



# DT INSTITUTE ANNUAL REPORT

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# 2020





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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

We founded DT Institute in October 2019 for the sole purpose of doing development differently.

As a non-profit funder and implementer, we are uniquely positioned to meld research-based ideation with achievement-driven implementation. In doing so, we push the boundaries of what is possible in global development.

We seek to improve the well-being and lives of others around the world.

In the pages ahead, you will see how our capacity to relentlessly innovate, create, and measure impact guides us in developing cutting-edge tools and approaches, strengthening communities, and empowering a new generation of leaders. You will see evidence of DT Institute’s commitment to achieving its own programming goals and helping grantee partners achieve theirs. You will also hear from the people who do this vital work—our staff—in their own words. Their ingenuity and dedication to the DT Institute mission are what made our 2020 success possible, especially in a year that was difficult for so many around the world.

Here’s to a successful first year for DT Institute—and many more to come!

Sincerely,  
John P. DeBlasio



Chairman  
John DeBlasio

A handwritten signature of John DeBlasio in dark ink. The signature is fluid and cursive, matching the printed name above it.

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am deeply honored to have the opportunity to lead DT Institute as we deliver programs and partnerships that catalyze sustainable initiatives to transform lives and empower communities around the world. I cannot overstate my immense gratitude for those who make this important work possible. Thank you.

What we offer is new and disruptive, and our rapid growth in 2020 is a strong indicator that the global development community took notice of our differentiator: a foundational commitment to pushing the boundaries of the peace and development profession by blending research and practice.

In the pages that follow, you will read about how and why DT Institute is purposely designed to overcome the structural barriers faced by many of our contemporaries. You will learn about our 2020 philanthropic expansion, meet a sampling of our great partners, and explore several of our complex public sector-funded technical programs, which are implemented in some of the most difficult environments in the world.

In early 2020, when DT Institute was busy planning for the work that this annual report details, none of us imagined how the world would change in our first full year in operation. With the emergence and subsequent progression of COVID-19, many aspects of our day-to-day lives at work and home changed; and yet, our commitment

to “doing development differently” has remained unwavering.

Thanks to our dedicated international team, we worked to mitigate the threat of COVID-19 by immediately transitioning to virtual work, restricting travel, and complying with the local stay-at-home orders. We supported our staff—each of whom felt the weight of the pandemic in his or her own way—encouraging them to focus on what matters most: building a resilient and safe space for our teams, their loved ones, and our beneficiaries.

I am immensely proud of what we achieved in 2020. In 2021 and beyond, I will ensure the team at DT Institute continues to passionately build a uniquely mission-driven, agile, and innovative non-profit that both implements and funds impactful, state-of-the-art programs and organizations. We will grow strategically and do profound good in the world together.

Thank you to all of our colleagues, collaborators, and grantees who have made 2020 successful, despite incredibly difficult circumstances. I stand in awe of your professionalism and commitment. I could not be more grateful to work alongside each of you.

Onwards,  
Hugh Doyle, CEO

HUGH DOYLE

*Hugh Doyle*



# CATALYZING PEACE IN DEVELOPMENT

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DT Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is committed to “doing development differently.” We implement complex global development programs in conflict, fragile, and closed environments. We also fund thought leadership initiatives that drive innovation and improve lives through evidence-based programming.

## **Our Mission**

DT Institute partners with communities and leaders to help build and preserve more *resilient, equitable, inclusive, and democratic societies*.

## **Our Institutional Values**

While we are a new organization, our staff collectively have hundreds of years of experience in peace and development. Our values reflect our team’s hard-won knowledge and wisdom, as well as their passion for helping those in need. Our values also reflect our professional and respectful approach to each other, our partners, our donors, and those we serve.

**Ethics.** We 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.

DT Institute:  
International development  
**done differently**



# MAKING AN IMPACT

## Technical Areas



### **Stabilization, Transition & Peacebuilding (STP)**

We partner with current and future leaders to counter drivers of radicalization, implement coordinated stabilization, advance the rule of law, and build systemic peace.



### **Independent Media, Technology & Human Rights (MTH)**

We design creative solutions to develop and sustain media institutions, improve the quality and availability of news and information, and strengthen societies' resilience against disinformation.



### **Economic Growth & Environment (EGE)**

We transform communities, increase economic opportunities, and create healthy, livable environments through innovative and impactful programs.





