



## Grant Agreement

<b>1 NED Grant Number</b> 2020-10474	<b>2 Amount</b> \$545,750.00	<b>3 Term</b> 27 Months	<b>4 Start Date</b> July 01, 2020	<b>5 End Date</b> September 30, 2022
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### 6 GRANTEE

AN Foundation  
PO Box 6342  
Long Island City NY 11106  
United States

Federal Tax ID: 832235831

### 7 SUBGRANTEES

### 8 PURPOSE

**Project Title:** Strengthening Information Integrity in the Digital Space

To enable the Grantee to carry out the project objectives shown in Attachment A, Program Description, which are consistent with the purposes stated in section 502(b) of the NED Act. The Grantee is responsible for planning, organizing, and administering the program to carry out the project objectives in accordance with the terms of this agreement and all attachments and appendices.

### 9 AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This grant is awarded in accordance with the authority contained in Public Law 98-164 (the NED Act) as amended and Grant Number S-LMAQM-20-GR-2006 (CDFA 19.345), between the United States Department of State and the National Endowment for Democracy.

This agreement consists of these pages and the following attachments. Each of the attachments and appendices is fully incorporated into this agreement.

Attachment A: Program Description  
Attachment B: Budget  
Attachment C: [Standard Provisions](#) (Please click on the link to access document)


Appendices (if applicable)

Any amendments to this agreement must be requested in writing prior to the end date indicated in Box 5 and must be signed by authorized representatives of NED.


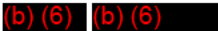
### 10 SIGNATURES

By signing this agreement, the Grantee assures that it will comply with all terms and conditions of this grant. Failure to comply with the terms set forth in this agreement may result in the withholding of payments, grant suspension, grant termination, or legal recourse.

#### AN FOUNDATION

Signature   
Name CLARE MELFORD  
Title EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Date SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

#### NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

Signature   
Name   
Title Senior Director, Grants Administration  
Date September 16, 2021

## 11 REPORTING SCHEDULE

### Narrative Reports

Period Covered:

From	To	Due Date
October 01, 2020	December 31, 2020	RECEIVED
January 01, 2021	March 31, 2021	RECEIVED
April 01, 2021	June 30, 2021	July 31, 2021
July 01, 2021	August 31, 2021	September 30, 2021
September 01, 2021	December 31, 2021	January 31, 2022
January 01, 2022	March 31, 2022	April 30, 2022
April 01, 2022	June 30, 2022	July 31, 2022
July 01, 2022	September 30, 2022	October 31, 2022

**Cumulative Assessment:** No

### Financial Reports

Period Covered:

From	To	Due Date
October 01, 2020	December 31, 2020	RECEIVED
January 01, 2021	March 31, 2021	RECEIVED
April 01, 2021	June 30, 2021	July 31, 2021
July 01, 2021	August 31, 2021	September 30, 2021
September 01, 2021	December 31, 2021	January 31, 2022
January 01, 2022	March 31, 2022	April 30, 2022
April 01, 2022	June 30, 2022	July 31, 2022
July 01, 2022	September 30, 2022	October 31, 2022

**Grantee Products:** Yes Country Reports Due Date: October 31, 2022

## 12 PAYMENT SCHEDULE

**Payment Method:** Advance Payment

**NED Fund Code:** 2020AA,

Schedule Date	Amount
September 01, 2021	\$105,750.00
January 01, 2022	\$80,000.00
April 01, 2022	\$80,000.00
July 01, 2022	\$50,000.00

**Total:** \$545,750.00

## 13 SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Item: Description:

1	<p>The Grantee is authorized to use noncompetitive procurement procedures for budget items above the small purchase procurement threshold of \$10,000 in Attachment B, Grant Budget, with the exception of those marked by an asterisk and highlighted in Attachment B. Small purchase procurement requirements must be met for any costs (&gt; \$10,000) not in the Attachment B, Grant Budget unless authorized by NED or one of the exceptions listed under 2CFR200.320 is applicable.</p> <p>Reminder: Please note Grant Provision 14 (Procurement Standards), which requires your organization to follow a written procurement policy, which includes provisions for price analysis, standards of conduct, and conflict of interest. The complete standards for procurement can be found in Grant Appendix B, 2CFR200 Subpart D Post Federal Award Requirements Standards for Financial and Program Management, sections 200.318 through 200.326.</p>
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## ATTACHMENT A

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

#### I. Project Objectives

- To deepen understanding of the challenges to information integrity in the digital space

#### II. Project Activities

The AN Foundation – the US entity of GDI – will use NED support to deepen understanding of the challenges to information integrity in the digital space. GDI will cooperate with local partners to carry out assessments of the local online media ecosystems in 4 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, and will help to inform advocacy directed at combating disinformation.

##### Assessing Disinformation Risks

During FY2020, GDI will cooperate with local partners in 4 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, most likely Nigeria, India, Malaysia, and Mexico, to conduct a set of comprehensive assessments of the local online media ecosystems. GDI selected these countries based on the following criteria: strong levels of internet penetration, high use of online news sources and media, robust media landscapes, key upcoming electoral or policy processes, and dynamic online advertising markets. GDI's local civil society partner groups will be drawn from those working in the fields of media, disinformation, fact-checking, and digital rights. In FY2021, GDI will expand its coverage to work with local partners in 5 additional countries to conduct research and assessments to produce disinformation risks reports. During FY2021, cases will likely include Bangladesh, Colombia, Philippines, Thailand, and Turkey.

GDI will conduct a series of 4-6 online trainings for its local partners to apply its methodology to rate the disinformation risks of news sites. GDI and partners will identify up to 40 news sites to analyze, selecting the sites with the highest popularity rankings and social media followers as a way to capture sites with high levels of engagement and therefore relatively greater impact and reach in the overall media market. The framework for the analysis involves identifying disinformation flags that are spread across 4 pillars connected to news domains' structure, content, operational policies, and context. In each country, the review will include an automated broad assessment of news sites' technical metadata and computational indicators to distinguish and filter out news sites that have been hastily assembled to capture advertising revenue. The manual review by experts will then focus on a smaller set of the most popular news sites' content, examining sample articles for credibility, sensationalism, hate speech, and impartiality, and operational standards, reviewing rules that domains abide by to establish trust and reliability, such as disclosed policies on conflict of interest, inaccurate reporting, and operational integrity. This will be followed by an independent public perception survey of informed news consumers from across the political spectrum to assess the reputational practices, reliability, and trustworthiness of the news domains. Throughout the reviews, GDI will provide research support to its partners, including by validating findings, visualizing data, and providing overall quality assurance for the assessment and ratings process. Building on these assessments, GDI and its partners will produce 4 reports on the local media ecosystems, including disinformation risk ratings for up to 40 of the most popular online media sites. These independent assessments and disinformation risk ratings can be used by legitimate media outlets to strengthen their journalistic standards and practices and by advertisers and ad technology companies to inform their decisions about where to channel their funding.

##### Promoting Informed Policy Responses

Upon completion of the assessments, GDI will work with its local partners to identify opportunities to promote evidence-based policy responses to disinformation. This will include informing national policy debates on combating disinformation and strengthening trust in media, as well as domestic and global-level advocacy with advertising companies and trade bodies to defund disinformation. At the outset of the project, GDI will select local partners based on their ability to engage with diverse stakeholder groups locally, nationally, and internationally. GDI will work with local partners to develop their capacity to use the ratings to conduct dialogue with the relevant actors and to produce policy relevant materials, such as briefs and infographics, based on the risk ratings and media ecosystem report.

GDI will also work with its partners to map key policy stakeholders in each country, including major media companies, press and journalist associations, CSOs, advertising trade associations, leading brands, social media platforms, and the advertising technology companies serving the respective markets. GDI previously piloted this approach in South Africa, working with its local partner to engage media companies and press associations on the findings; as a result, some of the largest media companies

changed their policies and the national press association updated its code to align with stronger operational and editorial integrity measures. For each country in this project, GDI will support the local launch of the assessment reports through virtual and in-person roundtables where local partners will present the findings for the local media markets. GDI will also support the local partners to lead individual meetings with reviewed news sites to share their scores and respond to any questions, and to present findings to individual stakeholder groups in meetings or webinars as a way to promote stronger standards.

