

2019 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 and its financial health. Meedan 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



Hi Meedan Friend,

It's comforting to return. Probably has something to do with the fact that we are on a planet that spins on its

axis once a day. During times of chaos, confusion and uncertainty being asked to return to a regular task can feel like a lifeline. Writing this note to you from day 22 of our shelter-in-place here at the home office in Woodacre, CA, I am grateful not only for the honor of looking back across an amazing year for this organization but also for the momentary normality from my annual return to the task of remarking on the past year at Meedan.

How our past shaped our future

As a context company, I will make an effort to also situate this note in the data that describes the current global pandemic. This annual CEO letter is being written on a day when the World Health Organization notes [1,279,722 confirmed global cases of COVID-19](#). The year began with concern for Wuhan and China, but by the start of March there was more attention on other East Asian countries. By the end of March, of course, more focus on Iran, Europe, and the US. We are currently bracing ourselves for the focus to unfortunately move to countries in the greater Global South, including the North Africa Western Asia region, Africa, Latin America and Asia Pacific, where social distancing is much harder, and where COVID-19 is likely to have unprecedented devastating effects.

Today as I write this note, we have made public [an ambitious COVID-19 response database](#) and toolkit effort with the support of Sida, Google, Facebook, Omidyar, and a cast of global public health experts. I am reminded of a similar point in the early weeks of 2011 when our team efforts were in the course of a few short days converted to working with a community of hundreds of translators to share personal narratives from inside the Egyptian revolution.

Just as our work to establish and staff a team of journalists and engineers in Cairo from 2007 placed us in a unique position to do important work during the Arab Spring, our work on Covid-19 response began in 2018 when we established Meedan's Digital Health Lab as a research and practice hub for developing a standard of care for responding to misinfodemics. Which is perhaps a thread I can follow here to get back to the task of reporting on Meedan's remarkable year in 2019.

We have always viewed our work as fundamentally global, from our beginnings in 2006 building a social network for translating and annotating global media to our work since 2011 on media verification and fact-checking workflow, we have always emphasized the need to work across boundaries and between communities. In 2019 we formalized this community aspect of our work, launching the Check Global Network with LatAm, APAC, NAWA (North Africa West Asia), and East African partners. A few of the highlights from this network:

We supported the inspiring women's media collective Chicas Poderosas to lead two collaborative [media design and training workshops, or "mediathons"](#) in Colombia and Mexico, each of these brought together more than 100 women journalists for fact-checking and verification trainings and media innovation co-design. Mediathons are two-day events where journalists, communicators, designers, and other women who work in media gather with the aim of creating collaborative, multimedia, journalistic projects to make visible under-represented issues.

[The NAWA Investigative Fund](#) is an initiative of Check Global to financially support new, quality investigative journalism from, for, and about the Arab region. The NAWA-IF supports a new generation of digital

investigative journalists in the North Africa and West Asia (NAWA) region by providing micro-grants for investigative work across all media.

During 2019, our partner Mnemonic has published four full-length open source investigations in Syria. The investigations included the bombing of civilian infrastructure such as medical facilities, as well as the use of chemical weapons against civilians in Syria and the export of these chemicals from the EU to Syria after sanctions.

Our work with Hacks/Hackers on the Credibility Coalition continued in 2019, with the release of the [CredCat](#) as a compendium of misinformation response efforts around the world.

Our election monitoring work continued with important efforts in APAC. We ran a Pop-Up Newsroom (our partnership with Fathm) with WhatsApp and the civic media studio Proto. The Checkpoint project team monitored and responded to visual misinformation circulating on WhatsApp through the run up to the Indian national election in July. In parallel we ran election monitoring projects in Indonesia, Cekfakta, with partner Tempo.co, and in the Philippines, Tsek.ph, with partner Vera Files.

Checkpoint was also the first release of our open source solution for monitoring and responding to misinformation on WhatsApp. This technology is a version of Check that is integrated with WhatsApp (and a dozen other closed messaging apps) and optimized for efficiently sorting thousands of incoming messages and generating visual cards for viral response. We've been extremely fortunate to have WhatsApp as a partner in this work to design and develop tools to address the most daunting aspect of the global misinformation challenge - misinformation response in E2E encrypted messaging networks.

