

# #ASKNET 2021 Project Evaluation Report

Berlin, 31. March 2022

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## SUMMARY

The BMZ funded project “South Sudan / North-Uganda: #ASKnet – the professional network remains viable and able to offer media trainings” (project number p5751) was implemented in Uganda and South Sudan by German NGO r0g\_agency for open culture and critical transformation in collaboration with partner Hive Collab from April 2021 until March 31, 2022.

#ASKnet (Access to Skills & Knowledge Network) is an initiative by young South Sudanese and their community media organisations that has been developed over the course of several successive annual projects funded by the BMZ. The ASKnet members educate media users and producers, especially previously discriminated, disadvantaged and poorer groups. The BMZ-funded ASKnet project intends to foster the viability of the seven media organisations that are currently ASKnet member organisations as well as the capacity building of independent community-based expert open knowledge trainers in South Sudan and Uganda.

The project implementation plan as detailed in the project funding proposal consists of the following five main project activity blocks that were carried out largely in parallel with each other throughout the full project runtime:

Main Project Activities	Short Description
1. Hub-Development Support	Financial support to improve basic hub infrastructure (“media kit”) and to cover running costs during the project runtime, including ASKotec training kits,
2. Develop Register of ASKnet Experts	As "on-the-job training", the project participants will under the guidance of local IT professionals collaborate to create a searchable professional directory with profiles of individual experts from the ASKnet network.
3. Expert Coaching Program	A series of small-group online coaching sessions with selected international and regional experts on topics requested by the participants themselves, aimed at strengthening the capacities of the ASKnet experts and thus increasing their technical survivability.
4. Develop Two Knowledge Exchange Platforms	Platform 1 is to be used like an intranet for the electronic storage and documentation or management of information/knowledge. Platform 2 will be an e-learning platform that will be adapted to the technical framework conditions of the region so that work can also be done without permanent internet access.

5. Implementation of Educational Events by ASKnet Members	These events are the core task of the professional network (primary target group). The organisers are given specific professional support and further training by the project staff. They are free to define by themselves which format, length and venue of the events, however the content must be clearly related to the funding principles and project objectives.
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The scope of the evaluation includes all project intervention activities and projected outcomes as outlined in the original project proposal. As an initial step of the evaluation process, survey data collected in the two antecedent #ASKnet projects (p4126 / 2019-20 & p4814 / 2020-21) were reviewed, summarised and analysed in relation to the current project approach.

The evaluation relied on two main data sources: internal documentation provided by the project team and first-hand data collected through two field data collection activities conducted in February and March of 2022: An online survey of the direct target group and a focus group session with managers of the five main ASKnet partner hubs.

#### Assessment of OECD-DAC criteria:

In terms of **relevance**, the evaluation concludes that the objectives of the ASKnet project remain highly valid in the ASKnet 2021 project and that the design of the project is adequately adapted to the selected project goal.

In terms of **effectiveness**, the completion of the project indicators have up until the time of reporting only been partially achieved. While the first of the four indicators was fully completed and survey feedback as well as publicly accessible digital documents indicate that work has been put forward both by the project team and the participating hub teams towards achieving all set objectives, the completion of either of the next three indicators (indicators 2-4) cannot be confirmed by the evaluation at this point because results have not yet been comprehensively documented and to some extent, the initial indicators had not been formulated in a clear and concise way.

In terms of **efficiency**, the evaluation focussed on the feedback by the participants who appear overall to be relatively satisfied and positive concerning the project implementation. No particular aspect of the project implementation is rated negatively or commented on negatively by any significant part of the survey respondents.

In terms of **impact**, the ASKnet project and approach have had an overall positive effect on the five (/seven) MO's ability to operate and provide services to their respective community, mainly by providing organisational capacity building to the hub teams, resources to cover running costs and carry out activities and opportunities to network and collaborate with each other and external partners. To further analyse the project's actual impact on the indirect target groups, more information concerning the media training activities that have been carried out by the hubs is needed.

In terms of **sustainability**, despite different challenges described by respondents, the ASKnet network has now at the end of the ASKnet 2021 project reached a level of maturity and substance that bodes well for its sustainable continuation in the future under the assumption that further funding can be secured to maintain activity in the network and support its coordination.

As concerns further cross-cutting issues, the evaluation concluded that more needs to be done to promote gender equality on a structural level within and through the ASKnet project in future.

Based on the evaluation results, four recommendations are given for any future implementations of the ASKnet project approach:

- The evaluation first of all recommends that the ASKnet project should be continued with further support by the BMZ so as to be able to consolidate achievements and scale up.
- Next steps should involve a strong exit strategy and continue to gradually shift responsibility and decision power from the German project partner into the hands of the regional ASKnet network and its member MOs.
- Future projects should include a more stringent system of monitoring, documentation and periodical review beginning from the start of the project runtime and also conduct further research on the actual extent and nature of project impact on the benefiting communities so as to verify the assumed theory of change.
- Finally, to achieve the aims of gender equality within the ASKnet network itself and within the local beneficiary communities, the project evaluation recommends developing a clear and profound gender equality strategy for future projects.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Object of the evaluation

This document describes the process and outcomes of the evaluation of BMZ (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) funded project titled “South Sudan / North-Uganda: #ASKnet – the professional network remains viable and able to offer media trainings” (project number p5751), that has been implemented from 1. April 2021 – 31. March 31, 2022 by German NGO r0g\_agency, based in Berlin in collaboration with local partner Hive Collab based in Kampala, Uganda.

Both in South Sudan and in the refugee camps in Northern Uganda, access to media and information is poor and there is a lack of media education and media training centres. This particularly affects young women, who are denied access to education due to cultural reasons. Journalists and media workers in South Sudan are threatened, persecuted and restricted. Furthermore, many people do not have the necessary media skills or the opportunities to acquire them in order to benefit from them. Especially women and girls as well as refugees, people in remote and rural areas with low levels of education and low income run the risk of not benefiting from effects of media development. Digital and media skills furthermore play a central role in the context of the post-conflict situation, which is repeatedly threatened by online incitement to violence and hate speech in social media, especially with regard to peace building and conflict mitigation.

Intended as an answer and solution to this challenge, #ASKnet (Access to Skills & Knowledge Network) is an initiative by young South Sudanese and their community media organisations that has been developed over the course of several successive annual projects funded by the BMZ. The ASKnet members educate media users and producers, especially previously discriminated, disadvantaged and poorer groups. The BMZ-funded ASKnet project intends to foster the viability of the seven media organisations that are currently ASKnet member organisations as well as the capacity building of independent community-based expert open knowledge trainers in South Sudan and Uganda. How the ASKnet project has developed over time and how it is structured is related in more detail under section 3 of this report.

## 1.2 Background and Objective of the evaluation

The evaluation plan was developed based on a review of the ToR, the project proposal document and updates provided in initial project briefing meetings with the project lead (r0g) Clemens Lerche on September 15 and with project curator Stephen Kovats on November 8, 2021 in Berlin.

The evaluation was to serve two main purposes:

- On the one hand, the evaluation is conducted as a basis for the final reporting of the implemented one-year project in relation to the project performance indicators (output, outcome and impact) including the effectiveness, efficiency, impact, relevance and sustainability and

- On the other hand, to provide recommendations of action as relates to potential future follow-up projects. I.e. to analyse the ASKnet approach as it has been implemented thus far and to identify challenges and potential measures to be taken for the improvement of future iterations (lessons for future design and implementation).

Accordingly, the final evaluation report is directed towards both the funder (BENGO/BMZ) and the project team of the implementing and participating organisations (r0g\_agency, Hive Collab and the seven ASKnet member hubs) as intended target audiences. This final report is therefore authored in English.

The scope of the evaluation includes all project intervention activities and projected outcomes as outlined in the original project proposal (p5751) and described again here further below. To gain a broader perspective on the current ongoing project and to make more valid recommendations for future steps, evaluation data collected within the two preceding ASKnet projects (p4126 and p4814) have additionally been reviewed and summarised as a basis for the final report (see section 3).

The evaluation strives to answer the following central questions, including standard questions to fulfil the criteria laid out in the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, but adapted and amended with consideration to the specific project context and the previously mentioned objectives of the evaluation.

## **Key Evaluation Questions**

### **RELEVANCE**

- To what extent are the objectives of the project still valid?
- Are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives?
- Are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the intended impacts and effects?
- How were the measures and activities of the project accepted and evaluated by the project activity participants themselves (direct target group)?

### **EFFECTIVENESS**

- To what extent were the project objectives achieved?
- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?
- In what way and to what extent do the specific set of technical tools and platforms that are designed and implemented as a part of the ASKnet project contribute to achieving the project objectives and intended impact?
- What is the added value of the project format in terms of its potential future local intensification or regional extension? What ways to improve and extend the format can be gained from feedback from the participants, the actual project results and the evaluations of the project team?

### **EFFICIENCY**

- Were activities cost-efficient?

- Were objectives achieved on time?
- Was the programme or project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?

#### **IMPACT**

- What has happened as a result of the project?
- What real difference has the activity made to the beneficiaries?
- How many people have been affected?
- What specific benefit to the indirect target groups (hub communities) can be inferred from the outcomes of the project activities?
- Which members of the local communities actually participate in the media education events organised by the hubs within the ASKnet project?
- Do men and women equally participate in the program and benefit from their participation to the same extent?
- Which lasting effects can be identified on an individual, organisational and systemic level? At which level are interventions more effective?

#### **SUSTAINABILITY**

- To what extent will the benefits of the project continue after donor funding has ceased?
- What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project?
- Which network connections have emerged among the program participants and which content and long-term strategic quality do they have?
- To what extent are the current ASKnet member hubs and the ASKnet network viable and self-sustaining?

### **1.3 Evaluation Mission**

The evaluation was carried out by Jörn Schultz as a contracted external consultant, assisted by the ASKnet project team in terms of data and document collection, strategic advice and interview input. Jörn Schultz has several years of experience within international and German development coordination, both as a project manager, project designer and in the role of an evaluator of development initiatives within different geographic and technical contexts. He also has specific experience from several projects implemented in South Sudan and involving South Sudanese target groups in the regional diaspora. Jörn is certified in CapacityWORKS (GIZ) and User Requirement Engineering (CPUX-UR / UXQB).

## **2. Evaluation Process**

### **2.1 Methodology**

The project success (effectiveness) was evaluated in reference to the following performance indicators, as they have been initially defined in the impact matrix of the accepted project proposal:

<p><b>Impact:</b> The media specialist network ASKnet (South Sudanese media organisations and media professionals) is being strengthened and its members can train media literacy among media users in their region.</p>		
Project Objectives	Indicators	
Outcome	Status quo	Target
The professionally strengthened ASKnet specialist network offers educational events that strengthen the media competence of media users in South Sudan / Northern Uganda.	<p>0 Classroom teaching events, as there are too few resources available (financial as well as structural)</p> <p>0 Distance learning events since no platform usable</p>	25 well documented events by ASKnet members
Output	Status quo	Target
1. ASKnet as a specialist network has become more visible for potential clients and offers direct contact persons	No public accessible directory for potential clients, no clear contact persons	A publicly accessible directory with 7 contact-persons (1 per hub) and 25 registered freelance media professionals per hub, at the end of the project.
2. Selected ASKnet experts increase central knowledge in the area of media competence / management of educational events and can also act as multipliers.	The expert network has 25 experts with sufficient knowledge and function as multipliers.	The expert network has 75 new experts at the end of the project: 15 in the topic of training management, 15 in media production, 15 in organisational development, 15 in media Hardware, 15 in Media software
3. The ASKnet members can work together better by setting up knowledge exchange platforms and develop and offer learning content via eLearning.	Limited exchange of information and knowledge exchange and no eLearning service due to lack of central platforms.	Exchange of 25 learning contents and e-learning offers through two platforms set up by the end of the project.
4. Educational events can be carried out cost-effectively and in collaboration with partners	No educational events with cost recovery	Implementation of at least 25 events until the end of the project, for a maximum of 750 media users in the Project region

*Table 01: Impact Matrix of the project ASKnet 2021 (p5751)*

### **Data collection measures**

As an initial step of the evaluation process, survey data collected in the two antecedent #ASKnet projects (p4126 / 2019-20 & p4814 / 2020-21) were reviewed, summarised and analysed in relation to the current project approach. In a next step, the following two field data collection activities formed the data basis of the evaluation (1. Online survey of direct target group → 2. Focus group session with ASKnet hub managers) in addition to document review:

#### **1) Online survey**

An online survey of the direct target group (ASKnet network members) was administered to gather qualitative and quantitative data in relation to the main evaluation questions. The online survey was implemented through LimeSurvey in English language as a mix of open-ended questions, rating scales and multiple-choice selection formats. The survey data was subsequently processed and analysed in spreadsheet and text-document format.

The survey was administered online between February 28th and March 6th 2022. The survey URL was shared in the #ASKnet Telegram group to reach everyone who had been actively involved in implementing the ASKnet 2021 project on the side of the target group (South Sudan & Uganda - not r0g\_agency personnel). The intention was to gather feedback from everyone on the ground in the ASKnet implementation areas who could be expected to have enough knowledge about the ASKnet project to understand what objectives and activities each of the survey questions refer to. To be able to keep track of those who had actually answered the survey and those who still remained, the survey was administered non-anonymously, but in the subsequent data-analysis, individual names were not processed. A total of 26 persons responded, corresponding to 100% of those who had been asked to fill out the questionnaire.

#### Demographic distribution of survey respondents:

The survey asked the respondents to state their gender (Male/Female/No Answer) and to select, “Which of the following ASKnet partner hubs are you most closely connected to?”. As the following table shows, 73% of the respondents were male and 23 % were female. At least three persons each identify themselves as close to each of the five main ASKnet hubs (most belonging to YEF and Platform Africa). Concerning the two additional “satellite hubs” that are in process of being set up in new locations (see section 3), none of the respondents identified themselves most closely with Platform Africa in Yei and only two respondents declared themselves to be most closely affiliated to YEF in Adjumani camp. The explanation for this is that the teams of the original YEF and PA mother hubs are involved in the satellite expansion process, which is still in progress as the new hubs have not yet been fully established with independent managing teams in the satellite locations. For the purpose of simplicity, in the further analysis, the respondents from the satellite hubs were therefore counted as part of their mother hub communities.

Hub	M	F	Total
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ATAKA	••	•	3
GoGirls ICT		••••	4
JunubOS	••	•	3
PA - Rhino Camp Uganda	••••• •	•	7
PA - Yei South Sudan			0
YEF - Adjumani Camp Uganda	••		2
YEF - Pagirinya Settlement Uganda	••••• ••		7
<b>Total</b>	<b>19 (73%)</b>	<b>7 (27%)</b>	<b>26</b>

Table 02: Survey respondent distribution across gender and hub-affiliation

Furthermore, the survey respondents were asked to define their own role in the ASKnet 2021 project by selecting one or more of five predefined role-descriptions (+ “other”). The corresponding question was stated like follows: *“What has been your own specific role within the ASKnet 2021 project? In what way did you participate and/or contribute?”* A slight majority of the respondents answered that they were part of one of the respective hub teams. Several identified themselves as having more than one project role and only two identified themselves exclusively as “learners”.

