



**POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS
FOR THE
UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND**

EVALUATION REPORT

**UDF-17-747-MLI
Strengthening Media to Promote Inclusive Democracy in Mali**

23 January 2023

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Acknowledgements

The evaluator would like to thank Mr Jaime Palacios at UNDEF in New York and Mr Moro Siaka Diallo at *Journalists for Human Rights* in Mali for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this report.

Disclaimer

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

Author

This report was written by Kevin Lyne



Journalism students at the ESJSC in Bamako, 11 March 2020



Roundtable discussion - Women Leaders in the Media, Centre Aoua Keita, Bamako, 8 December 2021



Radio broadcasting to facilitate access to COVID-19 related information for the deaf and hard of hearing, ENERGIE FM, Bamako, 16 July 2020

I. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

This report is the evaluation of the project entitled “Strengthening Media to Promote Inclusive Democracy in Mali”. It was implemented by *Journalists for Human Rights/Journalistes pour les Droits Humains* (JHR/JDH) from 01 January 2019 to 28 February 2022. The project benefitted from a UNDEF grant of USD 198,000 to carry out the following activities:

- Training and mentoring journalists and journalism students on producing 200 human rights and governance stories.
- Training and mentoring 50 media managers and editors on supporting human rights and coordinating media and civil society professionals, with a Media Accountability Committee (MAC) to monitor media behaviour and practices.
- Radio programming to engage a large proportion of Malian citizens in open and informative discussions on human rights and good governance issues.

Direct beneficiaries were: journalists, journalism students, media managers/editors, CSO representatives, targeted media audience and participants. Indirect beneficiaries were: general public reached by human rights media, future journalism students taught using JHR’s imbedded curriculum, future journalists in targeted media outlets. Additionally, given the low participation of women in the media sector (outlets had less than 15% of working women journalists), the project aimed to prioritise the participation of women in the activities – aiming for a minimum of 30% participation.

Overall Achievements

At a time of much political instability and deteriorating security and economic and social tensions exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project made innovative and significant contributions to the media sector, and democratic development, in Mali. Thanks to the project, JHR was able to establish itself as a credible actor that can mobilize and bring together different stakeholders from the government, education, health, social development, media, and other CSOs. Journalism students and a broad range of media practitioners benefited from new human rights-focused training and professional guidance that has enhanced their abilities to monitor and report on human rights including women and girls’ rights and good governance issues. Events were attended by key figures including members of the transitional authorities. These events received positive media coverage from prominent outlets. Quality human rights stories contributed to the public dialogue on important human rights, women and girls’ rights and good governance issues. Important groundwork was also done to review and improve the legal and regulatory framework for the media sector, and to establish more professional, inclusive and gender-sensitive practices at the management and operational levels.

Key Recommendations

- The Grantee should build on the successes of this project, utilising the constructive links that have been developed with CSOs, key media outlets and authorities at local and national levels – e.g. to build resilience and influence reform of the media sector through the application of new legislation, and to improve regulatory mechanisms such as plans for the Media Accountability Committee (MAC) that did not reach fruition during the lifetime of the project.
- For future project management: adjust and adapt Results Frameworks when baseline studies have been used to expand/refine activities after project implementation has started. As part of this, ensure that deliverables and output indicators do justice to the breadth and depth of the planned interventions.
- A review of relevant lessons from UNDEF-funded projects where the safety and security of journalists has been addressed may be worth conducting and sharing.

- For future reporting, ensure that all associated documentation is made available as part of any Final Narrative Report (FNR), to provide the strongest possible evidence base.
- Improve intra-UN coordination for the approval and monitoring of UNDEF-funded projects including through designated in-country Points of Contact in the UN RCO (Resident Coordinator Office) system.

Key Lessons Learned

- The use and influence of social media in the Sahel region is already significant and is expected to grow – and should be part of any context-setting, if not the subject of direct activity, in future projects supporting the more established media sector.
- The project applied a “three-pronged approach” (involving the participation of government institutions (state services), media, and CSOs) which proved to be highly effective in breaking down barriers, forming new networks, and improving access to human rights and essential services in a highly unstable environment.
- Without losing sight of the importance of Civil and Political Rights, a focus on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights can be more impactful in certain restricting contexts, and pave the way (e.g. with “transitional” authorities) for the advocacy of a wider spectrum of human rights when circumstances allow.
- Sensitivity to local languages should be an essential part of project design and delivery in countries where such diversity exists, though this may bring additional challenges in terms of measuring and evaluating the success of an intervention.
- Project activity costs can be reduced through close coordination, mutual trust and regular consultation with key implementing partners that can lead to financial burden sharing and increased buy-in.

II. PROJECT CONTEXT AND STRATEGY

(i) Development Context

Mali is in the interior of West Africa and is part of the Central Sahel region which in recent years has seen a “perfect storm” of conflict, weak governance, underdevelopment, demographic pressure, and climate change – currently leading to one of the worst protection crises in the world, aggravated by COVID-19.¹ Mali is among the 25 poorest countries in the world. Its HDI (Human Development Index) value for 2021 was 0.428 - which put the country in the low human development category - positioning it at 186 out of 191 countries and territories.²

Since 2012, Mali has faced a volatile crisis as political armed groups, including ethnic based movements, jihadist groups and transnational criminal networks, fight for hegemony and the control of trafficking routes in the north of the country. An “Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali”, signed in Algiers in 2015, remains difficult to implement and signatory groups still resort to violence to settle differences. Jihadist violence against security forces is increasing and militants have capitalized on local conflicts and the absence of the State in rural areas to secure safe havens and new recruits. The number of serious allegations of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by state security forces in the context of counter-

¹ Ministerial Meeting (as part of the High-Level Humanitarian Event) on the Central Sahel on 20 October 2020, Hosted by the UN, EU, Denmark and Germany. Statement by Ilze Brands Kehris, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, New York, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26422&LangID=E>.

² UNDP Human Development Report 2021/2022, https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf.

terrorism operations has increased significantly over recent years.³ Mali's instability also has regional consequences as violent extremism spills into neighbouring countries.⁴

Following contested legislative elections in March-April 2020, demonstrations in Bamako in July 2020 included clashes with security forces. On 18 August 2020 the military took power in a coup, led by Army Colonel Assimi Goita. Efforts to establish a civilian transitional government were not successful, resulting in further tensions with the military, and another coup took place in May-June 2021. Since 7 June 2021 Colonel Goita has been a self-proclaimed Interim President. A National Transition Council (*Conseil National de Transition*, CNT), with most members personally selected by the military authorities, has replaced the National Assembly.⁵

Malian relations with the international community have deteriorated since 2020. Western governments have been criticized by Malian military leaders for their military presence in Mali, under the French-led Operation Barkhane and the Takuba Task Force, resulting in a withdrawal of French (and other) troops in February 2022.⁶ This has complicated force generation and troop deployments for the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Diplomatic relations have been similarly strained, including with Mali's neighbours and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).⁷ Against this backdrop, and a deteriorating security situation,⁸ the military-led government has welcomed a new military partnership with Russia through the presence of the Wagner Group.

In April 2022, Interim President Goita said that no elections would be conducted until 2024.⁹

Following a visit to Mali in August 2022, the UN Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Mali, Mr Alioune Tine, stated: *"There is a deleterious climate marked by suspicion and mistrust, with a continuous shrinking of civic space, the hardening of the Malian transitional authorities, and a malaise that does not spare international partners."*¹⁰

This context highlights threats to numerous freedoms and human rights in Mali, in particular the freedom of expression and opinion, freedom of the press, respect for the rule of law, democratic values and good governance.

The media environment in Mali has in recent decades been considered as one of the most liberal in West Africa, but the current political and security context has impacted negatively on the sector. Notwithstanding challenges associated with political interference, intimidation, and financial precariousness, professional media organisations are using press releases, media outlets and

³ UN Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Mali, February 2021: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G20/008/96/PDF/G2000896.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁴ International Crisis Group, CrisisWatch, June 2020: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali>.

⁵ Some members, including media representatives, have been selected by professional organisations.

⁶ The last military unit of the Barkhane force left Mali on 16 August 2022.

