A series of workshops, exchange of experiences and participatory processes have been so far the main activities of the Project ‘Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media in the Electoral process in Jordan’. The initiative is being implemented by UNESCO office in Amman and funded by the European Union and takes place in the framework of the reformed electoral process in Jordan. The Project initiated with the Parliamentary elections in January and will continue until the municipal elections, planned for late August.

“The journalistic coverage of elections is more than a news-story, as electoral process involve crucial decisions about the future of a nation” –said Dr Anna Paolini, Director of UNESCO Office in Amman and UNESCO representative in Jordan. “This initiative is being an unprecedented opportunity for media professionals in Jordan to have a say about the challenges they face when covering elections and will lead to the development of new mechanisms that would facilitate their work in the future”, she added.

Investigative journalism, key in elections reporting

The major duty of the journalist is to seek the truth and to share it with the general public to generate debate. In this context, investigative journalism appears as the field of specialism to research and telling a story that someone tries to hide.

The relevance of this field justifies the inclusion of a series of workshops of investigative journalism in the Media and Elections Project. Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism, ARIJ, has been conducting these following the ARIJ Manual “Story-based Inquiry” plus Computer Assisted Reporting tools and legal safeguards and multi-media skills.

UNESCO reinforces journalist’ role in the coverage of elections as basic for democratic processes

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This publication has been created with the funds of the European Union in the framework of the Project ‘Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media in the Electoral Process in Jordan’
Training, debates and consultations, tools to foster media professionalism in elections reporting

The multi-stakeholder nature of the Project, that involves three local and international partners – Jordan Media Institute, ARIJ, Community Media Network and Albany Associates- aims at building technical capacities of the media by involving media stakeholders from print, online and audiovisual outlets. “The goal is to create a platform of media professionals with skills to report elections in a professional, accurate and comprehensive manner. This achievement will enable free, objective and impartial elections reporting”, commented Rut Gomez Sobrino, UNESCO Project Manager for this initiative.

Besides the knowledge transfer to the journalists, the debates and open discussions held within the Project give the journalists the possibility to create a forum for exchange of experiences and best practices to raise their issues of concern. In addition to this, consultations through personalized interviews and questionnaires to Jordanian journalists are providing a very useful feedback that will help creating an action plan to improve the media exercise during elections.

The Project ‘Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media during the Electoral Process in Jordan’ builds upon UNESCO’s two decade-experience in media development during elections in Southern-Eastern Europe, the MENA region, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The steering committee of the media and elections project held its first meeting

The members of the Steering Committee of the UNESCO Media and Elections Project met last 16th May to review the activities already conducted and the forthcoming ones. The meeting was also attended by Dr. Anna Paolini, UNESCO Representative in Jordan and Mr Mogens Schmidt, Director at the Bureau of Field Coordination at UNESCO, in official visit in Jordan.

The Steering Committee of the Media and Elections Project is constituted by the Project partners – JMI, ARIJ, CMN and Albany Associates- together with the donor of the initiative, the European Union and the Independent Electoral Commission.
Awareness and debate sessions emphasize the role of the journalists during elections

Exchange of experiences has been identified as one of the most useful tools with regard to media training. In that regard, a Open Forum to generate debate and practical tips in covering elections has been one of the activities of the Project.

Jordan Media Institute, the partner responsible to conduct this component, organized a 5-day seminar in which a number of well-known media figures acted as key speakers, leading the debates. These included journalist and columnist Mr. Fahed Al Khitan, Chief Editor of Al Ghad newspaper Mrs. Jumana Ghunaimat, researcher and journalist of Al Arab Al Yawm newspaper Mr. Walid Husni, General Manager of Jordan News Agency PETRA Mr. Feisal Al Shboul, lawyer Dr. Sakher Al Khasawneh, former Ambassador to Russia Mr. Ahmed Mubaideen, and Lebanese journalist and lecturer at JMI Dr. Jean Karam.

As Yasar Durra, Head of Training at Jordan Media Institute stated, “the workshop has focused the attention of JMI and staff on the urgency to channel more training resources to bring about a change in the traditional perceptions of journalists, bloggers and activists and to highlight the mutual exclusivity of Human Rights and gender sensitivity”.

