



Akademie

Made for minds.

EVALUATION REPORT

Executive summary Palestinian Territories and Jordan

Scaling up Media and Information Literacy and supporting
emerging women journalists

Background

In 2021, the Palestinian Territories and Jordan were ranked 132 and 129, respectively, out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index. In both places, authorities restrict free access to information, especially in the digital realm, and intimidate journalists for political reasons. Over half of the respective populations are under 25 years old. Particularly in Jordan, this demographic has surged in recent years due to the settlement of Syrian refugees, mainly in the Northern regions and the capital, Amman. For young people, social media is by far the most important source of information and means of communication. Just like everywhere around the world, false information and hate speech abound on social media with young people particularly exposed. In addition, there is stark gender inequality in the Palestinian media landscape. Even though many more women than men graduate from journalism programs, only very few women work as journalists, let alone as media executives.

The DW Akademie country project under evaluation, funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), aims to address these challenges with two project components,

one for the Palestinian Territories (also addressing Palestinians in Israel) and one for Jordan. The two components work toward a common project objective to support “young people—especially young women in the Palestinian Territories and also refugees in Jordan—to use and produce media independently and on equal footing.” Both components aim to scale up the promotion of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) among youth, in particular by integrating MIL into school curricula and extracurricular activities. The Palestine component also aims to strengthen gender equality in the media.

The objective of the evaluation is to enable organizational learning at DW Akademie, support strategy development for the next project phase (planned for 2023-2025) and provide accountability to the BMZ. The evaluation covered the ongoing project phase running from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2022. An impact study conducted as a part of the evaluation also included activities from previous project phases. The evaluation was kicked off in December 2021 and concluded with a change workshop with the main stakeholders on April 8, 2022. The assessment was based on the standard six OECD/DAC criteria. In addition,

it focused on the cross-cutting criterion of adaptive capacity. Each of the criteria was broken down into a set of specific evaluation questions which form the basis for the conclusions presented below.

The evaluation combined two evaluation approaches, namely a contribution analysis of the whole project and a qualitative ex-post impact assessment of MIL activities in the Palestinian Territories. The impact assessment considered activities from the current as well as two previous project phases (2014-2016 and 2017-2019). The evaluation relied on qualitative methods, including document analysis, 24 semi-structured individual or group interviews (mainly remote), 7 focus group discussions with a total of 50 high school students (34 female, 16 male), and an interactive Theory-of-Change workshop with the project teams. Initial data collection coincided with the publication (on February 7, 2022) of the report of an external investigation into allegations of antisemitism against individual staff members of DW and individual partner organizations. Its publication led to delays in data collection which, however, did not affect the validity of the evaluation results.

Project evaluation results

Relevance: Both project components are consistent with the policy objectives and strategies of the BMZ and the German federal government. They adequately address the needs and priorities of the project partners who confirmed that activities are planned jointly and that DW Akademie regularly includes the partners’ ideas in the advancement of the project strategy. The Jordan component, for example, is closely aligned with the national MIL strategy, published in 2019.

Both project components reacted in a timely and adequate fashion to changes in the broader economic, political, and social context. The Palestine component faced the triple challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic (since 2020), the flaring up of hostilities between Palestinians and Israeli armed and security forces

(since May/June 2021), and the gradually shrinking spaces for civil society. It reacted with changes to the project strategy and specific measures to address these developments, all in close coordination with partner organizations. In addition to challenges and delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Jordan component was mainly affected by high personnel turnover both at the main partner organization and all levels of government. Overall, the relevance of the project is rated as “comprehensively fulfilled.”

Coherence: For the purposes of this evaluation, internal coherence was defined as the complementarity of the project activities to the partner’s own efforts and as the synergies among the partners of each project component. The activities of both country components are complementary

to the partners’ efforts. However, both components did not fully exploit the potential for cooperation and synergies among partners. For example, although the Palestine component had identified synergies among partners as a strategic priority for the current project phase, progress in creating these was successively hampered by pandemic-related travel restrictions, a replacement of the project team, the worsening security situation, and uncertainties and delays of some project activities after the publication of the external investigation report.

External coherence was rated rather high for the Jordan component. The work on integrating MIL into the national school curriculum and promoting it in youth centers fills a niche hitherto not addressed by international media development in Jor-

dan. At the same time, activities funded by other donors now also make use of the MIL training materials and the MIL trainer pool created together with the Jordan Media Institute. As for the Palestine component, many avenues for more synergies with other donors (such as UNESCO) exist, in particular cooperation on a flagship MIL center in the West Bank, to be built by the partner organization Pyalara. However, the Palestine component did not fully develop its external coherence for the reasons already cited above. Overall, the coherence of the project is rated as “partially fulfilled.”

Effectiveness: The project set itself very ambitious quantitative outcome indicators. In the judgment of the evaluators, based on a thorough analysis of monitoring data and the project’s Theory of Change, both indicators will most likely not be reached by the end of the project period. The main reasons for this are delays in the achievement of four of the six underlying output targets, which in turn stem from the rescheduling of activities necessitated by the pandemic and the reshuffle of the project team—both of which were outside the control of the project staff. Although the contribution analysis showed some minor inconsistencies in the Theory of Change, these mainly result in a possible underestimation of goal achievement and do not compromise the overall soundness of the Theory of Change. It is therefore likely that many of the project’s indicators will be reached at a later stage (e.g. during a possible follow-up project).

