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A close-up, black and white photograph of an elderly man with a weathered face and a keffiyeh headscarf. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue geometric pattern in the bottom right corner, which contains the title text.

# Strengthening accountability through media in the **Palestinian** **Territories**

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Final evaluation



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### What's the story?

“Honestly, I feel people reach a level where they don't care and are disappointed... They can only protest, although they are aware of the fact that even protesting is useless. People have lost hope, as if we are waiting for a miracle to solve our problem.”

*Female, 25–44, refugee camp, Gaza Strip, baseline audience panel, 2012*

In 2011, as they are today, the Palestinian Territories were characterised by a complex political and governance scenario. The ongoing Israeli occupation and factional government structure in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip contributed to a legislative vacuum and poor sense of accountability in service delivery. The high rate of unemployment, widespread poverty and a strong sense of disconnection with policies made the Palestinian youth particularly disillusioned with politics.<sup>i</sup> Violence and uprisings were often seen as the only means of achieving bottom-up accountability.

It was in this context that the DFID-funded Global Grant governance project launched in 2011.<sup>ii</sup> It aimed to provide a platform for 'ordinary' Palestinians, particularly the youth, to interact with and question their leaders, share their opinions on issues important to their lives and engage in constructive discussion. The project tried to improve understanding of the democratic process, rights and responsibilities, and ultimately sought to contribute to more accountable, peaceful and inclusive state–society relations in the Palestinian Territories.

To achieve this, BBC Media Action and the BBC Arabic Service established a partnership with the state broadcaster, the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), and produced two debate programmes that were collectively known as 'the Palestine Debates'. These audience-led shows, *Hur El Kalam* (Free to Speak) and *Aswat Min Filasteen* (Voices from Palestine), aimed to bring people in the Palestinian Territories face-to-face with policy-makers and hold those public figures to account.

BBC Media Action conducted research throughout the project to inform its development and evaluate its impact. This included three quantitative surveys to report against key logframe indicators and to understand the audience profile, as well as a number of qualitative studies with audiences, trainers, media practitioners, PBC managers, and media and governance experts.

#### **Key findings from the research**

The creation of two accountability-focused programmes and the lasting legacy of the close partnership with PBC is a key achievement of the project.

The training and mentoring delivered to PBC equipped media practitioners with the skills, knowledge and confidence to produce high-quality, engaging debate programmes. These were

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considered by media and governance experts to be ground-breaking in terms of technical quality and in bringing audiences and decision-makers into direct dialogue. There was some evidence that the editorially independent and balanced nature of the Palestine Debates may have positively influenced PBC's reputation.

However, PBC faces wider and more complex resource-related and cultural issues that capacity strengthening alone could not address. For example, there is little evidence that the technical and editorial skills gained by individual PBC staff have influenced wider organisational practices. PBC has not established a formal mechanism through which to transfer the skills learned to other staff or programmes. Despite this, BBC Media Action and PBC successfully and effectively maintained a close working relationship over the five years. This resulted in *Hur El Kalam* continuing to be produced and broadcast beyond the lifespan of the project.

The research revealed that the issues debated in the programmes resonated with audiences and that audiences became more knowledgeable about the functioning of government institutions, their democratic rights and the obligations that leaders and authority figures have towards Palestinians.

Collectively, the Palestine Debates reached a large proportion of people in the Palestinian Territories; 1.17 million people watched the Palestine Debates between September 2012 and January 2016. However, the programmes struggled to engage 'hard-to-reach' viewers (i.e. youths, people living in the Gaza Strip and, to some extent, women), though young people and women were well represented in their live studio audiences.

Audience sizes of both programmes decreased significantly towards the end of the project; the two programmes reached 0.19 million people in 2015, compared to 0.41 million in 2013. This was likely due in part to the intensified political turmoil having made the youth, in particular, feel increasingly disconnected from politics. Although a Facebook page dedicated to the Palestine Debates successfully engaged audiences, the page's content was somewhat restricted by PBC management.

Through the Palestine Debates, audience members learned that they could interact with authority figures in ways that they had previously not considered. Some described feeling empowered enough to seek out such figures and hold them to account after watching the programmes, but many said restrictions on freedom of expression, or scepticism about their leaders' responsiveness, prevented them from directly pursuing greater accountability from the government.

Audiences also pointed out that the Palestine Debates did not follow up on the issues raised on air and this prevented them from being seen as fully effective as far as enhancing accountability in the Palestinian Territories was concerned.





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# I. INTRODUCTION

This report presents a synthesis of all research and analysis completed under the Global Grant governance project in the Palestinian Territories between 2011 and 2016. The main focus of this report is the evaluation of the project's impact on development outcomes among audiences and media partners (media practitioners and organisations). Based on this evaluation, the report reflects on the impact the project has had on the broader governance system and, in particular, on improving government accountability. Where relevant, this report also draws on formative research and monitoring data collected throughout the project, as well as relevant data from external sources. More detail on the research approach and methodologies used can be found in section 2.

The report unfolds as follows. Section 1 summarises the project including the background, the governance and media context in the Palestinian Territories and the project's objectives and activities; section 2 describes the research approach; section 3 presents and discusses the evaluation's findings; and section 4 offers some final conclusions.

## I.1 Project background

The Palestinian Territories encompass two separate geographic regions: the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The governance context in the Palestinian Territories is complex. Ongoing occupation by Israeli forces has created a situation in which Palestinian leaders have limited control over some key aspects of governance, including security and provision of services. Furthermore, longstanding political divisions within the government, difficulties in holding elections, endemic corruption and a lack of social accountability mechanisms have weakened democracy and governance in the Palestinian Territories.<sup>iii</sup> Add to this poverty, high unemployment, gender inequality and a very young, politically disenfranchised population, and it becomes clear why many consider the Palestinian Territories to be 'fragile Territories'.<sup>i</sup>

Many Palestinians are not aware of the roles and responsibilities of the various governmental and non-governmental organisations that deliver essential services. Furthermore, formal accountability mechanisms are very limited. For example, there are few formal channels for people to participate in local government and there are serious concerns about the accountability of civil society and non-governmental organisations operating in the Palestinian Territories.<sup>iv</sup> Moreover, authority is rarely scrutinised publicly and women, in particular, are discouraged from speaking out against government officials and other authority figures.

Formative research conducted by BBC Media Action in 2012 revealed that Palestinians considered high unemployment, a pervasive sense of disconnection from society among the youth, and ineffective and inconsistent governance structures, to be the key problems affecting them. Younger generations (aged 15–25) described feeling that their needs and priorities were not being considered in the design of public policies and decision-making.

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<sup>i</sup> Definitions of 'fragile states' vary, but they are states where it takes little for them to fall apart. These are countries where government and governance is weak, where the rule of law does not run across the country and where there is tension and conflict in society. See: Deane, J. (2013) *Fragile states: the role of media and communication*. BBC Media Action Policy Briefing No.10.



Producers at work behind the scenes on *Aswat Min Filasteen* (Voices of Palestine)

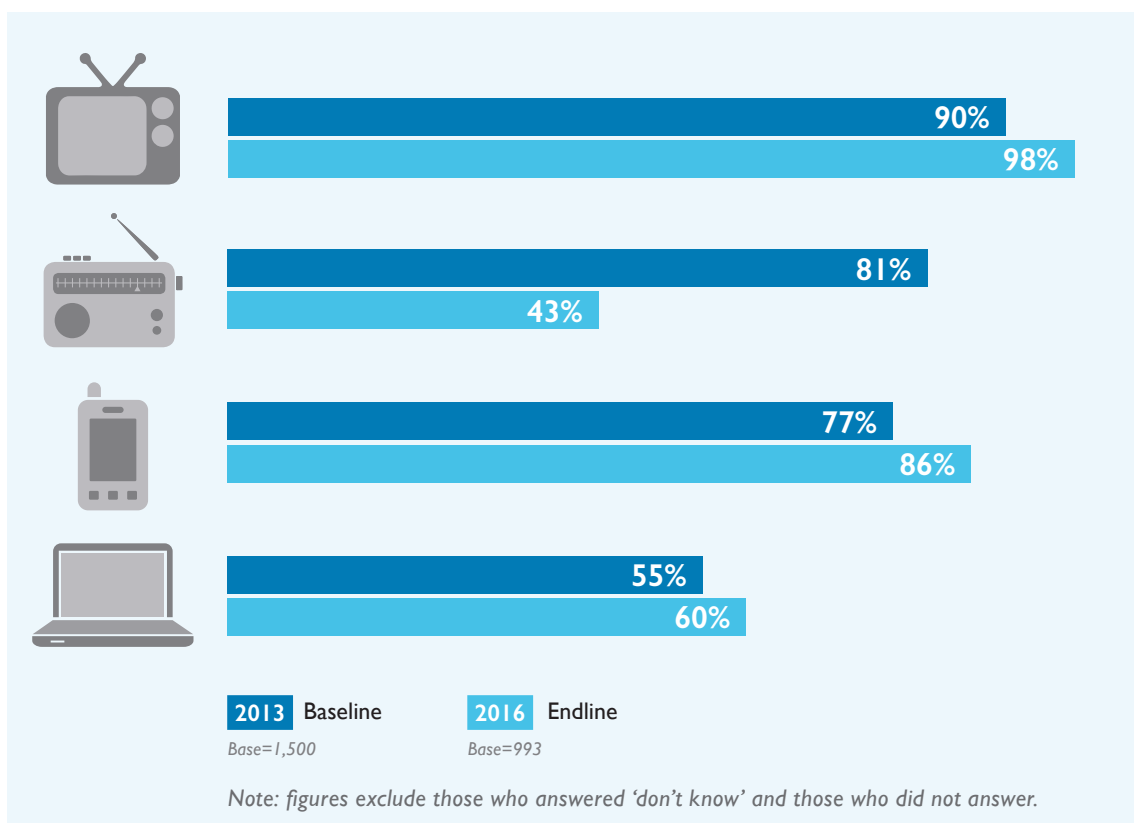
Since then, perpetual delays to presidential and legislative elections, combined with increased violence and civil protests in the West Bank, have fuelled instability and created more uncertainty than at any time in the Palestinian Territories' recent history.<sup>v</sup> Violence, major displacements, and humanitarian crises across the Arab region have further disrupted the socio-political situation and shifted the interest of the international community elsewhere. As a result, the optimism that characterised this project's aims to create positive change in political participation and contribute to improving state–society accountability has diminished somewhat since its inception in 2012.

