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CENTRAL ASIA MEDIA PROGRAM

FACT SHEET

The USAID-funded Central Asia Media Program aims to develop a more balanced information environment in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to increase openness among youth and adults for differing ideas, opinions, and perspectives and in turn increase their engagement in civic participation. The five-year, \$15 million program is implemented by Internews and runs from October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2023.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Improve media’s capacity to provide balanced, informed, and unbiased reporting on key policy and public interest issues;
- Increase media and information literacy among youth and adults so they become more critical consumers and producers of information; and
- Improve the legal enabling environment for media.

OUR WORK

The Central Asia Media Program works with partners from the Central Asian media, academia, and civil society to improve content quality and audience engagement across traditional and “new” media platforms; strengthens media outlet financial sustainability and the professionalism of journalists, bloggers, and citizen reporters; increases the wider public’s media literacy; and strengthens the legal and regulatory enabling environment for media in Central Asia. Local partners’ needs and feedback drive the design of program activities as well as a flexible and adaptive approach in a rapidly changing media, information, and socio-economic landscape. The program likewise capitalizes on the region’s “youth bulge” by increasing production and consumption of digital media to spark innovation, help local media reach new audiences, and build openness to diverse perspectives.

OUR IMPACT

Internews and its partners trained over 1,500 journalists and media professionals from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in the first two years of the program, and provided assistance to 41 non-state news outlets as well as individual journalists and civil society organizations (CSOs) to produce over 1,700 pieces of local content in diverse and engaging formats which provided timely, socially-important information in Russian, Kazakh, Tajik, and Uzbek. In the 2019-2020 academic year, 24 universities in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan used modules from Internews’ Media Literacy Manual in Russian, Kazakh, and Tajik to instruct over 1,500 students in media literacy and journalism courses. Internews also provided capacity building and technical assistance to 6 media support organizations in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to improve their advocacy work, strengthen self-regulatory measures within the media community, and ensure media representatives have a seat at the table in important relevant legislative decisions.

The Central Asia Media Program’s direct support for local partners in years 1-2 included:

- 37 rapid response projects for media and journalists to produce vital news content about the public health situation and continue operating during the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis with approximately 23.9 million total views across all projects.
- 41 content production projects on important and under-covered issues such as gender-based violence, poverty, education, the environment, youth, and people with disabilities with approximately 10.2 million total views across all projects.
- Major events that served as educational and networking platforms for hundreds of media practitioners, CSO representatives, journalism teachers, media literacy educators, trainers, and civic activists, including Regional Media Literacy Eduthons, Inclusive Content and Business Labs, and the annual region-wide Central Asian Media Festival and Journalism Award.
- Creation of a network of more than 90 citizen reporters in 27 cities, towns, and districts across Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, who produced over 600 pieces of content on local issues for 18 media outlet partners. In several cases, the reports triggered action by the local authorities.
- 20 collaborative projects between media outlets and CSOs in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan which stimulated involvement in and raised awareness about socially important community activities such as participation in local governance, volunteering, mentoring of children from disadvantaged families, and consumers’ rights.
- Promoting 9 positive changes to legislation in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and improving the capacity of two major media associations to serve as support networks for the media community, leading to a more transparent system for media attendees at government COVID-19 press briefings in Kazakhstan and the establishment of a network of 11 Ethics Commissioners (Ombudsmen) within 16 media outlets in Tajikistan.
- Preparation of nine analyses of changes to improve media legislation in Uzbekistan.