⁷ Relations with France have been especially impacted. The French Ambassador to Mali was ordered to leave the country by the regime in January 2022, and French media outlets Radio France Internationale (RFI) and France24 were expelled from Mali in April 2022. With ECOWAS, during January-July 2022 Mali faced economic and financial sanctions. These sanctions, in addition to the security crisis, worsened the socio-economic conditions of people already weakened by the impact of COVID-19 with its periods of restrictions and lockdowns.

⁸ A UN panel reported that in the first three months of 2022, 543 civilians were killed and 269 wounded, warning the 2015 peace agreement was under serious threat. The report also noted a sharp increase in the number of people needing humanitarian assistance over the previous year. (Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Mali established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2374 (2017), 14 July 2022, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2022_595.pdf.)

⁹ Technically this was done by decree, revising the Charter of Transition of February 2022 which had planned for elections in 2022.

¹⁰ Full statement (in French) on the OHCHR website at <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/press-releases/2022/08/mali-un-expert-gravely-concerned-deterioration-security-and-human-rights>.

news content to publicly denounce cases of aggression, violence and violations against journalists and other media professionals.

(ii) Project Objectives and Intervention Rationale

The full title of the project was “Strengthening Media to Promote Inclusive Democracy in Mali”.

The Grantee, *Journalists for Human Rights (JHR)* (in French: *Journalistes pour les Droits Humains – JDH*), is based in Toronto, Canada. Since its establishment in 2002, it has run projects and programmes in 28 countries across North America, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East to empower journalists and journalism students to cover human rights more ethically and effectively. The organisation has trained over 15,650 journalists and journalism students - to understand, engage with and create local and mainstream media spotlighting human rights, social justice and democracy themes.

JHR is held in high regard by UNDEF, and has received seven UNDEF grants over the past 15 years. The grant for this project was the sixth. Post-project evaluations for earlier work in Sierra Leone and Jordan are referenced in Annex 2.

For the implementation of the project, JHR worked in partnership with : the *Ecole Supérieure de Journalisme et des Sciences de la Communication* of Bamako (ESJSC), the *Union des Radios et Télévisions Libres du Mali* (URTEL), and *La Maison de la Presse du Mali* (MP). The ESJSC is currently the only public higher learning institution offering university-level programmes in journalism. URTEL is the agency responsible for regulating private television and radio transmission operations in Mali. The *Maison de la Presse* is a non-profit umbrella media organisation which supports and brings together the main professional media associations in Mali. Its objective is to support the entire media sector and promote their rights in Mali, contribute to the expansion and growth of the media, and the forging of excellent relations among the media based on mutual trust, respect and fraternity. It stands as the official “spokesperson” for the media sector with the authorities all over the country.

The project started on 1 January 2019 and was due to end by 31 December 2020. Due to a number of factors (namely, COVID-19, political instability and the security situation, some delays in registration processes, and human resources issues within JHR) the project was granted an extension until 31 March 2022. The project in fact concluded on 28 February 2022.

The project addressed the problem of the ineffective role of fragile media in public life towards achieving inclusive and transparent public institutions.¹¹ The overall goal of the project was **to strengthen media and media institutions’ abilities to play their role in fostering an effective, inclusive, and transparent democracy in Mali.**

Three outcomes were envisaged:

Outcome 1: Increased quantity and credibility of media coverage on human rights and good governance issues.

Outcome 2: Improved management capacity and stability within targeted media outlets and institutions.

Outcome 3: Increased sharing of information between media and CSOs on human rights and good governance.

¹¹ To contextualise this, the Problem Analysis in the Project Document references findings from an in-depth needs assessment conducted by JHR in 2017.

To achieve this, the project included the following activities/outputs:

- Training and mentoring journalists and journalism students on producing 200 human rights and governance stories.
- Training and mentoring 50 media managers and editors on supporting human rights and coordinating media and civil society professionals, with a Media Accountability Committee (MAC) to monitor media behaviour and practices.
- Radio programming to engage a large proportion of Malian citizens in open and informative discussions on human rights and good governance issues.

The project focused largely on the city of Bamako (province of Bamako Capital District), with workshops initially planned for Dioila and Bla. Due to poor infrastructure in Dioila and Bla, activities were undertaken in Ségou instead – including representatives from Dioila and Bla. Broadcasts, forums and online activities reached the public from across the country.

Direct beneficiaries were: journalists, journalism students, media managers/editors, CSO representatives, targeted media audience and participants. Indirect beneficiaries were: the general public reached by human rights media, future journalism students taught using JHR's imbedded curriculum, future journalists in targeted media outlets. Additionally, given the low participation of women in the media sector (outlets had less than 15% of working women journalists), the project aimed to prioritise the participation of women in the activities – aiming for a minimum of 30% participation.

(iii) Project Strategy and Approach

The overall design of the project was encapsulated in what the Grantee called its "Key Approach" in the original Project Document, basing Memoranda of Understanding with implementing partners and media outlets on seven themes:

- 1: Capacity building (of journalists to produce human rights journalism and apply their skills through on-the-job mentorship);
- 2: Education (with the development of human rights reporting curriculum for students);
- 3: Awareness raising (by ensuring that the general public has access to factual reporting on human rights and governance issues through traditional and other media);
- 4: Inclusion and engagement (through the introduction of inclusive policies, enforced across the sector by a Media Accountability Committee, and the engagement of CSOs and the public in discussions on human rights);
- 5: Gender equality (targeting women journalists and journalism students in activities to promote and increase their presence in media coverage and the media sector);
- 6: Networking (by encouraging data exchange in the sector and partnering with a union that works across the country);
- 7: Innovation (by introducing new skills and opening up new publishing opportunities through international media partners).

All activities were completed, and reporting documents (including milestone monitoring) produced.

The budget for the project was USD 198,000. There was an underspend of USD 9,339.

III. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation focuses on the achievement of the project's outcomes, as well as on the impact and programme effectiveness in achieving its ultimate goals. It uses a set of standard

Evaluation Questions in line with the OECD-DAC Criteria¹² adapted and developed to fit the context of the project (see Annex 1). The evaluation framework was participatory and people-centred, whereby stakeholders and beneficiaries were the key actors of the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation.

The evaluation followed a four-step process: (1) engaging project management and conducting a preliminary desk review to describe the project and evaluation framework and consider remote data collection tools (Launch Note agreed on 26 September 2022); (2) gathering credible evidence; (3) consolidating data and writing the report; (4) sharing the draft report with the main users for feedback then finalization.

A field mission to Mali (Bamako) was carried out during 2-7 October 2022. This was facilitated by MINUSMA and UNDP in Mali, including a security briefing and the provision of a vehicle and driver, and the issuing of a UN pass, for which the evaluator is grateful. The security situation did not allow the evaluator to travel outside Bamako.

Documents reviewed included: project documents and reporting, third party reporting, official Malian texts, and other sources. The evaluator also conducted more than 100 Internet searches in news, social networks and pages of different institutions and organisations. Some of these have been cited in this report. (Annex 2)

During the evaluation, 25 people (16 men and 9 women) were consulted (see Annex 3).

The Final Narrative Report (FNR) submitted by the Grantee on 30 March 2022 was admirably thorough, and included 45 Annexes. It became apparent during the field mission that not all of these Annexes had been received by UNDEF and the evaluator, but they were subsequently made available by the Grantee – along with a detailed end line study/evaluation conducted by a third party in December 2021.¹³

This final report presents the main findings and gives answers to evaluation questions based on evidence.

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

Evaluation criteria, questions and sub-questions are listed in full at Annex 1.

(i) **Relevance**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to the context and needs at the Grantee, local and national levels?

Main findings:

- The current political and security context in Mali has impacted negatively on the media sector. Press freedoms became more restricted after the coup of August 2020.¹⁴ Reflecting on one of the major outputs of the project, the new human rights curriculum for journalism students at the ESJSC, the new Director General of the ESJSC (Dr Aboubacar Abdoulwahidou Maiga) told the evaluator on 3 October 2022 that “... **if the course did not exist it would need to be**

¹² See: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dacriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.

¹³ *Rapport Final : Évaluation sommative du projet « Renforcement des médias pour promouvoir la démocratie inclusive au Mali »* – David SAGARA & Sanibé Abel KONE (for « ADS » – a local consultancy in Bamako), December 2021.

¹⁴ Freedom House, Mali Country Report 2022: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/mali/freedom-world/2022>.

created”.

