

Call for Proposals/ Terms of Reference

Evaluation of DW Akademie's project Sahel +

**funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation
and Development (BMZ)**

DW Akademie is calling for proposals for the evaluation of its project Sahel + funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). DW Akademie invites interested and qualified persons to submit proposals. These Terms of Reference are to be taken as the basis for the evaluation.

Tender information

Title: Evaluation of DW Akademie's project Sahel + based on the OECD/DAC-criteria, with a specific prioritization of selected criteria and focusing on key questions as identified during the inception phase.

Type of contract: Service contract

Start Date: 01 November 2026

Duration of assignment: The contract will be effective for 6 months from date of signing

1. Introducing DW Akademie

DW Akademie is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training, and knowledge transfer. Its work is based on the conviction that freedom of expression and access to reliable information are fundamental human rights. DW Akademie empowers people around the world to make informed decisions based on independent information, verified facts, and constructive dialogue.

As a team of journalists, consultants, and media development experts, DW Akademie collaborates with partners worldwide to promote freedom of expression, strengthen human rights, and support the development of independent and sustainable media systems. DW Akademie is guided by the belief that journalism, education, and culture contribute to more informed, inclusive, and resilient societies.

DW Akademie's work is guided by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression and access to information. It stands for free media, free expression, and open societies, recognizing that access to trustworthy information and diverse perspectives is essential for democratic participation and social progress.

DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). We also receive funding from the German Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in around 60 developing and emerging countries worldwide.

In Africa, DW Akademie and its partners are implementing BMZ-funded projects in Ghana, Kenya, Namibia and Southern Africa, francophone Western Africa (via the program Sahel +, including Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, and Senegal) and Uganda (with regional component Tanzania).

2. The BMZ-funded project Sahel +

a) Context and project summary

DW Akademie's projects in Africa are currently being implemented over a three-year period from January 2025 to December 2027. During the last year of the projects, an evaluation is scheduled to take place in time to provide actionable information for any subsequent proposals.

The focal points of the project are as follows:

Disinformation and hate speech threaten social cohesion in the Sahel region as well as in neighboring coastal countries. They hinder access to reliable information, particularly for young people and disadvantaged population groups (such as women in rural areas and internally displaced persons in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger).

In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, media freedom and freedom of expression are severely restricted or under threat due to military governments. In Côte d'Ivoire, polarization of the media and society is likely to intensify in the run-up to the 2025 presidential elections, posing risks to peace and security. Limited access to reliable information makes populations in all target countries susceptible to manipulation, exacerbates tensions, and undermines social cohesion. The situation in the Sahel countries has a significant impact on neighboring coastal countries and the wider region. The new Sahel+ program brings together the existing country projects in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, including Mali, Niger, and Senegal, and adopts a regional approach.

With support from DW Akademie, Fasocheck is strengthening the capacities of media professionals in fact checking and security training at the regional level. The organization in Burkina Faso identifies and counters disinformation and provides further training to young journalists, community media, and civil society organizations in the project countries. In Côte d'Ivoire, DW Akademie also strengthens media professionals in the electoral context to identify and counter hate speech.

DW Akademie and its partner organizations establish protected spaces for dialogue and joint learning by and for communities. This is supported by the alumni network "Et si on en parlait" in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as by community radio stations in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. The community radios create formats for dialogue between internally displaced persons, host communities, and authorities, from which aid projects emerge.

With the support of DW Akademie, Centre ESD (Côte d'Ivoire) and EducommuniK (Burkina Faso) are expanding their activities in the field of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) on socially relevant topics, raising awareness of disinformation and advancing regional networking. Regional MIL products have been further developed, and MIL networks expanded.

b) Project aims

DW Akademie's projects follow a results chain that links activities, outputs, and outcomes. Activities include training, mentoring, dialogue formats, and other interventions implemented by DW Akademie and its partners. These activities generate tangible outputs, such as trained media professionals, learning materials, professional networks, or media content. Together, these outputs contribute to the project outcome, which describes the intended change among the project's target groups.

For the Sahel+ project, the intended outcome is:

A network of media professionals, media users, and civil society organizations in the Sahel region and neighboring coastal countries is strengthened in its efforts to counter disinformation and hate speech.

This outcome contributes to a broader regional objective (impact level) shared across DW Akademie's Africa portfolio:

Key actors in Africa strengthen local media ecosystems to promote freedom of expression, social cohesion, and democratic participation. They contribute to diverse and resilient media landscapes that counter disinformation and hate speech through sustainable, high-quality journalism and constructive dialogue, while fostering the inclusive participation of all population groups.

3. Principles and criteria of the evaluation

All evaluations of DW Akademie projects are based on principles that both the contracting authority and the contractor must adhere to. These principles stem from the OECD/DAC and the German Association of Evaluators (DeGEval): Impartiality and independence, credibility, usefulness, participation, feasibility, fairness, and accuracy. In addition to accountability to the BMZ, the evaluation focuses on mutual learning for future project work.

The OECD/DAC criteria are used as the basis for the evaluation design. All OECD/DAC criteria are to be examined (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability).

During the inception phase, particularly at the kick-off workshop, the project team and the evaluators will review and prioritize the six evaluation criteria, refine the proposed evaluation questions, and formulate additional guiding questions where necessary.

