

Communication for stabilisation in Southern Afghanistan

A report by Media Support Solutions

Commissioned by the Department for International Development (DfID)



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List of Acronyms

| | |
|----------|---|
| 1. DfID | Department for International Development |
| 2. MSS | Media Support Solutions |
| 3. FCO | Foreign and Commonwealth Office |
| 4. GoA | Government of Afghanistan |
| 5. ISAF | International Security Assistance Force (for Afghanistan) |
| 6. CfS | Communication for Stabilisation |
| 7. BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| 8. RTA | Radio and Television Afghanistan |
| 9. FATA | Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Pakistan) |
| 10. SfCG | Search for Common Ground |
| 11. IWPR | Institute for War and Peace Reporting |
| 12. NGO | non-government organisation |
| 13. FM | frequency modulation |
| 14. AM | amplitude modulation |
| 15. SW | Short Wave |
| 16. TLO | Tribal Liaison Office |
| 17. CDC | Community Development Committee |
| 18. HMG | Her Majesty's Government |
| 19. NC3 | National Coordinating Communications Committee |
| 20. CPAU | Cooperation for Peace and Unity, Afghanistan |
| 21. CAST | Communications and Stabilisation Team |

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Gordon Adam
Media Support Solutions
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Communication for Stabilisation in Southern Afghanistan

Media Support Solutions

1. Executive Summary

1. This proposal outlines a strategic communication intervention to support a shift in Afghan public opinion away from acceptance of violent insurgency towards political process. It addresses the limited impact of ad-hoc communication interventions by proposing a long-term, multi-layered series of activities that are linked through a consistent vision and coordinated management. The Communication for Stabilisation (CfS) initiative is functional at local and regional levels through a variety of media and participatory communication activities, and maintains a coherent and consistent 'stabilisation agenda' through an integrated management structure.
2. DfID's broader conflict programme in Afghanistan is innovative and could be a model for adaptation in other countries. It integrates a 'bottom-up' approach through strengthening community capacity to manage and transform conflict, and enables a 'top-down' process through supporting the Government of Afghanistan to be more inclusive, while integrating and supporting both through a coherent and strategic communications component. This provides a combination of strategic, outcome-oriented and participatory communications that engage Afghan citizens voice and strengthen the provision of accurate information.
3. Communications for Stabilisation draws on the British Government's Stabilisation Unit definition of stabilisation: 'the gap between emergency humanitarian assistance and longer-term development assistance. The most fundamental distinction is between the explicitly political aims of stabilisation – aiming to promote peaceful political processes, the strictly neutral role of humanitarian assistance, and the apolitical poverty-focussed rationale for development activity¹.
4. The CfS initiative is timely. Ghani and Lockhart, both with extensive Afghan experience, note that "*neither the Afghan state or the international community has succeeded in responding to and harnessing the energies of ordinary Afghans for building a state that would have legitimacy at home and internationally.*"² At the heart of CfS is the intent to engage directly the energy, vision and voice of ordinary Afghans in whose hands the future of the country lies.
5. The proposal builds on Afghans passion for communicating and their loyalty to radio listening, as well as their recent adoption of mobile phone technology, while noting the importance of traditional gatherings such as jirgahs. It is integrated with GoA and British governance reform initiatives, and is in line with progressive counter insurgency thinking. Importantly, it is grounded in rigorous social research, is long term and informed by behaviour change and strategic communication best practice.

¹ <http://www.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/index.html>

² Ghani, A and Lockhart, S 2008 *Fixing Failed States* OUP p12

6. The conclusions of this work are that the conflict in Afghanistan is complex, involving a wide range of insurgents. Far from being a monolithic organisation, the “Taleban” is the term given to a wide range of malcontents, many of them with different reasons for taking up arms against the GoA and ISAF. The communications response needs to be both subtle and practical, stemming from a close respect and understanding of Pashtun culture. For instance using the word “insurgents” rather than “Taleban” – the Taleb being a traditionally respected title.
7. To be successful, CfS recommendations have to take into account that key target audiences - young Pashtun men, elders / opinion formers and reluctant insurgents who could be swayed from supporting the insurgency – are often sophisticated media consumers who are highly sensitive about being manipulated by the media.³ Media interventions need to be transparently independent of GoA, ISAF or other organisations perceived not to be independent.
8. At the same time, media is at the heart of these recommendations, as face to face community based work remains too dangerous to undertake apart from in communities where there is a sustained effort at conflict transformation. In three or possibly four such communities, it is suggested that local radio stations with a strong participatory mandate are set up. It is hoped their carefully mentored work will act as a catalyst for community centred development, good governance and enhanced security which will be emulated elsewhere.
9. There are two ways that CfS can be deployed: the first is to work with the media in persuading public opinion towards political dialogue and away from insurgency. The second is creating safe spaces where Afghan citizens can express themselves and be confident that the GoA is listening, and perhaps even acting. These approaches are often seen as conflicting, but both are required in southern Afghanistan, and if sensitively deployed they will combine to create a significant impact.
10. Participation – allowing people to be part of the argument and agents of their own change, rather than passive recipients of well intentioned but often ineffective “messages”, is fundamental to the recommendations below. From community based radio to setting up an Afghan version of “Question Time” on national TV, opportunities exist for ordinary people to take part in debate and to question policy makers. This is particularly important in the run up to presidential and parliamentary elections in 2009. A further principle is: follow up talk with action, so people’s confidence in government, local and national, is enhanced. This requires a parallel effort within the GoA to not just tolerate dissent, but to welcome constructive criticism and act on it. This would go some way towards restoring Afghans’ battered confidence in their government.
11. At the same time underpinning CfS must be an understanding that expectations have to be managed. Afghans are used to being promised lavish assistance and frequently being let down. A major challenge is for Afghans to make up their own minds about how to live their lives despite the very difficult circumstances in which many of them live. For this they need relevant information and the opportunity to debate amongst themselves life-

³ Marie, C & Karokhail M “An exploratory study of communication for stabilisation in Southern Afghanistan” (TLO), Annexe 2

changing decisions. This is the challenge, above all, for Communications for Stabilisation.

2. Summary of Recommendations

At the centre is Local Radio for Stabilisation (LRS), a radio production centre which will serve up to four new local stations set up to complement conflict stabilisation efforts mounted by the GoA with assistance from the international community. LRS will also be a clearing house for other CfS material coming from Radio PACT in Pakistan and other sources. It will provide programming, intensive training and on the job mentoring for the new local radio teams. It could provide a conflict-sensitive radio news service to the local radio stations, and to other radio stations in Afghanistan. The local radio stations would support community based interactive street and school-based theatre. The LRS production centre could also broadcast in its own right on AM to much of southern Afghanistan, and on FM probably to the Kandahar area. The LRS would be contracted through the Communications and Stabilisation Team (CAST, see below) as a competitive tender.