Randa Naffa, in charge of the Gender-Based Reporting session, together with the journalist Rana Hussein, commented that “the aim of this activity was to stimulate a dialogue on gender equality and engaging participants in a process tailored to their context and identifying feasible steps by journalists that could have positive practical implications on gender sensitive reporting. Participants said that the training helped them not only acquire new knowledge and skills in gender but also the basics of accurate, clear and fair reporting as a tool to tell less discriminatory stories. For some it also meant changing their entire perspectives on life and acquiring a new attitude towards gender issues.”

The Open Forum generated debate and practical tips in covering elections

The workshop covered various key topics such as a review of elections and democracy practices in Egypt and Lebanon in comparison with Jordan, Jordan election laws vis-à-vis international standards, elections from a gender-sensitive perspective, and guidelines to independent and professional elections coverage.
Principles of professionalism in covering elections

By Yasar Durra, Head of Training, Jordan Media Institute

As part of the UNESCO’S Project “Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media on the Electoral Process in Jordan” funded by EU, JMI-Jordan Media Institute shared with local partners a number of highly focused training workshops and events relating to accurate media coverage on elections.

An intensive five-day training workshop on election awareness and skills was delivered to journalists during the run-up for the 2013 elections. It was attended by close to twenty journalists, bloggers and academicians. The selection criteria for the journalists were based on designated roles by their respective organization in covering the elections. The criteria for trainers and lecturers invited were: expertise, integrity, independence and commitment to democracy. The topics were intended to ensure that by end of the week, participants recognized the crucial importance of their role in reporting of the elections guided by the principles of total freedom of expression, fairness and on the profiles of the candidates, their programs and their integrity in order to help the electorate make an informed choice.

A positive approach of this Project has been to ensure integral coordination between all partners through a series of joint meetings. These open an opportunity for all to team up in the effort through sharing information and experiences with respect to the overall program.

Booklets of the new 2013 Electoral Law were handed out and clauses carefully examined and scrutinized. A representative of the Electoral Commission was invited to clarify ambiguities and respond to questions. The Electoral Law became the leitmotif of the workshop and both, lecturers and trainers ensured that by the end of the training participants were familiar with the law.

A review of Jordan’s previous elections was a powerful motivation for participants to become aware of their absolute responsibility in reporting truthfully and accurately and to avoid malpractices that led to inept parliaments which failed people’s expectations.

The exceptional importance of the 2013 elections in the light of regional turbulence, unstable geopolitical and socio-economic conditions were expounded and dwelt upon. The principles of professionalism, researching facts no matter, were emphasized. Some participants shed light on difficulties encountered regularly in obtaining information from official sources and spoke of disguised resistance.

Elections in Egypt and Tunisia and the how they were covered by the local media were reviewed, with the purpose of highlighting practices inconsistent with fair and balanced coverage. Examples such as coverage that may have distorted essential information that voters should have had, to make an informed decision before going to the ballot boxes were shown.

Consensus was achieved during brainstorming sessions that journalists have a pivotal role in educating candidates and raising their awareness of priority issues; the need for them to have coherent viable programs. There was agreement that by asking the right questions and challenging opaque statements and vague generalizations, candidates will be forced to research their programs and review their slogans or perhaps recast them in a more serious and responsible context.

Following the elections, a series of four panels attended by journalists and bloggers and by partners from ARIJ- Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism, Community Media Network and Albany Associates were held. In the first panel, Dr. Abdul Ilah Khatib - President of the Independent Elections Commission asserted the need to review the Elections Law by the new parliament, to reform it in order to have a new elections law that is just, fair and protects the elections process from financial corruption and empowers the Commission to monitor campaign funds and block them if they contravene the law. The unabashed openness of Dr. Khatib was a pointer to the need for the engagement of the media in a process that contributes to a workable elections law acceptable to the majority of Jordanians.

UNESCO’s involvement and EU’s support in the project according to Journalist Walid Husni of Al Arab Al Yawm “lent moral strength and integrity to the training that aims to empower democracy, freedom of expression and professional media”. In the subsequent three panels, speakers and participating journalists openly criticized and condemned mal-practices and lack of professionalism in the media citing a long list of infringements. The views expressed were incisively critical and frank in evaluating the coverage of the elections and the behavior of some of the candidates who did not have viable programs.

The empowerment of women in the democratization process through awareness of gender bias practiced by the media whether out of ignorance or deliberate, was the subject of a well-attended workshop. The training stressed the coupling of gender sensitive reporting and basic human rights.

