



Afghan Media in 2010

Priority District Report Mazar-e-Sharif (Balkh)

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1 Methodology

The team conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with the managers of the following 16 outlets: Balkh Radio Television of Afghanistan (RTA); Setara-e-Sahar radio; Killid radio; Arezo TV and radio; Nahad radio; Rabia Balkhi radio; Lahza radio; Shahr Mazar-e-Sharif radio; Shahr Kabul radio; Sabz radio; Mehraban radio; Band radio; Omid-e-Jawan radio; Ayaran-e-Balkh magazine; Nada-e-Jawan magazine; and Asr-e-Naw Weekly magazine.

KIIs were also conducted with representatives of: the Department of Information and Culture; Bakhtar News Agency (BNA); Nai Supporting Open Media; Nye Express; the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR); the Department of Journalism (students); and German Development Cooperation (GTZ).

The team also conducted 190 close-ended interviews with men and women in Mazar-e-Sharif city. Fieldwork took place in April and May, 2010.

Additionally, the team collected audience data for 61 individuals living in Balkh province by means of a phone survey, which took place from July 9-23 and from August 22-28, 2010.

2 Media landscape

Mazar-e-Sharif is among the liveliest cities in Afghanistan as far as exposure to media is concerned. After Kabul and Herat, it has the largest number of terrestrial TV channels and radio stations. Over 40 years of exposure to media from Uzbekistan and Russia have contributed to a media-aware population, and Mazar's unique geographical location, near the border of three different countries (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan), means there is a good climate for setting up businesses in general, including media outlets. A relatively secure environment, a stable political scene (with a governor who reportedly does not get in the way of the media)¹, and a culturally lively environment also contribute to this context. The number of media outlets in Mazar has hence grown considerably over the past four years: since 2006, two new TV stations have been established and nine new radio stations (three of these since 2010).

Grid electricity covers the whole city, although occasional power cuts hamper activities. All cell phone operators have coverage, with good reception. The steady increase in mobile phone usage partly explains why the number of Public Call Offices (PCOs) in Mazar has decreased significantly in the past four years (from 150-200 then to 10-15 now). Furthermore, PCOs in Mazar have reduced the number of services they provide. Most of them now only sell hardware for mobile phones and scratch cards, with very limited space given up for calling services, within Afghanistan (at a price of \$0.20 a minute) and abroad (\$0.40 a minute).

There are 50-60 ice cream shops with cable TV and two large computer markets (Katib Zada in Balkh Darwaza and Mozafar in Kabul Darwaza), adding up to a total of 150 shops selling hardware, software, and maintenance services. There are 60-90 satellite equipment shops selling dish antennas (at an average price of \$60), low-noise block down converters (LNBs), cable wire and decoders (\$100). These mostly serve the needs of rural areas, where satellite is relatively more common owing to the absence of cable TV. Several bookstores around the city sell books, and 50-60 stalls sell print media (some of which belong to Nye Express).

2.1 Media outlets

The population in Mazar has access to 11 terrestrial TV channels, three of which are local, and 19 radio channels, 12 of which are local. Approximately 11 newspapers and magazines are distributed in the district, 3 of which are local.

A large number of media-related organizations, including local outlets, branches of Kabul-based outlets, and a non-governmental organization (NGO), are located in one building in the city center (Barat Building, or Tameer-e-Barat). A number of managers favor this location, because of the regular electricity supply, the height of the building (which allows for antennas at a reasonable height), and the liveliness of the media atmosphere.

¹ A Shamsad reporter once announced that the governor had fled the province, when in fact he had left for health reasons. On his return, the governor did not respond to these accusations. Furthermore, every couple of months a spokesperson invites journalists to talk about the problems they face and asks them to report any threats they encounter because of their work.

2.1.1 Television

Besides satellite and cable channels, 11 TV channels are available in the district.

Name	Scope	Ownership	Antenna location	Broadcast radius
Balkh RTA	Local	Government	Mazar	75km
Arezo	Local	Private	Mazar	25-30km
Setara-e-Sahar	Local	Private	Mazar	-
Tolo	National	Private	Mazar	50km
Lemar	National	Private	Mazar	40km
Shamshad	National	Private	Mazar	60km
Noorin	National	Private	Mazar	40km
Ariana	National	Private	Mazar	30km
Ayna	National	Private	Mazar	-
Noor	National	Private	Mazar	30km
Saba	National	Private	Mazar	58km

Local terrestrial TV channels

Balkh RTA

Balkh RTA TV is a state-run TV station established in Mazar in 2005, with Mr. Zabiullah Fitrat as its current manager. The antenna is located in Mohaberat Square and is 75m high. Its 1kW transmitter has a 75km broadcast range. The outlet is planning to establish a new antenna in Jawzjan province to cover Jawzjan and some districts in Faryab province.

The channel broadcasts 15.5 hours a day. Local programming is broadcast 8.30am-5pm, 7-8pm, and 9-12pm, in Dari, Pashto, Turkmen, and Uzbek. Programming from Kabul is broadcast 5-7pm and 8-9pm. Music is broadcast 17 hours a week. The outlet has computers and internet and runs on grid electricity.

Examples of live/interactive programming include *Mez-e-Gird* (“Roundtable”), on specific topics such as security, and *Nazar Bedehed Wa Ahang Beshnawed* (“Make Suggestions and Listen to Music”). Balkh RTA (both radio and TV) employs 38 staff members (18 female), of whom 12 are journalists. Some are voluntary staff.

RTA Kabul covers monthly costs. These include (also for the radio station) \$3,200 for salaries, \$2,400 for electricity, \$1,000 for transport, and \$400 for food.

In terms of advertising, the average price is \$0.30 a second for local companies and \$0.40 a second for international broadcasting. The manager interviewed did not know how much revenue this generated. Major clients include businessmen, the police, and the Ministry of Health.

Major needs include a recording studio, training for all staff, and funds to increase local programming.

Arezo

Arezo is an independent TV station set up in 2007. Mr. Najib Paikanand manages it, with his assistant Mr. Abdul Bassar. The antenna is located in the office in Karte Sulh. It is 40m high

and the transmitter is 2.5kW. The channel can be viewed by satellite. It covers 14 districts in Balkh, Jawzjan, and Faryab provinces, and also districts in Uzbekistan. The manager plans to increase coverage further to include Kunduz, Badakhshan, and Takhar provinces. The station employs 10 journalists, 5 non-journalists, 17 technicians, and some marketing and administrative officers. A total of 30% of employees are female.

The station broadcasts 20 hours a day, and programming is in Dari, Pashto, Uzbek, and, to a much lesser extent, English (news once a day). Music is broadcast 21 hours a week and local content 23 hours a week. Sponsored programming and advertising are broadcast 30 hours a week, from local, national, and international businessmen, phone companies, the police, the Afghan National Army (ANA), and the Ministry of Health. External content also comes from the internet, through satellite (e.g. the BBC), and from CDs.

Live/interactive programming includes *Entekhab-e-Shuma* (“Your Choice”) for song requests, *Pasukh Chist* (“What Is the Answer?”), and *O Kest* (“Who Is It?”).

Mr. Najib Paikan also highlighted the importance of raising awareness on rights and the law through media, and of supporting campaigns against illegal drugs and narcotics.

Costs were not disclosed.

The station is currently funded by the owner, Mr. Kamal Nabizada, a businessman who used to own the venture together with the governor of Balkh province. Advertising (from businesses and national NGOs) and sponsored programming are an additional source of funding, with prices ranging from \$3 a minute to \$5-20 a minute, respectively.

The outlet manager mentioned training as the only major need.

Setara-e-Sahar

At the time of writing, Setara-e-Sahar TV was in the process of being established, with a target launch date of August 2010. The station is the initiative of the chief and owner of Setara-e-Sahar radio station. The reason he gave for setting up another new outlet in Mazar’s relatively rich media landscape was that there is a gap in the market with respect to TV for youth. He claimed that the new channel would provide educational and cultural content for youth, to deter them from engaging in extremism, for instance.

Seed money for the TV channel has reportedly come from the owner’s radio stations, which attract a great deal of commercial advertising. The owner claimed that Setara-e-Sahar radio station fully covers its own costs, as it attracts most of the advertising in the area (which generates complaints from other local outlets).

