

## Terms of Reference

### External Evaluation on Regional Broadcasters' Capacity to Report on Issues of Public and Community Interest

#### 1. Background

Informed, effective citizens' participation in governance cannot happen without media – an institution that can provide broad access to information from varied sources, let people raise and debate issues and help hold government accountable to its citizenry. Transparency and accountability need to be integrated in the political and economic culture of Moldova. One way to reinforce this development is to support media institutions whose main purpose is to promote these key elements.

According to the initial contextual analysis of the project, the media was highly handicapped in Moldova due to their dependence on state authorities, financial scarcity and lack of professional human resources to report on public issues. Rural areas were disadvantaged by limited pluralism and limited access to information because of an underdeveloped advertising market that would ensure financial security to regional broadcasters.

Limited resources prevented radio and TV stations to compete effectively with the larger national stations on production quality. Urban production trends of the bigger media outlets established a bias towards political and entertainment reporting over poverty-oriented stories and development issues. Additionally, the journalists were insufficiently trained to report on economic development, public health, education, environment and gender equity issues on a professional level.

The previous project funded by Sida (May 2006 – September 2009), focused on improving the media sector in Republic of Moldova by creating a Regional Broadcast Media Network.

The current project funded by Sida - **Enhancing the Regional Broadcast Media Network's Capacity to Report on Issues of Public and Community Interest**, is a component of a broader project - **IMPROVING GOOD GOVERNANCE IN MOLDOVA THROUGH INCREASED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Dec 2009 – Jan 2012)**.

This media project is a continuation of the previous media improvement efforts in the Republic of Moldova and aims to further support the Regional Broadcasters' Media Network by looking at the quality of the reported content. The project proposed to address all the above mentioned issues and build the capacity of the media network to produce quality newscasts and reports on community-related problems.

The project is implemented under the Soros Foundation-Moldova's (SFM) Media Program through multi-organizational involvement, where the Regional Professional Broadcasting Association (RPBA) and National Coordinating Broadcasting Council act as the main partners. Journalists from local independent media institutions and NGOs specialized on media issues are the main beneficiaries of the project's activities. The SFM approaches this project as a partnership with the local member stations of the network, implemented in a way that passes the authority and responsibility for its outcomes increasingly to the stations. All decisions about network broadcasting programming on public and community issues, therefore, are established by consensus among the member stations. The role of SFM is to provide them with the appropriate tools to develop efficient schedules and ensure that they can follow them. In addition, the SFM Team seeks to build linkages between local journalism professionals and regional peers by utilizing regional technical assistance from Romania, Russia, and Ukraine whenever possible.

## **2. Rationale and Audience**

### ***Rationale***

Since 2006, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has funded and Soros Foundation-Moldova (SFM) has implemented one 3-year and one 2-year development projects in the Republic of Moldova aimed at improving the independent media sector by building the capacity of regional media broadcasters.

The project under evaluation (Dec2009 - Jan2012) focuses on content production and capacity building of regional broadcasters to report on issues of public interest.

Both the funding and implementing agencies would like to know the effectiveness, impact, sustainability and relevance the latest project had on the regional broadcasters' reporting capacity and quality and to what extent the news/stories/shows of the supported regional broadcasters reflect in a fair way the community-related problems and issues.

Both interested parties – Sida and SFM – would like to find out about additional effective but still efficient, relevant and sustainable ways of improving the regional media broadcasters' capacity to report on issues of public and community interest in a fair and objective way.

### ***Audience***

The primary audience for the evaluation is the funding and implementing agencies. Secondary audiences include national authorities, civil society, other interested parties and stakeholders.

## **3. Purpose, Objectives and Scope**

### ***Purpose of the Evaluation***

The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the overall effectiveness, impact, sustainability and relevance of the project's activities on the regional broadcasters' capacity to report on issues of public and community interest in a fair and objective way.

### ***Objectives***

The objectives are to obtain descriptive and analytical information related to the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the project in the following areas:

1. Regional broadcasters' Capacity to Report on Issues of Public and Community Interest;
2. Support of the Media Development in Transnistria and Cooperation between Media Outlets from Both Banks of the Nistru River;
3. Capacity of the Regional Professional Broadcasting Association to Manage and Support the Network of Regional Broadcasters;

## Scope

The evaluation shall cover all major activities of the current project (Dec2009 – Jan2012) and any other areas which emerge from the specific questions at each evaluation criterion.

