

# Refugee media and refugees in the media: Improving the information environment in the MENA region

Evaluation Report | Executive Summary  
Syria and Lebanon

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## Background

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Syrian refugees have streamed over the border to neighboring Lebanon. In the meantime they account for about a fifth of the population. Politically, Lebanon finds itself in a permanent state of crisis. Economically, it is mired in a recession. Social tensions are increasing. The predominantly Arab minority lives for the most part in a parallel society. As a result the Syrian migrants are a highly vulnerable group of people who are disadvantaged in many ways. The DW Akademie project “Syrian Refugees in Lebanon” (2016) addresses this issue with the aim of providing Syrian refugees access to relevant information so that they can publicly exercise their rights. The aim was addressed with two different sub-projects: Together with the Syrian NGO Basmeh and Zeitooneh, young Syrian citizen journalists have been trained to build up and operate an interactive online platform on youth-relevant topics in the Shatila refugee camp. The second sub-project focuses on regional dialogue. The Lebanese NGO Maharat Foundation has been supported to develop and disseminate standards at the regional level for reporting on flight and migration. The implementation was mainly done through the organization

of symposia and through an international conference for media managers from the region. Both sub-projects follow longer-term approaches making measurable effects at the level of the users to be expected only in the next few years. The project year 2016 was therefore regarded as an orientation year for DW Akademie with a view towards the future strategy in Lebanon as a focus country.

The purpose of this external evaluation is to provide a constructive assessment of the project results after the completion of the first year in order to integrate learning experience into the subsequent project proposal. The expert opinion is based on the OECD/DAC criteria and consists of a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, including the analysis of internally collected data and interviews with project partners in the field as well as project managers of DW Akademie.

## Conclusions and lessons learned

The DAC criteria **relevance**, **efficiency**, and **impact** are judged as fulfilled. The DAC criterion **effectiveness** as well as the **quality of the management** are classified as 'partially fulfilled,' as weaknesses were identified in both projects. Potential for improvement is possible in the next phase. An assessment of the DAC criterion **sustainability** is not possible due to the short duration of the project.

The **learning experiences of the DW Akademie team** in the collaboration with Basmeh and Zeitooneh relate in particular to the first half of the project. The breadth of applicants for the citizen journalism trainings should be widened, combined with more intensive selection processes of the candidates. Important personnel decisions should be made in consensus with DW Akademie and project partners. If in the course of the project a training year is divided into stronger and weaker candidates, the selection should be communicated transparently. The regional project component has highlighted the importance of a sufficient preparatory period in the application phase in order to be able to adequately include project partners and media representatives.

## Recommendations

### Basmeh and Zeitooneh

1. Due to the precarious refugee situation, a sufficient number of citizen journalists should be qualified, with a preference for participants who wish to build up a livelihood in Lebanon.
2. The first year of training has shown that it seems more appropriate for the target group if DW Akademie and its partners concentrate on fewer basic formats, which are then practiced in more detail and under guidance in order to ensure safety in the application.
3. The online platform Campji should not only point to educational offers for young people, but also include such offers themselves, for example in the form of video tutorials on professional fields.
4. As of 2017, the offer of the online platform should be expanded to a mobile application that allows the user

to react directly to information and to pass on content to the editorial team.

5. In order to increase the range, a linkage of the platform with the website of Basmeh & Zeitooneh should be considered.
6. Important personnel decisions which concern the project should be made in consensus between DW Akademie and Basmeh and Zeitooneh.
7. At management level, cooperation can be improved in the following areas: definition of responsibilities at the management level, adequate time allocation for smooth project handling, improving communication and, in the continuation phase, taking over responsibility by the project partners from the outset.

### Maharat Foundation

8. The newly trained VJ-trainers at Maharat should also be used in the next phase as co-trainers with experienced colleagues from DW Akademie.
9. As a follow-up to the thematic broad-based Digital Media Viability Conference, individual aspects of economic sustainability can be discussed in greater detail (for example, advertising, strategic planning, and target-group research).
10. Subsequent events may also bring together decisionmakers from various media organizations from the Arab world who are pursuing similar business models to enable a more in-depth exchange of experiences.
11. The selection and involvement of the media companies involved is crucial for the training of media consultants envisaged in the subsequent application. Since this project line is a three-party constellation in which Maharat, DW Akademie, and media companies are involved as stakeholders, it should be reflected how the third group can also be bindingly integrated. In this respect it could be considered to draw up Memorandum of Agreements with the individual media companies. In those then the individual consulting requirements could also be included.

## DW Akademie

DW Akademie is Germany's leading organization for media development and Deutsche Welle's center of excellence for education and knowledge transfer. As a strategic partner of Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development we strengthen the universal human rights of free expression, education, and access to information.

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