Particular emphasis should be placed on identifying overarching strategic questions that are relevant across all evaluations within the Africa portfolio conducted during the current evaluation cycle. These cross-cutting questions will provide a common analytical framework, facilitate comparison across projects, and generate evidence to inform the strategic design of follow-up interventions.

The evaluation findings should contribute to strengthening knowledge management and methodological learning across the Africa department, while also helping to further clarify and sharpen DW Akademie's unique selling point and impact within its fields of work.

Under the impact criterion, the evaluators are requested to identify impact stories which describe our impact on the ground and are suitable to present it to a wider audience.

4. Evaluation process

All proposals received will be assessed according to an internal set of criteria. Following contract clarification, DW Akademie will provide the contractor with the detailed project information. In a kick-off workshop with the project team, priorities and guiding questions will be further determined, including agreeing on how DW Akademie staff can support the evaluator(s) in scheduling and organizing (face-to-face and remote) interviews in various locations.

Based on the decisions made during the kick-off workshop, the evaluator(s) will produce an inception report detailing the evaluation questions, interview partners, methodology and work schedule (a template will be provided).

Data collection trips shall be conducted to meet project partners. The trips will be planned in cooperation with DW Akademie and independently conducted by the evaluator(s). For the data collection phase, proposals can be submitted detailing how and where the team(s) plan to conduct face-to-face interviews and for how many days. The team will be supported by a co-evaluator from DW Akademie during the data collection phase.

At the end of the evaluation process, an independently written report detailing the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation is to be submitted by the evaluator(s), based on a template provided by DW Akademie. A draft version of the report will be discussed in a workshop with the project team, after which the final version of the report is to be prepared by the evaluator(s).

5. Deliverables

The following services are to be rendered on assignment:

- Participation in the kick-off workshop with the project team and evaluation consultant from DW Akademie's Project and Capacity Development Unit (PCD), carried out online
- Inception report (max. six pages, plus appendix)
- Data collection phase — including the preparation and execution of evaluation interviews (face-to-face or online)

- Presentation of the findings in a workshop at the end of the evaluation, during which the results and recommendations will be presented and discussed with the same participants invited to the kick-off workshop, carried out online.
- Final evaluation report of max. 20 pages (plus appendix) in English or German, as well as an appendix containing any additional information that supports the understanding of the evaluation results. This includes research tools such as questionnaires, interview guidelines, and a list of interviewees. Moreover, 2 – 4 impact stories identified under the impact criterion shall be presented in the annex of the evaluation report.
- Additionally, an executive summary in English or German of about four pages, should be submitted. DW Akademie will be responsible for the proof-reading of the executive summaries in English and German, which will be edited by DW Akademie and then published on the DW Akademie website.

6. Application requirements

a) Applicant's profile

Applicants should have experience in designing and carrying out evaluations in the field of international development (including OECD/DAC criteria). They should be proficient in information and data collection and analysis, as well as having excellent analytical skills. Experience in the media sector and in international development cooperation/media development, as well as relevant regional and in-countries expertise, is required. We are looking for teams consisting of experts with extensive knowledge of the region, including any relevant language skills. Fluent French and English language skills are a prerequisite. Ideally, at least one team member of the applicant's team should have long-term experience in the respective local media market(s). Please note that the project documentation is partly in German; however, the main documents can be provided in English or French.

b) Format of the proposal

Interested applicants should outline a coherent proposal for the design of the evaluation. The proposal is mainly intended to assess the competence and motivation of the candidates and will not necessarily be used as a basis for the evaluation itself. The final methodology and procedures will be discussed and agreed upon by the contracted evaluator(s) and DW Akademie at the kick-off workshop.

Furthermore, the applicant's own evaluation expertise as well as the context of the project region, evaluation objectives, methodology, and evaluation design should be described. The specific documents to be submitted are listed below (6 c).

Overall, each applicant can only be contracted for one evaluation. Each evaluation will be awarded separately as they will all be conducted at the same time. Submitting a proposal does not constitute an entitlement to the conclusion of a contract.

c) Budget & documents

The budget for the evaluation is **21,800 Euros** net, including any travel expenses. This amount should not be exceeded.

The following documents should be included in the proposal:

- Cover letter, detailing the suitability of the applicant(s) for the specific evaluation
- CV(s) of evaluator(s), documenting relevant experience, including contact details for two references
- Proposal (max. 6 pages) detailing the proposed evaluation design, including a draft schedule and budget, indicating the honorarium for the entire team, the number of anticipated working days, and any travel expenses.

7. Timetable and deadlines

- Deadline for all proposals: **30 August 2026**.
- Evaluators will be selected by **10 September 2026**.
- Evaluation contract begins on **1 November 2026**.
- Kick-off Workshop: between **mid-November and mid-December 2026**.
- Data collection is scheduled for **February 2027**.
- Draft evaluation report should be available by **early March 2027**.
- Change Workshop is scheduled for **March 2027**.
- Final evaluation report is due by **mid-April 2027** at the latest.

Questions regarding this call for proposals may be submitted until August 16. Answers to all questions received by the deadline will be compiled and shared in the form of an FAQ document. No further questions will be answered after August 16. The FAQ document will be made available upon request via email until August 28, 14:00 (Friday).

Evaluation proposals should be addressed to Sabine Harriehausen and emailed to dw-akademie.evaluations@dw.com. Only electronic formats will be accepted.

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