Cable networks

There are approximately five cable networks in Mazar (including Paiman City, Setara-e-Balkh and Sulh), offering a choice of 55 different channels. Each provider has 500-700 subscriptions, sold at \$150 a month.

2.1.2 Radio

In addition to the shortwave radio stations available throughout Afghanistan, there are 19 radio stations in the district.

Name	Scope	Ownership	Frequency	Antenna location	Broadcast radius
Balkh RTA	Local	Government	101 FM 1584 AM	Mazar	35km (FM)
Setara-e-Sahar	Local	Private	91.3 FM	Mazar	50km
Killid	Local	Private	89.55 FM	Mazar	60km
Arezo	Local	Private	91.8 FM	Mazar	70km
Nahad	Local	Private	90.4 FM	Mazar	100km
Rabia Balkhi	Local	Private	87.9 FM	Mazar	70km
Lahza	Local	Private	96 FM	Mazar	70km
Band	Local	Private	98.9 FM	Mazar	25km
Sabz	Local	Private	92.3 FM	Mazar	-
Mehraban	Local	Private	98.4 FM	Mazar	-
Shahr	Local	Private	95.5 FM	Mazar	100km
Omid-e-Jawan	Local	Private	96.6 FM	Mazar	10-15km
Arman FM	National	Private	98.1 FM	Mazar	40km
BBC	International	Public (UK)	89 FM	Mazar	20-25km
Nawa	National	Private	103.1 FM	Mazar	58km
Sada-e-Azadi	National	Military	88.5 FM	Mazar	50-80km
Voice of America (VOA)/Ashna	International	Public (US)	100.5 FM 1296 AM	Mazar	2 km 600km
Azadi	International	Public (US)	100.5 FM 1296 AM	Mazar	25km 600km
Noorin	National	Private	94.4 FM	Mazar	40km

Local radio stations

Balkh RTA

Balkh RTA is the local state-run radio station, established in 2005. It broadcasts programs in Dari, Pashto, Uzbek, and Turkmen. Its FM transmitter (1kW) has a coverage range of 35km, enough to cover, at least partly, 14 districts in Balkh province. Its 2kW AM transmitter covers all of Afghanistan. The station is considering setting up FM broadcast relays in Kunduz and Jawzjan provinces.

The outlet employs 38 people (both the radio station and its TV channel), with six volunteers working on news and on programming targeting women.

The station broadcasts 12 hours a day (7am-7pm). Of its air time, 80% is dedicated to programs produced or selected locally. The remaining 20% is used to rebroadcast Kabul RTA programs. Music is broadcast 16 hours a week. Sponsored programming and advertising are aired 20 hours a week.

Advertising is generally placed by local businessmen, the Afghan National Police (ANP) and ANA. The local Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and the government provide sponsored programming (generally health and educational programs).

Live programming includes (as on the TV station) *Nazar Bedehed Wa Ahang Beshnawed* (“Make Suggestions and Listen to Songs”), which is broadcast every day for 30 minutes. According to the station manager, an average of 17 people call the station each day to offer suggestions and to express their wishes (e.g. to request additional programming).

See Balkh RTA above for costs and sources of funding.

Main needs, as expressed by the station manager, include computers, mixers, training, and new content on agricultural diseases.

Setara-e-Sahar

Setara-e-Sahar (“Morning Star”) started operations in 2005. Mr. Shafiullah Azizi owns and manages the station, along with two other radio stations, Saday-e-Bano (“Woman’s Voice”) on 87.7FM in Sari Pul province and Bostan (“Garden”) on 97.7 FM in Shebarghan district of Jawzjan province. He plans to establish another station in Tamana (Faryab) and one in Ghurmach (Badghis), the latter in discussion with US Special Forces².

The outlet employs 10 journalists, 4 non-journalists, 2 technicians, and 4 other staff members. Of the entire staff, 16 are female and only 16 are paid.

The station’s 500W transmitter has a 50km broadcast range, allowing for reception in all 14 districts of Balkh province.

The radio station broadcasts 24 hours a day. Music takes up 25% of air time, and content produced by the station takes up 50%. Interactive programming includes *Nazar Bedehed Musiqi Beshnawed* (“Share Your Views and Listen to Music”). Some content is bought from the BBC and provided through satellite (10-minute news bulletins every hour at \$1 a minute). The BBC also provides free programming (learning Uzbek language, 20 minutes a day). Students are occasional voluntary local content providers, reporting on local news, health, household problems, and women’s issues. The manager stated that among the most important issues are those that affect the household (e.g. trafficking of women).

Monthly running costs include: salaries \$1,000, electricity \$1,000, and transport/food \$500.

The main source of funding is advertising by telecom companies (MTN, Etisalat, AWCC, and Wasel), national NGOs, local businesses, the government (Ministry of Counter Narcotics), the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Advertising by the international development community represents 20% of all advertising. In total advertising accounts for 20 hours of broadcast time per week and generates \$4,000 a month. Sales usually occur through personal contact with companies (the only exception being UNDP, which used Sayara as its intermediary). Mr. Azizi felt that a media placement company to negotiate for all clients in one sector (e.g. telecommunications) would be useful and would lead to more efficiency.

² A major obstacle to the setup of this station is the limited institutional memory of commanders (the position of commander has, on average, a three-month turnover period).

The outlet runs a training center, which trains six or seven employees over a period of six months. Once the training period is over, trainees are generally employed by other outlets. The aim is to increase local capacity.

The major needs of the outlet include radio transmission equipment, FM cables, a dipole antenna, training of training center trainers, and content on agriculture, livestock, and the laws of Afghanistan.

Killid

Killid is an independent radio station that started broadcasting in Mazar in 2007. Mr. Nasir Ahmad Amin currently manages the Mazar branch. He claimed that the station has a unique advantage over other stations, especially in terms of reporting, thanks to its presence in a number of provinces.

The outlet's 600W transmitter has a 60km broadcast range, which allows for coverage of all the districts in Balkh province. The station employs six journalists, four non-journalists, five administration/marketing officers, three technicians, and six other staff. Eight staff members are female.

The station broadcasts 24 hours a day, in Dari, Pashto, Uzbek, and Turkmen, with 90% local programming and 10% rebroadcast from Killid Kabul. Music is broadcast 21 hours a week. The station does not purchase any programs. Seven hours a week of programming (generally news and information programs) come free from other provinces where Killid is active (e.g. Herat and Khost) through satellite and the internet.

Interactive programming includes *Kaweshgarand Az Gap Gap Mekhezad* ("From Debate, Debate Is Generated"). Advertising from ANP and sponsored programming from GTZ and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) are broadcast four hours a week.

Running costs total to \$6,000 a month, including salaries of approximately \$4,400.

Advertising is a source of funding, generating \$5-10 a minute (total revenue was not disclosed).

The manager mentioned new content and expertise as among the outlet's main needs. Killid used to broadcast a program on Afghan law and rights (30 minutes a week over a six-month period), but cancelled this owing to a lack of personnel qualified to inform listeners on constitutional law. According to the station manager, law, human rights, agriculture, and livestock are key topics on which more awareness is necessary.

Also cited as needs were a transmitter and antenna in Jawzjan, training for producers, and long-term funding through advertising and paid programming agreements.

Arezo

Arezo started airing in 2007. It is owned by Mr. Kamal Nabizada, who also owns Arezo TV and Kamal Nabizada Export and Import Company. Its 2.5kW transmitter has a 70km

broadcast radius, covering the provinces of Balkh, Jawzjan, and Samangan and reaching Termez (Uzbekistan). The station owner hopes to cover all of Afghanistan with a new AM transmitter. The outlet employs 27 people, including 5 journalists and 17 staff members working as technicians, drivers, guards, and cooks, etc. Female staff make up 20% of the total.

The station broadcasts 20 hours a day in Dari, Pashto, Turkmen, and Uzbek, as well as some broadcasting in English (for news only). Programming includes music (two hours a week) and locally produced content (20 hours a week). The station does not purchase content. Local journalists (e.g. journalism students) generate 15 hours of content a week (on education, health, and entertainment), for free.

The outlet's costs were not disclosed.

Advertising (from phone companies, government, and local businesses) and sponsored programming (from the government on educational and health issues) is broadcast for 15 hours a week.

