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**UDF-JOR-10-373: Media and art as catalysts for free speech and access to  
information in Jordan (Jordan)**

**Date: 6 December 2014**

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**Authors**

This report was written by June Kane and Zein Ghanma. Landis MacKellar provided editorial and methodological advice while Aurélie Ferreira provided quality assurance. Eric Tourres was Project Director at Transtec.

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## I. Executive Summary

### i. Project Data

The Centre for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) is a media/press-focused NGO based in the Jordanian capital, Amman. In addition to monitoring violations of press freedom and free speech, it operates a legal support service to journalists who come into conflict with the authorities and conducts training programmes and policy-related research.

From 1 April 2012 to 31 May 2014, CDFJ ran a project called *Media and arts as catalysts for free speech and the right to access to information (Freedom Messengers) in Jordan*. The project received USD200,000 in support from UNDEF and was granted a two-month, no-cost extension in order to use unexpended funds on additional project activities. Of the total grant, USD20,000 was retained by UNDEF for monitoring and evaluation.

The aim of the project was described in the Project Document as: “to engage talented young artists and journalists, and encourage them to use new forms of art in promoting change and advocating for free speech and media freedom as a cornerstone of democracy”, however the evaluators found that the project had lost this specific press/information-related focus in implementation and that there was consequently a mismatch between the activities undertaken and the specific objectives set.

The activities planned and implemented were:

- Training of young journalists on media coverage of human rights issues;
- The production of 10 newspaper supplements written by the trainees;
- Training of young artists on human rights issues;
- Creative productions on the themes of democracy and human rights;
- Building a network of the trainees from both groups (Freedom Messengers Network);
- A public event;
- Establishment of a media observatory;
- A social media campaign targeting 20,000 young people.

### ii. Evaluation questions

Evaluation of the project focused on what the trainees had learned and how they had interpreted this knowledge in their subsequent regular work, and how the several diverse components of the project fitted together and in particular contributed to achieving the objectives set. During the course of the project, important considerations relating to the allocation of resources, impact and sustainability also arose.

In considering the project’s **relevance**, the evaluators focused particularly on the shift from a specific focus on free speech, press freedom and access to information to more general human rights training and thus coverage in the work of the Freedom Messengers trained. This may have arisen from the fact that the Freedom Messenger concept was ‘borrowed’ from an earlier regional project, and that the textbooks from that project were used, or it may simply have been a flaw in implementation. Sadly, the shift of focus made the project less relevant and also raised questions of whether the grantee was the ideal organization to implement it. Decisions relating to the nature of the training, the choice of participants, the lack of project partners and the diversity of project activities also reduced its relevance.

Gender was not well integrated into the project overall but it was dealt with as an issue in the training.

In exploring the project's **effectiveness**, the evaluators looked at how the project was implemented and in particular how the core component of the project, the FMN, was set up, resourced and functioned. The FMN is a dynamic group, however it has shrunk in size over time, rather than grown, and this is due to a number of factors, including insufficient resources being allocated to its work, a mismatch between the journalists and the artists involved, and too many interruptions and inactive times between projects when funds are not available. The on-line components of the project – the FMN website and Facebook page – are similarly inactive when project funds are not available and reduce the enthusiasm and the outputs of the network.

While the project met its targets in relation to the number of trainees, newspaper supplements and advocacy and other 'products' planned, the final conference was limited in its outreach and there was no way of assessing the numbers of people reached by the advocacy campaign. The project was considered to be only partly effective.

In relation to **efficiency**, the evaluators met with the finance officer at CDFJ responsible for the project's budget and were able to look at monthly financial reports. Although the budget was managed according to CDFJ's agreement with UNDEF, the evaluators considered that there were serious misallocations in resources to the essential and non-essential components of the project that significantly undermined its impact. Indications of this came early in the evaluation when an interviewee advised that CDFJ had not paid for the services provided because, they said, they did not have sufficient funds. Journalists dropped out of the network, and others became disheartened when they were told that the fees they would be paid for their work would be limited because the budget was required to cover "fixed costs".

Artists were unable to cover their costs after project funds ran out and so were unable to do all they wanted to do. At the same time, significant funds were spent on a media observatory that was not essential to the project but rather part of CDFJ's ongoing work, a newspaper supplement whose value was questioned even by the journalists working on it, and high overheads/personnel costs of the grantee. The project was judged not to be efficient.

The **impact** of the project worked at a number of levels: the artists, and to a lesser extent the journalists involved in the project, considered that its impact on them and their work had been mostly positive, despite the disappointments. The impact on the secondary target – specified as 20,000 young people – was impossible to assess. The evaluators had some concerns about the advisability of focusing an awareness campaign on social media which is not regularly maintained and updated and were not convinced that the campaign would lead to the desired creation of a public pressure group for change.

The shift in focus of the project away from advocating for freedom of speech and press freedom meant that there could be no impact in these areas. Moreover, the obstacles to free speech and freedom of expression are systemic in Jordan, intricately linked to reactions to the political and social challenges currently facing the country as a destination for mass people movements and given its geographic location in a conflict-torn region.

The evaluators had concerns about the **sustainability** of the project's outcomes as well as of the grantee itself. These are in a sense linked because the grantee's institutional funding model is project-focused and no serious consideration seems to have been given to diversifying funding sources or raising income in other ways. This results both in the 'down times' that lead the volunteers to become disillusioned and also products such as websites to become inactive and dated. The over-reliance on volunteers without any consideration of their needs and no plans to compensate them for their input is also a risk to sustainability.



Freedom Messenger rap at the first FMN workshop

In attempting to identify **UNDEF value-added**, the evaluators felt it necessary to alert UNDEF to repeated comments from interviewees that there is a growing perception in Jordan (and in the region more generally) that 'external' funding comes with conditions that represent undue influence on domestic affairs. There have been instances where CDFJ itself has been criticized for organizing an event using funds from USAID and Al-Jazeera. Where once such comments came only from extremists, they are becoming more frequent in the wake of the perceived failure of the Arab Spring.

The evaluators also received comments and queries on how UNDEF-supported projects were selected to 'fit' with existing national programmes and projects in the same area. This is referred to UNDEF for consideration.

### **iii. Conclusions**

- **The project was only partly relevant.** Although on paper a project focusing on press freedom, free speech and access to information, run by an organization whose work centres on the media, seems highly relevant, there was a significant gap between the project as described and its implementation. Moreover, organizing a residential training course outside Amman not only had cost implications that limited the number of trainees but also excluded some potential female participants who would not spend nights away from home.

- **The project was only partly effective.** Indications that the choice of participants was not as open as it might have been limited the effectiveness of the project and this 'closed group' approach extended to a lack of partners and invitees to the events, which were all in Amman and targeted at audiences familiar with this kind of social event.

- **Other components of the project also had limited effectiveness.** The 10 issues of *Baranda* were expensive and even journalists writing for it questioned whether anyone read it. Such a supplement is not equivalent to placing articles into mainstream media or through alternative media with already developed audiences. This was not an effective output nor an effective use of funds. The media observatory was neither relevant nor effective in relation to the project's objectives, constituting rather 'daily business' for CDFJ. The advocacy campaign was relevant but its effectiveness is impossible to quantify.

- **The training was gender-sensitive but the project was not.** The training took a gender-appropriate approach and the trainees gained some insight into the gender aspects of human rights reporting and messaging. However there was no attempt to integrate gender more broadly into the project.

- **Effectiveness was compromised by the design of the project.** There were too many components, not all designed to contribute to the stated objectives. Working with partners would have made spreading the messages more effective. A lack of expertise in designing awareness-raising/advocacy campaigns meant that no audience testing or post-testing was undertaken to underpin the messages or results. Just adding journalists to the FMN alongside the artists did not take into account their differing work contexts or needs.

- **The project was not efficient.** The funds available were not efficiently allocated to different project components. There was an emphasis on covering the grantee's costs and not enough on resourcing the actions and activities that would lead to achievement of the objectives. The evaluators were particularly concerned at the substantial payment made to *Al-Hadath* for use of its licence and for printing *Baranda*, a commercial arrangement that was not declared as a conflict of interest for the owner, the CDFJ Director. The outreach of the project is impossible to assess.

- **The project had a positive impact on the artists involved and to a lesser extent the journalist trainees.** The project had a strong and positive impact on the Freedom Messenger artists interviewed, who saw it as opening a door to new audiences and new ideas for their work. However this was limited by the funds made available to them. The journalists interviewed were similarly enthusiastic and saw positive benefits from their participation in the training and in the FMN, however this too was constrained by funds available and potentially led to 15 of the 20 trainees leaving the network. Impact on the secondary target is impossible to measure.