- The project built on JHR experience in other countries, and the intervention was well prepared with analysis and baseline studies. JHR’s 2017 Problem Analysis cited above identified four “sector challenges” which the project went on to address: 1) lack of training, leading to a lack of in-depth reporting on human rights and governance issues; 2) fragile institutional capacity of media outlets due to lack of strategic and financial planning; 3) weak representation of women and girls within media outlets and coverage; 4) minimal use of available technology, constraining outlets from audience expansion.
 - UNDEF post-project evaluations for JHR work in Sierra Leone (2011) and Jordan (2017) picked up some shortcomings, for example relating to institutional engagement and strategy for outreach beyond the capital cities, which were not areas of weakness in the Mali project, suggesting that these earlier recommendations had been well received and acted on by the Grantee.
 - Social media was not within the scope of the project.
- The project was the first to be implemented by JHR in Mali, and as such it was used to establish a permanent office and a small team (of three) in Bamako.
- Use of Bambara, for local radio broadcasting, maximized impact for non-French speaking listeners.
- The project was gender-sensitive and target indicators for the participation of women in key events were ambitious and mostly met or exceeded.
- The project benefited marginalized communities such as the deaf and hard of hearing, and people with other disabilities relating to mobility.
- Since July 2021, UNDEF has been supporting another project in the same sector: « *Appui à la démocratisation du Mali par la programmation radiophonique participative* », being implemented by the *Association des Radiodiffuseurs de Kayes pour le développement Rural*. This is due to run until June 2023 and has a more narrow geographical (Kayes) and sector (radio) focus.
- Risk mitigation was set out clearly in the original Project Document (PD) agreed on 27 November 2018. This covered: targeted journalists not committing to activities, further deterioration of the security situation, and financial transparency – and was linked to specific outputs.

“The Malian press is plunged into unprecedented precariousness with the challenges of training and building the capacity of journalists and media managers, the self-censorship of journalists and media because of threats, intimidation from the authorities in place, and disinformation amplified by social media on public related issues”. (Speaking publicly on World Press Freedom Day, 3 May 2022)

“JHR have been with us through a complex situation in Mali. Notions of human rights were not well understood by the press. The media were not interested in them. **The project, for the first time, put journalists at the heart of human rights subjects, not just as narrators but as actors.**” (Evaluation interview in Bamako, 7 October 2022)

“The project came at the right time. It helped us deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and it bore fruit – helping raise awareness of people’s rights, access to health care, even at the local level. It also promoted the role of the Directorate and by sharing hard quotable facts and data we helped journalists be more credible in their reporting.” (Evaluation interview in Bamako, 4 October 2022)

Mr Bakary DEMBELE, Regional Directorate for the District of Bamako, Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and Family

(ii) **Coherence**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: How well did the project “fit”? - i.e. to what extent was the project compatible with other projects and programmes in the country, sector or institution?

Main findings:

- Donor coordination in Mali has been weak across all sectors over the past ten years, coinciding with a significant increase in international assistance going to the country. Such assistance has often been difficult for Malian institutions to absorb.
- Against this background, it was not easy, for this evaluation, to assess how well the project fitted in with similarly focused initiatives from other quarters – though it is worth stressing that the evaluator found no evidence of the project duplicating or cutting across other related activity. The project’s activities appear to have been universally welcomed by all those involved.
- In the current political context of transition, with a decrease in the number of security-related interventions by some donors, there appears to be growing interest from some Western donors in project activity relevant to freedom of expression and the media. For JHR in Mali, this has meant funding for new projects from new donors such as Global Affairs Canada (GAC); the National Endowment for Democracy (NED, US) and the Fund for Innovation and Transformation (FIT, Canada). Which suggests that the project was a timely and relevant intervention in this field, demonstrating (real and potential) satisfactory synergies and complementarity between what the project achieved and what may follow in the future.

(iii) **Effectiveness**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?

Main findings:

- Notwithstanding the volatile political and security context within which the project took place, and the COVID-19 pandemic, the project was able to deliver against the agreed outcomes¹⁵ as below – using the detailed reporting in the FNR and the findings from the end line study, which the evaluator was able to discuss with the Grantee.
- Outcome 1 (*“Increased quantity and credibility of media coverage of human rights and good governance issues”*).
 - The baseline study found that roughly 14.8% of coverage by targeted media was on human rights and good governance. Of those, only 42% were of good quality. The end line study found that 51.5% of coverage by targeted media was on human rights and good governance. Of those, 82% were deemed to be of good quality.
 - JHR trained 75 journalists throughout the project. The end line study found that 81.59% of trained journalists practiced human rights journalism in their daily work. JHR-trained journalists have demonstrated significant improvement in their capacity to cover human rights, democracy and good governance issues. Trained journalists have reported applying learned skills in their daily work and also sharing their knowledge with other

¹⁵ The evaluator understands ‘outcome’ to mean: behavioural, policy, procedure or budgetary change in target population/institution, partially attributable to project outputs, achievable by the end of the project, but more in the control of the project target population/institution.

- journalists within their professional circle, multiplying the positive effects of the project.
 - While none of the content analyzed through media monitoring during the baseline study was defamatory or overly politicized, 73% of targeted journalists questioned at the time admitted to producing stories based on their opinion rather than facts. This was evidenced by the lack of data from credible sources (CSOs, experts, INGOs, etc.) in their reports. In contrast, 82% of stories currently produced by targeted media include data from credible sources.
 - Overall, increased coverage on human rights and good governance issues by targeted journalists and media houses is contributing to changing the public discourse. Content produced by trained journalists offers a diversity of voices reflecting the inputs of experts, civil society activists, and the needs of the most vulnerable people traditionally disenfranchised from mainstream media. Through the project, the local population are more exposed to media content that is more informative, diverse and focused on human rights issues. This paves the way for building a stronger media sector that is capable of holding duty bearers accountable on human rights and good governance issues. This is particularly true of issues relating to access to health services.
 - However, it is important to note that despite these notable improvements, the capacity of trained journalists still remains relatively low. There is a need for continuous training and capacity building to ensure that journalists maintain good professional standards. Many journalists leave the media sector because of low pay to join better paying industries, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this trend. Those who choose to remain face pragmatic challenges, such as poor access to key sources due to lack of money for transportation or phone credit, limited access to the internet to verify information, and limited access to equipment for production.
- Outcome 2 (*“Improved management capacity and stability within targeted media outlets and institutions”*).
 - JHR trained 25 media managers (5 women) on financial sustainability and developing inclusive policies. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, JHR’s expert trainer was unable to carry out in-person, one-on-one mentorship with trained managers to help them operationalize learned skills. This greatly affected trained media managers’ capacities to effectively implement changes within their newsrooms. Nevertheless, the training provided targeted media houses with the much-needed knowledge to improve their financial viability and to create a more inclusive and safe working environment.
 - By the end of the project, all 48 students on the three-year ESJSC journalism programme (graduating in 2021) had benefitted from a total of 40 hours of teaching in semesters four and five based on the new human rights curriculum. This human rights course makes it possible for all students in the university to access high quality education on human rights reporting, and increased the students’ ability to connect with and contribute to their communities by highlighting endemic human rights abuses and good governance issues. The human rights curriculum should go a long way in ensuring the sustainability of the project’s results. The curriculum will also have a multiplying effect in the local media industry, as new graduates bring their skills to their workplaces, and by extension contribute to changing the sector’s culture and level of professionalism.
 - Project activities have provided the media sector with the tools to increase their resilience – though more work needs to be done to build up the resilience of the media sector as a whole. The sector still faces many challenges in terms of financial viability, staff retention and editorial independence. The COVID-19 pandemic, compounded by the ongoing socio-economic crisis in the country, has further exacerbated this trend. Many media outlets have had to downsize their operations or completely shut down due to additional financial constraints caused by the pandemic.
 - While all targeted media outlets remain committed to updating their internal policies and developing expansion plans, it has not yet been possible to identify any significant progress towards sustainability and gender inclusion at the management level.

