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COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: KAZAKHSTAN

These recommendations are designed to deliver communication campaigns by mass media, non-governmental organizations, government agencies and religious leaders to prevent violent extremism among the population of Kazakhstan with an emphasis on youth.

The Team at The Centre for Social and Cultural Design “Gonzo-Design” developed this Strategy at the request of the Centre for Religious Studies within the scope of the Internews implemented Project “Strengthening Resilience to Radicalization and Disinformation in Central Asia” with the financial support of the European Union.

This communication strategy was produced based on study performed by the Center for Religious Studies from March to December 2020. The study included the content analysis of online platforms in six languages (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek, Tajik, and Turkmen) and the field studies in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, which interviewed 4,005 respondents, aged 18-35 to identify the value orientations of Central Asian youth and their media preferences.

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INTRODUCTION

This communication strategy document represents a system of applied recommendations to deliver media campaigns aimed at preventing VE among the population of Kazakhstan with an emphasis on youth. The strategy includes 8 sections covering all aspects of communication process:

1. goal-setting;
2. understanding the audience;
3. formation of messages;
4. understanding stakeholders;
5. review of effective channels and formats;
6. specifics of the context;
7. evaluation of communication efficiency;
8. presentation of potential risks.

The strategy provides an overview of messages, tools, approaches and contextual specifics for applied work among four stakeholder groups: government agencies, NGOs, media and religious leaders. Each group was reviewed based on regional characteristics and analysis of their current activities.

HOW TO USE THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

The communication strategy structure is based on fundamental principles of the communication model, which can be represented through the following definition:

Communication is the process of transferring information from sender to receiver through an environment in which both parties equally understand the information transmitted. A significant portion of information is called content and the outcome of transmission process is a message.

Therefore, this communication strategy includes the description of all participants, conditions, and mechanisms of communication. We answer the questions: what is required to broadcast? to whom? under which conditions? and how to achieve the desired effect.

MISSION OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Goals, objectives, and impact

This section describes the motives and prerequisites for developing a strategy, including the description of expectations from its results. What kind of desired effects we wanted to achieve and what goals we set? What must happen if all the recommendations described in the strategy will be effectively implemented?

Goal

Strengthening the resilience among youth to radicalization and misinformation leading to violent extremism by supporting the media, civil society, government institutions, religious leaders, and active citizens in Kazakhstan. This goal seeks to strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation.

Main drivers of PVE:

1. Improving education of the population.
2. Reducing fragmentation in society.
3. Improving social infrastructure.
4. Developing interaction between the State and citizens.

Objectives:

1. Creating and promoting alternative narratives among groups vulnerable to radicalization.
2. Strengthening the system of cooperation between local and global stakeholders.
3. Increasing the level of media literacy and critical thinking among the TA (Target Audience).
4. Developing communities and strengthening the group identity of the TA based on humanitarian values.
5. Reducing the level of disunity on national, religious, and ethnic grounds due to developed alternative factors to improve the internal ties among TA groups.
6. Popularizing humanitarian values and culture.
7. Promoting social and cultural values for systemic formation of personal identity of the TA.
8. Developing family values and strengthening intra-family ties.

Long-term impact:

This strategy contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by reducing the factors that contribute to VE for the next 15-20 years:

1. Increasing the level and quality of life.
2. Ensuring access to education for all segments of the population.
3. Developing gender education.
4. Promoting the processes of self-development and increasing professional competencies and enhancing social activities.
5. Reducing the level of inequality within and between countries.
6. Ensuring cities and human settlements are inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
7. Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

SECTION 2

TARGET AUDIENCE

To whom do we address the communication?

Hereinafter target audience is referred to as TA.

Understanding the project TA will help:

1. use a suitable channel to communicate with the TA;
2. choose an effective genre and communication style;
3. plan and calculate communication effects and risks;
4. organize relevant promotion mechanisms.

The section addresses:

1. patterns of information perception among the TA;
2. important mechanisms of information consumption for the TA;
3. TA value system;
4. key factors in building credibility to information among the TA;
5. communication behaviors of the TA.

The features of value orientations and priorities of TA in Kazakhstan

- **Economy**

The economic crisis and lack of access to a well-established social sphere reflects in financial well-being in value system of the TA. High unemployment rate and wide-spread corruption system increases the level of depression and despair among the TA.

- **Professional development and education**

A high unemployment rate and undeveloped labor market. Despite the capital obtained during higher education process, access to labor resources and career growth remains critically low.

- **Family**

Traditions of family relations and values remain integral part in view system of the TA: intra-family ties, family planning, priority distribution and the formulation of roles in society.

- **Relationships with loved ones.**

In addition to family values, romantic and friendship relations are important personal landmarks. Interpersonal conflicts are of great concern to those surveyed.

- **Stability**

Emotional, political, and financial.

SECTION 3

CONTENT

WHAT DO WE BROADCAST TO THE AUDIENCE TO ACHIEVE THE PLANNED EFFECTS?

Using content guidelines will allow one to:

1. build an effective dialogue with the TA;
2. evoke the desired response from the TA;
3. qualitatively influence the level of awareness and education of the TA;
4. motivate the TA to make positive changes in habits, mind-sets, and actions.

The section addresses:

1. on which key senses we must build communication;
2. which messages to use and which to avoid;
3. which emotional messages and intonations to apply in communication;
4. how to choose communication stylistics.

MESSAGES

The main drivers of negative VE narratives in Kazakhstan:

1. promoting the sense of exclusivity and superiority of any idea, ideology, and identity over “alien” groups;
2. justification of hostility and violence against “strangers” and their dehumanization;
3. xenophobia;
4. disinformation through religious propaganda.

CATEGORIES OF DIRECT MESSAGES BY SEMANTIC GROUPS:

1. POLITICAL

1.1. Developing basic legal literacy in mass agenda

It is necessary to build accessible and clear communication by terminology and principles of the legal system. This will help avoid responding to manipulative statements about law, fairness, and justice.

