A. Background

Free Press Unlimited (FPU) works to ensure that reliable news and information are and remain available to people across the globe, particularly for people in countries where there is little to no press freedom. By supporting local media professionals and journalists, Free Press Unlimited helps to enable as many people as possible to gain and keep access to the information they require to survive and develop.

Project Summary

Free Press Unlimited is implementing a third running programme in Syria, titled Cohesion through Independent and Inclusive Media (CIIM), which is part of a long term strategy that started almost 10 years ago. From 2021 - 2023, Free Press Unlimited is working with several Syria media organizations to strengthen the role of Syrian media in promoting dialogue among divided Syrian communities. Free Press Unlimited, and strategic partners, see greater inclusivity, accountability and trust within Syrian society as key to reconciliation and peace. To encourage these values and empower actors, we will support diverse activities that fall within three interconnecting "change pathways": Inclusivity, Dialogue, and Accountability.

Main objectives:

- Media outlets and professionals, civil society organisations jointly engage as and with change makers in Syria for dialogue towards social cohesion, trust, inclusiveness in the Syrian society
- Syrian youth (females and males) become more media literate, allowing them to become more resilient to misinformation and hate speech, and they are empowered in expressing their voices and promoting their rights in the media, dialogue and society.
- Media outlets / professionals and CSOs increase cross sector collaboration to develop mechanisms to hold duty bearers accountable, promote ethical journalism, and work towards inclusive solutions for Syrian society.

Specific objectives:

- To support and contribute to the dialogue and advocacy efforts planned and implemented by both FPU and the supported partners
- To improve the accountability of the governing authorities through investigative and solution journalism.

B. Evaluation objectives:

The CIIM (Cohesion through Inclusive and Independent Media) Programme, is a Sida funded programme to support Syrian media that runs from November 2021 until November 2024. The main objective of the Midterm and the final review is to evaluate the CIIM strategy, its relevance, effectiveness, and implementation. Eventually its impact.

C. Key Questions:

On dialogue and collaboration:

- How partners relate to and acted within the dialogue objective of the programme dialogue? If yes how?
- What might be the factors that contribute to the partners/and non partners to value and participate in the activities under the dialogue objective or prevented them from actively engaging?
- Are partners working towards a common agenda (recommendation first mid-term assessment)?
- Has there been initial results of increased dialogue, also across divide lines?
- To which extent is the programme promoting cohesiveness and inclusiveness and critical thinking and does it have an impact on the awareness and the way the partners and attendees work at the issues dealt with under the programme objectives?
- What is the impact (influence) of the dialogue sessions implemented by the supported partners on the participants in terms of behavioral change among them, their attitude towards the talks or sessions and the language used during the sessions.
- Has the dialogue program seen a rise of women and youth participation, engagement?
- Has managed to rise inclusion of women, youth in the media content, interventions and actions of dialogue?

On policy and advocacy:

- Has the programme made some progress in raising priority for advocacy, raising skills for the participants in the advocacy activities under the programme objective.
- Has the ground work for lobby and advocacy been laid eg: increased awareness and capacity?
- If yes, which actions can be observed (or are not taking place) that follow from the groundwork that has been laid?

On accountability:

- How FPU supported partners are using the accountability mechanism and how the partners 'perform' when compared among themselves in regards to adopting the accountability mechanism?
- Through analysis of the various results and data, what is the impact of the mechanism on the quality and impartiality of the content produced among partners?
- What were the steps taken by the media outlets that participate in the accountability? And what was intended by theses steps ?

On ethical principles:

- Have ethical principles been incorporated by partners as envisioned?

On Research:

- Have partners made use of monitoring and event based monitoring output and/or research consultation activities? How?

On Learning:

- Has the programme contributed to professionalization of the supported partners. (Note – learning components are expected to be light handed, and focus on observing how partners apply previous learning and mature)
- Has the programme contributed to increased engagement, crossing divide lines and more understanding?
- Has the programme contributed to increased accountability of the supported partners (Syrian media sector).
- To what extent are partners (for whom this applies) using knowledge accumulated in the previous cycles of support from FPU which included capacity building and training cycles.
- How the partners are incorporating this knowledge into the new program.

On Gender and inclusivity:

- Has the programme stimulated gender balance and reduced gender gaps in terms of participation and representation in the activities under the three objectives of the program? How?
- Has the programme increased gender mainstreaming within partners programmes? How?
- Have possible old or new gender gaps identified and addressed? If so how? (refer to gender indicator used in the M&E mechanism among others)
- If yes how is this happening ?
- Has the team managed to set preconditions to run 2 years Youth program? If yes, how? (starting from year2)
- Has the programme led some concrete foundation for youth centered approach, content and/or vision work? If so how?
- has the program helped partners to identify and address critical issues of youth and/or with youth?
- Has the program manged to raise awareness and interest to reach and serve youth audiences?
- Has the program identified and created opportunities for youth as users, as makers and/or as actor of change?
- How partners relate to and acted within the Youth component objective of the programme?
- What might be the factors that contribute to the partners/and non partners to value and participate in the activities under the Youth objective or prevented them from actively engaging?

On Security and PHS:

- Has the programme stimulated and increased security awareness? and how did that happen?
- Has the programme delivered tools and a safety mechanism and is it used?
- Has the programme addressed psycho-social needs in a good way? and how did that happen?