- Outcome 3 (“Increased sharing of information between media and CSOs on human rights and good governance”).
 - Throughout the project, JHR sought to reinforce the relationship between the media sector and CSOs by training journalists in seeking and collecting data from credible sources such as CSOs, organizing roundtables with representatives from both sectors, and training CSOs on media relations. Overall, this approach has contributed to the increase of collaboration and information sharing between the two sectors – and indeed with interested Government stakeholders at the national and local levels, especially in the areas of health and social development including women and girls’ rights promotion. This three-pronged approach (media/CSOs/government), although not mentioned in the original PDS, is a significant innovation and was successfully developed and applied through the lifetime of the project.
 - In the baseline study, 53% of journalists and 82% of CSO representatives reported having access to information on human rights. While 73% of CSO representatives and 22% of journalists reported having access to information on good governance. In the end line study all CSOs and journalists interviewed reported having better access to information on human rights and good governance.
 - Increased collaboration between media and CSOs have in turn contributed to a significant improvement in access to data on human rights and good governance for those journalists who benefitted from the project. However, access to information, specifically from government institutions who were not involved in the project, still remains a major challenge for journalists and CSOs alike. Although the project helped improve levels of trust and information sharing with national and local level official bodies working on health and social development, government institutions are still, for the most part, unwilling to cooperate with media and CSOs in terms of information sharing. Officials rarely respond to journalists’ requests, making it hard for journalists to produce reports on certain good governance issues.

- Project activities were not hampered significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the proper hygiene precautions in place, training events and workshops were conducted successfully. The only activity that was impacted negatively by COVID-19 restrictions was training for media managers under Output 2.1 (and Outcome 2, see above), which was conducted via Zoom by a trainer based in Canada – who was unfortunately unable to travel to Mali to follow-up on the one-to-one mentorship that had been requested by the participants.

- There was a significant (temporary) change of project staff during the lifetime of the project. From 1 September 2020 to 31 July 2021, JHR employed a new in-country project coordinator (who the evaluator met during the field mission) to replace the original coordinator who was briefly assigned to work on another JHR project. The FNR acknowledged that “... **while a good employee, the new coordinator had limited capacity to carry-out some of the outstanding activities, such as the development of datasets and the management of JHR’s website, further disrupting the activity schedule**”. The original coordinator, Mr Moro Siaka Diallo, remained involved in the project during this time, to the extent possible, and resumed full coordinating duties on 1 August 2021. The main lesson drawn from this experience seems to be that project staff with suitable expertise and experience in this sector remain exceedingly hard to find in Mali.

« Il ne faut pas être pressé, il faut être précis ! » (“Don’t be rushed; be accurate!”)

“Before the project, human rights were not really of interest to journalists, and reporting was done without using sources and checking the facts. Articles were often written based on the personal opinions of the journalist. Now people are interested in hearing about the voices and opinions of those at the centre of the stories [...] There was a good deal of contact between journalists and civil society, which was new, and trust was built. Relations with state services, especially on health issues, were also much improved – and have helped journalists access the correct information.” (Evaluation interview in Bamako, 3 October 2022)

Mme Dado CAMARA, journalist, project mentor, Director of *L’Announceur* (newspaper produced entirely by women), and Board Member of *La Maison de la Presse du Mali*

(iv) **Efficiency**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?

Main findings:

- The project delivered activities and outputs¹⁶ in a coordinated manner and with a high degree of efficiency, which can be summarised in the table below.

Outputs	Achievements
Output 1.1: Produce a baseline study for the project and assess the media sector as a whole including its relation to civil society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achieved• JHR conducted a baseline study during September-November 2019, targeting the cities of Bamako, Bla and Dioila. The study was led by URTEL, with the support of JHR staff in Mali and in Toronto. The final report was validated by JHR on 14 November 2019.• The final detailed report was of a high professional standard and provided useful information on local journalists’ capacity, the level of women’s representation within the local media sector and within local media coverage, the level of information sharing between CSOs and the media sector, the quantity and quality of coverage of human rights and good governance issues, and the overall structure of the media sector in Bamako.

¹⁶ The evaluator understands ‘output’ to mean tangible (infrastructure, equipment) products delivered/completed, changes in intangible (knowledge/skills) capacities of stakeholders as a result of project activities, and activities completed. Completely/significantly in the control of the project.

<p>Output 1.2: Improve the skills and knowledge of 75 journalists (at least 25 women) in factual reporting on human rights and good governance issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially achieved, but significant progress. • JHR conducted three training workshops in June 2019, November 2020 and December 2020. Two were in Bamako, and the November 2020 one was in Ségou. • JHR trained 75 journalists (18 women). According to the FNR, the target of training 25 women was not met due to the “severe under representation of female journalists in the local media sector”. • The workshops allowed targeted journalists to gain knowledge on fundamental human rights principles and key human rights issues in Mali, and also gain technical skills on human rights, gender-sensitive and ethical reporting. The end line study found that 81.59% of JHR-trained journalists practiced human rights journalism in their day-to-day work. • The June 2019 workshop was observed by UNDEF Project Officer Mr Jaime Palacios who included in his Milestone Verification Report of 3 July 2019: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “JHR placed a heavy focus on data-driven reporting as an essential feature of eliminating bias and building credibility in stories regarding human rights issues. Another important element of the training was regarding the correct treatment of sensitive information, respecting rights and safety of, for example, interviewees. [...] Strong JHR team, both international and local. In particular the local staff, Mr Moro Siaka Diallo, is seemingly capable of ensuring high quality ground oversight of the project.”
<p>Output 1.3: Improve the skills and knowledge of 40 university students on professional journalism and human rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved, and target exceeded. • On 11 March 2020, JHR held a training workshop for students at the ESJSC in Bamako. This was attended by 47 second and third-year journalism students (16 women), and facilitated by a JHR trainer. The training introduced the fundamentals of human rights principles and key elements of human rights journalism. This used materials relating to the development of a new human rights curriculum – under Output 2.2. • The end line study found that 100% of trained students were sufficiently familiar with the concepts of human rights journalism and integrated them into their daily work, compared to 40% before the training.
<p>Output 1.4: Produce 200 high quality stories on human rights and good governance issues, mentored and published in targeted media outlets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved, and target exceeded. • JHR supported the production of 204 radio, print and online stories on human rights and good governance during the course of the project. The stories were produced by JHR-trained journalists with the support of JHR mentors. All published stories were vetted by mentors to ensure that they aligned with human rights and gender-sensitive reporting principles. • The stories were published by 18 media outlets and had an overall audience reach of roughly 3.8 million people. They covered topics such as the impact of COVID-19 on human rights, gender-based violence, women’s rights, child marriage, the rights of people with disabilities, and child rights.

<p>Output 1.5: 6 professional journalists and 4 journalism students recognised for human rights and good governance reporting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially achieved, but significant progress. • JHR was able to organize an award ceremony for JHR Human Rights Journalism Awards in Bamako on 26 June 2021 to recognise outstanding reporting on human rights and good governance issues, and to incentivize local journalists to strive for excellence in their work. This was the first of its kind in Mali and was attended by senior government figures: the Minister of State Reform and a representative of the Minister of Communication. • Two (2) journalism students and two (2) professional journalists were recognised for their work instead of four (4) and six (6) respectively, as originally planned. According to the FNR this was due to the higher than anticipated costs of organizing the ceremony. • The evaluator interviewed Mr Kouane Diarra on 4 October. He had come second in one of the categories (radio) of the JHR awards but was awarded the distinction of the best report of the year at the 2021 Mali Media Awards (MAMA21), organised by <i>Fondation Tuwindi</i> – whose mission is to strengthen good governance practices and democracy in Mali. He won the “Eve” prize in the radio category for his report “Early Marriage of Young Schoolgirls at Mafouné Primary School”. He was among the first year of ESJSC graduates to have benefitted from the new human rights curriculum in 2021 (Output 2.2). He told the evaluator how this training had “really impacted and improved” him. • The award ceremony was not repeated in 2022. The President of the <i>Maison de la Presse</i> told the evaluator on 7 October 2022 that he recognized the value of the initiative and was interested in organising similar events in the future.
<p>Output 1.6: Improved skills and knowledge of 12 trained journalists on training their peers (TOT).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved, and target exceeded. • A training workshop was held in Bamako in February 2021. It targeted journalists who had already participated in JHR’s introductory training and who had demonstrated an aptitude for assimilating information and working effectively with their peers. There were 16 participants (9 women). • The workshop sought to strengthen trainees’ capacity to deliver training sessions on human rights journalism and gender-sensitive reporting. It also provided participants with advanced skills and knowledge on human rights and gender-sensitive reporting, and tips for conducting training in formal and informal settings.
<p>Output 2.1: Improved capacity of 20 media managers and editors to support independent and effective newsrooms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved, and target exceeded. • JHR carried out virtual training by Zoom (due to COVID-19) in February 2021, by a Canadian-based trainer. It involved 25 media managers and editors (5 women). • The training focused on best practices for fostering gender-inclusive newsrooms, minimizing harassment in the workplace, and supporting human rights and gender-sensitive reporting. Participants were taught how to develop and enforce a staff code of conduct and sexual harassment policy. They were also provided with tips for promoting diversity in hiring and developing an editorial line that gives prominence to human rights and gender-sensitive reporting. • JHR received very positive feedback from media managers, who reported that it helped improve their knowledge on leading effective and independent newsrooms. Several managers requested follow-up one-on-one training to help them operationalize learned skills. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, JHR was unfortunately unable to carry out this post-training mentorship.