GDI will also collaborate with its local partners to build greater engagement and dialogue the private sector on the challenges of disinformation more broadly, including undertaking strategic policy outreach and leveraging windows of opportunity to defund disinformation. GDI's approach has already begun to gain traction globally, as advertising technology firms, as well as advertising clients themselves, take action based on its findings. For example, as a result of GDI's risk assessments and advocacy, 2 advertising technology firms have blocked the *Russia Today* website from their placements. Meanwhile, clients themselves, concerned over the bad publicity of having their brands appear on disinformation sites, have demanded that the advertising technology firms take action. Building on this momentum, GDI and its partners will develop mutually reinforcing advocacy strategies, through which partners will conduct domestic advocacy and GDI will leverage its global profile and connections to pressure global platforms and brands to engage at the local level. The aim is to use the risk ratings as a well-grounded entry point for discussions with key stakeholders in government, the media, and private sector on disinformation, trust in media, and freedom of information.

In FY2021, GDI will use lessons learned from the assessments produced in the 2020-2021 period to update methodology as needed and useful and to update, similarly, the planning process for future work with local partners. It will carry out a brief partner survey to collect feedback from its local partners to surface any unknown areas for improvement.

GDI, in collaboration with a local partner, will also hold individual meetings/calls with reviewed sites and present findings to individual stakeholder groups, including media outlets reviewed, in one-on-one meetings and/or webinars.

### **III. Evaluation Plan**

**Objective:** To deepen understanding of the challenges to information integrity in the digital space

- GDI and its partners will track the reception of the risk rankings of the target countries, including media coverage and feedback from participants in the key stakeholder meetings. The groups' abilities to draw on the assessments to provide new insight into local media contexts will indicate success. Feedback from local media companies and press and journalist associations, as well as the strengthening of operational standards and policies in response to the assessments, will also indicate success.
- GDI will monitor its ability to initiate dialogue with advertising technology firms, brands, and platforms on the country assessments, and to raise awareness about this challenge. The number of meetings and responses from interlocutors will indicate success. Any reduction in advertising on high-risk disinformation sites attributable to this advocacy will be a key indicator of success in disrupting the financial incentive structure. Any responses from social media platforms and search engines, particularly in down ranking the sites, will also indicate success.
- GDI's methodology reflects best practices in data collection and risk assessment to strengthen the reputation of this work toward developing and global standard. The organization incorporates lessons from previous years, collects feedback from existing local partners to fine tune the methodology, and documents reactions of relevant stakeholders, including ad tech companies.

## ATTACHMENT B

## BUDGET

PROGRAM COSTS	Cost		
	Original	Extension	Revised
<b>Salaries</b>			
Senior Research Manager	\$(b) (4)	\$0	\$(b) (4)
Junior Researcher	\$(b) (4)	\$0	\$(b) (4)
Team Administrator	\$(b) (4)	\$0	\$(b) (4)
Junior Researcher, 2 (US)	\$0	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
Director, Programs (Germany)	\$0	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
Director, Funding & Finance (UK)	\$0	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
Executive Director (UK)	\$0	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
	<u>\$(b) (4)</u>	<u>\$(b) (4)</u>	<u>\$(b) (4)</u>
<b>Benefits, Taxes and Allowances</b>			
Pensions & Payroll Taxes	\$8,978	\$0	\$8,978
Health Insurance	\$5,411	\$0	\$5,411
Pensions & Payroll Taxes (UK)	\$0	\$632	\$632
Payroll Taxes, Social Security, & Healthcare (Germany)	\$0	\$3,870	\$3,870
Payroll Taxes (US)	\$0	\$2,295	\$2,295
Health Insurance (US)	\$0	\$3,533	\$3,533
	<u>\$14,389</u>	<u>\$10,330</u>	<u>\$24,719</u>
<b>Contractual Services</b>			
Disinformation Index Ltd:			
Executive Director	\$(b) (4)	\$0	\$(b) (4)
Finance & Operations Manager	\$(b) (4)	\$0	\$(b) (4)
PEO Worldwide Ltd: Index Director	\$(b) (4)	\$0	\$(b) (4)
Senior Research Manager (Australia)	\$0	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
Junior Researcher (Netherlands)	\$0	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
Team Administrator (UK)	\$0	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
Local Partner Expert Reviews, Research & Report Writing (flat rate):			
* Nigeria	\$(b) (4)	\$0	\$(b) (4)
* India	\$(b) (4)	\$0	\$(b) (4)
* Colombia or Mexico	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
* Philippines	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
* Turkey	\$0	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
* Bangladesh	\$0	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
* Thailand	\$0	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
Perception Surveys (flat rate):			
* Nigeria	\$(b) (4)	\$0	\$(b) (4)
* Colombia or Mexico	\$(b) (4)	\$0	\$(b) (4)
* Philippines	\$(b) (4)	\$0	\$(b) (4)
Graphic Design & Layout, 8 (flat rate)	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)	\$(b) (4)
	<u>\$(b) (4)</u>	<u>\$(b) (4)</u>	<u>\$(b) (4)</u>
<b>Other Direct Costs</b>			
Bank Fees	\$0	\$180	\$180
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>\$230,000</b>	<b>\$315,750</b>	<b>\$545,750</b>

\* The grantee is required to use competitive procurement procedures for initial purchase of items with an asterisk and highlighted. If the procurement was previously competed, the purchase does not need to be re-competed as long as the contract is valid.

*Reminder: Budget flexibility is allowable only up to 15% or \$5,000 (whichever is larger) of the amount of each budget category. Any changes in excess of the flexibility limit require prior approval. (See Grant Provision 7)*

## GDI – Quarterly Narrative Report for NED – July to September 2020

<b>Grant no:</b>	2020-1116		
<b>Grantee:</b>	AN Foundation		
<b>Term of project:</b>	July 2020 to June 2021	<b>Report for quarter ended:</b>	30 September 2020
<b>Total amount funded:</b>	\$230,000	<b>Total spend to date:</b>	\$18,384
<b>Amount paid out in current quarter:</b>	\$76,700	<b>Total spend in current quarter:</b>	\$18,384
		<b>Amount remaining:</b>	\$211,616

### Project activity

#### Hiring

During the quarter, GDI identified and recruited an exceptionally strong candidate into the role of (b) (6). (b) (6) existing commitments are currently winding down and he joins GDI on a (b) (4) basis from November onwards. In the meantime, one of GDI's (b) (6), (b) (6), has been assisting our (b) (6) to ensure that the project remains on schedule.

#### India

We had already contracted with a local partner in India for our expert review (Center for Internet and Society – India, or **CIS**) prior to receiving NED funding. CIS created a media market list for India consisting of 100 English, Hindi and Bengali news sites. We discussed and selected 60 sites across these languages for assessment by two country reviewers against the GDI framework and methodology. We developed a bespoke technical tool to enhance the scalability of the project, based on lessons learned from previous studies, which includes functionality to manage reviews in multiple languages. After we had delivered training, CIS carried out its rating of the operations and content pillars of local news sites. GDI is presently undertaking a reconciliation of the results of the reviewers' work. The content pillar scoring by CIS will take place during the next quarter of the NED grant period.

YouGov also completed its India survey during this quarter.

*Note that the cost of the India work is partly funded by the UK government (Foreign & Commonwealth Office, or **FCO**). GDI maintains a comprehensive tracking of all costs in its accounting system, where invoices are "tagged" by our different funders.*

#### Mexico, Nigeria and The Philippines

We are currently carrying out the background research for all three upcoming studies: Mexico, Nigeria and The Philippines; we had already selected a local partner for Nigeria (Code for Africa) prior to receiving the NED grant and have identified a potential local partner in Mexico. GDI is additionally considering whether the current political instability in Nigeria and The Philippines will make our proposed work there inadvisable i.e. be likely to trigger further instability and social unrest. We are engaged in discussions with NED as to potential alternative countries.