### 4. Evaluation Criteria and Questions. Lessons Learned

#### *Evaluation criteria*

The evaluation shall concentrate on the following criteria:

1. Effectiveness
2. Impact
3. Sustainability
4. Relevance
5. Efficiency

Area	<b>A. Regional broadcasters' Capacity to Report on Issues of Public and Community Interest</b>
Criteria	Effectiveness
General Question:	To what extent the project objectives within this area were met and how effective were the project activities in building the regional broadcasters' capacity to report on issues of public and community interest?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What issues of public and community interest were addressed in the regional broadcasters' reports? (source: Monthly reports; TV/Radio Monitorings)</li> <li>2. How was the quality of broadcasted news and stories monitored along the way? What specifically was monitored? Who was responsible? (source: Monthly reports; TV/Radio Monitorings)</li> <li>3. To what extent the broadcasters' news/stories/shows improved their fairness and objectiveness? (source: Broadcasters; www.canalregional.md; Vasile Stati's reports)</li> <li>4. To what extent the broadcasters' reports are well-sourced? (source: Vasile Stati's monitoring reports; www.canalregional.md)</li> <li>5. What kind of media tools were used by the regional broadcasters to involve the public opinion and public decision making. (source: Broadcasters; www.canalregional.md)</li> <li>6. How did regional broadcasters encourage civic journalism among their viewers? (source: Regional Broadcasters; www.canalregional.md)</li> </ol>

	<p>7. As a result of encouraging civic journalism, was there any significant improvement concerning public participation in news making? (source: Regional Broadcasters)</p> <p>8. How balanced are the news/shows from the gender point of view? (source: Vasile Stati's monitoring reports; www.canalregional.md)</p> <p>9. Is there any improvement in the weight of the social news in the total news pool? (source: Vasile Stati's monitoring reports; www.canalregional.md)</p> <p>10. Choosing from news and shows/debates, which of them recorded an increase in production since the project inception? (source: Vasile Stati; Vasile Stati's monitoring reports; www.canalregional.md)</p>
<p>Criteria</p> <p>General Question:</p> <p>Specific Questions:</p>	<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>What was the real impact of the project activities within this area on each regional broadcaster's community and Local Public Administration?</p> <p>1. How often people from the community watch their regional broadcaster's programs? (source: CBS AXA Audience research)</p> <p>2. Did regional broadcasters offer to Local Public Administration representatives the possibility to communicate with local community without being influenced or pressured to distort information in their favor. (source: Broadcasters; www.canalregional.md; Local Public Administration)</p> <p>3. Did any national media outlets find out about the Sida project "Enhancing the Regional Broadcast Media Network's Capacity to Report on Issues of Public and Community Interest"?</p> <p>4. What percentage of the Republic of Moldova's territory is covered by the regional broadcasters participating in this project? (source: Broadcasters' mapping)</p>
<p>Criteria</p> <p>General Question:</p> <p>Specific Questions:</p>	<p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <p>How sustainable is likely to be the achieved positive results with regard to the regional broadcasters' capacity to report on issues of public and community interest?</p> <p>1. Do regional broadcasters see public journalism as a way to promote themselves, gain credibility, more viewers and hence an increased advertising volume? (source: Broadcasters)</p>

2. Who will monitor the quality of the produced news/shows/debates in the future? (source: Regional Professional Broadcasting Association - RPBA)
3. How difficult is to share the produced news and stories with the broadcasters' network? Does it require special training or technical skills? (source: Broadcasters)
4. How easily news and stories can be taken by a broadcaster from the network and put it on air? How much time does it take? (source: Broadcasters)
5. Are there specially assigned people within each regional broadcaster that are responsible of civic journalism component? What are their responsibilities? Will they be responsible for this area after the project ends? (source: Broadcasters)
6. Who are the actors or what are the elements that can keep improving or maintaining the capacity of the regional broadcasters to report on issues of public and community interest?

Criteria	Relevance
General Question:	Are the project activities within this area in accordance with the country and beneficiaries' needs?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did the regional broadcasters feel a need to improve their capacity to report on issues of public and community interest before joining the project? (source: Broadcasters)</li> <li>2. How did the implementing team monitor the needs of the beneficiaries during project implementation? (source: Agenda of the monthly meetings of the regional network's members)</li> <li>3. What were the activities that addressed specifically the capacity building of regional broadcasters to report on public issues? (source: In-house training reports; Monthly evaluation meetings reports)</li> <li>4. What are the most demanded TV topics by the local community? (source: CBS AXA Audience research)</li> <li>5. What are the expectations of the local community towards their regional broadcaster? (source: CBS AXA Audience research)</li> <li>6. Was there any evaluation or needs assessment done before accepting new regional broadcasters into the network?</li> </ol>

