
**THE REFUGEE
JOURNALISM PROJECT**

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

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OUR PURPOSE

The Refugee Journalism Project works towards social change by creating opportunities that support the authenticity and agency of a group whose experiences and perspectives are rarely represented in the mainstream media. Since 2016, we have supported displaced and exiled journalists and storytellers to reconnect with their careers. We focus on helping them to become better connected within the UK industry, updating their journalistic skills and finding publishing opportunities, freelance work and jobs.

The project delivers activities that:

1. Prepare participants for work in the UK media industry.
2. Create opportunities for participants to publish their work and build wider networks.
3. Provide opportunities for participants to collaborate and innovate with other journalists, artists, technologists or other creative practitioners.
4. Connect participants with practising journalists and platforms where they can participate in national discussions relating to asylum-seeking, representation, human rights and international policy.
5. Engage with new audiences, key policy and opinion-makers in order to debunk negative institutional and public perceptions of refugees.



THE TEAM

Our work is delivered by a small, part-time team which is based at London College of Communication. The delivery of the project is supported through partnerships with media organisations and civic society. Its project management and longer-term strategic decisions are overseen by a steering committee which meets on a bi-monthly basis.

Project Delivery Team:

- Vivienne Francis, Project Director
- Beatrice-Lily Lorigan, Project Assistant

This year's Steering Committee:

- Daniel Trilling, London-based journalist
- Maysa Ismael, Director of Gender Action for Peace and Security
- Imogen Pursch, Assistant Director of Delivery at UK Youth
- Tim Hoar, Director of Business and Innovation, London College of Communication



OVERVIEW

Global events have had a significant influence on the work we have delivered in 2022. We began the year with the expectation that the upheaval in Afghanistan would be the focus of our response. Indeed, we received applications from number of Afghan journalists who were recent arrivals to the UK.

Our immediate concern was resolving the practical challenges these journalists faced with access to computers and Wi-Fi. Within a month of the commencement of our delivery, Russia's invasion of Ukraine led to requests for help from journalists displaced from the region, but also from media organisations enquiring about the practicalities of supporting refugee workers. This has led us to collate our best practices in a toolkit publication.

This year, the project was broken down into two phases. Phase 1 involved a programme of workshops, mentoring, networking and publishing opportunities. Phase 2 saw the project offer paid fellowships to the most promising participants from Phase 1.

The project commenced delivery of Phase 1 whilst the UK was emerging from the Covid pandemic. We adopted an agile programme delivery, whereby we started our sessions online but shifted to in-person once organisational restrictions had been lifted. In Phase 2, our paid fellowship programme allowed participants to experience longer, more intensive on-the-job experience within media organisations where they have been able to develop higher-level competencies.

In light of the situation in Afghanistan and Ukraine, supporting the mental health and well-being of our participants has been paramount. Working with a team from the Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma, we delivered group sessions designed for journalists who had reported on and lived through turmoil. The project has also been able to respond to the desire of our participants to work with a therapist from a similar cultural and linguistic background for one-to-one sessions.

At the end of the last cycle, the project committed to redressing the gender imbalance within previous cohorts, as male journalists have historically dominated our intakes. This year, we succeeded in reversing this trend, recruiting mostly female participants.

Collaboration has always been at the heart of the project's delivery. We have worked with The Guardian Foundation, Bloomberg and Centre for Investigative Journalism to offer a wide range of opportunities and workshops that have benefitted both the participants and the organisations.

OVERVIEW

This cycle also saw the project collaborate with the UN's Refugee Agency's (UNHCR) Journalist Mentorship Programme, which enabled us to engage more globally with journalists in exile. Our delivery also embedded the contributions of undergraduates and postgraduates by employing journalism students to co-deliver workshops, and by inviting our project participants to present their work and share their experiences within the university's curriculum.

This year's participants have been inspired by the experiences of some of our former RJP journalists who are now working full-time within the UK media sector at organisations such as Bloomberg, BBC World Service and Middle East Eye.

They have also been able to celebrate their own successes. In addition to the fellowships, a number of participants have been published for the first-time in the UK; one journalist has gained full time employment with a production company; another has an audio documentary in development with a broadcaster, and others have spoken at industry conferences.

