



## **AFGHAN MEDIA – THREE YEARS AFTER**

*Media and Alternative Sources of Information in Afghan Society*

Nationwide Research – Sept 2004 / March 2005

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## INTRODUCTION

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Since early 2002, a large number of initiatives have worked to restore and develop media in post-conflict Afghanistan. These initiatives involved numerous media development NGOs (local and international) as well as nascent private media groups, with extensive support from international donors. They range from infrastructure and technical support, to journalist training and media content production in the governmental and the independent media.

In the last 3 years, the media have been used intensively to disseminate news, educational programs and entertainment, as well as being the main tool of public information campaigns related to development and reconstruction projects.

Altai Consulting was mandated by USAID in September 2004 to design and conduct a study of the Afghan media and other sources of information in the Afghan provinces, with the following goals:

- Assess media's availability, public consumption patterns, and the impact of media on knowledge, opinions and behaviors
- Analyze the interaction of the media with other sources of information at the community level
- Evaluate Internews' community radio stations network<sup>1</sup> and individual station's audiences and interaction with local communities

Surveys have previously been conducted at a local level (audience surveys in Kabul<sup>2</sup>, social research in Samangan<sup>3</sup>), and a census of all media in Afghanistan was conducted in 2003-2004<sup>4</sup>, but no extensive social research on the media was yet available to understand to what extent and how the media were being used by different *strata* of the Afghan society, from urban centers to remote villages, and across different levels of literacy and gender.

From September 2004 to March 2005, Altai research teams interviewed over 2,800 people in 15 Afghan provinces<sup>5</sup>, using a set of qualitative research tools (observations, unstructured interviews, content testing, focus group discussions, debates with local *shuras*) as well as a survey questionnaire. The study covered more than 60 communities ranging from the main regional centers to remote rural villages, both within and beyond the coverage of Internews-supported FM stations. Kabul city was not part of the main scope of work. Only a pilot study on television usage in a small number of households was conducted in the Afghan capital.

The following document brings together the key findings of the study, with a transversal analysis of the 15 provinces covered. It was designed to be accessed and used as a tool by a large range of development actors, inside and outside of Afghanistan, from media development organizations to public information teams and donors.

A set of comprehensive research reports is also available on demand with Altai Consulting, and will be published online by the end of April 2005. They include a synthesis of the evaluation of the Internews Network, the 15 provincial media reports and 5 regional case studies based on a socio-anthropological approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Between 2002 and 2005, the media development NGO *Internews* set up a network of community radio stations in 30 cities and small towns around Afghanistan.

<sup>2</sup> Intermedia: Media Survey, Kabul Afghanistan, September-October 2003. Internews: Kabul Radio Survey, 2003. Moby Capital: Kabul Media Survey, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Sarah Kamal, Disconnected from discourse, *Women's radio listening in rural Samangan*, June 2004

<sup>4</sup> Aina, Afghanistan's media landscape, *Peering into the provinces*, 2004

<sup>5</sup> Provinces covered : Badakhshan, Baghlan, Balkh, Bamyan, Ghazni, Ghor, Herat, Kandahar, Kapisa, Khost, Logar, Nangarhar, Paktia, Panjshir , Parwan.

# 0. METHODOLOGY

## 0.1. Objectives & Approach

### 0.1.1. Overall objectives

There were two overall objectives to this study:

1. Analyze the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAPs) of Afghans concerning media, and more generally, the circulation of information in Afghan communities.
2. Evaluate the current state of the Internews-supported network of local independent radio stations.

The following synthesis only relates to the outcome of the first part of the study. The evaluation of the Internews network is available as a separate document.

### 0.1.2. General approach

Research tools were designed in order to better understand how, in 15 selected provinces, information is circulated through different strata of society. To this purpose, the different components of media penetration were separated as follows:

1. Coverage
2. Audience
3. Comprehension
4. Trust and buy-in
5. Perception
6. Integration in communities
7. Interaction with traditional sources of information
8. Impact on opinions and behavior

### 0.1.3. Research questions

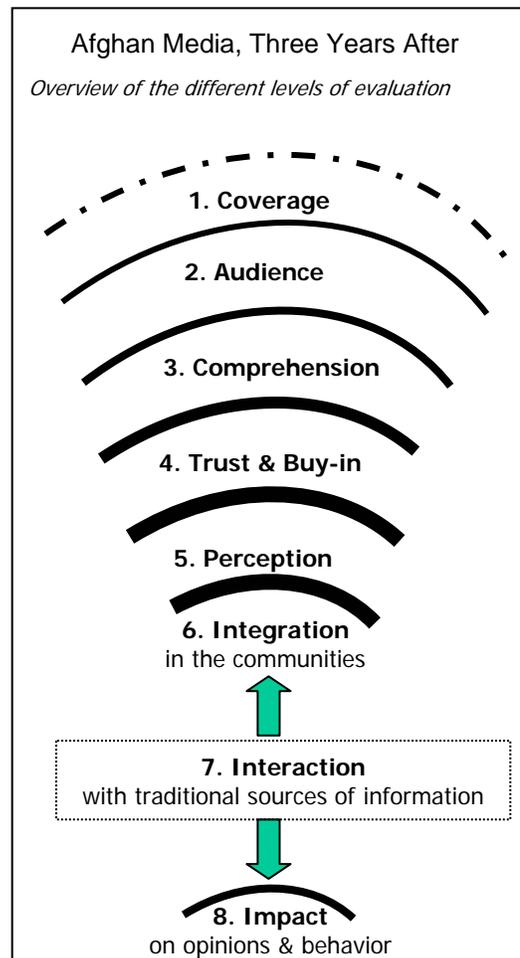
**The first part of the study attempts to answer the following questions:**

**What is the outcome of three years of media development?**

- What is the coverage of different media?
- How do Afghan people use media in their daily lives?
- Which stations/programs are the most popular?
- Do media users understand the content?
- Do they trust the media? Do they buy into the information?
- How do they perceive media?
- What role does media play in traditional communities?

**What are the other sources of information in the Afghan society?**

- Who are the main opinion leaders/influencers?
- What kind of information do they disseminate?
- Do they block the penetration of the media?



- How do traditional sources and media interact?
- Which sources do people trust most?

#### Does information influence opinions and behavior?

- On what topics?
- Through which channels?

The different steps of the research were designed to follow the progression of information dissemination, from media coverage to impact on opinion and behavior.

#### 0.1.4. *Limits of the approach and objectives*

- This study is a qualitative research on the dynamics of media in Afghan Communities including a large-scale survey on a purposive sample.
- It is not, in any case, to be considered as a complete census and evaluation of all media projects in Afghanistan. The approach was “bottom-up” (starting at community level) and not “top-down” (analyzing the process of media projects themselves), and therefore some media projects are under-represented in this study because they were implemented in areas not covered by the evaluation, or were too small or too specific to be mentioned by a limited sample of interviewees.

## 0.2. Tools

### 0.2.1. *Tools used in the following part of the study*

- **Social research** was conducted in 15 Afghan Communities. In each community, a minimum of 10 unstructured interviews on media topics (usage, preferences, expectations, level of information) were conducted, as well as two focus groups with women (1 literate, 1 illiterate), and a discussion with the local *shura*<sup>6</sup>. Direct observation was done in places where information may be exchanged (*chai khana*<sup>7</sup>, mosque, hamam, well, etc). Altogether around 150 unstructured interviews, 30 focus groups with women and 15 debates with local shuras were conducted in 15 communities, spread among 4 regions.
- In Kabul, a pilot study was conducted with 10 families who watch television on the dynamics of the various media available and to obtain a preliminary data set on television use in the capital. A summary of the study is available in the following report.
- **Paired interviews** were used to collect qualitative information among different audience profiles in the 15 provinces of research. Paired-interviews are semi-structured, in-depth discussions where two interviewees can debate and compare their opinions. 150 paired interviews were conducted.
- **A general survey questionnaire** was designed to identify the sources of information and the general attitudes towards media. 1507 people (757 women and 750 men) answered this questionnaire nationwide.
- **This questionnaire was complemented by specific questionnaires** focusing on the usage of particular media, for respondents to the general questionnaire who were media users:
  - 1,243 people answered the *radio* section (666 men and 577 women)
  - 441 people answered the *television* section (269 men and 172 women)
  - 181 people answered the *newspapers* section (127 men and 54 women)
  - 50 people answered the *internet* section (49 men and 1 woman)

Unstructured interviews were held with local media actors (Nye representatives, directors of local newspapers and of state radio/TV, cable TV managers, etc.)

<sup>6</sup> Council of elders and other community leaders

<sup>7</sup> Tea house

### 0.2.2. *Other tools, used in the specific Internews network evaluation report:*

- **Local station questionnaires** focused on the perception of the local Internews-supported station. 394 people responded to this questionnaire.
- **Interviews with the management and observations** were conducted at Internews stations.
- **Content testing sessions** were organized with radio listeners. The latter were invited to listen to some selected extracts from the *Salam Watandar (Hello Compatriot)* program and to participate in short interviews about its content in order to evaluate their level of understanding and appreciation of the program's different segments. 311 people participated in content testing sessions (154 men and 157 women).

### 0.3. *Fieldwork*

**Teams:** Teams consisting of one international consultant, one national consultant and two national interviewers conducted the field work. A team composed of one international social researcher (Dari speaker), together with two national researchers (one male and one female) carried out the social research.

**Security concerns** influenced the choice of locations with regards to rural areas and southeastern provinces. Therefore, the data gathered does not reflect the most extreme opinions that are to be found in the villages contesting the authority of the present government. In some high-risk areas, security concerns prevented international consultants from conducting research. However, national consultants were able to conduct surveys in most places.

### 0.4. *Sample for the general survey*

#### 0.4.1. *Quotas used*

The sampling method used in this survey is **a purposive sampling methodology** using gender and level of development (provincial center/nearby village/remote village) as a criteria of selection.

Within these six categories (three types of locations/two genders) a random selection of interviewees was done.

#### a) *Gender breakdown*

The allocation of interviews by gender was essential, as women's opinions, attitudes, knowledge and expectations significantly differ from those of men in Afghanistan. In each location, **50% of interviewees were male and 50% female.**

#### b) *Selection of locations*

The sampling of the general survey was designed based on the **Internews network** (which corresponds to the most populated areas). It aimed at understanding the progression of information through different types of locations across 15 provinces, so as to compare urban and rural areas.

This sample was also designed in order to gain a significant insight into media consumption in the area where it is the most diversified: the urban centers.

Therefore, quotas for interviews were designed as follows:

- 40% in broadcast centers of Internews-supported community radio stations
- 30% in near-by rural locations called "Village 1" (less than 1 hour from the center, within the coverage area of the local Internews-supported station)
- 30% in remote rural locations called "Village 2" (over 3 hours from the center, off the main roads and outside coverage areas of local radio stations)

In each province, Villages 1 and 2 were generally selected with the aim of an ethnic representation of the province. Security concerns occasionally restricted the teams to the most accessible areas.

The villages visited for the survey only includes villages that are generally located within three hours travel from the broadcast centre. In some places (e.g. Nangarhar, Khost), this radius encompasses approximately the whole province. In others, such as Badakhshan and Ghor, the evaluation did not reach the most remote locations.

Generally speaking, the figures shown in this report **do not constitute a comprehensive audience analysis of all radio stations** in Afghanistan. The sample used is purposively centered on the broadcast areas of local Internews stations and includes very few interviewees in the coverage area of Kabul FM stations.

### c) Selection of provinces

Interviews were carried out in the following provinces: Badakhshan, Baghlan, Balkh, Bamyan, Ghazni, Ghor, Herat, Kandahar, Khost, Logar, Nangarhar, Parwan, Panjshir and Wardak. In Paktya and Kabul, only sociological research was conducted (no quantitative data).

Due to the presence of two Internews-supported radio stations in Herat and Parwan the provinces were split in two sub-provinces: Herat East – Herat City and Herat West – Ghorian for the first, Parwan – Shamali and Parwan – Kapisa for the second.

**Each of the provinces is detailed in an individual report.**



**Figure 0-1: Provinces covered by the evaluation**

d) Locations grouping in cross-analysis:

From the initial breakdown of three types of locations (provincial center, village 1, village 2) which was used to select the survey locations, experience proved that it was more relevant to group the locations in further categories, as some provincial centers hosting an Internews radio station fitted more the “village” definition than the urban center definition and present very different characteristics. Therefore, the majority of the cross-analysis was done by grouping the locations as follows:

- **Big cities:** Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad.
- **Medium cities:** Pul-e-Khumri, Ghazni, Khost.
- **Semi-rural:** Qarabagh (Kabul), Bamyan, Jabel Saraj (Parwan), Said Abad (Wardak), Faizabad (Badakhshan), Charikar (Parwan), Fuladi (Bamiyan), Dihdadi (Balkh), Chaghcharan (Ghor), Ghorian (Herat), Surkhrod (Nangarhar), Pul e Alam/Waghjan (Wardak), Zamon Khel (Baghlan), Said Khel (Parwan), Eshaq Suleiman (Herat), Barnabad (Herat), Daman (Kandahar), Durani/Khwaja Kotkai/ Asau (Wardak), Poozolich (Ghor), Lakan/ Bada Khel/ Ghoauso (Khost), Batosh (Badakhshan), Qaraboghi (Ghazni), Zargun Shahr (Lowgar), Spin Boldak (Kandahar) and Islam Qala (Herat)

All of the other locations have been classified as “rural.”

0.4.2. *Variations with official CSO data*

Due to the objectives of the study and following the criteria of purposive sampling mentioned above, our survey sample was not designed to be statistically representative.

The figures given in the different charts were used to confirm and extrapolate the data collected through qualitative research and explore regional variations. On most issues, if not all, it is to be specified that trends shown through the survey were confirmed by qualitative research, and vice versa.

The data collected are, therefore, valid in the above-mentioned specific sample, and shall not be extrapolated at a nationwide level. That is also the reason why no margin of error was calculated.

**Still, considering the size of the survey sample (1507), it is possible to use the figures to understand some of the general trends in media consumption, habits, and behaviors in Afghanistan. However, the following biases should be taken into account.**

The figures used as a reference hereafter come from Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2003<sup>8</sup>. It is to be noted that these figures are not completely accurate since no extensive census was completed at the time of writing this report, but these data constitute the best reference available in Afghanistan today.

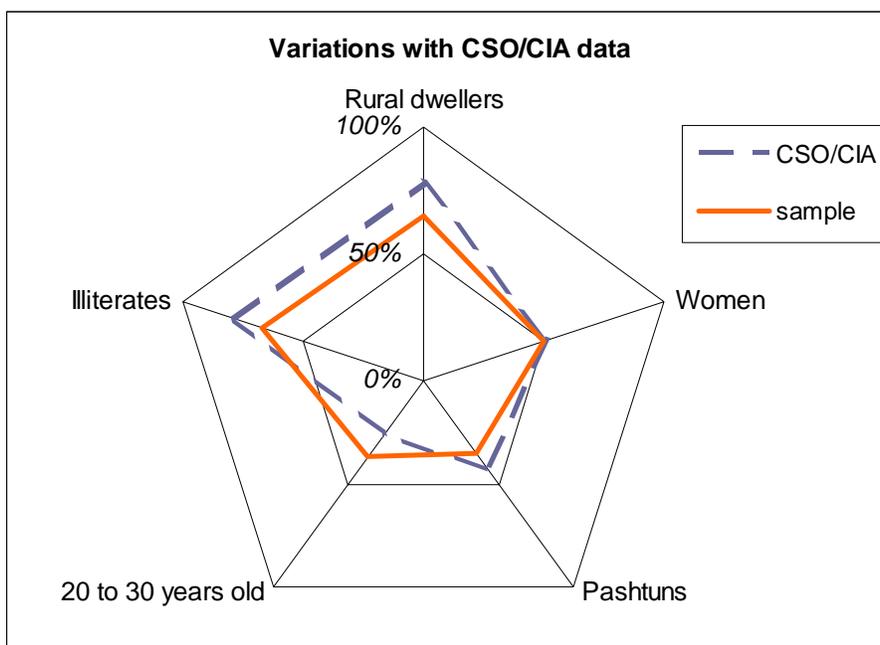
**Main variations to be taken into account**

- **Urban vs. rural:** Urban dwellers are over-represented in our sample: 35% vs. 22% (CSO estimation for 2003).
- **Ethnic balance:** ethnic data should be considered with great care. The following comments are merely indicative. Pashtuns and Uzbeks seem under-represented, six points under their estimated proportion<sup>9</sup>. Tajiks are over-represented at 14 points over their estimated proportion<sup>10</sup>. These distortions are a natural consequence of the selection of provinces done in collaboration with Internews.
- **Gender:** Based on CSO gender figures (51% women, 49% men), the bias in our sample (50% / 50%) is negligible.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.aims.org.af/cso/>

<sup>9</sup> CIA Factbook; <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>

<sup>10</sup> The formula used is: % in sample - % in Afghan population / CSO data. Therefore, the difference is expressed in points, not percentages.



0.4.3. Biases in random selection:

Random choice within each of the six categories (three types of locations - two genders) was the most constraining aspect, since **interviewers rarely choose their subjects completely randomly**. The first constraint was to **find people willing to spend around one hour** of their time without any personal benefit. The variations with CSO data to be considered are the following:

- **Age:** The over 50 age group is under-represented by 4 points. Young adults are consequently over-represented, since the 20 to 30 age group is five points over official estimates.
- **Literacy:** Literates represent 33% of our sample, whereas the proportion among Afghans over 15 is estimated at 22% by CSO. This is mainly correlated to the high representation of more educated urban areas.

In summary, the primary bias is an over-representation of **urban dwellers, youth and literates**. This profile is generally more likely to be open to the media than a completely representative national sample.

This bias was taken into account in our analysis, and systematically challenged with social research, which was conducted in remote areas and which included conservative areas with a large proportion of illiterate people.

0.5. Difficulties in field research

0.5.1. Interviews

**Duration/attentiveness:** as the issues covered were numerous, interviews were taking around one hour for the general public interview, and longer for an interviewee using all media devices (radio, television, newspapers, Internet). As a result, for some interviewees, attention started dropping during the second half of the interview, and some interviewees may have shortened their answers or declared “no opinion”, in order to finish the interview faster. This problem is generally met in extensive research with the illiterate in Afghanistan.

**Lack of habit of opinion surveys:** Most of the interviewees were not used to being surveyed and found it odd to be questioned by strangers, seemingly without practical purpose. Several attitudes, leading to insincere answers, were noticed:

- “Examination attitude”. Some interviewees felt that the aim of the questionnaire was to judge their knowledge. They tended to try to provide the “right answer” rather than genuine opinions, and over-estimated their knowledge of media and their contents. They were sometimes ashamed of their ignorance. For instance, some interviewees declared that they read newspapers or used the internet, although further investigation revealed that they did not.
- “Gift attitude” was less current. Some interviewees thought that the interviewers distributed radio sets. They tended to distort their answers in order to show that they deserved to be chosen as beneficiaries. For instance, they claimed that they knew all stations and all programs, in order to appear as avid media users. Such an attitude is often based on the experience of other surveys where interviewees were actually offered food or money.
- “Distrustful attitude” is not common, but does exist. It is caused by private questions (marital situation, wealth, etc) and questions on sensitive topics (divorce, women’s rights, disarmament, etc). A few interviewees suspected the interviewers of spying, corrupting Afghan traditions or even sometimes organizing thefts.

The presence of witnesses often made it extremely difficult to conduct interviews without interferences from third parties. In houses, relatives or friends were often present, and since rooms are not individual, it was virtually impossible to isolate the interviewee. In shops, hotels or bazaars passers-by intervened or even gathered out of curiosity. The exceptions are cars or fields, but such options were not always available. For most of the questions, the presence of witnesses had no impact. However, for a few sensitive topics, it may have deterred interviewees from expressing opinions which diverged from socially accepted views.

Specific difficulties due to the nature of the subject

- **Translation and wording:** A few issues cannot be translated with full accuracy into Dari and Pashto: this was the case, for example, of “private media” vs. “public media”, which does not have an exact translation in Dari/Pashto and had to be explained by the interviewer. Geographical words used in interviews (village, area, neighborhood, etc) also do not refer exactly to the same distances from one province to another.
- **Cultural differences** can be an obstacle: “family planning” or “dating”, for instance, do not have easily understandable equivalents in local languages. Interviewers often had to explain them, which introduces a personal bias.
- **The levels of education** are highly varied in Afghanistan. Therefore, it is difficult to design a questionnaire on an issue like the media that solicits more sophisticated opinions from more educated respondents and that is understandable by all interviewees. A compromise was required.
- **Sensitive questions:** Some questions dealt with sensitive issues such as homosexuality, sexual education, divorce, and women’s rights. In some instances, the **security of the interviewers** was an issue. In these cases, based on the judgment of the interviewer, such questions were skipped or the phrasing was changed. (e.g. “live separately” instead of “divorce” or “girls going to school” instead of “freedom of women”).
- **Self-censorship:** It seems also that some interviewees tried to appear more progressive than they really were. The reason for such a behavior is not clear. Public campaigns on certain issues

(girls' education, women's rights) might cause some interviewees to express opinions that they do not necessarily hold.

### **0.6. Conclusion**

The tools designed for this research were created to be complementary, with qualitative research providing in-depth information, and a large-scale survey used to identify trends and help understand information dynamics in both urban and rural areas.

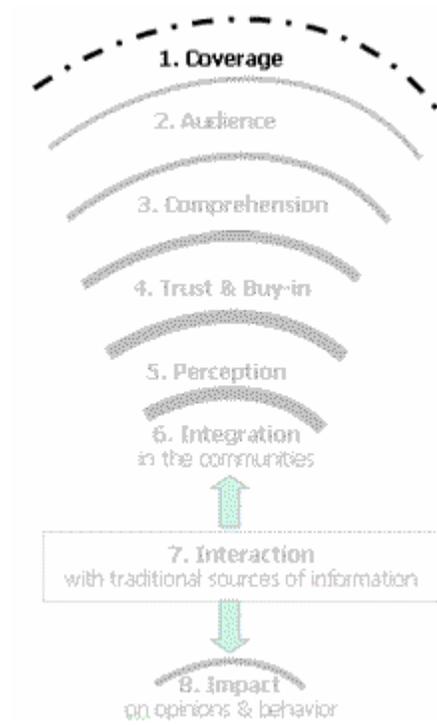
However, in consideration of the mentioned biases, it would be a mistake to interpret the quantitative data as representative of the entire population.

The percentages and graphs in this report illustrate general trends and provide **relative comparisons** (between regions, genders, age groups, etc.) and a first look at media consumption habits in Afghanistan.

The study should be considered as an **initial step in exploring media** in the country. It is recommended that further research be carried out to address the unanswered questions that remain.

# 1. MEDIA COVERAGE

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*Radio Satellite receiver, Radio Solh, Jabel Saragh,*

**1.1. Overview**

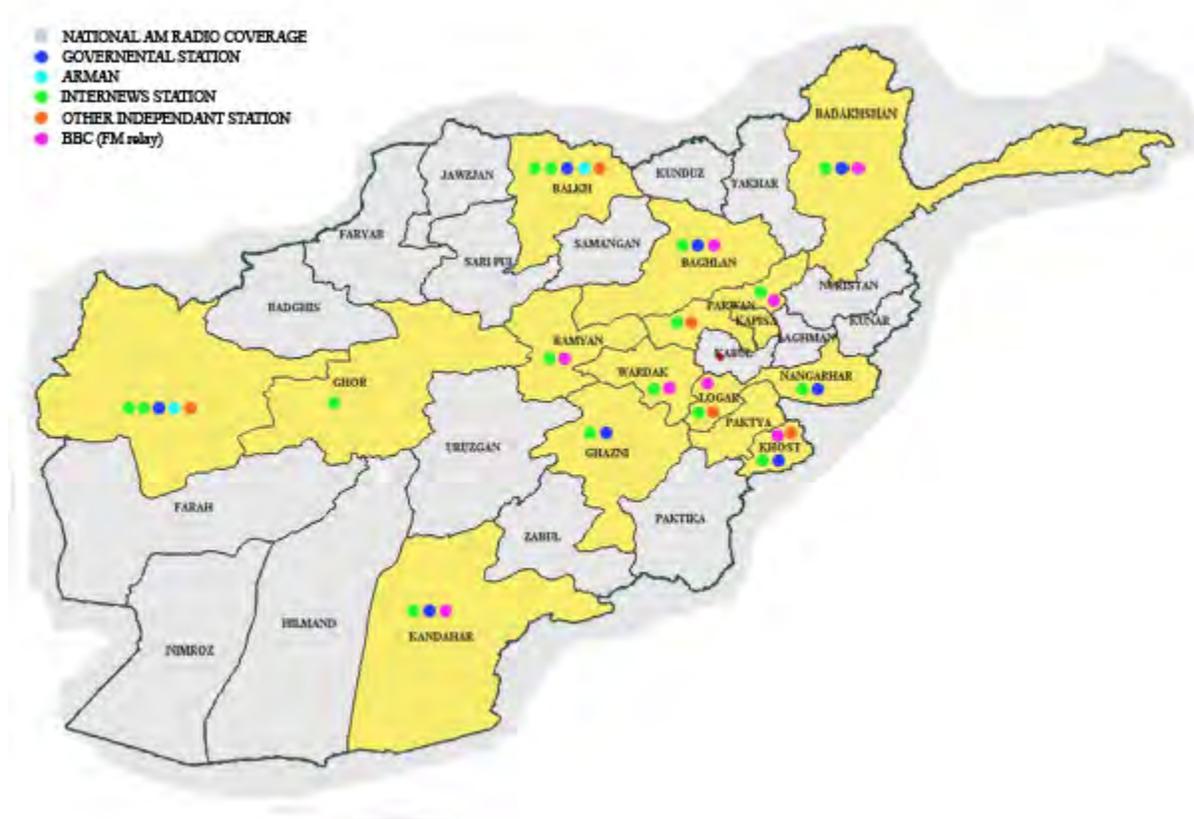
In all locations, observations were made of the available media. This was not intended to be a complete census, as was conducted in 2004 by the non-profit media organization Aina<sup>11</sup>, but it primarily aimed at providing verification and a benchmark for the study.

The following is an overview of the media available in each area. Detailed reports on each location are also available.

**1.2. Radio**

Radio has by far the widest coverage of the different media. All locations had at least some access, with variation in the number and quality of signals available.

The map below gives an overview of the main stations available in the visited provinces.



**Figure 1-1; Presence of radio stations in the locations visited**

**1.2.1. Nationwide stations**

**AM signals** have a larger coverage area than FM, however they are more affected by variables such as weather, terrain, and time of day. The four major AM radio stations available throughout the country are

<sup>11</sup> *Afghanistan's Media Landscape: Peering into the Provinces* (Aina, Kabul, 2004)

the BBC, Voice of America (VOA), Radio Azadi (Radio Free Europe - Afghanistan) and Radio Afghanistan.

Deutsche Welle, All India, Radio France International (RFI) and Radio China also have nationwide coverage, but much smaller audiences.

AM stations have strong reception nationwide. Still, some isolated villages in mountainous areas do not receive a reliable AM signal.

*In the Shukhi village (Kapisa) the signal could be reached with difficulty by standing on the roof of a house or using a high quality radio. In Bazarak village in the Panshir Valley the signals are highly irregular. Villagers have been known to climb the surrounding mountains or to walk for more than an hour to reach a reliable signal.*

The BBC signal, in some provincial capitals (see map), is relayed **on the FM band** by transmitters often hosted by local radio stations, while parts of Radio Afghanistan's programs are broadcast in FM by some of the state provincial stations<sup>12</sup>. The range of the FM signal does not normally exceed a few dozen kilometers.

### 1.2.2. Stations from neighboring countries

In many provinces, radio stations from the neighboring countries are available on AM.

This is the case for Mashad Radio (broadcast from Mashad, eastern Iran), Radio Farda (Radio Free Europe's broadcast for Iran), and Radio Iran. The latter was found in nearly all the surveyed areas.

Radio Pakistan, Radio Tajikistan and Radio Uzbekistan can be received in provinces near the respective borders.

### 1.2.3. Kabul based FM stations

Arman FM, a commercial radio based in Kabul, is now available with an FM transmitter in several provincial capitals: Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat and very recently Kandahar (March 6, 2005). The programs are transferred by satellite from Kabul to these locations. Radio Killid, part of the Killid group, is a commercial radio station based in Kabul.

In the provinces surrounding Kabul, listeners sometimes benefit from the signal of these Kabul-based FM stations. This was the case in some locations in Parwan, northern Wardak and Logar provinces.

### 1.2.4. Provincial state stations

In most of the provincial capitals visited, a provincial state-run FM station is available. It is generally run by the local office of the Ministry of Information and Culture (MIC) and has a coverage area varying from 10 to 100km. Financial and human resources are usually shared with the state provincial television, when it exists. These stations often serve as a relay for national Radio Afghanistan broadcasts.

