

Final Evaluation Report
**“Capacity Development for the Association of
Journalists of Kosovo” project**

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Executive Summary

The aim of the evaluated project was to facilitate the continuing development and expansion of APJK as a vital mechanism for oversight and accountability in Kosovo. The intention of the project was to strengthen the contribution of media in promoting democratic governance, through capacity development initiatives, including professional training, to increase cohesion of the professional body, greater advocacy for freedom of speech and information, enabling greater outreach, and encourage stronger participation of the media. Project activities were framed around the following three outputs (which were considered under the evaluation):

- (1) Capacity of the Association of Professional Journalists improved;
- (2) Laws and regulatory frameworks for freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of information established or revised according to international standards; and
- (3) Access to information for excluded groups and quality of reporting improved.

The following are the findings of the project evaluation:

- Project design didn't involve APJK staff and the media community.
- Outputs and outcomes set highly optimistic benchmarks.
- Partners identified during the project design were not capable of carrying out the activities, but APJK was able to find new partners and implement alternative activities.
- Project implementation had a three to four months delay.
- The visibility of APJK increased considerably during two years.
- Journalists have started to see APJK as a legitimate and credible address.
- The project has installed regular discussion, debriefing and consultation fora among journalists.
- Two years ago APJK did not have technical resources and institutional memory.
- Irregularities in APJK's standards of decision-making.
- Public reactions fastened, still APJK couldn't go beyond press-releases.
- Development of strategic planning capacities initiated, but not fully operational.
- Operational/financial management and service delivery capacities still at a maturing phase.
- Analytical, policy and advocacy capacities essential for a professional association.
- Financial sustainability of APJK at risk.
- Criticism about the awards and prizes for the best journalists of the year.
- Legal and regulatory framework might be enabling, but the problem remains with the courts.
- Process of opposing articles 37&38 made APJK an important media stakeholder.
- The exchange of journalists between Kosovo and Serbia, a positive example to be learned from.
- Grants and scholarships for journalists failed, but substituted with non-formal education.
- APJK reaction too weak compared to the degree of political interference in RTK.
- APJK was unable to promote and protect socio-economic rights of journalists.
- APJK as an accelerator of international reactions.
- Gender component not addressed during the project.
- Web-page not updated, not fully operational, lack of information and content.
- Registration (re-registration) of journalists prolonged unjustifiably.
- Quality of media reporting a legitimate concern.

Introduction

The overall objectives of the evaluation are: a. to assess achievements, constraints, impact and sustainability of the project, b. to generate lessons learned, and c. to provide recommendations for future strategies of project stakeholders. The evaluation will particularly look at the outcome level impact of the project, measuring the concrete changes occurred in relation to the project objectives.

The evaluation was comprehensive and covers the outcome, outputs, activities and inputs of the project. In this context, the evaluation extracts lessons for future interventions in the sector and outlines main areas of focus for future projects in the area.

The scope of the evaluation incorporates the following categories of analysis:

- Efficiency: the productivity of the implementation process - how good and how cost-efficient the process of transforming inputs into outputs and outcomes was;
- Effectiveness: a measure of the extent to which the project has effectively implemented its results;
- Capacity development: as a key to development effectiveness, the achievement of the capacity development goals and sustainable local development.

Methodology

The following evaluation methods were applied: a. desk reviews of relevant documents, b. interviews with project team, partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries, c. focus-group with journalists, d. field visits to project sites, and e. consultation, briefing and debriefing sessions with UNDP staff:

- *Desk review of relevant documents* – The initial phase of the evaluation task was spent studying and analyzing the following documents: Project document, midterm reports, Final Report, documents produced by the project, UN Common Development Plan for Kosovo 2011-2015, Kosovo Program Action Plan 2011-2015, project cooperation agreement, media coverage on project activities, project budget, international reports on freedom of speech and media, etc;
- *Interviews with project team, partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries* – After a careful scanning of the relevant documents, a round of interviews was conducted with the key informants: APJK staff, UNDP staff, and journalists from print and electronic media in Kosovo;
- *Focus group with journalists* – An overall assessment of the project's impact was conducted through a group discussion with a group of 10 journalists, some of which were direct participants and beneficiaries of the project. The aim of the focus group was to confront different views and perceptions of journalists on the project's impact and identify successes and constraints;
- *Consultation, briefing and debriefing sessions with UNDP staff* – UNDP staff received regular updates on evaluation progress. In addition, consultation, briefing and debriefing sessions were held on a regular basis.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation was conducted around the following questions concerning the project specifically:

- Were the outputs achieved? What are the factors (positive and negative) that affected the accomplishment of the outputs? To what extent has APJK contributed to the achievement of the outputs?
- Were the activities to achieve the outputs effective and efficient? How well were the activities planned and implemented? Were key methodologies and approaches that facilitate the success of the initiative, particularly regarding participation and empowerment, gender balance, and delivery of necessary inputs appropriate?
- How appropriate were the inputs? Were the inputs sufficient to achieve the results? How cost effective they were?
- Ascertain whether the partnership strategy has been appropriate and effective. What were the partnerships formed, including UN Agencies and other donor organizations? What was the role of APJK? How did the partnerships contribute to the achievement of the outputs? What was the level of stakeholders' participation?