Hub	Hub Team	Trainer / Mentor / Coach	LEAD Data Collector	ASKnet Project Team / Coordination	Participant in any ASKnet media training event (learner)	Other
ATAKA	•••		•	•		
GoGirls ICT	•••	•	••	••	•	
JunubOS	•••					
PA Rhino	••	•••	•••	•••	••	•
PA Yei						
YEF Adj.	••					
YEF Pag.	••	••	••		•	
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 03: Survey respondents' self-identified roles in the ASKnet 2021 project

## 2) Focus Group Session

A focus group session of 2 hours' length was carried out on March 8, 2022 with a total of seven members of the management teams of the five main ASKnet hubs. The purpose was to get more in-depth feedback on key questions from the main responsible actors and coordinators of the direct target group, to consolidate and deepen the gathered and initially analysed survey results. The focus group session was conducted via video conferencing (Zoom) and the discussion was moderated along six main guiding questions (see transcribed protocol in appendix 3) that covered both the preceding three years of the ASKnet project and the anticipated future development of the network.

## 3) Document review

In addition to the aforementioned data sources, the following documents and digital resources were reviewed:

- Participant lists and documentations of meetings and events
- Online platforms and digital content created as part of the project
- Social media posts and messenger group communication

Furthermore, individual members of the main #ASKnet project team were consulted by the evaluator repeatedly throughout the evaluation process to verify his understanding of identified facts and relationships.

The following table provides an overview of the main steps of the evaluation process in relation to the overall time frame.

Activity	Purpose / Output	Timeframe
Document Review, analysis of the two preceding #ASKnet projects	Summary report, refined research questions	January 2022
Online survey (via LimeSurvey): Main #ASKnet community members	Qualitative survey data	February 28 - March 6, 2022
Focus group session with #ASKnet Hub managers (half-day, 7 participants via ZOOM & Miro)	Review of survey results, map out future scenarios	March 8, 2022
Data analysis, report writing	Final evaluation report	31.03.2022

Table 04: ASKnet projects of the past three years.

## 2.2 Critical assessment

First of all, while the intention of this evaluation is to provide an overarching assessment of the ASKnet initiative including both the current implementation as ASKnet 2021 and a retrospective review of the two preceding projects, the resources were not enough to go into great detail

concerning each and every aspect. The focus of the current evaluation is on the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project and less on its efficiency.

It is quite difficult from the outside to gain a complete and well-grounded understanding of the ASKnet project, as many activities are happening in parallel via different channels throughout the informally connected network and stringent documentation and reporting is still one of the challenges remaining to be solved (see section 5). A main challenge of the evaluation has therefore been to filter through the continuous flow of information and updates, to consolidate the essential aspects and draft an understandable picture of the essential outcomes of the project over the years.

As concerns the online survey, it was difficult to set criteria for whom to include as a respondent and to determine who is a member of the direct target group in general, especially as this year's ASKnet project was not structured around a specific set of formal training activities with a number of recruited participants. The actual network consists of many more individuals than those who were now recruited as respondents in the survey, as there is no official sign-up process for individual membership in the ASKnet network and anyone who has participated in or benefited from any of the community media trainings organised by the hubs (or any other ASKnet related activities) can to some extent be considered part of the wider ASKnet community. Therefore, the hub managers and the ASKnet project teams were asked to in particular approach those members that they knew would have a somewhat informed opinion on this year's project. This recruitment method of course may come with the side effect of having less critical voices included in the sample. In future evaluations, it may be advised to survey a wider spectrum of community members, including those belonging to the indirect target group, with more objective sampling methods.

Furthermore, as, for practical reasons, the data from the recent survey and focus group were not collected anonymously, the openness of the respondents to voice critique may have been somewhat further inhibited.

Finally, it is in part difficult to separate the activities and outcomes of the different ASKnet project years from each other, as the implementation has been a largely continuous process over the years. Activities that were started in one project have been continued into the next one and the actual project starting and ending times have usually been delayed compared to the officially confirmed project run-times, that furthermore do not correspond to calendar years. From the target-group's perspective, ASKnet may therefore at times and to some appear as one long project and they may be unaware of which activity belongs to the current project or to previous ones. Therefore, the following review of the two prior ASKnet years (section 3) can provide a useful background to the new data collected in the ongoing latest project and the reader should keep in mind that respondents may at times have a wider perspective on the project outcomes, even when asked specifically about ASKNet 2021 activities.

### 3. Brief Review and Assessment of Preceding Project Activities and Development of the Framework Conditions

As part of the evaluation of ASKnet 2021, the evaluator was asked to also review the feedback collected in the two previous projects (2019 & 2020). The following subsections cover this retroactive review, attempting to establish a rough outline of how the project has developed over the past three years, up until the current project, including particular challenges that have been overcome and those that remain. Further references to previous survey results will also be made in section 5, where deemed appropriate. The review covers the following BMZ-funded ASKnet projects:

Short title	Project number	Approved project run-time
#ASKnet 2019	P4126	1.5.2019 - 31.3.2020
#ASKnet 2020	P4814	1.2.2020 - 31.3.2021
#ASKnet 2021	P5751	1.4.2021 - 31.3.2022

*Table 05: ASKnet projects of the past three years.*

Precursors to these three projects were two further ones funded through the BMZ media title: p2699 and Let's go jHUB 2016.0801.7. Those however fall outside of the scope of the current review.

#### 3.1 Target Groups

Throughout its iterations over the past three years, the ASKnet project has retained its focus on supporting the development of communities of young media developers in South Sudan and in the refugee communities of neighbouring countries (mainly Uganda, but also Kenya). The support has primarily targeted a selection of so-called “media organisations” (MO) or “hubs” (main target group) in the respective communities. These MOs are relatively small (average staff = 5), community driven grassroots organisations and serve different functions for the members of their communities, such as:

- Providing educational opportunities through trainings, awareness raising and peer-learning events, especially aimed at strengthening the media competencies of the respective local target group
- Providing networking and promotion opportunities to strengthen the capacity for acquiring third party funding and job opportunities
- Providing access to office infrastructure, Internet, media hardware and software which is often not available or easily accessible elsewhere in the local environment.

In addition to the core staff of each MO, a further group of loosely affiliated freelance and volunteer community members, media workers, trainers and other experts contribute to the hub activities on an irregular basis.

Indirect target groups of the ASKnet projects are defined as other organisations and groups within the local communities surrounding the ASKnet MOs for whom the MOs pertain to serve as clients and partners. In general, the concerned communities from which also the team members of the MOs are recruited are characterised as low-income, young, poorly educated and poorly equipped. Due to ongoing armed conflicts and forced displacements, issues like trauma and unstable family situations also play a big role in defining the motivations and behaviours of the target individuals. These target group profiles as they have been described in the ASKnet project proposals, including different official national and international statistical references, are largely confirmed through personal accounts by ASKnet project personnel and through the answers of respondents in the surveys. However, the project evaluation has thus far not included any own demographic research of the community populations in the different locations, so as to verify the actual socio-economic and educational compositions of the direct and indirect target groups. This may be worthwhile to consider as part of future evaluation measures.

The media organisations currently forming the ASKnet network all evolved from previous BMZ-funded projects in South Sudan, where previous community members of the initial jHub project ventured on to form their own community-oriented organisations in South Sudan and then, caused by political disruption, in refugee camps of neighbouring East-African countries. Starting with six formally participating hubs in 2019, one of those hubs (ASKlab in Nakuru, Kenya) fell short on its commitments in the course of the 2020 project and was therefore excluded from participation in future projects, while two new hubs have since then emerged as respective satellite representations of the hubs YEF and Platform Africa. Each ASKnet hub has a slightly different strategic focus and targets different segments of the local communities, depending on each hub's founding history, the interests and skills of involved personalities and the local context within which they each operate. Common to all of the MOs is that they aim to develop the livelihood and education of mostly young members in their local community by providing access to information technologies and supporting collaborative processes to develop solutions to challenges on a local level. The following table lists the MOs that have been partners in the ASKnet project over the three project years:

MO	Profile	Location	2019	2020	2021
<b>GoGirls ICT</b>	A female-led organisation that engages, educates, and empowers girls and women in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM)	Juba, South Sudan	X	X	X
<b>Junub OS</b>	A community based educational space geared towards peace building among youth.	Juba, South Sudan	X	X	X
<b>ATAKA</b>	A community based innovation centre	Bor,	X	X	X

	focussed primarily on school drop-outs	South Sudan			
<b>Platform Africa</b>	A youth-led organisation aimed at stabilising refugee communities through training and peace-building engagement.	Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement, Uganda	X	X	X
	→ New satellite hub	Yei, South Sudan		(X)	(X)
<b>YEF (Youth empowerment foundation)</b>	A community oriented innovation hub	Adjumani Refugee Camp, Uganda	X	X	X
	→ New satellite hub	Pagirinya Refugee Settlement, Uganda		(X)	(X)
<b>ASKlab</b>	An organisation that focuses on training youth and women on basic health literacy and socio-economic skills.	Nakuru, Kenya	X	(X)	

Table 06: ASKnet member hubs (MO) during the past three years.

### 3.2 Partnership Structure

The main partner of r0g\_agency for open culture and transformation in Berlin since the beginning of the ASKnet projects has been Hive Colab in Kampala, Uganda. Hive Colab is a well established technology and innovation centre in Uganda with extensive experience in fields related to the ASKnet field of operation, such as social entrepreneurship, media development, ICT training and tech ecosystem building.

Roughly outlined, the project employs the following main personnel, supplemented by further experts, trainers and mentors assigned to specific tasks and activities throughout the project.

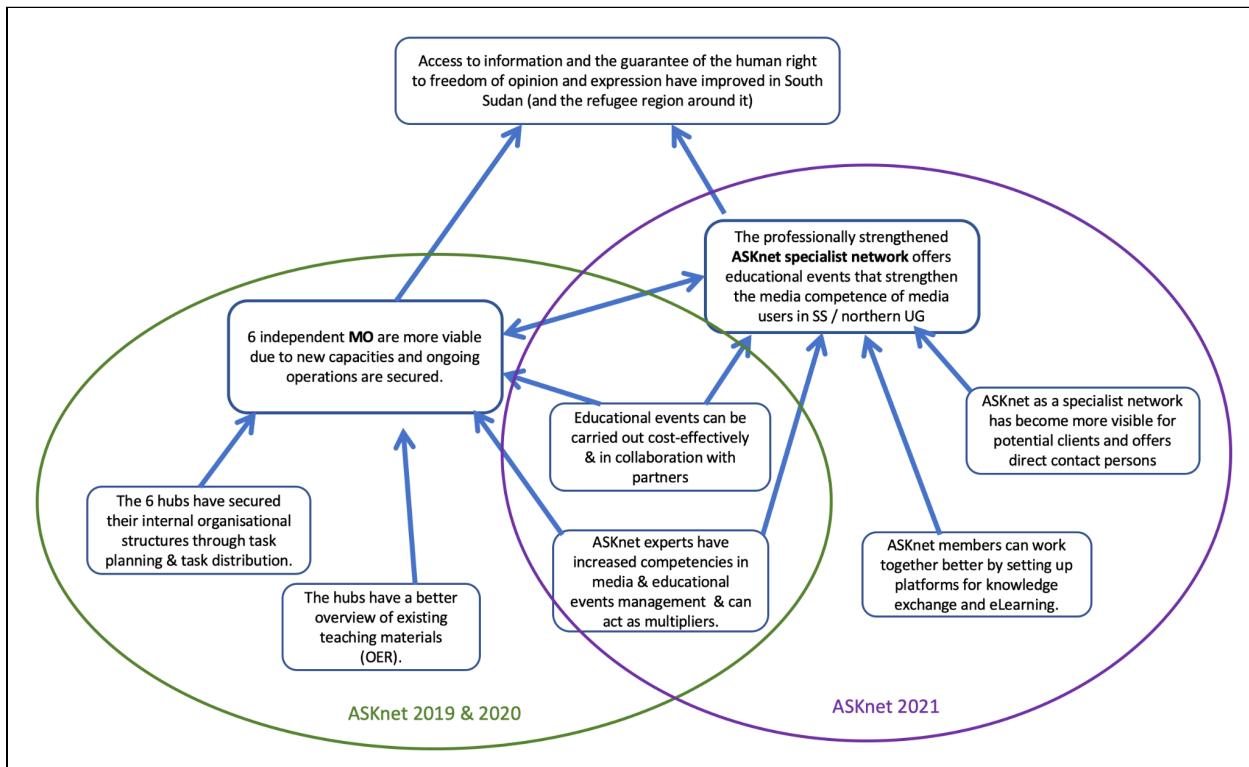
R0g_agency (Germany)	Hive Collab (Uganda)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Overall project management</li> <li>● Project curation (content and concept)</li> <li>● Project assistant, curator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Project lead</li> <li>● Project coordinator</li> <li>● Finance manager</li> </ul>

Table 07: #ASKnet 2021 (P5751) Main project roles

### 3.3 Project Objectives

While the overall project objective (impact level) remained relatively consistent across the first two ASKnet project years under consideration, mainly to strengthen the capacity of the partner MOs for servicing their respective communities with media education to improve their access to information and strengthen their freedom of opinion and freedom of speech, in the current

ASKnet project (P5751), the focus of impact as described in the project proposal has moved beyond the individual hubs towards the ASKnet network of experts as a whole. On the outcome level, this is reflected in a move from strengthened institutional capacity of the MOs in 2019 and 2020 to a strengthened network of experts in 2021 (see Diagram 01 and Tables 10-12 below).



*Diagram 01: Simplified results model for the last three ASKnet projects, based on impact matrix from the respective proposal documents.*

On output level, the first (2019) of the three projects aimed to increase MO staff's administrative and pedagogical skills, next to stimulating cooperation, peer support and regular organisation of "media events" (defined as trainings, meetings, or other formats of organised community gatherings with a focus on media skills development and collaborative innovation). In the second project (2020), the establishment of an overview of open educational resources was added to the outputs, while the intended outputs of the third, currently ending project (2021) are focused on the visibility of the network through common digital platforms and resources. This gradual shift from the hubs as the focal units towards the network as an entity of interaction presumably reflects the gradual establishment of the hub organisations and the strengthening of the ASKnet network as a result of the project measures. Over time, the creation of shared resources between the hubs and network members and common promotion of the network and its members have gained importance. For reference, the following three tables list the defined impact, outcome and output of each of the three successive ASKnet projects.

