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**Country: Egypt**



“The balance is simple: 200 journalists, 160 students, 30 editors, 20 journalism professors and more than 400,000 ‘consumers’ of the content produced over the last 3 years. Challenging but inspiring work!” This is how Doaa Kassem, the Media Diversity Institute’s (MDI) Egypt project manager, describes the hard labour she and her team invested in the successful implementation of MDI’s third multi-annual programme in the country which has been through many political, social and cultural changes during this period.

Doaa continued: “And we wanted to end it with a big bang – we organized an discussion to give an opportunity to the editors of the key Egyptian media to come with recommendations which would help all journalists deal with the challenges of reporting on terrorism.

We also brought the other most active stakeholders to a public roundtable to discuss the same issue. In addition we awarded journalists who had produced the best stories on political

and social issues and awarded the most active NGOs who helped those journalists get the right stories.



On top of that we gave prizes to student journalists for their work in running the [Ehna Keda website](#) (The Way We Are). All this in one day, the last day of the project, 31 March 2015. I feel privileged and lucky to have had an opportunity to work with all of them.”

An innovative and large component of the project involved helping journalists and NGOs learn how to work together and benefit from each others field of expertise.

Doaa Kassem is justified in feeling proud about her work. Hundreds of stories written by journalists and journalism students, some thirty TV shows, and several public roundtables have passed to a broad audience a simple message: inclusion is an important pillar of democracy and should be pushed for in particular by the media and, especially, at the times when Egyptian

society is polarized along different lines: political, intellectual, social, and cultural.

As pointed out at the March 31 roundtable, polarisation is everywhere - between rebels (pro revolution) and remnants (pro old regime), between the Muslim Brotherhood and their allies, between Muslims alone (Sunni / non-Sunni), between Muslims and Christians, between Christians (Orthodox, Catholic, Baptist) and between those 'who have' and those who don't, fuelling severe grievances and tensions.



But, the work is far from done. Giving the awards to journalists, students and activists, Milica Pesic, MDI Executive Director, confirmed the organisation's willingness to continue this important work.

"There are still many journalists in Egypt, as much as in other countries in the region and globally who don't see the importance of civil society in democratic processes, neither what a 'well' of stories, ideas and contacts the NGOs are. I do believe that the continuation of this project will contribute in many ways to improving the media scene in Egypt and, most importantly, to improving people's basic rights."

[The Ehna Keda website](#) (The Way We Are), set up, edited and produced by Egyptian students with support from MDI, will continue after the project's end, to 'voice the voiceless', as Hosam El Sokkari, an MDI mentor, TV presenter and former Head of BBC Arabic, put it when congratulating the students for their work at the awards. As will the work of all the journalists and NGO activists trained under the project.

The project whose end was marked on March 31, entitled '[Inclusive Parliament: Building citizen participation in the political process in Egypt through better media, parliamentary and civil society interaction](#)' was funded by the UK Arab Partnership Programme.

The Media Diversity Institute has been training and supporting journalists in Egypt since 2007.

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