

**MID-TERM PROJECT EVALUATIONS
FOR THE
UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND**

EVALUATION REPORT

**UDF-19-853-RAS
Strengthening Independent Media in the Arab Region**

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluator. They do not represent those of UNDEF or any of the institutions referred to in the report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Strengthening Independent Media in the Arab Region,” is a regional Middle East and North Africa (MENA) project, implemented by Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) in 4 countries: Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia. The project’s initial duration from January 1, 2021, to 31 December 2024 has been extended through June 2025. Based on an inclusive project design, human rights media-related activities are multi-scalar and participatory, as they are being implemented in four countries working with a wide network of media and civic actors, decision-makers, and local authorities.

The project is relevant to the contemporary political contexts in each country, as the Implementing Partner has been able to effectively and impactfully use advocacy skills and technical expertise to sensitive media and civic actors to data-driven journalism and ethical journalism practices. Building on synergies from previous UNDEF grants and working with wide networks in each country, the Implementing Partner has been able to adapt to complicated and rapidly shifting political contexts, while building capacity to counter disinformation. Material outputs are in consistent use, human rights studies are regularly produced in various media outlets, signaling a strong potential for sustainability. UNDEF is well positioned in that reporting on sensitive human rights issues and journalism practices are increasingly under threat in the MENA region, underscoring the project’s importance to democratic development.

I. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

This report is the mid-term evaluation of the project titled, “Strengthening Independent Media in the Arab Region.” It has been implemented over 4 years since January 1, 2021, with an extension granted through June 2025, by Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) in 4 countries: Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia. This is the Implementing Partner’s third UNDEF grant. The project benefits from a budget amounting USD 495,000 to carry out the following activities:

- 16 focus group trainings for 192 media professionals and civic actors on press freedom and access to information;
- 96 on-air and online forums (monthly, 24 per country) through targeted media;
- 8 roundtables with 96 key stakeholders from media concerned with human rights;
- 8 position papers on challenges to press freedoms (2 per country);
- 8 training workshops for local journalists (2 per country) on effective data-driven human rights journalism;
- Regional training of trainers (ToT);
- 200 human rights reports;
- Small grants program for mentorship of human rights story production;
- 4 human rights awards for journalists;
- Working group of journalists and civic actors for networking (regular meetings), led by legal advisors; and

- Human Rights Code of Ethics for North Africa and the Middle East (JHR code of ethics for human rights journalists on a regional level).

The project aims at reaching the following groups of project participants:

- Over 96 journalists (40% women);
- Over 96 civic actors (50% women);
- Over 64 decision-makers (22% women);
- Over 600 citizen journalists (50% women);
- Over 1,160,000 media audiences (50% women).

The project increases the capacity of media professionals to produce sensitive human rights stories based on data-driven journalism and through networks of civic, media, and decision-making actors in Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia. Implemented in four vastly different political environments, from security deterioration to authoritarian retrenchment, JHR has been able to carry out training and mentorship activities, expand networks, produce human rights stories in various print, audio, visual, and digital platforms, and adjust project activities due to rapidly changing contexts. In addition to sensitizing journalists to data-driven human rights journalism and its ability to counter disinformation, activities include the input and buy-in of diverse civil society actors and local authorities. The project is based on an inclusive and participatory activity design that brings together human rights journalists and advocates from across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This approach lent the project legitimacy among partners and beneficiaries who stressed the importance of such initiatives in the MENA and the need for follow-up activities with mentorship for purposes of long-term sustainability and impact.

Challenges to the project were initially linked to COVID-19 public health restriction depending on national policy, shifting partnership strategies, security, and decline in democratic conditions. Next to Iraq, the work of human rights reporting in Lebanon faces the most devastating nexus of challenges: the recent war in the South and bombings in Beirut, regime change in Syria, the Beirut port explosion, a financial crash and devaluated currency, in addition to daily security incidents and power outages. In Morocco and Tunisia, tightening of government control over freedom of expression and access to information has placed new barriers on investigative human rights journalism. Despite these complicated situations and the stark variation in the four countries, the Implementing Partner has been able to mitigate challenges, relying on synergies with previous initiatives and redesigning elements of the overall project design for its continuity, effectiveness, and efficiency.

As such, the project is **relevant** to the contemporary political and media contexts in each country in that the Implementing Partner is effectively and impactfully using its technical expertise and advocacy skills to strengthen sensitive media coverage while training civic actors on data-driven and ethical journalism practices to counter disinformation. In addition to a compelling, **efficient, and flexible project design**, which allows the Implementing Partner to realign activities when needed and ensure their timely implementation, JHR also relies on synergies from its previous UNDEF grants and **lessons learned from other UNDEF Implementing Partners**. With its broad and established network of media and civic actors, JHR adapts to complex and rapidly transforming political environments, while complementing other media and civic initiatives in each country. **Impact is visible** in the increased commitment to practice data-driven journalism, the growing coverage of sensitive human rights stories, and the positive engagement of authorities in Lebanon and Tunisia. To date, the project shows a **strong potential for sustainability** as material outputs are in

consistent use and human rights stories are regularly produced in a variety of traditional and new media outlets. As reporting on human rights issues and data-driven journalism practices are in decline in the MENA region, **UNDEF is well positioned** in that it provides legitimacy to projects that can be deemed sensitive while underscoring the project's importance to democratic development.

Drawn from a set of conclusions, key recommendations stress the critical need to strengthen data-driven human rights journalism in the MENA with professional trainings and capacity-building activities aligned with country-specific priorities to improve overall media environments. Recommendations also highlight that for multi-annual regional projects activity designs and budgets must be flexible and adjustable to rapidly shifting political, legal, and financial conditions and activities must be situated within full understandings of the barriers and possibilities in each case. Partnership strategies promise effectiveness if developed in early project stages as they can help identify substantive country priorities. Effective partnerships are also imperative to identify mitigation strategies should shifts in the working environments affect project implementation. Relatedly, networks of civic and media actors committed to human rights work are key in advancing advocacy strategies to sensitize for data-driven reporting while inclusive partnership networks throughout project implementation have a better chance to garner engagement and support by local authorities. For these reasons, project designs need to include activities, such as position papers and analyses, that keep track of contextual shifts, which simultaneously strengthen training and capacity-building initiatives, inform material outputs, and reinforce advocacy elements throughout.

Lessons Learned:

- Flexibility in project design is key to successfully implemented projects in rapidly changing contexts, especially in cases of deteriorating security, war, and (previous) pandemic-related lockdowns.
- Inclusive partnership strategies and local participation during project design and at the project start-up stage are critical for more precise and consistent alignment with contemporary priorities. Consistent involvement in project implementation by local offices and coordinators is necessary to mitigate contextual challenges and effectuate activity redesign, including bottom-up involvement in the development of training materials and knowledge-sharing.
- An alternative strategy to foster more impactful and sustainable practices among media and civic actors in multi-country projects is to focus on specific themes of common interest, such as climate justice and gender or minority rights (which figured prominently in this project) across countries. Not only would this allow for the design of catered trainings, skill-and-capacity-building activities that focus on specific human rights areas. It would also sustain the network of journalists and civic actors focused on common interests regionally and internationally.
- Another multi-faceted benefit of regional partnerships are the synergies that are created on the national level stemming from local partners that bring different experiences and lessons learned to the fore.
- Inclusive project designs that rely on human rights actors from diverse professions and backgrounds have a high potential for engaging stakeholders and local authorities.