- **Impact on the problem identified was compromised by flaws in implementation.** The original objectives of the project, which focused on addressing the issues of press freedom, freedom of speech and access to information “as cornerstones of democracy” were lost in implementation through the shift of focus to general human rights issues. The design of the project also diluted the potential impact because it excluded partners, presumed dependence on volunteers and had too many components that were not strategically linked. The reliance of the grantee on project funding also meant that ‘down times’ diluted any impact on individuals, secondary targets and the problem itself.

- **The project relied too heavily on volunteers.** Over-reliance on volunteers is a risk to sustainability, even when the volunteers are committed and motivated. This should be taken into account in project design and, more importantly, design of the budget. The FMN has a life of its own and could become independent.

- **CDFJ’s reliance on donor funding is a threat to its organizational future.** The political situation in Jordan and the region more generally has implications for the future of donor funding and in particular for organizations that rely on project grants from external donors. CDFJ’s project-focused funding model is not sustainable in the long term.

#### **iv. Recommendations**

##### **For CDFJ**

- **Improvements need to be made to the design of projects to ensure that they achieve their objectives.** There were numerous flaws to the design and implementation of this project, outlined in the body of the report. It is recommended that CDFJ look in future to simpler projects that demonstrate a clear link between design, implementation and outcomes.

- **Consideration needs to be given to diversifying income sources.** The organization’s project-dependent funding model compromises project results and is a risk to sustainability. CDFJ’s use of the project budget to meet ongoing organizational costs is particularly unfortunate since it left important parts of the project under-funded and volunteers discouraged. It is not appropriate and will not be sustainable.

- **CDFJ should look at acquiring expertise in monitoring and evaluation.** Donors require organizations to demonstrate impact as well as output, and CDFJ should consider recruiting someone who can design monitoring and evaluation tools that can be used to measure a range of project outputs, outcomes and impacts. This also helps in project design, since setting up these tools as the project is in design stage often shows weak links between the components or inappropriately targeted actions.

- **CDFJ needs to reassess its approach to volunteers.** CDFJ is over-reliant on volunteers and ultimately this is a risk to sustainability. It is not difficult to design a budget that will provide suitable recompense to those who work on behalf of the project or

organization. This recognizes the needs of the volunteers and also sits more comfortably with a rights-based approach, acknowledging their contribution, their expertise and their needs.

#### **For UNDEF**

- ***In relation to how it positions itself***, UNDEF might explore the clear indications received during this evaluation of a shift in perception in some Arab countries that is leading to external donors, particularly 'western' donors and those working in the areas of human rights, being seen as interfering in domestic affairs and promoting 'normalization' of ties with Israel. Although this has always been true to a limited extent, the failure of the Arab Spring has led many more people, not necessarily extremist in their views, to question the intentions of external donors. This should obviously not influence UNDEF's selection of projects to be funded, but it might for example affect how UNDEF wishes its emblem to be used.



## I. Introduction and development context

### *i. The project and evaluation objectives*

From 1 April 2012 to 31 May 2014, the Centre for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) ran a project called *Media and arts as catalysts for free speech and the right to access to information (Freedom Messengers) in Jordan*. CDFJ is based in the Jordanian capital, Amman. The project received USD200,000 in support from UNDEF and was granted a two-month, no-cost extension in order to use unexpended funds on additional project activities. Of the total grant, USD20,000 was retained by UNDEF for monitoring and evaluation.

The project's aim was:

“to engage talented young artists and journalists, and encourage them to use new forms of art in promoting change and advocating for free speech and media freedom as a cornerstone of democracy”.

This was to be effected through a series of activities:

- Training of young journalists on media coverage of human rights issues;
- The production of 10 newspaper supplements written by the trainees;
- Training of young artists on human rights issues;
- Creative productions on the themes of democracy and human rights;
- Building a network of the trainees from both groups;
- A public event;
- Establishment of a media observatory;
- A social media campaign targeting 20,000 young people.

The project envisaged three principal outcomes:

1. An increase in media coverage on human rights, media freedom, free speech and the right of access to information by trained young journalists by end-2013;
2. An increase in the engagement of young people in human rights, media freedom, free speech and the right of access to information through artistic activities/products by young artists by end-2013;
3. Raised awareness of young people of human rights, media freedom, free speech and the right of access to information by end-2013.

This evaluation is part of a series of post-project evaluations funded by UNDEF. Its purpose is “to undertake an in-depth analysis of UNDEF-funded projects to gain a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project, which in turn helps UNDEF devise future project strategies. Evaluations also assist stakeholders in determining whether projects have been implemented according to the project document and whether the intended project outcomes have been achieved”.<sup>1</sup>

### *ii. Evaluation methodology*

An international expert designated to lead the evaluation prepared a preliminary planning note (Launch Note) in October 2014 in consultation with the national expert and Transtec Evaluation Manager. The Note was based on a review of project documentation (see Annex 2). Meanwhile, the grantee and national expert began developing a schedule of interviews that would take place during a field mission to Jordan from 9 to 15 November 2014.

The evaluators interviewed staff of the grantee, CDFJ, participants in the project activities and other organizations working in areas related to the issues dealt with by the project. The full list of people interviewed is presented in Annex 3. Additionally, the evaluators undertook

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<sup>1</sup> Operational Manual detailing Transtec evaluation methodology, p.6.

desk research to gain a comprehensive understanding of the media landscape in Jordan and in particular the challenges and constraints at the core of media freedom, free speech and access to information. The complex geo-political situation of Jordan as a result of its borders with a number of war-torn countries additionally required research and consideration, as social change in the region has affected both the aspirations of young people, their media use and government responses to this change. These matters are discussed in more detail in the Development Context section below.

Information was collected, analysed and is presented in this report according to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation questions are outlined in more detail in Annex 1.

### **iii. Development context**

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy ruled by King Abdullah II since 1999. The King has executive power, and appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister and cabinet. The King has recently promised to devolve executive powers further to elected officials, although there has been slow progress on this.<sup>2</sup>

Women have equal political rights under the law in Jordan but in those areas of law that fall under Shari'a courts (inheritance, divorce, child custody), women face systemic discrimination. Women make up 52% of the electorate but only 13% of parliamentary candidates in 2013.<sup>3</sup> The Jordanian Penal Code also contains provisions that discriminate against women, in particular in relation to rape and honour crimes.<sup>4</sup>

In 2013, Jordan's population was 6,533,000,<sup>5</sup> however in July 2014 the population was estimated at 7,930,491,<sup>6</sup> significantly increased by the influx of refugees and migrants from the conflict in Syria, adding to the long-term and recent refugees from Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon. These people on the move – both short- and long-term – are a major factor influencing domestic and foreign policy in Jordan.<sup>7</sup>

Jordan is a land-locked country except for the port of Aqaba opening to the Red Sea in the south and shares borders with countries that over decades have seen frequent internal conflict and external aggression that have resulted in massive people movements into the country. The history of the country and its immediate neighbours continues to affect the demographic and socio-economic situation today, as well as political realities that are important to understanding the media landscape.<sup>8</sup>

Before 1948, Jordan was known as Transjordan. Since 1922 it had been a state under the British Mandate for Palestine and remained under British supervision until 1946. Following the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 Jordan, with the help of



<sup>2</sup> Freedom House: *Freedom in the world 2014: Jordan*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Rana Husseini: "Jordan", in Kelly S and Breslin J, *Women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa*, p.5.

<sup>5</sup> *Jordan in figures 2013*, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Department of Statistics, June 2014.

<sup>6</sup> *CIA World Factbook*, on-line version consulted October 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Kane, J: *People on the move: Migration and trafficking in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria*.

<sup>8</sup> Essoulami, S: *The press in the Arab world: 100 years of suppressed freedom*.

Arab allies, gained control of the West Bank of Palestine and there was an influx of Palestinians across the River Jordan into "temporary" camps. This was repeated in May 1967 when Israel's pre-emptive strikes in Egypt began the Six Day War. Jordan and Syria responded with attacks on Israel, which in victory annexed the West Bank.

The final years of the 1960s and early 1970s saw considerable turmoil in Jordan as Palestinian paramilitary groups threatened the rule of law. In June 1970 fighting broke out and the armed forces eventually succeeded in expelling these groups from the country in an episode now known as *Black September*. By 1974, however, Jordan had joined in the Arab League agreement that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" and Jordan thus gave up any claim to the West Bank. A formal renunciation of the claim came only in 1988, however, when the PLO assumed responsibility as the Provisional Government of Palestine (in exile).

In 1991, Jordan agreed to participate in direct peace negotiations with Israel sponsored by the US and the Soviet Union. An end to hostilities with Israel was signed on 25 July 1994 and an Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty was concluded in October that year. This has endured, however there remain concerns at what is known in Jordan as "normalization" and this has become more common since 2010 and the so-called "Arab Spring" when what is seen as foreign influence on domestic politics in countries such as Egypt resulted in change that ultimately was seen to be a failure.