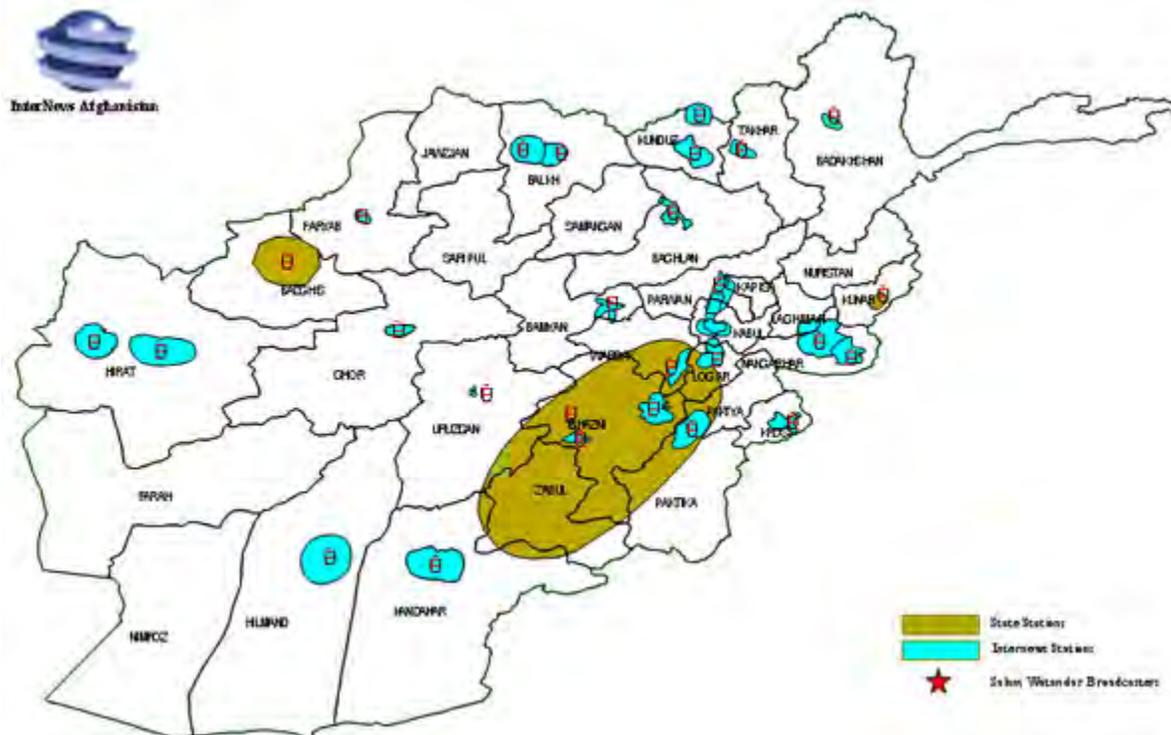
*In the provincial capital Chaghcharan (Ghor), according to local residents, the transmitter of the state provincial station was destroyed by the Coalition Forces at the end of the Taliban regime, and was never replaced. As a substitute, this station broadcasts 1.5 hours of daily programs through loudspeakers positioned at the bazaar. The "coverage area" of this station is thus a few hundred meters.*

<sup>12</sup> Many cases exist: in Badakhshan, the local state provincial radio broadcasts, on top of its own programs, some programs taken from Radio Afghanistan and BBC satellite streams.

**Radio Khost**, a state provincial radio station, shows the particularity of **transmitting in AM**, which provides the station with a nearly national coverage area. It was mentioned by interviewees in Patkya, Wardak, Ghor, and is apparently listened to in neighboring parts of Pakistan.

Local independent radio stations: As of March 2005, **Internews** had created or supported 28 local stations in the following provinces: Badakhshan, Balkh, Baghlan, Bamyán, Daikundi, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghor, Helmand, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, Kunduz, Logar, Nangarhar, Parwan, Takhar and Wardak.

Although these stations are meant to be independent from Internews, they nevertheless constitute a real network, broadcasting some programs in common (relayed from Kabul by satellite, particularly *Salam Watandar*).



**Figure 1-2: Internews created or supported radio stations (source Internews)**

A variety of other actors have developed other independent radio stations. Two of these were encountered in the surveyed areas: Youth Voice Radio in Herat (based at Herat University and supported by Sayara) and Omed Ghag Radio in Khost (privately supported by the governor of the province).

### 1.3. Television

Television coverage outside Kabul has grown quickly in the last two years, thanks to the rebuilding or enhancement of existing local television facilities, as well as other broadcast technologies.

### 1.3.1. Broadcast television

#### a) Television Afghanistan

The station is the television branch of RTA (Radio and Television Afghanistan), run by the Ministry of Information and Culture (MIC). It produces around 10 hours of programming everyday. Its signal covers Kabul and parts of the surrounding provinces.

The station's programs are transmitted to state provincial television stations by satellite, then transmitted via terrestrial signals, under the supervision of the provincial offices of the MIC. Coverage areas vary from 15 km for Faizabad Television to up to 100 km for Ghazni Television.

Most of the state provincial television stations also produce their own programs, which they transmit alternatively with national programs. Quality and duration of local programming differs greatly across provinces.



**Figure 1-3: Baghlan Television studios**

*In Pul-e-Khumri, Baghlan Television is broadcasting from 14:00 to 22:00, 6 hours of programs from Kabul Television, and 2 hours of locally produced programming. But local production facilities are extremely limited; for example, the team is borrowing cameras from friends and families. The all-in-one studios and offices are located in a large container outside the city. Technical problems with the transmitter recently prevented them from broadcasting for nearly a month.*

*In Herat, Herat Television is installed in a large building, on one side of the government palace. Studios are spread across several large rooms. One room is dedicated to in-house recording, with one wall featuring a world map for the evening news, another wall has a black board for educational programs, and one corner set features a table with flowers for the taping of women's programs.*

This system of relaying national programs was generally observed in surveyed provinces, with the exception of the most isolated provinces: Bamyan, Wardak, Ghor and Khost.

#### b) Non-government television channels

**Afghan TV**, created in May 2004 is the first private television channel in Kabul. It broadcasts 24 hours a day, including six hours of live broadcast. Its broadcast area covers Kabul City and should be extended to four other provinces in the second quarter of 2005. Its director Ahmad Shah Afghanzai is planning satellite broadcasts in the near future.

**Tolo TV** was created in 2004 and is based in Kabul. It is owned by Moby Capital Partners, which also started the commercial radio station Arman FM in 2002. The station is co-funded by Moby Capital Partners and USAID. Tolo TV currently broadcasts in Kabul and its surrounding vicinity.

**Aina TV** (not affiliated with the Aina media NGO) is a private television station broadcasting from Sheberghan, the capital of Jawzjan province. Although it was difficult to obtain exact information on the station's supporters, it is often perceived by interviewees to be aligned with General Abdul Rashim Dostom, a powerful warlord in the northern region.

**Ghorian TV**, a private television station launched and funded by entrepreneur Hafizullah Haqdot, is based in Ghorian (Herat province). The station shares its offices and facilities with the local Internews-supported community radio, and broadcasts a set of local programs including news, health and education. The station also airs RTA programs – apparently without agreement – which it receives by satellite.

In border provinces, television channels from neighboring countries can be received with aerials. This is true in Nangarhar (Pakistan TV), Badakhshan (Tajikistan TV), Herat (Iranian channels), and Balkh (Uzbekistan TV).

### 1.3.2. Satellite

Satellite signals can be received everywhere in Afghanistan. Satellite television serves two needs:

- It replaces aerials where Television Afghanistan (RTA) cannot be received. In this case, the programs inserted by the state provincial television are not received.
- It is also a way to access more diversified channels (mostly Indian, Iranian, Arabic and Western).

### 1.3.3. Cable

Though developing rapidly, cable networks are still rare, and very few houses are connected. Cable television is available in some provincial capitals and in a few villages where a local entrepreneur has been able to develop a market. They offer a variety of national and international channels, from Western news to Arabic entertainment.

Among the places visited, Jalalabad, Herat, Pul-e-Khumri, Mazar-e-Sharif and the neighboring village Dihdadi, have access to one or more cable networks.



*In Jalalabad, cable television networks are strong and well established. Three providers have been created in the last three years. On the whole, around 7,000 houses in Jalalabad, out of a population of about 100,000, were connected at the time of the evaluation (February 2005). The set-up price is \$20 and the monthly fee \$3-4.*

*In Dihdadi (Balkh), a rural location around 20 km from Mazar-e-Sharif, residents can receive 17 cable channels for \$3 a month from a local cable provider (pictured left). This company estimates that 45% of the potential market is already tapped. This surprising situation (a cable network in a village) is partly explained by the fact that many inhabitants of Dihdadi work in Mazar-e-Sharif.*

## 1.4. Press

### 1.4.1. Distribution channels

Press is available in all Afghan provincial capitals, some district capitals and a very limited number of villages through a variety of distribution channels.

**Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan (DHS) created the Nye Distribution Network (formerly Killid distribution network) in 2002.** The network, initially based on *Killid*, the largest weekly magazine in Afghanistan, now distributes a broad range of other publications.



Paid representatives were met in Ghazni, Jalalabad, Mazar-e-Sharif, Pul-e-Khumri, Herat and Kandahar. There was an office in Bamyan as well, but it appeared largely inactive. The representatives are responsible for obtaining the copies from Kabul and distributing them to the selling points (book shops, pharmacists, dedicated red carts, etc), both in the provincial center, rural districts and, at times, in neighboring provinces. Once a week the sellers return the unsold copies and the revenue of the sales, minus their commission. Selling points were observed in all provincial centers and scarcely in rural areas, with high variability in sales and regularity in supply.

*In Ghazni province, around 1,500 copies of Killid and 1,000 copies of Mursal are distributed every week. Newspapers such as Kabul Weekly, Eqtedor-e-Milli, and Watandar are available as well. Distribution involves about 30 representatives in the center and in the districts. The success of the network is evident in that only 12% of interviewees in the province report that the lack of access is the reason for not reading newspapers.*

*Distribution in Ghor is nominal if it exists at all and newspapers are rarely found. In Chaghcharan (provincial capital), the most recent copy found in the bazaar was more than two months old – and the roads were just about to be closed for the winter.*

The main titles officially distributed by the Nye network are:

- *Killid* (weekly general interest magazine, 22,000 copies)
- *Mursal* (weekly, women's magazine, 15,000 copies)
- *Kabul Weekly* (weekly newspaper, 7000 copies)
- *Roz* (monthly, women's magazine, 2500 copies)
- *Malalai* (weekly women's magazine, 2500 copies)

The strength of the Nye distribution network is that it provides readers with a large variety of titles. Maintaining such a distribution network, given the logistical and financial difficulties, is in itself an accomplishment. However, the coverage of the country is still incomplete. Some provinces, and the majority of districts, are not regularly supplied. Newspapers are sent only once a week, which prevents daily newspapers from reaching areas outside of Kabul in a timely manner, if at all.

Local publications are also found in many places. For instance, 1,000 copies of the *Nangarhar* state newspaper are printed three times a week. *Marwand* is a private bi-monthly magazine in Pashto which has a print run of 2,000 in Kandahar. Most local papers have limited circulation and are not issued regularly.

*“Here, daily newspapers are issued once a week, weeklies once a month and monthlies once a year.”*  
(Local Media Manager, Khost)

a) Self-distribution of local newspapers

Local newspapers often have their own distribution network in the vicinity of the production center. Whether state run or independent, they are usually distributed to offices (local branches of the government, districts, NGOs). The local state newspaper is usually exchanged for other provinces' publications.

b) Informal distribution via commuters

In most rural locations, the only way to obtain print media is to bring it in from the nearest city through travelers or taxi drivers. This is particularly true for the areas around major urban centers, where villagers receive from time to time magazines and newspapers from friends and relatives who commute to the city.

In other locations, such as Bamyan, there is a demand that is not fully satisfied. Some local shopkeepers suggested that there should be a place in Kabul where drivers who regularly travel to other provinces could purchase national and local newspapers.

### 1.5. Internet

Internet development follows a disparate pattern in Afghanistan.

On the one hand, access points in UN or NGO offices are rather widespread – they exist in all of the provincial centers visited, but are not accessible to the general public. On the other hand, public access through Internet cafés was observed only in Jalalabad, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Kandahar and Khost. In some cases, the lack of Internet cafés is partly offset by NGOs opening public access rooms.

*In Ghazni, the absence of Internet cafes was compensated by the presence of a public access in the Aina office.*

*In Herat, the Swiss organization, Media Action International, set up Internet access in 2003 for students and journalists.*

*In Khost, the school of journalism at the university has access, which is funded by Sayara and reserved for teachers and journalism students. The first public Internet café opened in late 2004.*

### 1.6. Mobile media

Mobile media presentations were reported by interviewees in many provinces, but not directly observed in the field. Neither FCCS<sup>13</sup> / Sayara Mobile Theater, nor Aina / Afghan Film Mobile Cinema was active during the period of evaluation.

*In the northern region, Aina/Afghan Film mobile cinema served Balkh, Jawzjan and Samangan provinces by showing short films on education and health issues, as well as the new constitution. In these areas, 200 mobile cinema screenings were held in 200 villages, educational centers, schools, madrassas and outdoors. The Aina Media Center in Mazar indicated that it will continue on a smaller scale with mobile cinema local-showings, starting with a mine awareness program.*

*In Baghlan, the Mobile Theater campaign for the presidential elections, carried out by FCCS / Sayara in the summer of 2004 and funded by The Asia Foundation, was quite active in the province. The show played 18 times in June 2004 in different locations of Pul-e-Khumri, Dahana-e-Ghori and Baghlan districts. According to the organization's estimates, it attracted about 19,000 spectators in Baghlan province.*

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<sup>13</sup> Foundation for Culture and Civil Society, Afghan NGO based in Kabul.

Overall it was difficult to get feedback on mobile media as screenings had occurred at least two months prior to the evaluation.

**1.7. Conclusion**

Considering the absence of independent media during the Taliban regime, and the state of public media after its fall, the first three years of media development in Afghanistan can be considered a shared success for all involved.

It should be remembered that the current media development has not been achieved from scratch. Often, what existed before the war has been used as a foundation for reconstruction. Most of the provincial television stations were created in the 1980s, and sometimes earlier. Very often, the state local newspapers were created more than 30 years ago, when they had high circulations and more regular print runs.

*Jarida-e-Badakhshan (“Badakhshan Press”) is a state newspaper. It was created in 1946 as a weekly newspaper. For a time, it even went daily, but now it is published only twice a month, and distributed only to state offices, through subscription and in exchange for other provinces’ newspapers. 300 copies only are printed with very old equipment.*

The last three years have also witnessed the introduction of media that did not exist previously, such as cable television.

**1.7.1. Strata of coverage**

The initial approach, considering different *strata* of coverage for the different media was confirmed by the observations:

<i>Media availability noticed in the locations visited, at the time of the evaluations</i>											
	Television Afghanistan			Radio					Newspapers		Internet
	Television Afghanistan	Other broadcast TV	Cable TV	Main AM stations	Internews FM stations	BBC (FM)	Local state radio	Other indepd. stations	Nye distribution	Local newspapers	Internet
Balkh	x	x	x	x	xx		x	x	xxx	xx	xxx
Herat East – Herat city	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	xxx	xxx	xxx
Nangarhar	x	x	x	x	xx		x		xxx	xx	xxx
Baghlan	x		x	x	x	x	x		xxx	xx	x
Khost				x	x	x	x	x	xxx	xx	xx
Kandahar	x		x	x	x	x	x		xx	x	xx
Ghazni	x			x	x		x		xxx	x	x
Parwan – Shamali	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	
Badakhshan	x			x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Logar	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	
Bamyan				x	x	x			x	x	x
Wardak				x	x	x			x	x	
Parwan – Kapisa	x	x		x	x	x					
Herat West		x		x	x				x		
Ghor				x	x					x	x

**Large cities** are well served by the media, with a large array of radio and television stations available (both public and private), numerous publications distributed, and the quick development of Internet cafés.

**Medium cities** generally benefit from the presence of public radio and television, as well as from an independent radio station. Most of them (but unfortunately not all) are also adequately supplied in print media by the Nye distribution network, but generally do not have public Internet access.

**Semi-rural areas** get public radio and television, where available, from the nearest provincial center, and receive an irregular distribution of newspapers. Public Internet access is unavailable, and cable television was observed, as an exception, in Dihdadi (Balkh province).

**Rural areas** are by essence the most isolated. They generally rely on AM radio, and in rare cases on some FM stations. They generally do not get any broadcast television signal, but a small number of wealthy households have purchased satellite antennas in order to receive international channels. In these locations, the press arrives irregularly from commuters: never more than a handful of outdated copies which generally leave the potential readers frustrated.

### 1.7.2. *Positive factors in media development*

#### a) *Individual initiatives and emulation*

Individual initiatives, though they normally have a limited impact on overall media, should not be overlooked.

*The journalism training center in Saïd Abad, Wardak, was created in 2002 by an Afghan individual. A pool of journalists was since formed in the area, helping to provide a foundation for the Internews radio station that has been established. It is now supported by "Mediothek für Afghanistan" (German media NGO).*

*In Jalalabad (Nangarhar Province), media is booming, largely due to the efforts of one man: Engineer Shaiq. He has created Radio Sharq, Shaiq newspaper, and has produced a movie called Black Poison (filmed in Nangarhar). He is also planning to create an independent local television station in the future. These media outlets have largely been financed through revenues from other activities run by this entrepreneur (construction, imports, etc).*

#### b) *Help from international organizations*

The international community has played an important role in developing the media in Afghanistan. Below are some examples that were observed in the field.

- **Internews** and **IOM**, have created an important network of local radio stations and are also providing training to numerous journalists.
- **The Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS)** contributed to the development of women's radio stations in Herat and in Mazar-e-Sharif, among other projects.
- **Aïna** has created a network of *Media and Culture Centers* in seven provinces outside Kabul, where people can access the news and journalists are provided with resources. In most of these centers, the public can access the pressrooms and libraries, as well as have access to the Internet. The headquarters in Kabul also hosts several publications, two radio production units, one video production unit and one photo agency.
- **Sayara** media & communication agency has created mobile theater campaigns in collaboration with FCCS (Foundation for Culture and Civil Society) and supports university radio stations in Herat and Kabul, among other projects directly targeting Afghan journalists.
- **Mediothek für Afghanistan** focuses more on helping journalists, but its centers are opened to the general public.

### 1.7.3. *Negative factors for media presence*

#### a) *Disorganized and fragmented initiatives*

Although efforts with regard to media seem well coordinated between the main donors and international NGOs, there is a dispersion of efforts at the local level, which endangers the sustainability of small media projects.

This is particularly the case for the press. There are currently more than 200 newspapers registered with the Ministry of Information and Culture. Local newspapers are extremely varied (more than 20 in Khost for instance). This situation testifies of the dynamism and emulation of individuals willing to develop print media. However, extreme diversification leads to low circulations, a lack of scale effect and, thus, a short-lived existence.

*Several endeavors to establish local private newspapers have taken place in Ghazni. Zamzam, Neda-e-Ghazni and subsequently Naestan existed for a short while and then stopped printing due to lack of revenues relative to operating and printing costs. They were local weekly newspapers focused on news, with print runs of around 1,000 copies.*

Diversification is not as extreme for radio stations but raises issues in some cases. The rapid expansion of small community radio stations shows an encouraging interest in media, but might also threaten their financial sustainability as sources of revenue are limited.

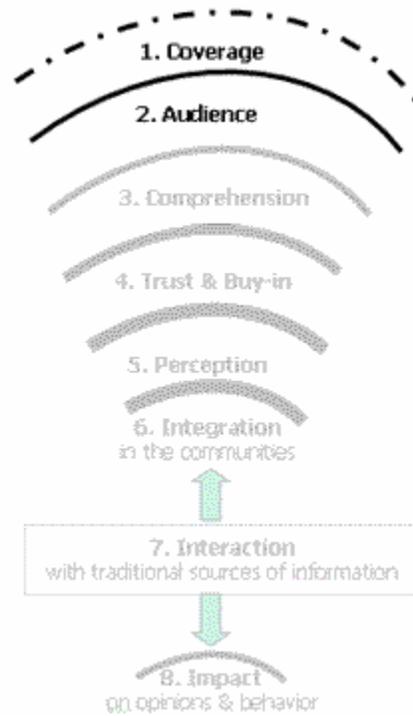
#### b) *Geographical constraints*

Afghanistan's terrain makes radio and television signals difficult to receive in some areas. In mountainous provinces such as Badakhshan, local FM signals, as well as RTA, cannot be received beyond 15 or 20 kilometers because of mountain ranges.

Transportation difficulties are an obstacle mostly for the distribution of the press. Some provincial capitals are over one day's reach of Kabul and, therefore, newspapers and magazines arrive late.

## 2. AUDIENCE

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**Eshaq Suleiman village, Herat province**

*Taking advantage of the access to Iranian state channels, people in even rural areas with no electricity manage to watch television on old b&w sets that they power with car batteries.*

## 2.1. Penetration of different media

### 2.1.1. Equipment

#### a) Relative penetration of media devices

<i>Equipment</i>	
	Total
Radio	83%
Television	37%
Internet in the vicinity	6%

*N = 1507*

The equipment ownership rate in 15 provinces underlines the **dominant position of radio** among all other media, and the high rate of radio equipment ownership in Afghanistan. The standard price of a basic radio set is approximately \$3-4. For an average usage of 4 hours/day, expense on batteries amounts to around \$1 per week.

**Ownership of television** is relatively high considering that data were collected outside Kabul, but it should be specified that the survey sample purposively over-represents urban & semi-urban centers where television ownership is higher than in rural areas. Some respondents might have confused “ownership of a television” and “access to television” (through friends and neighbors). The price of a black and white television set is approximately \$35, while a basic color set costs around \$70.

Television ownership does not mean access to television channels, since nearly a third of television owners only use their television set to watch VCD/DVDs. For these people, DVDs are a substitute for expensive satellite antennas that give access to entertainment channels, when these are not available through cable or broadcast. Pirated DVDs of Indian, and to a lesser extent, Western movies, can be found in all bazaars for approximately \$1, and a DVD player costs around \$60. A satellite set (dish antenna and receiver) costs around \$120.

<i>What type of television do you have?</i>	
No television	60%
Local	22%
Cable	3%
Satellite	4%
DVD only	11%

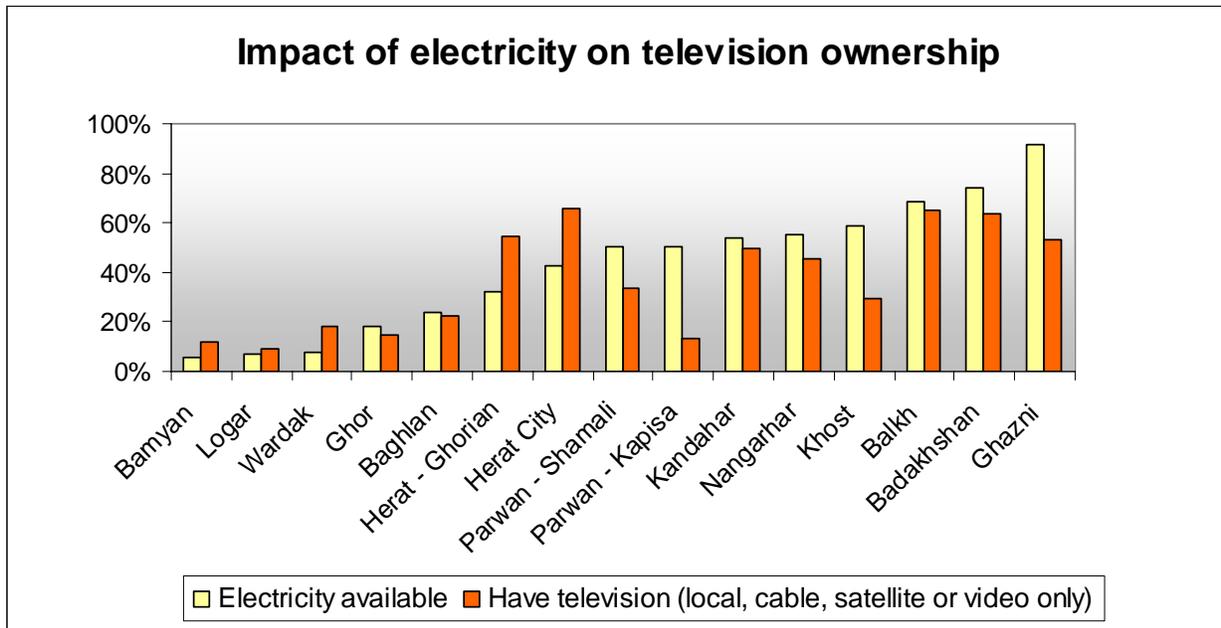
*N = 1426*

#### b) Regional Variations

The **Radio** equipment ownership rate is relatively steady across the surveyed provinces (between 80 and 95%).

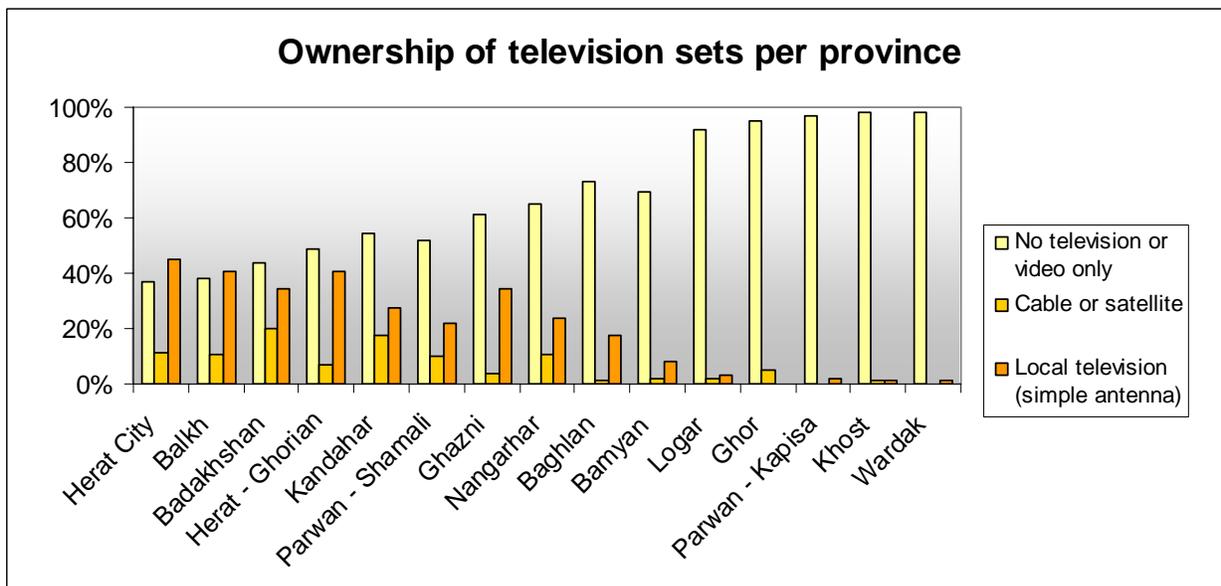
**Television** ownership is, in the first place, correlated to presence of broadcast signals, followed by access to electricity. Some exceptions should be pointed out:

- In Parwan-Kapisa, the television equipment rate is surprisingly low compared to the level of access to electricity. This exception to the general pattern is likely due to poverty and cultural resistance against this medium.
- In Herat, the television equipment ownership rate is high compared to access to electricity. Due to the abundance of television signals originating in Iran, many people have been observed finding alternative sources of energy (such as a car battery) to run their television set.



Television ownership analyzed per type of equipment (network television, cable, satellite, video/DVD only) shows a **high presence of aerials (antennas) in provinces with major urban centers**, where local television is available and the average disposable income is higher (Balkh, Herat, Nangarhar). Isolated provinces with no broadcast television signal, which are generally the poorest, show the lowest rate of equipment (Bamyan, Logar, Wardak).

Khost is an exceptional case where there is a dynamic media community (in terms of number of actors and media channels) and where electricity is available (hence a high rate of DVD players). Yet the television equipment rate is very low. This is due to the fact that no broadcast television signals are received. In addition, as Dari is hardly spoken in this mainly Pashto-speaking area, there is little interest in Dari-dominated broadcast television.