- For journalism projects, access to information trainings and data-driven journalism capacity-building/sensitization workshops are essential. In all four project countries, project participants emphasize the increased difficulties in accessing information to engage in data-driven reporting to counter rampant disinformation and the positive impact of specifically catered initiatives to help access information and data.
- Material outputs are most useful when they hold long-term temporal value and become staple references, such as the Human Rights Code of Ethics for North Africa and the Middle East (JHR code of ethics for human rights journalists on a regional level).

II. PROJECT CONTEXT AND STRATEGY

(i) Development context

According to the *Reporters without Borders* 2023 Press Freedom Index, the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) is the lowest ranking region in the world and has gradually declined over the past two decades, despite the collapse of the Baathist regime in Iraq (2003), the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon (2005), the fall of Ben Ali in Tunisia (2011), and constitutional reforms in Morocco (2011). The low regional ranking, however, hides significant intra-regional differences in the levels of freedom of the press in the four states covered by this project, ranging from a very dire situation in Iraq (167/180), to a more optimistic situation in Lebanon (119/180) and Tunisia (121/180), with Morocco ranking fifth in the MENA region (144/180).

The development of mass media in the MENA dates to the 19th century, though its true expansion occurred during British and French colonial occupation in Iraq (1921-1932), Lebanon (1920-1939), Morocco (1912-1956), and Tunisia (1889-1956), as colonial authorities and nationalists struggled to inform and form public opinion. While radio and later television were entirely controlled by colonial authorities, independent print media was tolerated,

“Journalism is part of building a state, and one of the principal pillars of statehood.”

(Iraqi journalist, JHR project participant)

though tightly controlled via official censorship offices and other repressive tactics. Many of these tactics, in turn, were adopted by the post-independence governments of these states.

Freedom of press is measured along several axes, including the overall political context of the country, level of private capital penetration, existing legal framework, and security to media outlets and their reporters. These axes map onto the historical and contemporary rankings of freedom of press in the four countries covered by this project.

Until the 2000s, post-independence governments and political actors sought to control critical media coverage in several ways, including the monopolization of publicity, failure to issue operating licenses, and instituting official ruling-party or governmental censorship offices.

While a series of political shocks and changes in each state in the 2000s forced governments to re-visit their media practices, including 1) political liberalization to allow multiparty elections; 2) permitting private ownership of the print press, radio, and television; and 3) constitutionally guaranteed freedom of the press, significant challenges continue to confront independent media outlets and journalists. Despite these transformation-indicating changes, press freedom has decreased over the past twenty years in Iraq, Lebanon, and Morocco, to varying degrees. And while gains made following the 2011 Tunisian revolution still place it at the top of the MENA group, its overall ranking has declined since 2019.

The key factors leading to an overall decline in freedom of the press include physical insecurity due to war or armed groups (Iraq, Lebanon); concentration of private press ownership by dynasties or political parties sometimes with close alliances with the government (Morocco, Tunisia); the expansion of free online news sources that seriously disrupted print media business models while conflating investigative journalism with fake news and undermining public support for journalists (Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia); the adoption of laws that criminalize broadly defined attacks on public morality, state security, and libel (Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia); and an overall weak legal system that allows preventative detainment during an ineffectually slow administrative process (Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia).

The JHR project seeks to address some of these lacunae by improving the media environment in four countries through professional trainings and mentorship in human rights reporting. The project specifically addressed fake news, public support for journalists, and sensitizes the public for the need to address human rights issues, including strengthening freedom of the press, by expanding knowledge on legal rights.

(ii) The project objective

JHR has been implementing this 4-year regional project since January 1, 2021 (original end date 31 December 2024, but at the time of writing an extension through June 2025 was being granted) titled, "Strengthening Independent Media in the Arab Region," through a network with local project partners in 4 countries: Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia. The key local partners are the National Union of Journalists in Iraq, Awan Media in Lebanon, Association Initiatives Citoyenneté (Mouvement Bawsala) in Morocco, and Ulysse F.M. and Radio 6 in Tunisia. The total budget is USD 495,000.

The objective of this project is to strengthen independent and collaborative human rights media in the Arab Region towards greater public accountability and improved governance outcomes. To achieve this objective, the project is designed along the following goals: (1) building greater accountability and governance, (2) improving the working environments for journalists, (3) advancing media freedom and accessible information and data, (4) enhancing the capacity of freelance and full-time journalists to cover sensitive human rights stories, and

(5) improving journalists' legal knowledge through strong working partnerships with civic actors. Project activities also incorporated responses to the COVID -19 crisis for journalists on the front line.

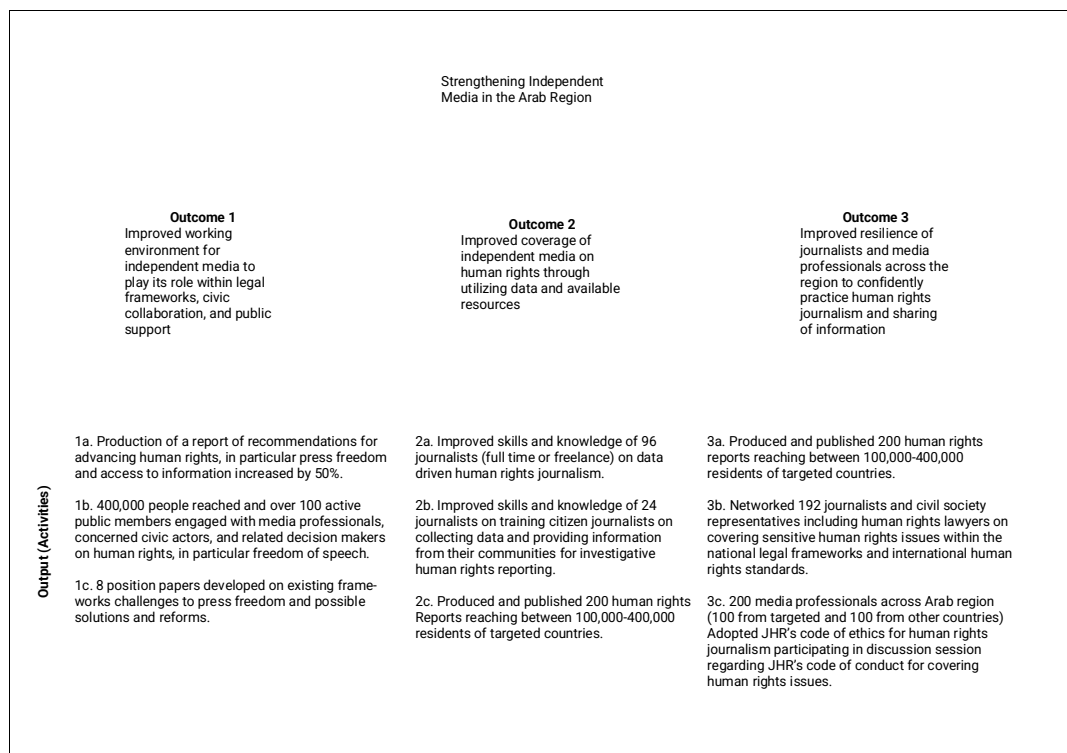


Figure 1: Intervention Logic - Project Objective, Outcomes and Outputs

To achieve the proposed goals, the project includes several activities:

- 16 focus group trainings for 192 media professionals and civic actors on press freedom and access to information;
- 96 on-air and online forums (monthly, 24 per country) through targeted media;
- 8 roundtables with 96 key stakeholders from media concerned with human rights;
- 8 position papers on challenges to press freedoms (2 per country¹);
- 8 training workshops for local journalists (2 per country) on effective data-driven human rights journalism;
- Regional training of trainers (ToT);
- 200 human rights reports;
- Small grants program for mentorship of human rights story production;
- 4 human rights awards for journalists;
- Working group of journalists and civic actors for networking (regular meetings), led by legal advisors; and
- Human Rights Code of Ethics for North Africa and the Middle East (JHR code of ethics for human rights journalists on a regional level).