The Communications and Stabilisation Team (CAST), will administer a CfS 'challenge fund' (separate from the LRS) over four years to which media companies can apply to undertake the following activities:

- Radio CfS programming
- Television CfS programming
- A close partnership with an Afghan TV station focused on CfS
- Pakistan based CfS programming for Baluchistan and Afghanistan
- Reality peace-building programmes focused around specific mediation efforts (radio and TV)
- Support to BBC Pashto/ Dari Service for CfS programming
- Support for long running CfS storyline in BBC's New Home New Life radio soap opera
- Afghan "Question Time" on TV

The project ideas for the challenge fund would be approved by a Programme Assessment Committee (PAC) which would be a regular meeting convened and chaired by the Strategic Evaluation Team, whose membership would be drawn from DfID, the Integrating Agent, implementing organisations, the Strategic Evaluation Team and several independent Afghan academics/ development professionals

The Strategic Evaluation Team (SET), who will be in partnership with the "Integrating Agency", will evaluate the CfS programme, and also be responsible for the PAC through which it will ensure alignment with the initiatives vision, mission and values.

3. Background

This work was commissioned by the DfID Conflict Adviser for Afghanistan following an approach from Media Support Solutions (MSS), which believed that the media could be deployed more extensively to support conflict transformation in southern Afghanistan. The scope of the terms of reference were extended considerably at DfID's suggestion, to include detailed research on public opinion and media use in Baluchistan, FATA and Dubai as well as in the provinces of Helmand, Uruzgan, and Kandahar. The research team suggested including Zabul as part of the target area, which DfID agreed to. In the event because of transport and other logistical difficulties, it was not possible for the research team to visit either Zabul or Uruzgan, but people from both provinces were interviewed in Kabul and Kandahar as part of

the field research. The following reports were commissioned or versioned for the study and are included in annexes:

1. Information Sources and Public Opinion in southern Afghanistan
2. An exploratory study of communication for stabilisation in southern Afghanistan
3. Countering the Taleban “propaganda machine”
4. Information sources and media access in Baluchistan and NWFP
5. Survey of media use by Pashtun diaspora in Dubai
6. Summary of the CfS workshop in Dubai
7. Access to Electronic and Print Media in Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan,
8. Technical Challenges and Solutions
9. Satellite TV feasibility Study
10. Potential Partner Summaries
11. Literature Review on Media and Public Opinion in Afghanistan
12. List of individuals interviewed, and publications consulted
13. Terms of Reference

A two day workshop comprising twenty individuals from the research team, DfID, FCO and Afghan academics, was held in Dubai. The summary of the sessions is included as Annexe 6.

As well as the research papers, over eighty people from the Government of Afghanistan (GoA), ISAF, DfID, FCO, the Afghan and Pakistani media etc were interviewed in the course of the Communications for Stabilisation (CfS) research, and these conversations were important in informing the conclusions summarised below. These individuals, along with a list of publications consulted, are attached as Annexes 11 & 12. The full Terms of Reference is included as Annexe 13.

4. Assumptions

This work has been predicated on the following key assumptions:

1. Communications programmes aimed at raising awareness with a view to influencing loyalties and eventual behaviour change, are long term in nature
2. This needs to be separated from “messaging” which is best suited to precise short-term advice (eg: “keep away from military convoys”, “inoculate your children at your local clinic on August 14th”)
3. Attitudinal and behaviour change is most sustainable when target populations define and direct the desired change through making their “voices” heard. They will own the agenda and responsibility for its success far more if they feel they have invested in it.
4. A range of coordinated public information initiatives is likely to make much more impact than a single intervention
5. Interpersonal communication is a significant influencer in Afghan Pashtun society
6. Print, TV and audio products, however high quality, will only make an impact if they reach their target populations over a sustained period of time, and are understood and discussed by them
7. To be credible, communication has to resonate with the experiences of the target populations, and to be followed up by action rather than rest on words

5. Context and Rationale

1. The over-arching objective of a Communications for Stabilisation (CfS) strategy is to reduce violent conflict through strengthening an alternative discourse which is focused on what research has shown clearly Afghans want – security, jobs and education. CfS meshes with broad British policy on

Afghanistan which, in the words of the British Prime Minister, aims “... to defeat the insurgency by isolating and eliminating their leadership”.⁴ CfS will use to the full the Pashtuns’ passion for debate, their traditional obsession with radio listening, and their newly discovered love affair with the mobile phone to engage local people - including those who have supported the insurgency - in discussion and activities which over time will shift social norms in favour of peace. Up to now many have become increasingly isolated and often victims of mini-tyrants in their remote valleys. CfS will work towards inclusion using cellphones combined with radio and TV programmes. This may not be as difficult as it seems: research shows that most Pashtuns in the South are reluctant insurgents who are more interested in peace than ideological warfare⁵, and CfS will aim to shift the discourse away from violent conflict in favour of negotiating an honourable settlement.

2. This is not an isolated initiative: it will take place in parallel with a Government of Afghanistan (GoA) initiative promoting devolved local government, the National Solidarity and District Shura programmes, which DfID is strongly supporting. It will be closely linked with another British supported initiative – to improve the GoA’s public information operation centrally and provincially. It will appeal to Afghan traditions and is fully in line with recent counter-insurgency thinking on both sides of the Atlantic. As General Sir Rupert Smith has written about conducting “wars amongst people”:

“ To win the clash of wills we must change or form the intentions of the people; the pressures and factors that bring about this change of wills are communicated by the passage of information of other deeds, of growing confidence in the rule of law, as well as demonstration of and the use of force”⁶

3. What will be new about this CfS initiative is that is based on sound social research, it is long term and it learns from “behaviour change communications” methodologies. This goes far beyond the “messaging” approach which is typical of communications interventions in Afghanistan. It will engage the local population in a series of linked local, regional and national media and face-to-face initiatives which allows them to be agents of their own change, rather than simply objects for change. In this way, fundamental issues such as loyalties can be raised, questioned, debated and re-assessed by the people themselves.
4. These assertions are not speculative: given the right mix of mass media and interpersonal reinforcement, they will deliver measurable results over the projected four year period of this programme. There are important precedents from Afghanistan⁷, and they are based on well-researched social communication theory which has delivered results in many different settings, in a variety of contexts.⁸

⁴ Gordon Brown, address on Afghanistan to the House of Commons, December 12th 2007

⁵ Marie and Karokhail, *ibid*

⁶ Smith, Rupert *The Utility of Force* (2005), p290

⁷ Adam, G: “Radio in Afghanistan: a model for socially useful communications in disaster situations?” World Disaster Report, 2005 (Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva)

⁸ See Bandura A. “Self Efficacy” (1997) pp505-511 for examples on mass media and literacy and health programmes; Besley, T. and Burgess, R., 2001, “Political Agency, Government Responsiveness and the Role of the Media”, *European Economic Review*, 45(4-6): 629-640; Reinikka, R. and Svensson, J., 2004b, “The Power of Information: Evidence from a Newspaper Campaign to Reduce Capture”, *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper Series*, Nr. 3239, The World Bank, Washington DC; Strömberg, D., 2004b, “Radio’s Impact on Public Spending”, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*,