<p>Output 2.2: Human rights reporting curriculum developed and adapted by the ESJSC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved. • During November 2019 – March 2020, JHR worked with ESJSC to develop a human rights curriculum that was context-sensitive and responded to the institution’s needs. • The curriculum was elaborated by a JHR expert and a resident expert/professor at ESJSC (Dr Youssouf Coulibaly). The human rights course was delivered for the first time over 40 hours in semesters four and five in 2021. • Of the 21 journalism students defending their end-of-degree dissertations at ESJSC in December 2021, ten (10) of the dissertations (including three from female students) focused on a human rights theme. During a visit to the ESJSC, the evaluator could observe from documents posted on information boards that this high proportion of dissertations with human rights themes was expecting to continue in December 2022.
<p>Output 2.3: Improved skills and knowledge of 20 media managers on developing strategies and inclusive policies for their organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved. This Output was combined with Output 2.1, see above.
<p>Output 2.4: Improved capacity of 10 media managers on drafting and incorporating inclusive expansion and sustainability plans in their outlets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved. • JHR held a virtual workshop targeting media managers in Bamako in January 2021 – using a JHR trainer based in Canada. It trained 25 media managers (5 women) in developing expansion and sustainability plans to increase their organisations’ financial viability. The baseline study under Output 1.1 had identified a lack of financial resources to be a major obstacle to the development of a vibrant and independent media sector. The training provided participants with the necessary knowledge to seek out different kinds of financial solutions to address the problem of media sustainability. For example, at <i>L’Annonceur</i> (an all-female newspaper), the Director and the Editor-in-chief have increased contacts and dialogue with a number of private companies to negotiate subscriptions to their newspaper. The negotiations also covered contracts for commercial announcements as the COVID-19 restrictions had negative economic consequences for media outlets.
<p>Output 2.5: 15 media organisations and civil society organisations networked through a Media Accountability Committee (MAC).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially achieved. • During March-June 2020, JHR consulted extensively with its implementing partners about this initiative. Despite broad agreement on the need to improve monitoring of media accountability it was decided not to create a new mechanism as such, but to expand the mandate of the existing Ethics and Deontological¹⁷ Council (CEDEP) – which is a self-regulatory media structure created by the <i>Maison de la Presse</i>, whose main mission is to ensure compliance with ethical and deontological rules within the media sector. CEDEP’s mandate would henceforth include media monitoring activities that consider human rights journalism, along with women’s and girl’s rights. • 15 media and CSO representatives were selected as members of the MAC, to work within the existing CEDEP structure, and the MAC held its first meeting on 10 September 2020. • With the support of JHR, CEDEP was able to carry out some of its planned activities, but changes in leadership within the <i>Maison de la Presse</i>, compounded by the ongoing socio-political crisis in Mali,

¹⁷ Ethics being a system of moral principles or rules of behaviour. Deontology being a theoretical approach to ethical questions in which moral obligation is seen as arising from certain unvarying rules and principles, which are universal – i.e. they should be followed irrespective of consequences. (Oxford Dictionary)

	<p>hindered the committee’s ability to hold regular meetings as originally planned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MAC remains active, nonetheless. Ramata DIAOURE, the former President of the CEDEP and one of the media representatives at the CNT told the evaluator during the field mission: “The participation of CSOs from different backgrounds related to law, human rights, women and girls rights, stands as one of the innovative aspects of the MAC which fits the media challenge for consensus as far as self regulation is concerned in Mali.” The new President of the <i>Maison de la Presse</i> (Mr Bandiougou Dante) told the evaluator that he was looking to “dynamise” the body by clarifying roles and responsibilities and bringing in new people – which he hoped to achieve by January 2023.
<p>Output 3.1: 210 media professionals and civil society representatives participate in discussions of human rights and good governance issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved, and target exceeded. • During June 2019 – December 2021 JHR held 9 roundtable discussions that brought together members of civil society, media, private sector, and the government. The events had 490 cumulative participants (224 women) and addressed various human rights and good governance issues, under these headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Status of human rights in Mali; ○ The use of chemicals in gold mining sites in Mali; ○ Voting in Mali: challenges and solutions for people with disabilities; ○ Ethics; ○ How to help women prevent domestic violence in the period COVID-19; ○ COVID-19’s impact on women in media; ○ COVID-19’s impact on women empowerment; ○ Review of local press laws (conference); ○ Women leadership in media. • The events provided a platform for different stakeholders to elaborate tangible strategies and provide recommendations to address pressing human rights and good governance issues. • The roundtable on women’s economic empowerment held on 19 August 2021 was highlighted in the FNR. One of the issues discussed was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on female journalists, which had exacerbated the under-representation of women in the media sector. During this discussion, the Higher School of Technology and Management (ESTM, a private institution for higher education) made a commitment to offer 50 half-scholarships (25 undergraduate and 25 Masters level) to women journalists to attend their journalism programme. As of February 2022, eight female journalists had benefitted from this scholarship. • The four-day conference on reviewing local press laws was also highlighted in the FNR as being particularly successful, and the evaluator heard positive feedback on this from participants during the field mission, especially from the <i>Maison de la Presse</i> who praised the “specialized technical” contribution of JHR. In January 2022 the <i>Maison de la Presse</i> submitted finalised amendments to new legal instruments to the Minister of Communication and to the President of the High Authority for Communication (HAC). In October 2022, the Ministry of Communication validated these new legal instruments with all the stakeholders. These are expected to be adopted at the Ministers Council; debated and voted by the CNT in the near future. • The roundtable discussion on the impact of COVID-19 on women in the media, in March 2020, was observed by Mr Zein Almoghraby – JHR’s Director of International Programmes visiting from Toronto. In his Milestone Verification Report of 17 December 2021, he concluded that the event was productive and that it had led to a “tangible action plan”.

<p>Output 3.2: Conduct 19 on-air and public forums on human rights and good governance issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved. • JHR supported the production of 19 on-air forums that covered human rights and good governance topics – including women’s participation in public life, the rights of people with disabilities, and the human rights effects of COVID-19. The forums were inter-active (with contributions from callers) and provided the public with platforms for discussions on issues that affected their communities. They also brought together CSO representatives, government officials, and the public – with a cumulative reach of over 250,000 people. • One event highlighted in the FNR was a radio show broadcast on 27 August 2020 on gender-based violence. This brought together important actors including the CSO Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), which subsequently reported a significant increase in the number of victims reaching out to their organisation for support as a direct result of the show. • These discussions were conducted in both French and Bambara to ensure maximum accessibility for listeners.
<p>Output 3.3: 200 users from media and CSOs registered on a data platform that aggregates data from across Mali through project networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not achieved. • An online platform was developed by JHR but not finalised: https://mali-jhr.com/fr/. The most recent reporting on the site is from June 2021. • The goal of the platform was to facilitate access to human rights information for local media and CSOs, provide a platform for local media professionals to publish their work, and aggregate data from the project. The original plan was to register 200 users from the media and CSOs but this was abandoned, according to the FNR, “... due to weak internet penetration and low digital skills within the media sector and the country as a whole”. This has been identified as a lesson learned for future projects in the country.
<p>Output 3.4: 6 data thematic reports on human rights and good governance produced.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially achieved. • JHR commissioned a report from a third-party¹⁸ which mapped quantitative and qualitative data from 86 content items produced and broadcast throughout the project. The report was not able to cover all content produced due to poor archiving.
<p>Output 3.5: A unified channel for human rights and good governance podcasts, established and operational.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not achieved. • Plans for this output were abandoned at an early stage. • JHR explained in the FNR that podcasts are a new medium in Mali with very limited media impact at present. This has been identified as a lesson learned for future projects in the country.