Palestinians are heavily reliant on the media as a source of information about local and regional issues. The media also serves an important function as a platform through which Palestinians can share their stories with the rest of the world. While most Palestinians have access to television and mobile phones (a trend which has increased significantly since 2012, as shown in figure 1), there remain problems with the media content that is available. Widespread violence and abuse towards journalists and media practitioners;<sup>vi</sup> the highly factionalised nature of privately funded media outlets;<sup>vii</sup> limited sources of sustainable financing for the media industry;<sup>2</sup> and a lack of editorial and technical capacity<sup>viii</sup> all restrict the editorial independence and ability

<sup>2</sup> According to the IREX Media Sustainability Index, Palestine has a low score of 1.4 out of 4 regarding its business management.

of the Palestinian media to operate as an effective accountability mechanism. Furthermore, very few media programmes offer opportunities for ordinary people to interact with, and hold their leaders to account.

Figure 1: Media access among the Palestinian Territories' adult population



## 1.2 Project objectives

With this backdrop in mind, the Global Grant governance project was designed to provide Palestinian audiences with information that could support citizens' engagement with a wide range of governance issues affecting their daily lives. It was also designed to empower ordinary people to influence the decisions being made by the authorities in the Palestinian Territories. To achieve these aims, the project team set out to produce audience-driven programming that could act as a forum through which citizens could interact with public officials and service providers. Given widespread youth disenchantment with governance in the Palestinian Territories, the project team was especially eager to motivate young people to take an active role in constructive public debate and in holding officials to account.

In an effort to maximise the project's likelihood of successfully engaging Palestinians, and to best ensure sustainability of the project's impacts, BBC Media Action set out to co-produce the programming in partnership with Palestinian media practitioners. As such, the project aimed to strengthen existing media capacity in the Palestinian Territories, so that in-country practitioners would be capable of producing further governance and accountability-themed programming beyond the end of the project.



In the long run, the project aimed to facilitate greater transparency in political decision-making, so that a culture of transparency and accountability would be encouraged and, in turn, democracy strengthened. Its intended cumulative outcome was to contribute to more accountable, peaceful and inclusive state and non-state relations in the Palestinian context.

### BBC Media Action's governance approach

BBC Media Action's governance work aims to support more accountable, peaceful and inclusive states and societies. This is based on the view that lack of government accountability, the presence of conflict and political and social exclusion can prevent people from living safely and freely, and from exercising their rights.

These factors can act as significant barriers to equitable development. Accountable and inclusive governance can contribute to poverty reduction and the creation of more equal societies. BBC Media Action posits that, as an institutional driver of accountability, the media can directly hold those in power to account by acting as a watchdog over leaders and setting the agenda around certain issues. The media can also indirectly hold those in power to account by equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate in public life and challenge power holders to demand and enforce accountability.

In 2012, BBC Media Action developed an **accountability conceptual model** that posited that media can influence a range of individual and collective drivers of accountability that, in turn, reinforce one another. The individual drivers in the conceptual model have been distilled into five key constructs that are operationalised and measured in BBC Media Action's research.

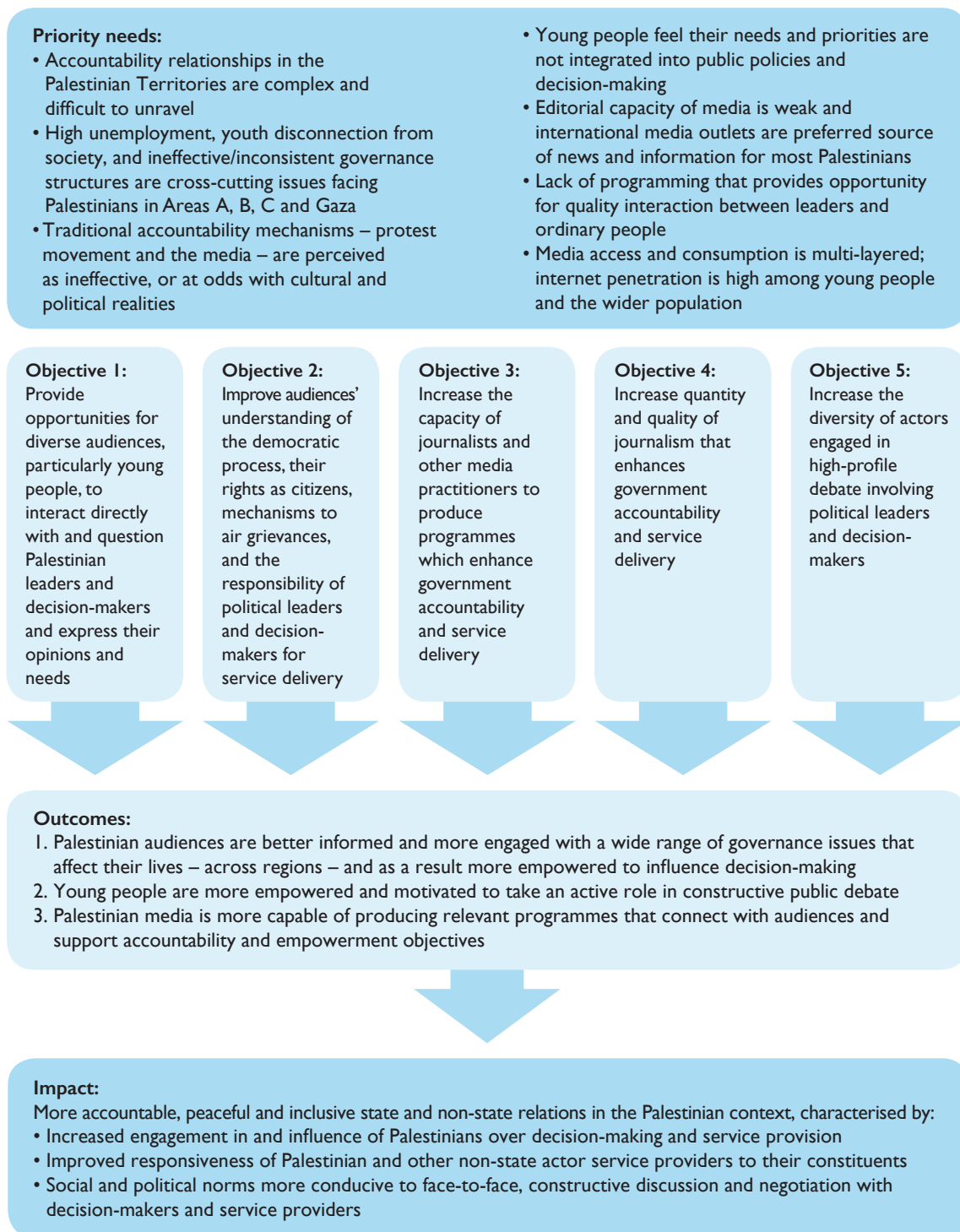
These are: **political knowledge**, **political participation**, **discursive participation** (discussion), **interest in politics** and **political efficacy**.

Through influencing these outcomes, BBC Media Action conceives that media can empower citizens to hold their governments accountable.

The Global Grant governance research programme was developed to explore both direct and indirect influences of BBC Media Action's programming, enabling the organisation to critically reflect on and adapt assumptions underpinning its work.

The project's **theory of change**, which was built on BBC Media Action's governance approach, is depicted in figure 2. This remained broadly unchanged during the five years of the project, as the needs in the country stayed largely constant with regards to lack of accountability. Palestinians continued to need information about key governance issues in order for them to be part of decision-making processes and to demand an accurate account from their leaders on decisions that affected their lives.

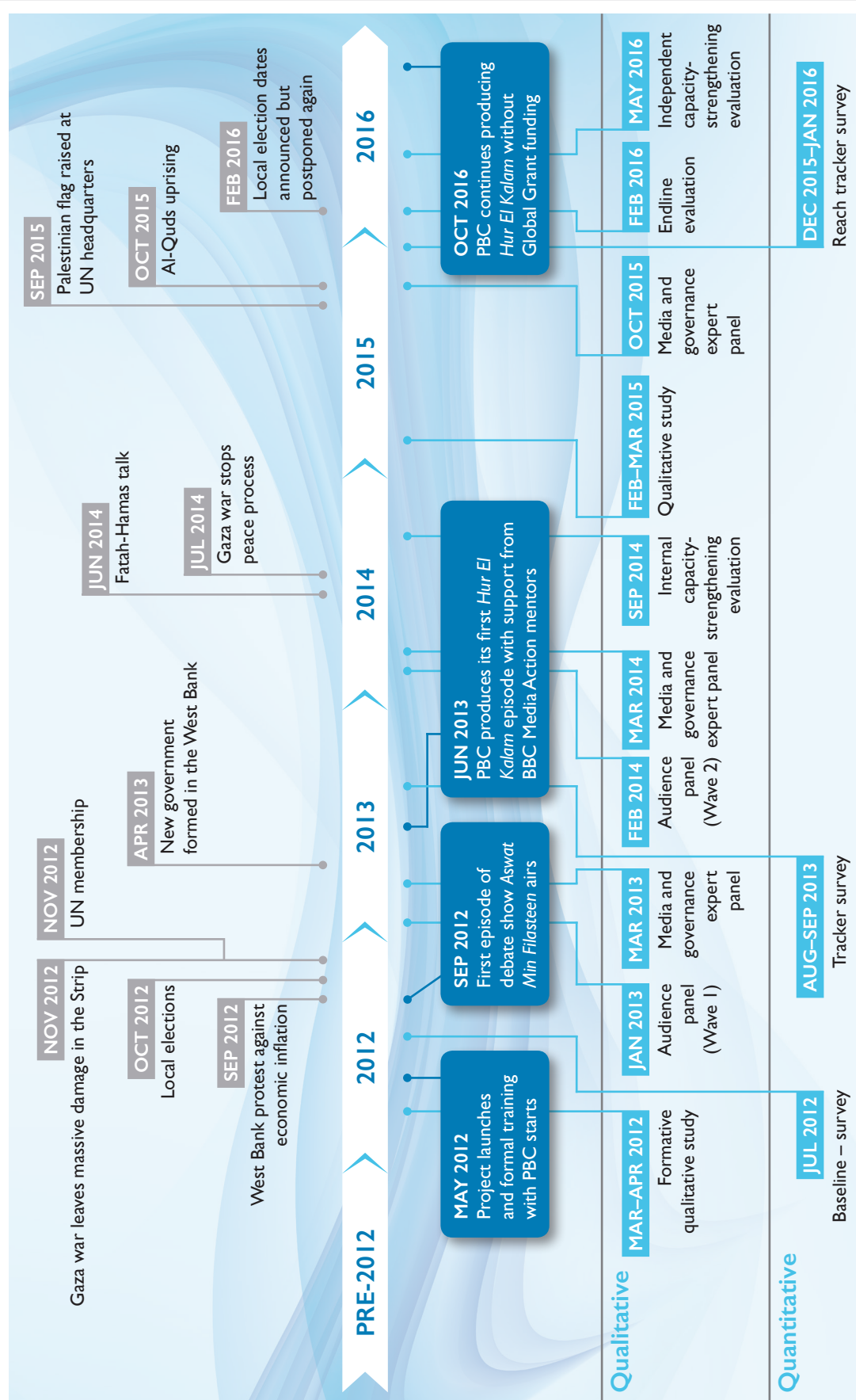
Figure 2: The Palestinian Territories Global Grant governance project's theory of change



### 1.3 Project activities

To achieve these objectives, the project centred on several key activities and outputs. These included the production and broadcast of two audience-led accountability debate programmes – collectively known as the Palestine Debates – and a partnership with PBC to strengthen its capacity. All project components, as well as key concomitant national events, are set out in figure 3.

