

# Covid-19 Response in Africa: Together for reliable information

FINAL EVALUATION

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## List of abbreviations

A19	Article 19
AFEM	Association des Femmes des Médias
CEA	Community engagement and accountability
CDAC	Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CSO	Civil society organization
DEVCO	European Union Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DWA	Deutsche Welle - Akademie
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FGD	Focus group discussion
FH	Fondation Hirondelle
FPU	Free Press Unlimited
ICNL	International Center for Not for Profit Law
IDUAI	International Day of Universal Access to Information
IMS	International Media Support
IO	Intermediate outcome
KII	Key informant interview
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
PPE	Personal protective equipment
RSF	Reporters without Borders
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USD	United States Dollar

## Executive summary

As the Coronavirus outbreak began in early 2020, the EU asked media and development organizations to investigate the possibility of creating a consortium to provide emergency support for the anticipated needs of the pandemic in Africa.

An award in the amount of EUR 4.736.820 was awarded to a six-partner consortium, led by Free Press Unlimited (FPU) and included International Media Support (IMS), Deutsche Welle Akademie (DWA), Fondation Hironnelle (FH), Reporters without Borders (RSF) and Article 19 A19. UNESCO was an affiliate partner. The 18-month project ***COVID-19 Response in Africa: Together for Reliable Information*** kicked off on 1 August 2020 and ends 31 January 2022 and was implemented primarily in 17 countries.

The project's ***overall objective*** was to contribute to better informed populations that are aware of how to protect themselves against COVID-19, to mitigate risks and limit the number of casualties. The ***specific objective*** was to provide essential, timely support and materials to independent media and journalists in Sub-Saharan Africa so they could fulfil their role of providing quality and reliable information and to help them overcome the risks they faced during the crisis.

The project consists of three components:

- Sub-grants and emergency grants to media outlets and media workers;
- Creation of an online co-working space, fact-checking workshops, viability support and community engagement and accountability;
- Multi-tiered advocacy efforts.

As the project enters its final months, this external evaluation seeks to gauge impact, measure learning and provide input for future projects as well as ensure accountability to the EU, the project's donor. The OECD/DAC criteria were considered together with gender equity and learning, cooperation and management throughout the evaluation. Data collection included: documentary review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and a survey.

This impact and results-oriented mixed methods evaluation was ***participatory*** and ***qualitative*** and adopted an ***appreciative inquiry*** approach. The methods and tools included literature review, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions with representatives from consortium members, local partners, local communities and other stakeholders. A survey was developed and circulated to more than 70 local partners.

Based on OECD/DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance this ambitious and complex intervention was a success. The project was ***timely and relevant*** and combined with successful efforts at ensuring co-creation and pivoting to address challenges posed by the pandemic such as misinformation. The project was designed not knowing how the pandemic would manifest on the continent and while Europe was suffering greatly, there was an assumption it would manifest even worse in Africa. Instead, the impact of the pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa remains markedly lower compared to much of the world. Despite this, local partners overwhelmingly spoke of the importance and relevance of the project.

The project was also ***effective*** in achieving its three intermediate outcomes: numerous media organizations and individuals were provided with support and resulted in a substantial amount of content produced; PPE was distributed to media workers in the target countries; media organizations received support to address the viability of their media organizations

during the pandemic; media workers learned effective fact-checking and community engagement techniques and were thus able to ensure their communities had access to important, life-saving information. Finally, advocacy efforts, while seemingly modest, were successful and, in some cases, got some traction with local officials.

Considering the short (18-months) timeframe, this project was *impactful* and has resulted in some behavior and attitudinal changes in communities across the continent and learned skills, such as fact-checking, that are likely to be used going forward. In addition, numerous media houses were able to continue their operations thanks to the support offered by the project.

The three-pillar approach of grants, learning and advocacy should go a long way to ensuring future sustainability of local actors. In addition, consortium members stated that significant effort was expended on building local capacity be it at the level of financial reporting of local partners or enhancing journalistic skills often requiring significant time yet also playing a role to ensure future sustainability.

The evaluator found that the project was particularly *sustainable* in two areas. The first was the *contribution to the survival of numerous media organizations* that otherwise may have had to close. There may be some who view this as bridge funding, however, in an emergency setting such bridge funding is well justified. The second area was the promotion and skills-building of *fact-checking* – a skill that can be brought to numerous other areas such as election reporting and health coverage.

This project brought together *organizations that normally would be competing* for funds; here they *successfully worked closely together*. Consortium members all spoke highly of the coordination and communication between members and in several cases, this ensured coherence with members' other projects on the continent. In many cases, consortium members brought unique expertise to the project and leveraged those different roles and expertise. DWA, for example, focused on media viability while RSF and Article 19 focused on advocacy. This latter, however, was an example of where there appeared to be some duplication of efforts, although for the most part RSF focused on Francophone countries while Article 19 focused on Anglophone countries.

Considering that the project involved multiple consortium members, an affiliate partner, 17 focus countries and over 80 local partners, based on the global budget, the *project was efficient*. There was a substantial amount of output, and most activities were implemented in a timely fashion. Several local partners noted the significant amount of programming produced with one noting that “the small amount of money covered a huge amount of content”.

This project did not have any specific focus on *gender*, nor did it have any specific activities focused on women. However, it is clear that the project *successfully ensured that the interests, needs and priorities of both men and women were taken into consideration*. Anecdotal evidence from local partners suggests that there were efforts made to reach women and many of these were successful.

Informants noted a number of challenges associated with implementation of the action including Zoom fatigue, conducting virtual trainings, lack of internet and/or adequate bandwidth, lack of electricity and deaths and illnesses of staffers due to COVID. Despite these challenges, however, as noted above, the project was a success.

***Assessment of project performance as a whole***

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Comments/Interpretation</b>
<b><i>Relevance</i></b>	Comprehensively fulfilled	The project's components and activities were all highly relevant to the context and the needs across sub-Saharan Africa.
<b><i>Effectiveness</i></b>	Overall fulfilled	The project's objectives and results have largely been achieved and were implemented with a consideration for local needs and with local input.
<b><i>Impact</i></b>	Comprehensively fulfilled	Evidence of clear, causal impact in media projects such as this is always challenging; however, results show strong evidence of medium and longer-term impact. For example, media houses were able to keep their doors open and journalists across the continent have learned new skills that they can use in their reporting on issues from elections to health.
<b><i>Sustainability</i></b>	Overall fulfilled	The project's results show preliminary evidence of some sustainability. As above, this is exemplified by media houses keeping their doors open and journalists having new skills that are transferable to stories beyond COVID.
<b><i>Coherence</i></b>	Overall fulfilled	This was not a primary criterion for this project; however, the project design was coherent and any overlap with other similar projects was discussed within the consortium and addressed accordingly.
<b><i>Efficiency</i></b>	Overall fulfilled	This was not a primary criterion for the evaluation; however, evidence does suggest that the programme was able to utilize resources in an efficient manner and produce results with a reasonable amount of available economic and human resources.
<b><i>Gender</i></b>	Overall fulfilled	Given that this was not a primary criterion, it came as a pleasant surprise that there were significant successes in covering gender-related COVID issues.
<b><i>Learning, cooperation and management</i></b>	Comprehensively fulfilled	There is clear evidence of a strong and fruitful partnership that without this project likely would not have been as successful as it has been.

***Key lessons learned*** include:

- It is critical so continuously share information during implementation of such a complex project.
- Local expertise exists and can be utilized with excellent results.
- Mobile-based platforms can be more effective than web-based particularly if there are connectivity or power issues.
- If target countries are decided in the proposal stage, it can lead to a more dynamic start. This is particularly important in a project with a limited timeframe such as this.
- If the context is not materializing as expected, it may be prudent to request additional time to implement and/or adjust activities as needed.
- Ensure use of local languages so that vulnerable and marginalized audiences can be more effectively reached.

***Key recommendations*** include:

- Ensure flexibility particularly when the situation is fluid and the project is complex.

- Be cognizant that start up phases, particularly when working with a large number of local partners, can take significant time and adjust the timeframe accordingly.
- Develop M&E frameworks that are suitable for emergency contexts; much of what was done in this project was done with a development framework.
- Training can be more effective when done over a period of months as opposed to days making virtual or hybrid training particularly attractive.
- Ensure all partners are on the same page with regards to visibility and reporting requirements.
- Don't be afraid to try something new. Emergency contexts often provide the opportunity to try, test and innovate and much can be learned.

## 1. Background

At the start of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March-April 2020, a number of European media and development organizations were asked by European Union (EU) International Partnerships (formerly EU DEVCO) to investigate the possibility of creating a consortium to provide emergency support to the anticipated needs of the pandemic in Africa. Six media development organizations – Free Press Unlimited (as coordinator), Article 19, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Fondation Hironnelle, International Media Support and Reporters Without Borders and UNESCO as an affiliate partner – did so and submitted a joint proposal to EU in May 2021 which was approved a few weeks later.

An award in the amount of EUR 4.736.820 was awarded to the consortium. The project ***COVID-19 Response in Africa: Together for Reliable Information*** kicked off on 1 August 2020 and was officially launched on 28 September 2020, the International Day of Universal Access to Information (IDUAI). The 18-month project ends 31 January 2022.

This emergency program was implemented primarily in 17 countries by six partners:

- FPU – in 6 countries (plus one regional organization) 11 partners in Sudan (1), South Sudan (1), South Africa (2), Nigeria (2), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (3), Ethiopia (1) and one West-African regional network of investigative journalists based out of Burkina Faso. A project with the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Mozambique started on 1 August 2021.
- IMS – 10 sub-grants in five countries: Mozambique (2), Tanzania (3), Zimbabwe (3), Ethiopia (1) and Somalia (1).
- DWA – five organizations in three countries: Kenya (2), Burkina Faso (1), Ghana (2).
- FH – 10 sub-grants in four countries: Senegal (5), Guinea (2), Côte d'Ivoire (2), Benin (1)
- RSF – worked primarily with Africa Check in numerous countries
- Article 19 – worked primarily with Meedan in numerous countries.

In addition, 12 countries and 29 partners were reached with small emergency grants.

The project's ***overall objective*** was to contribute to better informed populations that are aware of how to protect themselves against COVID-19, to mitigate risks and limit the number of casualties. The ***specific objective*** was to provide essential, timely support and materials to independent media and journalists in Sub-Saharan Africa so they could fulfil their role of providing quality and reliable information and to help them overcome the risks they faced during the crisis.

The three ***intermediate outcomes (IO)*** and their activities were:

***IO1:*** Media outlets, journalists and other critical media workers were provided quick assistance in the form of sub-grants to address their most pressing needs and support the production of quality public interest content that reached a large audience, including the most marginalised communities.

***Activity 1.1:*** Provide ***sub-grants*** to media outlets in 17 Sub-Saharan countries allowing them to continue production of quality public interest content to their audiences (FPU, IMS, FH, DWA).

***Activity 1.2:*** Provide ***emergency grants*** to journalists and media organizations in need of immediate financial, safety, and / or material assistance (FPU and IMS).



**IO2:** Create an *online co-working space* that will connect African journalists and encourage them to consult and ask questions on issues related to COVID-19 such as the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), cross-border best practices<sup>1</sup>, advocacy efforts countering press freedom violations and gender-related matters. Verified news and information on COVID-19 collected from a range of sources and training opportunities were also to be shared.

**Activity 2.1:** Create a *secure online co-working space* with information resources on COVID-19 that is accessible to media workers (FPU).

**Activity 2.2:** Develop *online fact-checking workshops* on COVID-19 to detect and counter misinformation (A19 implemented by Meedan in Anglophone countries and RSF with AfricaCheck in Francophone countries). Six additional organizations were identified and provided funds to conduct fact-checking.

**Activity 2.3:** Develop *online assessment workshops and follow-up consultancies* for African media to strengthen their organizational capacities and develop more resilient business models (DWA).

**Activity 2.4:** Series of webinars and direct technical support to African media editors on effective *community engagement and accountability (CEA)* in crisis settings (IMS in collaboration with Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities (CDAC)).

**IO3:** Undertake *multi-tiered advocacy efforts* (national, regional and international) to protect freedom of expression and information during the crisis, based on accurate, timely information on the infringement of these rights allowing journalists across the continent to continue doing their work in times of crisis and beyond.

**Activity 3.1: Monitoring of attacks** against journalists and media outlets in Africa related to the pandemic (RSF and A19).

**Activity 3.2: Legal analysis and monitoring of policies that impact press freedom** and right to information in Africa (RSF and A19).

**Activity 3.3: Policy recommendations pitched** at the national, regional and multilateral levels, in conjunction with directed advocacy to support those recommendations often in collaboration with local and regional organisations (A19 and RSF).