- There was no formal project steering committee. Project performance, cost-effectiveness and accountability were supported by regular consultations between the JHR project coordinator and the implementing partners. Such monitoring would undoubtedly have benefited from a more detailed Results Framework to reflect the number and complexity of activities that were brought into scope after the findings of the baseline study.
- Experts/consultants/mentors hired and/or used for the project were selected through fair competition and added significant value – for example in the design and delivery of training events, and the development of the new human rights curriculum at the ESJSC. JHR in Toronto also supplied some of the trainers through their organisation’s roster of *pro bono* experts.
- There was a small (USD 9,339 of the total USD 198,000) underspend of the budget. This was achieved by the project coordinator applying rigorous procedures (e.g. for the purchasing of services and material) and judicious management of financial resources. He also managed to bring down costs by persuading implementing partners to share some of the financial burden

¹⁸ The Bamako-based company ADS, who were also used for the end line study.

for certain events, when co-hosting.

(v) **Impact**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to the objectives of the project and democratization more broadly?

Main findings:

- The project demonstrated the ability of civil society actors and organisations in Mali to contribute significantly to the democratic process. The application of a “three-pronged approach” (involving the participation of government institutions, media, and CSOs) proved to be highly effective in breaking down barriers and forming new networks.
- Professional and academic training has had a positive impact; through focused workshops and roundtables, mentoring, and teaching at the ESJSC. A new generation of human rights-trained graduates in journalism will be better prepared to monitor and report on Mali’s numerous challenges in the years ahead.
- The project’s contribution to the review of local press laws has prepared the ground for a more professional, tolerant and liberal legislative framework for the media sector.
- Women and gender issues have been consistently highlighted and addressed.
- Marginalised groups such as people with disabilities and the deaf and hard of hearing community also benefited significantly from the project. For example:
 - Following the second round of legislative elections in April 2020 the Election Observation Mission (EOM) comprising CSOs and the National Commission for Human Rights in Mali submitted a post-election report to the Government of Mali including recommendations stemming from JHR’s pre-election awareness activities and roundtable on the participation of people with disabilities in the elections. This included recommendations on practical measures to facilitate access to polling stations and measures to increase the ability to vote such as transcriptions of names of candidates and political parties in Braille on the ballots.
 - At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, JHR became aware of the lack of accessible information on COVID-19 for the deaf and hard of hearing community in Mali.¹⁹ JHR worked with Mr Moussa Keita, President of the Malian Association of Interpreters in Sign Languages (AMILS) to address this problem through radio and television broadcasts, including the national television broadcaster *Office de Radio et Télévision du Mali* (ORTM). Pledges were made from the authorities to produce and broadcast videos on COVID-19 in collaboration with AMILS. These have been respected and videos have been produced on preventive measures and government restrictions, and disseminated by ORTM and social media. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs has trained 30 peer educators in the district of Bamako to disseminate accurate COVID-19 messages to the deaf and hard of hearing. Following this discussion in the media, a local CSO gave hygiene kits to AMILS, which were shared across nine schools for the deaf across the country. Other human rights CSOs are now asking AMILS to be included in training programmes and their outreach strategies. **This is a good example of the approach of the JHR Project Manager in Bamako which is “... to encourage associations to use media to resolve their own problems”.**

¹⁹ During a meeting with Mr Keita of AMILS during the field mission, it was explained that there are currently 5,326 registered deaf people in Mali – including 1,121 students at school.

“The project has given real visibility to women as social actors and stressed the gender dimension. We have seen positive differences in the writing of press articles since the project.” (Evaluation interview in Bamako, 6 October 2022)

Mme BOUARE Bintou Founé SAMAKE, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF)

“In the workshops supported by the project, we were listened to by the press. Before the project, the press never came to our own activities. Now they do. We have seen real change since 2019 in the way the media treat themes related to people with disabilities.” (Evaluation interview in Bamako, 7 October 2022)

Mme DJIKINE Hatouma GAKOU, former President of the Malian Federation of Associations for People with Disabilities (FEMAPH), and member of the National Council of Transition (CNT)

(vi) **Sustainability**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?

Main findings:

- Notwithstanding the obvious and very real challenges to democratic development in Mali in the current context, it is possible to identify numerous “catalysts” for democratic change that the project has either generated or contributed to:
 - Professional training and human rights-awareness for practicing journalists has been very well received and put into good use.
 - The new human rights curriculum at the ESJSC is already improving the ability of future journalists in Mali to be more aware of issues relating to human rights and good governance, and to give them the professional tools and confidence to report on them in the media.
 - The review of legal texts for the media sector benefited from JHR support and the results of this are expected to be endorsed, in large measure, by the Government and the CNT in the near future.
 - Female journalism students at a large private university are now benefitting from a 50% saving in their fees due to the under-representation of women in the media sector that was highlighted by the project.
 - Some new sources of funding, better access to media outlets, and other “spin-offs” have come the way of several CSOs and organisations that have participated in the project. For example:
 - A radio journalist (Mr Tiéman Diarra of *Radio Royale*) trained by JHR in June 2019 went on to produce a radio programme in August 2019 on the use of chemicals in artisanal mining, and the effects on health and the environment. Thanks to his outlet’s networking with local radio stations, this programme attracted a good deal of attention and listeners called in from across the

country. The Minister of Mines thanked him personally after the broadcast and has stayed in touch with the journalists since then through social media. A like-minded CSO (Association of Mining Women in Mali - AFEMINE) is now collaborating with the journalists on awareness-raising on new radio broadcasts, with support from USAID and the Ministry of Mines. As Mr Diarra put it to the evaluator during the field mission: **“Training allowed us to make our programmes more professionally”**.

- From the perspective of the Grantee, the project was designed as a pilot project to gain them a foothold in the media sector in Mali. JHR is now a well-established and respected CSO in this sector. The Grantee appears to be well placed to take forward work initiated by the project supported by other means, with recent and ongoing support from Global Affairs Canada (GAC), National Endowment for Democracy (NED, US) and the Fund for Innovation and Transformation (FIT, Canada). The project coordinator has also recently been selected as one of just a handful of CSOs that now frequently participate in senior official meetings at the Ministry of Health and Social Development.

“The project really strengthened my capabilities. By learning to be precise, clear and objective I am now more confident about what I can publish, and this has also protected me from possible persecution or prosecution. In such a fragile context one cannot just publish anything. [...] I have used what I have learned to carry out internal training in my own newspaper.” (Evaluation interview in Bamako, 6 October 2022)

Mr Dramane KONTA, Director of Publication of *Le Credo*, newspaper

(vii) **UNDEF added value**

The evaluation addressed the following main question: 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?

Main findings:

- Mindful of the uncoordinated nature of much of the external assistance going into Mali, from a short review of current donor activity from online sources it was possible to conclude that external support for programming in the field of freedom of press and training for journalists in Mali has received relatively limited attention in recent years. This may be changing as some donors move away from “hard” security-related interventions towards “softer” areas. In this sense, UNDEF funding for the project filled an identifiable gap at the time it began to be implemented.
- However, UNDEF has not been the only UN actor in this space. UNDP has been implementing various related projects, including through the *La Maison de la Presse* (training and coaching for young journalists), the *L’Association Malienne des Droits de l’Homme* (AMDH), and the *Fondation Tuwindi* on capacity building for investigative journalism. Discussions with UNDP in Bamako during the field mission revealed that, while UNDEF and UNDP may have initially coordinated in 2018-2019 to approve support for the project, these links had weakened and, by the time of the conclusion of the UNDEF project, visibility of the work of JHR had been lost. There is therefore room for improvement in the way such intra-UN coordinating processes are

undertaken, especially via the UN's RCO (Resident Coordinator Office) system. See recommendations below.

