

EVALUATION REPORT

# Executive summary

## Mexico | Central America

Growing audiences and strengthening local media:  
Media Viability and Media and Information Literacy in  
violent contexts

## Background

Latin America is characterized by social inequality, violence, and major social problems. Indigenous communities and people in remote or impoverished areas have very limited access to robust media offerings on topics relevant to them. Critical reporting by journalists and local media outlets is often only possible under insecure conditions. DW Akademie addresses this deficit with two strategies, namely by making the ongoing human rights violations visible and strengthening media outlets themselves (Media Viability) and by empowering users to better assess media reports and make their own voices heard (Media and Information Literacy). The project fosters the long-term resilience and viability of independent local media in Mexico, as well as their attempts to increase public awareness of human rights violations. The overall goal is to increase both the relevance of local media outlets and trust in journalists. In Guatemala, the focus is on Media and Information Literacy (MIL). Vulnerable population groups in rural, mainly indigenous, regions and urban peripheries learn to exercise their rights to self-determination and social participation. In El Salvador, two universities joined forces to advance MIL approaches in the educational field. In Honduras, disadvantaged

young people from poor urban neighborhoods were empowered to use the media more safely and to express their concerns in public.

The overall objective of the program is to support “disadvantaged population groups, especially indigenous peoples and youth, as well as those affected by violent conflicts, in their use of the media to claim their social, political and cultural rights and constructively participate in the management of social conflicts.” The expected outcome is to support “independent Mexican media and civil society organizations in the promotion of a broad social debate on human rights violations in areas where freedom of expression is particularly threatened. Organizations in Central America and Mexico are actively promoting Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and a greater presence of disadvantaged youth in the media landscape.”

The project partners in Mexico are the umbrella organization of independent media houses “Periodistas de a Pie (PdP)” and the human rights organization “Técnicas Ruidas (TR)”. The target group encompasses media professionals and committed volunteers from civil society. In Guatemala, the

project partners are ASEC (radio stations and a publishing house), IGER (a publishing and training institution) and Comunicares, a consulting NGO for indigenous regions, while the target group includes the indigenous populations of four separate linguistic regions and disadvantaged youth from the urban peripheries. In Honduras, OYE addresses older young people from disadvantaged segments of society. In consultation with ASEC, the media lab format “AlfabetoMedia” was developed in El Salvador by two universities, UCA and ECMH, to teach media skills.

In addition to the DAC criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability), this evaluation takes a closer look at the issue of efficiency and the cooperative relationship between DW Akademie and its local partners. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the adaptation of the project to the changed framework conditions caused by the pandemic were also examined. Methodologically, the evaluation is based on a document analysis, interviews and focus groups.

## Project evaluation results

**Relevance:** The project convincingly pursues a human rights approach. While the creation of a project with a specifically regional focus was a new development, it was clearly successful, as demonstrated by the transfer of MIL activities to Mexico and the supra-regional networking with important organizations. The directly and indirectly addressed target groups were selected according to need and greatly benefited from the various project measures. In Mexico, a clear delineation of the target group is still lacking. Through the reallocation of funds, many of the ongoing project activities could be adapted and implemented despite pandemic-related restrictions. Face-to-face activities were successfully replaced by interactive digital instruments that will still be useful after the pandemic is over. The project’s relevance is thus rated as “overall fulfilled.”

**Coherence:** When selecting the project partners, care was taken to ensure that the working methods and values of the organizations were coherent with the objectives and measures of the planned project. The transition to online work was a dynamic process, which also accelerated innovative digital productions and stabilized the close exchange between DW Akademie and its partners. The networks and working strategies initiated by the project, such as Campus AMI, AMIDual and the network Red AMI, established sustainable structures and created synergies between the partners in the countries involved and other organizations active across the region, such as with UNESCO in the context of the Red AMI. Overall, the project’s coherence is rated as “comprehensively fulfilled.”

**Effectiveness:** Based on the media viability approach, eight media houses in Mexico were strengthened organizationally and structurally so that their work is more targeted, effective, and able to counter the “disinformation crisis” in Mexico. The media alliance organized by PdP has succeeded in defusing the threat they face. With its numerous events, TR has created new opportunities for directly addressing interested segments of the population and has increased the visibility of human rights violations. In Guatemala, MIL has proven to be a successful education and skills development measure for various target groups. The impact will be most felt in the scalability of the experiences from Guatemala into further project countries. The establishment of MIL in the four indigenous project regions was successful. The part-

ners in Honduras and El Salvador were trained in MIL activities and successfully adapted them to their own needs and contexts. The project's effectiveness is rated as "comprehensively fulfilled."

**Efficiency:** The management structure of the project—with a program director in both Mexico and Guatemala, and an office manager in Guatemala who supported the project's activities in Honduras and El Salvador—proved to be successful. The head office in Mexico needs to be strengthened in terms of staff in order to better reflect the regional nature of the project, especially since local/regional experts ensure an adequate understanding of the socio-cultural context. The management level of DW Akademie in Germany is committed to a participatory working culture, although not all cultural and historical factors were fully taken into account. Communication processes and responsibilities were clearly defined. The cost-benefit ratio is optimal. The flexible reallocation of funds in response to the pandemic has proven to be extremely successful. The project's efficiency can be assessed as "overall fulfilled."

**Impact:** The changes brought about by the project include an increase in reporting on human rights violations in Mexico and the integration of disadvantaged population groups in Guatemala into the media landscape. It can be assumed that young people in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador have become more critical and self-confident in dealing with media offerings. Although not planned, the project also sparked the interest of parents in the indigenous regions of Guatemala for MIL and helped strengthen young people's linguistic and cultural self-identification. The project's impact is thus rated as "comprehensively fulfilled."

**Sustainability:** In Mexico, the solidarity and structured exchange among the media outlets have strengthened the media alliance both internally and externally, in terms of their public visibility, for the long term. Thanks to DW Akademie's consultancy services, the internal organizational structures of various media outlets have been improved for the long term, and PdP could professionalize their work. In Guatemala, sustainable structures have been created, partly through the recognition of MIL concepts within educational policy. Both project partners are financially stable. The enormous commitment shown by ASEC and Comunicares in Honduras and El Salvador are beginning to have a visible, sustainable impact on the cooperation partners there. The project's sustainability is rated as "comprehensively 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.

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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.*