

EVALUATION REPORT

Executive summary

Colombia | Amazon Basin

Strengthening alliances: Together media and civil society actors in Colombia and the Amazon basin support discussions on human rights and environmental protection

Background

Colombia is—after Mexico—the most dangerous country for journalists in Latin America (129th out of 180 countries in the ROG Index). The danger to journalists no longer arises exclusively from reporting on political issues, but also from reporting on environmental issues. Freedom of expression, human rights and environmental protection are all at risk. These developments have come to a head in the Amazon region, intertwined with various technical limitations, deficits in journalistic skills and a lack of cooperation in journalistic production, reflecting an urgent need for the continued professionalization and strengthening of media and civil society actors. The DW Akademie project (2020-22) examined in this evaluation focuses on these challenges, by targeting journalists in the countries of the Amazon basin and environmental and human rights activists. The project's objective is strengthening the alliance of

actors from the media, academia and civil society to promote a discussion on human rights violations and environmental protection in Colombia and the countries of the Amazon basin. As per to the project proposal, the project's objectives are to be realized through four project strands, and involves four implementing partners: Consejo de Redacción in Colombia (a non-governmental organization that encompasses more than one hundred journalists engaged in various kinds of journalism, including investigative journalism); Coordinadora de Medios Comunitarios Populares y Educativos del Ecuador (a network of community media outlets); Hacemos Memoria at the Universidad de Antioquia (which works in Colombia to journalistically come to terms with human rights violations in the context of the Colombian civil war); and Vokaribe Radio (a community radio station broadcasting in the Colombian city of Barranquilla).

In addition, there are two cooperation partners, the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC) in Colombia and Servindi in Peru. They were integrated into the implementation of the project and are therefore also included in the evaluation in line with the project partners.

The purpose of this evaluation is to consider the achievements of the project in light of OECD/DAC criteria and with the purpose of promoting of institutional learning. The evaluation started in November 2021 and ended with the submission of the final evaluation report in April 2022. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible for the external evaluator to travel to the project region. The survey phase of the evaluation was conducted with the help of a co-evaluator on site, partly remotely and in direct contact. The evaluation design follows a mixed-methods approach.

Project evaluation results

Relevance: The selection of implementing partners and cooperation partners as well as the strategic objectives was seen as positive and purposeful by all interviewees. The involvement of the implementing partners in the elaboration of the project design was exemplary. The definition and involvement of the target groups was of variable levels of success. Since the project started during the initial COVID-19 lockdowns, numerous adjustments had to be made. While the issue of gender was neglected as part of the project, the urban/rural divide was actively considered. Stakeholders were mixed in their assessments of the “project alliance,” with positions ranging from “too heterogeneous and conceptually too open” to a “successful cooperation” between the stakeholders. In sum, the project's relevance can be assessed as barely “overall fulfilled.”

Coherence: The interviewees confirm that the implemented measures were largely complementary. It must be noted that there are no redundancies and broader discussions allowed for a number of synergies. The stakeholder mapping

was not completed in sufficiently comprehensive or structured manner. Embedding the results in the project design would have improved the project. Overall, however, the project's coherence can be rated as “overall fulfilled.”

Effectiveness: There is a very professional monitoring system in place, and the defined indicators require sophisticated methods of measurement. The M&E documentation and other reports reveal that almost all planned activities were carried out. The regional focus works well: the implementing partners mentioned the many “micro-alliances” that were established. Furthermore, the organizational consultancy provided to the implementing partners by DW Akademie was very much appreciated. Impact logic: The project objective was formulated at the outcome level, whereas the associated indicators were formulated at the use of output level, thus making their relationship to the objective somewhat unclear. The outputs are described coherently, but it is not always clear how they contribute to the objective. For the indicators used to define the outputs,

the question arises whether the effort involved justifies the knowledge gained. The project's effectiveness can be rated as “overall fulfilled.”

Efficiency: The processes in the project are efficient to the extent that the objectives were or can be largely carried out within the available time frame. Some implementing partners criticized the fact that the increase in staff at DW Akademie in Colombia has not made certain processes faster, simpler or more efficient. Decision-making processes at the DW Akademie are perceived as slow and partly intransparent. Communication within the project is described as open and trusting. Apart from the pandemic, the many changes in roles and responsibilities between and within the implementing partners and DW Akademie were perceived as hindering clear communication. Not all partners are clear about the various individual responsibilities of the local and German DW Akademie team. While the flexibility of the alliance and the mutual support of the implementing partners was praised, a lack of steering capacity and unclear responsibilities in

the alliance were also noted. Due to the shifting framework conditions in the light of the pandemic, the impression arises that the alliance is too large, too diverse and too disparate for efficient management. The cooperation with the DW Akademie project administration is rated as good overall. The implementing partners consider the resources allocated to be sufficient but would like to see the inclusion of overheads to encourage a more stable organizational performance. Cost efficiency arises from the fact that trainers and consultants are contracted almost exclusively from the region; there were also certain pandemic-related cost savings. The cost efficiency of a project is significantly influenced by the structure of its staffing expenditures. A head count gives the impression that, at a minimum, a review of the ratio of personnel to operational costs would be useful. Overall, the efficiency of the project in terms of criteria fulfillment is classified as “partially fulfilled.”

Impact: Almost all interview partners point out the importance of learning from each other in the context of a very diverse group of implementing partners. Bilateral alliances contributed to deeper exchange of experiences and learning processes. The regional focus has enabled the partners to shift their perspectives on certain issues. The development of criteria to measure the quality of journalistic outputs initiated a wider reflection of one’s own work. The issue of climate change was successfully introduced and integrated. The digitalization of work at all levels due to the pandemic also triggered a push toward digitalization in the Amazon region. Finally, many participants implemented learning outcomes in their practical work. Most of the evaluation results show that the project’s impact can be rated as “overall fulfilled.”

Sustainability: Innovative and collaborative forms of journalistic work are likely to continue after the end of the project. The same applies to the new workshop formats developed in the area of continuing education. The pandemic allowed for the “discovery” of the power of audio-visual formats for community media. It can be assumed that these learning processes will be integrated and cemented in future activities. There are concerns that the alliance did not produce any self-sustaining activities. In this context, the organizational consultancy provided by DW Akademie is an important signpost for the implementing partners in their attempts to achieve greater financial independence. The project has thus also increased the organizational strength of the various partners. Overall, the project’s sustainability can be considered as “overall fulfilled.”

DW Akademie

is Deutsche Welle’s center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue. DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. We also receive funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in approximately 60 developing countries and emerging economies.

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The objective of the external evaluation is to provide a constructive assessment of the project results. It does not necessarily align with the perspective and planning of DW Akademie. Nevertheless, all findings were discussed in order to allow lessons learned to be incorporated into the development of future strategies.