

EVALUATION REPORT 2021

# Executive summary MENA Region (Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Tunisia)

“Shabab Live – Giving Youth a Voice through the Media”

## Background

The regional project “Shabab Live – Giving Youth a Voice through the Media” was implemented by a consortium consisting of DW Akademie (lead applicant, Germany), Al Khatt (co-applicant, Tunisia) and AL-JANA (co-applicant, Lebanon). The project was funded by the European Union with additional support from the German Federal Foreign Office. The total project funding amounted to 3.3 million euros. The project was launched in April 2018 for a period of three years, and was extended for an additional six months. Project activities were completed in September 2021. The main parameters of the Shabab Live project included the following:

- three main stakeholder groups: young people, the media (TV and radio broadcasters), and NGOs
- six countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA): Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco the Palestinian Territories, Tunisia
- eighteen sub-grants via financial support to third parties (FSTP) for local radio and TV channels and NGOs
- four specific objectives (SO)

The political situation in the region worsened during the project period, especially in Lebanon, which experienced deepening economic hardship (including rising inflation) and a massive explosion that disrupted life in the capital Beirut, and in

the Palestinian Territories, where hostilities escalated significantly. In addition, the overall environment for journalists deteriorated in certain countries such as Algeria. The COVID-19 pandemic was still ongoing at the time of this evaluation in autumn 2021 and had a significant impact due to contact and travel restrictions. This affected activities with young beneficiaries in particular, who lacked the opportunities and technical means to smoothly switch to online cooperation. Despite the unprecedented challenge posed by the pandemic, the Shabab Live project managed to successfully adapt to changing circumstances and successfully complete its activities. The pandemic also had an unintended positive effect in that it intensified online contact and communication among partner organizations, and as local FSTP projects provided young people with alternative activities during lockdowns. The local FSTP projects adapted to the pandemic by covering the topic as part of their content production – in forms of information campaigns, reports and educational health videos.

The objective of the external evaluation was to assess Shabab Live in order to fulfill reporting obligations to the donors and to offer an opportunity for a systematic institutional analysis for DW Akademie and its partners. The evaluation was conducted in line with the standards of the German Evaluation Society (DeGEval) and according to the six OECD-DAC criteria for evaluation: relevance, coherence,

effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. As per the terms of reference, special weight was given to the criteria of effectiveness and impact. Considering the complexities of the project and the limited evaluation timeframe and budget, it was not feasible for evaluators to review all project outputs and interview all relevant stakeholders. Therefore, in consultation with DW Akademie, it was decided that the evaluators engaged in an in-depth assessment of seven project activities and their associated outputs: Four of eighteen FSTP projects, the selection procedure for these FSTP projects, the media and information literacy training series and the workshop “Online didactics and tools” as a response to COVID-19. Data collection took place between 7 October and 3 November 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no field trip to partner countries was scheduled. The main data collection tools were desk research, an online survey, semi-structured stakeholder interviews and group discussions. Following the data analysis phase, a meeting with DW Akademie and consortium partners was held to discuss and validate the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

## Project Evaluation Results

**Relevance:** The objective of Shabab Live to give young people in the MENA region a voice and a platform in the media was deemed highly relevant, which was confirmed in the needs assessment survey conducted in the first year of the project. The project rationale was clearly shared by interviewed project partners and motivated them to make Shabab Live a success. The objective of the EU call was reflected both in the Shabab Live concept and in the subsequent call for FSTP project proposals. Thanks to the widely

disseminated call, the consortium could identify and select eighteen well-suited FSTP projects. The FSTP organizations and the young participants showed a very high ownership over the project, which motivated them to find ways to continue and complete their projects despite difficult circumstances (COVID-19 and the various crises in partner countries). FSTP interviewees confirmed the need for capacity development on an individual (mainly young people), organizational (further development of MENA

NGOs and broadcasters) and network (nationally and regionally) level.

Both the relevance of the Shabab Live project and the relevance of its FSTP projects were rated as “comprehensively fulfilled.”

**Coherence:** Internal and external coherence was achieved to some extent. The Shabab Live project team had some contact with other initiatives in the field of media and youth in MENA countries. However, a more systematic approach to

identifying and using possible synergies was stymied by a lack of both available human resources and an enabling environment. The visibility of Shabab Live, its donors and implementing organizations, as well as the underlying rationale of the project could have been strengthened. On FSTP level, some interesting collaborations with other stakeholders took place. At the strategic and content level, the Shabab Live project fit well in the portfolio, objectives and development plans of the consortium partners, whereas at operational level, the required administration modalities posed some challenges to the consortium organizations. Both the coherence with external initiatives and the coherence within the organizations were rated as “partially fulfilled.”