- Against this background it is difficult to assess whether UNDEF in Mali has been able to exploit its unique position and comparative advantage to the best effect. In such a donor-rich environment, it is possible to see UNDEF as just another funding mechanism for CSOs, among many.²⁰ There is, though, at least one clear distinction between UNDEF and UNDP funded activity in Mali: UNDP can only fund national Malian CSOs, as opposed to international CSOs such as JHR.
- Putting all the above to one side, there was broad agreement among those interviewed for the evaluation that UNDEF enjoyed a neutral/impartial reputation that lent itself well to the sensitive nature of the project.
- UNDEF support for the project was visible in publicity materials for events, during the events themselves, and for outcome documents. There was good visibility for UNDEF support in the written press, suitable acknowledgements on radio and television broadcasts, and on JHR's website and social media.
- The project features prominently in the JHR Annual Report for 2020, with Mali appearing as the first country to be mentioned in the case studies. UNDEF support is acknowledged clearly.



Review of Press Law Conference with Ministers of State Refoundation and of Communication alongside the President of *La Maison de la Presse du Mali* and the Representative of the *Haute Autorité de la Communication* (HAC) (11-14 October 2021, Bamako)

²⁰ Meaning that UNDEF might demonstrate most added value where there are fewer donors and other external funding mechanisms. There is also, perhaps, a wider discussion to be had over whether UNDEF should be targeting countries which are also benefiting from the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The PBF is the UN's financial instrument of first resort to sustain peace in countries or situations at risk or affected by violent conflict. PBF in Mali has invested USD 27.2m since 2014. Projects focusing on: dialogue and reconciliation, justice and security sectors, restoration of state authority, community reintegration of refugees and displaced people, local governance, and community-based conflict resolution - including in Ségou. More details on the PBF at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/documents/mali_two-pager.pdf

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion	Recommendation
<p>At a time of much political instability and deteriorating security, and economic and social tensions exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project made innovative and significant contributions to the media sector, and democratic development, in Mali. Thanks to the project, JHR was able to establish itself as a credible actor that can mobilise and bring together different stakeholders from the government, media, and other CSOs. Journalism students and a broad range of media practitioners benefited from new human rights-focused training and professional guidance that has enhanced their abilities to monitor and report on human rights including women and girls' rights and good governance issues. Events were attended by key figures including members of the transitional authorities. These events received positive media coverage from prominent outlets. Quality human rights stories contributed to the public dialogue on important human rights and good governance issues. Important groundwork was also done to review and improve the legal and regulatory framework for the media sector, and to establish more professional, inclusive and gender-sensitive practices at the management and operational levels.</p>	<p>(1) The Grantee should build on the successes of this project, utilising the constructive links that have been developed with CSOs, key media outlets and authorities at local and national levels. JHR seem especially well placed to continue to build resilience and influence reform of the media sector through the application of new legislation (that they have already contributed to) and to improve regulatory mechanisms such as plans for the Media Accountability Committee (MAC) that did not reach fruition during the lifetime of the project.</p>
<p>The scope of the project was broad, as evidenced by the activities against Outputs summarized in Evaluation Findings Sub-Section (iv), and the large number of Annexes associated with the FNR (45). For an inexperienced project coordinator, maintaining coherence could have been problematic – but this was not the case for this project. The (very experienced) project coordinator held everything together and remains convinced that all of the project's activities played an integral part in the overall success of the project. However, the evaluation revealed that project management would undoubtedly have benefited from a more detailed Results Framework to reflect the number and complexity of activities that were brought into scope after the findings of the baseline study.</p>	<p>(2) For future project management: adjust and adapt Results Frameworks when baseline studies have been used to expand/refine activities after project implementation has started. As part of this, ensure that deliverables and output indicators do justice to the breadth and depth of the planned interventions.</p> <p>To note that: UNDEF guidance for Grantees online, in English and French, is comprehensive – including on best practice for Results Frameworks. Checking progress against Results Frameworks is an integral part of monitoring progress, in addition to the established practice of reporting on Milestones.</p>
<p>Threats, intimidation and even violence against journalists, especially those working on remote radio platforms, is an unfortunate reality in insecure and politically unstable environments. By December 2022, none of the 75 journalists trained, supported and mentored by JHR during the three years of project implementation had been arrested, threatened or physically assaulted. This speaks highly of the quality of the training, support and mentorship received – and are factors that could be relevant to journalists in other highly unstable settings.</p>	<p>(3) A review of relevant lessons from UNDEF-funded projects where the safety and security of journalists has been addressed may be worth conducting and sharing.</p>

<p>JHR reporting on the project, including the baseline study and end line survey, was of a very high standard. However, during the evaluation it became clear that not all of the documentation prepared for the FNR had been collated and submitted to UNDEF at the conclusion of the project. This may have been the result of mis-communication between the field office and JHR HQ in Toronto. This caused some initial confusion, and delay, in the preparation of the evaluation.</p>	<p>(4) For future reporting, ensure that all associated documentation is made available as part of any FNR to provide the strongest possible evidence base.</p>
<p>UN coordination: While UNDEF and UNDP may have initially coordinated in 2018-2019 for the project, these links had weakened by the time of its conclusion, and visibility of the work of JHR (in UNDP Mali) had been lost.</p>	<p>(5) Improve intra-UN coordination for the approval and monitoring of UNDEF-funded projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before awarding any grant, UNDEF should check with an in-country UN Point of Contact that the project does not duplicate or cut across other existing UN activity. And invite feedback where appropriate. Such Points of Contacts in the UN RCO have been used more systematically by the UN in recent years. • Monitoring visits from UNDEF project officers could include exchanges with the designated Point of Contact. And at the end of the project, final reporting should be shared, along with any plans for a post-project evaluation. • The efficiency of the UN RCO system for approving and monitoring UNDEF-funded projects will inevitably be affected by staff turnaround and/or absences, and procedures should be kept under review by UNDEF. For this evaluation, for example, the RCO referred UNDEF/the evaluator to UNDP for the field mission without informing UNDP of the background to the project in-country.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED

Some key lessons can be learned from the project that could be applied to other projects either in the same region or on the same theme.

- It is widely accepted that local community radios continue to be the medium most established and most used and trusted (for news and information) by people in Mali and other countries in the Central Sahel region – especially in remote areas where access to print media and television is more limited. However, **the use and influence of social media is already significant and is expected to grow – and should be part of any context-setting, if not the subject of direct activity, in future projects supporting the media sector.**
- The project applied a **“three-pronged approach” (involving the participation of government institutions (state services), media, and CSOs)** which proved to be highly effective in breaking down barriers, forming new networks, and improving access to human rights and essential services in a highly unstable environment.
- Without losing sight of the importance of Civil and Political Rights, a **focus on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights can be more impactful in certain restricting contexts, and pave the way (e.g. with “transitional” authorities) for the advocacy of a wider spectrum of human rights when circumstances allow.**
- **Sensitivity to local languages** should be an essential part of project design and delivery in countries where such diversity exists (as was the case with this project in the use of Bambara for local radio broadcasting to maximise impact for non-French speaking listeners), though this may bring additional challenges in terms of measuring and evaluating the success of an intervention.
- **Project activity costs can be reduced** through close coordination, mutual trust and regular consultation with key implementing partners that can lead to financial burden sharing and increased buy-in. This project, for example, reduced costs by persuading implementing partners to share some of the financial burden for certain events, when co-hosting.

Annex 1: Evaluation Questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to the context and needs at the beneficiary, local and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key contextual elements being the ongoing political and security crisis in Mali under the military-led government and delays in the electoral calendar. • How were the beneficiary journalists and students selected, and was the approach relevant to context and needs? • Was there an adequate risk mitigation strategy in place?
Coherence	How well did the project "fit" - i.e. to what extent was the project compatible with other projects and programmes in the country, sector or institution?	<p><i>Internal coherence:</i></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 Grantee? <p><i>External coherence:</i></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, harmonisation and coordination between the Grantee/the project and other organisations/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?
Effectiveness	The evaluator will assess whether the activities of the project linked up, achieved the agreed indicators, and provided the best approach to achieving the outcomes and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking into account the volatile political and security context within which the project took place, the evaluator will assess the extent to which the project's objectives have been reached and how this has been measured. • Did rotation of project management staff have an impact on the effectiveness of project implementation?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evaluator will take the opportunity of talking to the Grantee to learn how the project was run and resourced, and how the underspend was justified. • The evaluator will look into how the project was organised and how cost-effective it was.

