

“Borderline” Radio Program Broadcasts to Afghans and Pakistanis

Radio program promotes co-operation, harmony, and peaceful co-existence among people.

A new weekly radio program, entitled *Da Pulay Poray* (“On the Borderline”), has started broadcasting on independent stations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The program covers a range of issues affecting the border regions and emphasizes co-operation, harmony, and peaceful co-existence among people on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. It is one of the first to address women’s issues – using women journalists – in an extremely conservative region.

UNIVERSITY WORKSHOPS ENCOURAGE FRESH TALENT

Da Pulay Poray is produced in Kabul and Peshawar by the Pakistan-Afghanistan Cross-Border Training and Information Exchange, a project of Internews Network. Two training workshops, held in April and June at the project headquarters at Peshawar University, included an equal number of participants from Pakistan and Afghanistan. The reporters trained in the workshops regularly contribute to the weekly radio program.

Since then, two further workshops have been held inside Afghanistan, at Kandahar and Jalalabad universities, maintaining the project’s policy of working in journalism departments of universities, and encouraging fresh talent.

A WIDE RANGE OF WOMEN’S ISSUES ARE INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAMMING

The women’s issues covered include the psychological and health consequences of girls marrying young, common on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border; the practice of giving girls away in marriage to end disputes; how women are given away to repay debts incurred against opium; and how women are prevented from getting medical care due to the stigma on women going out in public.



Recording of traditional Afghan music is a major component of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Cross-Border Training and Information Exchange project. Carefully selected songs are used to reinforce the themes of radio reports. Project Director John Butt (left) works with musicians on program music.

Other topics dealt with include whether primary education should be made compulsory, for boys and girls; the assistance that farmers in eastern Afghanistan require to find alternatives to growing opium; how personal feuds caused by trivial matters in the border areas lead to needless loss of life and how the feuds might be ended; the burning of houses and other punishments in the Pakistan tribal areas.

MUSIC APPEALS TO LISTENERS AND TIES STORIES TOGETHER

Music plays a big part in *Da Pulay Poray* with originally-recorded music often used to reinforce the themes of reports. A song often starts out the program. The signature tune of *Da Pulay Poray* is a traditional tune associated with the loading of camels

by Pashtoon nomads, when they are heading for a new destination. “Load the camels, tie the ropes.” The featured instrument is the rebab, an Afghan equivalent of the mandolin. You may listen here: <http://www.internews.org/pact/maintheme.mp3>.

“As you know, women often live quite a contained life. They are left with their thoughts, in which they roam free – free as birds. But these dreams are also doomed to end in disillusionment,” said the narrator introducing a singer for one program that included a number of reports about women. “Let’s have a listen to Qamar Gul as she flies in her dreams: ‘I flew like a pigeon. Did you see me or not?’” Listen to *Laka kontara alwatum* sung by Qamar Gula here: <http://www.internews.org/pact/gula.mp3>.





Journalists participate in a workshop held at the University of Nangrahar in Afghanistan. Workshops include an equal number of participants from Pakistan and Afghanistan and the reporters regularly contribute to the weekly radio programs.

“Pearls of Culture” winds up the program, interviewing traditional and contemporary artists and musicians. For example, Nazia Iqbal is a female singer from the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan who has achieved enormous popularity in Afghanistan. Qasim Jan, an uneducated resident of Peshawar, has memorized the entire collection of poetry of Rahman Baba, a popular Pashto poet born in the 17th century.

COVERAGE REPORTS AND EDUCATES ON THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Another weekly feature incorporated into Da Pulay Poray is a report on the electoral process in Afghanistan, where parliamentary elections are due to be held this month. Among the topics dealt with so far have been whether the elections should be party or non-party based; how refugees living in Pakistan will be able to vote in the parliamentary elections; and whether Afghans would like religious figures or laymen to stand for election.

The lively mix is proving popular with listeners. At one FM station in Peshawar, Pakistan, listener Gulab Khan called in to say the program was “informative and very interesting. It shows us our own society and culture.”

Such feedback is music to the ears of project director, John Butt. “The main aim of Da Pulay Poray,” he says, “is to revive the great traditions of moderation, love, peace and tolerance in the region, which have been smothered by decades of war.”

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Brainstorming of topics to be covered in practical report-making can be a long, painstaking task, but Pakistan-Afghanistan Cross-Border Training and Information Exchange co-ordinator Wajhma Wali finds a lighter moment during a training session.

ABOUT INTERNEWS

Internews® Network is an international non-profit organization that works to improve access to information for people around the world by fostering independent media and promoting open communications policies. Internews’ programs are built on the conviction that providing people with access to vibrant, diverse news and information empowers them to make their voices heard and to participate effectively in their communities.

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