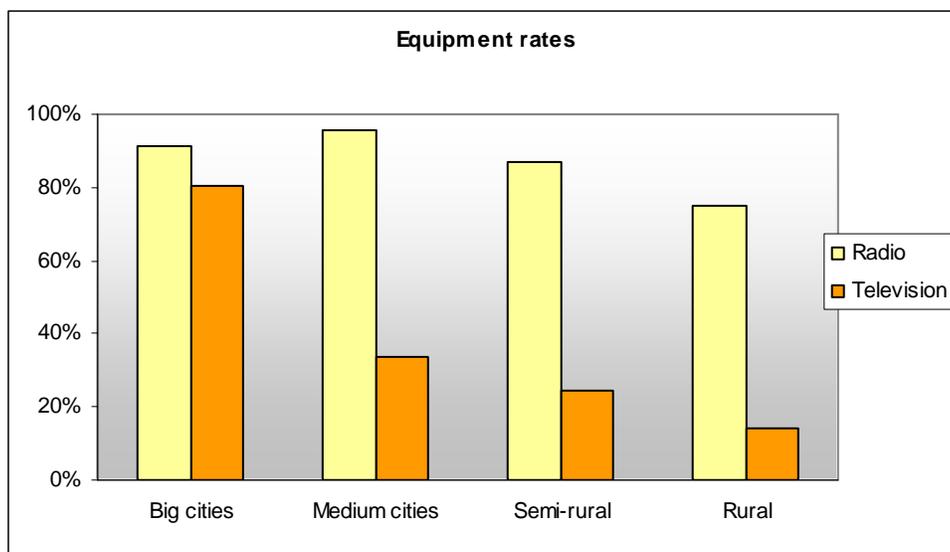


**In Bamyan Province**, where radio set ownership is at the highest level (94%), only 4% of respondents have a television (using them mostly to watch DVDs due to the absence of coverage), and 3% have a mobile phone.

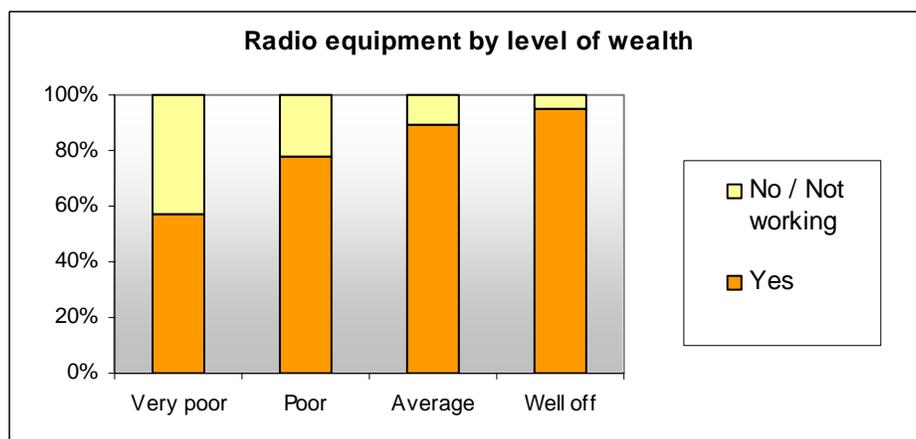
**In Balkh Province**, where the access to electricity is probably the best (72% of respondents reported having access to electricity), television set ownership rates are the highest – 68% at the provincial level, 96% in the city of Mazar alone. 12% of respondents said they had cable television (Herat and Jalalabad follow similar trends).

c) Influence of wealth and isolation on equipment ownership

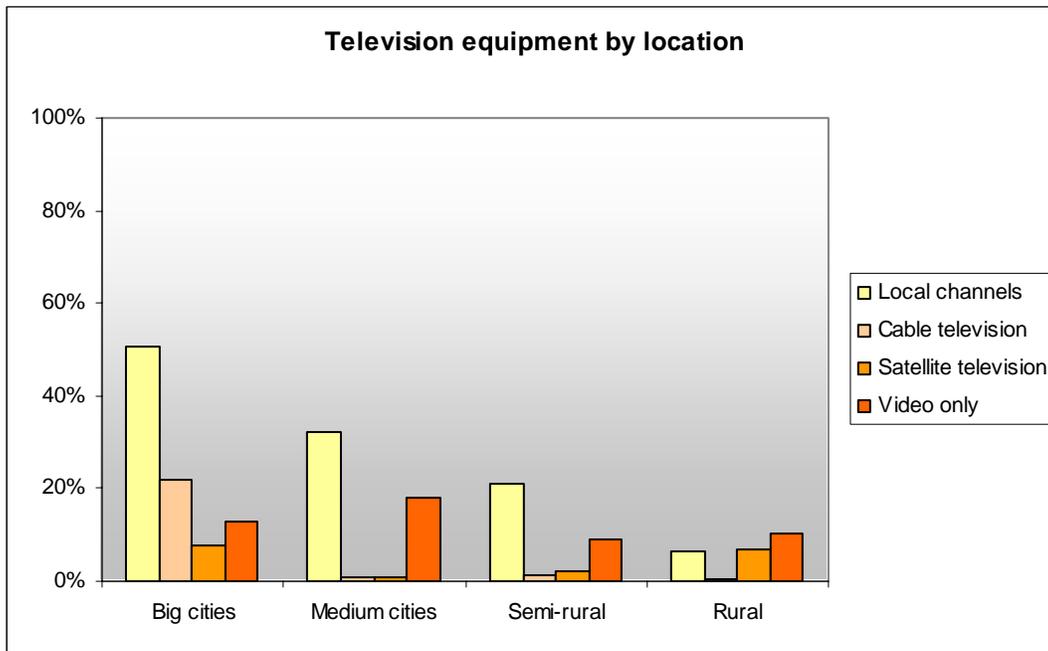
**Radio:** Although radio is often the only media available in isolated locations, remote villages show a slightly lower rate of radio equipment ownership than urban centers (average 75% for remote villages vs. 91% for big cities). This situation is probably due to poverty and lack of choice between stations. For example, **in Badakhshan** the radio ownership rate is 95% in the provincial center of Faizabad, 84% in Batosh (around 15 km away) and 77% in Baharak (around 60km away).



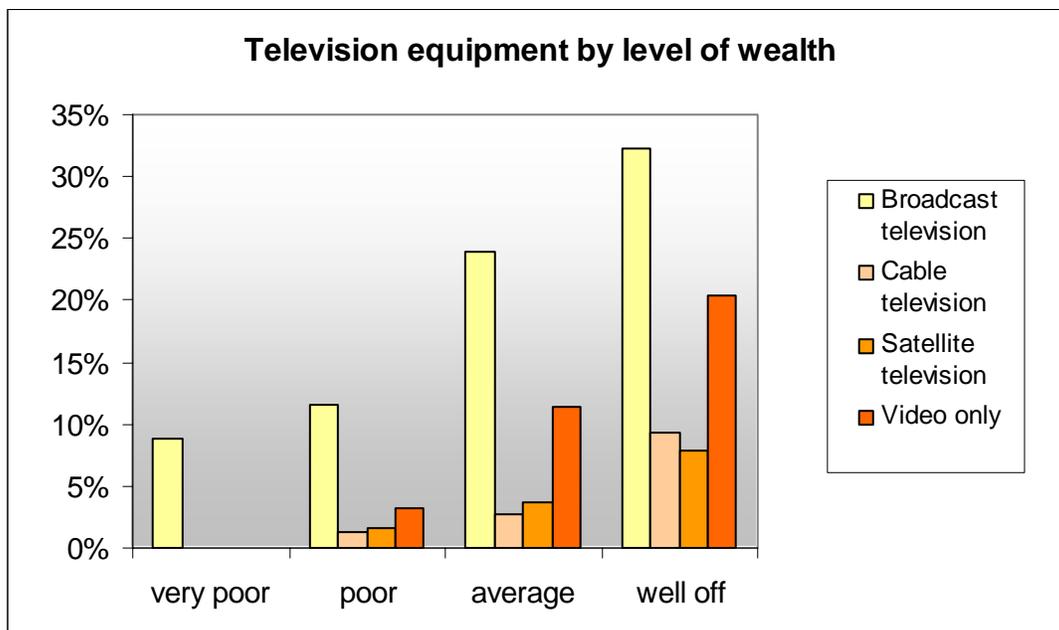
The levels of wealth presented below have been evaluated by the interviewers in compliance with precise standards. Very poor applies to interviewees who sometimes go hungry. Poor applies to people who do not suffer from lack of food but can hardly afford any comfort. Average applies to people who can afford some home equipment and have a regular source of income. Well-off applies to people who own a mobile phone, sometimes a car and/or are important landowners.



**Television:** Generally speaking, television ownership decreases with isolation. Cable television, in particular, exists almost only in big cities. Satellite antennas are wide spread in big cities, due to a relative prosperity and an eagerness to access more channels. The presence of satellite antennas slightly rises in rural locations: broadcast television is not received and satellite reception constitutes the only solution to receive Television Afghanistan (RTA). Ownership rates of DVD players are more or less steady across locations, as they are not tied to the availability of broadcast signals.



**The influence of the level of wealth is much more important for television than radio.** Cable television and satellite television are particularly sensitive to the level of wealth, because they respectively require monthly fees (\$3-4) and initial investments (the set-up cost of cable television is usually around \$20).



**2.2. Overall media consumption**

Media Consumption			
	Men	Women	Total
Listen to radio	89%	77%	83%
Watch television	38%	34%	36%
Read newspapers*	31%	19%	25%
Connect to Internet	3%	2%	2%

*N = 1507 \* Read or have someone reading for them*

**Media consumption habits are almost in line with equipment rates: Radio has a clear leadership** in the 15 research areas, with a rate of listenership of 83%. Television follows with a 36% audience amongst interviewees.

**Newspapers show a surprisingly high audience**, considering the low literacy rate in Afghanistan (22% of the population over 15 years old, CSO 2003), but 10% of respondents declared that someone reads for them, which confirms observations. Indeed, in some villages public readings by a literate person in the community have been witnessed.

This high figure for print media is to be considered carefully. The sampling methodology over-represented urban centers and included more literate people than the national average. Many interviewees may be ashamed to admit that they do not read newspapers, and tend to exaggerate their answer to a question which is directly related to literacy and education. Some respondents tended to answer “yes” to the question “Do you read the press?”, even if they only access a newspaper a few times a year.

<i>Newspaper Usage</i>			
	Men	Women	Total
I read	25%	14%	19%
Someone reads for me	11%	8%	10%
I don't use newspapers	65%	78%	71%

*N = 1507*

### 2.2.1. Influencing factors for media usage

#### a) Gender

Men tend to consume slightly more media than women. The difference is limited with regard to radio (16%) and television (12%), but rather significant when it comes to print media (63%). This largely reflects the fact that male literacy rates are higher than that of female in Afghanistan.

Still, observations revealed that the women who listen to radio tend to listen to it more than men, since they have more opportunity to tune in during the day while doing some work at home.

#### b) Literacy

**The influence of literacy on media consumption is determinant for all media, although it is more acute for television and for newspapers than for radio.**

Although literacy is not a pre-requisite to watch television programs, literacy and wealth are closely correlated in Afghanistan, as in most developing countries. Literate people, being wealthier, do have a higher chance to own a television and to watch it.

However, some literate people believe that television is more useful for non educated persons.

*“For the man on the street, television is more attractive and easier to access in terms of understanding than radio, as it provides simple but nonetheless reliable information.”*  
Amanullah, 72, Kabul.

The same can be said for radio, where the main reason for not having a radio is extreme poverty, often correlated with a low level of education.

Literates are of course the ones who are able to read newspapers, and 38% of them declared doing so (though the above-mentioned methodological limitations with respect to interpreting this percentage should be kept in mind). A small proportion of illiterates access newspapers via friends and relatives who read for them. Often, newspaper readers declare that they sometimes read aloud for their wife and children.

<i>Media Usage</i>		
	Literates	Illiterates
Listen to radio	89%	77%
Watch television	52%	26%
Read newspapers*	38%	2%
Connect to Internet	5%	1%

*N = 1507*

*\* Read or have someone read for them*

c) Wealth

<i>Media Usage</i>				
	Very poor	Poor	Average	Well off
Listen to radio	57%	77%	88%	92%
Watch television	11%	19%	41%	62%
Read newspapers*	9%	16%	35%	32%

N = 1507

\* Read or have someone read for them

The influence of wealth on media consumption is stronger than the influence of literacy, although both are often combined. This is particularly accurate when it comes to television: well-off people use television six times more than very poor people, due to the cost of equipment.

Print media is less sensitive to wealth levels: well-off people consume three times more print media than very poor people, mainly due to their better level of education and better access. More and more, though, the increasing prices of magazines tend to deter some potential readers.

According to the official Nye representative in Jalalabad, the sales of Malalai, a magazine with a focus on women, dropped from 200 to 50 per week when its price rose from 10 to 20 Afghanis (\$0.20 to \$0.40).

The relatively low level of radio equipment among the poorest has been confirmed by observations. Some people met in isolated areas (notably widows living a very deprived life) declared they did not have a radio because they could not afford one, let alone the batteries.

d) Regional variations

<i>Media Usage: Cross analysis per province</i>				
Province	Listen to radio	Watch television	Read newspapers*	Connect to Internet
Parwan-Shamali	81%	48%	37%	1%
Bamyan	95%	14%	11%	0%
Balkh	84%	61%	35%	4%
Baghlan	87%	27%	26%	2%
Parwan-Kapisa	83%	20%	6%	2%
Herat city	70%	57%	25%	10%
Wardak	98%	23%	20%	0%
Badakhshan	88%	67%	22%	0%
Herat West - Ghorian	72%	55%	26%	5%
Ghor	93%	17%	7%	0%
Ghazni	81%	47%	10%	3%
Logar	85%	12%	1%	0%
Khost	97%	22%	21%	1%
Nangarhar	86%	38%	27%	4%
Kandahar	67%	46%	14%	5%
<b>Averages</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>2%</b>
	above the average of the 15 provinces +5%			
	under the average of the 15 provinces -5%			

N = 1507 \* Read or have someone read for them

**The province-based cross analysis clearly shows that the type of media used in order of priority is directly correlated to the level of development and degree of isolation:**

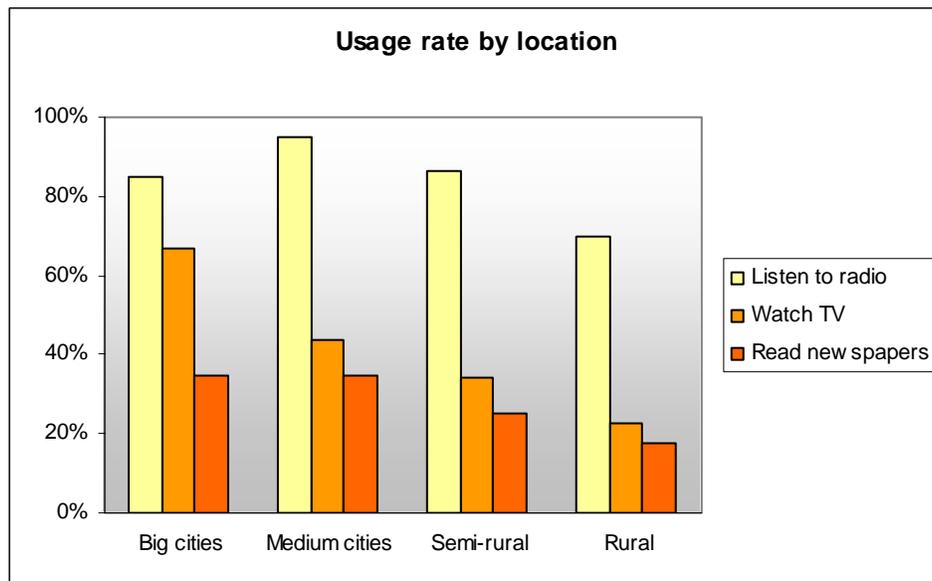
- **Dominance of radio with the highest listenership in the most isolated and/or the less developed provinces:** Bamyan (95%), Wardak (98%), Ghor (93%). These provinces also have a lower rate of television consumption due to lower access.
- In Khost province, isolation from the capital and the absence of broadcast television signals leave a large space for radio, which is listened to by 97% of interviewees.
- On the contrary, the provinces which are the most developed, the most central, or the ones that include an urban center (Balkh, Parwan - Shamali, Herat or Nangarhar) show higher consumption of television and press, and have a relatively lower rate of radio listenership. This may show that television, where available, is starting to affect the intensity of radio usage.

This assumption seems supported by the qualitative research conducted in Kabul. Among the interviewed households in Kabul, television is undoubtedly the most valued and the most widely used medium on a day-to-day basis. Interviewees in Kabul considered it to be more interesting and entertaining than radio and also easier to access and understand than print media.

e) Type of location

Although less covered by media than provincial centers, rural locations exhibit somewhat higher than expected consumption of television and newspapers. A reason for this discrepancy is that collective usage of media tends to be higher in rural locations. For instance, in isolated areas, the media available tend to be shared among more people. Sometimes villagers gather around the sole television. The intensity of usage may also differ with some rural residents reporting that they read newspapers when, in fact, they only read on an irregular basis.

*"I know how to read, and I read newspapers whenever I find one: about once a year."  
Male farmer, Khargenatu, Bamyan Province.*



Qualitative discussions showed that the more remote the area, the more the interviewees claimed to be interested in media. Some very remote areas were found to have the highest radio listenership (up to 98% of the interviewees). Probable reasons are a lack of alternatives to radio and absence of diversified opportunities of entertainment in remote villages.

### 2.2.2. *Obstacles to media usage*

#### a) *Leading factors*

**Revenue & education:** The very poor and illiterate are definitely the segment of the Afghan population that remains the most isolated from the media, including radio. Only 46% of them declared that they listened to the radio and 11% that they watched television.

**Isolation:** Although isolation is barely an obstacle to radio consumption, it was observed that the access to radio was sometimes limited by the weakness of the signal in some isolated and mountainous areas.

- The combined absence of electricity and broadcast television signals in remote locations is the main obstacle to television penetration.
- Print media distribution is almost always absent in remote locations, although it has been observed occasionally that commuters were able to bring some copies from the provincial center once in a while.

**Gender:** Although surveys and observations showed that the impact of gender on media consumption is, on average, relatively limited, there is a clear handicap for women who combine all negative factors previously mentioned. **Poor, illiterate women living in isolated areas have the lowest access to media.** Cross analysis of these four criteria yielded only a small number of interviewees (16 women), but appeared nevertheless to confirm this assumption: only five of them had a radio set they listened to.

This segment of the population was closely observed by Sarah Kamal, who conducted research in a remote village of Samangan province<sup>14</sup> in February 2004. Only 12% of women she interviewed reported listening to the radio. The study highlighted their limited access to radio sets, a lack of freedom or initiative to use it, and a low level of understanding of the language and concepts used by radio stations.

However, research conducted in a large set of locations showed that this observation could not be generalized to all women – neither to all women living in remote places.

#### b) *Secondary factors*

**Language barriers:** The Language barrier is stronger for radio and newspapers than for television, where images offset the absence of understanding. For instance, a large number of Al Jazeera watchers do not understand Arabic. For radio, however, monolingual Pashto speakers, who do not understand Dari are limited in their choice of stations and programs, as Dari is the dominant language.

**Cultural barriers:** In some conservative areas, it has been observed that television, and especially satellite channels, were considered to be unsuitable and contrary to Islam. However, the impact of such religious denunciation is not clear. It seems that the broad majority of interviewees buy media equipment and use it all the same (with the exception of some mullahs, who must be consistent with their sermons.)

Two male interviewees in Jalalabad declared: *“Our mullah cannot change our personality, it is our life. He just says to do things this or that way, but we do not need not do follow it 100%.”*

#### c) *Time/disinterest*

Some interviewees answered that they had no time for listening to radio or watching television. However, this was in a nominal amount of cases.

<sup>14</sup> *Disconnected from Discourse: Women’s Radio Listening in Rural Samangan, Afghanistan*, by Sarah Kamal (2004)

## 2.3. Consumption habits & behavior

### 2.3.1. Frequency

<i>How often do you use... ?</i>						
	Radio		Television		Newspapers	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Every day	89%	76%	78%	66%	16%	17%
Several times a week	8%	15%	12%	20%	23%	39%
Once a week	1%	4%	2%	6%	37%	20%
A few times a month	1%	1%	3%	2%	19%	4%
Less than once a month	0%	1%	1%	2%	3%	13%
About once a month	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	7%
	<i>N = 1243 (radio users)</i>		<i>N = 441 (television users)</i>		<i>N = 172 (newspapers readers)</i>	

This chart shows the high frequency of radio and television usage.

83% of interviewees listen to radio everyday (73% for television). Although fewer women listen to radio daily, they catch up with men in listening to radio in the “several times a week” category.

Women watch television less often than men, because the television is often used by the head of family with his guests.

Press usage is far less frequent, because the distribution is not regular in most places, and does not include daily newspapers.

Usually, one copy of a newspaper is read by more than one person. On a sample of 95 valid answers, interviewees claimed that one copy is passed on to 7 people on average. Not surprisingly, the average circulation is higher among male readers (7.5) than female readers (6).

### 2.3.2. Location for usage

#### a) Favorite locations to listen to radio

Where do you listen to radio?			
	Men	Women	Total
Home	83%	97%	89%
Mobile radio	13%	2%	8%
Shops / bazaar	12%	0%	7%
Work	5%	0%	3%
Car / Taxi	3%	1%	2%
Relative's place	2%	1%	2%
School	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%
Friend's place	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%
NGOs	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Women's center	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
<i>Chai khana</i>	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%
Ice cream shop	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%
Public places	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>No answer</i>	1%	2%	1%

*N= 1243 (all radio users)*

The data shows a predominance of **home listening** for radio.

Women rarely have any other choice. Only a handful of women said they were listening to radio in taxis, or at a relative's place—one woman said she tuned in at a women's center. Women usually turn on the radio during the day while doing housework.

Men have other opportunities to listen to radio: in public places, e.g. shops, at the bazaar or at work. Moreover, 13% of male respondents carry a mobile radio.

Chai khana yielded a very low number of answers. People do not go there with the purpose of listening to the radio and, therefore, do not cite it as a usual place of usage.

Direct observation also showed that men often listen to the radio collectively during informal gatherings, in particular in rural areas where village men informally meet together on a daily basis and discuss a variety of issues, including news on the radio.

b) *Favorite locations to watch television*

Where do you watch television ?			
	Men	Women	Total
Home	93%	98%	95%
Friend's place	5%	1%	3%
Bazaar/shops	1%	0%	1%
School	0%	0%	0%
Women's center	0%	0%	0%
NGOs	0%	0%	0%
Relative's place	1%	0%	0%
<i>Chai khana</i>	0%	0%	0%
Ice cream shop	0%	0%	0%
Public places	1%	0%	0%
<i>No answer</i>	1%	2%	2%

*N = 269 for men and 172 for women*

Television is normally used at home. It is almost exclusively used in the evenings, when most of people return from work and gather with their family members.

A few interviewees declared watching television at friends' places, which is confirmed by direct observation. In some remote areas where only one or two well-off families have a television, neighbors are invited by them to watch.

*A local commander in the Jam valley (Ghor Province), explained that every time he wants to watch television, he has to turn on his generator and the villagers, alerted by its noise, come and watch it with him.*

However, in the quantitative survey, interviewees only gave the primary place where they usually watch television, that is to say, at home rather than friends' houses.

**Even if many restaurants, hotels** and some ice cream shops own satellite TVs or, more often, VCD/DVD players, nobody claimed to watch television there. Most of the time, people hear the radio or can see a television that is on in hotels and restaurants, but very rarely focus on them the entire time. Almost nobody goes to a hotel or a restaurant with the purpose of using these media. Customers who watch television together in hotels and restaurants tend to do so because they happen to be there, not because they are bored at home or like exchanging views on programs with strangers. It is also to be noticed that the owner of the establishment generally controls the choice of the channel.

c) *Favorite places to read newspapers and magazines*

Newspapers and magazines are read in a number of different places, including shops (especially pharmacies, bookstores and stationary shops), where men sometimes pick up a publication made available by the shopkeeper.

<i>Where do you read newspapers?</i>			
	Men	Women	Total
Home	60%	70%	63%
Shops	27%	2%	19%
School	6%	25%	12%
NGOs	1%	2%	1%
Friend's place	1%	0%	1%
<i>Chai khana</i>	2%	0%	1%
Public places	2%	0%	2%

*N = 162 for men and 64 for women*

Women, who have less freedom to go to public places, can read magazines that are brought back home by their husbands. Schools are also important in terms of where females can alternatively access print media. The fact that the core readership of magazines such as *Mursal* is constituted of female high school students attests to this.

### Focus: Public points of media consumption

**Hotels and restaurants**, as a general rule, own media devices depending on their quality. Lower-end establishments tend to have only a radio while the mid-range may have a television and a VCD/DVD player. The high-end establishments often have a satellite antenna.

Typically, movies or music videos from India and Iran are played. During peak hours, when noise levels are high and people are busy talking and eating, less attention is paid to the TV. But when the television is broadcasting a popular series or an important news story people tend to pay close attention. During off-peak hours, hotel workers and lingering customers often watch more attentively. At night, people who are sleeping at the establishment usually watch the news on Television Afghanistan and/or movies in the common room.

**Loudspeakers** are normally found at mosques and at bazaars. In mosques they are used for the call to prayer, death announcements and to convene near-by villagers to a gathering (on common works or NGO projects, for instance). Bazaar loudspeakers are often used by the municipality for official announcements. In some places, they are used to regulate the prices.

**Ice cream shops** often own a television and show DVDs of Indian movies. The audience consists mostly of young male and jobless individuals who pay a small sum to watch.

**Cars and buses** are an important place of collective radio listening. However, cassettes are often preferred to radio. The acoustic quality is low and the poor road conditions make it difficult to understand everything.

**Cinemas** are rare and often considered to be dirty. The large majority of Afghans prefer watching movies at home. Women have no choice as they are not allowed to go to the cinema.

**Libraries** are few and their collections are limited (a few hundred books). They can be found in provincial information and culture departments, in some cultural centers set up by NGOs (Aina for instance). In the cities of Bamyan, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Jalalabad and Kabul there are libraries at the local universities.

**Schools** are an important place to exchange magazines (mostly *Killid* and *Mursa*) between pupils and for collective reading.

**Offices** are places of exchange and collective reading of newspapers. Usually, local newspapers, whether private or state run, are distributed to governmental offices and NGOs.

Radios are on in most **shops**, which are often gathering points for small groups of three or four listeners.

### 2.3.3. Decision makers

Most interviewees said they **turn on the radio themselves** including 59% of women interviewed. This tends to contradict the perception or stereotype that women are not permitted to have such a liberty. Still, 28% of interviewed women stated that their husband was the one turning on the radio. When the head of family (husband, father or father-in-law) is at home, he usually turns on the radio and chooses the station. Otherwise (during the day), women and their children are generally free to do so. When women have their own radio set, they enjoy greater autonomy, even when the men are at home.

This relative autonomy of women towards media was usually confirmed by direct observation, with the exception of Paktia Province, where some uneducated women were far less free to use the media by themselves, or did not dare to do so.

<i>Who turns on ?</i>				
	Radio		Television	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Myself	85%	59%	56%	37%
Spouse	5%	28%	30%	19%
Child	9%	20%	3%	22%
Brother/sister	3%	16%	1%	15%
Parent	5%	7%	5%	7%
Other	4%	3%	3%	8%
No answer	4%	6%	7%	5%
<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>666</i>	<i>577</i>	<i>269</i>	<i>172</i>

The situation is different for **television**: the proportion of women who turn it on themselves is somewhat lower. However, the figures presented above clearly show that there is no general interdiction for women to use television.

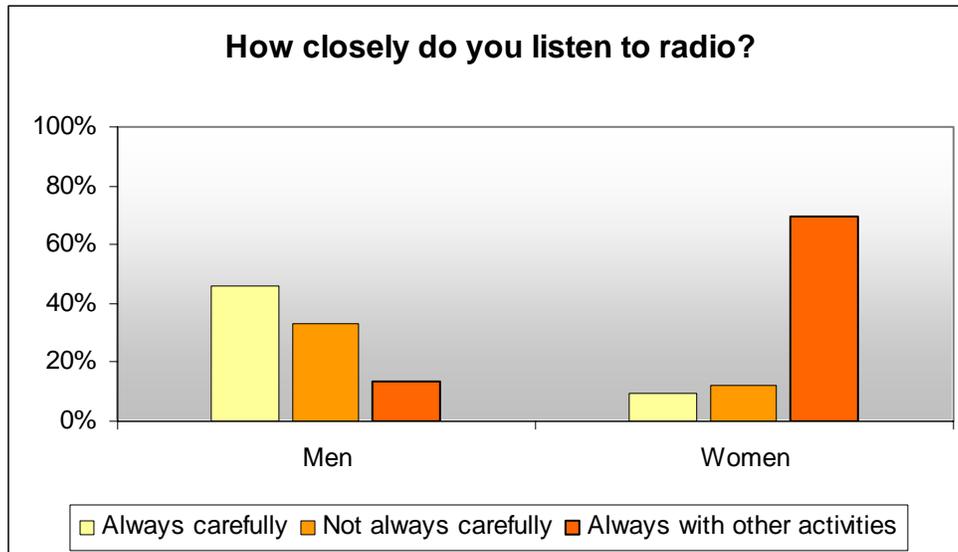
As women have fewer opportunities than men to go out of home, they have few chances to go to the bazaar and buy newspapers and mainly read the ones brought by their husbands. Schoolgirls seem to be an exception. They are often free to buy magazines and exchange them with school friends.

