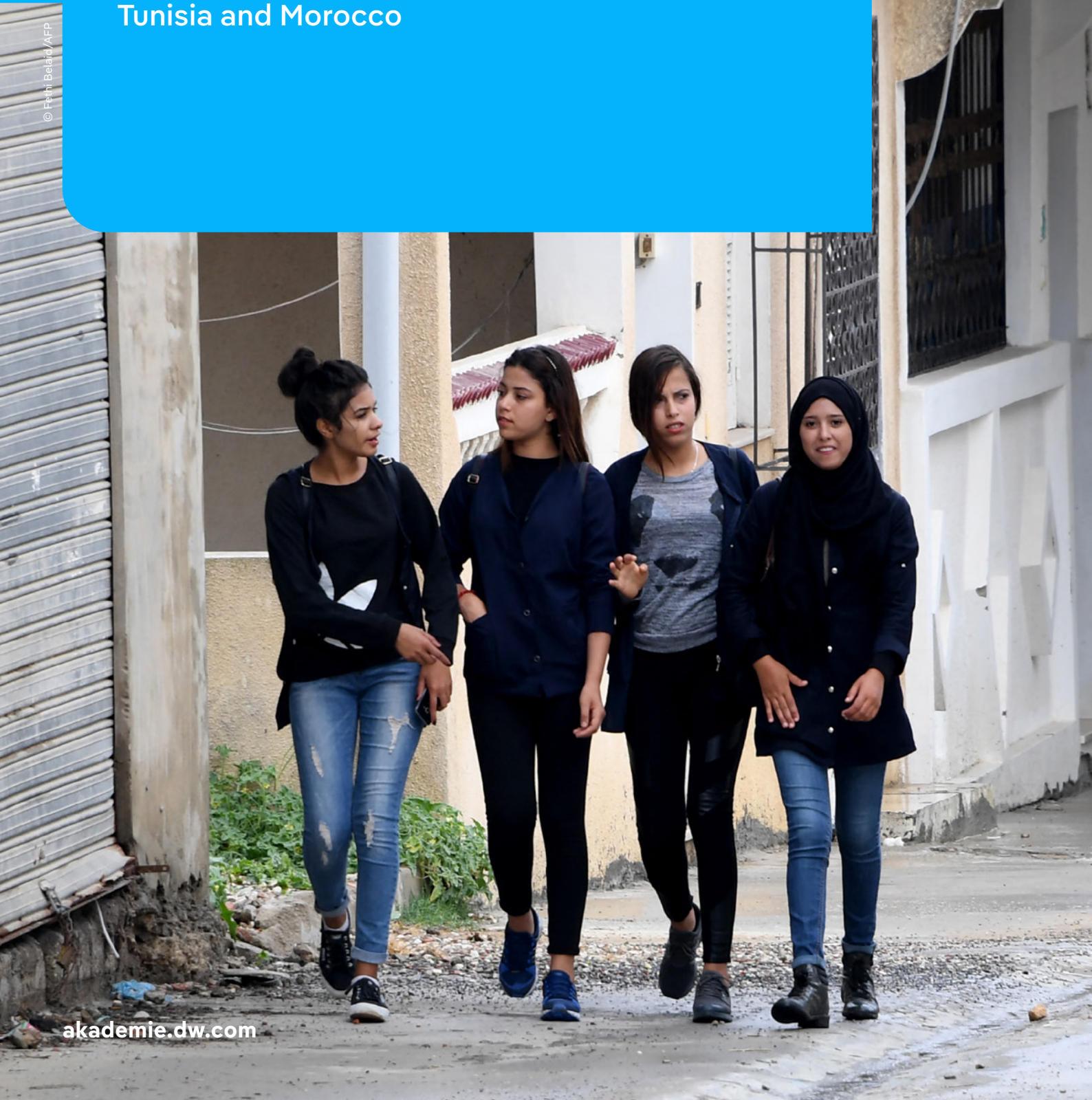


Evaluation Report 2025 • Executive Summary

North Africa

Tunisia and Morocco

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Background

The internal evaluation covers two BMZ-funded projects carried out by DW Akademie in Tunisia and Morocco that contribute to strengthening independent media and dialogue in the MENA region. The project duration was three years (2023–2025). The objective of the evaluation is to ensure accountability, promote organizational learning, and derive recommendations for the 2026–2028 funding cycle. The evaluation is based on the six OECD-DAC criteria. The focus was on efficiency, impact, and sustainability, as well as a comparative analysis of implementation modalities and partner approaches. The methodology is based on qualitative analyses (documents, online interviews). Limitations arise from the lack of on-site visits.

with reliable information and enable them to make independent decisions.

