

Evaluation Report 2025 • Executive Summary

Middle East

Lebanon and Palestinian Territories
with Jordan

© João Sousa/DW



Background

The project cycle is marked by the massive impact of the Middle East conflict in the region, especially the war in Gaza following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, and its consequences for the entire Palestinian Territories. In **Lebanon**, a new government has been in place since February 2025, raising new hope for overcoming the country's long-standing challenges. In the **Palestinian Territories**, the scenes of destruction and civilian casualties have deeply shaken Palestinian communities and divided the relationship with Israel and the Western world into a pre-war and post-war period. The extent of misinformation and disinformation has reached unprecedented levels since the war began. In **Jordan** the media are strictly controlled. In all three countries, the media sector has faced further financial strain following

the suspension of US foreign aid, including USAID funding, in January 2025 — a decision that affected numerous countries worldwide.

The subjects of the internal evaluation are the two projects implemented by DW Akademie and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) 1) in Lebanon and 2) in the Palestinian Territories and Jordan during the project period 2023–2025. The project objective in **Lebanon** is to strengthen alternative media and contribute to greater participation of marginalized groups in social dialogue. Main partners are the NGO Maharat Foundation and the NGO Utopia in Tripoli. The project in the **Palestinian Territories (PT)** and **Jordan (JOR)** aims to consolidate civil society organizations and public institutions in such a way that they sustainably

strengthen young people's resilience to disinformation and enable them to engage in constructive dialogue and political participation. The main partner in the Palestinian Territories is the NGO PYALARA, in Jordan the Jordan Media Institute (JMI) and the NGO FCPS (Family and Childhood Protection Society). Both projects contribute to a common regional overall objective: "Strong media and media users protect and strengthen the exchange of information, diversity of voices and dialogue in the MENA region."

The main objective of the regional evaluation is to fulfill the reporting obligation to the donor BMZ and for internal DW Akademie learning. The evaluation is based on the six OECD/DAC criteria and is oriented towards core questions that were agreed jointly with the teams. Based on the document analysis, the evaluator formulated hypotheses that were reflected in interviews with different stakeholder groups. A total of 35 semi-structured individual and group interviews were conducted.

Evaluation results

Relevance

The relevance of the media viability measures implemented in **Lebanon** and the moderation of dialogue formats remained high and were selected in close consultation with the project partners. After the outbreak of war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon in September 2024, the dialogue formats were adapted to reflect the new realities. The Utopia team felt well supported

by the DW Akademie team in this situation, although they would have liked to be able to use the project funds more flexibly for humanitarian purposes as well.

In the **PT** and **JOR**, the importance of MIL has increased during the project cycle, especially the relevance of disinformation, digital security and AI. During the temporary break in cooperation

following October 7, imposed by several European governments including Germany, the PYALARA team continued the joint project activities independently due to the high relevance for young people. In both countries, some events could not take place as planned or had to be postponed due to the war in Gaza. Overall, the tightening of the framework conditions did not lead to any significant changes in the project concept. The assessment of the relevance criterion is "overall fulfilled."

Coherence

In Lebanon, the DW Akademie team and the project partner Maharat

decided to terminate the cooperation a year earlier than planned. The relationship with Utopia developed positively, cooperatively, and constructively. Synergies between the project lines did not develop. However, synergies have developed with projects from other donors in the country.

In the **PT**, a relationship of trust based on mutual respect has developed with PYALARA because of many years of cooperation. In **JOR**, the partner JMI plays a central role in MIL and acts as an important multiplier. Cooperation with the NGO FCPS was constructive, and the team responded flexibly, creatively, and with commitment, even in difficult phases. The regional exchange between the partners was already planned in the project concept and worked well under the given difficult conditions. FCPS benefited the most from this. The regional cooperation is appreciated by all project partners involved, and they are very interested in continuing it. The assessment of the coherence criterion is “overall fulfilled” for Lebanon and “comprehensively fulfilled” for PT/JOR.

Effectiveness

The impact logic of the project in **Lebanon** is coherent. Overall, the indicators are formulated broadly enough to allow room for maneuvering in a volatile context. The internal project logic was not fundamentally changed by the external crises. Except for one indicator, which was formulated too ambitiously, all indicators have already been met or are expected to be met if the activities are implemented as planned in 2025. In addition, the office in Beirut carried out a number of activities that are not included in the indicators. The impact matrix therefore does not fully reflect the project results.