Looking back, it is clear that our accomplishments in 2019 have positioned us well to contribute to the unfolding crisis of Covid-19. From this vantage point it is pretty clear that now, more than ever, the world needs Meedan to succeed in its mission to improve the equity, diversity, and inclusion in our digital ecologies as a means to create and extend a healthier world. As a small but mighty organization we will continue to build global infrastructure in code, data, partners, and research to address the grand challenges that feel so close and pressing.

Please be safe and stay healthy.

Yours,

Ed

Woodacre, CA



Meedan's Director of Programs Tom Trewinnard speaks at RightsCon 2019

Tunis, Tunisia

Program Names

- [Check Global](#)
- [Digital Health Lab](#)
- [Credibility Coalition](#)
- [Pop-up Newsroom](#)
- [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's Team Retreat

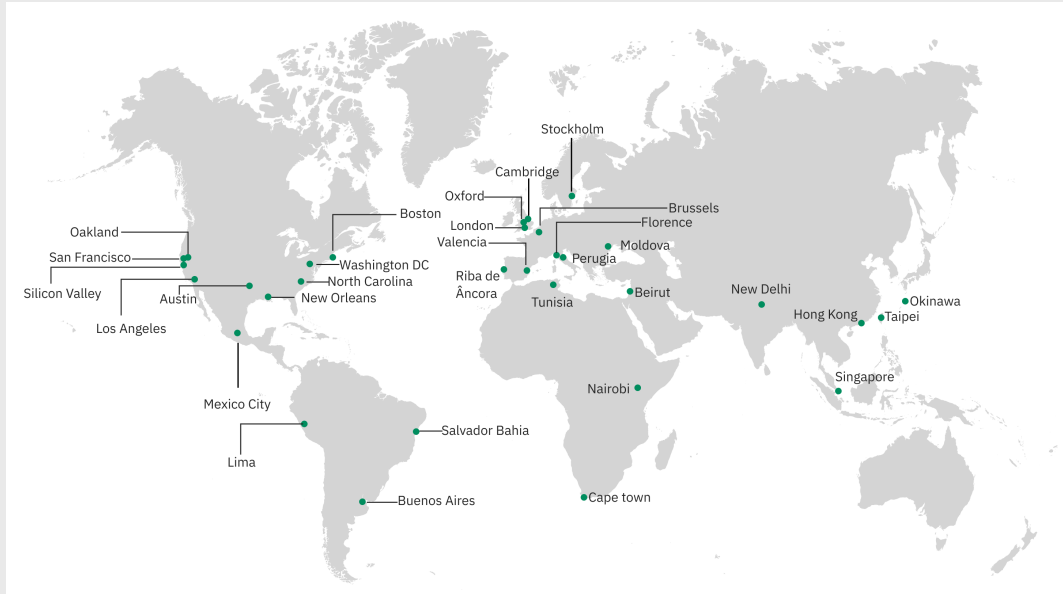
Portugal - October 2019

Geographic Areas Served

- India
- South Africa
- East Africa
- Nigeria
- Kenya
- United States
- Tunisia
- Mexico

- Latin America
- Zimbabwe
- NAWA region
- Western Sahara
- Philippines
- Lebanon
- Syria
- Yemen
- Egypt

Timeline



Meedan greatly values engaging with the broader professional community of journalists, fact-checkers, human-rights workers and technologists. This map captures some of the locations our staff visited and presented at in 2019.

01

Tom Trewinnard, with ICFJ, gave a training on misinformation collaboration in Moldova

Pop-Up Newsroom - Chisinau, Moldova

03

Dwight Knell presented on CredCo with Connie Moon Sehat and Sewell Chan

SXSW: Nutrition Labels for News - Austin, Texas

Caio Almeida presented on free software using Check

Computing Week - Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, Brazil

Daniela Feitosa presented on history of the web and web development with Ruby on Rails

Computing Week - Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, Brazil

Nat Gyenes presented on credibility coalition and participated in a panel with other organizations working in the credibility sector

Google News Initiative Summit - Google HQ, Silicon Valley, California

Caio Almeida presented Check and Check message (Whatsapp Integration)

Tech & Check - Duke University, Durham, NC, USA

04

Wafaa Heikal showcased Montage tool, gave a session about elections in Zimbabwe with CITE and participated in the localization lab summit

Internet Freedom Festival - Valencia, Spain

Meedan's crew (Nat Gyenes, Dwight Knell, Wafaa Heikal, Uva Vaca, Ed Bice, Tom Trewinnard) hosted a health misinformation workshop, presented on a health misinformation panel related to the Path project, moderated a panel on journalism and chat applications