The forthcoming municipal elections and the media training planned will draw on lessons learnt and experience gained so far from the program and should engender a positive change in the media in the governorates and raise standards of journalists and bloggers alike.
Media professionals from Amman and other cities such as Irbid, Karak, Ajloun and Zarqa have participated in a consultation forum to debate and improve journalistic coverage of elections. The consultation was also attended by representatives of the Independent Electoral Commission, IEC, Petra University and Jordan Media Institute. The outcomes of the consultation will serve to build a Road Map of challenges and of strategies to improve journalistic practice in Jordan with regard to the coverage of elections.

Some of the issues that arose during the consultation include the role of media in educating and informing voters and monitoring media violations during the coverage of elections. Principles such as objectivity, fairness and the ‘four roles’ of journalists in elections – watchdog, mediator between the government and the public, peace foster and information disseminator – led most of the debates. In addition, gender sensitive reporting and the portrayal of women during electoral processes occupied a major part of the discussions.

“One of the main issues that journalists covering elections normally face is the lack of qualification together with the low awareness about the electoral law”, assessed Adnan Nassar, a journalist from Al Arab Al Yaum participating in the forum held in Irbid. “There is also a need for an efficient body to regulate the exercise of media and its performance” added Mohamed Al-Nawrasi, from Amen FM.

The use of media by political parties was also one of the subjects raised in the debates, in reference to the parliamentary elections held in January 2013, the participants pointed out that “3 TV channels and 7 websites were owned by political parties”.

Improving access to information during elections was another topic underlined by most of the forum participants. To this regard, Bashar Qeblan, from Radio Jordan, asserted that “social media was the most valuable source of information during elections.”
“Good elections reporting is critical to getting democracy right”

With a long-standing expertise in media development in conflict, post-conflict and transitional contexts, Doug Griffin, Director of Albany Associates, has worked in countries such as Somalia, Afghanistan and Kosovo. As partner of the Media and Elections Project Mr Griffin has shared his views about the importance of professional election reporting in this interview.

QUESTION: Elections are at the core of democracy, but is the media community, in general, aware of their responsibilities when covering electoral processes? How could you summarize the role of journalists in elections?

ANSWER: We do not yet know the degree to which Jordanian journalists understand their roles and responsibilities during elections, but UNESCO Jordan has wisely included research looking into that question as part of its project that Albany is implementing—known as ‘Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media in the Electoral Process in Jordan.’ Data gathered from surveys and interviews will give us the answers, which will be published through this project. In general, around the world, media professionals could always benefit from more training on their special role during elections—providing elections information to voters, presenting facts with balance and impartiality, and giving various candidates and parties a voice, to name a few. The best way to ensure that journalists understand and buy into special rules applicable to them during elections is to make them part of the rule-making process and to hold events, workshops and roundtables to discuss these rules and their application.

Q: Elections observation missions are a recurrent component of election processes in many countries, how the media community can liaise with those? What other components of elections can be considered as major source of information for journalists?

A: Journalists should engage with elections observation missions by interviewing them and publishing stories about their roles and activities. Elections commissions are other sources of information that journalists should cover, and journalists should aim to hold them accountable as they would any other public institution. Elections bodies should also facilitate these processes by granting interviews, holding press conferences, and publishing information—acting as examples of open and transparent governance.

Q: Through private media enterprises proliferated in the last years in the Arab region, state media in the region appears to be the major source of information, how to deal with media freedom and therefore media professionalism and proper coverage of elections and other political subjects in this circumstance?

A: All media is vulnerable to political influence, but state media is even more likely to serve the interests of government. Publicly funded media can act independently if structures are in place that provide for independent financing and leadership—so that it serves the interests of the public rather than the state. A good example of this is the BBC in the UK. But, where state media is subject to government control and unlikely to change in the near future, the best way to ensure that the public receive accurate information is to provide for multiple and varied sources of information—with a legal framework that allows for private media and makes establishing and running private media as easy as possible.

Jordan has the chance to become a model for its neighbors, including during elections and it should seize upon that opportunity.
Having a truly independent regulator in place is the best safeguard against improper political influence. Legislation establishing such a regulator should provide for independent financing of the regulator’s activities and for the appointment of an independent board and management. The regulator should have authority to license and regulate broadcasters without political intervention. It is our understanding that Jordan does not yet have a legal framework that provides for independent regulation of media, and the government should explore ways to address this. The media landscape around the world is changing and governments can no longer control what people say, read, see and hear. Satellite transmission and the Internet have erased once solid borders, and governments need to adapt.