<b>Impact</b>	Improvement of media development / education in South Sudan / refugee camps, strengthening of the media sector through viable actors / media organisations, improved access to information, guarantee of the human right to freedom of opinion and expression.
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>The 6 media organisations (MO) have strengthened their media viability through new knowledge and more cooperation.</b>
Output 1	Administrative skills of employees improved
Output 2	Trainers have expanded their skills by taking part in advanced training.
Output 3	Stimulation of cooperation, cohesion and mutual support
Output 4	Regular implementation of media events (training courses, meetings, etc.)

*Table 08: #ASKnet 2019 (P4126) Impact-Outcome-Output*

<b>Impact</b>	Access to information and the guarantee of the human right to freedom of opinion and expression have improved in South Sudan (and the refugee region around it).
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>6 independent media organisations (MO, hubs) are more viable due to new capacities and ongoing operations are secured.</b>
Output 1	The 6 hubs have secured their internal organisational structures through task planning and task distribution.
Output 2	Trainers have increased their competence in the field of didactics and training methodology.
Output 3	The hubs have a better overview of existing teaching materials (open educational resources).
Output 4	Media users in the South Sudan region have access to media education events.

*Table 09: #ASKnet 2020 (P4814) Impact-Outcome-Output*

<b>Impact</b>	The media specialist network ASKnet (South Sudanese media organisations and media professionals) is being strengthened and its members can train media literacy among media users in their region.
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>The professionally strengthened ASKnet specialist network offers educational events that strengthen the media competence of media users in South Sudan / Northern Uganda.</b>
Output 1	ASKnet as a specialist network has become more visible for potential clients and offers direct contact persons
Output 2	Selected ASKnet experts increase central knowledge in the area of media competence / management of educational events and can also act as multipliers.
Output 3	The ASKnet members can work together better by setting up knowledge

	exchange platforms and develop and offer learning content via eLearning.
Output 4	Educational events can be carried out cost-effectively and in collaboration with partners

*Table 10: #ASKnet 2021 (P5751) Impact-Outcome-Output*

### 3.4 Project Activities, Formats and Tools

The ASKnet approach over the past three project years can be characterised by the following activity formats and tools that have been applied with varying emphasis in the successive project iterations:

- **Technical and methodological training and mentorship:** International and regional experts from the fields of organisational development, entrepreneurship, social media communication, open source development and different types of media content and technology development have been contracted as trainers and mentors to support the direct target group in acquiring and developing skills related to their work of running local community media organisations. Two main content categories have been at the core of training and mentorship activities since the start: 1) Organisational development including hub sustainability, project, financial and PR management and 2) Open source media education, including media hardware making, digital project documentation and different formats of media content production, such as podcasting and digital storytelling. While on-site intensive training sessions were the focus of the 2019 project, the capacity building strategy has over time shifted towards more efficient shorter regular and on-demand virtual mentoring session- and on-the-job training formats. This has in large part been due to the pandemic induced travel restrictions, but also corresponds with the successful process of gradually strengthening capacities and relationships within the project. In addition to instructor-led training, expert mentorship and peer learning between participants have been at the core of all capacity building measures throughout the three project iterations.
- **Network gatherings:** Larger gatherings, especially at the start and at the end of a project serve the purpose of collaborative project planning and review, team building and networking and in cases when external stakeholders and network partners have also been included, promotion of the hubs, experts and network. In these events, the hub teams and experts have shared their intentions and results to gather peer feedback. Since the start of the Covid pandemic, gatherings have increasingly been held online rather than physically.
- **Community media events:** With financial support from a “Support fund for ASKnet Media Activities”, the ASKnet hub teams are encouraged to organise their own community events (mostly media trainings) to both put into practice what they learn through the training and mentorship activities, to pass on media skills to further community members and to generate more hub-activity. The hub teams are free to propose their own topics and formats for the events based on estimated needs within

their communities, as long as they correspond to the funding requirements of the BMZ media title. While in the earlier projects, a certain amount of funding was distributed equally at regular intervals to each participating hub, starting with the current project (2021), hub teams and community members alike can submit event proposals that are then evaluated and approved by the ASKnet project team before the corresponding funds are released.

- **Hub ToR:** In the first two projects, commitments between participating ASKnet hubs and r0g\_agency were discussed and specified formally in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for both partners to sign at the beginning of each project. This process was abandoned in the current 2021 project, as a consequence of some participating hubs failing to uphold their commitments.
- **ASKotec training kit:** This is a training tool that has been co-developed by the hubs and is often used in their training courses. Each of the physical kits contains about 70 basic building blocks and training materials, including mechanical and electrical tools, basic electronics and IT materials, specifically adapted to the region. All these components were purchased, assembled and delivered as kits to the hubs. Further maintenance of the kits should then be possible by purchasing standard components locally. The kit enables participants to create or repair a wide variety of simple electronic devices themselves.
- **Repair café:** The repair café format was introduced to the ASKnet community as a part of ASKnet 2019 and has since then grown in popularity and spread as a core basic community event format throughout the network.
- **Github:** The open source developer platform has over time become a central tool for all virtual activities related to collaborative project documentation, knowledge sharing and learning material creation within the network. Many of the ASKnet project's training and mentoring sessions therefore tend to revolve around learning how to use this tool effectively for different practical purposes.

The ASKnet project in 2019 was structured around two main week-long on-site training blocks in Juba, accompanied by a kickoff-event and local community events organised by each hub in their respective locations. In the following project (2020), rather than common training sessions for all participants, the project was structured around two separate training tracks running in parallel with differently recruited groups of participants. Track 1 was focussed around hub development and track 2 was about media development. The project training and networking activities had all originally been planned to take place physically, however due to the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic, the project plan had to be refined and all activities of the 2020 project that would have required travel were instead carried out virtually online. Only local gatherings in each of the hubs were carried out through physical meetings, while maintaining the common social distancing precautions. The corresponding project change request had been accepted by Bengo in October of 2020.

The following is a summary of the review of survey data collected during the two projects ASKnet 2019 (p4126) and ASKnet 2020 (4814). In 2019, online (and in part, paper) surveys were conducted with both participants and project team after each of the two main training

blocks and then a final survey at the end of the final event “Media Expo”. In 2020, the participants were surveyed once after completing half of the project run-time (mid-term) and then once again after the end of the project, when additionally the project team was also surveyed.

Specifically, the following survey data has been collected throughout the first two projects:

Project	Assessment	Target group	Timeframe	N
ASKnet 2019	Training 1 assessment	Participants	22.06.2019	18
ASKnet 2019	Training 1 assessment	Coordinators	22.06.2019	3
ASKnet 2019	Training 2 assessment	Participants	01.11.2019	19
ASKnet 2019	Training 2 assessment	Coordinators	01.11.2019	8
ASKnet 2019	Final assessment	Participants	01.12.2019	28
ASKnet 2019	Final assessment	Coordinators	01.12.2019	10
ASKNet 2020	Mid term assessment	Participants	18.01.2021	21
ASKNet 2020	Final assessment	Participants	14.04.2021	24
ASKNet 2020	Final assessment	Coordinators	26.04.2021	10

Table 11: Survey data collected in ASKnet 2019 (p4126) and ASKnet 2020 (p4814)

The survey feedback is summarised in two subsections here below, each beginning with a short tabular description of the project activities as they were actually implemented.

### ASKnet 2019 (p4126)

Main Project Activities	Short Description
Hub-Development Support	Financial support for basic hub infrastructure and running costs during the project runtime, including ASKotec training kits, combined with organisational consultation, especially as refers to bookkeeping and financial reporting and including peer-to-peer consultations between the hubs
Kickoff Meeting	Gathering with all project participants in Juba (SS) to plan, prepare and coordinate all project activities together.
Training 1: Organisational and Business Consultation	A two-week long full-day training in Juba (SS) focussed on hub management and administration issues, such as business model development, project management and

	public relations management. Host and co-organiser of the training was local ASKnet member Hub GoGirls ICT
Training 2: Pedagogical and Media Competence	A two-week long full-day training in Adjumani (Ug) focussed on implementation of open source training formats (open-source training modules in terms of documentation and publishing). Host and co-organiser of the training was local ASKnet member YEF
Media Expo / Conference	The participants were matched in small groups with invited mentors from the region, corresponding to their own previously expressed needs. After the mentoring sessions, a public community repair café event was collaboratively organised by the participants themselves. Host and co-organiser of the training was local ASKnet member ASKlab in Nakuru, Kenya
Support fund for ASKnet Media Activities	This activity category served the purpose of allowing the hubs to put to practise what they learned in the trainings. Each hub was able to organise their own community media training events. The hub managers were required to hand in a conceptual and financial proposal for each event beforehand to apply for the financial support to the event and to document and report all expenses after completing the event.
Co-production of documentation resources	With content input and active participation from all six ASKnet hubs, a project documentation booklet as PR material and an “Open Training Guide” poster as a physical training resource were produced.

Table 12: ASKnet 2019 (P4126) Main Project Activities

Judging from the documented outcomes and collected feedback from the involved partners and participants, the ASKnet 2019 project was overall successfully implemented. All surveyed participants were in general satisfied with each of the three main training events and also with the development of the emerging ASKnet network between the hubs. The participants in particular highlighted the pragmatic relevance of the capacity building measures to the hubs' own work situation, they valued the professional expertise of the selected trainers and mentors and they appreciate the inclusive participatory format of the training and mentorship session and related activities. The collected feedback demonstrates an organic continuity of the project activities in that topics and methods that were introduced in the initial training have been followed up, practised and completed throughout the other steps of the project process. The feedback however indicates that the acquired skills may be more spread across the group as a whole, rather than being fully instilled in each individual workshop participant, also considering that only about half of the total amount of training participants fully participated throughout the whole series of training sessions.

While the three main training events were overall successfully implemented, there was some room for improvements concerning the workshop preparation and logistic administration. In particular the first of the three trainings received some negative feedback concerning the on-site organisation of workshop logistics and venue services, which appear to have then been improved in the following two training blocks.

Concerning the project management, it would have been advantageous that project coordinators from both implementing partner organisations take part personally in at least the initial project activities and make sure on-the-ground, that logistics are well set up and carried out according to plan, as especially the first project meeting with participants both sets the mood for following activities and provides a valuable initial opportunity for the project team to gain insights concerning the participants' motivations, skill levels and concerns. A related organisational factor that appears to have brought some confusion and distrust into the process, especially during the first workshop was the conflicting role of the local project coordinator who at the same time was the manager of one of the six participating ASKnet hubs. Such unclear role definitions should be avoided.

Furthermore, the curation of the group of workshop participants left room for improvement. Concerns were raised especially among the coordinators and trainers, that a few of the participants in each of the three workshops had appeared less engaged in the training process due to a variety of factors, such as low basic ICT skills or other miss-matched skill sets and motivation profiles. The feedback also indicated that a part of the participants of the final workshop that were members of the hosting hub team (ASKlab) were not able to fully commit to the workshop process due to their parallel tasks of organising the workshop logistics at the same time. This in turn appears to have negatively impacted the mentoring process for the whole group. Therefore, earlier planning of each session, with clearer formulation and communication of workshop requirements and expectations combined with a more careful prior assessment and transparent selection of participant candidates based on skills and motivation was recommended, to make sure that each participant is able to make the most out of the given opportunity and that the workshop content and tempo can be appropriately adapted to the group's actual learning capacity, despite the already stretched trainer/trainee ratios.

The network- and team-building process within the ASKnet 2019 project clearly brought positive results and the feedback gave hope that the group of participants would continue acting as a community-of-practice, driven by peer-learning after the end of the project. The topics selected for the community events to be organised by the hubs themselves during the ASKnet project run-time indicated that the transfer of the acquired skills was a core motivation of the organising hub teams. Regrettably however, although the level of activity was clearly high on average and a list of event titles and dates had been completed in the end, the full documentation of the events was not followed up in a comprehensive format, so as to allow a more in depth study of who had attended the events, which actual methodologies were applied and which activities were carried out.

According to survey feedback, the financial struggles of the hubs remained a main challenge to the organisational sustainability of the network, as did hierarchical structures and lacking team coordination skills in the hub teams. Some survey respondents suggested that in future projects a stronger focus should be placed on the individual differences between hubs, as regards their organisational mission, team competencies and local community structures and to in the future diversify, adapt and tailor the training, mentoring and coaching measures more to the individual needs of each hub team. In any case, respondents recommended for future project implementations to offer more individual training to participants and support to each partner organisation based on their particular situation and context, to help them better develop their structures and strategies beyond the planning of short term activity programs.

#### **ASKnet 2020 (p4814)**

Main Project Activities	Short Description
Hub-Development Support	Financial support to improve basic hub infrastructure and cover running costs during the project runtime, including ASKotec training kits,
Kickoff Meeting	Gathering with all project participants in a web-conference to plan, prepare and coordinate all project activities together. Following the initial full day virtual kick-off meeting, a full week of online exchange events organised by the project participants themselves ensued, including participants from partner NGOs from each local hub community.
Training Track 1: Organisational and Business Consultation	The training track was implemented as a series of regular weekly online meetings (average 2 meetings per week). Ten topics were handled as peer-to-peer exchanges in two main clusters of sessions: a) Organisational and business development; b) Pedagogical and media skills development.  The synchronous online meetings were complemented by continuous communication via online messenger group. Participants of track 1 were nominated by the hubs themselves (3 per 5 hubs).
Training Track 2: Open Tool Collaboration	The training track was implemented around 17 main 3-hour long online web-conference sessions. Main objectives were to  Through a formal application process, it was open to any ASKnet community member to apply to be one of the 12 participants attending track 2.
On-Demand Hub Trainings	Targeted training sessions with invited experts on topics requested by the participants.

Support fund for ASKnet Media Activities	As in the previous year, this activity category served the purpose of allowing the hubs to put to practise what they learned in the training sessions. Each hub was able to organise their own community media training events. The hub managers were required to hand in a conceptual and financial proposal for each event beforehand to apply for the financial support to the event and to document and report all expenses after completing the event.
Co-production of documentation resources	With content input and active participation from all six ASKnet hubs, a project documentation booklet as PR material and an “Open Training Guide” poster as a physical training resource were produced.

*Table 13: ASKnet 2020 (P4814) Main Project Activities*

In both the ASKnet 2020 mid-term and the final assessment surveys, the project participants (as well as the members of the project team in the final survey), rated the implementation of the different aspects of the project overall somewhere between positive to strongly positive (apart from a few negative outliers in each of the categories).

The ASKnet project staff gave their least positive ratings to aspects that concern the project implementation: Overall project coordination and formats and methods of project implementation and communication and collaboration within the main coordinating team and with the participating hubs (“ok” on average). The strongest ratings were given to “Overall project purpose” and “Impact and sustainability of the project results”, but also technical tools applied to implement the project and the project participants’ communication and engagement with their own local extended communities (“good”/“great” on average).