(iii) Project strategy and approach

¹ JHR is planning to produce two additional position papers in the extension period, for a total of 10 position papers.

The project addresses a weak media sector in the four countries and structural challenges that impede the development of strong and independent journalism: (1) weak media capacity; (2) weak press freedom; and (3) compromised right to access information. These challenges are the result of an overall hostile and polarized media environment; the proliferation of fake news, and inability to access public data; legal and physical intimidation of journalists and an increase in the practice of self-censorship among media professionals. With a focus on collaborative human rights coverage, the project strategy is informed by previous UNDEF projects in the region, as well as by UNDEF and other projects previously designed and implemented by JHR.

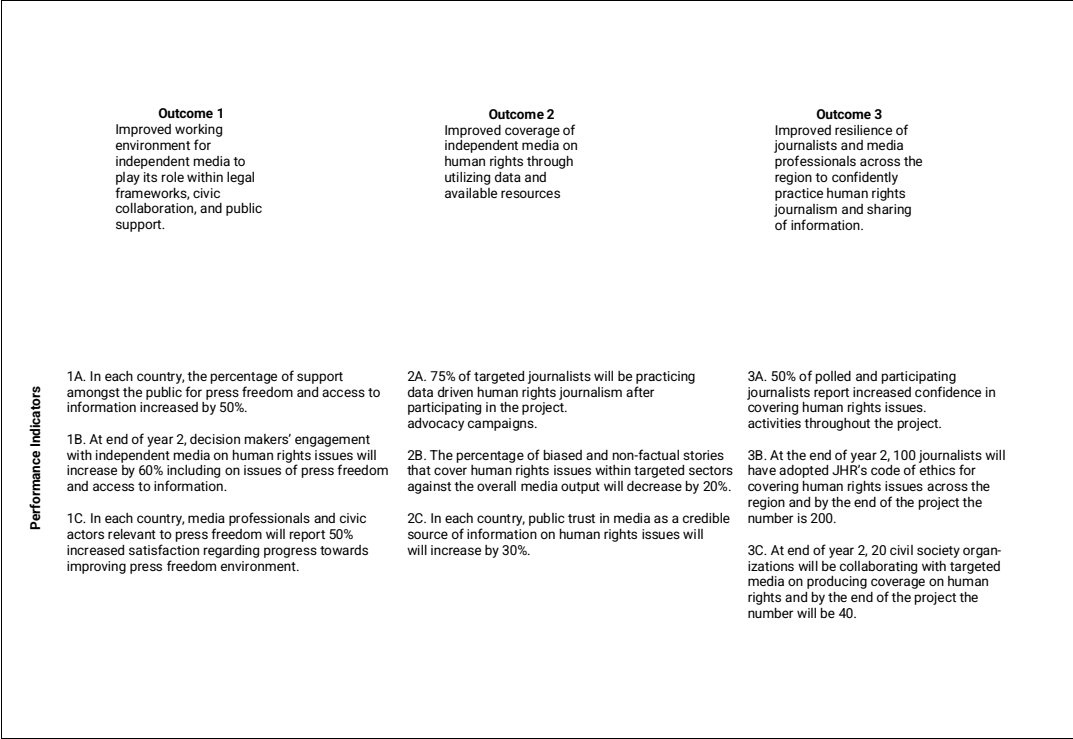


Figure 2: Project Strategy

To strengthen independent and collaborative human rights media in the Arab region, the project strategy focuses on: (1) engaging relevant stakeholders to support press freedom and access to information; (2) fostering partnerships between media and civil society; (3) building the capacity of media; (4) enhancing support for press freedom and access to information amongst the public; (5) complementing other projects funded by UNDEF in the region to avoid duplication and build on existing results and plans from other partners; and (6) innovate through expanded lessons learned from JHR’s programming, in particular UNDEF-funded projects. The project is inclusive as it has brought together journalists, civic actors, and decision-makers and attempted to represent gender equity.

The project strategy and approach are informed by JHR’s longstanding work in the media sector, a large network of journalists and media professionals, and a permanent office in Tunisia that implements a variety of media reform projects. In each country, a JHR program coordinator works with existing and expanding networks of media professionals, civic organizations, local authorities, and media institutions that ensure regular coverage within radio, television, in parallel to capacity-building and skills training opportunities, many of which are organized outside of capitals and major cities.

III. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The purpose and objective of this evaluation is to conduct a midterm analysis of the overall project UDF-19-853-RAS, with specific attention to achievements and lessons learned in the 48 months of implementation to-date (January 1, 2020-December 31, 2024). The evaluation was conducted from October 7, 2024, until December 20, 2024, in a transparent approach with attention to the Implementing Partner's capacity as well as the overall development context in Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia. This allowed for an in-depth assessment of the project rationale and justification, both its programmatic (outputs and outcomes) and financial dimensions. The variation of site visits and meetings with project partners brought additional value to fully assess impact as well as measure sustainability. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Norms and Standards for Evaluations developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group, the OECD criteria of evaluation, and the UNDEF operational manual. Recommendations and lessons learned were developed from evidence-based findings following the desk review and field work.

Per the launch note, the evaluation is based on a comprehensive analysis of all available narrative, financial, and activity-specific project documents, a relevant literature review, field work in Morocco and Tunisia comprised of interviews with the implementing partner organization, local CSO project partners, journalists, and a virtual focus group meeting with partners and journalists in Iraq. This mid-term project evaluation seeks to establish the achievement of outcomes thus far and the potential impact of the activities towards achieving the principal objectives, while gaging its sustainability prospects. Evaluation questions focused on project synergies with previous JHR initiatives, sustainability potential of trainings and capacity-building activities, variation and similarities in the four diverse contexts, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the project design. **Evaluation questions are detailed in Annex I.**

In addition to the desk review of project documents, the evaluator conducted a secondary literature review including statistics and indexes of country-specific measurements of press freedom and journalism practice. Research was also conducted on the Implementing Partner's past activities in journalism and human rights work. The evaluator held a virtual introductory meeting with JHR key staff to discuss the overall project and the field mission plan, and several follow-up meetings during the evaluation analysis. Throughout the field mission which involved interviews and focus groups with partners and beneficiaries, the evaluator focused on project-specific questions with attention to contextual challenges and opportunities. For questions of external coherence and synergies across other UN-funded projects, the evaluator was able to meet with a UN representative in Morocco.

