

Empowering youth and women: Media & information literacy, women's issues and documenting the past in Cambodia

External Evaluation Report | Executive Summary
Cambodia

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Background

The political environment in Cambodia continues to be marked by human rights disputes and limits on freedom of expression. While the traditional media landscape is dominated by some powerful key players, communication on the Internet is relatively free. Social media play an important role in the country. They open up new opportunities for public discussion, but also pose dangers. The aim of DW Akademie's project in Cambodia (2015-2017) is therefore to educate youth and particularly young women about the responsible use of media in order to facilitate their access to relevant information. This can contribute to a greater level of participation in social and political discussions among the Kingdom's young population.

The main focus of the project is training media competencies. In the field of "Media & Information Literacy" (MIL), DW Akademie cooperates with Cambodian state actors as well as non-governmental organizations. They include the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the local NGO Open Institute. Together with these local players, DW Akademie developed MIL learning modules for a textbook on "Informa-

tion and Communication Technology", which was introduced nationwide in 12th grade classes with computer facilities. In addition, DW Akademie partnered with the Cambodian NGOs Media for Education and Development in Action (MEDIA One) and the Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM) to implement MIL activities for youth groups in two provinces.

As part of a second project line, DW Akademie aims to advance and improve how Cambodian media report on issues relevant to women. It has supported the independent media organization Women's Media Center (WMC) by training its staff in multimedia journalism. Their journalistic pieces are published on the radio, on TV and on WMC's interactive website, ensuring maximum reach for women-related topics. Moreover, employees of the Communications Department of the Ministry of Women's Affairs have been trained in multimedia reporting to better present topics for women's empowerment on the ministry's website.

In a third project line, DW Akademie has supported the development of a multimedia Internet platform on Cambodia's

Khmer Rouge history. Together with The Documentation Center of Cambodia / Sleuk Rith Institute (DC-Cam), DW Akademie developed an interactive website aimed particularly at young people. It makes that dark period of Cambodian history come alive for today's youths in a way that accommodates their communication channels and behavior.

The aim of this evaluation, which was carried out by an external consultant, is a constructive assessment of the project results after completion of the first funding phase (2015-2017) in order to allow lessons learned to be incorporated into the development of future strategies. The evaluation is based on the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and uses a mix of methods, including document and literature analysis as well as interviews with project managers, project partners, and target groups on site. The recommendations have been discussed with the project team and will be taken into consideration in future planning.

Conclusions of the project evaluation

Cambodia's youth offer the strongest potential for change in the country. The growing number of young Internet users in rural areas can bring new political and social impulses to the villages. A recent study on media use in Cambodia by Phong et al. (2016) reveals that the relevance of MIL has grown even stronger since the beginning of the project. In addition, the topic of MIL hasn't been appropriated by any political faction in Cambodia. This can inspire young people to participate in social and political communication and to think critically without feeling the danger of being labeled as opposition forces. Trainings conducted and websites produced under project lines 2 and 3 are also highly relevant for supporting and expanding the activities of the project partners. Therefore, the criterion **relevance** is evaluated as "comprehensively fulfilled."

The indicators specified in the logframe are only partly indicative of the project's success, since they had to be defined before the start of the project and thus without the involvement of the project partners. Since some indicators cannot be achieved until the end of the project, the criterion **effectivity** is assessed as "partly fulfilled."

The project management and the project partners have handled their funds efficiently. Due to the large number of project and cooperation partners, these funds could be used to start and implement many aspects of the project objectives. However potential for improvement was identified with regard to DW Akademie's internal administrative processes. In the future, financial and administrative issues

should be better geared to conditions abroad and adapted to the needs of country management and project partners in order to make processes more efficient. Taking the administrative problems into account, the DAC criterion **efficiency** has therefore been assessed as "partly fulfilled."