Pursuant to its focus on adaptive capacity, the evaluation specifically looked at how flexibly and effectively the project dealt with emerging needs and changing contexts. Apart from the external challenges addressed under the relevance criterion, the reactions to two developments proved to be important for the implementation of the project. First, the project adapted very swiftly and effectively to the challenges presented to teambuilding and effective collaboration by the pandemic. Therefore, the DW Akademie project team was able to keep the negative impact on its internal process to a minimum. Second, the publication of the external investigation report in February 2022 caused a major disruption of the project’s Palestine component. The evaluation shed some light on possible

reasons for why DW Akademie handled the report’s publication in a way that was met with criticism by the Palestinian partner organizations. Overall, the effectiveness of the project is rated as “partially fulfilled.”

Efficiency: The assessment of this criterion focused on the internal efficiency of administrative processes at DW Akademie, the role division between the project teams and the partners, and the degree to which the project’s responses to various crises were cost sensitive. Two evaluation questions regarding DW Akademie’s regionalization strategy and the funding modalities of BMZ projects, which are also discussed in the efficiency section, did not factor into the efficiency assessment as they lie outside the project’s sphere of influence.

The evaluation found that the efficiency of internal processes at DW Akademie has improved in recent years due to an increase in administrative staff and an enhanced cooperation between DW Akademie’s contract and financial administration (PAD) and the program divisions. A remaining challenge cited by partners and project staff alike is the time needed to finalize both long and short-term contracts. Efforts by the project teams and PAD to assist partner organizations in fulfilling the administrative requirements by DW Akademie are largely seen as helpful and effective.

In addition, the evaluation found that there is some degree of disagreement between DW Akademie and the partners about the role division regarding the regional MIL network and the MIL center in the West Bank. However, this does not result in inefficiencies but rather highlights the need for a strategic decision by DW Akademie as to which role it wants to play in both contexts in the future. Whereas a thorough cost-benefit analysis was outside the scope of the evaluation, the qualitative assessment did not find any signs of cost-insensitivity. All in all, the efficiency of the project is rated as “overall fulfilled.”

Impact: The first part of the impact assessment pertains to the whole project and is based on the contribution analysis. As the outcome targets had not yet been reached (see above), the evaluators mainly assessed the impact the project is likely to make presuming the outcome

is realized at a later stage. As previous phases of the Palestine component have had a major impact by helping to integrate MIL into the school curriculum and promoting extracurricular MIL activities in selected schools, the planned MIL center in the West Bank will very likely play an important role in scaling up MIL education through extracurricular activities. Likewise, the work of the Jordan component to integrate MIL into the national school curriculum has the potential to improve MIL skills among youth nationwide. The evaluation found no unintended overarching effects of the Jordan component. As for the Palestine component, it has had the unintended positive consequence that the use of online tools promoted by DW Akademie through their partners during the COVID-19 pandemic will make it easier to include final beneficiaries from the Gaza strip in future activities. The tensions and challenges in the relationship with the partner organizations that followed from the publication and handling of the external investigation report stands as a negative unintended consequence.

The second part of the impact assessment considers the long-term effects of the project line that aims to strengthen the MIL skills of high-school students in the Palestinian Territories and has been implemented by the partner organization Pyalara over three project phases (2014-2016, 2017-2019 and 2020-2022). The qualitative impact study found evidence that interviewed beneficiaries acquired and/or improved their skills in accessing information and media, analyzing and critically reflecting on the acquired information, acting on their learnings regarding MIL and creating media content themselves. Overall, the students rated the extracurricular activities as very useful and confirmed that they had contributed to positively changing their use of the internet and social media. All in all, the impact of the project is rated as “overall fulfilled.”

Sustainability

The assessment of sustainability focused on the capacities of partners to sustain the outcomes of the project without long-term support from DW Akademie and on the project’s contributions to strengthening these capacities. In both project components, the efforts with the highest potential for sustainability are those focused on

promoting MIL in various forms in the public school system as there is a high stakeholder buy-in, continued political support, and a willingness among partners to continue these activities. High staff turnover at partner organizations, as well as limited financial means to continue activities after disengagement from DW Akademie, pose the greatest threats to the sustainability of both components.

The project was successful in strengthening the resilience and organizational capacity of the partner organizations to some degree. Positive examples are the provision of psycho-social support and capacity building in physical and digital security for partners in the Palestinian Territories and the building of capacities in project steering, networking, and stakeholder management in Jordan. At the time of writing, it was unclear how seriously the publication of the investigation report would affect the sustainability of project activities in the Palestinian Territories. Overall, the sustainability criterion is rated as "partially fulfilled."

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 approximately 60 developing countries and emerging economies.

CONTACT

Dr. Laura Moore
Head Research and Evaluation
laura.moore@dw.com
Berlin, Germany

 DWAkademie

 @dw_akademie

 DWAkademie

 dw.com/newsletter-registration

 [dw.com/mediadev](https://www.dw.com/mediadev)

The objective of the external evaluation is to provide a constructive assessment of the project results. It does not necessarily align with the perspective and planning of DW Akademie. Nevertheless, all findings were discussed in order to allow lessons learned to be incorporated into the development of future strategies.