### Some wider context for GDI's work

During the quarter, we also published special reports analyzing:

- gender-related disinformation;
- how COVID-19 disinformation is being funded by online advertising (and the brands appearing next to it); and
- ads placed by charities and NGO's next to disinformation. This led to the publishing of an open letter to Google's CEO ([here](#)), signed by more than a dozen of the US's top philanthropic organizations, including the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation, criticizing his company for placing ads for prominent charities on websites that promote misinformation.

All GDI reports can be downloaded here: <https://disinformationindex.org/research/>.

<b>Signature</b>	(b) (6)
<b>Name</b>	Clare Melford
<b>Position</b>	Director
<b>Date</b>	30 October 2020



## GDI – Quarterly Narrative Report for NED – January to March 2021

<b>Grant no:</b>	<b>2020-1116</b>		
<b>Grantee:</b>	<b>AN Foundation</b>		
<b>Term of project:</b>	<b>July 2020 to June 2021</b>	<b>Report for quarter ended:</b>	31 March 2021
<b>Total amount funded:</b>	\$230,000	<b>Total spend to date:</b>	\$104,859
<b>Amount paid out in current quarter:</b>	Nil	<b>Total spend in current quarter:</b>	\$38,234
		<b>Amount remaining:</b>	\$125,141

### Project activity

**Country Roll-out:** Data collection for all four country studies is now complete. From January to March, we completed the site reviews for the expanded list of Indian media sites as well as the sites from Mexico, Malaysia and Nigeria. Completing data collection for the later three countries included the following activities over the quarter:

Finalizing the market samples: Local research teams in all three countries compiled complete media site lists, based on the reach and relevance of the most frequently visited news sites in their media market. Each country team also contributed to GDI's global list of disinformation narratives by adding the topics and keywords that can be considered disinformation flags in their context, and verifying GDI's machine translation of the entire list in their study language, supporting the development of a global disinformation classifier framework. Using the site and keyword lists for each market, GDI constructed a sample of content for review.

Training the local research teams: GDI trained all three teams on an updated version of the review methodology that included tools to collect over 100 data points on each site. In January and February, the GDI research team updated all of our data collection tools and developed new video and written training content that provides country teams with a more comprehensive understanding of how to apply the review methodology, as well as extensive examples. The updates to the data collection tools focused on improving precision and efficiency, such that country teams are now able to collect roughly 150% more data, of improved quality, in the same amount of time.

After reviewing the training materials and participating in trial reviews, each country team participated in two interactive sessions with GDI and received written feedback on their scoring; this portion of the process is designed to achieve a high level of consistency and reliability between reviewers, thus clarifying the final results by minimizing the amount of statistical "noise" in the resulting datasets.

Operations pillar site reviews: Using GDI's questionnaire, codebook, and custom-built data collection system, country teams reviewed each site in their market sample, answering a set of up to 98 questions on the site's ownership, funding, and editorial policies and practices. Each site was reviewed independently by two researchers, and then the teams worked together to validate and reconcile their data collection. This data will then be aggregated by GDI into 13 sub-indicators and 6 indicators to calculate the final Operations pillar scores.

Content pillar article reviews: Following the site-level reviews, country teams reviewed 10 pieces of content from each site in their market sample. Each article was reviewed independently by two researchers; in this case, teams do not reconcile their reviews, as the content assessments include subjective evaluations of concepts like bias, sensationalism, and hate speech. Multiple, independent content reviews are one of the ways which GDI reduces bias in developing site risk ratings. Researchers coded each article on 13 questions, which are used to construct the 9 indicators that make up the final Content pillar scores.

Context pillar survey data collection: While the site and content reviews were underway, YouGov conducted informed online reader perception surveys in each market and delivered these datasets to GDI.

The three datasets - Operations, Content and Context - will be collated by the GDI research team and used to calculate the final risk ratings for each market. Country teams will then proceed to draft their final results reports, which will be published and launched in May and June.



## Some wider context for GDI's work

During the quarter, we also published a number of blogs, including:

- How Disinformation Fueled the Siege of the U.S. Capitol ([blog](#) published February 4, 2021).
- Disinformation Risks in the South African News Ecosystem ([blog](#) published February 8, 2021).
- Ad-funded COVID-19 conspiracy sites: A look at the EU ([blog](#) published February 23, 2021).
- Climate Change Denial has been Rising Steadily since the Change in Administration in the U.S. ([blog](#) published March 24, 2021)

Links are embedded; click on the underlined word or phrase to download the blog from GDI's website.

Some press coverage that GDI received during the quarter:

- In this round-up [piece in The Washington Post](#), Dr. Danny Rogers, GDI co-founder and CTO, is quoted regarding how disinformation peddlers are branding and merchandising their messages on a range of e-commerce platforms (published January 19, 2021).
- [This New York Times](#) article discusses how merchandise, with phrases like "Battle for Capitol Hill Veteran", was available on major e-commerce sites, even as other platforms worked to remove related groups. Dr. Danny Rogers provides insights into the problem. (Published on January 19, 2021).
- In this article published by [ABC News](#), experts including GDI's Dr. Danny Rogers discuss how and why the information ecosystem in the US has helped to feed conspiracy theories and extremism. (Published on January 22, 2021).
- [Announcement](#) of Infolinks Media Partners Partnership with Global Disinformation Index to Protect Brands from Rising Disinformation Across Sites. (Published March 31, 2021).

Signature	(b) (6)
Name	Clare Melford
Position	Director
Date	30 April 2021



## Grant Agreement

<b>1 NED Grant Number</b> 2020-10474	<b>2 Amount</b> \$230,000.00	<b>3 Term</b> 14 Months	<b>4 Start Date</b> July 01, 2020	<b>5 End Date</b> August 31, 2021
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### 6 GRANTEE

AN Foundation  
PO Box 6342  
Long Island City NY 11106  
United States

Federal Tax ID: 832235831

### 7 SUBGRANTEES

### 8 PURPOSE

**Project Title:** Strengthening Information Integrity in the Digital Space

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Appendices (if applicable)

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AN FOUNDATION

(b) (6)

Signature

CLARE MELFORD

Name

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Title

JUNE 28, 2021

Date

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

Signature

(b) (6) (b) (6)

Digitally signed by (b) (6) (b) (6)  
Date: 2021.06.29 21:22:00 -04'00'

Name

(b) (6) (b) (6)

Title

Senior Director, Grants Administration

Date

## 11 REPORTING SCHEDULE

### Narrative Reports

Period Covered:

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July 01, 2021	August 31, 2021	September 30, 2021

**Cumulative Assessment:** No

### Financial Reports

Period Covered:

From	To	Due Date
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April 01, 2021	June 30, 2021	July 31, 2021
July 01, 2021	August 31, 2021	September 30, 2021

**Grantee Products:** Yes Country Reports Due Date: September 30, 2021

## 12 PAYMENT SCHEDULE

**Payment Method:** Advance Payment

**NED Fund Code:** 2020AA,

Schedule Date	Amount
---------------	--------

**Total:** \$230,000.00

## 13 SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Item:	Description:
1	Reminder: Please note Grant Provision 14 (Procurement Standards), which requires your organization to follow a written procurement policy which includes provisions for price analysis, standards of conduct, and conflict of interest. The complete standards for procurement can be found in Grant Appendix B, 2CFR200 Subpart D Post Federal Award Requirements Standards for Financial and Program Management, sections 200.318 through 200.326.

