

Report from Dr. Sakena Yacoobi on the Progress of Radio Meraj

Radio Meraj has officially been on the air for two months now and the results have been so exciting! I would like to share an update regarding the progress of the station with all of you who have in one way or another supported me in my dream of starting this station.

8 Districts, 10,000 Listeners, 900 Likes



Our station has a 1,000-watt transmitter, making it one of the most powerful stations in the area and giving us the ability to reach 8 provinces – further than most other stations. We estimate that we have 10,000 listeners after only two months of broadcasting! The only issue we have faced is that the electricity from the government isn't sufficient, so we have to run our generators nearly every day to keep the station on the air.

The Radio Meraj staff has already created a [Facebook page](#) to reach out to fans. The page now has nearly 900 likes, and is getting more every day. If you follow the link to the page, you will see a video that we made to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, the end of Ramadan. Since the video is not in English, allow me to describe what is being said. It begins with snippets of Radio Meraj programs, then comments from callers and finally a message from me wishing everyone a Happy Eid. I am so proud of the production level of this video and am looking forward to future videos.

Music, Call in Shows, Poetry and News

The station staff is still experimenting to find the best programming for the radio station. Current programs include:

Morning Message: A morning show that shares information on a “hot topic” being discussed by Afghans and asks listeners to share their opinions on the topic via calls and text messages---we are getting lots of callers!!!

Happiness Wave: A program that aims to increase women's awareness of their rights, featuring a woman host who interviews experts on topics related to women's rights---women love it!!

Health Program: This program invited doctors to come on the air and discuss the health concerns that they are seeing around Herat Province, then offer suggestions on how people can avoid these health issues—everybody finds it very helpful!!

Family Song: Advice on having a strong and successful family—ideas are already being used.

From Silence to Word: Poetry from well-known poets, both past and present, including discussion of the meaning of the poems—Afghans love poetry!!!

Response: A popular call-in show where people are given the opportunity to talk about the activities of the government of Herat—people power!!!

The Sound of Meraj: Thoughts and advice on living good, peaceful lives.

During the month of Ramadan, Radio Meraj offered special programming twice a day where guest speakers were invited to speak on subjects appropriate for the season, followed by music and poetry that allowed for reflection. We were fortunate to get permission to air some wonderful programs interpreting the poetry of Rumi. If you have heard about our Love and Forgiveness conferences, which use the poetry of Rumi as a vehicle for



teaching about peace and harmony, you will know how excited we were to be able to air these. My staff had the opportunity to meet with the creator when they were in California this spring, and he gave us permission to use the programs on our station. We are so thankful to him and are happy to have this resource available to us.



“Your station has changed the lives of thousands of people in this village.”

“I thank Radio Meraj for waking me up!”

Each day we are receiving calls from listeners telling us about the incredible impact the station is having on their lives, and I'd like to share two of these with you.

First is the story of a man, who lives in a remote, rural village. He called in to say, *“I am the elder of the village. A few weeks ago I complained about the lack of drinking water in our village through your live radio program, and an official listened to my complaint about the water and, soon after, our problem was solved. Now we have enough drinking water in our area. Your radio changed the lives of thousands people in this far distant village.”*

The second story is from a teenage girl. *“My name is Somaya and I am a senior in high school. Before Radio Meraj, I just listened to music on the radio. When talk programs would come on, I would start scanning to find music to listen to. About a month ago, while I was scanning, I found Radio Meraj and I really liked what I heard. The program was about education and schoolgirls were calling in to share their ideas. It was so interesting for me! I have listened often for the last three weeks, and it has really changed my mind about things. I have decided to study harder and to pass the college entrance exam. I have started buying new books and studying with my classmates. I thank Radio Meraj for waking me up!”*

Every day we are hearing similar things from our callers. Radio Meraj is opening their eyes to new and inspiring ideas. People in distant villages are now able to get news, information and entertainment through our station.

Thank You

I wish to thank you again for your support of Radio Meraj. I am so happy to have the station broadcasting and to already be seeing the impact that the station is having. It's amazing. As the security situation in Afghanistan continues to worsen, the station is giving me an important tool to reach people, especially women, who cannot travel to AIL workshops or Learning Centers. Thank you.

Warm Regards,

Sakena

