



Afghan Media in 2010

Priority District Report Khost City (Khost)

October 13, 2010

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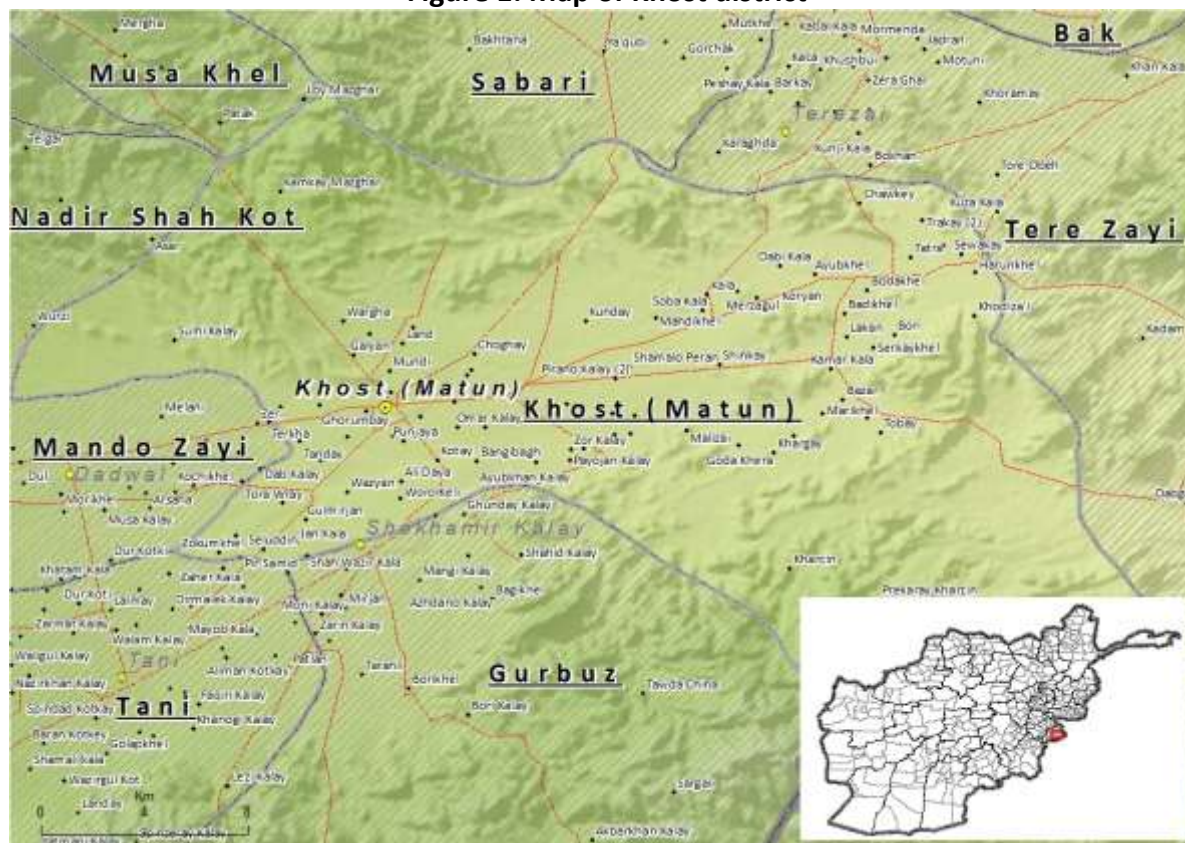
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1 Introduction

1.1 District profile

Khost (Matun) district is located in the center of Khost province, once a part of the Loya Paktia region, close to Paktia and Paktika provinces. The district center is located about 200km southeast of Kabul (seven to eight hours), two hours from the border of North Waziristan agency of Pakistan. The closest town in Pakistan is Miranshah.

Figure 1: Map of Khost district



Khost district comprises about 160 villages, mainly inhabited by Pashtuns, with small Hindu and Tajik pockets. Estimates vary but the population is significantly above 100,000.

The province's main financial resources come from business with Pakistan and the Gulf countries: there are many Khosti living in or traveling to and from Dubai and other nearby countries (informal figures mention approximately 150,000 Khosti living in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)).

A number of areas within the province, including Alisher, Burguz, Bak, Tanay, and Sabari districts, are considered out of bounds to journalists or anyone from outside the district. However, Jaji Maidan (the former base camp of Osama Bin Laden) is said to be the most secure district of the province, since *shuras* (councils) and elders control the area and do not allow insurgents to access it.

1.2 Methodology

Fieldwork, conducted in April 2010, covered the following locations: Khost city, Ade Mangal, Ayoub Kheyl, Khan Kalay, Mando Khel, Matun Tapa, and Saray Kuchi.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with: 12 outlet managers; 8 community leaders (3 school headmasters, 2 *maliks* (village chiefs), and 3 tribal chiefs); and 3 journalists, from Lemar (1) and Sol-e-Paigham (2). Additionally, audience data were collected by means of 129 interviews and 435 phone interviews with 61 unique media users living in Khost province, from July 9 to 23 and from August 22 to 28, 2010.

Khost city was perceived as generally insecure at the time of the fieldwork: rockets were fired on the city every night, most people carried a gun with them, and *shabnama* (“night letters”) were distributed in the city on a regular basis. Our interviewer mentioned that security was a particular issue since Khost borders the Pakistani region of North Waziristan. Explosions occur regularly in the city, with insurgents targeting people working with the military. Community leaders reported that “*government is present but does not control.*”

2 Media landscape

Khost has a relatively animated media landscape, with one local TV channel, nine local radio stations, and five local publications. There are approximately 10 shops selling TV sets, DVD players, decoders, and satellite antennas; 20 computer shops; over 10 bookstores/stationery shops; a few printing presses; and 4 internet cafés. Khost is also the only Afghan city other than Kabul that has a Faculty of Journalism within its university.

Very few satellite antennas were observed in the city. With the increased presence of local TV channels, sales of satellite antennas have reportedly dropped significantly¹. Security issues are another reason for this: people who own satellite dishes generally try to keep them hidden. Furthermore, local people in Khost are not adept enough in foreign languages to appreciate news reporting on satellite channels.

Still, TV was observed in most hotels, restaurants, and ice cream shops (about 40 places in Khost bazaar). There is no cable TV. Following the collapse of the Taliban, an Afghan expatriate living in Russia thought of launching a cable TV network, but the project was never implemented, for financial reasons.

Public electricity is patchy across Khost. There is no comprehensive supply for public use in the district: *“You cannot rely on city electricity – this is why businesses do not exist here; people who could afford to run big businesses do not set them up because of electricity constraints.”*

Approximately three years ago, the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) supported the Ministry of Energy with a \$1.5 million investment, which led to the establishment of two public generators. These run 8am-4pm and 6-10pm and serve shops, offices, and a few houses in Khost city center. They are used for lights, fans, sewing machines, and TV sets.

Approximately 100 private generators complement the two public ones, for heavy electricity needs (e.g. government use). Newly built areas have no electricity. One four- or five-storey building offers spaces with private generators, providing electricity 24 hours day. The Matun Tapa area (a relatively wealthy neighborhood on the hill) does not have access to grid electricity, and people living in Saraie Kuchi said they had electricity under the Taliban, but not anymore.