Example

**Kazakhstan National Security Committee (KNB)
produced documentary film
‘Flowers in Handcuffs’ (2019)**



The documentary is aimed at countering extremism. Similar to the film “The Bitterness of Wormwood,” this documentary was published on KNB website and its official YouTube channel. The film tells about women serving sentences for terrorism and extremism. The duration is 45 minutes. Two convicts tell their stories with open faces and talk about repentance for their deeds. Their stories are accompanied by commentaries by theologians, Imams, KNB Officers, and other experts.

Pros:

Availability of information and detailed explanation of consequences of VE activities from a legal point of view. The film uses infographics with data and quotes from Kazakh legislation to explain the tightening of laws on terrorism-related crimes.

Conclusions:

A good example of engaging the State in the ideological struggle against VE, however, due to the lack of sufficient promotion, support, and comments from media critics, the film failed to have wider coverage.

1.2. Promoting and popularizing the ideas of secular state

It is necessary to make the connections between the features of a secular society and favorable factors that have impact on quality of life available and understandable. It is important to create a clear and transparent system of positive connotations in relation to components of a secular society such as freedoms - access to information, education, movement, communication, and independence - self-development, entrepreneurship.

1.3. Developing an image and reputational profile of young public figures

Currently, the fight against extremist narratives and hate speech on the social networks of Kazakhstan is carried out through direct bans and removal of inappropriate content. The approach is designed to destroy extremist materials in open access, which, however, does not guarantee that dangerous content is not distributed through closed chats and channels. In addition, direct state intervention hinders dialogue between various parties in matters of belief, building communication with radical communities in the network. This creates an obstacle for alternative methods to prevent extremist ideas and achieve long-term results in the fight against propaganda of religious or ethnic exclusivity.

Example

An MP, Mr. Bekbolat Tleukhan is a Kazakh-speaking politician. It is common knowledge that he is a religious person and adheres to moderate Salafi views. He has a large number of young people surrounding him, who he engages into his ideology and supports them by building an ideological community.

1.4. Developing and promoting political literacy

Accessibility and clear understanding of the global political situation will create the grounds for appropriate understanding and interpretation of real relations and priorities on the world stage.

Example

International situations in which the actualization of extremist narratives or disinformation occur: the COVID-19 pandemic, the speech of E. Macron, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the assassination of Iranian general K. Suleimani.

1.5. Promoting the values of multiculturalism

Coverage of global social processes and achievements (scientific, cultural, social, humanitarian) will enable one to undermine many hostile views about the West, Canada, and China and, as a result, to eliminate destructive and aggressive sentiments towards other states and cultures. To build the topic on the importance of partnership, continuity, and experience sharing in areas that affect the quality and level of social infrastructure: science, education, medicine, law, and economics.

1.6. Promoting the values of ethnic diversity

Strengthening the ideas aimed at acceptance and understanding of other nationalities, peoples and classes will reduce the level of fragmentation and potential for confrontations with other ethnic groups.

2. SOCIAL

2.1. Developing group identity

To promote the ideas and values aimed at unification through joint creation, creativity, education, volunteering, lifestyle, and culture.

2.2. Popularizing the role of civic initiatives and personal self-development

It is important to build an extensive system of drivers that affect the quality of life and problem solving among the TA. It is necessary to shift the focus from religion as the main driver for addressing all challenges.

2.3. Providing education in the field of medicine and biology

It is necessary to create accessible educational formats with the aim of mass education in medicine, anatomy and biology. This will help the TA correctly and critically treat anti-scientific and speculative fake news spread in the information space

Example

Namys TV is an Islamic YouTube channel in Kazakhstan with an audience of about 190 thousand subscribers. During the quarantine and lockdown, it became one of the disseminators of conspiracy theories regarding Bill Gates' interest in the pandemic and using the vaccine to implant chips into citizens.

2.4. Developing socially oriented campaigns with figures of contemporary culture and art

It is necessary to create a link between representatives of secular culture and social infrastructure: charity, volunteering, and interaction with vulnerable groups.

Example



Kanat Beysekeyev is an independent Kazakh film director who produces his films primarily for his YouTube channel. As part of “Zhusan” operation he and other cameramen were permitted to present on the board of aircraft, which evacuated Kazakh citizens. It is interesting to note that Kanat Beysekeyev is not a journalist, but represents a new “fashionable” wave of Kazakhstan documentary filmmaking.

2.5. Improving quality of life and its popularization

Promoting actions and ideas aimed at improving quality of life: building roads, providing humanitarian aid, fighting corruption, etc.

2.6. Promoting and building community

To bring together the TA based on the ideas of brotherhood through positive constructive practices, common everyday interests, and mutual assistance.

2.7. Popularizing the idea of a free, healthy society

To create positive images through the topics of self-development, equality, and justice.

2.8. Working on negative stereotypes associated with class and economic inequalities

It is necessary to rebuild the mechanisms of perceiving the “friend-or-foe” concept. It is important to initiate discussions and campaigns, involving the audience on various grounds: ethnicity and religion and by uniting them on the grounds of joint creation, experience and knowledge sharing, and mutual assistance.

3. RELIGIOUS

3.1. Enhancing the accessibility and publicity of imams and religious leaders

It is necessary to broadcast and make accessible the ideas, meanings, and vision of religious leaders to increase their importance and presence in information agenda.

Example

In Kazakhstan, there are many followers of Russian Imam Shamil Alyautdinov. His lectures are popular, he often visits the country to deliver expensive trainings, and his books are bought widely.

Example

Kairat Zholdybayuly, an Islamic scholar, 7 years ago he was the Supreme Imam of the mosque in capital city, and now he is the Imam of Nur-Mubarak mosque. He studied in Turkey and Egypt and has authority. They listen to him.

3.2. Promoting and popularizing the sources of information and media literacy, science, and information technology

It is necessary to disclose a wide range of possible sources to obtain verified evidence and information, this will help the TA to critically approach the narratives of VE and improve their education.

3.3. Promoting multicultural ideas

It is necessary to unleash the potential of wealth of ethnic diversity through promoting aesthetics and significant cultural monuments and symbols of different cultures, including other countries of Central Asia. There are often ethnic tensions in Kazakhstan with Chinese nationals.

3.4. Promoting the education and interaction in the field of foundations of morality, ethics, and basic human values

The TA has a demand seeking to better understand the defining benefactors and moral issues that directly affect their lives. Philosophers, university professors, local and Western theologians can become media mediators and build dialogue with the TA on topics of common interest.

