

 DT Institute

Annual Report



2023



Table of Contents

Letter from the co-CEOs	02
About DT Institute	03
Technical Area Highlights	05
Part 1: Implementation	06
Part 2: Impact Grants	11
Part 3: Thought Leadership	15

A message from our Co-CEOs

Dear Friends,

We at DT Institute believe that all people have the right to live in peace, with dignity, individual rights, and equal access to trustworthy information and opportunity. These rights are foundational to resolving conflict peacefully, promoting social trust, encouraging cooperation between communities and nations, and supporting economic prosperity. They are also the underpinnings of strong and vibrant democracies.

Since our founding in 2019, DT Institute has been promoting peace, justice and democratic principles in communities facing conflict, instability, and democratic decline. We do this by investing in the ideas and capacity of emerging leaders, social change agents, and local partners all of whom are dedicated to creating positive change in the communities they serve.

During 2023 we continued to expand our network of local partners, while deepening our understanding of the place-based challenges they face, and investing in co-creating projects, experimenting with innovative solutions, and proving that novel ways of doing development can unlock new possibilities.

We expanded the diversity of our programs and funding from public and private donors. This diversity enables us to be agile, creative, and catalytic in the kinds of programs we deliver and the impact we have. We also built new coalitions with networks of partners who share our mission and can help amplify our impact. These partners included Humanity United, the Carter Center, and the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution, among others. The potential impact these collaborations will have in the months and years to come is much greater than the sum of our partners, and we are honored to be a member of these mighty coalitions.

Despite ongoing threats to freedom, human rights, peace, and democracy around the world, our global and local partners have remained steadfast in the communities they serve. In this report we are honored to share some important examples of the programs and impact DT Institute and its partners had in 2023.

Thank you for your support throughout the year. We hope you will stay the course with us as we continue to build peaceful, just and democratic societies for years to come.

Sincerely,



Violet Tsagka
Co-CEO



Kate Thompson
Co-CEO



About DT Institute

DT Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to “doing development differently.” We implement complex global development programs in conflict, fragile, and closed environments.

We fund grants and research initiatives through our private sector and philanthropic funds that drive innovation and improve lives through evidence-based programming.

Our mission is to partner with communities and leaders to help build and preserve more resilient, equitable, inclusive, and democratic societies.

Our values reflect our team’s hard-won knowledge, wisdom, and passion for helping those in need. They also reflect our professional and respectful approach to each other, our partners, our donors, and those we serve:

- **Ethics**
 - We aim to demonstrate responsibility, integrity, fairness, and respect in all that we do.
- **Innovation**
 - We continually pursue new and better methods, find efficiencies, and seek ways to increase our peace and development impact.
- **Collaboration**
 - We develop and facilitate long-term partnerships based on mutual trust and respect.
- **Radical Transparency**
 - As thought leaders, we commit to sharing our insights with the broader community of experts (within legal, ethical, and regulatory boundaries) to advance peace and development.



Global Impact

2019 In September 2019, the DT Institute was founded with a commitment to redefine global peace and development. This was the start of our mission to partner with communities and leaders and help them build and preserve more resilient, equitable, inclusive, and democratic societies.

2020 In March 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic resulted in lockdowns and restrictions around the world. Despite these challenges, the DT Institute's programs adapted, like the Information Access Fund that shifted to virtual formats, working with 12 partners across Central and Eastern Europe to continue to support media trainings for journalists in Moldova, develop social media content to counter COVID disinformation in Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, and support Belarusian independent media as increased government crackdowns, following the fraudulent August 2020 Presidential election halted their ability to operate.

2022 As countries slowly re-opened from pandemic restrictions, we were able to similarly expand our impact through new partnerships, adding 10 new programs, and awarding more than 20 impact grants.

2023 This year, we have continued working across increasingly challenging contexts to promote community resilience across media and technology, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and human rights. From enabling better service delivery for internally displaced citizens in Ukraine to connecting more than 5,500 people in Iraq to psychosocial support and reconciliation services, we remain committed to amplifying leadership and knowledge that builds more just societies for all.

2024 Looking toward the future, the DT Institute's new strategy (2024-2026) will enable us to accelerate new partnerships, optimize program implementation, and expand our impact while we continue building a strong organizational ethos. Building on existing relationships and new partnerships, we will continue to raise awareness of our values-based initiatives to promote inclusive, transparent, and accountable development programs.