Advertising and sponsored programming represent the outlet's major sources of funding. The outlet conducts in-house training, so this is not one of its major needs. The manager plans to increase programming on agriculture, which he claimed is a topic listeners want to hear more about.

Nahad

Nahad started in 2006 and is owned by the manager of Arezo radio and TV, Mr. Najib Paikan, who also runs an association for youth and a magazine called Noma. Despite being the owner of and adviser to Nahad radio, Mr. Paikan works full-time as an employee at Arezo radio and TV. He said that his salary at Arezo allows him to contribute to the funding of Nahad, which is nevertheless struggling in the face of competition from outlets that reportedly attract all their advertising through personal business connections. The outlet's 600W transmitter has a 100km broadcast radius, which allows for coverage of all districts in Balkh province, as well as in Termez (Uzbekistan). Mr. Paikan plans to increase coverage to the north and the south (Kandahar, Ghazni, and Paktia provinces). The outlet employs 22 people, including 7 journalists, 8 non-journalists, 1 marketing officer, 2 technicians, and another 4 staff members working as guards and cooks, etc. Female staff account for 40% of the total.

The radio airs 18 hours a day. Programs include music (30 hours a week) and general local content (100 hours a week). No programs are purchased or received for free. Advertising and sponsored programming (local businesses, phone companies, manufacturers, and NGOs/development projects) are broadcast for a total of four hours a week.

The station broadcasts live shows four times a day.

The manager reported that the media should promote informative content, including on security, development, and education, to a greater extent. The chief of the Human Rights Department (Qazi Said Mohaman Same) and the assistant to the Balkh provincial governor, Dr. Rahmani, are reportedly popular guests on the radio station.

The outlet's monthly costs include salaries \$4,400, electricity \$1,200, food \$400, and transport \$400.

Funding comes from the owner and through advertising (\$2 a minute for a total of \$7,000 a month). The station's main needs include a new, more powerful transmitter and regular training on news reporting.

Rabia Balkhi

Rabia Balkhi was established in 2002. It is owned by Ms. Najiah Hanafi and managed by Ms. Mubina Khairandesh. The station's 300W transmitter has a 70km broadcast radius. The manager plans to buy a 1kW transmitter to increase coverage to Jawzjan and Maymana (Faryab province). The radio employs 28 staff members, including 6 journalists, 6 non-journalists, 2 administrative officers, 3 technicians, and 11 guards/cooks, etc. Female staff members number 12.

The radio airs 18 hours a day. Programming includes music (42 hours a week) and local programming (21 hours a week). The station buys no programs. Local journalists provide content to the radio for free (including programs on household issues, children, youth, and health). Sponsored health, social, and educational programming comes from the Social Organization for Prosperous Afghanistan (SOPA) (30 minutes a day), and Salam Watandar is broadcast every day from 7-7.30am and from 6-6.30pm. Advertising (from the PRT, telecom companies, and local businesses) is broadcast for 30 minutes every day.

The outlet's monthly costs include the following: salaries (\$3,200), electricity (\$600), rent (\$500), transportation (\$650), food (\$200), and stationery/others (\$200).

Funding comes from advertising (\$10 a minute) and sponsored programming (\$1 a minute). Major needs include a new 1kW transmitter and training for all staff.

Lahza

Lahza radio station was established in 2008 by Mr. Mohammed Ibrahim Ghazan Far (owner of Ghazan Far Group) and is managed by Lutfullah Raufi. The outlet's 1kW transmitter has a 70km coverage radius. The manager is planning to connect to the internet via a fiber optic cable (provided by Fiber Noori, a cable provider from Uzbekistan), to be able to transmit across all of Afghanistan and also internationally. The station employs 20 staff members, including 4 journalists, 5 non-journalists, 6 administrative officers, 4 technicians, and 3 guards/cooks. There are 4 female staff members.

Programming runs for 18 hours a day and includes music (10 hours a week). Local programs come for free from local journalists (15 hours a week). Music is the only content that is bought – from the bazaar (DVDs and CDs). Advertising from ANA, ANP, and AIHRC is broadcast five hours a week.

The main monthly costs include salaries (\$2,600), electricity (\$500), rent (\$500), and transport and food (\$500).

Sources of funding are advertising (\$1 a second for a total of \$1,400 a month) and Ghazan Far Group. Major needs include training for staff, mixers, microphones, headphones, and books on journalism. The outlet manager would be keen to have long-term agreements with NGOs, and is interested in establishing Lahza TV.

Sabz

Sabz was established in March 2010 by Ms. Mubina (manager of Rabia Balkhi), who bought Delaram radio station and changed the name. The lack of focus on agriculture and the environment on the radio in Mazar was one of her main reasons for purchasing the radio station. Ms. Saeeda Sae manages the station, which broadcasts 13 hours a day, 7am-8pm. Programming currently includes music and the following four programs: Farmer's Voice, Wonders of the World (on agriculture), *Daricha-e-Sabz* (for music requests), and *Barg-e-Sabz* (for song requests and general knowledge).

The owner currently covers expenses, along with two advertisers, one from a clothing company in Kabul and one from a construction company in Mazar. The aim is to sell advertising to companies working in the agriculture sector and, by extending the broadcasting area in the future, to expand the pool of potential advertisers (currently, the radio has one antenna only, in Mazar). Ms. Mubina is not keen on starting a TV channel, since her audience reportedly comprises local people (e.g. farmers) whom TV would not reach.

Mehraban

Mehraban is a newly established radio station, set up in May 2010 by two very young men, Mr. Mushtaq Seconder and Mr. Zia Rahman (a former Internews and Sayara employee). The outlet employs 11 people and is currently broadcasting 18 hours of music a day (as part of a pilot period). The plan is to broadcast international music (Turkish, Tajik, Hindi, US, and European) (50%) and also specific programming on health and agriculture and some news bulletins (50%).

The founders started the radio station in order to diversify the music on offer in Mazar. They identified a gap in the market in the city relating to modern music: apparently, this gap has been filled in Kabul by Maiwand FM and Tapes radio (which inspired the two young founders). The founders claimed that Band in Mazar does not reach the same market (see below). Seed money so far has included \$35,000 from the founders of the station and sponsors, including Mawlana Hospital and the Ministry of Agriculture (for two programs broadcast as an alternative to music).

Band

Band radio station was started in March 2010 by a manager of Irtiq-e-Nawin, a group of companies working on food production (potato chips), construction (e.g. schools for foreign NGOs), logistics, and media production (e.g. advertisements and short documentaries for the International Organization for Migration (IOM)). The radio station employs 12 young staff members and has a 40m antenna and a 300W transmitter. The decision to set up the radio station was driven by a gap in the sector: the owner reported a lack of outlets focused

on youth and poor families. Through Band, the aim is to foster cultural exchange for these two audience groups.

Programming was not disclosed in detail, although the station currently broadcasts mainly music and some informational content targeting youth, such as *Aftab Baranak*, which relates to Islam and traditional cultural mores, recently aired an episode that attempted to present for youth the engagement period as a standard relationship culmination between girlfriend and boyfriend.

Irtiqa-e-Nawin covered the startup costs of the outlet (\$70,000) in their entirety, and the companies are expected to pay for a further six-month period of broadcasting. Commercial advertising from Irtiqa-e-Nawin has been placed to create an advertising culture within the outlet. The owner also hopes to sell advertising space to other companies through the establishment of a marketing section. He also plans to establish a TV station.

Omid-e-Jawan

Omid-e-Jawan radio station was established in 2006 in Ghazni province by Mr. Hamidiin. He moved it in June 2010 to Mazar as a result of increased insecurity (one of the station's advisers, Jaweed Ahmad, was killed). He is also keen to expand the business in the near future to Herat and Jalalabad. In his opinion, Mazar-e-Sharif city offers a safe and culturally and geographically strategic environment. The station started with the aim of developing and increasing the capacity of youths, and 80% of its programming relates somehow to youth (e.g. Best Idea, a call-in show that enables youth to share their thoughts and ideas). The station is currently undergoing some program restructuring from more localized content in Ghazni to programming that is appropriate to Mazar as a result of the recent move. The station is managed by Mr. Aliyar (a student at the Department of Journalism at Balkh University). It reportedly has over 40 staff members and currently broadcasts 20 hours a day.

