VERA Files not only in refining our fact-checking process but also in involving more people in forwarding and making the discipline of verification relevant.



Merinette A. Retona
Researcher, VERA Files

Digital Health Lab

DHL Instagram Live Series

13

NPS

71

(NPS of <https://learnaboutcovid19.org/> - now health-desk.org)

Number of responses published

210

Number of responses shared by partners

25

Can someone be infected with COVID-19 more than once?

How does COVID-19 differ from malaria?

Does wearing a mask reduce your oxygen level?

Does wearing gloves protect against or stop the spread of COVID-19?

How long is a person infected with COVID-19 contagious?



The database is super helpful; we use it constantly because our local experts might not know everything

about COVID-19, and the database answers those questions.



Sean Ndlovu

Innovation and Research Manager at CITE

WhatsApp Third-Party Fact-Checking Program

Conversations*

221,932

*A conversation is defined as a unique interaction between an end user and a tipline bot. A conversation leads to one of three possible outcomes: A bot resource is consumed by the user after exploring the bot menus, the user submitted a fact-check query or the user remains inactive.

Claims matched

10,154

Unique end users

132,567

(This doesn't mean they all got what they wanted, just that they interacted with the bot - also many users had more than one conversation)

Uniques claims

30,904

(Not in trash, not duplicate or similar)

Reports sent to users

13,019

(One user can receive more than one)

Bot resources sent

14,602

(One user can receive more than one)

Reports published

10,305

Number of partners in 2020
(Tiplines)

12

(2824 Trainees on open source investigation and misinformation monitoring)



We've been running a tipline for two years, and this is the tool we have been waiting for. One that can make the newsroom process of finding misinformation more efficient and automate the responses.



Jency Jacobs

Newsroom Editor
BOOM

Research

Papers Published

8

Papers under Review

5



In just the last two months we have already found that Check has really been a force multiplier in being able to track down fake posts.



Ritu Kapur

Founder and CEO
The Quint

Training

People Trained

2,824

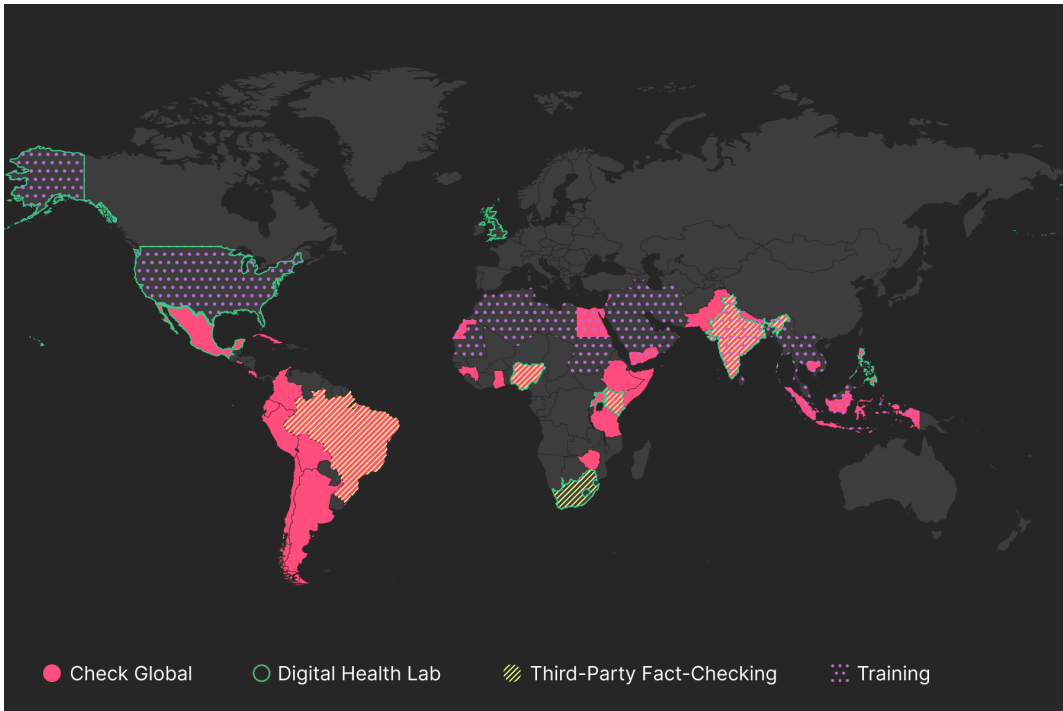
Engineering

Commits pushed to 35 different
code bases

3,449

Lines of code written

1,001,946



Geographic Areas Served in 2020

3.
What are people
saying



We are humbled by these quotes from our partners using Meedan's tools in 2020.



