



Akademie

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MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation Report

Executive summary Colombia

Dealing with the aftermath of the conflict: Access to human rights-related information and sensitive reporting of local media in Colombia

Background

The situation in Colombia in terms of access to information, freedom of the media and freedom of expression was greatly affected by decades of armed conflict between the government, left-wing guerrillas and other illegal armed groups. The signing of the peace agreement had given rise to hope, but journalists continue to be frequently harassed and threatened when dealing with sensitive issues. Currently the ELN, FARC dissidents and other illegal armed groups threaten and silence alternative and community media in many parts of the country. In 2018, Reporters Without Borders ranked Colombia 130th in its annual World Press Freedom Index.

DW Akademie focuses on supporting free and transparent media systems, quality journalism and media and information literacy (MIL) in some 50 developing and emerging countries. DW Akademie's project in Colombia supports initiatives that promote the inclusion of diverse experiences in the country's historical memory, focusing in particular on the local effects of the peace process. In general, these initiatives are aimed at giving Colombians, mainly victims and people in post-conflict areas, access to human rights-related information. To this end, the project works with different implementing partners and approaches:

- Consejo de Redacción (CdR) to develop training and journalistic consultancy services in regions affected by armed conflict;
- the community radio station Vokaribe to strengthen the community media sector on the Atlantic coast;
- the University of Antioquia (UdeA) in Medellín, to support the establishment of an academic centre for journalism and historical memory, as well as the training of local media and victims of conflict to report on sensitive human rights issues;
- the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC) based in the department of Cauca to promote the creation of a media centre aimed at increasing media diversity and, in particular, the participation of indigenous minorities in public discourse, and
- FLIP, the Foundation for Press Freedom in Bogotá.

The project was evaluated along the five OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability). For each criterion, the DW Akademie scoring system was applied. In addition, according to DW Akademie policy, three digital questions were included. Gender was assessed as a cross-cutting topic.

In terms of approach and methodology, the performance evaluation and appreciative inquiry approach was adopted; mixed methods were used through a highly participatory process (desk review, field work in Bogotá, Medellín, Barranquilla and Cauca), as well as interviews with the DW Akademie team in Germany and Colombia. Throughout the process, more than 70 actors were consulted using different primary data collection methods (semi-structured interviews, focus groups, in situ observation, etc.).

Conclusions of the project evaluation

The project strategy is relevant and extremely important considering the state of the media and freedom of expression and the crucial value of historical memory. The activities address a key issue in the Colombian socio-political context that remains such and regarding which DW Akademie has a comparative advantage compared to other international cooperation actors in the country. No significant changes requiring a redefinition of the initial hypothesis on freedom of the press and expression are detected; rather, recent changes in context make the project in this area even more necessary. Partners also value how the project was able to address specific target groups, themes and approaches for their local context and work.

Relevance: In general, the project is in line with the strategies and objectives of the implementing partners. However, the project design process was not fully participatory and there was limited familiarity by partners with the project results framework. The design of the project and in particular the logic of change and results framework reveal weaknesses in its conception and the application of a results-based management approach. There is also no evidence of a systematic inclusion of cross-cutting approaches, in particular re gender; however, some unintended gender-specific results have been achieved. DW Akademie has an innovative and eye-catching digital strategy (launched after the formulation of the project), which should be accompanied by more support tools so that it can be systematically operationalized by local partners. The assessment with regard to the Relevance criterion is "overall fulfilled".

Effectiveness: Despite challenges relating to internal policies and procedures, the project in general shows significant implementation achievements in giving voice to the most marginalized population groups in the areas of intervention; results that the planning framework and its goals fail to capture in their fullness. The strong thread of the project's achievement seems more in line with DW Akademie's aims to promote freedom of expression and less with the planned focus on historical memory, which is also related to the weakness of the project's theory of change. In general, there is clear evidence that problems that have arisen over the course of the project have been discussed openly, in particular with the country coordinator. In addition, the project has established ad hoc alliances and collaborations with German organisations and other key actors that have contributed to the results. However, there is room for improvement to strengthen, expand and create new partnerships to further benefit the effectiveness of the project. The partnership with the Arbeitsgemeinschaft fuer Entwicklungshilfe, AGEH, and the benefit it has brought to the project, particularly in Cauca, is generally valued by stakeholders, although the precise definition of responsibilities (and accountability) between CRIC and AGEH could be clarified further. The diversity of the project partners represents a great opportunity for mutual learning; at the same time, it presents challenges in ensuring the comprehensiveness and coherence of the project design and its implementation. The assessment with regard to the criterion of Effectiveness is "overall fulfilled".

