



CENTRAL ASIA MEDIA RESILIENCE INCUBATOR: A REPORT ON AI USE AND SUPPORT NEEDS AMONG TWENTY NEWSROOMS IN MONGOLIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
MAY 2026



STRENGTHENING NEWSROOM
CAPACITY



MITIGATING RISKS AND
DISINFORMATION



BUILDING SUSTAINABLE
MEDIA ORGANISATIONS



RESPONSIBLE AI FOR
INDEPENDENT MEDIA

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We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the editors, journalists and managers from the twenty participating media organisations in Mongolia who generously gave their time, shared their experiences and contributed their insights throughout the research process. Their openness and willingness to discuss both the opportunities and challenges associated with the adoption of artificial intelligence have provided an invaluable evidence base for this study

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Purpose of the Research

This study was commissioned to inform the design of a pilot intervention under the Central Asia Media Resilience Incubator in Mongolia. Its purpose is to assess the readiness of Mongolian media organisations to adopt artificial intelligence (AI), particularly in relation to improving operational efficiency, strengthening organisational resilience, and countering disinformation.

The research and analysis focus on the practical, operational understanding of how newsrooms are currently engaging with AI, what opportunities they see, what risks they face, and what forms of support are most needed. The findings are intended to guide the development of targeted capacity-building programmes and longer-term support strategies for independent media.

Methodology

The research is based on a structured qualitative assessment of Mongolian media organisations. A selection process narrowed an initial pool of 389 outlets to 25 priority organisations, based on criteria including editorial quality, national reach, organisational stability, and potential for impact.

From these, 20 newsrooms were included in the final analysis, following semi-structured interviews conducted between February and March 2026. The sample was designed to provide a balanced cross-section of Mongolia's independent media landscape, with a particular focus on organisations based in Ulaanbaatar, where most national independent media are located.

Consideration was also given to achieving diversity across media formats and organisational size, ensuring that the research reflected a range of newsroom contexts and levels of organisational maturity. The organisations included should therefore be understood as a purposive sample selected to support the objectives of this study, rather than a ranking of media quality across the wider sector.

The sample reflects the diversity of Mongolia's media ecosystem:

1. A mix of digital-first platforms, television, magazines, and social media outlets
2. Predominantly small-scale organisations, many with fewer than 10 staff
3. A primary audience of young, urban professionals

Interviews (40–90 minutes each) were conducted with senior editors, managers, or designated AI leads, using a standardised questionnaire covering:

- Organisational capacity and digital maturity
- Current AI use and tools

- Perceived risks and vulnerabilities
- Incentives, barriers, and readiness for adoption

This approach provides a robust qualitative evidence base to understand both technical readiness and organisational dynamics shaping AI adoption.

Key Findings

A summary of the key findings of research are presented here.

There is strong interest in AI adoption, but implementation remains largely informal and reactive

Interest in artificial intelligence is widespread across Mongolia's independent media sector. Every newsroom interviewed expressed interest in adopting AI tools, primarily because they face persistent challenges related to staffing shortages, limited financial resources, and increasing production demands. However, AI adoption is currently being driven more by immediate operational pressures than by long-term strategic planning. Many organisations view AI as a practical response to resource constraints rather than as part of a broader digital transformation agenda.

Although a number of newsrooms have begun experimenting with AI, its use is often fragmented and driven by individual journalists or small teams rather than being embedded within organisational systems and workflows. As a result, AI use frequently takes place without formal oversight, clear internal guidelines, or structured approaches to risk management. This creates a gap between enthusiasm for AI and the organisational capacity required to use it effectively and responsibly.

Readiness to adopt AI varies significantly across the media landscape

The research found substantial variation in the level of preparedness among Mongolian media organisations. A relatively small group of digitally advanced, largely digital-first newsrooms has already integrated AI tools into editorial and production workflows. These organisations are experimenting with content generation, workflow automation, audience analysis, and multimedia production, and are well positioned to adopt more advanced applications.

A larger group is still at an exploratory stage. While interested in AI, these organisations face constraints related to technical skills, organisational capacity, and financial resources. In many cases, concerns about editorial integrity and audience trust have also made management cautious about encouraging wider adoption.

Levels of readiness are closely linked to organisational size and access to technical expertise. Smaller organisations, which make up a large proportion of Mongolia's media sector, often lack dedicated technology staff and have limited capacity to invest in new tools or processes. This creates a risk that existing digital inequalities within the sector could be reinforced as AI adoption accelerates.

AI is primarily viewed as a tool for efficiency and sustainability

Most newsrooms see AI's immediate value in helping them work more efficiently. Organisations consistently identified opportunities to automate repetitive tasks, speed up production processes, reduce costs, and alleviate the impact of staffing shortages. Journalists and editors highlighted practical applications such as transcription, summarisation, drafting, translation, content production, and workflow management.

Alongside these operational benefits, there is growing interest in the potential for AI to strengthen organisational sustainability. Several organisations highlighted opportunities to use AI to support audience analytics, subscription strategies, sales and marketing activities, and revenue generation. Nevertheless, most organisations continue to view AI primarily as an efficiency tool rather than as a catalyst for broader innovation in journalism, audience engagement, or organisational strategy.

