



Monitoring Press Freedom and Supporting Independent Media in Mongolia

Progress Report

October 1, 2008- March 31, 2009

Submitted to: Open Society Forum

Project Leader Kh.Naranjargal

Project Budget: 15,000 USD

Received: 8,350 USD

Expenditure: 7,769 USD

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I. INTRODUCTION

Globe International has started the project “Monitoring Press Freedom and Supporting Independent Media in Mongolia” since October 2008. The present reported period is October 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009.

Main goal of the project is to promote greater democratisation and openness in Mongolia by campaigning for the public’s right to have access to free and uncensored news and government information.

Project objectives are to protect the rights and independence of journalists by monitoring threats and attacks on journalists and media organisations; and to promote the media self-regulation system

During the reported period, we have established the professional team to support the project activities, organised four team meetings. We carried out the study on the civil defamatory cases against media and journalists. Globe International has registered in total, around 50 cases of the free expression violations until now.

We distribute the information on the Mongolian media through English and Mongolian webzines and web site www.globeinter.org.mn. We have raised 2,500US\$ from the IFEX for the information distribution and producing the 2008 Media Freedom Report.

II. MID-TERM RESULTS

The project planned to carry out two-inter-related activities: Monitoring and reporting on threats and attacks on journalists, and Campaigning to promote self-regulation. We have achieved the following interim results during the reported period

- i) Monitoring and reporting on threats and attacks on journalists
 - GI has succeeded in fund raising for Byamba-Ochir (newspaper photo journalist) who suffered from the July 1 riot while reporting on the event. He underwent the surgery in Seoul, Korea. CJFE has donated 1,500CND along with other organizations as the IFJ, Danish Union of Journalists and Norwegian Journalists’ Union, and local Mongolian community. Byamba-Ochir returned to his job.
 - We have registered in total, 43 cases against journalists’ rights violations occurred in the provinces in 2008. 12 journalists do not want to alert on the cases. Seven of the cases reported through the national monitoring network

- Seven alerts received from the local monitors. All the alerts were about election coverage on the 2009 Parliamentary Election. The complains mostly affected publications and programs paid by the political parties or candidates, so we did not send it to the IFEX Alerts Network. The news were distributed through the national network. One of the alerts was on the civil defamation case in Khentii aimag. The case was against B.Battsetseg, chief-in-editor of Khetiin Medee, local newspaper and issued by G.Baatar and J.Bataa, members of the MPRP for the article “The MPRP members were drunk” published in 2008 November’s issue No 7. The plaintiffs worked in the local election district of Khentii center. The article was paid. Globe International has provided the legal consultancy and helped to find an experienced advocate. **The case was decided on**
- GI protested decision of the Citizens’ Representative Meeting of Bayan-Olgii province, in the far western Kazakh province of Mongolia, for issuing a non-competence decision that makes the normal operation of public media unstable. At the Citizens’ Representative Meeting’s meeting in Bayan-Olgii Aimag on December 24, 2008, a decision was made in regard to public radio and television ownership. This decision infringes the Law on Press Freedom and the Law on Public Radio and Television. Therefore, the Globe International sent a demand addressed to Kh. Bayan, Head of the Citizens’ Representative Meeting in Bayan-Olgii Aimag, and to S. Haval, Governor of the Aimag, to invalidate its Non-competence Decision # 128 of 2008 and requesting them not to meddle in local radio and television activities. Globe International leader interviewed by the Mongolian National Public Television. The action stopped
- In total, 33 civil defamation cases were heard by the courts in accordance with the study on the court cases against media and journalists in 2007. In 38.4 % of the cases, the plaintiffs were MPs and other public officials and 6% belong to the singers. The rest of the complains were brought to the courts by the ordinary citizens.
- Two issues of Mongolian and English webzines produced and distributed through e-mailing list. We have signed the contract with General Lights- e-marketing company to distribute the webzines. Webzines included news and information on free expression violation in Mongolia and abroad, GI activities, journalism training and other events, new publication on media and journalism and legal and practical tips for journalists. The first issue was produced in October 2008 and has 4 pages. The second issue - 5 pages.
- E-mailing list is developed and it contains 704 in total, and webzines also distributed through NGO e-mailing list which contains 685 NGOs in Mongolia
- The English e-mailing list contains 755 individuals and organizations

- We are working on the content of the 2007 Media Freedom Report in assistance of a team of journalism teachers and media experts. We are waiting for the results of the survey among the journalists
- Total access to website is 15,600 and total access to photos 1019 during the reported period. We have posted over 40 news and 33 PDF files of the publications and presentations.
- News on the launch of webzines published by two daily newspapers: Odriin Sonin(Daily News) and Niigmiin toli (Mirror of Society)

ii) Campaigning to promote self-regulation

- A team of 10 media professionals consisted from media experts and journalism has established in order to contribute to the development of the strategy for the efficient self-regulation system in Mongolia
- Self-regulation handbook is developed and designed to distribute to the journalists and educate on the importance of self-regulation
- Two presentations "Should we regulate or should Mr. Nyamdorj regulate?" by Ts.Onon, independent researcher and 'Role of trade union in protection of journalists' rights' by Ch.Choisamba, Ph.D in Journalism discussed by 42 round table participants on December 8, 2009

III. ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

With the support of OSI, GI has built a free expression violations monitoring system that reports cases nationally and internationally in 2005. At the moment, we have 21 local correspondents/monitors in 21 aimags/provinces.

The present project started in October 2008 due to the delay of the project funding after the end of the previous project in January 2008, , but Globe International monitoring network has been working.