There were some challenges to the evaluation. The Implementing Partner was eager to discuss the project, including its limitations and new possibilities, share project-specific and additional supporting documentations, facilitate meetings during the field mission with partners and contacts, and remained available for follow-up meetings and discussions following the field missions. However, due to the security situation in Lebanon, both linked to military attacks on infrastructure in the South and Beirut, and the collapse of the government

in neighboring Syria, interviews with project partners in Lebanon were not possible. All Lebanon-specific information is drawn from project documents, secondary source research, and interviews with JHR staff.

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

(i) **Relevance**

The project is **relevant** in that it addresses critical democracy development needs in the MENA region, where media sectors have been weakened because of a variety of factors – some similar across countries, others idiosyncratic to the national contexts. These include structural conditions that lead to obstacles for press freedom, fragility of the media sector itself (including tackling fake news), and legal and extra-legal intimidation of media sector outlets and professionals. Access to information and reliance on data-based journalism is a challenge in all countries. In Tunisia, for instance, *Circular No. 2018-19 of May 18, 2018, relating to the right of access to information* renders the information request process so long that it does not align with the publication or production of timely news. In Iraq and Morocco, the media sectors are fragmented with oversaturation of fake news and disinformation, though to different levels. Iraqi journalists face a politically fragmented environment in which approximately 25,000 fake news sites have been produced by competing sectarian and political interest groups. While Moroccan journalists also grapple with disinformation, the media landscape is not defined by the kind of political fragmentation and security threats that journalists confront in Iraq and Lebanon. Rather Moroccan journalists are faced with low salaries and weak job security. Tunisia's media institutions have historically been strong and are publicly legitimate, with a culture of veteran journalists and high levels of public trust in credible news outlets, while in Lebanon the public increasingly mistrusts media, especially following the Beirut port explosion, a disastrous financial crash, significant currency devaluation, and most recently the war.

Core Human Rights Issues Represented in this Project:

- 1. Climate Justice and Ecology**
- 2. Access to Information and Press Freedom**
- 3. Gender Rights and Empowerment**
- 4. Minority Rights**
- 5. Political Participation for All**
- 6. Combatting Fake News and Disinformation**

The regional project design was constructed with launch phases at different moments, based on JHR's capacity and partnership-strategy in the four countries, allowing the activities to build upon each other and inform comparatively depending on country strengths. This strategy, which shifted in the first year due to a change in the local key partner in Morocco and subsequent delays, is flexible and elastic, allowing the Implementing Partner to amend activities and timelines without compromising the overall progress towards goals and

objectives. The project design includes locally based program coordinators who have been implementing multi-faceted activities with vast networks of media and civic partners. The Tunis-based JHR office, for example, has a network of over 400 journalists across the country, which allows for activities to be held nation-wide with 80% of activities taking place outside of

the capital. JHR has two criteria for in-country partnerships: (1) partners are selected based on willingness to work on human rights issues; (2) partners have extensive reach to assure nation-wide impact and sustainability for trainings and practices.

Relevance is also measurable at the project participant level. In all focus groups, participants and beneficiaries underscored the need for training on data-driven journalism, capacity-building around sensitive human rights issue coverage, and combating fake news. Two clear areas of common interest highlighted by participants across the four countries were legal barriers to information access and the participation of local actors in the Human Rights Code of Ethics for North Africa and the Middle East. This need for continued and increased professional development, mentorship, and exchange opportunities highlights the absence of such media training in the MENA region and attests to the project's relevance regarding capacity and skill-building. While the contextual factors in the four countries differ drastically, exchanges for journalists to learn from each other are critical, especially understanding the kind of challenges and hurdles other journalists face. Because the variation in context is so high (post-conflict, sectarianism, war, authoritarianism, blocking access to information) bottom-up lessons learned are key.

Elements of the project design shown to be replicable and relevant across countries, are the development of networks including journalists, media professionals, human rights advocates and legal experts. In the four countries, the level of engagement in these networks varies as each project operates in different security, political, and legal contexts. A common thread is the usefulness that such inclusive professional networks provide in engaging key stakeholders and decision-makers, as the experiences in Lebanon and Tunisia show. In short - while the size and engagement of networks of media and civic actors vary across the countries, their ability to garner buy-in from local authorities is evident. An alternative or additional project strategy that could increase the relevance of cross-national projects is to concentrate on fewer themes that resonate among journalists from different contexts, such as climate justice and gender or minority rights, which figured prominently in this project. This would allow the Implementing Partner to develop more catered training, skill-and-capacity-building activities that focus on specific human rights areas and would broaden the network of journalists and civic actors regionally and internationally. The partnership strategy would more actively engage in the design of activities, thereby increasing potential for sustainability of issue-based journalism across the region while strengthening regional networks of journalists and civic actors with similar human rights interests.

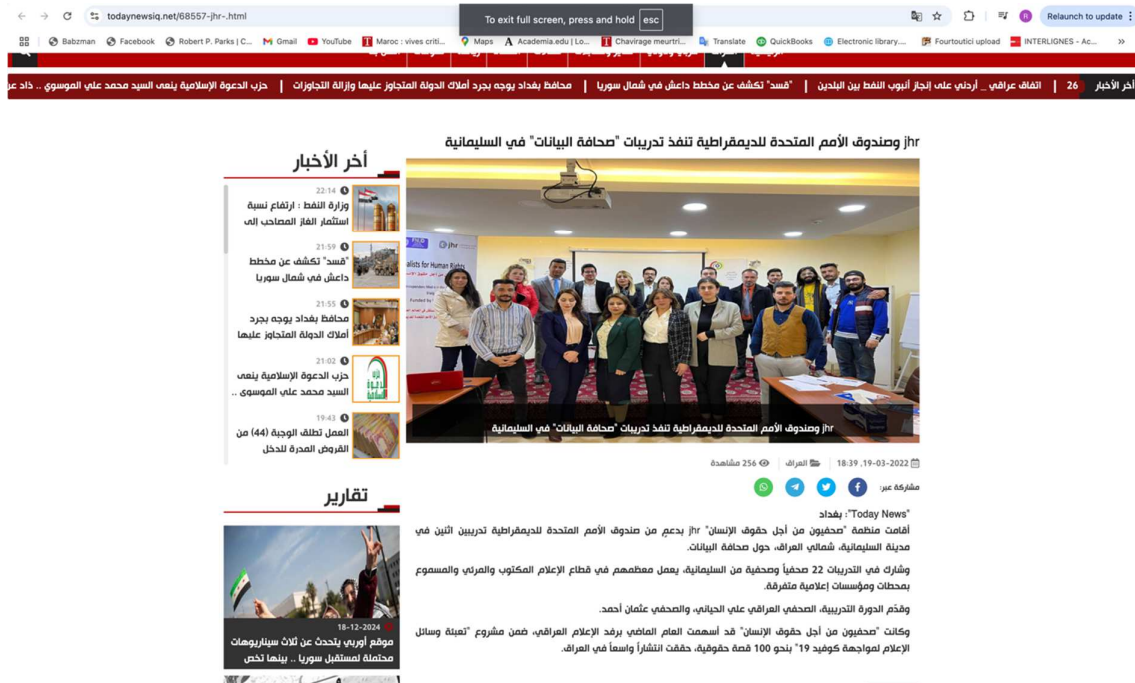


Photo 1: Screenshot of Today News Report on JHR Data-Driven Journalism Training Activity in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq (March 19, 2022)