3.5. Promoting multi-confessionalism and religious tolerance

Denial of an idea to discrediting other groups based on religion.

3.6. Promoting the common values of religious teaching and social structure

It is necessary to work with the agenda of opposing the norms of secular state and religion.

4. HUMANISTIC

4.1. Developing principles of mutual help, empathy, and charity

Development of community principles and internal assistance through humanitarian values.

4.2. Promoting moral obligations and true values in a positive context

4.3. Promoting humanitarian values and human rights values

Inability to prosecute others and justify violence and aggression against people who violate social and/or cultural norms.

INDIRECT MESSAGES BASED ON THE TA PRIORITY VALUES:

Key values are combined into semantic groups according to the principle of commonality of messages aimed at the actualization of the TA's relevant values.

1. SELF-REALIZATION, EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENT

- personal development,
- serving God. the Lord. the Creator,
- making their mark on the world,
- professional development

1.1. Developing the culture of volunteering and civic social initiatives

Participation in social activities and opportunities to be engaged into practicing charity and social activity will significantly develop values that are important for youth communities: mutual assistance, a sense of community and unity (as opposed to a sense of alienation and loneliness), sharing challenges, an awareness and realization of one's own strength and capabilities.

1.2. Developing small-scale and light educational formats

It is necessary to build a system of accessible and resource-intensive educational tools. This will fill the gap between not always available fundamental long expensive education and complete absence of any quick, simple and applied tools for personal and professional development.

1.3. Popularizing the DIY concept (Do It Yourself)

One important characteristic of the TA in Kazakhstan is their willingness to feel self-confident. It is an important motivating factor. It is necessary to popularize practices that help to realize oneself independently, show an active position and take personal initiatives.

1.4. Broadening the understanding of development tools

Employment and income challenges can be partially addressed if the TA is more aware of potential ways of acquiring professional skills and self-promotion. Digital professions and types of online remote work can seriously change the understanding of the TA in relation to new opportunities for employment and professional development.

1.5. Promoting mentorship, motivation, and leadership

The resources designed for Implementation can significantly be reduced by using existing content on these topics. Costs will thus be limited to translation from foreign languages and distribution.

1.6. Promoting beauty and health topics

Popularizing sporty active lifestyles and involvement of the TA in the agenda of careful attitude towards themselves, not only in terms of aesthetics, but also in terms of investments in their future. Popularization of popular science formats on physiology, body, and hygiene.

Example

What Would You Do If You Had No More Limits?



A social video on menstruation in developing countries, women's access to education, and their opportunities.

2. FUTURE, STABILITY, CALMNESS:

- creating one's own family,
- strong financial position for oneself,
- strong financial position for oneself and loved ones.

2.1. Escalation and transparency of topics of the future, its presentation, and components

Many ideas linked to well-being and successful future are formed among the TA due to stereotypes imposed by the cultural and social environment, in addition to unconsciously copying the practices that are constantly visible (TV, mass culture, YouTube). It is paramount to make the process of forming values and ideas as conscious and independent as possible. Questions and discussions addressed to TA will help raise the agenda of personal self-determination and reduce the level of stereotypes when developing values. Discussion formats among the TA about the future will also enable maintaining links with youth and strengthening inter-generational ties.

2.2. Stress reducing due to financial instability

It is obvious that the situation with education and employment requires effective decisions and reforms at the State level. However, the objectives of communication include creating an effective emotional background among the TA and increasing the level of optimism in society. Only in an emotionally favorable environment, we may count on the emergence of civic initiatives, aspiration for self-development and mutual assistance, as well as the motivation to improve skills and knowledge.

2.3. Anxiety reducing due to responsibility for financial well-being in the family

Even though family support and responsibility is an important cultural basis, it is necessary to work with the negative consequences arising among the TA connected with this responsibility: alienation, powerlessness, feeling of not being good enough and successful, etc.

3. IDENTITY, PERSONAL SATISFACTION, SENSE OF SIGNIFICANCE

- make the mark on the world,
- have satisfaction,
- create one's own family.

3.1. Popularizing cultural and historical values

It is necessary to consider the issues of multiculturalism and multinationalism through the prism of cultural heritage. By making the current diversity of knowledge interesting to the TA will create a fruitful field to search for personal identity and develop group identity.

3.2. Popularizing fairy-tale, mythological, and poetic characters

Exploring the topic of heroification through positive and peaceful images.

3.3. Revitalizing and popularizing crafts and related technologies and practices

In addition to the ethnographic component, which is revealed in traditional crafts, these types of creative practices serve as a good driver for developing communities based on common interests and tourist attraction destinations, emerging small private entrepreneurship by involving young people in rethinking and creating new creative areas.

EMOTIONS AND INTONATIONS

As part of TA field interviewing, we identified the gradations in TA's emotional-sensitive perception of information. In particular, what sensations and emotions do evoke certain types of media products, how they affect the distribution of attention, perception and motivation to any action.

Emotional guidelines based on the study of TA value priorities:

1. Sense of community, non-loneliness, confidence in future

Recommended intonation tags are calmness, moderate dynamism, cohesion, compatibility.

Not recommended intonation tags are anxiety, linearity, melancholy, aggressiveness, excessive emotionality, violence, apathy.

Values:

- self-confidence,
- happy family,
- striving for peaceful social interactions.

2. Stability, optimism

Recommended intonation tags are dreaminess, romance, poetry, determination.

Not recommended intonation tags are manufacturability, haste, variability, fragmentation.

Values:

- love, loved person,
- calmness, no anxiety,
- humor.

3. Self-confidence, feeling important, creation

Recommended intonation tags are admiration, imagination, dreaminess, activity.

Not recommended intonation tags are envy, haste, comparability.

Values:

- self-determination (professional, religious, social),
- impressions and knowledge,
- physical activity.

4. Security

Recommended intonation tags are ease, leisurely, domesticity.

Not recommended intonation tags are immensity, suppression.

Values:

- state, financial and social stability,
- peaceful and humanitarian values,
- striving for peaceful social interactions.

5. Well-being, success

Recommended intonation tags are spirituality, calmness, naturalness, originality.