## **ATTACHMENT A**

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

## ATTACHMENT B

## BUDGET

PROGRAM COSTS	Original	Changes	Revised
<b>Salaries</b>			
Senior Research Manager	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
Junior Researcher	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
Team Administrator	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
<b>Benefits, Taxes and Allowances</b>			
Pensions & Payroll Taxes	\$4,171	\$4,807	\$8,978
Health Insurance	\$6,500	-\$1,089	\$5,411
	<b>\$10,671</b>	<b>\$3,718</b>	<b>\$14,389</b>
<b>Travel and Per Diem</b>			
3 RT International Airfare, TBD-TBD	\$3,000	-\$3,000	\$0
Per Diem, 3 ppl x 3 days x \$260.40	\$2,344	-\$2,344	\$0
	<b>\$5,344</b>	<b>-\$5,344</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Contractual Services</b>			
Disinformation Index Ltd:			
Executive Director	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
Finance & Operations Manager	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
PEO Worldwide Ltd: Index Director	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
Expert Reviews, Research & Report Writing (flat rate):			
* Local Partner, Nigeria	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
* Local Partner, India	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
* Local Partner, Colombia or Mexico	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
* Local Partner, Philippines	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
Perceptions Surveys (flat rate):			
* Survey, Nigeria	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
* Survey, India	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
* Survey, Colombia or Mexico	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
* Survey, Philippines	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
Graphic Design & Layout, 3 (flat rate)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
	(b) (4)	(b) (4)	(b) (4)
<b>Other Direct Costs</b>			
Roundtables, 4:			
Venue	\$758	-\$758	\$0
Refreshments, 75 ppl	\$8,241	-\$8,241	\$0
	<b>\$8,999</b>	<b>-\$8,999</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>\$230,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$230,000</b>

- \* The grantee is required to use competitive procurement procedures for initial purchase of items with an asterisk and highlighted. If the procurement was previously competed, the purchase does not need to be re-competed as long as the contract is valid.

## GDI – Quarterly Narrative Report for NED – October to December 2020

<b>Grant no:</b>	2020-1116		
<b>Grantee:</b>	AN Foundation		
<b>Term of project:</b>	July 2020 to June 2021	<b>Report for quarter ended:</b>	31 December 2020
<b>Total amount funded:</b>	\$230,000	<b>Total spend to date:</b>	\$66,625
<b>Amount paid out in current quarter:</b>	Nil	<b>Total spend in current quarter:</b>	\$48,241
		<b>Amount remaining:</b>	\$163,376

### Project activity

**Team:** The research team is now fully staffed for this project. The team includes:

<u>Name/job title</u>	<u>NED budget funding line</u>
(b) (6)	Junior Researcher
(b) (6)	Junior Researcher
(b) (6)	Senior Research Manager
(b) (6)	Index Director

**Country Roll-out and Partners:** We used the first and second quarters of the project to ensure that the right countries and partners were secured. This reflection, in collaboration with NED, helped to reassess the originally proposed countries given national level developments. The three countries of focus are Malaysia, Mexico and Nigeria. In all three countries, we have qualified research partners to conduct the project in-country. They will join our partner in India (the Centre for Internet and Society) in this project. The media list is being finalized and training is set for early February for all partners when the work will begin. The project timeline is to have the reports released and socialized in May 2021.

**Malaysia:** Following a review of three different partners, we will be working with the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ - <https://cijmalaysia.net/>). They will be reviewing a selection of +30 sites in English, Malay and Mandarin. They are pleased to be doing this work as they want to push for a press code in the country and to better flag local disinformation.

**Mexico:** After working with NED and speaking with a range of local partners, we have signed a research agreement with Data Cívica (<https://datacivica.org/>). They are recognised leaders in using data for change and are working on disinformation, particularly coming from official sources (such as around femicide rates in the country). They will be reviewing domains in Spanish.

**Nigeria:** We have identified a leading local and regional digital rights and research organisation, based in Nigeria and which operates across Africa: Paradigm Initiative (<https://paradigmhq.org/>). They will be reviewing sites in English, after a discussion of doing additional languages (the challenge is that most news sites in Nigeria are only available in English). They are also interested in expanding this work to other African countries (funding dependent).

**India:** Our local partner, the Centre for Internet and Society – India, or **CIS**, is conducting the review of nearly 60 news sites in English, Hindi and Bengali news sites. Data collection has been completed for two out of three pillars of the index, with the third currently in progress. (Note that the cost of the India work is partly funded by the UK government (Foreign & Commonwealth and Development Office, or **FCDO**).

For all countries, we have the following updates on our research process:

- **Survey work** We have already contracted YouGov to complete a perceptions survey of informed online users in all the countries for the NED work. This is to afford synergies and to ensure a standardized sample and set of questions. In addition, up to three country-specific questions will be added on to each of the surveys in Malaysia, Mexico and Nigeria to better understand perceptions of disinformation in these countries.
- **Research questions and data collection** As part of improving the GDI methodology and research process, we have:
  1. built out our internal platform for researchers to assess the articles in each country (site links, cleaned articles, questions, managing multiples languages, etc.).
  2. improved and expanded operational questions, with more nuanced scoring.
  3. improved article selection around specific topics, such as politics and health (COVID-19);
  4. improved our training process for researchers, such that we are able to double the number of training hours and provide researchers with additional assets to support their work; and
  5. commenced compilation of disinformation narratives in each local context (to help feed into article selection and using machine learning to identify disinformation in these countries at scale, following the completion of the studies).

#### Some wider context for GDI's work

During the quarter October to December 2020, we also published special reports analyzing:

- The media market risk ratings for Argentina;
- The media market risk ratings for France;
- The media market risk ratings for Germany;
- The media market risk ratings for Latvia;
- The media market risk ratings for Estonia;
- The media market risk ratings for Georgia;
- Bankrolling Bigotry: An Overview of the Online Funding Strategies of American Hate Groups (jointly with Institute of Strategic Dialogue); and
- GDI Primer: The US (Dis)information Ecosystem.

Links to the reports are embedded in the report name; click on the underlined word or phrase to download from GDI's website.

Signature	(b) (6)
Name	Clare Melford
Position	Director
Date	27 January 2021





# National Endowment for Democracy

Supporting freedom around the world

1025 F Street, NW Suite 800 Washington, DC 20004  
p(202)378-9700 | f(202)378-9407 | www.ned.org

## Grant Agreement

<b>1 NED Grant Number</b> 2020-1116	<b>2 Amount</b> \$230,000	<b>3 Term</b> 12 Months	<b>4 Start Date</b> July 1, 2020	<b>5 End Date</b> June 30, 2021
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### 6 GRANTEE

AN Foundation  
PO Box 6342  
Long Island City, NY 11106  
United States

Federal Tax ID: 83-2235831

Contact:

(b) (6)

### 7 SUBGRANTEES

None

### 8 NED STAFF CONTACTS

Program:

(b) (6)

Grants:

(b) (6)

Compliance:

(b) (6)

### 9 PURPOSE

**Project Title:** Strengthening Information Integrity in the Digital Space

To enable the Grantee to carry out the project objectives shown in Attachment A, Program Description, which are consistent with the purposes stated in section 502(b) of the NED Act. The Grantee is responsible for planning, organizing, and administering the program to carry out the project objectives in accordance with the terms of this agreement and all attachments and appendices.

### 10 AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This grant is awarded in accordance with the authority contained in Public Law 98-164 (the NED Act) as amended and Grant Number - S-LMAQM-20-GR-2006 (CFDA 19.345) between the United States Department of State and the National Endowment for Democracy.

This agreement consists of these pages and the following attachments. Each of the attachments and appendices is fully incorporated into this agreement.

Attachment A:	Program Description
Attachment B:	Budget
Attachment C:	Standard Provisions and Appendices

Any amendments to this agreement must be requested in writing prior to the end date indicated in Box 5 and must be signed by authorized representatives of NED.

### 11 SIGNATURES

By signing this agreement, the Grantee assures that it will comply with all terms and conditions of this grant. Failure to comply with the terms set forth in this agreement may result in the withholding of payments, grant suspension, grant termination, or legal recourse.