(ii) Coherence

Externally, the project harmonizes with other journalism projects in the MENA, both regionally and in the four focus countries. An ad-hoc advisory committee was set up early in the project with representation from other UNDEF-funded projects in the region to consult on country-specific priorities. In Tunisia, the JHR project aligns with other critical human rights initiatives including work of Lawyers without Borders, Article 19, Al-Bawsala, the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (*Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux*, FTDES), Nawaat, and Inkyfada. The regional JHR project adds value to existing initiatives as it centralizes professional capacity building around access to information and data-driven journalism around human rights coverage, through an inclusive strategy of bringing media and civic actors together and working with stakeholders. By working with established networks committed to human rights, the project focuses on data-driven journalism towards two interrelated goals: (1) improving the overall media environment by working towards improving access to information; and (2) awareness raising among journalists of how data-driven journalism can counter disinformation and false narratives.

In addition to their consistency with other journalism and human rights projects in the MENA region, project elements also complement current UN priorities, especially the various cooperation frameworks signed between the UN and Iraq, Lebanon, and Morocco respectively. The project's approach also aligns with the U.N. 2.0 quintet of cutting-edge skills: (1) behavioral science (by strengthening behavioral science, better choices are made such as reducing stigma); (2) building data capacity (how to collect and understand data, for instance to counter fake news); (3) digital capacity to transform education, create intergovernmental dialogue, transparency; (4) foresight, navigating uncertainty; and (5) innovation.

The project has created synergies from lessons learned within the four-year span, as well as from previous UNDEF-funded journalism initiatives in Syria and Mali on collaborative journalism approaches between media and civic actors, especially journalists in marginalized areas. Synergies have also developed on the national level as local partners brought different experience and lessons learned to the fore. For instance, the Moroccan partner focused on producing stories in multiple vernacular languages for community-level resonance and highlight the role of communitarian media as garnering legitimacy among listeners and readers at the local level. The JHR office in Tunisia brought a large network of journalists, media professionals, and engaged civic organizations to the project that helped inform on navigating complex legal frameworks governing information access. While all beneficiaries voiced the need for more professional training and mentorship opportunities, especially considering limited journalism training at the university level and the rise of disinformation, cross-project synergies have been established with the continued utilization of human rights ethics codes and JHR-produced training materials.

(iii) Effectiveness

The project design is based on three interrelated outcomes around improved working environment for independent media, improved coverage of independent media on human rights, and improved resilience of journalists and media professionals. Activities as envisioned in 2020 were adequate in progressing towards project objectives as they combined professional training, knowledge-sharing and effective journalism writing opportunities, and working towards an improved human rights reporting sector by engaging with stakeholders and decision-makers around access to information. Early in the project, the Implementing Partner developed sound mitigation strategies to adjust activities in response to rapidly shifting public health policies related to the COVID-19 pandemic. More recently, the media environment in all countries has been significantly affected by deteriorating security and war, natural disaster, and authoritarian retrenchment. In this sense, the project shifted from the original project document as the largest challenge at project start were COVID-19 restrictions, as well as delayed project implementation due to shifts in partnership strategies. This shift, however, did not compromise overall objectives but adapted to the context and in some cases exceeded goals.²

At the mid-term stage, **effectiveness** is difficult to fully gauge as progress towards reaching objectives and goals is observable in some outputs more so than in others, with variation by country. For instance, activities and outputs linked to the first outcome for improved media working environment show progress as all partners have been actively involved in producing recommendations through engagement with CSOs and other actors and included these in trainings and subjects of on-air and on-line public fora. The Morocco component was delayed because of a change in partnership strategy, while Lebanon's implementation was delayed in the first year, and came to a halt with the 2024 war. Early delays in Morocco and Lebanon have been overcome with JHR's flexibility around volunteer staff and cost-sharing, with Morocco showing significant progress towards all outcomes. In Lebanon, the engagement of key-stakeholders and publication of recommendations and other JHR-led human rights analyses by the Ministry of Information indicated important decision-maker buy in, however an intensification in armed conflicts significantly slowed project implementation.

² To date, almost 100% more journalists signed the Human Rights Ethics Code than expected, and 25% more position papers are expected to be produced.

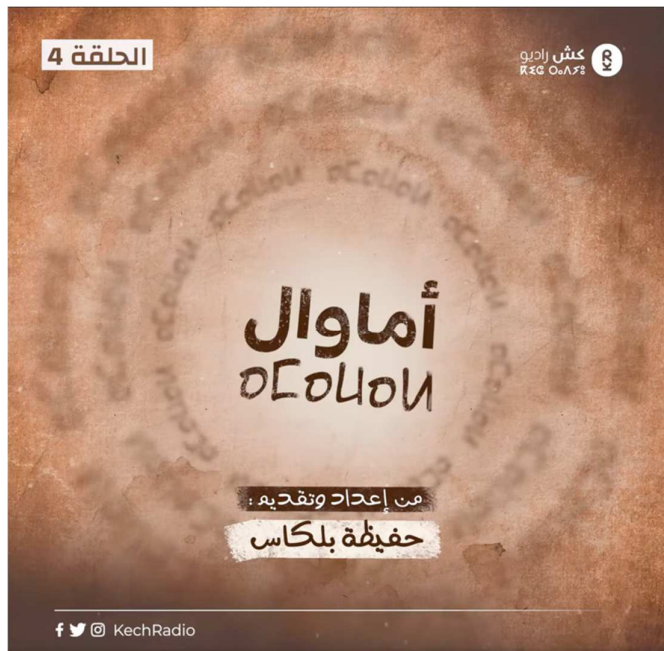


Photo 2: Screenshot of Moroccan Kech Radio Live Streaming Interface, 'Amawal' (Dictionary) on Facebook

In Tunisia, the project has made the most significant progress to-date, which is linked to the presence of a JHR country office, and the established nation-wide network of journalists, media institutions, and civil society that served as project partners. Training manuals are in regular use, analyses of challenges (mainly legal) to press freedom and data-driven journalism are on-going and underpin all JHR's work in Tunisia. In Morocco, Bawsala organized a series of advocacy and sensitization activities around the Human Rights Journalism Code of Ethics for North Africa and the Middle East, regularly using the Code in briefings with stakeholders. Project beneficiaries actively produce stories on human rights topics, which are systematically included in journalistic outputs. To-date, close to 150 human rights articles have been published because of the small grants program (output 2.3), while 38 on-air forums (output 1.2) have been held regionally reaching over 800,000 people.