Amid regional turmoil, however, Jordan today appears stable. Militarily, there is no serious security threat to the kingdom internally or externally, including from groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Jordan has strong defence capabilities, which were improved in the 2000s when the country recognized new challenges posed by unconventional warfare. This strength is accompanied by efficient intelligence services with a reputation for toughness on extremists. It is worth noting that more than a quarter of Jordan's male labour force consists of employees of the state, largely defence and security forces.<sup>9</sup>

Jordan has a history of state opposition to extremism, but social injustice, the economic marginalization of many (especially young people), and the failure to find a solution to the Palestinian issue increasingly affect the public mood, creating a strained environment that promotes extremist ideologies among Jordanians. This is especially true of young people, among whom the highest rate of unemployment is recorded, in the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 years (36.8% and 30.8% respectively, compared to 12% joblessness country-wide).<sup>10</sup>

Jordan in 2014 became part of the US-led coalition to fight ISIL, and this in itself could pose a potential threat to the country's stability as Jordanian public opinion starts to sympathize with extremists in Syria and Iraq. If the conflict in the region escalates and the political process in Iraq fails, a significant number of Iraqis will add to the 1.4 million Syrians who are currently refugees in Jordan. Another such wave into the kingdom would pose a heavy burden on education, health and other services, as well as the country's infrastructure, eventually heightening the risk of instability.



Protests in downtown Amman, November 2012

This scenario is a nightmare for Jordanians already struggling with an existing refugee population. The cost of hosting Syrian refugees in Jordan was USD 2.1 billion in 2013, while the international aid Jordan received

<sup>9</sup> Jordan Department of Statistics, 21 July 2014.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

for this purpose that year amounted to less than USD 0.8 billion. The remaining costs fell on Jordan and intensified already strong pressure on health, education and water infrastructures, as well as subsidies for basic commodities. Moreover, Jordanians, especially young Jordanians, face increased competition with Syrians in finding jobs and securing housing.<sup>11</sup>

Almost 60% of Jordan's population is under the age of 25. The apathy of many young people and their lack of interest in politics partly explain the absence of an Arab Spring in the country, along with recognition of the failure of such movements in other countries in the region. Nevertheless, demonstrations calling for constitutional and social reform have become a frequent occurrence after prayers on Fridays in downtown Amman. These peaceful protests -- by a loose coalition of leftists, Islamists, young people and tribal elites<sup>12</sup> -- have covered issues ranging from rising food and fuel prices to a call for some government officials to step down. While the Arab Spring never quite made it to Jordan, therefore, recent years have witnessed stirrings of change that underlie the introduction of more repressive media legislation.

### **Media landscape and freedom of speech**

Publicly, the Jordanian Government upholds human rights including the right to freedom of expression. However, the media landscape in Jordan presents a mixed picture. In some respects, influenced by security fears, press freedom declined in 2013. Jordan ranked first in 2013 among Arab states in terms of blocking news websites, with 291 such cases.<sup>13</sup> In July 2014, the Reporters without Borders organization criticized the government for blocking news websites on the grounds that they failed to obtain the required license as stipulated in a recently introduced Press and Publications Law.<sup>14</sup> In particular, from June 2013, the government started blocking unlicensed news websites after giving them a deadline to register. Blocked sites included 7iber, which promotes free speech and media freedom.

The website licensing system is used to control access to information published on the Internet. The law requires websites that publish local news and analysis to register and obtain licences from the Press and Publications Department, which is part of a newly established Media Commission. The state authorities have put tough conditions on websites to register and obtain a license to operate. The law also mandates a special court to look into media cases and stipulates a four-month deadline for the tribunal to rule on any case it hears. Moreover, the legislation holds on-line media publishers accountable for comments their readers might post and prohibits them from publishing comments not relevant to the article to which they are attached, also requiring that all material be archived for no less than six months.

### **The Arts Scene**

The Arts are not high on the government's priorities. Outside activities subsidized by the government, it does not practice censorship over any form of art. This opens the door for young artists to initiate and start their own projects. With few resources, young artists have managed to develop a following in Amman, mainly engaging young audiences. Both the arts and the kind of media activity that focuses on social comment is seen as essentially "young urban" and centres on the capital. The activities and outreach outside Amman are much less significant. Some artists have been focusing their activities in theatre, music/rap and film to address human rights, freedom and political issues. The outreach of such activities remains limited, though it is slowly growing and producing outspoken and enthusiastic young artists.

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<sup>11</sup> According to Andrew Harper, UNHCR Director in Jordan, in a public presentation in Amman, 3 March 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Freedom in the world 2014: Jordan, <http://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/jordan>

<sup>13</sup> According to a study by the Centre for Defending the Freedom of Journalists' Network for Media Freedom Defenders in the Arab World (SANAD), May 2014

<sup>14</sup> Mohammad Ghazal and Omar Obeidat "Reporters without Borders criticizes government for blocking news websites", *Jordan Times* 10 July 2014

## II. Project strategy

### *i. Project approach and strategy*

As described in the Project Document, this project was designed to respond to growing concerns about the rolling back of media freedom in Jordan, particularly in relation to on-line sources of information. It was targeted particularly at young journalists and artists, and at a broader youth public, based on analysis showing that young people in particular had disengaged with the democratic movement in Jordan. This contrasts with other countries in the region, where young people have driven calls for social justice and democratic reform, taking advantage of modern technologies to mobilize large numbers of young people.

A situation analysis undertaken by the grantee at the design stage of the project noted that Jordan is trying to become a model for peaceful change in the region and that His Majesty King Abdullah has acknowledged the need for reform. This has been slow, however, and has led to the disengagement of many young people (under the age of 25), who make up 56% of the population in 2014.<sup>15</sup>

The project is predicated on the influencing role of the media and the arts, in particular the role of young journalists and artists, in encouraging debate on fundamental democratic issues of freedom of speech, media freedom and access to information, as well as broader human rights issues.

It presumes that enhancing the understanding and skills of the young journalists and artists participating in training, writing/performing and networking will have a multiplier effect in raising the issues and promoting change. Participants in these activities were to join an already established network called 'Freedom Messengers'.

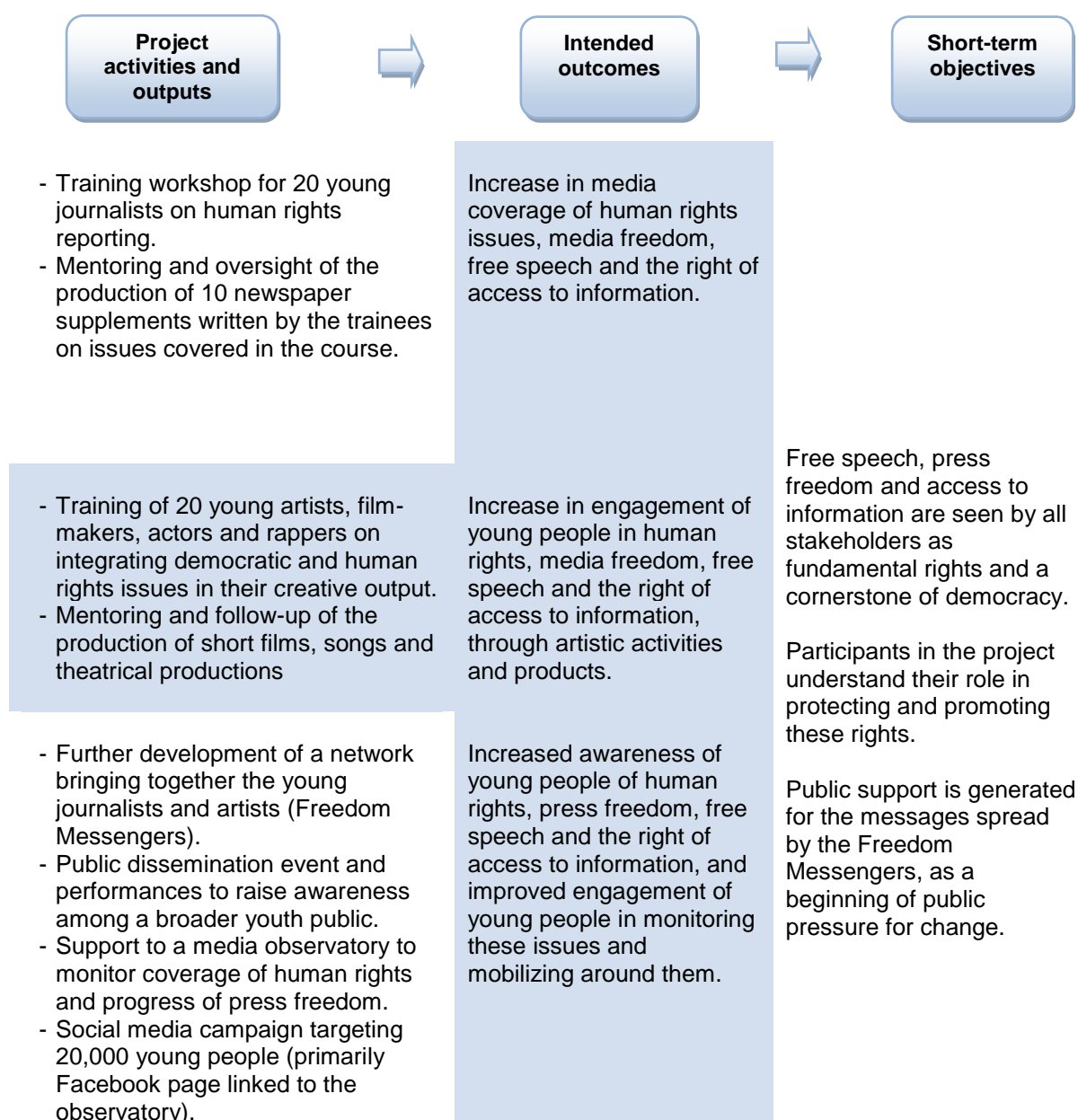
The project also included public events and an advocacy campaign that were intended to build public support for the Freedom Messengers and thus create pressure for change. Additionally, the project included the further development of an existing on-line observatory and the creation of a web presence for the Freedom Messengers.