Technical Area Highlights

2023 Highlights

At DT Institute, we are proud of our commitment to learning and doing global development differently. By working both as implementers and funders, we amplify leadership and knowledge to help our partners continue building resilience, equity, and inclusion in their communities.

Part I Implementation

Over the past year, DT Institute has maintained our focus on collaborating with global and local partners, from design through implementation, to strengthen communities, build resilience, and promote people-centered design.

We work in challenging contexts, from conflict zones to backsliding democracies, to ensure civil society, independent media, social movements, and institutions remain strong in the face of stressors and shocks.

Our essential work is implemented across three focus areas: media and technology, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and human rights. This section highlights some key results from our programs in 2023.



Creative Campaigns to Promote Human Rights: Pop Culture Challenge in Serbia

Civil society organizations play an important role in organizing citizens and mobilizing resources in democratic societies. In Serbia, civil society has often been undermined by negative media and political narratives that aim to weaken their influence and ability to promote equity and inclusion.

With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development, Partners Global, and Centar E8, the DT Institute helped launch the Pop Culture Challenge—a creative solution to help mobilize support for human rights and democratic values by building on Serbian traditions of storytelling.

The first Pop Culture Challenge, organized in Belgrade, brought together around 100 participants and established a community of creatives and civil society organizations committed to promoting human rights and democratic principles through pop culture for years to come.

Media and Technology

Open access to information and knowledge are essential for citizens to engage in democratic processes. Despite the transformational benefits that digital and social media have provided for historically marginalized groups, recent years have shown that bad actors seeking to share divisive messages and disinformation can warp perceptions even in strong democracies.

We equip partners and participants with the tools they need to protect themselves and to gain access to the information needed to act as responsible and engaged citizens.

For example, building on the past success of programs connecting users to virtual private networks (VPNs), we have continued to support the development and expansion of these tools into new regions to ensure more people can benefit from private and secure internet access.

Collectively, these tools now enable more than 2 million users to access digital content that is otherwise banned or censored. Using the latest advances in artificial intelligence, we are promoting novel censorship evasion strategies and helping develop new privacy protections, while innovative datacasting tools managed by DT Institute also combat the increasing use of internet shutdowns as a tactic of repression.



Belgrade, Serbia: Pop Culture Challenge with Center E8

Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

Violence and conflict can rise quickly and affect communities around the world. The DT Institute applies a long-term focus and trauma-informed approaches to strengthen social cohesion and build resilience in communities.

Iraq Program Highlight: Preventing Reprisals and Mitigating Violence

Since 2021, the DT Institute has applied the Preventing Reprisals and Mitigating Violence model (PRMV) model in Iraq to support reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts. We continued to expand on the program's past success in reducing stigma for ISIS-affiliated internally displaced people returning to their communities, using a combination of public interaction and digital engagement.

In 2023, PRMV continued to combat misinformation and build awareness of reconciliation through social and traditional media. PRMV's social media page, Maifarqoona, adopted a storytelling approach and expanded content diversity to include not only the perspectives of returnees, but also of ISIS victims. These methods helped Maifarqoona increase engagement 100%, reflecting greater public trust in the platform as a source of information.

Alongside these digital media initiatives, PRMV also arranged in-person events, including "Breaking Barriers through Art: A Message of Peace from Mosul" and a series of theatrical performances held in Baghdad, Baquba, Fallujah, and Mosul, that brought communities together by using the arts to further humanize reintegration and social cohesion issues.



Building Awareness and Knowledge of the Syrian Political Process

In 2023, the DT Institute closed the first phase of the Strengthening the Syrian Political Process (Taziz) project that has been implemented since 2020.

Despite facing frequent challenges—including the global COVID-19 pandemic and delays in the Geneva Peace Process—Taziz still successfully built relationships with partners and political process stakeholders. During the project's first phase, more than 5,100 people participated in political process engagement sessions in Syria and Turkey, while separate peacebuilding events engaged an additional 4,674 people.

Together, these activities helped raise awareness of the ongoing peace and political processes, with 89 percent of participants in technical sessions indicating they had a greater understanding of the constitutional reform process.