Our participants say they feel a greater sense of belonging and professional worth as a result of the project. They also say they have more confidence, are better connected and feel more in tune with the demands of the UK media industry. Overall, they welcome the opportunity to be able to speak for themselves and their communities in a journalistic context.

This annual report presents some of the notable activities and achievements from 2021/22.

I would like to thank all those who have helped make this year possible, particularly our funders Open Society Foundations, Google News Initiative and University of the Arts London.

Vivienne Francis, Project Director

December 2022

IMPACT

The Class of 2022

In this short video, recorded via video call, some of this year's participants share how their professional and personal lives have been impacted by their participation in the project. To play, please click on the logo or use the link below.



**THE REFUGEE
JOURNALISM
PROJECT**

copy and paste link to play

drive.google.com/file/d/1_OdXo7L_BlzsrZHkc36qZFCDwaKBrIEJ/view?usp=share_link

APPLICATIONS & RECRUITMENT

About this year's applicants:

In December 2021, the project team received a total of 30 initial applications. We received 12 more applications in the early part of 2022, prioritising those from Ukraine and Afghanistan.

Key points:

- All the applicants were over 25 years old, with the greatest number being over 35.
- Almost half had a postgraduate qualification.
- Over 60% had a journalism qualification.
- Over 70% had been a journalist (or media professional) for more than five years outside the UK.
- 70% had never received paid work as a journalist in the UK

Following shortlisting interviews, 19 final participants were selected to make up the final cohort.

About this year's final participants:

Participants self-declared gender:



19 Participants

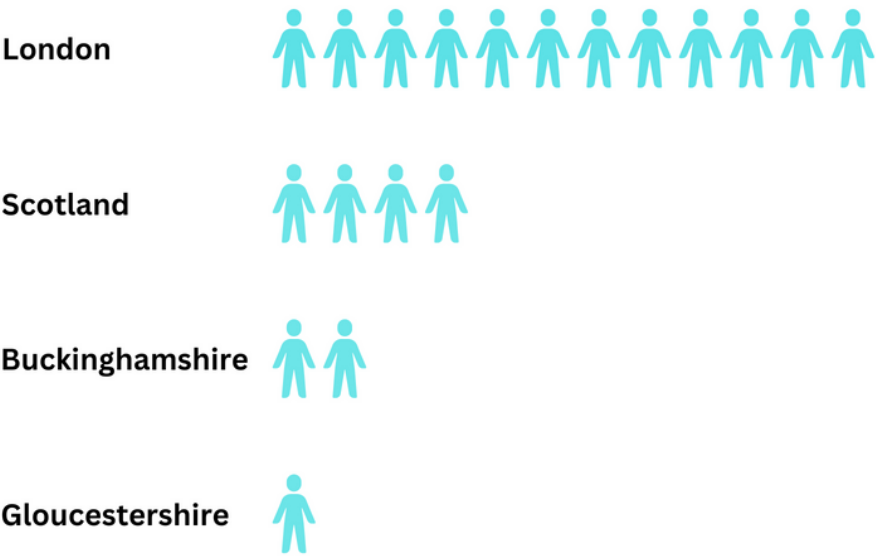


13 Women

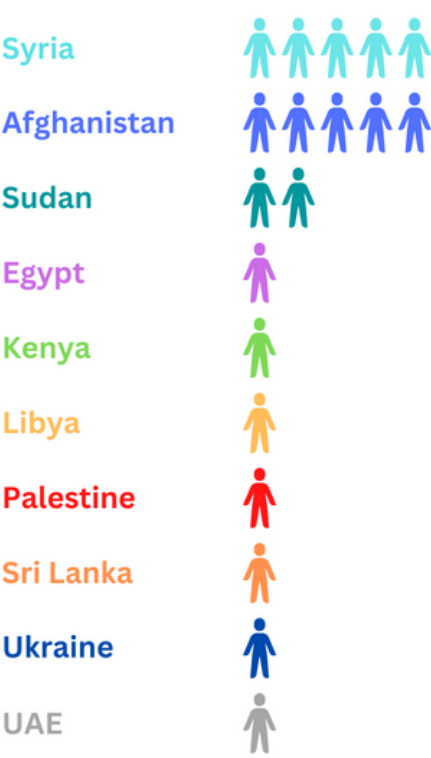


6 Men

Participants UK locations:



Participants original countries:



SNAPSHOT OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Hajar Harb

Hajar is a journalist from the Gaza Strip. She graduated from the Islamic University, Department of Journalism in 2006, and in 2014 received a Master's degree in Political Science. She has worked for a number of Arab news channels, as well as local newspapers. In 2016, she started a series of investigations focusing on corruption cases related to the government in Gaza. In 2017, whilst returning from cancer treatment in Jordan, she was sentenced to six months in prison due to her investigations into the Ministry of Health. Several international human rights organizations and those defending the rights of journalists issued statements condemning the sentences issued against her.