The project also called for an African-focused media observatory to be set up relying on information collected regionally by local partners. This was to enable local partners to build their capacity on lobby and advocacy and that knowledge is built and shared locally and directly, including via the co-working space under IO2.

## 2. Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

According to the terms of reference, the external evaluation had the following objectives:

- To make an overall independent assessment about the project's performance;
- To identify intended and unintended results;
- To identify key lessons learned of activities undertaken in times of crisis including recommendations for future crisis response.

The evaluation questions are based on the OECD-DAC Criteria for Development Assistance (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability). The main goal of

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Congolese journalists can inform others about efforts fighting Ebola and how this can be used to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

this evaluation was to analyze the impact on the final beneficiaries of this project: marginalized people and communities in Africa who listened to, read or watched content produced in the framework of this program. In addition to the focus on the DAC criteria, learning, management and cooperation and gender equity were also considered.

This evaluation is intended to contribute to learning which enables FPU, the consortium partners and the donor to draw lessons from the experience, and to improve ways of working in partnership and to suggest practical recommendations – what to build on or to develop and adjust – in light of the evaluation’s findings.

This ***impact and results-oriented mixed methods evaluation*** was participatory and qualitative and adopted an appreciative inquiry approach. Such an approach focuses on existing strengths rather than deficiencies and allows for the identification of instances of good practice and ways of increasing their frequency.

The evaluation methodology was designed by the consultant and local consultants together with the consortium-lead, FPU. The methodology used sought the views of a broad array of stakeholders, including a balanced representation of men and women. A mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) approach to data collection and analysis was used.

In consultation with FPU, it was decided that the two local consultants would visit Cameroon, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa. This geographical distribution allowed for data collection from East, West and Southern Africa from three each of Anglophone and Francophone countries and from two countries for each of the consortium partners except only one for DWA.

The data collection methods and tools included a literature review, ***key informant interviews*** (KIIs) with representatives from consortium partners, media beneficiaries, local partners and trainers. Interviews were conducted both in-person by two local consultants (one in Anglophone East Africa and one in Francophone West Africa, and remotely via Zoom (see Annex II for the KII guide). Six ***focus group discussions*** (FGDs) were held with project beneficiaries (see Annex III for the FGD guide): Two in Zimbabwe, one in Senegal and three in Kenya. As it was difficult to identify audience members, most of the FGDs were held with training participants and trainers with an occasional audience member taking part. Purposive sampling was applied to the selection of key interviewees (see Annex I), although particular attention was made to ensure inclusion of youth and women.

Finally, a ***survey*** was developed and circulated to the 70+ local partners (see Annex IV). Due to time constraints, the survey was not tested prior to sending. There were 50 responses to the survey for a response rate of over 70% (see Annex V).

The evaluation analyses results on an outcome and impact level whether caused directly or indirectly by the intervention. Furthermore, the evaluation allowed for valuation of findings, thereby ensuring that stakeholders and beneficiaries had an opportunity to consider the value of the project and its activities.

All OECD/DAC criteria were considered throughout the evaluation though specific attention was paid to relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Additional criteria of gender and learning, cooperation and management were also considered.

Specifically, this evaluation sought to:

- Examine and determine the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the program.
- Assess the degree to which the objectives of the project have been met and identify any challenges and problems that might have been experienced.
- Draw conclusions from the above and make recommendations for the future.

### 3. Findings

The project's **overall objective** was to contribute to better informed populations that are aware of how to protect themselves against COVID-19, to mitigate risks and limit the number of casualties. The **specific objective** was to provide essential, timely support and materials to independent media and journalists in Sub-Saharan Africa so they could fulfil their role of providing quality and reliable information and to help them overcome the risks they faced during the crisis.

The 18-month programme had **three immediate outcomes**:

1. Grants provided to media outlets and journalists.
2. Online co-working space created (including learning sessions).
3. Advocacy efforts.

These outcomes were achieved by providing sub-grants to allow media organizations to continue production of content, emergency grants to individuals and organizations, an online working space, online fact-checking and media viability workshops and advocacy efforts in the form of monitoring, legal analysis and policy recommendations. Together these activities sought to provide a fairly holistic type of support to media in the 17 target countries.

The challenges presented by the pandemic (e.g. inability to travel) required **flexibility** due to the contextual changes on the ground due to the pandemic (tightening press freedom, loss of advertising revenue) yet the consortium partners were able to deliver, although in some cases there were delays in getting activities off the ground. These delays were sometimes COVID-related and other times to bureaucracy or delays in appointing project staff.

Based on OECD/DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance<sup>2</sup> and the guiding questions as outlined in Annex II, this ambitious intervention was a success. The project was **timely and relevant** and combined with successful efforts at ensuring co-creation and pivoting to address challenges posed by the pandemic such as misinformation.

If one considers the three main focus areas of the project as **grants, learning sessions** and **advocacy**, the project was successful, though it is clear some activity lines such as the grants, online fact-checking, community engagement and accountability (CEA), and viability workshops, were more successful than others. The co-working space and advocacy work can be considered the least successful. Despite this, activities under IO1 and the learning sessions of IO2 were able to reach intended targets and provide important support.

There are inherent challenges in evaluating advocacy. For example, advocacy efforts usually span a significantly longer time frame than that of the duration of this project. In addition, with so many moving parts in advocacy-related work, it can be difficult to directly attribute

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>

certain actions to specific outcomes, especially when advocacy efforts can go on for years. In the case of the pandemic and media freedoms, while health officials initially feared the pandemic would sweep across Africa killing millions, that catastrophic scenario has yet to materialize.<sup>3</sup> Essentially, the advocacy efforts took place in an environment that, to a large extent, never materialized.

Despite the challenges presented by working in a large consortium and the ongoing pandemic, the *project was effective* and most of the intended activities have already been completed and any outstanding activities will very likely be implemented by the end of the project.

Topics selected for workshops and learning sessions were decided using a *participatory approach* thereby ensuring a high degree of relevance.

It is clear that the project was a success and met its specific objective with the production of hundreds of factchecks and news items across the continent in both sub-grant countries and countries in which local partners received emergency grants. Significant amounts of content were also broadcast by community radios across the continent, often reaching hard to reach audiences.

There were some challenges noted in the implementation of the project. Several interviewees noted that varying levels of capacity among local partners made it difficult to streamline implementation and reporting. There was also a lack of monitoring and evaluation provisions for local partners whose mandate was to reach their communities; audience research efforts would have gone a long way to gauging not only reach but efficacy of programming produced under the auspices of the program. Finally, there was a lack of cohesive reporting among all members. For example, one consortium partner had developed a reporting template for its grantees that included impact questions while most others did not include such reporting requirements. Having such information would have gone a long way to further understanding the impact and efficacy of the project.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- 39 subgrants with 39 African partners in 17 focus countries
- 29 emergency small grants to 29 organizations in 12 countries
- 16 emergency small grants to 16 individuals in 9 countries
- More than 900 additional journalists supported by local partners including JED (DRC), MISA (Zimbabwe), SOLJA (Somaliland), FESOJ (Somalia) and PAGED (Nigeria)

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<sup>3</sup> See: [https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-science-health-pandemics-united-nations-fcf28a83c9352a67e50aa2172eb01a2f?user\\_email=&utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=MorningWire\\_Nov19&utm\\_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers](https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-science-health-pandemics-united-nations-fcf28a83c9352a67e50aa2172eb01a2f?user_email=&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningWire_Nov19&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers)

### 3.1 Relevance

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*This is a first in Kenya where bloggers have gotten a stake in health interventions for our people.*

*– Kennedy Kachwenya, Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE)*

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Relevance examines the extent to which the “intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change”.<sup>4</sup>

The project was set up during the first wave of the pandemic in Europe and it was still unclear as to how the pandemic would manifest in sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, the project design took a holistic approach that included addressing sustainability issues, providing emergency and legal support, medical needs, training and advocacy with an emphasis on COVID. Due to the emergency nature of the intervention, the assessment phase was truncated and not as robust as it possibly could have been. However, the everchanging nature of the pandemic likely would have made any more in-depth assessment moot. Indeed, the project was designed not knowing how the pandemic would manifest on the continent and while Europe was suffering greatly, there was an assumption it would manifest even worse in Africa. Yet, a BBC article in October 2020 noted that the pandemic in Africa was far less deadly than elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> While there has been an increase in COVID-19 deaths across Africa since mid-July 2021, the impact of the pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa remains markedly lower compared to the Americas, Europe, and Asia.<sup>6</sup>

It is, of course, important to note differences in the continent’s regions – Southern Africa, for example, tends to be more Western as far as living conditions and climate and, at the time of writing, is being hit hard by COVID variants, such as B.1.1.529.

One local partner noted the relevance of the project’s timing: “Senegal recorded its first case of COVID-19 in March 2020 and our contract for the sensitization campaign came into effect in September. That timing could not have been any better because our first activities took off at that same time when Senegal was entering into the second and deadliest wave. Then the public was caught in total panic and freight and needed information urgently on the barrier measures.”

The project’s objectives and the associated *activities are in line with priorities and policies* of the target groups as well as partner, country and global needs and priorities thereby making the project *highly relevant*.

#### ***Locally driven***

The nature of the 17 sub-grants largely ensured their relevance as it was the local partners themselves that submitted concept notes based on their specific needs. In addition, *surveys were sent to all local sub-grantees* at the end of January 2021 to gather information about

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<sup>4</sup> OECD Revised Evaluation Criteria (2019), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54418613>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://qz.com/africa/2049407/why-has-covid-19-had-less-of-an-impact-in-africa/>.

skills they needed. Ideally, this survey would have been sent at the start of the project to assist in identifying current needs, however, staff was unavailable to do this.

Key informants from consortium members and local partners emphasized the *involvement of the local beneficiaries in the design* and implementation of the project activities thereby ensuring its relevance to local communities. One local partner in Cameroon said that they were able to gather local input for the project’s design through a series of workshops and situational analysis sessions in which members brainstormed and shared results of the realities within their local communities which are affected by conflict. These consultative sessions provided inputs for the project’s design. In addition, the partner noted the importance of using *local languages* to ensure that local and minority groups were not left out in accessing information.

Several other local partners ensured content produced was available in local languages. In Western Kenya, for example, fact-checking was done in several *vernacular languages*, according to the local partner, Africa Check.