6. Challenges

1. There are a number of challenges: neither ISAF, its international supporters, nor the GoA is popular in many conflict areas of the south. Even a few instances of civilian casualties and insensitive house searches cause huge offence, exacerbated by wild and often inaccurate rumours that spread far and wide⁹. Taliban propaganda is widely believed because it feeds people's preconceptions and prejudices. ISAF and the GoA are usually distant and aloof, whose explanations are all too often not credible while bombs continue to fall.¹⁰ Lack of security has deterred them from freely mixing with the local people and understanding their mindset and concerns. The communications void fuels rumour, much of it incredible to outsiders but firmly believed by most locals.
2. The Taliban are demonised by ISAF and the GoA, and the complexities of the conflict are – if known – not reflected in their public statements and obscures the local dimensions of peoples concerns and reasons for support to the insurgency. This contributes to their lack of credibility. The insurgents are often close to the people and they have respect as Islamic warriors, as family members and as administrators who settle disputes quickly and (generally) honestly, unlike (for the most part) the government legal services¹¹.
3. Expectations of the GoA are often unreasonably high, and their actual performance falls far short. Corruption is rife, protection is patchy and services are poor, much undermined by insurgent intimidation and attacks. There's a sense that government isn't listening or delivering on its commitment, and an unrealistic level of expectation on what the government can deliver. Another problem is that the GoA has seen the role of communication traditionally as a government propaganda tool. For them to become more "listening" and to tolerate criticism will be a major culture change. Yet it is essential that this process takes place, as Afghans have had thirty years of (mainly) lies from authoritarian governments, and current government public information is seen as remote and often not credible.
4. Security is also a major constraint to any new CfS initiative that relies on face-to-face work on the ground. Research shows that interpersonal communication is very important in Pashtun society.¹² Access to communities to enable monitoring for quality and coherence of the communication work at local levels is currently difficult and dangerous. The isolation of the people is maintained – which is exactly what the insurgents want.

7. Opportunities

At the same time, there are a number of positive elements to the situation in southern Afghanistan that a CfS strategy can build on:

- Recent research in the south has confirmed the results of numerous audience surveys in Afghanistan – that Afghans especially in rural areas remain strong

119(1): 189-221; "Listen to the Radio! Media and corruption: evidence from Madagascar", Francken N, Minten, B and Swinnen J, *World Bank, Madagascar Country Office*.

⁹ Metcalfe, Leo and Rahmani "Information Sources and Public Opinion in Southern Afghanistan", Annexe 1

¹⁰ MacKenzie, Jean "Countering the Taliban 'Propaganda Machine'", Annexe 3.

¹¹ Mackenzie, Jean *ibid*

¹² Metcalf, L: "Information sources and the formation of Public Opinion in Southern Afghanistan", Annexe 1

radio listeners, with the BBC continuing to command great respect.¹³ The media mapping exercise also shows that in rural areas of high insurgent activity, there is very little media in Pashto that the population can access.¹⁴ This provides an opportunity – support credible radio stations with a CfS agenda, and they are likely to attract a substantial audience. Moreover, surveys have noted that Pashtuns feel strongly attached to their language and culture and feel it is under represented on the national station, RTA¹⁵.

- TV audiences are high in towns in the south, though electricity supplies continue to provide problems. Nationwide, access to TV is about 37%, which is rapidly growing.¹⁶ It is a highly desired medium, and often trusted through its ‘portrayal of reality’. Internet access in the areas surveyed is low and charges are high, but this could change if a fibre optic cable link reaches Kabul in early 2009 as planned, although security concerns make this projection questionable.¹⁷
- It is known from anecdotal accounts and from the mobile phone companies that mobile phone ownership in Afghanistan has increased exponentially over the past five years – according to the Roshan telecommunications company, currently at the rate of 130,000 per month. ISAF’s Radio Musa Qala – a shoestring operation set up earlier this year – recorded over one hundred music request calls a day, resulting in the daily phone in programme being increased to two hours [the recent destruction of local telecommunications towers has led to the suspension of this service; this could be made good with a satellite link]. This story has been repeated among radio stations in Kandahar, Lashkar Gah and in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).¹⁸ Pashtuns in rural areas are often short of entertainment, they relish the chance to take part in debate and are not afraid to express themselves plainly, or ask difficult questions. Radio can be a reassuringly anonymous medium.
- There have been examples of media programmes in Afghanistan which have significantly influenced behaviour, the best known of which is the BBC’s long running radio soap opera, *New Home New Life*¹⁹. These can be built on for a future CfS strategy.
- Much has been learned from the health field, particularly HIV/AIDS, on how to shape effective behaviour change communications.²⁰ Combining “diffusion” (mass media) with a participatory approach – involving the target population in the complex process of behaviour modification through community based activities in which people are involved in defining and shaping that change, could be adapted to work effectively in Afghanistan.
- There is a strong tradition of discussion to solve problems amongst Pashtuns - the “jirga” process. Using a combination of radio and cellphones, and an expert journalist as anchor, it should be possible to create a “virtual jirga” to raise contentious issues and discuss them in a way that stimulates reconciliation. The NGO “Search for Common Ground” (SfCG) has developed techniques involving radio over a number of years. They have been used successfully in many African countries, and SfCG has produced handbooks explaining the methodology²¹

¹³ Metcalf, Leo “Audience Research Report”, Annexe 1

¹⁴ MacLeod, Norman “Media accessed in Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan”, Annexe 7.

¹⁵ “Afghan Media – three years after. Media and alternative sources of information in Afghan Society”, Altai consulting, Kabul 2005

¹⁶ Asia Foundation: “Afghanistan in 2007: A survey of the Afghan people” p128

¹⁷ Macleod, Norman: “Technical challenges and solutions”, Annexe 8

¹⁸ *ibid*; Adam, G: “Information sources and media access in Baluchistan and NWFP provinces of Pakistan”, Annexe 4

¹⁹ Adam, G: “Radio in Afghanistan: a model for socially useful communications in disaster situations?” World Disaster Report, 2005 (Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva)

²⁰ see Galavotti, C et al: “From innovation to implementation: The long and winding road” (2007)

²¹ Howard, R and Rolt, F “Radio Talkshows for Peacebuilding”, Shipler, M “Youth Radio for Peacebuilding”, SCF (2005), (2006).