Figure 3: The Palestinian Territories' Global Grant governance project timeline



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### 1.3.1 Debate programmes: *Hur El Kalam* and *Aswat Min Filasteen*

One of the project's core components was the production and broadcast of the Palestine Debates:

***Hur El Kalam*** was a 55-minute-long weekly debate programme, co-produced by BBC Media Action and PBC, and broadcast on TV and online (via the PBC website, the BBC Arabic website, and the programme's Facebook page). This audience-led show featured debates on social issues faced by people living in the West Bank and, to a lesser extent, the Gaza Strip.

***Aswat Min Filasteen*** was a 55-minute-long quarterly debate programme, co-produced by BBC Media Action, BBC Arabic and PBC, and broadcast on TV and online (via the PBC website, the BBC Arabic website, and the programme's Facebook page). It featured debates on local issues commonly faced by Palestinians, as well as on issues affecting people throughout the Arab world, including immigration, local elections, the peace process, education, and violence against women.

Both programmes aimed to provide a platform for ordinary citizens to question their leaders on issues affecting them and their community. They were founded on the premise that the empowerment of ordinary people – by allowing them to engage with their leaders in a constructive dialogue – is key to increasing genuine accountability.

The Palestine Debates featured a moderated discussion between a live panel of officials and an audience of ordinary Palestinians. For each episode, a live audience was recruited and the production team selected questions from audience submissions. The audience members whose questions were chosen were then invited to ask their question directly to the panel during the discussion. To 'bring' more people into the studio, questions could also be submitted live via Facebook, as well as through pre-recorded vox pops.<sup>3</sup>

By March 2017, 43 episodes of *Hur El Kalam* and 19 episodes of *Aswat Min Filasteen* had been broadcast. Moreover, PBC continues to produce *Hur El Kalam* with little support from BBC Media Action; since October 2016, six new episodes have been produced and broadcast.

### 1.3.2 Capacity strengthening with PBC

The other major project activity was a capacity-strengthening partnership with PBC that aimed to address the organisation's lack of editorial and technical capacity, which was hindering its ability to produce programmes that increased government accountability. Specifically, the aims of the project's capacity-strengthening component were to:

1. Improve the core editorial and technical competencies of Palestinian media practitioners to produce content that presents a diversity of views, provides accurate information around governance issues, and facilitates a national and inclusive conversation that helps to hold public figures to account
2. Raise the capacity of PBC staff to produce content as above, supporting them to produce outputs that reflect local governance issues and incorporating strategies to support a national and inclusive conversation

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<sup>3</sup> Vox pops are short interview segments filmed with members of the public.



The production team at work behind the scenes on *Aswat Min Filasteen* (Voices of Palestine)

BBC Media Action selected PBC as a partner media outlet as it was one of the few broadcasters with adequate resources to support the production and broadcast of debate programmes, and because of its expressed interest in committing to producing similar shows in the long term. It also designed the partnership to support PBC through its transition from a government media institution into an independent public service broadcaster. Research participants (interviewed by an evaluator) were unanimous in their view that PBC was the right partner for the project, given its reach and brand, its organisational scale and capacity, and its ability to resist government pressure.

To achieve the aforementioned aims, BBC Media Action arranged formal training for 44 PBC staff, which was designed to provide them with the skills needed to produce debate programmes, including direction, vision-mixing, floor management, sound and lighting. The PBC trainees then went on to form part of the production team that co-produced the Palestine Debates with BBC Media Action.

Following on from this, BBC Media Action staff provided on-the-job training and long-term mentoring in order to engrain the skills acquired during initial training. Beneficiaries were given an opportunity to put the skills they had learned into practice, and to be supported and guided through the production of the debate programmes. Ultimately, the capacity-strengthening activities aimed to equip PBC staff members with the skills and knowledge to continue to produce high-quality debate programmes without the support of BBC Media Action after the conclusion of the Global Grant project.

Furthermore, because of the high levels of internet penetration in the Palestinian Territories, BBC Media Action assisted PBC in designing and implementing an online and social media strategy, intended to help PBC to enhance audience engagement.



## 2. RESEARCH

Research was a core component of the project and was carried out by BBC Media Action's Research and Learning group. The programme of research was designed to:

- Inform project activities
- Monitor results and report to the aggregate-level Global Grant logframe
- Evaluate the project against its specific objectives

During the course of the project, BBC Media Action undertook seven qualitative studies with audience members, media practitioners, media organisation managers, and media and governance experts, as well as two nationally representative quantitative surveys. Finally, an independent evaluation of the capacity-strengthening element of the project was completed. An overview of the quantitative surveys carried out for the project is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Overview of quantitative research studies

Study	Data collection	Sample size	Criteria	Purpose
<b>Baseline survey</b>	July 2012	n=1,500	Representative of adults 15+ in the West Bank and Gaza Strip	Evaluation: Understand audience attitudes, knowledge and behaviours around key governance issues, accountability drivers and media consumption
<b>Tracker survey</b>	August – September 2013	n=1,500 in the Palestinian Territories n=1,400 in Jordan n=600 in Lebanon	Representative of Palestinian adults aged 15+ living in the Palestinian Territories (PT), Lebanon and Jordan	Monitoring: Measure the reach of the Palestine Debates in the Palestinian Territories  Evaluation: Explore and better understand audience attitudes, knowledge and behaviours around key governance issues, accountability drivers, and media consumption
<b>Reach tracker survey</b>	December 2015 – January 2016	n=1,000	Representative of adults 15+ in the West Bank and Gaza Strip	Monitoring: Measure reach of the Palestine Debates and the demographics of the audience

The qualitative studies mainly focused on identifying how the Palestine Debates had influenced audience members, and on assessing to what extent training and mentoring had improved the technical skills and editorial approach of PBC staff involved in producing the Palestine Debates. An independent audit of PBC was carried out in March 2013, in order to assess the organisation and some of its key cultural issues. Table 2 presents an overview of all the qualitative studies carried out during the project.

Table 2: Overview of qualitative research studies

Study	Data collection	Method	Participants	Purpose
<b>Formative qualitative study</b>	March – April 2012	6 focus group discussions (FGDs) 54 in-depth interviews (IDIs)	Palestinians living in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and in refugee areas	Gain a more in-depth understanding of governance, accountability, conflict processing and general media habits in the Palestinian Territories context
<b>Audience panels (2 waves)</b>	January 2013 and February 2014	10 FGDs 30 IDIs	Palestinians living in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip, in urban, rural and refugee camp locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the impact of the programmes on their audience over time – by revisiting the same group of participants at multiple time points</li> <li>• Compare attitudes and behaviours of those exposed to the programme with those not exposed</li> </ul>
<b>Organisational audit</b>	March 2013	Desk-based research and IDIs	PBC trainees and BBC Media Action staff in Ramallah	Assess PBC and some of its key cultural issues to identify potential actions required to tackle these challenges and help shape the project's design
<b>Media and governance experts panels (3 waves)</b>	March 2013, March 2014 and October 2015	10 IDIs	Media and governance experts, <sup>4</sup> representatives of non-governmental organisations, and university staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine experts' views on the two programmes' role in providing audiences with the opportunity to hold officials to account</li> <li>• Help to clarify the programmes' contribution to achieving the project's objectives</li> </ul>
<b>Internal capacity-strengthening evaluation</b>	September 2014	11 IDIs	PBC trainees, mentors, managers and civil society members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate BBC Media Action's mentoring and training of PBC staff</li> <li>• Understand the project's impact on PBC's staff and management</li> </ul>
<b>Qualitative study</b>	February – March 2015	19 IDIs	10 male and nine female audience members of different ages in urban, rural and refugee camp locations in the Palestinian Territories	Gain feedback on audiences' perceptions of the role that the programmes played in raising salient issues and asking important questions of decision makers and officials
<b>Endline evaluation</b>	February 2016	10 IDIs	Male and female audience members in the West Bank and Gaza Strip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate audiences' perceptions of the role that the programmes played in holding decision makers and officials to account, and how this compared with other mechanisms as defined by audiences and their experiences</li> <li>• Understand the programmes' contribution to achieving the project's objectives</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Media and governance experts are government and civil society members, such as academics, journalists or staff from non-governmental organisations who have professional expertise and experience in media and governance, and are able to provide in-depth insights and opinions on those contexts.

Table 2: Overview of qualitative research studies (continued)

Study	Data collection	Method	Participants	Purpose
<b>Independent capacity-strengthening evaluation</b>	May 2016	18 IDIs	PBC practitioners and management, media experts, BBC Arabic service presenters, BBC Media Action staff in London and Ramallah, and BBC trainers and mentors	Provide an impartial assessment of the impact of the capacity-strengthening activities, and identify areas that may need to be improved or adjusted in future initiatives

### Challenges in conducting research in the Palestinian Territories

Audience research remains a sensitive topic in the Arab world as a result of historical constraints on collecting data imposed by governments in the region.<sup>ix</sup> These constraints, coupled with the tense security situation (particularly in the Gaza Strip), made conducting research in the Palestinian Territories challenging. The research team had to be cautious about the times and locations of audience research activities to ensure that no researcher or participant was put at risk. For instance, in the Gaza Strip the research was always conducted by a local freelancer, not only so that the Ramallah-based researcher did not have to travel to the Gaza Strip, but also to circumvent the difficulty of obtaining permission to travel there from Ramallah in the West Bank.



