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Made for minds.

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation Report
Executive summary Lebanon

Relevant information for all: Empowering refugees
through media and exploring media viability strategies
in Lebanon

Background

Lebanon has the most free, diverse and active media landscape in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Yet nearly all outlets depend on the patronage of political parties, wealthy individuals, or foreign powers that strongly influence the political orientation of coverage. Local watchdog groups say summonses, interrogations and complaints filed against journalists have increased. In addition to these political constraints, the Lebanese media market—similar to most media markets in the region—suffers from a precarious financial situation.

At the same time, Lebanon now has the world's highest proportion of displaced people. Syrian and Palestinian refugees face the gamut of official and societal discrimination, occasional violence and economic hardships. The presence of refugees is seen as a problem among many Lebanese, with anxieties stoked by political slogans, media scare stories that promote fear, and perceived injustice.

This is in brief the context that informs the two objectives of DW Akademie's Lebanon project, which is part of DW Akademie's regional program "Freedom of expression and media development in the Middle East". The program is financed by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the overall project period is 2017-2019.

The project objectives at the outcome level are twofold, each informing its own project strand. 1: Young people participate in social discussion by using media. 2: "Media Viability": Selected media from the MENA-Region to be strengthened in their viability.

Within these two project strands a variety of activities have been accomplished during the last two years. In strand 1, the Campji Facebook-platform was established, which young refugees use to report about refugee camps in Lebanon, particularly the Shatila camp in Beirut. Furthermore, courses were set up in Shatila to improve young people's media and information literacy (MIL). In project strand 2, the brand "Digital Media Viability Lab" (DMVLab) was established by DW Akademie and project partner Maharat Foundation. DMVLab conducted media management training courses and organized international exchanges. As the project is ongoing (until the end of 2019), further activities will follow.

Conclusions of the project evaluation

Relevance: Concerning project strand 1 ("Shatila"), all stakeholders interviewed saw the need for public participation of young people and refugees through media. Similarly, the objective of project strand 2 ("Media Viability") of strengthening media viability in the region was supported by all stakeholders interviewed. Each project strand is well justified and consistently broken down into objectives and outcomes and measurable output indicators. In a fragmented state such as that of Lebanon, governmental documents should inform a project like the one under evaluation, but should also look at what politically marginalized groups need. The project is doing that to a great extent. In conclusion the criterion Relevance is assessed as "comprehensively fulfilled".

Effectiveness: Consolidating the citizen platform Campji has been fully achieved despite a very insecure period after the exit of B&Z as local project partner. All indicators and activities are on track in project strand 1. In general, the objective at outcome level and the respective indicator 2.1 for the project strand "Media Viability" are ambitious. Two of three outputs have been achieved, while the third has been adapted to better cater for the needs of sustaining quality journalism courses. In general, the project was very effectively managed despite the fact that the DW Akademie team had a tough time with saving Campji and finding a new project partner. In conclusion the criterion Effectiveness is assessed as "overall fulfilled".

Efficiency: For the DW Akademie team it was challenging to keep Campji going after B&Z had left, which took time and caused extra work and higher expenditures. Still, these efforts were necessary because otherwise DW Akademie would have run the risk of losing the whole project strand. On the second project strand, Maharat Foundation worked efficiently. Several interviewees from different stakeholder groups criticized the general DW Akademie administration for low salaries, long delays in paying salaries and complicated administrative procedures. Additionally, project amendments are considered a challenge to efficiency by interviewees from the implementing stakeholder group. Money has to be spent at short notice. In conclusion the criterion Efficiency is assessed as "comprehensively fulfilled".

Impact: Campji (project strand 1) has increased its impact enormously. With daily postings on the Facebook platform, a core newsroom team and a total of roughly 35 500 channel subscribers, Campji could consolidate its work over the evaluated project phase. This is particularly remarkable after all the challenges the project faced throughout 2018. All in all, the project strand "Shatila" has had a wide and diverse positive impact. The media management training (project strand 2) had an impact on the participants' knowledge and outlook. It particularly increased their knowledge of the economic aspects of media viability and strengthened their confidence that quality media have a chance to financially survive in the region. In conclusion the criterion Impact is assessed as "comprehensively fulfilled".

Sustainability: The major challenge vis-a-vis the "Shatila" project strand is the transition into a broader capacity-building strategy. If the new project partner wins the trust of the young Campji team and manages to focus its activities, there's every chance that Campji will prove sustainable beyond the end of the actual project period. Steps have already been taken to work out a strategy for it to become a viable media institution. The Maharat Foundation is currently trying to build a brand in the "Media Viability" project strand with DMVLab, in order to sustain the project impact and to work on their own financial sustainability. In general, the DW Akademie team commits strongly to ownership and do-no-harm principles, both being an important pre-requisite for sustainability. In conclusion the criterion Sustainability is assessed as "comprehensively fulfilled".

DW Akademie
is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development. As a strategic partner of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), DW Akademie carries out media development projects that strengthen the human right to freedom of opinion and promote free access to information. DW Akademie also works on projects funded by the German Foreign Office and the European Union — in approximately 50 developing and emerging countries.

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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.