All phone operators are present in the city: Roshan, AWCC, MTN, Etisalat, and, to some extent, Afghan Telecom. AWCC has good reception (also for international calls), whereas that of Roshan is reported to be less clear. In Wazizadran (a district of Paktia on the border of Khost province), only AWCC has coverage. At the time of the study, AWCC had an offer for 400 minutes of free talk with other AWCC numbers for \$0.55 per day. Its network is therefore very busy and the quality is worse than usual. Most people in Khost use Roshan, since this was the first operator to reach the province and people do not want to change their number. A number of people have AWCC as a second number.

¹ Each shop sells approximately 10 satellite antennas per month at \$80-100 each and 50 TV sets at \$50-80.

There are 12 Public Call Offices (PCOs), used mostly for international calls. Four of them offer very low calling rates to Pakistan (about \$0.10 per minute), through a direct antenna link considered illegal by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

2.1 Media outlets

Khost is particularly well endowed in terms of media outlets when compared with other cities of a similar size. Six TV channels can be received over the air, one of which is local, and, besides AM/SW stations, twelve radio stations are received in the city, nine of which are local. Five local publications were observed.

2.1.1 Television

Besides satellite and cable channels, there are six TV channels available in the district through terrestrial signal.

Name	Scope	Ownership	Antenna location	Broadcast radius
Khost RTA	Local	Government	Khost (Matun)	45-50km
Tolo	National	Private	Khost (Matun)	50km
Lemar	National	Private	Khost (Matun)	40km
Ariana	National	Private	Khost (Matun)	35-75 km
Shamshad	National	Private	Khost (Matun)	30-160km
Kabul TV	National	Government	Khost (Matun)	-

Khost RTA

The only local TV channel is the government-run Khost Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA). Established in 1984 and currently managed by Faizullah Gamkhur (since May 2010), it works under the supervision of the Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC).

The 24m high antenna is located on Matun Hill and has a broadcast radius of around 50km. The channel broadcasts 17 hours a day (6am-11pm). A total of 10% of the content comes from Kabul (50% Pashto and 50% Dari) and 90% is produced locally (100% Pashto). Programming covers economics, politics, entertainment, and health. There are 61 employees (10% female), including 10 journalists.

Monthly costs include the following: technical (\$200), salaries (\$4,000), electricity expenses (\$6,000), security (\$1,050), and food/other (\$1,800). Major sources of funding are the coalition forces and advertising. The latter generates \$4,000 in income a month (at \$34 a minute).

Major needs of Khost RTA include technical support and training in the fields of sound and video editing.

Rumor has it that Mr. Sakhi Sarwar Miakhel, former director of Khost RTA, is about to launch a private TV channel called Gharghasht.

Other TV channels

The following national channels are also received through aerial antennas located on Matun Hill: Tolo, Lemar, Ariana, Shamshad, and Kabul TV.

The interviewer observed a number of interruptions to Tolo broadcasts, each lasting a few minutes (images without sound).

2.1.2 Radio

Besides the shortwave radio stations that are available throughout Afghanistan, 12 radio stations are available in Khost, 9 of which are local:

Name	Scope	Ownership	Frequency	Antenna location	Broadcast radius
Khost RTA	Local	Government	89.5 FM 1458 AM	Khost	150km
Sol-e-Paigham	Local	Private	88.8 FM 93.2 FM	Khost	120km
Wolas Ghag	Local	Private	96.7 FM	Khost	120km
Zuwan Ghag	Local	Private	99.7 FM	Khost	200km
Hilo Karawan	Local	Private	90.6 FM	Khost	200km
Killid (Khost)	Local	Private	88.2 FM	Khost	100km
Nan	Local	Private	89.1 FM	Khost	250km
ANA	Local	Military (ANA)	Unknown	Khost	-
ISAF	Local	Military (ISAF)	94.2 FM	Khost	-
Arman FM	National	Private	98.1 FM	Khost	50km
BBC	National	Public (UK)	90.1 FM	Khost	30km
Mashaal/Deewa	International	Public (US)	100.5 FM	-	-

Khost RTA

The government station Khost RTA, established in 1982, closed during the civil war and was reactivated in the last year of the Taliban regime. Most of the outlet's current equipment was provided or renovated with the financial support of the coalition forces. Khost RTA is based in the US military compound and is hence quite dependent on the US army, despite being a state radio station. It is currently managed by Mr. Ghafur Mahidi.

Programming runs 18 hours a day (starting at 5am), including music (50 hours a week) and locally produced content (45 hours a week). It is 100% Pashto. No content is purchased. There are 26 employees: 13 journalists, 7 writers, 2 marketing officers, and 4 technicians.

Monthly costs amount to \$3,200, including salaries (\$2,400), guards and security (\$600), and stationery (\$200). Electricity is provided for free by the military base. Funding comes from advertising (\$600 a month at \$5 a minute) and probably from the military (although this information was not disclosed).

Major needs include a more powerful transmitter, computers, generators, training for staff, and funds for transport and salaries.

Sol-e-Paigham

The private station Sol-e-Paigham (“Peace Message”) was created in 2004 with the help of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Internews. It is currently managed by Mr. Zaid Shah Angaar, a businessman and former director of Mediothek.

The station broadcasts 14 hours a day. Programs include music (14 hours a week), local programs (4 hours a week), and paid programming such as advertising and development project announcements (Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), Salam Watandar, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local traders, etc. – 6 hours a week). External programs are received through satellite. Mr. Angaar noted they have no programs for women. Given existing gender issues, particularly acute in Khost, a sensitive approach is required on this.

The station employs 32 staff members, including 15 journalists, 10 non-journalists (in charge of content production), 2 marketing/administration staff, 3 technicians, and 2 guards. There are four women working at the radio station. Journalism students are employed on a voluntary basis or on low salaries, explaining why overall quality is reported as problematic.

The main monthly costs are salaries (\$2,400), electricity (\$1,300), and other categories such as food and stationery (\$600).

Major needs include training for all staff, especially journalists who come from Khost University’s Faculty of Journalism and who need extra training.

Wolas Ghag

The private station Wolas Ghag (“Voice of the People”) was created in December 2004, with the help and funding of the then provincial governor. It is currently managed by Mr. Bismillah Akhmal (a member of the Kabul Science Academy, he spends most of his time in the capital and the station is actually managed by his son).

Coverage includes all of Khost province, some districts in Nangarhar, and seven districts in Paktia. The station plans to extend coverage through an additional antenna.

The radio station broadcasts 17 hours a day. Music accounts for 7 seven hours a week, locally created content for 20 hours. Advertising (mostly from local traders) is broadcast approximately 3.5 hours a week at \$6 a second.

There are approximately 30 staff members, including 15 journalists, 5 content producers, 2 technicians, and 2 guards.

Operation costs include salaries (\$3,000 a month), electricity (\$1,000), and food (\$1,000). Funding comes from advertising and paid programming from the PRT and Kabul RTA.

Zuwan Ghag

The private station Zuwan Ghag (“Voice of Youth”) was set up by Khost University’s Faculty of Journalism in 2006. It is managed by Mr. Naqibullah Atish. Programming runs for eight hours (6-10am and 4-8pm) and is 80% Pashto and 20% Dari. Under the supervision of their teachers, students produce mostly educational programs (e.g. “The Basis of Teaching”) and reports about university activities.

