

Call for Proposals

Laos

Feasibility Study as a potential focus country of DW Akademie, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

DW Akademie is inviting interested groups of persons / organisations to apply for the feasibility study of Laos as potential new focus country funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

1. Introducing DW Akademie

DW Akademie is part of Germany's international broadcaster Deutsche Welle and is Germany's leading organization for international media development. We support free and transparent media systems, quality journalism and media and information literacy in close to 50 countries in developing and emerging countries.

With our projects and as a strategic partner of the BMZ, we strengthen the right to freedom of expression and access to information. We enable people to form their own opinions based on reliable facts and via a free flow of ideas so that they can present their views in social debates. This enables them to play an active and equal part in social and political developments and thus improves their standard of living.

We help to transform and restructure media landscapes after periods of crisis and conflict and contribute internationally to the professionalization of media training and education. We respect the cultural identity of our partners and conduct projects based on mutual agreement. It is important to us that projects have a practical approach and that they are interactive and innovative in nature. We consider our work to be successful when changes and reforms are being demanded by our partners and when partners are prepared to take responsibility for them beyond the time of our cooperation. Human rights are at the heart of what we do.

Our strategies are aimed at structural and sustainable changes to support and enhance free, independent and plural media landscapes. For this, four strategic fields are covered: Political and Legal Frameworks; Qualification; Professionalism and Economic Viability of the Media Sector; and Participation in Society. The interplay of these diverse approaches enables the creation of sustainable structures, which are a prerequisite for freedom of expression and access to information.

2. Feasibility Study

a) Context and Summary of the Study

DW Akademie implements media development projects in 25 focus countries around the world with funding from BMZ. DW Akademie now intends to conduct a feasibility study of Laos to assess its potential as a new focus country as well as its media development needs and strategic areas of intervention.

In **Laos** Freedom of Expression and Media Freedom are restricted. The media landscape is dominated by state-controlled media. Despite nominal press freedom granted by the constitution, journalists are criminalized. Internet platforms and social media have seen an increase in users, particularly in urban areas. Improved access to internet technologies provides with population with new opportunities for accessing information and political participation, particularly on social media. Talking to media and human rights organisations, the study analyses how journalism education, contacts and networks can be constructed step by step. It also analyses the conditions for a successful engagement of DW Akademie under the given political conditions. It includes a risk

assessment including possible measures of risk reduction. The study takes places in the capital and at least two other locations in Laos.

b) Strategic Objectives of the Feasibility Study

The following objectives and topics are central to each study:

- Which are the country's most pressing needs in strengthening Freedom of Opinion and Access to Information?
- Which strategic interventions – in line with BMZ's and DW Akademie's approach – can be successfully implemented?
- Who are the particularly relevant actors? Which actors are most promising for a successful cooperation?
- Which specific aspects (safety and security, political limitations, administrative difficulties in project implementation) need to be taken into consideration?

Digital aspects are particularly important for Freedom of Opinion and Access to Information. They are therefore fundamental to the studies.

More information about DW Akademie's digital strategy can be found here:

<https://www.dw.com/en/dw-akademies-digital-strategy/a-19321460>

DW Akademie's Strategy Model can be found here:

<https://www.dw.com/en/our-strategic-model/a-19427146>

The BMZ's media development approach should also be taken into consideration. More information can be found on the BMZ's own website:

http://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/information_flyer/flyer/booklet_opinion.pdf

3. Principles and Criteria of the Feasibility Study

The feasibility study shall be conducted as an independent study in close cooperation with DW Akademie. The participation of local stakeholders in a spirit of partnership as well as transparency about the objectives of the feasibility study are key principles guiding the work of DW Akademie. The study shall present facts and sources accurately and fairly, criteria for assessments shall be transparent and reproducible. In addition, all collected data and results must be useful for and geared towards proposals for realistic and implementable projects.

4. Process and Format of the Feasibility Studies

a) Process of the Feasibility Studies

All received applications will be judged according to a fixed set of criteria. Based on this appraisal, a consultant will be chosen for the study. DW Akademie will provide the consultants with the necessary background information. Open questions can be discussed during the kick-off-workshop to start the inception phase. Based upon this information and discussions, consultants will write their inception reports detailing the prospective methodology, key questions and final design of the

feasibility study. Beyond document analysis, a field trip to Laos is expected to take place. DW Akademie will support consultants in planning and conducting the trip. Interviews as well as data analysis and writing the report will be carried out independently by the consultant. At the end of the feasibility study process, the consultant delivers an independently written report, which will be subject of discussion with the regional team at the final workshop. All meetings and workshops will usually take place in Germany (Bonn or Berlin) or, if justified, the country/region of the study.

b) Format of Proposals

The proposal should outline a coherent concept for the feasibility study of Laos as a potential new BMZ focus country. It should include the objectives of the study and take into account the political situation in the country as a whole. Furthermore, applicants should make a suggestion for the overall design and a possible methodology and references to their experience. A preliminary time schedule should describe the different stages of the study, a proposed budget should detail expected expenditure for personnel, travel and materials. Applicants should also highlight their evaluation expertise. The exact documents to be included in the proposal are listed under 5 b). The proposal will be considered as the applicant's suggestion for the feasibility study. The exact focus of the feasibility study as well as the budget will be finalized during the inception phase and documented in the inception report. Applications by teams of consultants, consisting of a local and an international expert, are possible. This call does not create a right to a contract.

c) Format of the Feasibility Study Report

The final feasibility study report shall be approximately 15 pages (A4) in length and be written in German *or* English. It will be accompanied by an executive summary in German *or* English consisting of two to three pages as well as an appendix containing the additional information important for understanding the evaluation results. This includes research tools such as questionnaires, interview guides, etc., as well as a complete list of all activities conducted within the framework of the study including a list of all contacted organisations / institutions and interview partners, documentation of interviews (photo documentation, minutes in bullet points) and a list of consulted sources (media, secondary literature). DW Akademie will be responsible for the final proof-reading of the English executive summary. The exact methods that will be applied during the feasibility study will be finalized in a five-page inception report.

5. Application Requirements

a) Applicant's Profile

Applicants should have experience in planning and conducting feasibility studies within the field of international development. They should have proficient knowledge of information and data collection and analysis, as well as excellent analytical skills. Experience in the media sector, consulting experience in international development or media development projects as well as relevant regional knowledge are important. Applicants should provide proof of very good language skills for the relevant country / region. Additionally, they should have at least basic understanding of written German in order to understand documents of DW Akademie and BMZ.

b) Documents to be submitted

The following documents should be included in the proposal:

- Cover letter, detailing the motivation and competences of the applicant for the specific feasibility study;
- CV, documenting relevant experience as detailed above, including contact details for two references;
- Proposal for the design of the feasibility study, including methodology, relevant research questions and a preliminary time schedule;
- List of planned expenditures, broken down into costs for personnel, material and travel, as well as an indication of the number of working days the consultant(s) are planning to spend on the feasibility study.

c) General Information

Applicants should take into consideration the estimated budget of between 10.000 – 20.000 Euro, which includes personnel, travel and materials.

Proposals for feasibility studies should be submitted *in electronic form only* to Michael Karhausen (Michael.Karhausen@dw.com). Deadline for the receipt of all proposals is August 31st, 2018.

Consultants will be selected by September 15th, 2018. The projected starting date of the feasibility study is October 1st, 2018. The kick-off-workshops are scheduled to take place in October 2018.

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