Most of the project staff members reported that their expectations regarding their own job role and work tasks had been significantly disrupted through the changed situation caused by the onset of the covid pandemic and the related project change request. Although this meant entering uncharted territory, after a period of re-orientation, they had still been able to adapt to the new situation. Shifting mentoring and training activities to online formats meant an increased reliance on stable internet connections, which negatively affected communication and coordination, especially during times of added challenges related to flooding in Bor and government mandated internet shutdown in Uganda. Those staff members who dealt more with the implementation of new technical tools were surprised at the low level of ICT knowledge and skills among the target group, requiring additional personal support. Others reported having to deal more with conflict and expectation management than initially expected.

Critical remarks by the project participants were mostly related to administrative issues, in particular delays in reimbursements and correspondingly, the aspect “resource allocation, financial transfers, equipment” was rated slightly less positive by participants than other aspects of the project. Main challenges also included pandemic related disruption of activities and restrictions to travelling and physical gatherings, as well as insufficient access to Internet and

computers, and lack of funding that could finance further activities. Furthermore, some individual participants mentioned lack of coordination within certain hubs and low responsiveness of mentors.

The project participants also highlighted how well the radical project changes made necessary by the Covid pandemic had been mastered and how they were able to make good use of limited resources to support the communities despite the related challenges.

Participants in track 1 (hub development) especially appreciated the coordination of the sessions and the activities and also the practical relevance of the offered content, topics such as proposal writing, stakeholders mapping, financial management, reporting, monitoring and evaluation. Among the few challenges reported were occasional struggles with access to the Internet and to the open source communication tools and the fact that members from some of the hubs did not attend training sessions. As positive developments for their respective hub the participants report having gained the ability to launch several innovative pilot projects that can attract funding by third parties and to write more effective funding proposals (Gogirls ICT), securing a co-working space (Junub OS), expanding the community membership base and creating several new media projects (Platform Africa), while the team from YEF has registered their organisation and acquired some equipment.

Participants in track 2 (open tool collaboration) express a general excitement about collaborating with others, some mention having learned online project documentation using a variety of open source tools, in particular Github, as well as how to repair hardware equipment and how to plan concrete activities such as repair café in collaboration with their own community and with other hubs. They furthermore reported having improved skills such as writing funding proposals and piloting projects, provide trainings with the #ASKotec kit, creating podcasts, collaborating and reaching out to others in general. They especially appreciated the peer-to-peer learning format and the length and frequency of the meetings, while limited network and power connectivity at times made it difficult to participate fully, which may have been a more severe obstacle to the types of activities in this track, requiring more continuous online access than in track 1. However, “digital tools applied to implement the project” were appreciated more strongly by participants in track 2 than in track 1.

As concerns the situation of each hub, they all suffered from financial hurdles.

Regarding current challenges to hub development, members of GoGirls ICT mention lack of financial resources to pay skilled project personnel and for developing organisational manuals and procedures. Members of other hubs related that their main challenges were lack of transparency (Junub OS) and lack of funds, resources and infrastructure (Platform Africa and YEF). In general, lack of funding and income generating activities are thought to be the main challenges also to future development and sustainability of the hubs, as are lack of transport and local access to specific hardware tools and materials. Misunderstandings and lack of organisational structure also hinder several of the hubs from developing further. The opportunities provided by the ASKnet project to acquire relevant skills, organise events and

expand the network of partner contacts were highly valued, but a projected mid or long term positive effect of those acquired skills to hub sustainability did not appear certain to the respondents. Members of the project staff furthermore commented that there are large differences between the hubs as regards their level of readiness and contributions. Most of the hubs reported several sources of additional funding they gained since the program started, including from funders such as UNDP, Internews, ADF, RefEd and Uganda Readers Association and eatBCH, while one of the hubs reported no additionally acquired funding.

All respondents from the project team confirmed that despite the unexpected challenges in relation to the pandemic, the project objective had been achieved, at least “to a greater extent” and for time being. Several point out that especially two of the original five hubs achieved less than had been expected of them. On the other hand, an unintended positive development has been the establishment of two new “satellite” hubs during the course of the project.

According to the project staff, indicators had not been completed at time of the final survey in part due to difficulties of communication with the hub teams, still insufficient skills and commitment within the hubs and insufficient amount of attention paid to the indicators by parts of the project team. The participants themselves furthermore point to the difficulty of implementing the whole project only through online communication in this particular context involving unreliable network connections, unstable electricity supply and natural disasters, which all contributed to participants not being able to fully participate in all required activities.

Asked how their local communities have profited from the project, the participants most frequently mentioned the outcomes of the community events organised by each hub, in particular repair cafés where community members learned how to repair their own broken vehicles and devices and to help other community members repair theirs, further adding to community building. Better general outreach and impact of the MO’s work was reported, due to improved organisational and communication skills of the hub, widened network and better hardware infrastructure to offer to community members.

The majority of ASKnet participants gave very high ratings as concerns the development of the #ASKnet network since the project had started. Most participants rated the development of their own relationship with the other ASKnet hubs strongly positive (with a few negative ratings only from members of one of the hubs). Participants declared that it has been helpful to get to know the others more closely through joint activities and to learn about what the others are doing and who has which skills. Participants were hoping to work more closely in the future, to support each other and to build on each others’ strengths when developing joint projects, co-creating digital solutions to challenges, collaborating in virtual platforms like Github, organising joint trainings and other types of events between different constellations of hubs.

All ASKnet 2020 project participants appear to embrace the open culture approach of the ASKnet project, and have gained a good understanding of its benefits such as the following aspects:

- Building trust within the community and helping each other progress and help support the development of their own organisation by openly sharing ideas and information with other community members. Good relationship between the refugees and the host community.
- Stronger community ownership and gaining better insight into community needs and preferences by engaging with them early on in project development.
- Better able to develop their own knowledge and skills by receiving feedback and accessing knowledge shared by peers.
- More creative solutions by co-creation with others and increased self confidence by inspiration from learning what others achieve.
- Reduced expenses and increased efficiency by applying open source technologies

Finally, the following were main issues mentioned by the project team members to consider in case of a future continuation or repetition of the project:

- Funding for the hubs to be allocated more based on merit and proactive planning, rather than the current automatic and equal distribution.
- Better involve the hubs in the project design and selection of participants.
- More self-evaluation and continuous monitoring throughout the process
- Better preparation, simpler instructions and templates
- Stronger proactive follow-up to ensure that hubs comply with their commitments
- More close collaboration between the hubs by teaming up for tasks
- Less dependency on online availability for session calls but rather individual meetings and small team calls.
- Focussing on one tool at the time instead of many in technical trainings.
- Less workload for the program curator by distribution of tasks and more sharing of responsibilities within the team.
- More physical events, meetings and more one-on-one communication, if and when conditions permit.
- More support for online content moderation
- More skills, needs and idea assessment beforehand.

### **ASKnet 2021 (p5751)**

To conclude the review of preceding project iterations, for comparison, here below is the tabular description of the main project activities as they were implemented in the current ASKnet 2021 project. The corresponding results of data collection measures are then reported and discussed both here below and further on in section 5.

Main Project Activities	Short Description
Hub-Development Support	Financial support to improve basic hub infrastructure (“media kit”) and to cover running costs during the project runtime, including ASKotec training kits,

Develop Register of ASKnet Experts	As "on-the-job training", the project participants will under the guidance of local IT professionals collaborate to create a searchable professional directory with profiles of individual experts from the ASKnet network. After the end of the project, the directory will belong to the network and will continue to be used, maintained and maintained by it as a resource to serve potential clients.
Expert Coaching Program	A series of small-group online coaching sessions with selected international and regional experts on topics requested by the participants themselves, aimed at strengthening the capacities of the ASKnet experts and thus increasing their technical survivability. These experts, in turn, as multipliers in the ASKnet network, can pass on their knowledge to less experienced and trained experts via peer-to-peer learning. To provide professional support to individual experts in the network and to encourage them to work together on a specific idea / problem solution and to train them as multipliers for the specialist network (examples: Repair Café, GitHub platform services, developing ASKotec training formats, podcasting) Not to train these multipliers in competition with one another, but also to support them in working in teams with others
Develop Two Knowledge Exchange Platforms	Like an intranet, platform 1 is used for the electronic storage and documentation or management of information/knowledge (didactic concepts, learning content, media production manuals, templates, timetables and instructions). Platform 2 will be an e-learning platform that will be adapted to the technical framework conditions of the region so that work can also be done without permanent internet access.
Implementation of Educational Events by ASKnet Members	These events are the core task of the professional network, to impart media competence to media users in the region and to improve access to information and media, especially for marginalised groups. The event organisers are given specific professional support and further training by the project staff. They are free to define by themselves which format, length and venue of the events, however the content must be clearly related to the funding principles and project objectives. It is important that the Hubs always work together with others, either other hubs, other freelance experts or a local NGO or educational institution.

TAble 14: ASKnet 2021 (P5751) Main Project Activities

In this subsection and in the following sections 4, 5 and 6, the results of the online survey of the direct target group and the focus group with hub managers, as well as other reviewed sources of information from the ASKnet 2021 project will be shared and interpreted. In general, the qualitative feedback from the participants presented in tables throughout the following sections has been summarised, consolidated, reformulated and clustered based on commonalities with

the aim of conveying the essential content of the entirety of statements as a compact and readable overview. The full lists of original responses can be found in Appendices 2 and 3.

As part of the focus group session that was held in March 2022, the participants were initially asked how the ASKnet project has developed over the past three years? All seven participants unanimously agreed that the past years have seen a strong positive development. Beside an initial strong focus on institutional and professional capacity building of the member hubs and their teams, the project has over the past years provided a framework for self-initiated experimentation and prototyping of different ideas that has allowed the hub teams to better understand the needs of their respective communities. This has, according to the participants, led to a good organisational development where the hubs have - to varying degrees - managed to develop their own strategies and have - empowered by acquired skills and added credibility resulting from increased visibility - increasingly managed to raise additional funding from other international funders and to start projects with other partnering organisations in their respective communities. They now find themselves at a stage where they are looking closer into how to standardise and scale up existing pilot projects.

The participants especially laud the following positive aspects of the ASKnet project approach up to date:

- The pragmatically useful professional skills gained through the program, especially related to strategy development, reporting, proposal writing and documentation
- The free hands-on approach that allows the members to practically experiment and prototypically test what they have been learning and researching.
- Ever increasing collaboration and information sharing between the ASKnet hubs as well as within each hub community,
- The open format of working with local communities and the platform offered, allowing community members to get involved, participate, collaborate and assume ownership over activities and their outcomes.
- The impact it has had on the local communities by empowering their members through skills they learn and information they access through the hub activities to start their own projects, develop solutions to challenges they encounter in their surroundings and run their own businesses.

Challenges that have occurred over time and/or remain include the following:

- Communication between the hubs and r0g: Most of the ASKnet hubs have a rather hierarchical management structure that conflicts with r0g's preferred flat communication structure. The hub teams request that all new project related information and instructions from r0g first pass through the hub managers who then disseminate it as needed through the hierarchical layers of their own internal organisational structures. New information from r0g should not bypass the hub leader, as it complicates implementation.
- There has previously (2020) been confusion as to the role of ASKnet Experts independent of their affiliation with a local ASKnet hub. r0g had attempted to loosen

the control that the hub organisations had by allowing individuals from the communities to participate and turn in their own proposals for activities to be funded by ASKnet independent of hub preferences. As a result, the hub teams then felt left out of the decision making process and made obsolete. However, this issue appears to have been resolved in a favourable manner through the design of last year's project (2021).

- Several of the hubs have been slow or negligent to fulfil their commitment as outlined in their MoU with r0g. Therefore, r0g has in the last project (2021) decided to skip issuing MoU which in turn has led to confusion among the hub teams as to what exactly is required of them.
- Achieve complete community ownership of activities initiated through ASKnet
- It is not always clear for participating hub teams what types and amounts of funding is available to finance hub resources and community activities. More transparency and clearer instructions are requested.
- One participant mentioned a challenge related to applying for and receiving money and suggested, there should be a follow-up letter any time a hub receives money, confirming the receipt of the respective amount for a specific activity.

*Table 15: Summarised focus group contributions to discussion around the question “How has the ASKnet project developed over the past three years?” (N=7)*

### **3.5 Development of Framework Conditions**

The political and socio-economic framework condition of the ASKnet project largely remained unchanged throughout the last years. A decade after independence, South Sudan is still considered a failed state, grappling with political instability, corruption, poverty, unemployment, insecurity, large scale displacement of populations and armed conflicts flaring up at irregular intervals across the country. Large parts of the South Sudanese population remain in refugee camps in neighbouring Uganda, which also hosts refugee communities from other countries of the region. In all the project's implementation areas, electrical power access is unreliable and Internet bandwidth low and relatively costly. The effects of climate change are noticeable and natural disasters like flooding and drought are frequent.

However, the global covid pandemic that began in early 2020 and continues until today has incurred massive interferences both to ASKnet project activities and the daily work of the project partners in their respective communities. Restrictions to travel and interpersonal gathering led to the cancellation of most physical activities as of mid-2020 and the adaption to virtual channels and formats. While all parties have meanwhile developed mitigation strategies and tactics and the 2021 project design took the continuation of pandemic conditions into consideration, the negative effects on the ability to carry out the project are still substantial.

## 4. Development of the Project Partners' Performance Capacity

All employed project personnel appear to be professionally qualified according to their respective assigned tasks. The covid-related shift of project activities from physical to online formats represents a large challenge, but both r0g\_agency and hive-collab are well equipped and experienced as regards online work formats and already in possession of the needed open source online tool infrastructure.

The following summary describes how the focus group participants report on their experience of working together with project partner r0g\_agency during the ASKnet 2021 project:

All participants are very satisfied with the partnership in general, they highlight the following aspects of their relationship with r0g that they especially appreciate:

- They appreciate r0g's function as an enabler and the continuous dedication to institution building and responsiveness of the project team who are open and able to mentor and give advice whatever new topic comes up.
- Also their patience and individual attention when hubs are not able to deliver their results on time.
- They are open to new ideas and support experimentation and the development of solutions until the implementation stage.
- They appreciate the funding for resources and activities that r0g is able to channel through the ASKnet project, especially also covering the costs for physical meetings between the hub teams of the network.
- Seeing r0g as a role-model, hubs have learned how to best interact with other organisations according to open culture principles.
- r0g's efforts to reduce bureaucratic hurdles over time.
- Simple communication across different channels

Suggestions for things to improve on or develop further include:

- How to include the hubs more in the decision making as regards the future implementation of the ASKnet project? It is important to have discussions between all partners early on in the process.
- also to have more frequent progress reviews so that everyone is on board with each step and can voice their opinion in case needed. If conditions change, new challenges arise or changes are made to the program, there needs to be efficient communication between all partners.
- the communications, at some point we don't receive the information on time and that give us pressure if we have to work on something at least you have to get information early and then from there, you will be able to plan whom to assign and all this.
- the challenges that we discussed about the side of communication, that is within the hubs and of course from the funder himself, from r0g who is our biggest supporter here, that kind of miscommunication, that as I say lack of promotion, all that.