The production crew preparing to film an episode of *Aswat Min Filasteen* (Voices of Palestine)



A lack of capacity and the quality of local research agencies represented a further challenge to conducting research in the Palestinian Territories. The agencies BBC Media Action commissioned often failed to deliver on their commitments, and BBC Media Action's Ramallah office frequently had to step in to provide support.

### Research strengths and limitations

This report utilises both quantitative and qualitative data to examine the extent to which the project has achieved its objectives. Because of limitations in quantitative data collection in the Palestinian Territories, this evaluation is, by necessity, more dependent on triangulating qualitative data from audiences and experts. While qualitative methods do not provide numbers or nationally representative findings, they provide a more in-depth understanding of engagement and what impact, if any, the project had on Palestinians, PBC, the wider media sector and accountability.

The three quantitative samples were fielded to be nationally representative in order to create a cross-sectional snapshot

of the population at one point in time. A series of validity checks were implemented throughout the research process to ensure that data collection and analysis were rigorous and robust. Data was cleaned and weighted to account for any errors or limitations in data collection.

Nevertheless, further to the challenges described above, limitations of the research should be considered when interpreting the findings detailed in this report. Primarily, the measures used were often self-reported and therefore may have been prone to response bias. For example, many questions relied on a respondent's perception of how much they know about politics. Results should be interpreted with this in mind.

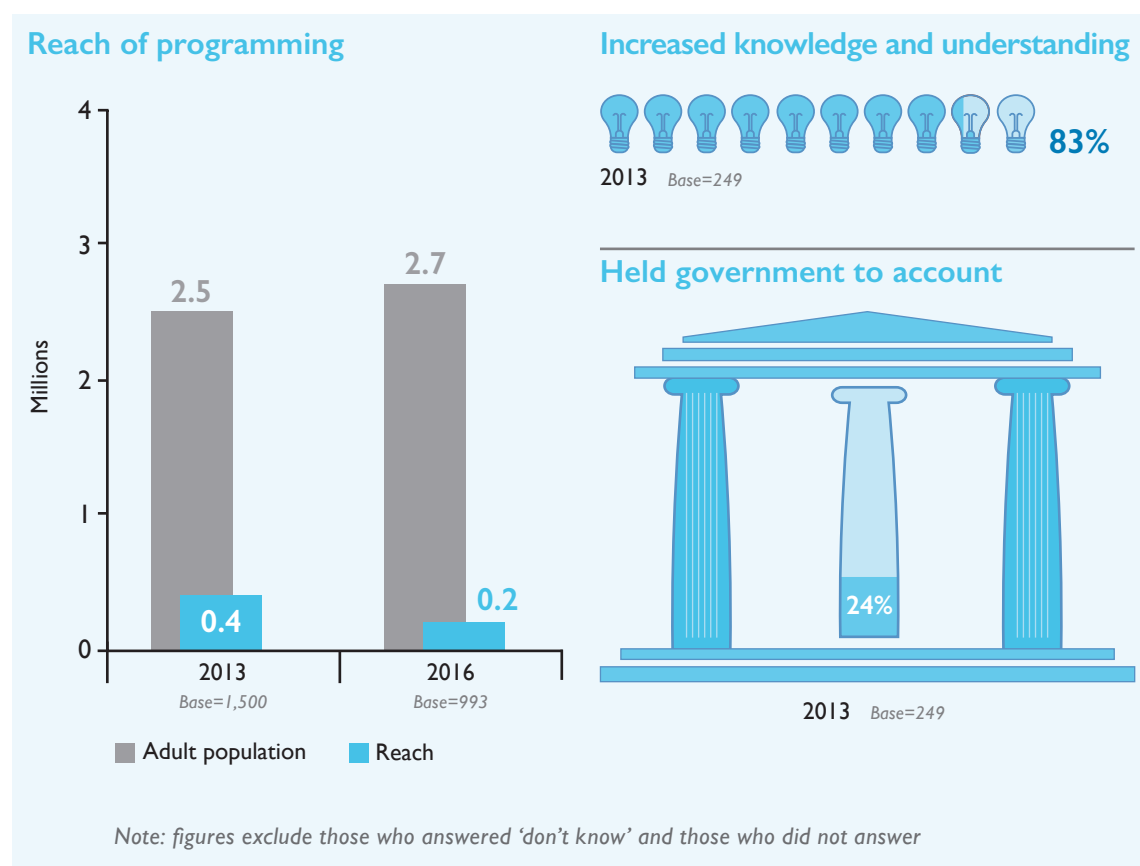
This report synthesises findings from the programme of research outlined above and presents these findings as an evaluation of the Global Grant governance project in the Palestinian Territories.

### 3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The following section outlines the findings from the programme of research described in section 2 – including the findings of the independent evaluation of the capacity-strengthening partnership\* – to offer an overall evaluation of the Global Grant governance project in the Palestinian Territories. This includes performance against headline indicators monitored throughout the project, a breakdown of the reach of the Palestine Debates, feedback on audience engagement with the programmes, and evaluation of the impact of the programmes on key outcomes related to governance.

#### 3.1 Headline indicators

Figure 4: What did the project achieve?



#### Definitions:

#### Adult population

Those aged 15 years and above

#### Potential audience

All those who report having access to TV, radio or the internet in the household or elsewhere

#### Audiences reached

Those who report having seen/listened to the programme(s) within the last 12 months at the point of data collection

#### Audiences regularly reached

Those who report having seen/listened to at least every other episode of the programme(s) within the last 12 months at the point of data collection

#### Outcome

The percentage of viewers/listeners of BBC Media Action governance programmes who agree that the programme(s) increased their knowledge on a range of governance issues ('a lot' or 'a bit')

#### Impact

The percentage of viewers/listeners who 'strongly agree' that the programme(s) play a role in holding government to account



## 3.2 Audience reach and profile

### Key insights

- Over the five years of the project, the Palestine Debates reached an estimated 1.17 million adult Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip
- At their peak, in 2013, the programmes reached 17% of the total adult population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip
- The Palestine Debates experienced a significant drop in audience size during 2015, when only 7% of adults tuned in. This possibly reflected the worsening political situation in the Palestinian Territories at the time
- Despite reaching a large number of adults aged 35 and over living in the West Bank, the Palestine Debates struggled to engage hard-to-reach audience members (including youth, people living in the Gaza Strip and, to some extent, women)

### 3.2.1 Reach of the programmes

One of the main advantages of media and communications-based interventions is the level of scale that can be achieved through the broadcast media. As such, reach (the number of people who watch or listen to a programme) is one of the key measures of a project's success (though it is certainly not the only measure of success).

Between 2012 and 2016, the Palestine Debates cumulatively reached an estimated **1.17 million** adult Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.<sup>5</sup> At their peak, in 2013, they reached 411,000 adults (17% of those aged 15 and above in the West Bank and Gaza Strip). However, the Palestine Debates experienced a significant drop in audience size during 2015, when only 7% of adults in the Palestinian Territories watched or listened to at least one debate programme, with *Aswat Min Filasteen* reaching 133,000 and *Hur El Kalam* 130,000. This is depicted in table 3.

<sup>5</sup> Estimated cumulative reach refers to the number of people who have been reached in the Palestinian Territories by BBC Media Action programming over the lifetime of the project, acknowledging an amount of churn in programmes' audiences year-on-year. Cumulative reach is calculated using an assumption that 10% of the audiences are new listeners/viewers within existing audiences year-on-year. More detail on the cumulative reach calculation can be found in appendix I. During this data collection, the Population Reference Bureau estimated the adult population (those aged 15 and above) in the Palestinian Territories to be 2.7 million – based on 2013 and 2015 data.

Table 3: Reach estimates by programme

	Reach (2013)		Reach (2015)	
<b>Overall</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>0.41m</b>	<b>7% ↓ 10pp</b>	<b>0.19m</b>
<b><i>Aswat Min Filasteen</i></b>	13%	0.32m	5% ↓ 8pp	0.13m
<b><i>Hur El Kalam</i></b>	10%	0.25m	5% ↓ 5pp	0.13m

Notes: the arrows indicate significant changes since the previous measure. All changes were statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

Separate programme figures do not add up to the overall figure because viewers were not double-counted. For example, someone who watches *Aswat Min Filasteen* and *Hur El Kalam* was included in both programme figures. However, each individual was only counted once in the overall reach figure.

The decline in reach during 2015 was unexpected, given that the programmes had built a reputation over time and that the frequency of broadcasts of *Hur El Kalam* had increased from monthly to weekly. Moreover, audience research suggests that viewers were satisfied with the topics the shows covered. Media and governance experts reported that the Palestine Debates were of a higher technical quality than other similar programmes, and both audiences and experts agreed that the discussions were more in-depth. It was, therefore, expected that reach would either increase, or at least be maintained, between 2013 and 2015.

The worsening political situation in the Palestinian Territories might explain some of the decline; viewers may have become more disillusioned and less interested in programmes about governance issues during the period of political turbulence.

