



**Georgian Media Enhance Democracy, Informed citizenry and Accountability
(Cooperative Agreement AID-114-A-10-00007)**

**Final Performance Report
September 28, 2010-September 27, 2014**

Submitted Dec. 23, 2014

IREX submits this final report in accordance with the requirements of the Georgian Media Enhance Democracy, Informed citizenry and Accountability Program (No. AID-114-A-10-00007), Section A.5 Reporting and Evaluation. IREX welcomes USAID comments and questions directed to Terry Thielen, Senior Technical Advisor (tthielen@irex.org).

Table of Contents

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
II. INTRODUCTION	5
III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.....	8
OBJECTIVE 1: IMPROVE QUALITY AND DIVERSITY OF MEDIA CONTENT AND BROADEN CHANNELS OF DELIVERY	8
1.1 <i>Build skills and develop cross-platform journalism content through grants, topic-specific training and support for independent in-depth and investigative productions.....</i>	8
1.2 <i>Diversify delivery channels by supporting innovative, traditional, on-line and mobile phone content distribution systems.</i>	15
1.3 <i>Develop media literacy among citizens of all ages, including in high schools and through public education to develop active, questioning media consumers.</i>	22
OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVE PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM.....	25
2.1 <i>Develop practical, apprenticeship-type education at a graduate-level journalism school, including support for student-run media, paid internships at regional media outlets and scholarship programs</i>	25
2.2 <i>Improve journalism training for professionals, including both core skills for new journalists and capacity for in-depth and investigative journalism and reporting on specific issues.....</i>	37
2.3 <i>Improve media self-regulation to raise standards and increase credibility among media-consuming public</i>	40
OBJECTIVE 3: IMPROVE THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECT JOURNALISTS’ RIGHTS.....	42
3.1 <i>Digital Switchover (DSO).....</i>	42
3.2 <i>Support Media Advocacy Organizations and Initiatives</i>	45
3.3 <i>Transparency and engagement with the stakeholders of Georgian National Communication Commission (GNCC) is improved.....</i>	53
OBJECTIVE 4: IMPROVE MEDIA OUTLET’S VIABILITY	55
4.1 <i>Address conditions affecting the sustainability of media outlets, including legal issues around advertising, in order to improve their viability.....</i>	55
4.2 <i>Address the financial sustainability of targeted media outlets, including revenue sources, business plans, marketing, demand for their content and delivery methods.....</i>	60
IV. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN	74
INTERMEDIATE RESULTS BY OBJECTIVE	74
PMP IMPLEMENTATION AND INDICATOR HIGHLIGHTS.....	75
<i>Achievements and Areas for Improvement.....</i>	76
V. LESSONS LEARNED & CONCLUSIONS.....	84
APPENDIX 1: MCAT FINAL REPORT.....	87
APPENDIX 2: PMP FINAL REPORT.....	104
APPENDIX 3: G-MEDIA PMP MATRIX	119
APPENDIX 4: MEDIA PARTNER ASSESSMENT TOOL.....	132
APPENDIX 5: G-MEDIA ENDLINE REPORT	138
ADDENDUM: SUCCESS STORIES, PHOTOS AND VIDEO LINKS.....	139

SUCCESS STORIES139
G-MEDIA PHOTO LIBRARY.....150
G-MEDIA STORY VIDEO LINKS.....160

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Georgian Media Enhance Democracy, Informed Citizenry and Accountability Program (G-MEDIA) was designed to fulfill USAID's objective "to improve the Georgian public's access to a range of sources of news and information by developing a more politically balanced, editorially independent, professional, and viable media sector that reaches audiences across the country through diverse delivery channels." The period of performance for the program was from September 28, 2010 through September 27, 2014 with a total program budget of \$12,971,000 over the four year period.

The G-MEDIA program's four core objectives included 1) improve the quality and diversity of media content and broaden channels of delivery, 2) improve professional journalism, 3) improve the regulatory environment and protect journalists' rights, and 4) improve media outlets' viability. A range of comprehensive activities were designed and implemented to support the achievement of these objectives including almost \$5 million in subgrants to key local implementing partners to provide training, research and legal services to journalists, and content grants to media outlets to improve the quality and diversity of print, TV and online programming.

This report provides an overview of activities conducted under each of the objectives and discusses the results achieved, based on extensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data gathered over the four year program by IREX's M&E subcontract Social Impact (SI). Under objective 1, the content grants noted above are discussed in more detail, along with other activities, including results from the New Media Initiative which introduced digital and multimedia story telling techniques and tools to regional news outlets. The discussion under objective 2 highlights G-MEDIA's work with the Caucuses School of Journalism and Mass Media (CSJMM), including building of the Multimedia Education Center. G-MEDIA also worked closely with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to develop a certificate program for citizen and professional journalists as well as two-month practical internship program and conducted more than 100 additional trainings on a wide range of topics.

Objective 3 focuses on G-MEDIA's efforts to improve the regulatory environment with support to a range of local stakeholders including Transparency International-Georgia and the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), as well as the program's role in providing international technical expertise to regional news outlets in advance of the digital switchover which will occur in Georgia in 2015. Finally, objective 4 discusses G-MEDIA support in providing reliable audience research to TV and radio outlets in Tbilisi, and consulting in management and sales/advertising to media outlets in the regions to improve business practices and increase sustainability. G-MEDIA also provided support for the development of new businesses as an innovative source of alternative revenue for regional media outlets.

The report concludes with an in-depth discussion of the G-MEDIA performance management plan (PMP), with an analysis of indicators that showed particularly good results as well as noting those that did not. Finally, the report provides an analysis of lessons learned during the four year G-MEDIA program. As part of the appendices IREX has also included a *media addendum* that includes narrative success stories from the program, a photo gallery of useful pictures that illustrate G-MEDIA activities, and a list of links to videos (uploaded to YouTube) that were produced during the program that highlight particularly unique or exciting program outcomes.

II. INTRODUCTION

The Georgian Media Enhance Democracy, Informed Citizenry and Accountability Program (G-MEDIA) was designed to fulfill USAID's objective "to improve the Georgian public's access to a range of sources of news and information by developing a more politically balanced, editorially independent, professional, and viable media sector that reaches audiences across the country through diverse delivery channels." The period of performance for the program was from September 28, 2010 through September 27, 2014 with a total program budget of \$12,971,000 over the four year period. Nearly 40% of the program budget or \$4,906,266 was distributed via more than 100 subgrants to local implementing partners and media beneficiaries.

During the four year program, G-MEDIA improved the capacity of youth seeking to make an entry into the field of journalism as well as seasoned journalists and other media professionals. It also strengthened the media educational infrastructure by providing technical and financial support to academic institutions and training initiatives. G-MEDIA also sought to lay the groundwork for continuing improvements in the Georgian media environment by supporting systematic advocacy for improved media law and regulation driven by Georgian stakeholders. Additionally, it provided numerous content-production and business development grants to media outlets to help them improve the quality of their content and the sustainability and profitability of their organizations.

The G-MEDIA program integrated four core objectives into a comprehensive program with a range of activities designed to achieve results. The objectives were to:

1. Improve the quality and diversity of media content and broaden channels of delivery,
2. Improve professional journalism,
3. Improve the regulatory environment and protect journalists' rights, and
4. Improve media outlets' viability

To achieve **objective 1**, G-MEDIA provided financial resources and technical capacity-building to media outlets and facilitated cooperation between print, broadcast, and online media outlets in Tbilisi and the regions. During the life of the program, G-MEDIA awarded 68 content production grants to Tbilisi-based and regional media outlets to help them produce higher quality content in the wake of political uncertainty and national economic downturn.¹

G-MEDIA also provided support to the Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters (GARB) with a content exchange project designed to improve the diversity of news programming of regional TV stations and to help them expand coverage outside their regions. By August 2014, 17 out of 20 of GARB-member media outlets (85 percent) were publishing content originally produced by other media outlets, a dramatic increase from zero at the time the G-MEDIA Baseline Report was published in August 2012².

The New Media Initiative (NMI), a holistic approach to new media development, was launched in year 3, for regional print, TV, radio, and online media organizations. The NMI included intensive on-site training and consulting in content management systems; website development

¹ SI and IREX Database on G-MEDIA Grantees.

² GARB Survey Report 2014.

and use of social media platforms; multimedia content production; and sales and marketing for the web. Part of the NMI's success was its emphasis on-site consulting and staff mentoring at partner outlets to meet the outlets' specific needs. In addition, G-MEDIA helped non-broadcast partners establish small TV studios for producing online TV media, learn to operate TV equipment, and develop plans to provide live, interactive coverage from each of their locations. G-MEDIA also provided multimedia content production training to dozens of non-affiliated journalists and freelancers independent of NMI.

To improve professional journalism (**Objective 2**), G-MEDIA focused on the development of sustainable academic programs that emphasize practical production skills and short-term training programs, such as certificate courses and internships.

The Multimedia Education Center (MEC), a state-of-the art classroom and fully-equipped newsroom designed to support academic programs that focus on practical skills, opened in year 2. It continues to serve as a training ground for students and professors of educational institutions and civil society organizations. During the program period, more than 450 students from four journalism schools used the MEC. In addition, G-MEDIA made the facility available to other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and USAID partners, hosting a total of 110 events and trainings.³

Throughout the program, G-MEDIA worked with CSJMM management to improve the quality of journalism education offered at CSJMM, build the organizational capacity of the school, and strengthen management and administrative processes crucial to the overall goal of sustainability. G-MEDIA and CSJMM management also worked together to encourage and support practical learning opportunities for students at CSJMM through the creation of student media, a documentary film festival, and international internships.

G-MEDIA also worked with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) to develop a curriculum and financially supported a nine-month multimedia reporting certificate course designed for citizen and professional journalists looking to develop their skills in the latest multimedia technologies. A total of 35 students graduated from the program, along with 100 interns who attended the two-month "Learning-by-Doing" internship program for students and recent journalism-school graduates.⁴

Outside the university partnerships, G-MEDIA provided a variety of trainings and workshops aimed at increasing the professional skills of Georgian journalists. G-MEDIA held more than 110 capacity-building events and trained approximately 1,000 journalists and other media industry professionals through these independent workshops.⁵ To encourage self-regulation, G-MEDIA also supported Ethics Charter which uses peer review to adjudicate complaints against journalists and facilitates discussions about professional standards and best practices.

Under **Objective 3**, the G-MEDIA provided financial and technical support to media, civil society organizations, and the government to support the drafting of media laws that conform to international best practices. Consultants provided technical reviews and related assistance for the law reform that address media issues including freedom of information (FOI), broadcast

³ MEC Database.

⁴ IREX and SI Database on G-MEDIA Trainings and Events.

⁵ Ibid.

ownership and financial transparency, must-carry and must-offer regulations, and rules for the selection and appointment of the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC).

The program partnered with the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), Transparency International-Georgia (TI-Georgia), the International Senior Lawyers Project (ISLP), and coordinated with GARB to inform and advise the lawmaking process. This included providing the partners with funding, guidance, and technical expertise to support each of their activities. G-MEDIA also funded TI-Georgia's research on the advertising market and media transparency in Georgia and other reports addressing media ownership and its impact on the independence of journalism, the state of the internet and lack of openness in the telecommunications sector, the practice of electronic surveillance and its effects on journalism, and cases of political pressure on regional media.

G-MEDIA also engaged ISLP to help the GNCC develop a communications strategy and increase its level of transparency and interaction with stakeholders, media, and civil society organizations and provided GARB with assistance in negotiating fees and reporting requirements on music rights with the Georgian Copyright Association and Collection Management Organization. In the last year of the program, G-MEDIA provided a range of financial and technical support related to the complex digital switchover including engaging an international technical expert to advise the TV stations on the financial, technical, and programmatic aspects of the options and the consequences of their decisions.

Under **Objective 4**, G-MEDIA improved media outlets' viability by providing them with management consulting services and business development grants for addressing common business challenges. G-MEDIA also supported initiatives aimed at benefiting many players in the media and advertising industries simultaneously through the development of a radio-audience measurement system and an audit of the TV audience measurement system.

G-MEDIA subcontracted Innova, a management consulting firm, to conduct an organizational and management assessment of targeted media outlets, and analyze their commercial environment and competition to determine how best to ensure sustainability. This was followed by business innovation grants to help outlets develop alternative revenue streams. In addition to the business innovation grants, these media outlets received business consulting services from Innova, to help them prepare and implement business plans. G-MEDIA also hired the well-respected Management Academy to provide three-month courses for select media managers.

Finally, in last two years, G-MEDIA worked to develop and increase the effectiveness of audience measurement systems. Specifically, G-MEDIA selected an international auditor to assess the TV MR GE, a Nielsen Television's Audience Measurement official licensee,⁶ TV ratings system. The goal of the audit was to increase client and advertiser trust in the ratings data either by providing evidence of the accuracy of the system or by helping TV MR GE increase the accuracy through service improvements. G-MEDIA also helped radio companies increase their viability by initiating a new system of continuous radio audience research, providing radio stations and advertising agencies with monthly reports on audience habits in 11 medium- to large-size Georgian cities, including Tbilisi.

⁶ TV MR GE's Website can be found here: <http://www.tvmr.ge/#len/company>.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Objective 1: Improve Quality and Diversity of Media Content and Broaden Channels of Delivery

1.1 Build skills and develop cross-platform journalism content through grants, topic-specific training and support for independent in-depth and investigative productions

1.1.1 Content Support Grants

A priority of the G-MEDIA program in the first two years was the award of content production grants. Media outlets, with few financial resources and limited content production capacity, were hard-pressed to offer the public quality news coverage, public affairs reporting or to provide a forum for the debate of public issues. The G-MEDIA program, in consultation with USAID, identified a range of grant activities designed to help media outlets increase their production capacity, produce higher quality content and increase audiences. Recipients of G-MEDIA grants for public affairs content and investigative journalism were selected competitively, by a committee comprised of independent experts. Selection criteria were made public through RFAs and explained during Open Door Days. IREX analyzed each grant application to confirm that the resources requested were appropriate to the Georgian market, the outlet had the ability to effectively use the funds, and the grant concept was feasible.

Year one of the program saw the award of 24 content production grants with a total value of approximately \$833,000. These grants supported a range of reporting initiatives and covered a variety of issues of high public interest:

- The establishment of internet television (Palitra TV) where 15 reporters, equipped with flip cameras, cover major events, many of them live, more accurately and comprehensively than national TVs and are attracting up to 300,000 unique hits monthly
- Investigation of cases of families living below subsistence level who were denied social benefit packages
- Investigation of cases of nepotism and cronyism in regional governmental offices (Information Center Kakheti)
- Increasing awareness about legal issues and domestic violence among Georgia's Azerbaijani minorities (Marneuli TV)
- Investigation of the quality of food supplied to schools in Kutaisi (Akhali Gazeti)
- Discussions around issues important to local populations such as the impact of village assistance programs, fate of IDPs, local budgets, role of school's board of trustees, calculation of subsistence minimum, food safety, waste management (Channel 25, TV Trialeti, Borjomi TV)
- A popular program by TV Kavkasia, which enabled interactive discussion on important issues such as unemployment, how the Georgian army should be formed, labor laws and rights of employees, student self-governance, fate of parks and green zones in Tbilisi, public's trust to courts, rights of prisoners, and others

Half the year one content production grants went to regional media outlets and there was an almost even distribution between print and broadcast. Up to \$50,000 went to online-only media outlets.

For year two, IREX introduced a two-tiered approach to grant contests. The first tier focused on current grantees through limited competition, and applicants were required to demonstrate added value for a second year of funding. IREX also launched a system of pre-competition training in order to attract new applicants. In year two, approximately \$1.12 million was awarded to 29 media outlets. In addition to program and story production projects, as in year one, the year two grants also

- Helped the news magazine *Liberali* stay in business and reach out to regional off-line readers by publishing its best articles in a newspaper insert for a half-dozen regional papers
- Funded the relaunch of Georgian and Armenian language editions of the newspaper *Samkhretis Karibche*
- Supported the production of programs from Studio Monitor which continued to challenge the authorities with excellent investigative films, exposing cases of corruption and human rights abuses.

The changed political climate, after the October parliamentary elections, was also conducive to



Information Center Kakheti Journalist preparing a multimedia story

the production of regional issues-based content. Journalists breathed more freely, no longer fearing physical and emotional assaults, threats and intimidation, and gaining more access to public information, meetings and officials. Small media outlets were able to obtain ads from local businesses, which once shunned them, and their commercial revenues increased. In years three and four grants also enabled Georgian media outlets to continue production of quality content in the wake of political uncertainty and a national economic downturn after the October, 2012

parliamentary election.

Most grants awarded in year three (four grants for \$113,000) and year four (four grants for \$102,000) were dedicated the Regional Election Initiative described in section 1.1.3.

Through the entire G-MEDIA program, content production grants allowed the program to provide crucial assistance to regional media outlets which lack human resources, technical capacity, editorial skills and opportunities to earn revenue. The grants allowed partners to

- Upgrade equipment
- Improve presentation
- Retain qualified staff
- Enlarge their pool of contributors
- Pay for local travel and other production expenses
- Develop new products and platforms
- Create new content to attract larger audiences
- Become more attractive to advertisers

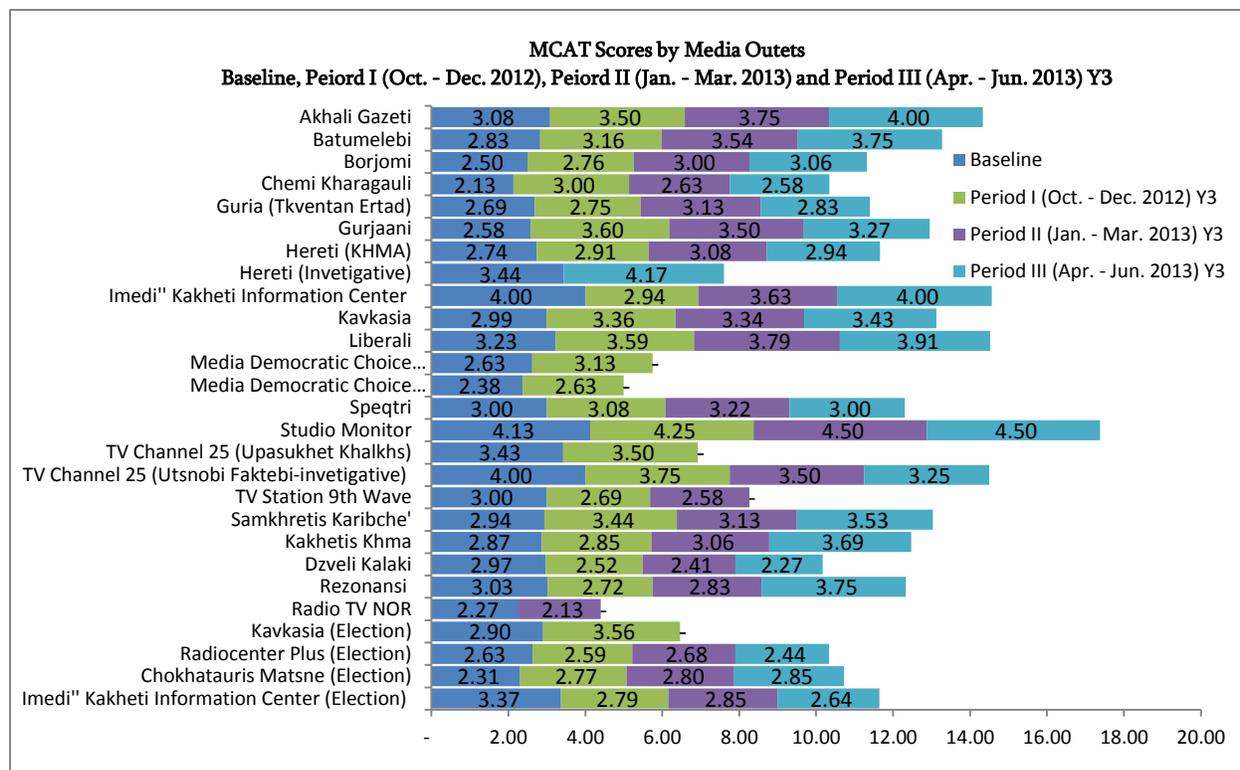
The importance of content production grants for the outlets overall development and sustainability was noted in a report by Monitoring and Evaluation subgrantee Social Impact: “Most organizations that received content production grants have reported positive trends in quality, diversification of production, and quantity of media content. Most importantly, all those organizations that experienced these trends also reported increased revenue as a result of support received from G-MEDIA.”

The report was based on interviews with subgrant recipients who were asked about the effect of grants on the amount of content they produced. A majority of 83 percent reported a “great” increase (35% to 100%) and six percent a slight increase (from 10% to 35%). The remaining eleven percent said there was no change in quantity.

The program content grants were also credited with improving the capacity of recipient outlets as 94 percent of interviewed media outlets reported their production capabilities increased greatly (67%) and slightly (28%) and only one media outlet said that its production capabilities have not changed.

On the issue of quality of produced content, results were nearly as high with 72 percent of the grantees reporting a “great” increase in the quality of their content and 22 percent a slight increase. Six percent did not note any changes.

The quality issue was independently addressed through a Media Content Assessment Tool (MCAT) employed by Social Impact to evaluate articles and programs produced with G-MEDIA assistance (see Appendix 1, MCAT Final Report). According to the MCAT evaluations, the balance, accuracy and impartiality of content produced by G-MEDIA grantees met or exceeded targets in the Performance Monitoring Plan. See *Final Scores for All Media Outlets* in the table below (also see Appendix 2 PMP Final Report and Appendix 3 PMP Indicator Matrix).



Final MCAT Scores for All Media Outlets in Period I, II, and III

In order to more directly address issues of content quality, the G-MEDIA program added to its staff, late in year three, a Senior Journalism Advisor, to work directly with content production grantees and other regional media partners. Nina Robakidze produced 27 assessments covering the work of 14 G-MEDIA partners. Although she identified a number of creative and production-related problems including a lack of effective storytelling techniques, she also identified a number of more serious problems including the use of unreliable sources and the inclusion of journalist's personal viewpoints in news articles.

Ms. Robakidze addressed reporting problems with media outlet managers and journalists, letters detailing these issues were sent to each and meetings with owners and editors were conducted with G-MEDIA management in Tbilisi. Finally, in order to more widely discuss deficiencies in reporting by Georgian media, a workshop to discuss professional journalism practices and principals was conducted in October, 2013. Ms. Robakidze reviewed her findings and representatives from Tbilisi-based and regional media discussed challenges facing journalists and the need for greater professionalism

Based on the MCAT evaluations of TV partners, IREX introduced, late in year two, a program of on-site training and mentoring by international trainers. That assistance is discussed in section 2.2.2.

Successes of content production grantees were acknowledged in national competitions. In June, 2013, G-MEDIA subgrantees took home nearly all the major prizes in June in contests hosted by Transparency International Georgia, the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs and the Civil Society Institute. Studio Monitor took home nearly all the major prizes awarded by TI Georgia and the GIPA-Friedman prize. Batumi station Channel 25 and newspaper *Akhali Gazeti* were also singled out for their work for investigations uncovering misuse of public funds among

officials. *Liberali* magazine reporters took the top two prizes for best articles on social issues from the Civil Society Institute. A Gurjaani TV reporter took first place for the best TV report on social issues. See the G-MEDIA Update story on isolated minorities produced by Anita Tvauri in addendum I.

Overall achievements of the content production grant assistance:

- The program awarded nearly \$2million dollars in content production grants through a competitive process.
- Grantees were able to increase their production and editorial capacity.
- Implementation of the grants and technical support of IREX enabled grantees to substantially increase the effectiveness of their management and operations.

Challenges encountered in implementing this assistance:

- Many partners lack the skill to plan effectively and assure sustainability of their programs. Low management capacity is a common problem.
- Extremely low content production capacity at many regional outlets.

A lesson learned from this activity was that intensive technical assistance, training and monitoring (through a journalism adviser and trainers/consultants) from the beginning of the program might have helped the outlets increase their production capacity more quickly and effectively.

1.1.2 Media.ge

Together with NED and Open Society Georgia Foundation, IREX helped support the daily operation of Internews' Media.ge trilingual media portal in Georgian, English and Russian. The goal of the Media.ge site is to provide a platform for daily coverage of all significant events related to media development and freedom of expression in Georgia. The target audience is the journalistic community, development organizations, human rights NGOs, think tanks and other entities working on the development of the media.

In year two G-MEDIA's new media advisor actively worked with Internews prior to their grant application to update the website to help attract advertisers. IREX also worked to recruit a Drupal trainer to help Internews staff develop the media.ge portal. Following a consultancy on Drupal, the open source web-building software, Media.ge began to include the following improvements:

1. Database speed was optimized so the site loads faster.
2. New and improved design for weekly bulletins, which are emailed to subscribers.
3. New design for the main page.
4. Contact database of Georgian media organizations and individuals developed.
5. Faster search option which also yields better results.

During the life of the project the site hired two full-time news reporters, an editor and freelance journalists to improve the quality of content and to cover time-sensitive topics more promptly. The website has steadily grown in popularity, attracting 1,300 unique visitors a day.

1.1.3 Regional Election Initiative

Implementation of the G-MEDIA program coincided with an intense political environment in Georgia as Parliamentary (2012), Presidential (2013) and local (2014) elections were all scheduled during the course of the program. From the outset of G-MEDIA, the high degree of political polarization exhibited by Georgian national media (particularly national TV stations) was a cause for considerable concern, particularly in relation to election coverage. In order to address this problem IREX established a Regional Election Initiative (REI) which would bring together regional media outlets in a cooperative election-reporting project. In addition to providing a counter to the anticipated heavy political bias of national media, the REI was also seen as an opportunity to help the regional media improve their professional skills, work cooperatively and establish (or reaffirm) their political independence.

Approximately 50 local media outlets (TV, Radio, Print, online) were the foundation of the REI. Grants were provided primarily through regional media associations, The Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters (GARB) and the Georgia Regional Media Association (GRMA), and TV Kavkasia and Radio Palitra.

Grantee	REI Grant Amount, by year		
	2012	2013	2014
GRMA	\$67,746	\$23,428	\$32,737
GARB	\$27,149	\$24,275	\$32,018
Kavkasia TV	\$40,514	\$24,131	\$29,124
Radio Palitra	\$6,474	NA	NA

Although there were operational and editorial differences in each year of the project, the basic design of the initiative was the same for each election. The GRMA, which represents 20 regional newspapers, operated a central REI “newsroom” in Tbilisi. Editorial planning and coordination of all REI partners was conducted through this central hub, and regional media, including the 20 GARB TV stations and their five radio operations, produced election-related content from their respective markets. Weekly programs were produced by Kavkasia TV and Radio Palitra creating, in effect, an alternative national broadcaster using the resources of regional media outlets.

IREX also transferred to GRMA the website *headlines.ge* where the public and project partners could access all produced content as well as research about political parties, events, legislation and political commentary. By aggregating election-related news from 51 partners, *headlines.ge* was able to increase the potential audience for stories produced by regional media outlets. The number of unique visitors to *headlines.ge* ranged from 300-700 in the pre-election periods to more than 5,000 on election day and the total number reached 120,000 by program end. The website was regularly promoted through Facebook, Twitter and Google+.

In 2012, the election news was packaged into weekly radio programs at radio Palitra and into weekly TV programs on Kavkasia “Election 2012”. The news was supplemented with discussions on election-related issues. TV Kavkasia also contributed party profiles for each weekly program and GARB organized pre-election debates at nine member stations. After the election GARB contributed profiles of newly-elected majoritarian MPs.

A similar model was used in 2013 when GRMA, GARB and Kavkasia jointly produced the weekly TV program “Election 2013”. The program included profiles of presidential candidates,

an overview of previous presidential elections in Georgia, a summary of election-related activities in the regions and discussions with experts.

The 2014 local elections presented significant opportunities and challenges for regional media. Under a new system of self-governance, the number of locally-elected government officials was greatly increased. This gave the regional stations an opportunity to produce election coverage which was much more localized and relevant to their audiences. The parliament approved a new electoral code just three months before the election day which meant the regional media needed to inform the population about the new election law and provide coverage of local campaigns, political leaders and issues. The G-MEDIA program also provided training for journalists about the new laws, the issue of self-governance and related topics in 2014 (election related training is discussed in section 2.2.1, Training Workshops). Monitoring showed that 43 journalists from 27 media organizations who participated in the 2014 training (*How to Report on Self Government Elections*) produced more than 1500 election-related articles, stories or programs.

Over the three-year course of REI grants, GARB, GRMA and TV Kavkasia produced a total of 50 programs which offered unique coverage of election activities in the regions, historical perspective of political commentary in Georgia and analysis of the activities of the main political parties and leaders.

The quality of the weekly TV programs was compromised by technical flaws which are endemic to all TV Kavkasia-originated programs. The quality of content from the regional TV stations was not always reliable, as some outlets are more capable than others. Planning and coordination efforts, particularly in the first year of the cooperative effort, were not always effective, although this improved as the partners became more experienced and G-MEDIA staff became more involved in editorial meetings and program planning, particularly in 2014.

GARB and its member TV stations organized more than 35 pre-election debates over the three-year period. The debates were produced according to an agreed format and made available for rebroadcast to all GARB members (through the organizations central server). Platforms of the candidates and political parties were discussed at length in talk shows produced by the regional stations.

International monitoring organizations, reviewing pre-election reporting of Georgian media, expressed a consensus opinion that events were covered from a neutral perspective but there was also a lack of critical reporting and political analysis. While recipients of the REI grants thoroughly covered campaign events and the process of the election there was a lack of reporting on the positions and programs of the parties and candidates. Election activities of mayoral candidates and Gamgebeli were covered more actively than those of candidates of proportional representation and majoritarian seats.

The REI also benefitted from Indirect support as the G-MEDIA program also provided extensive training to many media outlets in new media technologies, the production of multimedia content and integration of reporting with social media through its New Media Initiative. G-MEDIA staff noted this training contributed to the increased quality of news and programs which produced through the REI cooperative effort. The 2014 elections were particularly well-covered by several media organizations: SKnews.ge (Akhaltzikhe), ICK.ge (Kakheti), Gurianews.com (Ozurgeti), TV Borjomi (Borjomi). On Election Day, the social networking capabilities are very well used by Netgazeti.ge (Tbilisi).

By the end of the project, REI partners had enlarged the pool of media outlet contributors, refined program formats, improved their system for information exchanges, raised the quality of reporting from the regions and increased the profile of the portal *headlines.ge*. and provided their audiences with election coverage not available through the national, politically-polarized media.

Participating organizations learned to work cooperatively with the common goal of improving election coverage and the REI created an increased respect for deadlines and the value of teamwork. The reporting and organizational ability of the partners improved from the initial REI project for the 2012 parliamentary election to the presidential election in 2013 and then to the local elections in 2014. The project has created unprecedented dialogue and cooperation between regional print outlets, TV stations and online media and an important archival record of the elections has been created for future use.

1.2 Diversify delivery channels by supporting innovative, traditional, on-line and mobile phone content distribution systems.

Expansion of the internet into virtually all parts of Georgia, the growth of new media production tools and the public's engagement with social media presented a golden opportunity for media outlets and journalists to reach new audiences and engage them in interactive discussions. Activities in the first two years of the program focused on an innovation camp for university students, social media skills training for journalists and the award of media innovation grants.

167 participants were trained in nine workshops that focused on basic computer skills, new multimedia content production and integration with social media. A Training of Trainers workshop was conducted for seven professionals in March, 2012. The program awarded 13 content production grants through its New Media Technology Fund, providing assistance for nine bloggers and four on-line media outlets.

At a Student Media Innovation camp (October 1-2, 2011) Five-student teams from four universities were trained in new media technologies, including photo and video production and how to work with social media platforms such as YouTube, Flickr and Prezi. Two of the four teams, CSJMM/GIPA and Caucasus Media School, completed multimedia projects and were awarded prizes.

The effectiveness of the innovation camp was hampered by the students lack of basic computer knowledge. A fifth school, Iliia State University, had been expected to participate as well but they could not find five students with the technical skills required and the team from Tbilisi State University was not able to finish their project. A second innovation camp, anticipated for year two of the program was cancelled and the program was modified to focus much more attention on basic skills training and media outlet support through a New Media Initiative in years three and four.

1.2.1 New Media Initiative

The proliferation of new media and popularity of social media expanded greatly during the course of the G-MEDIA program. What began, in the first two years, as general technology and multimedia production training workshops for journalists evolved, in years three and four, into an ambitious project designed to help capable regional media capitalize on new opportunities to reach their audiences, integrate their newsrooms with social media and create alternative

sources of revenue through online advertising, The New Media Initiative (NMI) was designed as an intensive, holistic approach to new media development for motivated, engaged partners.

IREX was fortunate to recruit as New Media Manager Dachi Grdzlishvili, who was working as Deputy Editor in Chief of the integrated newsroom of Palitra Media Group. A former journalist, presenter and producer, Mr. Grdzlishvili is a well-known and respected media professional in Georgia who has a full range of management, technical, editorial and new media skills. Ana Nizharadze joined the team as Training Coordinator. The team was strengthened by the addition of four skilled and experienced local trainers; all completed in an IREX training of trainers course and each specializes in an NMI targeted activity: multimedia content production, website development and online sales.

NMI partners were selected through an evaluation process, conducted by Dachi Grdzlishvili who met with the 27 media outlet partners identified in the year three work plan. Grdzlishvili used assessment questionnaires and interviews with media owners and managers in order to determine their capacity, interest and level of commitment to developing a greater online presence. The evaluation included a review of their staff capabilities, equipment and training needs.

Media outlets selected for the NMI included *Samkhretis Karibche*, TV Borjomi, Radio NOR, *Kakhetis Khma*, TV Tanamgzavri, Radio Hereti, *Spektri*, *Guria News*, *Chemi Kharagauli*. TV Ninth Wave (Porti), *Akhali Gazeti*, Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters (GARB), Georgian Regional Media Association (GRMA), and Palitra Media Holding.



NMI Manager Dachi Grdzlishvili leads a training.

Although the purpose of the on-site evaluations was to identify partners for the New Media Initiative, Grdzlishvili also included some initial consulting on a range of issues including equipment procurement and configuration, content production, staff management and multimedia reporting skills. In the early implementation of the NMI, it was apparent that partner interest was extremely high and that the range of consulting would extend beyond the array of training topics originally envisioned. Based on the assessment process, Grdzlishvili and New Media Training Manager Ana Nizharadze created a planning matrix which identified the strengths and weaknesses of each partner media outlet, in relation to their new media capacity, and set training priorities.

Although the initial training began in early in the third year of the program (October-December, 2012) a formal launch of the NMI with project partners and USAID officials was conducted in January 2013. Participants were told that training, consulting and mentoring would fall into four categories, which reflect the project objectives:

1. Management training and mentoring, to help partners use their staff and other resources most effectively for management, news production and business development.

2. Website design to help partners offer a full range of journalism content, provide a forum for discussion of public issues and advertising space needed to support and sustain the partners' efforts. Technical training and support, equipment acquisition and configuration were also included.

3. Content production training, to teach journalists and other staff how to produce news stories, programs and other content for their website and social media, including the production of infographics.

4. Training in new media sales, including the creation of new media products, marketing and the use of website analytics to determine audience and maximize revenue from online advertising sales.

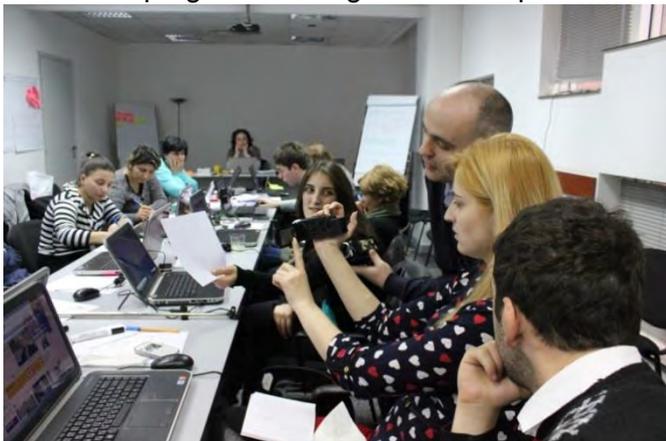
NMI Partners

The importance of participant commitment was stressed and included a discussion of what the G-MEDIA program would require from partners, who would be regularly evaluated:

- Full participation in all training and consultancies;
- Anticipated investments in equipment and software;
- Implementation of training and consultancies in order to establish dynamic new media operations, including a demonstrated commitment to sustainability; and
- A commitment of human and other resources needed to implement the assistance.

Multimedia production training conducted in the first two years of the program demonstrated the need for standardized training equipment. Journalists either lacked modern computers or their software was inadequate or, more often, pirated. In order to support training in multimedia production and similar tasks, IREX invested in 11 laptop computers, cameras, voice recorders, microphones and other accessories. This equipment would serve as the backbone for training workshops conducted in Tbilisi, the regions, and in the participants' own media outlets. Training was much more efficient as all participants were able to use the same computers and programs in classroom sessions.

A related effort was the NMI staff's work to build a Georgian language software kit for multimedia reporters. DVDs of trial and free software programs were given to NMI partners and allowed reporters to shoot video, record audio, take photos, insert logos, download and convert files from the internet, create information graphics, do Skype interviews, organize archives of materials, construct schedules and share it all with colleagues. By selecting free or low-cost software IREX was also able to encourage partners to avoid expensive software in favor of more affordable options.



Shota Gogishvili leads a multimedia training

Initial training focused on basic technical skills and, as partners became more computer-literate the training and mentoring evolved into more specific media-related subjects that supported the NMI objectives:

- Multimedia content production, including photography and editing, video and audio and info-graphics production
- Management practices and technical facilities needed to support a viable new media operation
- Design and operation of websites and related issues such as hosting options, social media integration, and website analytics
- New media sales opportunities, tools and management

Training Type/Name	N of Trainings/ On job coaching	N of Participants
New Media Training Y3	30	232
New Media Training Y4	4	44
Total	34	276

An evaluation at the end of year three demonstrated continued growth and some extraordinary achievements by NMI partners, some of whom did not even have websites prior to the project.

- Newspaper *Kakhetis Khma* was now capable of managing their own website, producing video content and integrating content from their newspaper.
- Newspaper *Speqtri* replaced their simple blog with a sophisticated and interactive website, integrated their news content and began selling advertising space.
- *Borjomi TV* had a new website and technical staff capable of managing it. They integrated their TV content, become very active on social media and site visits increased dramatically. NMI assistance also helped them redesign their studio and control room to more professional standards.
- *Radio NOR* developed a fully-functioning web page and this small community radio station even started selling advertising space.
- Newspaper *Samkhretis Karibche* was able to offer high-quality multimedia news coverage on a more sophisticated website that also enabled them to sell advertising packages. With the assistance of NMI, the newspaper also engaged in a joint sales effort with *TV Borjomi*, thereby providing multimedia advertising products.
- Newspaper *Chemi Kharagauli*, with limited resources, had a fully-functional website, was producing multimedia news content and raising additional revenue through website advertising.
- Newspaper *Akhali Gazeti*, achieved a great deal through the first full year of the project with a more capable website, great increase in multimedia content, active engagement with social media, dramatic increase in unique visitors and new advertising revenue.

The evaluation also recognized that three partners (GARB, Radio Hereti and TV Tanamgzavri) did not make a successful commitment to the NMI and they were dropped from further participation. Based on positive public coverage of the NMI, other media outlets (who had initially declined the opportunity) requested inclusion in the project and newspaper *Batumelebi* and the Information Center Network (web portal) were subsequently added.

An assessment report in June 2012 by Social Impact confirmed good initial training success and an overall knowledge increase of 40% versus the target of 35

As the NMI project moved forward and assistance evolved from training workshops to more specific consulting and mentoring, it became evident that all partners would benefit from more targeted assistance as their skills increased and their needs became more diverse. IREX determined that in year four the NMI would focus more on on-site training, mentoring and consultancies tailored to the needs of each partner. Another benefit of the NMI project has been the continued development of skilled local trainers; one on website development, one on internet sales and two on content production. These trainers worked closely with Dachi Grdzlishvili to address specific partner problems and to expand the skills of their staff. Training workshops also continued.

During the final year of the project 44 journalists and other media outlet staff were trained in skills related to the NMI.

As in year three, NMI partners recorded a number of significant achievements, including the following:

- After establishing a sophisticated web page and receiving new multimedia equipment through NMI support, newspaper *Speqtri*'s content became much more diversified. Instead of only providing text and photo materials on the site, the staff started producing multimedia video packages on a daily basis. Based on the NMI team monitoring and evaluation *Speqtri*'s unique visitors have doubled and the organization received a new commercial advertisement for the web.
- After becoming an NMI partner and participating in several professional workshops, *Information Center Network* dramatically increased quality of multimedia content. Based on the high-capacity technical and human resources, the NMI team worked with the organization to set up an online studio that opened up an additional space to facilitate public debates in their community.
- The NMI team worked with *SK News* management on oral speech trainings and workshops on preparing special multimedia reports. During the local election *SK News* journalists regularly broadcasted online talk shows with election candidates which diversified the regional election news materials. By the end of NMI support the data showed that the traffic and the unique visitor's numbers had increased dramatically.
- Following the studio and control room technical update, the programs at *Borjomi TV* improved their quality and incorporated Skype, Hangout and other social media tools in regular broadcasting. The NMI team created specially-designed graphical templates for promotion and intro videos for the outlet and conducted several workshops for the staff during year four.
- With NMI support, newspaper *Guria News* improved their web page by adding new categories and rubrics. The outlet's video production became much more professional throughout the year. Since the on-site sales consultations the organization marketing is now very flexible and uses a specially designed software to save and manage all sales data is saved. In Y3 *Guria News* established a studio with NMI support. Since then the newspaper is able to maintain the studio recording by itself and receive commercial revenue from its talk show.
- Since joining NMI program, G-MEDIA assisted *Batumelebi* in establishing an online studio, not only the organization's staff, but also for the students to have an opportunity to learn journalism in a professional and well-organized organization. The NMI team provided tuition, on-site consultation and technical support for the studio set up. Like with newspaper *SK News* *Batumelebi* also worked intensively on the local election initiative and provide high-quality content and technical maintenance.

The program also brought some unintended benefits. The Georgian Publishers ITV Network “subproject” is an initiative that began after the NMI started. A group of key regional newspaper publishers, many investing their own funds for equipment, expressed an interest in live Internet video streaming to augment their multimedia content. In consultation with NMI staff, the partners asked for help in creating an ad-hoc cooperative venture which became the Georgian Publishers ITV Network. G-MEDIA helped the partners establish small studios, learn how to operate their equipment and provide live, interactive coverage of major events such as elections. With NMI guidance, the newspaper *Batumelebi* invested substantial money in developing an online video studio. G-MEDIA produced a report on the work at *Batumelebi*: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GW_uqjVrZpl

The partners also expressed an interest in sharing content and news coverage so Mr. Grdzlishvili conducted a three-day workshop in Tbilisi for three live studio partners: *Akhali Gazeti*, *Samkhretis Karibche* (SK News) and *Guria News*. The partner’s primary goal was to increase their ability to produce programs and live talk shows and share content in preparation for the presidential election in late October. Seven participants were given additional instruction on how to use their studios and they produced a live program featuring pre-produced video elements, and live inserts using Skype, Hang Out and 3G. As a result of the training, the partners were able to do post-election talk shows with studio guests and exchange live coverage from their respective newsrooms. G-MEDIA produced a report on the workshop: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7mKc69Oufw>

Although a great deal of the assistance was technical in nature, the importance of high quality editorial content was addressed as well. Ekaterine Pirtskhalava, an experienced journalist and NMI multimedia production trainer, was later hired as G-MEDIA Senior Journalism Advisor and continued to train NMI partners with local trainer Shota Gogishvili. Participants of training workshops were included in a closed Facebook Group where they could continue to share their work and interact with each other and G-MEDIA staff.

In order to gauge the progress of journalists the NMI staff borrowed and adapted a process used by Monitoring and Evaluation subgrantee Social Impact. A media content assessment tool (MCAT) allowed the NMI staff to evaluate some of the hundreds of multimedia stories posted by project partners each month. This assessment, in early 2014, revealed that journalists continued to face a steep learning curve and would benefit from additional training. A final NMI multimedia production camp was planned for the mountain retreat at Bakuriani in July and, because it came near the end of the G-MEDIA program, USAID representatives and owners and editors of NMI partner media were invited for a celebration of the project and its accomplishments.

The journalists worked with NMI staff and trainers on final projects and awards were given to the top three stories and the top three NMI project partners. Journalists receiving awards for their multimedia stories included video cameras, multimedia smart phones, lightening equipment, voice recorders, microphones, tripods, bags and etc. The top story, available in the following link, and produced by ICN (Information Center Network) journalist Manana Mamagulashvili reveals production skills rarely seen in the regional TV stations. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KjPeHxqE_8&feature=youtu.be

Through implementation of the NMI, IREX staff became acutely aware that some regional media outlets were lacking equipment which could substantially increase their ability to benefit from the

project and enhance their prospects for sustainability. Mr. Grdzlishvili oversaw the purchase and installation of these items at partner media outlets in 2014.

Results of the NMI project for years three and four exceeded all targets in the Performance Monitoring Plan (See Section IV, Performance Management Plan, and Appendices 1 and 2).

While the NMI project was successful and gave partners an opportunity to develop or greatly expand their internet presence, integration with social media and interaction with their audiences lessons of the project got off to a difficult start. Although the initial assessments confirmed that technical skills were low, G-MEDIA staff and trainers were frequently surprised by the extremely poor computer and technical skills present in the regional media outlets. This slowed training and, in some cases, more experienced journalists were frustrated by the inability of their colleagues to effectively participate in training workshops. In response, the NMI staff scheduled more frequent on-site mentoring visits to partner outlets so the needs of individual staff and members could be addressed.

Another challenge was the high demand placed on G-MEDIA staff and trainers by the media outlets that developed online video studios. While it was gratifying to see the high level of interest from partners, their need for constant technical, creative, production and editorial assistance placed an unanticipated burden on the program. While these were “challenges” in every sense of the word they also reflect a high level of interest and participation on the part of NMI partners, which was, in itself, an achievement of the project.

1.2.2 New Media/Social Media training for journalists

Although implementation of the New Media Initiative in years three and four of the program enabled G-MEDIA to provide a broad range of new media and social media assistance to 14 select media outlets, IREX also recognized there was a great deal of interest in technical training on the part of journalists whose outlets were not part of the NMI project.

In year three and four of the program, G-MEDIA offered a total of six regional new media/social media training workshops (two each in east and west Georgia and two in Batumi). A total of 81 journalists were trained in the six regional New Media skills training workshops. Again, these were for journalists whose media outlets were not part of the formal NMI project.

The NMI staff noted, in year three, that the level of basic technical skill that Georgian Journalists brought to the workshops was very poor so, in year three, a skills-assessment was added to the application process, resulting in more capable participants and more effective training.

The regional training workshops can be categorized as both achievements and challenges to the program. The interest in new media skills training far exceeded the capacity of the program to meet demand. The number of applicants was routinely several times the number of available seats at the table. Heavy demands for assistance by partners in the NMI project limited the number of regional training projects that could be offered and future media development projects should recognize both the heavy demand for new media training and the fact that most journalists have little current technical skill.

1.2.3 Website Support

In year two, Sourcefabric, a Czech Republic-registered nonprofit, at IREX's request, assisted selected news magazine Liberali, DECOM business publication Business-magazine.ge, and the CSJMM student media site Newscafe.ge, to migrate their websites from an outdated content management system to Newscoop, a free and open-source specialized content management system for newsrooms. Newscoop was meant to offer a more modern website, a more simplified layout, an easier process for journalists to upload content to the site, a better managed space for advertising and better linkages to readers through social media.

After transferring to the Newscoop site, Liberali visitation statistics increased and allowed for great social media interaction with its audience. The site had been averaging 70,000 to 120,000 visits per month and peaked in May 2013 to 267,245 visits. In addition, Sourcefabric worked closely with GIPA CSJMM and trained more than 20 students and teachers in newsroom management, editorial work and online journalism. Since its launch Newscafe.ge collected 35,000 unique visits, with up to 8,000 daily unique visits.

Unfortunately, though Sourcefabric's Newscoop platform offered a number of improvements to beneficiaries, overall GMEDIA partners found Sourcefabric support to be unreliable and the Newscoop system itself not as user-friendly for the editors and journalists using it as anticipated. Sourcefabric changed project managers and technical support staff to improve responsiveness but it was too late in the project to correct overarching issues. Despite contracting a local technician to provide support to site maintenance and repair, in fall 2013 GIPA's newscafe.ge told IREX that they would discontinue use of the Sourcefabric system and move to a Joomla platform as they found the site more flexible and easier for students to use. Around the same time Business-magazine.ge informed G-MEDIA management that due to financial difficulties and uncertainty about the publication's future, they would not be able to maintain the web-site. Liberali later announced they also planned to move to a different platform.

On December 16, G-MEDIA announced a competition among Georgian newspapers and magazines for the two vacated Newscoop powered web-sites. Newspaper *Kakhetis Khma* and Shida Kartli Information Center applied and were selected to transfer to the Newscoop platform. Both sites were launched in July 2014.

1.3 Develop media literacy among citizens of all ages, including in high schools and through public education to develop active, questioning media consumers.

1.3.1 Media Literacy Project

In 2012 G-MEDIA awarded five subgrants to regional media outlets to run workshops in the basics of journalism and media production for high school students. These subgrants helped media outlets strengthen links with their communities, gave teaching and mentoring skills to their senior editorial staff and prepared a cadre of citizen journalists among youth. Subgrants were awarded on a competitive basis to newspapers *Batumelebi*, *Chemi Kharagauli*, *Kakhetis Khma*, and *Below 21* and to TV station *Ninth Wave*. Subgrantees published more than 550 media pieces produced by 130 student participants on online and print platforms at the participating outlets.

IREX focused on media outlets from the regions to give youth outside the capital, where opportunities are limited, the chance to learn about journalism's role in promoting transparent democracy and development while giving them the skills to explore and produce stories important to them (see Batumelebi student Tamta Kakhaberidze's report on gender equality at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuplYDqk5zk>). Students attended "media school classes" on Saturdays where editors from the partner media outlets taught them about citizen journalism and how to create media products themselves.



To facilitate teaching, G-MEDIA provided grantees with an IREX-developed Teacher's Handbook in the Georgian language, including detailed lesson plans, and conducted TOT workshops on teaching skills and methodologies. Faculty from the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management helped turn the editors into teachers. Each partner media organization conducted two, 3-month (28 two-hour lessons) training courses.

The Youth Media Literacy project ended in May 2013 with an enthusiastic "graduation" celebration at the Multimedia Education Center. The media outlets presented multimedia news packages produced by the high school students, participants shared experiences, and took part in an interactive panel discussion with professional journalists. They also discussed the challenges and opportunities a career in journalism offers (See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBkFJ8LkX_8).

Imagine a person who is waiting for Saturday, not to rest but to attend Media School classes – we were the ones! We learned ... that you may not know anything today but if you try hard, you will tomorrow. ~ Khatia Zukhbaia, Batumi

The Media Literacy Project was by all counts a success. Some students have gone on to study journalism in college, others still work at their home media outlets. *Batumelebi* has continued the program on its own, where students continue to produce and publish stories on different media platforms. They also produce talk-shows for the Batumelebi Online Video Studio and produce packages for the newspaper's webpage.

Ten students at *Chemi Kharagauli* produce the student supplement *Imedi Khvalis* (Hope of Tomorrow) and several others now attend Tbilisi University where they continue to supply the newspaper with information about the latest developments in the capital. In Gurai, *Below 21* students work as citizen journalists, providing information from villages across the region. Khatia Zukhbaia, a Batumi Media School student, won the 2014 EU three-minute short film competition. She received first prize and a monetary award for her film *Decent Old Age*, which tells a story about the lives of elderly citizens in a retirement home. And shortly before G-MEDIA closed, TV 9th Wave in Poti shortlisted 15 new students to complete a three-month training course similar to Youth Media Literacy project using the youth studio it set up with its subgrant.



The project is credited with helping students with an interest in journalism make education and career decisions, while editors developed the teaching skills they need to work with young journalists who typically begin their careers in regional media. The project also helped the media outlets engage the communities more effectively and identify topics and issues important to youth. In all, more than 130 high school students worked with experienced journalists from five regional media partners (4 newspapers and one TV station), to learn more

about being reporters and photographers. See G-MEDIA video profile of three student participants at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RLrkh3BduU>.

1.3.2 *Telekritika*

In an effort to promote discussion about the way the news are reported and contribute to detecting cases of biased reporting, in June 2012, TI Georgia launched *Telekritika.ge*, a website where trained monitors summarized the main newscast of all major Georgian television stations in a way that sought to engage users. Users were encouraged to compare the summaries of newscasts to better understand the developments and the editorial leanings of channels as they described the events of the day to their audience. TI Georgia promoted *Telekritika.ge* using television ads (Maestro, Kavkasia TV, and public service announcements on the Georgian Public Broadcaster's Channel 1) and social media. The presentation of the policy report on the television sector was also used to present and promote *Telekritika.ge*.

Later into the project TI Georgia held a presentation of *Telekritika.ge* at the MEC to interested students and continued to reach out to and engage lecturers and professors in order to gain their support in including *Telekritika.ge* in their syllabi or to use it for extracurricular projects. Unfortunately, most lecturers and professors were not interested in even discussing the project and how their students could benefit from it. TI Georgia also continued to promote *Telekritika.ge* to students, including through presentations at Caucasus University, Ilia State University and at Tbilisi State University. TI Georgia also sought to encourage participation and engagement of *Telekritika.ge* through an online advertising campaign on *netgazeti.ge* and Facebook. As part of this campaign, in June 2013, a Kindle was awarded to one of the most active contributors to *Telekritika.ge*.

Despite the outreach and advertising efforts, TI Georgia did not manage to generate the engagement and discussion about the power and quality of the news as reported on television needed to make the project sustainable and generate the desired impact. In consultation with IREX, TI Georgia stopped updates to *Telekritika.ge* in June 2013 and conserved it as an archive resource for researchers.

Objective 2: Improve Professional Journalism

2.1 Develop practical, apprenticeship-type education at a graduate-level journalism school, including support for student-run media, paid internships at regional media outlets and scholarship programs

2.1.1 Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management (CSJMM)

Before program implementation, a decision was made by IREX, in consultation with USAID, to focus the majority of its educational institution capacity building and funding on one school in order to maximize impact. The assessment of existing higher education institutions with graduate programs in journalism showed the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management (CSJMM) at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) could most effectively absorb and benefit from new resources. The CSJMM focused only on graduate study and had gained the reputation of having the best hands-on journalism program in the country, the largest number of students and graduates, and was more flexible to change. It was also considered politically neutrality an important factor in developing independent journalism. Finally, the G-MEDIA focus on the CSJMM would complement the US Embassy Public Affairs Section three year \$750,000 program managed by the University of South Carolina. As a result of these and other relevant factors, GIPA/CSJMM was chosen as the main G-MEDIA partner for improving professional journalism in Georgia.

In order to build CSJMM capacity the G-MEDIA program planned to provide teaching and technical training and consulting and the tools to emphasize practical multimedia training, content production, support student-run media and provide apprenticeships needed to support a skills-based education. Additional technical and monetary support would allow CSJMM to expand its course offerings, increase the number of full-time faculty, build a converged studio for student-media in multiple formats, and offer student scholarships, stipends for reporting projects and paid internships. Another key objective was development of a sustainability strategy.

For the duration of the program, CSJMM capacity building would be focused on five areas:

- Faculty development/support
- Curriculum refinement/expansion
- Development of a student media center
- Development/provision of student support programs
- Development of sustainability plans

The G-MEDIA/CSJMM partnership was problematic during much of the program and the early implementation of assistance and development of a first year grant was indicative of what was to follow. The Dean of the school left for a PHD program at the University of South Carolina (the Embassy program) and the GIPA Rector called to use IREX funds for the procurement of a new building, rather than invest in institutional capacity building. He objected to the setting of revenue targets (in order to avoid accountability) and he claimed that unless IREX fully fund all Radio GIPA expenses he would sell the station. As a result of the initial problems and prolonged negotiations regarding the details of the grant proposal, the year one CSJMM grant agreement was not signed until the beginning of the second year of the G-MEDIA program.

After considering the administrative problems within GIPA/CSJMM and the components of the US Embassy grant to USC, IREX decided to put greater emphasis on improving the school

management, and in May 2012 replaced the Senior Journalism Education Advisor with Ohio University Professor Dr. Max Grubb to match the needs of the new vision. Tamar Gabisonia, graduate of Columbia University Teachers College, was hired as G-MEDIA Senior Journalism Education Officer in February 2011, managed implementation of the grant and related activities in coordination with the new Senior Journalism Education Advisor, Dr. Max Grubb.

Consistent with the new approach to CSJMM assistance, IREX decided to establish a Multimedia Education Center (MEC) in a rented space rather than in GIPA facilities and make it accessible to the other G-MEDIA education partner, Radio Liberty Media School. Establishment of the MEC was a high priority for G-MEDIA, and a great deal of the initial effort was focused on this task. As a result, all preliminary work needed for establishing the MEC was completed before September 2011. (see more details in section 2,1,4 on the MEC). The open, multipurpose concept of the MEC was developed by IREX consultant Robb Montgomery who also provided oversight during the development phase of the facility.

The first year grant to the CSJMM (Sept 2011- Aug 2012) focused on capacity building: hiring new faculty members, establishing student support programs and student media, renovating equipment for the CSJMM, revising the journalism program curriculum and developing short courses for revenue generation. Tamuna Kakulia was selected as a Project Director for the CSJMM grant through open competition.

Scholarships

G-MEDIA supported awarding stipends to the most qualified applicants based on merit and financial need. Five regional stipends were awarded to regional applicants each year. In addition, CSJMM awarded full-tuition scholarships to its best eight applicants each year. These scholarships and stipends significantly increased the quality of applicants to the journalism program, as many qualified students would not be able to apply to the program if financial aid was not available. Two CSJMM students were also funded for a two-week international internship at Radio Liberty headquarters in Prague through a competitive process.

Faculty

A high priority of the first year grant was increasing CSJMM teaching capacity by hiring qualified full-time faculty members and changing the practice of relying mainly on adjunct instructors for the journalism program. After a lengthy and competitive search process in December 2011 two full-time faculty members and two part-time faculty members were selected from a field of 17 qualified candidates. Priority was given to these candidates due to their education, extensive practical experience, close links to the industry and relevance of their background to the needs of the program.

Curriculum

After hiring these four faculty members the next task was to revise the journalism program curriculum. The goal was to meet the growing expectation that journalism graduates have good multimedia content production skills. The task of curriculum revision is deliberative, complicated and lengthy and the new faculty members, with limited academic experience, struggled with the process. IREX struggled to achieve buy-in and commitment from the school's leadership so G-MEDIA Senior Education Adviser Tamuna Gabisonia took command of the curriculum development process ahead of the Ministry of Education accreditation visit. The curriculum overhaul was also crucial for teaching faculty members the steps in a curriculum development process, international curriculum standards and requirements of the local accreditation system.

It was also very important that the students' education would reflect the needs of the local labor market.

The curriculum development process also introduced Dr. Lawrence Pintak, Dean of the Edward R Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University to the G-MEDIA program. Requested by IREX to review the curriculum changes, Doctor Pintak assessed the first draft as overly ambitious and the courses as non-complementary. The CSJMM accepted Dr. Pintak's remarks and recommendations and efforts to revise and improve the curriculum would ultimately extend into the third year of the grant. Dr. Pintak's extensive professional TV news background and academic skills would continue to be an important asset to the G-MEDIA program.

The Ministry ultimately accepted the revised curriculum and new course syllabi that were developed as part of the new program were introduced in the spring semester 2012.

In order to address the deteriorating management and operational situation at the school, G-MEDIA turned again to Dr. Lawrence Pintak during the second and third year grants. In addition to on-going consultation on the new curriculum, Dr. Pintak was asked to focus on improving the management structure and developing student media at CSJMM. After on-site assessment of the CSJMM, Pintak raised serious concerns about management failures at the school saying "all of the major challenges facing the school stem from the absence of strong, day-to-day hands-on leadership. Without this, the school's progress will stall." Pintak recommended establishing a faculty governance structure to allow faculty to take more responsibility and share in decision-making through a faculty council.

During year three, Dr. Pintak completed his work to refine the CSJMM Journalism program curriculum. He reported that the final document was cohesive, up-to-date, provided a logical progression of instruction and provided students with great value. Dr. Pintak also praised the student media component noting it was fully dependent on the MEC.

An important achievement of G-MEDIA has been the development of the Faculty Council that was suggested by Dr. Pintak in year two. After evaluating the work of the Faculty Council in year three, Dr. Pintak reported that the CSJMM faculty and administration understood the essentials of American-style faculty governance and had, in principle, bought into the concept.

A Media Business Certificate Program was developed by Senior Journalism Education Advisor Dr. Max Grubb in the first and second year grants. The program included six modules: media sales, telecommunication law, media marketing, media management, entrepreneurship and media economics. Grubb co-taught two of the courses (media marketing and entrepreneurship) with two local instructors. Although the program offered during year one attracted 19 participants, only nine completed the course and it failed to earn a profit. Assessment of the program, based on participants' feedback, indicated there was a significant need to change the program content, make it less academic and incorporate more Georgian examples.

The Media Business Certificate Program was revised in response to requests for more practical training. A new version of the program was launched in January 2013 and offered four courses: fundraising, media entrepreneurship, financial management, and media sales. While the four courses constituted the total program, the new format allowed interested individuals to sign up for separate courses as well. The new format received mostly positive reviews, but some were critical that much of the material was in English rather than Georgian. In addition to the Media

Business Certificate Program, the CSJMM started adding new short courses for professionals as well. These included public relations and communications management, internet commerce, cameramen skills, psychology of communication as well as courses tailored for Georgian companies and NGOs. CSJMM management claimed the new offerings significantly increased the revenue generated from short courses.



Multimedia Education Center

Development of the new MEC was complete by February 2012, so from that period CSJMM students were provided with a new curriculum, based on the teaching of practical skills, supported with new course syllabi, taught in a the state-of-the-art newsroom environment of the MEC. This marked a new era for the students as well as for the Georgian journalism education environment.

With funds from the year one grant, CSJMM was also able to renovate its computer lab with new laptop computers (also provided for staff and faculty), buy new furniture and equipment for other classrooms and new textbooks for the library. In addition, CSJMM was able to build a new website for the school that was visually attractive, very informative and incorporated most social media tools.

Student media

Another important feature of G-MEDIA support was the development of student media. G-MEDIA contracted the Czech Republic-based organization Sourcefabric to develop a free and open source content management system for the CSJMM student media website, newscafe.ge. In April 2012, Tamila Vashalomidze, with experience at the BBC, Associated Press and Al Jazeera was hired as the manager of student media. She developed a student media handbook which included all details related to student media operations. IREX Radio Consultant Rich McClear provided consultancy services for GIPA Radio and started working on the radio strategy to prepare for its re-launch in September 2012.

IREX consultant Rich McClear worked closely with Radio GIPA to make it an integral part of student media. As a result of his consultations, Radio GIPA started producing more local programming and gradually decreasing reliance on the BBC and NPR to fill time. Students also produced weekly news digests for radio as part of their student media requirements. Despite the positive changes in the programming of Radio GIPA, CSJMM did not head McClear's recommendations on how to make the radio station sustainable.

The radio station manager hired new presenters and, effective January 2014, completely changed programming. Despite their efforts, Radio GIPA sustainability remained a major problem that CSJMM was never able to solve. Although consultant Rich McClear provided detailed guidance on how to create and sell advertising on Radio GIPA, the station manager insisted on relying entirely on donor funds. McClear's recommendation that the station seek expat donations (listeners to NPR and the BBC) was not seriously implemented. Other recommendations on how to increase audience and raise funds were also ignored and by the end of the grant year Radio GIPA had no apparent future financial support.

Another major activity conducted with the CSJMM was the official launch of GIPA student media with its new portal www.newscafe.ge. The voluntary nature of the student



GIPA DocU winners

media discouraged active student involvement, but with IREX's strong endorsement, student media became a required part of the curriculum and the dynamic changed immediately. With a new format and a new manager student media became a highly valued part of the curriculum and provided students with important practical experience that qualified them for employment. Students started producing content in a variety of formats: they produced blogs, made infographics (through the support of part time programmers funded through IREX grant) produced photo and video stories, news and weekly talk shows, and wrote feature articles. Students also learned to cover live events (such as elections and demonstrations) in a newsroom environment, using all social media platforms incorporated in the student media web platform. Eventually Student Media became a vibrant place for experimentation and learning which was made possible through the unique environment of the MEC. G-MEDIA Communications Officer Anita Tvauri produced a story on the work of CSJMM Student Media <http://irexgmedia.wordpress.com/2013/12/04/laboratory-to-practice-journalism/>



Radio GIPA studio

During the second and third year grants IREX supported the Student Documentary Film Festival (GIPA DocU) which was hosted at the MEC. Eight student films were shown during the event and were judged by jury made up of the G-MEDIA Chief of Party, two film directors, a producer, and a producer/journalist for Associated Press. The two winners were awarded trips to the International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival in Prague, Czech Republic (funded by IREX). The same film was later chosen for screening at the Batumi International Film Festival.

The Y1 winning documentary is available on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E74nF3CLnrg>. G-MEDIA produced a story on the work of CSJMM Student Media <http://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/11/25/three-documentaries/>

Another major activity conducted with the CSJMM was the official launch of GIPA student media with its new portal www.newscafe.ge. The voluntary nature of the student media discouraged active student involvement, but with IREX's strong endorsement, student media became a required part of the curriculum and the dynamic changed immediately. With a new format and a new manager student media became a highly valued part of the curriculum and provided students with important practical experience that qualified them for employment. Students started active journalism content production in a variety of formats: they produced blogs, made infographics (through the support of part time programmers funded through IREX grant) produced photo and video stories, news and weekly talk shows, and wrote feature articles. Students also learned to cover live events (such as elections and demonstrations) in a newsroom environment, using all social media platforms incorporated in the student media web platform. Eventually Student Media became a vibrant place for experimentation and learning which was made possible through the unique environment of the MEC. G-MEDIA Communications Officer Anita Tvauri produced a story on the work of CSJMM Student Media <http://irexqmedia.wordpress.com/2013/12/04/laboratory-to-practice-journalism/>

As part of the student support programs, CSJMM developed Internship policies and guidelines and, through IREX funding, CSJMM students completed internships in regional media outlets and in Prague at Radio Liberty. Many students also did unpaid internships in Tbilisi thanks to agreements between CSJMM and the major media outlets. In addition, with IREX funding, students made several reporting trips to the regions of Georgia as part of their classwork. Students also worked summer jobs which further developed their practical skills and allowed them to experience the environment of a real newsroom. Unlike the classroom hours of student media during their regular semesters, summer work allowed students to work full time and feel the pressure and responsibility of having to do the work under deadlines.

Management concerns

Despite the wide range of assistance and accomplishments in the areas of faculty and curriculum development, student media, equipment and facility upgrades, completion of the MEC and student support programs, the overall assistance was clouded by a lack of management skill and engagement. CSJMM Dean Badri Koplataidze had private business interests which took precedence over his work with the school. Pressured to take an active role in development of the school, Dean Koplataidze declined, but promised to resign, and left the day-to-day operations to Project Manager Tamuna Kakulia.

The failure of GIPA and CSJMM management to address fundamental weaknesses in academic planning, operations and to support G-MEDIA efforts to increase the capacity of the school prompted IREX to notify USAID in August 2012 that other institutions would be invited to use the MEC in order to mitigate the failure of CSJMM to make the best use of USG assistance and to provide the greatest possible benefit to journalism students in Georgia.

The issue of replacing the absentee dean was a constant problem throughout the year II grant. No attempts were made to develop the policy and strategy documents needed to address the larger goal of sustainability. In light of the CSJMM's failure to implement virtually all recommendations to improve its administrative and management capacity, G-MEDIA wrote to USAID and recommended that assistance no longer include management-related activities in

the remaining year II grant. Efforts instead focused on curriculum and syllabi refinement, faculty development, and student media and student support programs. As the year two grant came to a close, GIPA made the decision to replace Dean Badri Koplatadze with the former director of Imedi TV, Bidzina Baratashvili, who would officially take over the school from September 2013.

At the initial meeting with IREX, Dean Bidzina Baratashvili expressed a strong commitment to strengthening the school and making it sustainable. However, over the course of the following nine months it became apparent that he was not willing to exert strong leadership and make difficult decisions. He was forthcoming, engaging, collegial, insightful and agreed with virtually all IREX criticism and recommendations but he failed to take action. Dean Baratashvili also became increasingly vocal and public with his criticism of the university, right up until his departure in the summer of 2014.

At the request of USAID, G-MEDIA added a sustainability review element to its third year grant. IREX completed a contract with the business development consulting firm Innova to assess the financial stability of the CSJMM and to project its ability to be sustainable without funding support from the G-MEDIA program. Although the CSJMM planned to find new sources of income through development of new undergraduate and graduate programs (BA in Media Arts/Visual Arts and MA Media Engineering) Innova projected that income from these programs alone would not make the school sustainable.

The report also examined the short courses and determined that only four of 13 courses had been profitable, far fewer than claimed by the school. Other liabilities, such as reliance on a PR program that provides most of the tuition revenue but has no full time faculty (adjuncts only) and unfavorable faculty-student ratios were also identified.

The overall conclusion of the 40-page Innova report is that the CSJMM will not be able to sustain its programs, including student media, which is a key component of the Journalism and Media Management Program. Innova was critical of the schools lack of strategic planning, financial analysis and inefficient operation. The report concluded that, for CSJMM to become profitable, it is essential that costs be reduced and the school take steps to develop revenue targets and strategy for each academic program.

Dr. Pintak noted the Innova report provided quantitative evidence of what had long been suspected but, in the absence of data, could not be proved:

- There is lack of financial transparency, budgeting and financial analysis at both CSJMM and GIPA as a whole.
- Programs are being planned and launched without a systematic effort to anticipate costs and revenues.
- CSJMM faculty are woefully under-utilized, resulting in high costs for adjunct instructors.
- The short courses are far less profitable than claimed; a handful of courses are responsible for the overwhelming majority of the revenue and administrative, marketing and in some cases space rentals are not included in the profit/loss calculations.
- PR is the most successful program, but it is built on a questionable reliance on temporary faculty, raising questions about quality.
- The decentralized nature of the GIPA organization produces unhealthy competition between units that produces massive inefficiencies (such as the fact that the School of Social Sciences is home to the BA in Journalism).
- Decisions on financial contributions of the units to the GIPA administration and infrastructure are opaque.

The overall conclusion made by Dr. Pintak after working with CSJMM over three years is that GIPA is a deeply dysfunctional organization. Arbitrary and illogical decision-making and a lack of financial transparency are seriously hampering its ability to address many of CSJMM's challenges.

Assistance to the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management (CSJMM) ended on June 30, 2014. Sustainability of the school, without significant donor support, is in doubt, but G-MEDIA has provided CSJMM with the necessary tools to reach that goal.

- A new journalism curriculum supports a master's level education which is focused on the teaching of practical skills and preparation of journalists for professional careers.
- Teaching faculty, who have professional media experience, are effective in the classroom and, in working with G-MEDIA education consultants, have also expanded their knowledge of academics.
- Teaching faculty have substantially increased their technical skills and ability to produce multimedia content.
- Vibrant student media outlets have been created, integrated into the academic program and provide practical experience for students in all platforms.
- The CSJMM is able to design and deliver certificate programs, providing a source of non-donor revenue to the school.
- In the absence of effective management from the faculty deans, a faculty council form of governance was adopted and implemented

Achievements at the school have been possible despite severe challenges, most related to poor management and administration, both from the CSJMM and GIPA University.

- The dean of the school (Badri Koplataidze) was neither engaged, cooperative, motivated nor capable and the rector of the university was not supportive.
- Serious administrative and academic issues went unaddressed
- In the absence of the Dean the journalism faculty was, in effect, directed by the G-MEDIA-funded project coordinator.
- The parallel implementation of a U.S. Embassy support program created confusion which was counterproductive.
- In the absence of effective management, the faculty and staff of the school were initially unresponsive and unaccountable.

From the beginning of the program, the CSJMM knew it was the single education partner of the G-MEDIA program. IREX believes the resulting sense of entitlement played a role in the GIPA administration and CSJMM management's refusal to address the fundamental capacity problems of the institution and long term sustainability, a key objective of the assistance. Although IREX was able to mitigate this damage at the midpoint of the program, by offering assistance to other institutions through the MEC, it is apparent that the designated beneficiary did not feel compelled to implement technical assistance and that the primary motive was to attract continued donor support.

2.1.2 Other Educational Institutions

Initially, the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management was envisioned as the only G-MEDIA educational beneficiary. However, with the launch of the Multimedia Education

Center (MEC), new opportunities opened up for support and collaboration with other Tbilisi-based universities, particularly in practical, hands-on instruction.

Ilia State University

Initial efforts to include Ilia State University as a beneficiary of the G-MEDIA program were made in September, 2011 when staff met with university officials and agreed on a first-step assessment of the school's journalism program. An evaluation of the curriculum concluded there was a lack of full-time faculty, discipline and academic rigor in the program.

G-MEDIA program representatives met again with Ilia State officials and offered to conduct workshops for journalism faculty. The university declined the offer and talks with the university ended until late 2013 when IREX offered the facilities of the Multimedia Education Center for production-based classes. The University accepted the offer of MEC facilities where it taught Radio Reporting, Television reporting and a course in camera work and editing. Classes were conducted through spring semester 2014.



CSM students use the MEC facilities

Caucasus School of Media, Caucasus University

The Caucasus School of Media was added as a beneficiary in 2013 when IREX and USAID decided to open the MEC to wider use. The school has both bachelor and masters' journalism degree programs, including a B.A. in audio-visual art that includes a number of TV production courses. At the time it was added as a beneficiary of G-MEDIA, 160 students were enrolled in the Bachelor's program and 20 in the Master's program. Although the school had attracted capable faculty, it suffered from a lack of production facilities. From September 2013 to the end of the G-MEDIA program, CSM conducted its production-related courses at the MEC. In addition to offering CSM the MEC facility for production-related courses, in October 2013 G-MEDIA also offered the services of G-MEDIA consultant Dr. Lawrence Pintak to conduct a technical review of its journalism program curriculum.

Dr. Pintak recommended that the program add a capstone course to allow students to implement practical skills learned during the program. Dr. Pintak provided sample syllabi and suggestions to the CSM Dean to help her develop such a capstone course when technical resources allow (during the consulting period, the school did not have the technical capacity to conduct such a course).

2.1.3 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Media School

With a subgrant from IREX (totaling \$ 223,612) G-MEDIA staff and consultants worked with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) to develop the RFE/RL Media School, a practically-focused, laboratory-based journalism education program taught by local and visiting Radio Liberty staff. Launched in April 2012, the school evolved to include two principle components: the one-year Multimedia Reporting Certificate Program and a two-month "Learning by Doing" internship program for students from various universities. During the two year grant, a total of

35 students graduated from the certificate program and more than 100 students from the internship program.

The Multimedia Reporting Certificate Program was designed to provide young working journalists with the practical skills not received in Georgian universities, including information-gathering, reporting, writing, editing, and multi-platform production. The program also aimed to teach students how to cover contemporary social issues, including gender, race, ethnicity, human development issues, and health and poverty, as well as to consider ethical issues in journalism. A major focus of the program was acquiring multimedia reporting skills. This hands-on, multi-media focused curriculum was developed also to address persistent complaints from editors and media managers that young j-school graduates were unprepared for work in a newsroom environment. The two-semester, nine-course curriculum includes among other topics, news reporting and writing, radio and television production, beat reporting, multimedia production, and media, society and ethics. Participants were selected on a competitive basis, and also required to pay tuition (up to \$1000) to attend the program.

The two-month “Learning by Doing” internship program was designed to give students the chance to practice journalism in a real media environment. Students worked extensively with 16 local RFE/RL practicing journalists on a rotating basis over an eight week period, observing as well as actually participating in the newsgathering and reporting process. Interns were recruited and selected on a competitive basis. Interns spent most of their time at the RFE/RL premises while certificate Program students attended classes in the Multimedia Education Center (MEC). As part of the grant, RFE/RL developed a website for the school which provided information about the programs and also showcased the work of students.

By using MEC facilities, RFE/RL instructors were able to conduct very practical, hands-on classes. As a result, students, many of whom had little practical knowledge prior to the program, were producing impressive video reports by the end of their first semesters.

The Media School also effectively incorporated the parliamentary elections in 2012 and the presidential elections in 2013 into the curriculum. Students from both programs received special training targeted toward pre-election reporting standards and election-day reporting techniques. During the pre-election period, students focused their reporting on voter education, posting stories and photos from events on local media websites, Facebook and the Media School website. Before and during the elections, students reported from across Georgia (mostly from their hometowns), reporting live via mobile phones, blogging, and doing live streams together



with RFE/RL radio reporters. RFE/RL bureau chief Marina Vashakmadze observed that “this was a test of professionalism for future journalists.”

The first RFE/RL Multimedia Reporting Certificate Program student cohort graduated from the program in February 2013; the second in May 2014. The ceremonies also included Learning by Doing Internship Program participants. Both events were

covered by local media⁷ as well as G-MEDIA (see <http://irexgmedia.wordpress.com/2013/02/22/radio-liberty-media-school-graduation/>).

In the final year of G-MEDIA, RFE/RL completed a comprehensive curriculum document for the Multimedia Reporting Certificate Program. With support from IREX consultant Dr. Larry Pintak, RFE/RL instructors finalized the one-year, 18-course comprehensive certificate program curriculum. This final product will help RFE/RL better present the program to potential funders, increasing the programs' chances of sustainability.

Both programs reached their initial goals. The involvement of the highly skilled RFE/RL journalists as Media School instructors provided participants with high quality training in practical journalism skills. In addition, these professional RFE/RL reporters also became skilled journalism trainers, ultimately building local capacity for journalism education. Student satisfaction with both programs was very high, and many were hired by local Georgian media organizations.

2.1.4 Multimedia Education Center (MEC)

The Multimedia Education Center (MEC) was created as a state-of-the-art, high-quality media education facility that allows educators to provide media students with practical, hands-on journalism training in a real studio environment. The MEC was completed in year 2 of the program and served as a training ground for students and professors of educational institutions directly supported by G-MEDIA as well as other educational institutions and civil society organizations. In program years 2, 3, and 4, more than 450 students from four journalism schools, including the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management (CSJMM), the Media School of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), the Caucasus School of Media, and Ilia State University used the MEC. In addition to its use by academic institutions, G-MEDIA made the facility available for other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and USAID partners to host a total of 110 events and trainings⁸, including discussions, open



Students at MEC work on different media projects

lectures, competitions, and training programs. In the broadest sense, the MEC was envisioned as a central hub for activities that intersect the disciplines of technology, journalism, and governance in Georgia and throughout the Southern Caucasus region. Over the course of the GMEDIA program, the MEC became the focal point of practical journalism

⁷ TV Kavkasia <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10200928465518982>; TV Maestro <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10200928449798589>; TV Imedi <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10200928439198324>; Palitra <http://www.palitrav.ge/akhali-ambebi/politika/27569-richard-norlandma-radio-qthavisuflebisq-mediaskolis-kursdamthavrebulebs-sertifikatebi-gadasca.html>; Media.ge <http://www.media.ge/stories/amerikashidzlierizhurnal>; Radio Liberty <http://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/media/video/24909693.html>

⁸ MEC Database

The MEC opened its doors in March 2012. The grand opening ceremony included 80 guests from USAID, other USAID partners, the U.S. Embassy, journalism educators and local media. From concept through construction, building the facility took nearly one year at a cost of approximately \$465,000. The center was designed as a large multi-platform stage using an open space architecture concept and mobile-oriented media labs where every square meter provides a studio-grade environment available for interviewing, editing, producing and hosting multi-platform content. A key part of the MEC concept was the SMART Lab or the MEC Newsroom. The acronym S.M.A.R.T. stands for *Scalable, Multi-purpose, Agile, Responsible and Trusted*. As such, MEC equipment and furniture can easily be reconfigured to adapt to different learning and production needs (see <http://youtu.be/OthWPRbPzZM> for more on the innovative use of space).

The MEC started hosting CSJMM and RFE/RL Media School classes almost immediately upon opening. In addition, the MEC was soon asked to provide space for media-related events by other G-MEDIA and USAID partners, and other NGOs. In 2013, two new journalism schools also began using the MEC to teach their courses. The addition of the Caucasus School of Media and Ilia State University as G-MEDIA educational partners helped maximize use of the MEC facilities and mitigated some of the risk from only working with CSJMM. In September 2014, the MEC added a fifth partner, Tbilisi State University Department of Journalism, which conducted its first classes at the center during the fall 2014 semester.

The MEC is managed by a team of four, with strict rules and procedures for equipment and facility use. Students sign equipment in and out using a digital tracking system and are responsible for repairs for any damage they cause. Over the three years the MEC has been in operation, the center has experienced some loss and breakage to equipment but this has been relatively minor considering the high volume of usage. The MEC team, in addition to running the center, also provide training on equipment use, conduct outreach to university partners and students, and ensure the MEC complies with USAID and IREX financial requirements.

Feedback from MEC students and other users has been universally positive. More than 80% consider the MEC a “comfortable and peaceful environment,” while 94% said it was very helpful in completing their assignments. Most importantly, MEC users emphasized that having access to MEC resources was critical to their success at becoming modern and capable journalists.

Sustainability of the MEC has been an ongoing concern from its inception. Once decided with USAID that CSJMM was not capable of effectively managing the center, IREX in the fall 2012 engaged management consultants SSG Advisors to conduct a feasibility study focused on developing sustainability options for the MEC. Expanding the partner base beyond CSJMM, and opening the facility up to other vendors and users was a critical step but revenue generated was not sufficient to meet its ongoing financial obligations. SSG Advisors recommended that the MEC become its own non-profit to continue to carry out its educational mission, and launch a sister LLC to generate commercial revenue. USAID conveyed to IREX that it would continue to support the MEC until the end of the G-MEDIA program until a final decision was made. At the close of G-MEDIA, the future of the MEC was rolled into the new follow on media program funded by USAID-Georgia and continues operation.

2.2 Improve journalism training for professionals, including both core skills for new journalists and capacity for in-depth and investigative journalism and reporting on specific issues

2.2.1 Training workshops

From February 2011 to May 2014, G-MEDIA staff, consultants and partners conducted nearly 40 trainings for more than 650 Georgian media professionals and media associations on topics ranging from investigative journalism (including computer-assisted reporting) to elections reporting, social media, advocacy and alliance-building, and understanding the media legal environment. These trainings were in addition to the specialized and targeted training provided to G-MEDIA regional TV and NMI partners and the marketing training conducted for sales teams by Management Academy. These events were designed to supplement those workshops or provide training opportunities to freelance journalists or others not necessarily affiliated with a partner media outlet.

Throughout the life of the program, seven workshops on tools and methods in Investigative Reporting benefited 136 Georgian journalists. Some investigative trainings focused on basic skills for reporters with limited experience while others tackled more advanced topics such as data mining and data visualization tools and techniques. During sessions, the reporters were given practical exercises for creating spreadsheets and databases and visualizations, and also developed investigative story ideas. Advanced investigative reporting trainings also highlighted the latest developments in investigative reporting methodology and techniques. GMEDIA Monitoring and Evaluation staff found that the Average Knowledge Increase for the basic trainings reached 47 % (pre-test score was 44 % and post-test score reached 64 %).

The April 2014 spring school of Investigative journalism conducted by the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) was intended to provide experienced investigative journalists with a wide range of information about legislative issues, government policies and procedures, access to information and related issues. Nine legal experts provided training in anticorruption mechanisms, administrative law, licensing and permits, the system of government procurement, and the Georgian Criminal Code.

With national parliamentary elections in 2012, a presidential election in 2013, and local elections all occurring during the G-MEDIA program, the need for balanced elections reporting in Georgia was critical. Transparency International-Georgia and GYLA hosted eight Election Reporting workshops for 165 Georgian journalists between 2012 and 2014. Workshops focused on the role of the media during elections, the relationship between government and media, issue-led journalism, rights of journalists, editorial ethics in election coverage, dealing with bias, how to evaluate election polls and reporting, tips for interviewing politicians, and social media in reporting elections. Participants said the sessions were vital for their everyday work. Some of the participants noted that, for them, learning about procedures of appeal was the most useful part of the trainings. Participants in the elections polls and reporting trainings said it was one of the most valuable they had attended.

As a special topic, IREX provided four workshops on Reporting on Local Government Elections for 72 journalists in the regions. The elections coincided with an increased level of decentralization in Georgia and the trainings focused on a review of the new Code on Self-governance, how to write stories based on the election programs of political parties, how to visualize information (text, photo and infographics), and how to use various social media tools when covering local elections.

At the end of the GMEDIA Elections Reporting trainings, Journalism Adviser Eka Pirtskhalava analyzed more than 500 articles and stories produced by reporters of 27 media outlets who participated in the trainings. Ms. Pirtskhalava found that, although there was still a need for critical reporting and analysis of the parties, coverage of election activities of both national parties and local candidates was overwhelmingly neutral and balanced.

In The fall of 2011, four safety training workshops prepared 67 journalists and editors on how to report safely during protests, riots, and civil strife, and deal with post-traumatic stress. The editors also learned how to manage reporters during violent situations, how to assess and analyze risks faced in such situations, and how to manage the story.

Two media advocacy workshops for over 40 participants from local and international NGOs and media outlets March and June 2011 provided the organizations and outlets with information on the basics of advocacy, including its structure and main components and such topics as advocacy approaches and styles, stakeholder analysis, building alliances, fundraising, lobbying, etc. In June, they focused on the role of social/new media in promotion for a change. For participants, the most important component was seeing concrete examples where social networks were effectively used for advocacy purposes.

"I plan to start more in-depth work in new media and use different types of web-pages for advertising purposes as well as update our organization's website. I'm going to use the tools presented during the training to make it more popular!"

- *Social Media Training Participant*

More than 125 journalists, media professionals and GMEDIA program grantees received training in Social Media, including online tools and marketing, how to build an audience with social media applications, citizen reporting, and content production. Eight of those participants attended a Training of Trainers to create a cadre of trainers able to effectively teach journalists how to use a range of new media tools.

In October 2011, eight participants from media outlets received a dedicated training in DRUPAL CMS (website maintenance and management software). Conducted by Alexander Manzhula, an experienced web-designer and Drupal administrator, the training delivered on-the-job support for www.media.ge – solving issues with database management, re-design of the website, and improving the comments system in order to encourage discussion.

GYLA conducted seven workshops on challenges with freedom of expression and information in Georgia. Participants learned what freedom of information and freedom of expression mean, what are the rights of journalists, what are the conditions when those rights can be restricted, and best international practices. Partnering with the East West Institute's Judicial Independence and Legal Empowerment Project, GYLA also provided 32 journalists from online, print and

broadcast media training on the main principles associated with administrative, criminal and civil law, as well as how to cover open court hearings and the role of the media in the process. They also discussed journalists' rights to information during court proceedings, as well as what official and non-official sources they can tap as resources.

2.2.2 On-site training at regional TV stations

On-site training of journalists, cameramen, producers and managers was introduced near the end of year two and continued through the conclusion of the G-MEDIA program. Although Partner television outlets successfully produced new content using production subsubgrants, evaluations conducted by G-MEDIA subgrantee Social Impact indicated that production quality and editorial content showed little overall improvement. In order to help these outlets improve their program quality, their overall production capacity and to support the G-MEDIA program strategy of building targeted media outlets, a system of intensive on-site training was introduced at the end of year two and continue in years three and four.

COP Matt Shelley, with extensive experience in TV news, documentary production and newsroom management did an initial evaluation of regional TV stations and, later in year two, former BBC reporter and producer Russell Peasgood was asked to visit four regional stations to assess their local production capacity. Peasgood also provided them with editorial and production advice on IREX-supported current affairs talk shows, which evolved into election programs during the campaign and the Election Day. Peasgood evaluated the stations' news programming, facilities and staff and provided IREX with training recommendations for the remainder of the G-MEDIA program.

Peasgood, with ten years of experience as a journalist, producer and manager in the U.K and nearly 20 years as a BBC trainer (most in former Soviet countries) was joined by cameraman-editor Sasha Zaikov (with more than ten years professional and training experience in the Balkans) and Roy Saatchi (with more than 25 years of BBC reporting and management and ten years training experience). They were asked to make quarterly one-week training visits to Georgian regional TV station partners. The training addressed virtually every aspect of news and information program production including management, planning, editorial policy, research, field production by journalists and cameramen, editing and program production.

IREX selected partners based on their anticipated ability to implement the training and their stated commitment to improve their work. A total of seven media outlets received on-site training assistance:

TV Gurjaani and TV Tanamgzavri (Kakheti), Guria TV and 9th Wave in Western Georgia, TV Borjomi in South Georgia, and TV Kavkasia and the GARB studio in Tbilisi.

The practice of "embedding" trainers with TV stations provides a holistic approach to assistance which allows us to address every element of the outlets' news and informational production capacity. International trainers develop close on-going relationships with the staff through repeated visits with monitoring and follow-up visits by IREX staff. Unfortunately two of the training partners (GARB and Tanamgzavri TV in Telavi) did not facilitate the training activities or implement recommendations. The on-site training efforts there were discontinued in year three.

TV Kavkasia was added in year four but work there was also discontinued because of a lack of cooperation and implementation.

The trainers encountered a wide range of response to their efforts. Some of the stations (TV Gurjaani, Guria TV, TV Borjomi) were receptive, engaged and committed to improving their work. Others (9th Wave and Tanamgzavri) were outwardly receptive but did little to implement the training and recommendations, while TV Kavkasia management was not supportive and the producer at GARB was virtually hostile.

No surprisingly, MCAT scores for the training partners showed a range of success, although the overall PMP target was exceeded at the end of the program (see Section IV, Performance Management Plan for more details).

Although IREX has no reservations about the quality of training, skills of the consulting team or their ability to work with Georgian partners there were a number of factors which prevented a higher rate of success.

- Most regional TV stations do not have strong managers to assist in implementing change.
- Staff at regional TV stations are poorly paid (or not paid) and there is a high turnover rate
- Regional TV stations are poorly equipped.
- The financial viability of the stations is tenuous at best (one partner was even forced to stop daily news programming during a six month downturn in business in early 2014).
- The ability of journalists at regional stations to report effectively was seriously hampered (until 2013) by a lack of local government information and access.

From a lessons learned perspective, the introduction of intensive on-site training half way through the program limited the potential success of the initiative. Although early content production grants helped the TV stations establish new programs and pay their staff there was no process for addressing deficiencies in production quality or editorial content. By the time trainers started working with the TV stations their program content production grant funds were virtually exhausted and the opportunity to work with more motivated partners was lost. A number of ambitious TV stations (noted above) did make good use of the on-site training and confirmed the value of this targeted, holistic approach but the overall result could have been significantly higher had the on-site training been implemented when the content production grants were awarded.

2.3 Improve media self-regulation to raise standards and increase credibility among media-consuming public

2.3.1 The Ethics Charter

The Ethics Charter, Georgia's self-regulatory body for all media, was established in December 2010 with the assistance of the European Union and the Council of Europe. It has an established code of 11 professional standards that comprise the Charter and an elected board of nine officers charged with investigating infractions and determining cases. At the close of G-

MEDIA, more than 250 journalists were signatories, predominantly from regional media though with significant representation also from Tbilisi-based media. Beginning in July 2011, IREX supported the Charter's institutional development by covering core operational costs and salaries of the executive director and legal secretary via subgrants totaling \$82,647.

With stable operational funding provided by G-MEDIA, the Charter was better able to focus on its own organizational development and growth. During the three years of IREX support, the Charter implemented strategies to increase membership (up 25% by program close), revised its complaints, investigation and hearing procedures to be more transparent and credible, and expand its donor base. This has allowed the Charter to broaden its mission to include advocacy and campaigns to protect journalists' interests, media monitoring of children's programming and election coverage, and conducting public outreach and educational events to inform the public, especially students, about the values and ethics of professional journalism. These additional activities have helped increase Ethics Charter's visibility among citizens as it continues to establish itself as a valued and trusted arbiter of journalism ethics among media professionals.

An important step toward increasing its influence occurred in November 2013 when a majority of Charter signatories voted in favor of broadening the Charter's mandate by allowing it to issue judgments on complaints against non-members. This change prompted a dramatic increase in the number of complaints lodged by the public, stretching the Charter's limited resources but also providing a positive indicator of the public's desire for ethical journalism and its perception of the Charter's role as an authority on professional standards. Over the life of the Ethics Charter subgrant, the organization reviewed a total of 30 cases, 16 of those in 2014 alone after the Charter expanded its mandate to non-members. Many reviews and subsequent statements or judgments resulted in public apologies from media outlets or other sanctions. All demonstrate how the Ethics Charter has made the media more accountable to citizens, government officials and each other. Some examples include:

- A complaint by an HIV-positive citizen that TV Maestro violated four principles of the Charter after the station failed to modify his voice or adequately obscure his appearance during an interview. Ethics Charter ruled that a journalist from *TV Maestro* violated *two principles of the Charter* by not protecting a confidential source and contributing to the discrimination of persons with HIV.
- A complaint that was filed against the News Director of TV Imedi over a Sunday program "Panorama." When the Charter agreed with the complainants, *TV Imedi* publicly *acknowledged its mistake* and the complaint was withdrawn by the group of citizens who filed it.
- The Charter Council reviewed a complaint from an MP against the journalists of TS Press and *agreed that journalism principles were violated* in three articles.

Another indication of the Charter's increasing influence can be seen in the kind of consultations sought from the organization by members and non-members alike. For example, after the Charter issued an advisory to journalists on how to cover the anti-homophobia protest in June 2013, its leadership received dozens of calls from reporters, editors and producers asking for advice on appropriate language use, ethical visuals, and other editorial guidance before

publishing or going on air. The Charter also issued numerous public statements during the course of the program when ethical and professional standards were violated by various media outlets including use of hate speech, obscenities, and other lapses in professionalism.

The Ethics Charter also celebrated its members' accomplishments. In December 2013, as part of the Ethics Charter annual meeting, the organization conducted its first ever contest for excellence in journalism. A total of 40 entries were received in four categories for reporting in Print, TV, Radio and media critique. Human interest stories were the big winners with pieces on the impact of the Abkhazia conflict and struggles faced by fishermen and those in poverty. The Ethics Charter also recognized work focused on sensitive topics but which adhered to the journalistic standards and ethics of the charter.

Before the close of their subgrant in July, the Ethics Charter successfully launched an English version of its website (<http://gartia.org.ge/en/>) providing information about its history, function, council members and duties, a membership application and other details. It also prepared a brochure with 20 cases reviewed from 2011-2014. The brochure will be given to journalism students and professionals and will be available electronically from the Charter's website. Each case is described in detail: parties to the dispute, the essence of the complaint, judgment and justification of the Charter Council. The Ethics Charter held a public presentation of the brochure in September 2014.

Objective 3: Improve the Regulatory Environment and Protect Journalists' Rights

3.1 Digital Switchover (DSO)

A 2006 Geneva agreement requires countries to cease analog transmission and convert to digital platforms by the agreed deadline, which for Georgia is July 2015. The Ministry of Economy and Social Development (MESD) is responsible for determining how Georgia will comply with the deadline. This is a complex process and large-scale reform that requires a great deal of technical and financial planning, legal reform and stakeholder input from the country's executive (MESD) and legislative authorities as well as the Georgian National Communication Commission (GNCC). The digital switchover requires decisions to be made about the configuration of a national digital transmission infrastructure, who will develop and operate the system and how consumers will receive digital broadcast signals.

Although Georgia faces the July 2015 deadline, the Georgian government failed to establish a policy and process until well into G-MEDIA program year four, with periods of progress marked by several months of inaction. While the change will be a great public benefit, improving the quality of broadcast signals, making more frequencies available and making the overall frequency spectrum more efficient, the process is complicated and time-consuming, especially for small regional outlets without the resources of national TV stations.

Despite the delays in policy, IREX supported this activity through support to media advocacy partners GYLA, TI and GARB to provide technical assistance and monitor the process, and

engaged a technical consultant to advise the regional stations to better understand the technology, the government strategy and policy, their available options and the consequences of their decisions.

Efforts to coordinate the digital switchover began in December 2012. Representatives of GYLA and TI Georgia became members of an Experts Council formed by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development. The group consisted of 50 experts representing government agencies, media, NGOs and academia, split into three working groups focused on legal, consumer and technical issues. GYLA joined the group on legal issues, GARB, the group on technical issues and TI Georgia has nominated as a representative to all three groups. Later in December the Ministry of Economy presented a strategy for the switchover to digital TV in Georgia, which had been drafted by consultants hired by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The groups were reportedly poorly organized and the effort evaporated by early spring 2013 although TI Georgia used its government contacts to monitor discussions about the need for a digitalization policy and to prepare recommendations for the government.

In early March 2013 the Experts Council presented its vision regarding the switchover to the government, which formed the basis for the Government's strategy. The Government's strategy, which underwent several revisions before the Government approved an Action Plan, envisioned awarding multiplex (MUX) licenses to commercial operators and accommodated the special needs of the Georgian Public Broadcaster and smaller regional broadcasters.

In the summer of 2013, TI Georgia published a report, providing input and recommendations to the Georgian government for the next steps in the process and evaluated Georgia's proposed switchover plan in the European context. With this paper, TI Georgia supported efforts to carry out a transparent, fair, competitive and well-managed process to award the operation of digital broadcasting networks, to establish an amended regulatory framework and to ensure that the audience is informed and receives assistance, so the public is able to benefit from the advantages of digital television. The report highlighted the need for more resources in the Ministry of Economy to handle the process, as well as the need for a competitive process to select the multiplex operators.

On February 10, 2014 the Government of Georgia approved an Action Plan and Recommendations on the Digital Switchover. The Ministry of Economy, GNCC and EBRD consultants announced the request for multiplex tenders on March 31. The announcement of the winner was scheduled for July 1. It was announced that commercial stations would be served by the company Stereo+ and the GoG would fund its own multiplex for the national broadcaster. On June 30 Rustavi 2 withdrew its application for Multiplex A, leaving no multiplex provider for the regional stations.

Regional TV stations were given the choice of developing their own local multiplexes, working with other regional broadcasters on joint ventures or relying on one of the national multiplex operations. Given the highly technical nature of the digital switchover and the importance of their future transmission infrastructure, IREX was concerned that the regional stations and GARB would not have the knowledge or skills to make well-informed decisions. In an effort to

help the regional stations better understand the technology, the government strategy and policy, their available options and the consequences of their decisions, IREX engaged consultant Marina Paunovic, and engineer who assisted the digital switchover in Serbia and has a background in media development.

Paunovic met with representatives of the regional stations March 24-28, 2014 to discuss the new government policies, hear the concerns of regional stations and begin to formulate a detailed report intended to help them better understand the DSO and its impact on their businesses. In between her first and second visit, Paunovic completed research on the GoG policy and GNCC tender, identified options for regional stations (and pros and cons for each option), estimated start-up and operational costs, and developed a model for determining ongoing expenses. She also addressed the effects of digital conversion on regional stations' audiences and their ability to operate independently. She drafted recommendations for methodologies to identify potential audiences and benefits of consolidation/merger with other broadcasters. She also addressed other developmental, operational or technical issues which may affect the ability of regional TV stations to successfully participate in the digital switchover and function as sustainable businesses. She presented the first draft of the report to regional stations during her second visit on June 23-27, solicited feedback and finalized the report.

Uncertainty created by the failure of a tender for a regional multiplex in July-September 2014 undermined efforts by regional stations to find their place in the new digital transmission system. In search of a solution, the GNCC floated a "trial balloon" to the regional stations, in early August, suggesting agree on cooperative ventures and develop small regional multiplexers where possible. The stations, working through GARB, rejected the proposal and demanded they be allowed to build their own independent digital transmission systems as outlined in the government policy. In mid-August the GNCC announced they would adhere to the original government policy and provide VHF frequencies to regional stations.

Although clarification was made on the government policy, the regional stations still faced many questions about the digital switchover, in particular the design, cost and operation of new digital transmission network. In July 2014, Marina Paunovic provided GARB with a list of 31 equipment suppliers who might be interested in providing digital transmission equipment to the regional stations. The American manufacturers Gates Air and Imagine Communications (former Harris), already active in the Georgian digital transmission market, also expressed interest in working with the regional stations and providing equipment at discount prices.

In an effort to ensure regional broadcasters had access to all relevant information about available equipment, IREX arranged for Natia Kuprashvili, Executive Director of GARB, and Marina Paunovic to attend the International Broadcasting Convention (IBC), in Amsterdam, on September 11-16. The annual conference is the premiere event for broadcasters in Europe, providing large exhibition halls of new equipment and several days of seminars on topics of interest to broadcasters. The pair met with 21 equipment vendors with a goal to find equipment vendors able to provide products and services to help the regional stations make the transition from analog to digital transmission at a cost they could afford.

At the conference, the delegation had extensive discussions with GatesAir and Imagine Communications. Kuprashvili and Paunovic met with top level company officials who again expressed interest in helping the regional stations and provide them with competitive offers and comprehensive solutions and support. The companies promised to prepare a model configuration for all GARB regional stations which will include GatesAir 100W transmitters, single channel head-ends (required to code TV signals into a digital stream) and antennas, as well as system integration, training, service, support and upgrading abilities. The company proposed meeting with GARB members to review the package in October.

As the G-MEDIA program ended Ms. Paunovic recommended that stations and stakeholders monitor developments related to DTT frequencies for regional TV stations and max power of transmitters, determine possibilities for cooperation among regional stations, and follow up with equipment suppliers and provide them with technical information needed to prepare their offers.

In the end of November 2014 GNCC officially awarded frequencies to be used for digital broadcasting to the regional stations and defined allowable transmitter strengths for each of them. The regional stations are now ready to provide network specification to equipment suppliers, which they need to customize their proposals.

The Digital Broadcasting Agency (DBA) will be reporting to the public on progress with constructing MUX for Public Broadcaster, procurement of set-top boxes for socially vulnerable populations and its plans for public information campaign on December 8, 2014.

3.2 Support Media Advocacy Organizations and Initiatives

During the first two years of G-MEDIA, Georgian journalists were working in a politically unstable and dangerous environment, facing frequent intimidation and threats. Journalists encountered barriers when collecting information for their reporting and were routinely marginalized and looked down upon by those in power. This violence against journalists intensified during opposition rallies and in the pre-election period.

Such an atmosphere was not particularly conducive to improving the media legal and regulatory enabling environment but was a critical component to the success of the G-MEDIA program. G-MEDIA brought in consultants at strategic junctures to provide technical reviews and related assistance to stakeholders including government for the reform of laws that address media issues, including freedom of information (FOI), broadcast ownership and financial transparency, must-carry and must-offer regulations regarding cable content, and existing laws pertaining to penalties for illegal interference in journalist's work and rules for the monitoring of media during election campaigns. The program also advised on rules for the selection and appointment of the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC). In program years 1 and 2, G-MEDIA also engaged the International Senior Lawyers Project (ISLP) to help the GNCC develop a communications strategy and increase its level of transparency and interaction with stakeholders, media, and civil society organizations.

Most importantly, G-MEDIA provided financial and technical support to key local implementing partners including Transparency International-Georgia (TI) and the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) media to support work defending journalists' rights and push for the development of media laws that conform to international best practices. With G-MEDIA support, GYLA and TI-Georgia issued numerous public statements and wrote blogs and letters to authorities in an effort to gain publicity for and strengthen laws and norms to better protect the rights of journalists and media outlets. TI also issued reports on media ownership transparency and advertising (see more on TI and GYLA activities below).

In response to challenges in media legislation, TI-Georgia and GYLA became founding members of the Media Advocacy Coalition (MAC), formed as a unified platform to improve journalists' access to public information and meetings and to defend their rights through advocacy and lobbying. Other founding members included the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF), Media Club, Georgia Regional Media Association (GRMA), GARB, TV Net, Ethics Charter, and Press Association. The MAC worked on issues including defense of journalists' rights and physical security, sub-titling requirements for broadcasters, proposing candidates to the vacant seat at the Georgian public broadcaster governing board, participating in setting up a system to monitor programs by the public broadcaster, surveying Must-Carry regulations, and requesting that cable companies transmit signals of over-the-air broadcasters without impediment. The coalition members also monitored and addressed cases concerning the arrest (and later release) of photographers accused of spying, protested the non-transparent privatization of a TV tower, and demanded fair treatment of the Palitra Media Group by tax authorities. One major issue was petitioning the Council of Justice for a re-admission of audio and video recordings in courtrooms.

One of the Coalition's greatest achievements was getting the amendment enacted on "must carry" to article 51 of the Election Code of Georgia. Spearheaded by TI-Georgia and GYLA, the legislation ensured cable companies were obligated to carry the signal of broadcasters possessing a general license (broadcasters which produce news and public affairs programs), regardless of the type of license (both over-the-air and satellite broadcasters), in their service area. This provision made independent broadcasters available to households in and outside their own cities and regions. This obligation to carry the signals ensured coverage of 20% of the Georgian population, both in and outside their service area which in turn ensured more comprehensive coverage of the 2012 elections. TI-Georgia wrote that, as a result of the organized and persistent work of MAC members, "in the weeks and months leading up to the October 27 [2013] presidential elections, private media was able to provide a largely pluralistic coverage of the candidates and their campaigns. There were no reports about harassment or intimidation of journalists or of undue government interference that would have limited the media's ability to cover the campaigns."

Unfortunately, over time the MAC suffered from its own internal politics and the competing agendas of its members. Though the organization made significant contributions to improving the enabling environment, before the end of G-MEDIA both TI-Georgia and GYLA had withdrawn from the coalition because of concerns around lack of transparency and inclusion.

Both organizations continued to work with G-MEDIA individually and cooperatively to provide advocacy for journalists, independent media outlets and the public.

In 2010, the level of optimism regarding the freedom of the media and public perceptions about the media was low in Georgia. A 2011 survey by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) reported that most Georgians felt, at that time, that the country's main TV stations served the interests of the government. Over the course of the G-MEDIA program however, Georgia's World Press Freedom ranking increased, and more than 100 amendments and new norms have been added to Georgian law that effect the media. Importantly, the public's perception of the media environment has vastly improved. According to the G-MEDIA Endline Survey (see Appendix 5, attached separately), almost all public opinion and media professional respondents mentioned an increase of freedom due to decreased political pressure. They also noted increased transparency in the media and the role that G-MEDIA and its partners played in making all of these changes happen. One G-MEDIA partner said, "I can tell you that all of our media activities, all of our media-related campaigns, and all of our attempts at advocacy are related to G-MEDIA. And, without its support, we could not have implemented any of these activities. That's why, when speaking about our achievements, we should certainly mention the contribution of IREX and G-MEDIA together."

There are many challenges ahead and having supportive media laws on the books is only the beginning. More leadership and enforcement from the Georgian legal entities is needed. But progress over the last four years has been tangible.

3.2.1 Transparency International Georgia

As a key G-MEDIA implementing partner, Transparency International-Georgia (TI-Georgia) made tangible improvements to the regulatory environment surrounding local media. With approximately \$637,000 in subgrants, TI-Georgia published seven high-quality reports on critical issues in Georgian media, led several successful advocacy campaigns, and assisted legislators in improving the transparency of broadcasting, party finance, and freedom of speech legislation. In addition, TI-Georgia and IREX, together with other GMEDIA partners, played a leading role in designing a national digital switchover strategy and assisted media outlets in making the move away from analogue broadcasting. GMEDIA and TI-Georgia also worked to strengthen the practice of data journalism in country, providing training to regional and Tbilisi-based media outlets. According to the endline study conducted by Social Impact, GMEDIA's partnership with TI-Georgia resulted in improved media independence and transparency, addressing critical issues such as media ownership, advertising, and online surveillance.

Contributions to Media Transparency

As a major GMEDIA advocacy partner, TI-Georgia's high-quality policy research played a critical role in facilitating public discussions and generating support for improvements in the transparency of Georgia's media. TI-Georgia's research informed its complementary work in public advocacy and legislative assistance. Major achievements include:

- Two landmark reports published in Years 1 and 3 analyzing political influence in the advertising market before and after the 2012 Parliamentary Elections.

- Two reports published in Years 2 and 4 analyzing structures of media ownership in Georgia. These reports increased the public's ability to detect bias in both TV and other media sources
- Improvements to Law on Broadcasting reducing the scope of the State Audit Office to interfere with media outlets that take a political stance. These changes resulted from pressure from "This Affects You Too Campaign," led by TI-Georgia and GYLA.
- Reforms, drafted in consultation with MPs and international experts, designed to regulate law enforcement's surveillance of digital communications. These reforms resulted in part from TI-Georgia's research on online surveillance, published in Year 2, and subsequent discussions on possible improvements in Year 3,
- Improvements adopted by the GNCC in the financial reporting requirements for broadcasters. These were a direct result of consultations with TI-Georgia

Must Carry Must Offer

GMEDIA partners, including TI-Georgia, GYLA, ISLP, and the Media Advocacy Coalition, were instrumental in supporting the establishment and enforcement of "Must Carry" and "Must Offer" rules to the Law On Broadcasting. Between 2012 and 2013, TI-Georgia briefed international actors and liaised between members of parliament and civil society actors, helping generate international pressure for increased TV media pluralism.

Georgian National Communications Commission and Georgian Public Broadcaster

GMEDIA's support was critical to preserving the political independence of Georgia's media regulatory bodies, the GNCC and the GPB. Consultations with TI-Georgia and GYLA contributed significantly to improving the legislation surrounding the regulation of the GNCC. The resulting changes strengthened conflict of interest provisions and raised minimum qualifications for commissioners. TI-Georgia and the Media Advocacy Coalition also sparked a widespread public debate over the government's attempt to replace the members of the GPB, through its public campaigns and discussions with law-makers.

Digital Switchover Strategy

GMEDIA played a major role in developing a switchover strategy for Georgia's upcoming move from an analogue to a digital broadcasting signal, a complex process involving interaction between government, business, and civil society. In early 2013, TI-Georgia moderated working group meetings of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MESD). Its recommendations were reflected in the Ministry's national switchover strategy, updated in March, 2014. In the subsequent months TI-Georgia and IREX worked together to assist regional outlets in developing their own digital broadcasting infrastructure.

Promoting Data Journalism

Supporting Georgia's media sector to take advantage of available public information in their reporting became a key GMEDIA goal. IREX supported TI Georgia to promote data journalism

principles during Years x and x. TI Georgia offered x trainings, x on-sight mentorings, x guest lectures on data journalism topics to local journalists. They also published an Open Data Guidebook and prepared 5 video tutorials on open data resources. Trainings covered topics such as finding and analyzing publically available data, and TI Georgia provided participants with open data resources. Usage of data journalism practices by reporters has increased following the trainings. For example, following a mentoring visit, the newspaper *Akhali Gazeti* started to release articles the Orthodox Church's ownership of a new popular brand of bottled water, Sno, and discovered that it recently won government procurement contracts worth nearly GEL 300,000 (http://newpress.ge/index.php?page=4&staties_id=501). In a follow-up story, AkhaliGazeti took a closer look at the business activities of the church and the public funding it receives (http://newpress.ge/index.php?page=4&staties_id=542).

3.2.2 Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA)

The Georgian Young Lawyers Association is a membership-based NGO dedicated to protecting human rights, strengthening the rule of law, and increasing public legal awareness. It is one of the largest NGOs in Georgia with more than 800 members and an eight-office network spread across the country. From 2011 to 2014 G-MEDIA financially supported GYLA to provide a range of media services for over 239 Georgian journalists, including training on understanding and reporting on media laws. G-MEDIA also supported GYLA's Legal Defense Centers (GMLDCs) which provided more than 8,000 legal services to constituents across Georgia. IREX also supported GYLA's work with the Georgian Parliament to monitor developments in media laws and advocate on behalf of journalists with law makers.

IREX partnered with GYLA in order to strengthen its efforts to strengthen professional journalism, protect journalists' rights, and improve the legal regulatory environment for media in Georgia. With financial support from G-MEDIA, GYLA accomplished these goals through the following major activities:

1. Trainings – GYLA conducted trainings to improve journalists understanding of media laws, and to use this understanding to improve their reporting. GMLDC offices offered journalists specialized, one-day workshops and roundtables on legal issues such as legislation surrounding administrative penalties, and procedures for appeal. GYLA also offered more formalized trainings on media issues such as proper use of the Freedom of Information Act, responsibilities of MPs, and the functioning of the tax system. Participants gained new competencies as a result of GYLA's trainings. For example, during the first two years of G-MEDIA, M&E data showed a 14% increase in knowledge on topics related to freedom of information based on GYLA trainings.

In Year 1, GYLA hosted a “summer school” in the town of Kobuleti for investigative journalists to provide intense training in investigating specific laws and issues within the Georgian government. The 10-day workshop was attended by representatives from 12 media outlets. Sessions were taught by leading law practitioners and judges. Participants gained critical skills in addressing issues such as the functioning of Georgia's bureaucracy, legal immunity for journalists, administrative proceedings, the Law on Permits, government

procurement, FOI legislation, and the Criminal Code. Journalists reportedly increased their knowledge of these topics by 22%, based on SI pre and post-testing.

GYLA also prepared journalists to report on each of the three elections that took place over the course of the program. In March 2012, before parliamentary elections, GYLA trained 52 journalists in two, 3-day workshops with the Election Code and their rights and responsibilities when covering elections. GYLA also provided guest speakers and presenters to G-MEDIA-organized trainings on election-related reporting skills in 2012 and 2014. In addition, GMLDC regional offices conducted roundtables on the Election Code before the presidential and local self-government elections.

2. Legal services to journalists – G-MEDIA support enabled GYLA to provide critical consultative and legal defense services to at-risk journalists across Georgia. During the first two years of the program, GMLDC centers provided over 1,300 consultations to journalists facing threats and harassment due to the politically unstable situation prior to the 2012 Parliamentary elections. Over the course of G-MEDIA, GMLDC centers provided more than 8,000 such consultations on topics such as filing FOI requests, appealing unjust decisions of public agencies, and issues surrounding electoral legislation. In addition, GMLDC centers, with G-MEDIA financial support, drafted over 1,000 legal documents for journalists and media outlets, including applications, lawsuits, and appeals, among others. G-MEDIA's financial support was critical in allowing GYLA to represent and defend journalists in various administrative suits throughout Georgia. GMLDC's argued for Journalists free access to public buildings, meetings, and events, and defending them against unfair punishments and fines. GYLA successfully defended journalists' rights on a number of occasions, for example in five cases, administrative were obligated to disclose certain public information to journalists and media organizations and in four cases, fines imposed by the GNCC on four regional broadcasters were removed. Over the course of G-MEDIA, GMLDC also litigated cases in court on behalf of media outlets and journalists in Georgia and in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, many of them successfully. The rate of successful litigations increased after the 2012 Parliamentary elections.
3. Parliamentary monitoring and legislative assistance – Throughout the course of the G-MEDIA program, GYLA was an effective partner in helping to improve the legal environment for journalists working in Georgia. Through its parliamentary secretary, GYLA used G-MEDIA support to monitor media-related legislation within Georgia's Parliament, and worked with a multitude of partners across public, private, and civic lines to ensure that journalists' interests were represented within law-making. For example, prior to the 2012 elections, GYLA worked with the CEC to amend an ordinance which restricted journalists' access to polling stations and reduced their effectiveness as watchdogs. GYLA conducted opinion surveys of journalists, met with CEC representatives, and produced legal analysis, official letters, and statements. Through its efforts, the ordinance was amended before the 2013 presidential elections.

GYLA also worked with GMEDIA partners TI-Georgia, GARB, and the Media Advocacy Coalition to improve the content and enforcement of laws regulating media outlets through legislative and drafting assistance. GYLA significantly contributed to GMEDIA's work to improve Georgia's Law on Broadcasting:

- GYLA participated, together with the Media Advocacy Coalition, in the *This Affects You* campaign, to include Must Carry & Must Offer provisions in the Election Code. This succeeded as a temporary measure two months prior to the 2012 elections and in 2013 it became a permanent part of the Law on Broadcasting.
- Working with TI-Georgia, GYLA succeeded in drafting amendments to raise the qualifications of commissioners appointed to the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC). Most of these amendments were approved in September 2013, helping to reduce the bias within this institution.
- GYLA worked with the Media Advocacy Coalition to improve the transparency of media funding. The G-MEDIA partners pressed the government to pass amendments identifying beneficiary owners and requiring disclosure of funding sources. Amendments ensuring transparency of ownership were introduced to the Law on Broadcasting prior to the 2012 elections while amendments aimed at bringing information on funding sources to light, were approved in 2013.

3.2.3 Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters (GARB)

G-MEDIA provided support to the Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters (GARB), the membership-based association of independent broadcasters, beginning in 2011. Technical assistance and subgrants were provided to help improve the association's organizational capacity to increase services to its 22 member stations (24, as of the close of the program). Indirect beneficiaries included the two million viewer audience that GARB members jointly reach.

Assistance to GARB was focused primarily on improving the diversity of news programming broadcast by regional media outlets, and supporting the expansion of outlets' coverage outside their regions. As a G-MEDIA subgrantee, GARB accomplished this with three key activities:

- 1) News Exchange - G-MEDIA supported GARB to operate a shared server for members to increase their programming diversity through a news exchange. The project allowed GARB members to make their stories available to each other, for inclusion into their respective news programs. This enabled them to report on stories outside their regions. In addition, GARB's Tbilisi studio provided members with a daily news package, which each station could incorporate partially or fully into their own news program. GARB also recorded interviews and press conferences at the request of members, when they need information about issues pertinent to a particular region or broadcaster.

The GARB Tbilisi studio prepared an average of six news packages daily, which were uploaded to a shared online server. Member stations had access to edit the packages as necessary and air the final product which were also shared online. As part of the News Exchange project, a total of 1,500 video reports were produced in Tbilisi and uploaded to the joint server and 700 stories were exchanged on the server among member stations.

GARB continues to support this project with its own resources.

- 2) Regional Elections Initiative – G-MEDIA supported a joint project of GARB, GRMA and TV Kavkasia to provide comprehensive coverage of the parliamentary elections in 2012 and presidential elections in 2013. The GRMA coordinated the work of a joint newsroom and operated headlines.ge, and GARB produced hour-long elections programs and helped its members organize pre-election debates which were rebroadcast through GARB's shared server, and;
- 3) Subtitling Studio – G-MEDIA supported GARB to operate a subtitling studio to help its 22 member broadcasting companies fulfill mandatory regulations set forth by the GNCC to put subtitles on at least 30% of Western films broadcast. The sub-titling studio produced an average of three films a week, 12 films a month. In total, 77 movies were subtitled and uploaded to the joint server. During implementation of the subgrant none of the GARB stations were fined for failure to meet the mandatory rule of broadcasting subtitled movies. In order to diversify the content of member TV stations, GARB reached an agreement with the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) to provide archived materials including western films, documentaries, ethnographic and TV sketches. GARB continues to cooperate with GPB after the completion of the project.

G-MEDIA also secured expertise to facilitate a negotiated agreement between GARB and the Georgian Copyright Association to agree on tariffs more reasonable to GARB members to be paid on broadcast income for the use of copyrighted music. The Georgian Copyright Association also agreed to simplify the reporting process on which copyrighted materials had been used in a given month.

GARB also played a significant role in supporting its members throughout the digital switchover process. As reported above (in section 3.1), GARB leadership worked closely with G-MEDIA consultant Marina Paunovic to ensure GARB members had access to reliable information about technical requirements and options, actively sought appropriate and cost effective vendors and suppliers, and represented its members interests before the GNCC. At the close of G-MEDIA the future of regional television stations, including GARB members, remained uncertain.

Social Impact (SI) conducted a survey of GARB-member TV stations to measure the extent to which G-MEDIA-supported GARB programming helped regional TV stations expand their news coverage, per indicator 1.1.2 : *The percent of GARB members that report expanding their news coverage outside their regions as a result of G-MEDIA support*. SI selected 16 GARB stations to participate in the survey (others were logistically inaccessible), of which 10 ultimately completed the survey (some cancelled, others opted out). The survey exercise revealed some tension between large GARB members who tend to be the decision-makers and smaller stations that felt excluded from GARB activities. These smaller stations are the ones that opted out of the survey.

Analysis of the 10 survey responses showed that 90% of respondents participated in GARB's content exchange. Respondents reported using the shared content and stories uploaded by

other TV stations to diversify their daily news programs, though indicated shared content didn't always pertain to subject matters relevant or interesting to their particular target audiences. Nonetheless, 80% described the content exchange as "very useful," while the remaining 20% said they thought it was "slightly useful".

The majority (80%) wanted more news stories prepared by GARB to allow for more diversity and possibly more stories relevant to their station's interests. Two respondents said they wanted GARB to produce more in-depth stories instead of news briefings and press conferences. All respondents recognized that GARB had limited financial and human resources for more production.

According to survey results, GARB stations succeeded at expanding their reach. Eighty percent of respondents reported they "greatly expanded the regions" they cover as a result of GARB assistance, and the remaining 20% said they "slightly expanded the regions" they cover. In the past, GARB stations could not afford to send a reporter out to cover an important event or news taking place in another region. Now with the joint server, stations said they can provide coverage of news from other regions without incurring any additional costs. Thus, respondents reported that GARB membership and the content exchange contributed to the diversification of their news content and also increased the quality of their news programs. The majority of respondents (70%) believed that their content improved either greatly or slightly (20%).

3.3 Transparency and engagement with the stakeholders of Georgian National Communication Commission (GNCC) is improved

3.3.1 Support Regulatory Transparency

Since its inception in 2000, the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC) has been widely perceived as a government-influenced and non-communicative communications regulatory authority. A significant breakthrough was achieved early in the project when G-MEDIA management initiated discussions with Commission Chairman Irakli Chikovani to explore the possibility of establishing a cooperative relationship with the program. The result was a period of open dialogue between the GNCC and NGO's, followed by technical assistance from the U.S. and development of a Strategic Communication Plan, intended to help the GNCC become more transparent.

Key assistance in this effort came from the International Senior Lawyers Project (ISLP), a group of highly qualified attorneys with extensive experience in media-related law and regulation. ISLP volunteer regulatory lawyer David Oxenford initially traveled to Tbilisi to provide the GNCC with expert legal advice on a wide range of important topical issues, including regulatory independence. With the Oxenford visit and the roundtable that followed, G-MEDIA helped raise awareness of media law implementation problems, and their possible resolutions. It also helped build trust between the GNCC and the newly formed Media Advocacy Coalition who met GNCC representatives at the discussion. Chairman Chikovani gave the green-light to develop a much-needed GNCC communications strategy with the support of G-MEDIA. The purpose of the GNCC communications strategy was to integrate interactive media platforms that allow broader

public awareness of GNCC activities, proactive GNCC-media relations, and greater public and industry participation in GNCC decision-making processes.

In early 2012 the GNCC hosted a meeting with NGO and media representatives regarding the communication strategy for 2012-2015, including the Media Protocols and the guidelines for responding to media inquiries, organizing news conferences, and issuing media releases. In May, ISLP volunteer lawyer Barbara Swann worked with the GNCC to finalize the plan and she also provided media relations training for commissioners and staff. . The GNCC conducted monthly open-door days in which journalists and interested citizens could ask questions on selected topics.

In February, 2012, IREX initiated discussion on an issue that would become both an opportunity and an existential threat to independent, regional broadcasters: the digital switchover (discussed in section 3.1). A roundtable discussion was conducted with the GNCC and representatives from the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, national broadcasters, the Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters and other stakeholders to share views and experiences and discuss the challenges faced by Georgian broadcasters as the country prepared to switch to digital broadcasting in 2015.

G-MEDIA in cooperation with the Washington, DC office of Davis, Wright, Tremaine LLP law office (an ISLP partner firm) organized a study tour to Washington for eight representatives from the GNCC, regional broadcasters, and civil society to learn more about the American experience in broadcast regulation. Transitioning from analog to digital broadcasting was also discussed. The participants spent two full days at the Federal Communications Commission, where they learned in detail many of the efforts the FCC made to raise awareness among the public about the transition, as well as some of the technical challenges they and local broadcasters faced as the transition deadline loomed near. The study tour participants also met with attorneys and lobbyists representing major U.S. television networks, smaller niche broadcasters, and other industry interest groups.

Although a memorandum of understanding was signed by USAID/IREX and the GNCC in early 2012, a parliamentary investigation of the GNCC and Chairman Irakli Chikovani (who fled the country for several months after the Georgian Dream's victory in the 2012 election) effectively ended additional technical assistance by G-MEDIA. The strategic communications plan, which was developed and at least partially implemented, was not presented publicly because of the toxic political climate and investigation of the commission. The GNCC staff continued to conduct the monthly open doors for some period of time and, when the GNCC became caught-up in the digital switchover controversy, it was apparent the commission had substantially improved its ability to work in a more transparent and cooperative fashion.

ISLP continued to provide technical assistance to the G-MEDIA program, conducting technical reviews on draft legislation and responding to requests for assistance from the Georgian Young Lawyers Association. In mid-2013, ISLP reviewed GYLA's draft legislation on the selection of GNCC commissioners and provided constructive criticism reflecting best practices and international norms. The review addressed the GNCC's structure, selection process for

commissioners, eligibility requirements, tenure and related issues relating to the commissioners qualifications and appointments. GYLA and TI Georgia worked together to further refine the draft amendment. Legislation incorporating a majority of points raised by GYLA and TI Georgia was ultimately passed and the process of selecting skilled commissioners is now conducted in a more transparent, less political fashion.

G-MEDIA and ISLP technical assistance to the GNCC (and program partners) addressed a number of issues important to the development of an independent and sustainable media environment: greater transparency by the regulatory body, new laws that require greater transparency of ownership and finances of media outlets and public's non-discriminatory access to the TV channels through a must carry law. Unfortunately G-MEDIA efforts were hindered by the severe challenges of a parliamentary investigation of the GNCC (and its chairman) and the long period of instability which followed impeachment of the next director and the appointment of yet another director in mid-2014. However, key staff with whom G-MEDIA worked, maintained their jobs at GNCC throughout the political turmoil and show greater appreciation for stakeholder input and significantly better skills in communications.

Objective 4: Improve Media Outlet's Viability

4.1 Address conditions affecting the sustainability of media outlets, including legal issues around advertising, in order to improve their viability

4.1.1 Radio Research

The lack of radio audience data, prior to the G-MEDIA Program, prevented development of the radio advertising sector and greatly limited the ability of regional radio stations to serve their communities. A new system of regular, reliable radio audience research was developed in year three and was functioning as a sustainable enterprise when the program ended. In addition to supporting the initiative, radio stations (and advertising agencies) learned how to use audience data to make programming decisions, increase the size of their audience and their advertising revenue.

In order to provide audience data to the broadcast and advertising industries, IREX (in year three) competitively selected Market Intelligence Caucasus LLC, an official licensee of TNS in Georgia, to measure the Georgian radio audience (IREX 2013 contract with TNS: \$77,359). The research, with technical support from IREX Radio Consultant Rich McClear, was launched in January 2013. McClear, with extensive experience in radio production, sales and management, audience research and international media development, oversaw the design of research methodology and implementation.

Day-after-Recall (DAR) was selected as the research method, with interviews conducted through phone (CATI/Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) and in person (Face-to-Face/F-to-F) where phone service is not reliable. DAR was selected as a low cost method capable of producing highly reliable data that is flexible enough to expand or shrink, according to market conditions, without requiring a major redesign to deliver scientifically valid results. Those characteristics are also important in order to ensure the sustainability of a measurement system in a weak and unstable economy such as Georgia.

The research encompassed virtually the entire country through interviews conducted in seven large cities, with populations over 45,000 (Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Rustavi, Zugdidi, Poti and Gori) and four medium cities, with population over 20,000 (Samtredia, Khasuri, Telavi and Akhaltsikhe). One isolated small market of fewer than 20,000 people, Lagodekhi, where IREX supports a strong local radio station, was included in 2013. An average 1,200 interviews were conducted each month. The continuous research is interrupted for only in August and two weeks in January when heavy holiday travel would create misleading information. To collect larger samples for the analysis of smaller markets, a decision was made to aggregate 3-months of data and report rolling data monthly (every month TNS adds data from the most recent month and drops the four-month-old data to achieve 3-month aggregation).

While the availability of research data is crucial to advertisers, they also must be able to verify that ads were played according to their contracts with radio stations. In order to support this element of the industry, IREX paid IPM Monitoring to supply data on nine Tbilisi-based radio stations⁹, for inclusion in the TNS monthly reports to radio stations and advertising agencies (IREX 2013 contract with IPM Monitoring: \$21,265. Contract in 2014: \$9,835).

In 2013, IREX covered roughly 70% of the research cost, with an expectation that TNS would recover the rest from the market, primarily radio stations and advertising agencies. This heavily-subsidized trial period enabled radio stations and advertising agencies to understand the research process, analyze results and structure and develop program strategies to reach their intended target audience. Requiring radio stations and advertising agencies to make a small monetary contribution, at the end of the trial period, proved to be an effective strategy and allowed IREX to reduce its support to TNS to 35% of the total cost in 2014 (2014 IREX contract with TNS: \$40,000). By the end of the G-MEDIA Program, TNS had 13 paying clients among radio companies procuring the research for 17 channels¹⁰ and 3 paying clients among the largest advertising agencies¹¹.

Sustainability was one of the main considerations when IREX, TNS and radio and advertising industries were discussing research design. The parties developed a transparent and fair payment system with radio stations paying an amount proportional to their market share (with both minimum and maximum amounts established) and advertising agencies equally dividing 20% of the research cost.

To increase the profile of the research, IREX hosted quarterly public events where TNS Director Nana Morbedadze and IREX radio consultant Rich McClear presented the latest research results, explaining methodology, data applications and describing market trends. A celebratory event to mark the first anniversary of radio research in Georgia attracted more than 150

⁹ Avtoradio, Ar Daidardo, Imedi, Commersant, Utsnobi, Fortuna, Fortuna+, Palitra and Maestro (substituting radio Shokoladi)

¹⁰ Radio Sakartvelo with 4 channels (Fortuna, Fortuna+, Ar Daidardo, Avtoradio); Apkhazetis Khma and Dardimandi; Pirveli Radio; Radio Utsnonbi; Radio Palitra; Radio Rioni; Maestro and Vinili; Radio Jako; Radio Imedi; Radios Atinati, Harmonia and Dzveli Qalaqi (subsidized by IREX)

¹¹ Media Port, Magi Style and TBC TV

representatives of radio stations, advertising agencies and major local and international advertisers. One year after its launch, the TNS data produced a complete picture of radio use in Georgia, nationally and in Tbilisi and seven regions.

Another important element of the radio research project was teaching radio stations and agencies how to evaluate the data. Each month TNS clients receive updated results which allows them to reconstruct a demographic profile of their stations audience (and that of competitors) according to certain criteria: gender, age, employment and economic status of listeners. They calculate how many people listen to them daily, weekly, for what duration, how large their core audience is and who listens exclusively to their station. They can also see how audiences differ between weekdays, weekends, day parts and in certain seasons of the year and they know where and how people listen to their stations. TNS trained its clients in special software needed to fully evaluate the data.

McClellan also met with the radio stations individually to discuss their results and help them better use the data for programming, management and strategic decision-making. Radio Sakartvelo, Radio Maestro and regional radio stations received consulting in advertising sales strategy, pricing and sales techniques from both McClellan and senior American radio sales professional Bud Stiker. Others receiving consulting assistance included the public broadcaster, Radio Muza and Radio GIPA.

The IREX-supported radio audience research helped confirm that radio is a viable component of the media landscape in Georgia. Contrary to common perception, radio in Georgia has a significant audience (half the population listens to radio) which is still growing. It also dispelled other myths:

- Radio listeners are mostly old people – In fact, the audience aged 25-54 in Georgia comprises half of the listeners, while those over 54 comprise only 13%
- Radio listeners are primarily in cars – Georgians listen everywhere, including homes and listening is increasing in every location
- Radio is old-fashioned – 21% of Georgians listen to radio on devices that did not exist 20 years ago such as mobile phones, Internet, iPads and tablets
- Radio listening is declining – in Georgia radio listening is growing. Not only are more people listening (from 44% in Jan. 2013 to 51% in April-June 2014) but they also listen longer (from 91 minutes in Oct.-December 2013 to 107 minutes in Apr.-June 2014).

G-MEDIA interviewed McClellan about the Georgia radio research:

<http://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/03/14/radio-is-better-than-you-think/>

Some of the radio stations directly credit the research for increases in their advertising income. According to the Marketing Director of Radio Maestro, its advertising income doubled immediately when TNS research revealed that the station is a market leader in talk radio segment.

The average weekly reach of radio Palitra was around 20,000 listeners a week when the research started. In the survey that measures May, June and July 2014, Palitra's weekly reach

increased to 49,000. The dramatic increase is attributed to Palitra having learned how to read the TNS data and adjust its programming and promotional strategies according to Rich McClear's advice.

McCclear also helped Radio Atinati in Zugdidi with a number of technical problems which lead to increased audience size in its hometown and in neighboring Poti.

Throughout the project, radio stations and advertising agencies were encouraged to pool their efforts and promote radio through establishment of a radio advertising bureau. Both McCclear and Stiker extolled the virtues of cooperative industry organizations which publicly promote the use of radio as an advertising tool. Stiker, who has worked with the American Radio Advertising Bureau (RAB) since 1999, and has worked to establish similar organizations worldwide, including Eastern European and former Soviet Union countries, explained to Georgian radio stations how RAB's work to defend the collective business interests of radio companies and promote radio as a valuable advertising medium.

In the summer 2014, shortly after Stiker's visit to Georgia, the radio stations started to meet regularly and discuss goals and priorities for a Georgian Radio Association and to collect documents needed to register the organization. They jointly-produced jingles to popularize radio and emphasize its power as an advertising medium and played them on May 23, to commemorate a Day of Radio in Georgia. The Georgian Radio Association is expected to register before the end of September, 2014.

TNS is expected to continue measuring radio audiences after the G-MEDIA Program with contributions from radio stations, advertisers and from NGOs and international organizations which have recognized the importance of radio ratings as a media planning tool.

4.1.2 TV Research Audit

In the second year of the program IREX proposed that an audit of the people-meter based TV audience research system be conducted in order to confirm that it met professional standards. Stakeholders, including the national TV stations agreed, as did the research company, TV MR GE, under license of Nielsen Television Audience Measurement. National television stations, by far, collect the lion's share of advertising revenue and the availability of credible audience data is crucial, particularly where the national channels rely on international advertisers.

TV MR GE started the audience measure system (with IREX technical assistance) in Georgia in 2005 but users had not been able to afford a system audit for the past six years (the recommended interval between audits is two years). IREX conducted interviews with major stakeholders and found that advertising agencies and others generally trust the ratings results. Stakeholders did mention a few concerns regarding:

- Selection of the research panel members (there are more than 300 families on the panel)
- Sample size
- The ratio of meters between Tbilisi and the more rural regions
- Technical issues such as the appearance of data during power outages

- Confidentiality of the panel
- The need for changes in light of increasing cable and internet penetration

IREX issued an RFP for an audit of the Georgian people meter TV ratings service, including assessment of the methodology used by TV MR GE and its compliance with international best practices. IREX received four strong applications out of which it selected one which provided the depth and detail requested and came at a price the industry can afford in the future. Helen Harrison & Company Limited, registered in England, has extensive experience in conducting similar audits, including in Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union.

The audit report was expected to include:

- A description of the research methodology
- Adequacy of the sample to achieve the desired results
- Discussion of controls of the sample
- A discussion on how proper tabulation rates have been maintained
- Analysis of overall response rates
- Data collection accuracy, in this case meter calibration and functionality
- Discussion of back office operations
- Critical statistical measures such as weighting
- Compliance with delivery deadlines
- Internal quality control
- Information on the provider's ongoing improvement program
- Overall maintenance of ethics and industry-accepted standards
- Suggestions for a continuing process of audit and evaluation, including areas to be included in future audits.

In February, 2013 the auditor made an initial visit of three days to meet parties and refine the scope and key objectives of the audit, six weeks to undertake the full evaluation, including 10 days in Georgia, and four additional weeks to deliver the draft report. TV MR GE was given an opportunity to review the report and Ms. Harrison returned to Tbilisi to meet with TV stations, advertising agencies and other stakeholders on June 18, 2013.

The auditor confirmed that the methodology used by TV MR GE, official licensee of Nielsen Television Audience Measurement, which measures television audience in Georgia via People Meter Panel, complies with recognized international best practice in accordance with GGTAM (Global Guidelines for Television Audience Measurement) guidelines and that TV MR GE carries out TAM (Television Audience Measurement) service with the declared international methodology.

Although the G-MEDIA program expected that technical assistance on the TV audience ratings system would end with the audit report, events in early 2014 took an unexpected turn. The State Audit Service, ostensibly as part of a tax investigation, demanded that TV MR GE surrender its list of panel households so that officials could verify the presence of people

meters. TV MR GE officials, aware that a violation of panel confidentiality would destroy the credibility of the system, refused and appealed to civil society and international organizations for help. Despite efforts on the part of USAID and IREX the State Revenue Service Director insisted that the company provide the confidential information.

TV MR GE was taken to court but in a series of decisions, prevailed over the State Audit Service. But the damage was done and many families who had been willing to be part of the panel were intimidated by the government action and resigned from the system. Unfortunately, the methodology of the research and the performance of TV MR GE were attacked publicly for what apparently were political motives and efforts to discredit the company for business reasons.

In an effort to set the record straight about the performance of the company, IREX conducted a public event in which Helen Harrison (via Skype) met with the press, TV stations, agencies, government officials and other stakeholders to again review the outcome of the audit and to respond to questions that had been raised about TV audience research as a result of the move against TV MR GE by the Audit Service. A key message to the audience was that without reliable audience research that meets international standards the broadcast and advertising industry stands to lose millions of dollars in revenue. Ms. Harrison encouraged the stakeholders and government officials to move beyond personal agendas and industry infighting in order to reestablish a viable, professional TV audience research system. She recommended that TV stations and advertising agencies develop a Joint Industry Committee to oversee the research system and she provided recommendations on how to begin that process.

At the end of the G-MEDIA program TV MR GE was still providing research to the national TV stations and advertising agencies, although their court case with the Audit Service was unresolved. If the company ultimately loses its case, and the Audit Service is able to force it to reveal the identity of panelists TV MR GE believes it will not be possible to operate a professional TV audience research company in Georgia. That would have serious ramifications for the industry which relies on audience research to sell advertising, particularly to international companies.

4.2 Address the financial sustainability of targeted media outlets, including revenue sources, business plans, marketing, demand for their content and delivery methods

4.2.1 Media Outlet Support, Business Management Consultancy

A weak economy, highly charged political environment, and media managers with limited journalism experience and even less business acumen greeted the launch of G-MEDIA in 2010. Politics were the driving force of Georgian government, business and society and even advertisers were forced to ally with the ruling party and they could only advertise in media outlets considered friendly to the government. Regional media, operating where there was little economic activity and where local politicians were known for strong arm tactics were particularly vulnerable and their prospects for independence and sustainability particularly grim.

IREX addressed these challenges through a number of different partners and a range of activities:

- Advocacy partners (primarily TI and GYLA) investigated corrupt practices in the advertising sector while pushing for laws that require greater transparency in the broadcast media ownership and financing and advertising sectors (discussed in detail under sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2).
- Audience research was established for radio stations and strengthened for the national TV stations (discussed in detail under 4.1.1 and 4.1.2).
- The business and sales management capacity of media outlets was increased through a long term training project by a leading Georgian training provider Management Academy (discussed in detail under 4.2.3).
- Targeted consulting and coaching by the Georgian Management Consulting Group (Innova) was provided to program partner media outlets.

The Innova consulting for media outlets focused on the overall capacity building of targeted outlets and a G-MEDIA business innovation initiative designed to help struggling regional media outlets develop new sources of revenue and provide additional support for their primary media businesses. Although this section will discuss how Innova helped the media outlets, more specific information about the Business Innovation Grants project is in section 4.2.2.

Although political pressure on the advertising sector was substantially reduced after the 2012 Parliamentary elections, and advertisers regained the freedom to place advertisements based on business (rather than political) strategies, the fundamental problems of low business management, sales and financial capacity persisted at the media companies.

To address these deficiencies, IREX selected the local management consulting company Georgian Management Consulting Group (Innova) to work closely with a number of media outlets where business management problems were particularly acute. Innova employs recent graduates of a prestigious Georgian business school who undertook the task with great enthusiasm. Despite their youth, the Innova consultants had already worked with a wide range of companies in diverse sectors, and provided management consulting services to the Georgian Public Broadcaster.

To increase their understanding of market-related problems and the challenges and opportunities faced by media outlets in Georgia, and to inform the G-MEDIA program, the consultants' first task was a survey of the media and advertising industries (advertising market research grant: \$30,020).

The research identified key industry players, their interaction, and current business regulations. Innova also studied profiles of advertisers, how business decisions are made, what tools are used, and how businesses perceive the value of advertising. Findings of the research were shared with G-MEDIA beneficiaries at a public event.

In the first year of G-MEDIA, IREX selected three newspapers (*Akhali Gazeti*, *Samkhretis Karibche* and *Kakhetis Khma*) and one TV station (TV Borjomi) through a competitive process to receive Innova consulting support. The consultants assessed the organizational capacity of each partner and helped them develop action plans to gradually address their weaknesses and capitalize on their strengths. *Kakhetis Khma* and *Akhali Gazeti* continued to receive guidance from Innova in Year Two, focusing on implementation of the action plans.

The assessment reports evaluated each company's position in the market, competitors, development goals, and overall capabilities. An analysis of external and internal challenges, the stated company mission, vision, and strategic, financial and operational goals followed. The report also addressed available resources: financial, human, technological, and informational. The action plans specified strategy and actions, dates, responsible persons, and expected outcomes.

Using its Media Partner Assessment Tool (MPAT, explained in Appendix 4), SI reported in year two that all four recipients of Innova's consulting improved in business management, and sales and marketing, three of them by more than 50%:

Media Outlet	Percent Improvement
TV Borjomi	72%
<i>Kakhetis Khma</i>	70%
<i>Akhali Gazeti</i>	52%
<i>Samkhretis Karibche</i>	13%

The SI report included a recommendation that IREX continue to use the services of Innova and, in Year Two, three more newspapers were selected through a competitive process: *Spektri* published by Orioni-Kalabegashvili LLC, *Chemi Kharagauli* and *Guria News* with its youth supplement *Below 21*, published by Chakhatauris Matsne Ltd (Consulting in strategic planning in Year One and Year Two: \$50,030).

When IREX provided grants to five media outlets to develop innovative new businesses, Innova was asked to help the subgrantees write and implement their business plans. The Business Innovation Grants, described in more detail in Section 4.2.2, were provided to:

- *Akhali Gazeti* to develop a free weekly "shopper" newspaper
- *Information Center Network* for a toll-based call center
- *Borjomi TV* for a training center
- *Spektri* for a printing line
- *Palitra* group publishing for a campaign to attract small and medium businesses to advertising

Innova helped develop standard business plans and kept in close touch with the five media outlets, reporting to IREX on their progress on a quarterly basis. Innova consultants helped the media outlets modify their business plans in response to changing market conditions,

new challenges and opportunities or to adjust for new products and services. The consultants also helped partners with selection of equipment and staff, pricing policies, branding, planning of marketing activities and establishing business contacts, where appropriate, with companies in Tbilisi. The Innova consulting cost was \$60,000 total in years three and four.

Although not all five ventures were completely successful, Innova's assistance helped all of them develop new skills, taught them how to analyze their environment and competition, how to identify and assess new opportunities and how to implement new business initiatives. The media outlets better understand how their organizations function as businesses as they have streamlined their staffing and accounting policies, production lines and sales processes. Managers of the five media outlets are more business savvy now and much of that credit goes to Innova.

By encouraging Innova to work with the media outlets, and allowing it to learn through trial and error, IREX contributed to building local management consulting capacity. Innova has a good understanding of how the media and advertising sectors work, a thorough knowledge of many media businesses in Georgia, and can provide valuable services at rates which local companies can afford. Capacity building of the consulting company is a secondary benefit of this assistance and will continue to be important as media outlets struggle with economic sustainability.

4.2.2 Business Innovation Grants

A key objective of the G-MEDIA program, helping regional media become sustainable, was jeopardized by a number of factors, including a poor economy and limited business skills of media outlets. But the monopolization of the advertising market, created and supported by a corrupt political system, prevented media not aligned with the ruling party from access to what is traditionally their primary source of income: advertising. Although the monopoly was effectively broken by the outcome of the 2012 parliamentary election, poor economic conditions and the lack of a developed advertising sector defied any efforts for quick solutions.

An alternative approach was introduced by the G-MEDIA program: business innovation grants which could be used by media outlets to create sustainable revenue streams through side businesses that are less susceptible to political pressure and manipulation. Income derived from new business initiatives could then be used to support and sustain a company's core media product.

In Year One, the program invited media outlets to consider how their current operations could be used to establish a new business enterprise which could create an additional source of revenue on a sustainable (not one-off) basis. Four projects received \$25,000 grants:

- Radio Dzveli Qalaqi (Radio Old Town) from Kutaisi intended to record and sell audio books with the help of local actors.
- Newspaper *Kakhetis Khma* from Gurjaani intended to relocate from Gurjaani to Telavi and open a media café in a newly renovated part of town.

- The publisher of *Guria News*, planned to issue cards to its 8,000 (large by Georgian standards) subscribers which would allow them to purchase items and services from newspaper's upgraded stationary shop at a discount.
- Newspaper *Samkhretis Karibche* from Akhaltsikhe had the most ambitious (and creative) plan. Using its database of local farmers, it intended to purchase surplus crops which could be sold to buyers in Tbilisi at retail prices. The plan was intended to strengthen the connection between the local agricultural community and raise money for the newspaper.

The four projects were implemented primarily in Year Two and all achieved their goals with the exception of *Samkhretis Karibche*, which could not secure additional cash to pay farmers for their goods. The newspaper ultimately decided to develop an agriculture-based insert and web resource which provided information on crop prices and related news and increased the newspapers audience.

Most successful was *Kakhetis Khma*, although its move into a historic building in Telavi was delayed by the government rehabilitation project, expected to draw tourists and provide a good return on investment.

By the program's end, the media café was a multifunctional facility where visitors can enjoy coffee and light snacks, access wifi and buy books of local interest. The café periodically hosts a Discussion Club for students



Opening of Kakhmetis Khma media café in September 2012

(lectures, book presentations, meetings with writers, concerts, etc). Office services such as copying, scanning, and printing are also available. A plan to move the newspapers' editorial offices to the café was later deemed inadvisable because the space is noisy and would be distracting. The newspaper hopes to increase revenue in the future as an OSGF funded kitchen will make it possible to provide a fresh lunch menu.

Radio Dzveli Qalaqi (Old Town) sought to use its audio recording equipment and production expertise to create a new product for the Georgian market: audio books. The biggest sellers were fairy tales; the radio station produced eight collections of the stories and made 400 copies of each, which were sold to the public, given to loyal clients, or awarded as prizes for listeners. Dzveli Qalaqi now owns CD production equipment capable of producing audio books of commercial quality. Although the selection of titles was a little eclectic (market demand should have been researched better in advance) and the marketing campaign could have been more rigorous, the project was still considered successful as it built the radio stations capacity in

audio book production and sales and the lessons are expected to help the radio to generate future income.

Guria News relies on a retail shop in order to augment its advertising income. Under the G-MEDIA program the company introduced “Newscard,” a promotional effort in which subscribers get office services at discounted prices in the stationary shop of *Guria News*, the only such business in Chokhatauri, which was strengthened by the IREX grant. The Newscard also serves as a receipt for subscriptions and promotes *Guria News*.

IREX issued another call for applications for Business Innovation Grants in Year Two, and the ceiling was raised to \$50,000. The Call for Applications was announced at a June, 2012 Media Business Innovation Event, where IREX brought together Georgian media entrepreneurs and their counterparts from Eastern Europe (Serbia, Bulgaria and Slovakia), where media markets faced similar economic challenges. The event was intended to help media outlets think creatively, and realistically weigh a range of business factors as they planned proposals for the new IREX Business Innovation Grants.

The second round of grants attracted 18 applicants (compared to seven in the first round) from which five projects were selected:



Stationary shop by Ltd Chokhatauris Matsne

- Orioni-Kalabegashvili LLC, publisher of the Gurjaani newspaper *Spektri*, proposed a small in-house printing plant to provide services to local businesses in need of marketing materials and food labels.
- A web portal Information Center Network (ICN) from Gurjaani proposed a Call Center to provide fee-based information services, capitalizing on its extensive database of phone numbers and other useful information. TV Borjomi proposed development of a training center with courses in electronic accounting systems and foreign languages.
- Newspaper *Akhali Gazeti* (Kutaisi)

from Kutaisi proposed a “shopper” supplement, *Top News*, to attract advertising from companies which refused to do business with *Akhali Gazeti* because of its critical stance toward the authorities.

- Palitra intended to create a new pool of advertisers from small and medium enterprises which have rarely or never advertised. These smaller businesses, which are typically unaware of the benefits of advertising (or there were no advertising products geared to their needs and budgets) were offered media planning guidance and heavily discounted advertising packages.

The grant size was \$40,000 on average, with the smallest being \$17,000 (TV Borjomi) and the largest – \$50,000 (Palitra).¹² The projects were implemented in Year Three and Year Four.

IREX again deployed Innova to work with each grant recipient, helping them with development and implementation of business plans, and reported to IREX on their quarterly progress. Assistance from Innova was of critical importance to the subgrantees as they had to navigate an unfamiliar world of commerce and finance to build their creative ventures.

Four out of the five subgrants were implemented successfully, with Orioni-Kalabegashvili LLC, publisher of newspaper *Spektri* and Call Center 16 100 by ICN showing the most promise.

Pirveli Feri by Orioni-Kalabegashvili LLC, publisher of newspaper *Spektri*

A major consideration on which Orioni-Kalabegashvili LLC planned its new business, was the high demand for printing services in the Kakheti region and the absence of any local competitor. Orioni-Kalabegashvili LLC also benefitted from having staff with the skills required to operate a small printing enterprise.

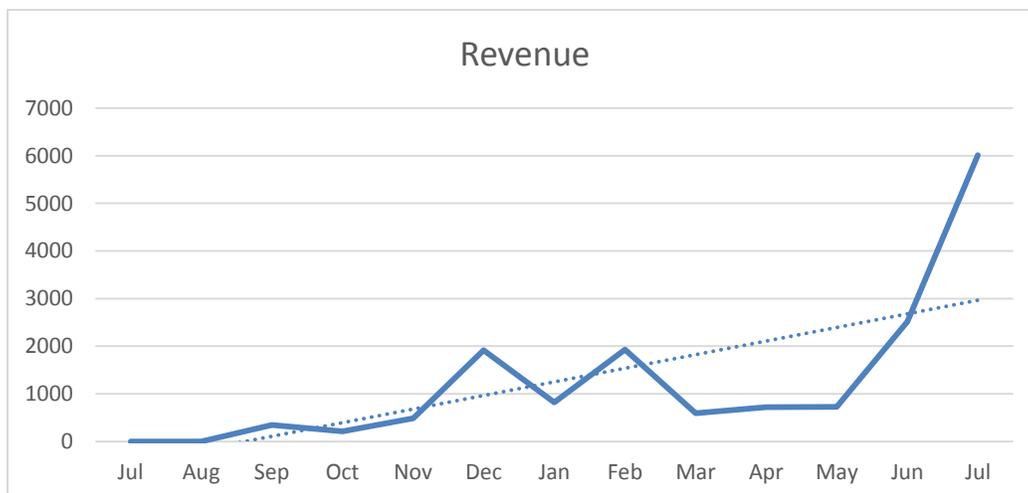
Established in the summer of 2013, the small in-house printing plant, Pirveli Feri, quickly acquired customers among local businesses which, at the G-MEDIA program's end, were responsible for almost 70% of its revenues. Other customers are private citizens of Gurjaani, the local government and various NGOs in the Kakheti region. Managers of Pirveli Feri made it a priority to process all orders on-time and with the highest possible quality. Pirveli Feri's efforts did not go unnoticed in the small community and it was able to secure a number of long term contracts, important for the success of a new business.

Pirveli Feri is well-equipped and staffed, able to design and produce a wide range of reports, brochures, business cards, books, calendars, notebooks, certificates, menus, pictures and to produce promotional items by printing on t-shirts, cups and plastic business cards. Customers include theatres and museums (tickets), municipalities (promotional materials), schools (calendars and certificates) and food processors (labels).

The Newspaper *Spektri*, the core media product of the company, is also now printed in Pirveli Feri, cutting expenses in half and providing greater production flexibility.

The revenue goal of this project, to reach the break-even point by the end of the project year, was met in the last month of the project, July 2014, when the company made a net profit of 1,066 GEL.

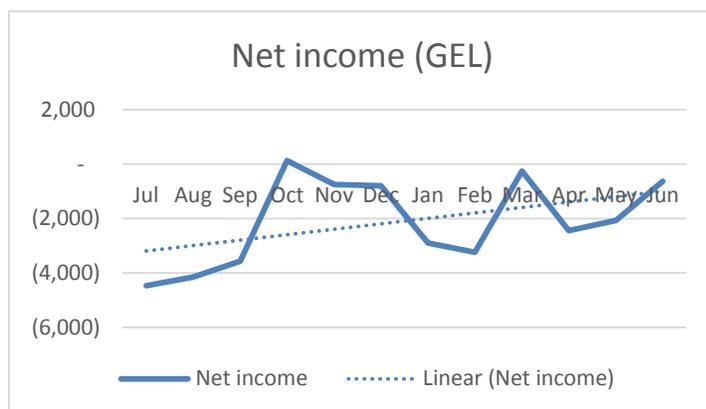
¹² Radio Palitra (\$49,229.88); TV Borjomi (\$16,985.45); Akhali Gazeti (\$43,898.4); ICN (\$43,200); Spektri (\$38,031.13)



The company managed to attract a total of 16,259 GEL (approx. \$9,500) in revenues over the first year of its operations.

The growth in revenues, increasing numbers of return customers and high performance in the final months of the project show that Pirveli Feri is growing and can be expected to maintain a stable income for *Spektri*, as originally intended.

G-MEDIA Communications Specialist Anita Tvauri produced a video story about the success of the business innovation grant at *Spektri*. The story was posted in order to coincide with Georgian Independence day and the introduction noted the importance of financial sustainability in developing independent media. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLOG81Rk6tl>.



Call Center 16 100 by ICN (Information Centre Network)

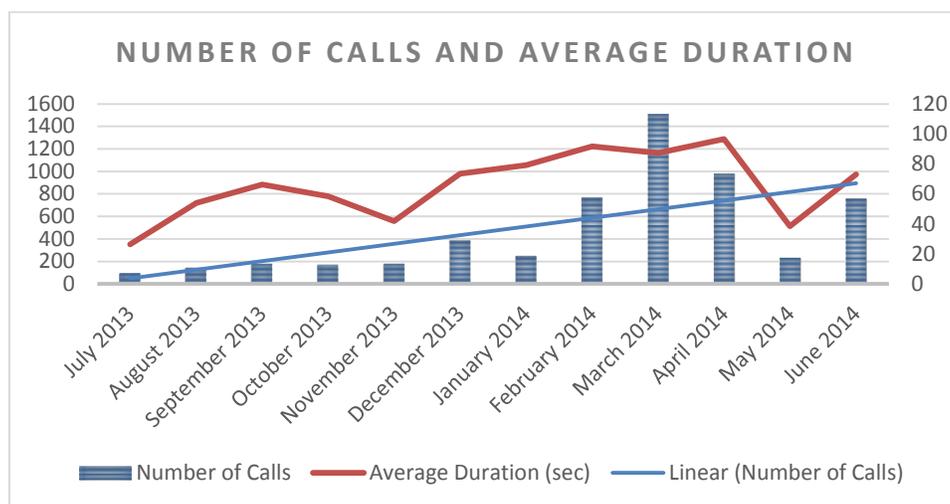
The Information Center Network started in 2005 as the Imedi Center Ltd, published a regional newspaper in Kakheti until 2009 and later founded the Information Center Kakheti, an independent web-based media organization. Two additional centers were added and the Information

Center Network was established in 2012. Through its evolution, ICN management built an extensive database that now includes 50,000 organizations and a total of 230,000 phone numbers from three regions: Kakheti, Mtsketa-Mtianeti and Kvemo Kartli. The ICN proposal, funded by G-MEDIA, was for development of a public Call Center where people could request telephone numbers and related information for a small fee.

Call Center 16 100, established by ICN, is modern and efficient, and calls are processed quickly. The Call Center regularly updates its core asset, the database, much of which is unique

to 16 100 and is not available from two Tbilisi-based Call Centers. In addition, 16 100 sells services such as SMS advertising services and defined segments of its database to corporate clients.

When the service was slow to develop, and few calls were received, ICN added new services: telemarketing, taxi on call, repair services for household electronics, computer repair and software installation services, computer-assisted telephone surveys (Call Center can conduct public opinion polls through phone), and even the purchase and delivery of traditional sweets during the New Year holiday. At the web portal <http://16100.ge/> one can find “buy and sell” information about houses, cars, furniture and other items and information about various services.



The Call Center 16 100 service targets individuals seeking information, and local businesses, government and the NGO sector that requires information, marketing or database services.

ICN’s revenue goal was to have the Call Center reach break-even point by the end of the IREX financed project (June 20th, 2014). From that time on, the Call Center could be expected to generate enough income to finance the ICN’s journalists and news content production.

Although ICN had not reached that point by the end of the program, the trend was very promising. While the number of calls received each month is much lower than expected, the number of calls received daily shows a positive growing trend and revenues (in the lower graphic) are rising as well.

The project earned approximately \$10,300 in revenues. Calls accounted for 15%, and 85% was attributed to provision of other services. Most notable is the SMS advertising service, which relied on company’s database of phone numbers to attract 61% of all other revenues. Another 22% of revenues came from miscellaneous services that used the database to generate new funding.

Although 16 100 will need to attract at least \$1,800 more each month in order to cover operation expenses, that seems readily attainable if revenues continue to increase at their current rate.

Innova has recommended the Call Center concentrate cost optimization, improved marketing, additional services and products and a new pricing policy for placement of classified ads on the company's web-catalogue.

G-MEDIA produced a video story about the success of the business innovation grant at the call center, available at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyLzP9AQC3U>

Training Center of TV Borjomi

TV Borjomi was in the enviable position of having a large, recently remodeled building that could support a new business venture. The company planned a training center, to be equipped with nine computer work stations and other support equipment. The company believed that even though it's located in a small region of Georgia, there would be demand for educational and business services not available elsewhere.

The training center offers educational services to small business owners, employed adults, school children, and legal entities such as NGOs and private companies. Office services such as access to the internet, printing, copying, and scanning are also available from the training center. As a complimentary business activity, it produces souvenirs (Borjomi is a popular touristic destination) with the use of a dye-sublimation machine.

Although the training center prepared eight different study courses it was able to recruit participants only for a select few, apparently because of low disposable income for people in the area. A related factor was the appearance of an unexpected competitor, the local water bottling company, that started offering similar classes at no charge, as a service to the community. Some business-related courses were more successful, including one focusing on how to use accounting software, and another on how to meet government accounting standards.

TV Borjomi is considering other potential training courses which focus on professional growth or skills development and, when classes are not in session, the training center is being used for the newly-created sales department of Borjomi TV which has generated new revenue for the company. In total the Training Center earned 4,933 GEL to TV Borjomi.

Innova is hopeful for the future of the training center despite unfavorable market conditions. The consultants have recommended that TV Borjomi expand and diversify its academic services, and establish long-term partnerships with commercial and non-governmental organizations operating in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region.

Small and Medium Enterprises Support Program by Palitra

The advertising industry is not fully developed, and small and medium businesses are, in particular, an untapped potential source of significant revenue. Palitra developed a program that specifically targets small and medium businesses, recognizing that while they may not make large advertising buys, they are a potentially lucrative market. Through their Small and Medium Enterprises Support Program, Palitra offered assistance in designing small campaigns and selling advertising at affordable prices, with the hope of creating regular customers.

The program was multi-faceted. Basic and customized multimedia (print, radio and online) advertisement bundles were developed and sold by a Palitra project team to enable smaller companies to gain experience in planning, implementing and checking results of advertisement campaigns. In addition, Palitra produced a radio show called Program Business File. The program was focused on issues of interest to SME owners and aired on Radio Palitra and PalitraTV. The live call-in talk show allowed Georgian SME owners to introduce their businesses and products to the general public with discussions followed by insights from an expert in the field.

In May 2014, Palitra management closed the project believing it had reached its primary goal of gaining a new segment of advertisers and had exhausted its pool of potential new customers. Innova noted however that according to the Georgian Revenue Service data, more than 90,000 SMEs are currently registered in Tbilisi, and was unconvinced Palitra had tapped them all or had made sufficient effort to win over reluctant clients. Palitra management's concern about internal competition between sales teams probably affected its decision to stop the program.

Although unfortunate that Palitra management discontinued the initiative, the project was clearly successful. It generated around GEL 132,500 (\$72,875) for Palitra by attracting 199 companies from the SME sector, 25% of which became return customers. Client satisfaction was also high. An Innova customer survey showed that 38% of respondents felt the SMB advertising yielded positive results, and 68% were very satisfied with the sales agents' services.

Top News by newspaper Akhali Gazeti

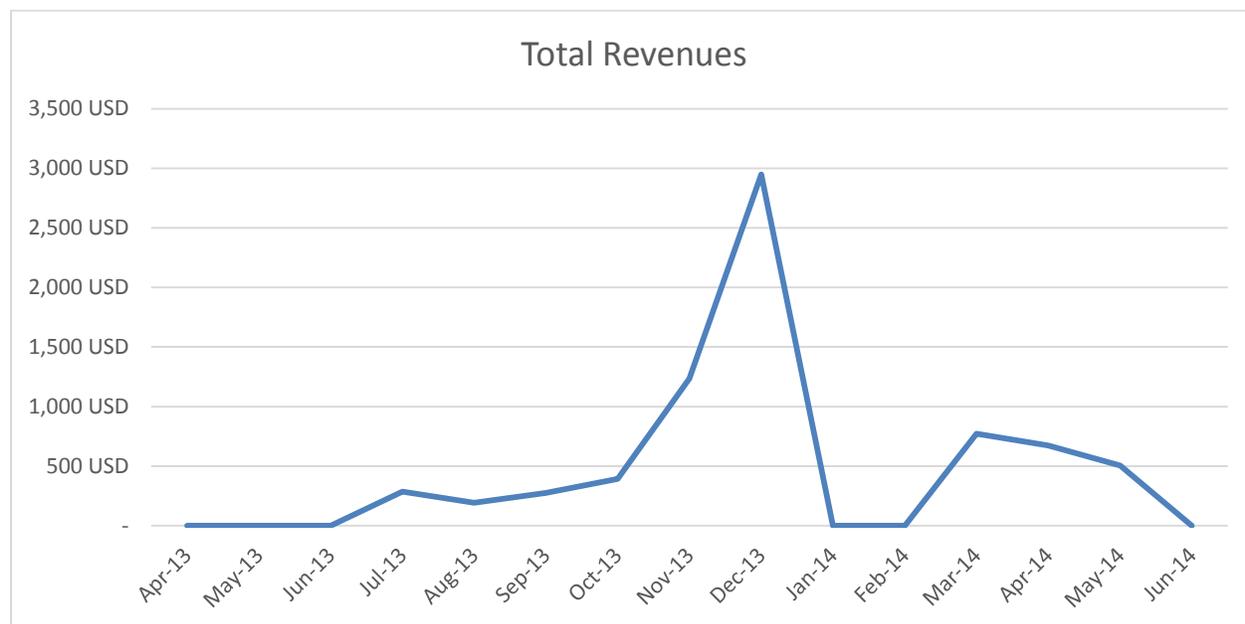
Newspaper *Akhali Gazeti* started to publish *Top News* as stand-alone "shopper" supplement to attract advertising from small, medium or large enterprises and organizations that operate in Kutaisi locally or through branch offices. The newspaper also hoped to sell classified ads such as announcements, items to sell or trade and congratulatory statements. The newspaper contained leisure content as "filler", was printed once a week in 10,000 copies (5,000 for the initial 3 months) and was distributed to passersby at no charge in 15 social hubs such as bus stations, supermarkets and parks.

Innova expected the newspaper to break even and begin making a profit in the second quarter of its operation and that most of the newspaper's revenues would come from classified ads. The long-term goal of *Top News* was to reach 15,000 GEL in monthly revenues by the end of its first year. The goal appeared achievable given the size of the Kutaisi market (second largest city in Georgia) the absence of direct competition, and experience of *Akhali Gazeti* with quality content production.

The venture got off to a bad start as the project manager, disengaged and absent most of the time, was not giving needed guidance and supervision to her employees. As a result, *Akhali Gazeti* did not make good use of the start-up period, much time and many resources were wasted, and *Top News* was not marketed as actively or effectively as needed. In November, 2013 Innova, at IREX's request, worked with *Akhali Gazeti* management to restructure the company's expenses, redefine its pricing policy and alter the financial plan to allow *Top News* more time to gain stability.

It was not possible to implement the changes because the Business Innovation Grant was suspended pending an IREX investigation into *Akhali Gazeti* reporting on an unrelated content production grant. The publication of *Top News* stopped in January and February 2014 and the paper lost key employees (sales manager and sales agents) and revenues for January and February. When it resumed publishing in March, 2014, with just one sales agent working, it could not recover from the damage.

Top News managed to attract only \$7,282. A total of 97% of this revenue came from corporate advertisements and only 3% was attracted from personal ads (\$7,038 and \$244 respectively).



Innova believed that *Top News* could be viable but in order to breathe new life into the shopper, *Akhali Gazeti* would need to recruit new agents and put more effort in advertisement sales, increase brand awareness to attract more customers and increase distribution locations. By the end of the subgrant period, the newspaper was not motivated to make these efforts.

In analyzing the successes and challenges of the business innovations subgrants activity, G-MEDIA notes that the subgrants, in addition to providing direct financial support, brought media outlets non-monetary benefits as well.

In all cases the subgrants improved the standing of media outlets in their communities, enhanced their images as cultural and educational centers, providers of vital services, centers of civil life and/or a place where they can get help and find support. G-MEDIA produced a video story about the development of the ICN Call Center 16 100 and how it helps local residents: <http://irexgmedia.wordpress.com/2014/03/20/ahelpinghand/>

By expanding the role of these small media businesses in their communities, journalists now have better relationships with sources, better access to information, and a more clear idea about the needs of local residents. The subgrants also helped some media outlets produce a

better core product and reduced operational costs (*Spektri* can print its own paper and the Call Center receives special tariffs from phone service providers).

A problem common to all subgrantees was the challenge of finding and retaining qualified staff. This appeared to be a particular problem in the area of marketing, the Achilles' heel for all media outlets. Some were able to implement successful marketing activities, with the assistance of Innova, but none of the projects reached anywhere near its full marketing potential.

The project also revealed a range of management problems, although of differing nature. Some had very committed and hardworking managers (ICN), who were not accustomed to delegating tasks and had to juggle to oversee two businesses (media outlet and new business venture). Management was particularly difficult during election times when managers needed to devote more attention to their media outlets and Georgia went through three election cycles in the last three years.

In some cases, hard work could not overcome difficult local market conditions (TV Borjomi) while in markets with stronger market conditions managers were not adequately engaged (newspaper *Akhali Gazeti* and Palitra). Also, in the case of Palitra, the organizational structure was too rigid and bureaucratic to allow independent and fast decision-making at the level of project manager.

Innova's role in mitigating these problems and reporting progress on the projects was indispensable and confirmed that IREX made the right decision when it assigned a business mentor to each of its Year Two business innovations subgrantees.

On the other hand, IREX and Innova erred in believing that new business units could succeed quickly after a brief startup period. A more reasonable expectation for future initiatives would be one year before a new business could become established and two years before it could contribute significant revenue to its core media enterprise.

4.2.3 Management Academy and Other Assistance

In years 2 and 3, G-MEDIA engaged the non-profit Management Academy to provide comprehensive sales and marketing training for sales teams from regional and Tbilisi-based media outlets. Under this activity a total of 58 staff (42 from Tbilisi, 16 from the regions) from 33 media outlets and GARB were selected through a competitive process, and trained during four courses over the two year period. Three of the courses were eight weeks long, consisting of two lectures per week, for a total of 48 academic hours. To accommodate regional sales staff outside of Tbilisi, Management Academy modified the 8-week course into an intensive six-day training which covered the same material but in a 42-hour format.

The training curriculum was the same for each cohort and covered all aspects of sales and marketing. Modules included recruiting the right sales team, sales force organization, managing sales quotas, advertisement revenue generation through alternative channels, working with small and medium enterprises, selling sponsorship, increasing public donations, marketing ad products, the selling process (lead generation, qualification, offer, closing), up-selling and cross-selling.

Following each course, Management Academy trainers provided follow on consulting services to those participants who requested it, which several media outlets did. Requests included additional coaching in, for example, sales team organization and motivation; measuring results; recruiting and organizing a sales team; and sales strategy.

Participants reported a number of successes as a result of what they learned through the Management Academy training. For example, long-delayed sales contracts were closed due to new pricing, communication or negotiation approaches. Contacts with new customers were established using creative negotiation approaches suggested by the trainers. Several media organizations recruited sales people using criteria learned during the training, some while they were still participating in the course. Many participants started CRM-like database development and pipeline tracking of potential customers. One participant working at a web media outlet reported that online income increased by 50 percent within a two month period due to improved marketing techniques learned in the course. Almost all participants said they improved their negotiation skills and increased sales anywhere from 5-20% using the new techniques and strategies acquired.

Gurjaani TV Director Levan Aleksishvili increased his sales by 70-80% using his newly acquired negotiation skills. "Before the training I took every step as too risky and hence, was overly cautious. Now I know the sequence of any step and have become more self-confidence."

Other Assistance

In addition to training, G-MEDIA assisted media associations through subgrants that helped improve bottom lines and/or services to members. In particular:

GARB – through G-MEDIA support, the Georgia Association of Regional Broadcasters (GARB) established a subtitling studio to help its members meet GNCC local language requirements for entertainment content. Prior to this, GARB members were unable to meet the 30% quota and were routinely fined by the GNCC. With IREX support, a total of 211 western movies were subtitled and distributed to 22 GARB member stations, bringing the television broadcasters into GNCC compliance. With the subtitling studio in operation, none of the stations have since been fined or received warnings for violating GNCC regulations.

GRMA - With G-MEDIA support, the Georgian Regional Media Association (GRMA) provided syndicated visual materials such as caricatures, comics and photos available to 24 of its members at no cost. This allowed members to improve the visual content of their media products.

GRRN - G-Media funding allowed the Georgian Regional Radio Network (GRRN) to equip four member radio stations covering seven regions of Georgia with modern radio advertising equipment and licensed software, enabling them to improve program quality and thus attract more advertising. The new equipment enabled the stations' sound engineers and production teams to significantly improve the quality of their products and successfully compete with better equipped radio stations and advertising agencies. The new software allowed member stations

to produce higher quality advertisements and promos, and broadcast them at the same schedule thus making it more attractive to sell to the advertisers.

IV. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

GOAL: Improve the public's access to a range of sources of news and information by developing a more politically balanced, editorially independent, professional and viable media sector that reaches audiences across Georgia through diverse deliver channels.
Introductory paragraph

Intermediate Results by objective

Objective 1: Improve Quality and Diversity of Media Content and Broaden Channels of Delivery

- 1.1: Media production capabilities are strengthened, including those of regional media
- 1.2: Media outlets, regardless of their primary platforms, start production of multimedia content
- 1.3: Audiences are active media consumers and advocates
- 1.4: Media content is more balanced, accurate and impartial

Objective 2: Improve Professional Journalism

- 2.1: Graduates of G-MEDIA supported journalism programs apply professional standards in their work
- 2.2: G-MEDIA-supported journalism education program offers improved educational infrastructure and programs for media students and professionals.
- 2.3: Viable sustainability plans for G-MEDIA supported facilities are in place
- 2.4: G-MEDIA trained journalists practice professional and quality journalism

Objective 3: Improve the Regulatory Environment and Protect Journalists' Rights

- 3.1: Proposals on legal and regulatory improvements are introduced in Parliament.
- 3.2: Journalists report and advocate for journalists' rights and press freedom through G-MEDIA supported watchdog institutions and advocacy mechanisms.
- 3.3: Transparency and engagement with the stakeholders of Georgian National Communication Commission (GNCC) is improved

Objective 4: Improve Media Outlet's Viability

- 4.1: Improved sales and marketing strategies of G-MEDIA supported media outlets and education institutions.
- 4.2: Improved business management and organizational capacity of institutions supported by G-MEDIA.

PMP Implementation and Indicator Highlights

G-MEDIA monitoring and evaluation was managed and implemented by IREX partner Social Impact (SI). Social Impact developed the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework and strategy based on G-MEDIA program overall goals, objectives and activities presented in the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP).

The PMP depicts the program's overall monitoring framework and consists of a set of program results, performance indicators, data sources, data collection methods, roles and responsibilities for data collection, and analysis. Social Impact, in coordination with G-MEDIA, employed the following strategies and actions to measure project performance:

- Reviewed existing national-level data on the media industry, such as Freedom House's *Nations in Transit* annual reports, and IREX's comprehensive Media Sustainability Index (MSI) for measuring the overall state of the media industry in Georgia;
- Utilized media M&E tools such as Social Impact's (SI) specially adapted Media Content Analysis Tool (MCAT) protocol for collecting information on improvements in the content of broadcast, online, and print media resulting from IREX/G-MEDIA's direct interventions;
- Conducted mini-surveys and key informant interviews with project beneficiaries, implementing partners, and other key stakeholders;
- Administered specialized assessments, such as the following:
 - Media Partner Assessment Tool (MPAT) to assess media outlets' business development;
 - Pre- and post-test knowledge-based training evaluations for measuring the effectiveness of IREX's training programs in increasing participant knowledge, among other indicators; and
 - Policy Milestone Index, which measures on-the-ground advancements in advocacy efforts.
- Conducted regular monitoring visits to track project activities and performance indicators in Tbilisi and regions. These monitoring visits included semi-structured qualitative assessments of project activities and assisted program staff in utilizing real-time information for project planning.
- Conducted regular group interviews with training participants after training sessions to gather qualitative feedback on training effectiveness
- Elaborated and administered specially designed tools for New Media Initiative to measure quality of multimedia content
- Monitored web-sites with a specially designed check-list
- Administered customized baseline and endline household (HH) surveys to measure individual outcome and impact-level results on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors toward the media industry, among other indicators

- Social Impact, with the support from G-MEDIA staff, collected and registered data in specially designed databases on a monthly basis
- SI analyzed qualitative and quantitative data and prepared reports on findings on different key performance indicators according to the reporting frequency indicated in PMP.

PMP implementation is not a one-time occurrence, but rather an ongoing process of review, revision, and re-implementation. The document, therefore, underwent modifications several times to reflect changes in IREX/G-MEDIA strategy and ongoing project activities, and was revised based on modified program work plans annually. Ultimately, the PMP was modified three times in Y2, Y3 and Y4. During G-MEDIA, more than 15 new indicators were added and around 30 indicators delated from the PMP. Modifications took place due to the following factors:

- 1) IREX added and/or expanded new activities (New Media Initiative, Media Literacy, TNS Research etc.) which necessitated adding new indicators to better capture program outputs and outcomes;
- 2) G-MEDIA gradually suspended some program activities and some IRs and related indicators were consequentially removed.
- 3) G-MEDIA reached set outputs and thus stopped working in the respective areas and related indicators and/or IRs were removed.
- 4) Activities related to minorities were less emphasized in program Y3 and Y4 compared to Year 1 or Y2, and, thus, related indicators were taken out from the respective PMPs;
- 5) In accordance with USAID's request to simplify the PMP, SI removed indicators that were assessing activities with minor significance or that proved to be ineffective management tools.

These modifications made the PMP more rigorous, outcome-oriented, and tailored to G-MEDIA program activities and goals.

Achievements and Areas for Improvement

G-MEDIA met or exceeded most targets set in each annual PMP, as illustrated in the PMP matrix which presents output, outcome and impact indicators, outlines related monitoring and evaluation tools, defines reporting frequency and sets yearly targets (see Appendix 2). In consultation with G-MEDIA, and based on collected and analyzed M&E data, SI has identified several activity indicators that particularly exceeded expectations over the program lifetime. SI and G-MEDIA also highlight here activities which demonstrated mixed or unfavorable outcomes. Each is discussed in greater detail below.

Achievements

Activities that demonstrated particularly good results include the New Media Initiative (NMI), Content Grantees and TNS Research. Highlights include:

- NMI partners produced more than 2,000 multimedia products. In addition, NMI media outlets created and/or upgraded their websites, increased number of unique visitors, introduced on-line sales strategies and significantly increased on-line sales.

- Subgrantees showed improved capacity. Media outlets that received content grants boosted their production capacity, improved content quality, and increased production of media products. In total, G-MEDIA grantees produced over 10,000 media content over the life of the program.
- G-MEDIA changed the radio industry's perception of and access to audience research by providing reliable data, and educating radio stations, advertising agencies and businesses as to its utility in radio marketing and programming. An SI survey shows that this will have a positive influence on the development of radio as an attractive and profitable medium in Georgia.

New Media Initiative

SI monitored New Media Initiative (NMI) activities throughout program Years 3 and 4. To measure NMI activity impact, SI employed a multi-method approach using many of the tools itemized above. Findings show NMI demonstrated significant achievements across all areas. Indicators that achieved particular note:

Indicator 1.2.2: *% of media outlets that receive G-MEDIA training that upgrade existing Web sites or create new Web sites with multimedia features*¹³. Starting from a baseline of 0, the target was set at 80% and exceeded by 12% or 92% of outlets upgrading their web-sites with new multimedia features and characteristics, making them more user-friendly and interactive and thus, more attractive for public use.

Indicator 1.2.2.: *“Number of multimedia products created and published by NMI partner organizations”*¹⁴. With a set target of 1500, NMI partner organizations produced and published around 2,149 multimedia products exceeding the target by 46%. In September 2013, before the NMI initiative, all supported media outlets produced approximately 280 multimedia video content¹⁵ per quarter. This figure almost tripled reaching 805 multimedia products in the last reporting quarter of July 2014, showing almost threefold increase within three reporting quarters (see Table 1).

Table 1. Multimedia Video Content Production by NMI Partner Organization

Name of Media Outlets	CONTENT PRODUCED										Total by Grantees
	Baseline	Period I			Period II			Period III			
	August - October 2013	Nov-13	Dec-13	Jan-14	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14	
Newspaper Speqtri	2.00	2.00	2.00	6.00	10.00	3.00	15.00	17.00	27.00	10.00	92.00
Newspaper Kakhetis Khma	45.00	45.00	39.00	36.00	104.00	100.00	72.00	73.00	85.00	60.00	614.00

¹³ Year 3 PMP, Objective 1, IR 1.2 Indicator 1.2.2

¹⁴ Year 4 PMP, Objective 1, IR 1.2 Indicator 1.2.2

¹⁵ Multimedia product is a media content produced for on-line production which, in addition to text contains video and/or photo material.

Kakheti Information Center	59.00	59.00	36.00	32.00	26.00	31.00	8.00	11.00	21.00	15.00	239.00
Newspaper Sk New	10.00	10.00	14.00	8.00	6.00	6.00	7.00	9.00	24.00	5.00	89.00
Radio Nor	14.00	14.00	15.00	18.00	1.00	2.00	6.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	68.00
TV Borjomi	91.00	91.00	66.00	74.00	66.00	68.00	71.00	81.00	116.00	112.00	745.00
Newspaper Guria News	47.00	47.00	11.00	10.00	10.00	8.00	11.00	50.00	20.00	10.00	177.00
Newspaper Akhali Gazeti	11.00	11.00	11.00	16.00	13.00	8.00	9.00	11.00	8.00	10.00	97.00
Newspaper Chemi Kharagauli	1.00	1.00			1.00	3.00	5.00	4.00	9.00	5.00	28.00
Total Multimedia Video Content Produced	280.00	674.00			670.00			805.00			2,149.00

There were also positive changes in the number of unique visitors to partner media outlets. Indicator 4.1.4: % change in number of unique visitors to G-MEDIA supported media outlet Web sites¹⁶ with set target of 30%, achieved an 81% increase. As shown in Table 2 below, compared to the baseline period, the number of unique visitors increased by 81% from average 168, 535.00 visitors to 304,221.00 visitors per quarter in the last reporting period.

All organizations except Kakhetis Khma showed noteworthy outcomes. Some media outlets, such as Speqtri, TV Borjomi, Radio Nor and Chemi Kharagauli, demonstrated remarkable %age changes at 471%, 213 %, 146% and 125% change, respectively. These organizations should not, however, overshadow the achievements of other organizations such as SK News, Kakheti Information Center, Guria News, etc. which also showed significant increases in unique visitors. These outlets started with a greater number of unique visitors during baseline, so the increase compared to the last reporting period expressed in %ages was more moderate though still impressive.

Table 2. Traffic by NMI Partner Organizations

Name of Media Outlets	TRAFFIC										% Change by Media Outlets
	Baseline	Period I			Period II			Period III			
	August - October 2013	Nov-13	Dec-13	Jan-14	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14	
Newspaper Speqtri	2,533.00	2,533.00	1,374.00	1,910.00	2,318.00	6,543.00	7,854.00	13,869.00	15,250.00	14,236.00	471%
Newspaper Kakhetis Khma	3,136.00	4,248.00	3,391.00	5,396.00	5,269.00	4,473.00	5,333.00	5,421.00	5,512.00	4,231.00	61%
KIC	42,615.00	44,235.00	45,125.00	44,158.00	45,236.00	48,169.00	48,102.00	51,687.00	62,145.00	65,213.00	40%
Newspaper Sk New	18,427.00	19,217.00	21,254.00	20,154.00	26,030.00	25,706.00	22,384.00	28,690.00	35,201.00	30,376.00	71%
Radio Nor	1,910.00	1,910.00	1,500.00	2,847.00	2,840.00	2,524.00	3,122.00	4,444.00	4,550.00	5,120.00	146%
TV Borjomi	2,415.00	2,800.00	3,252.00	5,882.00	5,591.00	5,556.00	4,656.00	6,956.00	7,501.00	8,214.00	213%
Newspaper Guria News	71,138.00	75,227.00	185,366.00	111,452.00	76,082.00	160,224.00	171,142.00	187,864.00	111,996.00	116,134.00	95%
Newspaper Akhali Gazeti	24,180.00	50,714.00	40,810.00	45,554.00	40,626.00	25,851.00	65,281.00	36,561.00	38,524.00	38,213.00	56%
Newspaper Chemi Kharagauli	2,181.00	6,650.00	7,521.00	24,394.00	2,337.00	3,696.00	3,492.00	4,555.00	5,185.00	5,015.00	126%
Total	168,535.00	259,624.67			273,479.00			304,221.00			81%

The same positive trend is evident in media on-line sales. As per Indicator 4.1.1: "% of G-MEDIA-assisted media outlets that received NMI support that report increased revenue"¹⁷ with

¹⁶ Year 4 PMP, Objective 4, IR 4.1 Indicator 4.1.4

¹⁷ Year 4 PMP, Objective 4, IR 4.1.Indicator 4.1.1

set target of 50%, SI monitoring data showed 78% of beneficiary organizations reported increase in revenues.

Table 3. On-line Sales by NMI Partner Organization

	INCOME										% Change by Media Outlets
	Baseline	Period I			Period II			Period III			
	June - Sept 2013	Oct-13	Nov-13	Dec-13	Jan-14	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	
Newspaper Speqtri	1,491.83	13,976.00	628.95	3,612.00	1,086.00	2,389.00	3,055.00	1,724.30	6,067.30	1,000.00	96%
Newspaper Kakhetis Khma	1,646.00	3,460.00	4,690.00	2,370.00	2,480.00	3,420.00	1,320.00	3,930.00	9,760.00	4,000.00	258%
Kakheti Information Center	2,803.33	6,142.00	5,428.00	3,742.00	2,580.00	2,800.00	4,275.00	4,650.00	7,213.00	5,600.00	108%
Newspaper Sk New	1,046.33	960.00	1,680.00	2,122.00	670.00	1,386.00	667.00	5,300.00	2,830.00	2,500.00	239%
Radio Nor	200.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-100%
TV Borjomi	2,173.33	4,327.00	6,388.00	4,556.00	1,125.00	2,587.00	1,030.00	1,745.00	13,376.00	3,500.00	186%
Newspaper Guria News	2,263.33	12,500.00	19,096.00	18,164.00	21,358.00	16,132.00	21,035.00	19,784.00	17,500.00	15,000.00	670%
Newspaper Akhali Gazeti	170.00	2,000.00	590.00	680.00	500.00	50.00	350.00	300.00	1,350.00	500.00	322%
Newspaper Chemi Kharagauli	845.00	720.00	2,185.00	2,425.00	3,576.00	1,752.00	2,287.00	727.00	990.00	400.00	-16%
Quarterly Average	12,639.17	40,880.65			32,653.33			43,248.87			242%

While most NMI partners demonstrated significant results, some reaching as high as a 670% increase, others such as Chemi Kharagauli and Radio Nor showed a decline in percentage change. IREX cannot definitely say why these outlets did not fare as well as their colleagues, however SI and the G-MEDIA NMI team suggest the following inter-related factors for this result:

- Local business and markets are under-developed in the municipalities where these media outlets are located (Ninotsminda; Kharagauli), causing instability and fluctuation in the frequency of advertisements placed and resulting revenue
- These municipalities are in the lower economic bracket, with lower purchasing power
- Generally poor internet penetration in these municipalities impedes on-line and multimedia development.

Despite these few cases, overall increases in on-line sales was substantial. As illustrated in Table 3, throughout the reporting period, on-line sales of media outlets increased by 242% from 7,255.55 USD¹⁸ (12, 639.17 Gel) to 24,827.14 (43,248.87 Gel) – very impressive results within a short period of time. While without a control group SI cannot fully attribute the positive trends in revenues and other areas solely to the New Media Initiative, the data suggest that the NMI significantly contributed to improvement in the performance of targeted media outlets.

¹⁸ Exchange rate: USD= 1.7422 GEL <https://www.nbg.gov.ge/index.php?m=2>

Content Grantees

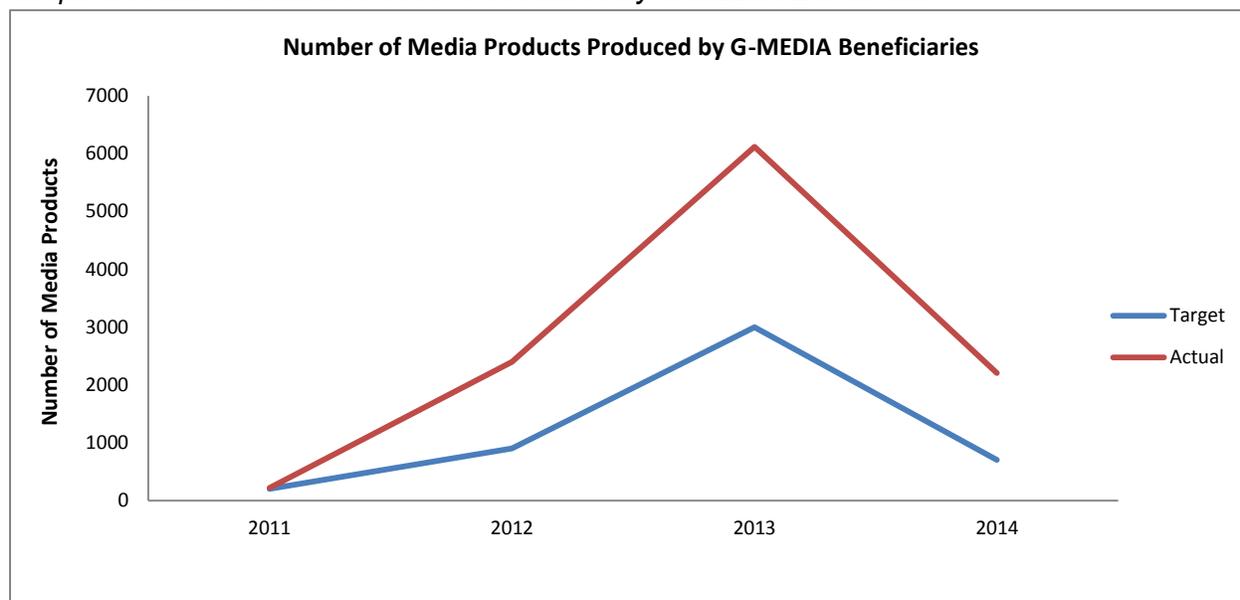
The other area which showed noteworthy results is content grantees. SI administered a mini survey to G-MEDIA grantees which demonstrated that as per indicator 1.1.1 *"% of subgrantees who report strengthening their production capacities"*¹⁹ with set target of 90%, 95% of grantees reported strengthened production capacity in Year 3.

The study showed that more than 60% of interviewed grantees believed that the G-MEDIA production grants helped to improve their organization's capacity to increase circulation, diversify their audience, boost production, purchase equipment, and improve the overall quality of their media content.

In addition to self-reporting, SI collected data on the number of media products produced by content support grantees. The analysis showed that as the beginning of the program G-MEDIA grantees were producing around 200 media products, and by the end of Year 3 the figure reached 6,000 media products annually.

As per USAID F-indicator *"number of media products"*²⁰ supported by G-MEDIA" with set target of 700 in Year 4, IREX has exceeded the set target by 1500 for a total of approximately 2200. In total, with G-MEDIA supported Tbilisi-based and regional media outlets produced around 11,000.00 media products throughout the G-MEDIA project lifetime, as shown in Graph 1.

Graph 1. Number of Media Products Produced by G-MEDIA Beneficiaries



The mini-survey also showed that 94% of grantees reported improvement in the quality of their media content. For triangulation of the result from the mini-survey, SI used Media Content

¹⁹ Year 3, 4 PMP, Objective I. IR I.I Indicator I.I.I

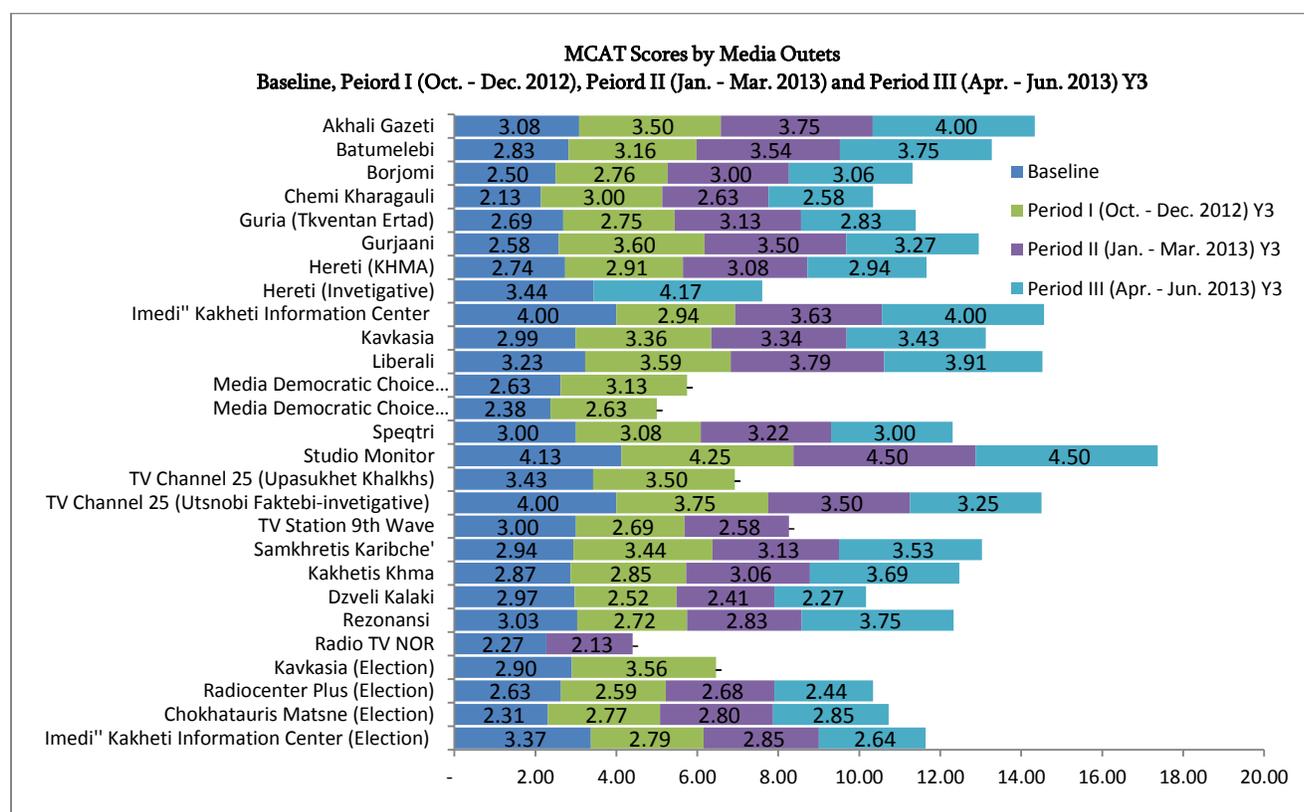
²⁰ One of the components of G-MEDIA support was content support grants. Within the framework of this component grants were awarded to Tbilisi based and regional media outlets representing all platforms including print, TV, radio and on-line media. The grants were awarded on competitive basis. With this awarded grants regional and Tbilisi based media outlets produced different media content including investigative stories, news programs, articles, TV and radio talks-shows etc. Media product is defined as any media content produced with G-MEDIA support and counts in articles, TV shows, news programs, multimedia products, etc.

Analysis Tool²¹ (MCAT) for the assessment of the quality of media content as per indicator 1.4.1: % change in score from the Media Content Analysis (MCAT), set target 10%.

MCAT findings demonstrate gradual but steady growth in the overall quality of supported media. Throughout Year 3, program grantees demonstrated 10% increase in the MCAT scores reaching an above-average score of 3.32 which on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1.0 represents the lowest and 5.0 the highest point, 3.0 is considered to be average/acceptable quality level.

Not all grantees succeeded in increasing the quality of media products, and some grantees even showed negative change. Also, throughout the reporting periods SI observed that some media outlets demonstrated frequent fluctuations in the scores as well. However, overall, 70% of grantees showed steady growth especially in the last reporting periods (see Graph 2 below).

Graph 2. MCAT Scores by Media Outlet, Program Year 3.



TNS Research

Radio station ratings research, initiated and funded by IREX, successfully changed the perception of radio stations and advertising agencies on the utility of audience data in programming decisions and ad buys. As per indicator 4.2.3: % of TNS subscriber advertising agencies and radios that report usage of audience research data for radio sales, set target –

²¹ Media Content Analysis Tool (MCAT) has been elaborated by SI expert and adapted to Georgian media context at the beginning of G-MEDIA program based on close consultation with Georgian media outlets. This is a tool used to measure changes in the quality of media content as per indicator 1.4.1: % change in score from the Media Content Analysis (MCAT) Tool.

50%, SI administered a survey for Market Intelligence Caucasus/TNS subscribers to identify if radio stations and advertising agencies were using the radio research data to inform their marketing and sales strategies and, if they were, how the use of this research influenced their revenue and sales dynamics.

The survey found that *67% of subscriber organizations use the data in their marketing and sales activities*. Three out of 12 organizations reported an increase in sales due to the availability of reliable rating data; others expected increases in sales in near future using the data.

All interviewed organizations acknowledged the importance of availability of radio ratings for attracting advertisements from private businesses, especially from international companies or companies whose advertisement and marketing decisions were made in headquarters not located in Georgia.

All visited and interviewed respondents stated that they were highly satisfied that radio ratings had been made available to them by IREX. *All respondents identified IREX as a “guarantor” of reliability of research data*. According to interviewed subscribers this was a first attempt to bring reliable ratings data into radio industry, conducted by a trusted organization not suspected to be involved in manipulating data in favor of any organization.

Market Intelligence Caucasus/TNS currently *has 16 subscriber organizations; nine out of 12 interviewed subscribers plan to purchase radio ratings data in the future*. These data indicate that the foundation has been established to make this service self-sufficient after G-MEDIA phases out. This, in turn will contribute to transforming radio as an attractive medium for businesses and the general public.

Areas for Improvement

PMP data also indicated that there are G-MEDIA activities that showed less impressive results. In particular, indicators for On-site Trainings to TV Stations, Professional Training and CSJMM show that interventions here did not reach the desired impact.

On-site Training to TV Stations

G-MEDIA provided tailor-made on-site training to Tbilisi-based and regional TV stations. SI used Media Content Analysis Tool to assess changes in the quality of news programs of targeted TV stations as per indicator “*% change in Media Content Analysis (MCAT) Tool score for television stations receiving G-MEDIA training from international experts*”.²² SI data showed that targeted organizations reached certain increases in MCAT scores, however over the long term most of them failed to maintain improvements, showed constant fluctuations in the scores from quarter to quarter, and some digressed.

In the last reporting period, SI data showed an 8% increase in the quality of scores, reaching 2.86 points, but overall the score remained below 3.0 which is below an acceptable/average quality level. The G-MEDIA team believes this may be explained by several interrelated factors: low capacity of staff at targeted TV stations, low interest and motivation of management, lack of

²² Year 3, 4 PMP, Objective 2, IR 2.4 Indicator 2.4.2:

IREX leverage to hold TV stations accountable for poor performance, and somewhat late introduction of this activity into the program. All these factors contributed to relatively weak performance of targeted TV stations.

Professional Trainings

The other area which had mixed results is professional trainings, For the assessment of training effectiveness, SI used pre and post-test to measure the participants' knowledge before training and compare it with the knowledge acquired during the training and by this identify change in knowledge. In addition to this tool, SI conducted group interviews with training participants to learn participants' feedback on overall effectiveness of the training. As per indicator 2.4.1 "*% change in journalism knowledge among G-MEDIA-supported training program recipients*"²³ with set target of 30% in Year 4, G-MEDIA achieved 20%.

Participant feedback indicated that some trainers, while knowledgeable in the content area, were not as skilled in training methods. There was a high correlation between this feedback and the pre and post-test results. Participants in local governance trainings also did not demonstrate significant knowledge gains. However, this could be attributed to the nature of the content which was potentially difficult to grasp and process within a short period of time.

CSJMM

The other area which did not show significant improvement is related to the support provided to CSJMM. SI and G-MEDIA used several indicators to assess achievements in the area of education and particularly in terms of support provided to CSJMM. According to the data, G-MEDIA met targets related to the application of professional standards and overall satisfaction with the master's program and the MEC. Specifically, SI found that G-MEDIA exceeded (100%) its target for the percentage of students who reported applying professional standards in their job as per indicator *% of CSJMM students and/ or graduates who find jobs in their fields*²⁴ with set target of 50%. However, SI found that G-MEDIA did not meet its target for the percentage of students/graduates who were able to find jobs in the media industry at least among this sample of students and graduates. Specifically, SI found that only 47% of students/graduates interviewed found jobs in their area of specialization, which is 18 percentage points below the Y3 target.

Though most survey participants expressed satisfaction with the education they received at CSJMM, the comments about some of the courses suggest there may be room for CSJMM to improve and refine its curriculum and to consider restructuring the complexity of some subjects and courses.

The majority of CSJMM students and graduates seemed generally happy with CSJMM faculty. However, there were concerns about teaching capacity that deserve attention from CSJMM management.

²³ Year 3, 4 PMP, Objective 2, IR 2.4 Indicator 2.4.1

²⁴ Year 3, PMP, Objective 2, IR 2.1 Indicator 2.1.1

As noted elsewhere in this report, G-MEDIA encountered significant resistance from CSJMM in making any significant changes in the business of running the school. Inaction on the part of CSJMM in this regard inevitably affected the school's ability to retain and place quality students in the job market.

V. LESSONS LEARNED & CONCLUSIONS

As reported above, G-MEDIA made significant gains in improving the Georgian media sector, particularly in introducing social media to regional outlets, improving the quality and trustworthiness of content, and providing young journalists and journalism students with quality facilities and instruction with which to learn their craft. There were also challenges, especially in assuring the financial sustainability of the CSJMM and regional media outlets.

Based on both the successes and challenges encountered by the program, G-MEDIA provides here a number of "lessons learned" for future media programming in Georgia. Some of the items below are not necessarily new but bear repeating as lessons to keep in mind when designing new programs. Other lessons, though unique to G-MEDIA activities, can be applied to other programs where long term sustainability is sought and similar mechanisms employed to achieve it. Below are the most representative and important lessons learned as a part of implementing the G-MEDIA program, by objective.

Objective 1: Improve Quality and Diversity of Media Content and Broaden Channels of Delivery

New Media Initiative

- *Must be willing to drop non-performers, even if it makes you unpopular.* Some initial NMI program partners did not fully implement the assistance, showed little incentive and were subsequently dropped from the program. This opened up space for more enthusiastic media outlets and sent the message that participation in NMI was not to be taken from granted. In this way, positive behavior was rewarded and incentivized.
- *Highly effective activities can strain resources.* NMI was very popular which ultimately created higher demand than project could reasonably accommodate. This significantly stretched staff resources, especially in supporting partners with video streaming studios.

Regional Elections Initiative

- *Multi-partner initiatives require dedicated staff oversight.* The first round of the REI was not as successful as it could have been as none of the REI partners were able to manage the entire initiative effectively. G-MEDIA recognized this and provided more staff support during the second round in year 4.

Telekritica

- *The public is not interested in actively critiquing media.* G-MEDIA and Transparency International overestimated public interest in analyzing news programs, even those they don't like, if it required action. Despite significant public outreach, engaging the public on this level never got traction.

Objective 2: Improve Professional Journalism

Caucasus School of Journalism and Mass Media (CSJMM) at GIPA University

- *Change must be supported at the top.* To improve management, a program must have the support and buy-in *from* management. Programs like G-MEDIA can engage decision-makers and present opportunities, but it is ultimately up to the beneficiary to do the hard work of improvement.
- *Sole partnerships can create a sense of entitlement.* In most cases, competition among potential partners helps ensure that only the most motivated and committed receive assistance. This also sets expectations. GIPA, as the sole education partner, had little incentive to accept G-MEDIA guidance or implement changes, expecting that assistance would continue regardless of performance. This attitude was somewhat predictable given the circumstances under which the partnership was created.

Multimedia Education Center (MEC)

- *Think beyond concept when establishing a new facility.* Creating the Multimedia Education Center was a highly innovative idea, and is considered a “game changer” in journalism education in Georgia. However, in some respects the concept may have overshadowed practicality. The MEC's historical location, though central, limits its ability to grow and demands high rent, threatening sustainability. Some design flaws proved to limit its effectiveness (no sound proof room, some equipment too high tech). While most of these problems were addressed, it is essential to think long term when making this kind of investment.
- *MEC's future was too dependent on CSJMM improvement in management capacity.* This inter-dependency put the MEC's future at risk when CSJMM proved to be incapable of effectively managing the facility.

On-site Training at Regional TV Stations

- *Change takes time - start training early in program.* On-site training significantly improved the quality of media content as demonstrated by improved MCAT scores, however it requires time to see tangible results. The intensive training and monitoring (through a journalism adviser and trainers/consultants) from the beginning of the program would likely have helped the outlets increase their production capacity more quickly and effectively.

- *Combine training with content grants.* The on-site training would likely have been more effective had it been provided in conjunction with the content production grants (most expired before the training got fully underway). This would have created stronger incentives for targeted outlets, provided leverage and established better preconditions for accountability among recipients.
- *Training must be supported by media managers* – there continues to be an overall lack of local expertise at regional media outlets, at all levels. On-site and other training can and will make a difference in improving reporting and business practices but management must be fully on board, supportive of the process, and reinforce training and new skills with their staff. Without committed cooperation from decision-makers, even the best training will have less impact than desired.
- *Journalism is not seen as a viable, long term profession.* Fair or not, journalism in Georgia does not enjoy the kind of clout or prestige needed to attract the best and brightest to the profession. Low wages, financial instability, and limited impact on issues that matter to the public contribute to the perception that journalism is a stepping stone to something better. It is essential to maintain attention at the high school level with activities like the Media Literacy Project to educate talented students about the power of media and its potential to make a difference.

Objective 4: Improve Media Outlets' Viability

- *Expectations for business projects must be realistic.* Unrealistic expectation of partners, particularly in business development, tended to set them up to fail. Business incentive grantees, for example, were given only one year to fully develop new enterprises, which proved to be too optimistic, especially given the economic conditions in the regions. Timelines were adjusted for the second round of grants but all grantees would have benefitted from a less constrained timeframe.
- *Cultural attitudes hinder sales and marketing.* The general lack of finance and sales expertise at media outlets has been a key obstacle to improved sustainability of media outlets in the regions. However, Innova consultants also discovered that sales – and selling in general – still carries negative connotations in the regions (a legacy of the Soviet era). This enduring mindset contributes to the already challenging task of building successful sales and marketing teams at regional media outlets.

APPENDIX 1: MCAT FINAL REPORT

Program name: Georgian Media Enhance Democracy, Informed Citizenry, and Accountability (G-MEDIA) Program

Prepared by: Rusudan Konjaria, M&E Specialist, SI/IREX G-MEDIA Program

TV Stations Trained On-Site by G-MEDIA: Media Content Assessment Tool Report

October 2013 to June 2014 Reporting Period

September 21, 2014

Contents

ACRONYMS	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
INTRODUCTION	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
METHODOLOGY	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
FINDINGS	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
GURJAANI TV	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
GURIA TV	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
9TH WAVE.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
BORJOMI TV	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
KAVKASIA TV	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
ANNEX 1: CONTENT ANALYSIS CATEGORIES	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

Acronyms

G-MEDIA	Georgian Media Enhance Democracy, Informed Citizenry, and Accountability Program
GARB	Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters
IR	Intermediate Result
IREX	International Research and Exchanges Board
MCAT	Media Content Analysis Tool
SI	Social Impact
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

Intermediate Result (IR) 2 under Assistance Objective 1 in USAID/Georgia's results framework is "improved public access to reliable news and information." Aiming to achieve this result, USAID contracted with the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) to develop the Georgian Media, Enhance Democracy, Informed Citizenry, and Accountability (G-MEDIA) Program. G-MEDIA's goal is "to improve the Georgian public's access to a range of sources of news and information by developing a more politically balanced, editorially independent, professional, and viable media sector that reaches audiences across the country through diverse delivery channels." One objective under this overarching goal is to improve the quality and diversity of media content while broadening media delivery channels.

To meet this goal, G-MEDIA commissioned a series of tailor-made, intensive, on-site trainings for five TV stations: Gurjaani TV, Borjomi TV, Guria TV, the 9th Wave, and Kavkasia TV. Four of these stations are regional; one is based in Tbilisi. G-MEDIA invited international media experts to conduct these trainings in two phases. In the first phase, an international media expert visited each organization to conduct a capacity assessment, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The second phase involved a series of three intensive, week-long, on-site trainings, delivered on a quarterly basis by two international media experts. Through these trainings, G-MEDIA aimed to teach journalists, camera operators, and other personnel about the news production process and provide guidance on current reporting standards.

Using a Media Content Analysis Tool (MCAT), Social Impact (SI) monitored the news programs produced by these five stations at baseline and the following quarters and prepared this report as evidence on the effectiveness of the trainings.

Methodology and Limitations

SI monitors changes in the quality of the news programs produced by targeted TV stations with its Media Content Analysis Tool (MCAT), which was expanded and adapted specifically for G-MEDIA by SI media expert Maureen Taylor. SI's MCAT coder analyzes media content from news programs using a weighted scale that helps to quantify the quality of media content. Content that meets Georgian professional standards of objectivity, accuracy, relevance, and structure is considered to be of quality. For a detailed description of the MCAT categories, please see [Annex I — Content Analysis Categories](#). The MCAT coder assesses media products using a five-point scale: 5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = average/acceptable, 2 = poor, and 1 = missing/nothing. Average scores for each organization were tracked for each quarter. An average score lower than 2.7 generally indicates that a grantee is struggling with the foundational skills of journalism, while a score of 2.75 or above indicates that the organization is on its way to achieving acceptable levels of quality. A score of 3.0 or above means that the media organization has reached an acceptable level of content quality.

During the period covered by this report, October 2013 to June 2014, the MCAT coder collected and analyzed data from more than 350 randomly selected news programs produced by the five trained organizations. This report summarizes the changes in the quality of content produced by the targeted

media outlets during this period and offers qualitative and quantitative data that can be used to identify both areas of success and areas for improvement.

SI used to have two MCAT coders, which was important as it allowed for triangulation of findings between the two coders, given that even though the MCAT has lots of guidelines, it is ultimately still somewhat subjective. However, one of the MCAT coders had to leave the organization to pursue another opportunity, and given that this happened right at the end of the contract, SI did not have the time or resources necessary to train another coder to take her place. Also, generally, 9 out of 10 times in the past, the two MCAT coders agreed on the scores they have each of the media outlet. This is because of the clear guidelines and the in-depth training each of the coders received in an effort to establish inter-rater reliability. Nonetheless, the loss of one coder make scores presented in this report somewhat less rigorous than previous scores (the last MCAT report also relied on findings by only one coder, but all previous reports included findings from both coders). This should be considered when reviewing the following findings and when comparing them between previous scores.

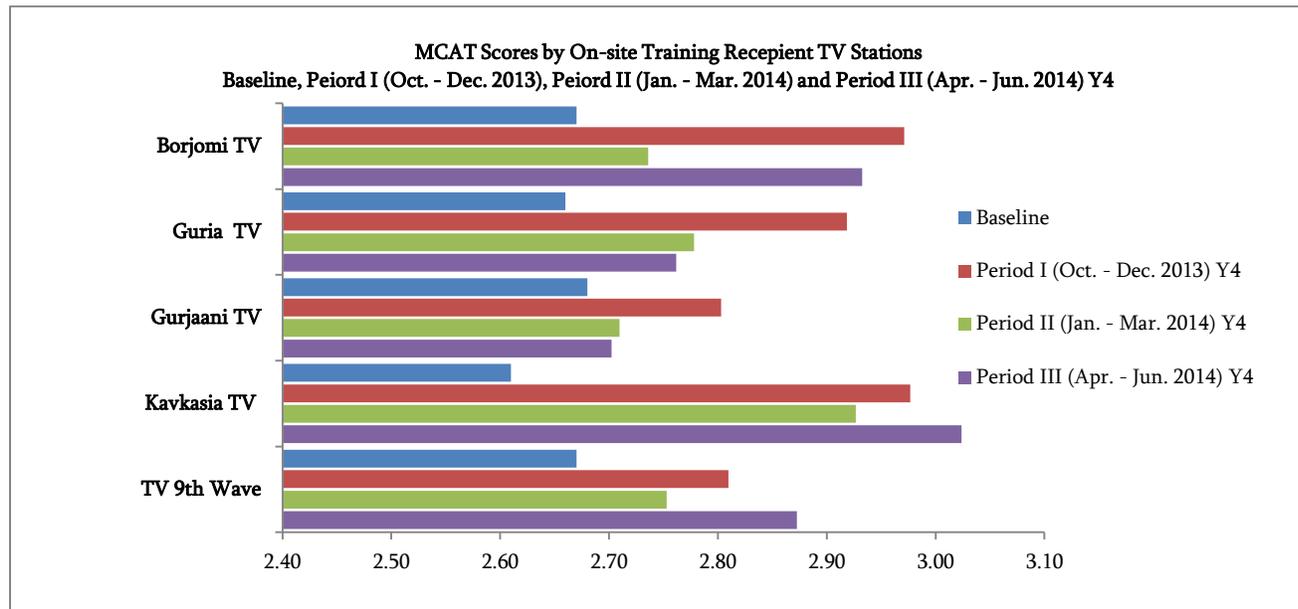
Findings

Figure 1 below illustrates the average scores for each of the G-MEDIA-supported outlets for the three quarters between October 2013 and June 2014. The first quarter data is a baseline; the actual baseline period varies across the outlets since it is tied to the training times. The figure also shows the average results. The Period 3 average score of 2.86 is an 8 percent improvement over the baseline average of 2.66. Although this score falls below the MCAT scale's threshold of 3.0 for "acceptable" quality, it is very close to this threshold. This means that, as of June 2014, G-MEDIA-supported media products are, on average, close to acceptable quality and need further work to reach that level of quality.

Table 1. Year 4 MCAT scores for on-site training recipients

On-Site Training Recipient TV Station	Baseline Period	Baseline	Period 1 (Oct–Dec 2013)	Period 2 (Jan–Mar 2014)	Period 3 (Apr–Jun 2014)	% Change
Borjomi TV	May 2013	2.67	2.97	2.74	2.93	10%
Guria TV	Jan 2013	2.66	2.92	2.78	2.76	4%
Gurjaani TV	Sept 2012	2.68	2.80	2.71	2.70	1%
Kavkasia TV	Mar 2013	2.61	2.98	2.93	3.02	16%
TV 9th Wave	Jan 2013	2.67	2.81	2.75	2.87	8%
Average		2.66	2.90	2.78	2.86	8%

Figure 1. Year 4 MCAT scores for on-site training recipients



Gurjaani TV

Gurjaani TV is a network in the Kakheti region that provides news programs to the local population. After G-MEDIA selected the network to receive intensive on-site training, SI began collecting and analyzing MCAT data for Gurjaani TV on a quarterly basis. A baseline study performed in September 2012 provides a snapshot of Gurjaani TV's content quality before the beginning of training with media experts in October 2012. The pre-training data can be compared to data collected after the intervention to identify any changes resulting from the intervention.

During the baseline study, coders observed many strengths in Gurjaani TV's news programming, including the relevance of its stories to the local population, its sound quality, and the above-average skills of its journalists, who spoke accurately and provided information in a presentable and professional way.

However, scores in the following reporting periods declined. In particular, the station's scores for objectivity, accuracy, and relevance declined, while only its score for structure improved. Specifically, coders noted that stories began to lack comprehensiveness and that some stories lacked analysis and background information. Additionally, coders reported that national stories continued to be one-sided and often lacked background information. According to G-MEDIA staff, this is because the regional television stations rely on the Georgian Regional Broadcasters' Association (GARB) for their national media content, and the quality of GARB news content is fairly low by G-MEDIA staff standards. On the positive side, programs started covering local stories in a logical way, which helps explain the increased score for structure.

MCAT scores for all major categories are in Table 2, which shows that the station's highest scores were during the baseline period. In the succeeding quarters, scores for all categories except structure

decreased drastically. Despite these findings on Gurjaani TV's quality, accuracy, and relevance, G-MEDIA staff and trainers said they believe that Gurjaani TV is one of the more capable regional television stations. Further, findings from SI's end line assessment showed that the public from the survey cities (Batumi, Gurjaani, Kutaisi, Signagi, and Tbilisi) tend to have a significant amount of trust in Gurjaani TV, suggesting high quality content. In fact, in the end line report, SI found the Channel of the Patriarchy to be the most trusted TV channel, followed closely by TV Gurjaani (amongst Kakheti residents, at least). A total of more than 50 percent of survey respondents reported trusting Gurjaani TV at both baseline and end line.

With regards to the technical categories, Gurjaani TV's anchor skills improved significantly (by 22%) from the September 2012 baseline to June 2014, the end of Period 3. Anchors often provided the audience with informative and brief introductions to topics being covered, and their text reading skills also improved. Gurjaani TV's scores in the other technical categories do not indicate any significant improvements. Nevertheless, all of Gurjaani TV's technical scores except for camera work maintained above-average scores throughout the reporting period. Although scores in camera skills improved, a coder reported that the station still struggles with poor video quality and frames that are often unsteady and shaky, and that the station still uses jump cuts.

Table 2. MCAT scores for Gurjaani TV (four major categories)

Gurjaani TV	Objectivity	Accuracy	Relevance	Structure	Average
Baseline	3.14	2.95	3.39	2.72	3.05
Period 1 (Oct–Dec 2013)	2.80	2.81	2.92	2.69	2.80
Period 2 (Jan–Mar 2014)	2.78	2.63	2.93	2.50	2.71
Period 3 (Apr–Jun 2014)	2.70	2.81	2.57	3.10	2.80
% Change	-14%	-5%	-24%	14%	-8%

Table 3. MCAT scores for Gurjaani TV (technical categories)

Gurjaani TV	Sound Quality	Anchor Skills	Journalist Skills	Camera Skills	Average
Baseline	3.14	2.95	3.39	2.72	3.05
Period 1 (Oct–Dec 2013)	3.21	3.50	3.55	2.86	3.28
Period 2 (Jan–Mar 2014)	2.99	3.59	3.55	2.85	3.25
Period 3 (Apr–Jun 2014)	3.10	3.59	3.52	2.95	3.29

% Change	-1%	22%	4%	8%	8%
----------	-----	-----	----	----	----

Guria TV

The Guria TV station is based in Georgia's Guria region and provides news programming for the local population in Ozurgeti and the surrounding areas. SI collected baseline MCAT data to assess Guria TV's content quality before training began in February 2013.

Guria TV's baseline MCAT scores were below acceptable levels in all categories. By Period 3, Guria TV's scores had improved in all categories except relevance. However, all of the station's scores remain below the acceptable level of 3.0.

The MCAT coder noted several areas for improvement. Reportedly, stories covered by Guria TV were not comprehensive and lacked diverse perspectives. The station also mainly covered local stories, which sometimes had a very strong human angle but often lacked details and fact verification. SI's coder also found that stories were often one-sided or unimportant (not relevant for audience members). Additionally, the coder noted that names and titles of respondents often did not appear in subtitles.

In the technical categories, the coder noted that transitions from journalist voice-overs to sound bites were often sharp with loud background noises. Anchor and journalist pronunciation skills need improvement, as some words were pronounced very poorly. The anchor and journalists also made frequent unnatural pauses. Even though camera skills improved significantly (by 24%), camera shaking still occurred occasionally. Additionally, frames were sometimes very bright during interviews.

Despite its improvements, Guria TV still struggles with fundamentals of professional journalism. It needs to continue to work on improving different aspects of storytelling, including covering relevant issues, providing diverse perspectives with varied facts, and improving sound quality and camera work to ensure high-quality programming.

Table 4. MCAT scores for Guria TV (four major categories)

Guria TV	Objectivity	Accuracy	Relevance	Structure	Average
Baseline	2.61	2.65	2.82	2.56	2.66
Period 1 (Oct–Dec 2013)	2.90	2.94	3.05	2.78	2.92
Period 2 (Jan–Mar 2014)	2.67	2.70	3.12	2.62	2.78
Period 3 (Apr–Jun 2014)	2.73	2.83	2.81	2.69	2.77
% Change	4%	7%	-0.4%	5%	4%

Table 5. MCAT Scores for Guria TV (technical categories)

Guria TV	Sound Quality	Anchor Skills	Journalist Skills	Camera Skills	Average
Baseline	2.77	3.45	2.92	2.37	2.88
Period 1 (Oct–Dec 2013)	2.82	3.92	2.75	2.96	3.11
Period 2 (Jan–Mar 2014)	2.67	2.57	2.71	2.81	2.69
Period 3 (Apr–Jun 2014)	2.69	3.08	2.86	2.94	2.89
% Change	-3%	-11%	-2%	24%	1%

9th Wave

The 9th Wave is a regional TV Station based in Georgia’s Samegrelo region. It provides news programming for the local population in Poti and the surrounding areas. The station received its first on-site training from G-MEDIA in February 2013, after SI collected baseline MCAT data in January 2013.

An analysis of baseline data showed that 9th Wave’s stories lacked comprehensive coverage. The station also rarely covered national stories; when it did, these stories were mostly on matters of little relevance to the local audience, such as press conferences. Additionally, sometimes two or more stories covered the same press conference. At times, the station’s programming also struggled with structure. Stories often did not have an introduction, and titles of respondents were often missing. With respect to technical issues, coders identified several issues including unsteady frames, illogical sequencing of shots, and unstable sound. Coders also noted that the camera was often not well positioned, usually only showing half of the news program’s name in the background.

In the three periods from October 2013 to June 2014, the 9th Wave’s news programming has improved in accuracy and structure but remained constant in objectivity and declined in relevance. Coders reported that the station covered mainly local stories of low importance such as TV station trainings and charity events. Although stories had multiple sources, they often tended to be one-sided. Coders noted the same problem with the station’s coverage of national stories. Coders said that these stores often lacked comprehensiveness and details. Again, according to G-MEDIA staff, this is because the regional television stations rely on the Georgian Regional Broadcasters’ Association (GARB) for their national media content, and the quality of GARB news content is fairly low by G-MEDIA staff standards.

In the final period, the MCAT coder noted that stories were usually well structured; however, in some cases the program started with a story on sports while a major news story was presented third or

fourth. Sometimes, the same video footage was used for two different stories. The coder also noted that sound bites often were cut in the middle, and sometimes the anchor or journalists used quotations that were discriminatory toward minorities including LGBT persons.

On the technical side, the coder noted the frame was steady, but there were occasional jump cuts. Sound quality was stable, but with some background, and sometimes, the studio was too bright.

As shown in Table 6, the 9th Wave improved by 8 percent across the major categories. However, except for accuracy, scores remain below acceptable levels, suggesting that the station requires further training. G-MEDIA staff and trainers provided opinions confirming this belief. They said that capacity at 9th Wave has remained low throughout the G-MEDIA Program despite attempts to bolster staff capabilities.

Table 6. MCAT scores for the 9th Wave (four major categories)

9th Wave	Objectivity	Accuracy	Relevance	Structure	Average
Baseline	2.78	2.74	2.82	2.33	2.67
Period 1 (Oct–Dec 2013)	2.74	2.77	2.99	2.74	2.81
Period 2 (Jan–Mar 2014)	2.73	2.64	3.00	2.65	2.75
Period 3 (Apr–Jun 2014)	2.78	3.05	2.76	2.89	2.87
% Change	0%	11%	-2.0%	24%	8%

Table 7. MCAT scores for the 9th Wave (technical categories)

9th Wave	Sound Quality	Anchor Skills	Journalist Skills	Camera Skills	Average
Baseline	2.63	3.85	2.93	2.41	2.96
Period 1 (Oct–Dec 2013)	2.62	3.39	3.86	2.72	3.15
Period 2 (Jan–Mar 2014)	2.99	3.63	3.66	2.64	3.23
Period 3 (Apr–Jun 2014)	2.89	3.24	3.59	2.94	3.16
% Change	10%	-16%	22%	22%	7%

Borjomi TV

Borjomi TV is a regional TV station based in the city of Borjomi that provides news coverage and other public affairs programming to the local population. Borjomi TV started receiving intensive on-site training in July 2013 after SI collected baseline data in June 2013.

On average, Borjomi TV has improved in all major categories except objectivity, where the station's score has decreased by 5 percent. Borjomi TV has achieved acceptable quality scores for accuracy and structure, but needs further improvement to meet acceptable standards of objectivity and relevance.

Analysis of qualitative data has shown that Borjomi's news programs often cover diverse stories on politics, social issues, the environment, etc.; however, some stories tended to present only one side of the issue and often lacked analysis. Although Borjomi TV often covered national stories, coverage tended to be one-sided, without multiple, diverse sources. As described above, this is likely because TV Borjomi, like TV Gurjaani and 9th Wave, relies on the GARB for their national media content, and the quality of GARB news content is fairly low by G-MEDIA staff standards. On average, the station covered five to seven stories per program. Most stories were reasonable in length, although some stories were too short.

Borjomi TV's scores for the technical categories improved significantly — by 29 percent. Every technical category improved, and by Period 3, every technical category surpassed acceptable levels. Anchor skills improved significantly: the anchor's appearance was more professional than during the baseline period, and the anchor's comments became concise and relevant to the topics covered. Anchor pronunciation remains an area for improvement, as the pronunciation of some consonants was too soft. The coder noted occasional jump cuts, but frames were mostly steady, and, in general, there was no camera shaking.

Table 8. MCAT scores for Borjomi TV (four major categories)

Borjomi TV	Objectivity	Accuracy	Relevance	Structure	Average
Baseline	2.99	2.88	2.73	2.08	2.67
Period 1 (Oct–Dec 2013)	3.04	3.10	3.08	2.66	2.97
Period 2 (Jan–Mar 2014)	2.68	2.77	3.03	2.47	2.74
Period 3 (Apr–Jun 2014)	2.85	3.10	2.74	3.18	2.96
% Change	-5%	8%	0.3%	53%	11%

Table 9. MCAT scores for Borjomi TV (technical categories)

Borjomi TV	Sound Quality	Anchor Skills	Journalist Skills	Camera Skills	Average

Baseline	2.46	2.08	2.78	2.76	2.52
Period 1 (Oct–Dec 2013)	2.66	2.55	3.05	3.09	2.84
Period 2 (Jan–Mar 2014)	2.91	2.90	3.23	2.72	2.94
Period 3 (Apr–Jun 2014)	3.18	3.29	3.47	3.06	3.25
% Change	29%	58%	25%	11%	29%

Kavkasia TV

Kavkasia is a TV Station located in Tbilisi. G-MEDIA began providing on-site training to Kavkasia in April 2013 after SI collected baseline data in March 2013.

During the baseline period, coders found that stories were weakly structured and often without a logical beginning or end, with most of the stories ending with quotations. Stories also lacked comprehensive coverage, although, on the positive side, they often featured more than two sources with diverse viewpoints. Coders also reported that story topics were often repetitive and that respondent titles were rarely displayed. Finally, coders found that the news programming did not cover cultural, sporting, or international events.

In the following periods, as illustrated by Table 10 below, the station has improved significantly in all major categories. By Period 3, Kavkasia scored above average in all major categories except structure, which improved but remained below average. Despite this progress, the MCAT coder still noted areas where the station would benefit from further improvement. In particular, according to the coder, stories provided comprehensive coverage with many details and facts but sometimes lacked analysis and were at times repetitive. Many stories provided diverse perspectives and multiple sources; however, there were cases when stories were one-sided. The station's news programming continued to cover diverse topics with well-sequenced stories. However, as during the baseline period, some stories had too many sound bites and were at times repetitive. The coder also stated that, at times, stories lacked a human angle.

As to the technical categories, the coder noted shortcomings with sound, as sometimes background noise was present, natural sounds were too loud during interviews, and sound transitions were rough. As to video quality, the coder noted frequent jump cuts and occasional camera shaking. In a few stories, video and sound content were not aligned. Anchor reading skills also need improvement, as the anchor often reads text from a paper. The TV station also needs to pay more attention to titling, as subtitles with names and titles of respondents were often missing.

Table 10. MCAT scores for Kavkasia TV (four major categories)

Kavkasia TV	Objectivity	Accuracy	Relevance	Structure	Average
-------------	-------------	----------	-----------	-----------	---------

Baseline	2.62	2.69	2.79	2.35	2.61
Period 1 (Oct–Dec 2013)	3.24	3.20	2.96	2.51	2.98
Period 2 (Jan–Mar 2014)	3.00	3.16	3.03	2.52	2.93
Period 3 (Apr–Jun 2014)	3.23	3.29	3.00	2.58	3.02
% Change	23%	22%	7%	10%	16%

Table 11. MCAT scores for Kavkasia TV (technical categories)

Kavkasia TV	Sound Quality	Anchor Skills	Journalist Skills	Camera Skills	Average
Baseline	3.04	3.96	3.16	2.78	3.24
Period 1 (Oct–Dec 2013)	2.58	3.28	3.34	2.82	3.01
Period 2 (Jan–Mar 2014)	2.85	3.18	3.22	2.65	2.98
Period 3 (Apr–Jun 2014)	2.45	3.35	3.68	2.85	3.08
% Change	-19%	-15%	17%	2%	-5%

Reason for Changes

SI has heard from G-MEDIA staff and other media professionals—through the G-MEDIA End Line Assessment—that part of the reason some TV stations have not experienced more growth in their capacity is because different stations have engaged differently with capacity development initiatives. Some have fully embraced trainings and changes, and others have not. As would be expected, according to these media professionals, those stations that have engaged more have improved more, and vice versa.

Conclusions and Recommendations

After receiving intensive training provided by international media experts, Kavkasia TV, Borjomi TV, Guria TV, and the 9th Wave all showed some improvement in the quality of their news content. While Gurjaani TV regressed in some areas, evidence from other sources suggests that overall, the public and G-MEDIA media professionals consider Gurjaani TV to be one of the more high-quality and trustworthy TV stations.

SI also found that regional TV stations' coverage of national stories tends not to be comprehensive and often one-sided. This is likely because regional TV stations get their national news stories from GARB, and the quality of GARB news remains low, according to G-MEDIA staff. SI recommends that USAID consider including capacity development of GARB in future Georgian media interventions.

Given the dynamics of change and improvement, SI recommends that USAID work with future implementing partners to continue G-MEDIA's pattern of providing more focused, tailored training only to those media outlets that show gradual and steady improvements in capacity over time. It is critical that beneficiaries buy in to the intervention and that they remain engaged in their own capacity development over time. G-MEDIA has tried to work with only those stations that put forth a strong effort to improve, having discontinued training three media outlets because of their lack of engagement (according to G-MEDIA staff). And, SI recommends that this process continue with any future media capacity development initiatives, perhaps with key milestones that the outlets must meet in order to continue receiving intervention benefits.

Annex 1: Content Analysis Categories²⁵

Category Definitions for All Media Platforms

Objectivity occurs when there is balanced coverage that provides equal coverage to the relevant perspectives. The journalist or presenter should use neutral language and there should be no personal opinions or bias in the story. If the story does not have two sides (such as a health or culture story) then the story can be marked a 3 if two perspectives are present.

Accuracy is ensured when the story includes verified facts, background and/or details from at least two credible sources. Sources can be people who are relevant to the story, NGOs, government agencies, political leaders, and others, but all of the sources should not represent one side or one part of an issue. Accurate news seeks to be comprehensive. Names and positions should be correct. A score of 3 means that the story has two diverse sources, includes details and facts, and gives the audience enough information to understand the situation. The score of 4 means that the story was better than average.

Relevance occurs when the information in the story is timely, new, and important. Relevant stories have a human angle that is interesting to the target or local audience. The information in stories should be useful and may provide a solution to a problem. Political stories that are not made to be relevant (explaining the so what) should be scored a 2.

Good Structure is a foundation of excellent journalism. The story should have a newsworthy headline, interesting lead with the most relevant parts of the 5Ws and H, straightforward language, and good grammar. The story should be appropriate in length and be organized in a logical manner that includes a beginning, middle, and end.

Presentation is the creative approach to the story. An excellent score on presentation means that the journalist takes an innovative or creative approach to the story. It is not the same old story, same old approach. Presentation is enhanced with additional information, sounds, visuals, new ways of portraying people and places.

Additional Categories for TV

Good Structure for a TV story means that the most relevant parts of the 5Ws and H are present. The story should be appropriate in length and be organized in a logical manner that includes a beginning, middle, and end.

Sound is excellent when there are appropriate levels that do not change from anchor to story or change from interviewee to interviewee. There is no dead air or lost sound. The interviewees can be heard and the natural sound adds to the story.

²⁵ These categories were initially developed by participants in a summer 2011 G-MEDIA workshop that invited media to share their thoughts about “what makes excellent news in Georgia.” The categories were later refined during the content analysis training.

Camera shots should be focused, steady, with an interesting mix of wide, close up and background shots. Visuals need to add to the story and tell the story. Good editing means that there is an easy transition between shots, between anchor and story, and from story to anchor.

Anchor skills are excellent when the anchor looks at the audience, can deal with small technical problems, speaks at a normal pace, has appropriate tone (not emotional, not flat) and is professional looking, and has a good lead-in or summary.

Journalist skills include good focused interview questions that show research and familiarity with the topic, with no repetitive questions. Good communication includes an easy-to-understand voice, straightforward language, and good grammar. Interviewees should do most of the talking.

Additional Categories for Radio

Anchor skills are excellent when s/he speaks at a normal pace, has appropriate tone (not emotional, not flat), and has a good lead-in to or closing statement to stories.

Sound is effective when music is not too loud or too soft. The use of natural sound should enhance the story, not detract from it. Good editing of sound means that there are smooth transitions between sound segments.

Good Structure for a radio story: The most relevant parts of the 5Ws and H are presented early in the story. The story should be appropriate in length and organized in a logical manner that includes a beginning, middle, and end.

Journalist skills include good, focused interview questions that show research and familiarity with the topic, without repetition. Good communication includes an easy-to-understand voice, straightforward language, and good grammar. Interviewees should do most of the talking. *Vox Pop* segments probe into answers — questions are serious.

Additional Categories for Talk Shows

Current timing of topics: The topic of the talk show is current and timely. The topic may have been ignored in the past or has been considered “off limits.” The show has a solution or practical aspect that helps people.

Audience centered: The topic and format of the show invites the local audience to participate. The call-in portion of the show encourages people to participate and respects their questions. Panelists address the audience’s questions.

Creative approach: New and innovative ways/information to talk about topics. The show includes more than just talking heads or politicians. Additional sounds, images, or people are included.

Embedded stories in talk show: They should be considered excellent if they meet the standards of the traditional news story (see TV or radio; may be only one or two per program, coded as a story). How well did the talk show incorporate the news story? Did it stimulate discussion?

Moderator: Uses good, focused interview questions that show research and familiarity with the topic, without repetitive questions. Good communication includes an easy-to-understand voice, straightforward language, and good grammar. Interviewees should do most of the talking. The moderator should be able to facilitate discussion among the guests and ensure balance of time and opinion.

Scales

5 = excellent, this is an exemplary story/talk show that should be the model for others. It was superb.

4 = good, this is a very good story/talk show on this feature but has small but fixable issues, that could make it even better.

3 = average/acceptable, this is what is common across Georgian media. It is acceptable and average. It is not special nor has impact. More work on this feature would help to make the story better.

2 = poor, the story or talk show feature is done poorly. It does not meet minimal expectations, and improvement on this feature would help make the story/show more acceptable.

1 = missing/nothing, the story/talk show failed on this feature. There was no evidence of this feature.

APPENDIX 2: PMP FINAL REPORT

Program Name: Georgian Media Enhance Democracy, Informed Citizenry and Accountability (G-Media) Program

Prepared by: Rusudan Konjaria, M&E Specialist, SI/IREX G-Media Program

Highlights on G-MEDIA Achievements and Areas for Improvement

Table of Contents

<u>OVERVIEW OF HOW PMP WAS MANAGED AND CHANGED OVER 4 YEAR PROGRAM</u>	106
<u>MEASURING IREX/G-MEDIA PROGRAM RESULTS</u>	106
<u>REVIEWING AND UPDATING THE PMP</u>	76
<u>CONTEXT INDICATORS</u>	107
<u>ACHIEVEMENTS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENTS</u>	76
<u>ACHIEVEMENTS</u>	108
<u>NEW MEDIA INITIATIVE</u>	77
<u>CONTENT GRANTEEES</u>	80
<u>TNS RESEARCH</u>	81
<u>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENTS</u>	82
<u>ON-SITE TRAINING TO TV STATIONS</u>	82
<u>PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS</u>	83
<u>CSJMM</u>	83

Overview of how PMP was managed and changed over 4 year program

Measuring IREX/G-MEDIA Program Results

G-MEDIA program's monitoring and evaluation has been managed and implemented by IREX's partner organization Social Impact (SI). Social Impact elaborated monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework and strategy based on G-MEDIA program overall goals, objectives and activities presented in Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP).

The PMP depicts the program's overall monitoring framework and consist of a set of program results; performance indicators; data sources; data collection methods, roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis, and reporting to USAID/Georgia. PMP is an important tool for managing and documenting the data collection process. It enables timely and consistent collection of comparable performance data, even in the event of staff turnover.

Social Impact, in close cooperation and coordination with G-MEDIA management team, employed the following strategies and actions to measure project performance:

- Reviewed existing national-level data on the media industry, such as Freedom House's *Nations in Transit* annual reports;
- Utilized IREX's comprehensive Media Sustainability Index (MSI) for measuring the overall state of the media industry in Georgia;
- Utilized media M&E tools such as Social Impact's (SI) specially adapted Media Content Analysis Tool (MCAT) protocol for collecting information on improvements in the content of broadcast, online, and print media resulting from IREX/G-MEDIA's direct interventions;
- Conducted mini-surveys and key informant interviews with project beneficiaries, implementing partners, and other key stakeholders;
- Administered specialized assessments, such as the following:
 - Media Partner Assessment Tool (MPAT) to assess media outlets' business development;
 - Pre- and post-test knowledge-based training evaluations for measuring the effectiveness of IREX's training programs in increasing participant knowledge, among other indicators; and
 - Policy Milestone Index, which measures on-the-ground advancements in advocacy efforts.
- Conducted regular monitoring visits to track project activities and performance indicators in Tbilisi and regions. These monitoring visits included semi-structured qualitative assessments of project activities and assisted program staff in utilizing real-time information for project planning.
- Conducted regular group interviews with training participants after training sessions to gather qualitative feedback on training effectiveness
- Elaborated and administered specially designed tools for New Media Initiative to measure quality of multimedia content
- Monitored web-sites with a specially designed check-list

- Administered customized baseline and endline household (HH) surveys to measure individual outcome and impact-level results on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors toward the media industry, among other indicators
- Social Impact, with the support from G-MEDIA staff, collected and registered data in specially designed databases on a monthly basis
- SI analyzed qualitative and quantitative data and prepared reports on findings on different key performance indicators according to the reporting frequency indicated in PMP.

Reviewing and Updating the PMP

PMP implementation is not a one-time occurrence, but rather an ongoing process of review, revision, and re-implementation. Social Impact and IREX/G-MEDIA utilized PMP as a “living” document to make it a useful tool for management and organizational learning. Therefore it underwent modifications several times to reflect changes in IREX/G-MEDIA strategy and ongoing project activities. The PMP was reviewed and revised based on modified program work plans annually.

Throughout G-MEDIA program implementation PMP was modified three times in Y2, Y3 and Y4 PMPs. In total, throughout G-MEDIA program implementation, more than 15 new indicators had been added and around 30 indicators had been delated from PMP. The formulation and numbering of some IRs and indicators had also been amended according to the respective year program work plan. The modifications took place due to the following factors:

- 6) IREX had added and/or expanded new activities (New Media Initiative, Media Literacy, TNS Research etc.) which necessitated adding up of few indicators for better capturing program outputs and outcomes;
- 7) G-MEDIA had gradually suspended some of program activities. Consequently, some of IRs and related indicators were removed.
- 8) G-MEDIA had reached set outputs and thus stopped working in the respective areas. Therefore, related indicators and/or IRs were removed.
- 9) Activities related to minorities were less emphasized in program Y3 and Y4 compared to Year 1 or Y2, and, thus, related indicators were taken out from the respective PMPs;
- 10) In accordance with USAID’s request to simplify the PMP, SI took out indicators that were assessing activities with minor significance or those that proved to be not effective management tools.

Through these modifications, SI in cooperation with G-MEDIA had made PMP to be more rigorous, outcome-oriented, and tailored to G-MEDIA program activities and goals. For details on the introduced changes please refer to the respective program year PMPs.

Context indicators

Achievements and Areas for Improvements

SI, in close consultation with G-MEDIA, based on collected and analyzed M&E data, has identified areas which proved to be most effective throughout program lifetime as well as activities which demonstrated mixed or not favorable outcomes.

In this section SI provides brief overview of these activities under subsections of Achievements and Areas for Improvements. Under Achievements, SI depicts results of New Media Initiative (NMI), Content Grantees and TNS Research. In Areas for Improvement, SI features On-site Trainings to TV Stations, Professional Training and CSJMM.

Achievements

Here are brief highlights of IREX achievements:

- With G-MEDIA support, regional media outlets started productions of multimedia content. Throughout the program implementation, New Media partner organizations produced over 2,000 multimedia products. In addition, NMI media outlets created and/or upgraded their websites, increased number of unique visitors, introduced on-line sales strategies and significantly increased on-line sales.
- Content Grantees have demonstrated strengthening of their capacities. Media outlets that received content grants, with IREX support, boosted their production capacities, improved quality of produced content and increased production of media content. Collected qualitative data illustrated that, in total, throughout program implementation, G-MEDIA grantees produced over 10,000.00 media content.
- The other area which showed impressive results is radio audience research initiated and funded by IREX. SI survey revealed that the radio industry did not possess reliable and trustful radio ratings data before IREX intervention. The survey demonstrated that, currently, with IREX support, reliable radio audience research data is available and accessible for radio stations, advertisement agencies and businesses. This, according to survey respondents, will positively influence on the development of radio as an attractive and profitable medium in Georgia.

Below, SI provides a brief overview on above-said achievements.

New Media Initiative

SI monitored New Media Initiative (NMI) activities throughout program Year 3 and 4. For the monitoring and evaluation of NMI activities, SI in close consultation with IREX used different methods such as pre and posttest to assess effectiveness of training; group interviews with training participants to learn participant feedback on conducted trainings; technical and editorial quality assessment of multimedia video content using specially designed evaluation tools; assessment of web-sites using specially designed check-lists.

Based on the main findings entailed from administering these tools, NMI demonstrated significant achievements across all areas.

As per indicator . “Percent of media outlets that receive G-MEDIA training that upgrade existing Web sites or create new Web sites with multimedia features”²⁶ with set target of 80 percent, SI identified that 85 percent of beneficiary organizations upgraded their web-site with new multimedia features and characteristics, making it more user-friendly and interactive and thus, more attractive for public use.

As per indicator “Number of multimedia products created and published by NMI partner organizations”²⁷ with set target of 1500, NMI partner organizations produced and published around 2,149 multimedia products exceeding the set target by 46 percent. Before NMI initiative, the multimedia video content production²⁸ equaled to 280 per quarter across all supported media outlets by September 2013. This figure almost tripled reaching 805 multimedia products in the last reporting quarter by July 2014, showing almost threefold increase within three reporting quarters. For the illustration please see Table I. Multimedia Video Content Production by NMI Partner Organizations

Table I. Multimedia Video Content Production by NMI Partner Organization

Name of Media Outlets	CONTENT PRODUCED										Total by Grantees
	Baseline	Period I			Period II			Period III			
	August - October 2013	Nov-13	Dec-13	Jan-14	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14	
Newspaper Speqtri	2.00	2.00	2.00	6.00	10.00	3.00	15.00	17.00	27.00	10.00	92.00
Newspaper Kakhetis Khma	45.00	45.00	39.00	36.00	104.00	100.00	72.00	73.00	85.00	60.00	614.00
Kakheti Information Center	59.00	59.00	36.00	32.00	26.00	31.00	8.00	11.00	21.00	15.00	239.00
Newspaper Sk New	10.00	10.00	14.00	8.00	6.00	6.00	7.00	9.00	24.00	5.00	89.00
Radio Nor	14.00	14.00	15.00	18.00	1.00	2.00	6.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	68.00
TV Borjomi	91.00	91.00	66.00	74.00	66.00	68.00	71.00	81.00	116.00	112.00	745.00
Newspaper Guria News	47.00	47.00	11.00	10.00	10.00	8.00	11.00	50.00	20.00	10.00	177.00
Newspaper Akhali Gazeti	11.00	11.00	11.00	16.00	13.00	8.00	9.00	11.00	8.00	10.00	97.00
Newspaper Chemi Kharagauli	1.00	1.00			1.00	3.00	5.00	4.00	9.00	5.00	28.00
Total Multimedia Video Content Produced	280.00	674.00			670.00			805.00			2,149.00

The positive changes in the above mentioned features showed significant increase in the number of unique visitors too. As per indicator “% change in number of unique visitors to G-MEDIA supported media outlet Web sites”²⁹ with set target of 30 percent, SI observed 81 percent increase. As demonstrated in the Table 2 below, compared to the baseline period, the number of unique visitors increased by 81 percent from average 168, 535.00 visitors to 304,221.00 visitors per quarter in the last reporting period.

As it is illustrated in the table below, all organizations except Kakhetis Khma showed noteworthy outcomes. Some media outlets, such as Speqtri, TV Borjomi, Radio Nor and Chemi Kharagauli, demonstrated remarkable percentage changes with 471 %, 213 %, 146% and 125% change, respectively.

²⁶ Year 3 PMP, Objective 1, IR 1.2 Indicator 1.2.2

²⁷ Year 4 PMP, Objective 1, IR 1.2 Indicator 1.2.2

²⁸ Multimedia product is a media content produced for on-line production which, in addition to text contains video and/or photo material.

²⁹ Year 4 PMP, Objective 4, IR 4.1 Indicator 4.1.4

However, impressive changes of these organizations should not shadow the achievements of other organizations such as SK News, Kakheti Information Center, Guria News etc., These media outlets also showed significant increase in number of unique visitors, however due to the greater number of unique visitors during the baseline, the increase compared to the last reporting period expressed in percentages was moderate.

Table 2. Traffic by NMI Partner Organizations

Name of Media Outlets	TRAFFIC										% Change by Media Outlets
	Baseline	Period I			Period II			Period III			
	August - October 2013	Nov-13	Dec-13	Jan-14	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14	
Newspaper Speqtri	2,533.00	2,533.00	1,374.00	1,910.00	2,318.00	6,543.00	7,854.00	13,869.00	15,250.00	14,236.00	471%
Newspaper Kakhetis Khma	3,136.00	4,248.00	3,391.00	5,396.00	5,269.00	4,473.00	5,333.00	5,421.00	5,512.00	4,231.00	61%
KIC	42,615.00	44,235.00	45,125.00	44,158.00	45,236.00	48,169.00	48,102.00	51,687.00	62,145.00	65,213.00	40%
Newspaper Sk New	18,427.00	19,217.00	21,254.00	20,154.00	26,030.00	25,706.00	22,384.00	28,690.00	35,201.00	30,376.00	71%
Radio Nor	1,910.00	1,910.00	1,500.00	2,847.00	2,840.00	2,524.00	3,122.00	4,444.00	4,550.00	5,120.00	146%
TV Borjomi	2,415.00	2,800.00	3,252.00	5,882.00	5,591.00	5,556.00	4,656.00	6,956.00	7,501.00	8,214.00	213%
Newspaper Guria News	71,138.00	75,227.00	185,366.00	111,452.00	76,082.00	160,224.00	171,142.00	187,864.00	111,996.00	116,134.00	95%
Newspaper Akhali Gazeti	24,180.00	50,714.00	40,810.00	45,554.00	40,626.00	25,851.00	65,281.00	36,561.00	38,524.00	38,213.00	56%
Newspaper Chemi Kharagauli	2,181.00	6,650.00	7,521.00	24,394.00	2,337.00	3,696.00	3,492.00	4,555.00	5,185.00	5,015.00	126%
Total	168,535.00	259,624.67			273,479.00			304,221.00			81%

The same positive trend has been noticed in media on-line sales too. As per indicator “% of G-MEDIA-assisted media outlets that received NMI support that report increased revenue”³⁰ with set target of 50 percent, SI monitoring data illustrated that 78 percent of beneficiary organizations reported increase in revenues.

Table 3. On-line Sales by NMI Partner Organization

	INCOME										% Change by Media Outlets
	Baseline	Period I			Period II			Period III			
	June - Sept 2013	Oct-13	Nov-13	Dec-13	Jan-14	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	
Newspaper Speqtri	1,491.83	13,976.00	628.95	3,612.00	1,086.00	2,389.00	3,055.00	1,724.30	6,067.30	1,000.00	96%
Newspaper Kakhetis Khma	1,646.00	3,460.00	4,690.00	2,370.00	2,480.00	3,420.00	1,320.00	3,930.00	9,760.00	4,000.00	258%
Kakheti Information Center	2,803.33	6,142.00	5,428.00	3,742.00	2,580.00	2,800.00	4,275.00	4,650.00	7,213.00	5,600.00	108%
Newspaper Sk New	1,046.33	960.00	1,680.00	2,122.00	670.00	1,386.00	667.00	5,300.00	2,830.00	2,500.00	239%
Radio Nor	200.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-100%
TV Borjomi	2,173.33	4,327.00	6,388.00	4,556.00	1,125.00	2,587.00	1,030.00	1,745.00	13,376.00	3,500.00	186%
Newspaper Guria News	2,263.33	12,500.00	19,096.00	18,164.00	21,358.00	16,132.00	21,035.00	19,784.00	17,500.00	15,000.00	670%
Newspaper Akhali	170.00	2,000.00	590.00	680.00	500.00	50.00	350.00	300.00	1,350.00	500.00	322%

³⁰ Year 4 PMP, Objective 4, IR 4.1.Indicator 4.1.1

Gazeti											
Newspaper Chemi Kharagauli	845.00	720.00	2,185.00	2,425.00	3,576.00	1,752.00	2,287.00	727.00	990.00	400.00	-16%
Quarterly Average	12,639.17	40,880.65			32,653.33			43,248.87			242%

As illustrated in the Table 3. It is noticeable that some organizations demonstrated significant results reaching 670 percent increase. However in the Table 3. we also see that some media outlets, like Chemi Kharagauli and Radio Nor show decline in percentage change. SI does not have hard data to draw conclusions on decrease in sales; however, SI and G-MEDIA NMI Team assume that it might be result of following inter-related factors:

- In the municipalities where these media outlets are located (Ninotsminda; Kharagauli) local businesses and markets are under-developed which has negative influence on sales dynamics causing instability and fluctuations in frequency of placed advertisements and revenues
- The population of targeted municipalities are characterized with poor economic conditions, consequently show low purchasing power which impedes local development
- In general, poor internet penetration in the targeted municipalities which slows down on-line and multimedia development.

Despite these cases, overall results in on-line sales are remarkable. As illustrated in the Table 3, throughout the reporting period, on-line sales of media outlets increased by 242 percent from 7,255.55 USD³¹ (12, 639.17 Gel) to 24,827.14 (43,248.87 Gel) which is quite impressive to achieve within a short period of time. While without a control group, it is impossible to attribute the positive trends in revenues and other areas solely to the New Media Initiative, the collected data suggest that the Initiative contributed to significant improvements in the performance of targeted media outlets.

Content Grantees

The other area which showed noteworthy results is related to G-MEDIA content grantees. SI administered a mini survey to G-MEDIA grantees which demonstrated that as per indicator "*Percent of subgrantees who report strengthening their production capacities*"³² with set target of 90 percent, 95 percent of grantees reported strengthening in their production capacities in Year 3.

The study showed that more than 60 percent of interviewed grantees believed that the G-MEDIA production grants helped to improve their organization's capacity to increase circulation, diversify their audience, boost production, purchase equipment, and improve the overall quality of their media content.

In addition to self-report, SI collected and registered data on number of media products produced by content support grantees. The analysis showed that as the beginning of the program G-MEDIA grantees were producing around 200 media content, when by the end of Year 3 the figure reached 6000 media content production annually. As demonstrated in the table below, G-MEDIA project team has been successful in significant increase of media products.

³¹ Exchange rate: USD= 1.7422 GEL <https://www.nbg.gov.ge/index.php?m=2>

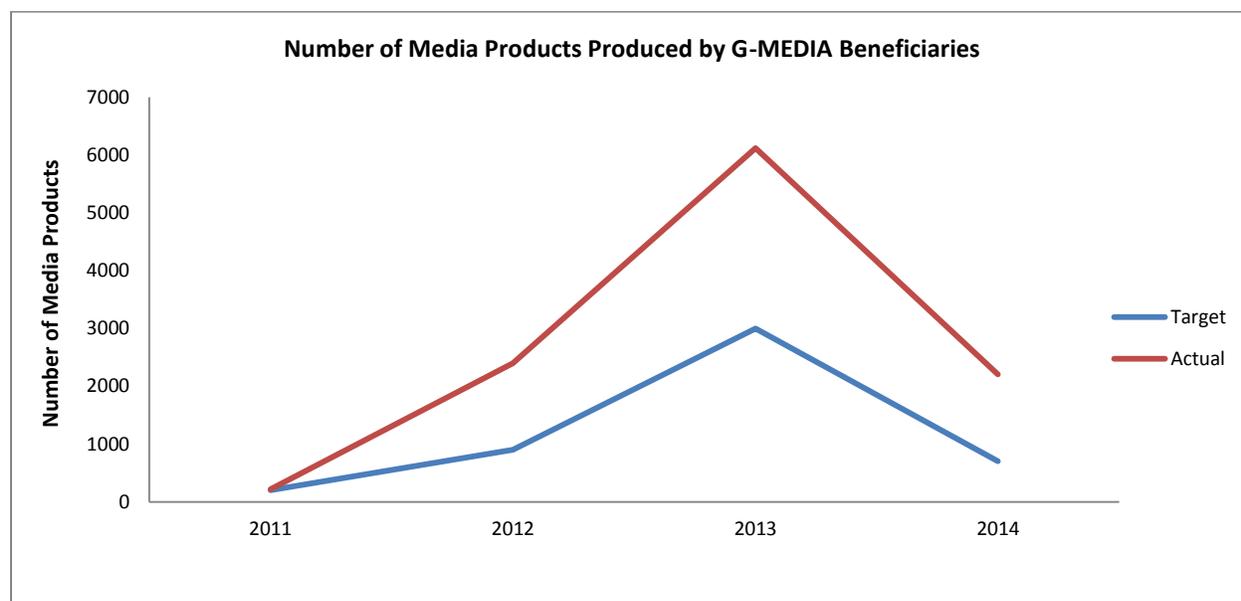
³² Year 3, 4 PMP, Objective 1. IR 1.1 Indicator 1.1.1

As per USAID F-indicator “number of media products³³ supported by G-MEDIA” with set target of 700 in Year 4, IREX has exceeded the set target by 1500. In total, with G-MEDIA supported Tbilisi-based and regional media outlets produced around 11,000.00 media products throughout G-MEDIA project lifetime.

Table 3. Number of Media Content Produced by Years

Intermediate Result	Performance Indicator	Target 2011	Actual 2011	Target 2012	Actual 2012	Target 2013	Actual 2013	Target 2014	Actual 2014	Total
Process Indicator/USAID F-Indicator	Number of media products supported by G-MEDIA	200	218	900.00	2400	3000	6121	700	2208	10947

Graph I. Number of Media Products Produced by G-MEDIA Beneficiaries



The mini-survey also showed that 94 percent of grantees reported improvement in the quality of their media content. For triangulation of the result from the mini-survey, SI used Media Content Analysis

³³ One of the components of G-MEDIA support was content support grants. Within the framework of this component grants were awarded to Tbilisi based and regional media outlets representing all platforms including print, TV, radio and on-line media. The grants were awarded on competitive basis. With this awarded grants regional and Tbilisi based media outlets produced different media content including investigative stories, news programs, articles, TV and radio talks-shows etc. Media product is defined as any media content produced with G-MEDIA support and counts in articles, TV shows, news programs, multimedia products, etc.

Tool³⁴ (MCAT) for the assessment of the quality of media content as per indicator 1.4.1: % change in score from the Media Content Analysis (MCAT), set target 10 percent.

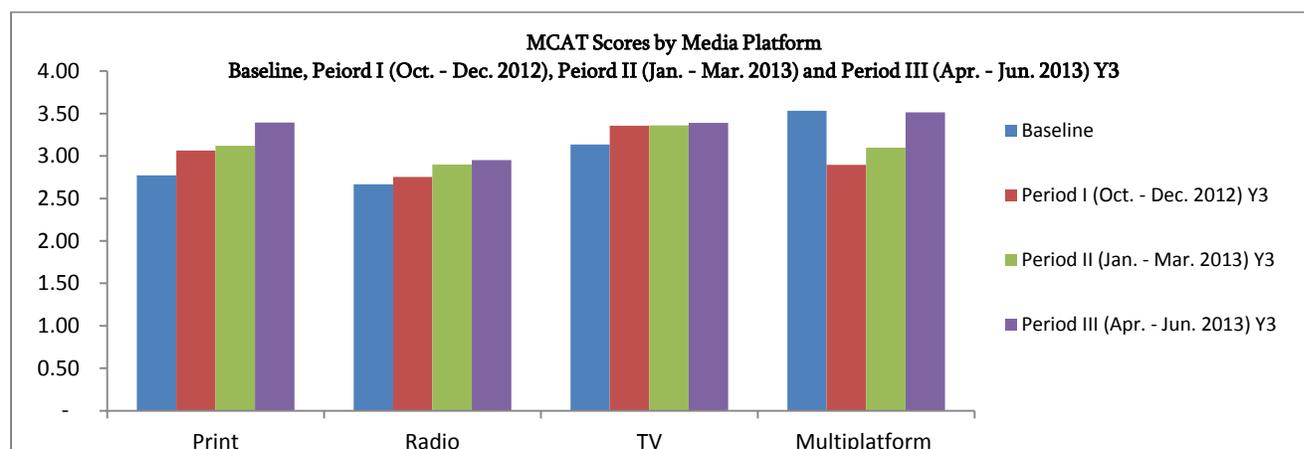
The MCAT findings have demonstrated gradual but steady growth in the overall quality of supported media. Throughout Year 3, program grantees demonstrated 10 percent increase in the MCAT scores reaching above-average score of 3.32 which on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1.0 represents the lowest and 5.0 the highest point, 3.0 is considered to be average/acceptable quality level. (Please see Graph 2. MCAT Scores by Media Outlet, Program Year 3.) Year 4?

When looking closer at the scores we observe that not all grantees succeeded in increasing the quality of media products, we observe that some grantees even showed negative change; throughout reporting period SI observed that some media outlets demonstrated frequent fluctuations in the scores as well, however overall, 70 percent of grantees showed steady growth especially in the last reporting periods.

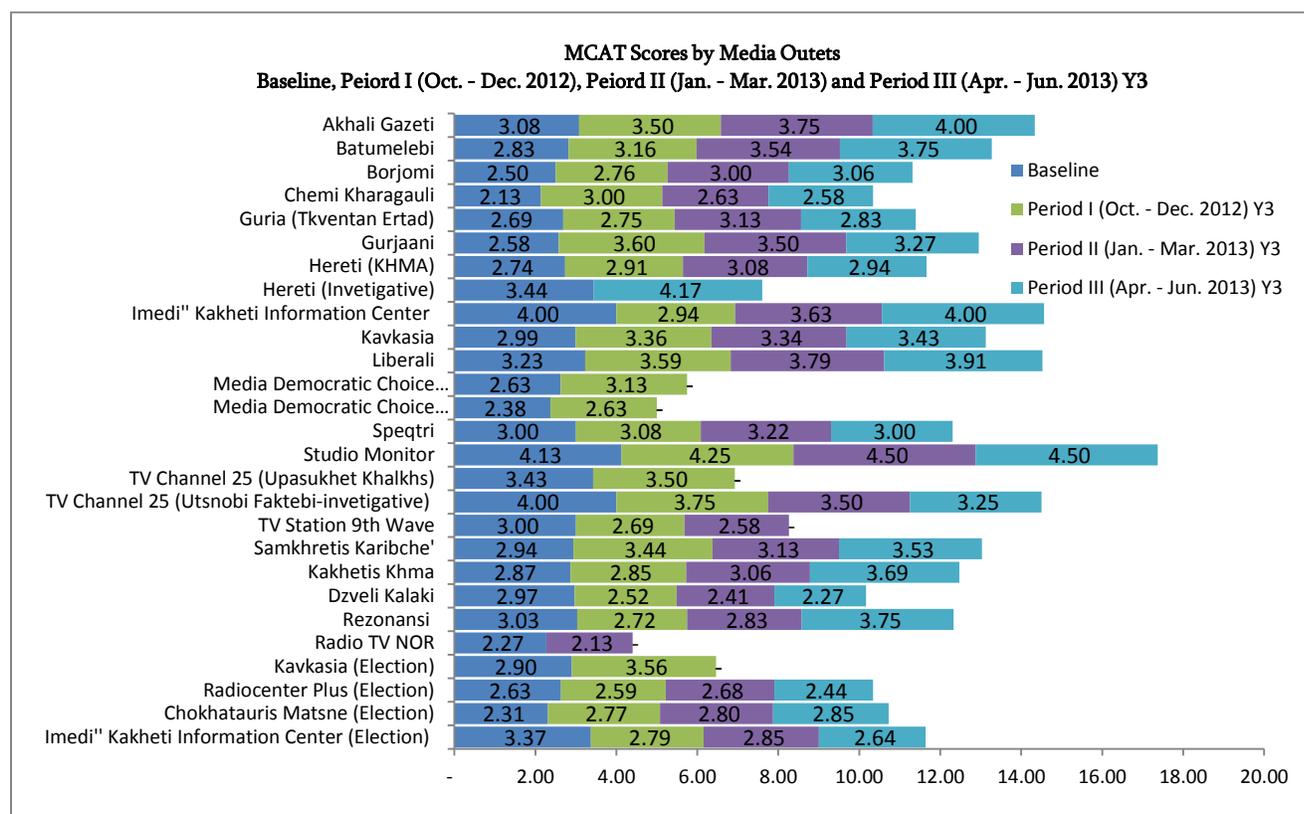
The analysis of the scores by type of media platforms also shows that in case of on-line media production, there was a negative change however with overall score it remained above average reaching 3.52 points descending only by 0.01 point from 3.53. Please see Graph 1. MCAT Scores by Media Platform. Without additional assessment done, SI cannot provide proved evidence on why there was a decline in the scores, however SI assumes that it could be explained by the fact that some online media outlets were already demonstrating relatively high quality at baseline so there was less room for growth compared to media platforms that started with below average quality.

Again, due to the lack of control groups, it is difficult to attribute the noted changes solely to G-MEDIA as there are other factors which might influence the overall changes in the quality; however the long-term observation suggests that IREX could be a one of main contributors of the change due to the scope of support provided to media industry.

Graph 1. MCAT Scores by Media Platform. Program Year 3



³⁴ Media Content Analysis Tool (MCAT) has been elaborated by SI expert and adapted to Georgian media context at the beginning of G-MEDIA program based on close consultation with Georgian media outlets. This is a tool used to measure changes in the quality of media content as per indicator 1.4.1: % change in score from the Media Content Analysis (MCAT) Tool.

Graph 2. MCAT Scores by Media Outlet, Program Year 3.

TNS Research

The other area which proves to be successful among G-MEDIA activities is radio stations ratings research which has been initiated and funded by IREX. As per indicator 4.2.3 % of TNS subscriber advertising agencies and radios that report usage of audience research data for radio sales, set targets - 50 percent, SI administered a survey of Market Intelligence Caucasus/TNS subscribers to identify if radio stations/advertisement agencies were using the radio research data to inform their marketing and sales strategies and, if they were, how the use of this research influenced their revenue and sales dynamics.

The survey finding demonstrated that **67 percent of subscriber organizations use the data in the marketing and sales activities**. Three out of 12 interviewed organizations also report increase in sales due to the availability of reliable rating data. The other surveyed respondents that use the ratings data in the sales and marketing strategy expect to yield increase in sales in near future.

All interviewed organizations acknowledged importance of availability of radio ratings for attracting advertisements from private businesses, especially from international companies or companies whose advertisement and marketing decisions were made in headquarters not located in Georgia.

All visited and interviewed respondents stated that they were highly satisfied that radio ratings had been made available to them by IREX. **All respondents claimed IREX to be a “guarantor” of**

reliability of research data. According to interviewed subscribers this was a first attempt to bring reliable ratings data into radio industry conducted by a trusted organization never noticed or suspected to be involved in manipulations of data in favor of any organization.

Market Intelligence Caucasus/TNS currently **has 16 subscriber organizations; nine out of 12 interviewed subscribers plan to purchase radio ratings data in future too.** SI believes that all these factors set a grounded precondition for making this service self-sufficient after G-MEDIA phases out. This, in turn will contribute to transforming radio as an interesting and attractive medium for businesses and general public.

Areas for Improvements

Throughout the lifetime of G-MEDIA, there were areas where based on collected and analyzed data, G-MEDIA showed less impressive results. In this respect, one has to point out tailor-made, intensive on-site trainings to TV Stations; professional trainings and CSJMM. Below SI provide with a brief overview of each of the components.

On-site Training to TV Stations

G-MEDIA has provided tailor-made on-site training to Tbilisi-based and regional TV stations. SI used Media Content Analysis Tool to assess changes in the quality of news programs of targeted TV stations as per indicator “% change in Media Content Analysis (MCAT) Tool score for television stations receiving G-MEDIA training from international experts”.³⁵ SI, based on collected data identified that targeted organizations reached certain increase in MCAT scores, however over long period of time most of the targeted organizations failed to maintain improvements, showed constant fluctuations in the scores from quarter to quarter; some targeted organizations even showed digressed scores throughout the reporting periods.

In the last reporting period, SI observed 8 percent increase in the quality of scores reaching 2.86 points, but overall the score remains below 3.0 which is below an acceptable/average quality level. It is difficult for SI to draw conclusions about relatively insubstantial outcome on this component without having any reliable background data, however according to G-MEDIA CoP it could be explained by several interrelated factors such as low capacity of staff of targeted TV stations, low interest and motivation of management, lack of leverage from IREX side to hold TV stations accountable for poor performance, late introduction of this activity into the program. All these factors contributed to relatively weak performance of targeted TV stations. G-MEDIA CoP emphasized lessons learnt from this experience which can be summed up in the following statement:

- On-site training bring added value to the improvement of quality of media content as demonstrated by improved MCAT scores, however it requires time to see tangible results as change happens slowly but gradually and is stretched in time
- Since change in quality take time, this type of support should be induced from the start of a program to yield notable changes by the end of a program

³⁵ Year 3, 4 PMP, Objective 2, IR 2.4 Indicator 2.4.2:

- On-site trainings are recommended to implement together with grant component to create strong incentives in targeted organizations
- By combining on-site training with grants component, a program creates a natural leverage which proves to be a necessary precondition for establishing accountability amongst recipient of this type of support.

Professional Trainings

The other area which proved to have mixed results is professional trainings, For the assessment of training effectiveness, SI used pre and posttest to measure the participants' knowledge before training and compare it with the knowledge acquired during the training and by this identify change in knowledge. In addition to this tool, SI conducted group interviews with training participants to learn participants' feedback on overall effectiveness of the training. As per indicator “% change in journalism knowledge among G-MEDIA-supported training program recipients”³⁶ with set target of 30 percent in Year 4, G-MEDIA has been able to achieve 20 percent.

During Program Year 4, G-MEDIA conducted two three-day trainings on *How to Report on Local Self-Government Elections* and one nine-day training course - *Spring School on investigative reporting* conducted by G-MEDIA partner organization - Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA). SI conducted group interview with the participants of trainings on *How to Report on Local Self-Government Elections*. The group interview revealed that in general participants were satisfied with the training however were disappointed with mentorship skills and capacities of some trainers. According to group interviews, participants recognized the knowledge and experience of the trainers in covered areas but indicated on lack of mentorship/trainers skills.

Throughout G-MEDIA program implementation, based on training participants' feedback, SI identified that trainers often had knowledge and experience in covered topics but lacked trainers skills and capacity. It proved to be a very important aspect in bringing knowledge to participants as there were often high correlation with participants' feedback on this aspect and pre and posttest results. Therefore, in selecting trainer, no matter local or international, it is of utmost importance that IREX pays particular attention to years of mentorship experience of invited trainers and/or consultants.

As for the Spring School, SI was not able to conduct group interviews with the participants of the School, therefore it is difficult to draw conclusions about why participants did not demonstrate significant knowledge gains. However, this might be explained by the nature of the training, which covered legal documents that are difficult to grasp and process within a short period of time.

CSJMM

The other area which did not showed significant improvement is related to the support provided to CSJMM. SI and G-MEDIA used several indicators to assess achievements in the area of education and particularly in terms of support provided to CSJMM. According to the collected data, G-MEDIA has met its targets related for the application of professional standards and overall satisfaction with the Master's program and the MEC. Specifically, SI found that G-MEDIA has exceeded (100 percent) its target for the

³⁶ Year 3, 4 PMP, Objective 2, IR 2.4 Indicator 2.4.1

percentage of students who report applying professional standards in their job as per indicator *Percent of CSJMM students and/ or graduates who find jobs in their fields*³⁷ with set target of 50 percent. However, SI found that G-MEDIA did not meet its target for the percentage of students/graduates who were able to find jobs in the media industry at least among this sample of students and graduates. Specifically, SI found that only 47 percent of students/graduates interviewed found jobs in their area of specialization, which is 18 percentage points below G-MEDIA's Y3 target.

Though most of survey participants expressed satisfaction with the education they received at CSJMM, the comments about some of the courses suggest there may be room for CSJMM to improve and refine its curriculum and to consider restructuring the complexity of some subjects and courses.

The majority of CSJMM students and graduates seemed generally happy with CSJMM faculty. However, there were a few concerns that deserve attention from CSJMM management—particularly in relation to teaching capabilities.

Again, due to the limited data, SI cannot draw conclusions on the causes of low performance on this indicator, however based on overall information on implementation of CSJMM project received during G-MEDIA team meetings, SI assumes that it could be related to CSJMM resistance to accept IREX recommendations on development of CSJMM as a sustainable media educational institution.

Conclusions/Summary

To sum up, throughout G-MEDIA program implementation, SI has used tools and methods to collect, register and analyze data and report on analyzed data on a quarterly basis. The monitoring and evaluation approach and strategy of the program has been presented and documented in Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). This is a document which presents program results framework, output, outcome and impact indicators, outlines related monitoring and evaluation tools, defines reporting frequency and sets yearly targets. Throughout program implementation, the PMP was subject to changes several times based on the modifications introduced in the work plan annually. SI had introduced changes in conformity with G-MEDIA management to make it “living” document fit to the program requirements.

Based on collected and analyzed data, SI with the request of and consultation with G-MEDIA , identified most noteworthy areas where G-MEDIA has been most successful and activities which did not show most impressive results. In respect to achievements, SI and IREX identified impressive results of NMI initiative which provide to be successful across all areas. The other components pointed out were content grantees with increased production capabilities and improved quality and TNS radio audience research which had been recognized by radio stations and advertisement agencies as a precondition for development of radio platform in media industry. All these outcomes are thought to contribute to better and improved functioning of media industry.

The areas which provided lessons for future programing are on-site trainings, some professional trainings and CSJMM. These components did show positive dynamics throughout program

³⁷ Year 3, PMP, Objective 2, IR 2.1 Indicator 2.1.1

implementation but due to reasons sometime beyond IREX control, in general did not yield solid achievements compared to resources inputted for the implementation.

APPENDIX 3: G-MEDIA PMP MATRIX

Intermediate Result	Performance Indicator	Level of Disaggregation	Baseline	Target 2011	Actual 2011	Deviation	Target 2012	Actual 2012	Deviation	Target 2013	Actual 2013	Deviation	Target 2014	Actual 2014	Deviation	Notes
CONTEXT INDICATORS:																
Across IRs	Overall score on the Media Sustainability Index (MSI)	n/a	1.82	NA	1.85	NA	NA	1.88	NA	NA	2.15	NA	NA	2.63	NA	Given that a variety of international donors support media and media-related assistance programs in Georgia, IREX believes that any change in this score cannot be solely attributable to IREX's work.
Across IRs	Freedom House's Nations in Transit Independent Media Score	n/a	4.25	NA	4.25	NA	NA	4.25	NA	NA	4.25	NA	NA	4.00	NA	Given that a variety of international donors support media and media-related assistance programs in Georgia, IREX believes that any change in this score cannot be solely attributable to IREX's work.
Across IRs	% change of public knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors	By type of outcome (KABs) and gender														The endline study demonstrated that the public now trust the media more, though they are still leary of whose interests the media ultimately meet. Further, public consumption levels are changing. Though overall consumption is not necessarily increasing, consumption of TV and internet news is on the rise, and consumption of print and radio is decreasing or staying the same.

	(KABs) about the media industry																programs in Georgia, IREX believes that any change in this score cannot be solely attributable to IREX's work.
Across IRs	Public's reported preference and use of independent media	By gender and type of media															Given that a variety of international donors support media and media-related assistance programs in Georgia, IREX believes that any change in this score cannot be solely attributable to IREX's work.
Across IRs	Level of public perception of balance, accuracy, and impartiality of media coverage	By gender															Given that a variety of international donors support media and media-related assistance programs in Georgia, IREX believes that any change in this score cannot be solely attributable to IREX's work.
OBJECTIVE 1: Improve the quality and diversity of media content and broaden channels of delivery																	
IR 1.1: Media Production Capabilities are strengthened, including those of regional	1.1.1 Percent of subgrantees who report strengthening their production capacities	By type of production and geography (regional vs. urban centers)	0	NA	NA	NA	20 87%	21 - 23 91% - 100%	1 to 3	90%	95%	5%	45%	50%	5%	Justification: The target is set low here, as G-MEDIA does not expect that the five grantees remaining in Y4 will see major increases, as they	

media.																	are already performing quite well.
	1.1.2 % of GARB members that report expanding their news coverage outside their regions as a result of G-MEDIA support	By media outlets	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	60%	100%	40%	30%	60%	30%	<p>Note: The data for 2011 and 2012 is not available as the indicator has been added in program Y3 PMP.</p> <p>Justification: The target is set low here, as G-MEDIA does not expect there to be much improvement this year since members already improved a lot last year.</p>	
IR 1.2: Media outlets, regardless of their primary platform, start production of multimedia content	1.2.1 Percent change in journalist knowledge of new media technology	By gender and media outlet geography	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	35%	35%	0%	25%	34%	9%	<p>Note: The data for 2011 and 2012 is not available as the indicator has been added in program Y3 PMP. The data as of April 30, 2013.</p> <p>Justification: Training will address a wide range of skills and knowledge in new media technology. Some of the invited participants have</p>	

																	few technical skills and may show a degree of improvement while others, who already have good fundamental technical skills, may not. Therefore, on average IREX anticipates only moderate increases in new media skills and knowledge.
	1.2.2 Percent of media outlets that receive G-MEDIA training that upgrade existing Web sites or create new Web sites with multimedia features.	By media outlet and geography of media outlet	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	80%	92%	12%	NA	NA	NA	NA	Note: Has been removed in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has achieved set goals and does not work on these aspects in Y4.
	1.2.2 Number of multimedia products created and published by NMI partner organizations	NA	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1500	2149	649	NA	Note: Has been added in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has expanded NMI activities.
IR 1.3: Audiences are active media consumers and advocates	1.3.1: Number of students trained by G-MEDIA supported media outlets	By gender	0	NA	NA	NA	96	38 F – 31 M – 7		106	124	18	NA	NA	NA	NA	Note: Has been removed in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has suspended activities in this area.

	1.3.2: Number of media products produced and published by students who attended trainings on Basics of Journalism and Media Production	By type of media product	0	NA	NA	NA	288	21		411	557	146	NA	NA	NA	Note: Has been removed in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has suspended activities in this area.
IR 1.4: Media content is more balanced, accurate, and impartial	1.4.1: % change in score from the Media Content Analysis (MCAT) Tool	By type of media (Radio, TV, online, and print) and geography of media outlets	2.86	NA	NA	NA	3	2.98	-0.02	10%	10%	0	NA	NA	NA	Note: The data for 2011 is not available as G-MEDIA grantees started implementation of the projects by the end of program Y1. Justification: G-MEDIA considers a 5 percent increase to be a moderate and realistic increase to expect in program Y4 since some of the organizations (e.g. Studio Monitor) that will be assessed in Y4 have already achieved very high MCAT scores in Y2 and Y3.
	1.4.2: Average technical quality score of multimedia content with	NA	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2.5	3.15	0.65	Note: Has been added in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has expanded NMI activities.

	video received by New Media Initiative (NMI) partners																
	1.4.3. Percentage of New Media Initiative (NMI) partners that meet minimal standards of editorial quality	NA	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	75%	79%	4%	Note: Has been added in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has expanded NMI activities.
OBJECTIVE 2: Improve professional journalism																	
IR 2.1: % Graduates of G-MEDIA supported journalism programs who apply professional standards in their work	2.1.1 Percent of CSJMM students and/ or graduates who find jobs in their fields	By gender and type of media outlet of employer	65%	NA	NA	NA	65%	57%	-8%	65%	47%	-18%	NA	NA	NA	Note: Has been removed in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has suspended activities in this area.	
	2.1.2: % of graduates of G-MEDIA supported journalism programs who report applying professional standards in their work	By training and/or journalism program	0	NA	NA	NA	20%	43%	23%	50%	100%	50%	NA	NA	NA	Note: Has been removed in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has suspended activities in this area.	

IR 2.2: G-MEDIA-supported journalism education program offers improved educational infrastructure and programs for media students and professionals	2.2.1: Number of users of media support facilities and programs at G-MEDIA-supported journalism school/ institutions	By school, program, type of user, and gender	0	NA	NA	NA	109	108	-1	126	48 - CSJMM Students and Graduate 33 - Internship Students 17 - Certificate Students	-28	20	20	0	Justification: 20 – RFE/RL internship program participants. Due to the late start of the grant with RFE/RL, the implementation of the internship program has been delayed. Therefore, only three of the planned five groups took part in the internship in Y3. Consequently, the remaining two out of five groups will take part in the internship in Y4. In each internship group RFE/RL recruits 10 interns, i.e. - There will be 30 interns who participate throughout the program in Y3, and 20 in Y4.
	2.2.2. % of users who are satisfied with media facilities and programs offered at G-MEDIA-supported journalism schools and institutions	N/A	0	NA	NA	NA	50%	49%	-1%	70%	95%	25%	70%	91%	21%	Justification: Surveys conducted in the past showed high levels of satisfaction with education programs and media facilities supported by G-MEDIA.

IR 2.3 Viable sustainability plans of G-MEDIA supported facilities are in place	2.3.1 % of MEC stakeholders who report believing the MEC sustainability plan is strong and valid	By stakeholder type	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	75%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Note: Has been removed in Y4 PMP. Data is not available on Y3 as according to USAID recommendation G-MEDIA discontinues activities on this area.
IR 2.4: G-MEDIA trained journalists practice professional and quality journalism	2.4.1: % change in journalism knowledge among G-MEDIA-supported training program recipients	By topic and gender and regional location of the journalist	0	20%	23%	3%	25%	30%	5%	30%	45%	15%	30%	20%	-10%	Justification: The target is based on last year's reported changes dynamics.	
	2.4.2: % change in Media Content Analysis (MCAT) Tool score for television stations receiving G-MEDIA training from international experts	By television station for those stations where journalists have received G-MEDIA training, and by regional location	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	15%	1%	-14%	5%	8%	3%	Justification: IREX expects moderate improvement in the quality of news programs produced by targeted TV stations due to the different interrelated factors influencing the quality of news program which are beyond of control of trainers who provide on-site training to the selected TV Stations.	
OBJECTIVE 3: Improve the regulatory environment and protect journalists' rights																	

IR 3.2: Journalists report and advocate for journalists' rights and press freedom through G- MEDIA supported watchdog institutions and advocacy mechanisms	3.1.1 Number of positive modifications drafted to enable legislation/ regulations for media (USAID common indicator)	N/A	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	5	0	Justification: IREX expects its partners to introduce changes in the following legislative acts and laws: Provision on must carry/must offer in the Law on Broadcasting, provision on financial transparency in the Law on Broadcasting, legislative base for digital switchover, legislative base for GPB reorganization, and the Freedom of Information Access.
	3.2.1 Number of initiatives in support of journalists' rights and press freedom	By activity	0	35	37	2	100	109	9	70	112	42	10	10	0	Justification: Due to the phase out of G-MEDIA program in Y4, the activities of funded organizations decrease gradually. In addition changes in political affairs have led to less politicized and pressurized environment which in its turn substantially has diminished need for advocacy activities.
OBJECTIVE 4: Improve media outlets' viability																

IR 4.1: Improved sales and marketing strategies of G-MEDIA supported media outlets and education institutions	4.1.1 % of G-MEDIA-assisted media outlets that report increased revenue	By type of outlet and regional location	0	NA	NA	NA	20%	13 organizations report increase in revenue which makes 62% of interviewed outlets	42% (for interviewed outlets)	70%	78%	8%	NA	NA	NA	Justification: Has been removed in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has suspended activities in this area, however is partly addressed by NMI, therefor is covered by another indicator.
	4.1.1 % of G-MEDIA-assisted media outlets that received NMI support that report increased revenue	By type of outlet and regional location	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50%	78%	28%	Note: Has been added in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has expanded NMI activities.
	4.1.2 % change in sales of G-MEDIA-supported media outlets	By type of outlet and regional location	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	20%	36%	16%	NA	NA	NA	Justification: Has been removed in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has suspended activities in this area, however is partly addressed by NMI, therefor is covered by another indicator.
	4.1.3 % change in the number of ads placed on G-MEDIA-supported media outlets' Web sites	By type of outlet and regional location	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	75%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Justification: Has been removed in Y4 PMP. G-MEDIA has suspended activities in this area, however is partly addressed by NMI, therefor is covered by another indicator.

	4.1.4 % change in number of unique visitors to G-MEDIA supported media outlet Web sites and the student media Web site (newscafe.ge)	By media outlets	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50%	68%	18%	30%	81%	51%	Justification: The target is set low here, as G-MEDIA does not expect that targeted media outlets will see major increases in Y4, as they are already performing quite well.	
IR 4.2: Improved business management and organizational capacity of institutions supported by G-MEDIA	4.2.1 % change on media partner assessment tool (MPAT) scores of G-MEDIA-supported media institutions	By competency	3.74	NA	NA	NA	40%	40%	5.25	0	50%	NA	NA	50%	60%	10%	Note: Has been removed in Y4 PMP as G-MEDIA is not giving business grants in this areas in the last year of the program implementation. Justification: The data for this indicator has not been collected for Y3 due to the late start of awarded projects in Y3.
	4.2.2 % of TV MR GE (the audience research company that G-MEDIA is auditing) subscriber companies that report increased trust in ratings data	N/A	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	60%	80%	20%	NA	NA	NA	Justification: Has been removed in Y4 PMP as G-MEDIA support provided to TV MR GE has been one time activity in Y3.	
	4.2.3 % of advertising agencies that subscribe to	N/A	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	60%	NA	NA	60%	67%	7%	Justification: The data for this indicator has not been collected yet.	

	TNS ratings that report increased use of radio advertising in their media mix																The monitoring data will be available in by the end of program Y4.
Process INDICATORS:																	
Across Objectives	Number of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and/or support institutions assisted by USG (USAID common indicator)	By type of organization (CSO, media outlet, other)	0	35 (39 Grants)	35	0	(47 grants)	24 (34 expected)		34	35	1	29	32	3		Justification: Based on Y4 Work Plan.
Across Objectives	Number of individuals trained with USG assistance (USAID common indicator: journalists)	By type of individual (journalists, other) and sex	0	200	268	68	600	574	-26	250	322 221 - Female 101 - Male	72	124	305 Female - 227 Male - 78	181		Justification: Based on Y4 Work Plan: - GYLA - 16 - Election - 36 - NMI - 42 - On-site training - 30
Across Objectives	Number of trainings conducted	By type of training	0	8	12	4	28	57	29	18	44	26	13	27	14		Justification: Based on Y4 Work Plan: - GYLA training - 1 - election trainings - 4 - NMI trainings - 3 - On-site training - 5
Across Objectives	Number of media development events	By type of event	0	5	7	2	11	9	-2	10	7	-3	7	6	-1		Justification: Based on Y4 Work Plan.

Across Objectives	Number of individuals who participated in media development events	By sex	0	300	304	4	320	289	-31	250	307	57	250	212	-38	Justification: Based on Y4 Work Plan.
Across Objectives	Number of media products supported by G-MEDIA	By sex	0	200	218	18	900.00	2400	1500.00	3000	6121	3121	700	2250	1550	Justification: Based on Y4 Work Plan.

APPENDIX 4: MEDIA PARTNER ASSESSMENT TOOL

Program Name: Georgian Media Enhance Democracy, Informed Citizenry, and Accountability (G-MEDIA) Program

Prepared by: Rusudan Konjaria, M&E Specialist, SI/IREX G-MEDIA Program

MPAT Report II – Program year 4

26, September 2014

Table of Contents

<u>ACRONYMS</u>	134
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	135
<u>METHODOLOGY</u>	135
<u>MAIN FINDINGS</u>	136

Acronyms

G-MEDIA	Georgian Media Enhance Democracy, Informed Citizenry, and Accountability (G-Media) Program
GARB	Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters
IR	Intermediate Results
G-MEDIA	International Research and Exchanges Board
MPAT	Media Partner Assessment Tool
SI	Social Impact, Inc.
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Intermediate Result 2 under Assistance Objective 1 is *improved public access to reliable news and information*. In 2010, USAID contracted with the International Research and Exchanges Board (G-MEDIA) to develop interventions aimed at meeting that objective through the Georgian Media, Enhance Democracy, Informed Citizenry, and Accountability (G-MEDIA) Program, which expanded on USAID's objective "*to improve the Georgian public's access to a range of sources of news and information by developing a more politically balanced, editorially independent, professional, and viable media sector that reaches audiences across the country through diverse delivery channels.*" One of G-MEDIA's primary goals under this overarching objective is to Improve media outlets' viability.

To meet this goal, G-MEDIA awarded business innovations grants to five media outlets. The purpose of the business innovation grants was to create an alternative source of income to support media outlets primary business activity – media production. In addition to business grants, Innova, a business consulting company, was selected to support them in proper planning and implementation of their proposed business plans and provide overall guidance. These selected organizations were: News Press, Information Center Kakheti (ICK), Borjomi TV, Speqtri and Palitra.

Methodology

In an effort to monitor any changes in development of business capacities of targeted media outlets, SI used Media Partner Assessment Tool. The Media Partner Assessment Tool (MPAT), which was adapted to the G-MEDIA program, provides quantifiable data on mutually agreed upon measures and compares change over time. The tool assesses criteria expected to be influenced by the program. These assessments are based on self-reporting and self-assessment by the targeted media outlets and are made on a 10-point scale where 1 represents missing/nonexistent and 10 signifies fulfilled/all requirements met. SI then calculates aggregated mean pre MPAT baseline score and compares with post MPAT scores for each of media outlet. The difference in the score demonstrate change incurred as a result of the intervention.

The targeted media outlets are asked to do the self-assessment on two major areas: Business Management and Sales&Marketing. These areas are divided into sub-areas or sub-criteria. For each of this sub-criteria media outlets do the self-assessment on conditions before and after G-MEDIA intervention. Before G-MEDIA intervention period is expressed Pre Baseline MPAT scores period and after G-MEDIA intervention period is demonstrated in is Post MPAT scores.

The MPAT included the following two sections and sub-criteria:

1. Business Management:

- Existence of a vision, mission, and goals
- Existence and implementation of a general operational plan
- Earnings to expenditures ratio (break-even point exl. grants)
- Competence and availability of personnel to fulfill support functions (sales, HR, finances, marketing etc.)
- Business-oriented thinking

2. Sales&Marketing

- Media outlet marketing and sales personnel are competent and effective
- Revenue goals and strategies are developed and followed
- Advertising revenue (at least 50 percent of expenditures covered)
- Additional organization revenue (side businesses)

- Market research-based decision-making established
- Coverage of target audience
- Awareness of the product among target audience
- Focusing product on target audience needs and wants

Out of five targeted organizations, SI interviewed and visited 4 organizations. These are: News Press, Information Center Kakheti (ICK), Borjomi TV and Speqtri. SI was not able to interview representatives of Palitra due to the limited timeframe for administering MPAT.

Main Findings

As per indicator 4.2.1 % change on media partner assessment tool (MPAT) scores of G-MEDIA-supported media institutions, G-MEDIA set target at 25 percent. As illustrated in Table 1. G-MEDIA has exceeded the target reaching 42 percent. The Table 1 demonstrated the pre intervention scores and scores acquired after G-MEDIA support.

Table 31. Pre and post MPAT scores

Media Outlet	Baseline Pre MPAT Scores	Post MPAT Scores	Percent Change	Percentage Point Change
Akhali Gazeti	4.14	5.90	43%	18%
ICK	4.55	7.91	74%	34%
Borjomi	1.79	7.26	306%	55%
Speqtri	2.18	8.31	282%	61%
Average scores	3.16	7.35	176%	42%

The aggregated mean scores of the assessed media outlets show that Borjomi TV received the lowest baseline MPAT score and Information Center Kakheti the highest. For details, see Table 2. Baseline MPAT Scores.

Table 2. Baseline MPAT Scores

Name of Media Outlet	Location	Type of Media	Baseline Pre MPAT Scores
Akhali Gazeti	Kutaisi, Imereti region	Print	4.14
ICK	Gurjaani, Kakheti region	Print	4.55
Borjomi	Borjomi, Samtkhe-Javakheti	TV	1.79
Speqtri	Gurjaani, Kakheti region	Print	2.18

As Table 3 below demonstrates, when scores are broken by subsections of Business Management and Sales & Marketing, we observe that targeted media outlets are more confident in the assessment of their baseline Business Management capacities than Sales & Marketing skills. At table 2 shows, the targeted media outlets received average scores of 3.45 in Business Management and 2.88 points in Sales & Marketing.

Table 3. MPAT Scores by MPAT Subsections

Baseline Pre MPAT Scores	Post MPAT Scores
--------------------------	------------------

Media Outlet	Business Management	Sales & Marketing	Business Management	Sales & Marketing
Akhali Gazeti	4.40	3.88	7.8	4.0
ICK	5.60	3.50	8.2	7.6
Borjomi	1.20	2.38	7.4	7.1
Speqtri	2.60	1.75	9.0	7.6
Average scores	3.45	2.88	8.10	6.59

Despite the higher baseline scores in Business Management, the media outlets self-report the greater increase in Business Management than in Sales & Marketing. This could be explained by the fact that the areas listed under Business Management are easier to improvement and development than skills under Sales & Marketing. The areas listed under Sales & Marketing subsection requires conceptual changes in the way the targeted media outlets vision and implement their businesses which is very difficult to achieve within the short period of time.

Table 4. MPAT Overall Scores

Media Outlet	Baseline Pre MPAT Scores		Post MPAT Scores		Business Management		Sales & Marketing	
	Business Management	Sales & Marketing	Business Management	Sales & Marketing	Percentage Change	Percent Point Change	Percentage Change	Percent Point Change
Akhali Gazeti	4.40	3.88	7.8	4.0	77%	34%	3%	1%
ICK	5.60	3.50	8.2	7.6	46%	26%	118%	41%
Borjomi	1.20	2.38	7.4	7.1	517%	62%	200%	48%
Speqtri	2.60	1.75	9.0	7.6	246%	64%	336%	59%
Average scores	3.45	2.88	8.10	6.59	222%	47%	164%	37%

APPENDIX 5: G-MEDIA ENDLINE REPORT

The G-MEDIA Endline report is sent separately as the document is too large to include as part of this final report.

ADDENDUM: SUCCESS STORIES, PHOTOS AND VIDEO LINKS

SUCCESS STORIES

Management Academy: 58 Professionals Improve Sales with New Approach



Media professionals in a Management Academy training

The ink on their certificates was not yet dry when media sales professionals started cashing-in on the benefits of a six-week business course, conducted by the highly respected Management Academy of Georgia and supported by USAID through the IREX G-MEDIA program.

Gurjaani TV Director Levan Aleksishvili says sales were up 70-80% after he used his training to find what he was doing wrong. “After the training I developed self-criticism,” he says “trying to analyze what was my fault in failed negotiations.”

The director of the TV station and founder of an advertising agency, Aleksishvili recalls how he used lessons from the class in a meeting with a new client. The manager of the large company was late and Aleksishvili had learned this gave him an advantage in negotiations. “The late client always feels disadvantaged, allocates more time for meeting and there is more chance to negotiate,” he said. Aleksishvili says he used techniques learned in the IREX training and the negotiation ended with a new long-term contract. He believes that competition inside the sector is fierce and such training is the only way to gain an advantage. Although he has seen immediate results, Aleksisvili says his goal is to improve media sales over the long term.

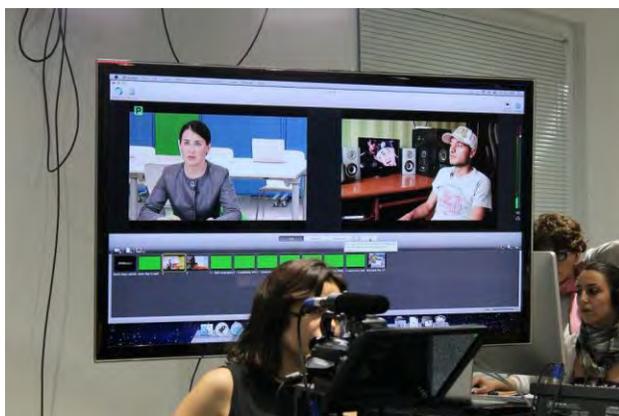
Aleksandre Siradze says he is now able to deal with even the most skeptical clients and feels more comfortable during negotiations. In his five years of working experience before this training Siradze always tried to avoid informal relationships with clients but he now realizes this is an important component of a successful negotiation. For a man whose Facebook profile says he is the “Friday Worshipper” this new approach to business relationships was a natural fit. “This is the day which I love most of all and the best time for building informal relationships. I met with one client on Friday and it followed with agreement and new contract on Monday.” With a confident new sales approach the Autobuild magazine sales manager has acquired three new long-term contracts.

The training benefits Siradze’s colleagues at the magazine as well, as it has inspired him to start an internal media sales group. “Now I can give acquired knowledge to others and establish a successful media sales group.”

Imedi Radio’s Sales Manager Natalia Tetrashvili’s says she has focused on the most practical and technical lessons of the course to double her income. An experienced media sales professional, Tetrashvili says her ratio of successful negotiations has increased from four in ten to seven in ten. “Through this training I gained new skills and techniques and became more successful in the negotiation process.” The trainer encouraged her to analyze every detail of a negotiation including the planning process: “Don’t blame anybody else if you could not sell the product. If you do your best, you will have success.” As a result, Tetrashvili says, Radio Imedi has fifteen new contracts, which significantly increases the company’s revenue and her personal income.

During the G-MEDIA program, Management Academy trained a total of 58 sales staff from 13 Georgian media houses through four sales and marketing courses, including one specifically for regional outlets. The training was provided under the fourth objective of the G-MEDIA program which focused on improving the viability and sustainability of Georgian media outlets.

Multimedia Education Center Producing Tech Savvy Georgian Journalists



The MEC provides students with state-of-the-art equipment to work on projects

Tucked into a historic neighborhood of Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, is a place where young journalists can learn the new skills needed to meet the challenges of the future. The Multimedia Education Center (MEC) provides state of the art technical facilities and digital, multi-platform content production for Master's level journalism education.

Designed to encourage student productions and packed with modern digital equipment, the MEC was built by IREX through the USAID-funded GMEDIA program. It enables journalism students to gain real-world

experience, taking them out of the classroom and into a studio environment.

Ana Davitashvili, a student from the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management (CSJMM), is part of the first class of students who will complete an MA program at the new education center.

"While thinking about the ways how to tell the story, I always tried to choose a specific platform: print, video or photo," Ana says. "Now I know that the best way is [through] multimedia. The center gives us the opportunity to work in multiple media platforms through using the latest visual media tools."

Student Tamar Chikviladze says the MEC resources have made it possible to develop new skills by using visual elements to tell stories and produce content, while also offering lessons in teamwork among classmates.

"We were very supportive of each other," Tamar says. "We knew that one's failure is a disappointment to the entire team and of course we share the success the same way."

By simulating a real newsroom, the MEC not only allows students to make informed career choices and gain confidence in their work, but also supports improvements in Georgia's professional journalism community towards sustainable media.

"After news days I wish to work as [a] news reporter. I am confident that we can easily transfer our new skills to jobs in professional media," says student Giorgi Sikharulidze. The key

beneficiaries of the center are more than 200 students from CSJMM, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Media School and Caucasus University School of Media. The MEC also offers a training venue for professional journalists and for amateur enthusiasts interested in learning photography, social media development and other forms of digital content production.

From IDP to Journalist: Media Literacy Student Keti Nogieva

A row of colored apartment blocks lines the road that enters the city of Poti. The banner says that IDPs live here. Keti Nogieva is one of them.

“These people are really poor and that is why I decided to make my first story about them,” Keti says. In her final year of high school, Keti was selected to participate in a Youth Media Literacy program at TV Ninth Wave TV in Poti. Every day, Keti attends classes on tv story production and ethical journalism.



[Keti outside her apartment complex in Maltayva](#)

Keti and her mother live in a single room flat in Maltayva. Their previous home was an abandoned hotel in Tskaltubo for 14 years, after Keti’s mother was forced to leave Abkhazia, where there are ongoing territorial disputes. Two years ago they were told by authorities to leave their home so the hotel could be sold to investors.

“They said there was a chance to get a flat in Maltakva, or we could wait until the hotel would be given to investors and we would get a home in Tskaltubo, but mother decided to use the chance,” Keti Nogieva says.

Those who decided to stay in Tskaltubo, still wait for homes. Many do not have adequate employment or access to resources. Keti wants to tell their story. “For me it’s important that I will be together with my people. I will be able to help my fellows out of difficulty.”

Keti has struggled to adapt to living in the new environment of Maltayva, but she says that her life changed after she was selected to participate in the Youth Media Literacy program. “I want to become a journalist so much that I will do everything to become one. Journalism is very important. It can help many people”

The IREX G-MEDIA supported program gave more than 130 school students around the country an opportunity to learn more about Journalism and Photography in five

regional media outlets. For Ketik, the project has been a chance to look beyond the bleak apartment blocks, to seek her dream and find a future in journalism.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6oy3bzllq8>

Media Literacy Classes Making a Difference: Mariam Kalandadze



Mariam waits for public transportation on her way to school

Georgia needs young journalists like Mariam Kalandadze, 17, who are driven by their passion for writing and sharing stories with others.

Mariam Kalandadze lives in a small house on a mountain slope in the village Khidistavi, 7 kilometers away from Chokhatauri. The road to her home is not asphalted and public transport does not reach there.

For the last year Mariam has walked several kilometers to get in the minibuss and arrive at newspaper Guria News in the center of Chokhatauri

every day. Mariam is a Youth Media Literacy student in IREX's G-MEDIA program and writes articles for the Guria News youth edition Below 21. Her articles focus on youth problems in the region.

"I always wanted to become a journalist. When I watched tv I liked how journalists interviewed people. I always wanted to be at that place and to do the things that journalists do. But when I experienced it myself I saw how hard it is."

Changing her perception of how hard journalism is did not diminish her interest. In her view, learning how to communicate with people and how to plan a story are the most important skills she's learned. Mariam finds that interviewing people and learning about their experiences is immensely rewarding, and she works hard every day to improve her writing skills.

Once, Mariam and her fellow Media Literacy students were asked to develop a story about city residents who lived in very bad conditions in an abandoned school building. The roof was in danger of falling down and leaked water.

"It was very hard to ask the question: what is your ordinary day like? You know they don't have much to say. You know the kids may not have the things other kids have." But the residents saw hope in the young journalists. Mariam and her team said they would be back.

The students spent several days walking in the streets and gathering money to buy small things for them. "On Christmas we visited them. Of course they did not expect us," Mariam says. The students brought

them some sweets and decorations. “The happiness didn’t last for a long time, but it was still important for us and them. This is the most important, to make somebody happy with what you do.”

Lia Dvalishvili, Mariam’s mother, is against her daughter’s choice about journalism. “I don’t want her to become a journalist, because it may be difficult for a woman, leading the family life, and journalism doesn’t match. But she wants it so much, Mariam does her best to become a journalist and if she succeeds in her life I will be happy too,” Lia says.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2CvAINgijw>

Journalism Students Bring Attention to Georgian Minority Communities



Students outside their school in Tzakendi

For more than 20 years, students at a school in the village of Tzakendi, Georgia were in the dark with few books to read and no electricity. That all changed when two journalism students wrote a story about the school’s isolation for the newscafe.ge website. Soon after the story was published, the missing books had arrived, including Azerbaijani literature. The school had “also solved their electricity problems.”

In an ethnically diverse country like Georgia, issues that minority communities face often become lost on political agendas and in coverage from mainstream media outlets. Three multiethnic students from Armenia and Azerbaijan set out to change that, while teaching Georgians more about their minority communities in the process. As part of their media journalism program at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA), the students Ani Gabrielyan (Armenia), and Aysel Abdulkareemova and Vusale Hezretli (Azerbaijan) covered stories of ethnic minorities within the country that rarely reach media outlets in the capital, Tbilisi.

Through GIPA, sponsored by the GMEDIA program and funded by USAID, the students learned the journalism and multimedia skills needed to produce content within the Georgian media sector in order to bring attention to minority communities.

“These people who are living farther from Tbilisi, they really need to know there are people who care about them,” said Armenian Ani Gabrielyan.

For her project, Ani visited the village of Tsofi, Georgia, where Armenians and Azeris live together peacefully. “I wanted to see how they can be neighbors without thinking of the past, or even present, about their countries,” she said. Ani created a video with interviews and footage from Tsofi, highlighting how the Armenians and Azerbaijanis interacted with each other socially and economically.

For their project, Azerbaijani students Aygul Abdulkareemova and Vusale Hezretli produced the story that ultimately led to changes for the ethnic Azeri students in Tzakendi.

Ani, Aygul and Vusale hope that future GIPA students will focus on minority issues in Georgia as well, bringing light to stories from villages and towns outside of urban areas, while enhancing the level of cross-cultural and multiethnic understanding between community groups.

“I think that we are giving motivation to next year’s students,” Vusale said. “They will come and they will cover and continue this tradition.”

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bZnaG5wMtE>

Georgian Newspapers Go From Print to Multimedia



NMI Manager Dachi Grdzlishvili, right, trains journalists on production equipment

When readers of three regional Georgian newspapers checked those websites for election news last Sunday, they saw more than they might have expected. IREX GMEDIA program partners are no longer limited to their print editions.

The newspapers Akhali Gazeti, Guria News and Samkhretis Karibche are now producing video stories, talk shows, live streaming and interactive programs through their websites. All three are members of the USAID funded GMEDIA program’s New Media

Initiative (NMI). With equipment and training support, they were able to bring a new dimension of election coverage to their readers, an online audience, and new advertisers.

“Our program has a sponsor and we have an audience,” said Nato Gogelia, a journalist at Gurianews.ge.

Gogelia belongs to one of the teams from the three newspapers that learned new TV production skills in IREX’s office in Georgia. The efforts were designed to help publishers create an online broadcasting network where regional outlets share content and diversify programming. IREX also provided the outlets with broadcast equipment, including lights, laptops and video/audio tools. Dachi Grdzlishvili, IREX Georgia’s New Media Manager, visited each center to assist with equipment set up and training.

“Our priorities in setting up the online studios were first to find economical technical equipment and secondly, to choose a kit that would be easy to use even for beginners to production,” Dachi notes. “Finally, these should not compromise quality. The equipment should provide high-quality images.”

The journalists began learning the very basics of broadcasting, like how to set up cameras and microphones.

“We had to learn everything from the beginning because this field is new for us and none of our staff had ever worked in TV or radio,” said Nino Narimanishvili, an editor at Sknews.ge.

Now, those teams are adding a complex array of high-quality coverage, including live calls and video packages, into online broadcasts. The new skills are helping them reach a broader audience and facilitate dialogue on important community issues.

During GMEDIA, the NMI worked with a total of 9 regional media outlets, providing training and equipment to expand their skills in online multimedia production.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7mKc69Oufw>

On the Air in Georgia: Promoting Development through Community Radio



A Radio Nor journalist on the job in the community

In the town of Ninotsminda in Georgia’s Javakheti region, a community radio station is promoting civic engagement, increasing community development and improving communications for hundreds of Georgians. Radio NOR, the country’s first and only community radio station, is broadcast online with support from IREX through the USAID-funded GMEDIA program.

What makes this form of radio so compelling is its inclusion of community members: anyone who is interested can participate. Volunteers manage and prepare programs while having the opportunity to create an open public dialogue on topics that mainstream media often neglect.

“Almost every day we get calls from inhabitants of Ninotsminda and surrounding villages to cover their stories,” says Boris Karslyan, radio NOR reporter.

Working in the field each day allows Radio NOR journalists to build relationships with the Georgian people, while simultaneously increasing the local spread of news and information.

In order to reach ethnic minorities, the station broadcasts in three languages: Georgian, Russian and Armenian. The diversity of broadcasts helps gain community support from variety of demographics while bridging cooperation and togetherness.

Immediate access to news about government and public institutions increases civic participation and promotes democratic activity among Ninotsminda inhabitants. Accurate reporting and access to information about current events are particularly important to locals and help garner a viable, quality media environment while developing media literacy and creative expression.

IREX's 2012 Georgian Media Sustainability Index (MSI) found that the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC), which designates radio frequencies based on market and public demand, did not grant any broadcasting licenses to community radio stations in 2011. According to a 2011 opinion poll conducted by the Commission, low popularity levels among broadcast media audiences plagued community radio in the past. A new poll in 2013 is expected to show greater public interest in community radio.

With the increasing popularity of Radio NOR, it is the hope that additional community radio stations will be conceived in the future, allowing citizens greater access to news information and the ability to develop stronger communities.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFivCek0pX8>

Young Journalism Student Focuses on Gender



Tamta interviews a classmate on gender issues in schools

Gender stereotypes plague everyday life in Georgia, forcing youth to grapple with the issue of gender equality in the country. Through media and journalism trainings, students now better understand the challenges facing Georgian women, and are equipped to share their stories.

Fifteen year-old Tamta Kakhberidze was inspired to highlight concerns about gender

issues after one of her classmates married underage. Following training through IREX's Youth Media Literacy project at Georgian newspaper Batumelebi, Tamta began interviewing her female classmates to learn what it is like to be a girl in a Georgian public school.

"Almost every day, students hear from our teachers, not from all of them, but certain ones who say to us that boys are more clever than girls and that they can succeed more than girls," said Tatia Bolkvadze, a Georgian public school student that Tamta interviewed.

"They say, 'you girls try hard to learn, but boys can logically solve arithmetic problems without learning. You [girls] need to work and learn a lot to do it,'" said Nino Beridze, another student interviewed by Tamta. Funded by USAID and supported by IREX's GMEDIA program, the Youth Media Literacy project is designed to give high school

students an opportunity to learn how newsrooms work while helping develop their own journalism skills.

Gender is now the focus of Tamta's journalistic practice. She hopes her work can bring change to her community while striving to impact gender equality and reduce stereotypes. "I became more confident, more communicable and more active [after the training]," said Tamta. "I started thinking about things that I never thought before, or I had my opinion but I thought I wasn't able to change anything."

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuplYDqk5zk>

Newspaper Spektri (2 stories)

Newspaper Spektri Gives Voice To Isolated Minorities in Georgia



Ethnic Azerbaijanis in Georgia can now engage on community issues through printed news materials in their own language

In the remote reaches of the Kakheti region, thousands of ethnic Azerbaijanis are now engaging local leaders on pressing community issues with the help of a local newspaper. By printing an Azerbaijani language insert along with the regular paper, Spektri has helped bring concerns like lack of drinking water and rundown school facilities to light.

The minority group previously had little interaction with their Georgian neighbors because geographic and

language barriers made communication and cooperation a real challenge. They knew little about events in Georgia and had limited access to information about government programs and services.

"They did not know anything about us and other Kakheti residents did not know anything about them," said Maya Kalabegashvili, Chief Editor of the Spektri newspaper.

With a grant to publish news in Azeri from the USAID funded GMEDIA project, her paper is helping to bridge those gaps and create a stronger community.

While the project helped develop a means to communicate, it took time for the locals to trust outside reporters. But what started two years ago as a monthly insert is now a full, 12-page Azerbaijani language edition.

"I like this newspaper, because they write about our problems and they tell the truth," said 65 year-old Baqir lolchiev, an Azerbaijani resident in the region.

During the first year of the project, Spektri journalists produced a monthly, single page insert. They met with the locals, heard about their lives and produced stories. With no distribution system in the isolated settlements, the journalists also delivered the publication to people gathered in village markets.

Ethnic Azerbaijanis make up 10% of the Kakheti regional population. They inhabit three municipalities there: Sagarejo, Lagodekhi and Telavi.

The largest community, united in five villages, is the Lormuganlo settlement in Sagarejo. In Sagarejo they make up 35% of the population, with 23,503 inhabitants.

Facts and Figures “At the beginning they were surprised to see us asking questions, but then they got used to us and now they even recognize us,” said Spektri journalist Lana Guloshvili. “At first we were searching for the topics to write articles, but now my respondents give me some suggestions on what to write about.”

The inserts identified problems facing the minority communities, like broken-down school facilities and a lack of drinking water. They also gave people a way to communicate with public officials. At the end of the first year, Spektri organized a meeting between Azerbaijani villagers and their local authorities.

“Now they know the people who are responsible for them,” Guloshvili said.

Villagers now meet the local trustees often but have difficulty reaching the key decision-making authorities. For that they frequently rely on help from the Spektri reporters. “They ask us to get the response from municipalities, head of municipality or regional government,” said Nato BarbaKadze, Spektris’ Editor for Ethnic Minorities. “We do our best to do so.”

The experience has been an eye-opener for people in the villages as well as the journalists. The bond between the minority communities and the newspaper encouraged Spektri to expand their news coverage from insert to a full edition now sold in shops across Kakheti.

The new edition has enriched the variety of content in the Georgian-language Spektri and raised awareness among the community as well as the Chief Editor and her staff.

“Since we started Spektri for ethnic minorities, my attitude toward these people totally changed,” Kalabegashvili said. “I thought they were closed, different, maybe I even thought they were a little aggressive, but they appear to be astonishingly welcoming.”

Georgian Newspaper Strengthens Independence, Efficiency



Thanks to support from GMEDIA, newspaper Spektri can print their own publications in house

Georgia recently observed the 96th anniversary of their declaration of independence. It was also a special day for Maia Kalabegashvili, who established the newspaper Spektri in eastern Georgia eleven years ago. This year, Maia says Spektri is close to finally having the independence she envisioned after launching a printing company.

Maia established Spektri to address local issues and give a voice to communities. However, soon after

the newspaper's beginning, political pressure dissuaded advertisers and Maia and her team were forced to turn to international donors for support. For Maia, depending on donations was a barrier to true independence.

"They [donors] announce projects according to their priorities and you have to follow the policy," Maia says. "This makes you disregard organizational issues that keep [the] organization from developing the right way. We have experienced this."

But last year, Maia found a solution. Through support from the USAID funded GMEDIA project, she established First Color, a small printing company and the only one in the region that provides design and printing services to other small business. First Color helps Spektri by printing the newspaper with its own equipment to reduce expenses, and can offer new services to advertisers.

With revenue from the printing business and new efficiency at Spektri, Maia believes the paper can now stand on its own two feet. "This is the first time that we have a chance to produce [a] product that is demanded, and with its income, guarantee the financial independence of [the] newspaper," Maia says. "I am waiting for very important changes. I expect that the number of our customers will increase ten times."

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLOG81Rk6tl>

G-MEDIA Photo Library



1. Students and journalists are recording a pre-election talk show with a mayoral candidate for Batumi at the new online TV studio at the newspaper Batumelebi. IREX GMEDIA helped regional news outlets like Batumelebi expand the reach and quality of their programming through the New Media Initiative.



2. Ani Gabrielyan (left), a student in the USAID-funded journalism school at GIPA interviews residents in the multiethnic village of Tsofi, where Armenians and Azerbaijanis live peacefully together as neighbors.



3. The Batumi newspaper, [Batumelebi](#), receives TV production training through IREX's New Media Initiative. With USAID's support, the newspaper was able to set up its own online studio, significantly increasing its coverage.



4. With funding from USAID, IREX helps The Batumi newspaper, [Batemelebi](#), set up its own online studio. Through GMEDIA's New Media Initiative the newspaper was able to take advantage of multimedia tools, significantly increasing its coverage.



5. Regional journalists in Eastern Georgia receive training in election reporting in anticipation of the 2014 local elections. With funding from USAID, IREX 's Regional Election Initiative improved the quality of election reporting available to Georgian citizens.



6. Regional journalists in Eastern Georgia receive training in election reporting in anticipation of the 2014 local elections. With funding from USAID, IREX 's Regional Election Initiative improved the quality of election reporting available to Georgian citizens.



7. Regional journalists in Eastern Georgia receive training in election reporting in anticipation of the 2014 local elections. With funding from USAID, IREX 's Regional Election Initiative improved the quality of election reporting available to Georgian citizens.



8. Regional journalists in Eastern Georgia receive training in election reporting in anticipation of the 2014 local elections. With funding from USAID, IREX 's Regional Election Initiative improved the quality of election reporting available to Georgian citizens.



9. Regional journalists in Eastern Georgia receive training in election reporting in anticipation of the 2014 local elections. With funding from USAID, IREX 's Regional Election Initiative improved the quality of election reporting available to Georgian citizens.



10. Regional journalists in Eastern Georgia receive training in election reporting in anticipation of the 2014 local elections. With funding from USAID, IREX 's Regional Election Initiative improved the quality of election reporting available to Georgian citizens.



11. The newspaper Spektri receives on-site content production training from the USAID-supported New Media Initiative of the GMEDIA program. This training helped them to increase their knowledge in video editing and strengthened their online content production skills.



12. With support from USAID and IREX, students in the GIPA student media school "learn by doing" journalism. At GIPA, students gain practical skills, such as covering stories in a newsroom environment, which help them advance as career journalists.



13. With support from USAID and IREX, alumni from the GIPA student media school “learn by doing” journalism. At GIPA, students gain practical skills, such as utilizing multimedia tools in a newsroom environment, which help them advance as career journalists.



14. Journalists working in western Georgian media outlets received training as part of the New Media Initiative. With support from IREX and USAID, this initiative helped journalists capitalize on new opportunities to reach their audiences, integrate their newsrooms with social media and create alternative sources of revenue through online advertising.



15. Journalists working in western Georgian media outlets received training as part of the New Media Initiative. With support from IREX and USAID, this initiative helped journalists capitalize on new opportunities to reach their audiences, integrate their newsrooms with social media and create alternative sources of revenue through online advertising.



16. Journalists working in western Georgian media outlets received training as part of the New Media Initiative. With support from IREX and USAID, this initiative helped journalists capitalize on new opportunities to reach their audiences, integrate their newsrooms with social media and create alternative sources of revenue through online advertising.



17. Radio GIPA hosts its first ever live broadcast with the help of a new broadcast console provided by GMEDIA. The IREX GMEDIA program, funded by USAID, supports the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs student media program through training, providing equipment, operating support, and curriculum development.



18. Palitra Media hosts a presentation on its Small and Medium Enterprises Support Program, an initiative designed to strengthen Georgia's advertising sector. This program was made possible through the Business Innovation Grants supported by USAID and IREX.



19. Journalists from the newspaper Samkhretis Karibche received content production training as part of the USAID-supported New Media Initiative. This initiative helped improve Georgian media outlet's competencies in video, photo, and audio editing, as well as in producing material online production.



20. The RFE/RL Media School graduation ceremony for the Multimedia Reporting Certificate Program and 'Learning By Doing' Internship Program was hosted at the Multimedia Education Center. These programs, supported by IREX GMEDIA and USAID, helped prepare aspiring career journalists by providing them with practical skills, such as reporting, writing, and editing.



21. IREX's Shota Gogishvili (left) trains journalists from radio Nor (a community station based in Ninotsminda) in content production. This training was conducted as part of the USAID-funded New Media Initiative, a project which improved media outlet's competencies in critical areas such as video, photo, and audio editing.



22. IREX International Consultants, Roy Saatchi (left) and Sasha Zaijkov (left-middle?), conduct studio production training at TV Gurjaani. TV Gurjaani was one of several regional media outlets whose content quality improved as a result of intensive on-site trainings supported by USAID.



23. Eka Pirtskhalava and Shota Gogishvili (right) train journalists from various media outlets in the Kakheti region and Tbilisi in content production at the IREX office. This training is conducted as part of New Media Initiative, funded by USAID.



24. Eka Pirtskhalava (??) and Shota Gogishvili (right) train journalists from various media outlets in the Kakheti region and Tbilisi in content production.



25. While helping set up an online studio for the newspaper New Press, Dachi Grdzlishvili (right), IREX's New Media Senior Manager, demonstrates GMEDIA's multimedia equipment, which appears to be surprisingly water resistant.

26. Equipment is being delivered to TV Gurjaani, a regional media outlet that, through the support of USAID's and IREX's content production trainings, improved the quality of their news programming.



27. Equipment is being delivered to ICK.ge, a regional media outlet that, through the support of USAID's and IREX's content production trainings, improved the quality of their news programming.



28. IREX commences a general training for media outlets in Eastern Georgia as part of the New Media Initiative. The Initiative, funded by USAID, allows Georgian journalists to take advantage of multimedia tools and enhance the reach and quality of their coverage.



29. Students from the USAID-supported Georgian Institute of Public Affairs student media program present their documentaries at the GIPA film festival on June 7, 2013. Three students used the skills gained from GMEDIA to produce films highlighting an issue they wanted to share.



30. Certificates are awarded to the 40 graduates of the Radio Liberty “Learning By Doing” internship program supported by IREX G-MEDIA and USAID. The program provides aspiring journalists with a much-valued opportunity to gain hands-on experience working in the media sector.



31. Young Georgians are learning about journalism at Guria News as part of the IREX GMEDIA Youth Media Literacy Program. With USAID’s support, regional media outlets developed their own mentoring and teaching skills and helped build a cadre of citizen journalists among youth.



32. Youth Media Literacy student Tamta Kakhberidze (right) interviews her classmates about gender stereotypes in Georgian society. With the support of USAID and IREX, young Georgians like Tamta are gaining the skills necessary to shed light on important social issues.



33. IREX G-MEDIA announces the 14 media outlets selected to be long-term partners in the New Media Initiative. The Initiative, funded by USAID, supports Georgian journalists and media organizations to take advantage of multimedia tools, enhance the reach and quality of their coverage, and develop new ways to raise needed-revenue.



34. The Batumi newspaper, [Batemelebi](#), receives TV production training through IREX's New Media Initiative. With USAID's support, the newspaper was able to set up its own online studio, significantly increasing its coverage.



35. IREX New Media Senior Manager Dachi Grdzlishvili (right) conducts an intensive, on-site management and technical support consultation with the newspaper Chemi Kharagauli as part of the New Media Initiative. The Initiative, funded by USAID, supports Georgian journalists and media organizations to take advantage of multimedia tools, enhance the reach and quality of their coverage, and develop new ways to raise needed-revenue.



36. IREX International Consultant, Roy Saatchi (back right) and Sasha Zaijkov (center), conduct studio production training at TV Gurjaani. TV Gurjaani was one of several regional media outlets whose content quality improved as a result of intensive on-site trainings supported by USAID.



37. Student's from Radio Liberty shoot footage at the Multimedia Education Center (MEC) in Tbilisi. The MEC, with its state-of-the-art facilities and portable newsroom, has become instrumental in teaching effective reporting within Georgia's media sector.



38. With the support of IREX GMEDIA, Guria News launched its own online studio. Now it produces video stories, talk shows, live streaming, and interactive programs through its website. Through the USAID-funded New Media Initiative (NMI) Guria was able to bring a new dimension of election coverage to its audience.



39. IREX GMEDIA hosts a workshop on how news outlets can set up their own online studios as part of its New Media Initiative. New Media allows media outlets to take advantage of multimedia tools in order to expand their coverage and access new sources of much-needed revenue.



40. The second round of self-governance Elections training commences in Western Georgia. Journalists learn how to report on Election as part of the USAID-supported Regional Election Initiative to improve the quantity and quality of election coverage in Georgia.

G-MEDIA STORY VIDEO LINKS



GYLA SPRING SCHOOL OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM – 4-13 JUNE 2014

GYLA invited journalists to an investigative journalism workshop and offered a different approach of teaching. Journalists were able to communicate with judges and lawyers on real cases and arguments and discuss the legal issues they face.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2014/06/04/gyla-spring-school-of-investigative-journalism/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=if-6IYZQOLQ>



SEEKING INDEPENDENCE – 23 MAY 2014

Recently, Spektri newspaper established a small printing company, “First color”, funded by USAID through the G-MEDIA program. With this small business development the company has become much more sustainable.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2014/05/23/seeking-independence/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLOG81Rk6tI>



A HELPING HAND – 20 MARCH 2014

The call center 16-100 was established to provide public information about businesses, telephone numbers and government services. But the center has now been integrated into the ICN newsroom and callers have learned they can not only find information when they want it but help when they really need it.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2014/03/20/ahelpinghand/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wylzp9aqc3u>



TAMTA KAKHBERIDZE FOR GENDER EQUALITY – 7 MARCH 2014

Tamta Kakhaberidze, from a small village near the Turkish border, says the Media Literacy Project has helped her better understand the challenges facing Georgian women, and the journalism training has given her a voice to report on them.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2014/03/07/tamta-kakhaberidze-for-gender-equality/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuplYDqk5zk>



MULTIETHNIC GIPA – 3 FEBRUARY 2014

With G-MEDIA support for the journalism school at GIPA (Georgian Institute for Public Affairs), Armenian and Azerbaijan students had the opportunity to learn journalistic skills and share their experiences and information about their minority communities with Georgian students.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2014/02/03/multiethnic-gipa/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bZnaG5wMtE>



A NEW LOOK FOR THE BATUMELEBI “FAMILY” – 10 JANUARY 2014

The Batumi newspaper *Batumelebi*, their on-line news portal *Netgazeti.ge*, in Tbilisi, and *Presscafe.ge*, created by Batumelebi as a source of volunteer, independent journalism, created a studio with financial support from the IREX G-MEDIA program, funded by USAID.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2014/01/10/a-new-look-for-the-batumelebi-family/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GW_ujVrZpl



LABORATORY TO PRACTICE JOURNALISM – 4 DEC 2013

GIPA University students from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan get valuable practical experience in the lab while viewers to the newscafe.ge website see news coverage from a student perspective.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/12/04/laboratory-to-practice-journalism/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KF6DlaYxzwQ>



GIPA DOC U FILMS – 25 NOV 2013

The kids who study at a special school for children with behavioral problems, the personal challenges of a woman who refused to accept her grandchildren's disabilities, and the lives of two teenagers living in the high mountains, isolated from public education and their peers – these are the stories told by GIPA students in three documentaries.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/11/25/three-documentaries/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2QRoqS_Mi0



FROM PRINT TO MULTIMEDIA - 29 OCT 2013

The newspapers *Akhali Gazeti*, *Guria News* and *Samkhretis Karibche* are now producing video stories, talk shows, live streaming and interactive programs through their websites as members of G-MEDIA's New Media Initiative (NMI).

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/10/29/from-print-to-multimedia/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7mKc69Oufw>



COMMUNITY RADIO PIONEERS IN GEORGIA – 26 SEPT 2013

On the remote and wind swept plain of Southern Georgia, people in the small town of Ninotsminda have come to rely on a small radio station for news about their community. But despite commitments from donors and dedicated volunteers, Radio NOR has not been able to receive a government

broadcast license.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/09/26/community-radio-pioneers-in-georgia/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFivCek0pX8>



TIME FOR ACTION ON DIGITAL SWITCHOVER - 17 SEPT 2013

Transparency International, Georgia, is calling on the government to take action quickly on the long-delayed digital switchover.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/09/17/time-for-action-on-digital-switchover/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUVNjna29YY>



NEW MEDIA FOR GEORGIAN MEDIA – 6 AUGUST 2013

It has been more than a year since IREX G-MEDIA started the New Media Initiative for 14 partner organizations. In response to high demand for training, the project has been expanded to include other Georgian journalists as well and offer them workshops on general new media tools.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/08/06/new-media-for-georgian-media/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hF7axgWldQ4>



**MEDIA LITERACY STUDENT –
MARIAM KALANDADZE – 10 JULY 2013**

Mariam Kalandadze, 17, is a Youth Media Literacy student and writes articles for Guria News youth edition Bellow 21. Her articles mainly focus on youth problems in the region.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/07/30/mariam/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2CvAINgijw>



**MEDIA LITERACY STUDENT –
SALOME ORKODASHVILI – 23 JULY 2013**

Classes are over and 16 year old Media Literacy Student Salome Orkodashvili is on her way to newspaper Kakhetis Khma. “I decided to try myself in journalism,” she says.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/07/23/salomeorkodashvili/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXrz84FQY1U>



**NEW MEDIA LITERACY STUDENT- KETI
NOGIOVA—10 JULY 2013**

Keti Nogiova, a Media Literacy Student from Poti, uses her new journalism skills to help the IDP community where she grew up.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/07/10/the-voice-of-her-community/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6oy3bzllq8>



GIPA DOC PITCH—13 JUNE 2013

Three documentary projects to be produced by six GIPA students were granted financial support from the IREX G-MEDIA Program as part of the ongoing support to the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management at GIPA.

<https://irexmtaq.wordpress.com/2013/06/13/gipa-doc-pitch/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gM08oj91qac>



YOUTH MEDIA LITERACY – 3 JUNE 2013

IREX's G-MEDIA project includes a great deal of work with college students, professional journalists, media companies, advocacy groups, other NGOs and large companies and government officials. But under the Youth media Literacy Project we have had the pleasure of working with high school students from the regions. More than 130 students worked with five of our regional media partners to learn more

about being reporters and photographers:

<https://irexmtaq.wordpress.com/2013/06/03/youth-media-literacy/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbkfj8lkx_8

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rlrk3bduu>



PASSION FOR JOURNALISM CONTRIBUTES TO GEORGIAN EDUCATION – 1 APRIL 2013

Dr. Lawrence Pintak is a man of many skills, and through the IREX G-MEDIA project he is able to share them with Georgian journalism students and educators.

<https://irexmtaq.wordpress.com/2013/04/01/passion-for-journalism-contributes-to-georgian-education/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IG_QSHUQJ1G



INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM HAS BIG FUTURE IN GEORGIA – 19 MARCH 2013

IREX G-MEDIA consultant in investigative journalism Brant Houston is giving a three days training to journalists from different media outlets in Georgia.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/03/19/investigativ-e-journalism-has-big-future-in-georgia/>

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=1FR_UWN-BPA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FR_UWN-BPA)



RADIO IS BETTER THAN YOU THINK – 14 MARCH 2013

A new study on radio in Georgia, commissioned by the IREX GMEDIA program and conducted by Market Intelligences Caucasus, shows that radio usage is higher than anticipated and that radio reaches an influential listenership with above average income.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/03/14/radio-is-better-than-you-think/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sosfwng5bw>



INSPIRED TO BE JOURNALISTS – 26 FEBRUARY 2013

Georgia is the first country where Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty established a media school. On 21 of February, the first group of Radio Liberty Media School students celebrated graduation from the one year certificate program.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/02/26/inspire-d-to-be-journalists/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdfflh0zbn4>



RADIO LIBERTY MEDIA SCHOOL GRADUATION – 22 FEBRUARY 2013

On 21 of February, Radio Liberty Media School students celebrated graduation from the one year certificate program. U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Richard B. Norland hosted the graduation ceremony at MEC.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/02/22/radio-liberty-media-school-graduation/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5thpnmassg>



WHO CONTROLS THE COMMUNICATIONS IN GEORGIA? – 6 FEBRUARY 2013

Transparency International Senior Analyst Mathias Huter discusses key issues facing the telecommunications industry, government agencies and the Georgian public which is increasingly reliant on the Internet for information.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/02/06/who-controls-the-communications-in-georgia/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bibeGm45mjw>



NEW MEDIA INITIATIVE – 25 JANUARY 2013

The New Media Initiative program presentation was held at the hotel Courtyard Marriott, where IREX/G-MEDIA has announced the selection of 14 media organizations involved in long term partnership.

<https://irexmtag.wordpress.com/2013/01/25/new-media-initiative/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vYPOEVK-kA>