*Table 16: Summarised focus group contributions to discussion around the question “How does your German implementing partner (r0g\_agency) respond to your needs?” (N=7)*

## 5. The Project’s Developmental Efficacy

As described in section 3, the ASKnet 2021 project was assessed based on standardised evaluation criteria and questions to ensure comparability. This is based on the OECD-DAC criteria for the evaluation of development cooperation and the evaluation criteria for German bilateral cooperation: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Each dimension is assessed in detail in the following subsections, based on the collected data.

### 5.1 Relevance

The relevance criterion analyses the extent to which the objectives of the development intervention were consistent with beneficiaries’ requirements, regional needs, global priorities and the policies of partners and donors.

According to the criteria of the BMZ/Bengo media funding program (<https://bengo.engagement-global.de/medienfoerderung.html>), that has been funding the ASKnet initiative since its beginning, supported projects should contribute to the following main issues (summarised):

- Improve the political, economic and legal framework for the realisation of the right to freedom of expression, opinion and information, and freedom of the media in cooperating countries and, for example, strengthen initiatives and organisations in cooperating countries that are actively working for the respect, protection and fulfilment of this right.
- Assist hitherto discriminated, disadvantaged and poorer groups of people in cooperation countries to know and claim their rights regarding freedom of opinion, expression and access to information and to provide them with access to independent media, information and means of communication;
- Educate media users to enable them to evaluate information and exercise their basic human rights (media literacy);
- Support journalistic training in cooperation countries and to qualify journalists and other media professionals (including, for example, bloggers);
- Establish and strengthen an independent, efficient and pluralistically organised media sector, media institutions, interest groups and professional networks in cooperation countries (or regionally) and to develop sustainable financing concepts in local contexts.

It is evident that the objective of the ASKnet approach in general and the ASKnet 2021 project in particular fall well within this scope, especially concerning the following priorities of the project:

- ASKnet aims to support a selected group of grassroots media organisations / media technology innovation hubs that dedicate their work to increasing the level of media literacy and access to information of their local community members.
- The main activities in the project have been trainings and mentorship sessions revolving around issues such as general media skills, online documentation, podcasting and the repair of media technology,
- The concerned local communities in South Sudan and Uganda are mainly composed of disadvantaged population segments such as unemployed youth, refugees and women.
- Through the strong propagation of open source information technologies within the project and the establishment of participatory and DIY formats such as repair café, podcasting and web documentation, a foundation is made for future independent and informed media consumers and producers.
- ASKnet supports the local, regional and international networking of organisations and activists and supports the marketability of related media skills.

The survey responses by members of the direct target group furthermore confirm this close fit with the funding directives when they were asked to define the main added value of the ASKnet network:

- Knowledge for community, build informed communities, information and skills for youth
- Collaboration between hubs and individuals, peer learning, co-creation
- Opportunity for research on community needs and provide solutions
- Being part of the decision making
- Open source tools - ASKotec, github, LEAD, website, podcast, repair cafe
- Vocational skills, hands-on, solve real-life problems
- Network of like-minded partners
- Growth, connection, resilience

*Table 17: Summarised survey responses to the question “What do you perceive as the true added value of the #ASKnet network?” (N=26)*

The continuous relevance of the ASKnet project to the communities of beneficiaries on the ground is particularly high due to the community oriented approach where the ASKnet participants take initiative to suggest which issues and topics to deal with, do their own research within their local context and implement it. As was stated by one of the hub leaders in the focus group:

*“The fact that we submit our own proposals, our own activities for what we want to do is one of the genius elements of the project, because in a way we are writing about the challenges that are facing people in our communities, so we are not importing solutions, but creating solutions that are working for the people that we are working with in our communities.”* (member of Platform Africa)

The respondents to the online survey were asked to describe the benefits of the ASKnet 2021 project to their local communities and as the summary below shows, the majority of the mentioned benefits revolve around acquired media skills and improved access to information.

#### LEARNED TO SHARE OWN NARRATIVE THROUGH PODCAST AND WEB

- Podcasting skills: Knowledge on script writing, storytelling and audio editing and audio production. The trainees record their stories and post them and the community listens to them.
- The participants have created content that they aired out in the radios and with the comments during the show and our Facebook page, it showed a great impact in the community.
- We have trained and worked with our beneficiaries to amplify the voices of refugees especially during the pandemic. Projects such as info4all / ASKpodcast and others trained refugees in podcasting and storytelling and enabled a community media project to evolve during the pandemic which saw refugees creating awareness via the means of PSAs, CSAs, podcasts and radio dramas to educate their communities on COVID 19 and other locally relevant subjects such as mental health.
- We are currently setting up a recording studio to be used by the participants of the Amplified Gender Voices trainees to be able to produce quality content for public consumption and we believe this platform will enable them to attract potential investors to use their platform for content production and they could monetarily benefit from this.
- The community members were trained on the digital skills in web development, and also members were able to produce podcasts on issues affecting the community.
- The community members were introduced to creating their own content.
- We were able to create information about refugees on open knowledge sites like Wikipedia through #Wiki4Refugees and empower refugees to be centre stage at telling and owning their narrative.

#### GAINED ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- An information centre, now they have the availability of internet and other services
- basics computer training
- we introduced the community to proper internet usage
- Media trainings
- The ASKsek (Access to Skill and Knowledge Science Kit) was designed to benefit young students learning in high schools in Bor.

#### GAINED SKILLS TO SOLVE OWN PROBLEMS AND FOR EMPLOYABILITY

- they gained new skills that can help them to do their own work and improved their level of employability
- Some are joining the LEAD directory after verification of there profiles
- They were also trained and equipped with repair knowledge
- Through the repair cafe, broken devices were fixed.
- Kids art therapy, Repair Cafe and others.

- Without this training, we wouldn't have known & seen the picture of coming up with such an idea.

## GENERAL

- The ASKnet project is designed according to complaints, recommendations and expectations, so it answers their questions and clears their doubts
- The community benefited a lot and still needs more training.
- not all that well based on the nature of the project implementation

*Table 18: Summarised survey responses to the question “How - if at all - has your local community profited from the #ASKnet project from June 2021 up until today?” (N=26)*

Finally, the focus group participants were explicitly asked to elaborate on the role that access to information and media technology play and were able to name a wide variety of specific benefits that they had experienced in their work with community members, that further demonstrate the relevance of the project to the information needs on the ground in the respective communities.

- Especially helpful have been trainings on cyber security, hate speech mitigation and fact-checking, because they help the communities stay peaceful amidst unstable political situations with high levels of ethnic conflict and violence. The low levels of basic media skills make local community members particularly susceptible to mis-information, rumours and fake news that are spread via social media.
- Community members learn how to create and publish their own podcast content that provides them a tool to communicate and spread awareness about challenges and issues that are most relevant to themselves and to their fellow community members.
- Community members have been able to generate their own income based on media skills they have gained in ASKnet workshops, for instance by designing PSAs and CSAs for organisations like UNHCR and WFP.
- Media skills were especially helpful for coping with assembly and travel restrictions during the covid pandemic. For instance, both Platform Africa and JunubOS were able to record educational, mental health and covid19 protection programs that were distributed via online podcast and community radio to children who were unable to attend school.
- Teachers were able to collect digital learning materials for their students based on skills they gained through ASKnet trainings. They use media to learn new methods of teaching STEM and will access a new lab to learn how to carry out experiments with their students.
- Hub teams and community members have been able to contact and get support from international experts via online communication to help them develop their solutions further.
- Through media skills, community members gain awareness about problems they are facing and are better able to develop solutions. The opportunities of creative

- engagement that digital media offer motivates youth to engage in constructive activities and learning rather than engaging in conflict and other destructive activities.
- Through the audio only podcast format, community members are better able to express themselves and are less inhibited than has been the case with video formats. They can record and publish podcasts from their own phone and also easily access what other community members have published.
  - Developed website for own organisation
  - Use media to deal with challenges like mental health problems that are not otherwise treated in the refugee camp setting.

*Table 19: Summarised focus group contributions to discussion around the question “What role does access to information and media technology play in the development of the local communities around your hubs?” (N=7)*

The evaluation thus concludes that the objectives of the ASKnet project remain highly valid in the ASKnet 2021 project and that the design of the project is adequately adapted to the chosen project goal.

## 5.2 Effectiveness

The criterion effectiveness measures progress against the project's objective. This includes an analysis of the degree to which the outcome indicators are achieved, as well as an analysis of the extent to which the project successfully contributes to the achievement of the objective and if any additional, not formally agreed results have occurred.

In the following, each project output and corresponding indicator is analysed separately before taking a summarised look on the evaluated overall effectiveness of the project.

<b>Output 1</b>	<b>ASKnet as a specialist network has become more visible for potential clients and offers direct contact persons</b>
Baseline	No public accessible directory for potential clients, no clear contact persons
Target value	A publicly accessible directory with 7 contacts (1 per hub) and 25 per freelance media professionals at the end of the project.

*Table 20: Indicators Output 1*

As a part of the project output, the so-called LEAD (Local Expert Action Directory) platform has been created (<https://lead.asknet.community/>) in collaboration with the participants and to date (25.03.2022), a total of 26 expert profiles have been entered into the database.

The content repository was designed to be highly accessible also on smartphones and via low bandwidth Internet connection. It has a clear layout and is searchable by search term query and results can be filtered by the following categories: Country, region and skill. Instructions inform any further expert from the community how they can relatively easily add their own profile to the

site. By using Github as the editing platform, the directory format is fully transparent and in the hands of the community members themselves, who can further expand and modify it as they wish.

Each expert profile page contains a profile photo, name and contact information, short bio and different fields for technical, methodological and language skills related to the fields of ICT, media and pedagogy.

The screenshot shows a member profile page for Yine Yenki Nyika. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the logo '#ASKNET' and links for 'ADD PROFILE', 'ABOUT #ASKNET', and social media icons. The main content area features a portrait of Yine, her name, and a brief bio at the bottom. To the right, there are sections for 'Country' (South Sudan), 'Region' (Juba), 'Hub' (GoGirlsICT), 'Language(s)' (English - Very Good, Kuku - Very Good, Juba Arabic - Good), and 'Skills'. The 'Skills' section includes a 'Web & Software' category with a list of bullet points: Degree in Computer Science, Skilled in Data management and analysis, Skilled in GitHub application, Wikifab, Creation of basic apps, and Management and debugging of apps. Below this are collapsed sections for 'Media & Art', 'Community Management', and 'Open Source & Knowledge'. At the bottom, there's a 'Contact' section with various icons for communication.

**Yine Yenki Nyika**

Country:  
South Sudan

Region:  
Juba

Hub:  
GoGirlsICT

Language(s):  
English - Very Good  
Kuku - Very Good  
Juba Arabic - Good

Skills:

Web & Software

- Degree in Computer Science
- Skilled in Data management and analysis
- Skilled in GitHub application
- Wikifab
- Creation of basic apps
- Management and debugging of apps

Media & Art

Community Management

Open Source & Knowledge

Contact:

Yine yenki is a south Sudanese female computer scientist who is enthusiastic at solving challenges facing the girl child by using tech, and hence the basic programming programs (MIT Scratch, Programming), collaborations with Achirachix and a couple of other organizations, and via the ASKNet project by proving the power of storytelling to the young girls in Juba to empower their self with and assertiveness, and this has made her be prominent and recognized of her service in the capital Juba, she is also a board member of the National Communications Authority a body that regulates the connectivity of the country.

*Image 01: LEAD expert profile of one member from the GoGirls ICT team.*

Furthermore, the ASKnet website contains a section describing the exiting five hub organisations with contact information to each hub (<https://asknet.community/#hubs>).

In sum, the LEAD online directory provides a very useful searchable virtual display case of the individuals and skill sets that make up the ASKnet network and community. It has been developed and gradually improved throughout the project runtime in collaboration between community members and project team and is now ready for upscaling by adding further profiles of skilled community members.

The following statement made by one survey respondent illustrates the utility of the LEAD expert registry to the direct target group:

*"I have fully understood the impact of the ASKnet project on our local community. I can immediately be connected with a local expert within my reach on the ASKnet website" (member of ATAKA hub team).*

The evaluation thus concludes that the indicator for output nr. 1 has been completely fulfilled as planned. The specialist network is visible, accessible, already exceeds the targeted number of registered experts and offers contact data for potential clients, both on individual expert level and on hub organisation level.

<b>Output 2</b>	<b>Selected ASKnet experts increase central knowledge in the area of media competence / management of educational events and can also act as multipliers.</b>
Baseline	The professional network has 25 experts with sufficient knowledge and function as multipliers.
Target value	The expert network has 75 new experts at the end of the project: 15 in the topic of training management, 15 in the topic of media production, 15 in the topic of organisational development, 15 in the subject of media hardware, 15 in the subject media software

Table 21: Indicators Output 2

This indicator is less clearly defined and therefore difficult to evaluate. Who are the initial 25 experts, what exactly constitutes a “new expert” and how is the expert skill documented? It can be assumed that the numbers stated in the target value description refer to the amount of persons who have successfully taken part in training and/or mentoring activities related to each of the stated topics. Therefore, if the indicator had been achieved, the network should now in total contain a minimum of 100 experts on different topics related to media training.

As described above in relation to output 1, the LEAD directory on the ASKnet website currently contains 26 expert profiles, each with different sets of media related skills listed, which could serve as one indication as to the current number of “experts” in the network.

The online evaluation survey had only 26 respondents and several of those should likely belong to the group of stated initial 25 experts, as many of them were part of ASKnet prior to the current project implementation. Nonetheless, here below follows a summary of the answers that these survey respondents gave to the question about what particular skills they have personally

acquired or improved on in the course of the project. Many of the self-declared acquired skills correspond to the general topics stated in the indicator, but of course there is no measure of the extent to which a certain skill has been learned and only individual respondents report having gained each type of skill - no participant reported having acquired all of the skills.

- Gained confidence
- Learned how to better strengthen our institution.
- Skills and knowledge, online work
- Skills related to how to use Github: for collaboration, documentation web publishing, how to organise informational structures.
- Skills related to community repair cafe: how to organise the events and how to repair devices, electronics.
- Proper open source tool usage, open tool collaboration skills
- Training skills, mentorship skills, how to pass on new skills to fellow community members.
- Other specific technical and method skills mentioned
  - Requirements engineering, prototyping
  - Project planning, project management
  - Proposal writing, project reporting
  - Finance management, financial reporting
  - Communication, social media management, how to showcase our work to the community, beneficiaries and our donors.
  - Content development through podcast: script writing, storytelling, voice editing and audio production.
  - Photography

*Table 22: Summarised survey responses to the question “What - if anything - have you personally gained from the #ASKnet 2021 project? What are you now personally better able to do than before?” (N=26)*

A core measure of acquired skills in the area of media competence and management of educational events would be the demonstrated ability to organise such events. However, while the project has clearly facilitated several such community events, the documentation is not yet comprehensive. It is impossible for the evaluation to determine how many experts have been involved to what degree in organising and implementing community media events.