## Technical Capabilities

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- Community Stabilization
- Civil Society Development & Capacity Building
- Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism
- Peace Process Support
- Rule of Law & Transitional Justice
- Human Rights Documentation
- Free & Independent Media
- Community Mediation & Reintegration
- Freedom of Expression
- Identifying & Countering the Influence of Adversarial Disinformation & Propaganda
- Internet Freedom & Cyber Security
- Economic Growth & Private Sector Engagement
- Environment & Water
- Transformational Leadership



# Technical Area Highlights

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Below is a sampling of our technical work done on 16 government-funded programs in 2020. Our primary partners were the U.S. Department of State (NEA, DRL, GEC) and the German Federal Foreign Office (FFO).

## **Peace Process Support.**

DT Institute's current programming includes peace process support in the Middle East and South Asia. We provide direct technical support and subject matter expertise, as well as support programming that encourages negotiation and collaboration in coordination with governmental, quasi-governmental, and multilateral entities. We also build the capacity of civil society organizations, with a focus on strengthening communications and outreach capabilities to facilitate broad-based engagement and raise awareness of key stakeholder issues and interests in peace negotiations. Throughout our work, we seek greater engagement of women, youth, and other marginalized groups in the peace process.

## **Human Rights Programs.**

DT Institute is active in programming that documents and analyzes evidence of human rights abuses in conflict-affected and other fragile settings. Members of our team bring more than a decade of experience designing relevant analytical frameworks, researching violations in a manner consistent with international human rights standards and evidentiary principles, and presenting findings nationally and internationally to advance justice and accountability. DT Institute successfully combines its specialized international legal expertise and proven track record engaging local civil society, activists, and communities to raise global awareness of the plight of victims and advocate for accountability for the perpetrators of violence.

## **Internet Freedom.**

DT Institute supports digital literacy, cybersecurity training, and the development of circumvention technology, which helps bypass internet censorship. Our information integrity work identifies, analyzes, and combats misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation, including by facilitating counternarrative responses when appropriate. DT Institute advances development objectives by deploying digital technologies and platforms that enable citizens to circumvent government internet filtering or internet shutdowns. DT Institute has developed specialized tools that provide alternatives to authoritarian state media and proxy outlets.

## **Community Mediation & Reintegration.**

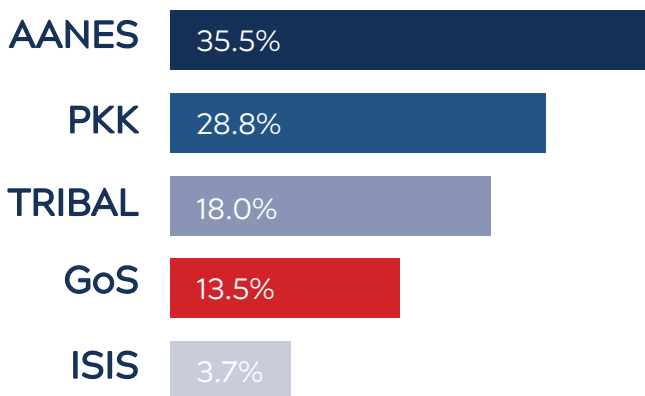
DT Institute equips Community Mediation Committees in multiple countries with the tools needed to administer effective, trauma-aware conflict mediation processes in order to break conflict cycles and build resilience to malign influences. Through these community-based mediation processes, DT Institute prevents intercommunal conflict and protects civic space, as well as provides interventions to reduce retributive attacks in neighborhoods where there is active reintegration of families of former combatants. To amplify impact, stories of successful local conflict resolution and reintegration efforts are broadcast through multimedia campaigns to undermine narratives that normalize violence as a means to justice.

# Program Examples

## Hybrid Political Orders: Can We Measure Influence vs. Control.

With support from the German Federal Foreign Office, DT Institute developed new approaches and tools to understand local dynamics and measure perceptions of local control in contested spaces. After an extensive literature review, DT Institute designed a prototype data collection and analysis instrument to rapidly identify and describe the relative influence of key groups and actors in local hybrid governance systems. DT Institute piloted the instrument in northeastern Syria to gain insight into the extent and nature of regime influence. Using learning from the pilot, DT Institute refined the instrument and now supports its use in other settings.

### Relative Influence in One Municipality



The instrument shows promise for adding both precision and accuracy to the understanding of local dynamics in conflict spaces. It can be particularly useful for peace and development donors and aid organizations seeking to understand risks and potential benefits and opportunities for peace-seeking collaboration.