(iv) Efficiency

As the evaluation has taken place around the time of project's Milestone #4 but prior to subsequent progress reporting (NPR/FUR M4) which will cover implementation since 2023, it is difficult to assess project efficiency, especially with regards to known disruptions such as conflict and war, the overall security environment, and tightening of restrictions over press freedom and access to information. Prior to that reporting period, the project was organized around a clear timeline with different launch dates to ensure timely lessons learned implementation and comparative capacity building (i.e. the Human Rights Journalism Code of Ethics, visual data usage trainings, and ToT on data-driven journalism exchanges). A 10-month implementation delay prompted the Implementing Partner to request a project extension which UNDEF granted through June 2025. How the Lebanese local project partner will continue implementation considering the security situation as well as regime change in Syria depends on the identification of feasible risk mitigation options. For the time being, JHR is working on

a strategy in Lebanon that can support local reporting, while assessing new barriers to information access that profoundly impact conflict-zone reporting.

Originally, the project was set to focus heavily on Lebanon and Morocco in year 1 and 2; followed by Iraq in year 2, and Tunisia in year 3. Consultations with local key project partners occurred in all countries concomitantly since project start. The Implementing Partner has contributed human resources in kind due to early delays that helped to get the project in all four countries back on track (2021-2022). The budget is designed in such a way that it allows for elasticity around the activity schedule and work plan, resulting in a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impact achieved thus far.

According to the two available narrative reports and three milestone verification reports, the project overall advanced on elements of Outcome 1 (understanding shifting legal frameworks governing information access and press freedom), and Outcome 2 (improved coverage on human rights issues that were decided upon in participatory focus group meeting), as well as elements of Outcome 3 (patterns of reporting on sensitive issues through capacity-building and knowledge sharing). As the budget was designed in a way for the project to meet its objectives, the Implementing Partner has concrete plans to complete implementation of all activities in the extension period (through June 2025). Human resources in kind contributed by JHR headquarters in Canada and a flexible project design allowed for an institutional arrangement that promotes cost-effectiveness and accountability.

(v) Impact

Impact potential is difficult to assess in the short-term and while the project is on-going, however, early indicators for impact are observable for all three outcomes. Additional challenges to assessing impact, especially positive impact, is the significant shift in the security, political, and legal contexts which each of the four countries experienced over the past two years. In Iraq, journalists reported constant electricity outages, sectarian tensions, and a very prohibitive flow of fake news tied to different political agendas. In Lebanon, the project started late because of COVID-19 related challenges, the structural effects of the Beirut port explosion in 2021 and was profoundly interrupted by the war in 2024 when journalists' priorities have changed. During the pandemic which hardened the already deep financial crisis, fuel was hard to come by, rendering electricity generation and basic transport impossible. However, during active implementation periods, the project has been able to engage decision-makers in impactful ways in which the Lebanese Ministry of Information engaged in meetings organized with Awan organization and published the first position paper on challenges to press freedoms produced in Lebanon on its website. Moreover, following a data management and interactive visual design training workshop organized by JHR for journalists in all four countries, Lebanese journalists and Awan have been publishing creative and high-quality environmental justice stories.

In Tunisia, JHR was able to sign a partnership agreement with the Access to Information Commission (*Instance d'accès à l'information*, IAF). The Commission agreed to actively engage with JHR-organized activities on human rights journalism, to deepen decision-maker commitment in facilitating data-driven reporting. The JHR team in Tunisia also made significant headway in signing a partnership agreement with the Independent High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (*Haut autorité indépendante de la communication audiovisuelle*, HAICA), a body created in 2011 to guarantee freedom of expression and pluralism of audiovisual communication.

Thus, the clearest impact to-date is visible in merging the concept of data-driven journalism across the Arab World and introducing this practice to journalists and media outlets. This has proven to be an effective way to counter rampant disinformation. JHR-trained journalists are significantly more aware of the methods, approaches and procedures to counter fake news and disinformation through data-driven and fact-based journalism.

Impact is also observable with respect to improved coverage of independent media on human rights, as partners and beneficiaries report on the utility of the variety of trainings, capacity-building opportunities, exchanges and knowledge transfers with journalists and other partners. Priority themes that emerged from participatory focus groups include minority rights, climate justice, inclusiveness of disabled populations and political participation, fake news and disinformation, gender rights and empowerment. In Morocco, Bawsala started Kech Radio, a community-based radio station in Marrakesh working with local journalists in the South, which produces 25% of its stories in Tamazigh, (a language of the Amazigh, or Berber, people) thereby reaching larger communities. As a strategy, Bawsala relies on Tamazigh speaking partner journalists to expand its listener base around local human rights issues, and to ensure language inclusivity.

At the individual journalist confidence level, impact is also evident. JHR works in countries with starkly different needs beyond operating within prohibitive legal structures that render access to information and data difficult, as well as shifting political dynamics. As such, JHR organizes trainings and capacity-building events that center on global standards for human rights reporting, as well as context-specific and subject-focused events that are designed in collaboration with local partners. A 2023 regional JHR training on the increased usage of visual designs in reporting included a series of forums on environmental rights and the impacts of climate change in Iraq on “The Green Economy Show,” on Radio Nawa. This initiative impacted a group of beneficiaries to create a new project, titled “Our Iraq is Calling for Help,” and an online platform “Green Observatory,” which publishes data on environmental and climate change, human rights stories, and investigative reports.



Photo 3: Screenshot of Climate Justice Image from Awan Media in Lebanon after JHR MENA Data Visualization Workshop for Journalists

Finally, a critical ripple effect is visible in the usage of the Human Rights Code of Ethics for the Middle East and North Africa. Drafted as part of this project with a goal of having 200 journalists sign and adopt the Code, JHR was thus far able to garner a total of 395 signatures, a nearly 100% increase compared to the original goal. Because the code has become a key document in trainings and advocacy initiatives, JHR introduced it to other non-UNDEF funded projects in Syria, Mauritania, and among Arabic-speaking populations in Turkey which resulted in the increase in signatories³. The Code and future amendments to it, attest to both its impact and sustainability.

(vi) Sustainability

To date, sustainability prospects are observable on several levels: (1) new skills and practices acquired by journalists about data-driven reporting on human rights; (2) mentorship and usages of manuals and codes of ethics; and (3) availability of learning resources to institutionalize knowledge.

Two kinds of training and workshop activities have been especially relevant to working towards project sustainability. The first is training local journalists on the regulatory frameworks in each country about accessing and obtaining information to ensure data-driven and fact-based coverage of human rights issues. In all four countries, local partners and beneficiaries reported on the difficulties of obtaining information because of complex legal provisions and administrative hold-ups. Position papers were developed on these issues in early project stages, and in Lebanon and Tunisia, local project partners have been

³ The Human Rights Code of Ethics with 205 signatures at the time of writing this evaluation report has also exceeded the goal in the 4 project countries (which leaves time for potential further increase until the end of the project),

able to gain critical decision-maker buy-in through partnership agreements and participation of local authorities in capacity-training workshops and advocacy events.

JHR professional mentorship and participatory production of a regional ethics code, has already resulted in sustainable practice and commitment to human rights reporting standards. Of the 395 overall signatures, 205 journalists from the four project countries have signed on to the ethics code and project partners have included it in activities and new trainings. Beneficiaries report high satisfaction on subject-specific trainings and regional mentorship as well as exchange opportunities, where knowledge and comparative experiences are shared. Tangible outputs such as shows on Kech Radio in Morocco, the publicly accessible Green Observatory in Iraq, and over 80% of coverage outside of the capital Tunis in Tunisia, show important promise for sustainability.