**Effectiveness:** It is a remarkable achievement that Shabab Live identified, contracted and supported twelve relevant NGO projects and six relevant broadcasting projects in six MENA countries. At the level of FSTP projects, all interviewees reported that the results achieved for the benefit of young people were beyond their expectations. This is also reflected in the FSTP project indicators, which were fulfilled or overfulfilled. About 90 per cent of the online evaluation survey respondents thought that their project produced tangible changes for young people in their country or region. On the level of Shabab Live, the four specific objectives were achieved, mainly via the eighteen FSTP projects. The three consortium members benefited to a certain extent from the regional approach of the project. At the level of FSTP project partners or young beneficiaries, the added value of the regional approach was less obvious. There was only a limited exchange of lessons learned, networking or synergies between projects. The effectiveness was rated as “overall fulfilled,” with the sub-criterion of project results rated as “comprehensively fulfilled” and the sub-criterion of regional added value rated as “partially fulfilled.”

**Efficiency:** Shabab Live achieved significant results with the resources available. The main mode of delivery, financial support to third parties, was successful,

The risk inherent in awarding a substantial amount of money to third parties with uneven administrative capacities was successfully mitigated by setting up thorough procedures and providing extensive (financial) management support to project partners. This additional support, however, required an additional time investment from DW Akademie support staff in a project with limited resources for project management and assistance. Setting up these structures and processes required considerable time and effort, when compared to a single implementation cycle of FSTP projects with an average duration of 18 months, which were at the heart of Shabab Live. Given more time and human resources, the project could have been even more effective by creating synergies across FSTP projects and across countries. The modes of delivery are rated as “fulfilled,” but the project coordination is rated as “partially fulfilled,” with an overall efficiency rating of “partially fulfilled.”

**Impact:** Shabab Live made a tangible impact on its three target groups. The online evaluation survey results and interviews unequivocally support the conclusion that Shabab Live had a strong impact on empowering the young participants. They were equipped with new media technical skills and introduced to relevant networks. In addition, they gained important soft skills, which increased their self-confidence and ability to actively engage in societal debates and broadened their horizons. Young people created content that highlighted “their issues.” Participating organizations received resources to implement their own projects and thereby extend their field of activities and outreach to young people. Shabab Live FSTP grantees increased their management skills, visibility and credibility. An even broader impact might have been achieved if certain common or relevant components from the 18 FSTP projects had been pooled, for example, by documenting and sharing innovative approaches and formats that were successfully piloted by individual FSTP projects. In this way, the results of FSTP projects could have been made available to other FSTP partners that work under similar conditions,

as well as to external NGOs, broadcasters and young people. The impact on the target group of young people (direct participants) and participating NGOs and broadcasters was rated as “comprehensively fulfilled” and the wider impact was rated as “fulfilled,” with an overall impact rating of “comprehensively fulfilled.”

**Sustainability:** The FSTP grantees showed great ownership of their own project ideas funded under the Shabab Live call and were motivated to continue the activities for young people. Some of the newly developed formats have secured follow-up funding. In the online survey, young participants overwhelmingly expressed their wish to continue to be active in the area of the media and some were already employed by the FSTP grantees, broadcasters or NGOs by the time of the evaluation. Many project partners expressed the wish to continue, repeat or scale up their activities in a second phase of the Shabab Live project. Some of the partner organizations continued their cooperation with funding from other donors. The Shabab Live project could have placed a greater emphasis from the beginning on working with the FSTP organizations to plan the continuation of their projects once the EU funding ended. The continuity of effects was rated as “comprehensively fulfilled,” whereas the continuity of support and cooperation was rated as “partially fulfilled,” for an overall sustainability rating of “overall fulfilled.”

## Lessons Learned

When managing FSTP projects selected via a call, ensure a good balance between, on the one hand, content autonomy and ownership over the project by applicants, and, on the other, providing support for project development and quality assurance.

A successful cascade implementation of (regional) training sessions requires a comprehensive project management approach to both the design, implementation and follow up of training activities and the co-

ordination of the collaboration between the parties involved, including any external stakeholders.

The management of third-party support requires a significant number of staff at the level of both the FSTP implementing organizations and the organization(s) responsible for the overall project management (in this case: DW Akademie).

## Selected Recommendations

Human resources are the most valuable resource in this kind of project and should be supplied with an adequate budget, distributed proportionally to the responsibilities involved. Especially new and multinational teams need support (budget and facilitation) to grow together and develop a common understanding of project goals, roles, responsibilities and work processes.

FSTP proved to be a valuable mode of delivery, but pathways should be identified to ensure that financial and administrative procedures do not dominate the project to such a degree.

In addition to administrative support, technical and content feedback and participation could be beneficial for the FSTP proj-

ect teams, but should be balanced against unwelcome interference that could reduce their autonomy and ownership.

Creating synergies between FSTP projects and external projects and partners requires considerable effort in the short-term, but can also save resources in the mid- and long-term and add value for all parties.

The implementing agencies should invest time and resources at the start and end of the project to assess previous experiences and anchor new experiences within their own organizations.

Text edited by DW Akademie.

## 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 more than 70 developing countries and emerging economies.

### CONTACT

Dr. Laura Moore  
Head Research and Evaluation  
laura.moore@dw.com  
Berlin, Germany

 DWAkademie

 @dw\_akademie

 DWAkademie

 [dw.com/newsletter-registration](mailto:dw.com/newsletter-registration)

 [dw.com/mediadev](http://dw.com/mediadev)