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# SUCCESS STORY

## Radio Brings Laughs, Informs Citizens

### Radio show supports democracy by highlighting election info



Photo: USAID

Peace Message Radio hosts read letters written by listeners that are filled with jokes, folk stories, and poems at their studio in the city of Khost, Afghanistan.

***“We have an open door policy; there is a place for anyone who wants to work here,” says Shazad, a director at the radio station.***

From a hill overlooking Khost city, democracy is taking root. Peace Message Radio, established with support from USAID, is an independent radio station that attracts over 80 percent of radio listeners in Afghanistan’s southeastern province of

Khost. In the two years since its founding, it has given a voice to women, reached out to religious schools or *madrassas*, provided comprehensive coverage of the parliamentary elections, and granted opportunities for high school and college students to learn about journalism hands-on.

Peace Message Radio’s most popular program is Bouquet of Flowers, in which the host reads letters written by listeners that are filled with jokes, folk stories, and poems. The station receives 200-300 letters per week, the majority coming from

women. They also host interviews with men and women in the community who voice their political opinions, hopes and concerns for Afghanistan. “It provides a great opportunity for women to be recognized,” says a reporter at the station.

Another show, Natya Kallam, or Speaking of the Prophet, has brought dramatic change to the province after just one month on the air. With its readings of the Koran and religious lectures, the show is attracting the attention of *madrassas* in the area.

“For the first time in decades, students and teachers in the *madrassas* are listening to the radio,” says Shazad, the director. “An important Mullah in the city used to ignore me when we passed each other. Last week he stopped me, gave me a hug and thanked me for airing this program. Also, since many of the *madrassa* students now have radios, they are listening to our other programs, like our news reports.”

In 2005, Peace Message Radio provided the most in-depth coverage of the parliamentary elections in Khost province. It aired discussions on selecting candidates, conveyed election information, and granted each of the 80 candidates five minutes of airtime. Peace Message Radio’s election coverage was so effective that it earned the top national prize for overall programming in 2005.