The station is facing financial problems, with monthly costs that amount to over \$6,000 and a monthly income of only \$2,000. Advertising currently covers only 10-15% of expenditure; the owner, who runs an electrical equipment company, covers the remaining costs. Advertising clients in the past have included Nye Express, Sayara, the PRT in Ghazni, the Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Killid, Nawa radio, and Cetena (Nye and Sayara are still advertising clients now). Currently, advertising funds are being generated through spots for candidates running in the parliamentary elections, which are to be held in September 2010.

The plan for the future is to reach financial sustainability through advertising, alongside the development of programming to build capacity and raise awareness on social issues. Omid-e-Jawan has recently submitted proposals to GTZ and Creative, which the station has identified as working on areas that match its needs. (Examples of other organizations providing development content to radio stations in Ghazni are UN Habitat, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), Future Generation, and the Afghan Development Association (ADA)).

Shahr

Shahr radio station was established in 2009 by Mr. Naser Totakhil (who also runs an NGO and a construction and import/export company). It is managed by Mr. Ahmad Shah Ahmadi. The outlet's programming focuses on traffic news.

2.1.3 Newspapers

Distribution

Only one network carries out printed press distribution throughout Afghanistan: Nye Express. Nye's local office in Mazar was set up after the collapse of the Taliban. It employs 40 people, falls under the administration of Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan (DHSA). It is currently managed by the Balkh zone regional manager, Mr. Mohammad Ishaq Hanafi, who has been working there since it was established. Initially distributing only two publications, Killid and Mursal, the office now oversees the distribution of approximately 70-80 publications across five provinces (Balkh, Samangan, Sari Pul, Jawzjan, and Faryab). These include Dari, Uzbek, and Turkmen publications.

Contractual arrangements between periodicals and Nye take place in Kabul, as all the publications distributed by Nye are printed in the country's capital. These arrangements include, among other issues, whether unsold copies remain in the region or are sent back to Kabul.

The Nye representative in Mazar claimed that within 48 hours, its distributions reach all corners of the country. Distribution within Mazar relies on 41 stalls, 6 large and 35 small, a few shops and bookstores, and a number of barkers (children) who sell copies on the street. Owners of stalls receive a \$0.02 commission on each magazine they sell and \$0.04 on each newspaper. Nye Express's manager did not disclose further details on the distribution chain, for security reasons.

According to the manager, the importance of the print media in Mazar has decreased significantly (down to 50% compared with early on in the new government), largely due to the proliferation of TV as an alternative source of news. Furthermore, illiteracy, insecurity, and inflation (publications' price increases up to \$0.30 an issue) were noted challenges to print readership.

Outlets

Besides newspapers and magazines distributed from Kabul through Nye Express, Mazar has a large number of local printed press outlets. The team interviewed a few managers, but the only local publication found in the major bookstore in the city center (Baihaqi) at the time of the fieldwork in July 2010 was Parcham-e-Azadi. It is possible to find copies of publications at the Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC), but even there the team found only two (Asr-e-Naw and Beder). The manager of Nye Express reported that, with the exception of Beder, all local publications struggle to keep up their periodicity: it is therefore hard to determine whether they are even active or not. Outlet owners generally provide the seed money for printing, and are forced to interrupt activities if fundraising is unsuccessful. In

other cases, outlets are started by interest groups, which interrupt their activities once they achieve their objectives. Others fail as a result of poor quality content.

Asr-e-Naw

Asr-e-Naw (“New Era”) is a weekly newspaper, set up in 2002 and owned and managed by Mr. Said Hassan Safayee. It is a Dari and Pashto four-page publication with 1,000-1,500 copies printed a week, sold at a unit price of \$0.20 (\$0.16 for shopkeepers). It is distributed in Balkh, Sari Pul, Jawzjan, and Baghlan provinces using public transport. In each of these provinces, one contact person supplies all the local shops. Local journalists produce all articles for free. The outlet employs three people: one manager, one assistant, and one person in charge of distributing copies in Mazar and sending them to the provinces listed above.

Monthly costs include salaries (\$160), electricity (\$10), food (\$100), and transportation (\$200). Printing costs are \$0.10 per issue (printing takes place in Mazar-e-Sharif city).

Only Cheragh Group places advertising, although no funds come from this, as the company designs the layout of the newspaper in return. Major funds come from sales and subscriptions. Approximately 100 subscribers a year generate \$5 a month.

Major needs include computers, internet access, cameras, a larger office (currently there is only one room), and funds to hire journalists, to produce content, and to pay for transportation.

Ayaran-e-Balkh

Ayaran-e-Balkh is a Dari weekly newspaper established in March 2010. It is owned and managed by Muhaiuddin Rahnaward, a writer and businessman running a construction company in Mazar. It is linked to the Balkh Youth Association (to which most of its journalists belong). It is a four-page publication, with 1,500 copies printed every week. The newspaper is distributed in Balkh, Samangan, and Jawzjan provinces using local public transport. In these provinces, the copies are sent to the local representative of the Youth Association, who distributes them to local shops within the province. The outlet employs seven staff members, including one manager, one assistant, two journalists, one marketing officer, one distributor, and one finance officer.

Monthly costs include salaries (\$300), food (\$200), and transportation (\$200). The cost of printing is \$0.10 per issue. The unit price is \$0.16 (\$0.12 to shopkeepers).

Major needs include a camera, computers, internet access, support for the layout of the newspaper, and funds to create local content.

Nada-e Jawan

Nada-e Jawan (“Youth Voice”) was set up in 2007. It is a weekly Dari and Pashto magazine, with 2,000 copies printed a week. In 2008-2009, it was sent to Farah, Kandahar, Kabul, Nangarhar, and Bamyan provinces through the NGO Empowering Youth, funded by UN Habitat. Now, it is distributed only in Balkh province, and only through shops (at a unit price

of \$0.30) and in schools (for free – approximately 1,000-1,500 copies). There are three staff members, including one manager, his assistant, and one distributor. The most significant monthly costs are rent (\$400), transportation/food (\$300), and printing costs (\$0.20 per issue). Sources of income include sale of the magazine and funding from UNICEF. The biggest needs of the outlet are internet access, a camera, a color printer, and computers.

Journalist-e-Balkh

Journalist-e-Balkh is a biweekly newspaper produced by the students of the Department of Journalism at Balkh University. It was started in 2002 and has experienced several interruptions. Generally, 1,000 copies are printed, using university facilities (funded by the department). It is distributed for free within the university.

2.2 New media

2.2.1 Mobile media

As mentioned above, mobile phone usage has increased significantly in recent years in Mazar, and is seen as explaining the decrease in the number of PCOs. However, mobile phones are not really used as a source of information (e.g. SMS news feeds). As in many other districts, downloading and exchanging ringtones and video clips on mobile phones are the most common activities, particularly among youth.

2.2.2 Internet

Three internet service providers (ISPs) (Neda, Multinet, and Insta, all also present in Kabul) and three telecom companies (Afghan Telecom, Wasel and AWCC) offer internet services in Mazar. They offer a range of bandwidths (from 64KB to 4MB) at different prices (e.g. Afghan Telecom offers 1MB at \$400; AWCC at \$600) to a still small proportion of the local population in Mazar. International organizations use internet through satellite (VSAT).

Optic fiber internet is available in Mazar, but the benefits in terms of speed of connection and reduced costs (estimated to knock off up to 50%) are still to be observed. Overall, it seems that it does not yet represent a convenient alternative to existing ISPs.

Public internet access is provided by 10-15 internet cafés in the city, with average-to-poor connection quality. Quality is not high because the band taken from ISPs is generally 1MB and split between three internet cafés. Each internet café has roughly 60 customers (80% young men) a day, in particular people who encounter connection problems at home or in the office, journalists, students, and youth, who use chat, check emails, and download ringtones and music. The connection price is \$1 per hour in the city center (the price is cheaper in remote areas where the connection is slower).

2.3 Media and information actors

2.3.1 Government

One TV channel and one radio station represent state-run media in Mazar, as mentioned above.