Around 150 students are employed on a voluntary and part-time basis. Monthly costs include salaries of technicians (\$1,800), electricity (\$20), security (\$240), and maintenance (\$100). Until the end of 2009, funding came from the PRT. The governor is trying to bring this back, but the university is now the only source of funding. There is no advertising.

Major needs include a stronger transmitter, generators, a UPS energy protector, a mixer, a MiniDisc recorder, computers, training and workshops, transportation, an independent building away from the university, and funds to cover electricity.

Hilo Karawan

The private Hilo Karawan (“Caravan of Wishes”) was established in 2009 by its director and owner Mr. Afsar Sadiq, former production manager at Wolas Ghag. Programming runs 13 hours a day (starting at 5am). It employs 52 journalists, 12 writers, 2 administrative agents, and 4 technicians. Female staff members make up 20% of the total. Major monthly costs include \$1,800 for salaries, \$1,200 for electricity, \$200 for security, \$400 for technical expenses, and \$600 for other expenses. There is no external funding. Advertising, generally from traders, generates \$400 a month. Major needs include computers, mixers, tape recorders, generators, a car, training for all staff, and funds to cover salaries.

Killid (Khost)

The private Killid (Khost), part of a network of radio stations established by the Killid Group in major Afghan cities (including Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Jalalabad, and Kandahar), was set up in June 2010 and is managed by former Khost RTA program manager Mr. Naqib Ullah Matun Wall, who is also a university English teacher.

A total of 85% of the programming is in Pashto and 15% in Dari. The station runs 24 hours a day. Locally produced content makes up 80% of programming. Major programs include news (every hour), current affairs, political discussions, and educational programs (there is also an English learning program). Music is broadcast 65 hours a week.

The staff includes 10 journalists, 3 writers, 1 administrative agent, and 3 technicians. Female staff members make up 20% of the total.

Major monthly costs were not disclosed, since the outlet is still in building mode, but they are likely quite high, as the station employs professionals and broadcasts 24 hours a day.

Killid was the only radio station interviewed in Khost that openly mentioned its external funding, including from USAID and the European Commission (EC). In addition, funds come from the Afghan NGO Development Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan (DHSA), which launched the Killid network and will inaugurate its seventh radio station in Ghazni. The PRT has asked the station to submit a proposal with its requirements. Information on advertising is not available at this stage.

Major needs of the outlet include funds to hire more employees and to increase local coverage of news and quality of programming.

Nan

The private station Nan (“Today”) started in May 2010 and is directed by Dr. Aslam Qanooni, who runs a private construction company. Programming runs 16 hours a day (starting at 6am) and covers entertainment, politics, social, informative, and economics issues, in Pashto and Dari, with English to come. It employs 12 part-time journalists, 7 full-time journalists, 4 writers/actors, 4 marketing/administrative staff members, and 5 technicians. There are no female staff members. Major monthly costs amount to \$5,200 and include \$3,600 in salaries, \$400 for electricity, \$160 for security, \$160 for programs, \$400 for other (e.g. food), and \$400 in rent. Funding is derived largely from the owner’s private business, with no advertising so far. It is unclear whether it is funded by the US or not. Major needs include technical equipment, training, and a budget.

Military

Additionally, there are a few military stations broadcasting from Khost and several broadcasting from other towns in the province. The interviewers were able to gather only limited information about these stations. One station is run by the Afghan National Army (ANA), transmitting from its compound. One is run by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), reportedly transmitting from the PRT. ISAF translator, Mr. Naseem Danish, helped the US army set up around 30 stations in southeast Afghanistan (in Paktika, Khost, Logar, and Paktia). Located in PRT bases or district offices, these are funded by the US Army and each has two to four employees.

Military stations are generally small and not clearly identified by the audience; they broadcast mainly music.

Other radio stations

Besides stations available nationwide in AM or SW, and in addition to the above, the following national and international radio stations are relayed through an antenna on Matun Hill: Arman FM, Ariana (irregular broadcasting), and Mashaal and Deewa (two stations, both launched in 2009, established by Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Voice of America (VOA), respectively, targeting the cross-border Pashto listenership.

Seemingly no radio stations broadcasting from Pakistan reach Khost city.

There were no reports of insurgent stations in Khost city, but respondents spoke of mobile Taliban radios broadcasting in two districts.

2.1.3 Printed press

Five local publications were observed in Khost.

Name	Type	Rhythm	Scope	Ownership	Circulation	Price
Par Makhtag	Magazine	Biweekly	Local	Private	1,000	Free
Paywastoon	Magazine	Bimonthly	Local	Private	1,000	\$0.65
Qawmoonoo Yawalai	Magazine	Irregular	Local	Private	1,000	Free
Mujahed Ghag	Magazine	Irregular	Local	Private	500	Free
Wulas Hela	Magazine	Irregular	Local	Private	tbd	tbd

Par Makhtag

Par Makhtag (“Development”) is owned by Mr. Naseer Rouchan, manager of the Lincoln Training Center in Khost. It was established in early 2009 and focuses on reconstruction. Major monthly costs amount to \$1,080 (\$360 for salaries, \$720 for printing expenses). The outlet receives \$1,500 from the PRT every month to cover these costs.

Paywastoon

Paywastoon (“Collective”) is a 70-80 page magazine established in 2006 by Mr. Rasul Adel. It is managed by its deputy chief editor, writer, and journalist Mr. Nourajan Baheer. It is the most popular publication in Khost. Distribution takes place through informal networks. Major monthly costs include \$300 for salaries, \$20 for electricity, \$200 for articles, \$600 for printing, and \$160 for rent. The average price of one advert is \$100.

Qawmoono Yawalai

Qawmoono Yawalai (“Unity of Tribes”) started in 2007 and is run by a committee called Qawmoono Paywastoon (“Connection of the Tribes”), which uses the magazine to advertise its activities.

Other publications

Two other magazines were reported: Mujahed Ghag, started in 2008 by the Committee of the Mujahedin, and Wulas Hela.

Additionally, approximately 20 publications (mostly Pashto language) from Kabul or other provinces reach Khost on an irregular basis, including the following:

- Godar (from Maidan Wardak);
- Khatira (from Kabul);
- Ulfat (from Peshawar);
- Kalai Ghag;
- Sada-e-Azadi (from Kabul – ISAF magazine distributed by Nye);
- Killid weekly magazine (from Kabul, approximately 150 a week reach Khost);
- Kabul Weekly (from Kabul, approximately 150 issues a week reach Khost);
- Eslah-e-Milli (from Kabul, approximately 150 issues per week reach Khost);
- Khidmatgar (daily newspaper from Kabul, distributed by Nye, approximately 500 issues reach Khost a day);
- Roz (from Kabul).

Government newspapers from Kabul reach Khost irregularly through the local office of MoIC. Other Kabul-based printed press reaches the city through Nye Express.

Nye Express (former Killid distribution network, funded by the Afghan NGO DHSA) established an office in Khost in 2002. Since then, Nye’s representative in Khost has been Mr. Matiullah Fazli, who is also a teacher. Nye used to run a distribution network consisting of representatives in 10 districts of the province, plus 8 *karachis* (carts) and 2 kiosks in Khost city but, owing to increased insecurity, low sales from kiosks and *karachis*, and a municipality ban on the latter to avoid traffic congestion, Nye now operates through one

office in Khost city and sells its newspapers and magazines only through bookstores (particularly one called Mujahed).