However, some individuals do not dare to assert their intellectual autonomy and believe that they need third parties to decide for them. This attitude is probably correlated to a conscious lack of education.

*“We live in a remote place and are very vulnerable. We would need an honest person to identify a good newspaper that we should read.” (Mullah, non-media user, Baghlan, village 2)*

### 2.3.4. Attentiveness to media

#### a) Male vs. female listeners



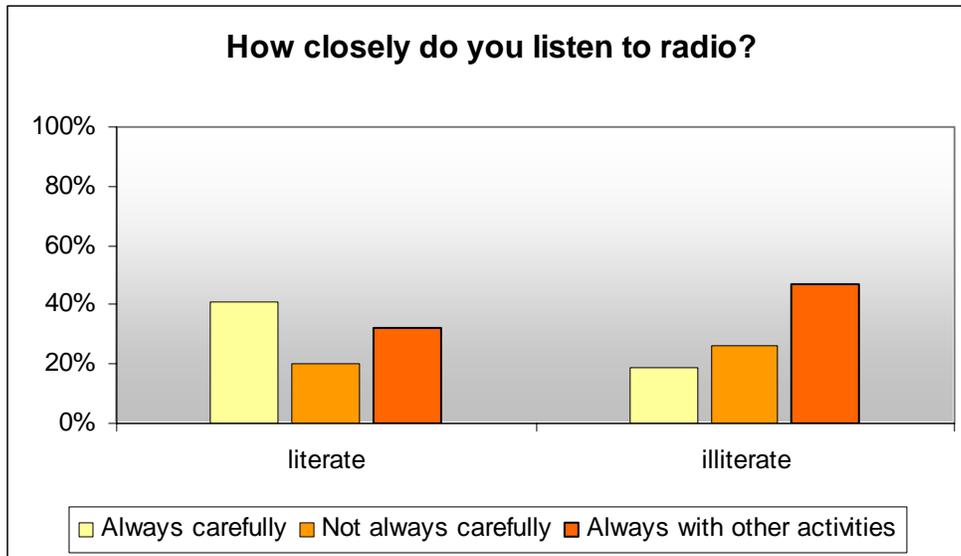
There is a very **stark difference between men and women** concerning attentiveness. Most women listen to the radio while they do housework (cooking, taking care of the children, cleaning the house, etc), whereas male listeners can more easily focus on the programs when they turn the radio on.

*“We received information about the election process from radio stations, but we did not listen to it closely, because we have children to take care of.” Illiterate female interviewee from Jalalabad, 45*

Still, some women did not admit that they stayed at home and just listened to the radio, because they feared being suspected of laziness. Instead, they would tend to say that they were very busy with housework and listened to radio at the same time.

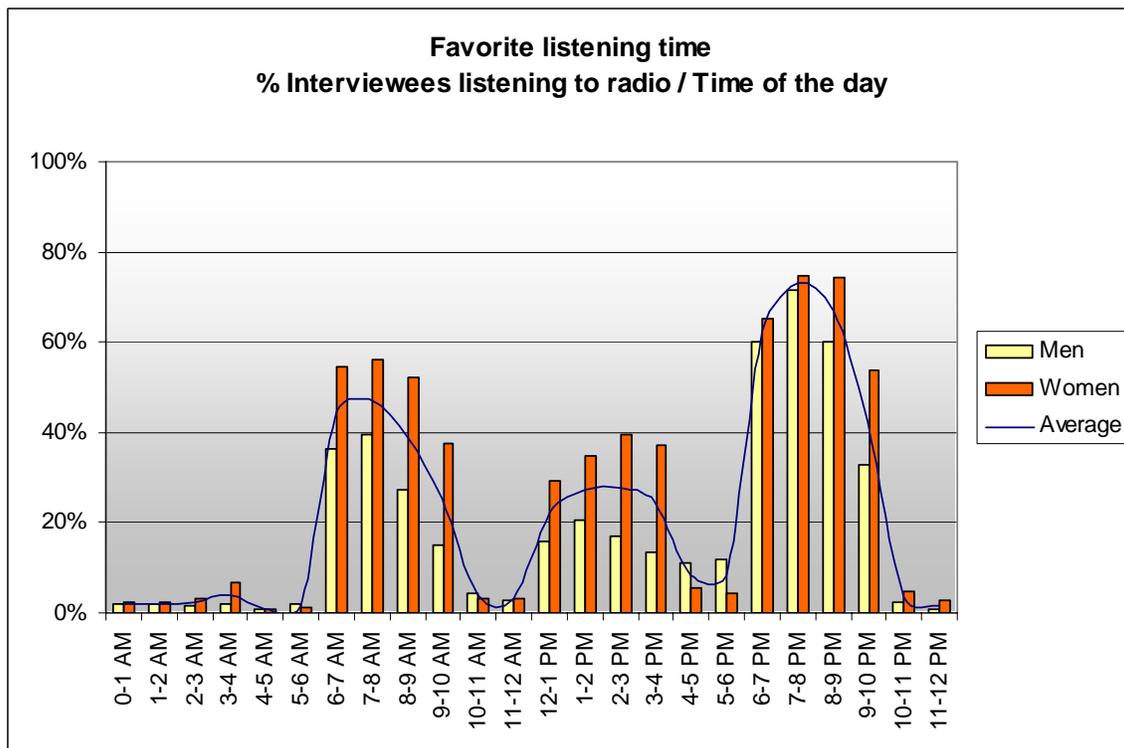
#### b) Literate vs. Illiterate

Illiterates do not listen to the radio as carefully as literates, or they listen to it while doing other activities. It should be kept in mind that illiterates are more involved in basic work – day laborers, construction workers – and have a better chance of listening to the radio than literates working in offices. Moreover, literates tend to have a more proactive behavior than illiterates towards radio. They are more inclined to turn on the radio for a particular program or search for news.



2.3.5. *Listening times*

a) *Favorite listening times for radio*



The above graph, based on declared favorite radio listening times, reveals **2 major listening peaks** in the morning (6:00 AM to 9:00 AM) and at the end of the day (6:00 PM to 9:00 PM). A smaller peak also appears during lunch time and early afternoon (1:00 PM to 3:00 PM).

Some listening gaps can be observed during the main working hours (10:00 AM to 12:00 PM and 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM). It should be noted, however, that interviewees were asked for their **favorite listening times** – not their actual listening times. Therefore, this is not a pure audience survey. Observations made in communities confirm the fact that there are some preferred times for radio listening, but also that people who do not work outside the house (women in particular) tend to leave the radio on all day, and keep on listening to the radio during these gap times while they do some other activities. Therefore, audience levels may not be as low as they appear in the two identified listening gaps.

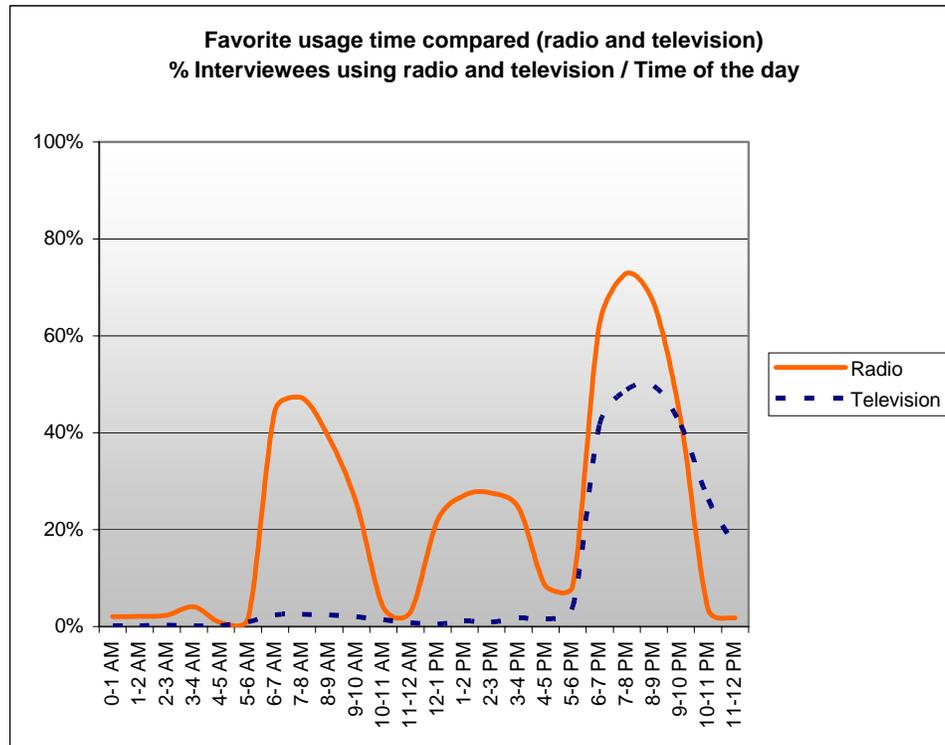
By age group, it appears that younger people tend to listen throughout the day, while adult listeners are more numerous in the early morning and in the evening.

During the afternoon, women tend to be alone at home. Therefore, radio stations should be encouraged to schedule specific women's programs during the afternoon. At this time, they can address specific female-oriented themes such as pregnancy, menstruation and family planning. During the early morning and in the evening, when the whole family tunes in, radio stations should schedule general programs addressing gender issues less directly.

b) *Favorite watching times for television*

**Unlike radio, the preferred time for watching television is clearly concentrated in the evening.**

- **Television is not a flexible media** as people have to be at home to watch it. There are no opportunities to watch television while working, or at the bazaar or while driving. Television is watched when the family gathers at the end of the day, during and after dinner.
- **Television is dependent on electricity**, which is more frequently available at the end of the day in most big cities. When people use private generators, they cannot afford to leave them on all day long. They are used in the evening for lighting, television and domestic appliances.
- Although Television Afghanistan (RTA) starts broadcasting in the early afternoon, most local television channels only retransmit programs at the end of the afternoon. Moreover, people are mostly interested in news and movies, which are mainly broadcast after 19.00.



**2.4. Audience**

**2.4.1. Radio**

**a) General audience**

Consistently across the provinces, three radio stations arrive in a tight group of the best known and the most listened to stations: the BBC, radio Azadi (Radio Free Europe’s broadcast for Afghanistan), and Radio Afghanistan. VOA and radio Iran, also displayed good spontaneous recognition, though they are not in the head group.

Other stations are usually not cited spontaneously, but remembered by a part of the audience, after prompting. These are Deutsche Welle, radio Pakistan and All India.

The objective level of knowledge and of listenership can be described as extremely high: the top three radio stations have an audience of 75% of interviewees; the audience of VOA and Radio Iran are also significant. Rates are even higher in some remote provinces (Ghor, Bamyan, Khost), where radio does not compete with television.

Radio listenership in Afghanistan can be considered as intensive, both in terms of diversity (number of stations listened to), and in terms of quantity (duration of usage per day).

Do you know / listen to these stations?			
	Spontaneous	Prompted	
	Know	Know <sup>15</sup>	Listen <sup>16</sup>
BBC	68%	71%	76%
Azadi	69%	65%	75%
Radio Afghanistan	64%	64%	74%
VOA	20%	37%	33%
Iran	16%	30%	21%
Deutsche Welle	2%	12%	8%
Pakistan	3%	12%	8%
All India	1%	7%	5%
RFI	0%	2%	2%
China	0%	2%	1%

N=1243

The sample system used makes it difficult to compare in a fair way the respective knowledge and audiences of the different radio stations. Since the Internews and other independent local radio stations, as well as Arman and Killid do not cover all places of interviews, they cannot be compared to other stations on the basis of the full sample. They are, *de facto*, less known and listened to than the stations which have national coverage. Nevertheless, inside their coverage areas, the Internews stations show a score comparable (even slightly superior) to the main national stations. In Kabul and surrounding areas Arman is usually among the interviewees favorite stations.

Do you know / listen to these stations?			
	Spontaneous	Prompted	
	Know	Know <sup>1</sup>	Listen <sup>2</sup>
Internews	80%	62%	79%
BBC	66%	71%	76%
Azadi	69%	64%	74%
Radio Afghanistan	63%	64%	74%

N=933 Radio listeners in Internews broadcast zone

Arman and Killid are not included in this comparison, as it was difficult to evaluate the part of the provinces neighboring Kabul (Parwan, Logar and Wardak) that were covered by their signal.

*b) Audience segmentation of radio stations*

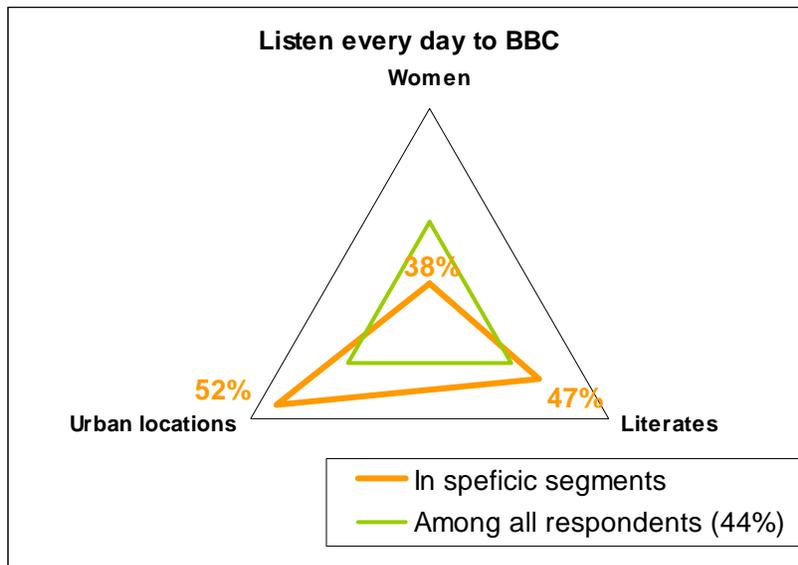
Generally speaking, one must bear in mind that segmentation of the audience is only at an early stage, and that specialized niches have not yet developed. The disparities presented below are interesting, but usually slight.

The listenership figures have been normalized across segments in order to eliminate the general effects – for instance, literates listen more to radio than illiterates, regardless of the station. The green triangles shown below represent the proportions of those who “listen everyday to station X” among all respondents to the radio questionnaires (1243)<sup>17</sup>. The orange triangles represent the normalized proportions of “listens everyday to station X” among specific audience segments. For each station, only the three most defining audience characteristics are indicated.

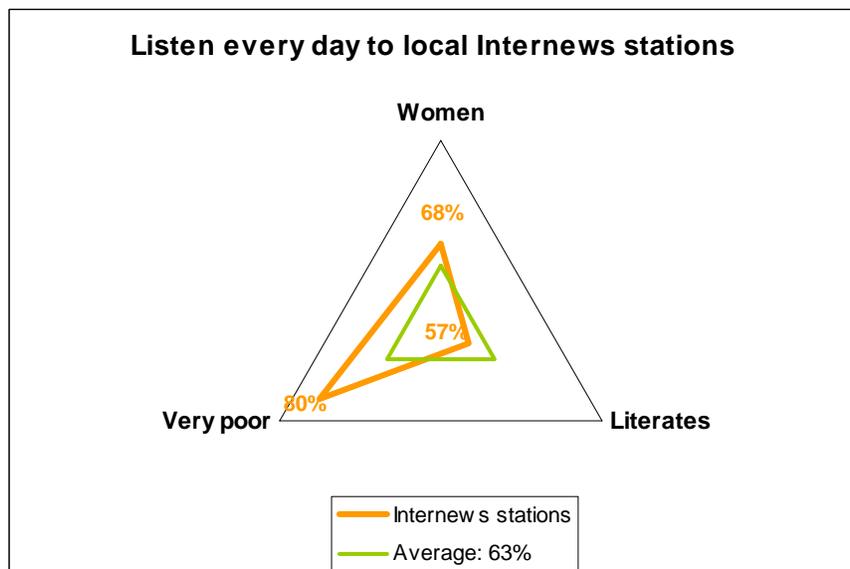
<sup>15</sup> There was some inconsistency among interviewers who did not always prompt after a station was mentioned spontaneously, hence the lower figures for some stations.

<sup>16</sup> Some of these figures are higher than in the knowledge columns because with some interviewees this question served as a second prompt, leading some to mention stations listened to that they had not previously expressed knowing; the interviewers did not always go back to correct the knowledge questions to reflect this.

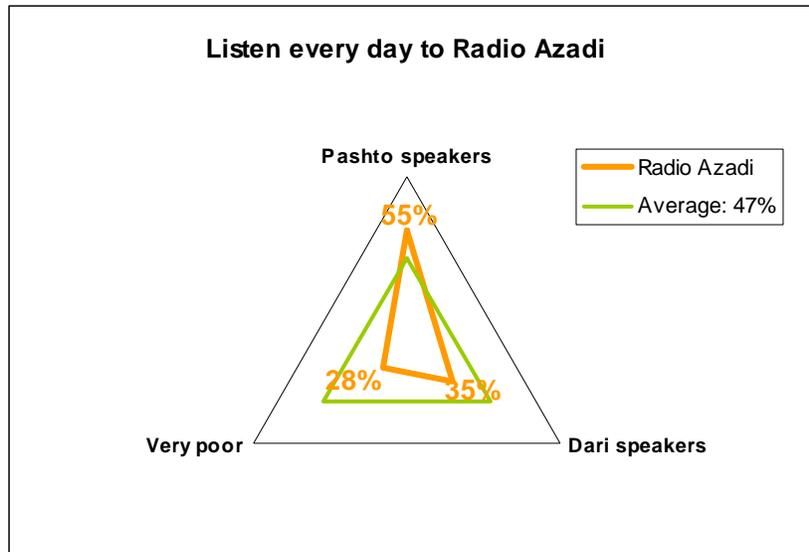
<sup>17</sup> For Internews-supported stations, all respondents to the radio questionnaire lived within their broadcast areas.



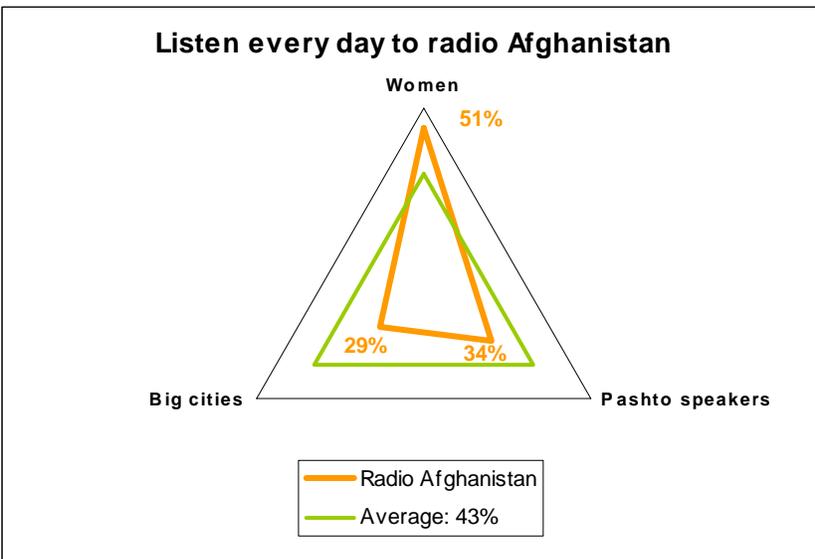
The BBC, represented by the orange triangle, is preferred by literates in urban locations with an under-represented listenership among women. Educated people value its extensive coverage of international news and politics. Since women have a lower educational level on average, some experience difficulties in understanding the BBC’s programs. The over-representation of the BBC in urban locations is largely linked to higher literacy levels.



It is of course difficult to aggregate the local Internews-supported stations, since they are diverse. However, a general trend appears: these stations are especially listened to by women and poor people, and slightly less among literates. The simple vocabulary expressly used by most local stations, along with their particular focus on local news, probably explains such a profile.



Radio Azadi is favored by Pashto speakers, who consider that, compared to other stations, it proposes more interesting programs in their language. On the contrary, Dari-speaking Hazaras are under-represented among radio Azadi’s listeners.



According to survey results, Radio Afghanistan’s share of listeners is lower in major urban centers and among Pashto speakers, and is preferred by women. It is indeed a common complaint among many Pashtuns interviewed, that Radio Afghanistan does not include enough programs in their native language. Women, unlike men, tend to pay less attention to the potential bias of this station towards the government. In the major cities, where greater choice is available, Radio Afghanistan must compete with other media, including Television Afghanistan and provincial radio stations from its own network.

c) Women’s stations

In some staunchly traditional regions, women’s local stations can benefit the female population by initiating progress – starting with the simple recognition of women. These stations also play an important role in terms of increased visibility of women in a professional capacity, as journalists or station managers.

However, as a whole it may be more appropriate to work towards a better representation of women in the stations that already exist. The research shows that, even in areas with local women's stations, women listen to the other stations available as well.

Moreover, stations with female-only staff do not necessarily have a female-only audience. The local women's station Rabia Balkhi (Mazar-e-Sharif), devotes significant time to women but is not entirely devoted to their issues. As a result, this station also benefits from a sizeable male audience.

d) Portraits of listeners

**Young listeners** almost always prefer music and particularly Arman FM where available. To them, radio is mainly an entertainment medium. They also like interactive programs focusing on everyday life, in particular on relationships and youth issues and listen to news broadcasts when the segments are short and come between two music sets.

*"As far as I am concerned I don't like the news because it's always the same thing: they only speak about war and death. Radio is for me a way to listen to music." (Setare, 18)*

In remote areas, young people pay more attention to educative programs as radio is the only way for them to learn more.

*"My favorite program is "New Home, New Life" and educative programs about agriculture, environment and the education of children; I've learnt a lot of things thanks to those programs." Naida, 18*

Men **between 30 and 50 years old** with an average level of education and a lot of curiosity are interested in the news, especially national news, educational and political programs, but also in music and entertainment. To them, each station has a specific function: Arman for entertainment, the BBC or Radio Afghanistan for the news, local radio or Azadi for educational programs.

*"People here listen to the news because they know it is important to be aware of the situation here and in the rest of the world. But as most of them have suffered a lot, they prefer happy programs like music." Debate with a shura, Dakoe Payan*

The **avid listener** is male and usually over 30. He is educated, and essentially listens to the news on the BBC as well as political and cultural programs. He is often a major source of information in the community. He is not necessarily the most educated person or the oldest. He can be, for example, a taxi driver with a lot of curiosity and the time to listen to the radio.

*"Out of one hour of programming, the ideal would be twenty minutes of news, a bit of music chosen by the listeners, twenty minutes for a program focusing on agriculture and industry, a program focusing on health and hygiene, and some tourism features." Abdul Wakil, 68*

*"I always listen to the news on the BBC to get a complete picture. I like to know everything about the news in foreign countries because it is always somewhat related to us; for instance the law on the veil in schools in France. I was very disappointed by the French." Mahmud Hamid, 43*

The **traditionalist** is often to be found among the elders. He is very religious, generally opposed to change and nostalgic of the radio from earlier times. He dislikes Arman FM and believes that the country only needs one radio station, with an emphasis on religious programs.

*"In the past, programs were better. There was for example a program called "Lessons of Quran", helping people to better understand religion. Nowadays there is too much music,*

*and not enough educational programs. What future for Afghanistan if the radio is not teaching anything to the youth?” Hajji Golaya, 58*

*“Radio should play less music. At the time of Zaher Shah [King of Afghanistan from 1934 to 1973], programs were better and always started with a verse from the Quran.” Debate with the Shura, Dakoe Payan*

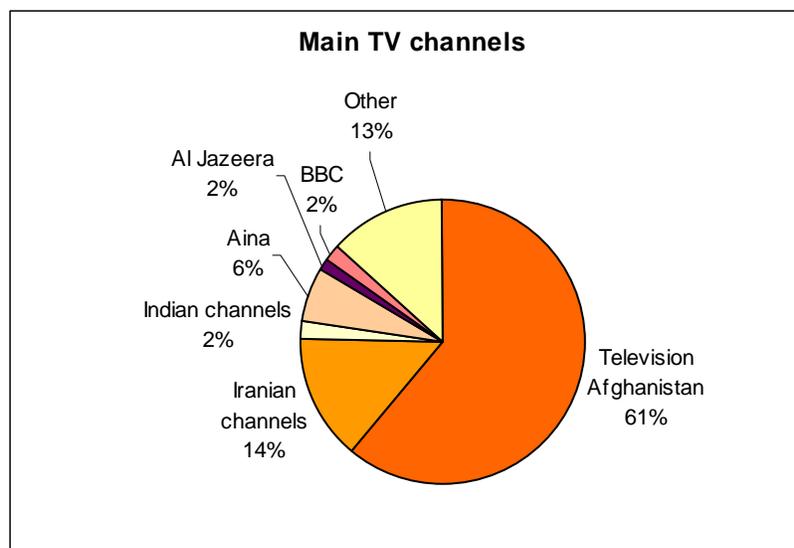
#### 2.4.2. Television

The general survey did not include Kabul, and therefore no data is available on Tolo TV and Afghan TV.

Television Afghanistan, due to its extensive coverage, is by far the most popular station in the surveyed provinces.

Other Afghan channels are far behind. In Balkh province, people can receive Aina TV through aerials, and it is included in cable multi-channel packages elsewhere.

Iranian channels are reached through aerials in Herat province, and through satellite antennas or cable elsewhere. Moreover, they can be understood by Dari speakers; this constitutes their main competitive advantage. Indian channels, used mostly for movies, face competition from DVDs. Al Jazeera, CNN and the BBC suffer mostly from language barriers, as most Afghans do not understand Arabic or English. These are considered elite channels.



*N= 657.*

*Channels spontaneously quoted by interviewees.  
% of Cumulated answers.*

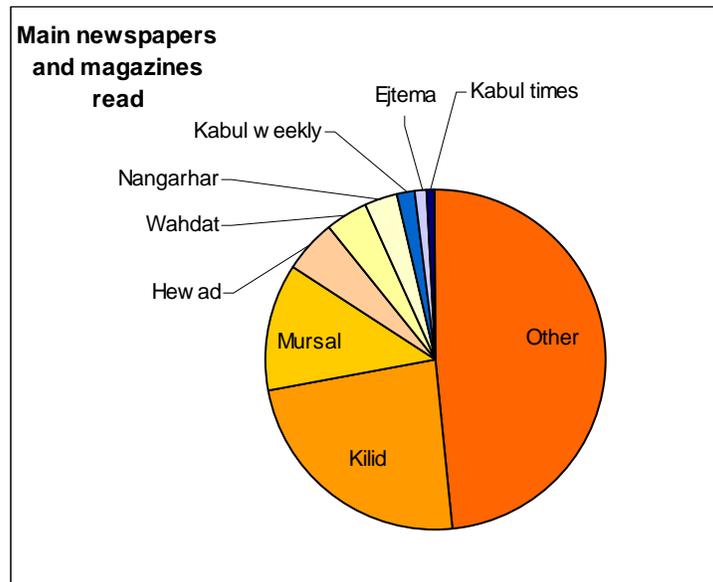
#### 2.4.3. Press

The press landscape is extremely diversified: with more than 200 titles available, along with the problems of distribution, the readership of each title is structurally limited and segmented geographically. 50% of the answers included over 70 titles, each of them read by less than 1% of the interviewees.

The two notable exceptions are **Killid** and **Mursal** which are the most successful publications. Both of them are especially successful among the young, with **Mursal** targeting a female audience. Adult readers tend to prefer newspapers, but sometimes read magazines as well, as daily newspapers are rare.

*In some remote villages like Bazarak (Village 2, Panshir), the number of women met who were reading Mursal was surprisingly high.*

*Wahdat is a daily newspaper imported from Pakistan, to be found mostly in Nangarhar (a predominantly Pashtun area). Its success relies on two factors: it is entirely in Pashto and it is the only daily newspaper available on a regular basis in this province (the press from Kabul is distributed on a weekly basis). It targets a general leadership.*



N= 252.  
 Titles spontaneously quoted by interviewees.  
 % of Cumulated answers

**2.5. Preferred Programs**

2.5.1. Radio

a) General programs

**Programs preferences by gender**

Men and women reveal essentially the same preferences, except for programs on health, family issues and obituaries, which are followed more by women than by men. Educational programs do show a difference in preferences among the genders. Although educational programs appear at the end of the list in the following graph, interviewees very often mentioned that they valued the educational aspects of programs on health, family or religion.