There is a MoIC representative in Balkh province, Mr. Salih Mohamad Khaliq, and a BNA representative, Mr. Lal Mohamad Hangam, who has an office in the Department of Information and Culture. The BNA office employs four people, including the manager, two journalists, and one technician. Using different sources for news feeds and information on general events taking place in the city, including the nearby government offices, the police, and the Departments of Education and Development, the office provides information to the Kabul office and to local government outlets (Balkh RTA and Beder newspaper). There is no interaction with independent outlets, which tend to provide their own feeds.

There are a few public libraries in Mazar. There is one in Mawlana Khasta and one in Khulm district. There is one library at the University of Balkh (offering a selection of 50,000 books, the majority published in Iran) and there are six high school libraries (under the Ministry of Education).

The richest and newest library seems to be the Iran-funded library, which is located on the road from Mazar to the airport. It was inaugurated in 2010 by three ministers, one from Iran, one from Tajikistan, and one from Afghanistan. It is managed by Mr. Zabihullah Khalili. Students are the main users of the library which is fully funded by Iran (through the Iranian Consulate, which is based in Mazar). It offers a selection of 20,000 up-to-date books from a range of disciplines, all published in Iran. There is also a big study room on the upper floor of the building.

2.3.2 Outlet managers and journalists

Three or four journalists' associations are present in Mazar. These include a union, chaired by Mr. Basir Bobi, and the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA), both which are not very active. Additionally, AIHRC and Nai Supporting Open Media (see Section 2.3.3) hold press clubs roughly every month.

Journalists' associations in Mazar have the same political affiliations as the outlets involved. Corruption charges have been brought against the head of one journalists' association in Kabul, which those in Mazar saw as evidence of a generally poor level of journalism in the country.

The Department of Journalism at Mazar-e-Sharif University was set up in 1993. The dean is Mr. Mohammad Nazari. Approximately 60 students enroll each year in its four-year program, although the department currently has 120 students (some leave the course and a more limited number fail the year). Tuition is free.

Journalism students identified a large number of challenges. As a department within the Faculty of Literature, and not an independent faculty, studies of journalism are very general, with no specific focus on radio, TV, or print media. The curriculum includes no official

internship program for students to gain practical experience as journalists. The department has a radio studio and a newspaper (Journalist-e-Balkhi), which addresses these needs to a limited extent. Students were not aware of any scholarships to study abroad. No books are used and teachers generally provide references and summaries as back-up to their lessons. Less than 10% of journalism students manage to find a job once they graduate: *“How many people you know and how much money you have count towards your success at becoming a journalist in Afghanistan”* (journalism students).

The media situation in Mazar is similar to elsewhere in Afghanistan: a number of independent and professional outlets (e.g. Killid and Rabia-e-Balkhi) alongside government-run outlets and outlets with political affiliations. Overall, there is a lack of media independence, which was reported to be a factor significantly affecting journalists and the quality of journalism in Mazar.

Outlet managers pointed to cases of censorship following reporting on sensitive issues: *“Once, we broadcast on the failures of the Directorates of Electricity and Agriculture ... the following day we received an official warning not to do so in the future.”* Mr. Parwiz Kambakhsh is a widely known example of the pressure that journalists can experience in Balkh. He was sentenced to death for supposedly having reported against Islam, although he was eventually freed thanks to the advocacy efforts of the international community.

Journalists also referred to limited access to information from the government as a great obstacle to their investigations: *“The government does not want to be interviewed by journalists, so it is hard to produce a balanced report.”* According to media NGOs in Mazar, reports often include disclaimers, for example: *“We are not able to find anyone who can answer these questions to address the issue in full.”*

Although Balkh is overall a relatively safe province, the BNA representative mentioned that insecurity was an issue for journalists in Chamtal and Chahar Bulakh districts. The owner of Setara-e-Sahar reported having had to change the location of one of his radio stations (Bostan) from Andkhoy (Faryab province) to Shebarghan (Jawzjan province), owing to concerns over the exposure that a women’s radio station would have in such a conservative place. He did not mention problems specific to Mazar city itself.

Finally, work uncertainty is also an issue. With reportedly low salaries (said to be \$800 per month), most journalists work for more than one outlet or organization at the same time.

2.3.3 Media NGOs

A number of NGOs support media in Mazar, including Nai Supporting Open Media, IWPR and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). They all conduct training for journalists in the province. When trainings are organized, they reportedly coordinate and draw on each others’ know-how and also share thoughts on issues to prioritize.

IWPR started its activities in Mazar in 2003 and covers the following provinces: Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Sari Pul, and Samangan. It organizes training for journalists, offers a media center with free internet facilities, and is active in defending journalists’ rights. Since 2008, the NGO has been working from Tameer-e-Barat, where all major local radio stations and

branches of Kabul-based TV channels are located. In the current two-year project cycle, IWPR has trained approximately 100 journalists.

Nai Supporting Open Media in Mazar was established in December 2009 by Mr. Malik Faisal Moonzajer, with the support of Internews. The office employs 20 people, functions as a hub for 9 provinces, and has trained approximately 250 journalists since it started its activities. Nai organizes a range of trainings (e.g. on principles of journalism, humanitarian reporting, election reporting, investigative journalism, and weblogs in remote areas, such as in Badakhshan) and targets a range of people (well-established journalists as well as youth). Nai is reportedly planning on establishing a private institute offering training for longer periods (one or two years).

German NGO Mediothek has received a grant from the German Foreign Ministry to set up a “media house” in Mazar, expected to be functional by August 2010. Mediothek has been active in Afghanistan since 1993 and works through a number of media houses in the country. These provide free internet access, working space, and equipment on a daily basis to freelance journalists, as well as to those employed at well-equipped outlets. Additionally, the centers organize training and workshops (on basic journalism but also on more complex topics such as investigative research), as well as roundtables on current issues and conferences.

Alongside NGOs, outlets may also function as training centers to some extent. As mentioned earlier, Setara-e-Sahar radio, for instance, provides journalism training: *“Our radio station is a training center for youth; we train them for a six-month period, then they can work in other stations”* (outlet manager).

2.3.4 Insurgents

No specific involvement of insurgents in the media sector in Mazar was reported.

2.3.5 Military

The international military (through the PRT) and ANA purchase advertising on a number of outlets in Mazar, as mentioned above (e.g. Killid, Lahza, and Arezo TV).

2.3.6 Others

The aid community is significant in Mazar. In this regard, the media could have a very strong impact, in terms of fostering long-term community development, raising awareness on human rights and gender issues, and promoting change. GTZ has reportedly started producing talk shows for TV (Arezo TV) on the relation between Sharia and constitutional law, although reportedly more remains to be done in terms of community engagement and creating interest.

Interviewees said that use of media by the international development community in Mazar was not extensive (Sabz radio outlet manager) and that it was generally more limited than in other provinces, such as Kandahar and Helmand (Setara-e-Sahar owner). They also felt that, whereas media should be critical and balanced with respect to development achievements, specific outlets, such as the national Sada-e-Azadi, hide the downsides and focus exclusively

on what the foreign military has achieved: *“They never mention when an explosion takes place, but only report on the roads they’ve paved”* (manager of media NGO).

Along these lines, one journalist from Tamadon TV station distinguished between outlets that use, for example, the number of schools built and budget lines as measures of success of development projects, and outlets that try to adopt more significant proxies, such as project quality. He also brought up the poor quality of development work: for example, Sultan Razia School was built with development funds and collapsed in 2007. Whereas some interviewees evaluated the achievements of the development community as positive overall (Setara-e-Sahar owner) and as a *“big chance”* to build local capacities (Nai Supporting Open Media representative), others (a larger number) reported significant issues. These included community clashes with foreigners and a general sense of frustration among the local population vis-à-vis the international community’s achievements and approach to development in the province. People were reportedly keen to be empowered, but interviewees mentioned a lack of attention to people’s needs: *“People need jobs, corruption is still high, and awareness of rights is still far from being achieved”* (Sabz radio owner). *“We need mental reconstruction before physical reconstruction ... We should first learn how to walk on streets, only then do we need streets”* (Arezo manager).

Some believe that there is a big comprehension gap between the international community and Afghans (GTZ). Others pointed to the distance between the development community and ministries in Kabul (Tamadon journalist). Still others highlighted the international community’s generally limited geographical focus (i.e. on the five major cities), as well as its project-based framework, which means that it pulls out as soon as the project timeframe is over. Although Mazar benefits from a strong local governor, who has made the place relatively safe and who has facilitated/supported the development of infrastructure (e.g. houses and a civilian airport), apparently no significant development achievements can be seen: *“Development in Mazar is a success because it is not a failure”* (development community worker).

