



# Table of Contents

- I. OVERALL ASSESSMENT ..... 1
- II. PROJECT CONTEXT ..... 2
  - (i) Development Context ..... 2
  - (ii)

### Acknowledgements

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### Disclaimer

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

### Author

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## I. Overall Assessment

This report is the evaluation of the project "Increased Citizen Dialogue through Strengthened Media in Jordan" implemented by Journalists for Human Rights (JHR). The project was initially set to be implemented from 1 November 2014 to 31 October 2016, and was later granted a two-month extension at no additional cost so the project effectively ended on 31 December 2016.

Through this project, JHR sought to expand the space for informed public dialogue on human rights issues in Jordan and contribute to building a stronger public culture of respect for human rights. The project aimed at developing a training manual on how to use data-driven journalism to cover human rights issues and on training a group of journalists to apply these skills in their daily work. In addition, the project aimed at fostering a more informed public dialogue on human rights issues through the production of high quality journalism and radio programmes that actively informed and engaged the public on human rights topics. Finally, the project aimed at increasing the sharing of information on human rights issues through the leverage of new technology tools developed by JHR - such as the Maidan app - which can provide media with more factual information to produce human rights-oriented stories. JHR received an UNDEF grant amounting USD 150,000 to carry out activities outlined in more detail in Section II below.

The project's overall development goal was to "contribute to building a public culture of respect for human rights in Jordan, with a focus on freedom of expression and gender equality." The specific objective is to "equip Jordanian media with tools and skills to facilitate a more informed public dialogue about human rights issues."

The project exceeded initially-set targets. Eleven senior journalists and 69 students/junior journalists were trained on the use of data-driven journalism in covering human rights issues. The training manual, although published at the end of the project timeline, has already been applied and promises to have wider use in the sector. Fifty-two in-depth stories were published in the course of the project, and 12 radio shows were organized and broadcast. The project helped consolidate a community of journalists highly engaged in covering human rights-related issues. It also helped in setting higher standards for reporting, encouraging other journalists to adopt similar methodologies and widen the use of data-driven and evidence-based journalism. As such, the project contributed to building a public culture of respect for human rights in Jordan, with a focus on freedom of expression and gender equality.

Key recommendations are mostly related to JHR's strategic engagement in Jordan. The organization has been implementing projects in the country for more than four years, and while it was essential to build a core in the capital, Amman, it is critical for JHR to have a strategy that encompasses stronger and more comprehensive geographic outreach. Increased strategic engagement also includes building synergies with human rights campaigns to ensure wider media coverage of nonprofits' campaigns and help influence relevant stakeholders. JHR should

also prioritize and consider expanding their work on "Maidan", the platform and application that was designed by the grantee to aid in human rights reporting and journalism.

As for lessons learned, the project confirmed that introducing fact-based journalism to leading human rights journalists can provide an excellent entry point for informed social debates and instilling democratic values. Providing trained and mentored journalists with a platform where they can share their personal experiences covering human rights issues is a powerful tool for both journalists and the public, whereby processes and research methodologies are made public, furthering the project's objective of consolidating a culture of respect for human rights in the country.

## II. Project Context

Despite being considered a regional haven surrounded by conflict and ongoing instability, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has major internal issues including the ongoing presence of Syrian refugees, skyrocketing inflation, and ongoing social discontent. Jordan had already welcomed hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees in the years following 2003, and more than a million Syrian refugees are estimated to have arrived in the country since 2012. While legislators and the government have been overwhelmed with the refugee response, social development has stalled. Coupled with other economic issues, the Jordanian public has struggled to engage constructively with the government and the monarchy around issues related to social justice. Social inequality in the country also contributes to gender inequality: for example, honour killing is condoned by some, and Jordan is among those countries with the largest gender-based disparities in the world according to the World Economic Forum's global gender gap report<sup>1</sup>.