Human Rights

People living in fragile and conflict affected states are too often subject to restrictions and outright violations of their human rights. DT Institute works to build awareness of legal rights, support civil society, and strengthen institutions to better establish and protect human rights for all.

Yemen Human Rights Forensics Lab

Since the outbreak of conflict in Yemen in 2014, the country has been plagued by grave human rights violations that not only contravene international law, but also inflict immense suffering on Yemen's civilian population, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis.


Through the Yemen Human Rights Forensics Lab Program, the DT Institute supported efforts to document and address human rights violations in Yemen—like the Yemeni Archive, a comprehensive database storing digital records of human rights violations.

By the end of 2023, the Yemeni Archive identified and preserved over 2 million digital records, ensuring this essential evidence is retained and accessible for future legal and reconciliation processes.

We also partnered with local civil society organizations to produce a series of investigative and analytical summaries of human rights violations to further amplify advocacy efforts. The DT Institute's capacity-building initiatives supported more than 266 trainees with the necessary knowledge, skills, and networks to champion justice and accountability in Yemen. To help ensure a lasting impact, we helped build coalitions across all of Yemen, like the Justice4Yemen Pact which consists of 10 member Human Rights Organizations, to lay a solid foundation for future human rights advocacy in the country.

Children in Yemen are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of the conflict, representing almost half of the population. To address this issue, the DT Institute has supported the Supporting Awareness, Facilitating Enforcement of Children's Rights Program, working in partnership with local organizations to protect Yemeni children from grave human rights violations. This included efforts to document violations, raise awareness, and advocate for accountability for perpetrators.





“As a survivor of human rights violations myself, I deeply understand the significance of our human rights programming. Our focus on capacity building for local partners underscores our commitment to empowering communities to champion justice and accountability. Importantly, our trauma-informed approach ensures that survivor interactions are conducted with sensitivity and empathy. Inclusion of justice and accountability is paramount in any peacebuilding efforts, ensuring lasting reconciliation and sustainable solutions for affected communities.”

– Feras Hamdouni, Senior Program Manager

Human Rights

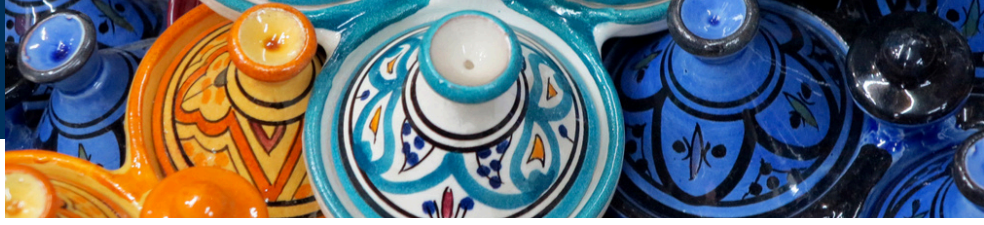
Supporting Transparency and Accountability in Sudan

Corruption not only steals scarce public resources from essential citizen services, but also undermines trust in institutions. After the eruption of civil war in April 2023, Sudan's already weak institutions experienced near total collapse, and all parties to the conflict have perpetrated a wide variety of human rights violations. Many of these violations are driven by both existing and new conflict-related manifestations of corruption.

Since April 2023, our research has continued to uncover evidence of corruption as a driver of conflict. Our periodic open-source investigative reports have identified emerging patterns of corruption, particularly in the local distribution of humanitarian aid in conflict zones and the delivery of public services to internally displaced populations in safer areas. Additionally, our comprehensive investigations have provided recommendations to enhance the involvement of local anti-corruption advocates, including media, civil society, and legal professionals, in documenting the impact of corrupt practices on ongoing human rights violations. This documentation aims to support regional and international advocacy efforts to hold those responsible for corruption accountable for human rights abuses. Moreover, the findings of our investigative reports continue to inform international policymakers about the increasing connection between grand corruption and the war economy, prompting advanced actions to enforce restrictive sanctions against leaders of warring factions.



Part II:
Impact
Grants



2023 Highlights

Alongside the DT Institute’s program implementation, we manage a high-impact philanthropic portfolio that awards grants to non-profit organizations, think tanks, civil society organizations, and individual researchers that are working to innovate and advance global development. This portfolio is supported by a number of private donors to include DT Global and the US GPD Charitable Trust.

