

Development Journalism, Gender Sensitivity and Sustainability in Egypt: Analyzing the Women's Voices project

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Abstract

Examining the concept of “development communication” and “development journalism” in the professional development of women journalists in Egypt, this study analyzes the Women's Voices Project undertaken by Deutsche Welle Akademy (DWA) in Egypt to develop the professional and gender sensitive skills of young women journalists. The project has taken place through a set of intensive professional trainings, leading to the establishment of the Masr El Nas website, intended to achieve sustainability or “media viability.” Testing the role of this “media development” project in developing the interpersonal and professional skills of women journalists and in promoting “development journalism,” through Masr El Nas, the methods used include in-depth interviews with the project managers, trainers and selected trainees, and a thematic content analysis of Masr El Nas, as a case study of development journalism. Research findings indicate there is no nation-wide impact for the project, since it has operated in a tight media environment with a variety of laws strangulating media freedom, as well as media development projects. The project, as a result, failed to achieve “media viability.” Yet, it could reach many of its small-scale goals, such as developing the interpersonal and professional skills of women journalists, enhancing gender sensitive reporting, using state-of-the-art technology, reporting on the people, and engaging local communities and attempting to develop them, as the interviews indicated. The content analysis showed that stories about marginalized women were dominant on the website, as well as stories from Upper Egypt, a blind spot for mainstream media.

