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CENTRAL ASIA MEDIA PROGRAM (MEDIA CAMP) FACT SHEET

The five year, \$15 million USAID-funded Central Asia Media Program, implemented by Internews, 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 civic participation.

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.

ACTIVITIES

- Increase the supply of balanced, fact-based information through production of local quality content using innovative formats. An Innovation Fund supports local media’s technological needs to help them produce more engaging content. Annual Inclusive Content Labs bring together local media and civil society representatives to design engagement strategies that amplify the voices of vulnerable groups. An annual contest honoring Central Asian journalists encourages better quality journalism.
- Journalists receive skill-based training and legal support to strengthen professional development across traditional and “new” media platforms. A New Media Accelerator incubates innovative start-ups in new media, and an annual Central Asia Media Festival features a range of classes and exhibits showcasing modern media strategies.
- An annual top managers’ forum strengthens the management and financial viability of independent media. The program also supports a local association in each country to foster the development of partnerships and resource sharing among cash-strapped media outlets.
- To strengthen media literacy skills and improve citizens’ ability to analyze information critically, the program posts media literacy curricula and resources, shares best practices from local media literacy partners, and features commentary on Central Asian media content. The program builds professionalism in media institutions by selecting and training independent ethics observers in each country to serve as watchdogs to monitor professional ethics in the media. An annual ‘boot camp’ introduces monitoring strategies to ensure that participants have a shared understanding of quality standards, and encourages them to find engaging ways to share findings.
- The program supports broad-based media literacy education across the region by promoting the curricula for high schools and primary schools developed under USAID’s Access to Information project. Trainings-of-trainers, sub-grants, and mentoring expands the local pool of trainers qualified to teach the curricula. To help launch a local community of practice around media literacy and raise public awareness, the program convenes a high-profile regional media literacy conference featuring international experts, master classes, and global best practices in media literacy education. An annual audience research survey is conducted to measure media consumption preferences, trust, and media literacy of the population.
- The program fosters development of citizen reporting networks and builds additional avenues for citizens’ engagement with local media. Internews and local partners encourage media outlets to experiment with new models for engaging the communities they serve. An Audience Engagement Fund provides small grants to help local media launch community initiatives.
- To improve the legal and regulatory environment, the Central Asia Media Program supports legal monitoring, analysis and advocacy in the region. The Program’s partners organize a series of annual media law workshops to build the capacity of lawyers specializing in media legislation. Special attention is given to strengthening media industry associations for improved representation and self-regulation and building the capacity of relevant government agencies and legislatures.
- To help independent broadcasters better advocate for and ensure their equities in the digital switchover process, the program supports the education of private broadcasters and outreach to local media.
- To increase access to public information for journalists, the program supports local partners to jump-start dialogue between government, the media and the public on the implementation of access to information laws. Annual Access to Information Labs for civil society and media representatives help participants learn how to make use of available information.