International Journalism Festival - Perugia, Italy

Ed Bice and Tom Trewinnard collaborated to design a large scale collaboration for the US 2020 elections

Pop-Up Newsroom: US2020 - Washington DC

Nat Gyenes presented on Path, discussed the challenges of health misinformation and technological collaborations to address them

SwitchPoint - Saxapahaw, North Carolina

05

Caio Almeida presented on Rails and GraphQL, which are technologies heavily used on Check

Mexico on Rails - Mexico City, Mexico

Meedan's crew (Ed Bice, Tom Trewinnard, Dima Saber and Wafaa Heikal) participated in misinformation panel

Stockholm Internet Forum - Stockholm, Sweden

Ed Bice met with Checkpoint project team

New Delhi, India

Katherine Lo moderated a Speech Police session at the launch of David Kaye's new book

Rights Night 1st Amendment: David Kaye Book Launch - Los Angeles Central Library

Daniela Feitosa participated in a panel about inclusion of women in computer courses

Ethics and Computing - Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, Brazil

Caio Almeida participated in a panel about free software

Ethics and Computing - Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, Brazil

06

Meedan presented in 11 sessions during Rightscon and led a live translation lab for all the event tweets

Rights Con - Tunisia

Meedan co-sponsored Rails Girls event. Daniela Feitosa, Caio Almeida and Alexandre Amorim organized the development workshop for girls and presented Meedan's Check and Bridge during the event

Rails Girls Salvador - Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, Brazil

Wafaa Heikal represented Meedan at meetings with our fact-checking partners in Africa and Asia

Global Fact 6 - Cape Town, South Africa

08

Katherine Lo moderated a workshop on abusive language online presenting machine learning solutions for moderation

09

Meedan's Brazil crew (Caio Almeida, Daniela Feitosa, Alexandre Amorim and Isabella Barroso) ran a workshop and demoed Check at the Media Fair, and Meedan co-led the Hackathon with 200 participants

Media Party and Media Party Hackathon - Buenos Aires

Katherine Lo, Nat Gyenes and Wafaa Heikal gave training workshops over a two week period

Kenya Census Workshops - Nairobi

Tom Trewinnard and Megan Marrelli represented Meedan at the largest gathering of journalists in the world

Online News Association annual meeting - New Orleans

Scott Hale represented Meedan at the academic workshop on data trusts and challenges to implementation

Data Trusts Workshop - Cambridge, UK

10

Meedan's Team Retreat

Riba de Âncora, Portugal

Scott Hale spoke about mis/disinformation and moderation topics

Turth and Trust Online - London, UK

Katherine Lo and Scott Hale represented Meedan at the Misinfo Con

Misinfocon London - London, UK

Scott Hale gave a talk on "Learning from social data to study human behaviour" to University of Oxford researchers

International Multimodal Communication Centre - Oxford, UK

Katherine Lo gave a presentation and participated in roundtable at the "Content Moderation, Automation, and Platform Accountability" session hosted by Witness Scott Hale participated in Misinfocon London

Mozilla Festival - London, UK

Ed Bice and Pierre Conti gave a talk on Check, Verificado, and collaborative journalism initiatives

20 Norwegian journalists & editors with Berkeley J-School - San Francisco, CA

11

Scott Hale gave a talk on "Learning from social data to study human behaviour" academics from across the natural sciences

Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology - Onna, Japan

Scott Hale attended academic conference on empirical methods in natural language processing (EMNLP) to present academic research on automatic detection of semantic change

Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP) - Hong Kong

Caio Almeida participated in a round table with EU delegation to discuss the role of Fake News in elections and talked about Check

MediaThon - Lima, Peru

Wafaa Heikal presented on sessions about fact-checking, debunking social media during civil unrest, and memes and propaganda. She also led a session about localization and misinformation in Arabic

Bread & Net - Beirut, Lebanon

Wafaa Heikal presented claims and memes database project during the event

Open Tech Fund Summit - Taipei, Taiwan

Megan Marrelli gave a talk on our new tool that maps anti-misinformation efforts globally

12

Scott Hale and Shalini Joshi presented on Check Message to main stage and shared Meedan Research Team work

Google News Initiative APAC Summit - Singapore

Ed Bice presented on Meedan's work to a gathering of Carleton College Alums in the E Bay

The History of Meedan - Oakland

2.
In Numbers



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

Check

Check combines smart checklists, workflow integrations, and intuitive design to make digital newsgathering an efficient and collaborative process. Invite your team and online community in a secure environment to work together to validate breaking news content. Then, quickly show the work to your audience on social media or your news site.