- An assessment of the likelihood that the project's results will endure after the active involvement of UNDEF and UNDP has ended. To what extent the changes (and benefits) brought by the projects can be expected to last after projects completion. The evaluation should provide recommendations for potential follow-up interventions, i.e. how feasible the follow-up actions would be, what alternatives can be identified and/or what components can be added to it, what knowledge products could be developed.

About the project

The establishment of an accountable and democratic governance system is a core issue for every young democracy and the role that independent media play in this process is crucial. International reports indicate that the government of Kosovo enhanced the legislative framework for the media, but in some cases failed to implement it or protect media freedoms enshrined in the constitution. While Kosovo's constitution and legal framework provide for freedom of expression and freedom of the press, the media environment continues to be affected by political interference, corruption, and financial pressure.

Political interference, direct and indirect, is a concern for both the public and private media. In 2011, the *Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo (APJK)*, being the representative voice of independent journalists, reported 33 instances of government officials, business interests, or media owners abusing press freedom, including through verbal threats against journalists and their agencies, pressure on outlets not to publish stories, and obstruction of reporters' work. Access to information and to public data remains difficult.

There is a law on access to information, but journalists report that they are often denied access to public sources in practice. Kosovo lacks a strong and private advertising industry that could support the growth of private media. As a result, private broadcasters have been dependent on international donors. Journalists have few professional rights, earn low wages, and often work without contracts, leaving them vulnerable to corruption and prone to self-censorship.

The project "Capacity Development for the Association of Journalists of Kosovo" was funded by the *United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)* and implemented by APJK from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2012. Quality assurance was provided by UNDP, who was also tasked to manage the financial transactions between UNDEF and APJK.

The aim of the project was to facilitate the continuing development and expansion of APJK as a vital mechanism for oversight and accountability in Kosovo. The intention of the project was to strengthen the contribution of media in promoting democratic governance, through capacity development initiatives, including professional training, to increase cohesion of the professional body, greater advocacy for freedom of speech and information, enabling greater outreach, and encourage stronger participation of the media.

Project activities were framed around the following 3 outputs: Output 1 – Capacity of the Association of Professional Journalists improved, Output 2 – Laws and regulatory frameworks for freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of information established or revised according to international standards, Output 3 – Access to information for excluded groups and quality of reporting improved.

Capacity development assistance was aimed at providing critical and immediate capacity development interventions in policy, management, leadership, and institutional reform. The project also aimed at

sensitizing government, public institutions and civil society to the importance of freedom of expression and freedom of press. In doing so, the project intended to raise the capacities of APJK to work with government authorities for the establishment and application of internationally recognized legal and regulatory standards for freedom of expression and freedom of information.

The project also attempted to establish enabling frameworks conducive to increasing media content that contributes to strengthening citizens' understanding of issues related to sustainable development and the environment; provide assistance to media organizations to impart subject-related knowledge to journalists and to strengthen their investigative capacities; and foster partnerships with media to create greater awareness of the importance of education for sustainable development.

Context

Freedom House's last Freedom of the Press report for Kosovo states that although the constitution and legal framework of the country provide for freedom of expression and freedom of the press, the media environment continues to be affected by political interference, corruption, and financial pressure. The report points out to the weak judiciary that is not considered to be fully independent and an underdeveloped civil society present further obstacles to media freedom. On the other side, Reporters without Borders' Press Freedom Index highlights the linkage of Kosovo media houses to political parties or financial groups that develop in their sphere of influence. The report also concludes that in the absence of foreign investment in the sector, these groups regularly practice "blackmail through advertising", in which they exchange their financial backing for advantageous media coverage. In addition, the report concludes that self-censorship that undermines part of the profession is aggravated by the absence of any real social status for journalists. UNDP's Public Pulse regularly reports that the public's perception of the freedom of media is quite low, ranging between 30 and 40 percent over the years.