Impact	To what extent has the realisation of the project objectives and outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been an increase in the quantity and credibility of media coverage on human rights and good governance issues? (Outcome 1) • Has there been an improvement in management capacity and stability within targeted media outlets and institutions? (Outcome 2) • Has there been an increase in the sharing of information between media and CSOs on human rights and good governance? (Outcome 3)
Sustainability	What measures did the Grantee put in place to ensure sustainability of achieved results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent will the Grantee be able to take forward work initiated by the project, supported by other means? • To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development in Mali? • Did the project open up new publishing opportunities through international media partners?
UNDEF value added	What was the value of UNDEF specific support to the project? Could the objectives have been achieved through alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders?	<p>This will be assessed in relation to other initiatives in the country that may have the same aims, and the comparative advantage that UNDEF offered to the Grantee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? <p><i>UNDEF value-added</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How far did UNDEF funding provide value added to the work of JHR? <p><i>UNDEF visibility</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there evidence showing that UNDEF support to the Grantee appears in all printed materials distributed during the project? • Does UNDEF visibility appear also in all events organised by the Grantee which are related to the project?

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

Project Documents and Reporting

Project Document, 27 November 2018

Extension Requests

Milestone Verification Report 2 (3 July 2019), and *Annexes*

Financial Utilization Report 2, 18 June 2020

Mid-Term Progress Report, 10 August 2020

Milestone Verification Report 3, 17 December 2021

Financial Utilization Report 3, 21 January 2022

Final Narrative Report, 30 March 2022

- o Noting that a total of 45 Annexes were submitted with the FNR.
- o Noting also the use of the end-line study/evaluation for the FNR, conducted by a third party, as referenced below.

Final Financial Utilization Report, 28 March 2022, and *Annexes*

PO Information Note for Post-Project Evaluation, undated but received in August 2022

Reporting by JHR on the project on their website at <https://jhr.ca/our-work/mali-2>.

JHR Annual Report 2020 at <https://jhr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/JHR-Annual-Report-2020-Digital.pdf>.

Independent Reporting on the Project

Rapport Final : Évaluation sommative du projet « Renforcement des médias pour promouvoir la démocratie inclusive au Mali » – David SAGARA & Sanibé Abel KONE (for « ADS » – a local consultancy in Bamako), December 2021

“COVID-19: When misinformation is literally a matter of life and death – A pilot project run by the Canadian-based Journalists for Human Rights is fighting fake news in Mali”, *National Post*, 5 September 2020.

Official Malian Documents

Cadre Stratégique (et Plans d'Action) de la Refondation de l'État 2022-2031 (Ministère de la Refondation de l'État, December 2021)

Charte de la Transition (Conseil National de Transition, February 2022)

Earlier UNDEF Evaluations on JHR Projects

Evaluation Report: UDF-SIL-07-154 / Democratic Dialogue through Media in Sierra Leone, 17 March 2011

Evaluation Report: UDF-JOR-13-553 / Increased Citizen Dialogue through Strengthened Media in Jordan, 30 October 2017

Other Sources

Freedom House

- 2022 Mali Country Report, at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/mali/freedom-world/2022>.

Human Rights Watch

- *Mali: Rights Reforms Crucial for Civilian Rule*, 9 August 2022, at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/09/mali-rights-reforms-crucial-civilian-rule>.

International Crisis Group

- Articles on Mali at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali>.

Maison de la Presse du Mali (MP): <https://www.mfwa.org/fr/publications/reports-2/>.

Media Landscapes

- Mali country chapter at <https://medialandscapes.org/country/mali>.

United Nations

- Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Mali: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-mali>.
- Panel of Experts: https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2022_595.pdf.
- Country Team/UNDP: <https://www.undp.org/fr/mali>.
- OHCHR/Human Rights and Protection Division in MINUSMA: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/mali/our-presence>.

Various - other online reporting:

- BBC, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cq23pdgvrqwt/mali>.
- Jeune Afrique, at <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/pays/mali/>.
- Le Monde, at <https://www.lemonde.fr/mali/>.
- ReliefWeb, at <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/les-operations-du-groupe-wagner-en-afrique-les-tendances-du-ciblage-de-populations-civiles-en-republique-centrafricaine-et-au-mali-30-aout-2022>.
- The Conversation, at <https://theconversation.com/amid-popular-opposition-is-the-uns-peacekeeping-mission-in-mali-doomed-189005>.
- VOA Afrique, at <https://www.voafrique.com/a/un-forum-clef-s-inqui%C3%A8te-du-retard-dans-l-installation-du-nouvel-organe-de-gestion-des-%C3%A9lections-maliennes/6724011.html>.

Annex 3: People Consulted

Those marked with an * were interviewed separately from the field mission of 2-7 October 2022.

Grantee & Implementing Partners		
Mr Zein ALMOGHRABY*	Director of International Programmes	Journalists for Human Rights (Toronto)
Mr Moro Siaka DIALLO	Project Coordinator	JHR (Bamako)
Mr Soumaila DIALLO	Project Coordinator (temporary)	JHR (Bamako)
Dr Aboubacar Abdoulwahidou MAIGA	Director General	Ecole Supérieure de Journalisme et des Sciences de la Communication de Bamako (ESJSC)
Mr Brehima CAMARA	Directeur des Etudes	
Mr Bandiougou DANTE	Président	Maison de la Presse du Mali Union des Radios et Télévisions Libres des Sciences de la Communication (URTEL)
Beneficiaries/Participants		
Mr Kouane DIARRA	Former student	Journaliste à Studio Tamani (Fondation Hironnelle)
Mrs Fanta DIAKITE	Journalist	Radio Klédu Bamako
Mr Tieman DIARRA Mr Allassane DIAKITÉ	Journalists	Radio Royale FM, 105.8 MHZ à Ouezzindougou
Mrs Dado CAMARA	Directeur	L'Annonceur (100% female media outlet) Board Member of La Maison de la Presse
Mrs BOUARE Bintou Founé SAMAKE	President	WILDAF Mali (national female CSO network)
Mrs Aicha DIARRA	Project Manager	
Mr Moussa KEITA	President	Association Malienne des Interprètes en Langue de Signes (AMILS)
Mr Dramane KONTA	Director of Publication	Le Credo (newspaper)
Other National Actors		
Mrs Ramata DIAOURE	Journalist and UNDEF Project Mentor	Member of the National Transition Council – (CNT)
Mrs Ramata DIA	Journalist – Faciliator of UNDEF Roundtable « Media and female leadership »	Member of the High Authority of Communication (HAC)
Mr Sadou A YATTARA	Journalist – President of Jury for JHR awards	Member of the HAC
Mr Bakary DEMBELE	Chef de Division	Direction Régionale de la Promotion de la Femme, de l'Enfant et de la Famille du district de Bamako
Mrs Hatouma DJIKINE Hatouma GAKOU	Former President of La Fédération Malienne des Associations de Personnes Handicapées (FEMAPH)	Member of the National Council for the Transition (CNT)
Mr TIEMOKO	IDPs Manager for Bamako, interviewed at IDP Camp Centre Mabilé	Regional Direction for Social Development (DNDS) of Bamako
International Community		

Mr Filippo DI CARPEGNA	Rule of Law Senior Adviser	UNDP Mali, Bamako
Mrs Minetou MOULAYE	Programme Manager	Embassy of United Kingdom, Bamako
Others		
Mr Christian LAMARRE*	Senior Programme Officer – focal point for JHR	UNDEF
Mrs Beatriz de LEÓN COBO*	Independent consultant on security and stabilisation in the Sahel. Coordinatrice du groupe d'experts du Forum de dialogue Sahel-Europe (Centro de Seguridad Internacional-Universidad Francisco de Vitoria)	Université de Paris

Annex 4: Acronyms

CEDEP	Conseil d'Éthiques et de Döntologie des Pairs
CNT	Conseil National de Transition
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESJSC	École Supérieure de Journalisme et des Sciences de la Communication
FNR	Final Narrative Report
HAC	Haute Autorité de la Communication
JHR/JDH	Journalists for Human Rights/Journalistes pour les Droits Humains
MAC	Media Accountability Committee
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali
MP	Maison de la Presse du Mali
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
ORTM	Office de Radio et Télévision du Mali
PD	Project Document
RCO	(UN) Resident Coordinator Office
UNDEF (FNUD)	United Nations Democracy Fund (French: Fonds des Nations Unies pour la démocratie)
UNDP	UN Development Programme
URTEL	Union des Radios et Télévisions Libres du Mali