List of top things added to Check in 2019

- Enhanced functionality of open source verification toolkit Check
- Check integrated with other tools including scrapers, archiving tools, mapping platforms, and visual analysis toolkits
- Check localized into Filipino and 5 other languages
- Improved open-access tools and technical infrastructure for independent actors in the Global South to curate, check, verify and debunk claims, links and media shared online, and to produce alternative content that helps countering mis-information

NPS

68

Software applications get a decent average NPS of 30

Number of countries using Check

49

Workspaces Created

258

New users that are still active

1,762

New Items Created

99,090

Items with Final Status

2,356

Claims and Memes Database

We created a unique international dataset of claims and memes drawing from our diverse international partners. We collected the dataset from Egypt, Mexico, the Philippines, Kenya, India, Indonesia, Lebanon and Tunisia in more than 13 worldwide languages including Sawhili, Tagalog, Indian, French, Arabic, Bengali, Marathi, Urdu.

Total Claims

84,470

Total Claims that reached a Final Status

1,497

Number of Countries collaborated

8

Media and Communications

Newsletter Subscribers

600+

Issues of the Checklist

35+

Views on our Medium stories

2,300+

New followers on Twitter

350+

Twitter Impressions

2.75M+

Press Mentions

20+

3.
What are people
saying



We are humbled by these quotes from our partners using Meedan's tools in 2019.



It has been really great using and learning about Check, it is an awesome tool for fact checkers and researchers and individuals working in other fields.

Achol Deng Bark
Kenya Check Team



Check was the platform we used to collaborate on election day. We had our own CMS and our own platform, but it was lacking in terms of managing live fact checking. I think that was solved by Check. Without that I cannot imagine how we could have worked.

Dhyatmika
Check Indonesian Partner

Press

Stories covering Meedan's work in 2019.

Check uses automation to improve fact-checking during elections

"In general principles, memes contain a simple message overlaid with some visual image that might be miscontextualised or the text of the meme might contain misinformation - and that's a common occurrence," Trewinnard said. "A lot of



what we see are recycled video and images from past events and other countries that are used to claim to show something else, and even politicians do this."

The myth of social media anti-conservative bias refuses to die

Meedan, a San Francisco-based startup, launched a new tool for correcting online disinformation on Thursday called Check. The tool is designed to allow users of private messaging networks to submit posts or images they find on those networks for verification by teams of journalists and trusted fact-checkers. The software was piloted during the lead-up to elections in India earlier this year.

Columbia Journalism Review.

Anti-vaxxers are spreading conspiracy theories on Facebook, and the company is struggling to stop them

A recent study from the Credibility Coalition and Health Feedback, a group of scientists who evaluate the accuracy of health media coverage, found the majority of the most-clicked health stories on Facebook in 2018 were fake or contained a significant amount of misleading information. The study looked at the top 100 health stories with the most engagements on social media, and it had a network of experts assess their credibility. The study found less than half were "highly credible." Vaccinations ranked among the three most popular story topics.

The Washington Post

١٠ دروس من تونس: ممّا تعلّمنا في رايتس كون ٢٠١٩

في الجلسة ذاتها، قُدمت وفاء هيكّل، مديرة البرنامج في منظمة ميدان، أداة من تطوير المؤسسة ذاتها، وهي أداة للتعاون في تقييم مصداقية Check أي محتوى إخباري بهدف الحد من الانتشار السريع للشائعات والمعلومات الخاطئة. وذكرت بأنّ الأداة تعمل على التحقق من الصور والميمات أيضاً، (Reverse Image Search) حيث تمكّن المستخدمين من القيام ببحث عكسي للصور وهي عملية رفع صورة معينة للبحث في مواقع، (أو صور شبيهة بها) سابقاً وفي مجال وتواريخ، وسياقات نشرها (أو صور شبيهة بها) سابقاً. وفي مجال الاستقصاء في مصداقية المحتوى البصري، نُوهت هيكّل بأهمية النظر في السياق الكلي حول صورة ما، وعدم الاكتفاء بتخصّص محتوى الصورة ذاتها. فيمكن النظر مثلاً إلى: موقع نشرها، النسبة إلى المصور (٥)، الشرح أو التعليق أدنى الصورة، وكذلك التمعّن فيما إذا كان هناك أي تعديلات



Meedan launches tools to enable journalists to check for fake news in messaging apps

"Global digital journalism needs better tools for real-time news," said Ed Bice, Meedan CEO & co-founder. "In our increasingly interconnected world, the most pressing real-time news is captured and shared by citizens, journalists, government officials and anyone with a social media account. Increasingly, this content is being distributed on messaging channels. Verifying and responding to this content requires new forms of journalism, supporting technologies, and focused collaboration at national levels."