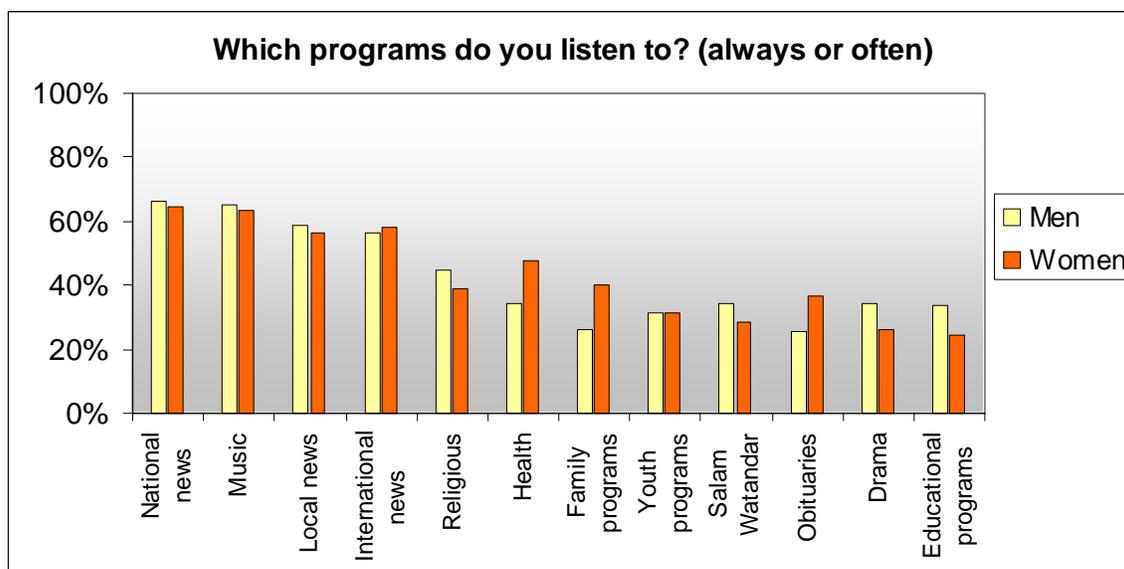
While women consider radio primarily as a means of entertainment, they also see it as a window to the outside world from which they are often completely cut off. Women living in villages are particularly keen on radio’s educational function. They see it as a means to learn effectively from home, so as to fill the gap left by their lack of formal education that sets them at a considerable disadvantage in their daily lives.

Programs that are explicitly devoted to women such as “New Home, New Life”, “Women in Society” or “Women and the Current World” have a strong female listenership. Themes that interest them in order of priority are: children’s education, family relations, cooking, health and the plight of women. In more

traditional regions, women also want radio to address issues such as polygamy, arranged marriages and the issue of abuse within the home.

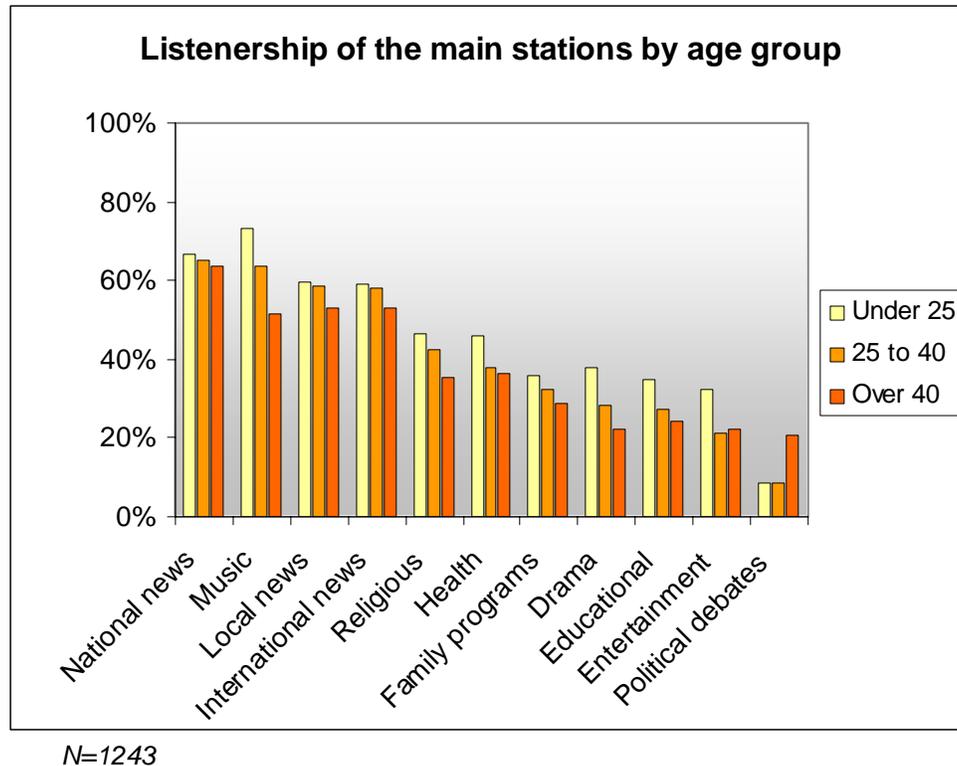
Women often express a strong desire for **health programs** and believe such programs should be presented by a female doctor. They would also like programs on women’s rights and conditions, presented in the form of roundtable debates and featuring educated women as participants. Women would also like to see **testimonies from women living abroad** and reports on other ways of life so as to open up new horizons and to become familiar with other cultures.

**Illiterate women** are more preoccupied with their immediate family and with life in the community, whereas **educated women** feel the need to broaden their scope and seek more information about their country and the world, as well as how to better define their role in today’s Afghan society. Whereas the former prefer listening to “New Home, New Life”, which is focused on family and home matters, the latter prefer “Women in Society” which specializes on women’s rights. Educated women want programs on how to be good Muslims while, at the same time, seek emancipation, or at least slightly more liberty. They are interested in topics such as the right to work or get divorced and the question of the burqa.



**Programs preferences vs. age group**

When the preferred programs are split by age group, a clear preference for music appears among the younger age segment: 75% of the interviewees under 25 cited music as their favorite radio programming. The young also have a higher preference for entertainment, drama, educational and health programs, while those over 40 show a preference for political debates.



Although in qualitative research, the young express strong enthusiasm for music, this chart shows that they are also interested in a diversity of subjects. Overall, it must be noted that the differentiation between age groups is not so extreme, when we consider main age categories. Qualitative research, still, showed that “music” does not mean the same for the youngster (mostly Indian music) as for more conservative (more traditional Afghan music).

#### b) Social and interactive programs

Some programs have emerged as real success stories across audiences. They are generally programs that include the **active participation of the listeners** who can phone in or send letters to pose questions on subjects such as politics, the development of the country, or to ask for advice on personal matters.

These programs provide listeners with the feeling that radio really pays attention to their needs and expectations. Many interviewees explained that they appreciated the interviews of normal people talking about their daily lives and their difficulties.

Programs based on **listeners’ letters** exist on many stations (particularly local ones). Such programs provide listeners with the opportunity to raise personal problems through letters, and receive advice from journalists, presenters, or special guests. These programs allow people to compare their experiences with those of others and to feel less isolated with regard to their personal problems. The main advantages for this format over live calls include accessibility for non-mobile owners, as well as discretion. For instance, it is easier for a young woman to send a letter about her sentimental problems, under a pseudonym, than to use the family phone and call in.

In some remote villages where people feel left behind by the government and not involved in the reconstruction process, listeners particularly enjoy programs that air criticism and allow people to voice their discontent anonymously, denounce corruption and economic hardship in their region, and generally complain about government policies. Good examples of such programs are “**Your Voice**” or “**Voice of the People**”, that exist on most of the local stations.

Even though these types of programs use controversy to build audiences, they allow the public to interact and debate on the evolution of society and partake in change. They answer a real desire among the listening public and are keenly listened to by a large section of the population. These programs have a strong cathartic value for Afghans in this sensitive period of stabilization.

The program “**The President and You**” also reflects the eagerness of listeners to be involved in the political and nation-building processes and to be considered full citizens who can speak out and directly address the President. This program illustrates the fledgling Afghan democracy.

c) *You are the Judge*

“You are the Judge” – a program produced by Awaz and broadcast through Salam Watandar (Internews network) – has become very popular among listeners for tackling social issues. The program takes a specific case or situation generally linked to some major issues in Afghan society, such as forced marriage, and submits it to the judgment of the listeners, as well as to the referred sections in the Sharia (Islamic law) and in the Afghan Constitution. Different interviewees mentioned this program, stating they had discovered that forced marriage was neither in the Quran, nor legalized under the Afghan Constitution. One interviewee even said that, after hearing this program, he had decided to allow his daughter to choose her husband.

d) *New Home, New Life*

“New Home, New Life”, a daily program on the BBC, is so often quoted by interviewees that it creates the impression of being a **real institution**. The program’s “magic formula” blends drama with educational and social content in a way that is both clear, socially acceptable and in accordance with traditional values and religion. Women, particularly the illiterate, usually listen intently to this program and appreciate both its entertainment and educational aspects. Some husbands have also demonstrated enthusiasm for this program and tune in together with their wives and children as they consider it useful for the whole family.

This program owes its success to the fact that all the “sensitive” questions, such as those surrounding the veil or the education of women, are placed in a religious context, with quotations from the Quran. This process has the double benefit of catering to the sensitivities of men whilst conveying a message to women.

“New Home, New Life” has brought significant changes to women’s lives. Indeed, a large number of men recognized the impact of this program on their behavior towards women and social issues such as forced marriage, education for girls or domestic violence. Women themselves have become aware of some of their rights and learned a lot of useful things for their everyday lives regarding children’s education, health or housekeeping.

However, issues raised by “New Home, New Life” do not always meet the expectations of some listeners, as it is a family program that focuses more on the traditional role of women as a mother or a spouse, than on “modern” gender issues or on women’s roles in the new Afghan society. This weakness was directly or indirectly raised by the most educated female interviewees, who tended to prefer programs which addressed the role of women in society, and even in politics.

While attention to Muslim sensitivities must always be kept in mind, “New Home, New Life” has the potential to continue to make a positive change in Afghan women’s lives by progressively addressing new and difficult issues.

e) *Pedagogical programs*

Many radio stations, whether local or national, have programs advising the teachers on pedagogical methods. They are highly appreciated by both teachers and students.

*“Thanks to the radio I learned that it was not good to beat the children, otherwise they get discouraged and they do not come back to school. Now I give them educative punishment instead.” Hamida, 33, teacher*

f) Advertising

50% of the interviewees said that they “liked” commercials, 31% said that they “did not mind” them and only 8% said that they “did not like” them (base: responses to a specific questionnaire on the local Internews-supported stations).

Advertising, at this early stage, is not perceived in the same way as in developed countries. It is not perceived as a boring interruption to programs, but as **useful and informative**. Very often, listeners learn something that they did not previously know through commercials.

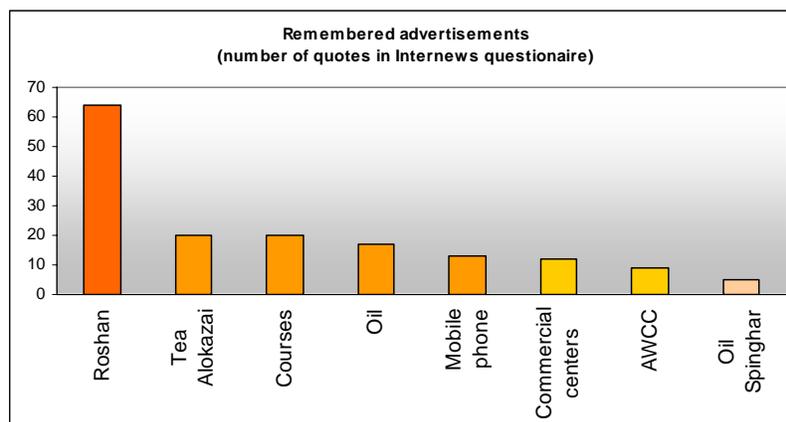
Since the lack of telecommunications and transport difficulties make prices extremely volatile in Afghanistan, the role of advertising is often to specify the prices of goods. Moreover, in provinces that are not located on the major roads (Ghor, Badakhshan, Bamyán, for instance), supply of goods is quite irregular, and advertisements inform people of what is available at the bazaar.

Several interviewees mentioned the fact that through advertising, they received information directly from the company (AWCC, Spinghar, Roshan, etc), and thus avoid over-charging or other misconduct from the retailers.

**This informative function is embodied in the vocabulary:** the most common translation for “advertisement” is “**elanat**”, a general word used for official statements or obituaries as well as commercials. This informative dimension is confirmed by the fact that most interviewees do not take in limited information about brands. When asked what commercials they remembered, interviewees quoted “sugar”, “cement”, “cotton” or “mobile phone” more often than any brand name.

Advertisements from big companies are overall outnumbered by **local advertisements** (though in some remote areas with limited commercial activity, this is not the case). Local shops (clothes, flowers, fruit, etc), private courses (English, computer, tailoring, etc), new shopping malls or wedding halls are very often advertised on local stations. This is a testimony to the rapid development of entrepreneurial and consumer activities spread after 2001.

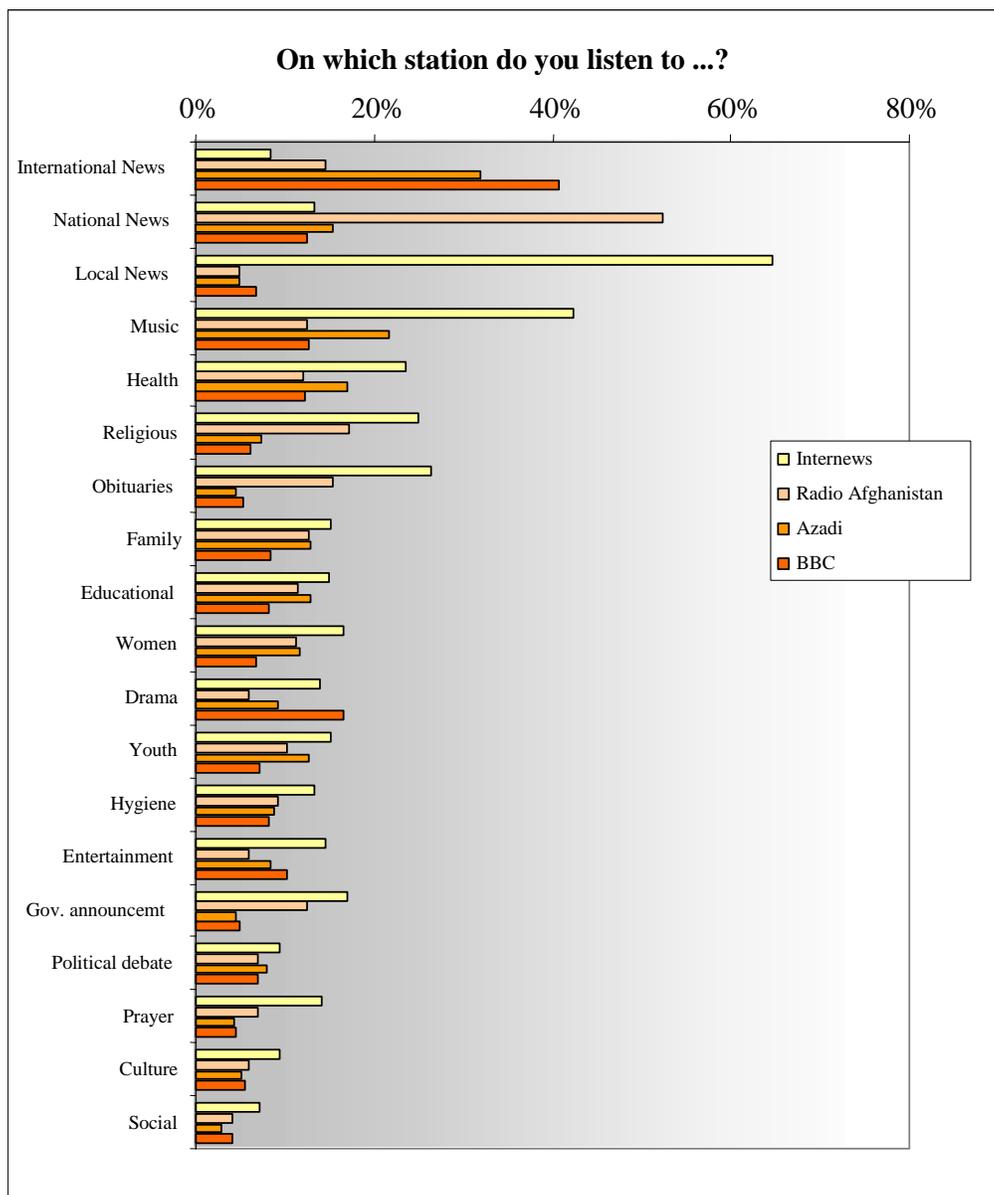
Still, the best remembered brands on a nationwide level are directly in line with the amounts invested by the largest advertisers: Roshan (GSM provider) has a strong lead on other brands after massive campaigns broadcast at the end of 2004. Other major brands remembered by interviewees are Alokazay Tea, and AWCC (GSM provider). But at the same level as the brands mentioned are generic advertisements for English courses, oil and commercial centers, as well as “mobile phone”, as a general terminology, which shows that **the concept of “brands” is still rather uncommon** in Afghanistan.



This general enthusiasm, though, is toned down by some interviewees who are exposed to a high frequency of Western style commercials (on Pakistani television channels for instance) and mentioned that they would resent Afghan media reaching this amount of advertisement.

*g) Programs listened to on specific stations*

Consistently across the provinces, listenership of news followed a simple theme: people listen to local news on local stations (particularly the local Internews-supported station), to national news on Radio Afghanistan, and to international news on the BBC, and to a lesser extent, on Azadi. This trend can be explained in the following way according to interviewee responses: the BBC has correspondents all over the world, and can provide accurate international information; Radio Afghanistan, being the national station, is the best source available for cross-country information; and local radio stations that have enough access to the community can provide the local news that is satisfactory to the local audiences.



This behavior is also confirmed by information which is read out on the radio like government announcements and obituaries, which are typically local and consequently listened to only on local radio stations. Culture-dependant programs also display this trend, though to a lesser extent. Religious, cultural and entertainment programs are preferred when they reflect the local culture.

The local Internews-supported stations are greatly successful for their music content, as they reflect local tastes and adapt to local languages better than the national or international stations. Many interviewees mentioned that they like hearing singers from their province.

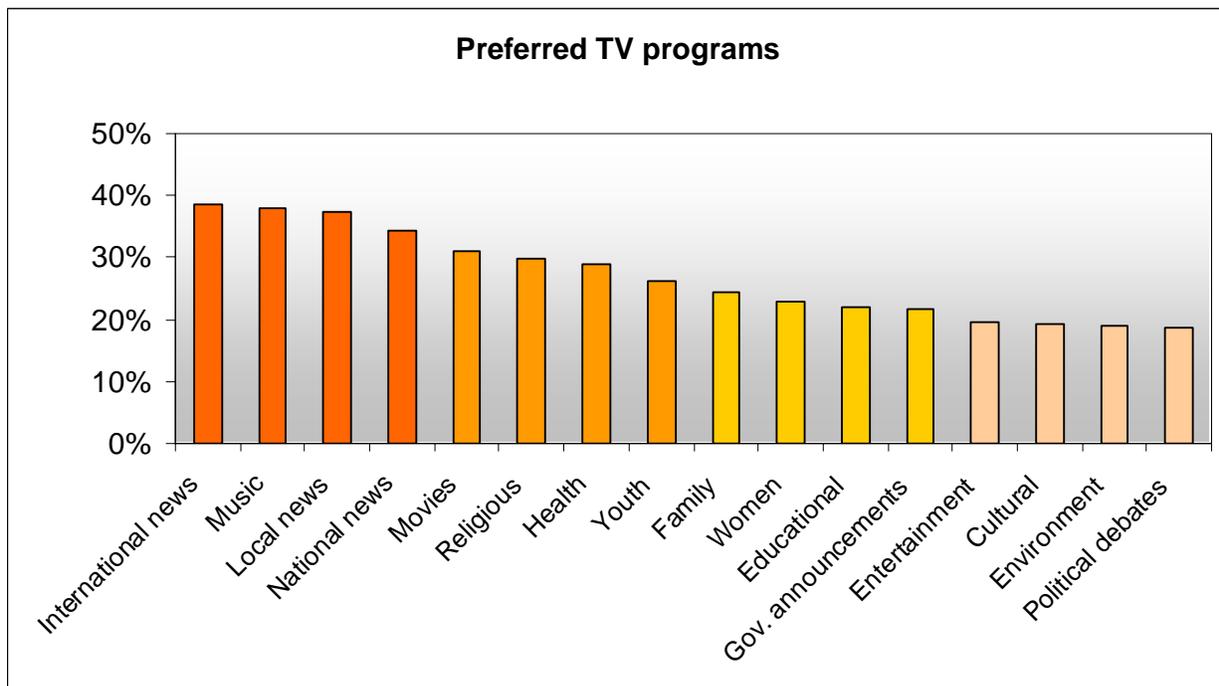
*In Jalalabad, the musical programming of radio Sharq is exceptionally appreciated. It is original compared to other stations – for instance songs in Pashai, a local language related to Pashto, are rare on national and foreign radio stations*

The good position of the BBC for dramas is largely due to the highly popular “**New Home, New Life**”.

For programs that are less geographically dependant with respect to appealing to listeners, audiences are disbursed among the different radio stations—although local specificities appear between the provinces, principally depending on the ability of the local radio to provide satisfying content on topics like health, family issues, political debates, and content targeted to the young and women.

As seen earlier, people tend to listen to several stations concurrently, and they divide their listenership by topics.

2.5.2. *Television programs*



Preferred programs on television show important similarities with the radio: news and music come in the first position, quickly followed by movies, cited by 34% of the interviewees.

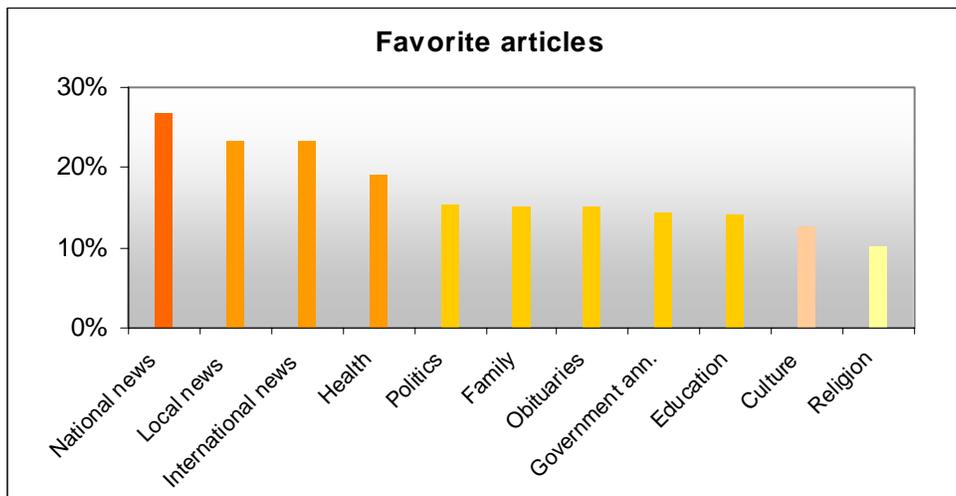
**Focus: satellite television programs**

Satellite channels are mostly used for entertainment. Movies are mostly watched on Indian channels, due to the strength of the Indian film industry (Bollywood). Moreover, Indian movies are considered more appropriate than Western ones for family viewing, as they do not include erotic scenes. Also, Hindi is understood by many Afghans and these musical films are appreciated for their dances. Musical programs are mostly watched on ITN or PMC (Iranian Diaspora channels broadcasting from outside Iran) and Arabic channels. Some movies and series are watched on Iranian state television channels as well.

The informational usage of satellite television comes only second, mostly because there are no channels devoted solely to news in Dari or Pashto. The only important informational channels available are Al Jazeera, the BBC and CNN. These are accessible only to a minority due to language barriers. Al Jazeera is in the best position since a handful of Afghans can understand Arabic (refugees from Gulf countries or, to a lesser extent, those who have received a religious education in classical Arabic).

Last but not least, satellite antennas are used to receive television Afghanistan (RTA) in places where aerials cannot catch its signal.

2.5.3. Press

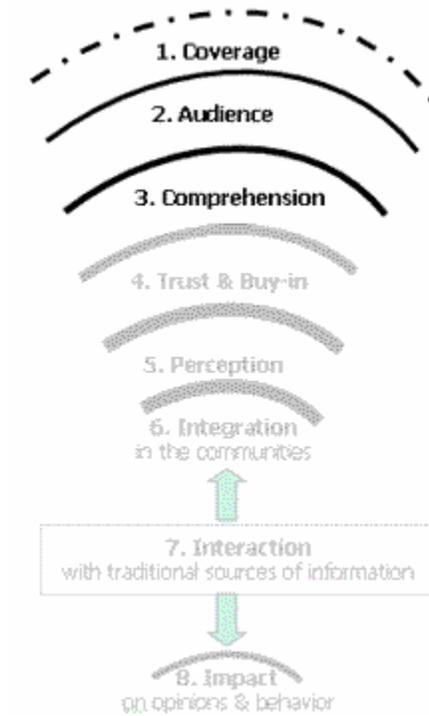


Even though newspapers outside Kabul are often out-of-date (because Kabul-based daily newspapers are not distributed outside the capital) readers still rank the news obtained from newspapers at the top of their preferences.

Other types of articles not shown in this chart, but appreciated by readers, are poems, stories and jokes, recipes, articles about technology and in-depth reports about social issues (women in sports, education for girls, etc).

### 3. COMPREHENSION

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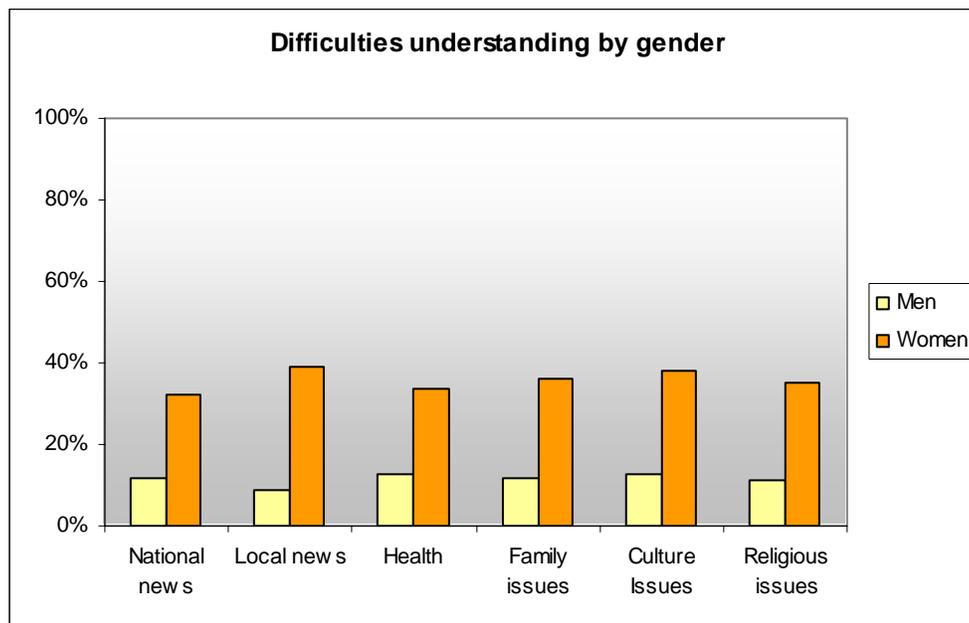


*Elderly man with radio in the backyard of his home in **Bazarak** village (Panjshir Province)*

General comprehension of radio programs is relatively good. However, 20% of interviewed radio listeners admitted they have some or a lot of difficulties understanding radio programs.

In our sample, differences in comprehension between literates and illiterates were not significant. However, these questions are prone to biases. People who do have difficulties are sometimes reluctant to admit them. Educated people are likely to listen to more complicated programs than the uneducated, and admit difficulties more easily.

The following graph shows a clear difference of understanding between men and women. The difference in access to education is the main factor explaining this gap. Moreover, women have fewer opportunities to seek explanations outside the home about radio programs. Generally speaking, there is also an under-estimation effect among men, who are sometimes ashamed to acknowledge understanding difficulties.



### 3.1. Content testing

To offset interviewees' over-estimation on this issue, this study included some direct testing of radio content with a sample of 154 men and 157 women in urban and rural areas. Listeners were asked to listen to a set of extracts from the Internews Network's *Salam Watandar* program and Radio Afghanistan's *Sobh Bakhair Afghanistan* ("Good Morning Afghanistan") and to then answer different questions aiming at testing their understanding of the programs.