The introduction of MIL in the first project line is a long-term strategy, which only began with the start of this project. During the first project phase, various approaches ran parallel to assess their effectivity in the Cambodian context. Their strengths and weaknesses were determined as follows: The school system with its teacher-centered method of education reaches the majority of urban and rural youth, but does not stimulate critical thinking and, thus, social participation. In contrast, the transfer of MIL through NGOs yielded well-trained facilitators who are able to use participatory training methods that encourage critical thinking. However, the facilitators' access to the target group was incidental, which restricts the impact of their activities. For project lines 2 and 3, the focus is on the construction of multimedia websites and their editorial use. The aim of the sites is to broaden the media spectrum reaching the target groups. This has been largely achieved. Against this background, the DAC criterion **impact** is rated as "partly fulfilled" for project line 1 and for project lines 2 and 3 as "generally fulfilled."

As the MIL activities are still at an initial stage, statements on the DAC criterion sustainability can only be made to a very limited extent. As it stands, MIL has been institutionalized by integrating it into the ICT textbook. In addition, sustainable local structures have been established or strengthened. Therefore, the DAC criterion **sustainability** can be assessed as "generally fulfilled."

A productive exchange between German development cooperation organizations in Cambodia is taking place. This ensures that synergies are being created and used. In project line 2, DW Akademie's activities are complementing those of GIZ's local women's project. However, there is still potential to further exploit synergies with local media and youth actors, as well as European donor organizations active in the country. Against this background, the **coherence, co-ordination, and cooperation** criterion is assessed as "generally fulfilled."

With regard to DW Akademie's management of the project, local project partners emphasized the professionalism of the DW Akademie team. There is an open exchange whenever problems arise. The management's strategic approach is to cooperate with reform-oriented state institutions as well as established independent media organizations. It also makes good use of synergies with other German actors in

the field of development cooperation. All this leads to an assessment of the **quality of management** as “comprehensively fulfilled.”

Key Recommendations

1. The broad-based project strategy of including macro- and meso-levels, ministries and independent media as well as urban and rural target groups has proven to be effective and should be pursued further.
2. As budget resources are very limited, one idea would be to extend the engagement on the macro-level in order to strengthen the project's impact.
3. Advancing the promotion of women should be incorporated into all project activities. It should be a cross-cutting theme instead of a separate project line.
4. In order to better meet the demand of local partners for media and MIL trainings as well as Train the Trainer courses, the establishment of a local pool of trainers should be considered. DW Akademie's local project coordinator should be responsible for this.
5. For the next project phase, it is recommended to examine a new composition of project partners.
6. In the initial phase of the project, much energy and funds have been devoted to the development of training materials in Khmer. These should be used in the next project phase with new project partners. Additional ways of applying them with multiplication possibilities should be explored.
7. The strategy should be focused to sharpen the profile of DW Akademie in Cambodia.
8. Due to the high relevance of the subject, the funds for an expansion of MIL in Cambodia should be increased. An analysis of the beneficial and hindering factors for the introduction of MIL in Cambodia shows the potential to anchor MIL in the country. DW Akademie could play a central role here.
9. The logframe of the next project proposal should be coordinated with the project partners. With regards to the development of indicators for the monitoring system, attention should be paid to achieving indicators based on SMART criteria.
10. DW Akademie's financial administration should cooperate closely with its Media Development department on which tools are needed for the correct financial procedures and how these can be prepared for the project partners on site in a user-friendly and transparent manner.
11. For the harmonization of MIL activities in the country, the following research would be helpful: (A) an inventory of all NGOs and institutions in the country involved in the implementation of MIL projects; (B) an inventory of youth organizations and networks which might have an interest in carrying out MIL trainings.
12. The Ministry of Education should include at least one question about MIL in the national exams.
13. Further consultancy or financial support could be provided to the Ministry of Education to expand MIL to existing curricula for younger pupils as well as for teacher trainings.
14. After the expiry of the GIZ project “Access to Justice for Women”, DW Akademie should define its position towards the Ministry of Women's Affairs independently.
15. After handing over the website to DC-Cam, it should be decided whether DW Akademie can still be involved as a consultant for a limited time period.

DW Akademie

DW Akademie is Germany's leading organization for media development and Deutsche Welle's center of excellence for education and knowledge transfer. As a strategic partner of Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development we strengthen the universal human rights of free expression, education, and access to information.

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