

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 politics, 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 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, ways to collaborate, 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

- Supported 15 content-production projects to enrich the market with high-quality, innovative content. In Year 1, 73 hours of video content and 70 online publications were produced and made available for other media outlets to rebroadcast. In Year 2, Media-K supported another seven projects of various genres that included investigations, factchecking publications, short films, and documentaries.
- Through Media-K, USAID is investing \$300,000 into a TV audience measurement project using peplemeter technology, while the Kyrgyzstani media sector (through the Media Industrial Committee) will invest \$2.1 million over five years. Media-K experts evaluated the Establishment Survey during the first stage of this project, which will help identify audiences open to installing peplemeters in their households.
- Hosted the second Media Toptoo Industrial Forum that brought together more than 500 people, including 25 speakers who led discussions on producing engaging content and high-quality advertisement to improve monetization and generate income. Participants exchanged knowledge, skills, and ideas for best practices with fellow media professionals.
- 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. The country jumped ahead by 15 units from 98th place to 83rd, now at its highest rank ever.

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