

EVALUATION REPORT 2022

Executive summary

Libya

Media in Libya: Stability through Reconciliation

Background

Between March 2017 and October 2021, DW Akademie implemented the project “Media in Libya – Stability through Reconciliation” (MLSR) funded by the European Union and the German Federal Foreign Office. The project aimed to contribute to the Libyan transition process by facilitating the access of the Libyan people to unbiased news and information. It consisted of four activity clusters (AC) targeting: media governance (AC1), disinformation and fact-checking (AC2), the professionalization of independent journalists (AC3) and the support of media content production (AC4). While clusters 1 to 3 were implemented by lead applicant DW Akademie, cluster 4 was implemented by co-applicant Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR).

As part of a larger evaluation project, consisting of baseline, interim and final evaluations, DW Akademie mandated the Center for Evaluation (CEval GmbH) to conduct the final evaluation of the project. While MLSR activity cluster 4 was evaluated between December 2020 and January 2021, the final evaluation of clusters 1 to 3 began in August 2021 and was completed in April 2022. The main goal of the final evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of MLSR through its achievements in relevant targeted areas. Further tasks included estimating the likely longevity of the MLSR project effects, identify (un)successful project strategies and

any potential room for improvement, as well as to offer recommendations.

The OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact served as guideposts in evaluating the development and status quo of MLSR at the end-line; a comprehensive assessment of the project’s efficiency in terms of a systematic cost-benefit analysis was outside the purview of the evaluation. Furthermore, MLSR was also assessed on project implementation and steering, in particular with respect to project adaptations and the involvement of project stakeholders.

The final evaluation was largely cumulative. However, formative elements pertaining to the design and implementation of current and future projects in the realm of media development were also incorporated.

Within the context of the final MLSR evaluation, and apart from the primary mission to assess MLSR effectiveness, a second task was realized against the backdrop of DW Akademie’s continued efforts to support the development of the Libyan media sector through its new EU-funded project “Media in Libya: Immune to Disinformation” (ML-ItD). Much like MLSR, the overall objective of ML-ItD is to provide Libyans with improved access to independent and accurate information. In pursuit of this objective, the project focuses on profes-

sional fact-checking, the safety of journalists and network analysis. Capitalizing on the thematic interconnections between MLSR and ML-ItD, baseline data was collected in order to describe the situation at the beginning of ML-ItD, thereby laying the foundation for an assessment of its achievements by the end of the project.

Methodologically, the evaluation was based on a theory based, participatory and mixed-methods approach; it made use of baseline, midterm and end-line data and analyzed cause-and-effect relations through recourse to contribution analysis, and thus by reference to the project’s intervention logic and the corresponding hypothesis. Data collection encompassed an analysis of project documents and secondary data (desk research), guided oral interviews (held virtually) with all relevant stakeholder groups, and online surveys completed by DW Akademie alumni from clusters 2, 3 and 4 and by the target groups of DW Akademie’s civil society partner organizations. Data analysis entailed the content analysis of all qualitative data from interviews, surveys and documents as well as any descriptive and inferential statistics in relation to quantitative survey data.

Project Evaluation Results

Project implementation and steering

Throughout the project cycle, several adaptations were required, which were found to be appropriate, especially against the backdrop of the highly volatile operating environment in Libya. The agility and flexibility of the project stakeholders can be identified as one of the success factors of the MLSR project’s implementation. Likewise, the shift in focus from the institutional and systems level to the individual level that took place over the course of project implementation and in the face of the political

and security situation in the country, was also justified. However, in part due to this shift, results on the individual level outweigh results on the institutional and systems level, which remained very moderate overall (see effectiveness).

In the midst of project implementation, a profound conceptual change of AC2 was accomplished, when the goal of establishing a Libyan media network was substituted with an anti-disinformation initiative. This adjustment proved to be pertinent and timely in view of the emerging “information war” in the coun-

try. Changes also occurred in relation to AC3, although less profound in nature and mainly focusing on implementation (including blended and online training modalities, and new training workshop subjects). Despite certain limitations, those changes were also appropriate, especially considering shifts in the Libyan context and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally speaking, in terms of the capacity development components of MLSR, the DW Akademie and IWPR’s practice-oriented training approach, the excellence of the trainers and the recruitment process for training participants

were key to the success of these components. AC4 implementation was rated as overall very successful, although two changes (in response to administrative issues and then the COVID-19 pandemic) decreased the scope of the project despite IWPR's capacity to deliver.