Combined with direct observation and social research, the following obstacles with regard to comprehension were identified:

Generally speaking, the **level of education** is the major obstacle to understanding the in-depth meaning and scope of programs. Many listeners do not have a broad knowledge of history or geography. This limits their ability to understand some international or national news. In addition, due to a lack of reading, people often have a limited vocabulary and, therefore, can't fully understand what is being said.

*"There are other good stations (other than the local radio) but we can't catch what they are saying as they use many difficult words." Female interviewee, 32, Village 2, Nangarhar*

Often, listeners understand programs while they are listening to them but do not clearly remember what was said several minutes later. As a result, 70% or 80% of the information provided in a detailed

informative report (around 5-6 minutes) is lost, and some listeners retain only the main topic and the places where events happened. It was noticed, on average, that educated interviewees tended to have higher retention rates when listening to programs.

A factor of difficulties in understanding is **foreign words**. Very often, radio stations do not translate Western terminology. They directly use words such as “democracy”, “parliament”, “system” or “family planning”. Experience from interviews shows that the meaning of such words is unclear for most of the people. This is also the case with the use of some Arabic words on Afghan programs. An effort to provide a complete translation of English words into Dari and Pashto is much needed. It could be based on the Iranian experience in this field. The impact of such an effort would be two-fold: people would better understand the meaning of these words; and the political evolution they designate would appear less as foreign notions and concepts.

*An unconfirmed anecdote, common in Jalalabad at the time of evaluation (February 2005), held that a local police commander, asked by a subordinate about the definition of “democracy”, provided the following answer: “Democracy means that you come and take my wife, and I go take yours!”*

### 3.2. Comprehension of specific radio stations

Which stations are the easiest to understand ?	
Local Internews radio	27%
Radio Afghanistan	14%
Azadi	12%
BBC	9%

N=1243

**The local stations of the Internews network are ahead of other radio stations in terms of comprehension.** This is attributable to the nature of their formats, as they are local stations with local journalists producing custom-made programs adapted to their area. It is also in phase with qualitative comments pointing out the advantages of local radio stations, which are using an easier vocabulary and broadcast programs which tend to reflect listeners’ daily lives. Moreover, local stations are more likely to use the most common language (vernacular) of the province as opposed to national stations. Beyond language options (mostly Dari or Pashto), the fact that local announcers speak with the local accent is an additional factor of understanding.

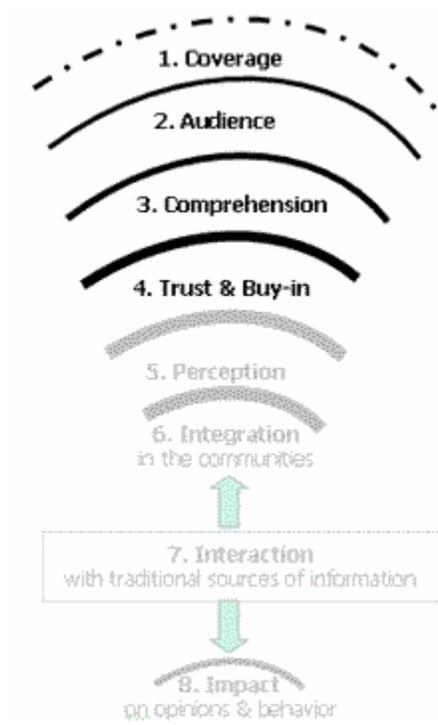
Radio Afghanistan, in turn, is considered as easier to understand than the BBC, which is the main station quoted as being difficult to understand.

It has to be said that the **intellectual level of the BBC** (Iranian and English words, theoretical political debates) is high for most of its programs, and many people acknowledged that they did not understand everything. However, it does not hinder the popularity of this station, since many people actually believe that they can gain knowledge through its programs, even if they do not understand everything. It is worth mentioning that Afghans who have lived (as refugees mostly) in Iran understand the BBC better, as many Farsi words are used. The BBC’s “New home, New life” is an exception as it has been tailored for rural, less educated listeners, and especially women—thus greatly contributing to its popularity.

Radio Azadi is considered as a simplified version of the BBC, and is reportedly easier to understand.

## 4. TRUST

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*Paired interview subjects in Balkh town (Balkh province)*

For radio, television and newspapers, the percentages are based on the number of interviewees who actually declared using these media.

<i>What source do you trust on these topics?</i>								
	International news	Afghan news	Provincial news	Local news	Health	Elections & politics	Religion	Average
Radio	88%	83%	62%	63%	54%	58%	52%	66%
Television	76%	53%	38%	37%	39%	32%	35%	44%
Newspapers	62%	33%	29%	27%	22%	21%	24%	31%

*Figures computed on the respective audiences of the different sources ( 1243, 441; 181)*

In general radio is consistently the most trusted medium, followed closely by television. The latter most likely suffers from the lack of plurality: for most of interviewees, television Afghanistan (RTA) is the only channel providing local, national and international news in their language. Because there are no other independent Afghan channels in most places, viewers cannot cross-check the information from RTA, which may affect its perceived level of reliability. Since users normally only view television in the evening to watch news and movies, they rarely watch other types of programs, which negatively impacts the overall average for television shown above. Instead they primarily gain information on topics such as religion and health during the day on the radio. Several interviewees specifically mentioned that, while they enjoy Iranian films, they do not trust information on Iranian channels, because it may be manipulated by the Iranian government.

Newspapers are, overall, less trusted than radio and television. Most readers also recall the time of factional control over newspapers during the civil war. The majority of newspapers are controlled at a very local level, whether by the provincial government or by small groups of individuals, and therefore may easily be suspected of bias. Moreover, because of irregular distribution, people often considered information out of date.

*Several interviewees in Badakhshan and Ghazni quoted Payam-e-Mujahid (Mujahid's message) as particularly untrustworthy because of its former heavy biases (it was controlled by one faction of Mujahidin).*

#### 4.1. Comparative trust: radio stations

<i>Do you trust these stations for these topics?<sup>18</sup></i>							
	International News	Afghan News	Provincial News	Local News	Health	Elections/ Politics	Religion
Local independent stations	20%	19%	44%	56%	29%	20%	37%
Azadi	48%	31%	8%	5%	23%	18%	13%
Afghanistan	34%	54%	18%	7%	23%	30%	31%
BBC	57%	18%	5%	2%	16%	12%	6%

*N = 1243*

- **For international news the BBC is the most trusted source**, although Azadi has gained ground and is not far behind. VOA does not seem to suffer from a suspicion of propaganda, but rather from a limited audience.
- **For national news, people's trust shifts to Radio Afghanistan**, despite its use as a propaganda tool in the past, e.g. during the Soviet occupation. In many cases it seems that this

<sup>18</sup> Other stations are not included in this chart due to their small audiences

may be simply due to the station's longevity. Older listeners have grown up with it and the young have never been without it.

*Some male listeners in villages of Paktia Province are particularly critical towards Radio Afghanistan. They believe the station, being aligned with the government, is lacking freedom of expression.*

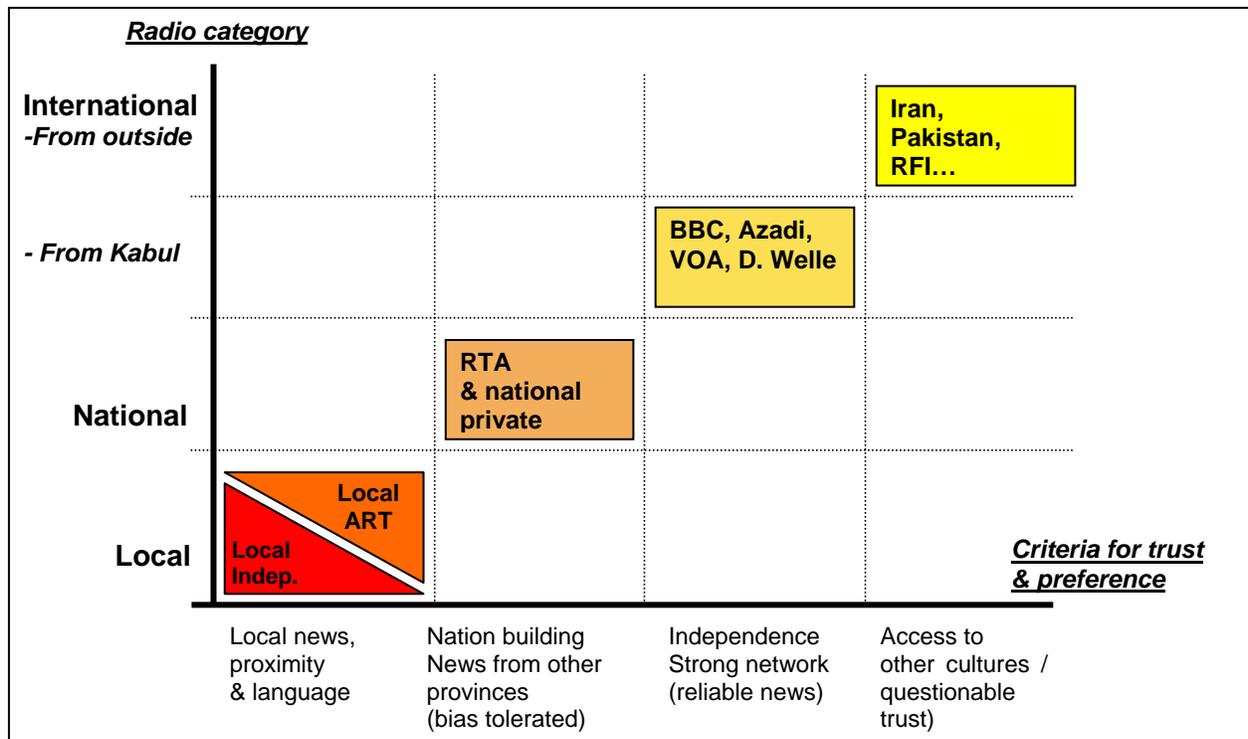
- **For provincial and local information, the local independent stations dominate.** This is to be expected as their journalists and managers are usually from the community and are able to gather and distill local news much more reliably than a national or international station. However, being local can also impose limitations. In particular, local stations may be pressured, directly or indirectly, by local commanders or political leaders to take certain stances on some issues.
- **Radio Azadi** (the Afghan branch of Radio Free Europe) is the leading competitor for the BBC on international news, and shows the same weaknesses in provincial and local news. But the station compares well with the BBC on health, political and religious issues for which it is better trusted. It should be noted that Azadi is particularly appreciated in remote areas and in Pashto speaking regions.

It should be noted that one of the main reasons that account for the BBC's lower figures in the table above for national news, health or politics is that interviewees tend to grant trust to stations in general, and not to specific programs on each station. When asked about trust levels on a program basis, they naturally attach the general level of trust for a particular station to the programs they listen to the most on that station. To sum up, they trust what they listen to, rather than listen to what they trust.

#### **4.2. Factors of trust and distrust**

The most common reasons to trust a particular medium, according to interviewees, are as follows:

- A strong and competent network of reporters around the world. This is particularly the case for the BBC.
- A track record as a reliable and independent source of information. For instance, many interviewees are grateful to the BBC for its independence during both the Taliban and the Communist regime.
- Local journalists/station managers are from the area – this is particularly the case for local stations.
- The station has no interest in distortion of information. This is particularly the case for independent and foreign stations (except those from neighboring countries), for instance radio Azadi.
- Reinforcement of information among media sources – sophisticated media users cross-check news on different stations.



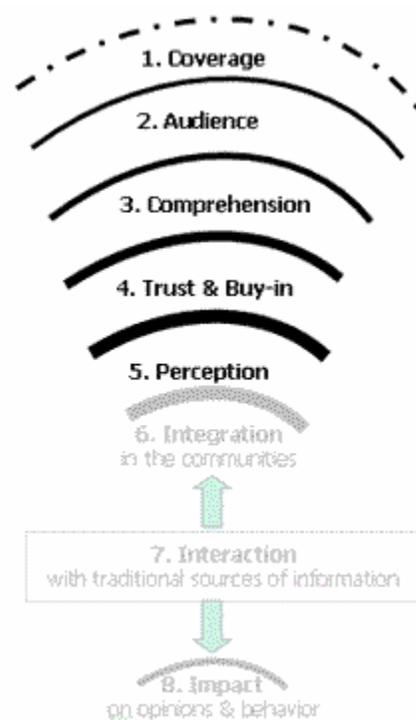
The factors of distrust are more difficult to assess because interviewees are often reluctant to admit doubts. However, a few trends were noted:

- the history of a medium, and particularly its control by factions during the civil war, is often remembered
- media from neighboring countries (mostly Iran and Pakistan) are distrusted by some interviewees (usually educated and sophisticated media users) because they may distort the truth in order to suit their government's interests
- an incorrect or awkward statement on a local station can rapidly jeopardize its reputation

*In Baghlan, a random joke about Pashtuns created a small scandal in the community following its broadcast on radio Tarajmir and forced the station manager to stop broadcasting for several days. It was still remembered several months later. This event seriously damaged the newly built station's reputation.*

## 5. PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEDIA

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**Kabul Province (Shamali Plains), Radio Qarabagh local radio letterbox set up at bazaar to obtain listeners' feedback, requests and issues to be read on air.**

### 5.1. General perception

Media generally have an excellent image throughout the surveyed areas, and the research on this issue was generally welcomed in the communities.

*In rural areas of Bamyan province, villagers were seen using two meter high home-made radio antennas to, unsuccessfully, try to reach Radio Bamyan's signal from outside the coverage area.*

The different reasons for the media's good reputation can be categorized as follows:

### 5.2. Perceived functions of media

Media are seen as a reliable **source of information** (see *Trust* section), and there is a strong desire for information in most Afghan provinces. The universal view on radio in particular is that it can improve people's awareness of the outside world.

Media are seen as a major **source of education** and development for the Afghan society, and most interviewees expect more educational programs. Many interviewees are clearly conscious that the Afghan population has a very low educational level and needs to catch up following the years of war. Radio is perceived as the most useful media for this purpose, since it is accessible to all, especially women and those who did not have the opportunity to access education.

*Radio Sada e Ghaznavion (Internews stations in Ghazni) organizes quizzes every week where young students compete on general knowledge questions. The program provokes a very strong interest among teenagers, but also among adults. When the results are announced, several shopkeepers voluntarily bring presents for the winners.*

Media are seen as bringing **new and positive ideas**, especially radio, since television is used more for entertainment.

*"In general the people of Bamyan province nowadays are open-minded, so they are looking for news and fresh information from television, radio and any other media. Even the mullahs listen to the radio. Now it is believed that media is not only for pleasure and entertainment, but also for information that is good for the development of the society." Teacher at a boys school in Bamyan.*

Media are seen as a **vehicle of progress**, highlighting and developing the positive aspects of traditional society, while helping to eliminate the bad ones. This is true in most visited communities, including the southeastern provinces where people are often believed to be more conservative.

*In Paktia, respondents expressed quite often that they would like radio to address a wider choice of themes and suggested that it should deal with sensitive questions such as corruption in the civil service, narcotics and alcohol, which they feel are all necessary to expose.*

A large number of people also expressed that media should hold **politicians and NGOs accountable** – even if they are often realistic about the limitations to this activity. Criticism is perceived as necessary in the relatively less restricted post-Taliban context. For instance, some interviewees believe that NGOs embezzle funds and violate government regulations – and that this problem would be solved or improved if the media covered these issues.

### 5.3. Local concerns, local media

The level of expectation from the media is often high in the most remote places, where people generally do not have much alternative access to news, education and information about the development of the country and, therefore, place greater value on it.

*In Balkh province, inhabitants of the city have easier access to various sources of information. They tend to be more resourceful in their quest for information on topics such as health and education. Hence, they expect less from a radio station in terms of educational content. Significantly, they listen less to the “New Home, New Life” program, which gives out a lot of advice and useful tips on domestic life (hygiene, education of children, health).*

In some isolated provinces, interviewees expressed their frustration at not having enough media, and, in particular, would like to **develop local media**.

*“Over here, we need a better local radio to start with, one that would emit a clearer signal and that is not state owned. We want a private and free local radio that would serve the community, instead of serving the interests of the governor.” Gardez, local shura*

Local media also constitute a channel for **local patriotism**. Afghans are often proud of where they come from, and listeners of local stations appreciate programs about the history of the province and its historical monuments and are eager to hear poems and songs from local artists, past or present.

*In the opinion of radio Sada-e-Ghaznavion’s manager, a local radio should make people proud of their origins, and this is why they broadcast the historical program Ghazna wa Ghaznavion (“Ghazni and the people of Ghazni”), which is about the historical places and monuments of Ghazni, the former capital of Afghanistan (around 1000-1200 AD). Although this program was rather new, a significant number of interviewees in town knew about it and appreciated it.*

**Pashto speakers** often perceive local media as a means of protecting and promoting their language, which they feel is under-represented at the national level. They sometimes fear that their language might disappear, due to the dominance of Dari—or Farsi. The problem, albeit somewhat exaggerated, appears to have some basis: there are very few books available in Pashto, and even fewer are published. It is hard to follow higher education in the language; resources are scarce at universities and PhD holders would prefer teaching in Dari at Kabul University than in Pashto in “provincial” Khost.

In this context, the local media as well as some cultural events (like festivals of Pashto poetry) are considered as a positive **resistance to the decline of Pashto language and culture**. Pashto poetry is rich and very uncommon (for example *landei*, a kind of local *haiku*), and its preservation is one important role that the public places in the hands of the media.

**Cultural minorities** also perceive local media as potential facilitators of their identity.

*An original initiative of radio Sada-e-Ghaznavion is the weekly two hours of Hindi programming hosted by and aimed at the Sikh community that lives in Ghazni (around 500 individuals have stayed in spite of the years of war).*

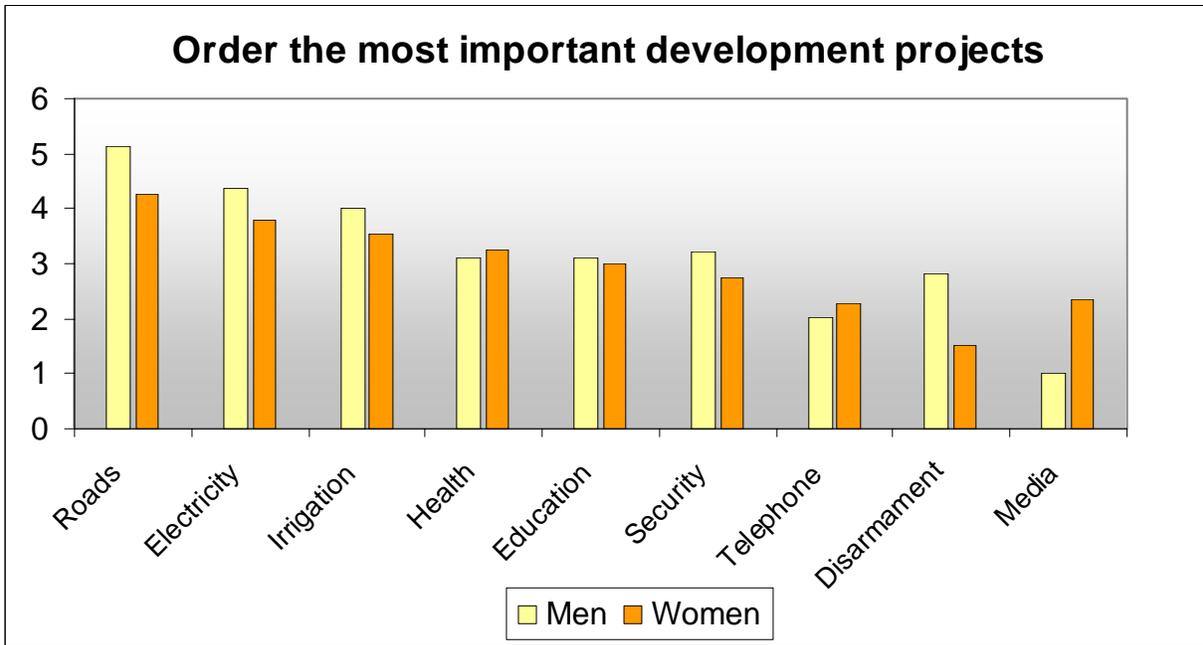
### 5.4. Relative importance of media among development projects

46% of the interviewees think that it is “very important” to support the media in Afghanistan and 22% think it is “important”.

However, given the destitution visible across Afghanistan, **development of media is not considered a top priority** compared to other projects. Only a handful of interviewees stated that the cultural level

should first be raised by media, and only then would economic development become possible. Across the 15 surveyed provinces, media is ranked ninth out of a list of ten priorities in the rebuilding of Afghanistan<sup>19</sup>, clearly showing that improvement of the basic living conditions comes first. Most of the priorities ranked above media are indeed pre-requisites for media development: television cannot be used without electricity, newspapers cannot be easily distributed without roads, and education is necessary to better understand media.

*“If you do not have electricity, how can you read newspaper or watch television? If you do not have asphalted roads, how can you read newspapers with the jolts?” Chief of justice department, 40, centre of Badakhshan*

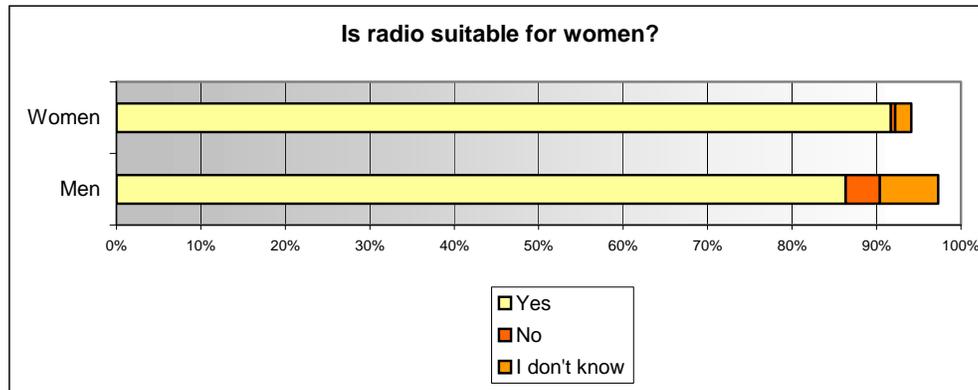


It is interesting to notice a couple of **differences between men and women** in the appreciation of development projects. Women give a higher importance to media (seventh in ranking) whereas men are more concerned about infrastructure (roads, electricity, and irrigation).

**5.5. Media for all**

Overall, interviewees showed a real open-mindedness on the issue of access to media for women and children.

<sup>19</sup> The following graph presents the average rank of each item, split by gender



This was observed in most provinces, although some variations were recorded. In Khost, only 70% of male interviewees considered that radio was suitable for women, whereas in Herat, Balkh and Badakhshan, over 95% were favorable.

### 5.6. Sensitive issues

Among sensitive issues to be tackled by media, **political ones**, even the most difficult (disarmament, commanders, etc) are far easier to deal with than social ones. People are often keen to hear about the disarmament of local militias and criticism of Taliban and local commanders.

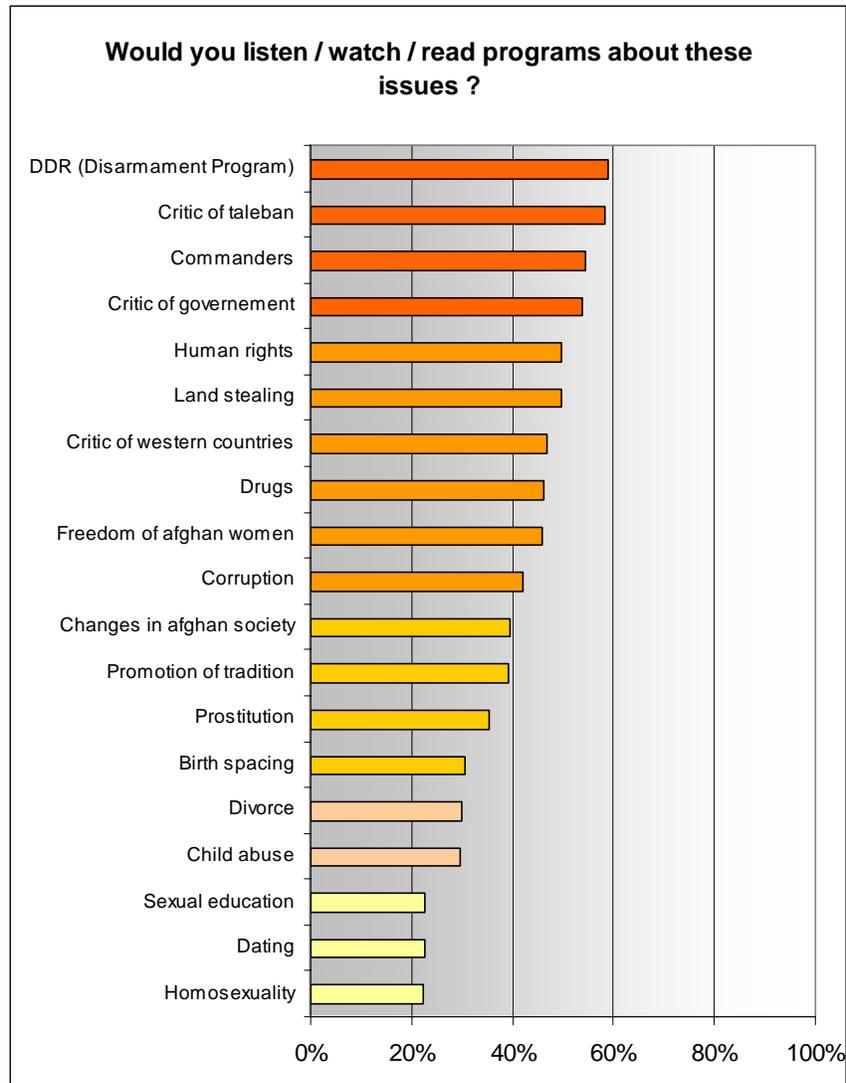
*In Nangarhar, **drugs and criticism of Taliban** are among the top concerns of interviewees, which is not surprising, as this region was one of the strongholds of the Taliban regime and host to the largest poppy crop in 2004.*

On the contrary, **social issues** are to be handled more cautiously. Most interviewees did not want media to ignore subjects such as homosexuality, prostitution or abortion, but to re-confirm that they are not acceptable in an Islamic society. Dating is taboo in most places, even when carefully translated as “a boy and a girl seeing each other or speaking to each other before they get married”. People feel this issue in particular is a breach of Afghan traditions and represents a push towards “infidel, loose” Western customs. It is even slightly more difficult to discuss than sexual education.

In some cases, interviewees did not feel that it was appropriate or safe to ask these types of questions.

*“There is no need to talk about sex, child abuse and divorce, because it does not happen here” Focus group with tribal elders, Khost*

However, during open discussions, where a higher level of confidence could be achieved, it appeared that social debate was of major interest to most Afghans, and that **most subjects, even the most taboo ones, could be treated** if the speaker had enough moral, religious and technical authority to do so.



*In Ghor, most people indicated that if some of the sensitive issues proposed were broadcast, they would listen to many of these topics with interest. For example, even if they considered it important to have numerous children, they would still be **interested in knowing about “family planning”** and specifically about different kinds of contraception techniques. A mullah interviewed in Chaghcharan said “Family planning is indeed very important, and Islam is not against contraception at all. It is a common misunderstanding. When it comes to abortion, the problem is different, but our community members should know how to best decide when to have children. Radio and television can help a lot on this matter.”*

*In Badakhshan, interviewees were generally **more progressive** on cultural issues than in many other Afghan provinces. Openness to sensitive social issues (freedom of women and birth spacing, for instance) is higher than the national average. Concerning gender issues, **a few interviewees even declared that dating was a good thing.** A young employee of a gas station said that Sharia’s prescription on this issue was that fiancées should see each other, and that the girl should be wearing very thin clothes, so that the boy could appreciate her physical beauty.*

*In Parwan-Kapisa, issues about divorce, birth spacing, homosexuality and sexual education were rejected by a majority of interviewees. At the same time the penetration of media was relatively low in this area, which may highlight the perceived influence of media on such issues. As Tajiks constitute the prevalent ethnic group in this area, such an observation undermines the stereotype of Pashtuns having the most conservative attitudes.*

## 5.7. Resistance to the media

### 5.7.1. Radio

There is **no visible resistance to radio** as a whole. Mullahs and shura leaders listen to the radio themselves and no denunciation or criticism was heard.

**A generation gap** does exist, though, concerning music. Older people and mullahs tend to be critical of Indian music, because of its foreign language and sensual style. They prefer Afghan singers, and even local ones for the most traditional interviewees.

