

Terms of Reference (ToR):
Assessment and Development of Media Development Strategy in Uzbekistan

1. Background and Context

Under the rule of the first president of independent Uzbekistan Islam Karimov (1991-2016), the media in Uzbekistan experienced significant pressure. Under the total domination of the media environment by governmental excessive regulation, censorship, including self-censorship and threats to journalists' safety there was no freedom of expression in the media. Only a few websites were brave enough to publish critical articles, and their offices were abroad. Local TV, radio, and newspapers were not focusing much on criticism.

The year 2005 should be considered a watershed moment, when after the public uprising in Andijan, the media sector was strictly controlled again. According to the 2006 Human Rights Watch report, "the government continued its practice of controlling, intimidating, and arbitrarily suspending or interfering with the work of civil society groups, the media, human rights activists, and opposition political parties. In particular, repression against independent journalists, human rights defenders, and opposition members increased this year."

With President Shavkat Mirziyoyev ascending to power in 2016, Uzbekistan embarked on ambitious reforms, influencing every aspect of social, political and economic life. Today the country experiences a unique development momentum, key steps having been taken to enhance freedom of speech, promote human rights, citizen engagement and participation in national and regional legislative oversight processes. Current media reforms in Uzbekistan aim to strengthen the capacity of media actors and stakeholders, including social networks (bloggers, vloggers, etc.) and improve their linking role and dialogue function between the public sector and society.

As noted in the updated UN Common Country Assessment from March 2021, restrictions on the independence of the media have eased over the past four years, and the President has publicly stated that there must be no going back on reforms in freedom of speech¹. Many previously blocked websites have been unblocked; however, some websites critical of the Government are closed, and bloggers are closely monitored for critical content. Moreover, despite public promises to provide registration, the foreign media presence is limited. While the initial liberalization resulted in a jump of Uzbekistan ranking in the World Press Freedom Index from 169th in 2017 to 156th out of 180 countries in 2020, and back to 157th in the just released report.²

Therefore, despite the intents of the Uzbek Government,

- the official policy framework for media activities remains unclear and occasionally contradictory,
- the official institutions maintain a relatively tense relation to the media,
- censorship and self-censorship remain common behavior on both the State's and the media's sides,
- the professionalism amongst the media actors remains low.

Moreover, Human Rights Committee, in its concluding observations to the fifth periodic report of Uzbekistan on implementation of International Covenant on civil and political rights in 2020, further concerned that current legislation regulating mass communication, information technologies and the use of the Internet unduly restricts freedom of expression, including: (a) the requirement to register online information dissemination platforms, including blogs, as media outlets; (b) regulations on content removal and the suspension of licences; and (c) restriction or blocking of online media platforms on vaguely defined criteria.³

¹ UN Updated Common Country Assessment, March 2021, page 32

² [Uzbekistan | RSF](#)

³ CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR/C/UZB/C/O/5&Lang=En

Media should contribute to the freedom of speech, pluralism and participation as well as social cohesion and peace. For this end, media's independence and freedom are crucial preconditions. It is necessary to ensure that media regulation does not lead to a limitation of freedom by the state, but rather strengthens freedom and pluralism as well as competitiveness, and protection of minors' rights. This, in turn, necessitates conducting regulatory, policy and strategic framework analyses, and enhancing the enabling environment, legal frameworks, policies and regulations for a robust media sector in Uzbekistan.

Swiss Development Cooperation in Uzbekistan

Switzerland is active in Uzbekistan with a small, but growing development cooperation portfolio working in two Domains: Water/Infrastructure/Climate Change and Economic Development/Job Creation. Switzerland also supports independent art and culture actors in the framework of its regional Art&Culture Program in Central Asia.

SDC has extensive experience with supporting media in different contexts. It takes a two-fold approach with the media: as a vehicle for development and as an important actor in governance. As for Uzbekistan, the Swiss Embassy in Tashkent considers the media sector as one of the most promising sub-sectors for Switzerland to support in the dynamic context of reforms in current Uzbekistan.

2. Objectives of the assessment

The expected output of the consultancy is an assessment report and a conceptual framework/strategy that provides key recommendations and strategic entry points for inclusive, gender-sensitive, and sustainable media development in Uzbekistan. The assessment of the media sector in Uzbekistan will be conducted using, but not limited to, the SDC Guidelines for Media Assistance (see Annex 1), adapted further to the context of the country.

3. Duties, Responsibilities and Methodological Approach

In order to achieve these objectives, the consultants shall perform the following task and activities:

- Prepare an **inception report with a detailed methodology** for the assessment with clear timelines and milestones to complete the assignment within one month. The methodology should include specific adaptations (if any) and analysis of approaches, gaps and opportunities to collect data and information as related to the checklist in the SDC Guidelines, but with strong focus on **independence, quality, and reach** as key dimensions of **quality media** (see Annex 2).
- Conduct a **state-of-the-art analysis of the media sector** encompassing the **public, private, independent/non-profit, and new media players**, focusing on:
 - A **political economy analysis of the media** sector including a review of existing legislative, policy and regulatory frameworks, gaps and opportunities for long-term development with special attention to **promotion and protection of human rights particularly as related to freedom of expression and media independence**;
 - A review of available media channels – **print, television, radio, new media** – and their current **quality status**, including with regard to content, professionalism, fact-based articles and analysis, relevance to particular target groups, use trends and reach
 - Targeted, representative **analysis of the media sector** with special emphasis on:
 - Institutional policies, frameworks, and systems related to editorial independence, media integrity, transparency, and agility to respond to emerging news and media developments in the country;
 - Gender equality, gender advocacy and mainstreaming, and gender-balanced programming
 - Capacity development and learning needs as related to infrastructure, technology, and technical professional journalistic skills, ethics and integrity, leadership, among others;
- Conduct a forecast and analysis of media audience, trends and revenue streams across media channels (print, TV, radio, new media) to inform policy and programmatic options for further modernization of the media sector in the country, with attention to ensuring effective reach to population groups left behind in development processes.

- Convene at **least two validation meetings** to present and validate emerging findings and recommendations.
- Prepare a **media development concept/strategy** based on the foregoing research, consultations, and analysis, with clear theory of change encompassing a 5-10 years media development framework for the country.

4. **Key Deliverables and Overall Tasks**

- **Deliverable 1:** Revised methodology and detailed work plan, including division of labour among mission experts. Due date (within 2 working days)
- **Deliverable 2: Assessment Report** of maximum 30 pages (plus Annexes), describing the media sector in Uzbekistan along the proposed themes above, including an evaluation of the interaction between the different media actors/stakeholders. A Power-point presentation (or other visual aid tool) summarizing key findings and recommendations of the assessment report for a validation meeting. **Due date:** *withing 28 working days*
- **Deliverable 3: A media development concept/strategy consisting of a set of recommendations** for the government, the Swiss Embassy in Tashkent, UNDP and other development partners for possible initiatives in the media sector in Uzbekistan, including a vision for potential future project/s in line with SDC guidelines and a robust theory of change. A Power-point presentation (or other visual aid tool) of the media development strategy for a stakeholders' meeting. **Due date:** *within 15 working days*

Proposed Outline of the concept note (15-20 pages without annexes)

- Executive Summary /Introduction
- Situation Analysis (overall background and specific context)
- Vision and robust theory of change
- Scope and Strategy (describe clearly the rational for the proposed intervention, suggest the outputs with related indicators, baselines and targets; define the methodological approach for implementation, including how the project outputs will be achieved)
- Roles and Responsibilities of key partners/ Management Modality
- Key activities / budgetary indications

5. **Time Frame and Team Composition**

The assessment mission consisting of an international senior team leader and a team of at least two national consultants (Media, Communications and Journalism Expert and Digitalization/New Media Consultant). Additionally, the team will be supported by the UNDP Effective Governance Cluster Leader and advised by the regional Governance Policy Adviser from the Istanbul Regional Hub.

The assessment should be conducted during a period of **45 working days** (including writing the report and presenting the findings to the Embassy team, UNDP and the Government) starting from the date of the contract signing within three months.

Preliminary division of labor and estimated timeline is included below:

#	Deliverable	Key tasks	Estimated # of working days to be invested by the Team Leader	Estimated # of working days to be invested by National Media Expert	Estimated # of working days to be invested by Digitalization Consultant
1	DEV. 1	Revised methodology and design assessment work plan, including division of labour among missions' members	2 days	1 day	1 day

2	DEV. 2	Assessment Report of maximum 30 pages (plus Annexes). Presentation summarizing key findings and recommendations	28 days	20 days	14 days
3		Desk review of existing documents, review legislation and regulatory framework	5	5	3
4		Interviews with partners, and key stakeholders, focus group discussions, launch survey as needed	7	7	5
5		Write up of the assessment report (<i>contribute with analytical pieces for national consultants</i>)	12	7	5
6		Develop and hold a presentation summarizing key finding and recommendations	2	0.5	0.5
7		Revise the assessment report based on feedback received from UNDP and SDC	2	0.5	0.5
8		DEV. 3	Media development concept, including a robust theory of change.	15 days	6 days
9	Based on the findings and recommendations in the assessment report design a media development proposal, identifying specific entry points, potential partners to engage, capacity development needs and mechanisms to deliver development support		7	2.5	2.5
10	<u>Develop the vision</u> for potential future project/s in line with SDC guideline, including a robust <u>theory of change</u>		4	2	1
	Prepare a power-point presentation (or other visual aid tool) of the media development strategy for a stakeholders' meeting		2	1	1
11	Revise the proposal based on stakeholders' meeting feedback		2	0.5	0.5
Total:			45 days	27 days	20 days

The estimated number of working days, indicated in above-mentioned deliverables, are based on UNDP's estimations. *The consultants may invest less or more days for each deliverable based on the needs however number of working days to be invested by bidder may be subject to change **for each deliverable**, the total working days of the bidder dedicated to this assignment shall be at a maximum 45 days for the international team leader (27 and 20 days respectively for the national consultants) as indicated in this document.* The successful bidder will agree to produce the aforementioned deliverables to the satisfaction of the UNDP and its partners within the working/day limits set forth in the preceding table. In cases where the consultant may need to invest additional working/days to perform the tasks and produce the deliverables listed and defined in the present Terms of Reference, he/she shall do so without any additional payment.

6. Key Functions of the Team of Experts

a. International consultant-team leader

Key functions	Qualification requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall lead and technical expert on developing the methodology, analytics and recommendations • Coordinate the various research pieces, interviews, focus group discussions, consultations, etc., in coordination with UNDP and the local consultants • Ensure alignment of the analysis and recommendations with international standards and benchmarks with regard to media development • Bring in practices and examples from other countries on media development, including on rights-based approaches to addressing misinformation and disinformation • Lead the forecasting and analysis of media audience, trends and revenue streams across media channels together with national consultants 	<p>Education: Master's in Media, Journalism, Political Science, International Relations, Social Sciences, Law or related fields.</p> <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable of different tasks relating to the media sector analysis; • Ability to work under pressure in a multicultural and complex environment; • Ability to produce reports and high-level political analysis; • Capacity to dialogue with key stakeholder and high-level decision-makers as well as donors from the international community; <p>Language Requirements: Fluency in English is required. Good knowledge of Russian is an asset.</p>	<p>Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least ten years of professional experience in media freedom and media development; • Experience in policy advisory services on media governance, media sector assessment and media development at the international level (with the United Nations System a strong asset); • Good knowledge of the freedom of speech, political environment and media sector in the context of Central Asia and/or other regions of the former Soviet Union; • Experience in conducting media sector needs and gap analysis and assessments

b. Media, Communications and Journalism National Expert

Key functions	Qualification requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for desk review and compilation of secondary information on the media sector – public, private, independent/non-profit, new media • With the international consultant, conduct analysis of existing policies, legislations and regulatory frameworks as related to the media sector, with particular focus on freedom of expression, human rights, and media independence • Identify capacity development and learning needs for the public, private, and independent/non-profit media sector including on ethics, 	<p>Education: Master's in Media, Journalism, Political Science, International Relations, Social Sciences, Law or related fields.</p> <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable of different tasks relating to the media sector analysis; • Ability to work under pressure in a multicultural and complex environment; • Ability to produce analytical reports; • Ability to conduct surveys, interviews and focus-group discussions with journalists • Capacity to dialogue with national stakeholders and media outlets 	<p>Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 5 years of professional experience in mass media outlets, or research in the area of media freedom and media development; • Experience in analytical and research services related to media governance, media sector assessment and media development; • Good knowledge of the freedom of speech, political environment and media sector in Uzbekistan; • Experience in conducting media sector needs and

<p>integrity, leadership, gender-sensitivity, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct targeted interviews and FGDs with key media/stakeholder groups 	<p>Language Requirements: Fluency in English, and good knowledge of Russian and Uzbek is required.</p>	<p>gap analysis and assessments is an asset.</p>
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c. Digitalization and New Media national consultant

Key functions	Qualification requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for desk review and analysis of digitalization and tech trends and their role in news, information, public engagement and debates, and policy change as part of media development • Analyze the role and influence of new media, including social media platforms, particularly as related to feedback mechanisms, social and political relations, government-to-citizen and citizen-to-government engagements • Identify capacity development and learning needs for new media players including on ethics, integrity, leadership, gender-sensitivity, etc. • Conduct targeted interviews and FGDs with new media/stakeholder groups 	<p>Education: Master's in Media, Journalism, Political Science, International Relations, Social Sciences, Law or related fields.</p> <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable of different tasks relating to the digital media sector analysis; • Ability to work under pressure in a multicultural and complex environment; • Ability to produce analytical reports based on data and evidence and applying web-metrics tools; • Ability to conduct online surveys, interviews and focus-group discussions with journalists • Capacity to dialogue with national stakeholders and digital media outlets <p>Language Requirements: Fluency in English, and good knowledge of Russian and Uzbek is required.</p>	<p>Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 5 years of professional experience in online mass media outlets, or research in the area of media freedom and digital media development; • Experience in analytical and research services related to digital media governance, media sector assessment and media development applying different web-metrics tools; • Good knowledge of the social media, online media outlets, freedom of speech, political environment and media sector in Uzbekistan; • Experience in conducting digital media sector needs and gap analysis and assessments is an asset