The evaluation thus concludes that the indicator for output nr. 2 has only at best been partially fulfilled. It is clear that capacity building has been a core focus of ASKnet project activities, but the structured documentation and verification of actually acquired skills is still lacking. Future projects should include a more thorough system of monitoring and documentation.

<b>Output 3</b>	<b>The ASKnet members can work together better by setting up knowledge exchange platforms and develop and offer learning content via eLearning.</b>
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Baseline	Little exchange of information and knowledge exchange and no eLearning offer due to lack of central platforms.
Target value	Exchange of 25 learning content units and eLearning offers via two platforms set up by the end of the project.

Table 23: Indicators Output 3

The project proposal states the following to describe the intended impact of this activity:

*“A targeted approach to knowledge (didactic concepts, learning content, media production manuals, templates, timetables and instructions) will strengthen the capacity of the target group and thus be an important building block for the success and the maintenance of the ASKnet members’ operability. Access to up-to-date and correct knowledge enables staff to make quick decisions and respond to requests in a professional manner. The ASKnet members can better collaborate, develop and deliver educational content by building two knowledge-sharing platforms. They will closely co-create and implement planning and production through learning-by-doing. Only licence-free open source software will be used.”*

At the time of evaluation, the “e-learning exchange platforms” are still a work in progress and only partially accessible for review online. It is in meantime clear that the initially sketched concept may have been too ambitious or the description inadequate in relation to the approach that has actually been implemented. In reality, the whole knowledge management approach within ASKnet revolves around the documentation of physical activities, processes and concepts in the public Github platform. Github is an Internet hosting service that offers distributed version control and is commonly used by open source software development projects. Additionally, the relatively new “GitHub Pages” service has been applied to generate websites from the content units saved onto GitHub. GitHub Pages is a static web hosting service offered for free by GitHub (currently owned by Microsoft) and currently powers both the ASKnet website and the LEAD directory of experts.

As a part of ASKnet 2021, the ASKnet community website (<https://asknet.community>) has been launched to provide a common portal for everything related to digital content, peer-learning and training activities within the ASKnet community.



*Image 02: The ASKnet website*

Under the subsection “resources” (<https://asknet.community/#resources>), a repository of documented learning activities and formats contributed and co-edited by the ASKnet community members is to be added (currently still under construction). The format will mainly consist of “how-to” guides for open source maker projects and community training event formats that can function as a reference for planning and carrying out related training sessions. The actual modules are hosted on public platforms such as Github and Wikifab and can be collaboratively edited by any community member. Accessible in the moment of writing are only a few first such documented guides for activities that had been carried out in the years prior to the current ASKnet project, such as “repair cafe” and “DIY solar charger”.

The ASKnet web projects are developed in a modular fashion to be scalable and everything is designed to be as easy as possible to access and edit via Smartphone. As an example of one of the contributors to the ASKnet github project, the profile of Wafela Andrew on Github can be accessed here: <https://github.com/chardso>

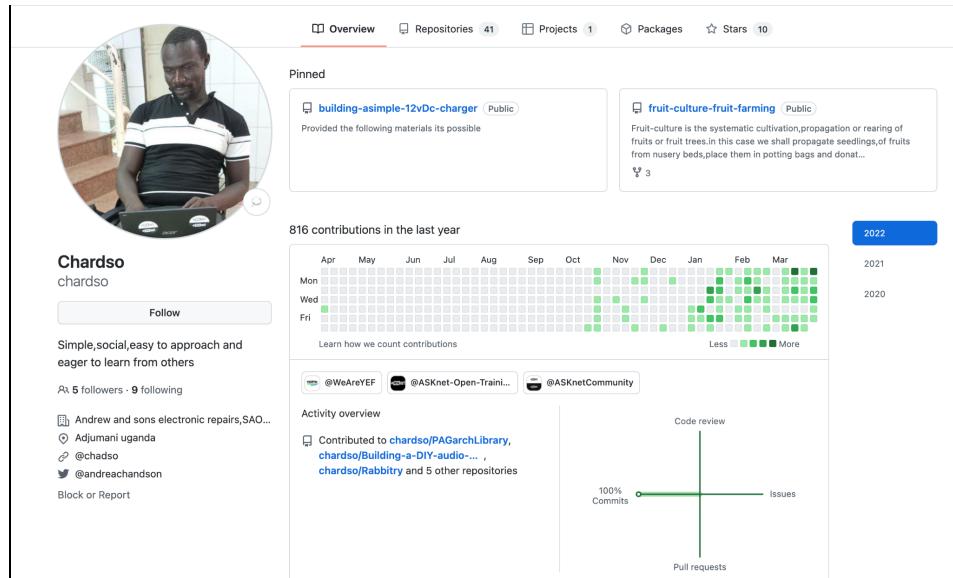


Image 02: Wafela Andrew Github profile (YEF)

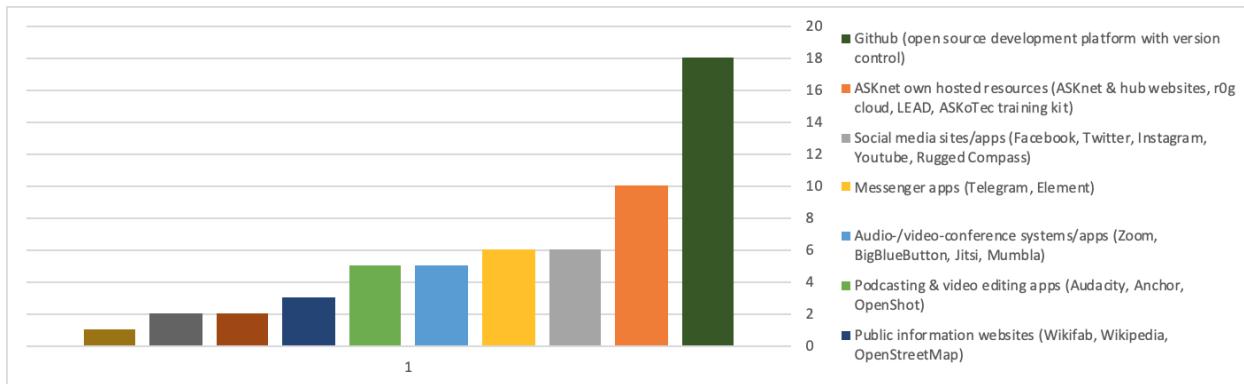
The profile page displays in a transparent format how many times the community member has committed something to github, what type of contributions he/she has made and what digital content he/she has created or contributed to. An example of one of Wafelas contributions - the documentation of a repair cafe event in Pagirinya refugee camp - can be accessed here:

[https://github.com/ASKnet-Open-Training/Minimal-Repair-Setup/issues/15#issue-1129392460=](https://github.com/ASKnet-Open-Training/Minimal-Repair-Setup/issues/15#issue-1129392460)

As a further experiment, a “training plan generator” tool is being conceived by the project team, that allows users to assemble a printable session plan for a training event. At the moment, this tool is still under development and only available as a first prototype version with limited functionality. It appears to need quite an amount of further work to be actually useful for the ASKnet community, but may well prove to be so in the future.

Once finalised, the ASKnet online portal is supposed to function as a common resource and tool for ASKnet trainers to conduct training events in their respective communities. Due to the open source format of the tool and content, the community is encouraged to participate in the generation of further modules and to continuously improve on existing ones.

Related to this indicator is the project participants’ own experience of learning how to use digital technologies within the project. Specifically, the online survey asked the project participants which digital technologies they had come to use in the project and how they had experienced the use of those technologies.



*Diagram 02: Survey responses to the question “Which digital tools and platforms have you yourself used during the #ASKnet 2021 project? Please list any tools (apps, platforms, websites, software, etc.) that come to mind”. All mentioned tools have been grouped and counted (N=26)*

As the graph above indicates, the digital tool most commonly named by the survey participants is Github, which is the central engine of all documentation and information management processes within ASKnet, followed by the other online services and repositories that have been created as part of the ASKnet project over the past years and are partly also generated through Github, including the websites dedicated to the network and the individual hubs and the r0g\_agency cloud document repository where reports are uploaded and project related information is shared.

Further categories of tools mentioned include tools and channels that were used for communication and collaboration within the network, such as video conferencing and messengers, as well public social media platforms for communication with the wider communities. Apart from Google Drive, Zoom and the social media sites, all other mentioned tools appear to constitute open source software.

The survey respondents related the following benefits and challenges that they had experienced when using the digital tools:

#### BENEFITS OF DIGITAL TOOL USE

- Meeting and communicating with people from distant places
- Communicate with the other members and hubs of the network
- Peer-to-peer learning
- Collaboration and sharing and searching for information related to solutions to challenges from local community
- Collaborate on content creation
- Share ideas and get feedback
- Coordinate activities
- Learned about the availability of open source tools and gained knowledge and learned new skills of how to use them
- Easy to use tools

- Good tools for learning
- Students can learn more practically than before
- Documenting and storing data for reference
- Recording audios for campaigns
- Edit podcast and radio drama
- Writing proposals

#### CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL TOOL USE

- Internet connection is expensive and often of poor quality
- Power supply inadequate and frequent power cuts
- Lack of hardware equipment (computers, smartphones, wifi-router, etc.)
- Lack of finance
- Confusing
- Initial insecurity and disorientation before learning how to use the tools
- Online project meetings have been of short duration

*Table 24: Summarised survey responses to the question “How has the use of those digital tools worked out for you in practice?” (N=26)*

The responses show that the surveyed participants experienced having gained useful digital skills and were able to familiarise themselves with a variety of new open source tools through the ASKnet 2021 project. Despite some of the participants reporting having experienced somewhat of a learning curve, the benefits clearly outweigh the challenges. All in all, the activities initiated by the community in online platforms like Github bear a lot of promise for future achievements. At the current moment however, the generated content is not enough to confirm the fulfilment of indicator number 3. It is not clear what the announced two platforms are supposed to represent and there are not 25 documented learning content units available online for review.

<b>Output 4</b>	<b>Educational events can be carried out cost-effectively and in collaboration with partners</b>
Baseline	No educational events with cost recovery
Target value	Implementation of at least 25 events until end of project for a maximum of 750 media users in the Project region

*Table 25: Indicators Output 4*

The project proposal states the following:

*“The educational events are differentiated according to their duration. Planned are:*

- 10 events of 1 day each
- 10 events of 2-5 days
- 5 events more than 5 days

*Depending on the type of event, up to 30 participants, i.e. maximum 750 participants.”*

Both internal documents (uploaded project proposal, financial reports and other separate files) on the r0g\_agency cloud platform and public social media posts from the ASKnet hubs demonstrate that a variety of different media educational community events have been carried out. However, no comprehensive summary of those events has thus far been made available to the evaluation and therefore it is impossible to determine what type and amount of community events have actually occurred in totality as a result of ASKnet 2021 and how the impact of those activities can be finally assessed. The completion of indicator number 4 cannot be confirmed by the evaluation.

### **Summary of the project's evaluated effectiveness**

The completion of the project indicators have, as has been described above, only been partially achieved. While the first of the four indicators was fully completed and survey feedback as well as publicly accessible digital documents indicate that work has been put forward both by the project team and the participating hub teams towards achieving all set objectives, the completion of either of the next three indicators (indicators 2-4) cannot be confirmed by the evaluation at this point. A main obstacle appears to consist in a serious challenge among team members as regards prioritising the indicators and taking the last steps and following up the documentation of actually achieved tasks and completed activities. Furthermore, several of the indicators had not been formulated in a clear and concise way, leaving playroom for their interpretation and potential misunderstandings also within the project team, as to what should be achieved.

## **5.3 Efficiency**

The efficiency criterion measures the extent to which objectives of the project have been achieved cost-effectively. The efficiency comprises production efficiency, which describes the transformation of inputs to outputs, including implementation efficiency (structures and processes of project implementation) and allocation efficiency, which examines the transformation of inputs to outcomes.

To evaluate the efficiency of the project, we start out by reviewing the general survey feedback from the project participants. The online survey contained a selection of questions with rating scales regarding different main aspects of the project implementation. The result of those is presented one by one here below:

First of all, asked to rate the overall project implementation, half of the respondents selected the top rating option and another ¼ selected the second highest rating option on the five-point scale. Only two persons gave less than neutral ratings. The participants' rating is thus strongly positive on average.

ATAKA				●	●●
GoGirls ICT			●	●●●	
JunubOS		●●			●
Platform Africa			●●	●	●●●●
YEF			●	●●	●●●●●●●
Total	2	4	7	13	

Table 26: Survey responses by hub-affiliation to the question “How do you rate the overall implementation of the #ASKnet 2021 project?” (N=26)

When asked to provide more detailed feedback, the aspect of project management was rated positively on average on the seven-point scale, while a significant group of respondents still used the slightly negative “not so good” rating option. Among the three related sub-categories, “overall project coordination” was rated most positively, followed by “project information and communication”. Least satisfactory was the sub-category “resource allocation, financial transfers and equipment”.

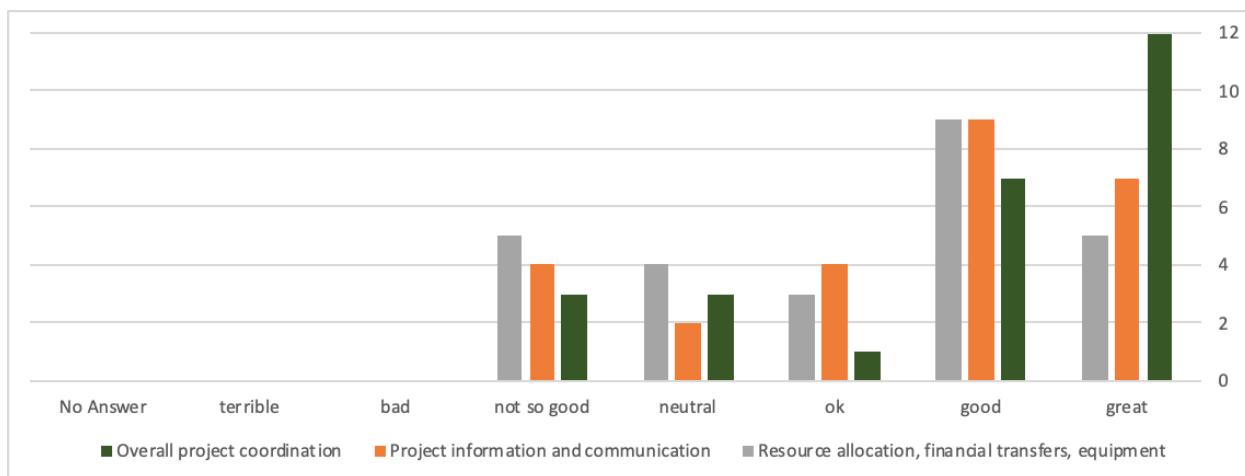


Diagram 03: Survey responses to the question “Please rate the different aspects of the overall #ASKnet 2021 program: Project Management” (N=26)

Asked to rate the mentoring, again a majority of participants rated it as either “good” or “great”.