The Arab spring had little impact in Jordan, as Jordanians watched other neighboring countries becoming increasingly destabilized. The Jordanian government continued to attempt to silence calls for change, or channel only those that also fall in their interests, and freedom of both expression and association have been constantly challenged by the authorities. Reporters without Borders' 2013 press freedom index ranked Jordan as 134<sup>th</sup> out of 179 (in 2017 it ranked 138<sup>th</sup> out of 180), just below Zimbabwe. Government intervention in media regulation reached a peak in 2013 with the adoption of amendments to the Press and Publications Law requiring new websites to apply for a government license. The amendments also hold news agencies liable for

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<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global*





### III. Methodology

UNDEF's 2017 operational manual for post-project evaluations was the initial reference document to develop the methodology. Basic criteria of constructive process, focus on lessons learned, forward-looking, and comprehensive view of the project's results were respected. Information was collected, analyzed, and is presented in this report according to the OECD – DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. An additional criterion was included aimed at analyzing UNDEF's added-value. The post-project evaluation also aimed at linking evidence-based findings to recommendations.

An international expert designated to conduct the evaluation prepared a preliminary planning note (Launch Note) in August 2017. The Note was based on a review of the following project documentation:

- Project document;
- Mid-term progress and final narrative and financial reports;
- Milestone verification reports;
- UNDEF Programme Officer mission note; and
- Email correspondence between UNDEF Programme Officer and the grantee.

The evaluator and the grantee then proceeded to hold introductory Skype conversations to develop a schedule of interviews that would take place during a field mission to Jordan from 16



discussions. Furthermore, the security situation and risks of terrorism continuously generate limitations to press freedom and access to information.

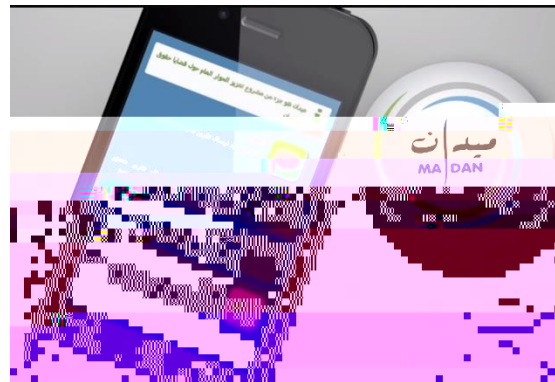
In this context, the objectives and activities of the project were highly relevant. The project related to UNDEF's own aims and objectives, and the design of the project was developed to suit the context and the needs of stakeholders.

Most interviewed journalists spoke positively about their experience through the course of this project, especially when it came to renewing their motivation and commitment to producing quality articles. Most journalists also talked about the open space that the project consolidated for like-minded journalists to work in.

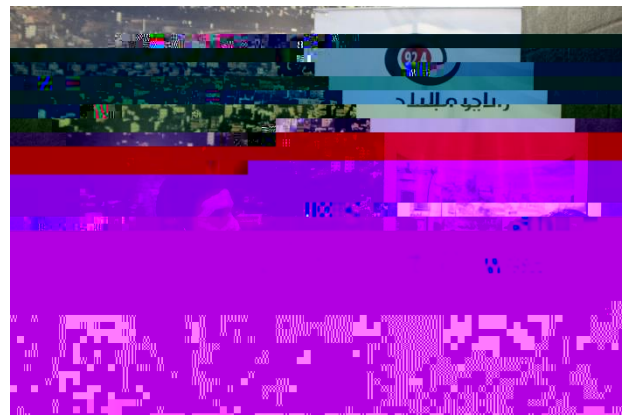
The design of the project was developed along the lines of previous similar JHR initiatives in Jordan where the needs were clarified and discussed with key stakeholders based on lessons learned. As a result, the training workshops and subsequent production of stories were highly relevant. Targeting journalism students at the JMI was also of great value to achieving the project's goals, despite the lack of clarity of young graduates in their career paths which may lead them away from investigative journalism. However, introducing them to democratic and human rights concepts in the course of their studies was seen by faculty and staff as a success in itself.