### 5.7.2. Television

Criticism is mostly focused on **satellite television**, as in many Muslim countries (e.g.: the ban on dish antennas in Iran, criticism of “paradiabolic antennas” by the Algerian Islamists in the 90s).

People are very often fond of dances or romantic music videos, on Indian channels or the Persian Music Channel (PMC) for instance. But all interviewees said that there were some “bad” channels on the satellite services, which they described as “prostitution channels” or “contrary to regulations” (by “regulations”, the general acceptance is ‘Islamic regulations’).

*In Ghor province, a waiter in a guesthouse was watching PMC, which was broadcasting what appeared to be modern Indian music videos, i.e. provocatively dressed women and suggestive attitudes. When asked if he would let his wife watch this kind of program, he answered no: she would get the idea of dressing and acting in the same way, which would be against Islamic rules.*

As a consequence of this widespread suspicion, access to satellite television is subject to more **social control** than other media.

*Two employees of a hotel in Faizabad (Badakhshan) stated that the owner forbids them to switch channels, because “bad movies are broadcast” (the expression in Dari is “film e bad”, where “bad” conveys a moral connotation of “evil”).*

Official moral rulings on programs come from a **combination of traditional and religious authorities**: elders, mullahs and ulamas. Many mullahs criticize this media as potentially harmful to the integrity of believers.

These official opinions are respected, but not always followed. Often, people will criticize television as long as they do not have access to it, but rapidly change their mind if they have the opportunity to buy a television set. For example, there is a strong market for dish antennas and many homes are now equipped in the central parts of Badakhshan province.

As a general comment, there seems to be some hypocrisy on the issue. Some people tend to profess to be religiously devout, but actually many of them enjoy the very programs that they denounce. Whether or not, and to which extent, they watch sexually explicit content remains unknown.

### 5.7.3. Indian content

Resentment against the Indian entertainment industry is sometimes strong among **older, more conservative people**.

*The Killid provincial representative in Ghazni province was once threatened in a district by men shouting “You are the one selling magazines with photographs of Indian girls.”*

Several middle-age female interviewees also complained that **Indian movies** were filling teenagers’ minds with romantic ideas, making them fall in love and write sentimental letters to the local radio. Some other women pointed out the “bad” image of women portrayed in these programs.

Criticism of Indian productions is **not solely based on moral grounds**: some educated, middle-aged, modernist interviewees expressed that educational and scientific programs should be promoted instead of what they consider as melodramas. Moreover, they expressed concern for Afghan culture which they believed was under threat or being destroyed by this perceived cultural invasion. In contrast, the urban, fashion-conscious young, usually less politically concerned, are keen on Indian imports.

### 5.8. Public vs. private media

A significant amount of interviewees (47%) declared that they do not really understand the difference between public and private media. Very often, interviewees mistake “public media” with media available in the whole country, or think that “private media” means “media run by only one person”. There is probably a need to educate listeners about these different concepts, and the different categories of media.

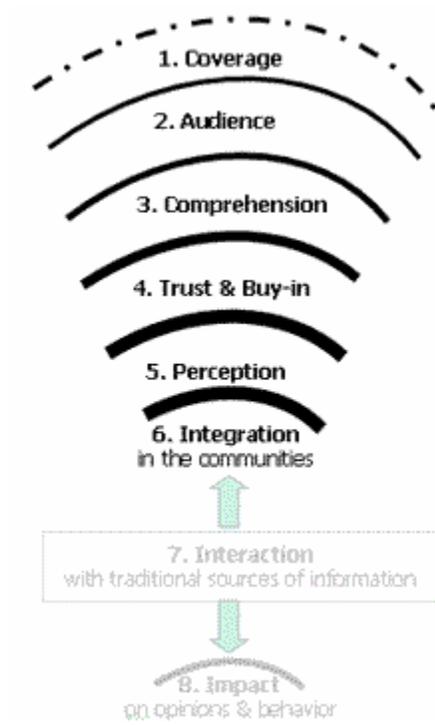
*In Balkh province, when asked which stations are governmental, 32% of interviewees correctly cited that television Afghanistan (RTA), 14% mentioned Radio Afghanistan, but 53% said that Arman FM was also public. As Arman FM only recently started broadcasting in this area, people were still not used to the concept of a nation-wide commercial station and thought it was a public medium.*

However, although the concepts of public and private media are not always clear, interviewees have some notions of freedom of speech and independence and can often distinguish, from practical experience, the media reflecting biased interests from the independent ones.

As expected in a post-conflict and still fragmented state, the notion of public service is not clear for the majority. However, there is a vague sense that Radio Afghanistan is both a symbol and a tool for national unity. In this perspective, it should be noted that among those interviewed, many Pashtuns claimed that there is a lack of representation of their language and culture on the national station.

## 6. INTEGRATION IN THE COMMUNITY

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*High school students produce and present a weekly program on English language lessons on Radio Naw-e-Bahar, their local community radio station (**Balkh Province**)*

The benefits of local media for the community have already been explored above. Integration of the media within communities has two other aspects. On one hand, what people receive from media is often shared with others. On the other hand, people can actively participate in media at the local level.

### **6.1. Circulation of information**

Afghans exchange information about media on a regular basis.

78% of radio listeners talk with other people about what they have heard on radio (40% often, 38% sometimes). 67% of television viewers talk with others about what they see on television. Only 20% of newspaper readers report speaking often about what they read in the press.

People speak less often about television than radio, probably because television is used more for entertainment. Newspapers are also less of a talking point than radio, because of irregular supply.

Interlocutors are mostly friends and family members. A clear difference appears between male and female users. Men exchange media information mostly with friends (57% on average for radio, television and newspapers), whereas women exchange information with family members (66%).

Information originating from media, especially radio, is often relayed by a person who is categorized as an “avid listener”. He is the one that other people consult because he is usually informed through different sources. He is not necessarily the most educated person or the oldest. Although the traditional chief or the representative can play this role, such relays of information may include taxi drivers with a lot of curiosity and the time to listen to the radio.

*“People here know that I spend my time listening to the radio, so when they need information they come to see me and I explain to them what happens in the world and in Afghanistan, I give them a summary of the important news.” Rahmdel, 33, Village 1, Balkh*

### **6.2. Participation in the Media**

Participation of the community in media happens above all at the local level. Small local stations give people **the opportunity to explore a career in media** or simply to participate in hosting programs.

*At radio Sharq (local Internews station in Jalalabad), Sharifa, 18, is responsible for the weekly program “Women’s Rights”, which deals with social problems such as forced marriages or female illiteracy. Sharifa has received a short training at the Tribes’ Department in Jalalabad, by a BBC journalist. This training was mostly an encouragement for female journalists, who were told not to be afraid of field reports and sensitive issues. Sharifa wants to study journalism at Kabul University. Despite the low salary, she would prefer working at the local station later on, in order to serve her native province.*

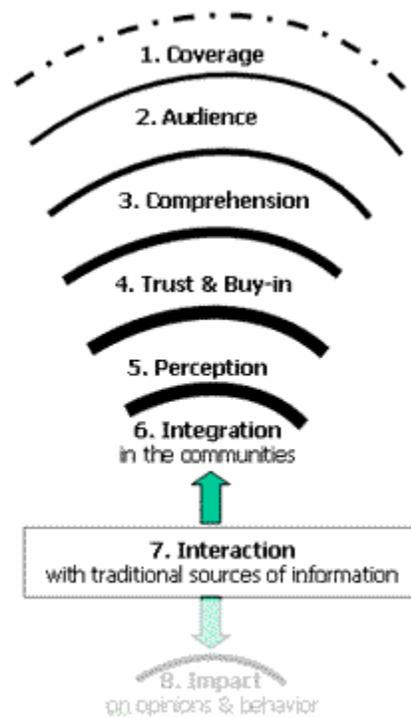
Listeners can also **participate in game shows** organized by their local station. Beyond providing specific points of general knowledge, this type of program emphasizes the importance of education in society.

Local media are acting as a **forum**, where people have, often for the first time and anonymously, the **opportunity to share their concerns**. Many sensitive issues (forced weddings, dating, divorce, revenge killing) are brought forward, creating a collective *catharsis*, that many users judge as positive.

*In Said Khel (Parwan province), two young male interviewees remembered listening to the story of a girl who had explained during a live call how she resented the prospect of an arranged marriage, as she was in love with another person. This story had visibly made quite an impression on them.*

## 7. MEDIA AND TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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*Altai research team debating with the local Shura of Charken village, Balkh Province*

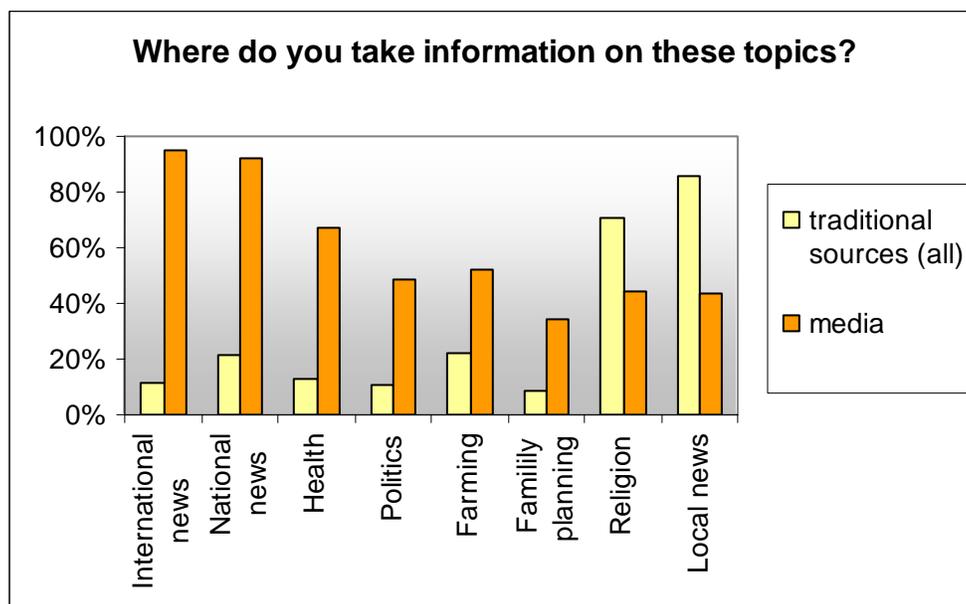
In 15 communities, a socio-anthropological approach was followed in order to better identify the information dynamics and also to understand if the media, (independently from their good coverage, a strong penetration and a high level of trust) were able to interact positively with traditional sources of information. The key questions of this research section were the following:

- Who are the opinion leaders / influencers in Afghan communities?
- What kind of information do they disseminate?
- Do they block the penetration of the media?
- How does information from traditional sources and media interact?
- Which sources do people trust most?

### 7.1. Preference & trust: Media vs. traditional sources

Media were found to be the leading source of information on most topics and generally speaking people trust them over other sources. Still, traditional channels retain two important roles. First, they spread information originating in the media and fill the gap in the lack of media coverage for certain topics. Furthermore, traditional sources, e.g. mullahs, directly participate in the production of some media programs.

In the following chart, traditional sources included family members, friends, shopkeepers, neighbors, mullahs and local *shuras*.



On most subjects, with the exception of religion and local news, media are clearly the leading source of information in terms of usage as well as trust.

When it comes to news from the villages and their surrounding areas, which are almost never covered by the media, the only way to keep up-to-date is through word of mouth, or through the traditional leaders.

*"We have different information sources for the local level news and for the national or international level news. For information about the village or nearby areas, like deaths, murders, weddings, work, and jirga meetings we prefer traditional sources. When we learn something, we hail down cars to spread the information to areas about 25km away. For*

*national and international news we choose radio and media in general." Local Leader in Khost Province*

**Overall radio and TV are not only preferred to other sources, they also take the lead on any other sources in terms of trust on all issues, including local news and religion:**

- For international and national news, radio has a clear edge on any other source of information: it is trusted by more than 80% of the respondents.

- It is interesting to notice that although they are not given as the primary source of information on **provincial and local news**, media -and particularly radio- are still the most trusted source on these issues. This confirms the fact that as soon as media cover a specific issue, they get a high level of trust and beat other sources.

- **On religion**, an issue on which the Mullahs keep a major role in terms of influence, radio is still the most trusted source (52% vs. 40% for Mullahs), with a slight variation across genders: most of the men interviewed asked mullahs directly, while women tend to resort more to radio, as they do not have direct contact with mullahs—women are not usually allowed to go to mosques in Afghanistan and do not normally speak with men who are not relatives.

What do you trust on these topics								
	International news	Afghan news	Provincial news	Local news	Health	Elections & politics	Religion	average
Radio	88%	83%	62%	63%	54%	58%	52%	66%
Television	76%	53%	38%	37%	39%	32%	35%	44%
Newspapers	62%	33%	29%	27%	22%	21%	24%	31%
Family	25%	17%	17%	18%	17%	15%	19%	18%
Friends	24%	17%	18%	19%	16%	15%	11%	17%
Neighbors	23%	16%	17%	17%	14%	14%	8%	16%
Mullah	11%	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%	40%	10%
Expert	12%	5%	4%	5%	32%	5%	6%	10%

*Figures computed on the respective audiences of the different sources (1507, 1243, 441; 181)*

- Family, friends and neighbours get a limited trust, but overall play a stronger role than Mullahs or other leaders on forging opinions; the trust they get is steady on most issues (16 to 18%).

- Experts (Doctors and nurses) are an important alternative to media on health aspects. On these issues, although media are a strong source of information, people tend also to turn the nearest local expert who gets a high level of trust since the information they give is really adapted to the specific needs of the person.

**→ Media is generally viewed as being able to give more exact information than friends, family, or neighbors because they have more resources at their disposal.**

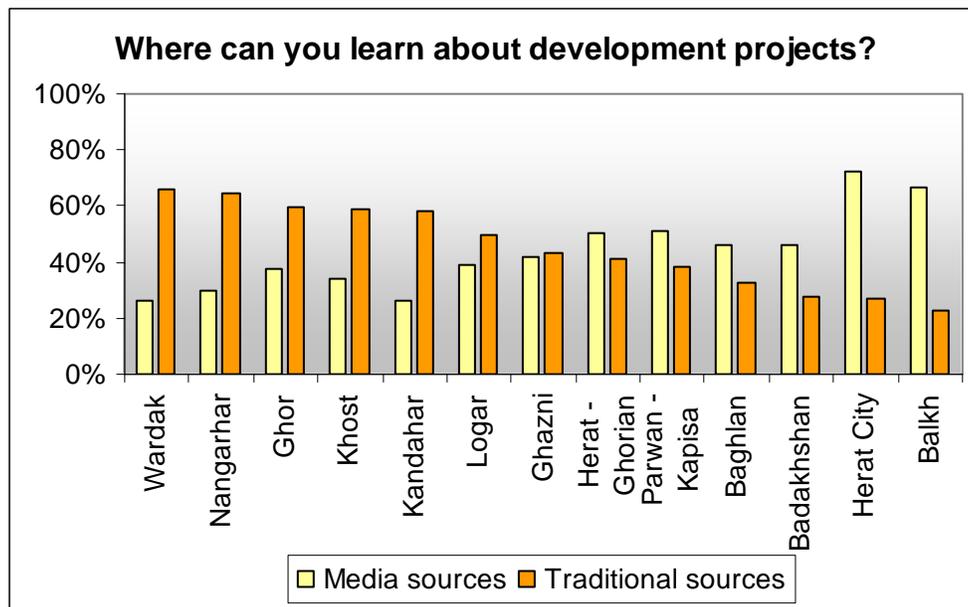
Limitations: When traditional sources take the lead on the media

In the specific fields of **Afghan reconstruction & development projects**, many people expressed their frustration on the lack of specific programs in the media explaining the different steps of the country's development: in the absence of reliable information, they tend to turn to informal sources, which often lead to **misconceptions and exaggerations** on the alleged abuses by NGOs.

On these reconstruction issues, **Afghans rely on direct observation** or word-of-mouth. The media only play a limited role and listeners retain primarily information focusing narrowly on two points: the reconstruction of roads across the country and the aid from the international community. Afghans often have a fair knowledge of the progress of reconstruction in their own region, but very little information concerning the other parts of the country.

**Reconstruction overall remains an abstract and vague concept**, which provokes a significant number of people to express their dissatisfaction and criticize the work of the government, of foreigners and above all, of NGOs, which are accused of making fortunes on the back of the Afghan people instead of working effectively to rebuild the country. Some interviewees also use fragments of information heard via the media to justify their views on this subject.

*“All these people who work for NGOs are thieves who keep the money allocated for reconstruction for themselves. I know this because I compare the budgets announced on the radio with the achievements; it’s obvious they don’t use all the money for the building sites.”* Jafar, 34, Center, Jalalabad



In half of the surveyed provinces, and in particular in the Pashtun-dominated provinces, where there is often a stronger resentment against the progresses of reconstruction, interviewees stated they were getting more information on development projects through traditional sources than from the media. On the contrary, media outshines traditional sources in urban centers (Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat) and in Tajik-dominated provinces.

**7.2. The role of traditional sources of information**

**7.1.1 Description**

> **The elders** (“White beards”) are respected within the community for their experience and wisdom that comes with age. They serve as **intermediaries between the population and the local authorities**: transmitting complaints from the community to local officials and enforcing government policies (e.g., the ban on opium). They help to **solve conflicts** among local people (e.g., on land or water sharing) and their guidance is sought for various questions on traditions, weddings, financial hardship, education of children

and on the proper way of behaving within the community. They are responsible for organizing and chairing the jirgas.

> **The malek** is the equivalent of a mayor. He acts as a relay for villagers on a wide range of issues, including the situation in other provinces, the latest government decisions, the actions of NGOs and reconstruction projects in the region. He is informed thanks to the media and to his contacts with members of the government. His role tends to be reinforced according to the isolation of the village.

In some regions, the malek's position is passed on from father to son, which in the eyes of the people is a sign of effectiveness and trust.

> **The shura:** Most visited villages have a **shura** – an assembly convened once a week or a fortnight. It includes the malek, the elders, mullahs, rich villagers and commanders. It discusses issues such as governmental action in the region, security or the presence of foreigners in town. Decisions and important news are communicated to the villagers. The shura is responsible for collecting funds for municipal buildings (mosques, for instance) and organizing common works such as irrigation projects. They also coordinate local development projects with NGOs and were very present in the lead-up to the elections. Villagers consult them on a range of issues, from security, to agriculture, to health and education.

> **The representative** (*nomainda*) is not a traditional leader *per se*, but he is delegated by the shura to serve as a community spokesperson with the local government. This disjunction between the traditional chiefs and the representative exists because traditional chiefs are often illiterate, and need a literate person to communicate with the administration. As the representative is regularly in contact with officials and goes back and forth to the provincial center, he is able to bring back information to villagers.

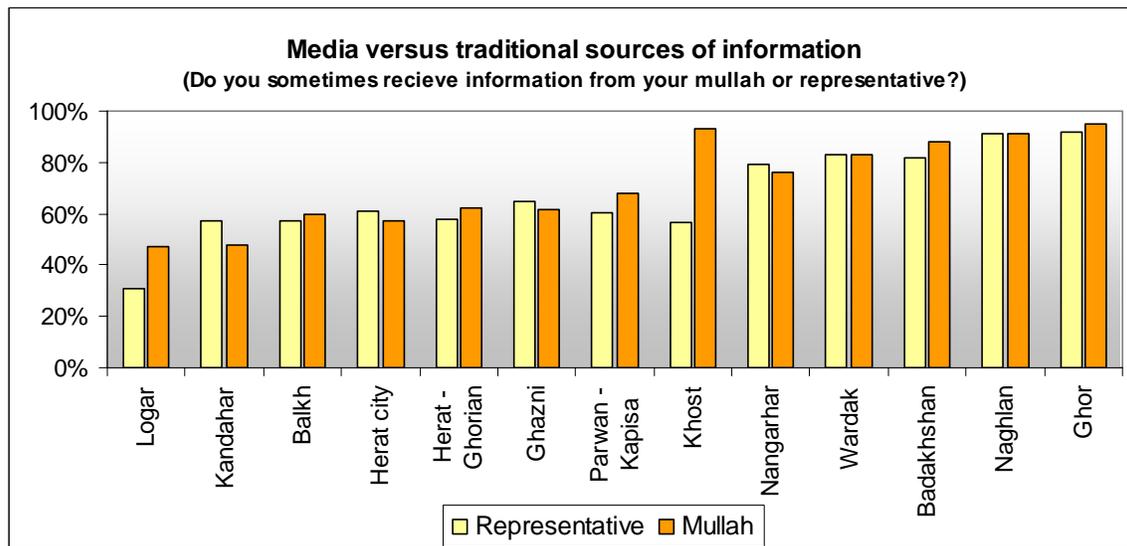
> **The mullah:** Contrary to many preconceived ideas, the **mullahs** were very rarely playing a political role within the observed communities, even in the most traditional regions of the southeast. Their role is almost exclusively religious. For the mullahs, this constitutes a fundamental change from the Taliban era where theology students ruled the country. The mullahs encountered in the course of the survey did not assume a function beyond religion. They are considered the guardians of tradition and as such, villagers consult them on moral issues. Many respondents believe their help would be highly valuable in putting an end to certain practices such as arranged marriages or barriers that impede the education of girls.

> **The commander:** The influence of **commanders** within the community is less discernable and does not gather universal approval. People often accuse them of acting in their personal interests instead of serving the collective interests. They are, in a more or less official manner, in charge of local security and have a duty to inform people about events that occur from time to time in the region. They often play a role in the fight against drug cultivation and they are often the most staunchly traditional members of the community. They are seen as more of a hindrance to change in society than mullahs or elders.

> **Barbers:** In some villages, barbers are a relay point for local information and disseminate news concerning the community (deaths, weddings or births). Their role is more important in villages that don't have access to local radio. This source of information is often considered old-fashioned.

> **Paytawi:** In Dari "Paytawi" refers to word-of-mouth. This traditional source of information is the least exploited and the most doubted. Essentially, it applies to issues linked to local security or to the presence of foreigners and is active in meeting places such as mosques, chai khanas or at the bazaar. on the contrary to sociological preconceptions, public baths (*hamams*) are not among the places where information is exchanged among members of the community. This can be partly explained by the fact that most Afghan hamams are organized with individual cabins rather than collective rooms.

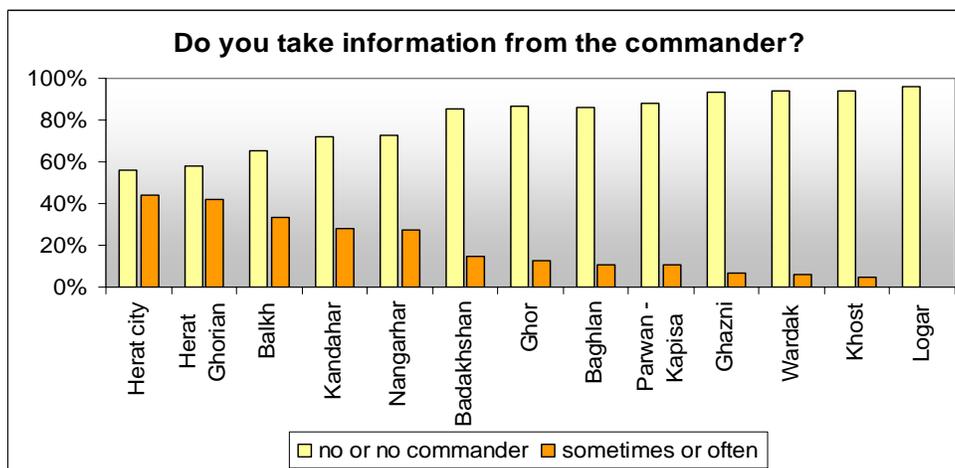
7.1.2 Focus on Mullah and representatives



- Although they generally come after the media in terms of usage and trust, traditional leaders are sometimes consulted in most areas, and to a larger extent in the most remote provinces (Ghor, Badakhshan, Wardak) and in Pashtun-dominated provinces like Nangarhar.
- On the contrary, provinces hosting **big cities** such as Mazar-e-Sharif or Herat show a lower usage of traditional sources.
- In Khost, the role of mullahs as a source of information is prominent. This highlights the role of religious leaders in this area, generally considered as more conservative.

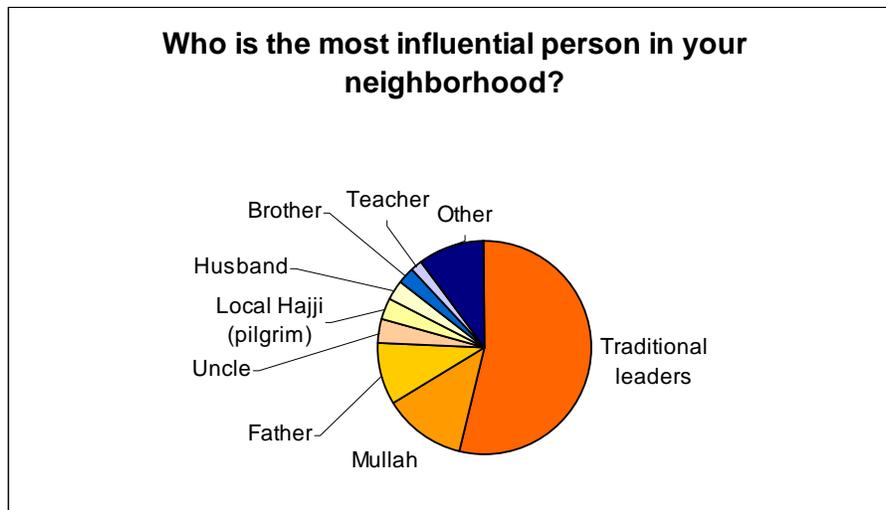
7.1.3 Commanders

The volume of information from local commanders is **difficult to assess**. Interviewees tended to answer that there was no commander, for two reasons: some want to shield them, in the current context of disarmament, because they still maintain a sense of loyalty towards their war-time protectors. Others simply fear retaliations in case informers report their comments to them. It can be assumed that such attitudes distort data in a more or less similar manner across provinces, and, therefore, regional variables can still be studied.



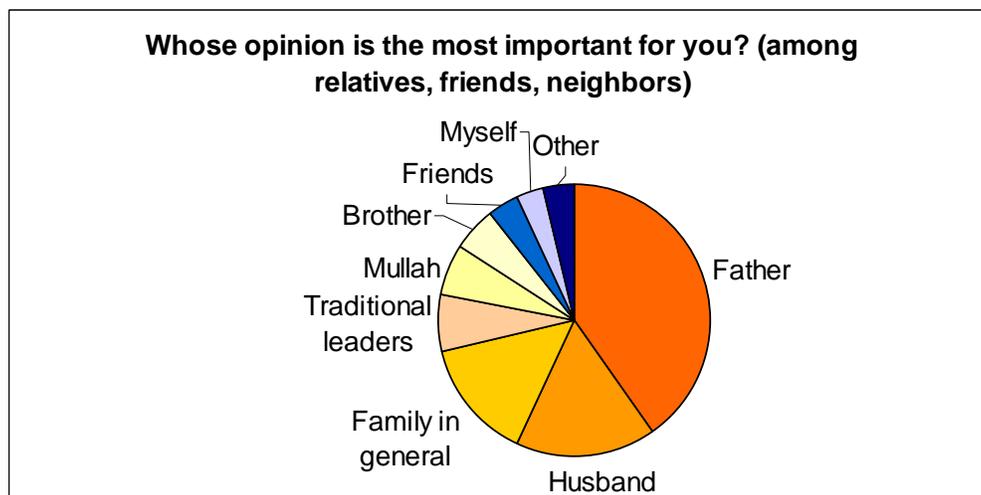
Compared to other traditional channels like Mullahs and representatives, **commanders seem to play a rather minor** role in the surveyed provinces. Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar and Nangarhar are far above the average, reflecting the role of commanders, or warlords, in these provinces – often in official positions. In other provinces, only a minority sometimes receives information from commanders. Overall, it seems that peace, strengthening of the central government and the demilitarization process (combined with commanders’ long-standing unpopularity) are bearing fruit and have already significantly undermined their position as relays of information.

7.1.4 Relative levels of influence among traditional sources



The above chart clearly shows that the traditional leaders (elders, *malek, nomainda*) receive a high level of consideration in their communities, and are considered by the interviewees as more influential than mullahs. Apart from heads of families (father, husband, uncle, etc), the Hajji (those who have done the pilgrimage to Mecca) command respect in their neighborhood – they are politely referred to as “Hajji Saheeb”.

When asked about their own opinion, however, most interviewees make a clear distinction between “respected leaders”, who are considered as generally influential in the community, and their close family members whose opinion really count on day-to-day issues:



**Among the people whose opinion counts**, most interviewees mention their direct relatives, from father (largely dominant with 37% of the cumulated responses) to husband (15%), and family in general (13%). Altogether, 80% of the cumulated answers to this question go to **direct relatives**.

