EVALUATION SUMMARY

EVALUATION OF MEDIA LITERACY PROJECTS IN EUROPE AND EURASIA

APRIL 2022

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BACKGROUND AND EVALUATION PURPOSE

The United States (U.S.) Department of State Bureau of Europe and Eurasia/Office of the Coordinator of Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (EUR/ACE) contracted Social Impact, Inc. (SI) to conduct a performance evaluation of nine media literacy (ML) assistance projects in Europe and Eurasia. For more information about the projects, see the Evaluation Report.

EVALUATION DESIGN

The SI Evaluation team used four data collection methods to answer the eight evaluation questions: (i) review of project documentation and structured literature review, (ii) online survey with 1,714 project beneficiaries, (iii) 45 key informant interviews with ACE partners, project leadership and field staff, government stakeholders, and subject matter experts, and (iii) 36 focus group discussions with 109 beneficiary respondents.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Across the portfolio, survey respondents expressed significant agreement that participation increased both their ability to assess the credibility of media and to identify misinformation, with almost one in three respondents agreeing strongly with both statements. Furthermore, in qualitative interviews, respondents from all projects were able to convey concrete examples of skills acquisition, though their level of confidence in identifying misinformation varied substantially. The full answers to the eight evaluation questions can be found in the Evaluation Report.

We present below the relative strengths and weaknesses of the four programmatic approaches used by the projects.

Relative Strengths of ML Approaches

Schools	Libraries	Stand-Alone Training	Games
Best way to promote population-level competencies.	National infrastructure with broad and varied reach (school and community libraries).	Flexibility – can be targeted and adapted to different, non-institutional audiences.	Can attract and hold player attention. Can broach complex subject matters.
Ideal structure for the introduction and reinforcement of ML messaging across subject matters, and dissemination of programming.	Receptive audiences. Librarians are looking to stay current and display benefits to civic leaders and patrons.	Efficiency – can be implemented rapidly, particularly with existing curricula and established organizations.	Role-playing can help demonstrate certain techniques better than lecturing/discussion.
Captive audiences – exposure can be more intense and more uniform than other approaches.	Utilization by a broad cross-section of society.	Best for projects of limited duration, limited funding, specific target groups, or specific thematic topics.	Expand ML instructional space (e.g., phone-compatible games).
Significant spillover potential (peer-to-peer, student-parent).	High degree of community trust.	Positive externalities – increased awareness of ML, increased media coverage, promotion of journalism. Cascade models develop leadership competencies.	Strong complement to other types of ML programming, (e.g., can be used to support ML teachers/trainers to demonstrate concepts).

Relative Weaknesses of ML Approaches

Schools	Libraries	Stand-Alone Training	Games
Enormous investment of time with unknown returns on investment.	Capacity constraints (pedagogical skills, ML skills, self-confidence).	Limited scope – generally not scalable, cannot affect population-level changes.	Low relative learning and retention potential.
Significant bureaucratic and political constraints.	Some librarians do not want to teach.	Poor sustainability. Necessitate continued funding to persist.	Length has to be kept short to maintain interest.
Challenging to modify curricula.	Variable and oftentimes inadequate resourcing.	Variance in the intensity, quality, and approaches.	Perception of games as childish creates a stigma.
Elective classes compete with other offerings. Extra-curricular classes have poor sustainability.	Heterogeneity in patrons makes designing and delivering ML programming difficult.	Contextualization and translation are difficult and expensive to do well.	Online games present security risks, particularly if using registration.
Updating curricula to keep current is difficult.	Discrepancy between the possible and practical reach.		
Limited availability of teacher training programs that include ML components.	Library patronage is highly variable across and within societies.		

RECOMMENDATIONS

SCHOOLS

- Assess the baseline state of the education system and identify the most practical entry points for ML instruction. The ideal outcome is the formal integration of ML into the curriculum as a cross-curricular subject across multiple grades. If this is not possible, programs should meet the education system where it is, integrating ML through stand-alone classes, optional classes, limited integration into other subject matters, or supporting extracurricular activities.
- Invest in building and maintaining relationships with key education stakeholders. If critical relationships do not lead to agreements and/or support, know when to cut losses and disengage.

LIBRARIES

- Adapt training programs to suit librarians' needs by (i) spending more time on introductory ML concepts, (ii) integrating pedagogical concepts, (iii) extending the duration relative to the teacher-led or stand-alone trainings, and (iv) including time for practicing ML instruction.

STAND-ALONE TRAININGS

- Use a cascade training model to increase the spread of ML messaging.
- Trainings should (i) include interactive activities, (ii) use a combination of in-person and online approaches, (iii) be supported through network building, and (iv) provide online resources for future beneficiary use.

GAMES

- Integrate games into other ML interventions, adapting approach to the beneficiary population.