## Countering Malign Information with Research, Training, and Technology.

DT Institute's Information Access Fund (IAF) supports civil society, media, and governments across Europe in researching and countering propaganda and disinformation. IAF provides its partners with strategic and political advice, research, technical and capacity development assistance, and learning opportunities. Through support for innovative initiatives, IAF promotes the use of cutting-edge artificial intelligence and information and communications technology tools to measure, increase awareness of, and counter disinformation. IAF grant activities include building the resilience of Ukrainian army officers against disinformation, countering disinformation aimed at undermining trust in democratic institutions and businesses in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland, debunking state-sponsored propaganda against the democratic movements in Eastern Europe, and evaluating the effectiveness of malign information operations in crucial U.S. ally countries such as Italy, Spain, Germany, the U.K., Japan, and Australia.



# A FORCE FOR GLOBAL CHANGE

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**\$23.52**

MILLION IN PUBLIC FUNDING

**37**

COUNTRIES AND COUNTING


**16**

PUBLICLY FUNDED PROGRAMS

**15**

MAJOR PHILANTHROPIC GRANTEES



-  = Where We Work
-  = DT Institute offices



# Research & Grants Division

In addition to implementing development programs globally, DT Institute funds innovative research and grants.

Described by our Chairman as a “think and do tank,” DT Institute integrates the challenging work of fostering peace and development with thought leadership for the international development community. We leverage our high-quality programming to generate peer-reviewed publications, convene relevant stakeholders and experts, and advance best practices in the field.

Our Impact Grants program pursues a philanthropic agenda that positions DT Institute as a leader in improving development outcomes. We award impact grants to non-profit and civil society organizations to build, test, and advance bold, innovative approaches to solving critical problems in peace and development. In support of our philanthropic goals, we build enduring relationships with funders and donor networks, inviting them to catalyze further impact by co-investing in grants.

## Peace & Development at our Core

We are first and foremost a peace and development organization. Everything we do— from funding and executing programs to generating knowledge and insights— is driven by our commitment to improving the human condition. Our peace work aims to reduce violence against civilians, identify and understand the drivers of conflict, and, ultimately, help end conflicts.

Through our development work, we provide services to those most in need, build local capabilities for sustainable self-reliance, and integrate economic growth initiatives into stabilization programming.

As both a funder and an implementer of peace and development projects, DT Institute focuses on co-creation and co-investment, as well as measurable impact and sustainability. We work with governments and our on-the-ground partners to address pressing issues— from conflict to economic crisis— and to establish a foundation for lasting stability, peace, and prosperity. We enter early and stay true to the communities and organizations we support.

It is in our DNA to be bold: we relentlessly innovate, create, and measure our ability to drive innovation, strengthen communities, develop the next generation of leaders, and positively impact the lives of those we serve.

**Our history starts now.**



The background of the slide is a photograph of a wall with several arched windows. Each window is filled with a colorful mosaic of flowers and leaves. The colors used include green, yellow, blue, and orange. The wall itself is made of light-colored stone or brick. A dark blue semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

## DT Institute has 15 philanthropic grants supported through the following five funds :

- Leadership Accelerator Fund
- Free and Independent Media Fund
- Peace and Stability Fund
- Clean World Fund
- Prosperity for All Fund

## DT Institute's 2020 Grantees

- The Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflict at the University of Chicago
- The Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University
- Center for the Study of Civil-Military Operations at West Point
- The Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver
- The Better Evidence Project at George Mason University
- Global Water Challenge, The Mapping Water Point Data in Ethiopia
- The Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East at the Atlantic Council
- Near East Training Program (“Syria Direct”)
- Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos
- Democracy Development Initiative
- Charles Sturt University
- Iraq Leadership Fellows Program
- Afghanistan Peace Process Support
- Foreign Policy Research Institute

# SYRIA DIRECT

## Free & Fair Journalism

Syria Direct is an independent media organization that promotes a democratic and just future for the Syrian people. DT Institute supports Syria Direct's high-quality reporting, investigative journalism, and podcasts, as well as its efforts to increase organizational sustainability through improved business development capacity, audience engagement, and growth.

**“The grant from DT Institute allowed us to put important structures and strategies in place that help ensure Syria Direct can continue its important work. We have been able to work with a business development professional to implement our consulting services, sponsorships, and start working on additional revenue-generating activities. For the first time, we have been able to focus on reader outreach and build a relationship with our readers that ensures we are engaged and continue to address issues of importance for our audience.”**

**— Lidjia Sabados, Executive Director of Syria Direct**

With DT Institute support, Syria Direct published more than 20 original reports in 2020. Topics included civil society, community facilitation, gender inclusivity, democracy and human rights, the reintegration of religious and ethnic minorities, the peace process, the role of the opposition, and the Constitutional Committee. In addition, the organization developed its first audience engagement strategy and hired an audience engagement expert to reach as many Syrians as possible.