Not recommended intonation tags are envy, haste, comparability.

Values:

- strong financial position for yourself,
- strong financial position for loved ones

SECTION 4

STAKEHOLDERS

Who are the senders of messages?

In this section, we take a close look at four key categories of stakeholders involved in communication. Each stakeholder has its own limitations and potentials. We will identify the approaches, tools, and resources that are appropriate for each category.

Understanding the specifics of potentials and limitations of the project stakeholders will enable to:

1. Create brand new communication products,
2. Rationally use the resources for their creation,
3. Build partnerships and scale up the communication effects.

The section addresses:

1. How to scale up the lessons learned.
2. How to benefit from existing restrictions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MASS MEDIA IN KAZAKHSTAN:

1. **Creating a permanent dialogue platform.** It is necessary to develop tools for discussing the tonality of information space in relation to religious topics and for respecting the rights of all confessions.
2. **Regularly monitoring and analyzing** publications on religious topics in public Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking media to understand the Government's involvement in forming general tone in the media.
3. **Facilitating the advancement of religious expertise.** As part of public order, it is necessary to support coverage of activities performed by religious minorities that do not have their own media platforms.
4. **Developing initiatives and activities** aimed at understanding the strategic importance of tolerant attitude towards religious confessions. For example, optional training courses (online and in person) on interreligious tolerance in the media in both the Kazakh and Russian languages.

5. **Developing a guideline on conflict-sensitive journalism** for the media to report on religious topics and respect international standards and journalism ethics.
6. **Developing an early warning system** to understand the possible public impact of publications. It is important not to provoke new conflicts or aggravate the previous ones.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NGOS IN KAZAKHSTAN:

1. Developing cooperation between NGOs working in Kazakhstan

It is necessary to establish interaction and joint promotion between state, near state, and international organizations involved in PVE.

Example

Government organizations:

- Ansar Foundation in Aktobe City works with risk groups:
- PF “Chance» and PF “Pravo” worked with difficult adolescents but redesigned their activities when they worked with children returned within the framework of the “Zhusan” Operation.



International organizations

- Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan
- UN
- USAID

2. Developing formats and approaches in promoting mission and expertise

More modern and interactive events and discussions are to be organized by inviting experts and young people. It is important to develop a more accessible, personal, and less formal language of communication.

Example

Forum of Internews Project “The Role of Media in PVE” (Almaty, 2019).



This was a three-day forum started with the speech-conference “Will Talk,” which selected a very successful platform - the ARTiSHOK Theatre stage. This is an independent theatre with good reputation and openly speaks out on pressing issues. 30 participants were presented in TED format with their presentations on critical thinking, media literacy, and countering extremism.

Pros:

International event, coverage, creativity, many participants and practical sessions. The event brought together several groups of stakeholders: media, experts, bloggers, and Government agencies. The project succeeded in establishing cooperation with the public sector. In Kazakhstan, this is quite difficult to do.

3. Strengthening and promoting the image of international organizations

Currently, their presence is perceived in a quite hostile manner, but their experience and level of expertise, as well as the research they have conducted, the quality of PVE activities could significantly benefit.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN KAZAKHSTAN:

1. Promoting and developing the ideas and methods in existing PVE measures

On the one hand, we can underline the integrity and systemic actions, but it is necessary to create a context in which these actions will be accessible, understandable and valuable for TA. There is a need to create a system of evidence and validity based on an appeal to international best practices and the use of high-quality expertise.

Example

Project of Karaganda portal 101 and Bota Omarova (participants of the Internews project on PVE)



A series of YouTube videos about radicalization in Kazakhstan. Among other materials, some can find interviews from Flamingo rehabilitation center in Aktau (they worked with children who returned from Syria). An interview with the head of the “Pravo Foundation” Olga Ryl (the foundation is responsible for working with children), interviews with women who returned from Syria, interviews from prison with a man serving a sentence for leaving for Syria, interview with presidential Adviser E. Karin.

Pros:

It was an excellent project with many exclusive comments included. There were trainings delivered as part of the project. The project brought together several stakeholders from different directions of stakeholders: the National Security Committee, participants of “ZHUSAN” Operation, relatives of returnees, the PF “Pravo.”

Cons:

The project failed to gain high audience coverage.

2. Creating integral infrastructure for both directly and indirectly involved institutions

Example

- SAMK (Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan) is an association supported, financed and controlled by the State, thereby making the Imams of mosques as people who are not free in their activities and maneuverability. 
- The Committee on Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Information and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan is engaged in certifying and regulating the activities of religious organizations. At the local level, each Akimiat (City Council) has a department for religious affairs. The committee carries out religious studies, oversees the field of religious education, and evaluates the activities of certain religious groups. 
- Centers for religious studies, which are located in almost every city or Oblast center. Formally, it is not a public agency, but their personnel policy is influenced by the State.

3. Promoting and developing the centers for religious studies

They have certain freedom in choosing the methods and tools to operate and can implement local methods of work. Their specialists are deeply immersed into the subject matter, quite autonomous, and not limited by elements typical to government agencies. Their activities are diverse in terms of specific interaction practices and selection of narrow audience segments.

4. Diversifying the ways in working with radicalized and de-radicalized citizens

Along with legal and judicial control measures, it is necessary to interact with the TA at different levels: providing psychological support, delivering dialogue aimed at reflection, and assessment of personal motivations.

Example

Most women who returned under the “Zhusan” Operation denied to consciously changing their views. They were taken from the Kurdish camps, where living conditions were harsh. They arrived to these camps from al-Baghouz town (the last Syrian stronghold of ISIS). Regarding this TA group, it is difficult to talk about deradicalization, since its motivation and ideology remains closed.

5. **Creating and developing sources of information and online discussion platforms for studying both the foundations of religion and important social, ethical, and moral concepts**

Experts of religious centers can hold and maintain a dialogue with an audience that has demands or doubts about certain aspects of religion.

Example

Center for religious studies



6. **Actively collaborating with sociologists**

Long-term and deep expertise of researchers will provide greater flexibility to introduce new tools in fighting radical ideologists.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN KAZAKHSTAN:

1. **Promoting and strengthening the image of religious leader**

Depressing and framing imams by the State negatively influences their reputation and limits their contact with the Kazakh TA. It is necessary to develop the presence of religious leaders in information space and use modern methods to promoting their statements.