The various actions undertaken and logical cause and effect links are illustrated in the logframe below:

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<sup>15</sup> CIA World Factbook, on-line version October 2014.

## ii. Logical framework



### III. EQ answers/findings

#### *i. Relevance*

Press freedom, freedom of speech and access to information are among the first casualties of the fear generated by perceived threats to national security and social and political stability. Although Jordan is seen to be coping with these challenges, recent years have seen limits being put on freedom of speech and access to information not through the imposition of restrictive laws but by the use of reasonable laws in ways that have garnered criticism from internal and external watchdogs. As a result, the 2014 *Freedom in the World* report published by Freedom House categorized Jordan's press as "not free", citing "vague clauses [in press laws] that restrict media activity in practice" and scoring it 63 on a scale ranging from 0 = best to 100 = worst.

In this context, the objectives of the project as described in the Project Document were highly relevant. However the implementation of the project and in particular the imbalance of resources devoted to various components when it was implemented diluted this relevance significantly.

- ***People at the heart of the project***

The heart of this project, and the key to its achieving its stated objectives, was the network of young journalists and artists trained, mentored and then supported to spread messages about press freedom, free speech and access to information to young people, especially, with a view to building public pressure for positive change ('Freedom Messengers'). It should be noted that the Freedom Messengers Network (FMN) existed before the project began, having been developed as part of a regional project in which CDFJ participated. CDFJ brought the idea to Jordan, principally Amman, and some of the Jordanian Freedom Messengers have been involved since 2009.

The project as implemented seems to have lost sight of the fundamental importance of the Freedom Messengers and to have diverted time, efforts and resources into components of the project that did not contribute significantly to the objectives as detailed in the Project Document.

The young artists brought into the project through a three-day training session in July 2012 were chosen specifically because they were already active in promoting messages about social justice, and all those interviewed remain committed to this task. The training was seen as useful and motivating, however what were supposed to be the core issues – free speech, press freedom and access to information – were just three of many human rights issues covered in that training and, not surprisingly, other human rights issues eclipsed them in the artists' output (for example issues such as honour killings, which prompt more social identification from the public). Thus the media-focused messages presumed from the original project description were lost early in the project. While messages promoting all human rights are valid and important, in the context of the expectations set up by this project, they were unlikely to contribute to fully achieving the objectives set.



**Rapper Samm at the project's final conference**

The journalists chosen for the training were a mix of mainstream and freelance journalists and their main output was to be articles for the newspaper supplement *Baranda*, 10 issues of which were produced and distributed. The journalists received general human rights training alongside the artists. They were mentored in looking both for human rights stories and rights-based angles to general stories, however there was no emphasis given to issues focusing on the rights of information or press freedoms. Indeed, the journalists interviewed expressed concern that they did not receive specific training or advice on protection issues of relevance to journalists whose writing attracts unwelcome attention from the authorities or interest groups. This should have been an integral part of the training for both journalists and artists. It should be noted that the training materials used had been produced for the regional project in 2009 by an Egyptian partner in that project and thus were not specific for the CDFJ training.

One of the trainers expressed concern at the choice of journalists who attended the training, and in particular said that he believed the selection had been made based on friendships and personal contacts rather than the potential of the trainee. This, he believed, had affected the overall outcomes of the training. He also noted that only 20% of the trainees were women, possibly because attendance at the three-day residential course required spending two nights away from home.

Another trainer believed that the workshops were too short to achieve desired outcomes and that for the journalists in particular training should include field-based assignments and therefore be spread over a longer period.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (i).

▪ **‘Product’ and performance**

As part of the training, the artists and journalists worked with the trainers and mentors to produce specific products that covered the human rights issues they had discussed. In the case of the artists, this included songs, short films and theatre, both sketches and plays. Some of the materials produced were performed at a series of events that aimed to take the messages to a wider public (although with a focus on young people). While the project as designed included one final conference at which the FMN would be showcased, over the course of the project’s duration, the artists joined other performers in several events that CDFJ organized. These are coincidental although complementary to the project itself. They illustrate the difficulty in unravelling what was UNDEF-supported activity, what was funded from other sources (and possibly overlapping projects) and what is ongoing output of CDFJ.

Date	Event	FMN contribution	Anticipated in the Project Document?
1 Sept 2012 3 March 2013 13 Aug 2013 16 Aug 2013	FMN planning and networking meeting	Participants in the training invited to attend	Yes – five such meetings were planned
8-11 Nov 2012	‘Audacity’ art exhibition	Not FMN-specific but some members attended	No
March 2013?	‘Singing for Freedom’ celebration	Showcased some productions by artist trainees, with input from other artists and FMN members from earlier projects	No
3 June 2013	‘Freedom Messengers’ exhibition	Mixed media concert/event focusing on FMN, old and new members	No
30 Nov – 1 Dec 2013	‘Sing for Freedom’ celebration	Two evening concerts featuring FMN artists plus guest artists from the region	No
24 May 2014	Final Conference	Showcase of FMN products	Yes



While the events were reportedly well attended (although the final UNDEF-supported conference seems to have been limited to project participants and have attracted little outside interest – see photograph below), interviewees involved in the arts scene in Jordan commented that to a large extent the audiences were made up of the same people who would regularly attend ‘alternative’ artistic performances. In at least one case, the venue was itself chosen because it has a regular audience that appreciates performances with social comment, often controversial and provocative. To this extent, it must be asked whether the organization of the events enlarged the audience for rights-based messages or whether it was to a large extent a case of “preaching to the converted”.

A number of interviewees engaged in the arts scene in Jordan said that they had not heard of the project’s activities. Those who had participated in one way or another, for example by providing a venue. A general remark was that the project seemed ‘closed’ to outsiders, and this is exacerbated by the fact that it had no partners. This is a strategic error in design for a project that aims to spread messages as widely as possible.

This finding leads to Conclusion (ii).

Some of the journalists attended the performances (although one female journalist said she had never been invited) and some participated as masters of ceremonies, but the journalists’ output was more understandably focused on the production of news and feature articles for the website and for 10 newspaper supplements produced and distributed as part of the project.



**Final Conference – Freedom Messengers**

to targeted households drawn from the circulation lists of the national newspaper *Al-Ghad*.

The supplements, with the title *Baranda*, comprised a series of articles focusing on human rights-related topics, from short pieces to two-page features. The back pages of the supplement consisted of English translations of some of the articles. The supplement also contained cartoons and illustrations. *Baranda* was printed under the licence of *Al-Hadath*, a now dormant newspaper owned by the Director of CDFJ. It was distributed free

The journalists themselves were equivocal about *Baranda*. While those interviewed all appreciated the mentoring and follow-up they received from the trainers and mentors (even after the project ended), they questioned whether anyone read the supplement or whether it was in fact quickly discarded. They were not impressed with the quality of the articles nor convinced that the articles would be of interest to the majority of people. In fact, they suggested that the written articles, like some of the artistic products, would most likely find an audience in those who already had an interest in human rights.

While the production of articles might therefore have been an important step in the training of journalists to understand and write on issues from a rights perspective, the relevance of *Baranda* as a vehicle for spreading messages about human rights and engendering change is low. It is not equivalent to working to integrate the same kind of articles into mainstream media, and to this extent does not contribute to Objective 1.

This finding relates to Conclusion (iii).

- **Advocacy and social mobilization**

Although the project limited its objectives to empowering the Freedom Messengers to formulate and spread messages about human rights, this fitted into a broad objective of mobilizing public support for the messages and thus creating public pressure for change.