7. Reference Documents

- Swiss Regional Cooperation Strategy for Central Asia 2017 - 2021 Central Asia
- The role of media in creating inclusive, just and peaceful societies - Guidelines for SDC media assistance
- Uzbekistan action strategy on five priority development areas in 2017-2021: priority area 1.3 Enhancing civil control over the public institutions: strengthening of the role of media, protection of professional activities of journalists;
- Local legislation and regulations on media: 2007 Mass Media Law (amended in April 2018), the 1997 Law on the Protection of Professional Activity of Journalists (amended in April 2018), and relevant presidential decrees, such as the Decree on Regulating Foreign Media (amended in March 2018)
- [UNDP's Engagement with the Media for Governance, Sustainable Development and Peace](#)

8. Annexes:

Annex 1. “The role of media in creating inclusive, just and peaceful societies - Guidelines for SDC media assistance (PDF)

Annex 2. Checklist for analysis of media sector and audience (all six segments)

Segments	Category description	Proposed methodology for assessment
1. Individual journalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of journalists, reporters, popular bloggers/vlogger and influencers (number, level of education both general and journalistic, professional skills, access to employment, specialization, gender, income; social background, ethnic/cultural background, languages, multimedia skills) • Existing role models and public figures in the context of Uzbekistan⁴ 	Desk-reviews
2. Media outlets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and character of existing media (newspaper, magazines, TV, private, public service or state, radio stations, websites, popular bloggers/vlogger channels in social media) <p><u>Working issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editorial work-flow, working conditions for women and men, editorial/ethical policy • Influence of owner • Independence from government • Security and safety • Autonomy of reporters/editors • Infrastructure (technical equipment, IT, electricity, paper) <p>Media output: quality/objectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of opinions published, topics (diversity, priorities) • Quality of content (accuracy, impartiality and responsibility in the public interest, level of professionalism, diversity of sources, human rights-based approach, gender-balanced programming) • Journalism concept (appropriateness of concept, use of information sources) • Relevance (for elites, for poor people, urban/rural, young/old, for women and men) 	<p>Desk-reviews</p> <p>Through interviews and FGDs. Segment media into public, private, independent, as well as new media influencers (vloggers/ bloggers, etc.))</p> <p>Desk review and interviews</p>
3. Media institutions, including new media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence and importance of education and training institutions • Existence and importance of professional associations, accreditation processes (press cards) • Performance of regulatory bodies • Existence of ombudsmen, press councils • Media research institutes and médiamétrie (incl. outreach of different media to the general public and different sub-groups, number of accounts in 	<p>Desk-reviews</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Audience measurement</p> <p>Surveys and interviews</p>

⁴ Further contextualization will be needed, to ensure all sensitivities

	social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc.)	
4. Economic and technological Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of technical media infrastructure (outreach) • Level of technical internet infrastructure (satellite, fiber, distribution) • Level of power and electricity availability • Structure of ownership (private/commercial, state/government owned, public, non-profit), media concentration, affiliation • Competition/monopolies in printing, distribution, advertising, etc. • Sources of revenue: subscription and advertisement markets, hidden advertising, public support, institutional communication opportunities 	desk reviews and targeted surveys and interviews
5. Political and legal environment, and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence and quality of legislation on: freedom of expression, mass media, public broadcasting, regulatory bodies, licenses, censorship, libel and slander, copyright, etc. • Legislation on access to information by government or other public bodies • Gender balance in all entities that consider media policy • Performance of law enforcement, judiciary system • Existence and activities of regulating bodies, advisory and complaints councils (accountability, appointment/constitution) • Government's attitude towards freedom of expression (pressure, repression) • Government's accountability • Level of threats and pressure against media and journalists • Status of impunity re: crimes against journalists 	Desk-reviews, interviews, qualitative information collection (anecdotal information, micro-narratives)
6. Societal beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of the media in society • Identification of taboo themes • Readiness for open discussion and public discourse • Structure of communication in society 	interviews, focus-group discussions, surveys