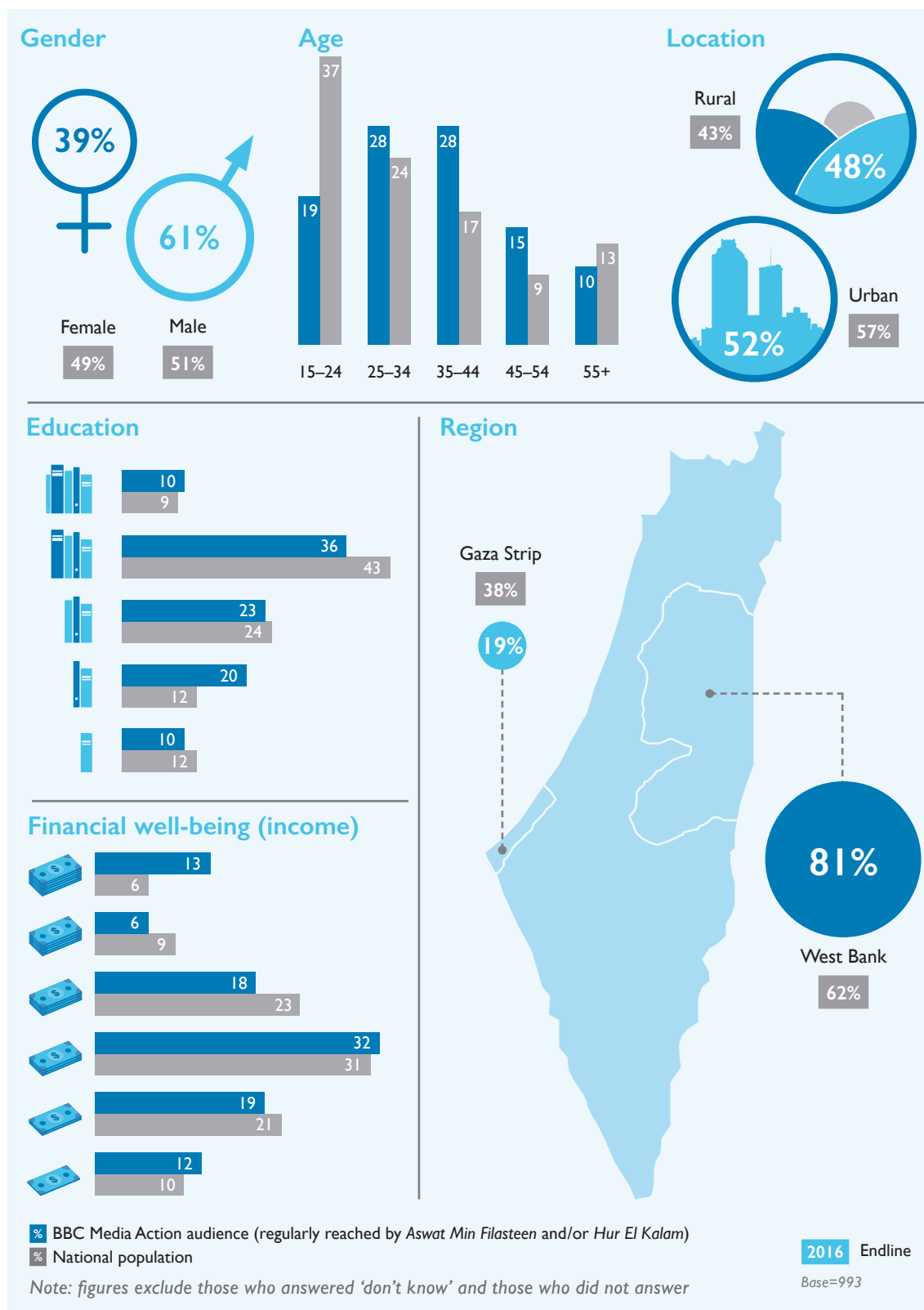
### 3.2.2 Audience profile

#### Broadcast audience

The Palestine Debates aimed to reach and engage an audience that was representative of the country's diverse population. In particular, they sought to reach young people, who often feel left out of national discussion and debate.

Figure 5 shows the demographic breakdown of the Palestine Debates' overall audience in 2015 and compares this with the national population to assess how representative the programmes' audience was.

Figure 5: Demographic profile of the Palestine Debates' overall audience (2015)<sup>6</sup>



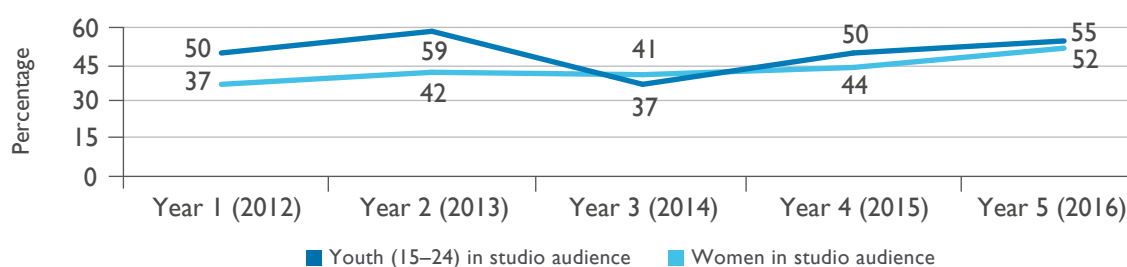
<sup>6</sup> The breakdown of the overall audience is based on a very small sample size (only 69 respondents). Therefore, figures and comparisons with population-level demographic statistics should be regarded as indicative only.

Despite reaching a large number of adults aged 35 and over living in the West Bank, the Palestine Debates struggled to engage hard-to-reach audience members (including youth, people living in the Gaza Strip and, to some extent, women). The programmes did not reach a representative sample of the targeted youth audience: just 19% of viewers were aged 15–24, compared with 37% of the general population. They also struggled to attract audience members from the Gaza Strip: only 19% of viewers there compared with 38% of the general population. Also, only 39% of the audience was female, compared with 50% of the general population.

### Studio audience

While young people and women were not very well represented in the Palestine Debates' at-home audience, this was not the case for their live studio audience. In fact, the percentage of women in the studio audience grew from 37% in 2012 to 52% by 2016 (see figure 6) and, over the course of the project, the production team ensured that, on average, they comprised 40% of this audience. Likewise, on average across the five years of the project, around half the audience was drawn from the 15–24 age group. Despite youth representation dropping from 59% to 37% in year three, following PBC's cutting of audience recruitment staff, this was recovered in the final two years when BBC Media Action staff helped with PBC audience recruitment.

Figure 6: Female and youth presence in the Palestine Debates' live studio audience (2012–2016)



Source: BBC Media Action live studio audience monitoring data. Base sizes: Year 1 n=206; Year 2 n=807; Year 3 n=922; Year 4 n=433; Year 5 n=329.

## 3.3 Engagement with the programmes

### Key insights

- Audience members reported that the issues debated during the programmes resonated with their experiences of daily life. They also felt that the presence of ordinary people in the studio audience helped to root the discussions in reality
- Audiences valued the opportunity to put their questions directly to authority figures, and were able to express themselves openly and explicitly
- Media and governance experts highlighted the importance of the programmes' format, suggesting that the dynamic of audiences questioning authority figures could play an important role in enabling people to gradually become more courageous about holding decision makers to account
- The dedicated Facebook page successfully engaged audiences, although its content was somewhat restricted by PBC management

The Palestine Debates were designed to engage audiences by raising awareness of, and opening up discussions on, the key governance issues affecting the Palestinian Territories. The following section explores how and why audiences engaged with the programmes, and looks at their perspectives of the shows.

### Topics that resonated with audiences

Audiences consistently described the topics under discussion on the Palestine Debates as tackling the important issues that they experienced in their daily lives, such as corruption, education, drugs and immigration. Indeed, the interviewed media and governance experts felt that the topics were well researched and appropriately selected.

However, some audience members from the Gaza Strip explained that the themes were not as relevant to them as they were not inhabitants of the West Bank – e.g. the episodes that discussed crossing the border to Jordan and life in Jerusalem – and pointed out that this was a missed opportunity for raising awareness about political issues pertinent to inhabitants of the Gaza Strip.

**“The topics of the Palestine Debates are so general about female issues in Palestine, and they usually don’t talk about Gaza. So, we feel we are not important.”**

*Female, Gaza Strip, audience panel (wave 2), 2014*

### Engaging audiences in the Gaza Strip

The Palestine Debates’ producers specifically tried to include panellists and live audiences from the Gaza Strip in the programmes, and aimed to feature content that would be relevant and interesting to them. However, throughout the project it proved difficult to attract audience members and panellists from the Gaza Strip, particularly following the 2014 Israel–Gaza conflict. One tactic that producers employed in an effort to overcome this was to invite people living in the Gaza Strip to submit live Facebook comments, which were then shown on a television screen in the studio and read out by the presenter.

Nevertheless, during the final year of data collection, only one episode of the Palestine Debates featured a live, Gaza

Strip-based audience discussing issues relevant to those living in the Gaza Strip. Some research participants from the Gaza Strip explained that they did not feel well represented in the studio audience and stated that when they were invited to be part of this audience, they were not given enough opportunities to speak.

**“This was a [big] problem in the programme overall. People from Gaza were never given a chance to speak. They were not invited at all to most of the episodes. Also, in [the Gaza reconstruction episode], where the problem [directly affected Gaza Strip inhabitants], they were still not given enough time to speak.”**

*Male, Gaza Strip, endline evaluation, 2016*



## Ordinary people shaped the debates

Viewers and media and governance experts reported that having a live studio audience and allowing audience members to put questions directly to panellists, was a ground-breaking and highly valuable feature of the programmes. Audience members explained that they greatly appreciated that the people who had been invited to be part of the studio audience were those affected by the issues being debated. They felt that the presence of a studio audience enabled ordinary people to shape the discussion, rooting them in reality. One young man from the Gaza Strip summarised this, stating that featuring a live studio audience enabled “the voice of the public to reach officials without barriers”.

### How does the format of the Palestine Debates compare with that of similar Palestinian programmes?

**Media experts** were positive about the technical quality of the Palestine Debates, particularly by comparison with other similar programmes. Specifically, they noted the quality of the sets, lighting and pre-recorded content. They also considered the discussions to be more professional, in-depth, serious and responsible than those on other shows. The media experts felt that the presenters were able to manage the discussions adeptly and were well informed about the topics. They described the format of the shows – specifically their use of social media and the audience’s interaction with the panellists – as distinguishing the Palestine Debates from other similar programmes.

**“The questions in the programmes that I have watched are well-planned, serious and do not cause embarrassment.”**

*Media expert, expert panel study, 2015*

**Audience members** thought that the Palestine Debates were similar to other programmes that discussed political, social and economic topics affecting people’s daily lives, and cited shows such as *Al*

*Thamenah* (Eight), *Wast Al Balad* (Downtown), and *Kalam Rasas* (Pencil) as examples. They tended to view the Palestine Debates as exploring issues in greater depth and as being better able to cover sensitive issues, such as honour crimes. Viewers also perceived the programmes to focus more on topics that were relevant to Palestinians, while other programmes tended to cover topics of relevance to the wider Arab world. Audience members were particularly positive about the shows’ debate format, which allowed citizens to interact with officials directly, and differentiated them from other programmes that tended to incorporate audience feedback by phone only.

**“It [the Palestine Debates] is different in the way things are done. There is more discussion, more interaction, [and] questions from everybody. Even its trailers are different – the ads for the other programmes are too long and not to the point. The discussion is very good, thorough, and of a high quality.”**

*Male, West Bank, endline evaluation, 2016*

## Studio audiences questioned authority figures freely and openly

Media and governance experts and audiences alike described how the studio audience showed courage in discussing issues directly with the panellists, including high-ranking officials.

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“I like the topics, the panellists and their interaction with the audience. This breaks the public’s fear of officials.”

*Female, Gaza Strip, endline evaluation, 2016*

Viewers were largely positive about the presenters’ ability to allow everyone to speak and more than one view to be expressed; they felt that audience members were able to talk openly and explicitly. However, some viewers felt that the presenters should speak less to allow time for more members of the studio audience to participate in the discussion and to give panellists more time to express their positions.

“They [panellists] answer some questions, and ignore others. The presenter asks a question, and the official responds in a different direction, in a way that makes one feel that the answers are irrelevant.”

*Media expert, expert panel study, 2015*

Furthermore, some viewers complained that questions put to authority figures were not always answered, or that responses were ambiguous, and that this allowed the panellists to evade some of the more challenging questions and/or left the audience feeling dissatisfied.<sup>7</sup> As such, some audience members expressed a desire for the presenters to be firmer with panellists and press for more precise answers to difficult questions.

Others mentioned that panellists involved in the programmes were not always the most appropriate and highlighted the importance of inviting panellists who were directly responsible for the issue at hand, so that they could be questioned and held directly to account.

“I liked that the public was able to speak freely with the decision maker. In the episode about inheritance, the guest was a sheikh. His opinion was important, but he is not a decision maker.”

*Male, Gaza Strip, endline evaluation, 2016*

### **Engagement via social media was somewhat restricted**

As part of the project, a Facebook page was developed, with the intention of improving interaction and engagement between the production team and the Palestine Debates’ audience. BBC Media Action believed that this page could act as a platform to obtain audience feedback and, perhaps most importantly, to connect communities that were divided both geographically and politically (between the West Bank and Gaza Strip).

The Facebook page enabled those who could not be physically present in the studio audience to submit questions during the programmes, and to post comments and relevant videos. By

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<sup>7</sup> Respondents considered the panellists’ answers not to be satisfactory if they did not offer solutions to the problem, were not supported with evidence, or were not entirely relevant to the question.

August 2016, it had been liked by more than 17,000 Facebook users and was reaching an average of 211 users per day, with 19 of those actively engaging with the content. However, the independent evaluation identified that audience members were reluctant to give their consent for content featuring them to be published on the Facebook page, and PBC management was reluctant to allow comments that could be perceived as critical of authorities to be posted on the page. The independent evaluation suggested that low social media literacy may have been a factor in these outcomes.

### 3.4 Impact on audience-level governance outcomes

#### Key insights

- The programmes contributed to improving audiences' knowledge of important issues and enhanced discussion: viewers reported regularly talking about issues raised on the shows with their friends, family members and colleagues or classmates
- Both audiences and media and governance experts believed that the Palestine Debates played a role in holding officials and decision makers to account
- However, audiences viewed the lack of follow-up and solutions as limiting the programmes' effectiveness in enhancing accountability

BBC Media Action believes that, by influencing change among individuals and populations, the media can indirectly hold those in power to account by increasing individuals' participation in accountability mechanisms and supporting their empowerment. BBC Media Action defines 'empowerment' as the process through which individuals: (i) become aware of the forces that have an impact on their situation; (ii) become more aware and trusting of their own ability, knowledge and experience; and (iii) build on these to gain self-confidence and the self-belief required to be active in improving their life situations.

Based on this premise, the project aimed to increase Palestinians' governance-related knowledge, stimulate public discussion/debate (particularly among the youth), and enable Palestinians to interact directly with decision makers: all things that BBC Media Action believes contribute to increased participation in politics/accountability.

#### 3.4.1 Improving political knowledge and understanding

Political knowledge is regarded as one of the key prerequisites of a functioning democracy.<sup>xi, xii</sup> As such, improving people's knowledge of key governance issues was a primary objective of the Global Grant governance project in the Palestinian Territories. The project also sought to improve audiences' understanding of existing processes and platforms through which the government could be held accountable.

Viewers of the Palestine Debates regularly reported having increased levels of knowledge about the key governance issues and topics discussed on the shows. They mentioned becoming more aware of the existence, context and scale of issues raised in the programmes, as well as learning new information about the topics covered.

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**“I know more about the problems faced by people, e.g. the minimum wages issue. Of course, I [already] knew about it, but it was very shocking to hear that a woman had been working for 20 years for only 800 shekels a month... As you hear about the problems of others and watch the programmes [the Palestine Debates], you become more and more familiar with the issues and problems people face.”**

*Female, West Bank, qualitative study, 2015*

Exposure to new information on the shows engendered a more profound understanding of issues among audiences, which ultimately led some to reconsider their opinions or to view officials in a more positive light. For example, viewers described how listening to other people's opinions and questions made them think more and/or in a different way about the issues discussed, and some also explained that they had begun to view officials as being more competent and closer to the public after they had heard them answering questions. However, a few reported becoming more negative about an issue or an official after hearing the discussions on the Palestine Debates.

**“They [the officials] feel closer to [us], the public, now. I used to think that they were incompetent, and that they did not work. Now I think that some of them want to work, but that they face a lot of challenges.”**

*Female, West Bank, endline evaluation, 2016*

Some audience members also explained that hearing panellists' explanations on the programmes had given them a new understanding of how institutions functioned in the Palestinian Territories.

### **3.4.2 Prompting discussion**

To support greater engagement in politics among Palestinians, interaction and dialogue around governance issues should be encouraged not just between the people and decision makers, but also among family, friends, and others in the community. Talking about politics can help to spread knowledge, support understanding of issues, and share a diversity of views. Discussion of politics at home and in the community is considered a key influence on a person's confidence to engage in and influence politics (internal efficacy) and an important driver of political participation. Ultimately, transparent, inclusive conversation and debate about key political issues – from the grassroots level right up to formal mechanisms of government – can help to rebuild engagement with, and trust of, the democratic process. The project, through the Palestine Debates, aimed to prompt informal and formal discussion of governance issues among audiences and to model constructive and inclusive political debate.

Audience members regularly reported discussing issues that they had seen and heard debated on the programmes – mostly with family, friends and, less frequently, with colleagues and

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classmates. This corroborates the 2012 baseline finding that the majority (87%) of adults in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip occasionally or frequently discussed politics with friends and family, rather than outside their immediate social circle.

### 3.4.3 Building political efficacy

Political efficacy is considered an important mediator of political participation, with low political efficacy being a barrier to engaging and participating in politics.<sup>xiii</sup> BBC Media Action defines political efficacy as ‘the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process’. Political efficacy is commonly understood to comprise two components – an internal measure that corresponds to an individual’s belief in their own ability to engage in, and exert influence on, the political process, and an external measure that constitutes the individual’s belief that government institutions are responsive to citizens’ demands.<sup>xiv</sup>

As a platform where ordinary citizens were able to directly question power holders and decision makers and demand a response, the Palestine Debates aimed to influence both internal and external efficacy among audiences by modelling good state–society accountability in action and building people’s confidence to engage in governance processes.

The independent evaluation of the project’s capacity-strengthening activities noted that by showcasing ordinary people discussing issues with authority figures, the programmes “modelled a new type of dialogue” between citizens and their leaders, which varied in tone from “calm and gracious to direct and challenging”.<sup>xv</sup> This was a novel and important contribution to the media landscape, given that a culture of holding officials to account did not exist in the Palestinian Territories.

**“ [I like it] when the official says something and then someone from the studio audience says the opposite thing. This embarrasses the official and also shows the gap between the public and decision makers. This is very important. ”**

*Male, Gaza Strip, endline evaluation, 2016*

Viewers also frequently stated that, through watching the programmes, they had realised that they had the right to question officials, and should not be afraid to do so. One audience member explained how he learned not to shy away from repeating a question if an authority figure did not answer it adequately the first time.

**“ I learned to not be afraid about questioning an official and that if [s(he)] evades the question, I can ask it again. This is a plus brought by Aswat Min Filasteen. ”**

*Male, Gaza Strip, endline evaluation, 2016*

During the endline evaluation (2016), a few participants from the West Bank mentioned that, by watching the Palestine Debates, they had learned that they needed to approach the relevant institutions if they wanted an issue to be addressed. Some participants reported



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feeling encouraged enough to directly approach officials in order to raise an issue; they had invited officials to participate in discussions (either individually, or through universities or the organisations where they worked or volunteered), and others explained that they had become aware of officials' names and positions, and were better able to identify who to approach for help with solving the problems they faced.

**“ [I learned] that I needed to go to the relevant organisations to solve an issue. ”**

*Male, West Bank, endline evaluation, 2016*

However, the majority of participants said that they would not seek direct interaction with government officials. Few explained why they opted not to contact an official to raise an issue, though some endline participants from the Gaza Strip pointed to the difficulty of coming into direct contact with officials as one of the main barriers preventing them from holding officials to account. This same lack of physical access to those in power was identified as a key barrier to Palestinians interaction with government officials at baseline (2012).

**“ I never contacted an official to raise an issue. It is always difficult to reach officials in Gaza. ”**

*Female, Gaza Strip, endline evaluation, 2016*

BBC Media Action's baseline study also revealed that people's negative impressions of officials' responsiveness was a major barrier: only 27% of respondents concurred that the government would respond to the needs of ordinary people. Endline research participants living in the Gaza Strip echoed this sentiment, expressing doubt that officials would answer their questions in real life in the way that they had witnessed during the Palestine Debates. Some also cited the lack of freedom of expression in the Palestinian Territories as a barrier to obtaining accurate information about important issues.