Some components of the project aimed to contribute to this directly. The project therefore included a multi-pronged advocacy campaign called “I have the right to know” which was launched through social media on 17 April 2014 (during the two-month project extension) and which was extended to some existing vehicles. The campaign included the development of an FMN website in June 2013 to showcase the artistic productions and journalistic output, an FMN Facebook page and a Twitter account with the hashtag *#I\_have\_the\_right\_to\_know*. Additional components included a series of photographs of people (including some of the project participants) holding cards with questions that needed answers.

The campaign also included street banners and a conference. The contents of the campaign were high quality, however questions must again be raised about the likelihood that it would reach those it was supposed to target (20,000 young people). Digital vehicles are notoriously difficult to target specifically, although CDFJ did allocate budget to ‘pushing’ the website and other vehicles through search engines. Nevertheless, as the main method of taking the messages of the project beyond the participants to a broader public, the campaign was a relevant component.

This finding leads to Conclusion (iii).

- **Other project components**

The project included also the development of a ‘media observatory’. This was subsequently integrated into the FMN website and includes monitoring reports of violations of press freedom, freedom of speech, access to information and other media-related issues. How the observatory relates to the objectives of the project is not clear and, although it may be a useful component of CDFJ’s ongoing work, it is not immediately relevant to this project. Moreover, several additional people were engaged to deliver services for the observatory, including a journalist, researcher and legal advisor. It is not clear how much work the researcher/writers did, since the journalist trainees also contributed to the site. The legal advisor was linked to CDFJ’s ongoing support to journalists in conflict with the law and was not an integral part of this project.

This finding contributes to Conclusion (iii).

- **Taking gender into account**

CDFJ did not have a gender specialist on staff at the time of the design and implementation of the project and so, like many organizations, considered that integrating gender into the project was the same as ensuring that women were represented among the participants.

The training schedule shows a session on gender and the evaluators were able to speak to the person listed as leading that session, however she advised that her remit was to discuss with the trainees how women might be involved in advocacy actions and outputs, and she did not address the issue of gender more broadly.

Despite these deficiencies in the project design, however, the evaluators learned from the journalist trainees that gender had been discussed in other training sessions during the three-day course and indeed, when they were asked questions about the meaning of ‘gender’ and how it applies to their work, the journalists showed good understanding. To this extent, therefore, the project paid attention to gender as it relates to the issues covered in the training. The trainers and mentors also confirmed that they had monitored awareness of gender in the articles and products of the trainees.

This finding leads to Conclusion (iv).

## ii. Effectiveness

Statistically, the project achieved its targets, however it must again be noted that the evaluators found it difficult to differentiate between actions that were funded by UNDEF (and thus an assessable part of the project) and which were supported through other means or by other donors. The Final Report submitted to UNDEF lists numerous events that were not in fact related to UNDEF's grant (see above). The evaluators have therefore cross-referenced events to the final financial report in order to define the project's outputs.

### ▪ 20 journalists trained and engaged as Freedom Messengers

Some 40 journalists applied to participate in the three-day training provided by CDFJ and of these 21 were chosen, with 20 then taking part. The evaluators asked why the training was limited to such a small number of journalists when the ultimate aim was to disseminate messages and build a body of support. CDFJ explained that the limit was imposed by available finances, however this is not convincing (see Efficiency section below). While it may not have been possible to train 40 journalists for three days, the possibility of running two two-day training programmes, and perhaps changing the location to a convenient venue in Amman rather than a residential camp at the Dead Sea, should have been considered. Indeed, if the training had been run on a day basis in the city rather than as a residential camp, then more female journalists might have participated. The evaluators learned that CDFJ regularly runs training camps at the Dead Sea resort used for this project. Just doing what is normally done, however, in this case seems to have led to a missed opportunity.

Of the 20 young journalists trained, only five remained engaged in the FMN at the time of the evaluation. This was largely for practical reasons (discussed in the Efficiency section below) but also a result of the project-driven funding model of the grantee, CDFJ, and the 'down time' between projects that sees volunteers slip away, even when they are committed to the cause. Young journalists need to earn a living and the evaluators were told that the small honoraria (or sometimes nothing) paid to them for researching and writing stories not only limited the time they could put into their articles (affecting the quality, by their own admission) but also meant that they were obliged to prioritize income-generating work.

## Committed to spreading the messages



Farah Maraqa and radio journalist Mohammed Freij at the training

Journalist Farah Maraqa works as a freelance writer for the Habeni news portal and is Executive Director of *Business Intelligence*. She was one of 20 journalists who participated in the training in human rights coverage offered as part of the project.

Farah was already studying for a Master's Degree when she signed up for the training and appreciated the way it allowed her to learn how to integrate rights issues that she cared about into her work. She was particularly interested in learning about women's and children's rights, and says that looking for and finding a human rights angle in her writing makes it more powerful.

She particularly appreciated building an ongoing working relationship with the trainers of the course, who provide support to her in her work even now the project has ended.

She was disappointed, however, that three-quarters of the trained journalists no longer participate in the FMN, and agreed that working journalists find it difficult to work as volunteers when every story they write involves research and interview costs.

This was not the case for the artists, since their ‘product’ contributes to their own profile and generates income from performances and sales of their work. Indeed, a song written by rapper Samm featured in an episode of the TV talent show *Arabs got talent*, and subsequently had three million hits on-line. As Samm explained, the exposure provided to him by his involvement in the FMN and in the concerts and performances organized as part of CDFJ’s various projects, had significantly enhanced his celebrity. He therefore sees value in continuing as a member of the network although he, too, was disappointed that things have come to a halt since the UNDEF-supported project ended.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (v).

- **25 young artists trained in human rights and engaged as Freedom Messengers**

Fifty working artists applied to participate in the three-day training and 25 of them were selected on the basis of their existing interest in and commitment to human rights. This exceeds the target of 20 artists in the original project document.

The training for both journalists and artists covered a range of topics, including secularism and the state, liberalization, freedom of religion and socio-economic rights. There was no specific focus on press freedom, freedom of speech and access to information. The artists interviewed agreed that, although the training was interesting, they learned more from contact with other participants and the ongoing discussions they had as part of the network.

- **10 issues of the newspaper supplement Baranda**

As noted above, 10 issues of the supplement *Baranda* were produced and distributed to targeted households. Five thousand copies of each supplement were printed. It is not known whether each targeted household received all 10 supplements or whether the distribution plan changed for each edition, although this is unlikely. In terms of efficiency, it is more important to ask whether the supplements were actually read. The journalists’ own scepticism about the value of *Baranda* is noted above. The evaluators asked the journalists whether they had been able to “recycle” any of the articles they had written for *Baranda* and offer them to regular media outlets. Some had done this but had reworked them for mainstream media.

- **10 short films, 10 rap songs, 11 alternative songs, one theatre play, one sketch**

During and after the training, the artists engaged in the project produced a number of artistic creations that benefited from their discussions of human rights issues. Some of the output was showcased in various events organized by CDFJ; the short films were uploaded to the FMN website and two CDs of rap songs were produced, one of which featured songs written by the Freedom Messengers while the other included works by others. One song was also used for the advocacy campaign. The creative productions that resulted from the training and from the engagement of the Freedom Messengers exceeded projections in the project plan.

Again, the evaluators note that it is not the production of the creations that is likely to be effective in moving towards achievement of the project’s objectives, but their reach and transformative effect on those that listen to the music, watch the films and attend the theatrical performances. There is more on this below, under Impact.

- **FMN website and media observatory**

The planned media observatory was combined with the Freedom Messengers website ([www.fmnnet.net](http://www.fmnnet.net)). This seems a strange decision. While the observatory is part of the core ‘business’ of CDFJ, the Freedom Messengers Network has a very specific purpose as an advocacy mechanism related to human rights more generally. Again, the evaluators found it difficult to separate UNDEF-supported project-focused outputs from the day-to-day activities of CDFJ, many of which are funded through project grants.

- **Advocacy campaign and social media sites**

The advocacy campaign ‘#I-have\_the\_right\_to\_know’ was launched through social media networks and featured photos and examples of the Freedom Messengers’ productions. It also included street banners and a press conference. The target audience for the campaign was young people, and the projected number to be reached was 20,000. It is impossible to know whether these targets were reached, although it is noted that young people are the most frequent (although not exclusive) users of social media. The short films had multiple hits on the website during the campaign, although it is not known whether these were unique hits or related to single users viewing several films.