Stakeholder involvement, overall, was also adequate, especially given that, throughout the project, DW Akademie established closer ties to local Libyan partner organizations (such as the CSO network). DW Akademie thereby indirectly strengthened their presence on the ground and also laid the groundwork for MLSR's sustainability, as CSO partners are now able to function as multipliers to further disseminate the expertise they have developed. In addition, DW Akademie was quite successful in including a diverse spectrum of Libyan media professionals into the MLSR's implementation, not only through the careful selection of AC2 and AC3 training participants but also the cooperation with Libyan CSOs catering to the needs and interests of ethnic minorities and risk groups in the country. This achievement was found to be particularly valuable in view of one of the overarching goals of DW Akademie, namely contributing to reconciliation in Libya.

Relevance

The evaluation showed that MLSR's main areas of intervention, namely in capacity development (AC3, AC4) and the anti-disinformation initiative (AC2, including journalist safety) were of great relevance to the further development and professionalization of the Libyan media system, especially in terms of contributing to the provision of independent, reliable and unbiased news and information. At the same time, the evaluation found that the need remains to put yet more emphasis on affecting change on the institutional level (Libyan media outlets) as well as on a systems level (the regulatory framework) in order to truly change how journalism is practiced in Libya.

In view of the detrimental role of targeted misinformation and disinformation in Libya, the evaluation confirmed the relevance of the "Immune to Disinformation"

(ItD) project and the measures planned within its framework. The relevance of the project not only lies in the goals it pursues, but also in its likely effect on the sustainability of MLSR achievements in terms of fact-checking and anti-disinformation work (i.e., AC2 outputs and outcomes).

Effectiveness – MLSR goal achievement
According to the results of the MLSR final evaluation, the achievements at the individual level (especially, AC2, AC3, also AC4) are the most prominent results of MLSR, while achievements on the institutional level (AC1, also AC4) are much more moderate in comparison. That said, and taking into account the dependency of DW Akademie on other actors to affect change on these levels, it must be concluded in retrospect that the results and outcomes aimed for by DW Akademie's MLSR project on the (public) institutional and systems level were possibly too ambitious.

AC1 was the least successful in terms of goal achievement: The intended outcome of the cluster (a framework for a free, independent and democratic Libyan media system) was not achieved. The tense security situation in Libya, the lack of political unity and the corresponding absence of institutional partners in the country led DW Akademie management to decide, in consultation with the EU, to limit AC1 activities to the support of institutions that did not require the direct involvement of state authorities. The most significant accomplishment in AC1 was thus the establishment of the Citizen Service Libya, which contributes to the availability of reliable and relevant information to Libyan citizens across the country, although a number of challenges limit its ability to fully and effectively fulfill its mandate.

MLSR's greatest achievements were seen in AC2 and AC3. In AC2, tangible achievements include the qualification of professional Libyan fact-checkers, although further room for improvement exists, including in relation to the fact-checkers' soft skills and in terms of advanced fact-checking. On the institutional level, the buildup of the Truth Seekers Centre (TSC) fact-checking platform is certainly

MLSR's most significant achievement. In addition, the fact that several other fact-checking platforms were created in the follow-up to DW Akademie's fact-checking modules – Tahara, Annir and Falso are the most promising – is another relevant result of MLSR.

In AC3, significant achievements were accomplished in relation to the enhancement of the capacities and professionalization of individual journalists. Furthermore, due to the (continued) advancement of a number of journalistic trainers, there is now a basis on which capacity building can continue independent of DW Akademie. Nonetheless, this potential has thus far not been fully exploited. Further, limitations to AC3's effectiveness are rooted in the scope of journalist professionalization within MLSR and the editorial guidelines of Libyan media outlets, which potentially hinder the full valorization of professionalization achievements.

With respect to AC4, the Voices for Change project model included intensive training and coaching of selected partners as well as the production of concrete deliverables. Content-wise, the evaluation shows a marked increase in individual professional knowledge and skills as well as in organizational capacity for strategic planning and management. The published media products clearly demonstrate the intended shift from classical reporting to a more engaging storytelling style.