Newsrooms recognise significant risks but lack the tools and systems needed to manage them

While enthusiasm for AI is high, awareness of associated risks is equally pronounced. Concerns about AI-generated disinformation, deepfakes, and synthetic media emerged consistently throughout the research. Many organisations expressed particular concern about the potential impact of AI-enabled disinformation during the 2027 Presidential Election and the 2028 Parliamentary Election, fearing that increasingly sophisticated synthetic content could undermine public trust and complicate verification efforts.

Newsrooms also expressed concerns about inaccuracies, hallucinations, editorial accountability, data protection, copyright, and the potential erosion of audience trust if AI-generated content is used irresponsibly. Many journalists believe that maintaining a strong human editorial role will become an increasingly important way of differentiating credible journalism from automated content.

Despite this awareness, most organisations lack the technical tools, expertise, and institutional processes required to manage these risks effectively. Verification processes remain largely manual, and many respondents acknowledged that improvements in AI technology will soon make it increasingly difficult to identify synthetic content through traditional journalistic judgement alone.

Governance and ethical safeguards remain underdeveloped

One of the most significant findings is the absence of formal governance frameworks within most participating newsrooms. The overwhelming majority operate without dedicated AI policies or editorial guidelines and rely instead on informal understandings or existing journalistic ethics frameworks to govern AI use.

As AI adoption expands, many organisations recognise that this approach is no longer sufficient. Newsrooms expressed strong demand for practical guidance on ethical use, transparency, disclosure requirements, accountability mechanisms, and internal oversight. There is particular interest in model policies and ready-to-adapt guidelines that could help organisations establish consistent approaches without needing to develop frameworks from scratch.

The findings suggest that strengthening governance arrangements will be critical if AI adoption is to occur in a way that protects editorial standards and maintains public confidence.

Structural barriers continue to slow adoption

Beyond issues of knowledge and governance, a range of structural constraints limit the ability of newsrooms to move from experimentation to systematic adoption. Financial barriers are particularly significant, with many organisations citing the cost of premium AI subscriptions and specialist tools as a major obstacle. Limited staffing and heavy workloads leave little time for experimentation, training, or process redesign.

Technical capacity is also unevenly distributed across the sector. Many smaller organisations lack dedicated technology personnel and must rely on editors and journalists to manage implementation alongside their existing responsibilities.

A further challenge relates to language and local context. Many respondents reported that leading global AI models continue to perform inconsistently in Mongolian, requiring substantial verification and manual correction. This limits the productivity gains that AI can currently deliver and contributes to caution regarding wider adoption.

There is strong demand for practical, workflow-based support

Across almost all participating organisations, there was a clear preference for applied, hands-on training rather than introductory awareness-raising activities. Many respondents stated that they had already attended AI-related workshops but felt these had focused too heavily on theoretical discussions and tool demonstrations without providing practical skills that could be integrated into newsroom workflows.

Newsrooms expressed particular interest in training on advanced prompting techniques, multimedia production, audience analytics, business applications, and deepfake detection. There was also strong support for workshop formats that allow participants to apply new skills directly to everyday newsroom tasks.

The findings suggest that future support will be most effective when it combines practical technical training with guidance on governance, ethics, and organisational implementation, enabling newsrooms to move beyond experimentation and toward sustainable, institutionally supported use of AI.

Recommendations

1. Support newsrooms to move them from awareness to greater operational capacity

Training programmes should focus on practical, task-based learning, enabling journalists to integrate AI into daily workflows. This includes:

- Prompt engineering for editorial use
- Multimedia production tools
- Real-world newsroom applications

A learning by doing approach will be essential.

2. Establish institutional safeguards and governance of AI

Support to newsrooms should prioritise the development of:

- Model AI ethical guidelines
- Internal editorial policies
- Clear standards for transparency and disclosure

This will support the shift of AI use from informal experimentation to institutionalised, accountable practice.

3. Provide a greater focus on how AI adoption can support financial sustainability

Support should explicitly connect AI use to:

- Revenue generation
- Audience engagement
- Cost efficiency

This includes training on:

- AI-driven audience analytics
- Digital subscription models
- Sales and marketing optimisation

4. Build the technical capacity of newsrooms to strengthen disinformation resilience

Given the election context, there is a need to:

- Develop skills in deepfake detection and verification
- Provide access to specialised tools
- Strengthen newsroom preparedness for AI-driven disinformation

5. Training and support should address structural and contextual barriers

Support should include:

- Funding mechanisms, such as tool subscriptions
- Shared technical resources
- Development of Mongolian-language datasets and tools

Addressing the *language gap* is critical for effective adoption.

6. Support should adopt a phased, tailored training model

Programmes should reflect differing levels of readiness, with:

- Advanced support for high-readiness organisations
- Foundational training for emerging users

Recommended delivery includes:

- Intensive in-person workshops
- On-site coaching
- Ongoing follow-up support

7. Newsrooms will benefit from support for long-term ecosystem development in Mongolia

Beyond the pilot, opportunities include:

- Shared verification infrastructure
- National standards for AI transparency
- Integration of AI into journalism education
- Grant support for media-specific AI solutions

Conclusion

Mongolian media organisations are at a critical point in their digital evolution. While there is strong demand for AI adoption, this is constrained by limited capacity and structural barriers. The opportunity is significant, but requires a balanced approach that combines technical capability, ethical safeguards and long-term sustainability.

The success of future interventions will depend both on the introduction of new tools and on enabling media organisations to use AI as a strategic, responsible and sustainable asset in strengthening journalism and countering disinformation.

Disclaimer

The findings and recommendations presented in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Open Society Foundations or the participating media organisations.

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