Nye's incentive structure was mentioned as a factor limiting more widespread circulation: representatives receive commission only on copies sold (no fixed salary) and are therefore not encouraged to reach remote areas. Spera, Zadron, Kalandar, Mussakhel, and Mangal districts are thus left out in Nye's distribution efforts.

The final price of printed press from Kabul, generally distributed by Nye, is decided by Nye itself. An underlying agreement between Nye and retailers in the city regulates the situation in relation to unsold issues that come from Kabul. The shop owner might decide whether he wants to keep old copies or send them back to the capital.

Khost features approximately 12 shops selling books, newspapers, and stationery (plus 4 selling books only). Shopkeepers mentioned that, *"selling a pen generates more income than a newspaper ... selling newspapers is more a way to advertise the other products that we sell in our shops, since they tend to attract customers on a regular basis."*

Publications are sold through these shops in two ways:

- The shop owner buys a number of copies, sets a selling price, and makes a profit.
- The shop owner is provided with a fixed number of issues to sell and then redistribution of profits takes place among the shop owner, the outlet, and the distribution channel, if any. Killid magazine, for instance, is bought by shops at \$0.40, sold at \$0.10, and generally distributed through a network of children, whom the shopkeeper pays some \$0.02 a copy.

Three private printing presses were reported in Khost, one of which is well established and prints newspapers and magazines. The other two have more basic facilities.

2.2 New media

2.2.1 Mobile media

Mobile phones are not really used as a source of information in the district. There are around 20 computer shops selling hardware and software in Kawsar Market, plus a number of other shops selling ringtones, videos (including of insurgents fighting), music, and video clips, which are often exchanged, especially among youth. A ringtone costs about \$1.20.

2.2.2 Internet

Internet in Khost is supplied by two telecom companies (AWCC and MTN), which provide wireless connection through mobile phones, and Alfa Waves, a two-year-old company owned by Mr. Sultan Ahmad Sabaoon, which operates through an antenna on a private house. The first are relatively cheap (AWCC charges \$20 a month, MTN according to consumption), but the connection is slow. Alfa Waves' services are expensive (\$500 for setup, monthly fee of \$100-500) and are used mostly by official institutions (including ISAF).

Public internet access is provided by four internet cafés. Two of them operate through AWCC and MTN and the other two through Kabul-based internet providers. Each café has approximately 100 customers and charges \$0.60 per hour. The connection quality is good through the Kabul providers but weaker through telecom companies. Another internet service provider offers expensive services (\$2,500 for the setup of an internet café, plus a monthly fee of \$300).

The public operator Afghan Telecom has announced a plan to set up cable internet at low prices, but so far this has not been implemented. One internet service provider was not able to compete with Alfa Waves and closed down.

2.3 Media and information actors

2.3.1 Government

Khost University has a Faculty of Journalism, which organized its first graduation ceremony in 2006. Currently, 250 students study in this faculty, in a three-year curriculum.

There is one representative from the state Bakhtar News Agency (BNA) in Khost city, and a local office of MoIC.

2.3.2 Outlet managers and journalists

There is one journalists' association, headed by Mr. Amir Bahir, a reporter for Azadi radio. Networking space for the journalism community in Khost is also provided by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) media center (see below).

Numbers of casualties in conflict is a very sensitive issue, one which exposes journalists to pressure from insurgents, ANA, and the coalition forces. One of the journalists interviewed (Lemar) reported being detained for a few hours by ANA while covering fighting against insurgents. He was interrogated over the release of casualty figures.

2.3.3 Other content providers

Khost RTA radio broadcasts a daily 15-minute educational program for children, provided by the Afghan NGO Media Support Solutions (MSS) (funded by USAID and managed by Mr. Akbar Akbar). This program is distributed on CDs to radio stations across the country.

A total of 10% of content broadcast by Khost RTA TV comes from Kabul (50% Pashto and 50% Dari). A total of 20% of content on Killid (Khost) comes from other Killid radio stations.

2.3.4 Media NGOs

German NGO Mediothek provides facilities and training to local journalists in its Khost media house (one of four it runs in Afghanistan).

IWPR has established a media center in Khost as well.

2.3.5 Traditional information sources

Besides media outlets, traditional sources of information play a considerable role in informing the population, especially in rural areas. Major sources include the *shura*, *qawmemeshers* (elders), *maliks*, and *mullahs*.

Traditional sources of information also interact with official media, largely because media often give the floor to community leaders when looking for local interviewees. For instance, several interviewees named Mohammad Mehdi, a tribal elder, as an important local figure, saying that he often speaks on the radio.

2.3.6 Insurgents

Mobile radio stations broadcasting from cars in Bak and Tanai were mentioned. Their signals were not received in the city at the time of this study.

There is no real insurgent media, but some magazines printed in Pakistan and favorable to the Taliban reach Khost (Zrak, for instance). The Taliban contact people through SMS or phone calls and distribute *shabnama* in some villages. Face-to-face interaction happens in the villages but not in Khost city.

Community leaders reported threats from insurgents as limiting media freedom.

3 Audience

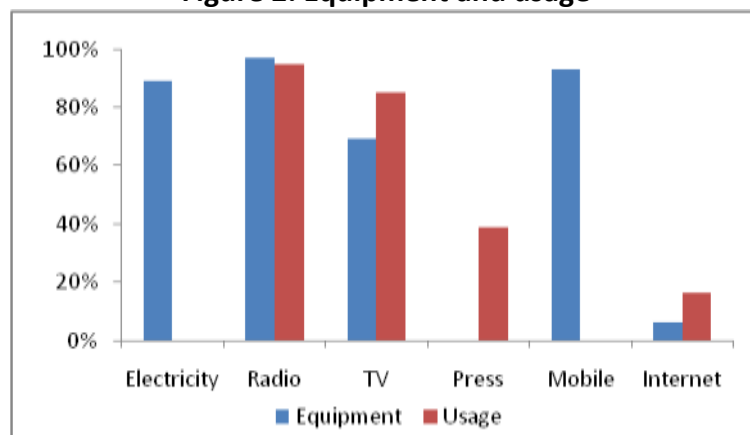
The following is a description of the audience in Khost city, based on 129 interviews and also the audience survey of the whole province, which included 435 phone interviews with 61 unique media users.

3.1 Equipment and usage

3.1.1 Household equipment

Households interviewed in Khost have a very high equipment rate, similar to that of bigger cities and reflecting with the very lively media landscape. Nearly all sampled households have at least one radio set, 69% are equipped with a TV, and 6% have access to the internet. A total of 93% of respondents have a mobile phone and 89% have access to electricity (19% are connected to the grid; 70% have private generators or solar panels).

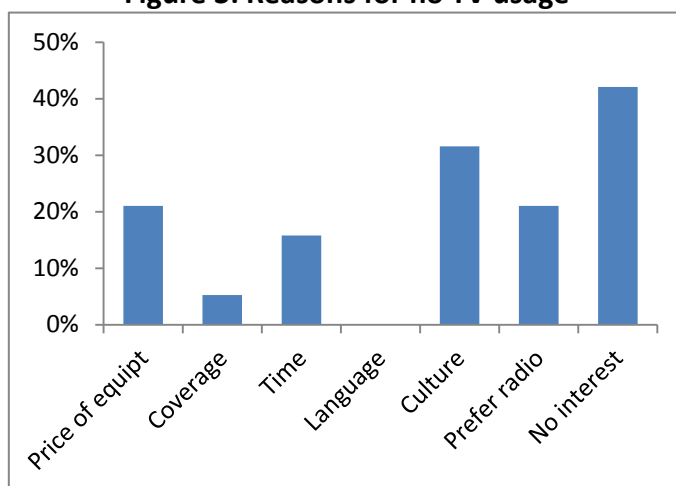
Figure 2: Equipment and usage



A basic radio set can be found in the bazaar for about \$3.00-3.50. Both handle and solar radios can be found for \$5.50 each.