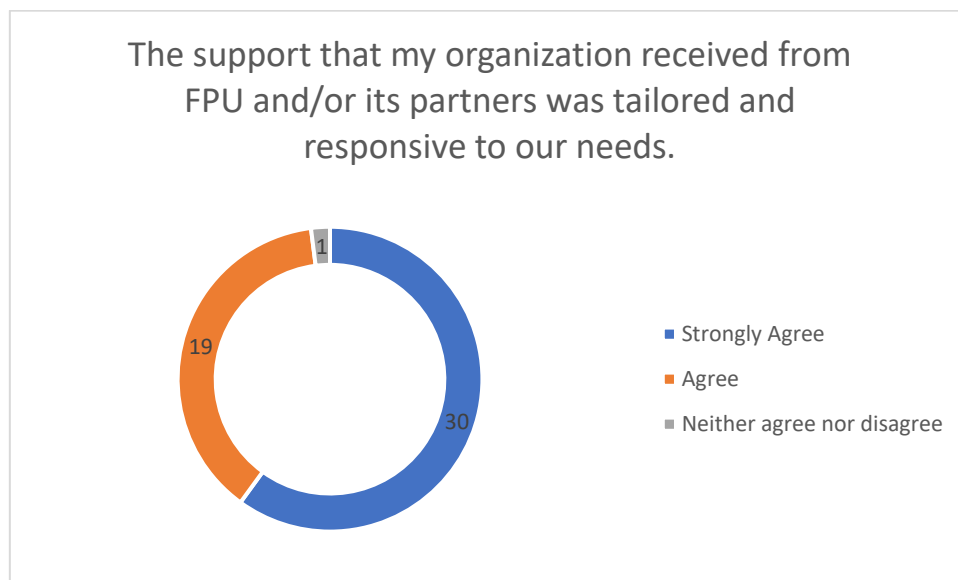
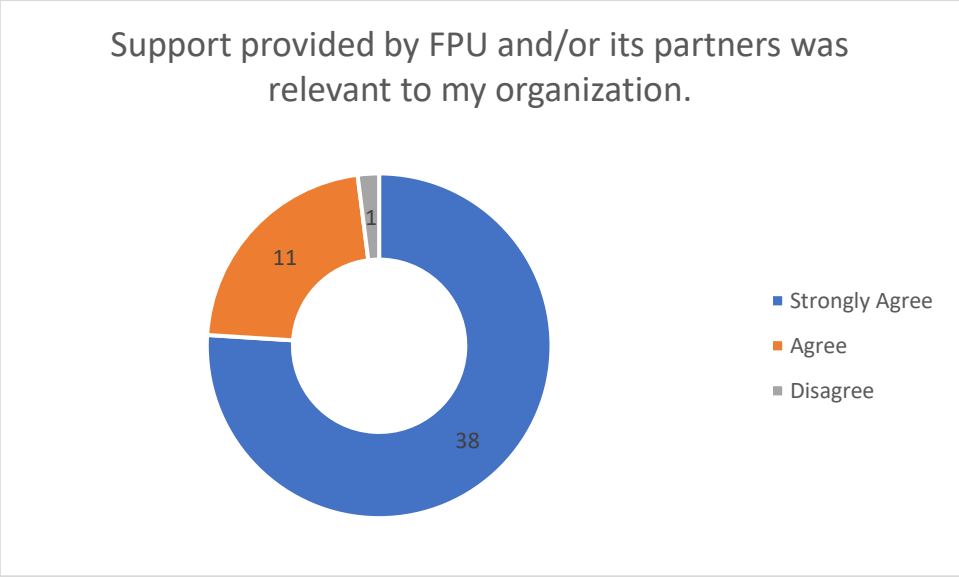
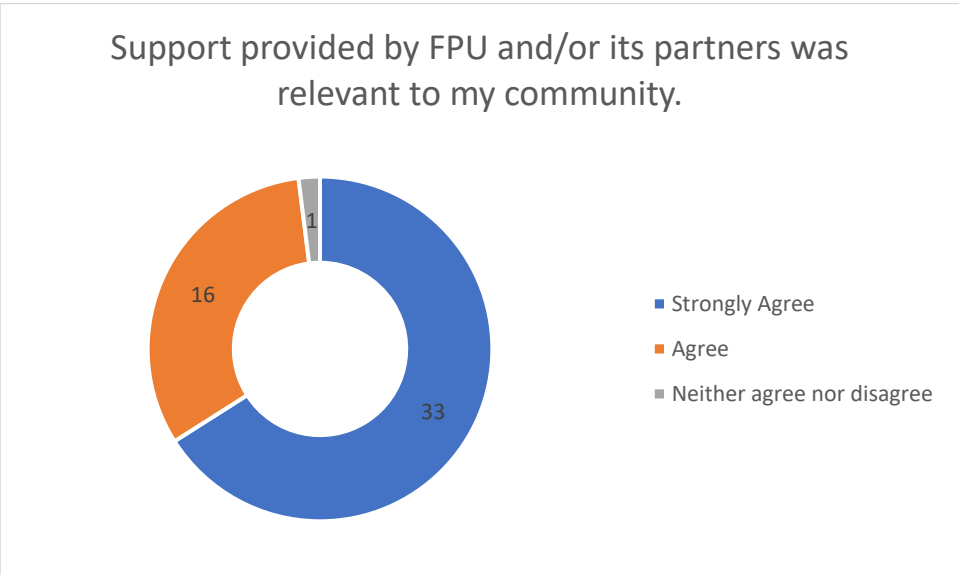


Figure 1 - Support was responsive to needs



*Figure 2 Support was relevant to my organization*



*Figure 3 Support was relevant to my community*

Figures 1,2 and 3 show that local partners felt the support they received was relevant to them and their communities. There was only one respondent (an organization in Côte d’Ivoire) who noted that the support was not relevant.

Several consortium members and local partners emphasized a **bottom-up approach** was utilized. “We asked them what they want after all this, and they prioritized and found ways to get consultants to assist them. So, it was created in a way that was the most bottom-up way that we could do. One organization I know is continuing to work on the business plans.”

One local partner in Kenya said that their organization came up with the parameters which allowed them to meet the needs of the target group. “Potential beneficiaries were involved at

the Twitter Spaces where they gave their opinion on what topics they would want tackled,” he said.

One consortium member noted that the “*country choices* were based on the real needs of what the [consortium members] knew about their partners. We selected countries most at risk and countries we knew and had contact with already thus avoiding due diligence and slow processes”.

Yet one consortium partner had some concerns about the target audiences and the final beneficiaries and noted what she described as a disconnect with regards to the needs of young people who make up some 60% of the continent’s population.

### ***Business as usual?***

One local partner in Kenya said that without financial support they wouldn’t have been able to continue the work as they did before. Another local partner in Kenya that received a small grant for factchecking, said: “The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted activities in Kenyan newsrooms; Pamoja FM was not spared. With tough economic times, we had challenges with sustaining some bills. The grant came in settling some bills; rent arrears, electricity et al. With such, we have managed to stay afloat with informing our audiences as we are not off air like before”. While this grant was meant to support factchecking work, it appeared to have also subsidized daily costs to ensure the radio station remained on air. This raises the question as to what extent the project was simply business as usual and how much was addressing issues raised due to the emergency.

This played out on the other side of the continent as well. According to one consortium partner: “In Nigeria, for example, during the biggest wave many media organizations shut down... [and] having some income to maintain your office open and to pay running costs” was critical. The partner added that the project was also critical in providing support such as computers, PPE and trainings on how to better report on the pandemic.

According to one consortium member: “This project provided us actual funds to consolidate and to put some actual actions in place and for us it was important to support the team and to have funds to support local partners and to put in place things that we could then scale up”.

While this may seem like business as usual, it is clear that the viability of media houses across the continent were faced with serious challenges during the pandemic with many struggling to survive; the *grants served as a lifeline* thereby ensuring provision of critical information during a pandemic and beyond.

### ***Importance of radio***

Another consortium member noted that the emphasis on working with radio was highly relevant as radio is still king in sub-Saharan Africa. “We *work with radio networks* so we can cover a wide range of population which is one of our objectives to give access to the population information about COVID. They are working in local languages which is relevant; content is adapted to the radio stations”.

One consortium member said: “We mostly target *vulnerable countries* and work with vulnerable media organizations such as *community radio* in rural areas. So, in those places this was often the only information the communities would get about COVID”.



This was further illustrated in a recent Associated Press article that talked about a project-supported radio station, Radio Zama in Burkina Faso. “Sawadogo’s [the radio presenter] voice has become a familiar sound for nearly a million people in her town of Kaya [Burkina Faso] and beyond, northeast of the capital in this West African country, where many feel the government has let them down during the pandemic. Hungry for any information about the virus, mothers huddle together outside to tune in to Sawadogo’s show, sharing rare mobile phones in slivers of shade while their children play nearby”.<sup>7</sup>

However, the same interviewee noted that “listeners were *not that interested in COVID [at the time] because it was not a reality* for them. So, we discussed with our partners and shifted our coverage more to general health to meet their needs as well as to the impact of COVID on economic and social aspects of life. That’s how we shifted, and our partners continued to work on the project. Required a lot of adjustments and good communication”.

One partner in Senegal also felt that while radio was important, television would have been useful particularly in urban areas. “More TV programs may tend to increase the effectiveness of the sensitization campaign since COVID -19 had proven to be hard hitting in the big cities and towns where inhabitants are more used to television than radio as is the case of rural areas where radio is king”.

#### ***Overwhelming demand but little data***

One consortium member said there had been “overwhelming demand” for their masterclass on fact-checking and that they received 250 applications and accepted 71. Yet, they added, measuring direct impact of any one fact-checking article “is pretty much impossible”. Some social analytics data does exist but, the consortium member said, “we don’t have that data for all partners.”

### 3.2 Effectiveness

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*I got the information through Radio Parapato that a new variant of COVID-19 arrived in Mozambique. I decided to sit down with my wife and kids to talk about it. Now we reinforce all prevention measures.*

*– Claudio Saute, Radio Parapato listener, Angoche district*

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***Effectiveness*** refers to the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups while also taking account of the relative importance of the objectives or results.

The project was effective in achieving its three intermediate outcomes: numerous media organizations and individuals were provided with support and resulted in a substantial

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<sup>7</sup> [https://apnews.com/article/women-zama-radio-burkina-faso-covid-64c0036a51a59320624018474f027a21?user\\_email=&utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=MorningWire\\_Nov25&utm\\_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers](https://apnews.com/article/women-zama-radio-burkina-faso-covid-64c0036a51a59320624018474f027a21?user_email=&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningWire_Nov25&utm_term=Morning%20Wire%20Subscribers)

amount of content produced; PPE was distributed to media workers in the target countries; media organizations received support to address the viability of their media organizations during the pandemic; media workers learned effective fact-checking and community engagement techniques and were thus able to ensure their communities had access to important, life-saving information. Finally, advocacy efforts, while seemingly modest, were successful and, in some cases, got some traction with local officials.

This evaluation is unable to provide in-depth assessment of the project's efficacy and there was uneven reporting by local partners of reach and impact. In some cases, partners provided some excellent examples of local impact, for example the community radio association in Guinea collected feedback from their members' audiences. Examples of that feedback included:

- *Apprécie toutes les émissions sur la covid-19 surtout les magazines infos covid-19, il a invité les communautés à une prise de conscience en appliquant les mesures barrières contre cette pandémie.*
- *Les infos covid sont d'une importance capitale. A travers ses émissions nous avons pu comprendre l'évolution de la maladie au niveau mondial. Dans les temps, tous les lieux de cultes étaient fermés.*
- *La radio a contribué efficacement à lutter contre la covid-19 en menant des séances de sensibilisation.*

However, in other cases there was little tracking by local partners of reach, engagement and impact of their content, even if in a rudimentary fashion. Indeed, the work that CDAC did could have been useful at the outset of the project to ensure that media houses have the skills and tools to gauge such impact, however, the nature of the pandemic called for emergency measures at the outset: supporting media houses so they could survive; provide life-saving information to communities; and work to ensure that media workers were not targeted by officials simply for the work they did. In other words, a more consistent approach to monitoring impact would have been useful.

Despite the lack of consistent approaches to monitoring efforts, there is evidence that the project was effective. When asked whether support provided by the project increased their organization's institutional and/or technical capacity, 96% of survey respondents said they strongly agree or agree with the statement; only two respondents disagreed.

In addition, the evidence that is available suggests there was some behavior change as a result of the project's activities. For example, there are numerous instances of local partners providing data or anecdotal evidence to illustrate the project's efficacy. According to one survey of journalists who took part in the project and conducted by a local partner, ***more than 57% of the produced reports prompted a reaction*** from civil society organizations and government, in their respective countries.

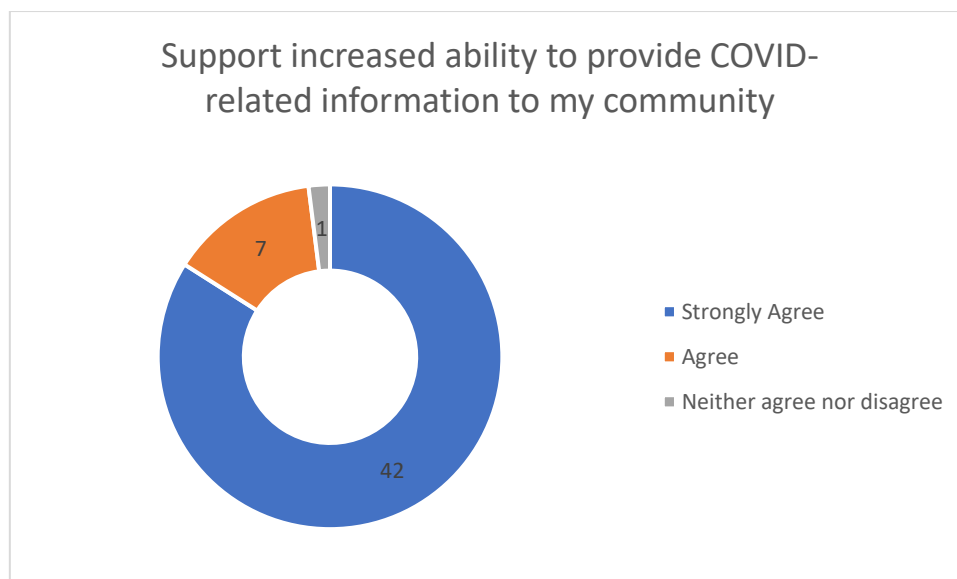


Figure 4 Support received increased my organization's ability to promote information about COVID-19 to my community

Almost all (n=49) survey respondents said that the support they received increased their ability to provide COVID-related information to their communities and 47 respondents said that the support increased their organization’s ability to ***promote information to the most vulnerable***.

