**REPORT**

**on the activities of the Public Foundation for Support and Development of National Mass Media during 2020**

The Public Foundation for Support and Development of National Mass Media was founded in November 2019 by a group of proactive journalists and bloggers to develop the media sector, provide material support, and ensure the rights of media representatives in Uzbekistan. The Foundation effectively began its activities in January 2020 after resolving all organisational issues.

The main goal of the Foundation is to promote equal conditions for mass media in the media market, support their further development, and ensure the rights of journalists and bloggers.

The primary sources of funding for the Foundation in 2020 were voluntary donations from individuals and charitable contributions from local organisations. In total, **10,056 million sums** were deposited into the organisation’s account.

These funds were directed towards achieving the statutory objectives of the Foundation in areas such as the development of national mass media, comprehensive support for media outlets, journalists, and bloggers; support for visually impaired children under the "Ko‘ngil Ko‘zi" project, and addressing gender issues. Specifically:

– Within the framework of the **"Xavfsiz Yordam"** project, the Foundation provided financial support in April to **100** veterans who had worked in journalism for many years and who are part of the "Golden Fund" of the profession. These individuals faced health problems and required social assistance due to various family circumstances. The assistance was provided in two stages: in the first stage, each person received a food package delivered to their home; in the second stage, plastic cards with 1 million sums credited to them were issued. Later, in May and June, similar financial assistance in the form of funds on a card was provided to a total of **6,000** women who found themselves in difficult financial circumstances due to the pandemic.

– The Foundation, in cooperation with the Milliy TV channel, prepared and aired a series of educational television programmes dedicated to the coronavirus. **The "Tez Yordam" programme** was created during a complete information vacuum. Its mission was to explain to as many people as possible what the coronavirus is, how to treat it properly, and what not to do under any circumstances when faced with this illness. Thanks to the project, panic among the population was alleviated, and the harmful practice of unnecessary IV drips and medications, which worsened the course of the disease, was curbed.

– Before the quarantine began, the Foundation initiated the creation of a Public Council, which collected and summarised society’s requests for information and directed them to the relevant authorities. Thus, a **media headquarters was organised**, bringing together prominent media representatives, PR and GR specialists, and heads of state and public organisations. The media headquarters worked around the clock to inform the citizens of Uzbekistan about the progress of the pandemic and the measures being taken.

– To provide verified information and combat fake news and panic, the Foundation, together with the Ministry of Health, the Information and Mass Communications Agency, and the Youth Union, created **the official website coronavirus.uz and the Telegram channel Koronavirus Info**. These platforms published information 24/7 on the fight against the pandemic, recommendations, statistics, and other useful information.

– In collaboration with the OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan, the Foundation developed and launched a toolkit to assist journalists and bloggers in identifying false information and performing fact-checking to prevent the spread of fake news. This toolkit can be accessed and used on the **platform** **infodemictoolkit.org**. The platform is available in Uzbek, Russian, and English.

– In March 2020, the Foundation, together with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, the Information and Mass Communications Agency, and the Supreme Court, held **the second Central Asia Judicial Dialogue** in Samarkand.

The two-day event brought together more than **60** experts, lawyers, and judges from the OSCE region and Central Asian countries to discuss the role of national judicial systems in ensuring freedom of expression and media freedom. There was an exchange of views on new trends and the most pressing issues faced when considering cases concerning restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom.

– On 28 September 2020, the Foundation for Mass Media, together with the OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan, held an online conference to mark the **International Day for Universal Access to Information**.

Participants included Melissa Fleming, UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications; Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä, Acting OSCE Secretary-General; Komil Allamjonov, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Public Foundation for Support and Development of National Mass Media; Saida Mirziyoyeva, Deputy Chair of the Board of Trustees; Ulrika Funered, Ambassador of Sweden to the OSCE and Chair of the OSCE Permanent Council in 2021; and others.

The event aimed to draw attention to the rights of citizens to access information during the COVID-19 crisis and to the importance of constitutional, legal, and policy guarantees for public access to information.

– As part of the **Media School** project, the Foundation organised free interactive training courses to improve the skills and exchange experiences of media professionals. From October to December 2020, **more than 70** press secretaries and journalists participated in these courses.

The training programme for these courses was developed and conducted by experienced trainers with extensive experience in the media sector and experience in international journalism internships in countries such as the USA, Switzerland, and Israel.

– In 2020, as part of the joint project **"Support for Mass Media in Uzbekistan"** by the Mass Media Foundation and the OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan, professional development courses were held for regional journalists and bloggers. **More than 100 people** participated in events held in Karshi, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Nukus.

During the courses, media representatives increased their legal awareness and acquired new skills in gathering and processing information, including creating and promoting unique informational content.

– In collaboration with the UAE Government Communications Department, a **ZOOM conference and online training sessions** were held from 14 to 16 July 2020 on the topic of "Improving Communications in Public Administration".

**More than 50** staff members of state body press services enhanced their knowledge in information work and acquired skills in media relations and preparing press materials.

– In August 2020, the Foundation, in collaboration with the OSCE Project Coordinator, conducted an **online media training** on the topic: "The Journalist's Work in a Digital Format: Social Networks and Blogging, Coronavirus and Self-Isolation, External and Internal Influence".

The event was attended by **more than 30** journalists, bloggers, and other media professionals from the country. The trainer was a foreign expert, PR specialist, media trainer, and editor-in-chief of the information and analytical portal informburo.kz, M. Dorofeev.

– On the eve of the **New Year**, in recognition of the most active journalists and bloggers who had supported the Foundation in promptly informing the public about the measures being implemented in the country to combat the coronavirus and mitigate its negative effects on the country's economy and the lives of the population, the Foundation for Mass Media sent them commemorative gifts in the form of MI BAND-5 fitness bracelets.

Additionally, during the reporting period, the **"Ko‘ngil Ko'zi"** project was actively implemented. The main goal of this project is to assist in the social rehabilitation of individuals with visual impairments by creating favourable conditions for providing the blind and visually impaired with the necessary literature, access to cultural objects, and professional support for workers in this field.

In 2020, within the framework of this project:

– An international charity run "Samarkand Half Marathon" was held in Samarkand. The funds raised from the event were used to purchase and install audio description equipment in theatres, making it possible for the first time to organise performances for this target audience;

– For the first time, performances with audio descriptions were organised in theatres across the country. Such performances were held at the Youth Theatre of Uzbekistan, the Republican Puppet Theatre, and the Alisher Navoi State Academic Bolshoi Theatre. Actress Irina Bezrukova helped visually impaired spectators "see" these performances through audio description;

– On the eve of New Year 2021, the practice of sending a "Caravan of Gifts" to all specialised boarding schools for blind children continued. In 2020, more than 3,000 students from boarding schools received sweet gifts.

The report on the activities of the Public Foundation for Support and Development of National Mass Media was discussed by the members of the Board of Trustees, who noted that despite the challenging period of the pandemic, the organisation managed to make a significant contribution to supporting and developing the entire media sector in Uzbekistan.