Area	<b>B. Support of the Media Development in Transnistria and Cooperation between Media Outlets from Both Banks of the Nistru River</b>
Criteria	Effectiveness
General Question:	How effective were the project activities in building the capacity of the Transnistrian broadcasters and the cooperation between media outlets from both banks of the Nistru river?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How many news were shared by the Transnistrian broadcasters with the network compared to the average share rate of the Moldovan broadcasters (most recent data)? (source: Transnistrian broadcasters; www.canalregional.md)</li> <li>2. Are there any shows/debates produced on the Transnistrian conflict? Who produced them? (source: Transnistrian and Moldovan Broadcasters; www.canalregional.md)</li> <li>3. What are the indicators/facts that prove an increased capacity of the Transnistrian broadcasters to produce and broadcast quality media products?</li> </ol>
Criteria	Impact
General Question:	What was the real impact of the project activities within this area on each regional broadcaster and community?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As a result of participation in the project, what was the impact of Transnistrian broadcasters on viewers? Did the audience size increase? (source: Transnistrian Broadcasters)</li> <li>2. In the view of regional broadcasters, what are the benefits vs. disadvantages of this cooperation? (source: Transnistrian and Moldovan Broadcasters)</li> </ol>

Criteria	<b>Sustainability</b>
General Question:	How probable is that the cooperation between media outlets from both banks of the Nistru River will continue after the project ends?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How useful do regional broadcasters find program exchanges between the Moldovan and Transnistrian media outlets? (source: Transnistrian and Moldovan Broadcasters)</li> <li>2. How do broadcasters see the future of this cooperation? (source: Transnistrian and Moldovan Broadcasters)</li> <li>3. Who are the players or what are the elements/context than can keep this cooperation going?</li> </ol>
Criteria	<b>Relevance</b>
General Question:	Are the project activities within this area in accordance with the country and beneficiaries' needs?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What were the arguments by which Transnistrian beneficiaries expressed their need for participation in the project? (source: Motivation letters)</li> <li>2. What were the activities aimed at increasing the capacity of the Transnistrian broadcasters and the cooperation level between media outlets from both banks of the Nistru River?</li> </ol>

Area	<b>C. Capacity of the Regional Professional Broadcasting Association (RPBA) to Manage and Support the Network of Regional Broadcasters</b>
Criteria	Effectiveness
General Question:	How effective were the project activities in building the capacity of the Regional Professional Broadcasting Association (RPBA) to manage and support the network of regional broadcasters?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does RPBA have a clearly defined development strategy? (source: Victor Sofronie)</li> <li>2. Does RPBA have all the necessary resources in order to fulfill its responsibilities towards its members? Does it have the capacity to attract the necessary resources? (source: Victor Sofronie)</li> </ol>
Criteria	Impact
General Question:	What was the real impact of the project activities within this area on each regional broadcaster?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What has changed in the news and programming producing routine of the members? (source: Reports of Sergiu Tudos concerning implementation of unique production standards, Minutes of RPBA meetings, VPN Network setup)</li> <li>2. Have advertising revenues increased? (source: Victor Sofronie – president of RPBA)</li> <li>3. In the view of the members, are their interests better represented as part of the RPBA? How? (source: Victor Sofronie – president of RPBA, regional broadcasters)</li> <li>4. What other benefits are there for the members? (source: Victor Sofronie; Broadcasters)</li> </ol>

Criteria	<b>Sustainability</b>
General Question:	Will the RPBA be able to adapt and continue to provide support to the Network of Regional Broadcasters after the project ends?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What does RPBA need to implement its development strategy in a consistent way? To what extent these needs are covered? (source: Victor Sofronie)</li> <li>2. What reasons has a regional broadcaster for joining or staying in the RPBA? (source: Regional Broadcasters)</li> </ol>
Criteria	<b>Relevance</b>
General Question:	Are the project activities within this area in accordance with the beneficiaries' needs?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did the need for a Professional Association emerge? (source: Victor Sofronie – president of RPBA)</li> <li>2. What are the key issues in which Regional Professional Broadcasting Association provides support to the Network of Regional Broadcasters? Are they relevant to broadcasters' needs? (source: RPBA)</li> <li>3. What were the specific activities aimed at increasing the Capacity of the Regional Professional Broadcasting Association to Manage and Support the Network of Regional Broadcasters (source: RPBA)?</li> </ol>