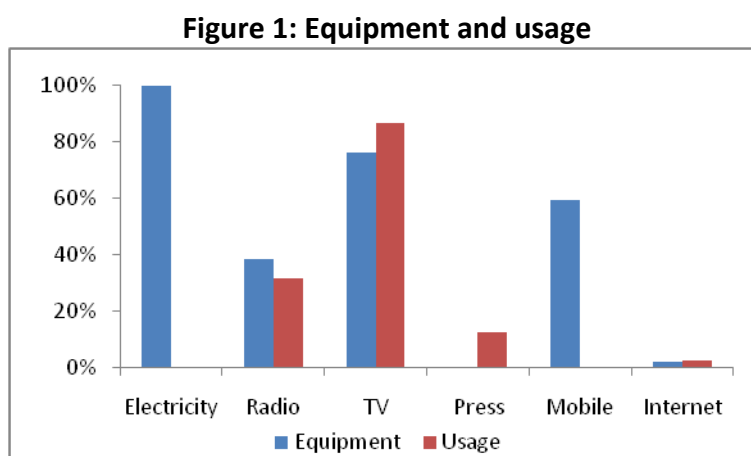
3 Audience

The following is a description of the audience in Mazar-e-Sharif city, based on 190 close-ended interviews and 435 phone interviews with 61 unique media users to collect audience data. Additional qualitative fieldwork was conducted in the city and the province through paired interviews and community case studies. Qualitative results in Afghanistan's cities are the focus of a detailed analysis in the national survey report. Therefore, we present here only a brief review of the city's audience.

3.1 Equipment and usage

3.1.1 Household equipment

Nearly all interviewees in Mazar-e Sharif city have access to electricity (99%). The city has had a consistent electricity supply for a long time. As a consequence, a large number of interviewees (76%) have access to at least one TV set. The main reason given by the few interviewees who do not have a TV set was lack of interest.



Similar to other cities (see, for example, Herat and Kabul), households in Mazar have seem to have replaced radio with TV in recent years: the ownership rate for radio is now 38%, compared with 91% in 2005. Respondents who declared not having a radio set explained that they preferred TV (65%) and/or had no interest in listening to the radio (39%).

Mobile phone penetration is rather low in the sample, given that Mazar is a large city that is well covered by all operators: only 59% of respondents have a mobile phone. Non-mobile phone users are essentially women and elderly men.

Only 2% of interviewed households declared being connected to the internet.

3.1.2 Sources of information and media usage

Mazar interviewees are quite intensive media users, but not as much so as in other cities, like Herat and Jalalabad. TV is the most important medium: 62% watch TV every day. It is both the most used and the most trusted source of information on all topics listed (health,

politics, religion, news, development, and entertainment). Traditional sources, such as friends, family, *mullahs*, and experts were mentioned very rarely.

Over 25% of respondents listen to the radio often or occasionally. Only 13% read the printed press and 3% connect to the internet. Both activities are conducted occasionally.

Figure 2: TV usage frequency

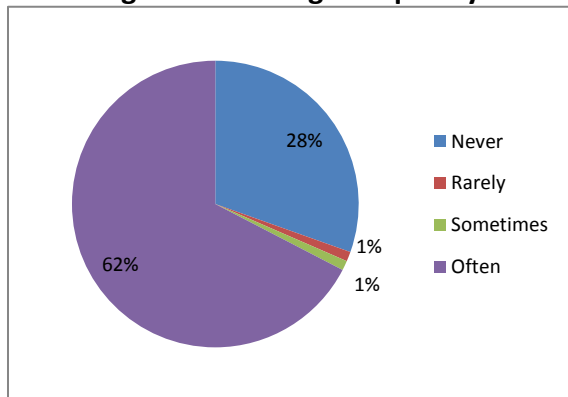
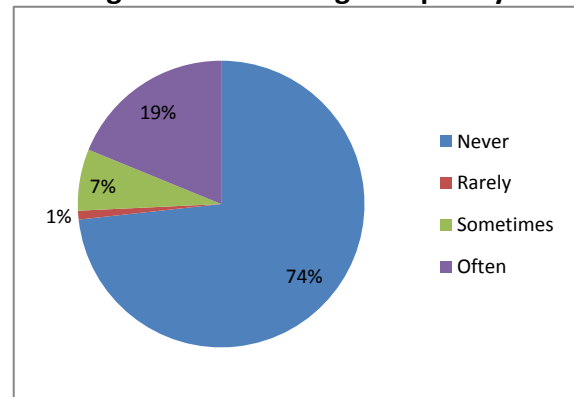


Figure 3: Radio usage frequency



3.1.3 Usage patterns

Respondents listen to the radio all day, with a slight preference for early morning (5-7am), essentially at home. Respondents watch TV mostly in the evening and at night, after 7pm, also at home.

Figure 4: Preferred times to listen to radio

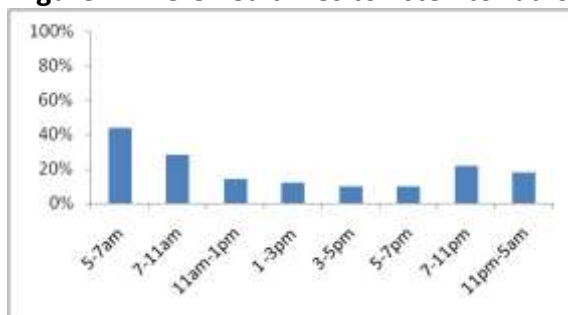
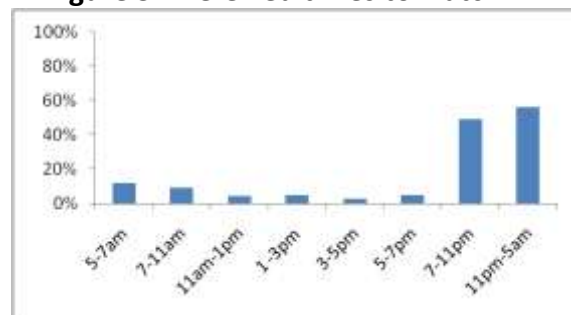


Figure 5: Preferred times to watch TV



3.2 Preferences

3.2.1 Television

The two most preferred TV channels are national Tolo and Ariana, mentioned by about two-thirds of interviewees mentioned. This is consistent with the observed audience share (in the audience survey). However, respondents listed Arezo as their third preference (and therefore it was the most preferred local TV channel), whereas Yak TV (1TV) took this position in the audience survey (Yak TV did not appear on the list of preferred stations). This discrepancy may be because of the time differences of the two surveys.

In terms of programs broadcast on TV, Mazar users show great interest in national news. Music, religion, and entertainment shows are also quite popular. Dramas were listed quite

low, at a level similar to other places in Afghanistan, but audience survey data suggest that they come first³.

Figure 6: Preferred TV channels (3 choices)

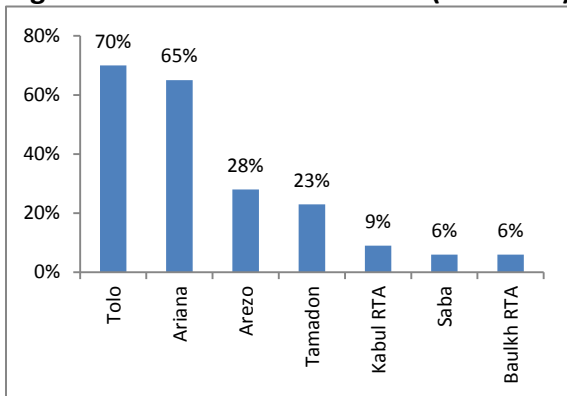


Figure 7: Preferred TV programs (3 choices)