#### **3.4.4 Limitations on achieving audience-level impact**

Given the prevailing context in the Palestinian Territories, the Global Grant governance project's aim of engaging and motivating Palestinians to take a more active role in public debate was ambitious. The media and governance experts interviewed by BBC Media Action explained that, although political protests and demonstrations do take place in the Palestinian Territories, in general Palestinians hold little confidence in influencing governance activities. This was reflected in the results of the 2012 baseline research, which showed that Palestinians hold only moderate levels of political efficacy<sup>8</sup> and substantial political cynicism.<sup>9</sup> Despite these challenges, the Palestine Debates' audience appears to have become better informed about governance issues, with some reporting having felt empowered enough to proactively seek to hold authority figures to account.

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<sup>8</sup> Political efficacy (defined in section 3.4.3) was calculated from agreement with these statements: (i) Sometimes politics seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on; (ii) I don't think the government cares much what people like me think; and (iii) People like me don't have any say about what the government does.

<sup>9</sup> Political cynicism was calculated from agreement with these statements: (i) Generally those elected to government soon lose touch with the people; and (ii) Political parties are only interested in people's votes, but not their opinion.

### 3.5 Impact on the media sector

#### Key insights

- Audience members, media experts and PBC staff all noted improvements in PBC staff's technical, production and editorial skills
- Trainees gained a greater appreciation of the importance of researching audiences' views, and learned to choose topics that would appeal to their intended viewers
- PBC staff also gained an understanding of the importance of diversity, and learned how to recruit a diverse range of studio audience members and panellists
- The Palestine Debates remained editorially independent and balanced, and may have contributed towards improving the editorial credibility of PBC
- However, the benefits of the training did not organically spread throughout the organisation and, as such, an independent evaluator recommended that formal dissemination efforts should be implemented in the future
- The impacts look likely to be sustained beyond the end of the project, as PBC has continued to produce and broadcast live debate shows and the ground-breaking format of the programmes appears to have influenced other debate shows broadcast in the Palestinian Territories

Through capacity strengthening, BBC Media Action aimed to support PBC to produce content that presents a diversity of views, provides accurate information around governance issues, and facilitates a national and inclusive conversation. In short, the type of governance programming that BBC Media Action believes contributes to improving accountability within state–society relations. This element of the project encompassed formal training for 44 PBC staff (designed to provide them with the skills needed to produce the Palestine Debates) and on-the-job training and long-term mentoring to engrain the skills acquired.

The project's impact on the Palestinian Territories' media sector is described below and, where appropriate, has been corroborated with findings from the independent evaluation of BBC Media Action's capacity-strengthening work.

#### Improving technical and production skills

The PBC team working on the Palestine Debates took part in a wide range of technical and production-based training, including sound, camera and lighting, research, scriptwriting, and how to recruit and manage audience members. According to both the internal and independent evaluations, PBC staff members' technical skills and knowledge of how to use modern equipment (such as cranes for camerawork, lighting and sound equipment) improved substantially as a result of the project. The managers noted that PBC staff were able to use the equipment to raise the production quality of programmes and the media experts interviewed commented that the technical quality of the shows improved over time.

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**“ There was improvement in every technical [area], like the sound, lighting, etc. This allowed trainees to use their new technical skills on other PBC programmes. ”**

*PBC manager, internal capacity-strengthening evaluation, 2015*

The internal capacity strengthening evaluation noted that all interviewees demonstrated technical improvements. This finding was supported by audience members' views that the quality of the Palestine Debates was technically stronger than other programmes produced by PBC.

**“ This is the first time we see nice set designs and good selection of panellists. It looks like the shows on international channels. ”**

*Media expert, internal capacity-strengthening evaluation, 2015*

Staff at all levels of seniority and several media experts commented on the improvement in the presenters' skills, noting that they had gradually gained more confidence when addressing a live audience. One presenter explained that she had learned how to manage and engage a large audience, something that she had no prior experience of doing:

**“ Before the episode I would sit with [the audience] and say that to get what you want and to get what I want, I need you to keep your questions short and to the point. With experience, I got even bolder and I was able to know when to stop people. ”**

*PBC presenter, independent capacity-strengthening evaluation, 2016*

Meanwhile, the scriptwriter reported learning how to carry out interviews with experts, tighten scripts, follow guidelines on conducting interviews, and employ different discussion techniques.

BBC Media Action's capacity-strengthening approach – classroom-style training consolidated through on-the-job training and mentoring – enabled the PBC team to put their newly acquired skills into practice immediately, and enabled trainers to identify and fill any training gaps. The independent evaluator noted that working towards producing and broadcasting the Palestine Debates appeared to instil a sense of camaraderie and team spirit in the trainees, which built up their confidence and increased the likelihood of the work being self-sustaining beyond BBC Media Action's intervention.

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**“We learned that not just one person was responsible for everything: we all worked together as one person. If I finished my work I would help someone with the lighting. That way, we learned about everything together and it created a kind of democracy; whereas, before it was competition.”**

*Producer, PBC, independent capacity-strengthening evaluation, 2016*

Furthermore, the format of the debate programmes, which was considered by media experts interviewed to be ground-breaking in the Palestinian Territories, allowed trainees to gain experience and skills in a variety of new areas, such as audience recruitment, floor management and social media. As a result, trainees reported becoming more confident in their ability to produce different types of programmes.

### **Growing appreciation of audience research**

During interviews for the independent capacity strengthening evaluation, the PBC team described learning the importance of reflecting the issues affecting the lives of ordinary Palestinians in the programmes they created. The team put this learning into practice by filming video vox pops to capture Palestinians' views and concerns, and gathering information from Facebook to inform topic selection.

**“Medical referrals abroad seemed to be a big story so we went on to the street and asked people if this was an issue, and they said it was.”**

*PBC producer, independent capacity-strengthening evaluation, 2016*

PBC staff also reported that they began contacting government departments and non-governmental organisations to request accurate data and statistics and started carrying out their own primary research to inform programming. For example, in April 2014, an education-themed episode of *Hur El Kalam* broadcast the results of the programme's own survey, carried out at six schools in the West Bank. When carrying out research to inform the debate shows, PBC staff made efforts to follow ethical standards, e.g. obtaining informed consent from audience members to use the information they had provided, and ensuring that unsubstantiated information was not included in the programmes.

### **Improving editorial standards and processes**

In both the internal and independent capacity-strengthening evaluations, PBC staff consistently reported an improvement in their understanding and application of editorial principles. They explained that they had begun: researching topics covered by the programmes in more detail; investigating reports; preparing and scripting for the shows; inviting panellists with different views to participate; and recruiting audiences who were able to ask relevant, interesting and succinct questions.

PBC staff reported that they began holding regular editorial meetings before filming, and feedback meetings post-broadcast to discuss the perceived successes, challenges and possible

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improvements for future episodes. Departmental meetings were initiated to allow staff to explore issues that would be of interest to the public and to clarify the focus of each episode.

**“In the past, when I had an idea about an episode, I used to go and apply this idea. But now, I have meetings and listen to other staff members for ideas.”**

*PBC director, internal capacity-strengthening evaluation, 2015*

The independent evaluation also found that the Palestine Debates demonstrated greater editorial independence than other PBC programmes. For instance, the team explained that PBC had resisted considerable pressure from one ministry not to broadcast a particular episode of *Hur El Kalam*. They also described how, by comparing the Palestine Debates with other PBC shows, they had become aware of the lack of impartiality on other programmes broadcast by the station.

### **Ensuring diversity of audience members and panellists**

To train PBC staff in how to recruit a diverse studio audience, BBC Media Action mentors accompanied them on trips to refugee camps and remote villages, helping them to establish contact with orphanages, youth organisations, organisations dedicated to helping people with disabilities, and other community-based organisations. As described earlier, this was largely successful: young people and women were well represented in the studio audience (see figure 6), and Facebook contributions were invited from people living in the Gaza Strip to ensure their representation on the programmes.

However, the independent evaluation found that PBC staff were less successful in ensuring a diverse range of panellists. Women were not always represented, in part due to the fact that few Palestinian women hold high-profile or decision-making roles. Furthermore, while PBC staff largely managed to achieve political diversity on the shows' panels, the audience recruitment teams reported experiencing some difficulty in reflecting Hamas contributions on air as some audience members did not identify themselves as being affiliated with the militant Islamist organisation for fear of political persecution.

### **Sustained impact: life after the Global Grant**

In addition to the direct impacts of BBC Media Action's capacity-strengthening activities, several secondary benefits were also achieved and look likely to be sustained beyond the end of the project.

Besides improving their technical knowledge and skills, trainees also began to recognise the value of having clearly defined areas of responsibility within the team. Over the course of the partnership, new roles were developed, such as floor manager and audience recruitment and social media teams. The independent evaluation found that the creation of clearly defined roles enabled the production team to operate effectively and successfully as a tight unit.

A secondary benefit of this, noted by the independent evaluator, was that members of staff seemed to take more pride in their roles and treat their duties with greater professionalism. When asked about their greatest learning, all PBC team members mentioned "the importance of in-depth preparation, whether editorially or technically". In particular, rehearsing and holding regular programme meetings was a completely new way for them to work. This heightened

professionalism was noted by PBC staff who had not participated in the training: they described aspiring to be more like their Palestine Debates colleagues. However, the independent evaluator also noted that these benefits had not organically spread throughout PBC, and recommended that sharing of knowledge and best practice should be formalised in future projects.

**“We were the only team in PBC to work in such an organised way. We now have a script that is given to the camera people and to the presenters, so everyone is prepared.”**

*PBC presenter, independent capacity-strengthening evaluation, 2016*

The aforementioned improvement in editorial standards and independence may have positively influenced PBC’s reputation. The independent evaluation emphasised that, inside and outside PBC, there was a perception that the partnership with BBC Media Action and co-production of the Palestine Debates may have contributed to improving the public image of PBC’s editorial independence. The 2015 BBC reach tracker survey found that PBC’s reach had increased over the past three years, which may provide some support for this perception.

**“These programmes helped us move from being an official [mouthpiece of the government] to a public service [broadcaster].”**

*PBC’s head of international cooperation, independent capacity-strengthening evaluation, 2016*

The independent evaluation identified that the PBC team had gained the ability and the confidence to produce *Hur El Kalam* without the formal involvement of BBC Media Action, and PBC management has committed the staff and resources needed to continue producing and broadcasting programmes using the live-debate format pioneered by the Palestine Debates.