Theatre Director and FMN member Suzan Banawi featured in the advocacy campaign

- **Final Conference**

As noted above, CDFJ organized numerous concerts, celebrations and events during the lifetime of the project, but only the final conference was supported by UNDEF and thus was properly part of the project. This took place on 24 May 2014 – after the original 24-month time-frame of the project – and was linked to the advocacy campaign. Compared to the “celebrations” organized between 2012 and 2014 and featuring both Freedom Messenger performers and guest artists from across the region, this was a low-key affair with a limited audience.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (v).

- **Where does it “sit”?**

A number of interviewees asked where the UNDEF-supported project, and CDFJ’s project activity more generally, fits into the many projects and programmes being implemented by other organizations in Jordan. They pointed to the fact that CDFJ listed no partners in this project, although there are many organizations specialized in human rights and some significant programmes and organizations focusing on monitoring press freedom, some with reputable, wide-reaching vehicles for informing the public and advocating for human rights.

The evaluators learned from UNESCO, for example, of ongoing programming related to media rights, and from the Director of the Community Media Network of a number of projects run over several years that are relevant to the objectives of the CDFJ project. The Director of the Karama Human Rights festival, the Chief of Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) and the founder of 7iber, a leading on-line source of social comment and investigative reporting, all head outlets dedicated to disseminating the kind of messages that the FMN developed during their training, and partnerships with these organizations – or at the very least discussion and consultation with them – would have significantly improved the likelihood of the CDFJ actions achieving their objectives.

### **iii. Efficiency**

From the beginning of the field interviews, the evaluators were concerned at repeated comments from interviewees that they were told that CDFJ could not pay them for their services “because there was no money”. Several interviewees mentioned that CDFJ had said that it had “fixed costs” and that they could only pay small amounts (or nothing at all) because of this. These comments came first from a theatre owner who, although the theatre provides a discounted rate for NGOs, gave the use of the theatre free for an event for which CDFJ claimed to have no funds. Then journalists participating in the project were told that funds were limited and so received little, if any payment for their work (and indeed some dropped out as a result). The artists said that their production costs had been covered part

but not all the time. Moreover (see Sustainability, below), the Freedom Messengers were disappointed that their network, updating of the website and activity to spread their messages seemed to have come to a halt once project funding ended.

Disconcertingly, there were funds left over at the end of the 24-month project implementation period and UNDEF allowed an extension for these to be spent. During this time, evaluators noted, USD 2,000 was transferred from the projected salary of the Administrative Assistant to pay the salaries of the Director and Project Manager. It seems more likely that, as the project moved into reporting phase, the Administrative Assistant might have more work to do while the Director would have less.



10 issues of Baranda were produced

As the evaluation progressed, it became clear that the funds allocated (and approved) in the budget for the essential components of the project – the training and support of the Freedom Messengers and the network – were insufficient because funds were instead allocated to what might be considered the “daily business” of CDFJ.

▪ **What was project activity and what was ‘business as usual’**

CDFJ’s “business” is monitoring and reporting attacks on press freedom and journalists’ rights, and providing legal advice to media professionals who come into conflict with the authorities or the law. In support of this, CDFJ conducts training and produces publications, in particular in relation to policy and legislation affecting the media.

It must be asked, therefore, why CDFJ decided some years ago to get involved in promoting general human rights messages by developing a network of creative artists (and fewer journalists), organizing exhibitions and concerts, and supporting the production of films, songs and theatrical performances. It might be considered that this might more appropriately be done by a specialist human rights, rather than a media organization.

The evaluators consider that, exhilarating and worthwhile as it is, the FMN is essentially a vehicle that is used to attract funding for CDFJ’s normal business and institutional survival. This is shown clearly in the budget which was allocated as shown in the table below:

Project component	Cost	“Business” or “Project-specific”?
Training (incl trainers)	5,033	Project
Network meetings	6,979	Project
Final conference	5,100	Project
Baranda	30,026	Project*
Observatory	22,878	Business
Advocacy	31,199	Project
Salaries and overheads	55,317	Business

\*Although expenditure on *Baranda* might be seen as project-related, an extraordinary USD 30,000+ was spent on the production of the 10 supplements. The evaluators learned in the course of the evaluation that half of this was paid to *Al-Hadath* newspaper, which no longer publishes and which belongs to the CDFJ Director. Even if this was a commercial arrangement, the evaluators believe that there was a conflict of interest that should have been declared in this instance.

USD 78,000+ went directly to CDFJ’s core business in the form of funds for the observatory and day-to-day running expenses. The heart of the project – the FMN and the vehicles for

spreading their messages (network meetings, final conference and advocacy-related outputs) amounted to USD 43,278 – less than the salaries/overheads.

The evaluators asked the CDFJ Director what steps had been taken to raise funds for the core costs of the organization so that it did not depend entirely on project grants and so that worthwhile activities were not interrupted – with the loss of committed participants and much goodwill. The Director did not see any obvious sources of revenue and was reluctant to consider selling some of the Centre's services (such as legal advice, for example).

These findings contribute to Conclusion (vi).

- ***Outreach and numbers involved***

The project document set low targets for the number of journalists and artists involved in the project, and the explanation provided for this was cost. This response should be considered in light of the notes above about allocation of the funds available. The evaluators believe that, since it cost just more than USD 5,000, for example, the training could easily have been repeated for a second batch of potential Freedom Messengers.

Targets set for the secondary audience – the 'receivers' of messages at events and reached by the advocacy campaign – were more ambitious, however it is difficult to ascertain whether they were reached. Most of the events described in the project final report were not delivered with UNDEF-provided funds. Although some of the Freedom Messenger artists performed at those events, the confusion of who did what and who paid for it makes it impossible to consider the audiences at these events as directly arising from the project.

The essentially digital advocacy campaign was designed to reach 20,000 young people, and it can be argued that young people are more likely to use digital technology than older people, however the actual reach cannot be measured with any certainty. Numbers provided on 'hits' on the website do not take into account double-counting (ie whether one person viewed five short films or five people viewed one each). The website does not generate traffic. At the time of evaluation the last update in the observatory section (which is a duplication of a part of the CDFJ website) was July 2014. The FMN part of the website is static.

What is clear is that the artists engaged in the FMN have their own audiences, built up through their own artistic endeavours and resulting popularity. To the extent that these individual artists incorporate human rights messages into their work, or that the journalists approach their subjects from new angles as a result of their human rights training, then there might be important outreach that unfortunately cannot be measured.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (vi).

#### ***iv. Impact***

The impact of this project is most appropriately measured at two different levels:

- ***Impact on the participants***

Although a number of the trainees left the project, those who remained and who became engaged in the FMN believed that the project had a positive impact on them in a number of ways.

The artists interviewed all believed that their work had been affected positively by the training they had undergone and as a result of sharing ideas with others in the network. Some said that the project had additionally given them opportunities to showcase their work and that this had given a boost to their profile and popularity.

The journalists were less enthusiastic, largely because while their own understanding of human rights issues and how to integrate them into their work had improved, the 'system'

held them back from taking their new approaches into mainstream media. They spoke highly of the trainers, who had kept in touch with them and continued to offer advice, and believed that they had benefited from their participation in the project. They were also disappointed, however, that the FMN seemed to be dormant once project funding ended. Between the end of the project and the time of the evaluation, the number of Freedom Messengers had dropped from 40 to 23, according to the FMN website.

The evaluators believe that increasing the number of participants in the training would have made it more likely that the impact on individuals – crucial to achieving the next step of influencing a broader public and to maintaining a solid ‘core contingent’ – would have been more significant.

This finding contributes to Conclusion (vii).

▪ **Impact on the secondary target audience: the general public**

From the outset, the project had an objective to raise awareness among a broader public. This was not well articulated in terms of the links between the FMN and the public – it seems almost to have been assumed that the public would pick up the messages and react to them – but was focused more evidently on the advocacy component of the project. It is impossible to measure, however, whether the advocacy campaign had any impact on public awareness or understanding of human rights issues, since no pre- or post-testing was undertaken.

It is disappointing to note that the open Facebook FMN page has fewer than 7,000 followers and minimal interaction. It was used principally to advertise the project-related events that the Freedom Messengers were involved in, the final conference, the hashtag *#I\_have\_the\_right\_to\_know*, and to promote events and news of CDFJ. However research shows that only 3-6% of followers of any Facebook page are reached by posts on that page. Even when the post is boosted, the reach is minimal. It is difficult to measure how effective those posts would have been and, certainly, even more difficult to assess the reach and effectiveness of the hashtag *#I\_have\_the\_right\_to\_know*. Of those interviewed who had not participated in the project in any way, few had heard of the campaign or the events.

This finding contributes to Conclusion (vii).

▪ **Impact on the problem identified**

The gap between the design of the project and its implementation, which shifted the focus from press freedom, freedom of speech and access to information “as a cornerstone of democracy” to human rights issues more generally, meant that it became unlikely from the outset that the project would have an impact on these specific media-related issues. While the advocacy campaign to some extent re-focused on the right to access information, this was a small component of the project which could have been supported by similarly focused artistic and journalistic outputs, but which was not.