AN FOUNDATION

Signature

(b) (6)

Name

Dr. Daniel J. Rogers

Title

President

Date

8/13/20

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

Signature

(b) (6)

Name

(b) (6)

Title

Senior Director, Grants Administration

Date

**12 REPORTING SCHEDULE****Narrative Reports**

Period Covered:

From	To	Due Date
July 1, 2020	September 30, 2020	October 31, 2020
October 1, 2020	December 31, 2020	January 31, 2021
January 1, 2021	March 31, 2021	April 30, 2021
April 1, 2021	June 30, 2021	July 31, 2021

**Financial Reports**

Period Covered:

From	To	Due Date
July 1, 2020	September 30, 2020	October 31, 2020
October 1, 2020	December 31, 2020	January 31, 2021
January 1, 2021	March 31, 2021	April 30, 2021
April 1, 2021	June 30, 2021	July 31, 2021

**Cumulative Assessment:** No**Grantee Products:** Yes

Due Date	Required Items
July 31, 2021	Country Reports

**13 PAYMENT SCHEDULE****Payment Method:** Advance Payment**NED Fund Code:** 2020/AA

Schedule Date	Amount
July 2020	\$76,700
November 2020	\$57,500
February 2021	\$57,500
May 2021	\$38,300

**Total: \$230,000****14 SPECIAL CONDITIONS**

Reminder: Please note Grant Provision 14 (Procurement Standards), which requires your organization to follow a written procurement policy which includes provisions for price analysis, standards of conduct, and conflict of interest. The complete standards for procurement can be found in Grant Appendix B, 2CFR200 Subpart D Post Federal Award Requirements Standards for Financial and Program Management, sections 200.318 through 200.326.

## ATTACHMENT A

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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#### I. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- To deepen understanding of the challenges to information integrity in the digital space

#### II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The AN Foundation – the US entity of GDI – will use NED support to deepen understanding of the challenges to information integrity in the digital space. GDI will cooperate with local partners to carry out assessments of the local online media ecosystems in 4 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, and will help to inform advocacy directed at combatting disinformation.

##### **Assessing Disinformation Risks**

GDI will cooperate with local partners in 4 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, most likely Nigeria, India, the Philippines, and either Mexico or Colombia, to conduct a set of comprehensive assessments of the local online media ecosystems. GDI selected these countries based on the following criteria: strong levels of internet penetration, high use of online news sources and media, robust media landscapes, key upcoming electoral or policy processes, and dynamic online advertising markets. GDI's local civil society partner groups will be drawn from those working in the fields of media, disinformation, fact-checking, and digital rights.

GDI will conduct a series of 4-6 online trainings for its local partners to apply its methodology to rate the disinformation risks of news sites. GDI and partners will identify up to 40 news sites to analyze, selecting the sites with the highest popularity rankings and social media followers as a way to capture sites with high levels of engagement and therefore relatively greater impact and reach in the overall media market. The framework for the analysis involves identifying disinformation flags that are spread across 4 pillars connected to news domains' structure, content, operational policies, and context. In each country, the review will include an automated broad assessment of news sites' technical metadata and computational indicators to distinguish and filter out news sites that have been hastily assembled to capture advertising revenue. The manual review by experts will then focus on a smaller of the most popular news sites' content, examining sample articles for credibility, sensationalism, hate speech, and impartiality, and operational standards, reviewing rules that domains abide by to establish trust and reliability, such as disclosed policies on conflict of interest, inaccurate reporting, and operational integrity. This will be followed by an independent public perceptions survey of informed news consumers from across the political spectrum to assess the reputational practices, reliability, and trustworthiness of the news domains. Throughout the reviews, GDI will provide research support to its partners, including by validating findings, visualizing data, and providing overall quality assurance for the assessment and ratings process. Building on these assessments, GDI and its partners will produce 4 reports on the local media ecosystems, including disinformation risk ratings for up to 40 of the most popular online media sites. These independent assessments and disinformation risk ratings can be used by legitimate media outlets to strengthen their journalistic standards and practices and by advertisers and ad technology companies to inform their decisions about where to channel their funding.

## Promoting Informed Policy Responses

Upon completion of the assessments, GDI will work with its local partners to identify opportunities to promote evidence-based policy responses to disinformation. This will include informing national policy debates on combatting disinformation and strengthening trust in media, as well as domestic and global-level advocacy with advertising companies and trade bodies to defund disinformation. At the outset of the project, GDI will select local partners based on their ability to engage with diverse stakeholder groups locally, nationally, and internationally. GDI will work with local partners to develop their capacity to use the ratings to conduct dialogue with the relevant actors and to produce policy relevant materials, such as briefs and infographics, based on the risk ratings and media ecosystem report. GDI will also work with its partners to map key policy stakeholders in each country, including major media companies, press and journalist associations, CSOs, advertising trade associations, leading brands, social media platforms, and the advertising technology companies serving the respective markets. GDI previously piloted this approach in South Africa, working with its local partner to engage media companies and press associations on the findings; as a result, some of the largest media companies changed their policies and the national press association updated its code to align with stronger operational and editorial integrity measures. For each country in this project, GDI will support the local launch of the assessment reports through virtual and in-person roundtables where local partners will present the findings for the local media markets. GDI will also support the local partners to lead individual meetings with reviewed news sites to share their scores and respond to any questions, and to present findings to individual stakeholder groups in meetings or webinars as a way to promote stronger standards.

GDI will also collaborate with its local partners to build greater engagement and dialogue the private sector on the challenges of disinformation more broadly, including undertaking strategic policy outreach and leveraging windows of opportunity to defund disinformation. GDI's approach has already begun to gain traction globally, as advertising technology firms, as well as advertising clients themselves, take action based on its findings. For example, as a result of GDI's risk assessments and advocacy, 2 advertising technology firms have blocked the *Russia Today* website from their placements. Meanwhile, clients themselves, concerned over the bad publicity of having their brands appear on disinformation sites, have demanded that the advertising technology firms take action. Building on this momentum, GDI and its partners will develop mutually reinforcing advocacy strategies, through which partners will conduct domestic advocacy and GDI will leverage its global profile and connections to pressure global platforms and brands to engage at the local level. The aim is to use the risk ratings as a well-grounded entry point for discussions with key stakeholders in government, the media, and private sector on disinformation, trust in media, and freedom of information.

## III. EVALUATION PLAN

**Objective:** To deepen understanding of the challenges to information integrity in the digital space

- GDI and its partners will track the reception of the risk rankings of the target countries, including media coverage and feedback from participants in the key stakeholder meetings. The groups' abilities to draw on the assessments to provide new insight into local media contexts will indicate success. Feedback from local media companies and press and journalist associations, as well as the strengthening of operational standards and policies in response to the assessments, will also indicate success.
- GDI will monitor its ability to initiate dialogue with advertising technology firms, brands, and platforms on the country assessments, and to raise awareness about this challenge. The number of meetings and responses from interlocutors will indicate success. Any reduction in advertising on high-risk disinformation sites attributable to this advocacy will be a key indicator of success in

disrupting the financial incentive structure. Any responses from social media platforms and search engines, particularly in down ranking the sites, will also indicate success.



## ATTACHMENT B

### BUDGET

#### PROGRAM COSTS

	Annual Salary	Percent	Months	Total
<b>Salaries</b>				
Senior Research Manager	(b) (4)	(4)		
Junior Researcher	(b) (4)	(4)		
Team Administrator	(b) (4)	(4)		
<b>Benefits, Taxes and Allowances</b>				
Pensions & Payroll Taxes				\$4,171
Health Insurance				\$6,500
				<u>\$10,671</u>
<b>Travel and Per Diem</b>				
3 RT International Airfare, TBD-TBD				\$3,000
Per Diem, 3 ppl x 3 days x \$260.40 **				\$2,344
				<u>\$5,344</u>
<b>Contractual Services</b>				
Disinformation Index Ltd:				
Executive Director	(b) (4)	(4)		
Finance & Operations Manager	(b) (4)	(4)		
PEO Worldwide Ltd: Index Director	(b) (4)	(4)		
Expert Reviews, Research & Report Writing (flat rate):				
* Local Partner, Nigeria	(b) (4)	(4)		
* Local Partner, India	(b) (4)	(4)		
* Local Partner, Colombia or Mexico	(b) (4)	(4)		
* Local Partner, Philippines	(b) (4)	(4)		
Perceptions Surveys (flat rate):				
* Survey, Nigeria	(b) (4)	(4)		
* Survey, India	(b) (4)	(4)		
* Survey, Colombia or Mexico	(b) (4)	(4)		
* Survey, Philippines	(b) (4)	(4)		
Graphic Design & Layout, 3 (flat rate)	(b) (4)	(4)		
<b>Other Direct Costs</b>				
Roundtables, 4:				
Venue				\$758
Refreshments, 75 ppl				\$8,241
				<u>\$8,999</u>

#### TOTAL COSTS

**\$230,000**

\* The grantee is required to use competitive procurement procedures for initial purchase of items with an asterisk and highlighted. If the procurement was previously competed, the purchase does not need to be re-competed as long as the contract is valid.

