

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation Report

Executive summary Tunisia

Rural voices: Professionalizing local radios and civil society organizations in Tunisia

Background

Tunisia is considered a rather liberal country from a media-political point of view. The population in disadvantaged rural areas, however, has limited access to information and few possibilities of voicing its concerns and contributing to the public debate. This is even more pronounced with women and youths. The existing local media – mainly local radio stations – are not able to fill this gap in demand. They are lacking the necessary degree of professionalism, sufficient budgets and qualified young journalists. Civil society organizations do not answer these needs for information and participation of the rural population either.

DW Akademie's media development project pursues two objectives that are only interlinked to a limited extent. Project objective 1 in the strategy area of participation in society is: "Disadvantaged groups in the rural areas of Tunisia, in particular women and youths, make use of the services of the local media and civil society organisations to make their concerns public." Project objective 2 in the strategy area of qualifications is: "Disadvantaged groups in Tunisia's rural areas have access to high-quality information, which adequately trained journalists contribute to."

The objectives are primarily to be achieved by means of training and advisory services. The project partners for project line 1 are commercially-run or community-run local radio stations – initially there were six, then seven, and since 2018 only two – as well as selected media-related NGOs. The project partners for project line 2 are the state run journalism institute IPSI and the state-run vocational training centre for journalism CAPJC. A project manager, who was initially living in Tunisia and since 2016 is spending only half his work time in Tunisia, is in charge of the implementation. The regional manager in Bonn manages the country portfolio.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is the project sponsor and the funding period is four years, from 2015 to 2018.

An independent project evaluation took place between December 2017 and April 2018. It was carried out by an external evaluation consultant. An external local co-evaluator participated during the data collection phase in Tunisia. Since a follow-on project is planned, learning and reflection were the focus of this evaluation. The five evaluation criteria of the OECD/DAC (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) formed the basis of the evaluation. At the request of the DW Akademie, the additional criteria "coherence, complementarity and coordination" was added. For these criteria a rating system with a 5-point scale is used: 1) comprehensively fulfilled, 2) generally fulfilled, 3) partially fulfilled, 4) minimally fulfilled and 5) not fulfilled at all.

In addition, for the first time in the Africa evaluations key questions were asked, which explicitly focus on digital aspects of the projects: D1) Digital collaboration, D2) Digital relevance and D3) Digital security. For these digital questions, no assessment was required, but only a section in the report with an inventory and, if appropriate, recommendations.

The evaluation used a mix of methods, but primarily based itself on standard qualitative methods, such as the study of documents, and interviews with project managers, project partners, implementation partners and external experts. The data situation was good and, by means of a triangulation of the results, permitted a differentiated view of the project. The recommendations were discussed with the project team and, as far as they are applicable, will be taken into account in future strategies.

Conclusions of the project evaluation

All interview partners confirmed that the key problem still persists. Local radio stations have the greatest potential to give people in disadvantaged areas a voice. The relevance of qualifying journalists was also fully confirmed. The project operates in an extremely volatile institutional environment. One of the project's main strengths was its ability to respond to the continuously changing framework conditions and situations of the project partners, and to adapt its strategic orientation accordingly. The DW Akademie's approach is consistent with all political strategies and guidelines relevant to the sector. The criterion **relevance** was evaluated as having been "comprehensively fulfilled".

The project objectives, measured against the indicators, will not be fully met by the end of the project. Based on an unfortunate choice of indicators and lacking monitoring information, the exact degree to which the objectives were achieved is difficult to gauge. Also, the initial project planning was too optimistic and conducted without the project partners' involvement. It could only be adapted in the course of the project implementation through active searching and trying out in practice. A great willingness to learn coupled with continuous critical self-reflection contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the project. The decisions resulting from this are well documented and comprehensible.

Most was achieved under project objective 1: the seven funded local radios are now technically, managerially and journalistically in a better position and all of them are still on air. The project has contributed considerably to the success story of Radio Nefzawa, which is regarded as a showcase for community radios. With the support of the project, two major events organized by NGOs in Tozeur and Kebili have given a voice to people in remote desert areas. Furthermore, the project built a pool of local trainers for local radios. Under project objective 2 little was achieved due to the limited capacity of the two governmental project partners. At the same time no alternative strategies were developed and implemented either. All in all, the criterion of **effectiveness** is therefore evaluated as have been "partially fulfilled".

