



SUCCESS STORY

Community Radio Debuts in Remote Humla District



USAID/NEPAL

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Evan Feigenbaum (left), U.S. Embassy in Nepal DCM Randy Berry, and USAID/Nepal Mission Director Beth Paige cut the inaugural ribbon at Radio Kailash.

In August 2006, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) began a program in Nepal to bolster the current peace process, strengthen governance mechanisms, and support positive, nonviolent community engagement in the country's political, social, and economic future. The objectives of the program are to:

- 1. Increase access to information and diversify public debate on issues critical to political transition, and*
- 2. Increase local-level engagement and participation in the peace process.*

June 2008 – FM radio has played a pivotal role in recent peace and transition processes in Nepal, as new stations were set up and began providing essential information and opportunities for discourse. But while the country has seen growth in the media sector in its more densely populated regions, media does not have a strong foothold in many remote areas. Information is slow to reach these areas because of poor or nonexistent roads and geography that obstructs broadcasts from larger media markets. As a result, these radio-blind areas remain isolated, and residents feel disconnected from larger national events.

To increase opportunities for residents of the remote Humla district to participate in Nepal's peace and transition processes, USAID/OTI provided support to establish Radio Kailash in Simkot. And after overcoming a number of obstacles – many of which were attributable to the remote location – the station commenced operations with a 50-watt test transmission in March 2008.

Today, Radio Kailash is broadcasting to 17 village areas and more than 20,000 listeners across the district. The station provides seven and a half hours of daily service, broadcasting music, Nepal Chautari (a national, live call-in talk show supported by OTI), national news received via a national satellite communication system (also supported by OTI), and local programs.

The community's enthusiasm for Radio Kailash was apparent at the official inauguration ceremony on May 26. District residents were excited not only about the improved access to national information but also about the possibilities for programming in the local language. More than 500 Humlis were present at the ceremony, some walking more than five hours to attend. Also in attendance were visiting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Evan Feigenbaum, U.S. Embassy in Nepal Deputy Chief of Mission Randy Berry, USAID/Nepal Mission Director Beth Paige, and OTI/Nepal Country Representative Melissa Rosser.

Local leaders have been working to address Humla district's problems through a "3B's" approach: Bato (roads), Batti (electricity), and Bichar (information). And with OTI support for this community radio project, the information pillar of their strategy has been significantly enhanced.