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Collaboration between Stanford Innovation Journalism Center and a Pakistani TV station honored

The award-winning program "Innovation" is dedicated to identifying innovation in all aspects of Pakistani life, and has covered issues ranging from alternative energy to mobile banking.

BY AIMEE MILES

A collaborative effort between the Vinnova Stanford Research Center of [Innovation Journalism](#) and a Pakistani television station, SAMAA TV, is receiving an [award](#) for its role in bringing local issues of innovative development to the forefront of public awareness in Pakistan.

"Innovation," a television program featured on SAMAA, was named "Brand of the Year 2009" in a category recognizing products and services that sharpen public focus on processes of innovation and competitiveness in Pakistan. The series beat out more than 500 competitors from various industries in a nationwide judging that included a consumer survey and an expert panel analysis. Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani is scheduled to present the award in February.

The idea for the television series was conceived by the CEO of SAMAA TV, Amir Jahangir, who sits on an advisory board for the Innovation Journalism Center (also known as the "InJo" Center) at Stanford. The series is dedicated to identifying innovation in all aspects of Pakistani life, and has covered issues ranging from alternative energy to mobile banking.

"[The Pakistanis] have created something of theirs with information and advice from us that has created a new model of media programming there that adds something to traditional journalism," said David Nordfors, founding executive director of the InJo Center. "It's a young, progressive, innovative and politically moderate TV company."

"[Jahangir] decided that SAMAA should start an Innovation Journalism TV series, that shouldn't be only about gadgets or only about business or technology, but look at how business, technology, and politics interact, about how innovation happens, and identify different actors in the ecosystem and get the whole picture. SAMAA's producer Shahray Zariif and her team did an excellent job in setting that up."

Nordfors identified the collaboration as a promising example of positive U.S.-Pakistani relations.

Four Pakistani journalists come to Stanford each year as InJo fellows, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The objective of the fellowship is to train international journalists to cover the innovation economy and network with U.S. media outlets. Fellows participate in workshops and conferences at Stanford and work with newsrooms across the nation covering issues relating to innovation. Fatima Akhtar, anchor and team member of the award-winning SAMAA series, will begin a five-month fellowship at the InJo Center in February.

"Pakistan used to be a very closed country — almost all journalism in Pakistan is about Pakistan, for Pakistani people. They've actually started taking in InJo fellows from other areas of the world as expert commentators," said Nordfors. "It's very nice to see that it actually turned out to be a smash hit because this is really a new creature in Pakistani journalism."

The first innovation journalism program started at Stanford in 2004, Nordfors said. "Our network today includes funded innovation journalism initiatives in Sweden, Finland, Slovenia, Mexico, Pakistan, Israel and the EU — all connected to the center at Stanford," he said.

Aimee Miles is an intern with the Stanford News Service.



Amir Jahangir, CEO of SAMAA TV in Pakistan and David Nordfors, founding executive director of the InJo Center.

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