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**PLANNING COMMISSION
ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN**

November 15, 2007

PC/DCD/UNDP/GEN/130



The Deputy Representative
UNDP
Thimphu

Subject: Forwarding concept paper for support to Department of Information and Media

Dear Sir,

We would like to submit herewith a concept paper for support to Department of Information and Media, MoIC for exploring fund under the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund through UNDP.

Thanking you for your cooperation,

Yours faithfully,

(Signature)
(Thinley Namgyal)
Head

Development Cooperation Division

CC: The Director, Department of Information and Media, MoIC, Thimphu.

UNDP THIMPHU	INFO	19/11/07	RR						
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Introduction

Recognizing the vital importance of information in today's knowledge-based society driven by information and technology, and with the need to create proper institutional and legal framework for a sound and holistic development of the Royal Government created the *Ministry of Information and Communications* in 2003 through bifurcation of the erstwhile Ministry of Communication. Further, to implement the Royal Government's policies, plans and programmes relating to information and media, the Royal Government approved the creation of a new *Department of Information and Media* under the Ministry.

The creation of Information and Media Department is, therefore, based on the premise that the flow of information requirements and their communication must be first fully understood before the use of technological tools. Information and media is to be made available to all Bhutanese population, penetrating deep into families and young minds. It is becoming increasingly important to have planned programmes for the promotion of healthy information and media industry in the country.

The Information, Communications and Media (ICM) Act and Regulations are already in place to provide broad legal framework for the information technology, media and telecommunications sector. The Department of Information and Media is responsible for content and strategy development of all forms of information and media, assessing impact of media on society, and media programme development and management.

In a nutshell, the main aims and objectives of creating the Department of Information and Media are:

- A. To create an effective, consistent, comprehensive, simple and efficient information and media policy, regulatory guidelines and information management system in the country through development of appropriate contents, research and promotion.
- B. To effectively and efficiently achieve fully coordinated development and use of media and information services in the country through:
 - (i) Creating a well informed public through timely, correct, and informative contents provided through various media;
 - (ii) Promotion of an independent, constructive, responsible and a vibrant media industry in the Kingdom with increasing participation of the private sector;

(!!!) Contributing to overall national development by providing accurate, timely and comprehensive information and data on important and relevant issues.

Towards achieving the above objectives, the Department, inter alia, proposes to undertake the following priority activities:

I. Implement and coordinate programs for training, study visits, seminars and workshops for media personnel to enable them to produce relevant and quality contents

This program is targeted towards media professionals from private and public media (print, broadcast and electronic) as well as government officials responsible for communications and public relations. It is intended to enhance their professional competence to produce and present quality contents and programs and provide accurate and fair news and information.

A well trained professional media is a must for Bhutan, particularly in the context of the changed political environment, to inform, educate and entertain the Bhutanese and positively contribute towards the democratization process.

The following programs are proposed under this activity:

1. In-country workshops, seminars and short training courses on important topics to be conducted by reputed resource persons in collaboration with the local professionals.
2. Short term training/study courses in various fields of media in institutes in India and Singapore.

II. Media Literacy Program

Alongside the development of the Bhutanese media industry, there is an equally important task for us to enhance the level of media literacy among the public. With the liberalization of media and the steady growth of consumerism in Bhutan, there is a need to educate the public in general on how they might perceive, absorb and consume what media provides them. The program aims to target the young children, students and public in general.

The activity is proposed to be implemented in two phases:

1. **Consultancy phase** to carry out a survey of impact of media so far, identify issues that need to be addressed, draw up an overall media literacy program (contents) designed to address the different target groups and also identify the media (print radio, television or school curriculum) to be used to educate the target groups;

2. **Implementation phase** to carry out the program during the 10th Plan.

For this program, the consultancy phase is proposed.

III. Community Radio

Owing to Bhutan's geographical topography, the Radio is the most effective media in Bhutan and reaches by far the largest audience. The Bhutan Broadcasting Service estimates that about 400,000 people, or 60 percent of the population, listen to the radio.

Understanding the power of radio and the low cost for setting up a FM station, it would be a very good idea to set up community radio for the rural parts of the country where TV and Newspapers are unreachable or expensive.

Community radio would cater to the interests of a certain area, broadcasting material that is popular to a local audience and get local communities to participate in producing programmes for themselves. It would provide a diverse range of services, meeting community needs in ways that are not met by other sectors. It would also provide voice to the local community to share their views and opinion, encourage open dialogue and democratic process. It would also help promote development and social change.

Therefore, the department would like to propose to set up three pilot community FM radio stations in rural parts of the country with assistance from organisations that have expertise in this field.