We used to get inundated by the thousands of messages that people would send us on WhatsApp. Check has not only made it possible for us to sift through the fact-check requests quickly, it also helped deliver most of our readers with fast and personalized responses. This helps us build a direct bond of trust with our audience.



Balkrishna

India Today

Press

Stories covering Meedan's work in 2020.

Coronavirus misinformation surges, fueled by clout chasers

"Nat Gyenes, who leads the Digital Health Lab at the technology nonprofit Meedan...said public health officials and organizations will have to compete harder if they're to outpace misinformation. 'If authorities like the World Health Organization or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention aren't the Instagram, Twitter or TikTok accounts that people source for information about the coronavirus outbreak, the entities they encounter may do more harm than good,' Gyenes said."



How a 5G coronavirus conspiracy spread across Europe

"It conveniently touches on a deep state, UN-level paranoia because [the rollout of 5G] requires global collaboration," said Ed Bice, chief executive of non-profit Meedan, which builds digital media verification software.



Media literacy and fact-checking in encrypted apps



"How does (South Africa-based fact checking organization) Africa Check know what is trending on WhatsApp since its system doesn't allow fact-checkers (or anyone else) to see the content and, therefore, to rank what is more viral? They have been using Check, a system developed by Meedan that allows fact-checkers to organize the number of queries they receive from their audience, which also helps them distribute their fact-checks back to people who had similar questions."

Megan Marrelli, program manager of Meedan, on fact-checking health information during COVID-19

In this week's podcast, we talk to in-house journalist and editorial lead of the lab, Megan Marrelli about the process of fact-checking science that is not fully understood. She tells us about what we can report on safely and what kind of information we have to watch out for as there is simply not enough knowledge in the scientific community.



Developing a digital literacy and verification network in the Global South

Research from Dr Dima Saber and Dr Jerome Turner has informed projects which have equipped over 7,000 activists, journalism students, archivists and human rights advocates with the digital literacy skills to counter misinformation online, and document human rights abuses in the North Africa Western Asia (NAWA) region, in Latin America, East Africa, and the Philippines.



