

Evaluation Report 2026 • Executive Summary

Journalism of the Future (JoF)

Enhancing journalistic quality through more balanced reporting

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Background

Press freedom in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Mongolia remains fragile (RSF 2025: Bangladesh 149th, Pakistan 158th, Uzbekistan 148th, and Mongolia 102nd). Journalists face political pressures, harassment, restrictive laws, and unsafe work conditions, while public trust is low due to perceived bias and poor-quality reporting. Similarly, gaps in media education and practical skills remain critical across the region. University journalism programs in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Mongolia are largely theoretical, leaving graduates unprepared for digital reporting, the use of AI in journalism, mobile journalism, audience engagement etc. Furthermore, marginalized groups including women, people with disabilities, and ethnic or sexual minorities are underrepresented in content and

newsroom participation, especially in leadership roles. Limited cross-country collaboration and knowledge exchange also reduce opportunities for replication of best practices.

The Journalism of the Future (JoF) project (2024–2026), funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), aims to strengthen local opportunities for professionalization and continuing education systems to enhance journalistic quality and economic viability. Implemented in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Mongolia, the project follows a regional approach to foster collaboration, shared learning, and knowledge exchange among media development partners.

The evaluation of DW Akademie's JoF project, conducted over a period

from November 2025 to April 2026, aimed to assess project performance using the six OECD-DAC criteria — relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability — while also examining the regional approach. The evaluation also aimed to identify lessons learned from the project, documenting unexpected or emergent effects to inform future strategies. The evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative data with limited quantitative information collected through desk reviews, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Focus Group Discussions. Purposive and convenience sampling ensured representation from implementing partners, educators, media professionals, institutional stakeholders, beneficiaries, and trainees. Most data collection was conducted online in local languages with the support of country evaluators, although some KIIs were conducted in person in Bangladesh. Further data collection from Mongolia was done remotely in English language with the help of a local translator.

Evaluation results

Relevance

The project has contributed to addressing key development challenges in the target countries, such as the gap between universities and newsrooms, low trust in the media, limited media viability, and the lack of training and other opportunities in digital media, including for marginalized populations. It has also contributed to addressing the needs and building the capacities of target beneficiaries, such as journalists, media

managers, media outlets, implementing partners, and other media actors, despite challenges posed by limited internet access in some places (Pakistan and Bangladesh). The project design includes clearly defined indicators, monitoring systems, and practical implementation modalities. It has demonstrated strong adaptability, responding effectively and in a timely manner to contextual changes and crises, including political challenges. Despite political crises, including in

Bangladesh, the project has remained aligned with the evolving needs of its target groups. The regional thematic approach, particularly the clustering of countries, has further strengthened relevance. Additionally, the selection of implementing partners has been strategic and appropriate, with partners demonstrating legitimacy, capacity, and influence to drive change at the national level. The project's relevance was rated as “comprehensively fulfilled.”

Coherence

The JoF project aligns with DW Akademie and partner policies, fits the broader country and sector context, and shows internal synergies across project lines. It leverages

the regional component to enhance cross-country connections, complements other DW Akademie initiatives in Asia such as EU-funded projects, and maintains external coherence with sector actors. Minor improvements, such as better use of existing training modules and follow-up from regional activities, could further strengthen alignment. The JoF project largely adhered to OECD media development principles by promoting media freedom, ethical and gender-sensitive journalism, supporting public interest media, fostering innovation and local ownership, coordinating among stakeholders. The project's coherence was rated as "overall fulfilled."

Effectiveness

Project activities have been implemented according to the proposed plan, with some ongoing as per schedule, and all are expected to be completed within the project period. Both output and outcome indicators have been achieved, with results largely attributable to the intervention rather than external factors. Achievements are significant, inclusive, and equitable across different beneficiary groups. The project's effectiveness was rated as "comprehensively fulfilled."

Efficiency

The JoF project utilizes financial, human, and material resources appropriately, cost-effectively, and in a timely manner to achieve its outputs, outcomes, and anticipated impacts. Project management, coordination, staff deployment, and budget use were generally efficient, with effective adaptation to contextual changes, risks, and logistical challenges. The regional thematic approach and clustering of countries further enhanced efficiency by creating synergies and optimizing resource use across contexts. However, the evaluation highlighted

areas for improvement, including the need for continuous mentorship for training beneficiaries, streamlining reporting processes to make them shorter and faster, and promoting a more integrated approach with the aim of strengthening collaboration between different project lines and further optimizing resource use and impact. The project's efficiency was rated as "overall fulfilled."

