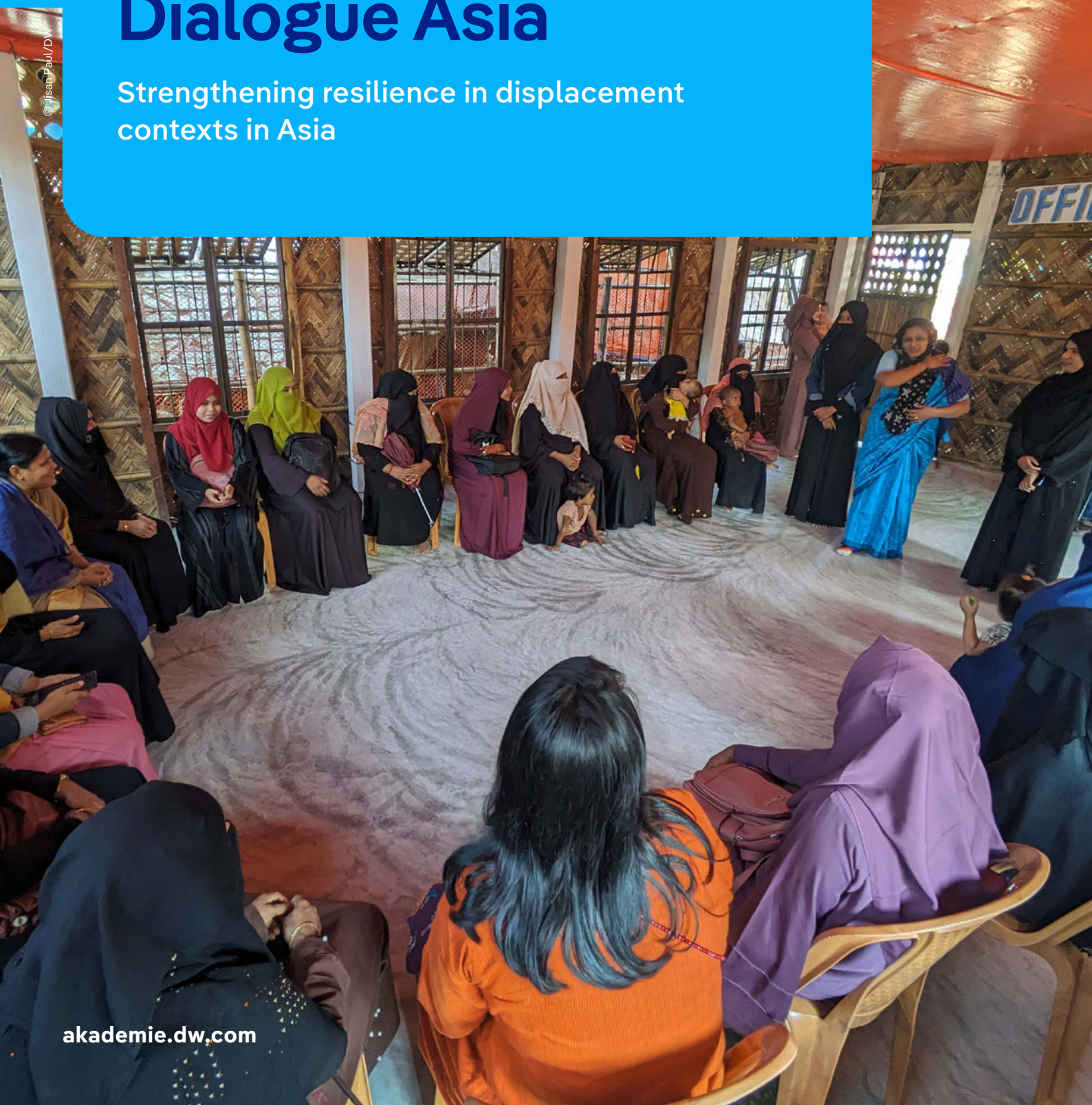


Evaluation Report 2026 • Executive Summary

Displacement and Dialogue Asia

Strengthening resilience in displacement contexts in Asia



Background

Asia is home to some of the world's largest and most protracted displacement contexts. Bangladesh hosts over one million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee settlement. The Bangladeshi government designates them as Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN), a status that does not confer official refugee rights or the right to work. Pakistan hosts approximately 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees, a figure that had grown significantly since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021. Pakistan has since intensified enforcement of its Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan, with close to one million Afghans estimated to have been forced to leave in 2025 alone. In Afghanistan and Myanmar, independent journalism has been effectively eliminated. Independent media outlets have closed or been forced into exile, and the countries are grappling with internet shutdowns and an ongoing economic collapse. Across these contexts, media freedom is severely restricted, displaced communities are blamed for all sorts of problems and their voices are largely absent from national media narratives. Access to reliable, relevant, and locally trusted information is critically limited.