Additionally, we have raised 2,500\$ to support the information distribution from the IFEX and 2,500\$ from the US Embassy to discuss the pressing issues of the media freedom taking an opportunity to devote it to the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- **The Professional Team**

The project has established the team of media professionals consisted from 10 persons seeking the professional support to the project activities.

Please see the list of team members. [Attachment No1](#)

The team had four meetings during the period:

Meeting 1, November 5, 2008

Kh.Naranjargal, project leader introduced the goal of the team and the project activities. Invitees are encouraged to work in the professional team and contribute their skills, knowledge, thoughts and ideas to the development of the responsible and ethical media.

She said that Globe International is planning to start a campaign dedicated to the World Press Freedom Day in May 2, 2009.

Campaign would include two-three events, publications, media advocacy and promotion of media freedom through billboards in the street. The first event is planned in December and dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the UDHR.

She stressed that the independent journalism is a crucial issue. It seems the professional and independent journalism is going to the end in this country.

The attendees agreed to focus on the most crucial topics such as media ownership, paid journalism, journalists' trade union, self-regulation and editorial independence

Please see the meeting agenda and minutes. [Attachment No 2](#)

Meeting No2, November 20, 2008

The meeting discussed the draft programme and concepts of the presentations. More information can be found later in this report

Please see the meeting agenda and minutes. [Attachment No 3](#)

Meeting No 3, January 13, 2009

The meeting discussed the results of the round table. It also touched the issues of building the journalists' trade union and self-regulation.

The attendees agreed that Onon will be the key person in self-regulation handbook and in other issues. Other members will take their contributions. He will develop the content and present it to the next meeting

The team also discussed how to mark May 2- WPF and agreed to continue the discussion through the next meetings

Please see the meeting agenda and minutes. Attachment No 4

Meeting No4, March 27, 2009

The meeting discussed the content and progress of the self-regulation handbook, possibility to establish the journalists' trade union and the WPF event.

The meeting agreed the members will immediately submit their contributions to the self-regulation handbook, learn the conditions for the establishment of the trade union and engage the journalism students to the WPF event in order to make it more interesting and attractive.

Please see the meeting agenda and minutes. Attachment No 5

- **Monitoring and Information Distribution**

Cases registered by GI:

➤ Assaults	6
➤ Threatening	19
➤ Denial in information	13
➤ Insulting journalists before the public	7
➤ Civil defamation	3
➤ Damage of professional equipment	2
➤ Demand to repeal confidential sources	5
➤ Censorship (publications/programmes banned)	2
➤ Censorship (attempt to ban the PSB)	1
➤ Calling to the force institutions	2
➤ Threatening the family members	1

In 60% of the cases occurred in 2008, the journalists' rights violated the authorities. In seven cases registered in 2009, six were caused by the paid publications. So GI has not distribute the alerts through the IFEX network.

Globe International received 2,500USD from the IFEX to carry out the following activities during six months:

- ✓ The information on Mongolian free expression situation is distributed through our main web site at www.globeinter.org.mn
- ✓ Productions of six issues of webzines: Globe News in English and in Mongolian and develop the e-mailing list
- ✓ At the end of the project Globe International will produce 2008 Free Expression Report in both Mongolian and English that will be distributed through e-mailing lists and web sites.

GI is preparing the 2008 Media Freedom Report and it will be distributed before the WPF.D.

Please see the report. *Attachment No 6*

- **Educational Materials**

Globe International has signed the contract with Ts. Onon to produce educational brochure on the importance, need and significance of the media self-governing.

Please the draft handbook. *Attachment No 7*

- Study on the civil defamation cases

During the reported period, Globe International conducted the study on the civil defamation cases heard by the courts in 2007. In total, 33 defamation cases reviewed by the courts of Mongolia. Two occurred in the provinces.

38,4 percent of all defamation cases were initiated MPs and government officials, 6 percent- by the singers and rest- by the ordinary citizens.

Only 9.6 percent of the court cases were won by journalists and media outlets, 69.7 percent were lost, and 12.1 percent reached a consensus.9.1 percent- annulled by the plaintiffs.

Nine of the defamatory articles were published by the daily newspapers. Topics that are touched by the media:

- 9,1%- public concern
- 27,3%- critical materials about the wrong-doing of the government agencies
- 63,6%- private lives of the high-ranking people

Maximum demand for damage was 100 mln. MNT and actually awarded is 5 mln. MNT (app.4.600US\$) to pay to Mr. Munkhbat Jigjid , owner of Gold medal of 1998 Mexico Olympic Games in free style wrestling. He is a winner of several world champions and Mongolian national wrestling. He is also famous that his son Hakuho (Mongolian name is Davaajarga) is famous champion of Japanese Sumo wrestling.

A tabloid newspaper “Terguun Sonin” published a story titled “Champion Muyo(champion’s short name) is under home detention” in its October issue of 2007. The story said that champion is seriously sick and staying at home. Mr. J. Munkbat demanded 8,000,000 mln. MNT to recover his good name, honor and reputation.

Chingeltei district court decision was taken on 28 November 2007 and the newspaper was accused in defaming his good name, honor and reputation under article 21.2, 497, 511.1, 57.1, 119.2 and 120.3 of the Civil Law of Mongolia and fined 5,000,000 mln.MNT.

On 27 March 2008, the newspaper appealed the case to the Ulaanbaatar city court, but the decision of the district court remained.

Please see the report. *Attachment No 8*

Report by Kh. Naranjargal, project leader
April 11, 2009, Ulaanbaatar