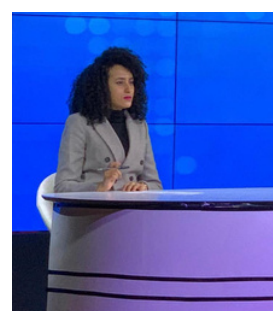
Zahra Shaheer

Zahra obtained her Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Law from Sayed Jamaluddin Afghan University in Kabul. She has also completed several journalism training courses. Since 2011, she has been working as a journalist and news presenter on Afghanistan National Radio and TV. She has contributed to news and feature programmes focusing on women's access to justice and equal access to education and work. She has also covered elections and political issues. During her time with the Afghan national TV broadcasting department, she also trained new journalists and presenters.



Samira El Saidi

Samira has worked as a broadcaster and news editor for Annaba TV and was a member of the teaching staff at the Faculty of Arts and Media at Tripoli University. She has also worked as a news broadcaster and programmes producer at Shababiya Radio, hosting a regular radio morning programme and daily news show. She also has experience working as an edition manager for the newspaper Creation Spaces, issued by Tripoli University.



Mohammad Usman Sharifi

Mohammad has been working with Afghan and international media for over a decade. He has worked as a fixer, translator, producer and journalist for Radio, TV and print media. He was a senior text journalist for Agence France Presse (AFP) for at least ten years, mostly covering Afghanistan and Pakistan. He has done extensive reporting and research on political and cultural issues, human rights violations and the current economic issues in Afghanistan and the region.



Marwa Ahmed

Marwa is a Sudanese journalist. She has vast experience in news and TV work. She started her career as a presenter, reporter, and producer on Sudan's national TV. She worked as a stringer and correspondent from Khartoum to the Alalim News Channel in Tehran, Iran, where she used to cover and report all political events and breaking news in Sudan. Until recently, she worked as an assignment producer at Alaraby TV Network in London.

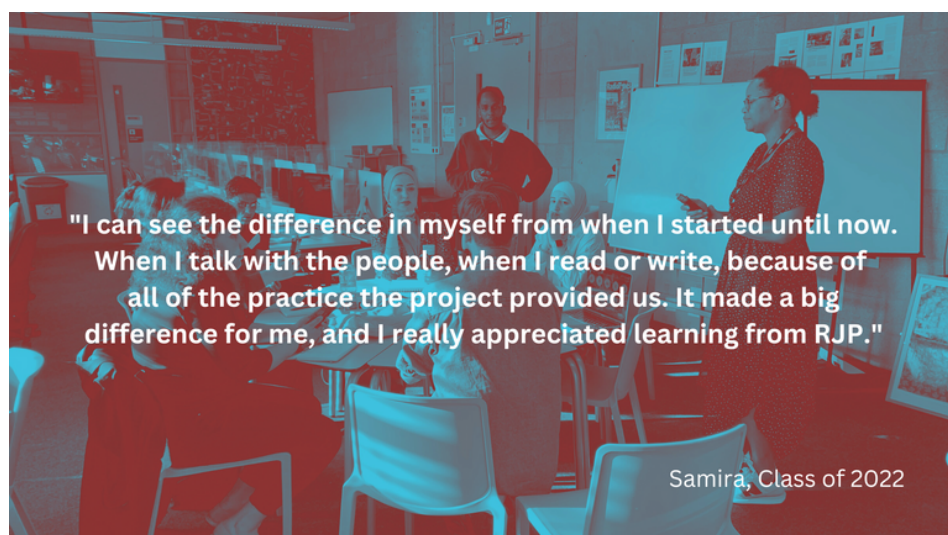


Mohamed Arkou

Mohamed is a Sudanese journalist and human rights advocate. He holds an LLM in International Law and Sustainable Development from the University of Strathclyde. He also has a postgraduate degree in Armed Conflict and Peace Studies from the University of Nairobi, Kenya. His first job was as a radio reporter at Sudan Radio Service in Nairobi, Kenya. He worked in a newsroom for over four years where he produced and edited podcasts, news, programmes and drama series.



