

# Country-level intervention strategies The case of Afghanistan

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# The challenge

- Draw a picture of the country-level context
- Identify the possible objectives of a strategy
- Identify possible actions, partnerships, and instruments

# Intervention strategies must be:

- Relevant – objectives must address the specific problems of the community or country
- Appropriate – actions must be selected according to local economy, culture, capacities
- Realistic – match available budgets, local capacity, economy; or include resources and actions to increase budgets, capacity

# Intervention strategies

- There are no “one-size fits all” solutions
- Research and consultation are essential
- Partnerships are indispensable – both local and expert partners

# What is community radio?

- Community-based
  - Local ownership and accountability
- Independent
  - Of government, donors, advertisers – transparent and democratic governance
- Participatory
  - Programming, management, \$, building
  - Promotes participation and empowerment

# What is community radio?

CR ties in with ideas of participatory development: communities must be the initiators, actors, and owners of their own development

- Health and education
- Debate – political communication
- Culture and entertainment
- Point-to-point communication – community telephone

# CR in Afghanistan: Questions

- What is the current media environment (including new and planned initiatives)?
- Do the conditions exist to enable CR? Legal and regulatory framework, government and donor interest, local demand, infrastructure, skills, training facilities...
- How might CR support democratization and development priorities?
- What is CR's role within the public broadcast system? Can it be independent and responsive?

# Communication and transportation

- Telecom infrastructure destroyed, incompatible systems, one of the lowest teledensities in the world, some GSM
- Internet still not allowed and access limited
- Transportation system destroyed
- Largely rural – 85% in 37,000 villages; only 4% connected to electricity grid

# Human capacity

- Education system never adequate, now destroyed
- Illiteracy estimated at 70%; 85% for women
- Better-educated left the country and unwilling to go back
- 1.2 million+ returned in 2002 – mostly unskilled
- University communication faculties slowly recuperating. “Quick impact” journalist training courses offered by international NGOs.

# Actors and interests

- The 7 centers of power in reconstruction and development complicate media development:
  1. The government
  2. UN agencies
  3. Development organizations
  4. International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)
  5. Regional political-military - “warlords”
  6. USA
  7. Civil society

# Radio in Afghanistan



# Policy and legislation

- Press law implemented in February 2002 – public and private radio – licenses required for print and other media
- Policy statement in June 2002 – transform RTA into public-service broadcasters and establish independent regulator
- Progress toward more free media, but with a few setbacks
- Women and foreign films temporarily banned
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# Receivers

- Most families have access to a multiband (MW, SW, & FM) receiver
- Men “drive” the receivers; women and youth do not. (In most countries, it is women who are responsible for health and are targets for much educational programming)

# Radio Afghanistan

- Traditionally a *state* rather than *public* broadcaster but supposed to be independent by 2004
- Radio Kabul – “network” head
- 17 provincial stations – technically deficient, 7 less than 100 watts, 2-5 hrs./day, salaries unpaid, “taxi network,” little independence, no money...

# Foreign radio

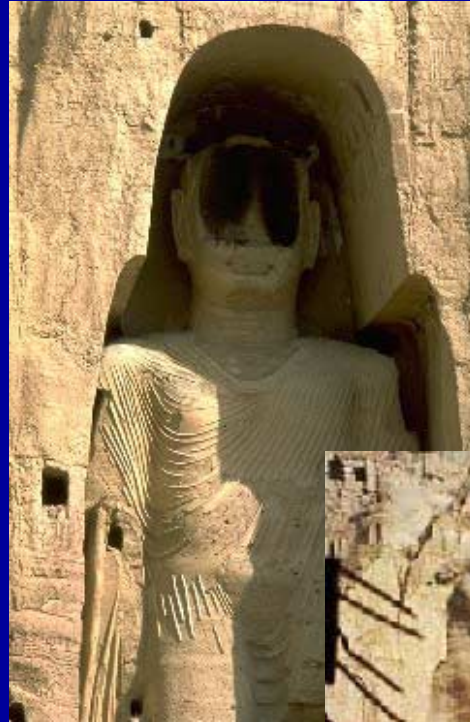
- BBC – Afghanistan's *de facto* broadcaster of record – SW, FM in Kabul – Dari, Pashto and English
- RFA / VOA share broadcast facilities
- RFA / VOA to “donate” 400 kW MW transmitter to RTA, but with a catch
- Turkish, German & US military have stations – some with local content

# Radio Sada-I-Solh (Voice of Peace)

- Located in Jabul Saraj, 60 km from Kabul
- Only “independent” radio station – dependent politically on National Alliance, financially on a French NGO, and the director is the legal owner
- No licence, but good prospects
- Programming largely development-oriented – education, culture, social problems
- Not a good model for CR governance

# Bamiyan – How not to start a radio

- No partner
- No plan
- No equipment
- No budget
- No licence
- No peace...



# Projects

- Radio Voice of Afghan Women
- Faculty of Journalism, University of Kabul
- Afghans for Civil Society - Kandahar
- Australian-Afghan commercial station for Kabul

# Conclusions: Is CR viable?

- It can be used to address Afghanistan's communication and information problems and to support medium and long-term efforts for reconstruction, development, good governance, and nation-building
- Low cost and effective
- There is interest - government, donors, NGOs, Afghan journalists, development agencies
- There is not much awareness

# CR in a public-service system

- Three-tiered public service radio
  1. National
  2. Provincial
  3. Community
    - Independent, community-owned and controlled
    - Local programming only – few hours/day
    - **They would be locally controlled** – better that they be controlled by the community via transparent governance structures than that they be controlled by political, military, or financial interests

# Actions I

- Awareness – There is interest, but low awareness. Radio traditionally is the voice of authority and difficult to imagine other models.
  - Publications, seminar series on CR, and communication for social change - to create awareness among development agencies
  - Radio road show to test interest at grassroots level

# Actions II

- Legal
  - Make use of informal opportunities while promoting gradual formalization of policies
- Partnerships
  - Support creation of forum for media development orgs., development agencies, ministries
  - Support indigenous leadership capacity

# Actions III

- Capacity building – “Professional” journalism training available, but no communication for social change training
  - Need for practical training to ensure that local community radio focuses on providing practical solutions to real problems

# Actions IV

- Governance – One of the biggest challenges
  - Community Board
  - Charter
  - Work with National Solidarity Programme where it has already established “Community Forums”

# More information

- The full report is available on the Internet at:  
<http://comunica.org/afghanistan>

Thank you

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