In November 2020, Syria Direct was awarded second prize for its investigation and video on education in Idlib during COVID-19 by Free Press Unlimited's Syria Media/CSO Co-Production Fund. The investigation was led by Senior Arabic Editor Ammar Hamou and produced in collaboration with Violet Organization. This award helped raise the global profile of this important organization and its critical role in using journalism to secure democracy and justice for the Syrian people.



# IRAQ LEADERSHIP FELLOWS PROGRAM

## Developing Next Generation Leaders

Founded in 2017, the Iraq Leadership Fellows Program supports politically and socially engaged Iraqi youth who are keen to shape the future of their country for the better. With DT Institute support, these future leaders learn tested campaigning, organizing, and advocacy techniques that can further their work in politics, protest movements, and civil society.

Through workshops with world-class teachers, peer-to-peer engagement with other young leaders from across the Middle East, and intensive mentoring and support, the fellows develop, refine, and launch their own political or social campaigns. Participants also build relationships with other fellows, creating a network of diverse Iraqis committed to

working together to grow positive social and political movements. DT Institute has also supported selected program alumni to participate in international training and development programs, including the Perennial Program in Seattle, the Canvas Freedom Fellowship in Belgrade, and the Millennium Leadership Program in Washington, D.C.

Alumni of the Iraq Leadership Fellows Program are already demonstrating their ability to better their communities and country. They have spearheaded campaigns and initiatives to improve the lives of their fellow Iraqis including, most recently, local response mechanisms to support those suffering from the economic and social impacts of COVID-19.

*“I’m proud that DT Global has been able to support DT Institute over the past year, bringing together our experience and relationships with DT Institute’s passion and technical excellence. Through our Profit for Purpose model, DT Global has donated in excess of 30% of our profit over the past two years to DT Institute in order to support research and grantmaking activities, and ultimately, amplify impact around the world. We are all united behind one mission: to leverage our resources to achieve greater impact and improve as many lives as possible.”*

**- Torge Gerlach**  
**CEO, DT Global**

# NUESTROS PEQUEÑOS HERMANOS

## Adaptive Leadership Development



**Leadership development has long been an important facet of what we do with approximately 3,200 vulnerable young people who live in NPH homes and the over 1,500 people who we employ. The GPD Charitable Trust and now DT Institute has been partnering with us in this area since 2012.**

Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH) creates loving and safe family environments for vulnerable children in countries throughout Latin America. With DT Institute support, NPH is undertaking a comprehensive leadership development initiative to better serve its mission. In 2019, NPH began an effort to build institutional capacity and human capital throughout its community.

Through a leadership development assessment, NPH collected data on how staff understand and experience organizational leadership, including perceptions of collaboration among executive leadership, as well as staff roles and responsibilities. The findings highlighted gaps and challenges in functional capabilities and organizational cohesion.

With DT Institute support, NPH used the findings to develop a three-year (2020-2023) leadership development initiative. The initiative aims to foster a strong culture of adaptive leadership in which people across the organization are fully resourced and able to contribute to NPH's enduring success. It also seeks to strengthen the leadership and management practices of the executive team, while also establishing a robust pipeline of emerging leaders within the organization. Together, these efforts will enable NPH to align its practices with its core values while achieving its mission.



# MAPPING WATER POINT DATA IN ETHIOPIA

## **Navigating Clean Water**

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The Mapping Water Point Data in Ethiopia project is developing an unprecedented inventory of rural water services. With DT Institute support and partnerships with government and civil society, the project will compile the country's most comprehensive dataset ever. This information will support data-driven policymaking and facilitate in progress and tracking Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) at the sub-national level.

The Ethiopian rural water point inventory is designed to overcome the challenges that have stymied past data collection efforts, including difficult-to-update systems and low-quality data. The inventory will be hosted on an open-access digital platform that both government and non-governmental stakeholders can routinely update and access. It will also harmonize data from disparate organizations using the Water Point Data Exchange (WPDx) Data Standard and a cutting-edge, user-friendly ingestion engine that allows data to be shared regardless of format.