We adopt a collaborative approach to maximize the results of the DT Institute’s impact grants, inviting other funders and philanthropic networks to co-invest and co-collaborate as we partner to drive innovation and impact.

Philanthropic Giving Summary

In 2023, the DT Institute provided impact grants across these four funds:



Peace & Stability Fund

Funds research and programs that identify, prevent, or counter drivers of radicalization, promote stability, and build lasting peace.



Leadership Accelerator Fund

Equips emerging and established leaders with the skills to build transformative social, economic, and political movements.



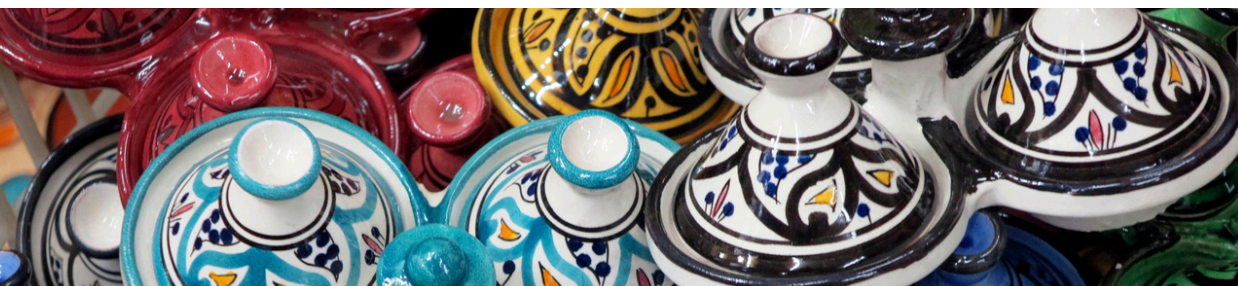
Prosperity for All Fund

Advances research and program activities that create economic opportunities for individuals and communities globally.



Free & Independent Media Fund

Funds research and program activities that improve the quality and availability of news and information to strengthen societies’ resilience against disinformation.



2023 Featured Grantees

Political and Governance Development Academy

Country: Iraq



From August to October 2023, the DT Institute funded the Political and Governance Development Academy in Iraq, enabling a series of training, workshops, and reports to help increase citizen participation.

Over the three months of implementation, the Academy organized 50 workshops across 15 governorates that brought together 2,000 direct participants from government, civil society, and the general public. The workshops also helped build new relationships between civil society and government institutions to actively promote accountability, creating a more proactive foundation for popular accountability in Iraq.



N'Zarama Center for Peacebuilding

Country: Côte d'Ivoire

Since 2021, the DT Institute has partnered with the N'Zarama Center for Peacebuilding in Côte d'Ivoire to promote efforts at countering violent extremism and instability. This partnership continued in 2023 with capacity-building workshops that were designed in consultation with the National Chamber of Kings and Traditional Chiefs of Cote d'Ivoire. The workshops used interactive simulations and intergenerational dialogue to raise awareness and skills at identifying risk factors for extremism within their communities. Alongside these skills, the program helped foster dialogue on challenging policy issues and strengthened overall social cohesion, which is often a target of extremist propaganda.



Supporting Sustainable, Independent Media in Syria

Country: Syria

With support from the DT Institute starting in 2022, Syria Direct has been working to build a more sustainable media landscape in Syria by producing high-quality local reporting. In 2023, Syria Direct published 127 reports that received more than 40,000 views on the organization's website and covered important subjects like inclusion, human rights, and local political processes.

Despite the tensions in Syria, the organization has been able to maintain timely reporting that ensures policymakers and decision-makers have the accurate and relevant information needed to make informed decisions.

Center for Policy & Legal Reform

Country: Ukraine



Thousands of Ukrainian citizens have been internally displaced since the Russian invasion began in 2022. The Center for Policy and Legal Reform worked to identify the key problems and challenges resulting from the conflict to make administrative services more accessible for citizens, especially internally displaced people.

