**Institutionalization: Adopting a holistic and adaptive approach to independent media sector development**

Supporting the development of an independent Syrian media, albeit in its currently transitional and stateless context, requires a holistic approach that considers both the needs of individual media outlets as well as the development of supporting media institutions. This holistic approach should combine providing financial support where it is needed, alongside the provision of institutional and capacity strengthening, strategic guidance and facilitating dialogue within and between partners. Over the years, the programme aimed to take the partners to a higher level of Good Governance including transparency and accountability with light monitoring and evaluation capacity building.

*No organisation can grow and be sustainable without procedures manuals; transparency, accountability, and good governance are a direct resultant of sound checks and balances*

The institutional capacity of partners is crucial for their existence and sustainability. Over the 5 years, Synergy-Takamol assisted partners in their evolution to increase institutional capacity:

* In Y1 and Y2, accounting systems were designed, and partners were trained on using them. Human resources and finance booklets initiated and institutional structures were set through training, coaching, and shadowing.
* In Y3, grant management was introduced, procedure manuals were implemented and updated. In addition, there was a focus on accounting coaching, as well as problem solving through coaching and capacity building.
* In Y4, Synergy continued assisting partners on a needs basis in updating procedures, organizing capacity building and problem-solving sessions as well as accounting training and shadowing.
* In Y5, Synergy assisted FPU in preparing for the audit at all levels, and helped the partners prepare and design a closure strategy at the internal level of management and finance. The quest for sustainability underpins the provision of strategic and institutional development support for establishing stable and efficiently operating media outlets and supporting organisations

Pillars of building institutional capacity:

* **Financial Management:** The key intervention in financial management was related to documentation and processes. Coaching and shadowing on Finance/Accounting including a review of financial reports and ledgers and supportive documents with recommendations, corrections and online coaching to strengthen the financial management capacity of the partners.
* **Good Governance, Policies and Procedures**: The key intervention strategy is awareness and capacity building on Good Governance. At the level of policies and procedures to consolidate the work done in Y3 by adding more emphasis on subjects such as transparency, accountability, and fraud corruption for media institutions as well as copyrights, privacy laws, and code of conduct.
* **Online accounting:** shadowing to assist partners build their ledgers and financial report as well as checking supportive documents to assess needs for coaching. The methodology: implemented through review of ledgers and supporting documents with email threads of corrections and recommendations.
* **Training and Capacity building**: This is tailor-made training. The overall results varied as partners are at different levels and have different needs. The media institutions focused on the amendment of bylaws and election procedures, with impending elections during Y4 and finally inductions of the new boards. Meanwhile outlets needed a focus on (detailed) HR procedures and financial booklets. In addition, with some partners a code of ethics and conflict of interest Integrity policy was developed.
* **Strategy and Editorial Management**: The key intervention strategies are discussions regarding: audience engagement, strategy development, unique selling points, diversification of income, and adding increased focus on indicators and outcomes in the planning as well as reporting.

**See Template checklist that shows how partners have been assessed: ¨EJSM Partners’ Transparency and Good Governance Policies¨**