2. **Facilitating openness and accessibility of statements and activities**

3. **Expanding formats and spheres for imams’ initiatives**

Kazakhs appeal to the Internet, or to Russian or foreign preachers to find the quality and affordable sources. Imams must have opportunities to show more initiatives. This will help the TA to receive a response to their requests and be in dialogue with a representative of religion.

4. **Creating close ties between urban and rural religious leaders**

Mullah and imams in villages play a more important role in social and religious life of the population. Collaborating and building a “professional” network will help to effectively work with the credibility and positive influence of religious leaders.

SECTION 5

CHANNELS AND FORMATS

How are messages delivered?

Panorama of current channels and formats will help:

1. Deliver messages to end TA.
2. Develop cross-platform and interdisciplinary communication.
3. Track and count the effectiveness of communication.
4. Maintain long-term relationships with TA.

This section addresses:

1. What genres and formats are relevant to the TA?
2. How is the information perceived depending on the product and placement?
3. What stylistic foundations are relevant to the TA?
4. How priorities of attention and confidence are formed with the TA?
5. How to manage the motivation of the TA?

Example

Let's assume that the project targets the elderly people living in a rural area. In such case, the suitable channel would be, for example, a series of short documentaries on TV. However, an interactive application for mobile devices would be a completely inappropriate format.

The channels relevant to TA in each country context are very specific and may not fit into the general logic of the media market. It is very important to take into account the local characteristics of the priority channels of Kazakhstan.

Communication preferences are made up of several key factors

1. internet speed and access,
2. formats and topics of priority content,
3. availability of existing sources of information,
4. established traditions of trusting sources.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS DIFFER BY NATURE OF THE TA INTERACTING WITH THEIR CONTENT:

1. STREAMING CHANNELS

Streaming - these are channels in which information is delivered to a user without special demand; a user does not control the information, which is received in a dynamic mode and uncontrolled stream.

Pros: constant reflexiveness, easy and quick access, it does not require special entry and decision-making

Cons: without immersion, it is impossible to calculate and predict the stop of attention; it is difficult to achieve deep involvement, it has an unstable level of trust.

Examples: all social media lines, television, outdoor advertising.

Drivers of attracting attention in streaming channels:

- bright contrasting emotions, both positive and negative,
- unequivocal intersection with personal values and interests of the TA,
- unpredictable and unexpected content,
- cognitive content: what the TA itself defines as useful knowledge or skill and understands how it can be used.

Streaming channels that are relevant to the TA in Kazakhstan:

Instagram, Facebook, VK, Tik-Tok

Characteristic features of social media channels in Kazakhstan:

- Due to the risk of criminal liability, the audience of social media feels afraid to openly demonstrate its critical attitude regarding religious issues.
- Religion on social networks is not the major discussed topic, it significantly lags behind political, social, and ethnic issues.
- Instagram has a large number of individual accounts, which have hundreds of thousands and even millions of subscribers.
- It should be noted that the TA has a fairly high level of confidence in information on social networks (it visibly distinguishes Kazakhstan from other Central Asian countries).
- Authorities now actively use individual bloggers on Instagram and Facebook as loyal content creators and most often at the expense of the State budgetary resources, which are used to cover advertising posts. Most often they are not labelled as affiliate content.

Examples

- Nurlan Koyanbaev, former KVN (team of humor competition) player, producer, host of evening shows.
- Toregali Toreali, a singer.
- Asha Matai, a singer, 4.5 million subscribers.
- Kuralai khanyim, a Kazakh-speaking coach, trainer, popular with young girls, advice on marriage and other personal topics; 1.1 million subscribers.
- Ainur Tursynbayeva, during the pandemic, he initiated a fundraising campaign for oxygen concentrators and in a very short period they succeeded in procuring about one thousand units; he has 2.9 million subscribers.
- Ardaқ Nazarov, a wrestler, he shares life instructive stories.

1) Creating and promoting educational formats.

Simple, playful, short educational genres: cards, tests, stories. The TA has a high demand for educational content and its alternative formats.

2) Developing discussion formats.

To initiate active participation of TA to talk about neutral, but at the same time, valuable topics from their perspectives: news, interpersonal communications, traditional culture, art, music, foreign languages. Engagement of different TAs in terms of their educational level and progressiveness into joint discussions will reduce the gap between various layers of audience and will create a common information field. This will reduce the level of isolation of vulnerable TA groups and help bridge their gap with progressive representatives of society.

Example

«Global Goals Jam»



A series of discussions, workshops, and presentations from local groups (experts, creatives, stakeholders, citizens) on an important local topic.

3) Community building.

Intensive promotion of topics relevant to TA will contribute to creating an online-friendly environment in which participants will benefit from a platform to form and exchange common interests. The development of online communities will help support proactive young people and equip them with tools to find like-minded people.

4) Developing collaboration formats with opinion makers and celebrities

According to the research outcomes, music and lifestyle content is the most popular among the TA. Engagement of musicians and media environment actors to promote positive narratives and value-forming discussions with the TA will help to increase the interest to such topics and create an alternative environment on such difficult topic as VE through the promotion of important aspects of life: individual and group identity, and self-development.

Example

Q-POP is very popular in Kazakhstan. This is a musical subculture - the Kazakh analogue of Korean K-Pop. The most popular of these groups in Kazakhstan right now is the band Ninety One. Traditional communities have criticized this trend, but at the same time, it represents a strong symbol of youth culture and changes in society. Group 91 consists of young men who can afford to have their hair dyed pink or have ear piercings. All texts are in Kazakh language.

Example

Manizha and the UN



Manizha is a singer who became the first Russian Goodwill Ambassador to the UN Refugee Agency. She often talks on these social topics in her social networks and composes music dedicated to self-identification and migration.

5) Expanding the presence of non-governmental organizations, experts in Islamic studies, and independent activists in social networks.

To popularize the positive narratives and attitudes through personal accounts and public pages of authoritative and progressive public figures and educators. It will maintain a competent information field and stay in contact with the audience. Active social networking will help to not only expand the field of informational impact and be in emotional contact with the TA, but also to announce educational events and organize live broadcasts.