- Similarly, conflict-sensitive journalism which goes beyond body counting but emphasises civilian victims, reports fully peace initiatives and avoids demonising any of the protagonists, has become increasingly influential. Organisations such as SfCG and the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) have put this into practice in the field. IWPR has worked in southern Afghanistan and produced a handbook for journalists in crisis areas.²²
- The international community understands this is a conflict which will be overcome only with a long term commitment. Communications is also a long-term process, which will make the greatest impact if it is consistently high quality.
- ISAF high command believes that a more radical and ideological insurgency leadership influenced by Al Qa'eeda is taking over in Afghanistan²³. There is an opportunity here to separate the less-ideological insurgents from their new leaders, which could be aided by an imaginative participatory communications initiative such as proposed here.
- This approach is very much in line with recent counter-insurgency thinking which believes most activity should be “non-kinetic”. To quote General Sir Rupert Smith again: “*War amongst the people is conducted best as an intelligence and information operation, not as one of manoeuvre and attrition in the manner of industrial war*”²⁴
- Some key people in the GoA are supportive of a CfS initiative, for instance Homayoun Hamidzada, the President’s spokesman. Governor Gulab Mangal of Helmand is also likely to be an ally – he is an enthusiastic supporter of the media’s role in development, education and good governance.²⁵
- Freedom of speech, while not perfect, is better respected in the electronic media in Afghanistan than in many Asian or Arab countries. Despite the uncertain status of the Media Law, there are dozens of media companies operating in the country, some of them doing impressive work in conflict areas. They are keen to have structured support to continue and expand their work.²⁶
- In Pakistan, where electronic media has been controlled, the Information Minister has signalled (11th April 2008) that restrictions imposed last year would be lifted. This opens the possibility of greater cross border media collaboration.

8. General Approach

1. With an estimated population of 2.4 million in an area of 152,645 sq kms, the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan and Zabul contain few people grouped in communities dotted over a vast area. Most are reached only by short wave radio, which is diminishing in popularity, or satellite TV which depends on electricity that the vast majority do not have. Selecting priority target populations to benefit from CfS interventions has focused on:
 - Three or four rural districts in conflict areas where a majority of the local population has opted to work with the GoA on reconstruction and improving security measures, and where DfID supports community conflict management efforts. The hope will be that these comparatively low cost interventions will be replicated in other areas as security conditions improve over the four year period of the CfS programme.
 - Populations in Kandahar, Lashkar Gah, Tirin Kot and Qalat and surrounding districts.
 - Pashto speaking TV audiences, and Pashto/ Dari speaking TV audiences nationwide, including many opinion formers.

²² “Reporting for Change” IWPR, London 2004

²³ General Dan MacNeill, interview in the London Times, April 8th 2008

²⁴ Smith *ibid*, p390

²⁵ personal conversations with the author

²⁶ MacLeod, Norman “Media accessed in Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan”, Annexe 7.

- The Afghan diaspora in the border areas of Baluchistan and in the Quetta region.
 - In addition there is a secondary target population of radio listeners throughout Afghanistan which have an appetite for quality programmes about CfS issues.
2. The activities have been designed to be practical in a very difficult operating environment, and to be mutually supporting at local, regional and national/ international level. They build on the best of what already exists, and opportunities are presented for indigenous media organisations to play a full role in the CfS strategy. The importance of training and intensive mentoring of broadcasters is emphasised. Much will depend on their professionalism, as they will be involved in peacebuilding activities as well as traditional journalism.
 3. Research shows clearly that discussion in the media is not enough on its own, it needs to be followed up by visits and actions on the ground.²⁷ This implies a high degree of collaboration with government, local shuras and NGOs into which much management energy will need to be expended. NGOs will also be involved in community based activities which will reinforce the CfS agenda that is broadcast on radio. This raises security issues which will need to be resolved by the local communities in which the radio stations are based.
 4. Participative communication in rural districts should build on the egalitarian principles of the “jirgah”, but its use of radio and its emphasis on reaching those who do not traditionally have a voice in open debate (the young, the poor, women) will be quite new. The mobile phone will give many the opportunity to contribute for the first time. Evidence from Musa Qala, Lashkargar, Kandahar, Khyber Radio and Radio Deewa broadcasting to FATA indicates that phone-in programmes will be very popular.²⁸ The challenge will be to extend the range of topics to contentious issues rather than keeping to the safe territory of music requests and on-air greetings. Communication in Afghanistan is generally seen as a top-down activity – more public relations than participation.²⁹ Change will have to be introduced gradually with great sensitivity, and its success will rest largely on structured training and follow up.
 5. The BBC Pashto/ Dari service is highly respected, according to the research undertaken³⁰. The service will receive a much needed boost to its audibility with the building of a powerful new FCO funded AM transmitter in Kandahar. This should reinforce its position as a key influence in the conflict areas. It is recommended that specific BBC Pashto language programming is given further support as part of the CfS initiative.

9. Activities

9.1 Local Activities

Complement the efforts of the GoA in local government reform and DfID funded organisation in promoting participatory community dialogue in three rural locations in conflict prone areas.

²⁷ Metcalf, *ibid*

²⁸ Metcalf, *ibid*; Mari & Karokhali, *ibid*

²⁹ “Decision makers do want communications – but they may not want participation”, Quarry, W. paper published by the World Congress for Communication and Development (2007).

³⁰ Metcalf et al, *ibid*; Marie & Karokhail, *ibid*

The following activities are planned:

1. 1.1 Setting up and managing (through editorial mentoring and on-the-job staff training) local FM radio stations able to reach the bulk of the target population, programmes to reflect local needs based on formative research undertaken by the broadcasters, with advice from TLO etc. Exactly where these stations would be situated will depend on the wider political and security situation as they will be tied in with IDLG activities, and this will be reviewed based on the situation of the mobile phone masts, currently being targeted by Taleban. There will be no existing radio station in the places chosen.

1.2 A key principle will be to show that the radio station is the servant of the community, but - crucially - independent of those in power. For this reason community "ownership" would not be a good idea – shuras are not representative of the whole community, and would tend towards conservative unadventurous programming. An NGO experienced in conflict transformation would be the best manager. But the community should form a representative advisory board to meet regularly and give feedback on the performance of the radio station. Experience with broadcasters as diverse as the BBC and Radio Musa Qala run by ISAF have shown that outsiders running radio stations can earn the respect and loyalty of audiences provided they broadcast news and programmes people find relevant, accurate and enjoyable.

1.3 This means a mix of speech - some of it banter, and music. People, especially those living in conflict areas, do not want a diet of unrelenting gloomy news and current affairs. Local accents and voices are particularly appreciated.³¹ Content is likely to include:

- "conflict-sensitive" news: reporting that humanises the conflict and explores solutions, rather than a numbers and victors approach
- daily "phone-in" programmes on local issues, focusing on solutions not on exacerbating differences and problems
- "Hujra": daily evening phone-in programmes on social issues and less serious chat, interspersed with music ("da hujre majlis" – a musical evening for young people). A virtual Pashtun guesthouse (hujra) where people gather and discuss news and ideas. Could promote practices such as voluntary social work ("ashar"), discuss voter registration issues, health campaigns etc.
- follow up programming with local politicians and officials responding to listeners' queries, (round table discussions etc) to check that appropriate action is taken and that it is reported
- phone-in programmes aimed specifically at young people, with appropriate music, competitions and chat on social, literary and political issues and on the hot topic of the day in Afghanistan or in the local area. This could also be broadened to topics like talking on some scientific invention in the region or globally - e.g. global warming - or on the importance of a social service e.g. blood or organ donation.
- broadcasting songs, poems and stories of local people, including oral testimonies on "golden memories" from older people. Encouraging new song production
- music request programmes using innovative production techniques (for Afghanistan), such as the programme producer walking in the market or in the village centre and asking people which song they would like to listen to in the music request programme tomorrow. One caller to each programme could be selected for a prize - which could come from a local

³¹ Metcalf et al...ibid

business company or a local trader, who would be sponsoring the programme in order to promote its business.

