



Akademie

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EVALUATION REPORT

# Executive summary

## Lebanon

Media Viability in Lebanon: Supporting alternative media  
on their path to economic sustainability

## Background

Lebanon is suffering from political paralysis and economic decline. In the last three years, several long-established media outlets have closed and many media workers have lost their jobs. There is a lack of investment and little opportunity for reform. Lebanon's once diverse media landscape is shrinking dramatically—except for the online sector. The core media development problem is the poor quality of reporting in the country, which affects the entire population. In addition, marginalized groups, such as refugees and migrant workers, are discriminated against in traditional and social networks and unable to access information relevant to them.

The BMZ-funded DW Akademie project in Lebanon is expected to run for three years, from January 2020 to December 2022 with the goal of supporting “alternative media in Lebanon, including citizen media dealing with public issues, operate

in an economically sustainable manner.” As part of the program “Freedom of Expression and Media Development in the Middle East/North Africa,” the country project contributes to a common regional overall objective of supporting “young men and especially women in the Middle East and North Africa, including refugees, to emancipate themselves through greater freedom of expression and participation.” The project cooperates with two implementing partners (Maharat Foundation and ARPCA-AI Jana), one cooperation partner (a local non-governmental organization, Utopia), and members of the regional DW Akademie alumni network.

The evaluation draws on DW Akademie's standards for planning and conducting evaluations according to OECD/DAC criteria, with a particular emphasis on the efficiency criterion. The aim is for DW Akademie to gain additional information that can be implemented in the strategy

development of any follow-up projects. The management annex is designed as a separate confidential internal document to the evaluation report. The overarching question is: “How functional is the cooperation management in achieving the development policy objectives?”

The evaluation was conducted from November 2021 to April 2022; the field mission in Lebanon took place from 6 to 13 February 2022 in Beirut and Tripoli. The evaluation design follows the basic idea of method triangulation, thus both quantitative and qualitative methods were used, and the data and information from different sources (project documents, interviews with DW Akademie team, members of partner organizations, trainers, and beneficiaries on site) was combined.

## Project evaluation results

**Relevance:** The objective of this DW Akademie project corresponds to the greatest need, but also the greatest potential for change, in the strategic area of professionalism and economic sustainability. Strengthening the viability of emerging alternative media outlets in Lebanon is very relevant to all stakeholders involved. It also corresponds to the needs and potential for change in the strategic area of social participation, especially in terms of refugees and youth. The project makes an important contribution to gender equality by addressing gender issues and implementing gender components with the partners. The developmental objective of the project is in line with the objectives and guidelines of the BMZ and DW Akademie. The objectives of the implementing partners—Maharat Foundation and ARPCA-AI Jana—are consistent with those of the development measure; a high degree of harmony can be observed here. The project's relevance is thus “comprehensively fulfilled”.

**Coherence:** The evaluation found that the DW Akademie's project measures are consistent with the international and national

norms and standards to which German development cooperation is committed. The project contributes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) included in the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG 5 (gender equality). With its approach to vulnerable groups, the project is committed to the principle of “Leave No One Behind” and the “No Lost Generation” initiative. The DW Akademie project's measures are closely coordinated with other development cooperation actors involved in the media sector in Lebanon. The project's coherence is thus rated as “overall fulfilled.”

**Effectiveness:** The impact logic of the project is coherent. The target values of the outcome and output-level indicators are expected to be achieved by the end of the project period. Learning and steering processes, communication and the exchange with project partners and expert advice from the project team and international and local advisers are rated very positively. Participatory approaches are used intensively in the cooperation with implement-

ing partners and other local partners and are highly appreciated by the partners. By applying a human-centered design, a strong focus is placed on the needs of the target group and a high degree of participation is made possible. No measurable negative impacts have occurred. The project's effectiveness is rated “comprehensively fulfilled.”

**Efficiency:** Goals and objectives were developed together with partners in strategic workshops at the beginning of the cooperation. A capacity development strategy is in place and is assessed as coherent. The personnel structure of the DW Akademie project (internal structure) and the office in Beirut (external structure) contribute to a high degree to the success of the project. The external structure allows for a high degree of flexibility and the expertise of the professionals involved allows for a high level of quality in both the advisory services provided and the project's implementation. Project management in general, both steering and administrative processes, are assessed as very positive and efficient by all stakeholders. One difficulty in the coop-

eration with Maharat Foundation is the lack of clarity in the assigned roles and responsibilities. The project created synergies through coordination with partners and other development actors. The DW Akademie project can be confirmed to be highly cost-effective with careful use of funds. With the escalation of the economic crisis and the pandemic, however, the project's implementation required a considerably greater effort, more resources and more elaborate planning for both the project team and with the partner organizations. Limitations include budget cuts, the fact that the partner synergies were not wholly efficient, and that the partners are only moderately motivated to provide their own or additional resources for a future-oriented continuation of the joint activities. The project's efficiency is thus rated as "overall fulfilled."

**Impact:** Relevant project contributions to medium and short-term impacts can be plausibly assumed. Based on the data available and the stakeholder responses, there is also evidence that results have been achieved at beneficiary level, including among vulnerable groups. An impact assessment in view of the overall development goals is not strongly established within the project's monitoring system. Relevant contributions to cross-cutting issues such as gender equality were observed, and risk monitoring and response is adequate. The impact achievement of the project is strengthened by the fact that models

and approaches set a positive example and are being duplicated by other stakeholders. The DW Akademie project's target groups—media professionals, users of alternative media, and vulnerable groups, such as young people with a history of migration—benefit from media viability, exposure to international trends, new teaching formats, public participation, and more inclusive, conflict-sensitive, high-quality reporting. Whether the impact of the project can be extended to the entirety of Lebanese society cannot be conclusively determined at this point. The project's impact can thus be assessed as "overall fulfilled."

**Sustainability:** The DW Akademie project took appropriate measures to ensure that the results can be sustained in the medium to long term by both the partner organizations and target groups themselves. Sustainable approaches in the field of capacity development were developed, and the strategy was frequently adapted to the rapidly changing framework conditions. The goal of the DW Akademie project was to support the economic sustainability of alternative media, which include community media outlets and organizations that deal with topics of public interest. Sustainability is thus a core element of the assignment, which the project and its partners were able to achieve in the various areas. In general, the DW Akademie team was deeply committed to ownership and do-no-harm principles, both important pre-requisites for sustainability. Active discussions and the documentation of lessons learned are taking place, anchored in a reporting system and used for annual strategic meetings. The project's sustainability is thus 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.*