Photo 4: Project Participant in Tunisia Producing On-Air Story

The project's regional reach has allowed for information sharing in the production of training materials as well as human rights award ceremonies, that indicate an institutionalization of knowledge as well as practice. At a human rights award ceremony in Marrakesh (September 2024, the project's Milestone #4), public discussions between journalists, human rights advocates, media representatives and students focused on how journalistic contributions have impacted human rights awareness in Morocco. In Lebanon, a female journalist from Syria received one of three human right awards, following a JHR-organized workshop around a position paper on the access to information barriers for female journalists. The human rights award ceremonies in Beirut and Marrakesh as well as the concentration of regional coverage in Tunisia, showcase the human rights awareness raising of local-level issues which resonates among affected communities.

(vii) UNDEF value added

The UN Democracy Fund is well-positioned to support a human rights journalism project, especially in a global context of false narratives and disinformation undermining democratic governance. The comparative advantage of UNDEF in working towards democracy via inclusive and participatory approaches that center civil society and media reform, was noted

throughout. This comparative advantage is especially pertinent in complex security situations, as well as in more restrictive political conditions that impact data-driven journalism and freedom of expression. **UNDEF value-added** was especially important at the high decision-making levels, where UNDEF support provided both legitimacy and trust. At the same time, the UNDEF brand was imperative to garner input from local media outlets and the local/regional civic associational level, especially around advocacy efforts and trust in producing sensitive human rights stories.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion	Recommendation
Institutionalizing data-driven journalism, related to human rights coverage as part of democracy development in the MENA region, is relevant to the political and media sector contexts in the four countries and shows prospects for sustainability . The Implementing Partner has taken contextual differences and idiosyncrasies into account with an activity design that is flexible to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and lasting impact .	Regional projects involving multiple countries, and multi-annual projects, require adaptable or elastic project designs to account for shifts in the political, security, financial, and legal environments that determine activity implementation. Relatedly, professional trainings, capacity- and skill building, and mentorship for data-driven journalism need to align with country-specific contexts and buttress media reform projects.
The regional project is internally and externally coherent as it adds value to existing initiatives in the four countries and complements current UN priorities, while building synergies with previous grants through growing networks of civic and media actors. These synergies increase the potential for impact , signal sustainability, and provide critical mitigation strategy tools to adjust project activities and ensure continuation.	Regional project work plans must be based on sound analysis of barriers and possibilities (in addition to risk mitigation strategies) in each country in which implementation occurs. Budgets need to be flexible to respond to drastic currency fluctuations or price increases around basic supplies. Ensuring internal and external synergies facilitates efficient and effective project adaptability.
The improvement of the independent media environment in each country is approached through an interrelated strategy that includes training media and civic actors on overcoming information access barriers, providing new platforms for human rights coverage, and working with local authorities. Despite the complex security, political, and legal working environments in each country, this strategy indicates effectiveness and impact as journalism skills and media reporting levels have improved and remain in practice.	Projects that work towards strengthening independent media sectors need to develop interrelated strategies to foster work among media professionals, civic actors, and local authorities. In the project start-up phase (or first phase) time needs to be allocated to develop a sound local partnership strategy to ensure progress expected towards outcomes and project goals. For effectiveness and efficiency , an inclusive partnership strategy and in-kind contributions by the Implementing Partner are critical to mitigating project delays and

	disruptions due to structural factors especially when the Implementing Partner has no in-country presence.
Access to Information legislation varies across countries and the process to receive data or facts/studies from official and public sources is lengthy, oftentimes not aligning with news publication deadlines. As such, project activities that focus on navigating legal and political environments to information access have already noticeable impact among journalists and civic actors who reported more confidence in countering rampant disinformation and engaging in data-driven reporting. Such activities benefit especially from inter-regional knowledge sharing opportunities as well as established networks of media professionals, civic actors, and local authorities in each country.	For sensitive human rights and media projects, awareness-raising initiatives among media professionals for data-driven journalism and knowledge on overcoming barriers to information access are critical throughout all project phases. Networks of civic and journalism actors committed to human rights work are key in advocacy strategies to sensitize for data-driven reporting. Project designs need to include activities, such as position papers and analyses, that keep track of contextual shifts.
Training and capacity-building initiatives that empower media professionals and build their confidence in reporting within complex and restrictive environment has already resulted in an increase in data-driven human rights media coverage. To date, more than the expected number of journalists have signed the Human Rights Code of Ethics in the Middle East and North Africa. Such skills and practices are sustainable and inform growing networks of journalists, civic actors and local authorities committed to data-driven information production.	Inclusive project designs are imperative to human rights reporting initiatives that require high level-decision maker input. Advocacy and sensitization activities and elements need to accompany project designs at all activity levels. As such, inclusive partnership networks throughout project implementation have a better chance to garner engagement by and support of local authorities and result in more impact and likely sustainability .
An alternative project strategy that could increase the relevance and impact of cross-national projects is to concentrate on fewer themes that resonate among journalists from different contexts, such as climate justice and gender or minority rights, which figured prominently in this project. This would allow the Implementing Partner to develop more thematic training, skill-and-capacity-building activities that focus on specific human rights areas and would strengthen the network of journalists and civic actors regionally and internationally.	In multi-country projects, the partnership strategy can be more actively engaged in the design of activities and priority themes, thereby increasing potential for sustainability of issue-based journalism across the region while strengthening regional networks of journalists and civic actors with similar human rights interests.
The UN Democracy Fund is well-positioned to support a sensitive human rights project at two critical levels: (1) countering disinformation that undermines democratic	The UNDEF brand can garner project support among local media and civil society actors in addition to local authorities that can help in building trust around advocacy

governance globally by centering civil society, and (2) engaging high-level decision makers by lending legitimacy and trust.	efforts and production of sensitive human rights media coverage.
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VI. LESSONS LEARNED

- Flexibility in project design is key to successfully implemented projects in rapidly changing contexts, especially in cases of deteriorating security, war, and (previous) pandemic-related lockdowns. In this project, the Implementing Partner has been able to effectively and efficiently shift activity implementation by relying on synergies from previous UNDEF-supported activities, networks of journalists and civic actors, as well as in-kind contribution to ensure successful project continuity.
- Inclusive partnership strategies and local participation during project design and at the project start-up stage are critical for more precise and consistent alignment with contemporary priorities. Consistent involvement in project implementation by local offices and coordinators is necessary to mitigate contextual challenges and effectuate activity redesign, including bottom-up involvement in the development of training materials and knowledge-sharing. In this case, the presence of country offices has been critical in mitigating project delays, changes in collaborative work with local authorities, and relying on broader networks of civic and media actors to ensure timeliness and impact.
- An alternative strategy to foster more impactful and sustainable practices among media and civic actors in multi-country projects is to focus on specific themes of common interest, such as climate justice and gender or minority rights (which figured prominently in this project) across countries. Not only would this allow for the design of catered trainings, skill-and-capacity-building activities that focus on specific human rights areas but would sustain the network of journalists and civic actors focused on common interests regionally and internationally. In this case, project participants from different countries have been able to share experience, lessons, barriers, and solutions resulting in productive media outputs.
- Another multi-faceted benefit of regional partnerships are the synergies that are created on the national level stemming from local partners that bring different experiences and lessons learned to the fore. In this case, the Moroccan partner focuses on producing stories in multiple vernacular languages for community-level resonance and highlights the role of communitarian media as garnering legitimacy among listeners and readers at the local level. In Tunisia, the local office brings a large network of journalists, media professionals, and engaged civic organizations to the project that helps informing on navigating complex legal frameworks governing information access.
- Inclusive project designs that rely on human rights actors from diverse professions and backgrounds have a high potential for engaging stakeholders and local authorities. In this case, inclusive project designs in Tunisia and Lebanon allow to

effectively work with local authorities towards understanding and addressing issues related to access of information and data-driven journalism.