- drama – simple ones locally produced; more elaborate rebroadcast from BBC and other stations
- regular children’s slot – young people presenting entertainment and raising issues of concern, competitions etc
- syndicated version of PACT’s programme looking at Islamic and other local solutions to problems that are common in Pashtun areas. Elements of the programme will be centrally produced, others will be provided in outline format, with guidance for local producers to version the items for their own audiences
- A number of regular programmes on specific issues can be made by a central production unit or by a regional radio broadcaster and distributed to local stations. See below (Regional Activities) for details.

2. Production of interactive street/ school based drama (Augusto Boal, “Theatre of the Oppressed” methodology of presenting unfinished scenarios which are completed through audience participation). This will be undertaken by a civil society organisation (which may be local such as CPAU, TLO or “Wadan” or could be an international organisation such as Counterpart International). The venues could be schools or fairs or shuras with the “woleswal” which research identified as key venues for influencing, and discussion of topical issues.³² The aim would be to stage a range of productions on themes such as elections, the right to bear arms, settling local disputes, fears about vaccination campaigns, the role of mothers and fathers in bringing up children, issues around debt, issues around taking substances (smoking, drugs, naswar etc). Comedy will play a central role in these productions, as will improvisation. Street theatre will have the advantage of reaching out of school children, of whom there are many in conflict areas.

3. Use of video (where acceptable) or radio for communities to present issues from their own point of view. To be edited by the local radio station and broadcast (radio) or made into a DVD for possible regional TV broadcast, or for use in schools. Topics similar to those featured in the drama (above), but reflecting grass roots concerns and bringing them to the attention of decision makers/ politicians, who will be asked to answer the issues raised. This will play a role in addressing the current poor reputation of GoA officials.³³

4. Training and close mentoring of a range of key players in participative communication:

- The radio journalists and presenters, especially the talk show hosts who have particular challenges in promoting conciliation, and who have to handle abusive callers firmly but tactfully. Also the management in how to handle pressure/ interference from local government, police, insurgents etc
- Local government officials (waliswal, directors, head teachers, senior police, the army officers, the Community Development Committee (CDC) chairmen/ women etc) on how to work with the media - to understand the importance of criticism and the obligation to answer it in the overarching objective of building support for peace and development through increased support for responsible local government.

³² Marie C and Karochail M ibid

³³ ibid

These activities present both opportunities and challenges:

| Activity | Opportunities | Challenges |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Community radio | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scarcity of other accessible Pashto media means high listenership even amongst women and the poor, and potential high impact • Proven popularity of phone-in radio programmes • Popularity amongst Pashtuns of locally based media in the local accent (media mapping data) • Afghan aural/ oral learning tradition means radio is an effective influencer/ teacher • Spread conciliation through conflict-sensitive reporting, avoid demonisation etc • Reduce isolation of population and increase opportunity for them to make informed choices • Creates constant awareness amongst government officials that their actions are being monitored • Gives government the opportunity to explain policies and to address grievances | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting the station from pressures from different interest groups • Changing the culture amongst “influentials” about using the media – as a participative tool not a means of propaganda • Training/ mentoring broadcasters in handling live phone-in programmes and conflict sensitive journalism • Avoid the station being hijacked by interest groups • Security of staff – independence and fair treatment of all the best protection from Taleban (viz journalists in Helmand) • Monitoring for quality and editorial precision – local language skills needed |
| Street/ school - based drama | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaching the younger, more open-minded generation and women who are often excluded • Memorable and effective means of participatory communication raises issues to be followed up by NGOs or local government • Can be tailored to specific audiences • Will expand and complement the peace-building component to the school curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding an organisation with sufficient experience or the initiative to learn the necessary mentoring and community-based media skills and to follow through on the issues raised through theatre, video and radio. Possibly an international organisation partnered with a local organisation may be the most effective approach. • Security – the locations of the street theatre will have to be carefully selected, as will the subject matter, starting with less controversial topics • Close liaison needed with education department – adherence to the peace-building curriculum a help • Mentors will need to acquire Pashto language skills |
| Interactive video/ audio | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving grass roots communities opportunity to choose issues and present them to a wider audience • brings officials and local politicians in close touch with issues of concern to local | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • careful mentoring by local broadcasters/social mobilisers of community groups needed to ensure the agenda is not hijacked by “influentials” and that the choice of issues to highlight is representative (the |

| | | |
|------------------------|--|--|
| | people | Jirgah/ shura system should help) |
| Training and mentoring | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> opportunity to change mind-sets of politicians, officials and broadcasters about the nature of communication, and how increasing participation can be a win-win scenario in a conflict situation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> security issues over expat trainers/ mentors being based in remote locations possible difficulties of recruitment of trainers (difficult living conditions, security etc) need to train high quality local mentors who then may be tempted by jobs elsewhere |

9.2 Regional Activities

The “region” is the overwhelmingly Pashto speaking provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan and Zabul. Some of these activities are linked to the local activities, others stand alone.

1.1 Setting up a regional production unit serving the three local radio stations which could also act as a radio station broadcasting in FM to the region around Kandahar city and possibly AM to much of southern Afghanistan. It would be based in Kandahar but with a production and input studio in Kabul, broadcasting on AM using the new mast which the BBC is planning, funded by HMG. Also broadcasting on FM relay transmitters linked by satellite, to Kandahar, Qalat, Tirin Kot and Lashkargar.

1.2 The rationale and programming will be similar to the community radio stations: to introduce a more participatory concept of radio with an emphasis on peace-building through talk programmes which focus on solutions to problems, rather than exacerbating differences for the sake of on-air entertainment. The main difference from the community based stations would be increased news coverage, with a professional staff trained and mentored in conflict sensitive journalism, but also covering national and international news. It would be possible for very little extra cost, except in terms of staff capacity building, to make these conflict-sensitive oriented news stories available to all Afghan stations via the Internews ‘Tanin’ network, or through FTP internet files

1.3 Also the three local stations would greatly benefit from having this ‘mother ship’ production unit, which can provide specialist CfS programming. Some of this will be prepared in a way that can be versioned by the different local stations – being presented using local voices, for instance, or being supplemented by interviewing a local figure. This would give the programme local ‘buy in’. There are several potential providers including Radio Salaam Watandar, Radio Killid, Radio Nawa, Internews and MSPA (see Annex 10, *Potential Partner Summaries*).