The wealthier of the interviewees have two TV sets: one in the guest room and one in the private part of the house. Those who have only one put it in the guest room. Reasons given for not having a TV were lack of interest and cultural issues (42% and 32% of non-equipped interviewees, respectively) and, to a lesser extent, lack of time, price, the running cost of a generator, and a preference for listening to the radio.

Figure 3: Reasons for no TV usage



3.1.2 Sources of information and media usage

Sources of information

Interviewees said that phones had replaced traditional communication channels. When something happens, they hear first by phone. Important local news can be spread quicker by phone than by means of other media.

General information still flows through the media, however. For a majority of interviewees, the preferred and most trusted source of information on all tested topics (news, politics, religion, health, development, and entertainment) was TV, ahead of radio (except for religion and local news) and far ahead of other sources. Radio is still a significant source, though, particularly on religion, local news, and development. No interviewee mentioned relying on traditional sources such as social networks, mosques, or shopkeepers.

Table 1: What is the most used source of information?

	No interest	Mullah, mosque	Newspaper	Radio	TV	Shopkeepers/ bazaar	Shura	Khan, malik, commander	#
Politics	3%	0%	0%	46%	51%	0%	0%	0%	129
Religion	0%	6%	0%	56%	38%	0%	0%	0%	129
Local news	0%	0%	0%	58%	42%	0%	0%	0%	129
National news	0%	0%	0%	43%	57%	0%	0%	0%	129
International news	2%	0%	0%	46%	53%	0%	0%	0%	129
Development projects	2%	0%	0%	45%	52%	1%	0%	0%	128
Movies and songs	0%	0%	0%	39%	61%	0%	0%	0%	127

Media usage

Media usage is very intensive: 95% of interviewees listen to the radio, 85% watch TV, 39% read the printed press, and 16% connect to the internet, at least from time to time.

Most people use radio and TV in a very regular way: 78% declared listening to the radio every day and 63% watch TV every day.

Figure 4: Frequency of listening to the radio

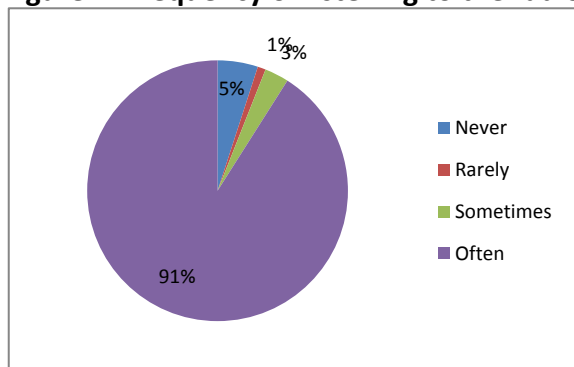
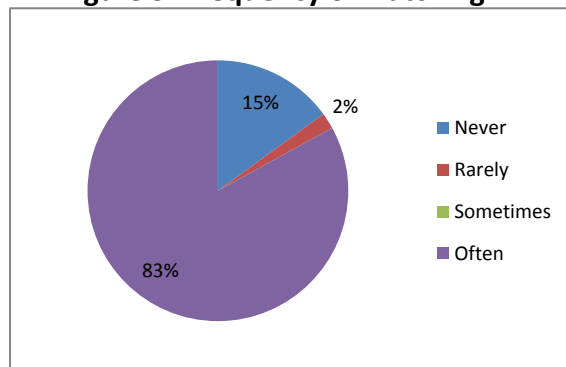


Figure 5: Frequency of watching TV



Newspapers are read less regularly: 29% of the sampled population (or 76% of press readers) read the press once or twice a week.

Most internet users usually connect once or a few times a week, in internet cafés where they find a decent connection (they can stream audio, talk through VoIP). However, internet is mostly used as a communication tool rather than as a way to get information: 90% of respondents use it to send emails, 62% to chat (certainly with the large community of Khosti emigrants living in UAE), 33% for job searches, and only 10% to find information.

3.1.3 Usage patterns

Preferred times to listen to the radio and watch TV are consistent with results in other districts: early morning (5-7am) and early evening (5-7pm) for radio and later in the evening (7-11pm) for TV, when grid electricity or generators (collective or private) are turned on.

Figure 6: Preferred times to listen to radio

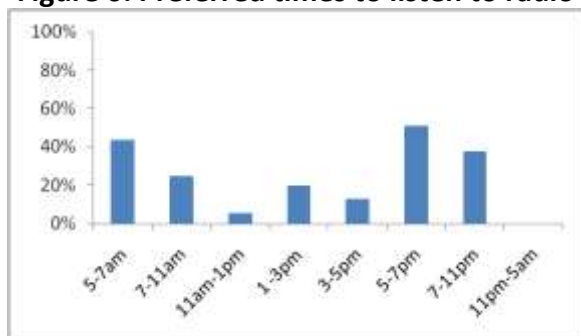
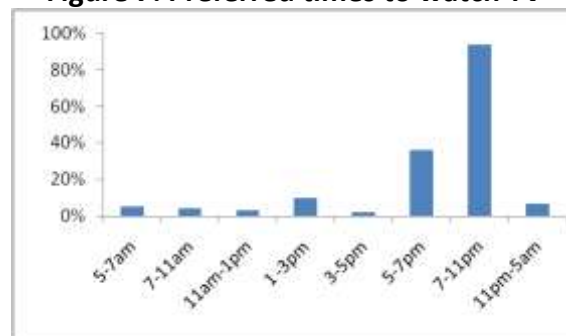


Figure 7: Preferred times to watch TV



Radio is used mainly at home, and to some extent at work or in cars or taxis (8-11% of respondents). TV is also essentially used at home (72%) but, as 16% of TV users do not own a set, they go to relatives (12%) or public places (5%).

3.2 Preferences

Moral censorship is accepted and supported, especially when it comes to female dress codes. Some people do not want women to be presenters; others find it acceptable, with conditions. One *malik* interviewed insisted that, “it is not the tradition in our province for women to go out of home,” but was still open to the idea of female presenters, “as long as they respect the Islamic dress code.”

