

EVALUATION REPORT 2019

Executive summary

Lebanon

Beyond Radicalization: Youth in Lebanon Speak Up

Background

This final evaluation assesses the joint Lebanese-German project “Beyond Radicalization: Youth in Lebanon Speak Up!”, which was implemented by DW Akademie from March 2016 to February 2019 and financed by the European Union and the German Federal Foreign Office. The project aimed to strengthen young people’s capacity in Media and Information Literacy (MIL). Parts of the project will be continued by a regional project funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

This is a unique pilot project in Lebanon, due to its linkage between peace building and MIL. It applied a training of trainers approach across several levels, involving three local co-applicants and working with additional public and private schools as well as local civil society organizations (LCOs). The project coordinates with the Ministry of Education and Higher Edu-

cation (MEHE) and joins forces with the Media Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut (MDLAB), the Jesus and Mary School (JMS) and the Permanent Peace Movement (PPM) as co-applicants. Gender equality among the target groups (both students and stakeholder and trainers) is clearly evident in the project indicators and is characteristic of the human rights-based approach. The project was steered by a DW Akademie project manager, based in Lebanon, with backstopping from DW Akademie headquarters in Germany, the staff of the co-applicants, and the support of international trainers.

The evaluation was conducted by an independent external evaluator from April to June 2019. It applied both qualitative and quantitative methods, participative and standardized approaches. Desk review, individual interviews, focus group interviews, the analysis of produced media and

answers to a standardized questionnaire were all triangulated.

Results for each OECD/DAC criteria were evaluated through a five-level approach: “very good” (goals fully achieved), “good” (goals generally achieved), “reasonable” (goals partially achieved) and “weak” (goals mostly not achieved) and “very weak” (goals not achieved). Each result (effectivity) and objective (impact) was assessed following this five-level approach. An indicator was achieved if there was a corresponding match to the original objectives. The achievement of the indicators represents the level of success of the respective result or objective.

Project Evaluation Results

Relevance was evaluated as “very good”: Most stakeholders and target group members confirmed the relevance of the project. The main arguments for the importance of MIL capacities were the still growing influence of social media and the overall political situation in Lebanon – as a state dependent on external subsidies, with decreasing development indices, contradictory political communication, and the tensions within the population due to the country’s inability to adequately and inclusively approach the long-standing refugee situation.

Trainers and youth confirmed that young people do not find their preferred topics sufficiently and suitably represented in traditional media. This motivates them to seek alternative media, such as social media. Social media is used by both trustworthy journalists and political propaganda actors. For that reason, trustworthy journalistic information unintentionally reinforces the public trustworthiness of inappropriate, false or hate messages. It therefore remains crucial to enable young people to access

information of various content types and from various sources.

Efficiency was evaluated as “good”: In terms of resources, the program performed as planned. Among the three co-applicants, the NGO PPM and the school JMS, also provided strong support for administrative tasks. Moreover, the project cooperated with four additional schools and LCOs. On the one hand, the program was active across different regions of Lebanon, which involves travel (logistical expenditures) and lost time (managing appointments). On the other hand, the inclusion of several types of target group – such as LCOs, private and public schools including marginalized groups in all regions of Lebanon – was a central part of the project’s concept.

The technical and intercultural experiences and capacities of the DW Akademie project manager, based in Lebanon, whose background combines journalism experience with regional knowledge from Syria, Lebanon and Germany, were of crucial importance for the project.

Effectivity and impact were evaluated as “good” to “very good”: The overall aim of the project was mostly achieved. At least 180 young people improved their capacities in identifying and critically assessing information at different levels, such as in messenger group discussions, on social media and in traditional media as well as interpersonal communication. The project’s main approach was hands-on training in media production (mobile journalism elements) as an instrument to promote self-directed experiences on how information can be investigated, interpreted and communicated. The UNESCO’s MIL steps provided the guidelines for the structure of the trainings. However, the project was hampered by the distance to its partners, which were located in four different regions of the country. Therefore, visits and workshops – at least in Bekaa, Tripoli and Chihim – were sometimes time consuming to organize and implement. Short-notice requests from partners in the regions could not always be responded to in time. The conceptual approach of trainers from Beirut coaching local peer multipliers may not have

been sufficiently flexible nor entirely suitable. The manual on MIL training can be seen as a success story, since it combines training capacities with MIL and peace building knowledge. Finally, it appears consistent that most of the youth reached have a better idea of conflict preventive behavior in regard to communications and most of these are enabled to communicate investigated stories on social media. Mutual understanding between the various groups could have been strengthened more. The contribution of the project to civic participation and peace in Lebanon can be assumed, although being of limited outreach.

Impact and sustainability were evaluated as “reasonable” to “good”: In particular, peer multipliers demonstrated a willingness to continue using their capacities in the critical assessment of information at all levels – personal, in their family or community, and the media. However, there is little evidence that those capaci-

ties would be used further in the context of interactive media publications. The participatory development of the training manual increased the commitment of the co-applicants and therefore the overall sustainability. Any impact at the level of the MEHE was very limited, due to a lacking systematic approach to advocacy work. Such a goal may have been too big for the program, since providing political advice and engaging advocacy would require different political networks, opportunities and approaches. However, it can be presumed that the program did provide fresh ideas through its regular reports to the ministry and its close cooperation with the JMS. Although MIL is not part of the official curricula, it can be expected that some of the teachers reached by the project will integrate elements of MIL in their lesson plans, although less systematically than during the project period.

Selected Recommendations

Develop a MIL trainer’s manual early in the project that also includes inclusive approaches according to the “leave no one behind” principles, and is based on the concept that gender, religion, local social context, age and education shape the different needs and capacities of target groups.

At an early stage of the project, implement a condensed training of trainers, who are then each responsible for a defined region and/or topic. The creation of a network of local freelance trainers could improve sustainability, if they can offer their capacities to other development organizations or NGOs once the project ends.

The geographic outreach of a project should be in balance with the budget and any logistical challenges. While diversity of genders, religious affiliations and social status can improve the success of the project – if used for intercultural exchange – a too ambitious geographical outreach can become a logistical challenge and put the quality of the outcome at risk.

Project goals at the political level should be defined based on coherent fact-finding and an analysis of the influence any future program could have at the political level.

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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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