The fact remains that the lack of press freedom, freedom of speech and access to information are systemic problems arising from political decisions that must be seen in a broad context of Jordan’s current socio-political and economic realities and the highly institutionalized press and media sector. While the project aimed to equip the Freedom Messengers so that they would then influence public pressure and contribute to an embryonic ‘Jordanian Arab Spring’, activity and outputs at this level are insufficient, and the nature of the funding model of CDFJ means that it is unlikely that the movement for change achieved among the FMN will continue to grow. Indeed, if the ‘down times’ between project funding stretch out, the FMN is more likely to shrink over time.

“Our editors are supportive but we can’t cross the ‘red line’. We are not allowed to tackle non-approved issues.”  
**Trained journalist, member of FMN**

These findings contribute to Conclusion (viii)



## **v. Sustainability**

### **▪ Relying on volunteers**

Despite the dedication and commitment of the Freedom Messengers – both artists and journalists – that the evaluators interviewed, there were clear signals that expecting professionals to exercise their profession without appropriate payment is not sustainable.

One film director, for example, pointed out that making short films is not just a question of his volunteering his own time – he has to pay camera operators, editors, actors and other crew members and cannot just expect them to work for nothing. As a result, he has at the very least to cover costs. The rap artists interviewed are committed to writing and producing songs with social messages, but recording these is expensive and there are costs, too, in managing performance opportunities. The journalists pointed out that every article they write involves telephone calls to potential interviewees and research costs. They cannot incur these expenses and then provide stories free of charge for the CDFJ website, for example.

“The message is more important than the money but, even if we’re not greedy, we need to eat.”

**Artist participant interviewed**

It was disappointing that, when asked whether he might have ideas to meet this challenge, the CDFJ Director said that the problem was not reimbursing volunteers but rather the fact that in Jordan volunteers, especially journalists, do not remain committed and are unreliable. This was clearly not the case of the journalists and artists interviewed for this evaluation – they are definitely committed and indeed eager to do more however, as one artist with a new-born baby pointed out, they also have to support their families and pay their bills.

It is worth noting that the trainers and mentors who worked for the project have continued to provide their services free of charge since the project ended, supporting the journalists in particular with advice and guidance. Advice and guidance, however, do not incur costs (except perhaps an occasional phone call) and are a good example of where volunteering can work.

It is also worth noting that the FMN Facebook page is no longer receiving posts, however the Freedom Messengers have created their own, closed Facebook page through which they keep in touch. It seems that the FMN is beginning to become independent of the grantee, which may be a good move. They are already considering trying to raise funds to buy a mobile vehicle that would allow them to ‘tour’ their performances and spread the messages beyond Amman. Although it will take some setting up, an independent Freedom Messengers organization would be able to direct all revenue to its core activity: performing or writing and spreading the messages.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (ix).

### **▪ Risks to organization sustainability**

This independence is particularly important given the project-focused funding model of the CDFJ. While the obvious hazards of focusing almost entirely on project grants are obvious (loss of staff, volunteers, and profile if core outreach materials such as the website are not maintained), there is a complicating factor in relation to the donor/grantee relationship in Jordan.

In the light of the perception that the Arab Spring was a failure at least in part because ‘outside influences’ did not understand the political environment of the region, and that the outcomes of such perceived interference were largely negative for people in the countries where the movement had been most evident, there is currently in Jordan considerable cynicism about the sources of donor funds and the conditions that might be attached to them. Funds from the US Government and its development agencies are seen as particularly ‘suspect’ and a number of interviewees mentioned this, noting even that CDFJ had been

criticized for accepting US funds to purchase airline tickets to bring in foreign performers for its concerts.

This perception of the dangers of accepting external funding, especially from the US, is linked to the growing concern that such funds bring with them an expectation of 'normalization' of the relationship with Israel, such that project grants are caught up in much greater issues of regional, even global politics. This makes it even more important for CDFJ and indeed NGOs more broadly to identify alternative sources of funding, particularly domestic and regional sources.

"After the failure of the Arab Spring, people lost faith in human rights and the idea of democracy. These became associated with foreign interference that leads to disaster. As a result, there has been a growth in recruitment of young people via the mosques. It is particularly important now to raise funds locally, not from overseas donors. Activism has become a profession, paid for by radicals."

**Prominent human rights activist interviewed**

CDFJ has recently obtained a grant from the King Abdullah Foundation for a follow-up project on the FMN, but at the moment CDFJ seems to have no contingency to ensure that its work is sustainable.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (x).

▪ **Project outputs**

What the project will leave behind is the tangible outputs that were produced with UNDEF support. While the journalists' work was time-bound and so has minimal shelf life, the films, songs, theatre performances and videos of them have a potentially long life. It is therefore important that the websites where these are freely accessible are maintained. In some cases, the artists themselves have posted to their own websites, however branded Freedom Messenger products rely on the FMN website run by CDFJ. This relies on future project funding being sourced.

**vi. UNDEF value-added**

While at this time UN entities do not seem to be viewed in the same light as 'western' funding bodies (potentially because of the long history of the UN in this region, in particular the decades-long presence of UNRWA), given the comments made above about changing attitudes towards external funding sources, it must be asked whether it is advisable for UNDEF's emblem to be shown alongside, for example, USAID's logo at events or on materials.

This is a precautionary comment only, however it is worth noting, not least because UNDEF is also known as a promoter of democracy, raising the spectre of the Arab Spring again. A number of interviewees mentioned this and noted that the same considerations may apply to other countries in the region at this time.

"There were problems because of the use of logos of USAID and Al-Jazeera. People were not happy and there were concerns about sponsorship like this reflecting stronger ties with bodies promoting Israel. Extremists object to foreign funding. Others are OK if it's unconditional. Human rights promotion with foreign funding is problematic."

**Attendee at a CDFJ concert in 2013**

A number of interviewees from UN agencies and national bodies expressed concern that UNDEF's selection of the CDFJ project did not take into account existing initiatives in the country and that country offices of UN agencies were not able to comment either on the project or the grantee. UNESCO in particular has a multi-annual media-focused programme and works with agencies across the country as well as the government in these areas. The Representative to Jordan (formerly UNDP Resident Coordinator in Jordan) queried whether UNDEF's selection process allowed for sufficient consultation with country offices so that duplication might be avoided and value-added more likely.

## IV. Conclusions

*i. The project was only partly relevant.* Although on paper a project focusing on press freedom, free speech and access to information, run by an organization whose work centres on the media, seems highly relevant, there was a significant gap between the project as described and its implementation. Moreover, the choice of trainees and format of the training needed more consideration. Organizing a three-day residential training course outside Amman not only had cost implications that limited the number of trainees but also excluded some potential female participants who would not spend nights away from home.

*ii. The project was only partly effective.* Indications that the choice of participants was not as open as it might have been limited the effectiveness of the project because it potentially excluded those who might have profited more from the training than participants already active and interested in human rights issues. This ‘closed group’ approach extended to a lack of partners – who might have been instrumental in spreading the messages further – and invitees to the events, which were all in Amman and targeted at audiences familiar with this kind of social event.

*iii. The effectiveness of other components of the project was limited.* The 10 issues of *Baranda* were expensive and even journalists writing for it questioned whether anyone read it. Quite simply, a ‘special supplement’ distributed free of charge to households who did not ask for it is not equivalent to placing articles into mainstream media or through alternative media with already developed audiences. This was not an effective output nor an effective use of funds. The media observatory was neither a relevant nor an effective component of the project. It was very much an “add-on” component of this project and a part of CDFJ’s day-to-day business that did not contribute to achieving the project’s objectives and, indeed, was not designed to do so. It was, however, very expensive and the evaluators believe it should not have been funded through the project.

*iv. The training was gender-sensitive but the project was not.* The training took a gender-appropriate approach and the trainees gained some insight into the gender aspects of human rights reporting and messaging. However there was no attempt to integrate gender more broadly into the project beyond the counting of female heads in the training contingent.

*v. Effectiveness was compromised by the design of the project.* There were too many components of this project and they were not all designed to contribute to the stated objectives; it could have been much simpler and funds would then have been available for more of the core elements. Working with partners (both human rights NGOs and bodies in the arts world) would have made spreading the messages more effective. A lack of expertise in designing awareness-raising/advocacy campaigns also meant that no audience testing or post-testing was undertaken to underpin the messages or results. In relation to the FMN, more thought needs to be given to the make-up of the network; just adding journalists to the predominantly artists’ group is not effective since they have different working methods, contexts and needs. Bringing journalists into the FMN may have been a way for CDFJ to use its experience of the regional FMN project and adapt it to its own organization profile, however it is a flawed model.