Acknowledging the local context of media freedom, the UN Common Development Plan (CDP) for Kosovo 2011 – 2015 brings a new perspective and concrete suggestions to address this segment of the democratization in Kosovo. The document concludes that accountability through the media – an essential factor in other liberal societies – is minimal in Kosovo. Another guiding document of UNDP, the Kosovo Programme Action Plan (KPAP) 2011 – 2015, sets principles of the work of this organization in the area of democratic governance. According to KPAP, civil society participation, women's empowerment and greater transparency and accountability will receive important emphasis across these areas. The "Capacity Development for the Association of Journalists of Kosovo" project of UNDP/UNDEF, implemented by APJK, operated within the given context and aimed at fulfilling the objectives of democratic governance in Kosovo.

Output and outcome analysis

Project activities were framed around the following 3 outputs: Output 1 – Capacity of the Association of Professional Journalists improved, Output 2 – Laws and regulatory frameworks for freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of information established or revised according to international standards, and Output 3 – Access to information for excluded groups and quality of reporting improved.

Output 1 – Capacity of the Association of Professional Journalists improved – The following indicative activities were planned to fulfil the output 1 of the project:

- Establishment of the APJK Forum;
- Consensus building on the guiding principles for APJK;

- Launch of the discussions;
- Consultations, review and publication of the draft paper “A vision for the Capacity Development for APJK”;
- Advisory missions;
- Policy preparation;
- Support to exchange visits;
- Support to selected elements of media freedom.

All these activities, as also reported by the APJK through the Final Narrative Report of this project, were concluded. APJK believes to have successfully accomplished the activities that aimed at sensitizing the journalism community and the public at large regarding the challenges faced by the journalists. One of the activities, the APJK Forum, served to bring media and journalists together – something difficult in a context where media allegiances differ significantly and bring the media and journalists closer to stakeholders such as the government, Kosovo’s Assembly and civil society. The round-tables with different stakeholders (the government, civil society, etc.) helped APJK build its public image and made the association far more visible in comparison with the years prior to the project’s implementation. All interviewees and the focus group discussion conducted within this evaluation point out to this increased visibility. Visibility was considerably raised through frequent reactions of APJK on violations of journalists’ rights. The involvement of APJK in removing Article 37 and changing Article 38 in the draft Penal Code played a crucial role in shaping APJK's public image positively as the issue was on the top agenda of the media for a long time.

The development strategy of the APJK was another achievement under output 1. This is a strategic document, drafted professionally aiming to give a structure and systemic approach to the work of APJK. Nevertheless, the document “Action Paper on Association of Professional Journalists in Kosovo” alongside other suggestions, recommended the adoption of the “APJK 2012-2015 Development Strategy” through the Board of Directors immediately, and implement operational structuring of the organization in line with the objectives and timeline set in the strategy. Some months later, a follow-up mission revealed that most of the recommendations were not taken into account. Capacity development is a complex and time-consuming process and the APJK development should be viewed in this light. In addition, there were numerous shortcomings and structural problems that the last Board (2010-2012) inherited from the previous ones, such as: lack of filing and archiving of decisions made, unpaid rent of the premises, non-functional web-page, etc.

The process of registration of journalists was initiated, but not accomplished. APJK reported a slow response rate of the journalists to register, even after being notified and reminded several times. An issue of concern is the membership fee, an ongoing debate, which has slowed down the process of registration. Yet another reason of this delay and slowness is the limited human resource capacities of the APJK.

Two years after the project, the executive team of APJK is still the same, the Executive Director and a part-time finance and admin officer. There is a slight improvement in the terms of electronic and other necessary office equipment, but this does not reflect directly on the outcome of the APJK’s daily work in the absence of greater human resources. It is evident that the managerial, policy and advocacy capacities of APJK need further consolidation.

The project has managed to establish a general framework of institutional functionality by providing a number of necessary tools for capacity development. Today, a very promising debate inside APJK is the

need to amend the Statute and make a clear distinction between the Board and the executive staff. The Board should act as a decision-making body, but the daily management of the association should be done through a professional and executive staff. Currently, these two are not separate and many of the current and former Board members interviewed considered this to be one of the greatest burdens of the functionality of APJK.

In addition, the need for an APJK Secretariat is soundly articulated. These are clear indications of a professional approach, which is necessary for a functional, consolidated and impactful APJK.

Output 2 – Laws and regulatory frameworks for freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of information established or revised according to international standards – The following indicative activities were planned to fulfil the output 2 of the project:

- Freedom of information legal survey;
- Freedom of press and information campaign;
- Regional conference on freedom of press;
- Press freedom media contest;
- Media ethics, reporting and investigative journalism course for media professionals,
- Media and journalists vocational training framework established.

Activities aimed at achieving output 2 were the ones that boosted the visibility of APJK. Although the outputs were very broadly defined and far too optimistic for a 2-year-long project, APJK's engagement in the two articles of the Penal Code – according to a key informant of the evaluation – justifies the whole 2-year mandate of the last APJK Board. Clearly, there were conflicting interpretations regarding articles 37 and 38 of the Penal Code, even inside the media community. The process of opposing articles 37 and 38 was a proof that APJK has become a strong media stakeholder. The role of APJK was crucial in this process, as it was the only address which had the mandate and legitimacy to mobilize journalists and act on their behalf.

There were a number of PR activities undertaken during the International Press Day and the Week of Journalism, as well as the regional conference on the freedom of press. The wide outreach, the information campaign and the partnerships for the regional conference confirmed publicly the rise and consolidation of APJK. APJK has reported a high number of events under the output 2 activities, namely: Freedom of Information Survey, Freedom of Press Information Campaign, Freedom of Press Conference, Freedom of Press Festival, Freedom of Press Documentary, Freedom of Press Contest, Journalism Week, Action paper and round-table with UNDP, Guide to Access to Information, and “defending journalists”. Regarding the “defending journalists” component, APJK has processed 23 cases of violations of journalists' rights in Kosovo through press conferences and reactions. The cases included acts of physical violations, obstruction of journalists' work and denial of the right to cover events. However, the Board could not fully realize the promise to bring APJK beyond press-releases as a means of reaction to the violation of journalists' rights.

There are different understandings on whether these activities were effective. In general, those that think APJK has become stronger and more effective in its work, claim that there have been several concrete impacts during the last two years, namely: the decrease in numbers of direct threats and attacks on journalists, the increase of court cases against journalists, the number of international reactions triggered by APJK, the legal assistance provided to the journalists and the overall confidence built among the journalists that there is an institution capable of addressing the cases of violation of their rights.

Nevertheless, output 2 also had its challenges. The idea of establishing a scholarship together with the Kosovo Institute of Journalism and Communication (KIJAC) failed. The reason for that was the closing down of KIJAC right before the project implementation started. Since the main topics of this education component were supposed to be ethics and investigative journalism, the project staff organized alternative events (courses and trainings) on media ethics.

Courses and trainings for journalists were organized in partnership with different organizations, which have certain expertise on the topics covered. Although many journalists attended these events, a general concern is that there is a fatigue regarding conventional methods of training, capacity building, knowledge production and dissemination. There is no doubt that it is quite difficult to substitute the value and impact of formal education (master courses for journalists in this case) with non-formal methods. Some media houses and their journalists interviewed claimed that the information about these trainings was not disseminated properly and not everyone was given the opportunity to benefit from them.

One of the most frequently addressed challenges of journalists today is the lack of legal assistance. There is a growing trend of court cases initiated against journalists and in the last years this has reconfirmed the need for legal assistance for journalists. This service should definitely be provided by the APJK. To date, the association was able to assist journalists in a very limited number of cases, pointing out the lack of interest from the journalists to ask for such a service. In general, Kosovo is considered to have a solid legal and regulatory framework for freedom of expression, press and information. The challenge remains at the level of courts and their functionality and impartiality. Journalists are pretty much afraid of the new trend of the state using its courts to silence journalists. In this respect, APJK's role is crucial, as it is mandated to protect the rights of journalists.

Output 3 – Access to information for excluded groups and quality of reporting improved – The following indicative activities were planned to fulfil the output 3 of the project:

- Workshops for journalists;
- Poverty Prize;
- Environmental Journalism Award;
- Transparency Award;
- Gender Media Award;
- Gender mainstreaming.

Although APJK has reported on the meetings held with the excluded groups of society and claimed they helped sensitize the journalists on these groups' challenges, the quality of reporting is quite hard to be measured and it is difficult to assess this output properly. Almost everything in output 3 was related to the prizes and awards. There is a general feeling that not everything went well with the prizes. Some events were postponed and the winners were announced with delay, making it lose its traditional character as well. In general, awards and prizes are not considered to have a significant impact on the quality of reporting. APJK insists that the process was transparent and that the decisions were taken by an independent jury, based solely on merit criteria and with no APJK interference or influence in the process.

The gender component is quite problematic, but this situation is not exclusive to this project. Considering the overall context characterized by a male dominated culture, the gender mainstreaming was not achieved in the project. Kosovo's media still lack the standards of gender-sensitive reporting,

and the project was not able to address this structural and mindset problem of the media sector in Kosovo.

Partnership analysis

The partnership strategy foreseen in the project proposal considered KIJAC and Kosovo Media Institute (KMI) as two main project partners. Both were unable to play this role, creating additional problems to the project staff. A solution was sought in finding new partners and alternative ways of delivering the respective activities. The project was somewhat successful in partnering with state institutions, civil society organizations, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders in organizing events. A strong partnership under the APJK leadership was established during the campaign for the revision of articles 37 and 38 of the new draft Penal Code, a proof of the association's ability to partner and mobilize.

Partnerships were crucial to the achievement of the outputs, as partners provided a considerable portion of knowledge, experience, visibility, advocacy, etc. – areas APJK was short of. The level of participation of partners and stakeholders was quite high, as APJK staff tended to be quite flexible in inviting the partners and the degree of their involvement. From the functionality point of view, such an approach towards partners and stakeholders was quite beneficial, as APJK's capacities were quite limited and incapable of delivering such a number of activities.

Sustainability analysis

The outcome level analysis makes it clear that outcomes like: "capacities improved", "regulatory framework improved" and "improved coverage of disadvantaged groups" are rather optimistic for a two-year project. However, it should be highlighted that concrete results were achieved during these two years, contributing to the belief that the outcomes could be fully achieved. Any future follow-up intervention (which is feasible and recommended) should build on the achieved results and consider the shortcomings. In the absence of further support to the capacity development of APJK, there is a risk of undermining the results that were achieved to date. So, the positive changes brought by the project can be expected to last (and not vanish) if there is going to be another tool of support. The previous work of APJK (before the project) was not based on a strategic approach. Only when the project started, APJK transformed itself from an ad-hoc mechanism, to an institution with clear strategic objectives of operation and projected change. These two years helped APJK personnel reshape the role of the organization, by placing it within a framework of long-term planning and development. However, considering the many structural deficiencies from the past, one cannot expect huge achievements in terms of sustainability in just two years. APJK was unable to raise other funds and initiate other projects during the two years of project implementation. If it had happened, this could have strengthened the internal capacities by offering a sound prospect for financial sustainability of the association.

In designing the new follow-up action, attention should be paid to the following aspects:

- Consolidation of the management and delivery capacities of the executive staff (APJK Secretariat);
- Establishment of professional, analytical, policy, legal and advocacy capacities within APJK Secretariat;
- Greater focus on capacity development and professional education for journalists (formal and non-formal education);
- Higher levels of prior consultation with journalists as a way of incorporating their needs into the project design.

Findings

The following is a summary of the findings from the evaluation, each explained in short paragraphs, reflecting not only the situation vis-à-vis the project, but offering a holistic picture of APJK and freedom of expression, aiming to offer a better understanding of the context where the project intervened.

Project design didn't involve APJK people and the media community

APJK's staff and Board were involved at a very late stage of project design, leaving little room for their input. This affected their general understanding of the nature of the project, which means it took much more time to get them acquainted with the project objectives and activities than usual. In addition, the communication with UNDP Kosovo caused some delays, given that activities needed to be consulted with UNDP staff in order to properly understand the rationale behind them.

Outputs set highly optimistic benchmarks

The 3 outputs of the project were far too optimistic for a two-year project. Such an over-ambitious (and non-realistic) benchmarking in a highly sensitive sector in Kosovo (media) illustrates the lack of real touch of the project designers with the situation on the ground. Therefore, the evaluation had to rationalize the outcomes and outputs in order to put the whole work of the project into a more realistic perspective.

Partners identified were not capable of carrying out the activities

The Kosovo Institute for Journalism and Communications and the Kosovo Media Institute were selected as project partners from the beginning. Both failed to comply with their obligations due to different reasons. They left a substantial gap behind, affecting especially one of the most crucial components of the project, the formal education program. The project designers were not careful enough to check the capacities of both partners in advance.

APJK was able to find new partners and substitute activities

The absence of KIJAC and KMI were compensated in different ways over the course of the project's implementation. Partners such as Kosovo Press Council, Kosovo Democratic Institute and KIPRED were invited to be part of different project activities, mainly concerning the trainings for journalists. However, this substitution did not manage to offer a solution to the program of educational grants for journalists, an activity that was reported as failed.

Project implementation had a three to four months delay

Due to various reasons, project implementation started with a considerable delay. APJK made the first request for funds in March 2011 and started the implementation of project activities in April 2011. The whole of the project's activities were carried out with delay, thus affecting the intermediate reporting as well.

The visibility of APJK increased considerably during two years

APJK gained considerable credibility due to its intense media presence. This was a positive input for the public image of the association. Almost all journalists interviewed agree that for the first time, during 2011 and 2012 APJK has become popular and the people associated with it have become publicly known personalities (especially the President of the Board).

Journalists have started to see APJK as a legitimate and credible institution

Although there are different interpretations, an uncontested fact is that APJK is slightly becoming a legitimate institution for the journalists to address their concerns. One of the main reasons behind this

boost of credibility is the reaction mechanism that APJK put in function to address the violation of journalists' rights.

The project has installed regular discussion, debriefing and consultation fora among journalists

During the last two years, the sense of belonging to the wider journalists' community has evolved among journalists. A higher number of journalists have participated in project activities, reported cases of rights violations and expected direct assistance of APJK during the court cases. The project facilitated the process of regular internal discussions, adding another layer of legitimacy to the work of APJK. For the first time, the journalists were offered a concrete space to directly contribute to and influence the work of APJK Board.

Two years ago there were no technical resources and institutional memory

The previous Board had to start work from scratch. There was a total absence of physical space and technical equipment, necessary to operate the association properly. Although many challenges still remain (such as filing, archiving, web-site, PR, etc.) the project helped APJK improve its technical conditions of work.

Irregularities in APJK's standards of decision-making

The last two meetings of the Assembly of Members of APJK witnessed several irregularities regarding the democratic principles and standards of decision-making. During both meetings, APJK was incapable of creating a system of verification of the members who were present and casted their vote to elect the new Board and the President. According to media reports and journalists that participated in these meetings, a number of those voting were not journalists.

Public reactions fastened, still APJK couldn't go beyond press-releases

Previously, the process of public reactions went through a slow and bureaucratic process. During the last two years, the APJK Board managed to install a faster mechanism of reactions for the cases of violation of journalists' rights. However, the promise that the Board (and President) made in the beginning of their mandate to go beyond public reactions was not properly met. APJK assisted journalists in a few cases offering legal assistance, but there is not much else to report on.

Strategic planning capacities started to develop, but are not fully operational

The strategic development document drafted during the project was a good initial point in building the strategic planning and development of APJK. Nevertheless, the association is still lagging behind in terms of a fully operational and strategically run organization. A number of benchmarks set by the strategic development document are still pending.

Operational/financial management and service delivery capacities still at a maturing phase

The daily management of APJK work is left at the mercy of two executive staff members, the Executive Director and the part-time finance and admin officer. With such human resources, it is beyond imagination to expect an effective management of APJK, and a capacity to deliver services to the large community of journalists. The journalist community is a quite large one, with many different needs and challenges. One of the most critical needs of the community is legal assistance, something APJK promised to deliver, but did not yet achieve a desirable level of accomplishment.

Analytical, policy and advocacy capacities essential for a professional association

The policy documents that were produced during the project were mainly designed by outside partners of APJK. This means that, besides the importance of having these policy documents for advocacy

purposes, almost no know-how was transferred to APJK staff. With no policy analysis unit, APJK will always be dependent on others in preparing the evidence-based grounds for their advocacy towards policy and decision-making processes.

Financial sustainability of APJK at risk

After two years of the capacity building project, APJK has not managed to raise additional funds for its institutional sustainability. The inability of the APJK to utilize the project period for strengthening the financial sustainability of the association is one of the most unfortunate conclusions of the evaluation. After the project budget had been spent, APJK might face serious challenges in maintaining its operations.

There is still criticism about the awards and prizes for the best journalists of the year

The process of awarding the best journalists in different categories provoked continuous debate and criticism among journalists. The main critique is on the objectivity of the evaluation committee and its decisions. In addition, it is claimed that the award areas are too broadly set and that this does not contribute to the development of professional journalism and reporting in specific areas and topics. Some media and journalists claimed that there were intentions to eliminate them unfairly, awarding those journalists that have closer ties to APJK people. Finally, not everyone agrees that prizes and awards are the best way to raise quality of and promote professional reporting.

Legal and regulatory framework might be enabling, but the problem remains with the courts

The enabling environment for the work of journalists is not considered to be limiting. However, the judiciary remains at the top of challenges, undermining the national integrity system of Kosovo. With an ill-functioning judiciary, journalists are afraid they cannot take full advantage of the legal and regulatory framework for media freedom. On the other side, there is a general perception of an increased trend of court cases against journalists, as a new and sophisticated way to silence and blackmail them.

Articles 37 and 38 of the Penal Code confirmed APJK as a strong media stakeholder

Not all journalists agree that the removal of two articles from the Penal Code was a positive change for the freedom of the media in Kosovo. However, the battle fought over 37 and 38 marked a turning point for APJK, convincing everyone, and especially the community itself, that APJK is capable of bringing an issue forward, and even achieving victories on behalf of promoting and protecting the rights of journalists in Kosovo.

The exchange of journalists between Kosovo and Serbia, a positive example to be learned from

The exchange between journalists working for different media in Kosovo and Serbia proved to be a unique and creative idea, since for the first time journalists were given the opportunity to feel and understand the opposite perspective. The stories that were developed out of the exchange program were of a high quality and tackled many sensitive issues faced by the societies at both sides.

Grants and scholarships for journalists failed, but substituted with non-formal education

A number of non-formal education activities, tackling especially the topic of media ethics, were carried out as a substitution to the failed component of grants and scholarships for journalists to undertake master studies on journalism. This change proved the ability of project staff to adapt to the circumstances, but there is no doubt that the project has lost one of the most meaningful and necessary components of education.

APJK reaction too weak compared to the degree of political interference of RTK

RTK, a public broadcaster of Kosovo, is a specific example of the efforts to depoliticize and professionalize media. The journalists interviewed during this evaluation believe that APJK should have taken a stronger role in addressing the abuse of RTK by governments and political parties, a phenomenon lasting for many years now. There were a few cases during these two years where journalists consider that APJK's reaction and public stand in the case of RTK was too moderate.

APJK was unable to promote and protect the socio-economic rights of journalists

The previous Board took a compromising stand with media houses when it came to the Labour Law. Although APJK is mandated to protect the rights of journalists and not media houses, they tend to find a balance, which was not always appreciated by the journalists, because they insist that the association should not take political stances and never forget that it has to protect the rights of journalists no matter who is violating them. Journalists claim that almost all media houses violate the socio-economic rights of their employees, usually by not registering them as employees under the state authorities.

APJK as an accelerator of international reactions

The international organizations defending the rights of journalists worldwide have reported and reacted in many cases of violation of such rights in Kosovo. APJK has managed to establish good communication with these organizations, and provided regular information to stimulate their reaction. It is believed that the power of international reactions in such cases is greater compared to that of national ones.

Gender component, not addressed during the project

The Gender Media Award was foreseen as one of the project activities under output 3, which together with the Gender Mainstreaming component thought to address gender issues of the work of APJK and media reporting. This had different reasons, including: no clear guidance as to how to implement this component, project staff lacked a general understanding of gender mainstreaming, and the cultural context in Kosovo. Overall, media reporting in Kosovo is not gender-sensitive and there are numerous cases of discriminatory and hate language present in almost all media. Issuing an award to journalists was thought to be inappropriate and in conflict with the idea of promoting gender-sensitive reporting.

Web-page not updated, not fully operational, lack of information and content

The APJK web-page lacks proper content and information, damaging seriously the association's PR and visibility. During the two years of the project the web-page was poorly updated and it is considered a non-functional one. The web-page does not even contain the information on the events and documents produced during the project period.

Registration (re-registration) of journalists prolonged unjustifiably

Different reasons were stated to justify the delays in the registration of journalists and compiling the database that will become the list of membership of APJK. It was a very slow process, unfortunately still pending. This means that APJK does not have a final and updated list of the members it is servicing, hence the problems with the unverified people attending the meetings of the Assembly of Members and voting to elect the Board and the President.

Quality of media reporting, a legitimate concern

Ethics and professionalism in media reporting are the most crucial challenges faced by the media sector today. The project aimed at addressing these issues, although it set very optimistic benchmarks. While the issue of ethics in media reporting was mainly addressed through trainings, the professional development through formal education (master programs) was not accomplished. The quality of media

reporting is believed to be at its lowest levels, and APJK has a vital role to play in addressing this challenge.

Conclusion and recommendations

Outcomes have been achieved to a certain extent. There is of course no qualifying formula to assess the degree of achievement of outcomes. In brief, the capacities of APJK are at an initial phase of development, but compared to the pre-project period, they have improved thanks to the project. Regarding the regulatory framework, there is not much to report on, besides articles 37 and 38 of the Penal Code. Yet, the challenge remains with the judiciary and the project didn't do much to address this issue. The quality of reporting is a complex and structural problem, and it is almost impossible to address it through a two-year project. Most outputs of the project were met in some degree. Due to a high benchmarking, however, not all outputs directly impacted the achievement of outcomes. Few outputs of the project could be reported as successes in their own, which not always interacted and contributed to the overall goal of the project.

Activities were implemented fairly and almost all of them were technically reported as accomplished tasks by the APJK. However, there was not always a natural consequence and order of activities, in order to complement each other and jointly contribute to the specific outputs of the project. Activities were reported to have respected the necessary conditions of organization, although there were certain criticism about the timing, content and the messages delivered. Partnerships initiated during the implementation were successful endeavours and they managed to overcome the challenge of losing a main partner in the beginning of the project implementation. Finally, the sustainability of APJK has not been reached yet. One has to acknowledge the complexity of this goal and understand that sustainability is a long-term process. The project has managed to move APJK from a chaotic and unstructured organization, to one that has set the basic standards of strategic management and accomplished a number of tasks and achieved certain successes.

Clearly, there is a need for follow-up support to the capacity development of APJK. Besides the many reasons stated in the report, the follow-up support is also necessary for the sake of saving and building on the already achieved results of the project. The following recommendations are drawn upon the assumption that there will be another capacity-building instrument provided to APJK:

- Involve APJK people and other journalists in the project design from the early stages of the process;
- Set the outputs and outcomes reasonably, drawing lessons from the current project, as well as from the baseline analysis on the overall context of media freedom in Kosovo;
- Pay special attention to establishing and strengthening the capacities of the executive staff of APJK (the Secretariat);
- Design a specific outcome regarding the financial sustainability of APJK, by also tracking regularly the efforts of the association to raise additional funds for other projects;
- Conduct a partnership analysis in advance, offering a reliable picture of the organizations and institutions that APJK could partner with;
- Further strengthen the "discussion forums" component of the project, urging APJK to operate more deliberately by building the sense of community and ownership among journalists;
- Insist on the strict implementation and respect of the internal democratic governance principles of APJK, starting from the meetings of Assembly of Members (re-registration essential);

- Focus on the implementation of the objectives and recommendations set in two documents: the Development Strategy 2012-2015 and the Action Paper on APJK;
- Require the establishment of a Policy Unit within APJK's Secretariat, as a prerequisite for effective advocacy and lobbying;
- Urge APJK to reconsider its role and mandate by moving beyond the conventional methods of public reactions;
- Make sure that professional reporting and ethics are the main thematic focus areas of APJK in the upcoming years;
- Focus on formal education opportunities for young and promising journalists, as a concrete way of investing on professionalism and improving the quality of reporting;
- Insist on the professional provision of the services by APJK to journalists, with a particular attention to the legal assistance during court cases;
- Diversify the topics of prizes and awards for the best journalists, by including others (culture, sports, etc.) and also by considering sub-categories; and
- Install a gender mainstreaming component of the project, with the aim to transfer this approach to APJK's work and philosophy.

References

Project documents

- Project document, Capacity Development for the Association of Journalists of Kosovo – project number: UDF-KSV-09-334
- Mid-term progress report covering year 2011, submitted to UNDP in 31 January 2012
- Project progress report covering year 2012, submitted to UNDP in December 2012
- Final project narrative and financial reports
- Project cooperation agreement between the United National Development Programme in Kosovo and Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo

Project products

- Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo, Development Strategy 2012-2015 (by KIPRED), at <http://www.apjk.org/?cid=1,18>
- UNDP, Public Pulse, Action Paper on Association of Professional Journalists in Kosovo, 29 March 2012, at <http://www.ks.undp.org/repository/docs/Action-Papers-eng.pdf>
- Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo, Kosovo Legal Media Framework (by Evliana Berani)

Other documents and reports

- Association of Professional Journalists of Kosovo, Statute, at <http://www.apjk.org/?cid=1,1>
- UN Common Development Plan for Kosovo 2011-2015
- UNDP Kosovo, Kosovo Program Action Plan 2011-2015
- Freedom House, Freedom of the Press 2012, Kosovo, at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2012/kosovo>
- Reporters without Borders, 2013 World Press Freedom Index, Kosovo, at <http://en.rsf.org/report-kosovo,114.html>

Interviews and focus groups

- Arben Ahmeti, President of APJK – interviewed 19 March 2013
- Arbana Xharra, Zeri – interviewed 22 March 2013
- Kushtrim Sadiku, Klan Kosovo – interviewed 25 March 2013
- Imer Mushkolaj, Executive Director of APJK – interviewed 29 March 2013
- Besa Luci, Kosovo 2.0 – interviewed 29 March 2013
- Flutura Kusari, BIRN – interviewed 4 April 2013
- Focus group with journalists, held 5 April 2013, with the following participants:
 - *Arben Ahmeti, President of APJK*
 - *Asdren Rrahmani, RTK*
 - *Gazmend Sylaj, Klan Kosovo*
 - *Nehat Islami, Press Council of Kosovo*
 - *Vehbi Kajtazi, Koha Ditore*
 - *Evliana Berani, Info Globi*
 - *Bardh Shkreli, BIRN*
 - *Burbuqe Dobranja, UNDP*
- Consultation and debriefing sessions with UNDP staff