FEEDBACK



PHASE 1

Workshops, Mentoring and Publishing Opportunities

We have offered participants the opportunity to take part in a range of activities that have helped them to extend their journalistic knowledge and build their industry networks.

The Workshops: A Snapshot



**THE REFUGEE
JOURNALISM
PROJECT**

**Introduction to
Journalism in the UK**
with Daniel Trilling

Media Law
with Holly Powell Jones

**Pitching and
Developing Ideas**
with Elizabeth Pears,
News Desk Editor,
Financial Times,
Lynne O'Donnell
commentator,
Mohamed Hassan,
journalist,
Stephanie Hegarty,
BBC World

Podcasting
with *BBC* journalist

**Telling Stories
with Data**
with Juliet Ferguson

Presenting on Camera
with University of
Brighton

CV Writing
with Stella Da Silva

**Covering Disasters and
Traumatic Events &
Preventing Mental
Health Problems
amongst Media
Professionals**
with Dr Kate Porterfield,
*Dart Centre for
Journalism and Trauma*
and Ismail Einashe,
freelance journalist

Cybersecurity
with Centre for
Investigative Journalism

**Reflective Group
Session**
with Dr Jeeda Alhakim,
Chartered Counselling
Psychologist

**Networking and
Careers Event**
with RJP mentors



Reporting Social Issues
with Patrick Butler, Social
Policy Editor

**Digital Journalism
and Features**
with Jon Henley, Europe
Correspondent

**Environmental
Journalism**
with Patrick Barkham and
Sandra Laville

Urban Journalism
with Chris Michael, US
Live News Editor

**Documentary Film
Making**
with Laurence Topham,
Video Special Projects
Editor

Pitching Ideas
with The Guardian team



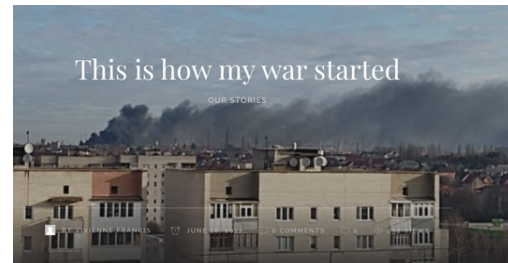
Financial Journalism
with Paul Addison,
Managing Editor,
*Global Training
Bloomberg*

**Introduction to
Bloomberg**
with David Merrick,
Senior Executive Editor
for News in Europe,
Middle East and Africa
and Dana El Baltaji,
team leader for Foreign
Exchange Rates in
Europe,
Bloomberg

**Introduction to
Quick Take**
with Andrew Barden,
Executive Editor,
Quick Take Bloomberg

Work Produced by Participants

Featured on The Refugee Journalism website: refugeejournalismproject.org



Featured elsewhere:



Women
in Journalism



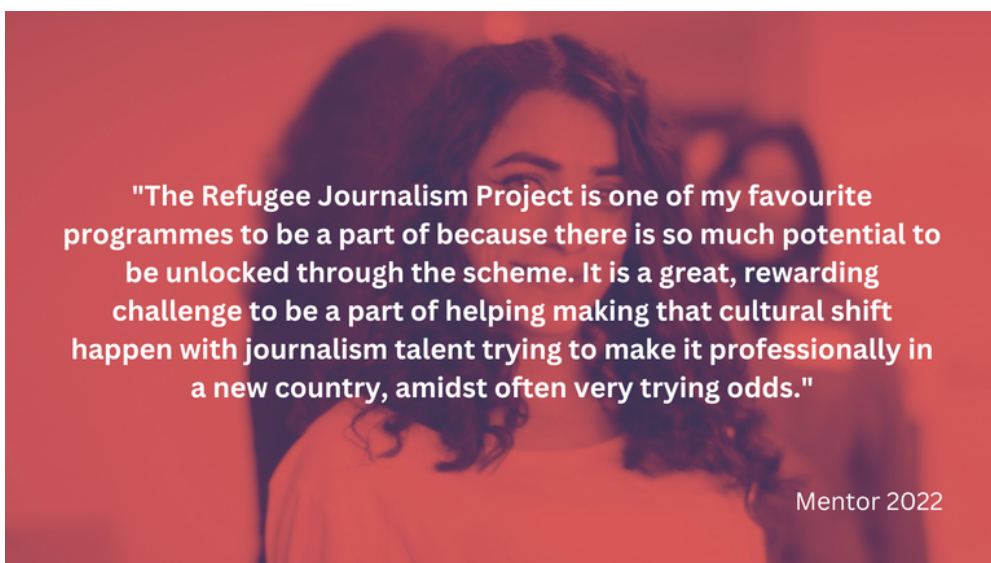
Majdoleen Hassona: Trapped in the West Bank to Silence her Journalism: By Douna Haj Ahmed