Another partner in Zimbabwe said journalists they worked with said their ***ability to report on COVID-19*** related matters accurately increased thanks to the fact-checking skills they had learned. “The ***fact checking training has capacitated the journalists*** to work closely with medical experts and the COVID-19 taskforce committee in verifying facts. As a result, there has been remarkable ***improvement in the accuracy of media reports on COVID-19***, both on transmission and management,” the partner said. According to another local partner: “***Fact checking is now a sought-after skill*** in most newsrooms, and it was learnt during this project”.

One partner in Cameroon noted that “the ***quality of productions has improved*** significantly over time among media organs that were directly involved in content production. This is a clear indication that they are already transferring the skills acquired through this project”. Another in Côte d’Ivoire noted that “many of our contracted community radio stations did several rebroadcasts of the programs that were expected to be aired while others even went further to organize phone-in programs for those episodes for which they received a lot of questions and feedback”.

One local partner said that one of their radio programs, called ‘Opinion COVID’, “turned out to be a blessing in disguise for it can truly serve as a tool to measure how people were changing their views especially among the youths. Many people at the beginning [of the pandemic] accused and insulted us for being the tools of Western propaganda in the project to exterminate Blacks but as time went on each member of the public could identify a member of the family or a friend who had contracted or died from COVID and that extremism began to die down gradually even if it is not totally eradicated”.

Participants in a focus group in West Africa said that information from the media was important. “Initially we were solely dependent on television for COVID-19 information...As

time went on there were many television and radio stations that provided this information”, said one. Another said that “with COVID we are now exposed to new sources of information especially on-line where there are many new websites. Now even the existing websites have introduced special icons only for COVID”.

Another partner noted that their *website traffic tripled* which they believed meant that people trusted their outlet as a source of credible information.

In Zimbabwe, one partner said they were able to gauge listener reach and impact through call-in sessions to their studio. “*Listeners from far areas like Chimanimani, one of the country’s hotspots were calling in* during the COVID 19 intervention programs. The social media posts on COVID-19 pandemic on the ZiFM social media sites also attracted reactions from followers,” they reported.

Another partner in Zimbabwe said their innovative use of *skits, plays, poems and murals* allowed them to share important messages with their communities in a language they could understand and in a relatable manner. They were also able to reach audiences where they were: in churches, markets and posting murals in estates. “We managed to use different forms of infotainment for different target audiences”. They said the skits and plays were so popular that the audience wanted to be part of the plays and the skits. This, they said, also served to motivate the team.

Indeed, several key informants noted the importance of the grants as a *morale booster*. Informants at one radio station in Kenya said that the project boosted morale and self-esteem because they were able to continue working thanks to the grant. The importance of this should not be underestimated.

Listeners of community radio stations also attested to the importance of the project’s outputs. One listener said that he learned a lot from the Furancungo community radio in Mozambique: “I started educating my family first about prevention and then [I talked to] three family friends who didn’t wear masks and walked in a lot in markets where there are many people. Now these families have changed their behavior. They are already following up with all forms of prevention.”

Many of the local partners worked hard to *include health workers in their radio programming*. According to one local partner: “By using [community health workers] the COVID 19 information was easily spread to the communities because they have done different interventions for the government before so they knew where to go, who to talk to and the different interventions that would work for different target audiences. The message was broken into *the local languages, so the marginalized* people got the message at ease”.

According to one consortium member: “We worked mostly with organizations who are focusing on *vulnerable groups* such as Association des Femmes des Médias (AFEM) in the DRC. We also worked with other organizations that did podcasts and while that’s not really vulnerable groups, in this kind of situation things are coming at multiple levels with information circulating all over so it’s good to work with them too. Podcasts maybe reach people from the diaspora and middle class, but all of those elements influence each other”.

Some consortium members said they were able to implement more activities than planned. DWA, for example, was able to conduct eleven media viability sprints – one more than initially planned and budgeted for.

**Advocacy efforts** to protect freedom of expression and information during the crisis were another of the project’s three intermediate outputs, Reporters without Borders and Article 19 were the consortium partners who undertook this work. However, it is nearly impossible to gauge efficacy of advocacy work as it is an ongoing process. Despite this, there do appear to be some wins in this area.

According to the International Center for Not for Profit Law (ICNL), at the peak of the pandemic, 110 countries around the world were [reported](#) to have adopted emergency declarations or laws that carried fines as heavy as USD 46,000 (Kenya), USD 10,000 (Zimbabwe), and 10 years in prison (Burkina Faso) for contravening their provisions. Closely related to digital rights, such laws also applied to social media engagement and communications, with some prohibiting publication of “any statement through any medium including social media, with the intent to deceive,” in South Africa.<sup>8</sup>

In other countries like Zimbabwe, the Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act already criminalized the publication of false statements, however the government introduced additional restrictions on false information related to COVID-19 lockdown enforcement. Indeed, the media fell victim to the regulations, with an estimated 52 cases of violations against practitioners reported during 2020.<sup>9</sup>

Against this backdrop both Article 19 and RSF conducted advocacy efforts in all four of these project countries as well as in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Guinea, Somalia, Nigeria, DRC, Liberia, the Gambia, Mali and numerous non-project countries. In several cases, governments responded to letters sent by RSF. Article 19 and FPU contributed to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for South Sudan and Tanzania.

RSF tracked 27 press freedom violations since the beginning of the project and since the start of monitoring by RSF on 14 March 2020, there were 71 violations in the project countries out of a total of 132 violations in all of sub-Saharan Africa.

Despite **delays in the start of advocacy efforts**, consortium members report that they are still on target. Implementation was delayed because it took time to bring on advocacy partners, conduct due diligence, contracting and administration. According to one advocacy partner, due diligence and **sub granting were too burdensome** for the amounts of the grants which were fairly small at EUR 7,000-8,000. “Some organizations were a bit scared, and they ghosted us because of this. In South Sudan we had to change partners”.

There was also a need for the advocacy organizations to **coordinate their efforts to avoid duplication** and there was a need to agree on which organization would work in which countries. Article 19 reported that it took some time to identify and contract five advocacy partners and in the case of South Sudan, there was also a **language barrier**.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://cipesa.org/2021/10/assessing-the-effects-of-covid-19-misinformation-laws-on-freedom-of-expression/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://cipesa.org/2021/10/assessing-the-effects-of-covid-19-misinformation-laws-on-freedom-of-expression/>

RSF reported some success in their advocacy efforts, in particular noting the response from the Burkinabe government. “They took a lot of time to answer to us and they clearly thought about our letter and showed that we were quite impactful”. Litigation was undertaken in Tanzania, Somalia and Zimbabwe and numerous court cases were followed. A mission to Somali that included submitting a list of recommendations regarding press freedom and COVID-19 resulted in significant discussions with that country’s authorities.

One consortium member said that while the pandemic did not manifest in Africa to the extent it did in Europe, they were still effective in sensitization and worked with local state actors who were “surfing on the COVID situation to crack down on press freedom”.

In some cases, consortium members conducted fact-checking activities with their local partners. One informant noted “it was a great occasion to have funds to do this work which could be used in another context or outbreak... Factchecking is a huge deal everywhere and this was a good opportunity to work with factcheckers and to start collaborations with them”.

Perhaps the least effective activity of the project was the co-working space. While it made sense to create a platform where all partners could conduct their work, find information, share articles, best practices and success stories, and serve as a platform from which to host the training courses, it simply was not the success implementers hoped. “At end of the day it was not the platform that we saw in the beginning. The forum page idea was that people could upload content and share but even other consortium partners were not particularly active and to have beneficiaries to have a password, log in and access secure space created some hurdles. We realized it was not really working so decided after three months to set up a [Facebook page](#) instead”.

As of 23 November 2021 the page had 354 followers, a daily reach of 74 yet with very little engagement; most posts had two or three likes, mostly from project-connected staff. It is important to note, however, that these followers are all organic and there was no payment for promotions.

One local partner in Senegal felt that the decision to create new radio and television slots for sensitization programs resulted in losing audience because “the public was taking time to get used to the new slots”. Instead, they said the program should have been incorporated into existing programs which already had followers and faithful listeners such as existing health programs and popular talk shows which deal with societal issues.

There were also some instances of *local partners lagging in their implementation* of project activities. One local partner, for example, cited financial procedures and the third wave of COVID in Senegal as the reasons for the delay of the organization’s activities with only one workshop having been organized and all other activities not yet implemented. The partner was confident, however, that they would still be able to implement all remaining activities in the time left. Yet another organization said that they are seriously lagging behind in their investigative reporting activities with none of these being produced with only two months remaining in the project.

### 3.3 Impact

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*The lessons learnt during the master classes will go a long way in shaping conversations in Kenya. In the coming general elections, we will use fact checking as a tool.*

*– Alphonse Shiunda, Africa Check*

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According to the OECD, **impact** is the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify social, environmental and economic effects of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. Beyond the immediate results, this criterion seeks to capture the indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention. It does so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people’s well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.<sup>10</sup>

One of the most challenging aspects of evaluating media development projects is that associated with measuring impact. Impact of a program examines the extent to which an intervention has generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended higher-level effects. Identifying causal relationships between media activity and longer-term impact or consequences is challenging simply due to the place of the media in society – it is only one of a multitude of actors that can impact people’s well-being, human rights, gender equality and the like; “proving” that the media were the cause of some transformational effect is difficult. However, this project was indeed impactful and has resulted in some behavior and attitudinal changes in communities across the continent and learned skills, such as fact-checking, that are likely to be used going forward. As such, the evaluator finds the program having impact in a relatively short time frame.

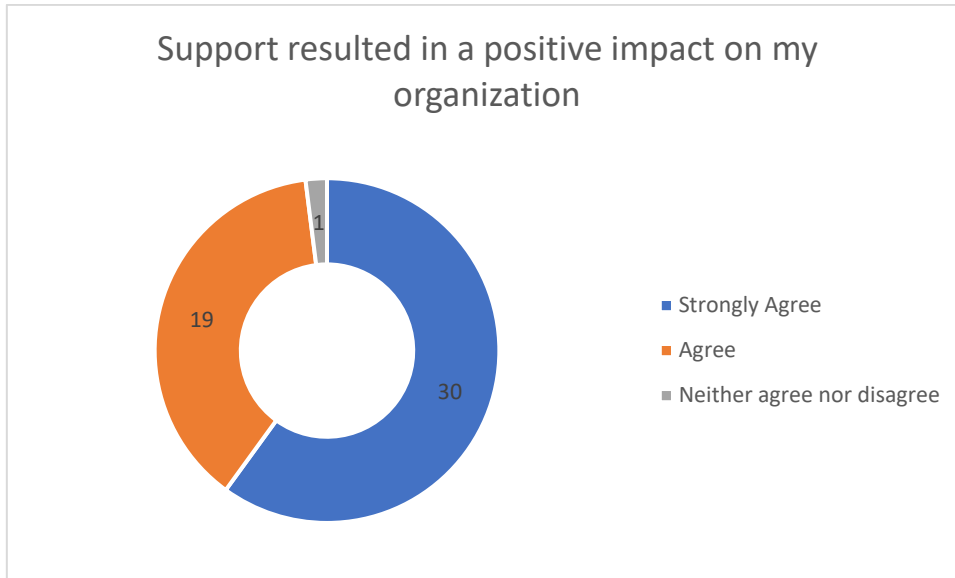
Both consortium members and local partners believe they **reached their target audiences** and shared important information with them. However, as mentioned in section 3.2, **not all partners measured impact** or collected anecdotal feedback. One consortium member said that there is some anecdotal data “but not all partners collected this which is unfortunate. I think they do receive feedback somehow and it would be good to get this. For example, in the DRC there are listening groups but no one is taking notes. This would be good to have this [information]”.

One consortium member felt that perhaps the goal [to have life-saving information reach 50% of audiences] was “a bit pretentious in hindsight”. But, she added, if life-saving decisions means you listen to a radio show talking about protective measures and you decide to wash your hands regularly ... then I would say yes [this is lifesaving]”.