Impact

The project has generated positive changes beyond its immediate outputs, contributing to improvements in the media sector of the respective countries. Key impacts observed during the project period include enhanced audience engagement, trust-based interaction, and participatory media in Pakistan; early signs of economic viability through alternative revenue models; strengthened professional capacity and quality of journalism across project countries; increased recognition of training platforms and courses in Uzbekistan; the creation of a sustainable pool of trainers and mentors for sectoral capacity building; and greater readiness among Asian academia to apply lessons from the regional conference. Some unintended positive effects were also noted, such as trainees becoming media platform owners and university educators adopting newly acquired e-learning skills. While these impacts are meaningful, their scope and consistency vary, and full transformative effects on the media ecosystems and social norms are still emerging. The project's impact was rated as "overall fulfilled."

Sustainability

Initiatives like the interactive platform Mediaviability.com and institutionalized journalism practices show high potential, but broader impact and social media monetization require scaling and support. Training

outcomes and institutional initiatives indicate continuity potential, yet additional training and financial investment are needed. Overall, the project has strengthened partner capacities and built enabling conditions, but long-term sustainability depends on continued support and consolidation of results. The project's sustainability was rated as "partially fulfilled."

Selected lessons learned

1. **Tangible support increases ownership and effectiveness:** Tangible support, such as the Interactive Offer and Media Viability programs, motivates media organizations to engage. Aligning activities with their immediate needs is therefore key to project design.
2. **Online-only learning is insufficient:** Despite the wide range of resources on [Mediaviability.com](https://mediaviability.com), low completion rates suggest that an online-only approach is insufficient. Public access, targeted promotion, better accessibility, and guided facilitation would improve learning outcomes.
3. **Strengthening training impact through local university educators:** Engaging local university educators in delivering training builds local expertise and supports long-term integration of training into university curricula.
4. **Post-event follow-up is needed:** Regional conferences can generate strong collaboration and initiative readiness, but without timely and consistent post-event follow-up, momentum is quickly lost; therefore, immediate action planning is essential to convert outcomes into sustained impact.
5. **Strategic participant selection is a must:** Well-chosen and well-trained participants can achieve significant outcomes. Examples include graduates who launched platforms like Paradigma.uz, Xorazmliklar.uz, and lgap.uz (Uzbekistan).
6. **Early consultation and flexible engagement expedite progress:** The delay with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the university-media house (Bangladesh) highlights the importance of conducting pre-meetings and consultations and allowing institutions to freely decide their level of involvement, as this leads to smoother agreements and stronger buy-in.
7. **Link material support with clear usage agreements:** Combining material support with clear usage agreements enhances production capacity and sustainability, as seen in Pakistan, where providing equipment alongside MoUs enabled small media outlets to effectively develop content and adopt monetization strategies.

Selected recommendations

1. **Scale up and replicate** the Interactive Offer and Social Media Monetization initiatives across Pakistan and other JoF project countries, targeting needy and interested media outlets.
2. **Increase [Mediaviability.com](https://mediaviability.com) platform ownership and reach** by expanding access and boosting targeted outreach.
3. **Improve cross-country coordination** by sharing, adapting, and integrating training modules across project lines. A structured mechanism should be established to map, share, and review available modules before creating new content.
4. **Strengthen and expand collaboration** between universities and media organizations by linking classrooms and newsrooms through structured engagement, clear MoUs, joint activities, coordination, and early consultations with relevant departments.
5. **Continue prioritizing local trainers** as the leads for country-specific training and module development, complemented where needed by targeted international expertise, to ensure contextual relevance, quality, and sustainable local ownership.
6. **Continue focusing on marginalized communities** and supporting trained journalists in reporting on issues relevant to their content.

7. **Implement a structured follow-up to the “Media Academia Alliance — Together for Tomorrow” declaration** through an action plan, M&E framework, regional stakeholder engagement, and continued conferences to sustain momentum. Also, promote joint research, academic exchange, and knowledge sharing.
8. **Deepen university engagement** and promote integration of practical, newsroom aligned content into curricula.
9. **Replicate CJEN’s informal networking model** to strengthen ties between academia and newsrooms across JoF project countries.
10. **Strengthen the MSU alumni network** to support peer learning, collaboration, and sustained professional exchange.

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.

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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.