In the context of the ongoing conflict, state policies posed a barrier to service delivery and strained communication between local government authorities and higher levels of government. To overcome these challenges, the Center for Policy and Legal Reform acted as an intermediary, linking these levels of government to escalate practical solutions and recommendations for policy reform.



Part III:
Thought
Leadership

2023 Highlights

Capturing and sharing knowledge is at the core of the DT Institute's ambition to relentlessly create, iterate, and measure evidence-based programs that build more resilient, equitable, inclusive, and democratic societies.

This ambition drives us to fill gaps in research, build teams who can tackle complex problems, and partner with top academics and universities.

In this section, we showcase four examples from 2023 that highlight our work on new tools and methodologies that can help do global development differently.



Countering Information Warfare on Wikipedia

Fund: Free & Independent Media Fund

Rising use of social media platforms by bad actors pose a significant risk to the health of democracy. While much focus has been placed on the most popular platforms, less research has been focused on the manipulation of content on Wikipedia for disinformation.

From January to October 2023, researchers at the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media (CASM) and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue analyzed Wikipedia content related to Ukraine and the Russo-Ukrainian War, about 50 pages in total, using a technique called semantic clustering. The selected pages had been edited by 1,988 accounts that made more than 13,000 revisions to content.

The analysis identified 176 clusters representing highly similar edits that had been made across one or more pages, and the methodology indicates it could be an effective way to identify and group together user accounts with suspicious behavior that could be indicative of disinformation campaigns.



2023 Highlights

From Evidence-Based Research to Networked Impact in Global Security

Fund: Peace & Stability Fund

Since 2022, the DT Institute has partnered with the Global Security Programme at the University of Oxford to support new research on effective policies and programs to address violence and insecurity. Alongside this research, our partnership has built a community of practice to create opportunities for this knowledge to be applied and tested. The program co-hosted a series of 8 virtual discussions that brought together 27 global experts from academia, civil society, and government to exchange knowledge and discuss opportunities.

Dr. Timor Sharan, a Visiting Fellow from Afghanistan who participated, described the program as: “a transformative experience for me. Beyond the academic knowledge and research skills I acquired, the personal connections and relationships formed through the in-person meetings and exchanges were invaluable.”

Our aim is that by linking theory and practice more closely together, we can help build more effective policies and programs for contexts dealing with conflict and insecurity.

Mobilizing Action for Digital Rights in Serbia

Fund: Free & Independent Media Fund

In 2023, the DT Institute funded an impact grant for the **Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)** to support the organization’s research and reporting on the use of artificial intelligence and digital surveillance tools by state actors.

As a result of BIRN’s investigations, they successfully traced more than \$13.6 million of public money invested across 61 procurements for surveillance technology. Using the relationships they had built with local media partners, BIRN was able to build awareness by earning placement for eight stories published in Serbian media outlets.

Scenario Based Exercises and Planning: Wargaming for Peace

Since our founding in 2019, we have been committed to constantly learning and adapting how we work to do development differently and deepen our impact. This year, we launched the Strategic Foresight Center to help us better serve our partners as they focus their agendas and strive for systemic reform.

Wargaming and matrix exercises have traditionally been used in military and business settings to simulate decision-making and strategic thinking in uncertain contexts, but these games can provide similar benefits for civil society and advocacy organizations.

DT Institute's adaptation of these approaches helps organizations integrate stakeholder feedback directly into planning and embeds learning through iterative feedback loops. This enhances the capacity of civil society to simulate complex scenarios and assess the outcomes of different strategies in a controlled environment. Each round of simulation creates opportunities for participants to reflect on their decisions, enabling them to adjust strategies in real-time.

In Focus: Global Democracy Coalition" or "Partnership Spotlight

In 2023, DT Institute's Strategic Foresight Center organized 9 scenario-based sessions in 7 countries focused on integrating youth into civil society, election integrity, internet shutdowns, and how civil society responds to authoritarian disinformation. One of these games was held at the 2023 Global Democracy Coalition Forum which held a split format event in Brussels and Washington, DC, and had attendees representing civil society, independent media, European Union and US governments, and academia. This brought stakeholders together to set short and long term goals for collaboration and partnership moving forward.



DT Institute

1500 Wilson Blvd Suite 1600

Arlington, VA 22209

info@DT-Institute.org | +1 (202) 800-4335

www.DT-Institute.org