6) Promoting volunteer and charity formats for the TA.

TV AND RADIO

Characteristic features of TV channels in Kazakhstan:

- TV and radio are important media, including for young audiences. Talk shows and news are of priority interest. Television is an important channel since it brings together different groups of population by nationality, age, and regional division.

Example



The reality show Kalaulym

A 3-4 hour daily program has now been on the air for three years. Young men and women under 30 are looking for their future life partners, while receiving different pieces of advice, including instructions from an older generation who has conservative and traditional views. The show is in Kazakh and has high ratings. Its members are super-stars for their audience now. The progressive audience accuses the show of ageism, homophobia, misogyny and so on.

- TV remains an important source of information in the regions, from which most people learn news.
- In one way or another, the State controls most TV channels.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO USE TV CHANNELS IN KAZAKHSTAN:

1) Introducing programs aimed at self-development.

It is important to integrate formats that are organic for TV channels and, at the same time, demanded by the audience: talk shows with successful public figures, popular science programs, and lifestyle coaching. One of the presentation formats can be talk shows with invited independent experts.

Example

The topic of female coaches is very popular as the way of giving advices to girls in Kazakhstan.

2) Expanding discussion and educational programs

It is necessary to maintain and develop feedback formats from viewers who could receive answers live on TV to their important questions

3) Synthesizing the topics in TV programs

Due to the sensitivity of the topic and almost complete absence of religious content on TV, it is advisable to synthesize indirect topics (see section Content) by integrating them into the format of programs, films, serials, and entertainment shows.

Example



Journalistic film *Prisoners of Jihad* (2017)

The reporter material filmed in three countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia (Moscow and the Chechen Republic). The film tells about Salafism, it contains interviews with those convicted for terrorism and extremism, religious leaders, including from Russia. The film was produced by journalists from one of the top-rated TV channels in Kazakhstan (KTK - Commercial Television Channel).

Pros:

It included a variety of presented views, locations, and characters. The material includes exclusive comments. The film has a narration from demanded experts: Dosym Satpayev (independent), Rakhim Chelidze (theologian), the cybersecurity department in Kazakhstan, Erlana Karina (a political scientist). The origin of radicalism in Kazakhstan is presented in comparison with the Chechen Republic.

Cons:

Despite the objectivity of this film, one cannot exclude the possible self-censorship by professional authors. Most documentary figures from among the convicts were mainly from Kyrgyzstan. Due to the sensitivity of the topic in Kazakhstan, it was almost impossible to find personalities who would agree to participate and be interviewed. A significant disadvantage of promotion is the lack of distribution for the Internet audience.

Movies or media material of this nature are likely to affect more secular-minded people. There is little chance that someone who has already immersed into radical ideology may change his or her beliefs after watching the documentary. The film was followed by many unethical and incorrect forms of speech addressed to adherents of radicalism.

4) Popularizing progressive figures

It is important to make visible representatives from among young people and active citizens who deal with addressing social challenges. Such practices will have a positive impact on the motivation and inspiration of the TA and will make visible private civic initiatives for independent scaling up.

5) Increasing in the share of youth topics and formats

It is necessary to build a better match for the content designed for youth audience. Expansion of youth-interested topics and formats in broadcasting, among other things, will reduce intergenerational gap

6) Developing lifestyle content

Saturation of the lineup with meaningful formats aimed at exploring the topics of development, self-determination, sports, travel, and science will help improve motivation

and vital energy among TA and obtain tools for self-realization, self-education and improving quality of life.

7) Promoting youth-relevant values related to well-being through educational programs

In particular, the promotion of topics of economic growth, professional development and scientific progress through game, entertainment, and educational formats will meet the needs of TA in terms of value priorities, and at the same time educate the TA on issues essential for planning gender relations.

Example

Materials from Aktobe journalist Zhanagul Zhursin for Radio Azattyk (Radio Freedom)



The journalist has been covering the VE topic for 10 years; relatives and families of those sentenced for terrorism and extremism have confidence in her. It is very important that Zhursin writes in Kazakh and her materials are translated into Russian. She covered such events in Aktobe in 2016. Now she works on addressing the problems of returnees from Syria and interviewing their relatives. She also led the story on the ban of wearing hijabs in schools. This caused a greater resonance among religious part of the society. Often, her materials on sensitive VE topics are made in the regions and on the first pages in public domain.

Pros:

Independence from public sector, efficiency, depth, knowledge of the situation, publications are made in Kazakh and in compliance with international standards. Very few journalists in Kazakhstan can professionally deal with PVE using all the available tools in journalism. Many semi-government journalists work with ready-made sources.

2. SPECIAL CHANNELS

Special channels are the channels that gather an audience on a central meaning or idea. It can be an interest, activity, hobby, or goal. The audience appeals to these channels with the intention to receive specific content.

Pros: there is an intention and motivation at the entry point, it has a permanent audience, certain level of confidence based on commonality after entry; they scale well subject to high-quality and long-term content saturation.

Cons: narrow focus, require follow-up.

Examples: professional communities and groups, YouTube channels, newspapers, and magazines.

Special channels are powerful tools for building communities. They help scale ideas, narrow the gaps between social strata, and give a sense of oneness, which in turn can resist artificially created or negative unions such as VEs.

CURRENT SPECIAL CHANNELS IN KAZAKHSTAN:

Online: YouTube channels, online media, video blogs, thematic groups on Facebook and Instagram, Telegram channels.

Features of special online channels in Kazakhstan:

- YouTube projects are progressing well in Kazakhstan, but they have their own limitations. Content production for YouTube is quite expensive. Some projects close almost right after their launch, as they cannot pay for themselves.
- The most successful channels are the channels that, in addition to YouTube, have platforms on other social media: YouTube + Instagram, YouTube + Facebook.

Example

“Voice of Islam” is one of the largest Russian-language Islamic YouTube channels with 226 thousand subscribers (as of 12 November). Average outreach (number of video/post views) is from 4 thousand to 900 thousand views. The channel positions itself as an Islamic Media Center and produces mainly educational videos on religion. Some materials may be identified as containing elements of hate speech against non-believers.