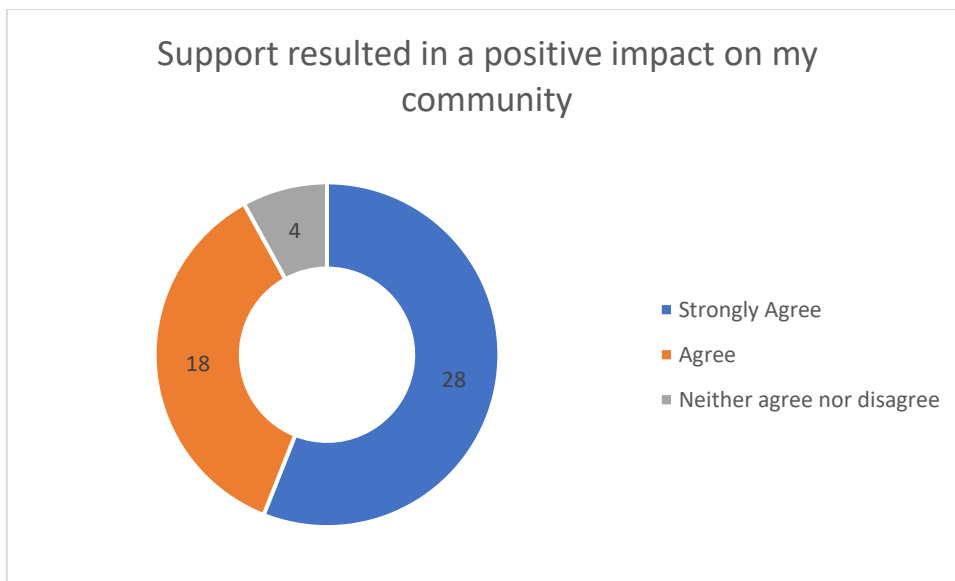
As illustrated in figures 5 and 6, local partners felt that the support resulted in both a **positive impact on their organization and on their community**.

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<sup>10</sup> OECD revised 2019, p. 11.



*Figure 5 Support resulted in a positive impact on my organization*



*Figure 6 Support resulted in a positive impact on my community*

One local partner said that during radio call-in shows, one caller would ask a COVID-related question and another caller would answer them; this they said was evidence that their shows were impactful. The partner also stressed that the majority of the callers were youth and women.

According to one consortium member, “I really have the impression that the results of the reporting that our partners did reached the target communities....if they changed behavior I can’t say because we didn’t measure that. It’s a well-founded impression that the **target audiences were reached** [but whether] they made something out of the new and correct information they received is beyond what I can say”.



As mentioned above, advocacy work can take significant time before it bears fruits. As such, it is not clear to what extent this pillar of the project generated significant higher-level effects. One of the advocacy consortium members did say that several governments, including Guinea and Burkina Faso, responded to their efforts. There was some disappointment, however, from one consortium member that not more was done to bring actors together under this pillar. “The impression I have is [that it is] basically research they are doing; monitoring and publishing statements. I see few interactions between them and the authorities and very few moments of contact good guys and the bad guys and very few moments of contact”. He added that he had hoped the local lobby and media civil society organizations (CSOs) would have held more events or meetings that brought various actors together.

### 3.4 Sustainability

**Sustainability** is the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue, beyond the life of the activities. Indeed, much of the goal of this project was to ensure the survival of media organizations across the continent.

The three-pillar approach of grants, learning and advocacy should go a long way to ensuring future sustainability of local actors. In addition, consortium members stated that significant effort was expended on building local capacity be it at the level of financial reporting of local partners or enhancing journalistic skills often requiring significant time yet also playing a role to ensure future sustainability.

The evaluator found that the project was particularly sustainable in two areas. The first was the **contribution to the survival of numerous media organizations** that otherwise may have had to close. There may be some who view this as bridge funding, however, in an emergency setting such bridge funding is well justified. The second area was the promotion and skills-building of **fact-checking** – a skill that can be brought to numerous other areas such as election reporting and health coverage.

Local partners expressed gratitude for the support as, in many cases, it ensured their survival while consortium members believed that “the financial support to third parties enabled them to continue as before. Given the fact that we didn’t introduce a new way of working or new products in their respective work lines, once COVID is over hopefully they will be back on safe ground”.

Another consortium partner said that “a lot of the **emergency grant beneficiaries are stronger on the other end**...It’s not just about paying salaries but also in the learning that has happened [in areas such as] how to manage a project and how to apply for funding”. Some partners, she said, have secured additional grants or funding. However, it is important to note that jumping from one grant to another is not necessarily sustainable.

Time and time again **fact-checking** was raised by consortium partners and local grantees as an activity that will continue to be used long past the lifetime of the program but in different contexts such as elections. One local partner said: “Most media houses needed the **fact checking skills** for COVID 19 and it will come handy during our general elections in 2022”.

According to one implementing partner, many of the skills learned are applicable to science reporting whether a pandemic or something else. In addition, the **collaboration between journalists and media houses** was an unexpected result. The informant believes that this

happened because the course was structured over a period of 18 months which created pathways for editorial collaborations between newsrooms.

Another consortium member said that “fake news has become a bigger problem and getting news from Facebook is huge in Africa, but you have no idea what’s happening on WhatsApp. Through the factchecking workshops there was a greater understanding of the problem behind this. I think no event other than COVID was able to show the relevance of factchecking”.

However, one local partner believes that there are no guarantees that all the participants, once they return to their newsrooms, will start *doing fact-checking*. Eventually, some might use the techniques learned as part of their usual work. The informant suggested that for future workshops participants propose a fact-checking topic that would be discussed during the training and at the end each participant would be invited to publish a fact-checking article.

One informant felt that activities focused on *financial viability* will also serve local partners in the long run. “Many partners have seen how good it is to have a good business model and diversity of funds. So, I think some of the skills they learned will serve them in the long run”.

According to one consortium member, some of the local partners have also established some COVID infrastructure such as COVID desks and felt that they will continue to make use of them. In addition, there has also been an informal network created through the various activities that brought participants from different countries together. “This *network they will continue* to use and tap into”.

This was echoed by another consortium member. This project, she said, was really an opportunity for us to *create links and build relationships for the future*. “They will continue in the future. We have applied for a new funding, and we have included our partners from Côte d’Ivoire in this and two others from Senegal”.

Another consortium member felt that such relationships with regards to advocacy work were fostered during the project and built trust. There were, however, some concerns that an 18-month project is not enough to ensure sustainability. One advocacy partner explained: “We definitely put some bricks on the wall. It was a good way to organize the work and to have some support to organize advocacy missions and to have the funds to do this. We all know it’s not enough and this work needs to continue after the project”.

At least one local partner that produced skits and dramas said they would be unable to continue such activities due to the expenses associated with hiring actors, community health workers and producers without outside financial support.

Another local partner said that established media houses are poaching reporters from the community radio stations for their fact checking desks therefore leaving gaps in the community radio stations. However, the partner noted that this was a common trend even before the pandemic, but he did feel that the increase in fact-checking skills was one of the motivating factors for this trend.

While the survey did not specifically have any questions related to sustainability, several respondents noted that they would have like more time to implement their activities “to

increase impact”. One respondent also noted that “vulnerable and hard to reach areas are still hungry for reliable information sources. We want to do more in this regard”.

### 3.5 Coherence

**Coherence** is the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution both within the organization and with others doing similar work. In this case, the evaluator found the action mostly coherent for a project with so many players, however, there appeared to be some duplication (RSF and A19) that likely hampered the efficiency of the action.

The project proposal noted: “This activity will be jointly implemented by FPU and IMS. Implementers of this activity will tap into their deep collective experience on the provision of protection resources for journalists or media outlets, or collaborative efforts to mitigate and respond using innovative formats. Both FPU and IMS will look for synergies with similar existing (EU-funded and non-EU funded) initiatives and avoid duplication of efforts.”<sup>11</sup>

It must be stressed that this project brought together *organizations that normally would be competing* for funds; here they *successfully worked closely together*. Consortium members all spoke highly of the coordination and communication between members and in several cases, this ensured coherence with members’ other projects on the continent.

In many cases, consortium members brought unique expertise to the project and leveraged those different roles and expertise. DWA, for example, focused on media viability while RSF and Article 19 focused on advocacy. This latter, however, was an example of where there appeared to be some duplication of efforts, although for the most part RSF focused on Francophone countries while Article 19 focused on Anglophone countries.

It is also important to note here is that *UNESCO was an affiliate partner* and as such *provided a certain gravitas* where needed. For example, UNESCO was able to amplify some of the project activities and provide a level of visibility that otherwise may have been difficult to achieve. According to UNESCO, there were synergies and coherence in that the work that RSF did, for example, provided a basis for policy work at UNESCO such as an issue brief on COVID that the organization produced. “We give the platform as UNESCO, and they do the job of monitoring and alerting”.

There were reportedly some challenges in that there were other COVID and media related projects being implemented in sub-Saharan Africa at the same time as this one. For example, UNESCO said that they faced some complications as there were two UNESCO-related projects that dealt with COVID, however, they worked to synergize, not to overlap and to ensure complementarity.

Several consortium members and local partners were implementing other COVID-related projects in sub-Saharan Africa. It is difficult to say to what extent there was overlap or duplication, but it is likely that there may have been instances of duplicate funding, however, it is impossible to say for sure. In any case, several informants noted challenges of ensuring they kept their various projects separate.

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<sup>11</sup> For example, FPU will add via this activity a Sub-Saharan African component to the existing EU-funded emergency funds for European journalists. Another example is Protect Defenders, with which FPU and IMS will ensure coordination and synergy via RSF to avoid duplication of efforts.

### 3.6 Efficiency

**Efficiency** examines the extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.

The budget for this 18-month project was EUR 4.736.820. Considering that the project involved multiple consortium members, an affiliate partner, 17 focus countries and over 80 local partners, based on the global budget, the **project was efficient**. There was a substantial amount of output, and most activities were implemented in a timely fashion. Several local partners noted the significant amount of programming produced with one noting that “the small amount of money covered a huge amount of content”.

However, there are areas that consortium members found challenging and as a result had a negative impact on the efficiency of the project. According to the lead consortium member, “the project was meant to give a rapid response to the pandemic – we were working in countries where we are already present, where we know our partners and where we could quickly do something. But bureaucratic and due diligence procedures handicapped us seriously in my opinion”. Consortium partners, he said, were buried under heavy bureaucratic procedures.

Some consortium partners, however, said some of this bureaucracy was due to internal structures at their organization or federal regulations in addition to EU requirements. One consortium partner said the project was simply too short and that bureaucratic aspects took more time than expected: “The **project is quite short for what we were expected to do**, and our targets and several partners were delayed so it’s daily work to contact them and follow up. It also takes time to explain to them what we want; there is always too much bureaucracy for them”.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, there appeared to be some overlap between the two organizations that took on the advocacy pillar. According to one informant, “having the two onboard was complicated” but, he added, at the end of the day it worked out. One consortium member also stated that there was a lack of clarity as to the roles of the large number of staff budgeted for, however, he added that this could be because advocacy organizations are not project-based organizations.

### 3.7 Gender

Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. This project did not have any specific focus on gender, nor did it have any specific activities focused on women. However, it is clear that the project **successfully ensured that the interests, needs and priorities of both men and women were taken into consideration**. Several of the local partners, for example, have a clear mandate to work with women such as AFEM in the DRC. There was also content produced as part of the project which clearly addressed gender-related issues. For example, several media houses covered the intensification of gender-based violence and increasing pregnancies during the pandemic.

Consortium members reported that they had conversations with local partners asking them to ensure women were included in all activities. They also sought to ensure that they used both female and male trainers.

Anecdotal evidence from local partners suggests that there were efforts made to reach women and many of these were successful. According to one local partner, “the fact that most of the health programs in our community radio stations are run by women turned out to be a blessing in disguise with regards to the involvement of women in this project. The presenters of the special COVID programs turned out then to be women who brought in a special feminine touch and perspective to the way the issues were addressed”.

Yet another local partner said that “there were special programs which addressed issues that directly affected women the most. This is the case of the special programme on the impact of the prolonged lockdowns on women who are the principal stakeholders of our informal economy with petty trading as a major destination for women who could not go out of their homes for weeks and saw their livelihoods completely destroyed/ruined”.

One local partner in Senegal noted that about 40% of those involved in their activities were women while another said that their project has a 50:50 ratio among administrative and financial staff and half of their eight correspondents are women.

Finally, it is important to note that several activities were planned towards the end of this project that will have a gender focus. However, because these activities had yet to be implemented, the evaluator is unable to render any comment.

### 3.8 Learning, cooperation, management

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*The consortium worked because the partners were all known [to each other] and there was constant communication and coordination.*  
– Consortium member

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All consortium partners noted the cooperation with the lead partner, FPU, as excellent and smooth. “Normally we would be competing with one another,” said one consortium member. “But we had a very clear idea of distributing different aspects of the overall project within the partners. **Each partner had different competencies** so it was a very different and refreshing experience to see that we could cooperate in a way that our respective experiences could actually yield the best and biggest result: **avoiding overlaps and trying to create synergies.**”

There was **ongoing communication** and in instances where another consortium member had existing plans to work with one of the local partners, another consortium partner would step away allowing IMS to continue their own project. Consortium members also appreciated regular meetings and the support and responsiveness from FPU.

Several consortium members felt that the consortium approach was **innovative**. Some cited the innovative approach in distributing tasks and responsibilities, while others noted the responsiveness and rapidity of the EU. “It’s like a gear box: the different cog wheels worked nicely together. It’s a complex project with many partners, different work lines but the initial idea is sound and given the experience of the partners involved it worked very nicely. I cannot recall another project in which there was such a constellation of partners”.