Data journalism helped journalists explore certain sensitive topics from an angle that was better accepted by the relevant stakeholders, from readers to government officials. Journalists were committed to using the scope of this project to strengthen the quality of their articles. Civil society activists were also pleased to see this type of engagement and those interviewed expressed positive feedback regarding the process of sharing information. The executive director of one NGO relayed her satisfaction to the fact that key concepts were no longer diluted in general terms but that cases were selected, trends identified, and infographics developed that

The production of stories and broadcast of radio shows also met and even exceeded the intended results. Instead of 30 in-depth stories, 52 ended up being published under the scope of the project. All of these stories were also the basis for radio shows, expanding the outreach of certain issues and opening a platform for the public to engage with journalists, government representatives, and civil society activists, through phone calls made directly to the live show. Among the most engaging topics were the issues of: tribal custom law, fair trial and rights of detainees, migrant workers' rights, orphan and adopted children's rights etc.







developed their articles and research. This accentuated the consolidation of a space for journalists to interact with the public over the coverage of human rights issues.

Views of the online platform and social media related to Maidan have also exceeded initial

Other costs also had efficient results. A stipend or financial incentive of USD 100 was provided for each journalist for the stories they covered as part of the project. Although the amount was relatively limited, it did encourage journalists to collect accurate data and ensure quality reporting.

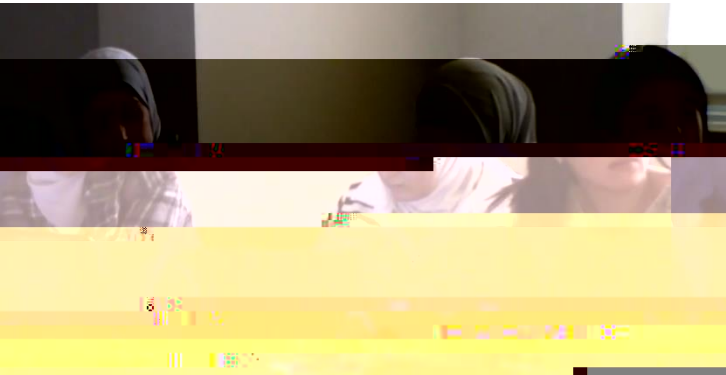
Some items were also co-funded by JHR core funds, such as the training workshops with senior and local journalists, as well as the stipends. JHR's contribution was important as it guaranteed quality implementation of these activities, indicating efficiency on this front.

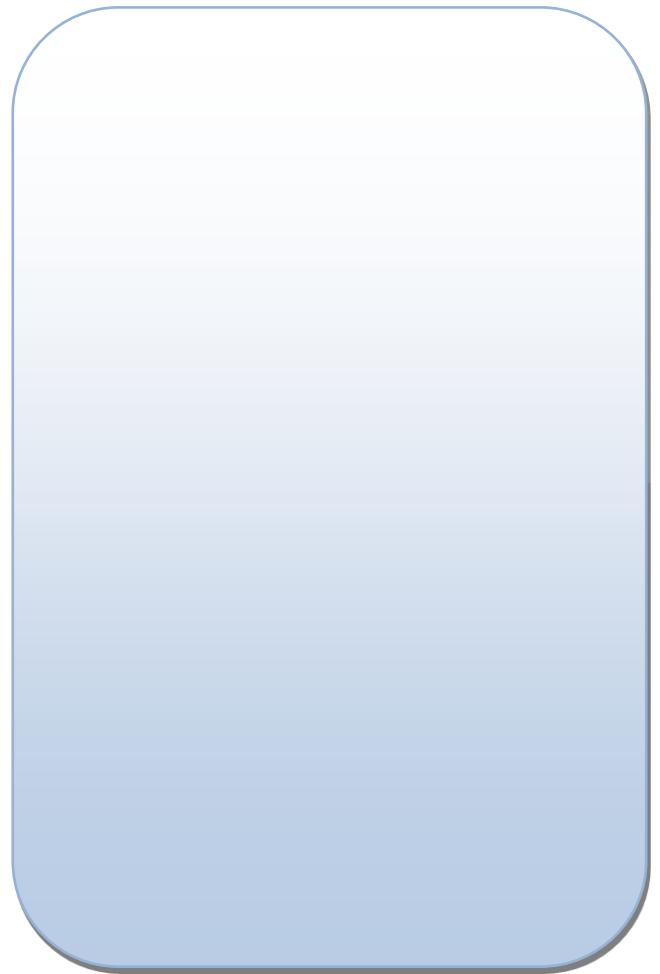
Aside from a transition period in between the appointment of project coordinators in Jordan, the project was well monitored and evaluated regularly. The regional programme manager visited the country every few months to assess the progress of the project, provide technical support, and enhance the quality of the activities and relationships with key stakeholders. In addition, the project coordinator kept regular track of progress with weekly narrative reports to the program manager, including additional documents with updated progress of research or article writing, among other examples.