MobileMarketing

My Favorite Tools: Malachy Browne

"Montage is an advanced YouTube search. It allows you to search by date, and also by place if you want — though not a lot of YouTube content is geotagged. But, a little bit like SAM Desk, it also allows you to collect videos into projects and to comment and put tags on them, and at at specific moments in the videos as well. It allows you to organize YouTube content and zoom in on the details as a team. And that's quite useful, especially if you're doing historical investigations; so much content from the Arab Spring, for instance, is uploaded onto YouTube."

Global Investigative Journalism Network

Social media hosted a lot of fake health news this year. Here's what went most viral.

"The most common concerns among health professionals are compliance with health treatments or prevention efforts, said Nat Gyenes, who leads the Digital Health Lab at the technology nonprofit Meedan and researches technology and health at Harvard University's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society. "It can lead to vaccination levels below herd immunity, harmful impacts on minors whose parents are responsible for their health care and well-being, engaging in alternative or homeopathic treatments as a primary approach and only complying with necessary medical treatments at a time where effectiveness is decreased," Gyenes said."

NBC NEWS

Did Facebook's Design Help Make It Toxic?

Then, Katherine Lo joins the hosts to discuss how Facebook's redesign will change how we communicate on the platform. She leads the content moderation team at a nonprofit called Meedan, which works with journalists on disinformation. While we talk a lot about how large social networks are governed—and misgoverned—it's less frequent that we talk about how these platforms are designed, and how that can lead to toxic behavior.

SLATE

Newsrooms, universities team up to fact-check 2019 elections

The Tsek.ph collaborative fact-checking project was launched at the University of the Philippines (UP) on Monday, February 11, the eve of the 2019 campaign period. The project aims to combat false news and other forms of disinformation in the lead-up to the May 2019 polls. Among those that will be fact-checked are statements and campaign promises of candidates, personalities, government agencies, and other entities, as well as election-related posts on social media, blogs, and other online platforms. Tsek.ph is supported by the Facebook Journalism Project and technology provider Meedan.



Off the Cuff: Fighting Misinfodemics

Writing in The Atlantic last August, Nat Gyenes and An Xiao Mina described how online misinformation can fuel epidemics such as Ebola virus disease and measles. They called such outbreaks "misinfodemics." As Gyenes explains for Harvard Public Health, the conventional public health responses will not be enough to stem these modern digital plagues.



Additional coverage

Checkpoint Tipline was launched to address the issue of fake news during Lok Sabha elections in India, April 2019. It allowed WhatsApp users to submit uncertain information or rumours they have received on Whatsapp. It supported Hindi, Marathi, Telugu and Malyalam in addition to English. It helped fact-checking rumors in the form of pictures, video links and text messages.

Checkpoint project has been mentioned in [Forbes](#), [WSJ](#), [Globo](#), [Times of India](#), [Reuters](#), and [CNN Business](#).



The WhatsApp tip line called Checkpoint lets the service's 200 million users in India send messages, photos, links and videos in four Indian languages and English to be fact checked at a verification center that will declare them to be true, false, misleading or disputed. Checkpoint was unveiled the day after a long story in The New York Times described a flood of fake posts and hate speech in India that has already led to violence and risks disrupting elections.

Jill Goldsmith
Forbes



"The goal of this project is to study the misinformation phenomenon at scale," Proto's founders Ritvij Parrikh and Nasr ul Hadi said in a statement. "As more data flows in, we will be able to identify the most susceptible or affected issues, locations, languages, regions, and more." The new service, dubbed Checkpoint Tipline, can receive messages in the form of images and video as well as text in English and four regional languages, it added. Checkpoint is a research project commissioned by WhatsApp.

Sai Sachin Ravikumar
Reuters



WhatsApp said the tip line initiative would “help contribute to the safety of the elections ... and deter people from sharing rumors that have no basis in fact,” it added. “It would also create a database of rumors to study misinformation during elections” the company added.

Rishi Iyengar
CNN

4. Financials