This is achieved through the Smart Media Accelerator (SMA):

- Media Loves Tech (MLT): Incubation of early-stage start-ups
- Media Parcours (MP): Professionalization of existing media outlets

Both components include needs-based coaching and are structured as modular, competitive programs. Implementation is carried out directly by DW Akademie, supported by the media NGO Al Khatt in an advisory role, as well as a network of highly qualified coaches, trainers, and start-up experts.

on expanding networks, promoting a supportive legal framework, and advocating for their formal recognition. The project aims to increase the visibility and participation of marginalized groups and to contribute to media diversity. It is implemented primarily through the local partner FMAS and, to a lesser extent, through the NGO 100% Mamans.

Tunisia

Following a period of democratic progress, since 2021 there has been a trend toward increasing authoritarianism and restrictions on press freedom. The Tunisian media landscape is heavily influenced by state control and commercial entertainment, while community media often lack financial resources and need more capacity building. Alternative media initiatives emerging from the tech-savvy start-up scene enrich the diversity of the media landscape but face economic challenges and operate in a politically sensitive context.

The project strengthens quality journalism, innovation, and the resilience of media start-ups and alternative media initiatives to provide citizens

Morocco

The current government is pursuing a reform-oriented development agenda, but freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly continue to be limited by restrictive laws; independent media outlets and journalists face political and economic pressure. The media landscape is dominated by state-controlled media outlets. Local media are marginalized, and disadvantaged groups have limited access to relevant information. Community media, supported by NGOs, are attempting to fill this gap but operate in a legal gray area.

The project aims to strengthen community media, particularly by improving their political and institutional environment. The focus is

Evaluation results

Tunisia

Relevance

The project clearly addresses the need for greater diversity, independent media, and innovative formats for young target groups. The approaches—supporting media start-ups through Media Loves Tech and coaching existing media outlets via the Media Parcours—are appropriate responses to this need. They are strategically aligned with the partner organization Al Khatt. Challenges arise from Tunisia's limited market size. The project's relevance was rated as “comprehensively fulfilled.”

Coherence

The project is well-connected, particularly with the Tunisian start-up community, and has a local presence through an office in Tunis. Strong synergies exist with EU projects (PAMT2, On en parle! Tunisie 360°). The design of the EU project in Libya was inspired by the Tunisian approach. There was no overlap in content or strategy with the BMZ project in Morocco. An expansion in the past into Algeria and Morocco were discontinued for cost reasons. Overall, a high degree of coherence is evident through strategic cooperation with relevant partners. The project's coherence was rated as “comprehensively fulfilled.”

Effectiveness

The project has largely achieved its target indicators, and all outputs have been fulfilled. A detailed monitoring system tracks the progress of the participating teams. The two programs, MLT and MP, are considered exemplary models for media support

and are characterized by flexibility, user-centeredness, and continuous optimization. The promotion of journalistic quality could possibly be emphasized even more strongly. Networking among participants was limited due to the online formats. The project's effectiveness was rated as “comprehensively fulfilled.”

Efficiency

The project conducted three rounds of each Media Loves Tech and Media Parcours and helped 24 teams develop their professional skills. The cost and staffing requirements per participating team are comparatively high but can be explained as a necessary investment in order to secure individual support. The risks inherent in any innovation funding were well mitigated. Efficiency was significantly enhanced through well-organized, standardized processes, digital tools, and the presence of a local office in Tunis. Adjustments were made in response to fluctuating funding. The project's efficiency was rated as “overall fulfilled.”

Impact

Support for media start-ups has created new, high-quality offerings for young target groups and contributed to diversity. While their reach remains limited because many start-ups cater to niche topics, they nonetheless contribute to diversity and innovation. Some initiatives have continued to develop successfully, while others have failed—a typical risk associated with start-up support. Regardless of market success, participants benefit from transferable skills and act as multipliers. The project also created a

dedicated community of media entrepreneurs, NGOs, and experts, and promoted networking and knowledge transfer. The Smart Media Accelerator is considered innovative and highly transferable. The project's impact was rated as “overall fulfilled.”