- YouTube does not actively progress in the field of reporting projects and journalism.
- Telegram channels are very popular. Many anonymous political channels that gather larger audience exist in Kazakhstan. However, they contain very controversial content. They do not rely upon any sources, but rather intensively ‘throw’ unjustified and provocative information.
- Most journalists and bloggers have their own successful Telegram channels.

Example

- Journalists who have their popular telegram channels with an alternative agenda.
- “They’ve already followed us,” TG-channel Dmitry Dubovitsky, <https://t.me/Zanamiviehali> (23 thousand), there is a YouTube channel of the same name.
- Gulnar Bazhkenova, editor-in-chief of Holanews.kz <https://t.me/gbazhkenova> (5 thousand).
- Blogger R. Balgabaev, PR specialist, creates satirical content, https://t.me/balgabaev_rinat (12 thousand).
- Channel of opposition youth movement Oyan, Kazakhstan (Wake up, Kazakhstan), <https://t.me/oyanqazaqstan> (1,900).

- Blogger and PR specialist A. Elikbaev <https://t.me/yelikbayev> (23 thousand).
- Blogger B. Alibekov (there is a like-named YouTube channel) <https://t.me/alibekovkz> (57 thousand).

RECOMMENDATIONS TO USE SPECIAL ONLINE CHANNELS IN KAZAKHSTAN:

1. Creating experimental formats designed for social topic in partnership with cultural and media prominent figures

Example

In mass culture, Commercial Director Nurtas Adambay works successfully with video formats. He raises acute social topics: bilingualism, contraposition of city and countryside, corruption. Interestingly, most often he uses a comedic style. His films are especially famous (Kelinka Sabina 3 films have already been filmed: Kudalar (The Matchmakers). The Director uses a language that is quite accessible to a mass audience and therefore his works receive high coverage. It is also important to note that Adambay actively expresses his political views and citizenship on social media.

2. Developing experimental formats at the interface with science and art

3. Collaborating with musicians

Due to the high adherence of the TA to musical culture, performers can become key opinion makers and broadcast their views and assessment of VE, both in the lyrics and in open accompanying discussions and interviews.

4. Developing discussion formats

To deliver in genres of talk shows and lifestyle stories by inviting experts from the field of culture, history, and traditions, who may indirectly impact the topic of positive narratives and values.

5. Promoting young and active people

Popularizing and strengthening the image of established, but not very well-known young active citizens from the regions of the country.

6. Developing educational channels and communities

Re-broadcasting educational content from West-originated sources with educational content aimed at developing skills in digital professions and creative industries.

7. **Popularizing the DIY (Do It Yourself) concept through regional and foreign bloggers**
8. **Developing and promoting the podcast culture genre**

Light in terms of traffic and genre close to usual audio content and quite popular radio has high potential for mass targeted message delivery.

Example

**The book Operation Zhusan. Who was brought from Syria, and why?
Written by Yerlan Karin.**

(Note “zhusan” means “wormwood.” The smell of wormwood is a metaphorical image of homesickness in literature).

The book publication followed the Government’s special operation Zhusan, during which 613 people (including 420 children) were evacuated from Kurdish camps of Syria in five stages. The book’s author is a political scientist and adviser to the President. He was directly involved in developing and implementing this operation. In addition, the content describes Operation Rusafa - the evacuation of Kazakh children from Iraq. The book consists of eight chapters, which tells about the chronicle of development of the phenomenon of foreign fighters in Kazakhstan.

A large part of the content is dedicated to children and women - ISIS combatants. The book included 100 interview materials of women returned from ISIS. Women talk about their journey to and from the conflict zone. The fate of children who must undergo re-socialization in Kazakhstan is covered separately.

Pros:

It has exclusivity of information. A separate chapter tells the stages on how the Zhusan Operation was prepared and performed. The book contains many details which were not presented in the media.

Cons:

It is likely that the book will not receive widespread attention from audience due to the discrepancy between the current contexts of pandemic. Its publication does not coincide with the current information agenda.

9. **Using figurative and non-documentary formats**

Use comics and animations to cover real stories on VE. Various visual techniques and mixed techniques reduce the risk for characters and at the same time helps to deliver the content to the TA in the friendliest way.

10. Implementing the mentorship and motivation formats

Successful story telling by active and progressive TA members and popularizing personal examples. Such formats encourage self-development and shift the focus from global agenda to personal, motivate a healthy lifestyle and inspire active social activities.

11. Expanding geography and multiculturalism

To produce cross and collaborate on materials with similar media in countries of outflow of migrants. To implement interregional joint projects and initiatives.

12. Introducing the formats and headings for interaction with the audience

To organize polls, contests, publication of letters and stories from the TA. This will allow them not only to see a section of the TA and keep in touch with the TA but will also increase the level of self-confidence and significance.

13. Promoting supplementary materials

The use of small, light, and accessible formats in social networks: stories, igtv, photo series.

14. Strengthening the reputation and image of specific authors

It will increase trust in the content and create a more personal attitude towards the conveyed meanings.

15. Introducing educational sections.

Example

Gradarak



The non-profit organization "GRADARAK" creates modern libraries to spark new knowledge among the younger generation and equip them with interesting and cognitive leisure. "Our primary goal is to build libraries in remote villages of Armenia to improve the level of education and broaden the horizons of residents from these regions. Libraries and educational institutions can create collections and sections on exciting topics, invite experts, and attract young people by establishing safer environment for them.

[Article on project](#)



16. Introducing sections with applied benefits for the TA

Employment, self-development, and social activity.

17. Developing an image and modern stylistic techniques and formats

To use contemporary illustrations and photographs in partnership with universities and young artists.

18. Attracting and creating user generated content

Example

“Zhusan: Long way home”
(see above example about the Book).



This film tells the story of a woman Ganibet, who asked the author of the book “Zhusan,” Yerlan Karin to help her in searching for her nephews. Ganibet’s brother and daughter-in-law left for Syria and died there. The children remained in a foreign country. The film tells about the attempts to find them. The film provides an interesting example, when the course of entire Operation Zhusan is told through a personal story.

