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## **MEDIA SUPPORT IN TAJIKISTAN: WAITING TO RECOVER**

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**The projects being implemented in Tajikistan still did not bring the press to its level of the late 80s, the period the experts assess as the best in the country press' history.**

Projects funded by foreign donors are implemented by both local and international organizations. First of all, these are: OSCE Tajikistan mission; Internews Network; Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation) Tajikistan office; Counterpart Consortium International; and Eurasia Foundation. The projects cover a wide range of issues: from educational programmes to direct financial support to the media. The OSCE Tajikistan mission, since 1997, has been implementing the Regional Newspapers Support Project. According to OSCE, some 14 district newspapers will have obtained financial aid by 2001. In 2000, *Sughd* newspaper and *Varorud* news agency were established in the northern republic, supported by the OSCE Tajikistan mission. The OSCE mission has also provided training courses and held conferences for journalists. According to the OSCE Tajikistan Mission Adviser, Filaret Motco, it intends to continue working to increase the role of the media and journalists in the Tajik society. Internews Tajikistan Training Coordinator, Masrur Abdulloyev, believes that his organization's activities have mainly resulted in the newly-emerged private TV stations. "Now they number 15 in Tajikistan," he said. "Indeed this is not too much; however, this number is quite a sign of success given that no private radio station has been established in the republic thus far."

### **TRAINING MATERIAL IN TAJIK**

International organizations use different methods to achieve their educational aims, including Tajik translation and publication of literature and recommendations aimed to improve journalists' skills and their legal literacy. Supported by the Open Society Institute Tajikistan Office grant, the Tajikistan Journalists Union has translated the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and *Journalist's Reference Book* into Tajik. "The reference book is useful mainly because it is based on the American and European press' experience," said Hayot Davlatov, Chairman of Tajikistan's Journalists Union. Internews Tajikistan has issued a number of reference and training books for the electronic media journalists. These include *Television Report*, *Ethic Standards of Radio and TV Programmes*, *Reference Book for TV Journalists* (management), *Brief Legal Reference Book for Tajikistan Journalists* and others, published in Tajik. "All these books are distributed free to journalists' organizations," Misrur Abdulloyev said. "Besides we provide technical support to the electronic media and train novice journalists."

### **PRINTED PRESS**

Another field of the international organizations' operation is providing direct financial support to journalists to establish new printed editions. "Due to the Counterpart Consortium grant

support, newspapers of non-governmental organizations such as *3+1* and *Sozvezdie* are now published in the republic," said Abdumalik Kadyrov, Counterpart Consortium Tajikistan media relations coordinator. "Although the print-run of the said newspapers is not great they provide much useful information about the Tajikistan NGOs' activities and show whom to cooperate with and to be socially useful." Counterpart Consortium has contributed to establishing new media NGOs. These are Tajikistan's Journalists Memory and Rights Protection Foundation and "Social Partnership" Association of Journalists. They help the Tajik journalists to obtain new knowledge and understanding of their own rights and responsibilities. Open Society Institute Tajikistan office provides financial support to Tajikistan's mass media. It arranges annual competitions for the best media projects. The programmes aim to support journalists and to implement their conceptions to develop civil society. "The principal aim of providing grants is to give financial support to improve the journalists' skills," said Zuhra Halimova, executive director of the Open Society Institute Tajikistan office. "It is important for the Tajik press because they should contribute to social development. We want to work with promising NGOs."

### **ARBITRARY POLICY TOWARDS ELECTRONIC MEDIA**

According to local analysts, while the Tajik state functionaries' arbitrariness has - to some extent - been defeated regarding printed media, this arbitrariness regarding establishment of independent radio stations is continuing. Parliament has passed a Law On Television and Radio Broadcasting, which entitles every citizen to found his own radio station, be licensed and operate. However, none of the citizens have managed to gain this. A project by journalist Andrey Sidorin, who had long-since dreamed to establish a new independent radio channel, was a failure. Governmental arbitrariness towards those willing to establish radio stations is still going on. In 2000, UNESCO and the Open Society Institute Tajikistan office supported the Asia-Plus radio station project and allocated a grant for that purpose. However, the governmental Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting has not licensed it for broadcasting.

### **REGIONAL APPROACH**

Also, regional Central Asian projects operate in Tajikistan. The Central Asia Media Support Project, initiated by CIMERA Switzerland, is one of them. The project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development. The National Association of Independent Media of Tajikistan (NAIMT) is the project partner in Tajikistan. "For more than a year we've been working within the framework of the Central Asia Media Support Project that aims to de-insulate Central Asian national press media," said Nuriddin Karshiboev, Tajikistan's Central Asia Media Support Project coordinator and NAIMT Chairman. "The Tajik journalists actively participated in three conferences and training workshops as part of the project. One of the conferences "Lessons of Tajikistan: the Role of Mass Media in Conflicts and Post-Conflict Period", took place in Dushanbe 27-29 September 2000." It is the general opinion that the Central Asia Media Support Project is a success and can sufficiently contribute to improving the republic's journalism level. "In order to let Tajik media occupy their worthy place in society, more efficient and realistic projects need to be implemented," Abdumalik Kadyrov said.