

Central Asia: Oct/Nov '10, Part II

Author: [Saule Mukhametrakhimova](#)

IWPR partner radio stations say service helps develop their journalists and lift their output.

Kyrgyz and Tajik broadcast partners of IWPR's Central Asia radio service have been speaking about the important contribution it has made to their operations.

IWPR's weekly broadcast for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - launched in December 2008 - comprises a 15 minute-programme of analysis and comment on current political and social themes in each country. The project also provides training for journalists working for partner radio stations who then work with IWPR to produce material for the programme.

The programme is available in Russian, Tajik or Kyrgyz and is being carried by established broadcasters with substantial audiences, both in urban centres and rural areas.

IWPR's broadcast partners are the National Television and Radio Corporation of Kyrgyzstan, NTRC; the Association of Radio and TV in Kyrgyzstan (ART); Radio Almaz (Kyrgyzstan); Sado-i Dushanbe (Tajikistan); and Radio Vatan (Tajikistan).

Last May, IWPR received a letter from the management of Radio Vatan, praising the project for the high-quality of its output.

Vera Kulakova, Radio Vatan executive director, told IWPR that she felt the weekly programme was impartial, critical and provoked debate. "Every report IWPR produces is a subject of discussion in our office," she said.

Director of Sado-i Dushanbe, Djonibek Asroriyon, said that due to a lack of funding, the station is unable to employ many journalists, so the IWPR service helps to fill gaps in output.

"Now with IWPR programmes, this problem has been solved," Asroriyon said, adding that IWPR's coverage of rural issues was particularly useful.

He recalled an IWPR report criticising local authorities in the flood-hit southern region of the Kulyab for shortcomings in the delivery of humanitarian aid. "You forced bureaucrats to work in a transparent way and this is something to admire," Asroriyon said.

The head of Russian-language programmes at Sado-i Dushanbe, Irina Umarova, told how listeners had called up the station to thank it for IWPR reports because they raised sensitive issues which go unreported in the local press.

"[Listeners] call to convey their appreciation of the objectivity and impartiality of courageous and brave [IWPR programme] journalists who are not afraid to report the truth," Umarova said.

Torokul Doorov, editor of the Kyrgyz service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, spoke highly of the way the programme sought comment from members of the public on subjects of national and regional concern. "I liked the way you raise important issues, making ordinary people the centre of attention, not politicians," he said.

The IWPR partner radio stations also said they valued the provision of journalism training, which they said had improved the skills of their reporters.

Sabyr Abdymomunov, editor-in-chief of NTRC, said his staff had become more professional through their association with IWPR.

"What is interesting is that when my journalists prepare reports for the IWPR programme, their items turn out to be more lively, dynamic and interesting," he said.

Mamasadyk Bagyshov, director of broadcasting at NTRC, said he was keen to work with IWPR because "we would like to raise [the level of professionalism of] our own radio journalists to achieve international standards".

Meanwhile, more radio stations in the region are expressing an interest in becoming IWPR partners.

Marek Bekerman, local project director for the BBC World Service Trust, said he would be interested in a partnership, "The IWPR radio project is one we would like to cooperate with. We will need good quality reports this coming spring."

And ART has asked IWPR to become a partner in a new project intended to raise the standard of radio journalism and programming.

“There are certain things that each of us is good at - ART is good at broadcasting, while IWPR is good at producing high-quality, analytical reporting which people like,” said ART representative Roman Milovatski.

Saule Mukhametrakhimova is IWPR Central Asia editor.

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