In terms of the outflow of funds, the project is on target. The cost-benefit ratio is reasonable measured against what was actually achieved. Considering the constantly changing political and institutional environment, this opportunistic approach was the best possible one from an efficiency point of view. The staff architecture of a local project team in charge of the detailed implementation and a coordinating regional team in Bonn was functional and decisive for the project's success. The fact that the project primarily

worked with local trainers and consultants is a positive feature. The rigid internal administration of DW Akademie contributed to bureaucratic burdens and caused considerable obstacles to efficiency. In order to bundle strengths, it would be better to establish one joint project objective, rather than two. The criterion of **efficiency** is regarded as having been “generally fulfilled”.

Due to the fact that the project has not been running for a very long time, statements on the impact and sustainability of the project can only be based on the likelihood of achieving these. The project’s results logic is generally convincing and the impact hypotheses are plausible. However, there are hardly any ties between the project lines – neither conceptually nor factually. The activities conducted under project objective 1 have most probably made a contribution – even if it is not quantifiable – to improving the realization of the freedom of information and opinion of people in the rural transmission areas of the supported local radios. The activities performed under project objective 2 have so far contributed little to improving the quality of journalism, in general, nor to that in the rural areas, in particular. The networking between local stakeholders has an impact potential that was only partly exploited. There is little indication that the advisory services offered are being replicated at scale, transferred to other contexts or embedded at a higher, more structural level.

The project’s monitoring system is results-oriented. However, as elucidated above, the formulation of the indicators is not particularly suited to capturing the impact at the outcome level. So far, there is a lot of monitoring data missing at the outcome and target group level. No non-intended negative effects were identified. Overall, the criterion of **impact** can be seen as having been “generally fulfilled”.

The interviewed radio stations appear to have adopted the advice received. This was even more the case with Radio Nefza-

wa. In the experts’ opinion, not all funded local radio stations will survive. Here, too, Radio Nefzawa appears in a better position in terms of having cost-covering revenues and a secure market niche. It was therefore important that the project placed a strong focus in its advisory work on the economic viability of the radio stations. As long as the NGO Rayhana remains a volunteering initiative without secured funding for the core staff, it will be difficult to consolidate the structural improvements. With IPSI and CAPJC, no institutionally rooted changes could be observed, which also had to do with the high staff turn-over at the executive level. Although the local trainers remain onsite, they are not tied to any institutional structure. An explicit exit strategy is not apparent, though this can still be excused, since this is the first project phase. The criterion of **sustainability** is evaluated overall as having been “partially fulfilled”.

The project is in close exchange with other actors in the media development sector in Tunisia, via the donor coordination forum in the media sector, Groupe Médias, and also via personal contacts. The project actively and systematically identified and realized synergies and complementarity with other development organisations. Among other things, it was actively involved in setting the course of the EU programme for media development in Tunisia. Together with the international NGOs Reporters without Borders and Article 19 the project implemented joint training programmes. There is an ongoing exchange between the GIZ and the German political foundations on site. The criterion **coherence, complementarity and coordination** is regarded overall as having been “comprehensively fulfilled”.

Digital issues: The Internet based monitoring system WebMo of the DW Akademie is a useful platform, although some elements are not very user-friendly. The internal administration processes that concern the project could be improved through electronic solutions. According to the statements of all experts interviewed, the digital

transformation is the most important future topic in the media sector, particularly because young Tunisians are very tech-savvy and the Internet coverage in Tunisia is high. The project addressed some issues in connection with this (e.g. training programmes in mobile reporting, improving the quality of web news, advising on social media strategies, etc.), yet so far the digital transformation has not really been a central focus of the project. The local interview partners showed little awareness of the issue of digital security. One challenge in this context is that the local project partners are making less and less use of email and primarily using Facebook Messenger as a communication platform.





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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.