In addition, media experts described how the programmes’ pioneering format appeared to have influenced other debate shows broadcast in the Palestinian Territories, and acted as a model for producing programmes that support accountability. The former was echoed in the independent evaluation, during which research participants from Ramallah had mentioned three other TV programmes that they perceived to be imitating the Palestine Debates.

### 3.6 Overall impact: contributing to improved accountability

#### Key insights

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Audience members and media and governance experts praised the Palestine Debates for creating an opportunity for ordinary people to meet and question officials directly</li> <li>■ However, they also felt that greater</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>accountability could have been achieved if more follow-up episodes had been produced</li> <li>■ PBC staff became more confident in their ability to select relevant topics and panellists in order to create accountability</li> </ul> |
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Through the production of the Palestine Debates and the capacity-strengthening support provided to PBC, the Global Grant project in the Palestinian Territories ultimately aimed to harness the media to improve state–society accountability. Based on BBC Media Action’s governance approach, the project sought to use the media to improve Palestinians’ governance-related knowledge, stimulate public discussion/debate (particularly among the youth), and enable Palestinians to interact directly with decision makers.

### 3.6.1 The Palestine Debates’ role in improving accountability

During various rounds of research, audience members frequently spoke positively about the opportunity that the Palestine Debates had created for ordinary people to meet and question officials directly, and to voice their concerns about issues that mattered to them. Participants explained that public figures had become more accountable because they had been directly questioned on the programmes.

**“The programmes invite officials, and give the audience the green light to ask direct questions and raise issues of importance to real people. This constitutes a sort of accountability.”**

*Female, Gaza Strip, endline evaluation, 2016*

However, viewers also felt that the shows should have gone further by offering solutions to the problems raised. Hence, for the audience, the programmes played an incomplete role in building accountability.

**“They [the people on the programmes] discuss issues without solutions. All they do is raise awareness.”**

*Male, West Bank, endline evaluation, 2016*

This view was echoed by media and governance experts interviewed by BBC Media Action. However, they did not consider it solely the role of the media to provide solutions, but rather viewed accountability as a collective responsibility of the media, the government and the law. The experts believed that the Palestine Debates’ real contribution was to connect the public with officials, and offer them a space to question and discuss issues of concern.

Audiences and experts alike called for follow-up episodes to explore whether officials had acted on the promises they had made on the programmes. And, while the independent evaluation found that PBC staff demonstrated increased awareness of, and commitment to, the media’s – and by extension their own – duty to hold authority figures to account, it also noted their lack of awareness regarding the need to produce follow-up episodes to maximise the shows’ potential to hold leaders accountable. Between 2012 and 2016, *Aswat Min Filasteen* offered just one follow-up episode on the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, three months after it first addressed the issue. *Hur El Kalam* did not broadcast any follow-up episodes due to a lack of resources; however, various issues raised on the programme (such as higher education, disability and consumer protection) were revisited in subsequent episodes. Audiences felt that the low number of follow-up episodes had muted the programmes’ ability to enhance accountability.



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## 4. CONCLUSIONS: to what extent has the project met its objectives?

The Global Grant governance project in the Palestinian Territories set out to achieve an ambitious set of objectives against a backdrop of tumultuous governance and weakened democracy. It aimed to improve audiences' understanding of their democratic rights, and to empower Palestinians to hold leaders to account. The project also sought to equip Palestinian media practitioners with the skills and knowledge needed to produce high-quality programmes that enhance accountability.

As an instiller of knowledge, the project was very successful. Palestinians who had watched or participated in the Palestine Debates reported becoming more knowledgeable about the functioning of government institutions, their democratic rights, and the duties that leaders and authority figures held towards the people living in the Palestinian Territories. This newly acquired knowledge led some audience members to reflect on, discuss, and even reconsider their opinions about the issues that were debated on the programmes, as well as the government officials who appeared in each episode. However, younger people and people living in the Gaza Strip proved to be difficult to engage and, as such, were under-represented in the shows' audience.

The project's success in terms of empowering Palestinians to hold their leaders to account was somewhat more tempered. After witnessing ordinary people discussing issues with authority figures on the programmes, audience members learned that they could – and indeed had the right to – interact with such individuals in ways they had not previously considered. Some described feeling empowered enough to seek out authority figures and hold them to account after watching the shows. However, many viewers were more circumspect, citing restrictions on freedom of expression, or scepticism about the responsiveness of authority figures, as barriers preventing them from directly pursuing greater accountability from government.

The training and mentoring delivered to PBC equipped media practitioners with the skills, knowledge and confidence to produce high-quality, engaging debate programmes that served to support accountability in the Palestinian Territories. The Palestine Debates, co-produced by PBC and BBC Media Action, were considered by audiences and media and governance experts to be ground-breaking in terms of technical quality and, most importantly, in the way they brought together audiences and decision-makers into direct dialogue. However, the project missed an opportunity by failing to create a formal mechanism that enabled trainees' skills and knowledge to be transferred to their colleagues.

Overall, viewers and experts were positive that the Palestine Debates had empowered Palestinians and increased government accountability to some extent. However, there was near unanimity regarding the need for more follow-up episodes to cement the programmes' potential as an accountability mechanism. Nevertheless, PBC continues to produce live debate programmes (beyond the end of the project) and other broadcasters have imitated this format. As such, it appears that BBC Media Action's partnership with PBC, and the Palestine Debates themselves, have created a legacy – suggesting that the project's impact may be long-lasting.

## 5. APPENDICES

### 1. Cumulative reach calculations

Cumulative reach measures long-term engagement in a particular country and across all countries, and the measure was used to set the overall reach targets at the beginning of the Global Grant. The measure utilises a calculation acknowledging 10% of new listeners and/or viewers within existing audiences year-on-year. The 10% is seen as a conservative estimate and takes into account the following:

- 15-year-olds entering the survey data and older people leaving
- New viewers or listeners reached by programming
- Natural turnover – people reached previously but no longer viewing or listening
- Increased geographical reach, improved access and new broadcast partnerships

This 10% is applied on the principle of adding the ‘lowest reach’; this means that if the reach figure for the prior year is higher than the current year, then 10% of the reach from the current year is added on to the cumulative reach figure. In turn, if the reach figure in the current year is higher than the reach figure from the prior year, then 10% of the reach figure from the prior year is added to the total amount.

### 2. Reach tracker survey (2016)

#### Sampling

BBC Marketing and Audiences commissioned IPSOS to design and deliver a nationally representative survey of Palestinians aged 15 and over in order to gain market understanding and measure the performance of the BBC brand on various platforms. This included questions about the reach of BBC Media Action’s programmes *Aswat Min Filasteen* and *Hur El Kalam*.

The sample of 1,000 was distributed proportionally across each city in the West Bank and Gaza Strip according to the 15+ population. Primary sampling units (PSUs) were selected using a proportional to population size based on population data from the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics. To further achieve national representation, quotas were set for gender and age. Each PSU was sub-divided into blocks and the block and starting point were chosen by the supervisor as the most suitable location following the classification of the area and the diversification in buildings based on socio-demographic criteria. Within blocks, interviewers moved in a clockwise direction.

#### Data collection

The fieldwork was carried out over December 2015 and January 2016 using face-to-face interviewing methodology and pen and paper questionnaires. A total of 3,966 interview attempts were made in order to achieve the sample of 1,000. Experienced interviewers were used, and project managers, supervisors and interviewers were briefed by IPSOS on the project objectives, questionnaire structure and routing, sampling approach and quality control process. Pilot interviews were conducted and relevant changes made to the questionnaire to ensure that the

interviews lasted no longer than the target length of 20 minutes. Quality control measures taken involved supervisors accompanying 10% of interviews, and checking another 75% of interviews face-to-face or by telephone. Data entry was conducted simultaneously with the fieldwork, and questionnaires were checked by field supervisors, the project manager and back checking team before being sent to the data entry department. Questions about the reach of BBC Media Action's shows included prompts in the form of programme descriptions, rather than audio-visual prompts as would normally be used, so this might have affected audience recollection.

### Analysis

Following data collection, weighting was applied to correct for imbalances in the education breakdown of the sample based on data from the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics.<sup>xvi</sup> The margin of error for the full sample is +/- 2.2% at a 95% level of confidence. It should be noted that neither sampling nor weighting accounted for the urban–rural breakdown and the data is not representative of the urban–rural breakdown of the population: the United Nations reports an urban population of 75%, which is much higher than the 57% in the sample.<sup>xvii</sup>

### Significance testing

To test whether differences between the data reported for 2013 and 2016 surveys were significant, significance testing was carried out on the reach percentages for each programme separately and combined.

Table 4: Results of significance testing

Programme	Indicator	2013	Sample size	2016	Sample size	T-test statistic	Significant at 95%?
<b>Combined</b>	Reach	16.6%	n=1,500	6.9%	n=993	7.71	Yes
<b>Aswat Min Filasteen</b>	Reach	12.7%	n=1,500	4.9%	n=993	7.02	Yes
<b>Hur El Kalam</b>	Reach	10.2%	n=1,500	4.8%	n=993	5.20	Yes

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>ii</sup> The Global Grant was a centrally managed grant from DFID that supported implementation of the Global Grant project in 14 target countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East between 2012 and 2017. The five-year-long grant focused on three core themes (governance, health and resilience) and aimed to produce media and communication outputs that contribute to better governance, healthier populations and an increased ability to cope with humanitarian crises.
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- <sup>v</sup> Shikaki, K. (2014) *The Likelihood, Consequences and Policy Implications of PA Collapse or Dissolution: The "Day After" Final Report*. Report [online]. Available from: <http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/finalreport.pdf> [Accessed 26 June 2017].
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- <sup>x</sup> This evaluation was conducted by Wendy Pilmer for BBC Media Action in August 2016 and is unpublished.
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- <sup>xii</sup> Lupia, A. and McCubbins, A.D. (1998) *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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- <sup>xiv</sup> Campbell, A., Gurin, G. and Miller, W.E. (1954) *The voter decides*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson and Company.
- <sup>xv</sup> Quote from the independent capacity strengthening evaluation conducted by Wendy Pilmer for BBC Media Action in August 2016, which is unpublished.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics (n.d.) *Percentage Distribution of Persons (15 Years and Over) by Educational Attainment, Region and Sex, 1995, 1997, 2000-2014* [online]. Available from: [http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_Rainbow/Documents/Edu-1994-2014-10E.htm](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/Edu-1994-2014-10E.htm) [Accessed 26 June 2017].
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