

ADP-Raseef22 Media Focus Group: Data Journalism in the Arab Region

Beirut, 30 March 2017

Enhanced open data facilities and increased provision of statistics in the Arab region offer journalists a new source of “interesting and new stories” that can contribute to unravelling societal controversies and highlighting political and economic marginalization and injustices. Indirectly, journalists have at hand a powerful tool that can contribute to holding policy-makers and actors in the position of power accountable. This is a role that is fully practiced in North American and European media outlets. Other regions are also following suit. However, only recently did journalists in the Arab region pay attention to the power of data as an investigative tool and as a promising platform.

In previous times, information was scarce and the efforts of journalists were devoted to gathering information from different sources, e.g. through direct interviews, field visits, desk research (to a certain degree), etc. where personal contact is key. Now bigger data flow is more easily available and offer Arab journalists an opportunity to explore other means of reporting, i.e. that of what is referred to as “data journalism”. As such journalists need to have the basics: (1) how to process and analyse data, (2) how to present data that is comprehensible by the general public. The focus should not only be about analysing and visualizing data only, it is rather about using the numerical data as a tool to produce fact-based, verified, engaging and relevant reporting and to produce data-driven stories in an appropriate and attractive way. In brief, data journalism is bringing sense and structure to the never-ending flow of data and present it in a relevant way to the mass.

The above and other subjects will be discussed thoroughly in ADP-Raseef22 Media Focus Group on Data Journalism in the Arab Region, which will bring together 20 journalists. The Focus Group Meeting will look as well into the developing trends in data journalism and create an opportunity to share experiences, best practices and knowledge while addressing the below:

Is getting stories from data considered journalism? Where does the Arab region stand in this? Are data on the Arab region available and accessible? What are the challenges that the journalists face when covering the Arab region? What are the needs of journalists to be able to play a more active role in making sense of the flow of data?

Proposed Agenda

9:00 – 9:30	Introduction
9:30 – 11:30	<p>Open discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Why is data-driven journalism important? ▪ Data journalism as a way to tell richer stories ▪ Challenges of data journalism in the Arab region ▪ Access to data in the Arab region ▪ Journalists knowledge on how to work with data
11:30 – 12:00	Coffee break
12:00 – 13:30	Big data and the future of journalism
13:30 – 14:30	Lunch break
14:30 – 16:30	<p>Data journalism techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finding the meaning/story in datasets ▪ How raw data can be turned into eye-catching visual stories ▪ Data journalism tools ▪ Best practices
16:30 – 18:00	TBD