1.4 The innovative programmes focusing on problem solving through Pashtun traditions and moderate Islam from PACT Radio in Peshawar³⁴ can also be channelled through this ‘mother ship’, which can version them for Afghan use, and pass them on to the local CfS stations and other radio stations.

1.5 The ‘mother ship’ would also be the focal point for training and mentoring the CfS local radio journalists, and for monitoring their broadcasts. Exactly where this regional production centre would be based will depend on the security situation at the time. Ideally, it could be close to one of the district based stations, or in Kandahar – the Pashtun capital. But both options are not possible for expatriates to

³⁴ Adam G “Information sources and media access in Balochistan and NWFP” Annexe 4

live safely at present, and expatriate training and mentoring will be indispensable for at least two years. The level of editorial and programme making skills will have to be very high.

Programme series could include:

- a) Religious broadcasting, including the Koran in simple Pashto, voiced by local readers (the central provider to supply the text, readers in local accents to come from the specific districts)
- b) Education for students and training, including features on school of the month, student of the week etc
- c) Agriculture: tips for farmers, new products and farmers discussing livestock health, crop protection, water issues, commodity prices etc.
- d) Small businesses: to encourage micro enterprises and economic growth at the most local level – availability and administration of small loans, practical advice on marketing, re-payments etc, show-casing small business successes (could tie in with the £10 million being made available from the UK Stabilisation Unit for small scale loans)
- e) Health issues: listeners' questions on health, prevention of disease, abuse of pharmaceutical and narcotic drugs
- f) Legal issues: advice on settling disputes, examples how different kinds of disputes have been settled to promote good practice. It might be possible to record jirgahs debating a topic and broadcast an edited version before a decision is reached – asking listeners to phone in with their own decisions and reasons for them.
- g) Women's programmes – including slots on what Islam says about education for both men and women – also slots on cooking, house management and finance, men's psychology, women's rights – explain this in a way that doesn't provoke religious or cultural sensitivities.
- h) Sports: Reports on games (inside the particular province-country, region and in the world. Make a good use of positive Pashtunwali codes such as Syalee (healthy competition) in sports. Don't equate losing a game to losing honour. Also encourage and report on local/ traditional games.
- i) English by Radio – structured conversational English lessons produced by a Kabul based organization in close collaboration with British Council if possible, or by the BBC.
- j) Special radio programmes on the rehabilitation efforts going on. Let the local beneficiaries talk about the benefits of the programmes and not the donor or implementing organization.
- k) Programmes on those who work outside Afghanistan – e.g. in Middle East or Europe, on job and educational opportunities there, on rules and regulations, labour laws and labour rights etc.
- l) Programmes to encourage and raise awareness on how to be part of main stream politics, multi party democracy, how to use vote, importance of being registered and able to cast votes, on how people in other Muslim countries participate in politics, elections, joining parties etc. Give examples of Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan - or how Muslims are allowed and have equal rights as individuals in western countries to vote, to give opinion and voice their concern on any issue in a democratic and non violent way.
- m) Rumour of the day - a programme to crack the hot rumour of the day and supply listeners with the most authentic information on the subject from more than one source

1.6 Many of these programmes will be interactive, with part of the time open to listeners making calls with questions and suggestions.

1.7 It is recommended that the regional production centre is also given broadcast capability. FM broadcasting is not an expensive option. AM is also a possibility, reaching many areas of Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul and Uruzgan after dark. This is expensive in terms of transmitter cost and fuel but possible if the most costly item – the high antenna – is built as planned by the BBC, as it could be used also for this local service. This station would be distinct from the BBC in that it would be a local, much more interactive service with a clear CfS agenda. It would also be quite different from other local stations which are distrusted by some because of the number of messages they broadcast from organisations such as ISAF, the Ministry of Defence, or the Counter Narcotics Ministry, which leads to suspicion they are controlled by special interest groups.³⁵ At the same time, it is important that existing stations should not feel sidelined, hence the importance of:

2. A challenge fund for Afghan radio and TV broadcasters to make programmes on CfS themes. These could be tied in with capacity building on the kind of “conflict-sensitive” ideas of reporting violent conflict, emphasise giving people “voice” and holding government accountable. Mentoring arrangements could come alongside the grants, so that this approach has the best chance of becoming more widely accepted. Calls for proposals could be made on an annual basis.

3. Video/ audio diary of professional conflict adviser/ mediator: Programmes based on their daily work, to bring to a wide audience the techniques of conflict resolution which can be learned and used in other areas of the country. “Fly on the wall” recording probably not possible because of the sensitivity of the work (this could be investigated further), but individual issues could be re-staged and made into a series of radio or TV programmes. To be broadcast locally, regionally and nationally weekly or monthly on radio and TV, to be followed by phone-in programme with an experienced conflict mediator in the studio answering questions. Supported by a conflict resolution handbook, perhaps in cartoon format, to be distributed by civil society organisations with mediation advice. To be produced in close collaboration with the TLO or another conflict transformation organisation.

4. TV broadcasting:

Provide intensive across-the-board support of news and programming in an existing service. This would provide CfS programming across the much of the output of a TV station, which would extend its impact. As noted in *Annexe 7 Access to Media in Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan*, there is little indigenous Pashto TV programming, apart from Lemaar TV, Shamshad TV, AVT Khyber (Islamabad) and some state local broadcasting in Lashkargar and Kandahar. Of these stations, Shamshad claims to have a peace-building agenda, and during 2008 will have terrestrial broadcasting capacity with the building of a transmitter in Kandahar funded by USAID. Shamshad has recently taken on a new manager on secondment from Media Support Partnership Afghanistan (MSPA) in order to improve its programme quality and boost peace-building content. Lemaar currently has a higher profile than Shamshad in the south, according to our research (*Annexe 7*), so could also be a candidate. Afghan TV stations could all be given the chance to compete for this support.

5. Training and mentoring of a range of key players in participative communication will be part of all of the activities mentioned above. Radio and TV journalists and presenters, especially talk show hosts, would be mentored. But it is important also to include local government officials (governor, governor’s spokespersons, provincial government department directors, heads of police etc). With 2009 being an election year, expertise in working with the media is particularly important. This activity could

³⁵ Marie, C and Karokhail, M *Annexe 2*

be coordinated with the Afghan Government's National Coordinating Communications Committee (NC3).