3.2.1 Outlets

Radio

There is no clearly preferred radio station among Khost interviewees: Wolas Ghag and Khost RTA are the most preferred, mentioned by 48% and 37% of respondents, respectively, but these are not far ahead of Sol-e-Paigham (30%), Deewa, the BBC, Sulh, and Azadi (all between 16% and 25%). Deewa is liked because it has political discussions with guests from various areas: people are said to participate from many parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Figure 8: Preferred radio stations (3 choices)

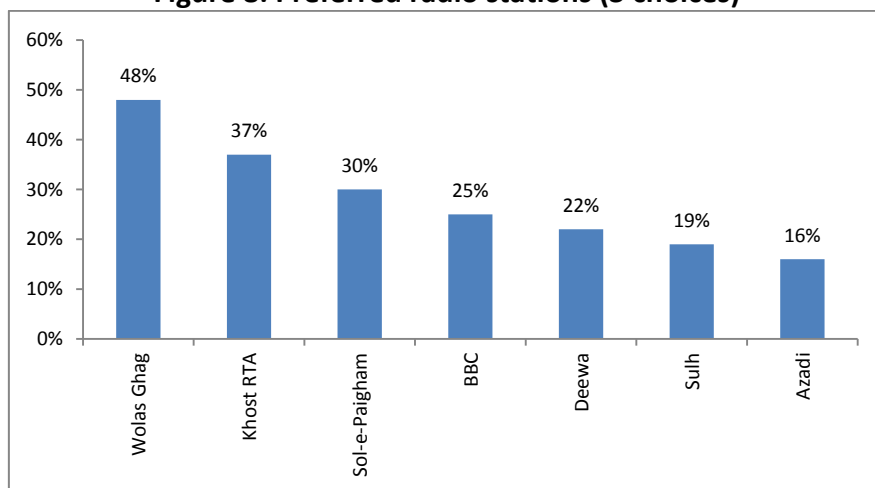
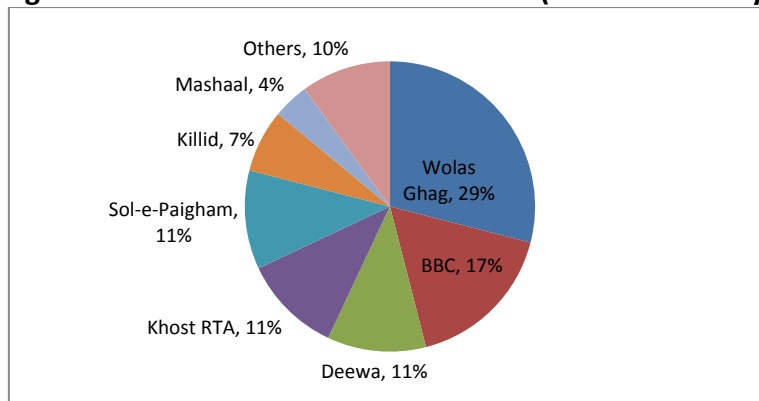


Figure 9: Most listened to radio stations (audience survey)



Audience survey data reflect self-declared preferences to some extent: Wolas Ghag has the largest audience share (29%). The BBC scores relatively better in terms of audience, with the second largest share (17%), followed by Deewa, Khost RTA, and Sol-e-Paigham (11% each).

Television

The preferred TV channel is by far Lemar (87%), Moby Group’s Pashto channel, followed by Shamshad (59%). The local state channel, Khost RTA, is among the preferred channels for 37% of interviewees. According to audience survey data, Lemar has the largest share again (38%), followed by Tolo (23%), and Khost RTA (20%). Shamshad ranks fifth (9%) when it comes to audience share.

Figure 10: Preferred TV channels (3 choices)

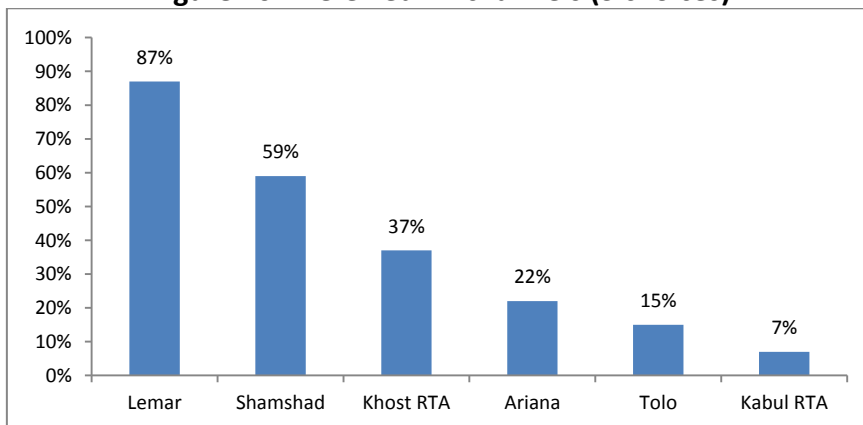
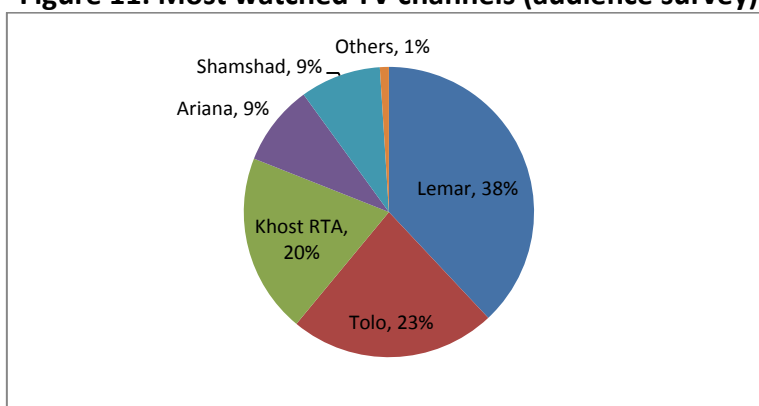


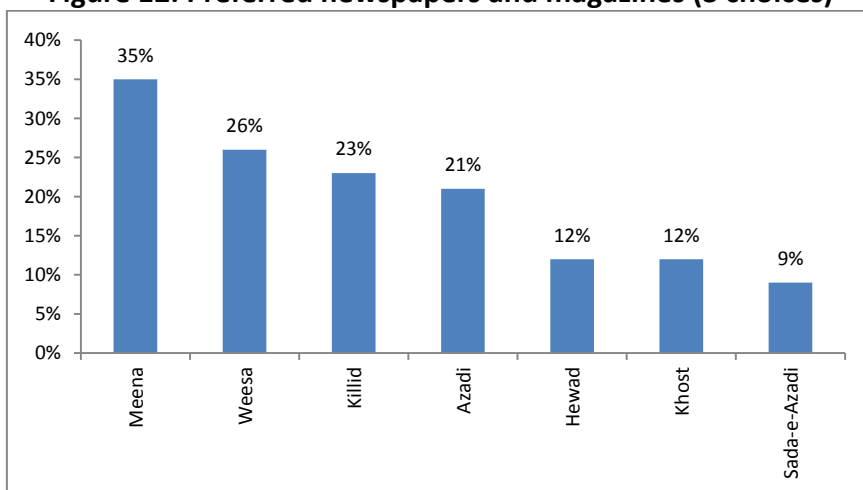
Figure 11: Most watched TV channels (audience survey)



Printed press

Printed press readers in the Khost sample mentioned Meena (“Love,” a magazine from Jalalabad, managed by Pashto poet Ezatullah Zawab, focusing on literature, culture, and social reports), Weesa, Killid, Azadi, and Hewad. The government provincial newspaper, Khost, was mentioned by 12% of interviewees.

Figure 12: Preferred newspapers and magazines (3 choices)



3.2.2 Programs

On TV, national news is the most popular program (71% of interviewees). As on the radio, Khost interviewees show a preference for national news over local news. TV dramas are not as popular in Khost as in other districts. In fact, 48% declared that dramas were their least favorite type of TV program, and 36% disliked music on the radio.