Q: Could you briefly elaborate on the need of a proper legal framework, election regulations and administration and media regulatory bodies in order to have a proper coverage of elections?

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Q: Media-self regulation appears to be a good solution to promoting high standards in the media, how to enhance this approach in the region?

A: Self-regulation is particularly important for print media and Internet, where licensing and statutory regulation is discouraged under international standards (mandatory regulation is allowed under international standards only for broadcasting, where a scarce public good, radio frequency spectrum, must be allocated). Self-regulation can be encouraged in a number of ways: training journalists and governments on self-regulatory mechanisms, developing networks and associations that can sustain self-regulation, and facilitating events, workshops and roundtables where codes of ethics can be developed. Journalists should advocate for self-regulation, and donors should incorporate it into their programmes.

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Q: For journalists reading this interview, could you suggest a few tips for a proper coverage of elections?

A: The best thing for journalists to do would be to organise their own events to discuss and agree to a code of ethics during elections. They should then publicise this code and hold each other accountable to adhere to it. If a large portion of media outlets and journalists sign up to and follow such rules, the public will be better informed and elections will go more smoothly.

Q: Why it is relevant to include election coverage at the curricula of Journalism Schools?

A: Good elections reporting is critical to getting democracy right. The public always needs accurate information, but even more so when they vote for their leaders. Training in elections reporting should start in journalism school, but should continue throughout a journalist’s career, including at events preceding elections reminding the media of any special elections rules.

Q: Could you briefly explain the relevance of this partnership between UNESCO and Albany and of this Project (Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media in the Electoral Process in Jordan)?

A: Albany has worked with and alongside UNESCO around the world to improve legal and regulatory frameworks for media, often during elections periods. This Project draws upon that experience and provides mechanisms for increasing public awareness of the role of media during elections, training journalists and developing networks that will ultimately work to improve the information that the public receives before it votes. Our work aims at increasing journalists’ capacity in terms of reporting professionally, accurately and comprehensively during elections; and creating a “Road Map”, a strategy to support the Jordanian media community in understanding its essential role in the electoral process.

The best way to try to limit problems (in elections) is to provide as much training for journalists and resources for public information and awareness as is possible.
Jordan media in transition: from official’s “lapdog” to society’s “watchdog”

By Rana Sabbagh, Executive Director of ARIJ

The tradition of investigative journalism in the West is a long and honorable one, marked by exposures that have held governments to account and periodically obliged democratic societies to confront the frequently uncomfortable reality of the rhetoric of transparency and accountability.

But in Jordan, as is the case in much of the largely autocratic Arab region, the practice of holding officials accountable for their actions is not common among journalists and editors, for a mix of legal, political and professional reasons. The region also lacks other equally important factors; a reformed legal environment, a tradition of lively and competitive press – with a diversity of owners – and adequate public support for bold journalists willing to break social, political and religious taboos.

Arab states, with the exception of Jordan, Tunisia and Yemen, have not enacted laws guaranteeing the right to access public information. Even here journalists complain that this legislation has too many snags that are being used by government bureaucrats to block information. Those who want to become professional journalists, often start on the wrong foot. Arab media students graduate with little practical experience. They join existing outlets where most editors-in-chief do not believe in the value of professional training, and where editors from older generations do not believe in passing on whatever expertise they have. Part of the problem is that few editors-in-chief are career journalists. Rather, they are “state appointees” with a mission to control the flow of information. Most private and state-controlled media pay low salaries. This forces good reporters to look for jobs abroad or to work for a number of other employers to make ends meet. In the process, they lose focus and steam, producing more quantity than quality that often does not pass through a rigid built-in editorial system of fact-checking.

Furthermore, the society is not willing to submit to such painful forensic examinations of its failings, maybe because it lacks the much needed confidence and maturity in the region’s patriarchal structures of power.

So, given all these challenges, can professional “accountability journalism” take root in Jordan and across the region? Yes, but gradually: starting with investigations that focus on consumer fraud, corporate abuse, environmental degradation, health scandals and more before they take on election fraud, organized crime and corruption.