In comparison, the opinion of Mullahs and Elders altogether count for 12% of the answers. Which clearly shows the limitation of these key figures when it comes to influencing personal opinions in the village, even if people regularly collect information from them. – C.f. following section-

### **7.3. Interaction between media and traditional sources**

Contrary to many preconceived ideas on the Afghan society, media and traditional sources are not at odds with each other, but rather co-exist and interact well. The information supplied by mullahs and elders is very rarely in conflict with the information conveyed through the media. On the contrary, traditional leaders often use media in making decisions and they relay information coming from the media to the local community.

*In Qaraboghi (Ghazni province), the representative (nomainda) passes on international news from what he hears on the BBC and Al Jazeera to villagers. He is able to do so thanks to his understanding of Arabic – he lived for 12 years in various countries of the Persian Gulf*

In general, people **use media to check information** and get more details to the information coming from the traditional sources or from word-of-mouth. The majority of interviewees said that when they are unable to directly access media, they received information indirectly from other media users.

The village leaders are indeed the strong arm that enables the application of change introduced or suggested through radio. The most remarkable example, which is also a very recent one, is the vaccination campaign launched by the media and spontaneously taken on by some villagers.

In the case of the **elections**, the traditional information relay points provided good groundwork for the information campaign led both by the media and by JEMB civic education officers.

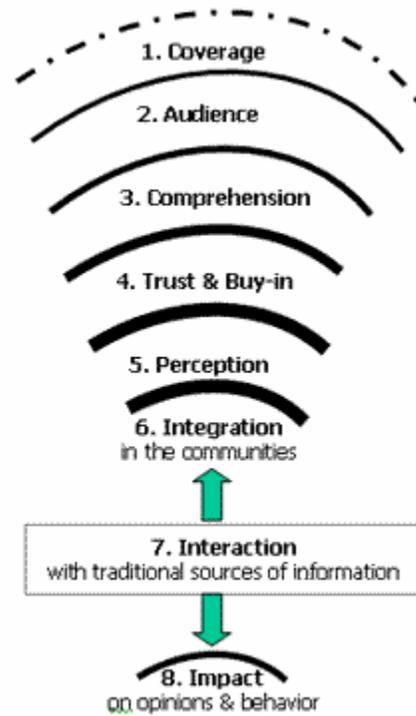
Testimony to this fruitful and effective **collaboration between media and traditional leaders**, the latter are often invited to speak on radio or on television and are sometimes consulted on programming.

*In Nangarhar, Radio Sharq (local Internews station) regularly broadcasts a program where mullahs explain the regulations of Islam on various issues, notably on poppy growing.*

*In Khost, the steering committee of radio Sul-e-Paygham is composed of a lecturer from the law faculty, a mullah, a tribal chief and the station manager.*

## 8. IMPACT ON OPINION AND CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR

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*15-year-old Hasina leads the production of the weekly program "Future Makers of Afghanistan" on Radio Naw-e-Bahar in her native town of Balkh (Balkh Province).*

## 7.2 General Trends

Radio is very much present in the daily lives of Afghans and its influence has had a visible effect on the behavior and opinions of listeners on a wide range of issues.

While it is challenging to carry out an in-depth assessment on the impact of media (insofar as no baseline research has ever been carried out) it is nonetheless possible to single out a certain number of topics on which radio has had a considerable influence and to identify groups of people on which it has had little or no impact.

The impact of media in cities is more challenging to pinpoint than in the villages, as city dwellers have easier access to other sources of information that also bear upon their opinion and behavior. In contrast, radio is often the only available source of information in villages and thus is the main driver of change within the community.

## 7.3 Specific issues

### 7.3.1 Elections

For almost all the interviewees, radio was the primary source of information in the run up to the elections. The combined efforts of the media, civic educators and poster campaigns in villages have been particularly effective. The Afghans as a whole have embraced their new role as citizens. Women have largely participated in the poll and have gained awareness of their new rights as citizens, often thanks to media.

*“It was thanks to the dialogues on the radio at the time of the elections that I allowed my wife and my daughter to vote.” Jafar, 34, Center, Jalalabad*

*“Before, I used to think that only men had the right to vote. But then I heard on radio Afghanistan that women also had a right to participate in elections. I asked for confirmation at the women’s Shura of our village, and I took out my voting card.” Hajera, 40, Center, Gardez*

In some regions such as in the southeast, a majority of respondents heard about the elections via traditional sources of information, which are particularly active. Very often, *shura* members, elders and *maleks* have assumed the role of relaying information and disseminated the news throughout the village. Only as a second step did people listen to the radio in order to obtain supplementary information and become familiar with the voting procedure and the names of the different candidates.

However, media did not have a determining influence on voters’ choices. Candidates speeches were listened to only by a minority of interviewees. Most voters based their choice on criteria such as the background, education and ethnicity of the candidate.

*“I heard interviews on the radio but they had not influenced me as I pay attention to actions, not to words.” Mohammad, 36, Village 1, Jalalabad*

### 7.3.2 Counter narcotics

Radio, coupled with the action of mullahs and elders, has a very important role to play in gaining acceptance of opium prohibition, using primarily religious arguments to convince people. One of the most efficient slogans was: “Do not make your wealth *haram* with drugs” – *haram* is a religious word designating all things that stain the human being.

*“Programs on drugs have strongly influenced peasants and encouraged them to stop growing poppies in the Paktia region, as they understood that it is against Islam.” Abdul, 43, Village 2, Gardez.*

*“We discussed the ban on poppy growing a lot among farmers. Some of us heard on the radio that it was contrary to Islam and that the Prophet condemned its cultivation as well as using drugs. Therefore, we decided to stop, but now we know our economic situation is precarious.” Saïd Rahman, 39, Village 1, Jalalabad*

The above statement emphasizes the fact that alternative livelihoods must be provided if counter-narcotics media campaigns are to have a long-term effect.

### 7.3.3 *Foreigners in Afghanistan*

Regular users of media, who are thus well informed, classify foreigners into two categories: the soldiers, who are here to search for members of Al Qaeda and ensure security, and the civilians, who are here to help rebuild the country.

The less informed perceive foreigners as an indistinct entity whose main purpose is summarized under contradictory headers: “they are here to help us” or, more rarely, “they want to occupy and pillage Afghanistan.”

*“Foreigners working for NGOs in Afghanistan spend a good deal of time walking around and buying expensive cars. They do not know Afghans, their culture or their needs.” Farida, 28, Mazar*

Media play an important role in explaining the reasons for foreigners’ presence.

*“When the Americans arrived in Afghanistan, I thought they wanted to invade us and occupy our country. Listening to the radio, I learned that they were building roads and schools, so I changed my mind. I now understand they have come here to re-build the country, not to plunder it.” Abdullah, 28, Center, Gardez.*

### 7.3.4 *Social issues and traditions*

Media have had a strong impact on important questions such as education and women’s rights. Some radio programs have contributed to the reduction of practices such as arranged marriages and, to a lesser extent, the obligation to wear a burqa.

*“On radio and television, I heard that women had the right to choose their husband by themselves, so I thought, why not me?” Faoziha, 16, Village 2, Mazar*

*“Before I started listening to the radio, I used to be a very conservative person. For example I forced my sister to marry a man she did not know. Since then, I have changed and I will let my daughter marry the person of her choice.” Saidullah, 38, shopkeeper, Village 1, Jalalabad.*

*“The Burqa is not part of our culture and will disappear thanks to the media. Already, we can see that every other woman has done away with it, and certainly not because Karzai went from door to door to tear them away. It was radio that incited them to do so.” Members of the shura, village 2, Jalalabad*

*“I learned on radio Azadi that a man who beats his wife will not go to paradise. We talked it over with my wife and I swore never to beat her again.” Rahmatullah, 27, Center, Gardez*

## 9. FOCUS: TV IN KABUL CITY

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Research was conducted in Kabul, among 10 families equipped with a TV set, to get an insight into the dynamics created by the recent developments of this medium in the Afghan capital. Extensive research should be undertaken to bring quantitative data on this issue, but the research conducted already highlights interesting trends, that can serve as a base for future surveys.

The social research was conducted in 10 households, with the following breakdown:

- 4 neighborhoods (North, South, East, West)
- 3 differing socio-economic backgrounds (well-off, middle-class and poor),
- 3 ethnic groups (Pashtun, Tajik and Hazara)

### 7.4 Use and expectations

In the households involved in our research, television was undoubtedly the most appreciated and most widely used form of media on a day-to-day basis. Contrary to the provinces, **television tends to take a lead on radio** which is frequently seen as “has-been” by Kabulis and only used as a back-up media during the day. The people interviewed in Kabul were highly sensitive to the quality of information offered by television together with its entertainment and educative function. They believe a positive and important development is underway, with freedom of expression, professionalism of journalists and uncensored interviews that bolster the credibility of information delivered by television. New channels have recently brought brand new program concepts that greatly differ from what was previously available on television Afghanistan (RTA).

**Even though the majority of interviewees considered that the information broadcast through radio and television was equally reliable, TV has a real edge on other media for the following purposes:**

- To **discover** more about the rest of the world and become familiar with other cultures
- To keep abreast of information and to understand, integrate and retain news items or informative **messages**. The pedagogical value and the practical benefit of television are often considered as essential when dealing with issues such as elections, health or education.
- To put the truthfulness of information to a **visual test** and to gain appreciation of the magnitude of an event or natural disaster such as the December 2004 Tsunami in Asia

Whilst the majority of respondents considered television primarily as a source of entertainment, they are also expecting it to be useful to their lives. They aspire to extend their sphere of knowledge and their cultural outlook thanks to educational programs that venture beyond basic information. People met during this research wanted to discover other cultures, become familiar with advanced technology, deepen their level of knowledge and cultural awareness.

### 7.5 TV versus Radio

Interviewees tended to indicate specific uses of television and radio, attributing distinct functions for each form of media:

- Television is seen as an easy and pleasant way to be informed about major local and international events. Indeed, **families watch news on TV** (in households where both TV and radio are present) with a strong interest for international news.
- Television is also a novel **source of entertainment** for those who enjoy music videos, films, quiz shows and hidden camera shows. It is also a source of **relaxation after a day's work**.

- Radio is considered by most interviewees as a complementary medium during the daytime. Those people use the **radio for its educational content and for music**.
- However there are also people who listen closely to the news, using radio to obtain detailed and supplementary information on certain events. Among the **most educated interviewees**, a sizeable number **prefer radio over television as they felt that radio programs were more precise, of better quality and more varied**. To this group, television was primarily useful for less educated people as it broadcasts simplified and less technical information.

### **7.6 Perception of the various television channels**

**Tolo TV** is watched extensively by various sections of the population since its creation is an event in the television scenery. Tolo TV is viewed as a highly novel alternative in an otherwise bland television schedule. The station's audience appreciates its **fun and entertainment** features. A sizeable number of people also consider it to be a reliable source of information and praise its free tone and the quality of its news bulletins. Tolo TV was, however, criticized for its lack of educational content, its panelists (considered too casual) and for its excess of Indian music. Staunch opponents of the channel are generally people over 50 who believe that the station's programs are not compatible with Muslim society.

**Afghan TV** is the **least watched** and least well known of the three broadcast channels. Either because of its low quality signal, or because its programming is not competitive (it is often deemed to be "an old hat" by interviewees, who complained about its "repetitive and dull programs" and its "outdated music"). Some also believe that there is too much advertising and political debate, which they find "boring."

**Television Afghanistan (RTA)** appears to be a **fair compromise** between the other two channels, offering a combination of entertainment, quality news and educational programs. It is acclaimed by the majority of interviewees and is often cited by adult men and women as the best channel. Some respondents however, regret the fact that it features too much traditional music and not enough innovating programs.

### **7.7 Profiles of television viewers**

**Children** are very keen on television. Together with their parents, they watch cartoons and programs specifically dedicated to them, combining fun and learning. They are very influential in the choice of program.

**Teenagers** and young adults watch television the most and express the greatest degree of interest in this medium. They enjoy music videos, education and cultural programs under the guise of games, movies, (mostly action) from India and Western countries as well as sports.

**Men** watch primarily the news, reports, roundtables, or critical short plays as well as movies. Some of the male respondents consider that the television programs currently available are too slanted towards the tastes of the younger generation and do not match their interests closely enough. RTA and Afghan TV seem to better meet their expectations than Tolo TV.

**Women** also watch the news on television, as well as programs on society, family and the plight of women, such as "Women in Society" on RTA. They also appreciate melodramas and movies that deal with relations within the family. They do not usually have a favorite channel, but watch all of them.

### **7.8 Most popular programs**

Some programs gather general acclaim among the various population segments mentioned above:

- **Danesyar** on Tolo TV, named after the well-known journalist that directs it, is seen as representative of a new generation of journalism which focuses on everyday realities and

undertakes in-depth interviews so as to obtain a better grasp of the problems and needs of Afghan society.

- **Deutsche Welle international news flashes** – broadcast on RTA – are presented by Afghan journalists living abroad. Viewers feel that the quality of the numerous reports make the topics treated lively and fascinating. They also appreciate having the Afghan viewpoint on international developments.
- Programs which focus on the **status of women in society** such as “Violence against Society” and “Women in Society” on RTA, are generally followed with interest. Educational programs for children that address general knowledge questions such as astronomy, geography, art or wildlife are followed closely by the entire family, who view them as a good means of combining entertainment and knowledge.

## 10. LESSONS LEARNED

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### Coverage

- Coverage is strong for major radio stations, but too limited for local stations, which are often in financial difficulty.
- Broadcast television – although rapid progress has been made – is still a long way from achieving nation-wide coverage.
- For the press, concentration should be encouraged and distribution improved.

### Audience

- Among media, radio has a clear lead. TV is rising as the leading medium when available and when there is a variety of channels. In Kabul, expectations are already very high. There is space for more development and support.
- Press consumption remains nominal, but should not be neglected given the level of interest demonstrated, its educative qualities and the number of initiatives already underway.
- Media users are more sophisticated than expected with regards to radio. Listeners differentiate the stations by topics and know a number of programs.
- Audience segmentation is emerging. Gender and education levels are currently more determining than age.
- Programming expectations are very high, particularly for educational content and social debate.

### Comprehension

- Levels of comprehension are extremely varied. The main difficulties are the variety of languages, the level of vocabulary and the use of foreign words. People who did not go to school often lack general knowledge and the necessary levels of concentration to perfectly understand some programs.
- Women are handicapped by the fact that they have fewer opportunities to seek information or explanations outside the home.
- Local media are generally easy to understand thanks to the use of local language, local accents and simple vocabulary.

### Trust

- Media are highly trusted, generally more so than traditional sources (even the most respectable sources including elders or *maleks*). Local information tends to be more trusted when confirmed by media. On religious issues, local mullahs are still trusted as much, if not more, than media.
- A limited number of interviewees had doubts about some media: especially media originating from neighboring countries (mostly Iran and Pakistan), several newspapers known to be controlled by a particular interest group, and state media (mostly based in the provinces).

### Perception

- Media have a very positive image in most places. They are perceived as having an educative and informative role. However, media development is deemed less urgent than roads, electricity or irrigation, for instance.
- Social discontent concerns only certain media (satellite television), certain content (foreign, e.g. Indian, movies and songs, erotic movies) and certain segments of the population (the older generation and the conservatives). Still, if the media evolution is too rapid and introduces controversial entertainment content, a social divide could appear.

### Integration/interaction with the communities

- Media are a central focus for discussions in communities; they raise interest and debate. Traditional leaders interact with media by passing on information to local people and expressing

themselves through media. People are eager to participate in media, and regularly do so on a local level. Information is relayed by local sources: those with influence or experts.

- However, media could better integrate into civil society by emphasizing more on ordinary people's opinions and strengthening their function as a facilitator of public accountability.

### **Impact on transitional opinions & behavior**

- Media have a very strong influence on opinions and may contribute to behavioral change. On some topics (elections and girls' education for instance), they have had a significant impact. On others (such as the perception of foreigners and NGOs, the wearing of *burqas*, or forced marriages) there is still room for improvement.
- Generally speaking, results can be achieved through the use of Islamic arguments against traditions or habits. On the topic of poppy eradication for instance, at the time of the evaluation (September 2004- March 2005), this strategy appeared to have achieved some successes.

### **Women and media**

- Women are usually free to use radio, but do not choose the station when the male "head" of the family is at home. Television is subject to more social control.
- Women have specific expectations (health and family programs, role of women in society), but are also as equally interested as men in other programs (news, including national and international).
- Media are all the more important for women as they mostly stay at home. For them, media represent a window to the outside world.

### **Television in Kabul**

- TV in Kabul has become the major media phenomenon. Tolo TV has brought a new genre to Afghan viewers—off-hand, modern and commercial. This is raising much interest and curiosity simultaneously to objections and fears.
- TV is opening the way to entertainment media, but is also expected to provide educational programming and should not drop its public service function.

## 11. CONCLUSION

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### **Three years after – Phase I of media development in Afghanistan is a success**

In the past three years, a large number of actors were involved in media development in Afghanistan – from international institutions to media development NGOs, local networks and universities, as well as major donors and the government. They have been able to cover most levels of the media chain, from the reconstruction of structures to journalist training programs and broadcasting.

In many ways, Afghanistan already serves as a case study for media development in post-conflict countries. Coordination between media actors was generally efficient, and overlap was limited. This evaluation shows that media have successfully filled the information void after many years of war. From the first presentation by an Afghan woman on Radio Afghanistan in November 2001; to the recent creation of Tolo TV; the opening of Radio Amu in Badakhshan; the distribution of copies of *Killid* and *Parwaz* in remote villages of the Khost province, many actors have come together to successfully reach audiences and have an impact on ways of thinking and behaving.

While this research project points out the major changes and opportunities to encourage development in the Afghan society, it should also be used to stimulate further debate on the role the media will play in coming years in Afghanistan.

### **Phase II: Supporting continued growth and development**

This study provides a more complete understanding of the influence of media on progress and positive change in Afghan society.

The main topics of interest among the Afghan population, as identified by the study, are:

- Elections, freedom of expression, accountability of the government
- More information on other regions, cultural exchange
- Debate on major social issues that remains respectful of religion
- Ownership of the reconstruction process and a better explanation of national development and the role of foreigners in the reconstruction process
- Education – high priority
- Entertainment - it will be a sensitive step in a society which remains very conservative

Based on the needs expressed by interviewees, media have a significant role to play in supporting these different aspects of the Afghan reconstruction. Media's role includes:

- Providing information
- Assisting the development of a still nascent civil society
- Maintaining independence, to hold the government and others accountable to the public. (Media remain weak in this area and often self-censor at the local level)
- Facilitating interactive social debate
- Educating the public. This includes:
  - On issues of progress and development
  - Practical information on topics such as health and agriculture
  - Professional and academic training on languages and other specific fields that require ongoing learning
- Entertaining - This must be handled with care or risk dangerous counter-reactions. The gap between urban youth and rural conservatives, for example, must be addressed.

As in most developed countries, this is not only a question of free speech and information. The goals in late 2001 – to restore freedom of speech and disseminate information – have seen significant progress. Though there remains a demand for greater independence of the media, so that it is no longer an instrument of a few, but a tool for advancement for the country.

The audience may evolve faster than the media, and expect far more. Afghans surveyed want social debate, they want educational programs and they want to open themselves to other cultures. Keeping up with the pace of social change is probably the major hurdle in the next phase of media development.

Afghan journalists and others in the media are being challenged to accept a role and responsibilities that go beyond journalism. Their actions are a major piece of the country's development. Their skills will have to be diversified to provide content that goes further than just the current entertainment-based programming.

The scope of this assessment does not include a provision of solutions for sustainability or direct recommendations for media development. Instead it has attempted, in part, to identify the major challenges and opportunities that will need to be considered in the coming years. It is hoped that this will allow the Afghan media to continue to progress and serve as a strong complement and catalyst for the country's overall reconstruction.

## 12. QUOTES

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### Change in society

"Our culture must not change nor should it be influenced by the culture of foreigners. The burqa is part of our tradition and my great grand-daughters will still be wearing it. Arranged marriages do not exist, because God knows who should be united with whom and the future spouses therefore, have no need to meet beforehand. These traditions must not be changed and there is nothing radio can do about it." Ziba, 30, Village 1, Jalalabad.

"60 years ago when the first radio antenna appeared, mullahs used to come and disperse people. Then records appeared and mullahs said it was the end of Islam. Today we have cables and they believe the day of the Last Judgment has arrived! But it doesn't prevent the society from changing." Abdul, 70, Kabul.

"Each time somebody has tried to reform this country, he has been stamped as *kafir* (infidel), for example King Amanullah." Manager of radio, 45, Ghazni.

"Afghanistan is changing, and so are we: we dropped the guns, and looked for a place at school for our children." Local radio journalist, Ghor, Chaghcharan.

"Some people are going to the Moon, but we're still riding camels!" Station manager, Khost.

### Criticisms

"The news on the provincial television boils down to this: "The governor has eaten bananas today, Bismillah, good night." Representative of Nye network, 22, Ghazni.

"Jalalabad radio has too many programs depicting the life of the governor in minute detail. I'm not interested in finding out what he ate for lunch!" Jafar, 34, tailor, Jalalabad.

### Education

"The communists tried to impose the education of girls through of the use of force: as we know, this was a failure. Radio has adopted the opposite strategy; gaining acceptance gently so that from here onwards, most people in the region will end up sending their daughters to school." Abdullah, 50, Village 1, Gardez.

"Since the end of the war people do not have time for education because we all work hard to get money to feed our children. But radio is a good way to learn without going to school as we cannot afford it. In a way I am a radio specialist, because I really want to learn." Nadib, 34, Village 1, Mazar.

"Listening to the Ali Baba program, I heard that each country had an important monument in its capital city for which it was famous. For example the Eiffel Tower in France and an enormous clock in London which name I cannot remember." Nasima, 26, village 1, Jalalabad.

### Elections

"Qanuni should have been the winner of the presidential election, but thanks to foreigners' support, Karzai remained president." Male interviewee, 24, Village 1, Parwan-Kapisa.

"We voted for Karzai and he won thanks to us. Even though we are only illiterate women, our votes count just as much as those of men – politicians should remember that." Focus Group with women, Jalalabad.

"At the beginning people here believed that elections would take place as usual, that is to say elders and warlords would select a candidate for all the villagers as they had always done. But finally people voted

for the candidate of their choice and not for Qanuni as the warlords wanted It's a great change!" Male, 32, Village 2, Panshir.

"I believe radio played a very important role in the elections as it has the unique ability to reach out to almost all Afghans, as even the poorest have a radio set at home. It was important to obtain an effective means of explaining such a novel thing as the vote to a population that is emerging from 25 years of war." Naqibullah, 34, Mazar.

### **Foreigners / NGOs**

"There isn't a foreigner in Afghanistan that has come here for the good of the country. On the contrary, they only think about making money and want to destroy our traditions and our religion. Those we used to call the Taliban were nothing but Americans with beards and turbans." Zamina, 38, teacher, Jalalabad.

"Foreigners working for NGOs in Afghanistan spend a good deal of time walking around and buying expensive cars. They do not know Afghans, their culture or their needs. Everybody knows this; all you need to do is look at the way they work and the way they live." Farida, 28, Mazar.

"All these people who work for NGOs are thieves who keep the money allocated for reconstruction for themselves. I know this because I compare the budgets announced on the radio to the achievements; it's obvious they don't use all the money for the building sites." Jafar, 34, Jalalabad

"When the Americans arrived in Afghanistan, I thought they wanted to invade us and occupy our country. Listening to the radio, I learned that they were building roads and schools, so I changed my mind. I now understand they have come here to re-build the country and not to plunder it." Abdullah, 28, Gardez.

### **Mullahs**

"Taliban made Mullahs contemptible and the US are very pleased because they succeeded in their goal: have the population that distrusts religious officials." Abdul, 57, Village 2, Shamali.

"In the past our mullah was completely opposed to TV, but now he does not take this objection so seriously." Female interviewee, 37, Village 2, Nangarhar.

"All the religious people of the community, like mullahs, listen to the radio: they are open-minded and they want to know about the news from all over the world." Man, 40, Bamyán.

"Our Mullah says watching TV and listening to the radio is against Islamic instructions. He protects himself from the bad influences that can come from media." Businessman, 40, Village 1, Baghlan.

"I do respect mullahs but I don't trust them because during the Taliban regime they persecuted women. I believe in God but not in them." Salima, 35, Village 1, Jalalabad.

### **Press**

"It is very frustrating to buy the newspaper each week, and find new issues one time out of three." Male interviewee, 30, Roshan representative, Badakhshan.

"I know how to read, and I read newspapers whenever I find one: about once a year." Male, 50, Village 1, Bamyán.

### **Reconstruction**

"I believe we should start with essential and unavoidable tasks like establishing reliable statistics and a census of the population. Afghans should be more involved in the process of reconstruction; this is our country after all!" Najibullah, 32, Jalalabad.

“I’m optimistic for the future, because everybody knows that, if they do not help Afghanistan, a lot of “September 11<sup>th</sup>” will happen again.” Male interviewee, 35, Jalalabad

“I visited a new school which had very modern toilets but students attended lessons under a tent. Why not build classes before toilets?” Said Abibullah, 30, Mazar

“Listening to the radio, I realized that peace would only return if everyone surrendered their weapons, so I handed in mine. I only kept three for my personal protection.” Ali Mahmud, 28, Jalalabad.

### **Sensitive issues**

“Talking about family planning is indeed very important, and Islam is not against contraception at all. It is a common misunderstanding. When it comes to abortion, the problem is different, but our community members should know how to best decide when they want to have children.” Mullah, 46, Ghor, Chaghcharan.

, Village 2, Khost.

### **Television**

“I always believe the news on television, because an image cannot lie.” Male pupil, 18, Village 2 Badakhshan.

“Television is either good or bad, and Muslims should be curious about everything.” Mullah, 46, Ghor, Chaghcharan.

“For the man on the street, television is more attractive and easier to access in terms of understanding than radio as it provides simple but nonetheless reliable information.” Amanullah, 72, Kabul.

“Afghanistan is a backward country, television provides us with an opportunity to discover other civilizations and other ways of life, it is the best way to change and develop.” Kudsia, 29, Kabul

### **Trust**

“We do not trust radio Pakistan, because each of the 37 political parties of this country are distorting the facts to suit their interests.” Male interviewee, 35, Village 2, Badakhshan.

“Now the BBC is 80% supportive of Karzai’s government, so we do not like it and we don’t trust it as much as before.” Male interviewee, 35, Village 2, Badakhshan.

“Radio Afghanistan is very different from the other stations. It always takes the side of the government as it needs its financial support. It is the same for the newspaper *Anis* and for Aina TV which supports Dostom. I do not trust them.” Mohamad, 42, Mazar

### **Understanding**

“We can not understand what reporters say, therefore it is better to get information from ordinary people because they speak like us.” Female interviewee, 34, Village 1, Nangarhar

“Even if we do not know whether the reports that we get from people are correct or not, they are more interesting for us than radio, because of the language difficulty.” Female interviewee, 47, Nangarhar.

“There are other good stations (other than the local radio) but we can’t catch what they’re saying, as they use too many difficult words.” Female interviewee, 32, Village 2, Nangarhar

### **Women**

"I am a Muslim and I respect the Quran, but it does not mean I do not want women to work or that I force them to wear burqa. For them the burqa is only a way to hide their shame of being so uneducated." Aminullah, 36, Village 1, Mazar.

"We heard on the program "Teacher and Pupil" that, according to the Quran, women had a right to education. We held long discussions about it and finally decided to send our daughters to school." Members of the Shura, Jalalabad.

"Prior to listening to the radio, I used to be a very conservative person. For example I forced my sister to marry a man she did not know. Since then, I have changed and I will let my daughter marry the person of her choice." Saidullah, 38, Village 1, Jalalabad.

"Women in Society" is a very useful program for those of us who are illiterate village women and who used to put up with being beaten by our husbands without knowing they had no right to do so. This program taught me that women have a place in society." Shafiq, 25, Village 1, Jalalabad.

"I learned on Azadi Radio that a man who beats his wife will not go to paradise, we talked it over with my wife and I swore never to beat her up again." Rahmatullah, 27, Gardez.

### **Quotes from journalists**

"Democracy has to be open, so dealing with censorship pressure makes us stronger." Herat.

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"Internews started over 20 stations, but as with kids, no one knows if they can raise them to adulthood." Pul-e-Alam.

"Without media there is silence." Pul-e-Alam.

### **Word of mouth**

"With word of mouth, one crow becomes forty crows, as says the Dari proverb." Female interviewee, 25, Ghazni.

"Paytawi (word of mouth in Dari) is no more than 30 % reliable because events are twisted and exaggerated. By the way, we have been using a new word for "word of mouth", which is "word of commanders". It shows how unreliable it is!" Abdul Razer, 57, Village 2, Shamali.