Figure 13: Preferred TV programs (3 choices)

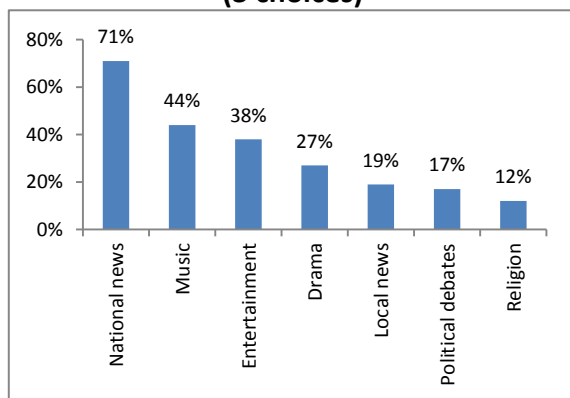
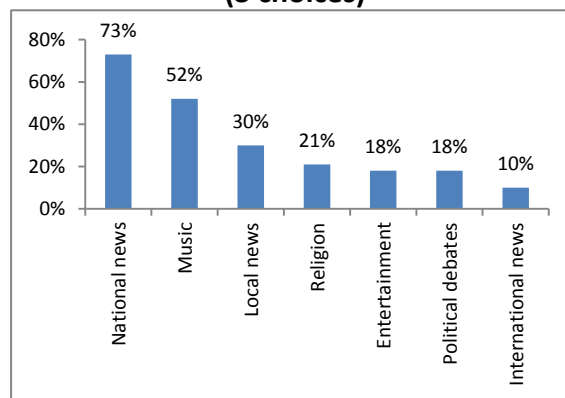


Figure 14: Preferred radio programs (3 choices)



3.2.3 Advertising

Since they are avid media users and most stations and channels broadcast advertising, Khost interviewees are very exposed to advertising. They do not seem tired of it, and usually find it useful: it is seen as a source of information to a certain extent. Only 13% of interviewees felt there was too much advertising on the radio and 21% too much on TV. The best remembered TV commercials are those for mobile phones (30%) and banks (28%).

3.2.4 Personalities

The two personalities interviewees would most like to see or hear on the media are President Karzai (61%) and former presidential candidate Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai (14%). Interviewees also mentioned Mrs. Shukria Barakzai, MP from Kabul, who campaigns against polygamy and forced marriages and is often critical of the international community’s shortcomings, both its civilian and military actions.

Among local personalities, interviewees mentioned Zayd Shah Angaar (the manager of Sol-e-Paigham radio station) for creating good programs, particularly on religion. Some named Mohammad Mehdi, a local tribal elder, as he solves conflicts in the area and often speaks on the radio. Lemar journalist Qadir Shah was cited for his responsive coverage of local news.

3.3 Perceptions and impact

3.3.1 Comprehension

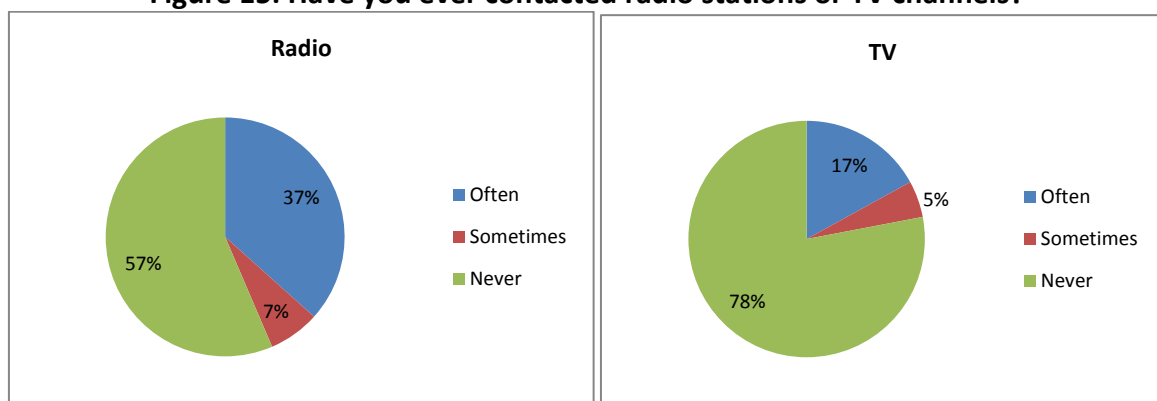
A large part of the sampled population (92% male) in Khost is literate (81%), and comprehension problems are minimal: only 6% of interviewees identified any issues with understanding radio programs and only 15% for TV.

The main issue encountered relates to the accent of speakers: the Pashtun spoken in Khost is slightly different from that of Nangarhar (mostly used on Shamshad) and that of Kandahar (mostly used on Lemar).

3.3.2 Participation

Almost half of interviewees call local radio stations, and 22% of TV users contact TV channels, essentially to request songs but also to pose questions to be answered on air or to request programs. The most contacted stations are Wolas Ghag (34% of respondents), Sulh (32%), and Khost RTA (26%). People might express their own opinions during political debates (particularly on Deewa) or ask questions during religious programs on Sol-e-Paigham or Hilo Karawan. During the cricket tournament, Zuwan Ghag listeners called and shared their ideas about the outcomes of the matches.

Figure 15: Have you ever contacted radio stations or TV channels?



Khost RTA TV channel is the most contacted, ahead of Ariana and Lemar.

3.3.3 Trust

Trust in radio stations is strongly correlated with preference: Wolas Ghag, Khost RTA, and Sol-e-Paigham are the local stations considered the most reliable. TV as a whole is considered a trustworthy medium. However, respondents do not trust it blindly, and many acknowledged censorship, as well as biases in favor of government on state-run channels.

Figure 16: Which radio stations do you trust most?

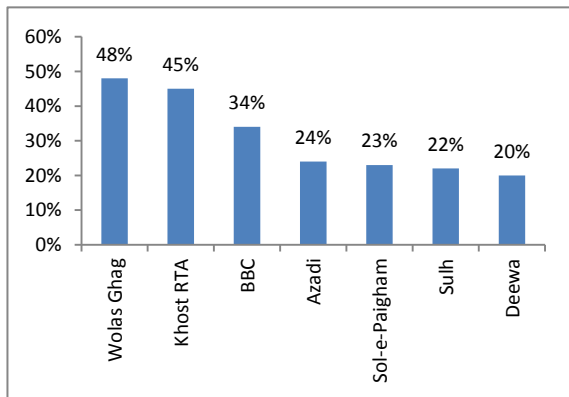
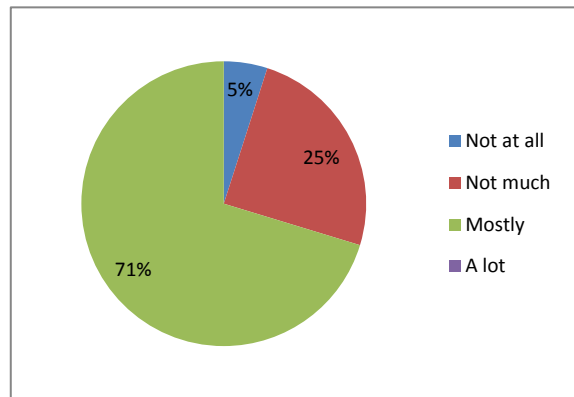


Figure 17: Do you trust what you see on TV?



