DW Akademie

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Evaluation Report
Executive summary Jordan

Using opportunities of the digital space: Supporting disadvantaged young internet users in Jordan and neighboring countries

Background

In the press freedom rankings for 2018 published by Reporters Without Borders, Arab countries are mostly at the bottom of the list. The countries in the Levant are ranked 132 (Jordan), 100 (Lebanon) and 134 (Palestinian Territories) out of a total of 180 classified countries. At the same time, the societies of these countries have a high percentage of young people. The civil war in Syria has led to a humanitarian disaster in the region and a growing influx of refugees to the neighboring countries Jordan and Lebanon.

The subject of the evaluation is the supraregional project with a focus on Jordan implemented by DW Akademie and financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The period under review was the current approval period (2017 to 2019).

The project was conceived as a pilot project and consisted of a supraregional project line and a project line implemented in Jordan. The project objective in the logframe was, "Relevant actors in the Middle East enable disadvantaged young people, especially refugees, to express their opinions freely and safely." At the regional level, an exchange of digital rights advocacy groups was encouraged with the aim of developing country-specific offerings for young users on digital security and privacy protection online. Moreover, journalists from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region were trained in data journalism. In Jordan, digital and analogue products were created to enable young Jordanians and Syrians to get to know each other better and to dispel mutual prejudices. In the Jordanian governorate of Irbid on the Syrian border, a training program on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) was also established. The project partners included 7iber, Social Media Exchange (SMEX), 7amleh—Arab Centre for the Advancement of Social Media, Leaders of Tomorrow (LoT), the Family and Childhood Protection Society (FCPS) and Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ). Since Jordan is not a focus country for DW Akademie, the measures implemented had a pilot character. Based in Bonn and Berlin, the project team implemented the project in remote management mode.

A theory-based evaluation design was chosen for this evaluation. Contribution Analysis was the key methodological approach. To a limited extent, Outcome Harvesting was applied. The evaluation of the project's developmental effectiveness was based on the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. In February 2019, the primary data collection took place as part of an evaluation workshop and a group discussion with DW Akademie in Bonn, the subsequent field phase in Jordan and Lebanon and by means of Skype interviews.

Conclusions of the project evaluation

Relevance: It can be confirmed that the objectives of the project corresponded to the media-relevant objectives and guidelines of the BMZ. Similarly, the regional focus and the focus on Jordan were in line with the BMZ's development policy objectives. The project can be assigned to the key strategy field "Social Participation" of DW Akademie's strategic model. As far as Jordan is concerned, it can be confirmed that the country's media development goals were sufficiently taken into consideration. Partly brought about by the project itself, the commitment of the Jordanian Ministry of Education to MIL is undoubtedly a relevant opportunity for DW Akademie. According to the findings, the target group definition in the project objective formulation was to be geographically confined to the Levant and the focus on refugees replaced by an inclusion of refugees. The self-perception of project partners remained ambivalent as to whether they perceived themselves primarily as recipients of funds, as project partners or as beneficiaries of DW Akademie. The project partners made efforts to identify the needs of the target groups, which included digital needs in particular. While all project partners praised the flexibility of DW Akademie and the freedom granted in the design of measures, project partners relevant to the regional project line A, which was aimed at informal networking, complained about a lack of participatory involvement in the project concept. The project team did not take enough advantage of the opportunity offered by increases in funds to make all necessary adjustments to the logframe. Based on findings which point out that, although the development orientation of the project was generally highly relevant, the concept of the regional project line A was not sufficiently based on sound needs analyses among the project partners, the Relevance criterion is assessed as "overall fulfilled."

Effectiveness: The results logic was mostly conclusive and coherent, but the project strand dealing with the qualification of journalists and developed with additional funds and a set theme remained detached. The target values of five of altogether ten indicators are expected to be achieved by the end of the project term. One will either be achieved or partially achieved, depending on the definition, and the remaining target values will only be partially achieved. In the project line implemented in Jordan, the objectives of the two strands were appropriate in principle. However, as part of the reconstruction of the intervention logic, adjustments had to be made to the output formulations. In the regional project line, the output formulations of the project strands were only partially appropriate. The digital rights advocacy groups in Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories did not jointly develop products on digital security and privacy protection. They developed these products separately and just exchanged experiences and knowledge. The results level of the output formulation of the project strand on the qualification of journalists was too high. Evidence on the achievement of the result formulated in the logframe can presumably only be provided subsequent to the

completion of the cash-funds project period (end of April 2019), as even though DW Akademie initiated the measures, it will not accompany the implementation of the activities until their conclusion due to the limited contract period. Since the individual measures, products and tools in all strands were original contributions, the results observed were derived from the activities conducted by DW Akademie and its project partners. However, the unique selling points of the conceptual approaches varied. Unintended negative effects were not observed directly but could be anticipated in one project strand. Since the partly incomplete achievement of intended outputs and target values of indicators was primarily due to theoretical errors and not implementation errors, the Effectiveness criterion is rated as "overall fulfilled".

Efficiency: Despite the travel costs of the project team, it can be assumed that remote management was more cost-efficient than possible operational costs of local office structures. The allocative efficiency was highest where proportionality of financial expenditure and results was given and/or per capita expenditure was low. The allocative efficiency was lowest where results did not meet expectations or were not sufficiently verifiable and/or administrative costs and/or per capita expenditure were high. The project partners' own contributions were mainly focused on the provision of technical expertise and networks. According to the project partners, remote monitoring did not have any negative effects on the co-operation. Depending on the organizational strength and implementation capacity of project partners, DW Akademie granted a considerable amount of freedom in the conception and implementation of individual measures. The Efficiency criterion is rated as "overall fulfilled".

Impact: Naturally, a pilot project diversifies its activities and thus the initial impact is less profound. The broad impact of the project also remained limited due to the available resources and the clearly-defined mandate. Broad impact can be achieved through multiplier effects of the training-of-trainers approach and the reach of digital products. Anecdotal evidence on the effectiveness of MIL activities was gathered in a focus group discussion with Jordanian and Syrian youths. The extent to which the measures Digital Heroes and Mo7aka achieved results, such as transfer of knowledge and behavioral changes, could not be answered satisfactorily. The indicators in the logframe did not include coverage targets for digital products, but nevertheless, project partners monitored the coverage. Such statistics, however, have limited informative value regarding the purpose of use. The Impact criterion is rated as "partially fulfilled".

Sustainability: As a pilot project diversifies to put activities to test, sustainability is compromised to the extent that some approaches may only be initiated but not followed up. This implies a focus on the most promising approaches in the application for a follow-up project. It can be assumed that the knowledge gained at individual level will be sustainable. The project partners are not institutionally dependent. The scope of design options and actions granted obviously enabled the generation of an increased sense of responsibility on the part of the project partners. The project partly used existing websites, partly initiated them. Maintenance appeared to be secured, however, further development seemed to be tied to additional financial resources. The Sustainability criterion is rated as "partially fulfilled".

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.