*vi. The project was not efficient.* The funds available were not efficiently allocated to different project components. There was an unfortunate emphasis on covering the grantee’s costs and not enough on resourcing the actions and activities that would lead to achievement of the objectives. The evaluators were particularly concerned at the substantial payment made to *Al-Hadath* for use of its licence and for printing *Baranda*, a

commercial arrangement that was not declared as a conflict of interest for the owner, the CDFJ Director. The outreach of the project is impossible to assess.

**vii. The project had a positive impact on the artists involved and to a lesser extent the journalist trainees.** The project had a strong and positive impact on the Freedom Messenger artists interviewed, who saw it as opening a door to new audiences and new ideas for their work. However this was limited by the funds made available to them. The journalists interviewed were similarly enthusiastic and saw positive benefits from their participation in the training and in the FMN, however this too was constrained by funds available and potentially led to 15 of the 20 trainees leaving the network. Impact on the secondary target is impossible to measure. There is no way to assess whether there was a shift in understanding or acknowledgement of the rights-based messages by the broader public, and in particular by young people.

**viii. Impact on the problem identified was compromised by flaws in implementation.** The original objectives of the project, which focused on addressing the issues of press freedom, freedom of speech and access to information “as cornerstones of democracy” were lost in implementation through the shift of focus to general human rights issues. The design of the project also diluted the potential impact because it excluded partners, presumed dependence on volunteers and had too many components that were not strategically linked. The reliance of the grantee on project funding also meant that ‘down times’ diluted any impact on individuals, secondary targets and the problem itself.

**ix. The project relied too heavily on volunteers.** Over-reliance on volunteers is a risk to sustainability, even when the volunteers are committed and motivated. In time paid activity will take people away from volunteering. This should always be taken into account in project design and, more importantly, design of the budget. The FMN has a life of its own and could become independent (although see above, (viii) on its make-up). It could survive independently of CDFJ as a body whose structure and set-up allows it to seek funding. This may take some time (and support) but ultimately it will allow the FMN to avoid the down times between CDFJ projects, move outside the capital and divest itself of a structure that has high overheads and running costs.

**x. CDFJ’s reliance on donor funding is a threat to its organizational future.** The political situation in Jordan and the region more generally has implications for the future of donor funding and in particular for organizations that rely on project grants from external donors. CDFJ’s project-focused funding model is not sustainable in the long term.

## V. Recommendations

### For CDFJ

- (Based on Conclusions i - ix): **Improvements need to be made to the design of projects to ensure that they achieve their objectives.** There were numerous flaws to the design and implementation of this project, outlined in the body of the report and relating to the focus of the training, the format of the training and choice of trainees, the inclusion of non-essential components and the lack of partners and outreach that led to this project not achieving its stated objectives. It is recommended that CDFJ look in future to simpler projects that demonstrate a clear link between design, implementation and outcomes. Additionally, The FMN model should be reviewed to take account of the differences between journalists and artists. The links between journalists in the FMN and artists is not clear and there seemed to be two separate groups working under a single banner. This should be reviewed to see whether it can be made to work better or whether forming two distinct groups is a more suitable option. The cohesion of the group might have been given more attention if there had been fewer elements to the project.

- (Based on Conclusions vi, vii, ix, x): **Consideration needs to be given to diversifying income sources.** The organization's project-dependent funding model compromises project results and is a risk to sustainability. In current circumstances, additionally, the problems associated with external donor funds pose an as yet minor but potentially serious threat to the organization. It is particularly disappointing that the committed volunteers of the FMN felt let down by inactivity when project funds ran out, and that the website and Facebook page lapsed into inactivity. CDFJ's use of the project budget to meet ongoing organizational costs is particularly unfortunate since it left important parts of the project under-funded and volunteers discouraged. It is not appropriate and will not be sustainable.

- Based on Conclusions vi, vii): **CDFJ should look at acquiring expertise in monitoring and evaluation.** Donors require organizations to demonstrate impact as well as output, and CDFJ should consider recruiting – on staff or through short-term contracts – someone who can design monitoring and evaluation tools that can be used to measure a range of project outputs, outcomes and impacts. This also helps in project design, since setting up these tools as the project is in design stage often shows weak links between the components or inappropriately targeted actions.

- Based on Conclusion (ix): **CDFJ needs to reassess its approach to volunteers.** CDFJ is over-reliant on volunteers and ultimately this is a risk to sustainability. It is not difficult to design a budget that will provide suitable recompense to those who work on behalf of the project or organization. This recognizes the needs of the volunteers and also sits more comfortably with a rights-based approach, acknowledging their contribution, their expertise and their needs.

### For UNDEF

- Based on comment in UNDEF value-added section: **In relation to how it positions itself,** UNDEF might explore the clear indications received during this evaluation of a shift in perception in some Arab countries that is leading to external donors, particularly 'western' donors and those working in the areas of human rights, being seen as interfering in domestic affairs and promoting 'normalization' of ties with Israel. Although this has always been true to a limited extent, the failure of the Arab Spring has led many more people, not necessarily extremist in their views, to question the intentions of external donors. This should obviously not influence UNDEF's selection of projects to be funded, but it might for example affect how UNDEF wishes its emblem to be used.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: Evaluation questions

#### General evaluation question categories

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context?</li> <li>▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why?</li> <li>▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?</li> </ul>
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached?</li> <li>▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not?</li> <li>▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives?</li> <li>▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?</li> </ul>
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs?</li> <li>▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability?</li> <li>▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?</li> </ul>
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address?</li> <li>▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative?</li> <li>▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization?</li> <li>▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?</li> </ul>
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact?</li> <li>▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?</li> </ul>
UNDEF value added	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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc).</li> <li>▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?</li> </ul>

## Annex 2: Documents reviewed

### Background documents

*CIA World Facts 2014: Jordan*

Freedom House: "Jordan" in *Freedom in the World 2014*, at

<http://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/jordan-0£.VFCLxRYzEY8>

Husseini, R: "Jordan" in *Women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress amid resistance*, ed S Kelly and J Breslin, Freedom House, New York 2010

Kane, J: *People on the move: Migration and human trafficking in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria*, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, 2011

Kuttab, D: "Jordanian media licensing law shuts down 300 websites" (6 June 2013), in *Al Monitor*, at

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/06/jordan-internet-blackout-licensing-law-protest.html>

Reporters without borders: "New law tightens government's grip on media" (21 September 2012), at

<http://en.rsf.org/jordan-new-law-tightens-government-s-grip-21-09-2012,43435.html>

### Project outputs

Freedom Messengers Network website: [www.fmnnet.net](http://www.fmnnet.net).

10 issues of the newspaper supplement *Baranda*.

CDs and short films produced by the Freedom Messengers.

### Project documentation

Project Document, UDF-JOR-10-373

Mid-term Progress Report, UDF-JOR-10-373

Final Project Narrative Report, UDF-JOR\_10-373

Project budget provisional and reconciled

Feedback from trainers supplied to CDFJ.

## Annex 3: People Interviewed

<b>Centre for Defending Journalists (CDFJ)</b>	
Nidal Mansour	Executive President (Director)
Haytham Abu Atiyyeh	Project Coordinator
Anass Al-Qawasmi	Finance Manager
<b>Consultants/temporary project staff</b>	
Omar Kallab	Trainer, Human Rights
Kamal Mashriqi	Trainer, Human Rights
Raja' Hiyari	Trainer, Advocacy (by telephone)
Walid Hussein	Managing Editor, <i>Baranda</i> ; journalists' mentor
<b>Artists</b>	
Abdullah Abudiak	Film maker
Krist Zoubi	Rapper
Samm	Rapper
Ahmad Srour	Actor
Suzan Banawi	Theatre director and actress
Sana'a Banawi	Actress
<b>Journalists</b>	
Mohammed Fraij	Community Media Network
Ghadeer Al-Saadi	Al-Rai
Farah Maraqa	Habeni News Portal
Sora Al Domour	Al-Rai
Hibr Abu-Taha	Al-Arab al-jadid; freelancer
<b>Other</b>	
Sawsan Darwaza	Director, Karama Film Festival for Human Rights
Raed Asfour	Director, Al-Balad theatre
Costanza Farina	UNESCO Representative to Jordan
Daoud Kuttab	General Manager, Community Media Network
Salama Madanat	Board member, Community Media Network
Rana Sabbagh	Executive Director, Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism
Ramsey George	Project and Community Architect, 7iber
Nisreen Bathish Abou Ragheb	Communications Officer, ILO
Kholoud Abu Zaid	National Programme Coordinator, ILO-IPEC
Roar Haugsdal	Norwegian Embassy



## Annex 4: Acronyms

ARIJ	Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism
CDFJ	Centre for Defending Freedom of Journalists
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EQ	Evaluation Questions
FMN	Freedom Messengers Network
HDI	Human Development Index
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States dollar
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization