



Media is Development: Afghanistan Media and Civil Society Forum

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Message from Mario Lubetkin, IPS Director General

When aims are clear, partners coincide and good results are evident, there is no need of too many words to share such experience with others. This is the case with the one-year project that IPS has been sharing with The Killid Group as the leading organisation, the Centre for International Journalism, Pajhwok Afghan News and Sayara Media and Communication, implemented through 2006 with the financial support of the Delegation of the European Commission in Afghanistan. Within 12 months, 500 journalists and students of journalism were trained in the coverage of sensitive development issues together with media managers and government information officers. 150 feature articles and 40 radio programmes out of the main-stream areas were produced and distributed nationally. And internationally, which is where IPS initial role comes in. We were the only international actor working together with 4 of the main Afghan media actors. It was soon after inception, in October 2005, that the project's manager suggested to Shahir Zahine and me including within it this Media is Development – Afghan Media and Civil Society Forum. That is how TKG and IPS took the lead in organising it.

When the project was conceived a major concern was considered: the overwhelming amount of war-oriented breaking news distributed internationally against reporting to the world the Afghan process in depth, the daily efforts for building the country. National opinion making against an opinion making...

This is what IPS is about since it was created, 42 years ago: in a reality in which for the news agencies from the North covering the South meant mainly reporting military coups, natural catastrophes and similar spot news, the IPS challenge was to cover the developing world from within, to articulate a south-to-north perspective, to give voice to all the social actors and to disseminate it world-wide. Today IPS has 500 correspondents and stringers in 150 countries, distributes its news in 22 languages, is the leading news agency with regard to the coverage of development issues and the leader as well in reporting on and interacting with civil society at local, national, regional and international levels. Within its mission and also since inception, the capacity building of journalists and media development in the countries of the South have been both a priority and a necessity to complete IPS' long-term objectives.

Coming back to us, this brief background explains why IPS was the more pertinent international partner to meet one of the project's objectives and why IPS was willing to do it. In practical terms, the outputs produced within the on-the-job capacity building seminars conducted by CIJ and with the support of Sayara in the schools of journalism in 5 Afghan universities were distributed nationally by Pajhwok and TKG, translated into English, then delivered to an IPS editor based in Delhi that was re-editing the copies and distributing it world-wide as part of the IPS daily cast.

The project implementation has demonstrated that national and international interaction is possible, that we must also focus in the reinstatement of Afghanistan in the global process, that an Afghan coverage giving voice to Afghan civil society is possible, and that media interaction to reinforce that same civil society within the aim of fostering a pluralistic development can be implemented.



The project has also showed, however, that we have covered just the beginning of the road and that by doing so new needs and constraints became evident. Which is natural in any human activity, which could not be otherwise in the dramatic Afghan circumstances. That is why IPS strongly commits itself to continue walking together that same road, which in our view shows the need of deepening the capacity building process, creating means to reach each single Afghan in each corner of the country, and to disseminate internationally an Afghan vision of its own process (national debate, public dialogue against internationalists' monologue). The Forum shows extraordinary Afghan organisational skills and the maturity of Afghan media and civil society wanting to make their voices be heard.

Thank you.