9.3 National/ International activities

1. A TV programme similar to the BBC's "Question Time" that puts senior politicians and other opinion formers on the spot with topical questions in front of an invited audience. The BBC World Service Trust runs a similar DFID funded programme "BBC Sanglap" in Bengali on the Satellite TV (Channel I) in Bangladesh, with a radio version being broadcast by the BBC Bengali service. On the job training is given to Channel I technical staff by the BBC. A recent OPR of the programme showed the programme was of a high standard, and that it was popular with an audience of 7.1 million people, relying mostly on satellite TV transmission. The radio share of this audience – at just over one million – is low principally because of transmission difficulties. There is some evidence that similar talk shows on other channels have increased as a result – including one on the state broadcaster, BTV. Evidence of issues being put higher on the political agenda through "BBC Bangladesh Sanglap" is more difficult to come by, but climate change (aided by a hurricane and two floods) is one topic which featured in the programme which is now being taken more seriously. There is broad consensus that BBC Sanglap has acted as a catalyst for change in governance. As the reviewers remarked:

BBC Sanglap is seen as breaking new ground by its participatory approach. A great number of interviewees told us they thought that the programme is helping to empower the citizen to ask questions of politicians and that this sense of empowerment is spreading. As Professor Muzaffer Ahmed put it: 'So far governance in Bangladesh has been a supply side issue. This is helping to stimulate the demand side'.³⁶

A similar programme for Afghanistan could be recorded 'as live', and then broadcast from Kabul and also from other locations throughout Afghanistan. Programmes could alternate Pashto and Dari or perhaps use bilingual techniques. An "Any Answers" programme could be run on radio and possibly TV after each "Question Time" – allowing listeners/ viewers to comment on the same discussion topics, and on the remarks made by the panellists. Objectives will be to encourage greater openness and inclusivity in government decision making through expertly moderated discussion. It should provide an impetus for government to respond to public concerns and not blame others, and it may provide an impetus to other Afghan radio and TV stations to start similar programmes of their own. The elections of 2009 would make an Afghan "Question Time" particularly high profile.

One option is to sub-contract the work to the BBC World Service Trust which has a Kabul base, and would be in a position to adapt the Bangladesh model – indeed, it has produced a manual intended for broadcasters who want to emulate the series. However, BBC Sanglap is costly: £2.8 million for 60 programmes, approximately £46k per programme.

Another option is to have a competition amongst Afghan TV stations to produce the series: the benefit will be local ownership, capacity building and less cost, the disadvantages are possible political pressure on the local organisation and lack of professional capacity to undertake the production; close mentoring will be required to produce the high production and editorial standards required. The "Question Time" anchor will have to be an outstanding journalist.

³⁶ Page, D and Chowdhury O "OPR of BBC Bangladesh Sanglap" (DfID Bangladesh, 2008)

2. Commissioning a long-running storyline (3 years or more) about an Afghan community striving for peace as part of the long running “New Home New Life” BBC radio drama. The programme would be broadcast three times weekly in Pashto and Dari by the BBC on the new AM Kandahar transmitter, also on the BBC’s network of SW and FM transmitters, and by other local radio stations in the “Tanin” network. Research shows that “New Home New Life” remains a popular programme with well established characters, and a team of talented and experienced writers.

The alternative would be to start a new radio drama which is focused specifically on the problems facing communities in the south. The advantages and disadvantages of the two options can be summed up as follows:

| Production Option | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|--|
| New Home New Life “add on” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tapping into a long running drama which remains popular in rural areas • Experienced creative team (writers, producers, actors) are all in place • High production standards which could be enhanced by dynamic new storyline • Experienced management • BBC is regarded as trusted broadcaster in Afghanistan • The BBC has reliable editorial judgement • Wide transmission on local radio stations and BBC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International production, so not raising local production management capacity • After 14 years, New Home New Life has become slightly stale and could benefit from new voices, actors, writers and production methods (which the new drama could provide) |
| New radio soap opera (possibly produced by the BBC or by an Afghan media production centre) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Afghan radio drama writing and production skills capacity • The drama could focus exclusively on issues related to the conflict areas of the south • The drama would be just in Pashto and could version itself with appropriate accents and local colour • The drama could use new production techniques – eg more location recordings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talented group of writers, actors and producers need to be recruited • Careful supervision required to ensure high editorial and production standards • Unlikely that the BBC would broadcast a new radio soap in competition with NHNL, unless it produced it |

3. Increased funding for the BBC Pashto/ Dari Service, which all the evidence from our surveys and others show is still greatly respected in the south of Afghanistan. Poor reception is an issue which will be addressed when the planned new AM transmitter is installed in Kandahar. The impartiality of the BBC, and its editorial rigour, could be particularly important in the run-up to the elections in 2009. Specific programming and training could include:

- more phone-in programmes on peace-related issues and featuring leading politicians in the run-up to the elections
- testimonial programmes from people with stories about the consequences of war, comparing life before with life now
- training and mentoring of BBC staff in Afghanistan in “conflict-sensitive” programming and how to handle phone-in programmes and round-table discussions which aim to reconcile different points of view

- BBC staff in turn prepared to work for short attachments with local broadcasters on these skills
4. Increased support for Radio PACT programming to engage with Afghans in Pashtun Baluchistan as well as in Afghanistan itself. See Annexe 4 for details of current Radio PACT programmes.
5. Advocacy with the Afghan Government and ISAF on understanding and buying into this participatory communications-led approach, the need for greater openness to journalists, the toleration of criticism and dissent, and the importance of working with the media to create trust amongst populations in conflict areas, rather than interfering with the media's freedom. Activities:
- Meetings with Ministry of Information, the President's Spokesman, the NC3, Counter Narcotics Ministry, the MRRD, the Ministry of Education
 - Exchange visits to countries where participatory communications plays an important role in the democratic process – India is one possibility

10 Recommended Implementation

Communication for Stabilisation (CfS) will be one of three DfID funded activities focusing on peace-building and good governance. The other two involve working with the GoA to improve public communication, and promoting dialogue for peace building. CfS has a role to play in all three areas. All three will be coordinated by an "Integrating Agency".

Regarding the CfS work, the preferred option is:

1. One grant to the Communication Assistance Stabilisation Team (CAST), an international communications organisation that will manage the CfS challenge fund and contract the Local Radio for Stabilisation (LRS).
2. One grant to a Strategic Evaluation Team (SET), which will be contracted separately through the Integrating Agency with a mandate to provide guidance on communication across the board, and specifically evaluation of CfS activities (see separate document for SET recommendation).

Core institutions:

1. Communication Assistance and Stabilisation Team (CAST). Managing sub-contractors and the challenge fund with RFPs that will commission specific projects.
2. Local Radio for Stabilisation (LRS). A production house (which could also broadcast regionally) that will manage local radio stations operating in districts where community conflict management efforts are focussed.
3. Strategic Evaluation Team. Independent monitoring of project activities, course correction and programme guidance through convening the Programme Assessment Committee (PAC) and reporting to the Integrating Agency. SET would convene the PAC quarterly to review and recommend challenge fund proposals and monitor the different CfS projects including LRS activities. It will consist of the implementing partners, CAST, LRS, SET, DfID, NC3, UNAMA and ISAF representatives and two/ three Afghan members from academia/ think-tanks.

