

Kyrgyz Investigative Journalists Drive Change

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Campaigning stories lead to direct government intervention.

Investigative reports published as part of an IWPR training programme in Kyrgyzstan are leading to real changes on the ground.

One story led to direct government intervention in a crucial irrigation project after the IWPR-trained journalist uncovered evidence of systematic corruption.

Guljan Altymyshbaeva's report revealed how graft and malpractice during its construction meant the newly built Besh-Batman water channel in southern Kyrgyzstan did not function properly.

This negligence in a state-run project meant that local farmers were still not receiving irrigation supplies.

The story, published at CABAR.asia website, led to the Kyrgyz agriculture ministry's department of water resources launching an internal investigation.

The department then ensured the channel was repaired and the pipes connecting it to the actual agricultural lands were cleaned.

Another investigative report on traffic police corruption also led to direct government intervention.

Baktiyar Tukeev, who works for the Kyrgyz Public Service Broadcaster KTRK, revealed how policemen were extorting money from minibus drivers on one of the country's major highways.

The reporter observed officers spending less than a minute "checking" the condition of three minibuses before demanding that each driver pay a fine.

After Tukeev's report was broadcast, the transport and communication ministry also launched an internal investigation.

One inspector who featured in the report was fired and the department responsible for traffic police was ordered to root out such practices.

Tukeev's report went on to receive first prize in last month's anti-corruption journalism contest held by Kyrgyz government, the Kyrgyz Business Association and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ).

Kyrgyzstan is the only country in Central Asia with a fairly democratic system, but the state is weak and corruption endemic.

This means that the specialised skills needed to probe complex issues are vital. Since 2015, IWPR Central Asia has been running a project called Investigative Journalism to Promote Democratic Reform.

(See also **[Encouraging Investigative Journalism in Kyrgyzstan](#)**).

Funded by the European Union, this project supports reporters working for local TV, radio, print and online outlets interested in investigative journalism.

Many lack the tools to carry out proper investigative work, as well as the financial resources or equipment. Local media are also often reluctant to feature such potentially high-risk stories.

IWPR has so far offered funding as well as editorial and legal advice to 28 journalists from across the country so that they can prepare their own investigative stories.

"At the training I realised that meticulous planning is the key to the success of not only an investigative report but also of any news story," Altymyshbaeva said. "It was new for me to test every hypothesis and plan interview questions so thoroughly."

Kyrgyz Public Service Broadcaster, KTRK, which aired Tukeev' report, is one of the leading partners of IWPR's project.

"It is obvious that when [our company] began collaborating with [IWPR's] project, our programme's quality improved, and the work of our journalist [Tukeev] got better," said Kokul Aripova, a producer at KTRK. "We are happy about the opportunity to develop and we will strive to achieve international [reporting]

standards.”

Location: Kyrgyzstan

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Focus: Project Highlight

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