\*\* Daily per diem amounts may not exceed the rates established by the U.S. State Department, which can be found at:  
[https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per\\_diem.asp](https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp)

*Reminder: Budget flexibility is allowable only up to 15% or \$5,000 (whichever is larger) of the amount of each budget category. Any changes in excess of the flexibility limit require prior approval. (See Grant Provision 7)*

## GDI – Quarterly Narrative Report for NED – September to December 2021

<b>Grant no:</b>	2020-10474		
<b>Grantee:</b>	Disinformation Index, Inc.		
<b>Term of project:</b>	Jul 2020 - Sep 2022 (27 months)	<b>Report for “quarter” ended:</b>	4m ended 31 December 2021
<b>Total amount funded:</b>	\$545,750	<b>Total spend to date:</b>	\$283,996
<b>Amount paid out in current quarter:</b>		<b>Total spend in current quarter alone:</b>	\$27,529
		<b>Amount of grant remaining:</b>	\$261,784

### Project activity

During this quarter, GDI launched media market reports in five countries – [Brazil](#) (a NED-funded country), plus [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [Spain](#) and [Kenya](#) (UK government-funded countries) – and completed reports that will be launched in the first quarter of 2022: Italy and Argentina. Brazil is the final one of the five 2020/21 NED-funded media markets to launch and had the largest audience viewership of all report launches this fall at nearly 600 participants. Additionally, GDI began the partner scoping process for the five 2021/2022 NED-funded countries: Bangladesh, Colombia, the Philippines, Thailand and Turkey.

For the 2021/22 cohort of NED-funded countries, we agreed to focus first on Colombia and the Philippines as both countries undergo election processes in 2022. We can report progress against the following objectives and activities during the period:

#### **Objective 1: Develop key local stakeholder knowledge of (and capacities in) the disinformation risks of their own online news ecosystem**

##### **Activity 1: Strengthen and expand the updated and expert-validated disinformation risk rating approach**

Used lessons learned from 2020/21 countries to update methodology as needed and useful. Similarly, updated the planning process for future work with local partners. GDI developed a full set of guidelines and improvements based on the post-project debriefing meetings with 2020/21 partners, which took place in the fourth quarter. This involved an online partner survey which allowed GDI to collect the same information from all partners, followed by an open-ended discussion with each team to help surface any unknown areas for improvement. These areas of improvement were related to the management of the country project, the methodology and its implementation, training of and communication with the partners, as well as impact management for the report launch. A brief list of known improvements for the 2021/22 project cycle includes:

- An increase in the funding provided to partners to better reflect the true time and resource required of them (2021/22 partners receive (b) (4) whereas 2020/21 partners received (b) (4));
- Engaging partners earlier in the process of planning the launch, and the dissemination and follow-up activities which come out of the project;
- More structured guidance and templates for collecting keywords and domains relating to key disinformation narratives;
- Enhanced training and increased time allocated to the anonymization stage of the content collection process, based on learnings regarding the limitations of the technology and the importance of human quality control for such tasks;
- Doubled the size of sample sets of collected content, based on learnings about making the methodology and its implementation more robust and the research results more representative;
- Developing additional pieces of guidance material for partners:
  1. A new Letter of Agreement that serves as a reference for the framework of our collaboration and more clearly provides context for the partnership;
  2. An External Project Guide which presents, in great detail, the responsibilities of all involved parties (including GDI's) and our expectations for each phase of work;
  3. A detailed Project Timeline that sets out the estimated time commitment for every single element of the work, based on our learnings to date;
  4. Detailed researcher profiles help partners easily advertise open positions on their teams and quickly source good candidates;
  5. A Writing Guide and updated report template which provides editorial recommendations for partners' report authors in advance, thus making the drafting and editing processes more efficient



- for both the partner and GDI and contributing to the maintenance of a standard of quality in the content of all reports;
- 6. An Editorial Style Guide which provides guidance to copy-editors, translators, and graphic designers and ensures quality and standardisation across all reports;
- 7. Revamped video materials for partner training purposes tailored to the revised content of research codebooks; and
- 8. A new set of Pre/Post Surveys to measure changes in skills and confidence applying thematic knowledge (related to our work) over the course of the partnership.

#### Activity 2: Cover additional key media and ad markets entering crucial electoral/political processes in 2022 or 2023

GDI began the partner scoping process for the five 2021/2022 cohort of NED-funded countries (Bangladesh, Colombia, the Philippines, Thailand and Turkey) and is in conversation with prospective partners in Colombia and the Philippines looking to begin in the first quarter of 2022. GDI also conducted partnership scoping in four UK-funded countries (Ukraine, Chile, Indonesia, and Japan) and finalized agreements with the first two in the last quarter of 2021 and the third in the first quarter of 2022.

The partner scoping process is necessarily rigorous and produces two valuable results: a skilled, reliable, non-partisan partner and a map of influential stakeholders operating in the given country or region. The latter serves as a basis for the planning of report launches and supports the work of GDI's Communications and Policy teams. Partners are all respected country anchors, drawn from academia and/or research-driven civil society organisations working on political communications, media development, and digital rights among other tech and democracy topics. We systematically revised our partner assessment criteria to include their willingness, ability and good standing to network and use the Disinformation Risk Assessment ratings for policy engagement with GDI support. Partners were also assessed against our newly developed Media Market Report Risk Register, formalised in an effort to identify, analyse, and preempt potential risks or setbacks within the project.

GDI's Research Associates developed preliminary media lists in all five 2021/2022 NED-funded countries and four UK-funded countries. GDI's Research Associates and Project Manager worked with the partners to identify the key roles within project teams whose agreements had been finalized. These roles include researchers who assess domain operations and content; cleaners who anonymise articles and play a key role in minimising bias; and a research supervisor. GDI learned in phase one that the project kick-off is a crucial time to connect the Communications teams from both organisations to begin planning the report launch and best leverage the outputs of the project. This planning process now takes place in parallel with the actual research and includes identifying the intended local audience for the research and designing the tools, events, or forums that will be used to reach them. Simultaneously, GDI's designated Research Associates provide the partner with a framework for mapping additional key online media sites in each study language(s). At this stage, partners are also asked to contribute context-specific disinformation narratives to GDI's global topic list and, for 2021/22, are supported with an improved methodology for this.

#### Activity 3: Support local partners to use risk ratings as an evidence-base to anchor their country work on disinformation

GDI developed a suite of research training materials and guidance for each component of the media market assessment methodology. Based on our learning from previous studies and on the country partners' feedback, the following improvements have been realised:

1. Integrated a training process for Cleaners – members of the team who anonymize the articles used in the Content pillar review. This involves a new training video and an exercise in which Cleaners clean a sample of articles and Research Associates check for understanding and uniformity and provide feedback where necessary.
2. Expanded the Cleaners' instruction guide to provide additional support in response to feedback received in past project retrospective meetings.
3. Implemented a new process to scrape news domains for article collection, resulting in a considerably faster turnaround time in our data collection phase. The previous method took 14 days for each scrape; the new process takes two days. Since article collection usually requires two to three scrapes, the new process is saving us considerable time.
4. Re-assessed two indicators to address concerns raised by local teams. Although conceptually justified, these indicators turned out to unfairly penalize a small subset of domains that focus on certain communities, topics, and geographical areas.
5. Introduced new questions in the Content pillar review to capture evidence that flags the enforcement of domains' good practices and/or policies regarding the quality of the journalistic sources used in the articles and the attribution of the elements used in the articles (such as statistics and external media). These questions were added on the basis of the questions piloted during the Australian country study.
6. Significantly improved our proprietary online platform to allow for more flexibility in the equitable and randomized distribution of articles to review, in case our team has more than the minimum number of required reviewers (two) and/or requires onboarding extra content reviewers.