Pros:

Exclusivity of material: these authors and operators filmed almost all existing frames during the entire Zhusan operation. The film was shot for a wider audience and now it is one of the highest-rated media products on Zhusan. Conclusions: The film became a good product to popularize the mission of Zhusan. The film attracted an audience from not only expert community or others who monitor this topic.

Cons:

The material lacks sufficient depth of the topic and has a sense of applied censorship.

3. PERSONAL CHANNELS

Personal channels are the channels in which we receive information from people who we know directly, and our perception depends on the quality of our relations with them.

Pros: Communication participants know each other, they communicate directly, it does not require special inclusion and participation from the TA, it has a high level of trust and emotional attachment, higher degree of involvement and responsiveness, where reputation plays a role.

Cons: It requires point of contact, interaction, and constant support.

Examples: Chats, instant messengers, chat bots, and professional groups.

Personal channels that are relevant for the TA in Kazakhstan

Chats and groups in WhatsApp and Telegram

Characteristic features of personal channels in Kazakhstan:

- Unlike Kyrgyzstan, where emailing in instant messengers inspire confidence among most of the TA, in Kazakhstan it does not inspire confidence either at all, or only partially.
- WhatsApp messages are particularly popular and the subject of attention among TA.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO USE OF PERSONAL CHANNELS IN KAZAKHSTAN:

1. Creating and promoting thematic chats and communities

It is necessary to use the potential of personal channels to open discussions and live communication on topics important to the TA. At the same time, it is important to keep these topics neutral: beauty and health, sports, active lifestyle, personal coaching and motivation, and the development of digital literacy.

2. Developing two-way communication and teaching expertise

The TA in Kazakhstan seeks for dialogue on social issues that are important and formative for everyday life. There is a shortage of formats where the TA has the ability to ask questions or set the topic.

3. Unifying language groups and promoting the idea of coexistence of languages

In a variety of game formats that can be easily integrated into any chats and chat bots, one can create easily understandable and accessible content, which will use two languages at once: Kazakh and Russian.

4. DEDICATED CHANNELS

Dedicated channels are the isolated stand-alone channels not linked to existing platforms and media.

Pros: There is the potential for building a community with strong ties; they respond to the request of the TA to create independent channels.

Cons: There is no ready audience. It must be created, and they require profound promotion.

Examples

The most popular websites are holanews.kz, vlast.kz, forbes.kz. We should also mention village.kz, where a very young and progressive team works, which raises new and sensitive topics for Kazakhstan: LGBT, feminism, violence, and political protest. TheSteppe.com has a good coverage of the topics of self-development and digital professions, talks about start-ups, youth, science and social issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO WORK WITH DEDICATED CHANNELS IN KAZAKHSTAN:

- 1. Creating educational channels on digital communication and skills topics.** It is important to combine educational content with applied lessons and materials aimed at developing professional skills and potential employment.
- 2. Developing thematic event formats to exchange views and participatory design.** This will create an opportunity for youth to emerge outside the institutional arrangements and engage in dialogue with decision-makers at all levels.
- 3. Expanding online and offline platforms for TA participation in social and economic activities** It is necessary to equip the TA with information and practical support to organize internships and provide training opportunities by observing the work of specialists, developing mentoring programs, improving vocational guidance and counselling in schools and universities, expanding opportunities for volunteering and summer programs.
- 4. Creating youth solidarity funds.** Small grants systems must be developed to help facilitate PVE initiatives at community, local or grassroots level, and to advocate for such practices.
- 5. Developing mobile games to educate and raise awareness on radicalization and its consequences.**

Example

1. Workeen



Workeen is a mobile app intended for help refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants navigate on the European labor market. The app developers claim that it can help them understand bureaucracy and prepare for interviews.

2. The service takes care of you

This map application is designed to search for free medical examination facilities. Its objective is to make sure that migrants understand the importance of cancer screening.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL TYPES OF CHANNELS:

1. Cross-platform

Cross-platform communication broadcasts one system of messages with a unique idea in the format of different products: on several channels and genres. In this way, an ecosystem is built with common messages and values, but it has different means of dissemination and promotion.

What does it provide?

- increases coverage,
- increases recognition and, as a result, trust,
- provokes citation,
- provides a graded system for content engagement,
- covers different layers of the TA.

It is noteworthy that along with homogeneity and integrity of the system of effective messages and favorable narratives, there can be a high variability of genres and communication conditions. A single idea can be embodied in various forms: digital product and events, video and poster, message and lecture.

2. Partnership

To achieve effective communication, it is necessary to build models and forms of cooperation both between stakeholders and with other potential partners. By expanding the network of potential alliances, we can increase the impact and spread favorable messages.

3. Multiculturalism

In conditions when most vulnerable groups of the TA are outside the country such as in labor migration, the cooperation with other countries and international projects is critical. Despite restrictions imposed on interaction with Western organizations, alternative indirect thematic fields can be used to expand the outreach and impact on labor migrants.

The high potential for effectiveness will be revealed in interaction and joint work with the media in Russia and Turkey, including with cultural educational organizations and mass media. Due to high cultural and informational gap, many projects implemented in outflow countries and aimed at integrating migrants become ineffective, since they largely influence the local audience. If projects and initiatives are created on bilateral partnership, their effectiveness will increase significantly. The potential for trust among migrant community in such sources will be higher; the presence of expertise, support and participation will increase the strength of impact and can significantly affect the existing risks of radicalization in Russia.

Example



“Don’t be silent”

The project aims to address violence domestically, which is indirectly related to the topic of radicalization. It includes anonymous stories from readers, describes incidents of violence, and statistics, advice from psychologists and expertise on the topic.

Pros:

- Private story can inspire other people to overcome the challenge.
- Creating an environment for communication, mutual assistance and problem sharing with other victims.
- Presence of user-generated content has attracted increased attention of the audience.
- Gained greater outreach due to applied tips and tools.
- Contributed to an open discussion, which resulted in eliminating most negative stereotypes.

Cons: It has no demonstration of positive outcomes.

ANNEX 1

This annex represents the theoretical material for understanding the practical recommendations made to each section in the main communication strategy document. Each section of the annex refers to the corresponding section of the main document and contains the theoretical evidence, goals, and objectives, of Sections 2, 3 and 5, the country context, performance evaluation and risks, and glossary