Efficiency: In order to assess whether the activities have been cost-effective, a broader scope evaluation and greater availability of information by the project would have been required, mainly on overall project financial execution. However, based on the informa-

tion available, it is perceived that partners have achieved significant results with the limited funds they received.

The achievement of the objectives and expected results in the foreseen timeframe of the project have been hindered by the challenges related to the governance, procedures and policies of DW Akademie. The organization's improvement in organizing/structuring more of its presence in-country and the progress that has been made in a relatively short period of time are valued. However, further progress is needed to improve efficiency, i.e. through more decentralization, increased formalization of its presence in Colombia and greater delegation of responsibilities (e.g. through a country office). The project benefits from the valuable advice and local presence of the country coordinator in solving problems. However, the management and monitoring mechanisms are not formalized enough. Partners recognize the importance of the country team in providing advice and guidance, and solving problems; but more constant and pro-active monitoring and regular feedback would improve efficient and effective implementation by project partners. DW Akademie staff has highly specialized expertise to carry out the planned work with their partners, which brings the organization its comparative advantage and added value. However, strengthening project management skills would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the project throughout its growth. DW Akademie has stood out for its ability to mobilize experts, build regional (e.g. CEPRAS-CRIC, Open Data project) and national alliances. An important role has been played by the partners and their proactive attitude to promoting partnerships among themselves. The project has achieved results through the mobilization of international and national expertise (including that of project partners in other Latin American countries) in support of the implementation of grant contracts. In some cases, these initiatives have been promoted by the head of the regional team, in others by the country coordinator and in multiple cases by the partners themselves. The assessment with regard to the Efficiency criterion is "partially fulfilled".

Impact: Due to the limited scope of this evaluation and general challenges in measuring impact, it has not been possible to collect sufficiently solid information to give a clear answer in terms of impact that fulfills the rigor required in an evaluation process. The only indicator present does not provide sufficiently reliable information. Despite the attempts made, the project does not have a clear baseline, nor a monitoring and evaluation system with indicators allowing the measurement of changes in behavior and/or perception of its beneficiaries in a statistically reliable manner. The very nature of the project and the complexity of measuring the processes it aims to effect also contribute to this. However, the information-gathering process reveals promising signs in terms of a possible future impact. For example, focus group participants reported real empowerment through their Vokaribe radio programs, being able to highlight their concerns and making the community more familiar with their lives. Young people and victims participating in the intervention of UdeA's "Hacemos Memoria" recognized changes in their behavior towards historical memory. On the other hand, signs of change can be identified in the investigative journalism practices of the participants involved in capacity building at the CdR. Based on the difficulty of assessing this criterion, the assessment with regard to Impact must be described as "partially fulfilled".

Sustainability: The project has contributed to capacity building of its implementing partners, who show a high level of ownership. Implementing partners recognize that their capacities have improved thanks to the work of DW Akademie. In general, the project's effort to promote financial sustainability of implementing partners is notable; however, this line of work was not standardized and should be strengthened. The project has mechanisms to generate information from implementing partners, but increased systematization of promising practices and lessons learned would improve the possibility of replicating successful approaches and experiences, as well as the visibility of the project's activities. The project does not have a clear exit strategy for its interventions. Although internal reflection on exit strategies has been encouraged for a new





phase of the project, no standardized criteria for sustainability and an exit strategy to help finalize the work with a partner were identified. In terms of scaling-up and replicability, there are some experiences that have been pointed out by partners and/or identified by the evaluator with potential for growth or replication in other contexts e.g. in UdeA's work with victims of the armed conflict in Antioquia, where victims themselves selected the issues to be addressed, defined and co-created their own story, and produced it in cooperation with local media. Additionally, in Barranquilla, the opportunity to voice to their own history/rights through a radio program was a key empowerment engine for the different human rights organizations, and stakeholders involved identified themselves as part of the same platform, all interested in following it up. The assessment with regard to the Sustainability criterion is "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.

Contact

Dr. Jan Lublinski
Head Research and Evaluation
jan.lublinski@dw.com
53113 Bonn
Germany

-  DWAkademie
-  @dw_akademie
-  youtube.com/DWakademie
-  dw-akademie.com

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.