The project coordinator was in regular communication with all the journalists participating in the project activities. Through regular meetings, phone, or social media, mentoring was also provided by the project coordinator, who is a leading human rights journalist himself.

As with partners, the monitoring and subsequent internal interim evaluations were extremely timely and efficient. Informed decisions were made, in a transparent and fair context, with both partners, JMI and CMN. Both agreements were revised, and components of the project were returned to JHR when appropriate to achieve the overall project objective, namely the manual for human rights data-journalism with JMI, and the Maidan app with CMN. According to their respective representatives, these decisions did not impede on the positive relationship they have with JHR. On the contrary, it may have relieved some pressure from both.

The project had positive impact on all project participants and stakeholders. Senior journalists (pictured on the right during the workshop) were able to use their new skills to strengthen the quality of their stories, which in turn were more widely read and shared by the public. One journalist was unaware of how the integration of visuals and infographics could impact the presentation of her





issues. This representative praised the quality of the work, underscored the importance to continue networking with the journalists directly to strengthen this new alternative media that is providing essential content. The example of the legislative repeal of penal code article 308 was also used to describe the instrumental role of the media in pushing for this policy change.

Another government representative also highlighted the need for specialized journalists, as they perceived a clear quality shift with the articles published in the course of this project, with other sensational angles for the same topics. They were encouraged to see that the professionalization of covering social and human rights issues is growing and will allow for improved communication with government bodies.

Some topics and approaches were ground-breaking and the public's engagement with the stories was considerable. For example, the articles around police brutality, and tribal law, had created a domino effect in the media, with follow-up stories from other news outlets. The UNDP staff member who had monitored the project on behalf of UNDEF also confirmed that outreach was increased after radio shows by successive follow-up stories by multiple newspapers, enhancing the informed debate.

Finally, Maidan did not have the impact that it originally intended, with a focus more on the online platform rather than the software application itself. This is mostly due to the fact that users did not understand what the added-value of the app would be. It is possible that this may have been a result of conflicting priorities and not prioritizing the introductory messaging regarding the app. It seemed like there was a lack of ownership of



The project helped sustain a network of human rights-driven journalists that come from different background and news outlets. Many of those journalists had not been in contact with each other, and this has raised the standards of quality reporting in the Jordanian media. Many of the journalists interviewed were still working on investigative pieces and were continuing their wor

value of a donor that did not impose guidelines or specific topics to focus on. This freedom of choice to the project partners, news organizations, and the journalists proved to be fruitful.

While the promotion and visibility of the project were mainly focused on JHR, it seemed clear that UNDEF's presence in this field that is easily prone to politicization was constructive and neutral. This in turn allowed for a better outreach to diverse groups of journalists, from different political spectrums, and acceptance from civil society and government to participate in the project's activities.