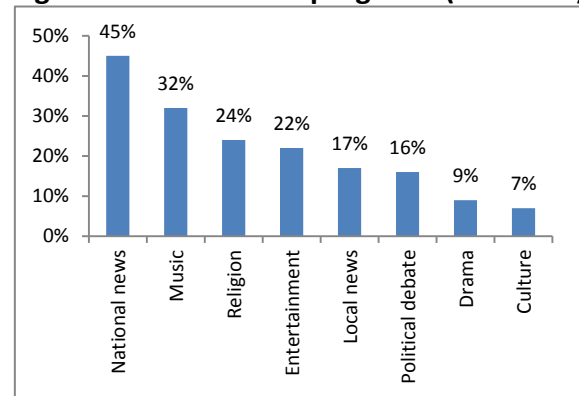


Figure 8: Most watched TV channels (audience survey)

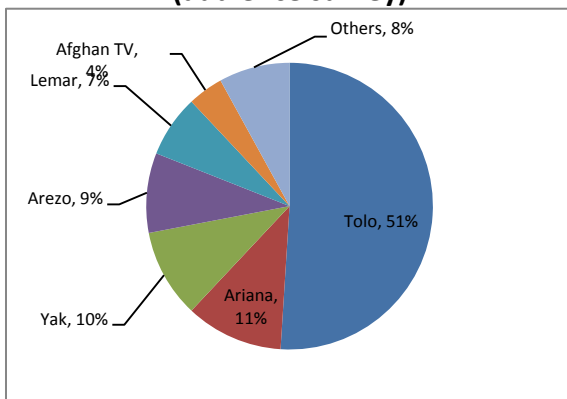
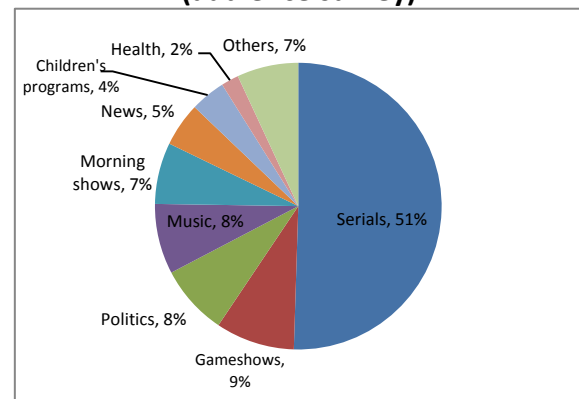


Figure 9: Most watched program type (audience survey)



3.2.2 Radio

With regard to self-declared preferences, national Arman FM emerges as the most popular radio station among radio users in Mazar, well ahead of local radio stations Balkh RTA, Arezo, Lahza, Rabia Balkhi, and Shahr Mazar. However, audience data suggest that Arezo is among the most listened to the stations, up close to Arman. Preferred programs on the radio are similar to those liked on TV: national news and music. Radio users are more interested in local news than TV users are.

³ Note that audience share by program category is calculated only for the seven most popular national TV channels, and is computed based on the amount of time each show was watched for in the province during the period of the audience survey. These figures should therefore be used with caution.

Figure 10: Preferred radio stations (3 choices)

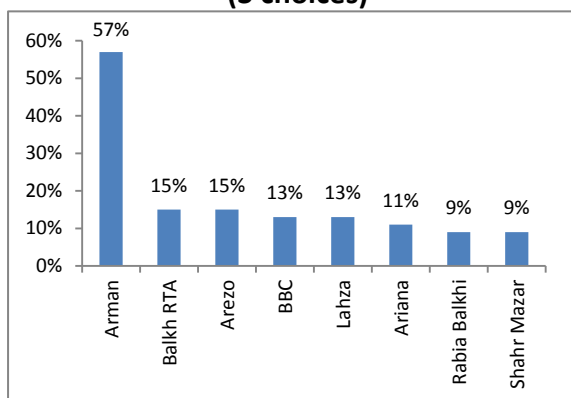


Figure 11: Preferred radio programs (3 choices)

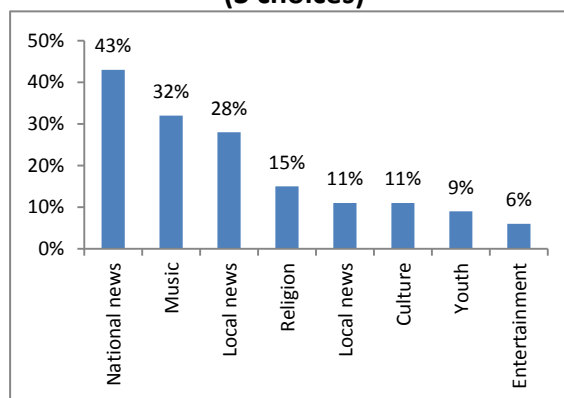
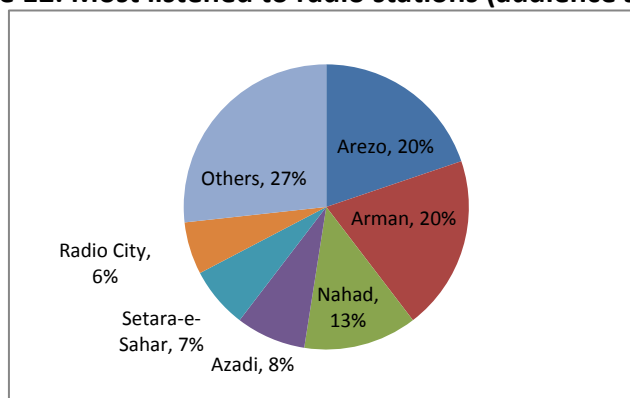


Figure 12: Most listened to radio stations (audience survey)



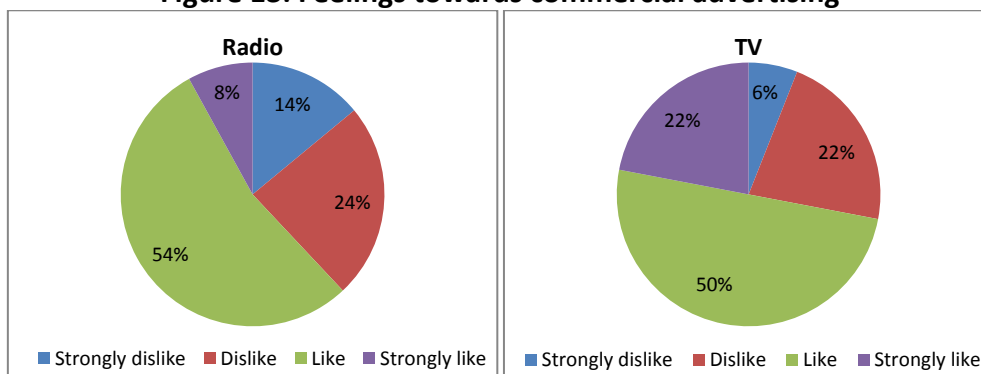
3.2.3 Printed press

Preferred newspapers and magazines are Sada-e-Azadi, mentioned by 45% of interviewees, and followed by Killid, Payam-e-Balkh, Mursal, and Anis.

3.2.4 Advertising

Mazar interviewees are exposed to commercial advertising through TV and radio. More than a third of TV users dislike/strongly dislike advertising, which is unusual in Afghanistan in general but more frequent in the main cities (see Kabul and Herat). Advertising is considered useful, but there is a general feeling that there is too much of it. The most remembered commercial advertisements include those for banks, food products, and mobile phone operators. A total of 28% of radio users declared that they did not pay attention to advertisements, so did not remember which ones they had heard recently.

Figure 13: Feelings towards commercial advertising



3.2.5 Personalities

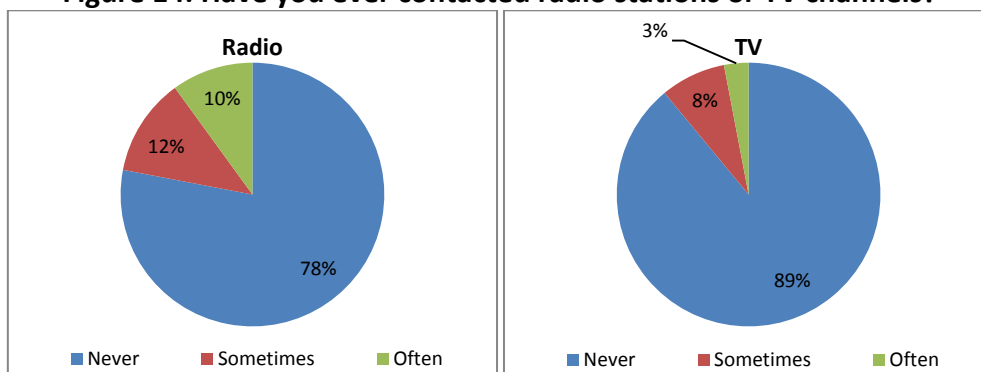
The most mentioned personality (someone respondents would like to hear or see on the media) was President Karzai (23%). Other personalities mentioned were either religious figures, such as Ayatollah Mohseni of the Khatam-ul-Nabehin *madrassa* in Kabul (10%), or political figures, such as MPs Ramazan Bashardost and Shukria Barakzai, former presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah, and Balkh governor Ustad Atta.