For each media market, at least 2 key risk factors have been identified based on research findings, which can be addressed in follow-up activities such as policy recommendations, best-practice recommendations for media, etc.:

**Brazil** – Half of the Brazilian outlets in our study were classified as having a high or maximum risk of disinformation. The sites that were assessed tended to score poorly on sensationalism and bias levels in their article content, suggesting non-neutral reporting. They also lacked funding source transparency and policies for ensuring content accuracy and attribution.

**Australia** – Only three out of 34 outlets were identified as high and maximum risk in Australia. In order to address disinformation risks within the media landscape, Australian domains should be more transparent about their policies to ensure the accuracy of stories before and after article publication. Australian domains should also disclose more information about their funding structure.

**Canada** – Suggested improvements for the news media market mainly concern disclosure of operational policies. Operational improvements can be achieved by publishing more information on the policies and practices regarding the sources used in their articles and the attribution of elements like statistics and external media. Canadian domains could also publish more editorial guidelines on journalistic content and editorial responsibility.

**Spain** – Most media sites in Spain were classified as having a low risk of spreading disinformation. Still, Spanish domains can improve their overall risk rating by following standard journalistic practices like using an opening fact-based lead and a byline. Most Spanish domains also lack transparency about their policies for ensuring the accuracy of the stories they publish.

**Kenya** – Only four of the Kenyan domains reviewed were classified as having a high or maximum risk for spreading disinformation. Within the Operations pillar, Kenyan domains must strive for greater transparency on their policies regarding pre-publication fact-checking and post-publication corrections.

**Argentina** – More than 90% of assessed Argentinian sites exhibited a medium, high or maximum risk of spreading disinformation. Those domains can considerably reduce their risk rating by implementing article bylines as part of their standard practice. Argentinian domains should be significantly more transparent with their operational and editorial policies.

**Italy** – More than a third of Italian domains in our study were classified as high or maximum risk in our index. Italian domains scored particularly low on their publication of policies for ensuring content accuracy and attribution. In terms of the content of their articles, Italian domains should ensure to include byline information and a standard introductory fact-based lede.

*Reminder of Objective 1 metrics:*

*Metric 1.1.1: At least five improvements (based on learnings from previous studies) are incorporated into GDI's methodology and process for the 2021/22 countries. Country partners' feedback evidences a more efficient and impactful project process than in the first phase.*

*Metric 1.2.1: At least 2 key risk factors identified per media market, based on research findings, that can be addressed in follow-up activities (policy recommendations, best-practice recommendations for media, etc.).*

*Metric 1.2.2: Findings, recommendations, or research techniques/methods used during the project are carried forward into future work by country partners, with or without GDI. This might include policy advocacy, media/journalism-related programming, further research projects, or similar, based on the partners' core focus and competencies.*

## **Objective 2: Promote policies to defund disinformation and rebuild the trust and resiliency of media**

### **Activity 4: support the development of viable local and global policy solutions to defund disinformation**

Forecast to begin in April 2022. In the interim, GDI has hired a Senior Policy Advisor who will support the development of strategic policy influencing plans and drive more impactful event launches. The office is also preparing to expand its in-house communications capacity to develop more ambitious report distribution plans and to produce more thought pieces, and additional, possibly comparative reports based on a digest of our growing country reports data.

**Mexico** – Data Cívica in Mexico held a workshop in which they discussed how to improve news sites' editorial practices and transparency based on the GDI country study. The audience was composed of around 30 people – predominantly news editors and journalists. Data Cívica reported that the audience was very responsive and satisfied with the guidance they received.

**Brazil** – Following the launch of the Brazilian Media Market Report, local organizations working in fact-checking and media standards reached out to GDI to inquire about training in methodology, to discuss opportunities for collaboration on local counter-disinformation initiatives, and to learn more about working with ad tech. We are in communication with them about potential next steps.

#### **Australia**

- Following the receipt of their risk rating report card, the Head of Digital and Head of Marketing and Communications at Sky News Australia contacted GDI to better understand their performance and rankings to inform their strategy and digital product.
- Following the receipt of their risk rating report card, the Managing Director of Publishing at Nine Entertainment contacted GDI to better understand the scores of three news domains in our study that he manages – *the Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, and *Australian Financial Review*.
- Following the receipt of their risk rating report card, the Social Media Editor of *the Australian* (of News Corp Australia) contacted GDI to better understand their performance and rankings to inform their strategy and digital product.
- Following the launch of the report, GDI was contacted by the UK Government, Department of Health and Social Care, UK COVID-19 Vaccine Security. GDI was asked to demonstrate the work we carried out and share observations/lessons learned from HSA disinformation and internal misinformation in Australia.

#### **Canada**

- Following the receipt of their risk rating report card, La Liberté applied and secured government funding to improve their policies and other operations, with an aim to set an example for other small media.
- Following the receipt of their risk rating report card and a call with the GDI team, the Executive Director of Strategy and International Relations for CBC/Radio-Canada organized a call with GDI to go through all the parameters GDI assesses in-country evaluation in detail. They asked both about the content and operational dimensions of our work but focused predominantly on the latter because that is where they scored the lowest.
- Following the receipt of their risk rating report card and a call with the GDI team, the Editor of Le Devoir decided to implement all of the operational aspects recommended by GDI. GDI put him in contact with our Canadian counterpart at the Journalism Trust Initiative to support the audit and revamp of their website.
- The Canadian team is working on a think piece on the basis of GDI's methodology; it is expected to be published in early 2022 in *Policy Options*, the Institute for Research on Public Policy's online magazine.

#### **Spain**

- Academics working on Spanish and UK discourse analysis contacted GDI to inquire about receiving training in our methodology and to discuss opportunities to produce additional articles and comparative analyses using GDI's existing data. We are in communication with them about potential next steps.
- The release of our report was covered by [AP Madrid](#) and [Asociación de Periodistas de Santa Cruz de Tenerife](#).

**Kenya** – Following the completion of the partnership, our partner organization (who works across several South and East African countries) encouraged us to re-engage in the regions in the coming years. They reported that the domains that were reviewed in our first African studies actively contact them to ask when there will be a repeat of the study. These domains are interested in a second assessment so that they can showcase the improvements they have made to their operations and content following the first study.

**Italy** – Uptake of recommendations to be reported following the launch of the report in the media market in Q1 of 2022.

**Argentina** – Uptake of recommendations to be reported following the launch of the report in the media market in Q1 of 2022.

*Reminder of Objective 2 metrics:*

*Metric 2.1.1: Production by country anchor of a set of clear recommendations to build resilient media for key stakeholder groups.*

*Metric 2.1.2: At least one documented uptake of recommendations in each media market, such as changes made by media outlets directly, contributions by the partner to changes in public policy, incorporation of recommendations by local press bodies or ad industry groups, or similar.*

#### **Objective 3: Provide tech solutions for ad industry to redirect ad funding from high-risk sites to high-quality journalism**

Activity 5: leverage country findings for local and global efforts with advertisers and ad tech companies to defund ad-supported online disinformation and fund trusted media

GDI worked with four of the 2020/21-funded country partners (in India, Malaysia, Mexico, and Nigeria) to leverage the individual report findings in those media markets (identified constituencies and policy opportunities) and the partners still continue to do so.

*Reminder of Objective 3 metrics:*

*Metric 3.1.1: 11 ad tech ecosystem organizations are using GDI products to divert advertising funding away from disinformation risks and toward high-quality journalism. GDI is working with these organizations to derive a dollar value for the redirected spend (note: ad techs are naturally reluctant for 'outsiders' to be privy to this data, as it evidences how much of their clients' advertising spend they have historically 'wasted' by directing it to disinforming domains – we are working to formally agree with them that the information will be shared under strict confidentiality terms and only with GDI's funders.)*

*Metric 3.2.1: Risk ratings for at least 30 news websites in each of five media markets (total of 150+ new domain ratings) pass requisite quality assurance checks, indicating a successful and high-quality research process, and are incorporated into GDI's inclusion and exclusion lists for use by the ad tech industry in defunding disinformation. Note that GDI's quality assurance process includes a step in which partners vet the results of the study and lend their contextual expertise to its validation, but is otherwise external to the projects, conducted by a separate GDI team.*

*Metric 3.2.2: Ad tech organizations are using GDI data products specifically in the new markets covered by this project, to defund disinformation in these emerging democracies.*

### Some wider context for GDI's work

During the quarter, we published ***The Business of Hate: Bankrolling Bigotry in Germany and the Online Funding of Hate Groups*** ([report](#) co-authored with Institute for Strategic Dialogue, or ISD, a prestigious UK think tank).