Another consortium member echoed this. “Everyone was working in their countries that they had experience in and in their wheelhouse. This was innovative and everyone was in their comfort zone”.

However, some felt that working in such a consortium resulted in a flawed or difficult project design. “While the coordination was good...I feel it’s always better if you feel you belong to something where you have common objectives and where you share activities. I’m not saying that each partner should have done the same thing but at least perhaps there should have been several activities in common because then it would have given more sense to the consortium. Each partner worked in their own silo”.

Many informants noted that there was ongoing learning and adaptation over the course of the project. One local partner, for example, took comments from an initial workshop and used them to modify the subsequent workshop in order to “better meet the expectations of the participants”.

One consortium member, however, noted some challenges with learning. “We wanted feedback from participants and so in Zoom sessions we did polls. For example, after sessions participants could rate the session. But I found it really hard to get honest answers. We got a lot of 9s and 10s”. How, she wondered, could one get honest feedback from participants from a learning perspective? This suggests the need for efforts to develop effective tools to measure efficacy and learning impact and to train trainers how to use such tools.

Local partners who responded to the survey were overwhelmingly satisfied with the management of the project. Nearly all (n=48) respondents said they agree or strongly agree with the statement: The support that my organization received from FPU and/or its partners was conducted in an uncomplicated manner and bureaucracy was avoided as much as possible. Only two respondents disagreed. Similarly, all but one of the 50 respondents said they strongly agree or agree with the statement: My organization was satisfied with the day-to-day management of the grant and working relationship with FPU and/or its partners.

### 3.9 Challenges

Informants noted a number of challenges associated with implementation of the action including Zoom fatigue, conducting virtual trainings, lack of internet and/or adequate bandwidth, lack of electricity and deaths and illnesses of staffers due to COVID. Despite these challenges, however, as noted above, the project was a success.

One consortium partner noted that while there was a need to focus on media *viability*, “they have no internet so it was frustrating at times, but we were able to work it out eventually. But now seed funding has to be used for data costs rather than something else”. In an attempt to overcome this issue, one partner experimented with training via WhatsApp but found it “painfully slow”.

Numerous local partners noted challenges related to *poor internet connection* or lack of electricity. According to one partner, these challenges meant that some radio stations in rural areas “did not download the programs on time and load shedding, a consequence of the shortage of electricity, impacted negatively on the strict respect of broadcast schedules for the programs in some stations”.

Several local partners said they *experienced issues due to COVID* such as activities halted or radio programs delayed because staff contracted COVID. COVID itself at times had a negative effect on the viability line in that a couple of local partners that one consortium member had planned to work with were not able to take part as they got hit by COVID very badly. One local partner saw five of its staff quarantined and two passed away causing delays in implementation.

At least one consortium member found the size of the consortium somewhat unwieldy. “It’s a *huge consortium* and I’m not sure if we got such a good grasp of what the other consortium members did.” Another member noted that *rapid response nature of the project was a bit of a struggle for most organizations*. Some organizations, she noted, were culturally a bit heavier on the bureaucracy while acknowledging that “in development things go a bit slower [than in emergency response]. But I think if we want to do such rapid things, we need to adjust especially on the admin side. When the proposals are built up, they need to integrate how to make things easier for local partners at the outset.”

Another consortium member cited *language barriers*. “Everything for advocacy and visibility needs to be translated and it is hard to get official texts of COVID 19 legislation...this delayed our legal analysis.”

Most partners and sub-grantees noted *Zoom fatigue* while some partners were not as tech savvy as others. Zoom requires solid internet which may have been a barrier for participation for some.

Local partners in Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe noted challenges with *local government bureaucracy* that hampered to some extent implementation of their activities. In Zimbabwe, for example, bureaucracy made it challenging to secure special permits for the plays and skits they sought to produce.

Several partners commented on challenges with monitoring and evaluation (M&E). “What we’re missing in this project is a good system to *collect information from the audience* and radio stations. It’s easier when you work with online media because you can get feedback and data. But for radio listeners in Africa, it’s much more difficult. We couldn’t get feedback from the final beneficiaries on the ground. Even if you monitor content, you never really know how it is being perceived or used. ... We wanted to focus on capacity building and not M&E, but perhaps there could have been something integrated at the beginning”. Another consortium member agreed. “The overarching objective was to reach the final beneficiaries but to be honest it is hard to judge whether we managed”. Local partners also felt that additional field work may have helped with this challenge.

One Senegalese partner noted: “There should be *more field work integrated into the project*. While there were outdoor activities, they were mainly limited to short formats like news reporting. We are convinced that town hall-like activities would be best suited for this take of mass sensitization projects. There is need for us as content producers to be in touch with the organizations that ultimately broadcast the programme we produce. This will create a healthy flow whereby we can get feedback and adjust what may be shortcomings in the programs as initially conceived”.

There were some partners who also noted *challenges in reaching their target audience*. A blogging association in Kenya, for example, said that “most *bloggers are urban based*.”

Getting journalists [bloggers] who are based in the rural areas was not easy because most of them are in the urban areas.” Similarly, a local partner whose target was children said that during the pandemic “most parents did not want to release their children for the training and most children did not have phones and power connectivity back at Soweto”.

Several partners said that bureaucratic procedures were heavy and that it took time for finances to arrive. According to one partner: “*The finances* were late to come because [the consortium member] insisted that we needed to set up special bank accounts for the project and even once that was resolved we were held down by the very strict control of the movement of funds given the tough legislation and controls to guard against financing terrorism and money laundry in the ECOWAS sub region”.

For some, the relatively short project timeline proved challenging. “It was a very ambitious project with very ambitious targets and COVID never really blew up. So, we can’t do any litigation process if there was nothing to litigate”.

Finally, one consortium partner found some of the consortium partners were not pushing their local partners regarding *visibility*. “They didn’t do enough on the visual side -- using the same logos and hashtags for example so it wasn’t cohesive visually”.

#### 4. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

There were a number of lessons learned that emerged from this project.

It is clear that for such a large consortium, there is a need to *continuously share information* and keep communications channels open. The sharing of best practices learned from local partners was helpful also. One consortium member thought it might be useful to regularly send out a brief newsletter that would keep all consortium members abreast of everyone’s activities.

The pandemic has resulted in a shift away from using international consultants and trainers and *rely more on local expertise*. This was also the case for this project. Consortium partners worked hard to work directly with their local partners and identify skills that could be useful to the project.

Web-based projects such as the co-shared working space are likely not the most effective way to reach local partners in certain parts of the world and this was the case for this project. Some suggested using *more mobile-based platforms* such as WhatsApp.

Some informants were confused about having both Article 19 and RSF engaged in the project as consortium members and felt this was a duplication of efforts although each consortium member conducted their activities in different countries. A suggestion was made to be clear at the outset and *decide at the proposal stage which countries will be targeted* as this could help identify which consortium members may be most effective.

Several consortium members and numerous local partners expressed some frustration with the short turnaround time and felt *more time* would have helped with more effective implementation of activities.



**Flexibility** of both consortium members and consortium leader was crucial to this project's success. While most of the members implemented activities they were comfortable with, this could have been an opportunity to try and test new things.

One local partner emphasized the **importance of including children** in such projects that have a behavior change aspect. "If donors would support programs for children between the ages of 8 - 13 years. Then a lot of interventions wouldn't be needed for adults because the children grow up knowing what needs to be done."

The **use of local languages** was critical in ensuring content reached vulnerable and marginalized audiences. One partner noted that over 40% of the content that was developed and disseminated was done so using local languages. This contributed to the provision of reliable information on COVID-19 for marginalized communities.

In addition to these lessons learned, the evaluator identified **several recommendations** that may prove useful for similar actions in the future.

#### 4.1 Need for ongoing flexibility in emergency or rapid response actions

This project was in response to an ongoing, fluid emergency which saw a division of labour (based on prior experience and partnerships in specific countries) with the goal of providing support to 17 focus countries, not including the emergency grants.

In such a response, it is important to understand that implementation cannot be complete without some thought given to understand and measure (see 4.2 below) both the expected and actual impact of such interventions. This means that clear objectives, outputs and outcomes are articulated but with the understanding that in an emergency context the situation remains highly fluid and subject to change which therefore suggests objectives and outputs may change as well.

However, in both rapid and emergency contexts, the fluid nature of the context and the often-experimental nature of the intervention are likely to make this more complicated than regular programmes and projects and requires significant fluidity which some organizations are more able to deliver than others.

Finally, it is important to note that most media development and press freedom organizations, including those involved in this action, are more development than emergency-focused, although IMS does have a Rapid Response unit. Despite this, consortium members were able to move quickly and reach out to previous partners to ensure timely provision to local populations thereby ensuring a rapid response.

#### 4.2 Match objectives and outputs with the timeframe

Clearly, the pandemic's trajectory and timeline were impossible to predict when this project was proposed. It was believed that 18 months would be sufficient to implement all project-related activities and that the pandemic would have ended. In addition, conversations related to the pandemic have shifted over time: in the early days it was defining COVID and how to protect oneself but currently it's about the vaccination process. The project is now coming to an end at the same time as vaccinations are becoming available in many sub-Saharan Africa countries.

It is clear that many local partners struggled with a timeline that was condensed due to bureaucracy, sometimes having a mere six months to implement activities. There was an assumption that activities could be implemented quickly, however, contextual considerations needed to be better understood together with partner limitations, many of whom were operating in a virtual world they did not have the tools for. The reality was the project was simply too short. As one consortium member noted: “It was very burdensome for an 18-month project. Things moved very slowly in some of these contexts... You just can’t start quickly”.

As such, future projects must be cognizant of limitations on the ground that may affect rapid implementation in challenging environments and objectives, outputs and outcomes should be adapted accordingly, or an extension should be sought.

It is, however, important to note that in some cases, planned activities could not be implemented because of COVID, such as those in schools as the schools were closed. “Ironically, some objectives may not have been met because of COVID,” said one implementer.

#### 4.3 Develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks for emergency situations

Monitoring and evaluation systems for emergency response should be light and dynamic to avoid placing a heavy burden on staff or detracting from the response itself while also staying responsive to the changing context and the evolving needs of targeted populations.<sup>12</sup>

This project was ambitious not only in its objectives (largely achieved as discussed above) but was saddled with an M&E system that was likely too burdensome. As one consortium partner noted: “After a while we realized we had all these indicators. What did we promise? The reality is different and how feasible is it for consortium members to stick to the indicators?” Some of the indicators were simply unrealistic and it was not clear from the outset how they could be measured or were too specific.

Several consortium members pointed out that their expertise was in development and not emergencies. As such, going forward, future emergency work must entail M&E processes that are appropriate, measurable, dynamic and light. In addition, it would be useful to ensure local media partners have some *rudimentary knowledge regarding community engagement and audience feedback*. CDAC did some work in this area as an implementing partner for IMS, however, it would have been helpful for this to have been done early on and with all content producing partners. This could have gone a long way to providing important feedback in the early stages of the project and understanding if and how audiences were using content produced as a result of the project. Such processes do not have to be complex or time consuming and can be as basic as collecting and documenting anecdotal feedback.

Indeed, one survey respondent noted that that would like to see *more community engagement approaches* intended to reach the poorest of the poor.

#### 4.4 Train over time

Due to the remote nature of many of the training and mentoring activities, many of these were conducted over a much longer period of time than is normally done when they are in-

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<sup>12</sup> See for example: Morel, D. and Hagens, C. (2012). Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning in emergencies: A resource pack for simple and strong MEAL. Catholic Relief Services.

person – months rather than days. Implementers noted that conducting a four-day training over the course of four months resulted in participants able to use new skills between sessions, return to the next session, learn some more and again have the opportunity to use what they learn. As one implementer put it: “Efficacy is quite high [and] the magic ingredient has been time”.

There is no reason this model can’t be adapted and used even when in-person trainings resume with perhaps a hybrid model used.

#### 4.5 Reporting

Ensure all partners are on the same page with regards to visibility and reporting requirements. While this may seem a minor concern, it will provide further cohesiveness to the project and ensure that important data, such as anecdotes regarding efficacy or impact, can be effectively collected and shared.

#### 4.6 Emergencies can create opportunities for innovation

This project saw the consortium partners work with previous partners believing this would allow them to move quickly and to start with a certain level of trust. Such factors are important in an emergency situation; however, it would also seem that an opportunity was lost. Yes, a certain level of familiarity is useful, but emergencies such as this can also provide opportunities for trying something new – and for the most part, many of this project’s activities were tried and true.

## Annexes

### Annex I Persons interviewed

<b>NAME</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>
Antoine Petitbon	RSF
Jeanne	RSF
Julie Leduc	RSF
Laetitia Chesseron	RSF
Werner Nowak	DW Akademie
Liesa Didoff	DW Akademie
Ilaria Fevola	Article 19
Teresa Hall	Article 19
FanMan Tsang	CDAC
Leon	FPU
Gaelle Weigl	FPU
Jullie Godignon	FH
Laura Bretea	EU
Manizja	FPU
Lena	IMS
Andrea Cairola	UNESCO
Caroline Hammerberg	UNESCO
Megan	Meedan
Benson Mbewe	AB Communications, Zim
Norbert Shetu	AB Communications, Zim
Kelvin Jakachira	AB Communications, Zim
Sylvia Mukwindidza	Bustop TV
Alphonce Shiunda	Africa Check Kenya
Mikinia Juma	Africa Check Kenya
Kennedy Kachwanya	Bloggers Association of Kenya
Henix Obuchunju	Pamoja FM Kenya
Lisa Blakeway	Vuselela Media South Africa
Mthoba Chapi	Vuselela Media
Colleen Monaghan	Ground Up South Africa
Eric Gohou	URPCI/Synergies Côte d'Ivoire
Amadou Tidiane	EJICOM, Senegal
Dieng Talla	URAC, Senegal
Faydy Dramé	OUESTAF, Senegal
Potin Aminata	Radio Télévision Sénégalaise
Blandine Angbako	ESD Côte d'Ivoire
Roseline Obah	Cameroon Community Media Network
Hermann Kom	OMENKART Cameroon
Clovis-Boris FOKOUABANG	ADISI Cameroun

## **Interview Guide**

To facilitate data collection, the research questions below have been listed base on the six evaluation criteria of the OECD-DAC (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, coherence) complemented by Learning & Innovation and one on Gender Equity.

The questions below are a guide only and the questions you ask will depend on the source and their role in the project. When appropriate ask for examples that illustrate their answers.

### **1. Relevance**

- To what extent do you feel the programme responded to the real needs of the African media outlets, the direct target group?
- To what extent do you feel the programme responded to the interest of the final target group, the listeners/readers/viewers of which most belong to poor and marginalised groups in the society?
- To what extent do you feel the project was designed to meet the needs of the partners and final beneficiaries?
- To what extent were project partners and potential beneficiaries involved in project design?

### **2. Effectiveness**

- To what extent have the objectives / outputs been achieved?
  - What changes might be beneficial in future?
- Were the objectives/outputs achieved specifically for particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (e.g. women, minorities, youth)?
  - To what extent are project beneficiaries able to use information about issues relevant to them?
- Which internal and external factors have had the biggest impact on reaching or not reaching the objectives?
  - What challenges existed in implementation?
  - What best practices were gleaned during implementation?
  - To what extent did COVID-19 affect implementation? What pivots were necessary?
- What real changes has the project achieved among the target groups?
  - To what extent were beneficiaries able to voice their opinions in the media?
- Were there any unintended results or consequences of the programme?
- Compared to similar projects executed by other support agencies, how do you view the effectiveness of the programme?
- Have there been any unforeseen external factors that influenced the implementation of the program either positively or negatively?
- How did the project meet changing needs/context?
  - What, if any, evidence is there that disadvantaged and vulnerable groups are more involved in political and social debates?
- To what extent have the initiatives actually reached the intended target groups?

### **3. Efficiency**

- How do you view the day-to-day management of the project (i.e. financial management, internal communication, contract management etc.)?
- How do you view the planning and monitoring mechanisms of the programme?
- Have activities been conducted in an uncomplicated manner and has bureaucracy been avoided as much as possible?

### **4. Impact**

- To what extent do you feel the program has contributed to the provision of reliable information on COVID-19 for marginalised communities, which includes women and youth? (In other words, what is your appreciation of the indicator related to Impact: At least 50% of surveyed audience affirm reporting on COVID-19 by media stakeholders engaged in this action helped them make informed life-saving decisions.)
- What was the impact of the small grants on beneficiaries? What are some suggestions for improving small grants?
- What was the impact of the awareness raising activities?
- To what extent and in what ways has the project strengthened availability of COVID-related information benefitting vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged people during the period?

### **5. Sustainability**

- What is your appreciation of the ‘ownership’ of the achievements of the program at the level of the partners?
- Do you feel that your organization could continue their activities and generate their own revenues after the project funding ends (financial viability)?
- To what extent do you feel that the skills learned at the different training sessions are transferable to your work?
- To what extent are the local partners able (in terms of their financial situation, human resources and organizational structure) and willing (ownership) to continue ensuring the positive effects of the project in the long term?
  - What is their vision for the project in the medium and long term?
  - How do they want to achieve that?

### **6. Coherence**

- What is the complementary and coherence with related activities and projects supported by EU International Partnerships, such as <https://en.unesco.org/COVID19/disinfodemic/coronavirusfacts?>
- To what extent do the activities complement and support the partners' own efforts?
  - To what extent do the activities complement those of other (media) development actors?

### **7. Learning and innovation**

- In what way is progress in the execution of activities monitored and are corrections made in case of failures?
- In what way do you feel the program is innovative?
- To what extent does it use new technologies, services or methods?
- Was the dissemination of knowledge produced during the program sufficient and successful?

## **8. Gender equality**

- What impact did this project have on women journalists?
- What is the percentage of projects that contained clear gender elements or had women as specific target audience?

## **Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Protocols**

### ***Sample Size and characteristics***

The goal for each focus group is maximum 8 people. Five would be ideal. Groups will be divided by language and gender. Age may also be a consideration if culturally appropriate.

### ***Safeguarding participant information***

Staff have an obligation to safeguard confidential and private information. Confidential and private information is any information that is personal and discrete in nature and related to focus group participants. This includes personally identifiable information. Personally identifiable information is information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, either alone or when combined with other information. For example, a participant's full name, a participant's name and phone number, a participant's name and arrival date, etc. The following are steps to protect participant information: 1) Always be vigilant in keeping sensitive data secure and confidential; 2) Never share/discuss participants' sensitive data with others that are not permitted to view this information; 3) Never discuss participants' sensitive information in public or in an open space where others might overhear you; 4) Never leave your screen or open documents containing participant related sensitive data unattended; 5) Delete documents and files being stored on your computer and/or other devices when asked to do so; 6) Never leave printouts of sensitive data – ensure they are always physically secured (e.g. in a locked drawer, cabinet, desk). In fact, you should refrain from printing out sensitive data all together. If you must print out information, shred printouts after the task is complete; 7) Report privacy incidents as soon as they occur.

### ***Conducting the Focus Group Discussion***

It is essential that participants feel they are being listened to with empathy. Similarly, if a participant becomes upset or frustrated during the FGD, the facilitator should provide reassurance or ask the participant if they would like to leave. Additionally, at the beginning of the FGD, it is necessary to receive informed verbal consent from participants. Informed consent is permission granted in the knowledge of possible risks and benefits of participation. Informed consent ensures participants have the information they need to decide to or not to participate in the focus group discussion. To obtain informed verbal consent, the script below should be read by the facilitator to all participants at the start of the focus group discussion. If everyone agrees to participate in the focus group discussion, the facilitator should select “yes” to the informed consent question(s) below. If any individual does not agree to participate, thank them for their time and ask them to leave. Once they have left, check the “yes” option to the informed consent question(s) and proceed with the FGD. If any individual agrees to participate at the start of the FGD but decides to stop participating partway through, the facilitator should thank them for their time, then ask them if they agree to the evaluator using the responses that they have provided so far. If they agree, thank them for their time and continue with the FGD once they have left. If they do not agree, be sure to write the individual's first name (do not write down their second name) in the “Notes” box below and note that they left the discussion early and would not like their responses used. Also make sure that the number entered into the “Number of participants” row in the table below does not include any individuals who do not agree to participate in the focus group discussion at the start of the session, nor any individuals who decide to withdraw partway through the focus group discussion and do not give permission for use of their responses before withdrawing.



Focus group number:	
Number of participants:	
Focus group population (language, gender, age):	
Date of Activity:	
Start time:	End time:
Facilitator's name and email:	
Notes:	

**Script**

*Introduction: Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ (and introduce any colleagues with you). I will be asking the questions today and running the group.*

*We are talking to you today because we'd like to understand your impressions of \_\_\_\_\_ [NAME OF MEDIA OUTLET/PROGRAM] regarding COVID-19 and what information you have heard and how you may have used that information. We are going to ask you all questions and then have a discussion where we hope to hear from all of you. There are no right or wrong answers. The discussion will take approximately one hour and 15 minutes.*

*This discussion is voluntary, meaning that you are answering these questions because you want to, not because you have to. If you prefer to not answer a question, that is okay.*

*We may share the aggregate data, or the general information that we learn, publicly so that others may learn from this discussion. This may include publishing the results externally. If you agree to participate in this discussion, we will be using your demographic information in our analysis and reports, including your gender, age, country of origin and language. No names or personally identifiable information will be shared in reports or publications.*

*We are also asking everyone here to please keep what others share private so that everyone can talk openly and honestly. Also, we want you to ask questions or let us know if you don't understand something, or if something that we said is bothering you in any way.*

*We are recording this discussion so we can take notes and not miss anything that was said. The recording will also be transcribed after the session. The recording will not be shared with anyone outside of our team. We will be keeping the transcript of the recording and the notes taken during this session. Notes and transcripts may also be translated into English. Your personally identifiable information will not be included anywhere in the transcript or notes. Notes and transcripts will be shared only with our team.*

*Thank you so much for being here and being willing to do this! Your thoughts and ideas are really helpful in understanding the extent to which \_\_\_\_\_ [MEDIA ORGANIZATION'S*

*PROGRAM] was able to provide you with information useful to you and your community regarding COVID-19.*

*Before we begin, do you feel comfortable participating in this discussion and answering my questions? Do you have any questions before we start?*

*I want to highlight three key points again.*

- *Your name and personally identifiable information will not be shared in any reports.*
- *Your participation in this interview is voluntary.*
- *You can stop answering questions or leave at any time.*

*Do you understand, and do you agree to continue?*

***Informed consent was obtained from participants:***  *Yes*  *No*

***Informed consent was obtained from parent/caregiver for participant(s) younger than 18 years:***

*Yes*  *No*  *N/A*

***Focus group discussion questions (1 hour)***

I would first like to take two minutes to meet each other. Please share your name and your favorite food. For example, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. My favorite food is \_\_\_\_\_. [Prompt participants to share]

We will now begin recording.

1. What information have you heard about COVID-19?  
Probe: Do you know how it is transmitted? Treated?
2. What are the main sources of information available to you on prevention and treatment of COVID-19?  
Probe: Family? Community leaders? Media - radio? TV? newspaper? Social media?
3. Where were you getting most of your information about COVID-19 during the early stages of the pandemic?
4. Where are you getting your information about COVID-19 now? Why/how has it changed?
5. Are the sources that you use for COVID-19 different than the sources you use for other news or information? How are they different? What other sources do you use?
6. What source or sources of information did you find ***most reliable and trustworthy?***
7. Why do you trust these sources?
8. What source or sources did you find ***least reliable and trustworthy?***
9. Why do you ***not trust*** these sources?

10. Is there information that you would like to get that you are not getting? What information is that?
11. Would you consider your current knowledge on COVID-19 sufficient to keep you and your family safe?
12. What do you feel are the strengths of \_\_\_\_\_ [PARTNER'S MEDIA PROGRAM]?
13. What you feel are the weaknesses of \_\_\_\_\_ [PARTNER'S MEDIA PROGRAM]?
14. Do you have any other thoughts/suggestions/opinions/comments about [PARTNER'S MEDIA PROGRAM]?

***Closing Script (5 minutes)***

This concludes the questions. Thank you again for participating in this discussion today. We know that your time and ideas are valuable. If you have any questions following this discussion, you can contact me at [\_\_\_\_\_]. Thank you.