Questions that could be used to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact:

I. Relevance

- What is the added value of FPU compared to support/collaboration with other donors/actors?
- How did/does the programme relate to the changing realities in Syria;
- Did/does the programme adapt quickly enough;
- Is the strategy relevant beyond the CIIM programme;
- Do the objectives of the programme still stand;
- How is the programme perceived by the stakeholders;
- How are the outlets perceived by the stakeholders;
- How are the media partners adapting their strategy in line with the current situation;
- What are the overall assumptions of the programme. Have they been/are they being addressed;
- How does the programme relate to the problems the emerging Syrian media are facing?
- Is support offered to the media partners (beneficiaries) responding to their needs and proven valuable for the partners?
- Are the supported organisations relevant to the final beneficiaries i.e. the audience?

II. Effectiveness

- Have the media partners embraced and adopted the idea that working along a strategy is contributing to their audience ?
- What are major factors that contribute(d) to achieving the objectives? (stories if possible)
- To what extent does the (editorial) approach and manner of working of the outlets media partners foster the achievement of the supported projects?
- To what extend do the strategies and manner of working of the media outlets foster the achievement of supported projects outcome?
- To what extent have the media institutions managed to run their operation (implementer role) managing their team (employer role) and protect and promote their mission in an effective way? (Note: the institutions are faced with complex and multiple layers of attention - are governed by a collective ownership and democratically elected leadership – the scope of this program is to light-handed coach them to have as much as possible stability, effectiveness and impact)
- What are the major external factors that influenced the program implementation and the achievement of the objectives?

III. Efficiency

- Assess FPUs coordination with other international media organisations covering Syria. Is there an overlap or a work share? How does coordination work?
- Have appropriate inputs been deployed at the lowest possible cost whilst taking into consideration the needs of the partners involved?
- Have activities been conducted in an appropriate manner?
- Were safety/security issues that affect the implementation of the programme been properly addressed without negatively affecting the implementation of activities?
- Have decisions been made at the right level and has bureaucracy been avoided as much as possible?
- Have overhead costs been kept to a minimum?
- Has duplication been avoided?
- Have conflicts during implementation been prevented or solved?
- Have outputs been achieved within the planned period and budget?
- Is the overall logic of the programme according to the challenges of the situation?

IV. Sustainability

- What real difference has the activities made to the partners? (management and output/production/services) (Note: the CIIM programme builds on a previous institutional development programme – focus now is maturity steps, trends)
- Is the programme strategy and management steering toward impact? (Internal – by team and external – by partners)
- To what extent are the benefits of the programme likely continue after the funding ceases?
- What are the major factors which influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the programme so far?
- How many media consumers have been affected directly and indirectly? (estimation of the outreach)
- How? (stories and wow moments)
- How can the impact of the media outlets been described in their work? Towards the final beneficiaries (quant. digital metrics); qual, research?.
- What has happened as a result of the programmes or activities in the sphere of interest or concern? If possible, stories would be appreciated
- What real difference is the programme and its activities making to the beneficiaries?
- Which non-intended positive or negative outcomes can be identified?
- What was the impact of co-production fund (CpF) on building relationships?
- What has happened as a result of the CpF programme?

D. Methodology

The approach is mixed method. This comprises analysis of the extensive documentation available and one to one or small group Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). All interviews will be remote.

The main documentation comprises:

- CIIM Annual plans
- Partner Annual plans
- Research reports include audience research
- Partner Audience and users figures
- Assorted activity documentations
- PME documentation (to measure progress);
- Progress markers for institutional development
- Progress markers for gender and youth (when available)Event-based Monitoring report (measuring progress of professional standards in content production by media outlets)
- Outcome harvesting materials produced by the FPU team building on the 5 year programme

KII will be undertaken with:

- FPU staff and consultants
- Partner staff
- Other stakeholders as required

Actors and stakeholders:

- FPU staff
- Direct beneficiaries of the project (up to12 partners)
- Indirect beneficiaries)who have been involved or participated through other projects/initiatives, such as the co-production fund): other media organisations / members of the supported media institutions, civil society organizations, institutions and commissions
- Donors

The levels of the evaluation will be: partner level, programme level, strategy level and country level.

E. Deliverables

The following deliverables are expected to be provided by the consultant:

- Inception briefing with FPU project staff and staff from knowledge and quality.
- Inception report containing the methodology and work plan by the consultant. The work plan shall include objective and evaluation questions, approach, methodology, and relevance and justification of proposal. It is accompanied with a draft time line with proposed activities and include questionnaires, interview guides, and any other data collection tools to be used (max. 5 pages).
- Data collection.
- Interview report describing how the tools were developed, how the interview went, and what challenges were faced.
- Report - The consultant will produce the first draft report before 15 February 2023. The evaluation report will address the questions as posed in this Terms of Reference and will include good practices and learning points / recommendations for the future.
- The report includes visuals, like table, graphs, survey statistics etc. - and includes reference to content to substantiate the analysis, when possible refers to quotation, link of articles or studies etc.
- Validation - Narrative report that incorporates feedback on draft report by FPU and partners. The final evaluation will be in English. After consultation and upon receipt of feedback of the draft report by partners and FPU, the evaluator will produce a final evaluation report by 28 February 2023.
- The evaluation will draft an **executive summary** (not less than 3 pages), which will be shared, elaborated and discussed with the beneficiaries to validate the report gathering reactions, and input needed to draft the future conduct reflecting the lessons learned and good practices of the programme.
- The final report will be then dealt with in a presentation to the FPU Management Team and Programme staff of FPU and possibly to partners in a partner event/webinar. The report will also be shared with the donor, SIDA.