3.3 Perceptions and impact

3.3.1 Participation

As in other cities, Mazar interviewees rarely contact the media. A minority contact mostly local radio stations to request songs.

Figure 14: Have you ever contacted radio stations or TV channels?



3.3.2 Trust

National Arman FM is the most trusted radio station, mentioned by 43% of interviewees, well ahead of stations that usually have the highest reputation in the country (BBC, Azadi). Interviewees usually trust what they see on television, although 43% were somewhat critical.

Figure 15: Which radio stations do you trust most?

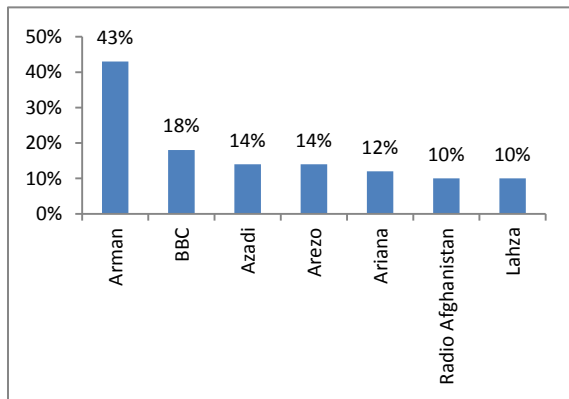
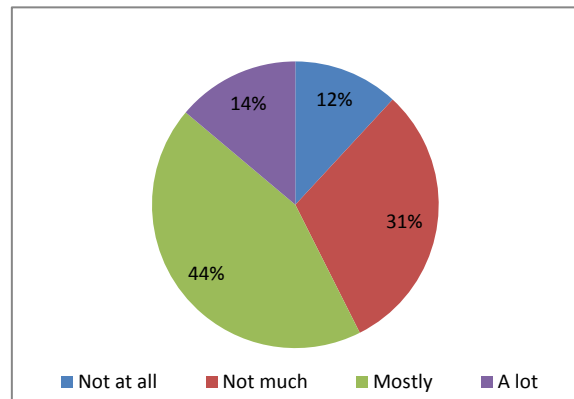


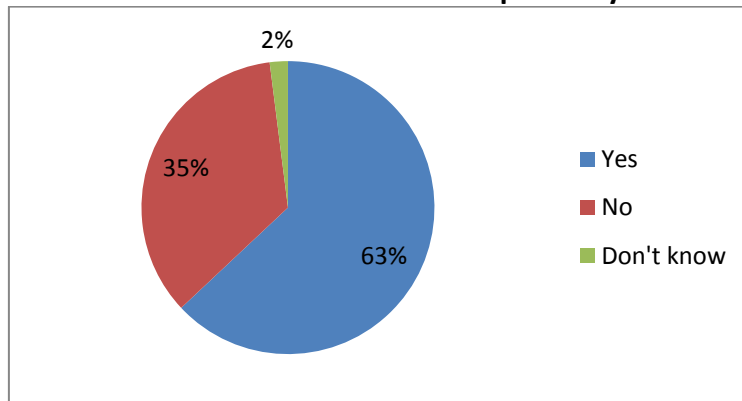
Figure 16: Do you trust what you see on TV?



3.3.3 Perceptions of the local media

When asked which local radio stations they listened to the most, interviewees in Mazar listed Arezo (26%), Balkh RTA (17%), and Arman FM – which is not really a local radio station, as it does not broadcast content specific to Balkh province. Interviewees seemed quite satisfied by the quality of Arezo and Balkh RTA: only 13% of listeners thought that they could do better. In general, interviewees thought positively of their local stations and two-thirds thought they had a positive impact on the local community.

Figure 17: Does the local station have an impact on your community?



3.3.4 Circulation and impact

Interviewees usually discuss what they see or hear on broadcast media. The vast majority acknowledged that the media brings new and positive ideas and helps them shape their opinions.

Figure 18: Do you discuss what you see on TV?

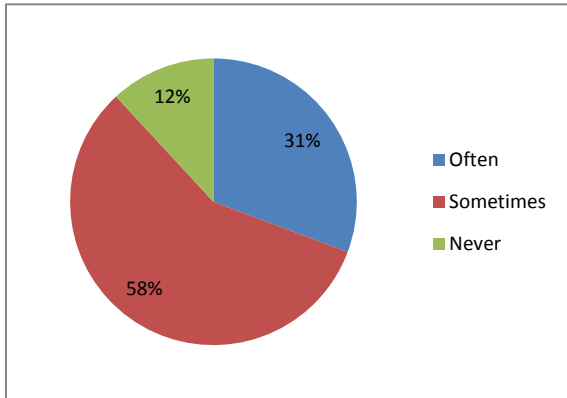
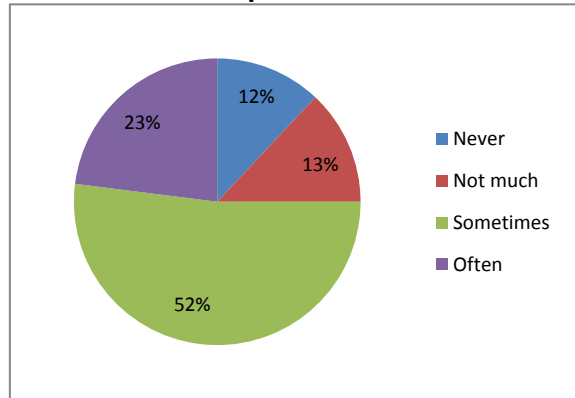


Figure 19: Can TV make you change your opinions?



4 Conclusions and areas of opportunity

The media landscape in Mazar-e-Sharif district is vibrant, with over 10 TV channels and almost 20 radio stations. Antennas located in the city generally allow major broadcasters good quality terrestrial coverage, as in other major cities in Afghanistan.

Since 2005, there has been not only dynamic development of all media, but also good integration of local media within civil society. Several outlets are closely related to civil society organizations (e.g. Ayaran-e-Balkh and Nada-e-Jawan, two publications related to youth), and radio stations have developed a large number of call-in programs. Some outlet managers interviewed have also invested in building local capacity or are involving volunteers in content production. Others are willing to develop educational content, and claim to educate their audience on the law and other key aspects of Afghan development, or have set up other stations in neighboring provinces. There seems to be a certain maturity in the media community of Mazar-e-Sharif, and a strong belief in the role that the media can play in the development of the country.

The continued creation of new outlets in an already lively media landscape is particularly striking. Outlet managers generally perceive this as a right and as a way to address key gaps that still exist in the industry (*“Everyone has the right to establish an outlet in accordance with the law”* (manager of media NGO); *“Each station has its own place”* (TV channel owner); *“Radio stations have their listeners and will have for years”*). However, their future is an open debate. Overall, it seems that a number of new outlets (backed by private businesses) are “trying their luck.” Those with a more established network as a result of their owners/managers running other outlets (e.g. Setara-e-Sahar TV) and those working with another well-established outlet (e.g. Sabz radio) seem to be in a more favorable position to survive, at least for a longer period of time.

Despite what appears to be an easy environment for setting up new outlets in Mazar, and a despite the fertile media landscape, strengthened by a relatively high number of media NGOs, major challenges to the development of media in Mazar exist. These include: somewhat limited solidarity among journalists (also caused by the weak role played by journalists’ associations); limited access to information; political affiliations; and the general uncertainty of journalism as a profession. Meanwhile, the sustainability of independent outlets is compromised by a small advertising market and, reportedly, limited attention from the central government to the fragility of local media (taxation adds up to \$3,000 every year, regardless of the size of the outlet).