The UNDP staff member monitoring the project on behalf of UNDEF highlighted the need to have consider synergies with the ongoing work of some UN agencies in strengthening the media sector in Jordan, such as UNESCO. The coherence of this project was still relevant, but more debriefing with herself before or after the milestone activities would have been preferred. She also added that she had not received any further information beyond the activities she monitored, and that she would have liked to receive a copy of the final narrative report of the project.<sup>3</sup>

## V. Conclusions

Improving the quality of journalism around human rights issues is the first step to ensuring productive public debates on these issues. In a context where the government is on high alert for security-related incidents, the line between press freedom and national security gets thinner. However, the project was able get all stakeholders, including the government interlocutors, to focus on specific facts and data-driven analyses and feed into a constructive democratic approach to finding concrete solutions to rights issues.

The project raised the public's awareness of the importance of evidence-based reporting, journalists had higher standards than ever to respect when covering human rights issues, and communication channels were opened with other important actors such as civil society activists and government representatives. With JHR's taking over of two components, namely the development of the training manual and the outreach for Maidan, the effectiveness of the project was better supervised and maintained.

Resources were appropriately allocated, and minimum standards for accounting and accountability of partners were respected. Target indicators were surpassed, and activities tailored to fit the needs of participants. Instead of running two workshops for

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<sup>3</sup> UNDEF confirmed that the final narrative report has been sent to UNDP. Following review of this document, UNDEF also highlighted that JHR Jordan had recently been involved in working with another grantee in Jordan on a project promoting the rights of migrant workers.

senior journalists, the decision to organize only one, and focus on the production of stories was cost-effective. As for workshops for junior journalists, five were organized instead of the initial two, as the need for further in-depth training was expressed.

The media landscape in Jordan has improved as a direct result of this project. The use of visuals and infographics was spread across several news outlets after the training workshops, and in turn impacted the quality of journalists' findings and analyses. Affected individuals, families, and communities, were able to contribute to the scope of the project, and follow-up stories resulted in increased citizen dialogue through the strengthened media.

... , and coordinate the production of stories with planned human rights advocacy campaigns. Human rights campaigns in Jordan have often lacked proper media coverage to ensure wider impact. If mentored journalists produce stories in line with campaigns, there is a better chance that of influencing public opinions towards solutions.

... , articulating a vision that is more easily relayed to different audiences for better understanding of the platform's added value. JHR should consider turning the software open source in order to allow other development and humanitarian applications of the tool.

... . Few of the students taking part in the workshops on data-journalism have pursued a traditional journalism path that allowed them to use the knowledge and skills they acquired. While the choice is personal, JHR could ensure that some of the most engaged students receive internship or employment opportunities that help them make a better informed choice for their career development.

... . Final narrative reports should be shared with the UNDP staff member having observed milestone activities and the UN Country Team to increase transparency. Informing these stakeholders of the project's achievements after its closure is important as it gives them the opportunity to verify or provide feedback on the submitted information.

## VII. Lessons Learned

... and potential government interaction. In Jordan, there is a growing appetite for evidence-based journalism, and despite potential backlash from illiberal actors, there is slow and steady progress.

The Maidan0.024 6B4008E>902310092009C02317

upgrades beyond the scope of the project for sustained impact and synergies with other human rights, development, or even humanitarian initiatives.

JHR's ability to adapt its strategy through careful review of local partners' feedback was essential for the success of this project.

## VIII. Annexes

### Annex 1: Evaluation Questions and Detailed Findings

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
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Relevance



## Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

### Background documents

UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report*, <http://www.arab-hdr.org/>; (27 September 2017)

Reporters Without Borders, *Press Freedom Index*, <https://rsf.org/en/ranking> ; (9 October 2017)

World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report*, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/rankings/>; (9 October 2017)

### Project documentation - UDF-JOR-13-553

Project document

Reports: mid-term progress report, final narrative and financial reports





## Annex 4: Acronyms

ARIJ	Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism
CMN	Community Media Network
JHR	Journalists for Human Rights
JMI	Jordan Media Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization