JORDAN MEDIA ASSESSMENT
WHITE PAPER: IMPEDIMENTS ON PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM, MEDIA EDUCATION AND MEDIA LITERACY

Governance Integration for Stabilization and Resilience in the Middle East and North Africa (GISR MENA)

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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

AREACORE	Arab-European Association for Media and Communications Researchers
ARIJ	Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism
AWMC	Arab Women Media Center
BA	Bachelor of Arts
CDFJ	Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists
CMN	Community Media Network
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DWA	Deutche Welle Akademie
EU	European Union
GOJ	Government of Jordan
ICCPR	International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights
IFCN	International Fact Checking Network
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
IREX	International Research and Exchanges
JMA	Jordan Media Assessment
JMC	Jordan Media Commission
JMI	Jordan Media Institute
JMSP	Jordan Media Strengthening Program
JPA	Jordan Press Association
JRTV	Jordan Radio and Television Corporation
L2D	Learn to Discern
MA	Master of Arts
MC	Media Commission
MDLAB	Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MIL	Media and Information Literacy
MILID	Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue

MSI	Management Systems International
OSF	Open Society Foundations
PPL	Press and Publications Law
RSF	Reporters Sans Frontieres
SMJP	Support to Media in Jordan Project
TRC	Telecommunications Regulatory Commission
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YP	YouthPower

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this White Paper is to highlight major findings from the two studies conducted within the scope of the USAID Jordan Media Assessment (JMA)), specifically, the Media Landscape Analysis and the Digital Media Sector Assessment, and to respond to several additional questions grouped around three distinct topics: 1) Impediments on Professional Journalism; 2) Media Education; and 3) Media and Information Literacy (MIL). The introductory notes aim at framing the topics by providing a brief overview of relevant regional developments.

IMPEDIMENTS TO PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

While each country of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has its own challenges, the impediments to professional journalism seem to include some widely shared features. In an overall environment marked by a downward trend in freedom of expression and by resilient impunity, professional journalism cannot flourish.[1] The Middle East's countries are yet again at the bottom of Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) World Press Freedom Index 2020.[2] There is no evidence that a negative trend could be reversed in a short-to-medium term as the major drivers of such a trend originate from a reconsolidation of authoritarianism that varies in its intensity from one to another country. Journalists remain vulnerable and are often the targets to an increasing number of safety and security challenges when reporting.

In addition, the overall economic environment for the media compounds the challenges facing professional journalism. The poor state of social and professional rights of journalists, low salaries, contract insecurity, and the lack of editorial independence, as the study[3] by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) highlights, make journalists and media more easily susceptible to corruption and intimidation by unethical politicians and powerful elites. There are also further implications for journalists and journalism as media struggle to find new resources and develop new and viable financial models to safeguard independent journalism.

In a highly volatile situation, every crisis, including COVID-19, tends to multiply the impediments to professional journalism. In her recent article, Rana Sabbagh writes: "Most Arab governments seem to be using the fear and anxiety caused by the virus to hide their own inability to effectively mitigate the ballooning public health and economic crisis."[4] And in Jordan, according to the same article, "[M]any Jordanian journalists say they are unable to objectively report about life under lockdown and feel they have no choice but to toe the official line."[5]

MEDIA EDUCATION

In spite of prevailing differences among many countries, higher education institutions across the region are in agreement that there are common regional challenges.[6] The number of journalism programs offered

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[1] For more information see the reports by the international watchdog organizations: Freedom House: Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in Retreat. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Feb2019_FH_FITW_2019_Report_ForWeb-compressed, Reporters Sans Frontieres World Press Freedom Index 2020, https://rsf.org/en/ranking.

[2] Reporters Sans Frontieres World Press Freedom Index 2020, https://rsf.org/en/ranking.

[3] MedMedia's report "Journalists' Unions in the Southern Mediterranean Region: State of Play and Perspectives", https://www.euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2017-12/Journalists-Unions-Report-13_12_17-Final.pdf.

[4] Arab Reporters During COVID-19 Lockdown: Life on the Edge, by Rana Sabbagh (May 3, 2020). https://www.occrp.org/en/coronavirus/arab-reporters-during-COVID-19-lockdown-life-on-the-edge.

[5] Ibid.

[6] For further reading on journalism education in the MENA region, see the 2017 paper, "An Examination of Curricula in Middle Eastern Journalism Schools in Light of Suggested Model Curricula". www.abacademies.org/articles/An-examination-of-curricula-in-middle-eastern-journalism-schools-in-light-of-suggested-model-

across the region has increased dramatically over the last few years, particularly in response to the increasing recognition of the important role that the media can play in political processes. However, the quality of these programs is still lacking with the majority of academic journalism programs being highly theoretical and lacking any proper connection with practice. The absence of teaching on new media, a shortcoming which is exacerbated by the conservative nature of many academic staff, reflects the need to modify curricula to address the rapid social transformation seen by the industry and by shifting consumer demands. There is also a lack of focus on teaching media literacy, an issue that concerns future journalists and their understanding of how their audiences will interact with news media, as well as applied ethics and ethical decision-making.[7]

While the last few years has seen a number of different projects in the region aimed at transforming news media and journalism, the teaching of journalism has been largely disregarded, with just a few examples of projects focused on improving the quality of teaching media studies. Shortcomings in journalism education are particularly important to focus on having in mind the rapid development of technologies that pose new challenges to journalists.

MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY (MIL)

The rapid advances in information and communication technology in the MENA region, like elsewhere in the world, have transformed the ways and pace that information is being produced, spread and circulated. In a time when everyone can be a content producer, when information is available on many platforms and easily accessible, the abundance of media content provides for increased opportunities to find information, but also perpetuate disinformation. The need for information and education about MIL has become more and more urgent. With MIL competencies, citizens may be empowered and able to fully exercise fundamental human rights, such as freedom of information and freedom of expression, and be able to scrutinize media content with a critical eye. This is why many countries across the globe have embraced MIL as core components of university curricula, and in some cases, middle- and high-school programs. However, and despite this rationale, no country in the MENA region had a national policy on MIL until recently.[8]

In 2016, the study "Opportunities for Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East and North Africa" presented the following situation regarding in the below table: Classification of the Take-Up of MIL in MENA Countries[9], none of which demonstrate that MIL is widely understood or with programs available to most citizens.

Scenario	Countries
MIL is largely unknown and underdeveloped.	Bahrain, Libya, Iraq, Kuwait, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, the Comoros, Yemen, Mauritania, Palestine, and Oman.
MIL is nascent and quite novel as a concept.	Djibouti, Algeria and the United Arab Emirates.
MIL is somewhat established within specialist programs and institutions and some citizens benefit from access to these initiatives.	Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Egypt.

The more significant efforts to advance digital and media literacy in the Arab world have been launched by academic coalitions and international institutions, such as the UNESCO-initiated International Network

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curricula-1939-4691-21-1-104.pdf.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Opportunities for Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East and North Africa, Editors: Magda Abu-Fadil, Jordi Torrent and Alton Grizzle: Preliminary Comparative Analysis of Media and Information Literacy in the MENA Region (2016).

[9] Ibid. (Table extracted from the publication).

on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (MILID). Another institutional initiative that has tried to address this situation and fill the gap is the Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut (MDLAB).[10] The academy was set up with the following objectives in mind: 1) to diffuse the knowledge and teaching of digital and media literacy education and promote its importance among Arab universities; 2) to train young Arab university instructors and graduate students each year on digital and media literacy concepts and competencies; 3) to develop annually university-level curricula that include lesson plans, curricular modules, training manuals, case studies, and multimedia content; 4) to establish a hub for a network of regional universities and media educators centering on the development and promotion of digital and media literacy education; and 5) to create and maintain an open online space for the dissemination of curricular material and the connection of the academy's alumni and potential contributors and collaborators. The MDLAB had an important role in spearheading the idea of teaching digital and media literacy in a variety of formats based on curricula developed at the academy.

As presented in the MIL section below, Jordan has made a significant step forward in MIL since 2016 and is now one of the few MENA countries that have incorporated MIL policy into its government's priorities.

PART I: IMPEDIMENTS ON PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM AND MAIN CHALLENGES FACING JOURNALISTS

In 2016, the Jordan Media Institute (JMI) undertook a Training Needs Assessment[11], in lieu of a national study, which showed that of the 211 journalists and media persons sampled, only 40% were members of the Jordan Press Association (JPA). Out of the total sample, 63% were males and 36% females, which reflect the lack of gender equality in the overall Jordanian media community and within the JPA, where female membership does not exceed 30% of the total number. Seventy-one percent of the press community was younger than 40 years of age, while 19% were above 50 years of age. Further, 69% were holders of a first university degree (Bachelor), while 20% held Masters' degrees and around 17% who did not hold any university degree at all. As for years of practical experience, the results indicated that 40% of Jordanian journalists had more than 10 years' experience, while approximately 20% of the media community had only three years of experience and 25% of journalists had practical experience between 4-7 years.

The most frequently mentioned challenges faced by Jordanian journalists included: access to jobs, access to professional training/professional development opportunities, economic conditions, and the legally repressive environment. While the previously mentioned study showed that only half of Jordanian journalists obtained their job through competition, another study[12] stresses that "while journalists' career prospects are largely determined by their social background, advancing in journalism appears even more challenging for women and minority groups."[13] Lack of professionalism, adequate knowledge and skills are also mentioned by both studies as issues impacting journalists.

Jordanian journalists face a multitude of challenges starting with the legal status and definition of who can be considered a journalist. According to Article 10 of the Press and Publications Law (PPL) only journalists (defined as practicing members of the JPA) may practice journalism in any form. In addition, the JPA Law stipulates that media outlets can only hire from JPA's list of registered journalists who, pursuant to Article

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[10] Ibid. "Sponsored by the Open Society Foundations (OSF), al-Monitor news, and the Arab-European Association for Media and Communication Researchers (AREACORE) through the German Academic Exchange Service, MDLAB was launched in 2013 by a group of Arab and international academics with the explicit aim of advancing digital and media literacy education in the region through training Arab media educators and developing digital and media literacy curricula, not only in Arabic, but also grounded in Arabic cultures and concerns."

[11] JMI Training Needs Assessment, 2016.

[12] End of project evaluation of the EU-funded project, Support to Media in Jordan, Forcier Consulting, 2019.

[13] Ibid.

5, have met the required conditions, such as an appropriate combination of education and training.[14] These rules exclude other media-related employment categories that are generally recognized as journalists in other countries[15] and are also at odds with international standards which reject legal restrictions on those who practice journalism.[16]

The 1952 JPA Law was originally limited to workers at newspapers. Subsequently, it has been amended three times to expand the membership base. In 1983, to allow workers at the Jordan News Agency, Petra, to join; in 1998, amendments allowed journalists working at the news department of Jordan Radio and Television; and, in June 2014, membership was extended to reporters at news websites or in the newsrooms of private television and radio stations. The last changes were to some extent dictated by amendments to the PPL in 2012, which required news websites to seek a license from the Press and Publications Department to operate.[17]

Despite these amendments, many categories of media workers still remain excluded, such as those working in the program section of radio and television stations rather than the news departments. Those working for non-news websites, or websites that are not registered with the Jordan Media Commission (JMC), are also not allowed to join. The requirement that journalists must work full-time in the profession at a recognized media outlet leaves out freelancers and a large number of workers at news websites, some of whom work for more than one website at the same time.

As a result, a large number of those who are de-facto journalists, but are not JPA recognized members, do not enjoy the same level of protection as the official members do. JPA membership provides access to benefits such as the Fund for Cooperation and Social Security in case of job loss; the Pension Fund which provides pension benefits for members or their dependent family members; and a health care system for journalists and their families as regulated by the Bylaw for Journalists' Health Insurance.

The legal restrictions deriving from the JPA Law are largely ignored by the media community; however, journalists working without JPA membership do not have the right to organize themselves in a separate union, as the JPA is the only legally recognized association representing journalists in the Kingdom. In 2011, the Electronic Journalism Society was launched for journalists working at news websites because the JPA Law did not allow them to join the Association at the time. The JPA opposed the establishment of the Society and issued a statement in which it pledged to "respond decisively to any attempts to fragment the journalism body by creating new organizational frameworks under different names but with similar goals to those of the Association."[18]

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[14] Analysis of the Press and Publications Law No. 8 for the Year 1998 as amended, April 2016, by Toby Mendel. https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/updatedjordan.ppl-analysis.16-05-18ls-1.pdf.

[15] Ibid. – "These include those working for broadcasters other than in the news department, those working for non-news websites (or websites that are not registered with the MC), those who do not work fulltime as journalists or who work for more than one outlet (which excludes freelancers and many of those who work for news websites, some of whom work for more than one website). In addition, some websites do not have a social security number, even if they are registered with the MC, which also precludes their employees from becoming JPA members."

[16] Ibid. – "Under international law the restrictions on who may practice journalism, unlike licensing schemes for other professions, are not legitimate. As the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee stated in its 2011 General Comment No. 34: Journalism is a function shared by a wide range of actors, including professional full-time reporters and analysts, as well as bloggers and others who engage in forms of self-publication in print, on the internet or elsewhere, and general State systems of registration or licensing of journalists are incompatible with paragraph 3 [of Article 19 of the ICCPR]. Similarly, the special international mandates on freedom of expression stated in their 2003 Joint Declaration: Individual journalists should not be required to be licensed or to register. There should be no legal restrictions on who may practice journalism."

[17] Assessment of Media Development in Jordan based on UNESCO's Media Development Indicators (2015), UNESCO. (http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Amman/pdf/JordanMDI_EN_small_01.pdf.

[18] Ibid.

Journalist unions and other professional associations are normally key media supporting organizations. As evidenced, JPA remains quite the opposite. It is one of the least reformed journalists' unions in the MENA region failing to adapt to changes in journalism brought about by new technologies and continues to serve the purpose of protecting the interests of a relatively small number of employees in state-owned media. Instead of standing firm in protecting media freedom it appears to be an obstacle rather than an enabler.

Many journalists and human rights activists in Jordan strongly resist the idea of compulsory membership arguing that it is a violation of the Jordanian Constitution and international human rights law. The system of mandatory membership presents a sort of licensing and allows for undue state and JPA control over who can practice journalism and, in turn, may be subject to abuse and may lead to freedom of expression being curtailed.[19]

Jordanian journalists operate in an environment which is best described as 'repression by force of laws'[20] and in an overall climate of impunity. The response to these circumstances is detrimental for the profession since most journalists practice self-censorship as a measure of self-protection. The Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists' (CDFJ) 2018 Annual Report,[21] "Media Freedom Status in Jordan", captures the widespread practice of self-censorship among journalists which remains high, despite a respite in 2011-12 during the calls for political reform. The table below shows the percentage of journalists (based upon a CDFJ sample) practicing self-censorship by year for the past 9 years:

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
%	93.5	87	85.8	91	95.2	93.2	93.6	94	92

This and other reports note that journalists continue to be subjected to serious abuses, resulting in violations of the law with impunity of the perpetrators and the lack of redress and compensation for victims. The CDFJ report[22] pointed out practices that have been adopted by the security services to interfere with the work of the media. Jordanian journalists are exposed to various types of influences, pressures and attacks. According to the Jordan 2018 Human Rights Report[23], alongside direct violations, journalists claimed that the government used informants in newsrooms, exercised influence over reporting, and government officials censored reporting. Editors reportedly received telephone calls from security officials instructing them how to cover events or to refrain from covering certain topics or events, especially involving criticism of political reform. Bribery of journalists took place and undermined independent reporting. Occasionally, government officials provided texts for journalists to publish under their bylines. Besides these kinds of direct contacts, advertisements and subscriptions are the main tools influencing journalists in this regard.

Some older studies whose findings are still valid point at the phenomenon of "soft containment" (Al-Quds Center for Political Studies, 2012), where journalists listed the most often means used by government officials to influence them as financial grants and gifts, facilitation of services and procedures at official institutions, appointment in a government or semi-governmental position, the opportunity to attend important meetings and travel with officials, exemptions from custom duties, etc. Journalists from all kinds of media outlets, regardless of media ownership, were almost equally subject to government measures of soft containment. Eighty-five percent of the respondents said parties other than government, such as

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[19] Assessment of media development in Jordan based on UNESCO's Media Development Indicators (2015), UNESCO (http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Amman/pdf/JordanMDI_EN_small_01.pdf).
[20] CDFJ Annual Report 2012: Media Freedom Status in Jordan. https://english.cdfj.org/resource/repression-by-force-of-law/.
[21] CDFJ Annual Report 2018: Media Freedom Status in Jordan. https://cdfj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Media-Freedom-Status-Report-in-Jordan-2018.pdf.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Jordan 2018 Human Rights Report. https://jo.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/Human-Right-Report-Jordan.pdf.

businessmen, security apparatuses, influential figures, civil society organizations (CSOs), political parties, members of parliament and tribal chiefs also practiced methods of soft containment.

The weak and deteriorating economic situation of the media is another challenge facing journalists. Nidal Mansour, the Director of the CDFJ, stressed that economic hardships are also working against media freedoms in Jordan because they are "forcing them (journalists) to accept the status quo so that they would not get into trouble with the authorities and eventually lose their jobs".[24] According to another source[25], 44% of the Jordanian media community works for more than one organization in order to be able to meet economic needs.

In conclusion, restrictive legislation, violations against journalists with impunity, the weak economic situation of the media, and overall lack of professionalism of journalists are among the main challenges and impediments impacting professional journalism. These problems are shared by journalists across the MENA region, however, the response to these challenges and impediments – specifically the high percentage of self-censorship – can be considered a more prominent problem in Jordan than elsewhere in the region.

The latest COVID-19 crisis will exacerbate already existing problems. The economic situation of all media has worsened and it is yet to be seen the extent to which this impacts the journalists in the post-crisis period. Objective reporting has already become constrained during the crisis as "many Jordanian journalists said they were unable to objectively report about life under lockdown and feel they have no choice but to toe the official line.[26] One of the attempts to report on the implications of the crisis to lives of poorer Jordanians was met with immediate and harsh reaction by the authorities (Roya TV case).[27]

In order to address the above challenges, recommendations focus on both legal framework (seen by a majority of journalists as a major impediment) and the support to strengthen the content of the independent media.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING CHALLENGES FACING JOURNALISTS[28]

1. Media (online and offline) requires a legal and regulatory framework that supports freedom of expression and information.

CHALLENGES: The lack of a legal enabling environment for media in Jordan and its current restrictive nature is perceived by a vast majority of journalists as the most serious obstacle to practicing their profession. Despite proclaimed reforms (such as the National Media Strategy of 2011 – 2015), the legal framework for media remains restrictive; furthermore, these restrictions continue to impact freedom of expression online. There is a steady negative trend of freedom of expression since 2012. To reverse these

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[24] Media Watchdog Report Finds Self-Censorship Prevalent, Rana Husseini (August 5, 2019). http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/media-watchdog-report-finds-self-censorship-prevalent.
[25] JMI Training Needs Assessment, 2016.
[26] Arab Reporters During COVID-19 Lockdown: Life on the Edge, by Rana Sabbagh, May 3, 2020. https://www.occrp.org/en/coronavirus/arab-reporters-during-COVID-19-lockdown-life-on-the-edge.
[27] Ibid. "In Jordan, the military kept Fares Sayegh, the CEO of Jordan's only private TV station Roya, and its news director, Mohammad Al Khalidi, in detention for three days, accusing them of exposing Jordanians to "danger" by broadcasting a report of citizens suffering financial difficulties due to the coronavirus lockdown. Both were released on bail after Sayegh's father, a prominent businessman, called the prime minister and promised to run a public apology. The channel ran an announcement stating: "It supports the Jordanian government's efforts throughout all crises as one of Jordan's media outlets that works professionally and patriotically and respects the rule of law."
[28] Relevant recommendations have been taken from the JMA Executive Summary and Recommendations Report.

trends, the laws governing the media would require thorough revision and an alignment with international standards.

OPPORTUNITIES: The Jordanian Government has undertaken international obligations following the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2014 and 2018. Even though the presence of political will to engage in such reforms has not been noted, there are recent signals from some government officials who consider Jordan's poor rankings in freedom of expression a problem that requires attention. Jordan will be undertaking parliamentary elections in autumn 2020 and a new parliament and the Jordanian Government may provide an opportunity to prioritize media law reforms.

RECOMMENDATION: Based on the lessons learned from the two previous media development programs (funded by USAID and the EU), the overall recommendation is that supporting the improvement of the enabling environment to media remains important. The lack of political will over the past decade should not discourage donors from engagement in media law reform, however, the approach will require the formulation of realistic objectives and will demand a multifaceted approach that includes a variety of relevant stakeholders. While it is not realistic to expect a complete makeover of restrictive legislation, engagement should be aimed at broadening the reform-oriented constituencies, increasing awareness of international standards, and increasing knowledge related to legal reforms among the various stakeholders: government, officials, CSOs, and journalists.

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERVENTIONS:

CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN MEDIA PROFESSIONALS' CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE TO ADVOCATE FOR MEDIA REFORM AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Occasionally, journalists have received training in media law. USAID's Jordan Media Strengthening Program 2006-2011 (JMSP) contributed and helped set up media law courses in two universities in Jordan. The review upon completion of the JMSP and Support to Media in Jordan Project (SMJP) found that journalists still did not have sufficient knowledge of the media laws and international standards. The journalists felt that knowing the laws better could protect themselves, as well as inspire engagement. However, they felt the training was too short and not sufficiently comprehensive.

- Support external evaluations of media training programs, training providers and funding to enhance training content;
- Support a series of media law trainings for journalists;
- Expand training delivery for journalists at the national and local levels;
- Ensure gender balance among the participants of the training sessions.

INCREASE THE KNOWLEDGE ON INTERNATIONAL LAW STANDARDS AMONG THE EMPLOYEES IN RELEVANT GOVERNMENTAL BODIES

Both JSMP and SMJP worked with employees of various regulatory and government bodies to increase their knowledge on international law standards. The evaluation of SMJP highlights this work as a particular achievement as it broadens the pool of officials who understand the need for reform.

- Support the continuation of training and professional debate with the employees across different government bodies (JMC, Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), ministries, etc.) that will increase the understanding of discrepancies between national media legislation and the international standards;
- Support exposure to different practices (regulatory bodies, licensing, court practice, etc.) through study trips;
- Ensure gender balance among the participants of the training sessions.

II. The Jordan media landscape is undergoing a paradigm shift driven by the fast-developing digital infrastructure, increased number of internet users and changing consumer behavior. The audiences look for trustworthy news and innovative local content on digital platforms and social media networks.[29]

CHALLENGES: Online news websites, though widely read and viewed by Jordanians, including youth, continue to suffer from a lack of credibility. Youth audiences show low trust in media content, as well as content on social media networks. Newspapers have lost youth readership while TV still leads in audience share, with Roya TV becoming the choice for the youth audience. The failure of traditional media to embark on digital transformation drove them to a crisis. In the case of government media, the crisis also originates from its controlled content, as well as unsustainable internal organizations. Jordan independent media do not operate in fair market conditions. The state remains a significant player in the overall media system through its monopoly in terrestrial TV broadcasting and its stakes in other sectors within the media industry (news agency, daily newspapers, as well as radio stations). State media outlets in Jordan are under firm government control through the manner of the appointment of their governing board and chief executive officers. They also enjoy other privileges, such as license fees and other tax exemptions, direct financing and government advertising. Their content is predominantly reflecting or favorable to government views, while according to research they enjoy little trust by the audience. However, the audience's trust in media, including social networks, is generally low.

OPPORTUNITIES: Digitization is driving innovative approaches to using digital platforms for video and audio content. The opportunity lies in the group of media that are either digitally native or have integrated digitization into their strategy and practice, and are committed to their independence, professionalism and quality content (see Executive Summary for examples).

RECOMMENDATION: The recommendation is to strengthen the independent media sector which has embraced digital transformation or is considered "digital first" and is committed to producing high quality local digital content which is on demand and experiments with new business models that can safeguard their independence. The aim will be to increase the availability of quality content in digital formats (in line with audience consumption trends) for the audience that is searching for trustworthy content focused on local issues.

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERVENTIONS:

SUPPORT INCREASED CONTENT PRODUCTION BY INDEPENDENT DIGITAL MEDIA (E.G. 7IBER, SOWT, ARAMRAM TV, ETC.)
Local news, topics of interest to youth and topics other media fail to cover is produced at a high quality by a small group of digital first media. To increase their content output:

- Facilitate in-house and tailor-made consultancies for each media to identify gaps (e.g. content development, outreach, marketing, IT infrastructure) and support them to address those gaps;
- Support their increased content output and diversified digital formats;
- Support the development of strategies to increase the number of followers on various digital platforms;
- Provide support for external evaluations and/or measurement of program impact, reach and online engagement in order to enhance content and improve engagement strategies.

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[29] This recommendation was written prior to COVID-19 crisis. It is expected that in the post-crisis period such kind of assistance will be needed even more.

SUPPORT THEIR SEARCH FOR ADEQUATE BUSINESS MODEL

Business models that support independent and quality content in digital formats or multi-digital formats is an area of exploration everywhere in the world, as it is in Jordan and the MENA region. These media need to diversify sources of funding (multiple sources of donors' grants) and continue to experiment with potential revenue streams from other activities.

- Support development of their marketing, communications and outreach strategies, and digital advertising revenue streams;
- Support development of their funding diversification and sustainability strategies;
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing with relevant media from abroad (peer-to-peer format, communities of practice, professional networks, etc.).

PARTNER WITH ROYA TV TO INCREASE CONTENT CREATION AND REACH

Roya television, the most watched television channel among young Jordanians, formed its digital media department in 2017. It is not only disseminating its content in various formats adapted to a specific type of digital platform but has already started to derive a percentage of its income from digital advertising.

- Support increased production of quality content (news, current affairs, educational, media for development programs) and its digital formats;
- Support implementation of Roya TV digital media strategy and marketing strategies to increase digital advertising revenue streams;
- Explore a partnership with the Roya Training Academy to support development of innovative content by new actors and provide a platform for disseminating independent content.

CREATE START-UP SUPPORT FUND

The new innovative initiatives can emerge and the existence of a fund to support them could be an additional incentive for start-ups, nascent initiatives, app developers for new content, etc. that are aimed to generate quality content in digital formats. In addition to funding content, support for dissemination, marketing strategies and business models could be considered.

PART II: MEDIA EDUCATION

JOURNALISM EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In 2017, the Jordan Media Institute (JMI) conducted a study on the MENA region's journalism and mass communications educational systems, with findings for Jordan summarized below.[30]

Academic education of journalism and media in Jordan began in 1981 when the first department of journalism and media was established at Yarmouk University. Since the middle of the last decade, Jordan has witnessed increased quantitative expansion with seven universities now teaching media, three of which have Master of Arts (MA) programs. Those universities and institutions include:

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[30] Jordan Media Institute, "Media and Journalism Education Systems' Status in the Middle East and North Africa: Continuous Old Problems and New Challenges", MEDMEDIA (2017).

Table No. 1: Overview of Jordanian Journalism and Media Educational Institutions

#	Location	University	Type (Public/Private)	Undergraduate Degree*	MA Degree
1	North	Jadara	Private	X	
2	Middle	Zarqa	Public	X	N/A
3	Middle	Philadelphia	Private	X	N/A
4	North	Yarmouk	Public	X	X
5	Middle	Petra	Private	X	X
6	Middle	Middle East University	Private	X	X
7	Middle	Jordan Media Institute, in cooperation with University of Jordan	Private/Public	N/A	X

* Undergraduate degree includes: Bachelor of Arts (BA), License, First University Degree.

Even with these increased media degree programs, the educational system for journalism and mass communication in Jordan is still suffering from difficulties and challenges that limit the ability of these universities to cope with the needs of the media industry, as further outlined below.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND SPECIALIZATION

There are three main specializations of basic programs at these faculties and departments: journalism, radio and television, and public relations and advertising. This educational model is the most prevalent at the aforementioned educational institutions. The academic programs fall short of courses that correspond to industry as well as the professional needs. Namely, digital media/electronic press courses are available at two universities only, while none offers data journalism and occupational safety courses. Investigative journalism programs, however, are offered by 6 universities with legislation and ethics programs offered by all 7 universities.

Table No. 2: Breakdown of Academic Programs According to Major Specializations

Type	Number
Press	3
Journalism & Media	3
Radio & TV	4
Communications Technology	1
Public Relations & Advertising	4
Total Academic Programs by Major	**15**

ACCREDITATION

The Jordanian experience in developing accreditation standards dates back to the 1990s. The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions periodically develops these standards. The Jordanian accreditation standards stipulate that the study program for earning a

Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree must include 132 credit hours, in addition to the compulsory and elective courses, as part of the package of university requirements. These standards specified the supportive compulsory fields of knowledge that the study plans of journalism and media must include. They include 9 credit hours that a student chooses from the following subjects: Arabic language, English language, sociology, economy, graphic design, statistics, computer, and political science. In the journalism program, the student must study editing and news, investigation, investigative journalism, direction and photojournalism, journalism skills in English, digital media, communication and media, and Jordanian media and ethics and legislation.

A review of the study plans revealed that while the plans abide by these standards, in reality they generally do not have internal quality control systems for the descriptions of the courses and to ensure that the plans reflect the names of the courses. This is clear in courses such as investigative journalism or digital media. Also, an internship is done mostly without follow-up or monitoring. Although most universities provide the facilities and equipment linked to the actual application of skills learned, these facilities are not utilized in a manner geared to develop the practical skills of students.

The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions conducts a review every two years of the commitment of higher education institutions to the accreditation standards in the following fields: study plans, number of students and capacity, number of members of faculty, libraries and references, labs, and studios. Since 2014, the Commission has started adopting the university proficiency examination to assess the impact of the application of these standards. Overall weaknesses reflect:

1. Most of these standards fall below reference standards, i.e. some are simply rhetorical expressions that are hard to measure.
2. The existing standards are mostly traditional and do not tackle the transformations witnessed by journalism, media education and the new trends that media schools and faculties worldwide have started to adopt.
3. There is a gap between what the standards refer to and the actual situation at universities. For example, Jordanian accreditation standards specify the capacity for student admission, but most public universities do not abide by this standard.

SHORTAGE OF SPECIALIZED TEACHERS

The above-mentioned study also shows that there is also a problem in a shortage of the number of specialized teachers available in most fields of the sciences of journalism, media, and mass communication. The standards for the selection of members of the teaching staff sometimes suffer from a common problem, which is the weak professional aspect and practical knowledge of those teachers. Most universities do not have teachers with prior practical experience in the field of journalism or television or any communication field.

JMI is the only educational institutions in Jordan that has managed to combine the theoretical with the professional and practical approaches in media education into its curricula. Experts from Columbia University, Lille University, London University, and the American University of Beirut have helped to develop its curricula. Meanwhile, the curricula of other universities vary in terms of the level of practical and professional aspects.

Table No. 3: Breakdown of Jordanian Educational Institutions According to Balance Between Theoretical and Practical/Professional Aspects

Degree of Balance	Number	Percentage
Good	1	14%
Medium	3	43%
Weak	3	43%
Total number of journalism/media educational institutions	**7**	**100%**

In Jordan, unemployment amid graduates of journalism and media programs exceeds 65%, according to the indicators of the Civil Service Bureau, with the exception of graduates of the JMI, who are recruited by regional and local media organizations upon graduation with employment reaching 92%, (taking into consideration that only around 40 students graduate annually from the JMI).

Examples of programs promoting journalism education at the university level include the USAID-supported and IREX-implemented JSMP (2006-2011) and the EU-supported and UNESCO-implemented SMJP. Over the period of five years IREX worked with the Yarmouk University, Petra University and Middle East University. The program encompassed training of 379 journalism students and 32 faculty members; worked towards bridging the gap between theoretical and practical training; provided consultancy and assessment on syllabi and textbooks; and equipped two media labs.[31]

The most recent program[32] funded by the EU addressed some of the above challenges by working with Yarmouk University and Middle East University. Both universities revised their curricula and four new courses were designed according to UNESCO's model: Investigative Reporting for TV; Investigative Reporting for Radio; Media Ethics; and Digital Journalism. Each of these new courses has received approval from the Higher Education Accreditation Commission. UNESCO provided training for lecturers about the practical and interactive delivery of the new study materials. In addition, UNESCO set up media labs in each of the universities with equipment for TV, radio and other media outlets for students and professors to use.

The evaluation of this program[33] recommended that, "[I]t might be worth considering developing longer training programs that combine the different workshops together in a program that takes place one day a week over a period of 6 months. A longer program would enable a situation in which professors can implement their newly gained knowledge and share their experience in doing so with the other professors so that discussions can take place about the challenges and opportunities. In addition, the training of trainers' modules is highly sustainable as the trained beneficiaries will be able to spread their newly gained knowledge after the project ends."

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND MEDIA TRAINING PROVIDERS

Capacity building and professional development programs provide journalists, journalism students and content creators with new skills and knowledge, complementing what is available within the university setting. Most offerings are initiated and/or delivered by specialized CSOs or private entities with support from international organizations and foreign donors. Few media outlets offer in-house training, unless prompted by external actors.

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[31] Final Report: Jordan Media Strengthening Program, IREX, 2011.
[32] End of project evaluation of the EU-funded project, Support to Media in Jordan, Forcier Consulting, 2019.
[33] Ibid.

In 2008, the JPA set up the Fund for Training and Qualifying Journalists with the aim of building the capacities and skills of journalists resulting in a grant of $1.3M from King Abdullah II, but the fund has remained inactive. The Jordanian Media Strategy (2011-2015) emphasized strengthening the professional capacities of the Jordanian media with its action plan defining a specific timeframe for fulfilling three main objectives: (1) the establishment of an independent media training center during the second quarter of 2013; (2) the launch of the King Abdullah Award for Media Excellence by the second quarter of 2015; and (3) the promotion of investigative journalism by the second quarter of 2013. Unfortunately, none of these objectives have been met.[34]

Between 2007 and 2016, several studies[35] analyzed the training landscape resulting in a common classification of training providers. These include, but are not limited to: (1) universities and academic institutions that provide training programs outside of their regular teaching programs (i.e. JMI); (2) media institutions/outlets with training centers, such as Jordan Radio and Television Corporation (JRTV) and the training center at the Petra News Agency; and (3) unions, CSOs and private sector institutions. Local organizations, often working in partnership with international or regional organizations, include the Community Media Network (CMN), JMI, the Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ), the CDFJ and the Arab Women Media Center (AWMC). Some local organizations, such as Imdad Media Center and Da3em, were set up primarily for training purposes. And in 2017, Roya launched its own training academy.

Research on professional media needs over the past ten years include the following findings:

- In 2009, JMI conducted[36] a study on the media market and training needs in the Jordanian media sector. The results showed that the first challenge facing new graduates is the weak training opportunities, as 16% of the graduates who join media outlets suffer from the lack of on-the-job training.

- Another study entitled "Quality of Media Training in Jordan"[37] stated that 74% of media persons received training during the last three years. It added that 68.2% of the sample took part in training courses that focused on writing and editing skills, while 44.2% of the sample received courses in the field of ethics of the profession and legal aspects, followed by 43.1% of the sample who received courses in investigative journalism.

- JMI's 2016 Training Needs Assessment [38] was based on a sample of 211 respondents that came up with important data. Concerning participation in the training courses in the last two years (2014-2016), 21% of journalists did not participate in any course during this period; around 42% took part in less than three training courses; and, 18% participated in more than five training courses. The most frequently received training was writing and editing skills (63%), producing video reports (50%), followed by investigative journalism, ethics of the profession, and legislation. The least represented fields of training were media management and digital media.

Results revealed a low level of satisfaction in media training with respondents identifying key problems that impede the quality of media training such as: repetition and similarity of training topics, lack of

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[34] Assessment of Media Development in Jordan based on UNESCO's Media Development Indicators (2015), UNESCO. (http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Amman/pdf/JordanMDI_EN_small_01.pdf).
[35] The Higher Media Council, Study of Training Needs in the Jordanian Media Sector, 2007, Basim Tweissi, Raed Sulieman, Nassim Tweisi; Quality of Media Training in Jordan, 2014; JMI Training Needs Assessment and Market Survey, 2009; and JMI Training Needs Assessment, 2016.
[36] JMI Training Needs Assessment and Market Survey, 2009.
[37] Basim Tweissi, Raed Sulieman, and Nassim Tweisi, Quality of Media Training in Jordan, 2014.
[38] JMI Training Needs Assessment, 2016.

sustainable training, limited allocations and spending on training within media institutions, and the need to combine theoretical and practical aspects. Priority training needs for journalists and media leaders differed with journalists requesting training on data journalism; specialized media topics; verifying information and news; and building successful economic models in media outlets. Media managers identified training priorities, including topics such as quality standards in managing media establishments; public opinion poll analysis; building successful economic models in the media; and planning and managing media establishments.

Overall, the various studies repeatedly found that training programs only partly met the needs of journalists and media managers; quality is uneven; and continuity is a recurring challenge. In addition, most training programs take place in Amman making it difficult for journalists from remote areas of the country to participate. In addition, thematic and issue-based donor-funded programs that include a "media for development" component provide training to journalists on specific thematic issues (i.e. a gender program builds the capacities of journalists to understand gender concepts or an economic reform program trains them on how to cover economic policy) or de facto journalism skills are being built while promoting the development objective.

However, there is a general perception that journalism training programs are defined and driven by donors or international implementers instead of based on the professional needs of the beneficiaries and that the overall lack of coordination among donors and implementers results in a duplication of effort, overlapping interventions, and a failure to streamline training initiatives for sustainable, long-term impact. If coordinated and responsive, such training programs can contribute to enhancing the independence, credibility and professionalism of journalism now and in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE JOURNALISM EDUCATION[39]

Digital transformation requires education that equips future journalists with knowledge and skills for the digital age.

CHALLENGE: All 7 universities in Jordan that teach journalism focus on three main specializations of basic programs: journalism, radio and television, and public relations and advertising, which fall short of courses that correspond to the needs of the industry, as well as the professional needs of the digital age. There is a problem in a shortage of specialized teachers in most fields of the sciences of journalism, media, and mass communication.

OPPORTUNITIES: The universities that received JMSP[40] and SMJP[41] support focused on the above deficiencies, specifically in the training of the academic staff to adopt teaching methodologies, techniques and knowledge relevant to the digital transformation. They also provided support in developing curricula for new courses, which was highly valued. The evaluations of previous programs point at the problem of a short implementation timeframe and a big gap in time between the two programs. There is an expressed need by the universities to follow up on those initial achievements. Given the fact that the unemployment amid graduates of journalism and media programs exceeds 65% and that graduates of other programs express interest in journalism, it is also recommended to build upon JMSP's successful experience with boot-camps (see Final Report of the JMSP).

RECOMMENDATION: To continue engagement with the universities and in parallel expand training to graduates of other university programs who express interest in journalism.

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[39] Relevant recommendations have been taken from the JMA Executive Summary and Recommendations Report.
[40] Jordan Media Support Program, IREX (2006-2011).
[41] Support to Media in Jordan Program, UNESCO (2014-2018).

In addition, given the pace of change in the media landscape, particularly with the digitization of media, it would be worthwhile conducting a new training needs assessment that would extend its reach to professional journalists and content creators, including those outside of the capital to better capture their priorities, as well as to assess the needs of specific media outlets to identify in-house training requirements and map donor funded training programs since 2016.[42]

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERVENTIONS:

- Support further revision of the journalism courses to align them with the international standards and demands of a digital age;
- Support further training of the academic staff on digital media delivering long-term all-inclusive training to professors (one day a week for 6 months);
- Support boot-camp and internship programs in close collaboration with media outlets and in combination with intensive training, on-the job coaching and internships.

PART III: MEDIA & INFORMATION LITERACY (MIL) IN JORDAN, TODAY & BEYOND

Jordan's rapid digital transformation has resulted in high accessibility and the growing use of digital media, altering the way people consume and deal with information. With the overwhelming increase in the amount of data and exposure to unprecedented amounts of information, it has become paramount to educate and train people on how to navigate through the abundance of information and skillfully use available tools to critically receive information. This includes the ability to differentiate between information and misinformation, facts and rumors.

No nation-wide study has been undertaken to assess the level of MIL among Jordanians. However, within the JMA, a closed-sample online survey[43] of youth engaged in USAID's youth programs (Ana Usharek and Youth Power) revealed that 32% Youth Power (YP) and 27% Ana Usharek youth have had the chance to learn about MIL in school and 30% and 42% at university. Also encouraging is that 41% YP and 30% Ana Usharek youth participated in MIL training workshops. When asked what the first thing that comes to mind when receiving a piece of news or information that they want to share, both groups responded (65% and above) that they would take some kind of action. Thirty-one percent of YP youth stated they are not interested in news verification, compared to 18% for Ana Usharek youth. Nevertheless, 34% of Ana Usharek youth claimed they were not aware what media literacy is all about versus 30% for YP youth.

MIL LANDSCAPE

Jordan has taken a proactive and constructive approach to MIL, having issued its first policy paper on MIL five years ago.[44] In November 2018, the Government of Jordan (GOJ) included a comprehensive MIL plan in its roadmap for the future of the country, committing to its citizens' right to know in line with the law. Although the Government adopted a National Strategy for MIL, whose implementation is under the purview of the Ministry of Culture, there is currently no budgetary commitment for the implementation of the strategy.

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[42] This would be an update to the Training Needs Assessment conducted by JMI in 2016.

[43] The online youth survey, conducted within the scope of the Jordan Media Assessment, queried media literacy among youth engaged in USAID programs Ana Usharek (implemented by the National Democratic Institute) and Youth Power (YP, implemented by Global Communities).

[44] https://www.jmi.edu.jo/en/public-policy-paper-%E2%80%9Cmedia-and-information-literacy-jordan-needs-and-opportunities%E2%80%9D.

Snapshot of Media Literacy Programs in Jordan (2016-2022)						
2016	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**
EU-funded "Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in Jordan" implemented by UNESCO & JMI		EU Youth Empowerment Project: UNESCO & Ministries of State for Media Affairs & Education (7/2018-2/2020)				
		IREX/Jordan "Learn to Discern" Pilot				
			JMI & Deutsche Welle Akademie Engagement in the MIL Action Plan			

A 2019 study by UNESCO, "Mapping of Media Information Literacy in Jordan,"[45] has shed light on the efforts being made in the Kingdom, attempting to categorize the MIL actors, the geographic spread of MIL programs and their main focus, but without details on the organizations involved, information on past or ongoing programs, their quality or impact. Yet the results of the study revealed that organizations involved exhibit considerable enthusiasm for the field of MIL and consider the competencies that fall within its scope as paramount in building a society that is empowered to successfully navigate the increasingly complex media sphere and use this knowledge to further contribute to the societal, cultural, educational and scientific development. It also confirms a shared view that the explosion of data and the fact that the digital world is becoming increasingly integrated in societies' daily lives only adds to their urgency of disseminating MIL knowledge and hence propels these organizations further in their efforts.

The study further finds that there is a great disparity in the capacity as well as resources among the organizations that implement MIL programs. Only a handful of organizations (MIL Drivers)[46] consider MIL a cornerstone of their strategic vision and are actively working to realize their objectives. On the other hand, a large number of the organizations implement MIL activities, but these are more often confined to certain segments of society. While there are different stakeholders involved, they all agree that hate speech and freedom of expression are crucial areas to prioritize, given that the internet and social media have exposed individuals to a wide set of varying opinions, beliefs, and cultures, among others. Another vital area of focus is raising awareness of fake news and disinformation by equipping individuals with the skills to critically analyze the information they are bombarded with, especially that which has deliberately been altered to suit the source's agenda. Other major challenges that were identified include the need for funding and the lack of MIL material in Arabic language.

Jordanian CSOs implemented some concepts of MIL through small and limited projects funded by international donors. In 2016-17, JMI and UNESCO implemented the most comprehensive MIL program in Jordan[47], that 1) provided policy advice to key educational policy-makers to further develop MIL, and 2) supported teacher training colleges to include MIL in their curriculum, resulting in the Ministry of Education raising awareness on MIL through the creation of pilot MIL clubs for grades 7-9. The initial pilot project involved training 24 teachers from eight public (boys and girls) schools who in turn set up MIL clubs at their schools. More than 120 students from grades 7-9, including Syrian refugees, joined clubs which convened once a week either before or after school hours. JMI also assisted the Ministry of Education in integrating MIL into grades seven, eight and ten.

JMI also worked with professors and students at Al Al-Bayt and Al-Hussein bin Talal universities. In a major development in the project, JMI received endorsement from the Ministry of Higher Education, which

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[45] Mapping of Media Information Literacy in Jordan, Net-Med Youth Project, UNESCO (2019), http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Amman/pdf/Mapping_Jor.pdf.
[46] Ibid. The study introduces two categories of the organizations: MIL Drivers and MIL Supporters.
[47] Support to Media in Jordan Project, UNESCO implemented and supported by the EU (2014-2018).

issued instructions to Jordanian universities to offer MIL as a course or integrate MIL into the study plans of education faculties. As a result, Al Al-Bayt University started a MIL course in September 2018. In the follow-up period, JMI drafted a strategic framework for introducing MIL on a national scale and in 2018 the GOJ adopted this strategic framework and formed a national team of stakeholders to oversee the implementation of this ambitious three-year project to be carried out by JMI, however, the framework did not ensure budgetary support for the implementation.

Within the framework of the EU-funded Youth Empowerment Project (July 2018-February 2020), UNESCO's Amman office was implementing another MIL program with strong collaboration and generous funding from the EU, and in cooperation with the Minister of State for Media Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the media community and civil society in Jordan. The main objective was to promote active engagement of young people to build an inclusive knowledge society and counter hate speech through information and communication technologies. The project aimed at deconstructing stereotypes and promoting mutual understanding among youth in Jordan through three main components: (1) public schools: set-up MIL clubs in public schools; (2) local radio stations: engaging two university radio stations to produce and broadcast MIL content; and (3) support CSOs to create awareness on MIL among youth in the governorates of Irbid, Zarqa, Ma'an and Mafraq.

JMI and Deutche Welle Akademie (DWA) joined forces in the implementation of the MIL Action Plan (2019 – 2022) and focused on two components with the following objectives:

- **Education System**: 1) Build the capacity of all teachers in all governorates to transfer MIL skills and competencies to their students and ensure its development; 2) Ensure sustainability of training and capacity building of teachers and educational supervisors through training-of-trainers (multipliers) at the Ministry of Education and teacher training institutions; 3) Integrate MIL concepts and skills into the curricula of targeted classes and ensure they are constantly reviewed and updated; and 4) Develop MIL extra-curricular activities for student MIL clubs.

- **Youth Organizations**: 1) Provide MIL training for members of youth centers across the Kingdom; 2) Disseminate MIL content and ensure sustainability through youth centers and other national youth organizations like "We Are All Jordan Youth"; and 3) Assist and support several youth centers to set up MIL units where they can produce content and become centers for disseminating MIL.

This project should feed into the implementation of the National Strategy for MIL, led by the Ministry of Culture. According to JMI[48], the first component of the Action Plan (Education System) will be jointly implemented with the DWA, while the other component is still seeking funding.

In January 2020, IREX/Jordan gathered MIL experts and stakeholders in Amman to share the results of its two-year "Learn to Discern (L2D)" MIL program in Jordan, which aimed at developing a new cadre of Jordanian trainers who have delivered the course to almost 1,000 people across the country, including school and university students, youths and adults of all ages, the majority of which are women.[49] The L2D "approach helps people of all ages develop healthy habits for engaging with information, online and offline. L2D has been used around the world in classrooms, libraries, community centers, fellowship programs, peer-to-peer networks, and other contexts. Impact studies have shown that the approach is effective with a diverse range of participants—from adult populations to kids in classrooms."[50]

For the reasons above, MIL preoccupies the attention of a variety of stakeholders. Fast spreading and growing in number, these programs are most certainly not only reflecting the needs but also the interest

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[48] Key Informant Interview, January 19, 2020.
[49] https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/new-information-literacy-training-methodology-roll-out-jordan.
[50] https://www.irex.org/project/learn-discern-l2d-media-literacy-training.

of donors and implementing organizations. While the multiplicity of programs has contributed to raising MIL awareness in general, the impact and sustainability of many small and thinly spread programs is questionable as such programs have almost by definition a short time span. Key factors for future consideration are the current Government's will to mainstream MIL programs and the existence of local partners who have already invested years of work in building the capacity to bring MIL programs to a higher level of quality. Greater coordination of donors, as well as involvement with the Government would be of benefit to the further development of MIL in Jordan.

FACT-CHECKING PLATFORMS ROLE IN ADDRESSING MISINFORMATION

MIL has been widely recognized as a power tool in navigating between facts and rumors, information and misinformation, knowledge and set of skills that can help people navigate through an abundance of information (and misinformation). The role of the media outlets that commit to high quality of content and professional standards and are considered credible sources has been stressed throughout the JMA studies. Finally, effective fact-checking requires efforts to improve public access to reliable information (e.g. effective implementation of Jordan's Access to Information Law). Fact-checking platforms can also play a powerful role in countering the effects of misinformation and restoring faith in reliable sources.

Below are three fact-checking platforms currently operating in Jordan:

- *Akeed Media Monitor*: Run by JMI and launched with the support of the King Abdullah Fund for Development, Akeed Media Monitor[51] was developed on the basis of advanced criteria for news verification, as well as a clear framework of reference of moral and ethical issues. It emphasizes its independence as well as resistance to pressure from official and private interest groups. In a broader sense, it aims to promote citizens' rights and access to accurate information, as well as to support media to improve the quality of its content and enhance its professional standards.

- *Fatabyyano*: This independent fact-checking platform is based in Jordan but serves the MENA region. It is certified by the International Fact Checking Network (IFCN)[52]. While it mainly targets news in Arabic, Fatabayyno also provides content in six other languages through the work of its 35-member team of researchers, academics, media people, and web developers, among others. With more than 500,000 fans on its Facebook page, Fatabyyano also counts over 3 million views on some of its "Fatabyyano Show" videos on YouTube.[53] Recently, Facebook partnered with Fatabyyano to launch a third-party, Arabic fact-checking platform across the MENA region to improve quality of news by implementing steps to review and rate accuracy of stories, including photos and videos. To ensure transparency, articles that are written by the third-party fact-checkers will appear in a Related Articles section below the original story in its News Feed. This approach is what some academics are calling a counterintuitive approach: "instead of killing the story, the story gets surrounded with related articles so as to provide more context and alternative views to the reader. In other words, the social platform hosting the disputed news alters the environment in which that story is presented and consumed."[54]

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[51] Akeed was listed in the Fact-Checking Duke Reporters' Lab which maintains a database of global fact-checking sites in 55 countries. No other Arabic language website was listed among the 161 international websites in the database. The list seeks to categorize fact-checking websites on the basis of scientific, professional and ethical criteria. The Fact-Checking Duke Reporters' Lab is a media research center at the Stanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. Its core projects focus on fact-checking and occasional research about trust in the news media.

[52] International Fact Checking Network, https://www.poynter.org/ifcn/.

[53] Harvard University invited Fatabyyano to their annual conference in 2016 as one of the best projects in the Arab world and Her Majesty Queen Rania recognized them as one of the most creative youth projects for 2016 in the Expo 2017.

[54] Editorial: How to Counter Fake News? A Taxonomy of Anti-fake News Approaches by Alberto Alemanno, European Journal of Risk Regulation, 2018.
https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-risk-regulation/article/how-to-counter-fake-news-a-taxonomy-of-antifake-news-approaches/EA53D30745F601834218DDD7DB90950A.

- *"Your Right to Know" (Haqqaq Taref,* حقك تعرف*)* In 2018, the GOJ launched a platform which aims at combatting rumors and fake news by allowing the user to verify information before sharing it on social media. As described by a personal interview conducted during the JMA, "[I]t is a permanent portal, it still exists but the problem is that it is not supported by a long-term budget, so will it eventually no longer exist? These initiatives are also done by a Minister who is here today but may be gone tomorrow. There is a problem of continuity and long-term vision. These initiatives can be done as a fix-it, a quick fix and that's it."[55]

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY[56]

Exposure to unprecedented amounts of information requires skills to navigate through the abundance of information, use the available tools to critically receive the information, as well as to create content.

CHALLENGE: The digital transformation in Jordan which has seen high accessibility, as well as rapidly growing use of the digital media alters the way people consume and deal with information. With the overwhelming increase in the amount of data and exposure to unprecedented amounts of information, it became paramount to educate and train people on how to navigate through the abundance of information and skillfully use the available tools to critically receive the information, as well as become creators of content. MIL has obviously become an area that for all the aforementioned reasons preoccupies the attention of a variety of stakeholders in Jordan. While the multiplicity of programs has contributed to raising MIL awareness in Jordan, the sustainability of many small and thinly spread programs is questionable, as such programs have almost by definition a short time span.

OPPORTUNITIES: The Government's plan for 2019-2020 officially adopted a strategic framework and plan to disseminate MIL under the Ministry of Culture, specifically focusing on the integration of MIL in the elementary and higher education system, which is projected to last four years.[57] The implementation is currently hampered by a lack of funding as there is no budgetary commitment so far.

RECOMMENDATION: To contribute to the Government's MIL strategy by supporting JMI in the implementation of the National Strategy's Action Plan, as well as to sustain other well-elaborated, experienced organization-led programs (e.g. IREX).

ILLUSTRATIVE INTERVENTIONS:

SUPPORT GOVERNMENT EFFORTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS MIL STRATEGY
- Support the Ministry of Culture in setting up a unit for MIL and capacity building for the unit;
- Support the implementation of the Action Plan (2019-2022) that defines the following activities:
  - Introduce MIL through national curricula, methodology, manuals and tools; textbooks for the 7th-8th grades, and IT books for tenth grade in public and private schools; activities in schools; prepare a national plan to train and build national capacities in MIL through two courses;
  - Introduce MIL into study plans in universities through two tracks: courses for students and MIL courses in teacher-training colleges;
  - Launch a national MIL project in youth centers;
  - Support influential groups with MIL skills, as such empowerment would be reflected on society as a whole. These include legislators, members of municipal and local councils, heads of professional associations and CSOs, and policymakers;

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[55] Key Informant Interview (January 29, 2020).
[56] Taken from the Executive Summary and Recommendations Report of the JMA.
[57] Key Informant Interview (February 10, 2020).

- o Encourage public, private and social media to produce and broadcast content that raises awareness on MIL concepts;
- o JMC to draft guidelines for corporate social responsibility for media organizations to encourage production of public service announcements on MIL.
- Closely coordinate potential support with JMI and DWA who have been already working together on the implementation of the first two components of the Action Plan.

SUPPORT OTHER QUALITY MIL PROGRAMS

- IREX's *"Learn to Discern"* program which applies an internationally tested and successful approach in helping people of all ages to develop healthy habits for engaging with online and offline information.