Sustainability

The project aims to bring about structural change by supporting new media initiatives as they enter the market. General international data show that, in the long term, approximately 90% of start-ups across all sectors fail within 10 years. Given the challenging operating conditions for media in Tunisia, survival rates are realistically expected to be even lower. Against this backdrop, the rates achieved by the project—33% of initiatives still active after two years and 16% after eight years—are in line with expectations. Sustainability is strengthened through self-reliant teams, viable business models, and ongoing mentoring. Some initiatives were able to secure additional funding after the program ended. The project's sustainability was rated as “overall fulfilled.”

Morocco

Relevance

The project addresses a relevant problem in the Moroccan media sector: The lack of diverse, locally rooted, and independent sources of information. Community media play an important role in this regard, as they enjoy trust within their communities and cover topics that the mainstream media do not address. However, they are significantly constrained by low

levels of professionalism, a lack of legal recognition, and limited funding opportunities. The project's approach is well aligned with the priorities of the partners. For the Moroccan government, however, community media is not a priority. In the current phase, the focus of the predecessor project was therefore sensibly expanded to include advocacy. The project's relevance was rated as "overall fulfilled."

Coherence

The project complements FMAS's advocacy work and supports the capacity-building of community media that rely on external funding. It is well coordinated with initiatives by the EU, UNESCO, and the i-Media project. Synergies with the project in Tunisia are limited, but there is relevant coherence with the DW Akademie's Colmena project, whose open-source software is actively used for media production. The project's coherence was rated as "overall fulfilled."

Effectiveness

The project in Morocco largely met its outcome indicators and contributed in particular to strengthening community media. Close and trusting cooperation with the project partners FMAS and 100% Mamans proved to be crucial in this regard. Flexible adjustments made it possible to respond to changing conditions. The project's effectiveness was rated as "overall fulfilled."

Efficiency

The project had limited resources. It was implemented smoothly from an administrative standpoint by the project partners. However, there were delays in the implementation of individual activities. Fluctuating budgets required adjustments and placed a strain on management. The project's efficiency was rated as "overall fulfilled."

Impact

The project achieved tangible results in terms of capacity building, professionalization, and networking among community media, while advocacy efforts failed to produce structural changes due to challenging political conditions. Interest from the government and mainstream media remains low. The funding strengthened key civil society actors and had positive effects on the empowerment of young people and marginalized women. It met essential criteria for effective civil society support. The web radio station Mères en ligne was able to contribute to the reform of the family law. The project's impact was rated as "partially fulfilled."

Sustainability

The project improved the quality and equipment of community media but was largely unable to enhance their organizational resilience. The structural sustainability of community media remains limited by reliance on volunteers, legal restrictions, and a lack of funding. In the long term, they remain dependent on external support. The partnership model promotes ownership but also creates dependencies. As with virtually all projects aimed at supporting civil society, there is a strategic dilemma between high relevance, limited impact, and low sustainability; funding should therefore be understood more as a contribution to democratic infrastructure. The project's sustainability was rated as "partially fulfilled."

Selected lessons learned

1. The Smart Media Accelerator is an effective, transferable approach to promoting media innovation, but it requires adequate resources.
2. Support for community media strengthens media diversity and civil society but requires realistic expectations regarding sustainability.
3. Joint evaluations of very different projects offer limited added value; evaluations of thematic clusters are more useful.

Selected recommendations

1. **Targeted expansion of the SMA:** Expand to Morocco and, if appropriate, other MENA countries, while adapting to local markets and new needs such as dealing with AI. Optimize documentation for easy scalability. In Tunisia, place a stronger focus on the Media Parcours; use the MLT less frequently or focus it on specific topics.
2. **Further develop the Media Parcours:** Expand its content and methodology to include a stronger competitive element and required and elective modules on topics such as AI, digital safety, local journalism, and constructive journalism. Additionally, make it more applicable to community media.
3. **Ensure a local presence:** Maintain the office in Tunis and utilize it regionally; explore options for establishing a presence in Morocco.
4. **Strategically support community media:** Community media should be supported according to the Media Parcours model, with targeted training, milestone-based grants, and networking with change agents. Prioritize advocacy only when realistic political opportunities arise.
5. **Expand funding and partnerships:** Leverage EU synergies and engage additional donors; focus DW Akademie's role on further developing the methodology as well as the selection, training, and quality assurance of participating teams.
6. **Strengthen the community of change agents:** Strengthen a MENA-wide community of media professionals, partners, and experts without establishing a formal network. DW Akademie can serve as a community co-manager in this process.
7. **Improve impact measurement:** Test new approaches (e.g., Outcome Mapping, Most Significant Change). Additionally, conduct a tracing study of all funded initiatives and systematically track user numbers and impact stories.

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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