Mentoring

Each participant was paired with a mentor who is a journalist within the UK industry. This year's mentors included journalists who have worked for the following organisations:

Insider, The Guardian, International Centre for Journalists, New Statesman, Washington Post, Sky News, BBC World Service, and Tortoise Media.



PHASE 2

Fellowship Programme

This year, the project has been able to offer a range of paid fellowships whereby participants spend between three and six months at a media platform or media department.

The host companies have included:

Bloomberg

Middle East Eye

Institute of War and Peace Reporting

Refugee Council

gal-dem

New Lines Magazine

Hot Topics

Houda Fansa



gal—dem



Houda graduated from the faculty of Architecture at Damascus University, Syria, in 2009. She came to London through the Chevening Scholarship in 2016. After graduation, she started working on a Middle Eastern online radio station based in London where she was primarily in presenting and researching roles. She co-hosted a podcast about Syria in English and Arabic. Houda is currently working as a fellow with *gal-dem* producing editorial content. In January 2023, she will join the team at *Middle East Eye*.

Houda says



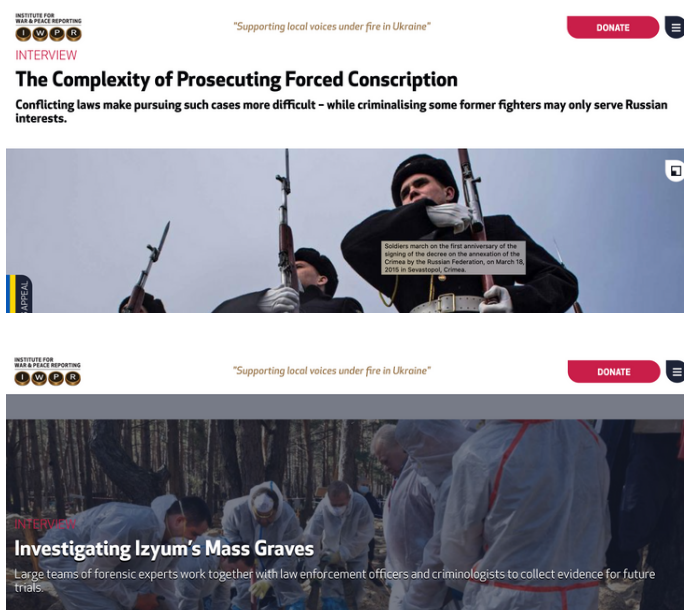
The fellowship is my bridge to understanding in-depth British society, one I am proud to belong to. I am learning about making an article, gathering ideas, knowing what interests others, pitching, subbing, fact-checking, building posts on WordPress, using Canva to edit photos and writing the article. I am also learning more about being me.

Svitlana Morenets



Svitlana is a Ukrainian journalist currently in the UK. She is writing for the *Institute of War and Peace Reporting* and the *Spectator* about Ukraine's resistance and the latest updates on the war.

A selection of Svitlana's work:



Svitlana says

“My fellowship was precious for me because I improved my writing in English, understood how to pitch the stories depending on the style of the media, published my pieces in English, and received advice from the editors on how to improve my pieces and my writing in general. I feel now that I have more chances to find a constant job after my fellowship ends because now I have some experience of working in British media and have published articles in English. When I came to the UK, I had no contacts, no articles in English and no understanding of how the media here work. Now I feel more confident.”

Sima Sultani



Bloomberg
TELEVISION

Sima is an Afghan journalist who has worked in the field for nearly five years. Her most recent job was with BBC as a Women Affairs journalist in Afghanistan. Sima is undertaking a six month fellowship with *Bloomberg Television* with the broadcast production team. It commences in November 2022.

