MEDIA PROGRAM IN ARMENIA

Program Factsheet

Budget: $15 million

Timeline: 2023 – 2028

Last updated: December 2024

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Armenia has a vibrant media ecosystem that nevertheless faces serious challenges. Resource-strapped public interest media struggle to consistently produce high-quality coverage that reaches broad audiences, including youth, minorities, and residents of rural areas. Few independent media outlets in Armenia are financially viable, which poses a threat to their long-term sustainability.

The USAID-funded Media Program in Armenia (MPA) aims to strengthen the integrity of the information space in the country. Implemented by Internews and its partners, Media Initiatives Center (MIC), Yerevan Press Club (YPC), and Zinc Network, the program aims to enhance journalistic standards, catalyze the financial viability of public interest media, and promote critical thinking. MPA also partners with the Media Diversity Institute (MDI), Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression (CPFE), Public Journalism Club (PJC), and Freedom of Information Center in Armenia (FOICA) to offer psychological, digital, and legal support to media and journalists and bolster advocacy efforts under MPA.

PROGRAM RESULTS AS OF DECEMBER 2024

➤ The program supported 59 media outlets with digital security, legal and psychosocial assistance, and guidance on ethical standards. A total of 338 media representatives received training in these issues along with media and information literacy and quality reporting.

➤ Media outlets and alternative content producers in Armenia, including influencers and bloggers, produced 805 pieces of content covering a wide range of public interest topics, significant events, and challenges within the media sector.

➤ 43 media outlets have received legal assistance, advice, and representation with the support of the Media Defense Fund.

➤ Sixteen Armenian media outlets have adopted the Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists since the start of the Program.

➤ MDI developed the Digital Ambassador concept, proposing a high-level representative with diplomatic status to represent the country in global digital governance and promote freedom of speech and ethics.

➤ MDI's advocacy efforts helped lead to the postponement of the final review of a bill that would expand surveillance infrastructure.

➤ 1,168 individuals received training in Media and Information Literacy, with 72% reporting significant improvements in their skills and knowledge. Over 100 schools across Armenia participated in Media Literacy Week programming, and five teachers implemented small educational projects in their communities following two separate media and information initiatives in Armenia's regions, organized by CSOs.

➤ The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of Armenia (MESCS) has certified MIC's Media Literacy Course (both offline and online versions) and MIC itself as an approved Training of Trainers (ToT) provider for teachers in mandatory attestation training.

GRANTS PROVIDED TO MEDIA WITHIN THE PROGRAM

18
4 to alternative content creators
Content Production

8
Technical Development

5
Strategic Development

4
Emergency

PROMOTING JOURNALISTIC EXCELLENCE

MIC's Media Excellence Accelerator offers on-demand training and mentorship to MPA grantees on storytelling and production skills across diverse formats and distribution channels. MIC and YPC guide media partners on editorial and ethical standards, while Internews's Marketing and Audience Engagement specialist helps expand audience reach with quality content. Integral initiatives like the Tvapatum Contest and Conference celebrate innovative storytelling and encourage collaboration and knowledge-sharing among media professionals. Internews also provides grants to media and content producers to create high-priority content identified through cross-cutting research.

ADVOCATING FOR IMPROVED MEDIA CLIMATE

YPC monitors media-related law reforms, state policies, and media freedoms in close collaboration with government and CSO partners. Key focus areas include the Law on Media, updates to the Audiovisual Law, and self-regulation mechanisms. In 2024, YPC brought together media CSOs to refine the draft Law on Media, incorporating self-regulation provisions and clarifying terminology, based on the review by the Venice Commission. The program also supports the independence of media oversight bodies, collaborating with the Council of Public TV and Radio, working to institutionalize the role of a media ombudsman, and strengthening the capacity of the Commission on TV and Radio. Yerevan Press Club also promoted Media Ethics Observatory to raise awareness about the media self-regulation system in Armenia among stakeholders and the broader public.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF PUBLIC INTEREST MEDIA

The program provides tailored business management support to selected media outlets, co-designing context-relevant business plans to drive audience and revenue growth while building sustainability. A recent comprehensive evaluation of outlet's organizational, editorial, and technical capacities identified strengths and areas for improvement, enabling these outlets to develop strategic development plans. Through Strategic Development and Technical Development Grants and consulting support from Zinc Network, the program helps selected media outlets enhance their business operations, strengthen market positioning, and adopt effective monetization strategies.

The program also continues efforts to support the establishment and operation of an independent and transparent Media Support Fund (MSF), ensuring the long-term sustainability of public interest media. In 2024, MPA developed a comprehensive strategic document for the MSF, conducted a feasibility study to evaluate potential fund models, and engaged with donors and stakeholders.

MEDIA LITERACY

Through collaboration with the MESCS, the program supports the integration of media literacy education into preschools and schools nationwide. MPA also bolsters media literacy skills among youth, educators, and youth workers through training and grassroots initiatives empowering CSOs to promote media education and community engagement.

LEARNING THROUGH RESEARCH

Three types of complementary research and studies under the Media Program in Armenia provide insight into the media and information ecosystem, audience trust and consumption habits, and the business capacity of media in the country.

Freedom of Expression and Media Consumption Research
The Program conducted a second round of this annual research to deepen insights into Armenia's media consumption trends and provide ongoing analysis of the information ecosystem, supporting data-driven decisions throughout implementation. Key recommendations from the last round include strengthening digital strategies, improving measurement of trust in media, demand-based topical coverage and formats, strengthening ethical standards and media literacy initiatives.

Media Market Analysis
First conducted by Zinc Network in 2023, subsequent rounds of this research will be conducted in 2025 and in the last year of the program to continue to assess the advertisement and media market in Armenia. The most recent study identified challenges related to financial sustainability, pressure on journalists, objectivity, monetization, and social media.

V6
This research aims to assist fact-checkers and media outlets in understanding the information consumption habits among various societal groups. The first quantitative V6 study conducted with project support will be published in 2025. This research is supplemented by qualitative studies, the most recent of which highlighted diverse media consumption, engagement with digital platforms, and skepticism toward paid content.