Scores of Jordanian journalists are cutting through these challenges because they want to earn a unique and honored place in the profession and they want to fulfill their role as “Special Forces” of journalism. They belong to a new generation of media practitioners who are showing dedication and courage to stand up to higher powers. They are going undercover, when needed, to document and expose wrongdoings for the sake of promoting better governance.

In this context, this year-long project launched by UNESCO office in Jordan early 2013 and funded by the EU, is focusing on enhancing the skills of journalists covering local elections: parliamentary and municipal. This project is building on the work of the Amman-based Arab Reporters for Investigative Reporting (ARIJ), the region’s leading media support network promoting the culture of in-depth reporting in news rooms and media faculties in nine Arab states, including Jordan, since 2006.

As a result, Jordanian TV reporters like award-winning journalist Raeda Hamra and Abdullah Kafaweens mounted a sting operation to expose vote-buying by hundreds of candidates ahead of Jordan’s January 23 parliamentary elections. Their televised investigation was broadcast on the independent TV Roya, sparking a huge outcry. The Head of the Public Security Department invited both reporters to his office and asked if they could hand him names of the culprits so “we can take action against them” to reassure a skeptical society about the fairness of election procedures.

The brave journalists declined and said police forces would find ample evidence if they followed election campaigns. Days later, three candidates were locked up in jail on charges of vote-buying, a crime under the election law. In another instance, veteran journalist Walid Hosni, who attended one of the UNESCO-project trainings implemented by ARIJ made a comparative study on the position of scores of former deputies who were contesting the 2013 elections to expose their double-standards on media freedoms. He listed their election promises to encourage more critical reporting although most of them had voted against such rights when the previous parliament voted in 2012 on amending the press and publication law. Such in-depth, well documented and factual reports that require ample time to look for linkages and correlations are crucial in providing clear information that can help voters make up their minds on who to vote for, based on track record and integrity.

Hence, investigative journalism is a vital tool for establishing a free and independent media, a key pillar of democracy, more so when much of the region is going through tumultuous transition after the toppling of Tunisia’s long-time president in January 2011. In-depth reporting is the future for media; print, TV, radio and on-line.

Despite the winds of change sweeping across Jordan for the past two years, the kingdom remains a “not free” country on Freedom House index 2012 and its political scene is filled with contradictions. One the one hand, the King is pushing for a parliamentary government to come out of the elected
Lower House. On the other hand, the government had enacted a tougher media law to stifle free expression on the internet. Cyber-repression is on the rise.

The country has a long way to go before investigative journalism becomes the rule and not the exception and an integral facet of daily journalism. Media laws need to be changed. The law granting the right to access information has to be amended to hold accountable officials who do not divulge data under a clearer system of public document classification.

Media owners and editors have to show more courage to ensure media becomes society’s “watchdog” instead of “lapdog” – journalists who enjoy sitting in the laps of the powerful. At the end of the day, it is true investigative journalism involving professional reporting that will help society edge closer to a truth.

Despite the gloomy outlook, a few brave and committed journalists have chosen to be on the side of professional integrity and to employ investigative techniques to earn a unique place in the profession. They want to democratize their society and promote a new and badly-missing culture of media excellence. These will become role models and tools of inspiration for the new batch of journalists.

This is what the ARIJ experience has shown. And this is what media development programs like this UNESCO-EU project is keen on consolidating.

Theory and practice included in the workshops on investigative reporting

The workshops conducted by ARIJ targeted journalists operating in Jordan who are active in covering elections. During two 5-day workshops, television and print journalists received training on how to cover parliamentary and municipal elections in Jordan, using in-depth reporting techniques. Basics of Investigative Journalism in line with the ARIJ Manual «Story-based Inquiry», Computer Assisted Reporting tools, legal safeguards and multi-media skills were some of the components of these two trainings. In turn, participant journalists have produced investigative reports before and after the elections to ensure greater transparency and accountability.

«As municipal elections in Jordan are approaching, this activity is of high relevance since investigative journalism serves to increase professionalism in elections coverage. UNESCO’s commitment in media capacity development on different topics and on elections in particular is manifested through such initiatives», stated Dr. Anna Paolini, Director of UNESCO Office in Amman and Representative of the Organization in Jordan.

Electoral processes constitute a rich subject for investigative journalism as they relate to procedures, laws, representation of minorities, and they require fairness and integrity. In this regard, investigative journalism appears as a useful tool to cover elections as well as to hold accountability.