We identified and investigated 17 right-wing extremist groups and entities operating in Germany using 20 different payment methods and services to solicit financial support from followers. Since publication, we have followed up with those payment platforms to bring their attention to the exploitation.

In short, half of the 20 platforms contacted by GDI have already responded positively and taken all possible action within their means. GDI continues discussions with the remaining platforms.

Also, during the quarter, we published a [report](#) outlining how Spanish-language disinformation about COVID-19 is being funded by online advertising.

Finally, some press coverage that GDI received during the quarter:

- In this [piece in Marketing Week](#), GDI's work is referenced in the context of monetisation of content that goes against the scientific consensus on climate change (published November 9, 2021).
- [The Drum reported on](#) the Association of Online Publishers' Crunch 4.4 event ***Understanding the increasing sophistication of misinformation & disinformation: how can we reframe the content agenda?*** A panel of experts, including GDI's Clare Melford, addressed some of the impediments to making disinformation a thing of the past (published October 1, 2021).

Signature	(b) (6)
Name	Clare Melford
Position	CEO
Date	31 January 2022



## GDI – Quarterly Narrative Report for NED – April to June 2021

<b>Grant no:</b>	2020-1116 / 2020-10474		
<b>Grantee:</b>	AN Foundation / Disinformation Index, Inc.		
<b>Term of project:</b>	July 2020 to September 2021 (extended)	<b>Report for quarter ended:</b>	30 June 2021
<b>Total amount funded:</b>	\$545,750	<b>Total spend to date:</b>	\$207,769
<b>Amount paid out in current quarter:</b>	Nil	<b>Total spend in current quarter:</b>	\$101,910
		<b>Amount remaining:</b>	\$337,981

### Project activity

The scheduled (virtual) launches in Malaysia and India in May had to be delayed to the end of June owing to the impact of COVID-19 on partner organizations. Delays in the release of the Mexico and Malaysia reports were also related to political tension and upheaval in country; we planned both launches with specific care to elections and governmental issues.

In summary, this quarter saw the launch of GDI media market review reports for India, Malaysia and Mexico (in both English and local language, and all countries funded or partly funded by NED).

Although it is early days, we are already seeing impact locally; in Malaysia, for example, national media sites are mentioning and using the risk ratings to frame national discussions and debates on how to combat disinformation. Examples of press coverage:

***Malaysian media have 'medium to low risk' of disinformation, study finds***

<https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/582483>

***'Advertisers have responsibility not to fund clickbait disinformation'***

<https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/582466>

*The same article was carried in Yahoo News:*

<https://sg.news.yahoo.com/advertisers-responsibility-not-fund-clickbait-004900146.html>

***Unclear fake news definition could lead to oppression*** <https://themalaysianreserve.com/2021/07/12/unclear-fake-news-definition-could-lead-to-oppression/>

***'Media perlu gesa kerajaan bantu masyarakat dapatkan maklumat yang benar' (Astro Awani)***

<https://www.astroawani.com/berita-malaysia/media-perlu-gesa-kerajaan-bantu-masyarakat-dapatkan-maklumat-yang-benar-307593>

Beyond the media market report, GDI was able to contribute to specific project ideas around gender discrimination disinformation in Malaysia and to local partner CIJ's gender-based violence work planning.

### Some wider context for GDI's work

We signed 5 new licensing deals in Q4\*; this brings our total number of licensees to 11 and means that the 'GDI Dynamic Exclusion List' is currently embedded in the systems of 8 global ad tech companies, including IAS, Peer39 and Oracle (3 of the key players). We are working with three licensees to quantify the advertising dollars diverted from disinforming domains as a result of GDI's work.

We continue our pilot project with (b) (4)

[REDACTED]

We are funded by Argosy Foundation to produce, in 2021, a digital catalogue of ad-funded disinformation which will assist partners and policymakers as they put forward policy recommendations to disrupt disinformation. The database reached beta testing phase during Q1 and is currently with trusted research partners for QA.

(b) (4)

Finally, our press coverage during the quarter included a front-page [article](#) in The New York Times citing GDI's research on the dramatic drop in reach of Trump's statements once the bullhorn of the social media algorithms is removed.

Signature	(b) (6)
Name	Clare Melford
Position	Director
Date	30 June 2021

## GDI – 2m Narrative Report for NED – July and August 2021

<b>Grant no:</b>	2020-1116 / 2020-10474		
<b>Grantee:</b>	AN Foundation / Disinformation Index, Inc.		
<b>Term of project:</b>	July 2020 to September 2021 (extended)	<b>Report for 2m ended:</b>	31 August 2021
<b>Total amount funded:</b>	\$545,750	<b>Total spend to date:</b>	\$256,437
<b>Amount paid out in current period:</b>	Nil	<b>Total spend in current period:</b>	\$49,668
		<b>Amount remaining:</b>	\$289,313

### Project activity

GDI has now incorporated the ratings developed for India, Mexico, and Malaysia into its data product offerings; one of the world's largest global advertisers is currently piloting the implementation of our risk ratings for their ad buys in Malaysia. That company also buys programmatic advertising in India and Mexico, and we will seek to implement GDI risk ratings in those countries too as the relationship scales.

This period, we turned our minds to evaluation of GDI's impact; specifically, to how we might measure the demonetization achieved through uptake of our risk ratings by brands and/or ad tech platforms. We have just partnered with a trusted ad tech analytics organization which has shared data with GDI on a confidential basis. This has enabled us to estimate impact to date in terms of reducing the \$ ad spend sent to disinforming sites on the open web (i.e., not including 'walled gardens' such as Facebook). The data shows that in the 15-month period March 2020 to September 2021, the number of bids sent to the c.1200 sites on our DEL almost halved, from 0.9% of the total inventory tracked by the analytics organization, to 0.49%. The decrease might sound small, but it represents c\$100mn diverted from the worst disinforming domains on the open web.

In terms of policy impact, it is still a little early in the process to assess any policy changes which may take place on the back of our research work in the 2020/21 NED-funded countries, given that the launch of the reports has only recently taken place in four of the countries (including [Nigeria](#) in July). However, all sites included in the NED-funded reviews were provided with a copy of their individual index results, and 10 have thus far engaged directly with GDI desiring to improve their practices/policies and their risk rating. We are confident that further impact will be seen in 2022 and beyond on the basis of our experience in previous media markets: for example, GDI's endorsement was placed on the front page of the "[White Paper on Disinformation](#)" written and published by the main US advertising agency trade body, the 4As. More recently, Congresswoman Lori Trahan's recent Social Media Data Act also [draws on GDI's work](#), and Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and Mark Warner (D-Va.) led a group of 11 senators in a [letter](#) that called on Google to strengthen the enforcement of its policies regarding election-related disinformation (and cited GDI's study).

### Some wider context for GDI's work

We signed 3 new licensing deals in this period, bringing our total number of licensees to 14. GDI's 'Dynamic Exclusion List' ("DEL") is now embedded in the systems of 10 global ad tech companies, including IAS, Peer39 and Oracle (3 of the key players).

(b) (4)

We also published our second Bankrolling Bigotry [report](#), this time focusing on hate groups in Germany (ahead of the September federal elections there).

Finally, GDI took first place in the prestigious U.S.-Paris Tech Challenge, sponsored by the U.S. State Department's Global Engagement Center. The prize (\$100,000 of funding) will be used to develop our technology in other languages. The addition of another government on our list of funders will also help with diversification.



Signature	(b) (6)
Name	Clare Melford
Position	Director
Date	31 August 2021