Sima says

“It's very important to have improvement and to show myself that I can do it. Besides the learning, I'm taking a salary, and with that money I can help myself and support my family over there in Afghanistan. It's very important in such a situation like in Afghanistan where there's too much risk. My mom can't go outside. She can't work. My sister can't work. My Papa is old. So they really, really need me.”

**At the time of writing, fellowships at The Refugee Council, Hot Topics, and New Lines Magazine are in the recruitment phase.*

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Collaboration

Co-creation and knowledge exchange have always been paramount to the work of the Refugee Journalism Project. 2022 saw a range of projects and events with other local and global organisations.

In June 2022, participants from the UNHCR's Journalist Mentorship Programme joined us to produce articles for our website to coincide with World Refugee Day.



In her article, Jeanne Muhimundu talks about the hope, aspirations and self-reliance that is being built within the Tongogara Refugee Camp in Zimbabwe.

refugeejournalismproject.org/2022/06/19/a-journey-towards-hope

Our participants also benefited from events and activities delivered by the following organisations:



Student Engagement

Journalism students from London College of Communication and the University of Brighton were paid as workshop assistants to co-deliver video production and podcasting workshops. This was an important opportunity to develop professional skills but also support cultural exchange, enabling graduates to enter the industry using their experiences to influence and shift practices.



I couldn't ever say that I'd talked to a refugee prior to this project. So to get that insight and hear some of their incredible stories, getting that perspective is really important. I think it makes me a more rounded person."

Robert Wallace, student at London College of Communication

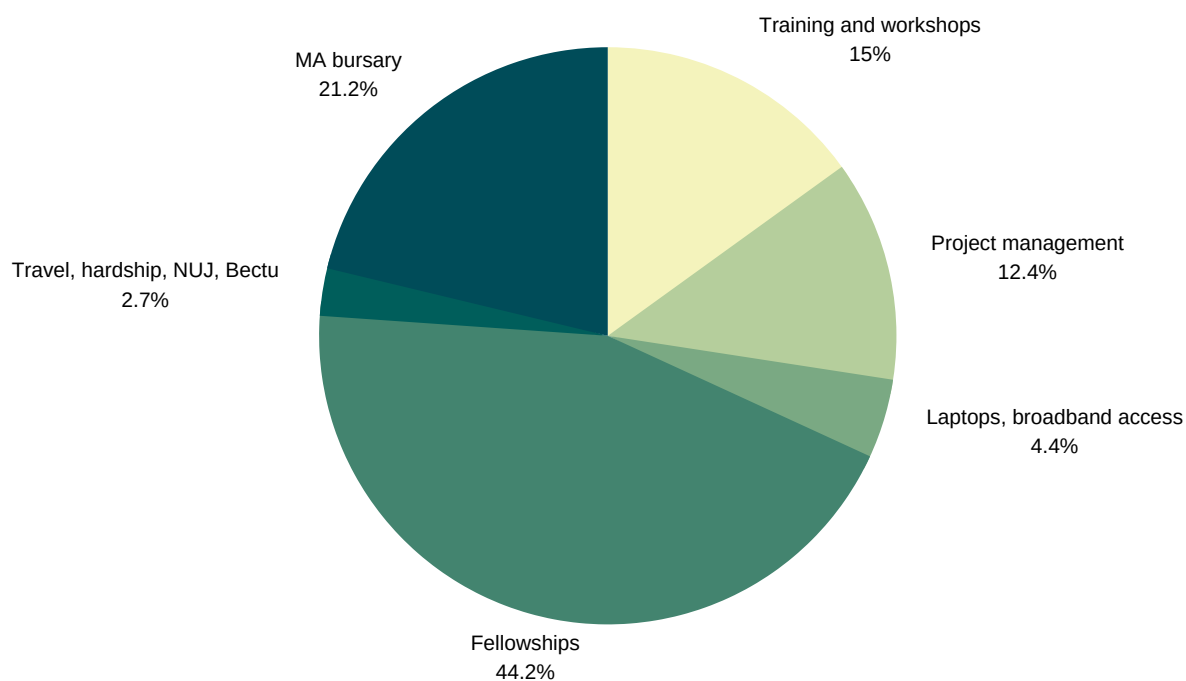


Up until that point, the projects that I've worked on at university were in a sense conceptual arbitrary skills. Putting pieces of things together without having any sort of real-life effect on anything. I wanted to do something that was purposeful, that was intentional and had a positive impact on the world."