The impact logic of the **PT/JOR** project is coherent as well and the internal project logic was also not fundamentally changed by the external crises. One positive aspect of the impact matrix is the cross-country formulation of indicators. Except for one indicator, all other indicators have already been achieved or are expected to be achieved if the activities are implemented as planned in 2025. Overall, the assessment of the effectiveness criterion is “comprehensively fulfilled.”

Efficiency

The general conclusions for both projects include that 1) the administrative processes in both projects are well established, 2) the selected instruments and consulting formats were functional, but also pose challenges with reduced budgets, especially in the field of media viability; 3) the budget reductions, also due to inflation and war-related cost increases, with a reduction in grant contracts, threaten the ability of the teams to work overall and mean planning uncertainty for the partners and DW Akademie teams. The partners cite DW Akademie’s experience, expertise, access to networks and professional, committed, culturally sensitive staff as unique selling points. Overall, the assessment of the efficiency criterion is “overall fulfilled.”

Impact

In **Lebanon**, the partner organization estimates that the three funded platforms in Tripoli cannot sustain themselves without additional financial support and further mentoring. The challenge for the trained moderators is also whether they will be given opportunities to apply what they have learned to moderating community dialogues after the professional training. The manual of best practices and

recommendations on media viability is likely to have the greatest lasting impact.

The **PT** and **JOR** also face the challenge of utilizing the project results achieved. Due to the tightening of freedom of movement, the number of visitors to the MIL Center has remained lower than expected. In Jordan, the MIL funding approach is impact-oriented and complementary, as the project partners JMI and FCPS enable young people to be reached with MIL measures via the formal and non-formal education sector. However, the impact of the jointly implemented activities is largely outside the sphere of influence of the project. Overall, the assessment of the impact criterion is “partially fulfilled.”

Sustainability

Overall, the project was able to strengthen the resilience and organizational capacities of the partner organizations to a certain extent. This primarily relates to the transfer of knowledge at the operational level: building capacities for project management, marketing and fundraising as well as networking and exchange. Concerns regarding sustainability relate in particular to measures from earlier project phases. This raises a fundamental question that should be investigated: What happens to the trained multipliers when ownership is handed over and/or when DW Akademie is no longer able or willing to fund their assignments? Overall, the assessment of the sustainability criterion is “partially fulfilled.”

Selected lessons learned

1. **Special features of cooperation with NGOs**
NGOs/CSOs see themselves as change agents that usually operate with a few permanent employees and many volunteers. Their motivation is therefore primarily social commitment, and their unique selling point is their proximity and familiarity with the final beneficiaries. Economic principles, such as marketing or acquisition, are often less of a focus.
2. **Cooperation relationships**
The role of partner organizations changes over time and depends on the budget. Long-term involvement in a country opens contacts at all levels of the media ecosystem for DW Akademie. This treasure of human capital has great potential through networking.
3. **Realistic assessment of the sustainability of measures**
It is important to realistically assess from the outset what can be achieved with the available budget. This applies to the target groups, but also to the support of expert pools and networks.
4. **Importance of strategic partnerships**
Entering strategic partnerships—through funding, editorial collaboration or institutional alliances—is helpful to support independent journalism while maintaining editorial independence.

Selected recommendations

1. A cross-country DW Akademie study should be commissioned to examine how jointly developed successful models develop when they are transferred to local ownership.
2. Recommendations for future thematic priorities:
 - Evaluate the experiences with dialogue programs and identify the most successful formats for other Arabic-speaking countries as well, possibly with co-applicants from the field of conflict transformation;
 - Connecting MIL with relevant, innovative topics: Constructive journalism and MIL as well as MIL as an approach for youth AI literacy.
3. DW Akademie's new role as a network facilitator for the Mashreq region: Under the umbrella of the DW community, DW Akademie should establish and promote its own network that explicitly facilitates the exchange of expertise in the Arabic-speaking world. It is recommended that the network coordination office is anchored in the Beirut local office and that a dependency is opened in Amman. The following steps could be considered:
 - Establishment of a Mashreq—DW community distribution list;
 - Dedicated website;
 - Training offers (digital and face-to-face);
 - Regular exchange formats;
 - Strategic network meetings.
4. New financing models to improve the efficiency—impact ratio:
 - A fund for the activity-based qualification of civil society;
 - Instead of grant contracts with few partners, opt for more smaller grants allowing more flexibility;
 - Strengthening the impact through mini-grants for implementation: either through reward models after successfully completed activities or in the form of applications for classic scholarship programs.

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 around 60 developing countries and emerging economies.

Contact

Dr. Laura Moore
Head of Research and Evaluation

✉ laura.moore@dw.com

Follow DW Akademie on



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.