The workshop reached consensus on the above and emphasized the relevance of investigative journalism particularly during municipal elections, as topics of concern are closer to people and civil society.

«Investigative journalism is a new phenomenon in the Arab World and it plays a huge role in exposing hidden issues. Before, during and after elections investigative journalism exposes any flaws in the electoral procedures and sheds light on these», commented Jihed Mansi, ARIJ trainer.
By Daoud Kuttab, Director of CMN

Elections normally provide media with a unique opportunity to exhibit its services. Because it occurs over a short period of time and it involves a large segment of society media can provide information and analysis to individuals in society that usually are not interested in politics or media.

The January 2013 elections in Jordan provided such opportunity and UNESCO, the premier UN agency that is involved in information and communication was involved in working with a number of Jordanian NGOs whose aim is to advance society through media.

Our organization, Community Media Network (CMN), was one of these organizations and we worked during this short period to train, educate citizen journalists and use our media outlets to inform the Jordanian public about the new election law, the candidates and the general running of elections.

The efforts of CMN were focused on three important election related areas. Debates, training and publication constituted the main activities.

The public in any society is often caught off guard when unknown candidates decide to run for office. Debates are perhaps one of the best ways to learn about a candidate in a short period of time. Over the short one month allotted for election campaigning we conducted 10 debates throughout Jordan. The debates focused on day to day issues affecting average Jordanians and candidates for the 17th Parliament were asked by moderators to respond to the issues facing Jordan in the coming years. Candidates in a particular district were given equal opportunities to participate and those that showed up were given equal time to speak and respond to our moderator and to the public that was invited. The debates revealed a lot about the candidates raising the public trust of some and exposing others as not being informed or able to understand the challenges that will face them if they made it to parliament.

The debates were broadcast on Radio al Balad, and were posted in full on our AmmanNet.Net web site. Local media covered the debates and published about them in local newspapers and websites. A large number of those who participated in our debates eventually won in the elections.

Our second challenge was to train a large number of Jordanians from a variety of districts. We decided to train 50 citizens in five different districts which included Irbid, the Jordan Valley, Karak, Maan and Jabal Al Nathef in East Amman. We provided these citizens with an intensive course in basic journalism, technical training in filming and editing as well as legal and ethical training. Out of the 50 citizen journalists we trained we chose 35 (seven in each location) and provided them with a small video camera and asked them to film, edit and post on our websites what was happening in their locations. We decided to work one day before elections, the election day and the following day. As a result of this activity over 70 video reports were produced and posted online receiving over a thousand visitors on the popular youtube site.

Elections are all about election day and on this day our radio station and website were onair and online for over 24 continuous hours. Our regular staff along with the newly trained citizen journalists covered the elections from the opening of the voting booths till the results were announced. The general public was thus able to follow in great details the entire election day activities.

Overall our experience working during the Jordanian parliamentary elections was very positive. Despite some problems because of the condensed nature of the program and the difficulties of working in remote areas and with inexperienced citizens, we were able to provide the Jordanian public with a huge menu of information and analysis about the candidates and the electoral processes. If we have a chance to do this another time we would want to spend a bit more time preparing and involve more professional staff to supervise the work of citizen journalists.

Social media, at the core of the coverage of elections

Agenda of forthcoming activities:

• Training of citizen journalists on municipal elections, given by Community Media Network, August 2013
• Training workshop on Crowd-Sourcing Tools, given by ARIJ August 2013
• Itinerary workshop on Municipal Elections in Jordan governorates
  - 18th & 19th August 2013 in Aqaba
  - 22th & 24th August 2013 in Madaba
• Presentation of the Road Map ‘Media Challenges in Journalistic Coverage of Elections’, September 2013
The rise of social media has revealed the high relevance of citizen journalism in topics such as election campaigns, where new media demonstrates the potential of Internet as a democratizing force. Websites, blogs and networks have become major platforms for expression and exchange of information but also the first tribune for future journalists.

In this context, the Project Media and Elections has incorporated citizen journalists as participants in its activities. Community Media Network, partner of the initiative, has conducted a series of workshops in different governorates, including Amman to improve the coverage of elections.

40 citizen journalists on covering elections benefited from this activity. 10 participants from each governorate also joined a 4-day workshop on video journalism, writing news and covering elections and prepared reports the day of the Parliamentary elections.