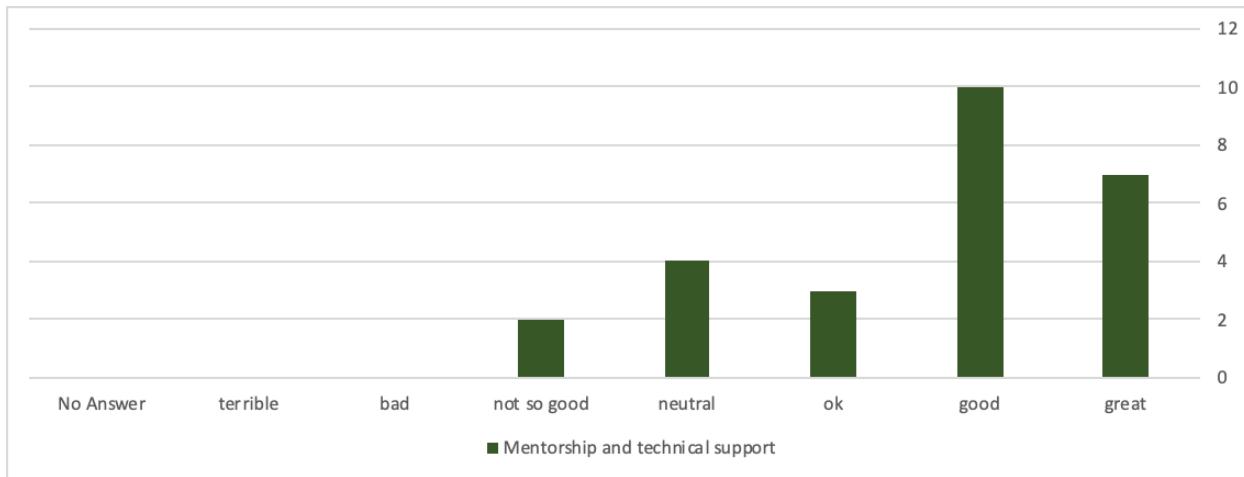


Diagram 04: Survey responses to the question “Please rate the different aspects of the overall #ASKnet 2021 program: Mentoring” (N=26)

Finally, asked about the participants’ contribution to the project activities, the most positive option “great” received the most ratings, closely followed by “good”. The respondents’ own contribution was on average rated a little bit more positive than the contribution of others.

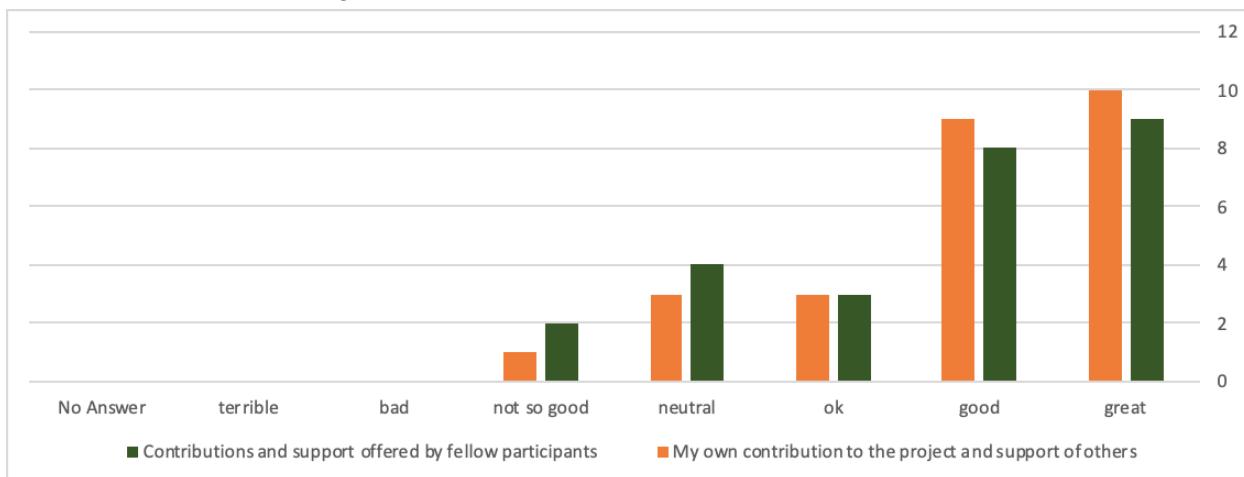


Diagram 05: Survey responses to the question “Please rate the different aspects of the overall #ASKnet 2021 program: #ASKnet Network” (N=26)

Some of the issues mentioned in the comment field for clarifications include adequate compensation for work tasks, delays to the project timeline and the quality of communication between different project stakeholders, but none of the issues was mentioned by more than one or two participants each.

The survey furthermore asked respondents to name any challenges that they had personally experienced during their participation in the project. Two main categories of issues were summarily reported:

1. Financial and material issues, including insufficient compensation for work tasks or covering expenses and lack of available IT hardware equipment.

2. Inadequate project communication and coordination including some unclear information provided and intransparent criteria for activity funding.

See the summary of survey comments in the table here below.

#### INSUFFICIENT FINANCE AND POOR INFRASTRUCTURE

- Lack of financial support in terms of mobility and the motivation to carry out the ASKnet project because things are expensive in my area.
- Unable to follow up on activities or scale them up due to lack of finance
- Mobile data, transportation and accommodation costs
- Poor wages given for trainers
- Unreliable Internet connection and unstable power supply making online meetings and documentation difficult
- Lack of good working electronic devices to join online meetings
- Shortage of tools like laptops, recording devices etc.
- Limited number of computers: Two students are put on one computer for their learning.

#### PROJECT COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

- Project objectives were not well communicated.
- Coordination not sufficient
- As a coordinator, filling + collecting data was a difficult task because a good number of the #ASKnet community members are offline most times
- Lack of support from assigned mentors
- Too much feedback and low action which is not uniform.
- Initially, the relationship between experts who budded from the program and the hubs wasn't clear as it was 'defined' by r0g without the input of the hubs. Due to that, there was friction when experts applied for funds for activities and hubs couldn't quite fathom their role in the project.
- Some hubs are given go ahead before their projects are completely done while others are not. The selection criteria was not well organised.
- Less clarity at the start of the project with budgeting for activities and cut down in hub development or HR funds to support the staff.
- Difficulty writing financial reports at the end of every activity due to lack of skills.
- Time period

#### PERSONAL SITUATION

- Difficulty scheduling calls due to other engagements and balancing work with studies
- Sometimes I end up overworking myself

#### WORK WITH TARGET GROUPS

- Data-collection is not easy, as people are hesitant to give out their information.
- Connecting with some communities due to language

- A few females take long to learn tech

*Table 27: Summarised survey responses to the question “Which - if any - challenges did you personally experience while participating in the project?” (N=26)*

To conclude, the participants appear overall to be relatively satisfied and positive concerning the efficiency of the project implementation. No particular aspect of the project implementation is rated negatively or commented on negatively by any significant part of the survey respondents. The aspect of inefficient resource allocation remains a concern to some, but not rated as negatively as in previous projects.

## 5.4 Overarching Developmental Impacts

The impact criterion measures the extent to which the intended overarching development results have occurred, and the extent to which the project contributes to the achievement of those overarching development results. It also takes into account unintended positive and negative results.

The objective of the ASKnet 2021 project at impact level was according to the project application: “*The media specialist network ASKnet (South Sudanese media organisations and media professionals) is being strengthened and its members can train media literacy among media users in their region.*”

This impact objective should further contribute to achieving the overarching development objective of the BMZ funding program which consists in the strengthening of access to information, freedom of expression and freedom of opinion. “*The realisation of this right simultaneously improves the chances of claiming and implementing other rights - civil, political, economic, social and cultural - and thus achieving sustainable, democratic and human development.*” (<https://bengo.engagement-global.de/medienfoerderung.html>). The central question is thus: Has the ASKnet 2021 project contributed to improving these conditions for its target group in the two countries of implementation?

According to the ASKnet hub managers (focus group participants), their own MOs have benefited from their participation in ASKnet especially in the following ways:

- Online mentorship and collaboration with experts.
- Learning how to document all activities and learnings and developing routines for continuous documentation.
- Capacity building in project management, financial administration and policy development of the hub teams.
- The fact that the project supports organisational growth by providing resources and developing capacity of the team members. Its aim being institutional self sustainability and independence of the partner hubs.
- Provide resources and spaces for the community to learn and collaborate.

- The focus on the development of local solutions.
- Continuously learning more about the actual challenges and needs of the own community and how to describe them by formulating applications for and receiving the means to carry out community activities.
- ASKnet activities and documentation supports visibility, both of hub organisations and of individual community members and their activities, which is helpful for establishing relations with the own community as well as other related stakeholders, including international partners.
- Strong peer-to-peer relationships between the hubs and ability to reach out for support in the network, such as during the flooding disaster of Bor.
- The openness and encouragement to integrate with other projects and partner

*Table 28: Summarised focus group contributions to discussion around the question “In what way does it benefit your hub to be a part of the ASKnet network?” (N=7)*

The statements above indicate that the ASKnet project and approach has had an overall positive effect on the five (/seven) MO's ability to operate, mainly by providing organisational capacity building to the hub teams, resources to cover running costs and carry out activities and opportunities to network and collaborate with each other and external partners. To further analyse the project's actual impact on the indirect target groups, more information concerning the media training activities that have been carried out by the hubs is needed.

## 5.5 Sustainability

Sustainability measures the extent to which results are anchored in partner structures, a forecast of the durability of results and the extent to which results of the project are socially and economically and ecologically balanced. To address these questions, the opinions, visions and cautions expressed by the representatives of the direct target group themselves in survey and focus group formats are reviewed.

The survey input summarised in the table below about the vision, hopes and ideas for what the future of ASKnet could be show that project participants in general have internalised the core ideas of the intended project approach and are actively exploring options for how to further develop the established network. Their suggestions revolve mostly around different ways of intensifying and expanding the impact of the network, as well as sharpening its profile and value proposition. All in all, the statements give the picture of the participants assuming ownership and having the ambition to continue developing ASKnet as their own network.

### FUTURE VISION

- Be the leading innovation and creative media program providing resilience and support to media organisations working in peace building, digital literacy, promoting correct use of social media, and lastly open access and sharing of knowledge
- A big organisation where youth can get different skills of learning
- building a strong self sustaining network in terms of skills of its members

- A decentralised network with a strong secretariat capable of overseeing its own growth.
- the best open source platform for everyone in the world.
- being the centre of innovation.
- A locally driven project with local communities communicating on how to solve their local challenges with collaborative and co working approaches
- A centre of excellence and collaboration for community development.

#### IDEAS FOR TYPE OF APPROACH AND SUPPORT NEEDED

- A grant for emergency activities within the hub.
- ASKnet award program as incentive to be given to any hub who may perform well during the project implementation.
- Exchange program for hub members.
- Engaging the hubs in collaborative events/activities
- Putting the hub in right direction, in term of implementation
- ASKnet activities should be extended to broadcast media to reach the masses of people.
- It should have a website to increase more members and community to own this project
- More monitoring and evaluation, community feedback
- To expand the LEAD directory by empowering the registered experts to carry out activities and give reports to affiliated hubs for submission.
- More trainings for hubs
- The network should be able to influence favourable policies at a higher level to benefit other startups
- Sustainability by constantly engaging the participants in the coming projects as mentors to the new ones that will be recruited.
- Beneficiaries of ASKnet should pass on their learnings by mentoring further community members. Both on hub and individual levels.
- Make ASKnet better known in local community and internationally by increased activity, targeted promotion and networking
- It needs more program support tailored for specific target groups to transfer the skill set that the network has.

*Table 29: Summarised survey responses to the question “What would you wish the future of ASKnet to be? How can that future vision best be sustained? Which type of support is needed?” (N=26)*

When asked, how they intend to organise ASKnet in the future, the focus group participants gave the following answers in summary that show that the ASKnet hub managers have been engaging with these matters and have reached a new level of maturity and formed an overall consensus on what approaches and structures they would prefer to implement in future projects:

- A core issue mentioned several times by different participants is the formation of a secretariat or steering committee, whose members are elected by the hubs themselves, for the future coordination of the ASKnet network. Main functions of the steering committee should be to better coordinate project internal decision making and information dissemination throughout the network and to increase the network's visibility outwards. The establishment of a network secretariat should take some of the pressure related to the future ASKnet project administration off the individual hub teams, who will in turn be better able to follow up on their activities, service their communities and engage in collaborations with other hubs of the network.
- There is a strong shared sense of the importance of taking on more responsibilities for decision making as a network, rather than relying on r0g\_agency as project owner to steer the decision-making process. The common ASKnet website that is edited and managed by the hubs themselves is seen as a good step in that direction, as it provides a direct interface for external partners to approach the network directly as a common body.
- Install routines to peer review each others' project proposals and better monitor each others' follow-up on commitments and evaluate outcomes of activities. Jointly decide which hubs' project proposals should be awarded funding and under which conditions.
- Improve planning and implementation through more frequent conversations and sharing of expertise starting early on between the project partners. Some of the participants suggest to re-install the signing of detailed memorandum of understanding (MoU) that were used in earlier project years, that make it objectively clear to each project partner what they are expected to deliver.
- Research and test options for how to best design projects that both have a strong impact on the local communities, while also complying with the ASKnet funder's definitions of media skills in cooperation with local civil society organisations. Include offline broadcast media like community radio and TV into the definition of ASKnet supported media formats to reach larger proportions of the local communities.
- Transfer activities that have been successful in one community to other communities within the network.
- Give more attention to follow-up and entrepreneurial support for community members who have passed through first ASKnet training activities, to increase the long-term sustainability and impact of the acquired skills.

*Table 30: Summarised focus group contributions to discussion around the question “How do you intend to organise ASKnet in the future?” (N=7)*

Now, looking instead at the perceived challenges to future sustainability, first on the level of sustaining the own existing five(/seven) hub/MO, it is clear that lack of financial income and regular funding to cover such basic running expenses as media hardware, space-rent, staff salaries, transportation, Internet and electricity remain a core urgent issue shared by all hubs. Beside that, the quality of locally available infrastructure is a further important challenge, as is staff capacity and high rate of staff turn-over and lacking financial means to enable longer term planning and upscaling of services to the community and also raising more awareness in the communities about the own hub. Despite advances reported elsewhere and although the

ASKnet grassroots organisations certainly have reached different levels of development, all of them appear to still be struggling with organisational sustainability on a rather elementary level.

