

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation Report

Executive summary Burkina Faso

Empowering rural populations: Community radios and conflict-sensitive reporting



Background

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are part of the Sahel and are among the poorest countries in the world. According to the Human Development Index (HDI 2020), the landlocked countries rank 182, 184 and 189 out of the 189 countries listed. With dynamic, professional and diverse media, Burkina Faso is one of Africa's success stories. Yet, between 2019 and 2020, it dropped one position in the press freedom rankings of Reporters Without Borders, to 37, while both Mali and Niger improved their scores over the same period (2020).

The past two years have seen a sharp deterioration in the security situation across Burkina Faso's northern and eastern regions (large parts of the East, Centre-North, North, Sahel and Boucle du Mouhoun regions) due to the presence of non-state armed groups—many with cross-border ties to extremist groups or movements in neighbouring Mali and Niger. The conflict and violence have led to the displacement of more than one million people in just two years and have left 3.5 million people in need of assistance—an increase of 60 per cent between January 2020 to January 2021 (UNOCHA 2021).

The security situation makes it hard to cover anything taking place there, and the national assembly passed an amendment to the criminal code in 2019 that severely penalizes “false information” and coverage of the security forces that “compromises public order and the conduct of security operations.”

The project objectives of the three-year (2019-2021) country project in Burkina Faso are:

- Disadvantaged sections of the population in Burkina Faso, especially in rural areas, have access to information that is relevant to them and exercise their right to freedom of expression.
- Media actors in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger work together to promote understanding and conflict management.

The project consists of four components (two are national and two are regional in scope):

1A) Reinforce access to information and participation of rural populations by supporting the professionalization of partici-

patory broadcasts on community radios. Partners: La Voix du Paysan, Radio Vénégré, Radio Munyu and Radio Tin Tua.

1B) A youth organization is coached by DW Akademie and provides Media and Information Literacy (MIL) for multipliers who, in turn, work with youth groups to raise awareness about radicalization. Partner: EducommunicAfrik.

2A) On a regional level, a network of journalists in Burkina Faso works with partner associations in Mali and Niger on conflict-sensitive journalism. Partners: Réseau d'Initiatives de Journalistes (RIJ), Réseau des journalistes sensibles aux conflits (Ré-JSC) and Réseau SKBO.

2B) A pool of media professionals is trained in research, verification and digital security and publishes systematically verified information on the Fasocheck platform. Partner: Centre National de Press Norbert Zongo (CNP-NZ).

Conclusions of the project evaluation

As the project phase enters its final year, this external evaluation seeks to gauge impact, measure learning and provide input for future projects, as well as ensure accountability to the BMZ, the project's donor. While all OECD/DAC criteria were considered throughout the evaluation, the emphasis was on three: relevance, effectiveness and impact. Relevance is critical in such a fluid environment, such as Burkina Faso, while effectiveness and impact are key when considering short- and longer-term results. These three criteria are also important when considering future projects. This impact and results-oriented evaluation, which drew on a mix of methods, was participatory and qualitative and adopted an appreciative inquiry approach. The methods and tools used included a

literature review, key informant interviews and group chats via WhatsApp with representatives from media, civil society, and local communities.

It must be noted that the pandemic resulted in a number of changes to activities which affected their implementation and in some cases also the coherence aspect of the activities. For example, exchanges between the four community radio stations, a regular feature of the program since 2014, had to be cancelled.

Based on OECD/DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance, this intervention was a success. The project was **timely and relevant, with innovative aspects** and demonstrated co-creation, sustainability

and efforts to adapt to address new challenges, such as that of misinformation, caused by the pandemic and the precarious security situation.

The **weakest criterion was coherence**. There is significant potential here, both within the project, by identifying and exploiting synergies between the project's components and activities, and in a wider context, by coordinating with efforts with international actors. In some cases, activities that would have resulted in further coherence were impossible to implement due to both the pandemic and the security situation which made planned travel between the provinces impossible.

Despite the security situation and the pandemic, the **project was highly effective** and has already implemented most of the intended activities. It is likely that the remainder will be implemented by the end of the project.

The project was **impactful and efficient** and there was a **substantial amount of output**, particularly considering the limitations due to the security situation and the pandemic. Indeed, most activities have continued in a timely fashion.

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 approximately 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.