Against this backdrop, DW Akademie is implementing the Displacement and Dialogue Asia project (2024–2026), funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The project supports information services by and for displaced people in Asia, promotes dialogue with host communities and strengthens the resilience

of (exiled) media organizations. In Bangladesh, the project supports Rohingya and Bangladeshi community reporters through training, learning and dialogue activities, as well as the Voice of Palong radio platform, implemented with Young Power in Social Action (YPSA). In Pakistan, the project partners The Communicators and Tribal News Network (TNN) train and mentor Afghan refugee community reporters. Furthermore, the project provides organizational viability support and financial sustainability to Afghan exile media partners, including 8AM Media, Etilaatroz, and Rukhshana Media. Finally, a regional and global component delivers professional journalism training workshops and conferences, cross-border advocacy and networking, and the development of knowledge products, such as the Beyond Borders toolkit for reporting on displacement and migration and the Media in Exile Study.

This evaluation was conducted between November 2025 and April 2026 and assessed the project against five of the six OECD-DAC criteria: Relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact. Sustainability was not formally assessed. The report still includes relevant findings on sustainability, but a dedicated rating was omitted because the primary drivers of long-term viability in displacement contexts are external to the project's scope.

The evaluation drew on a mixed-methods approach combining a desk review of project documents and relevant literature; key informant interviews (KIIs) with DW Akademie staff,

project partners, regional training and conference participants, and external stakeholders; and focus group discussions (FGDs) with community reporters and community members in Bangladesh and Pakistan. The aim was to assess project performance, identify lessons learned, and inform the design of future programming.

Evaluation results

Relevance

The project addresses a genuine and well-documented need. Displaced communities across many contexts in Asia face a structural information gap driven by language barriers, political exclusion, and the near-total absence of media that reflects their true realities. The project's decision to work in Rohingya and Chittagonian dialects in Bangladesh, in Dari and Pashto in Pakistan, and through exile media for Afghan audiences is what makes it reach communities that would otherwise have no access to relevant and trustworthy information. The community-rooted model compounds this, as people are reportedly more willing to speak to a reporter from their own community. Institutional affiliation with local partners further gives those reporters credibility that outsiders cannot replicate. The project has also made an important contribution to gender equality, both in the composition of its community reporter teams and in the design of activities, such as Women's Dialogue events and gender-responsive journalism training developed in partnership with United Nations (UN) Women.

The project is not designed, and does not claim, to address all the urgent survival concerns of displaced people, such as documentation, deportation fears, or economic precarity. However, these needs are real, and they shape the context in which the project operates. Their presence points to the limits of any media development intervention, not to a flaw in this one. The project's relevance was rated as "comprehensively fulfilled."

Coherence

The project fits coherently within DW Akademie's mandate and BMZ's priorities, and it occupies a niche that few other organizations systematically address at the intersection of exile media, community journalism, and displacement-sensitive reporting in a single regional framework. It complements rather than duplicates the work of other organizations, and has built substantive partnerships that extend its reach, most notably with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at the regional level, as well as UN Women and Bangladesh Betar in Bangladesh.

In addition to implementation of partnerships, DW Akademie has actively positioned the project within broader policy and funding conversations, participating in global forums and conducting high-level advocacy meetings, notably within the European Union (EU). These engagements demonstrate that the project is contributing to institutional conversations well beyond its immediate operating contexts.

Coordination is more uneven in Pakistan, where engagement with other development and humanitarian organizations remains limited despite overlapping target populations. Collaboration, however, is ongoing with several media organizations that have housed interns and published community reporter stories. Therefore, the project's coherence was rated as "overall fulfilled."

Effectiveness

The project has performed well against its own targets. By the end of 2025, seven of 13 indicators have been met or exceeded, with remaining targets on track. The content production indicator stood at 130% with a year still to go, and community reporter training in Bangladesh at 143%. These numbers, however, do not fully capture what the project achieved.

Community reporters with no relevant professional background, and, in some cases, limited formal schooling, developed technical skills, including video editing and radio production. More significantly, participants described changes in confidence, professional identity, and self-perception that extended well beyond technical skills. Furthermore, the regional component built analytical depth among professional journalists, shifting how they approach displacement coverage and giving them methodological tools they have taken back into their own countries and contexts.

Progress on the Afghan exile media viability component has been more limited. Organizational development indicators lag, and the V-Sprint model, while valued by the partners, has not translated equally across organizations of different scales and situations. What the output indicators do not capture, but the qualitative evidence makes clear, is that, for Afghan exile media partners, the project's financial support to keep journalists paid and organizations operational was as significant to effectiveness as any training activity. The project's effectiveness was rated as "overall fulfilled."