Credder Podcast #8: Ed Bice, Founder and CEO of Meedan

THE CREDDER PODCAST

EPISODE #8: ED BICE



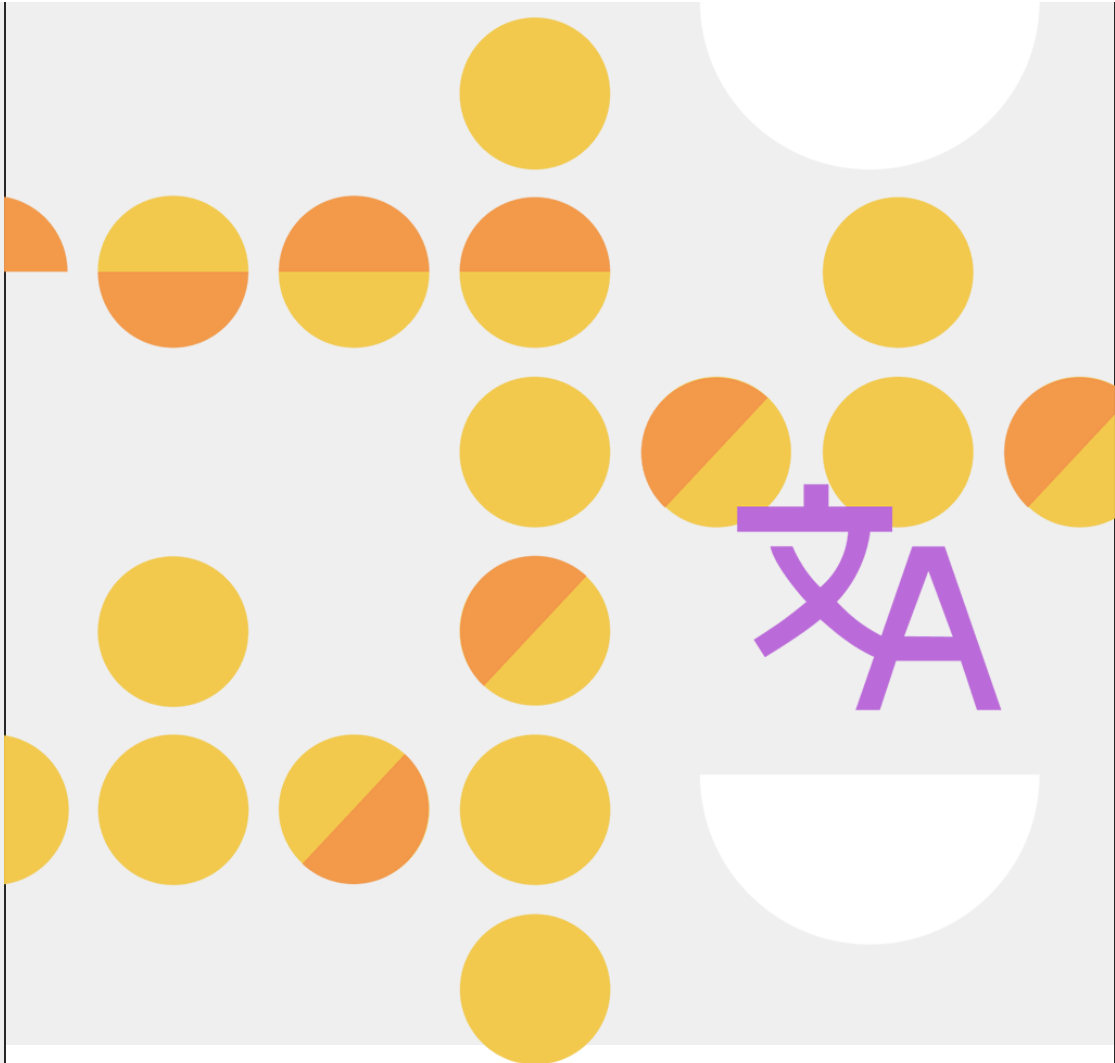


Human or Machine? Social science or computer science? Yes, we need them all.

Since 2019, Meedan has worked with fact-checking organizations and WhatsApp to pioneer a new “tipline approach” to fact-checking on encrypted platforms. Meedan’s open-source software allows WhatsApp users to forward a suspicious message to a misinformation tipline operated by a fact-checking organization. If there is an existing fact-check, this is returned to the user immediately. If there is not, it is entered into a collaborative workflow system for human-led analysis.

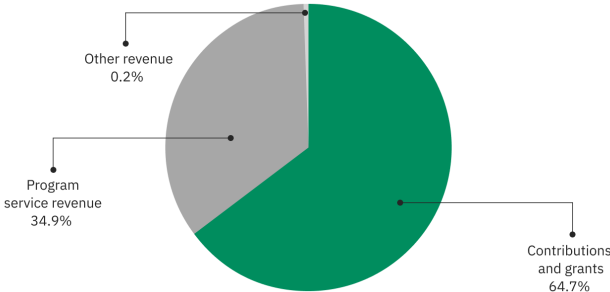
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4. Financials



We're pleased to share our financial report for 2020. These numbers come from audited financial statements, which are available upon request.

Revenues



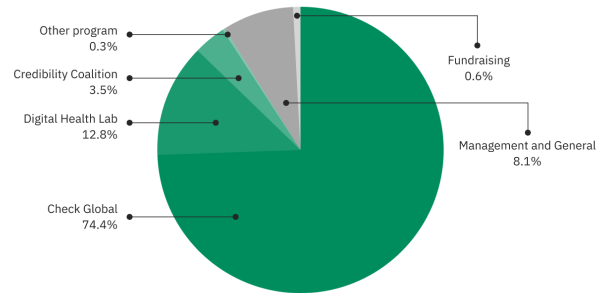
Contributions and Grants **\$2,374,837**

Program service revenue **\$1,279,662**

Other revenue **\$10,927**

Total revenue **\$3,665,426**

Expenditures



Program services **\$3,275,958**

Check Global **\$2,673,634**

Digital Health Lab **\$462,251**

Credibility Coalition **\$127,583**

Other program **\$12,490**

Management and General **\$291,338**

Fundraising **\$23,075**

Total expenditures

\$3,590,371

Board of Directors

Ed Bice (Board Chair)

Jon Corshen

Hanan Heikal

Tim Hwang

Zeynep Tufekci

Maria Ressa

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