Area	<b>Overall per project</b>
Criteria	<b>Efficiency</b>
General Question:	How cost-efficient where the activities aimed at achieving the project goals?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What was done to ensure the cost-efficiency of goods and services' acquisition for project activities?</li> </ol>
Criteria	<b>Impact</b>
General Question:	What are the results of Sida interventions at the Regional Broadcasters' level?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the main achievements with regard to the capacity of the regional broadcasters to produce quality media products and overall position in the media market? (source: Regional broadcasters)</li> </ol>

## Lessons Learned

Area	<b>A. Regional broadcasters' Capacity to Report on Issues of Public and Community Interest</b>
General Question:	What are the main lessons to be learned with regard to the efforts in building regional broadcasters' capacity to report on issues of public and community interest?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do the beneficiaries see as the main lessons learnt in this area?</li> <li>2. What does the implementing agency see as the main lessons learnt in this area?</li> <li>3. What does the evaluation team see as the main lessons learnt with regard to efforts in this area?</li> </ol>
Area	<b>B. Cooperation between Media Outlets from Both Banks of the Nistru River</b>
General Question:	What are the main lessons to be learned with regard to the efforts in encouraging cooperation between media outlets from both banks of the Nistru River?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do the beneficiaries see as the main lessons learnt in this area?</li> <li>2. What does the implementing agency see as the main lessons learnt in this area?</li> <li>3. What does the evaluation team see as the main lessons learnt with regard to efforts in this area?</li> </ol>
Area	<b>C. Capacity of the Regional Professional Broadcasting Association to Manage and Support the Network of Regional Broadcasters (RPBA)</b>
General Question:	What are the main lessons to be learned with regard to the efforts in building the capacity of the RPBA to manage and support the network of regional broadcasters?
Specific Questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do the beneficiaries see as the main lessons learnt in this area?</li> <li>2. What does the implementing agency see as the main lessons learnt in this area?</li> <li>3. What does the evaluation team see as the main lessons learnt with regard to efforts in this area?</li> </ol>

## **5. Methodology**

It will be part of the assignment to develop a relevant methodology that will ensure an objective approach to the evaluation and enable evidence-based assessments and conclusions. The following data sources can serve for this purpose:

1. Monthly evaluation documents, including agendas of the Network meetings;
2. Monitoring reports of Vasile Stati;
3. Regional Broadcasters' reports;
4. In-house and general trainings' reports and documents;
5. CBS AXA Survey on Audience;
6. Video materials exchanged through FTP server;
7. Regional Broadcasters' Website: [www.canalregional.md](http://www.canalregional.md);
8. Other relevant documents.

## **6. Organization and requirements**

### Evaluation Team

The evaluation team will consist of 1-2 members. The senior member will coordinate the evaluation schedule and report the progress to the Media Program Director or to the designated person(s) by Program Director.

The evaluation team should have the following competencies:

- Experience in evaluating development programs;
- Their own methodological approach concerning evaluation of development programs;
- Fluency in Romanian, Russian and English languages.

### Data Collection

For evaluation, the following data collection methods should be considered:

1. Documents and video materials analyses.
2. Interviews
3. Focus-groups
4. Field visits to regional broadcasters' office and communities.
5. Surveys

Data collection methods for each evaluated objective should be agreed with the contractor before commencing the actual data collection.

### Organization

Prior to initiate the evaluation process, the evaluators will agree with the contracting agency the time plan, methodological aspects and milestones, all of which will be part of the inception report. At each milestone, the representatives of the both teams will meet to review the progress and adjust the next steps of the evaluation if deemed necessary.

## Budget

The tender shall present a total budget with stipulated expenses for fees, travel, field work and other expenses.

## **7. Reporting and Outputs**

The evaluators shall undertake the following:

1. Prepare an inception report with the following contents:
  - An interpretation of the assignment;
  - Methodological approach of the evaluation for each project objective;
  - Time plan and milestones;
2. Preliminary reports with findings and conclusions for each evaluated project objective. At each stage, include a brief description of the work process with difficulties encountered and observations regarding data collection and communication with involved parties.
3. Prepare a draft final report after receiving Program Director's comments.
4. Integrate any final comments in the final evaluation report.
5. Prepare a 1-2 page synthesis paper with the most relevant key findings and conclusions of the evaluation.
6. Prepare an overall work progress report with difficulties encountered, observations and different experiences during the entire evaluation period.

All reports should be written in English. The evaluation team is responsible for editing and quality control of the language.

The evaluation team is expected to adhere to the DAC Evaluation Quality Standards. (Annex 1)