ATAKA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Finance is a challenge, because everything needs money</li> <li>● Funding to extend our services to nearby counties and states across South Sudan</li> <li>● Lack of space</li> <li>● Lacking Internet</li> <li>● Transportation from the workplace to the field</li> </ul>
GoGirls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maintaining team members, especially some of them might get busy or other opportunities elsewhere and they leave creating a gap that may need to be filled; and this requires more time and training to get a replacement</li> <li>● Having to do most of the work for the project because we still can't afford to maintain other colleagues even if on a voluntary basis be able to give them some allowances to be part of the team to do some of the work.</li> <li>● The capacity to involve many young people to do developmental activities</li> <li>● Not all of Juba know about #ASKnet or the Hub.</li> </ul>
JOS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Data connectivity, finance, and more training</li> <li>● HR and hub development support, most specially with the current project being cut off is a huge challenge, also activity or project support becomes a bit hard to organise frequently activities that can lead to transfer of skills.</li> <li>● Sustainability of the projects due to limited resources and poor investment on the team.</li> </ul>
PA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of regular funds to sustain the hub</li> <li>● Limited resources</li> <li>● Inadequate power</li> <li>● Long distance</li> <li>● The software is new to some people</li> <li>● Shortage of media tools</li> <li>● The pandemic: It is challenging up to now to visit and meet number of people in a short time</li> </ul>
YEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Few stakeholders are taking part in our activities</li> <li>● Having limited resources hinders some of the ideas which we would like to implement to accompany the current ideas in place</li> <li>● Collaboration among the hub</li> <li>● High rate of staff turn over and movement of trainees with others returning to country of origin (South Sudan)</li> <li>● Better Organisational structure</li> <li>● The administrative structure</li> <li>● Inadequate gadgets, eg computers, cameras</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport for experts who live at a distance places</li> </ul>
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*Table 31: Summarised survey responses to the question “What main challenges do you currently see to sustaining and further developing the #ASKnet Hub that you are most closely affiliated with” (N=26)*

The survey respondents were furthermore asked to describe what they see as main future challenges for ASKnet as a project and network. They again responded with many of the same issues that they perceived affecting the hubs, i.e. those related to the financial sustainability of the hubs and hub teams' capacity of internal organisation and collaboration with partner hubs. Additionally, some participants mention a few additional emerging challenges related to the sustainability and expansion of the ASKnet network (see table below). It is clear that the network members both see the network as a useful vehicle to expand their own hub's outreach and access to resources, while constructive engagement with the network partners at the same time requires added skills and workload on part of the hub teams. The survival of the own organisation and continuous hub activity appear to be seen as a priority and precondition to being able to benefit from the network.

<p><b>FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recover from damage related to the Covid pandemic</li> <li>• Sustainability of individual hubs</li> <li>• Financial compensation of staff</li> <li>• Maintaining hub activity</li> <li>• Capacity building for hub staff</li> <li>• Transport to be able to access learners</li> <li>• Shortage of digital tools</li> </ul> <p><b>EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued inefficiencies in ASKnet project administration</li> <li>• Corruption</li> <li>• Conflict of interest</li> </ul> <p><b>NETWORK EXPANSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion and awareness raising about ASKnet to reach wider circles of people</li> <li>• Prioritising the expansion of the network over strengthening already existing hubs</li> <li>• Sustaining the community as it's growing larger every day.</li> <li>• Updating database of #ASKnet members</li> <li>• Expand focus beyond media projects</li> </ul>
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*Table 32: Summarised survey responses to the question “What are main future challenges for #ASKnet?” (N=26)*

The same question was further elaborated in the focus groups session, where challenges of interdependence between the ASKnet hubs were further pointed out. According to the hub

managers, the following are main challenges ahead for ASKnet to achieve impact in their local communities (summarised):

- A challenge consists in the interdependence of the hubs in the network. If some hubs don't deliver on the commitments that they have agreed to, it also affects other hubs who are more diligent. There is a need for a system of frequent peer-reviews and enforcement of accountability. More active and well organised hubs do not wish to be "punished" or pulled down by others who are not managing to keep up with their commitments towards the network and the funder.
- Several participants stress that stringent online documentation remains a challenge. One of the participants suggested dedicating more staff resources within the hubs towards documentation.
- Developing strategies for how to, as a network, raise more funds from other donors than the BMZ funding for the purpose of increasing the hubs' impact on their communities.
- How to further develop the uniqueness of an ASKnet approach to offset against other actors.
- There is also a challenge of relating hub activities to the funding requirements of the ASKnet project, i.e. that funded activities should be related to media education and access to information. Participants mentioned for instance that they find it additionally difficult to combine both a focus on community impact and women empowerment with the requirement of activities to be related to media skills development.
- How to onboard new hub members to the network, to widen it and bring in a new set of skills.

*Table 33: Summarised focus group contributions to discussion around the question “What are the main challenges ahead for ASKnet to achieve impact in your communities?” (N=7)*

A further aspect related to the sustainability of the ASKnet project and network is its shared knowledge and learning resources that have been generated over the past years and is continuing to be managed in the ongoing process. Very positive in this context is the choice of infrastructure for this knowledge management process. As all documented resources are being kept on free public content platforms such as Github, Wikifab and youtube, without any own hosted services, continuous community access is guaranteed for the immediate future and close to no finance is required for the network to run and maintain the platforms.

In conclusion, despite the still remaining and the new added challenges mentioned above, the ASKnet network has now at the end of the ASKnet 2021 project reached a level of maturity and substance that bodes well for its sustainable continuation in the future under the assumption that further funding can be secured to maintain activity in the network and support its coordination.

## 6. Cross Cutting Issues

The ASKnet project, as a community oriented media education initiative focussed on providing access to information and supporting the development of local challenges in regions of conflict and forced displacement through an open culture approach, contributes to several of the sustainable development goals (SDG) of the UN Agenda 2030, including in particular SDG01 (no poverty), SDG04 (quality education), SDG08 (decent work and economic growth), SDG16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), but individual activities within the ASKnet network and its participating organisations also cover most of the remaining SDG too.

Concerning SDG05 (gender equality); while it is a stated ambition of both the project as a whole and of all the member hubs and project partner organisations, to contribute actively to gender equality in the communities of implementation, there are no evident tools or strategies in place for how this ambition can be systematically put into practice. The question remains open, to what extent and by what means exactly gender equality is promoted through the project. In the online survey, respondents were asked if women and men participated in and benefited from the ASKnet 2021 project on equal terms, to which roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  answered “yes” and  $\frac{1}{4}$  answered “no”. Judging from their related comments, the participants appear in general to be aware that gender equality is an issue that is promoted by the ASKnet project and some of them state explicitly that it is a policy within their own organisations. While they are in favour of increasing gender equality within and through the project, several respondents agree that more can be done in this regard.

	No	Yes
ATAKA		●●●
GoGirls ICT	●●	●●
JunubOS		●●●
Platform Africa	●	●●●●●●
YEF	●●●●	●●●●●
Total	7	19

Table 34: Survey responses “Did women and men equally participate in the #ASKnet 2021 project and benefit from their participation to the same extent?” (N=26)

The following quote from the survey responses appears to be a valid characterisation of the situation:

“Generally speaking, it's still GoGirls trying to make sure all the women attend, but we all need to put more effort to make women part of the #ASKnet community.” (a member of GoGirls ICT)

Only 27% of the survey participants were female and half of those were most closely affiliated with the hub GoGirls ICT, which is solely focussed on promoting the situation of girls and women. Out of the seven focus group participants, only one was female (again the person representing GoGirls ICT). Beside GoGirls, none of the other ASKnet MOs has any female representation on management level. It is therefore evident that more needs to be done to promote gender equality on a structural level within and through the ASKnet project in future.

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 7.1 Conclusions

The ASKnet project has step by step over successive years supported the development of a functional network and community of media activists and innovators working to improve access to information and media education in the refugee camps of Uganda and conflict zones of South Sudan, representing some of the most challenging circumstances and contexts imaginable. This is a significant achievement made possible by combined continuous efforts of the dedicated ASKnet project team together with the teams of the ASKnet member organisations. The open and flexible project approach has allowed for an organic growth of the network, adapting rather well to changing circumstances and making good use of new opportunities as they have emerged. A strong advantage of the project is its community focussed approach, where needs and ideas from the local communities are continuously absorbed and solutions co-created and improved in collaboration with the target beneficiaries themselves. Through this open experimental approach, a variety of formats have been tested over the years and solutions such as the ASKotec training kit, repair café events and the LEAD directory of experts have been introduced, adapted and successfully scaled across the network.

Having laid down the important groundwork, there is now a lot of potential for a continued stabilisation and future expansion of the network and its activities, which at the same time brings with it a new set of challenges, including the consolidation and maintenance of what has been achieved, the development of strategic decision making and conflict mitigation strategies and common practical monitoring and peer-evaluation routines.

The relevance of the ASKnet project's objectives and general approach to both its beneficiaries and to the BMZ funding program leaves few open questions and the project's overarching development impact should likely be considered rather high based on the feedback provided by the members of the direct target group, although further field data research would be required to be able to confirm this assumption and to determine more exactly the actual extent and the nature of the impact that community activities of the ASKnet network have on their target beneficiaries and the local communities in general.

Concerning the ASKnet 2021 projects' effectiveness, while the outcome indicators have to some extent been achieved, in other regards they have clearly not yet been achieved. For a large part however, it is currently not possible to determine and confirm if and what has been achieved,

due to both unclear indicator definition and due to lacking or insufficient documentation of completed project activities. The LEAD directory of professional expertise (output 1) can be highlighted as a well executed community oriented project that has reached a good level of practical utility. The platform both gives the network a needed face outwards towards external potential partners and funders and it provides a useful resource for community members themselves who are now better able to identify which experts are available for engaging in different types of tasks and projects. It is simple and usable enough for most community members to be able to contribute to it themselves or through some limited support from their peers.

The plan to implement two further platforms for e-learning and knowledge management (output 2) may however in contrast have been too ambitious and poorly thought through from the beginning. While there is an obvious need for the effective management of didactically prepared digital learning resources and methods within the network, project participants are still struggling with more basic tasks of project documentation and reporting. The same issue of documentation and reporting has also been a recurring challenge in the previous ASKnet project years. Although it is evident that many project related training activities, projects and events have been and are still continuously being developed and implemented as a result of the project initiatives carried out and resources invested, it is difficult for an external reviewer to gather a clear picture of what the current overall status is at any given moment. The fact that proper project documentation still represents a main challenge was also recurrently mentioned both by the ASKnet 2021 survey respondents, the hub managers in the focus group session and that has been related in communication with members of the project team. In general it appears that the fulfilment of project indicators have often been left in the background as project personnel and partners are busy keeping up with and completing more basic daily tasks of coordination and communication, especially under the tightened timeline resulting from late approval of each year's project proposal by the funders. A stronger, more stringent follow-up by the project management throughout the project process appears to be necessary in order for the team to stay on focus as regards the project's target outputs.

The project's implementation efficiency appears to have been rather high. Surveyed participants are in general and on average satisfied with the management and administration of the project. The timely allocation of resources has been a significant point of critique in earlier project years, but appears to have been improved in the current project. An issue that is left to deal with is some top-down decisions from the r0g\_agency project team that are in conflict with the ASKnet hub-teams' increasing sense of ownership over the network and their own agility.

As regards the sustainability of the ASKnet network, beside developing effective network administration and steering, an important lasting challenge is the financial sustainability of the member hubs as essential carriers and interfaces to communities and stakeholders on the ground. While a few of the ASKnet MO's have over the past years increased their capacity of acquiring third party funding, other hubs do not appear to have made significant advances in this regard. It will be an important challenge for future projects to establish mechanisms for how

to support ASKnet hubs that are struggling with operational sustainability or to implement stricter requirements for hubs to be members, so as to not risk burdening the whole network.

Concerning cross cutting issues, especially the aspect of gender equality deserves further attention. For instance, beside looking at the mere gender ratio of workshop participants, trainers and mentors, which should be significantly further improved in the future, it appears important to also develop strategies for how to specifically encourage more active participation and engagement by female participants within the training sessions and to break down implicit gender barriers within the organisational structures of each hub and of the emerging network between the hubs. Many cultural and social barriers prevent women from equal participation and benefit and more can be done to improve the situation, for instance by closer assessment of the situational context of female participants and closer moderation of their integration into the project.

Finally, the ASKnet network has over time gathered a lot of valuable experience and expertise that should be of high relevance to other global communities that deal with similar contextual challenges. A future more efficiently operating network management should be able to further develop the network's public communication and build more inter-regional partnerships that can both deepen the network's professional expertise and attract more resources towards the networks' own activities.

## 7.2 Recommendations

For future implementations of the project approach in direct continuation of this now completed project in and around South Sudan and/or expanded into any other, new contexts, the following recommendations are made based on the evaluation results:

- First of all, the evaluation recommends that the ASKnet project should be continued with further support by the BMZ. The ASKnet network as well as its individual member experts and hubs have experienced significant development throughout the previous projects, but they will still be in need of further support to consolidate and continuously maintain the structures and products that have been achieved and to further develop the networks' potential and lift it to new levels in next steps. The content and methods of capacity building that have been applied thus far have in general proved to be appropriate to the needs of the target group and should be continued in future projects. It is furthermore recommended to continue with the successful implementation and propagation of open source digital technologies as a main medium of communication, collaboration and knowledge management within the project, while also increasing opportunities of physical interaction through meetings, events and mutual visits as far as pandemic conditions permit.
- A strong priority for future projects should however be the continuation of the process to gradually hand over responsibility and decision power from r0g\_agency as the German project partner into the hands of the regional ASKnet network and its member MOs. Establishing a "network secretariat" as has been suggested by the focus group

participants may be one optional model in this regard. It is recommended to accompany and support the community members' own process of wayfinding and encourage their active experimentation to identify options that work best for themselves considering their own particular working context and socio-cultural structures. By testing out different options iteratively and gradually adapting strategies that work, the network can best develop its own identity and resilience.

- Future projects should furthermore include a more thorough system of monitoring, documentation and periodical review than has been the case thus far, beginning from the start of the project runtime to make sure that expectations remain realistic, commitments are upheld and targeted outcomes are achieved within the available project timeframes. In relation to this, it is also recommended to conduct further research on the actual extent and nature of project impact on the benefiting communities so as to verify the assumed theory of change and develop a solid results chain model for the project approach.
- Finally, to achieve the aims of gender equality within the ASKnet network itself and within the local beneficiary communities, the project evaluation recommends developing a clear and profound gender equality strategy for future projects, that goes beyond superficial expressions of commitment, that is both grounded in established professional practice and adapted to the particular cultural and social settings at hand. This could also include specific capacity building targeted towards the participating ASKnet hubs on gender sensitive issues to support them in developing their own strategies and policies to be better prepared to tackle gender based discrimination issues within their own organisations and to improve gender ratio also within their own managing structures. The already available expertise from ASKnet hub GoGirls ICT could be leveraged for this, but it is also recommended to include additional external expertise, in particular by involving other gender specialists from the region who have a neutral stance on the network's development.

# **Appendix**

The following documents are attached as appendix to the report.

**A1: Online survey questions**

**A2: Online survey responses**

**A3: Focus group transcript**