Operations:

1. The Communication Assistance and Stabilisation Fund – managed by the Communication Assistance and Stabilisation Team (CAST) - disburses funds on a competitive basis through issuing detailed activity and outcome based Request for Proposals in six key areas (see below). Each grant over a certain dollar value will require an agreed level of match funding, and each successful grantee will also be provided with appropriate TA and mentoring (ie specific programme production support / guidance as well as quality control over grants activities).

The grants will be reviewed every quarter/ half year based on grantee reporting, Programme Assessment Committee (PAC) review and SET evaluation. It is important that the fund be seen to be politically neutral and not embroiled in local politics. The fund provides an easy option through which interested donors may replicate/ scale up CfS activities.

The challenge fund will provide funding in the following areas:

1. Support for existing radio stations. This will be RFPs on specific programme ideas (see activity list) open to Afghan radio stations in southern Afghanistan. Each grant will include appropriate TA and mentoring to support specific programme quality as well as broader mentoring.
Note on capacity: there are sufficient radio stations broadcasting to the south of Afghanistan for them to be able to absorb funding of £50k p/a (see Annexe 7)
 2. Cross border programming. Reaching radio audiences in the Baluchistan Pashtun belt. Open to any radio station that has the right 'brand' (consistent with a 'stabilisation' agenda) and the appropriate audience, including Pakistani radio stations, especially Radio PACT, whose programmes could be expanded and made available to more Afghan stations.
 3. Stabilisation television programming:
 - Question Time style programming. BBC, Tolo, Al Jazeera.
 - Partnership (probably with Lemaar, Shamshad):
 - Support to existing TV stations for CfS programming broadcasting to the south of Afghanistan:
 4. Stabilisation 'reality' programming. Fact based, 'reality' style programming following the efforts of local communities to manage conflict and find solutions.
 5. Radio drama. Long running radio serial focussing on stabilisation agenda, local government reform, community challenges. Open to RFP, but ideally BBC New Home New Life or another established radio drama
 6. Support to BBC Pashto/ Dari service for CfS programming
2. Local Radio for Stabilisation (LRS) is at the heart of this CfS strategy. It will work with three (initially) newly established local radio stations in focal communities managing their own conflict mitigation efforts with help from a number of agencies including the Independent Department of Local Government (IDLG) and Afghan NGOs. The LRS is contracted through a CAST issued RFP valid for four years, reports to CAST and sits on PAC and/or is monitored through PAC. It will fulfil three functions:
- Local: Producing programmes for and managing and mentoring three or four Local Radio for Stabilisation (LRS) FM stations:
 - Regional: 'Mother-ship' regional radio station producing and broadcasting programmes for broadcast in Pashto on FM/ AM. Will also produce radio programme series to be versioned by local stations, and act as a "clearing house" for CfS radio programmes from other sources, especially Radio PACT in Pakistan, which it will adapt as required for Afghan broadcasting. Assuming 15 staff and 2 x international staff as technical assistance (also to work with the local stations):

- LRS will also be responsible for organising regular training sessions in participatory communications with broadcasters and other stakeholders, calling on specialist technical assistance where necessary
 - Providing a CfS radio news agency service in Pashto (possibly also a version in Dari) for radio stations in Afghanistan. To be distributed free by Internet FTP file. This would be an add-on activity to its broadcasting function.
 - Interactive Community Engagement (ICE) Including Peace Melas, playback theatre in focal communities managing their own conflict, etc. In partnership with local shura / woluswal. Conducted with TLO.
- 3. Strategic Evaluation Team (SET) conducts rolling evaluation of CAST and LRS implementation. This communications approach is both ambitious and innovative, and the implementing organisations will need to improvise and develop creative solutions to the difficulties that will arise. This oversight and advisory role would be to provide an objective overview of the full range of activities and through input mechanisms (e.g. the Programme Assessment Committee) provide a 'course correction' role, ensuring alignment with the initiative's vision, mission and values. It would be part of the consortium with the 'Integration Agency', or possibly contracted by that agency. A fuller description of SET is given in a separate document.

11. Conclusion

1. This set of activities is just a start: given the interest of locals in radio listening and participating in debate, the initial impact of a consistent communications campaign should be apparent within a year. The objective is that success will breed replication and that the three or four community based communications initiatives with local radios at their heart will be multiplied in other districts where stabilisation becomes a possibility. The Community for Stabilisation Challenge Fund could easily be added to by donors interested in replicating CsF activities. Participatory communications could be a significant bridge in the difficult transition process between armed conflict and reintegration into the state. This is a process which required buy-in from key stakeholders notably the GoA and ISAF. Again, success will make that all the more likely. But critical to this success will be committed and sensitive management of the Communications for Stabilisation component
2. The sustainability of the CfS is in the ground it lays for Afghans to define and drive the future shape of their nation. As the British Government's Stabilisation Unit notes, "*It is essential to remember that outsiders cannot impose a political settlement or generate confidence in the state; only domestic processes can achieve this*".³⁷ The CfS aims to create the conditions in which a domestic political process can develop.
3. If successful, the programme offers a model that could be potentially replicated. Linking civil society and government into one coherent programme, the specific communications approach and its integrated nature offer a package that can be scaled up in Afghanistan and adapted to other conflict areas.

Gordon Adam
Emrys Schoemaker

³⁷ <http://www.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/index.html>

**Media Support Solutions
Inverness
Scotland
April 2008**

Media Support

Media Support Partnership (MSP), is a UK-based non-profit organisation (NGO) specialised in communications for development. MSP's sister organisation, Media Support Solutions (MSS), is a consultancy that has undertaken media assessments and evaluations for DFID and other organisations in recent years; it is currently a DFID contractor under the Information and Communications for Development (ICD) Framework Agreement, and has overseen DFID funded media projects in DRC until April 2008. Short term assignments include evaluations in Sudan, Nigeria, DRC, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Nepal and Guyana. MSS has worked in Afghanistan since February 2002 on radio (and recently video) programming for voter education, raising awareness of the new democratic processes, on radio-based teacher training, and on evaluations of a range of media-based interventions. In November 2005, a local affiliate *Media Support Partnership Afghanistan (MSPA)* was registered as an Afghan NGO. MSS is also partnered with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in managing an innovative radio soap opera designed to influence behaviours associated with HIV/AIDS in Botswana, Zambia and Guyana. Along with local partners, MSP is working with young people on HIV/AIDS communication in Mozambique in two projects involving radio production training and production. It has partnered with HornAfrik Media in Somalia over the past two years to implement the DFID funded project *Strengthening Media Capacities for Peace*, and is about to embark on a successor project with media and civil society - *Strengthening Information Freedom in the Somali Political Crisis*. Gordon Adam, Media Support's MD, is co-author (with Andrew Skuse) of the DFID publication *Working with the Media in Conflicts and other Emergencies* (2000), and of *Radio and HIV/AIDS: Making a Difference* (2001, with N. Harford). Gordon also partnered with Nick Danziger to produce another DFID publication *Afghanistan: Development in Action* (2006). (Further details of activities under www.mediasupport.org).