

SCS Kyrgyz Republic: Cultivating Media Independence Initiative (Media-K)

Overview

The Cultivating Media Independence Initiative (Media-K) (2017-2020, \$6.5 million) is a USAID/Kyrgyz Republic-funded project to increase the professionalism and independence of media to ensure that citizens have greater access to diverse and balanced information, are less vulnerable to media bias, and are empowered to make more informed civic decisions that reflect their communities' priorities to best serve the public interest.

Kyrgyz Republic Context

Despite the progress made in recent years, Kyrgyz media outlets still face challenges adopting the professional market approach needed to grow their audiences and their revenues, and in working with other media stakeholders to advocate for a more enabling legal environment.

Major Program Components

Increase Domestic Production and Hosting of More Engaging Multi-Media Content through:

- Supporting production of digital content across multiple platforms; innovative story formats; and coverage of political, economic, and social issues that promote accountability and civic participation
- Awarding Engaging Content Grants to facilitate pilots for production of engaging TV and online video content
- Supporting Data Journalism Fellows who are trained and mentored to produce visually engaging, data-driven stories that demonstrate the possibilities of the genre to other media and the public

Assist Media Managers to Increase Advertising Revenues by:

- Conducting organizational assessments and performance improvement interventions for Key Partners
- Providing coaching and mentoring on audience research for expansion and engagement, good governance practices, and technology improvement plans

Engage Disparate Stakeholders to Better

Coordinate Efforts to Help the Sector through:

- Convening annual media forums for independent TV station professionals to discuss emerging trends, determine ways to collaborate and share content, and participate in master classes
- Improving audience measurement data collection mechanisms and data analysis skills to inform content production, scheduling, and business decisions

Achievements

- Kloop Media's high-profile [journalistic investigation](#), produced jointly with the [OCCRP](#) and Radio Azattyk, was named [one of the most interesting Russian-language publications of 2019](#) by the [International Journalists' Network](#). Media-K's institutional support and development of their capacity to analyze big data played a large role in enabling Kloop to conduct large-scale, impactful journalistic investigations.
- Year 1 & 2 Key Partners demonstrated improved skills in quality, [regionally-recognized](#) content production, increasing audience engagement by 43% and revenues by 8% on average.
- Through Media-K, USAID is investing \$300,000 into TV audience measurements, and the Kyrgyzstani media sector's Media Industrial Committee will invest \$2.1 million over five years. Peplemeter installation in the selected households is underway, and the first set of results will be presented on January 30, 2020.
- Hosted the annual Media Toptoo Industrial Forum in 2018 and 2019, gathering over 300 media professionals each year to exchange knowledge, skills, and ideas for best practices.
- Supported the creation of 1,021 pieces of content, including 113 hours of video and 268 online publications, enriching the media market with high-quality, innovative content.
- Contributed to the Kyrgyz Republic's improved ranking in [RSF's 2019 World Press Freedom Index](#), having mediated various defamation disputes from 2017 to 2018.

Updated January 2020