Efficiency

The project is lean by design. Hybrid trainings keep per-participant costs low by reducing transportation and accommodation, and DW Akademie has consciously chosen to keep its own operational footprint small in order to direct as much funding as possible to partner countries. This is a legitimate trade-off, but it has costs.

The project is reportedly understaffed, and payment delays have, at some points, prevented partners from scheduling activities and, in the most serious cases, created real hardship for individuals in already precarious situations. Documentation requirements are described by multiple partners as disproportionate to the amounts involved. Furthermore, the quality and quantity of equipment for community reporters have declined sharply over the project period. This points to constraints that directly limit what the project can deliver.

DW Akademie is, nonetheless, consistently described as responsive, flexible, and willing to accommodate partner needs when they were raised. Overall, the project's efficiency was rated as "partially fulfilled."

Impact

The project's most durable and consistently documented impacts are at the individual level. Participants, particularly women and young people in Bangladesh and Pakistan, described changes in confidence, professional identity, language skills, and economic independence that go well beyond what the project set out to achieve. Several defined the experience as transformative in how they understand themselves and their role in their communities.

At the community and institutional level, reporting produced by project participants has prompted concrete

responses from authorities in Pakistan and Afghanistan, including action by the Taliban following exile media investigations, which is a remarkable indicator of impact in a context where independent journalism operates under existential threat. The project, however, also carries real risks that must be acknowledged. People inside Afghanistan have faced arrest for engaging with exile media content (although this has not directly been related to the project), and Afghan community reporters in Pakistan expressed fear of returning to Afghanistan given their involvement with the project.

Social cohesion between Rohingya and host communities in Cox's Bazar improved measurably over the project period, though not directly attributable to the project alone, and a number of unexpected outcomes emerged, including journalism scholarships for Rohingya participants, independently-established media platforms, cross-border dialogue initiatives, and international recognition for Afghan exile media partners and Rohingya refugees through collaboration with the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and the International Criminal Court (ICC). The project's impact was rated as "comprehensively fulfilled."

Sustainability

The factors impacting sustainability are largely structural and external. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, both governments' goal is repatriation or deportation rather than durable solutions for refugees, meaning the communities this project serves are not meant to remain in the countries long term. In Afghanistan, the Taliban authorities actively target the exile media partners the project supports, and the current global funding landscape puts additional pressure on these organizations. These political

realities sit outside what any project can address, and the evaluation, therefore, does not assess this criterion.

Nevertheless, skills acquired by community reporters are genuine and transferable. The gender balance in Cox's Bazar journalism has shifted in ways that may outlast the project. In addition, partners have improved their organizational planning and credibility as fundraising partners. A couple of risks are highlighted in the recommendations of this evaluation report, particularly regarding structured pathways for community reporters and the psychosocial toll on media workers across all contexts.

Selected lessons learned

1. A key lesson from this project is that community reporter models tend to reach participants who are already better positioned to engage, specifically those with some mobility, literacy, or family support. Practical barriers, such as inaccessible infrastructure, caregiving responsibilities, and safety risks continue to limit participation for certain groups, even when inclusion is a priority, and efforts are made.
2. For exile media operating under significant financial and political pressure, direct financial support to keep organizations functional proved as significant as any training or organizational development activity.
3. The psychosocial toll of this kind of work, covering displacement, trauma, and human rights violations, is serious. This represents a real risk to the sustainability of the human resource base on which the project depends.
4. AI-generated misinformation and social media algorithms are actively working against the narrative progress this project has achieved, reproducing and amplifying negative stereotypes about displaced people at a scale that community reporting alone cannot address.

Selected recommendations

1. The most urgent recommendation is to address the administrative and financial bottlenecks that have sometimes limited delivery, specifically eliminating funding gaps between project cycles, reducing payment delays, and simplifying reporting processes for partners.
2. The evaluation recommends investing more deliberately in the conditions and pathways that make community reporting sustainable, such as proper equipment, visible accreditation, mentorship continuity between cycles, and support for community reporters transitioning out of the project.
3. Deepening the regional component is a third priority. The regional training workshops and conferences, toolkit, and exile media study are a strong foundation, but cross-context exchange between project settings, follow-up with regional participants, and localization and roll-out of the Beyond Borders toolkit should be explored more concretely.
4. There is an opportunity to expand the project's scope by integrating climate-induced displacement, engaging editors alongside journalists, and exploring new partnerships with community radio networks and other local media actors.

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

Sabine Harriehausen
Head of Project and Capacity
Development
✉ sabine.harriehausen@dw.com

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