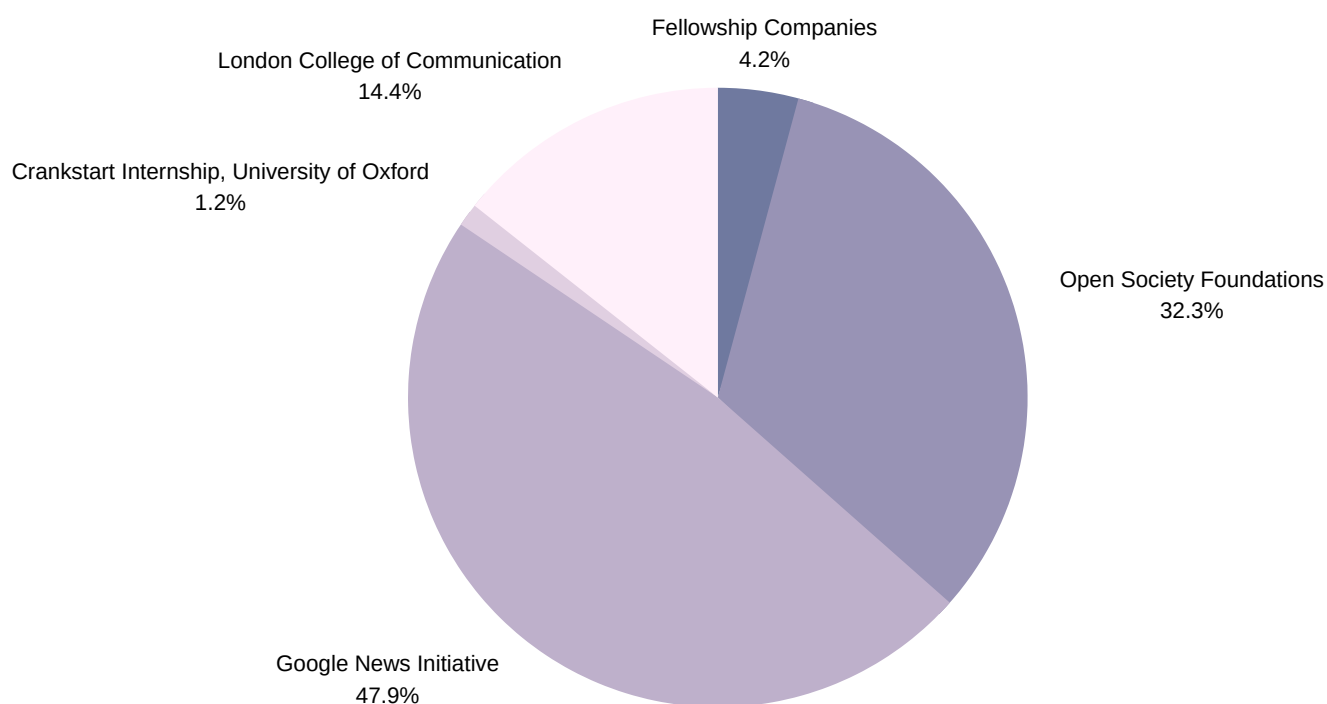
Roz Jones, student at London College of Communication

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Overview of Spending



Overview of Income



THE FUTURE

Plans for 2023 and beyond

At RJP, we are often the first contact for displaced journalists arriving in the UK after they are forced to leave their home countries. We provide a support system, a network, and a space of information, safety, and respect. Many of our participants express that RJP is the first place they feel valued as journalists after leaving their careers at home.

Every year we welcome refugee journalists from countries affected by conflict, the cohort shaped by a constantly changing global landscape, bringing their experience and expertise to our project.

In light of recent global events, and the effects of these events on our participants, we believe that the need and the demand for our work continues. While the causes of displacement continue all over the world, the media industry has failed to embrace diverse voices such as those of the participants we welcome into RJP every year.

The volume of emails we receive from journalists seeking our support, and the seeming lack of other avenues of safety and professional development after traumatic displacement, affirms our belief that RJP provides a unique service to refugee journalists.

The Refugee Journalism Project will therefore seek to recruit a new cohort of participants in 2023.