The Mapping Water Point Data in Ethiopia project will provide analytical support to the Ethiopian government to ensure the data translates into actionable policy. These efforts will contribute to better development outcomes in Ethiopia and serve as a model for other countries in the region.

# OUR TEAM, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

*“Having witnessed first-hand all the hardships of a long and difficult post-communist transition during my formative years, I always felt a dedication for helping those still living through similar challenges to achieve freedom and democracy. I am thrilled to be part of an equally dedicated team at DT Institute, where I am able to translate my passion and experience into cutting-edge solutions that empower fragile communities and societies around the world in their quest towards lasting rule of law, justice, and respect for human rights.”*

**- Olga Ruda, Senior Rule of Law Advisor**



*“DT Institute fosters growth and development not just through its programs but also through its people. I proudly belong to this family, where inclusiveness and professionalism surpass all and are reflected in our projects every step of the way.”*

**- Renee Skaf, Program Coordinator**



*“I’m extremely proud to have contributed to DT Institute’s mission by issuing its very first impact grant, providing support to IDPs in Raqqa, Syria and helping, in a small way, to relieve the pain of a heinous humanitarian crisis.”*

**- Sam Stevens, Director, Business Operations**



*“While many governments around the world attempt to block the free flow of information, I am proud that we have been able to provide a cutting-edge circumvention solution to tens of thousands of users in a closed society, which has enabled them to bypass government censorship, while making their online communications more secure.”*

**- Hamed Behravan, Vice President, Independent Media, Technology & Human Rights, Iran Programs**



*“I’m continually inspired by my colleagues’ commitment to the people and communities they serve. It is an honor to work alongside them to advance global peace and prosperity.”*

**- Erin Wagner, Grants and Partnerships Manager**



*“Success at the close of a fiscal year can be measured in any number of ways, but the thing that strikes me most when reflecting on DT Institute’s first year is that despite the enormous challenges of 2020, each and every one of my colleagues remained focused, driven, and committed to the work we do – to truly doing development differently and to having a meaningful impact on communities around the world.”*

**- Cassandra Schneider, Business Development Manager**

*“Colombia’s multiple peacebuilding challenges can only be addressed through an innovative approach. DT Institute, driven by co-creation and cooperation, has sowed seeds in 2020 which I eagerly anticipate will contribute to my country’s complex path towards peace.”*

**- Andres Martinez, Country Liaison - Colombia**



*“After over two decades supporting social inclusion, state accountability, and independent media globally, I’m excited to be part of DT Institute’s team undertaking a new bold approach to tackling peace and development issues. As we know, many of the peace and development challenges are complex and require long term action and multifaceted solutions. By combining research, philanthropy, and program implementation, DT Institute can co-create, co-implement, and invest in long-term partnerships, programming, and innovative solutions.”*

**- Kevin Rubio, Vice President, Independent Media, Technology & Human Rights**

*“I am most proud of how, in the face of the largest pandemic in generations, our team not only adapted to the various challenges, but increased the reach of our programming exponentially. By adapting our cultural activities to a digital format, we found an effective way to reach new communities and expand our artists’ messaging of free speech and human rights in Latin America and across the globe.”*

**- Alexis Rhyner, Program Coordinator**



*“The pandemic has touched each and every one of us in one way or another and, to an extent, cracked a window into the everyday lives of many disadvantaged communities around the world. Development is a moral duty, and empowering the voices of the vulnerable and supporting the growth, education, and welfare of communities to ensure their equal rights to basic needs, justice, and human rights is our obligation as citizens of the globe.”*

**- Salma Alwan, Senior Program Manager**

*“My passion for working in the non-profit sector and making a positive difference in the communities around me is my constant energizer in life. I am grateful that I have found my niche within the non-profit sector, and I have a lot of nonprofit professionals to thank for me getting to the place I am today at the young age I am. Having a passionate team working towards your organization’s mission is an empowering place to be in and will produce the type of success that positively impacts communities at large.”*

**- Sohaib Fahad, Director, Finance and Compliance**



*“As we consider the impact of DT Institute’s first year in operation, we must also reflect on our accomplishments and look ahead to many more years of service as our development efforts continue to take shape and truly make a difference to the people who need it most. We all realize how fortunate we are to work with such amazing, creative, passionate, and professional staff - to whom making a difference in some of the world’s most compelling venues is of the utmost priority. I remain humbled by the fortitude and resilience of our field-based staff and community-based partner organizations who remain dedicated to serve the communities in which they reside.”*

**- Heidi Silvey, Managing Director/Project Director, DT Institute EU - Berlin**



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