- For journalism projects, access to information trainings and data-driven journalism capacity-building/sensitization workshops are essential. In all four project countries, project participants emphasize the increased difficulties in accessing information to engage in data-driven reporting to counter rampant disinformation and the positive impact of specifically catered initiatives to help access information and data.
- Material outputs are most useful when they hold long-term temporal value and become staple references, such as the Human Rights Code of Ethics for North Africa and the Middle East (JHR code of ethics for human rights journalists on a regional level). In this case, the Implementing Partner relies on synergies with its other projects and thus far has increased signatories committed to the code by 100% beyond target.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix and Questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions	Indicator	Data Source	Data Collection Method	Limitation/ Risk
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the project participant, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs for democratic development, taking into account country-specific and regional priorities? ▪ Was the project design and its implementation suitable to address a necessary and priority issue in the Arab region? ▪ Did the project design and activities address the needs of project participants? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Is the project design replicable and relevant across cases, including the engagement of key stakeholders, capacity-building for journalists, and the construction of national networks of media and civic actors? ▪ To what extent did the inclusive project design reach project objectives? 	1. Project indicators 2. Regional and Country-specific indicators for media freedom (i.e. Arab Barometer, Freedom House country-studies)	Project documentation, project staff and partners, project participants and local authorities	Desk and literature review, interviews	Fully understanding the political, legal, and security context in the geographic areas.

Coherence	How well did the project “fit”; i.e. to what extent was the project compatible with other projects and programs in the country, sector or institution?	<p>Internal coherence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent are there synergies and interlinkages between the project and other initiatives carried out by the Implementing Partner? <p>External coherence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent is there consistency with other actors’ initiatives in the same context? ▪ To what extent is there complementarity, harmonization and coordination between the Implementing Partner/the project and other organizations/projects working in the same context and on the same issue? ▪ To what extent is the project adding value while avoiding the duplication of efforts? 	<p>1. Project indicators</p> <p>2. Regional and Country-specific indicators for media freedom (i.e. Arab Barometer, Freedom House country-studies)</p>	Project documentation, project staff and partners, project participants and local authorities, other donors	Desk and literature review, interviews	Scope of other projects and limitation in time to analyze these comprehensively.
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Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this? 	Project indicators	Project documentation, project staff and partners, project participants and local authorities	Desk and literature review, interviews	Ability to meet as many as possible diverse project participants with different experiences /different activity participation within the project for a comprehensive understanding of effectiveness beyond reports.
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives? 	Project indicators	Project documentation, contracts with local partners and their financial reports	Desk and literature review, interviews and further documentation requests (especially up to date financial report)	

Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the project participants experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples? 	<p>1. Project indicators</p> <p>2. Context-specific indicators to media and press freedom</p>	Project staff and partners, project participants and local authorities	Desk and literature review, review of material project outputs, interviews, visit of the field and implemented local project activities	Ability to gather concrete evidence of all results, as the implementing partner is currently in the process of requesting a project extension.
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)? 	Project indicators	Project staff and partners, project participants and local authorities	Desk and literature review, review of material project outputs, interviews, visit of the field and implemented project activities	Qualitative assessment as project is on-going.

UNDEF value added	<p>To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors? And what was the specific contribution of UNDEF's Lessons Learned in this respect?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues? ▪ UNDEF encourages implementing partners to continue using the UNDEF Lessons Learned database (undeflessonslearned.org) following project launch. To what extent did the use of UNDEF Lessons Learned support or influence project implementation? 	Presence of UNDEF logo in important project materials and outputs	Outputs and materials	Review of documents, media mentions and social media posts	Ability to gather all the documents and understanding of the implementation strategy with the other partners.
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Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

Project Documentation:

UDF-19-853-RAS Project Document and Budget “Monitoring Implementation of UN Treaty Bodies’ Recommendations in Morocco”

UDF-19-853-RAS Financial Reports (FUR M2, FUR M3)

UDF-19-853-RAS Milestone Verification Reports (MVR M2, MVR M3, MVR M4)

UDF-19-853-RAS Narrative Progress Reports (NPR M2, NPR M3)

UDF-19-853-RAS Extension Request

Reports, Project Documents, Brochures and Handbooks produced by Implementing Partner

Additional Documentation:

Journalists for Human Rights Code of Ethics for North Africa and the Middle East

Journalists for Human Rights, 2023, *Empowering Journalists in the Arab Region through Interactive Data Visualization*, (<https://jhr.ca/empowering-journalists-in-the-arab-region-through-interactive-data-visualization/>)

Reporters without Borders, 2023, *2023 World Press Freedom Index – Journalism Threatened by Fake Content Industry*, (<https://rsf.org/en/2023-world-press-freedom-index-journalism-threatened-fake-content-industry>)

World Bank, 2023, *Prosperity Data360*, (<https://prosperitydata360.worldbank.org/en/indicator/RWB+PFI+RANK>)

Annex 3: Schedule of Interviews

Nesreen Abusultan	JHR, Senior Manager MENA Region	October 15, 2024 Virtual Meeting
Zein Almoghraby	JHR, Director of International Programs	October 15, 2024 Virtual Meeting
Youssef Bouallala	Office of the UN Resident Coordinator	October 30, 2024 United Nations Compound, Rabat, Morocco
Moroccan Scholar	Media Anthropologist	November 1, 2024 Marrakesh, Morocco
Azeddine Aic, Yassine Abbar, plus one Board Member	Association Initiatives Citoyennes (Bawsala)	November 2, 2024 Marrakesh, Morocco
Mohammad Bassim and nine project participants	JHR, Iraq Country Coordinator; Yalla Media Network, Ejaz Media Foundation, Naya Organization for Media Training and Development, College of Media – University of Iraq in Baghdad, Baghdad Vision Center for Studies	November 26, 2024 Virtual Meeting
Zein Almoghraby	JHR, Director of International Programs	November 28, 2024 Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia
Ahed Jemaaoui and five partner journalists	JHR, Tunisia Program Manager	December 12, 2024 Tunis, Tunisia
Nesreen Abusultan	JHR, Senior Manager MENA Region	December 13, 2024 Virtual Meeting
Nesreen Abusultan	JHR, Senior Manager MENA Region	December 18, 2024 Virtual Meeting

Annex 4: Acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organization
FTDES	Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (<i>Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux</i>)
HAICA	High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (<i>Haut autorité indépendante de la communication audiovisuelle</i>)
IAF	Access to Information Commission (<i>Instance d'accès à l'information</i>)
JHR	Journalists for Human Rights
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
OECD	Organization of European Cooperation and Development
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund