



Akademie

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MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation Report

Executive summary **Bolivia**

Supporting local media in marginal urban areas:
The “Mediator Journalism” approach and public dialogue
programs in Bolivia



Background

Bolivia has suffered from a long period of political polarization, a situation made worse by the decision of the current President Evo Morales to opt, anti-constitutionally, for a fourth term. The non-acceptance by the president of the negative result of the referendum on February 21, 2016 has diminished the political trust of large portions of the Bolivian population.

This polarization is reflected in the media. Many media outlets allow themselves a strong bias based on their political position; facts are communicated from a political point of view. While there is freedom of expression in Bolivia, according to analysts it can be described as "controlled and stifled." The government uses public funds to control the media, for example, by cutting advertising to outlets that convey opinions contrary to those of the government.

The project is carried out in El Alto, the second biggest city in the country with almost a million inhabitants. El Alto is a "young" city on two counts: the city was formally founded in 1985, and 77% of El Alto residents are under 24 years old. The majority of the highly organized population is poor and has Aymara and rural roots. For many reasons El Alto is characterized by a high level of conflict.

The project is executed by the UNIR Foundation, a Bolivian organization dedicated to "education for peace, research and constructive management of conflicts". The project has been running since 2016 with annual funding from BMZ. The initial objective was "to contribute to the exercise of the Right to Information and Communication (DIC) of the population in the cities of El Alto and La Paz, through the improvement of the journalistic capacities of radio stations of popular character and with weak access to processes of training and professional qualification".

UNIR carries out the project with 4 to 6 small radio stations in El Alto using the "Mediator Journalism" approach where the journalist is an actor who assumes social responsibility and promotes constructive dialogue in situations of conflict. The project has two main lines of action: training of radio operators and production and chain transmission of a bi-weekly program of Public Dialogue by the participating radio stations. From the first transmission the radios baptized the program by the name of "Aruskipawi" (dialogue).

The objective of the evaluation was to find out more about outcomes following the implementation of the project by its various stakeholders, with the information collected ensuring the continuity and financial sustainability of the project. The evaluation identified lessons learned and recommendations for the parties involved (DW Akademie and UNIR). Fieldwork was conducted between February 5 and 15, 2019 by an evaluation team composed of three independent consultants. In order to respond to the criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability, the team applied a variety of instruments: these included a study of documents, review of a sample of the programs produced, interviews with the UNIR team and with directors and radio operators of the stations involved, as well as meetings and focus groups with listeners and trained journalists. Finally, German institutions working in La Paz and the two institutions that might be part of the project as of 2019 were interviewed.

Conclusions of the project evaluation

Relevance: The concept "mediator journalism" is appreciated by all interviewees as a form of journalism applicable to medium-sized conflict situations. The concept is very well elaborated and concretized in the documentation of the "public dialogue" approach. This approach is potentially relevant for El Alto, where all the preconditions for its successful implementation are met: conflict in neighborhood and municipal spaces, presence of social organizations and presence and use of communication media.

For BMZ and DW Akademie, the topics press freedom and public dialogue, as well as the target group of the project (population of El Alto), are relevant according to their institutional criteria. Due to its trajectory in conflict and communication, UNIR is a relevant organization to execute this project. The communication team has extensive experience in media research and some experience in management of projects directly linked to the media. Therefore the criterion of Relevance is rated as "comprehensively fulfilled".

Effectiveness: There is no project start-up document in Spanish that clarifies the meaning of the project; from the beginning there was ambiguity about the purpose and integrality of its three components: training, production of radio programs and contribution to conflict resolution. It is an achievement to have established regular contact with the participating radio stations and a biweekly chain transmission from different stations with the participation of different social actors. Nine radio stations participated at some point in the project, though only two from the beginning. The stations are small, most with little institutional stability and influence. Two of them are not from El Alto. The radio stations that left the project did so for political reasons, due to institutional instability, or they had reservations against the management of the project (repetitiveness in the training, inequal treatment between stations).

The indicators of the impact matrix (2018) lack precision but allow to confirm: 21 public dialogue programs were produced (indicator: 20); overall, the themes of the programs are rather general and poorly defined; 40% of the issues are "considered a priority for women" (indicator: 20%); men and women participated to the same extent in the open dialogue programs; there was no participation on the part of the audience, with the exception of some likes on Facebook; 66% of the public that listened to the programs was satisfied (indicator 50%); a third had observations about lack of information, little public participation, quality of presenters; the audience considered the programs easy to understand, credible and respectful of others; the number of participatory programs from these radio stations had not increased in comparison to 2016.

In general, the programs ignore basic radio work practices such as journalistic research, triggers or thematic development. The programs deal with issues in a superficial, yet conscientious way regarding the problem, but no specific agreements are sought or achieved in order to resolve the conflicts dealt with. The language is simple and accessible.

Training plays a very important role and is much appreciated by the participants, both the main trainer and the applied methodology. However, apart from the methodological tables per workshop,

there is no training plan, monitoring or evaluation of students. There is confusion about whether the training is part of the Aruskipawi public dialogue program or whether the program is an examination of the training. There is a huge turnover of participants in the workshops that forces the trainer to repeat themes, which causes dissatisfaction and abandonment. The participants observe the need for more requirements and a certification system.

There are serious technical problems that hinder the successful completion of the Aruskipawi program. The stations asked UNIR to do more follow-ups of programs in order to be able to improve them. The project distributes and promotes the Aruskipawi program on Facebook at a basic level; no other digital networks are used to generate participation. The project coordinated with two key actors: the Public University of El Alto (UPEA) and the Trade Union Federation of Workers of the Press of El Alto (FSTPEA); the project didn't coordinate with other institutions. In conclusion the criterion of Effectivity is rated as "partially fulfilled".

Efficiency: The discontinuity of the financial disbursements from DW Akademie hindered the operation of the project, seriously interrupting the existant framework and generating insecurity in the UNIR team and in the radio stations. This did not allow for a more ambitious project implementation. According to DW Akademie the financing system was changed going into 2019 and will now facilitate continuous operation. Despite this setback, much was achieved with few funds: programs, connecting stations, training of radiographers, reality checks.

The UNIR project reports include a lot of information but have little depth. They do fulfill their purpose: to render accounts and learn from what has happened in the project so far. However, no one in the monitoring chain has followed through, possibly also

due to the frequent change of project supervisors from DW Akademie, which affected the continuity of project monitoring. The project did not invest in collecting the information necessary for an advocacy strategy, such as data from the media environment, the stations, the Aruskipawi program and its audiences.

Although the reporting system is effective, the requirements from DW Akademie require almost manual transcription. It would be very beneficial if a regional digital system could be designed. Opting to cooperate with small radio outlets is expensive, since it generates constant rotation of stations and journalists, which causes repetition, demotivation and abandonment. Some station operators and journalists think it advisable to add large outlets with bigger audiences in order to have a broader public reach. In conclusion the criterion of Efficiency is rated as "partially fulfilled".

Impact: Radio stations do not identify much impact on their environment as a result of the Aruskipawi program. There is little awareness amongst the radio directors about the impact sought by the project. They strive to "do the program well". Some stories of personal change among listeners have been identified as result of the program. According to staff, the training for and production of Aruskipawi generated some changes in the internal logic of the stations, such as awareness of the need to work with a script and to work in a team. It is necessary to follow-up internally with the stations to make this important change visible. The criterion of Impact is rated as "partially fulfilled".

Sustainability: UNIR does not have a budget or other ways of assuring continuity of the project if the support of DW Akademie should disappear. The outlets are motivated to continue the project, showing some ownership of it. Their motivation comes mainly from training and belonging to a larger





project, the Aruskipawi network. Without the support of UNIR, they do not have the capacity to provide continuity. The inclusion of the Center for Radio Production (CEPRA) and the Foundation for Journalism in the project portfolio of DW Akademie presents serious challenges but also good opportunities for productive coordination that could strengthen the sustainability of the project. In conclusion the criterion of Sustainability is rated as "partially fulfilled".

DW Akademie

is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development. As a strategic partner of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), DW Akademie carries out media development projects that strengthen the human right to freedom of opinion and promote free access to information. DW Akademie also works on projects funded by the German Foreign Office and the European Union—in approximately 50 developing and emerging countries.

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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.