Impact - positive and negative long-term changes

The evaluation showed that MLSR has, as of yet, not produced any measurable achievements on the systems level of the Libyan media system (in terms of a free, independent and democratic Libyan media system). Instead, the limitations to the freedoms of expression, information and opinion found at the beginning of the project cycle persist. Due to the very narrow political framework conditions and limited space to operate on the system level, DW Akademie was not able to make any significant changes on the level of the Libyan media system. Ongoing polit-

ical and societal divisions, quarrels over state power, the tense security situation hindered change and systematic impact. Nonetheless, the professionalization of Libyan journalists accomplished in clusters 2, 3 and 4 can be considered an important foundation for making a positive impact on the level of the Libyan media system once the necessary preconditions have been met (the end of armed conflict, and a unified and stable government, including governmental institutions). In order to be able to make such contributions, changes are required on the institutional level, especially in terms of how Libyan media outlets and training institutions understand the role of journalism (as reflected in editorial guidelines and journalism programs at Libyan universities).

While no broad-based achievements can be attributed to DW Akademie's MLSR project on the impact level, it is worth

highlighting DW Akademie's contribution to reconciliation on the micro-scale during MLSR trainings, which brought together professionals from all over the country, engaged them in a fruitful and peaceful exchange and contributed to the development of personal and professional relationships that should not be underestimated. Journalists are important multipliers that can either fuel division and conflict or engage in conciliatory efforts. Thus, the achievements made, albeit on a micro level, are potentially important on a broader scale for the future.

Sustainability

The evaluation results show that the greatest prospects for the sustainability of the MLSR project in the longer run are at the level of trained individuals, who (plan to further) apply and possibly disseminate the knowledge and skills they have acquired to others. The extent to

which their new competences are valorized, however, depends on factors other than their own motivation and engagement. Again, the institutional environment in the country is a key factor, be it the willingness of Libyan media outlets to allow their journalists to apply and disseminate these skills sets, or be it in the form of Libyan CSOs disposing of the necessary resources to engage in dissemination efforts.

Selected Recommendations

In terms of project planning and the articulation of project goals and results, DW Akademie project staff is advised to thoroughly consider the operating environment in which the project is to be implemented, and to carry out a rigorous and unsparing risk assessment. DW Akademie project management should maintain the displayed level of flexibility to successfully maneuver in a highly volatile environment, in which not everything can be fully foreseen.

If at some point the political situation improves and opens space for more interaction with state officials, discussions on legal framework conditions for free media, cooperation with state institutions such as universities, efforts should be made to directly target those actors to allow for system level change in the media sector. In the meantime, it is essential to stay in touch with the stakeholders that have been trained during MLSR or with whom DW Akademie has cooperated previously in order to keep up the hope for change once the situation allows. DW Akademie project staff is also strongly advised to capitalize on the local capac-

ities. The skills of trained trainers should be valorized more strongly in any future DW Akademie-supported capacity development activities, for example for training and awareness raising activities as part of the "Immune to Disinformation" project.

It should be standard practice for another future project to systematically analyze the resources and particular strengths of project partners and to together develop options that deploy these to the benefit of overall goal achievement.

In order to foster the sustainability of MLSR results and outcomes, the ML-ItD project team should continue the targeted support of the TSC platform, other Libyan fact-checking initiatives and MLSR-trained fact checkers. In order to address the most pressing issues during the remaining project phase, a thorough needs assessment should be carried out, together with representatives of the project's target groups and entities, based on the results of this evaluation. Given the limited resources and partial capacities of Libyan fact-checking initiatives, net-

working among these initiatives, pooling resources and complementing each other's strengths is a promising strategy.

Selected Recommendations formulated on the basis of the AC4 evaluation implemented by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)

Make use of the initial experiences gained by following up with a fully virtual training mode for further online trainings. New components should be integrated that foster the community and networking aspects of the online training.

A stronger focus could be laid in the curriculum on the organizational capacity of partners, in terms of management, strategic planning and financial decision-making, since all contribute to the production and dissemination of high-quality content. The systematic collection and reporting of key metrics should be included as a deliverable, and the session on analytics and utilization of this data for strategic planning should be emphasized in the training in order to

equip the partner with long-term organizational skills.

An additional exchange session for trainers could help to coordinate the training sessions content-wise and provide a briefing on the progress of the various partners. Furthermore, including at least one further follow-up session in the contract to assess the production process as well as the key metrics and reactions to the publications would enable a more sustainable learning process for the partners.

A final facilitated online feedback session with the participants to document lessons learned and suggestions for improvement could be a very effective additional M&E tool to gather useful feedback on the implementation and content of the training sessions.

Text edited by DW Akademie.

DW Akademie

is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue.

DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. We also receive funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in more than 70 developing countries and emerging economies.

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