
TAJIKISTAN: PREPARING A NEW GENERATION OF JOURNALISTS

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Low-skill journalism is plaguing the Tajikistan press. Some journalist organisations meet the challenge through special training programmes.

The Independent School of Journalism, *Tajikistan - XXI*, existing under the aegis of the *Asia-Plus* News Agency, has been engaged in the training of domestic media workers. Last May, the School hosted the first workshop aimed at upgrading the skills of Tajik newsmen. “The workshop curriculum was very tight”, said Hairullo Boboyev, the School’s Coordinator. “During five days, Tajik media people learned about world media development trends, news division organisation, its role and place among other newspaper units, information gathering, sources and methods of information verification, creative ways of preparing news items and other specifics such as information genre, stylistics and deadline factors.” The workshops or round-tables held in the past covered topics like legal education of newsmen, general problems of the national newsmaking sector, or ways to get over a crisis. However, such technical areas as information gathering practices, credibility of information providers, news verification through other means, or journalese were neglected. The guest speaker, Mr. Andrei Raskin, B.A., invited from Moscow University’s Chair of Journalism, talked about news business and world media developments. The local journalists were hungry for these aspects of their trade as low levels of funding and a decade-long isolation had kept them professionally under-educated.

TRANSFER OF EXPERTISE TO THE NEW GENERATION

The Independent School of Journalism takes care of gifted young people. Last May, the *Asia-Plus* News Agency launched an UNICEF project to train would-be journalists. Schoolchildren from the Tajik capital passed a thorough screening to receive basic training in journalism. Theory was followed by practical assignments: to write a news item or article, or to conduct an interview. Ms. Natalya Bruker, an assistant professor from the Russo-Tajik Slavonic University, guided the trainees. The curriculum featured particular aspects of the trade such as the basics of how to use the Internet, newspaper management and advertising business, to name but a few. Training looked like a game rigged with various options. A visit to the editorial office of *Asia-Plus* gave an insight into the hardships and delights of journalistic work. Participants found the courses useful, especially those who were thinking about a journalistic future. However, one month is not enough to teach even the newsmaking fundamentals. The School intends to keep in touch with those teenagers who are keen to learn more. *Asia-Plus* has offered one of its pages, entitled *Generation - XXI*, for contributions from young knights-of-the-pen. The page focuses on youth and children’s events taking place in Dushanbe, the Tajik capital, supports the anti-drug drive among teenagers, answers their burning questions and tells stories about the life of their idols. The project is funded by the U.N. Children’s Fund (UNICEF). The UNICEF Project Coordinator, Almira Sylvander, explained that collaboration with the Independent School of Journalism and *Asia-Plus* is part of a pilot project under the UNICEF Youth Welfare Programme. “It is implemented in Tajikistan with a goal to popularise a healthy life-style among teenagers, to encourage the growth of youth organisations, to address

legal issues relating to adolescents, to promote the involvement of youngsters in the media”, said Ms. A. Sylvander. “The Convention on the Rights of the Child governing UNICEF activities sets forth that children, as well as adults, have the right to take part in public life, to obtain and disseminate information. Based on this ideology, UNICEF gave support to the School. The School’s work to bring children closer to mass media, to teach them how to analyse facts, to defend their views and to conduct a dialogue through media is in line with our objectives. We focus on fostering future leaders, developing abilities and talents of young people, activating their latent energy rather than on entertaining them.” Tajikistan, like other post-Soviet countries, targets the civil society where freedom of speech and information are key elements. The new generation of Tajikistan journalists, who survived the break-up of the “empire” called the USSR, the civil war in this country and soul-searching, have fears deeply instilled in them, laden with old stereotypes and impressions which combine to encumber their way of thinking, world view and creative capacity.