3.3.4 Perceptions of the local media

When asked about their local radio station, interviewees thought unanimously of Khost RTA. A total of 80% described the station as “very good,” and only 10% felt it could be improved. Interviewees seemed to differentiate between government and private media. The preference shown for private media (such as Wolas Ghag, Sol-e-Paigham, and Lemar) is explained partly by perceptions of bias in favor of government on state-run media. As an example, Khost RTA radio recently announced the arrest of criminals, but did not reveal that they were released soon after. Many interviewees complained about corruption, saying government media do not address the issue properly.

3.3.5 Circulation and impact

News heard or seen on TV and radio is often discussed among family and friends. Many consider that radio and TV bring new ideas, open minds, and have a positive impact on the community.

Figure 18: Do local radio have an impact on your community?

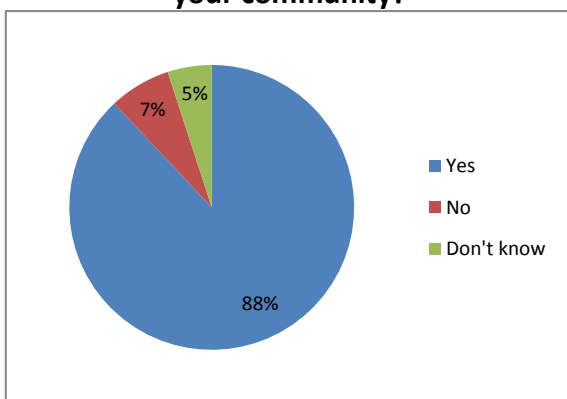
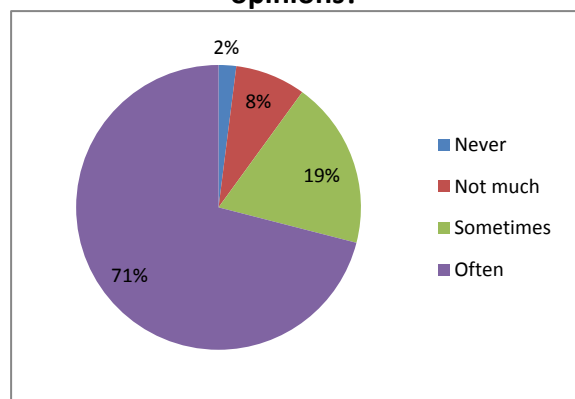


Figure 19: Can TV make you change your opinions?



3.3.6 Development project communication and educational campaigns

Best remembered public campaigns are those related to vaccinations and narcotics. Interviewees felt that these raise awareness on important topics. Sol-e-Paigham interviewees referred to presidential elections on TV and avian influenza on the radio as major government campaigns that produced a considerable impact.

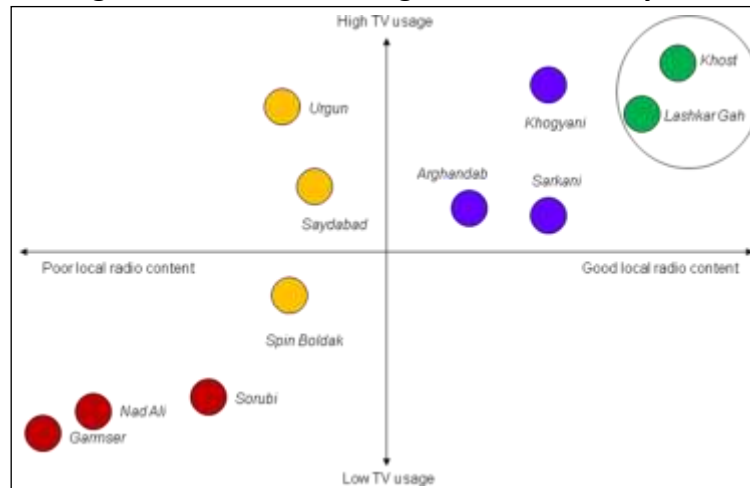
4 Conclusions and areas of opportunity

Already a relatively dynamic media community in 2005, Khost district has seen continuous development of its media landscape in the past five years. Nine local radio stations is a very high number of outlets, meaning that the media landscape in this district is close to saturation (as of September 2010, for instance, Mazar-e-Sharif had 11 local radio stations, Herat 13, and Jalalabad 10; Kandahar and Lashkar Gah are below average, with 8 and 6, respectively). The landscape is also unique: Khost features a relatively large number of military radio stations, both foreign and national. Besides ANA- and ISAF-run radio stations, an additional network of military radio stations is reportedly broadcasting from nearby districts, hence should also be received in Khost. Our research unfortunately did not have access to further information in this regard. Furthermore, Khost's proximity to Pakistan exposes it to two radio stations that specifically target the cross-border Pashto listenership (Mashaal/Deewa).

Matun Hill in Khost has become the favored spot for the location of terrestrial antennas, shared by almost all broadcasters, like Television Hill in Kabul. However, terrestrial TV and radio cover only the city center and a few neighboring districts where the reception is good thanks to flat terrain (Tanai, Gurbaz, Ismail Kheil, and Manduzi). A few households were reported as using higher antennas in places where the signal is particularly weak. Local printed press is present in Khost, and the local Nye Express office supports its distribution. Major gaps persist in terms of serving more remote areas, such as Spera, Zadron, Kalandar, Mussakhel, and Mangal districts.

Khost residents are generally well-informed and intensive users, often interacting with the media to take part in debates. A significant number are not only consumers but also creators of content. Relatively high standards of living, especially in the city, combined with an intellectual tradition (Khost is the only city in Afghanistan, besides Kabul, with a Faculty of Journalism at its university) and the entrepreneurship of Khost inhabitants, both at home and through migration, are the main factors driving this. The journalism community is also rather lively. It is supported by NGOs working in the media field, such as Mediothek and IWPR.

Figure 20, which classifies the districts analyzed for this study into four groups on the basis of TV usage and quality of local radio content, illustrates Khost's positioning in relation to the others.

Figure 20: Contextualizing the districts analyzed

In this almost saturated media scene – where the installment of repeaters could further support terrestrial coverage and electricity could also be improved – key interventions and recommendations must be focused specifically on media content. Outreach schemes carefully designed for a clever, well-informed audience, broadcast through existing local media and appreciated national media (such as Lemar), should be favored.

Khost’s buoyant and sophisticated environment should certainly not be misinterpreted as being one of general openness to all sorts of content, or of complete alignment with the current Afghan government or the actions, civilian and military, of its international supporters. Taste-wise, the audience is conservative (TV dramas, for instance, are strongly disliked) and some community leaders interviewed insisted that “*Khost traditions are not Kabul traditions.*” Idea-wise, the district seems to be sitting on the fence, reading both magazines and newspapers coming from Kabul and pro-Taliban press from Pakistan, and buying ringtones from the same bazaar that sells DVDs of insurgents’ assaults on ANA and the coalition forces.

Finally, researchers’ limited access to military radio stations constrains the scope of the recommendations that can be developed in this regard. Their weak presence among listeners’ preferences in Khost suggests that buy-in could be supported further, for instance through more targeted and diversified content to be shared among military radio stations functioning as a network.