Annex IV Local partner survey

<p>Free Press Unlimited (together with its partners International Media Support, Fondation Hirondelle, DW Akademie, Article 19 and Reporters without Borders) is conducting an external evaluation of the program "COVID-19 Response in Africa: Together for Reliable Information". As part of that evaluation, the evaluators would like to hear from the grantees. As such, kindly answer the questions below. The survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. Your input is critical in ensuring future programs meet the needs of local partners.</p>																																																											
<p>In which country are you based?</p>	<table> <tr><td>Tanzania</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>Zimbabwe</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Kenya</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Niger</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Malawi</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Côte d'Ivoire</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Ghana</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>South Sudan</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Cameroun</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Ethiopia</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Liberia</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Mozambique</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Zambia</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Sudan</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Sierra Leone</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Mali</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>The Gambia</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Bénin</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Burkina Faso</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Netherlands</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Burundi</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Guinée</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Cameroon</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">Notre organisation est basée au Burkina Faso. Mais nous intervenons dans les 15 pays de la CEDEAO et en Mauritanie</td></tr> <tr><td>Uganda</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Republic of South Africa</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Madagascar</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Rwanda</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>SENEGAL</td><td>1</td></tr> </table>	Tanzania	5	Zimbabwe	4	Kenya	4	Niger	3	Malawi	3	Côte d'Ivoire	2	Ghana	2	South Sudan	2	Cameroun	2	Ethiopia	2	Liberia	2	Mozambique	2	Zambia	1	Sudan	1	Sierra Leone	1	Mali	1	The Gambia	1	Bénin	1	Burkina Faso	1	Netherlands	1	Burundi	1	Guinée	1	Cameroon	1	Notre organisation est basée au Burkina Faso. Mais nous intervenons dans les 15 pays de la CEDEAO et en Mauritanie		Uganda	1	Republic of South Africa	1	Madagascar	1	Rwanda	1	SENEGAL	1
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<p>What type of grant(s) did you receive from FPU and/or its partners? (select all that apply)</p>																																																											

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Media sub-grant</li> <li>▪ Media emergency grant</li> <li>▪ Lobby and advocacy grant</li> <li>▪ Factchecking grant</li> <li>▪ Other</li> </ul>	<p>25</p> <p>17</p> <p>3</p> <p>8</p> <p>4</p>
<p>Which FPU partner(s) provided your organization with support?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ FPU</li> <li>▪ Article 19</li> <li>▪ Dw Akademie</li> <li>▪ Fondation Hirondelle</li> <li>▪ International Media Support</li> <li>▪ Reporters without Borders</li> </ul>	<p>14</p> <p>8</p> <p>8</p> <p>8</p> <p>24</p> <p>2</p>
<p>My organization was satisfied with the process used by FPU and/or its partners to award financial support.</p> <p>1 Strongly disagree</p> <p>2 disagree</p> <p>3 neither agree nor disagree</p> <p>4 agree</p> <p>5 strongly agree</p>	<p>0</p> <p>0</p> <p>0</p> <p>14</p> <p>36</p>
<p>The support that my organization received from FPU and/or its partners was tailored and responsive to our needs.</p> <p>1 Strongly disagree</p> <p>2 disagree</p> <p>3 neither agree nor disagree</p> <p>4 agree</p> <p>5 strongly agree</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>19</p> <p>28</p>
<p>The support that my organization received from FPU and/or its partners was conducted in an uncomplicated manner and bureaucracy was avoided as much as possible.</p> <p>1 Strongly disagree</p> <p>2 disagree</p> <p>3 neither agree nor disagree</p> <p>4 agree</p> <p>5 strongly agree</p>	<p>0</p> <p>2</p> <p>0</p> <p>23</p> <p>25</p>
<p>Support provided by FPU and/or its partners increased my organization's institutional and/or technical capacity.</p> <p>1 Strongly disagree</p> <p>2 disagree</p> <p>3 neither agree nor disagree</p> <p>4 agree</p> <p>5 strongly agree</p>	<p>0</p> <p>0</p> <p>2</p> <p>24</p> <p>24</p>

<p>Support provided by FPU and/or its partners increased my organization's ability to promote information about COVID-19 to my community.</p> <p>1 Strongly disagree      0  2 disagree                    0  3 neither agree nor disagree      1  4 agree                            7  5 strongly agree                    42</p>	
<p>Support provided by FPU and/or its partners increased my organization's ability to promote information about COVID-19 <i>to the most vulnerable in</i> my community</p> <p>1 Strongly disagree      0  2 disagree                    0  3 neither agree nor disagree      3  4 agree                            12  5 strongly agree                    35</p>	
<p>Support provided by FPU and/or its partners was relevant <i>to my organization.</i></p> <p>1 Strongly disagree      0  2 disagree                    1  3 neither agree nor disagree      0  4 agree                            11  5 strongly agree                    38</p>	
<p>Support provided by FPU and/or its partners was relevant <i>to the community</i> my organization serves.</p> <p>1 Strongly disagree      0  2 disagree                    0  3 neither agree nor disagree      1  4 agree                            16  5 strongly agree                    33</p>	
<p>Support provided by FPU and/or its partners contributed to the provision of reliable information on COVID-19 for the community.</p> <p>1 Strongly disagree      0  2 disagree                    0  3 neither agree nor disagree      1  4 agree                            13  5 strongly agree                    36</p>	
<p>Support provided by FPU and/or its partners resulted in a positive impact on my organization.</p> <p>1 Strongly disagree      0  2 disagree                    1  3 neither agree nor disagree      19  4 agree                            30</p>	

5 strongly agree	
Support provided by FPU and/or its partners resulted in a positive impact on my community.	
1 Strongly disagree	0
2 disagree	0
3 neither agree nor disagree	4
4 agree	18
5 strongly agree	28
My organization was satisfied with the day-to-day management of the grant and working relationship with FPU and/or its partners.	
1 Strongly disagree	0
2 disagree	0
3 neither agree nor disagree	1
4 agree	22
5 strongly agree	27
What, if any, changes or improvements would your organization recommend to similar activities in the future?	<p>La collaboration avec FPU et partenaires sur le projet "COVID-19 Response in Africa : Ensemble pour une information fiable" a été bonne, mais il y a toujours place pour l'amélioration et le changement. Un meilleur échange d'informations pourrait aider FPU et ses partenaires à comprendre les besoins des médias. Cela permet d'identifier les détails clés qui peuvent être résolus afin d'exécuter correctement les projets futurs.</p> <p>to To train journalists under my organization from community radios on ways to report covid 19 stories.</p> <p>Étendre plus sur les activités à proposer et d'avoir plus de subvention</p> <p>Timely release of the funds</p> <p>Arabic translations for resources where possible; journalism training on reporting on pandemics. Overall a great project - thank you.</p> <p>I am satisfied with the quick response, making it possible radio equipment available with in few weeks. To replenished what we lost in the fire tragedy. This enables us to continue our information service delivery to the community at a very difficult and desperate worldwide situation.</p> <p>In order for the continued sustainability of the results realised and our interventions, there is need for continued support as COVID 19 is still a lived reality</p>

	<p>Pour les activités similaires à l'avenir, nous aimerions ajouter en plus des productions média, des activités terrain de rencontre avec notre communauté que nous pouvons diffuser sur nos différentes plateformes média.</p>
	<p>Timely feedback and support on finances for smooth implementation</p>
	<p>Je souhaiterai qu'au regard du contexte difficile du Sahel que la subvention accordée soit plus rehaussée</p>
	<p>Sharing some of our best content with you to run on your social media platforms when the grant period starts. We may not have to wait until the end of the grant.</p>
	<p>nous souhaitons que les émissions soient également produites dans les principales langues locales du pays afin de toucher une plus grande partie de la population</p>
	<p>nothing</p>
	<p>Currently the support if reaching to 10 Radio stations equal to 10 region in Tanzania out of 35 radio member station from 30 regions, I would recommend the expansion of the target area and budget as well so that the community Radio network can reach to country-wide, so that help the rural communities to access COVID_19 messages (awareness). As Tanzania has started to provide vaccination it is prime time for local people to be given a positive information of the vaccination and avoid false</p>
	<p>No changes</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accorder plus de temps pour la mise en oeuvre des activités du projet ;</li> <li>- Octroyer un financement plus conséquent pour permettre à l'équipe à mieux se déployer surtout sur le terrain dans le cadre de la collecte des données.</li> </ul>
	<p>In this regard, as to our organization, everything is ok. I recommend the support and assistance we gave so far got from the partner is very smooth and efficiently processed that has to be continued. May be one thing I may suggest is that if there is capacity building trainings to help our organizations capability of activity implementation.</p>
	<p>Nous approuvons la présente formule du partenariat qui nous donne plus de facilité dans la réalisation du projet et plus de liberté de travail. Le résultat est toujours bon si le travail sans trop grande pression.</p>



	<p>to open the grand to suitable time and give a fund and and project's duration that can make the local NGOs and media institutions make a change.</p>
	<p>A Research grant at the end of the project grant to assess the impact of the projects implemented.</p>
	<p>I would request long term grants because providing reliable information is not a onetime thing, it needs to continue until you realize results.</p>
	<p>Pour des activités similaires à l'avenir, nous suggérons avoir à temps les fonds afin de commencer à bonne date les différentes activités comme stipuler dans le document d'accord de soutien financier</p>
	<p>The project need to be given enough time to implement more</p>
	<p>This support was so timely and less complicated. Technical support too may be needed in the future.</p>
	<p>Reaching out to the field and witness the activities in implementation</p>
	<p>I would propose a longer grant of 18-24 months to really increase its impact.</p>
	<p>While we are so appreciative of the grant and its impact, we believe more could have been done had the funds been more. Vulnerable and hard to reach areas are still hungry for reliable information sources. We want to do more in this regard</p>
	<p>continue to support community radios</p>
	<p>To increase the grant amount so as to reach a reasonable number of audience in our country Tanzania</p>
	<p>Supporting the work of the Community Media Space with digital tools and digital awareness. Many media beneficiaries have a very low level of access to these tools and skills and this has made things very challenging</p>
	<p>Notre organisation propose pour les activités similaires à venir, l'augmentation de la subvention afin d'atteindre une plus grande cible et de la durée du projet à 2 ou 3 ans. Il faut également prévoir des voyages d'échanges entre les cadres techniques dans les pays où le projet est mis en œuvre afin de promouvoir les partages d'expériences et des bonnes pratiques en vue d'améliorer les résultats.</p>
	<p>Etendre le projet sur une période d'au moins une année pour mieux évaluer les impacts positifs du projet. Ceci car il est difficile de trouver des impacts pour projet de 3 mois.</p>

	<p>There should be a strategy to sustain the collaboration beyond the current scope and timeline of the current project.</p> <p>Au cours de ce programme nous avons compris que la population a un besoin vital de la bonne information sur les questions de santé publique (pas que sur la Covid 19) demande faite par ces communautés lors de nos missions en région. Avoir un programme qui traite justement ces sujets à l'avenir en formats multimédias répondra à ce besoin réel d'information utile pour les communautés.</p> <p>None at the moment</p> <p>My organization will like to recommend that in future activities we should encourage more community engagement approaches indented to reach the poorest of the poor who are mostly marginalized.</p> <p>For my organization, this is a new partnership, and still looking toward more future collaborations. However, an increase in funding will be appreciated to enable partners to reach more vulnerable people and communities in areas where we work.</p> <p>Consideration for more funding for capacity building reaching out to more people.</p> <p>Comme FPU/IMS l'a fait avec nous, il faut toujours penser aux médias de proximité qui sont en région qui font un travail énorme, Des fois, situés à des milliers de km de la capitale comme Air Info, ces médias font de leur mieux !</p> <p>Néant</p> <p>Nous n'avons pas de suggestions particulières. Nous souhaiterions juste que l'initiative soit perpétuée.</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>La durée de l'intervention doit être plus longue et inclure des activités de renforcement de capacités sur les thématiques de l'intervention pour mieux outiller des acteurs des médias</p>
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	<p>On financial management, we would like to advice IMS to use partner's organisations internal financial standards when it satisfied itself they are okay. Most organisations including ours retire transport fund and leave per diem (Substance allowance) receipts because of complications in getting receipts especially in rural areas. The type of receipts we get in rural areas sometimes raises unnecessary auditing issues as some of the service providers does not know even how to write properly.</p> <p>We are happy that IMS support even small newsrooms with average audience and is open for new storytelling ideas even if they are not popular. This help build digital news startups especially during pandemic where getting such fund to experiment impactful news content like on Covid-19 is hard. We really appreciate for that openness and willingness to support digital journalism. We expect that they will continue to do this kind of support.</p> <p>I would recommend that the activities were of a longer duration (<math>\geq</math> 1 year) so that impact is easily measured and determined</p> <p>Everything was perfect, honestly. The process was easy, funds were disbursed on time and the IMS were very patient with us when we delayed, by a few days, to submit our final report due to the Presidential elections we had in Zambia. The entire process was flawless, and we are grateful for the support.</p> <p>Not much. Skills training/updating opportunities. Networking with similar organisations in different countries for inspiration.</p> <p>None</p> <p>There must be efforts to sustain the collaboration beyond the current project timeline. This partnership must be seen as the first step to enhanced collaboration among the various organisations.</p>
<p>Thank you. If you would like to arrange an interview with the evaluators please leave your name and contacts below.</p>	