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Youth Take Over Salam Watandar Airwaves | June 2014



Left: Recording interviews at the Afghan Youth Voices Festival. **Right:** Interns take to the airwaves during peak morning hours.

Despite a relatively healthy media sector, aspiring Afghan journalists still face limited opportunities to gain the hands-on experience valuable to their careers. To build the skills and confidence of Afghanistan's next generation of media professionals, Salam Watandar concluded its spring internship program with the chance for its 10 (4W) interns to put their new skills into prime-time practice.

"It has been four years that I have studied at the faculty of journalism and it was all lectures and theoretical lessons," said intern Nargis Waziri. **"After being a Salam Watandar intern, I am able to work more practically: I can easily record and edit voices, write and present reports, and run live programs."**

For this year's crop of interns, three months of training and mentoring culminated in the May 29th two-hour takeover of the Salam Watandar airwaves as part of this year's Afghan Youth Voices Festival, supported by the USAID-funded *Afghan Civic Engagement Project*. During the peak hours of 8 am through 10 am, interns collaboratively took over the station's studio and operations as they broadcast stories they researched and wrote themselves for *Soror-e-Sobh*, a two-hour public interest program that covers current events and culture.

Through their radio journalism training, interns gained a variety of technical skills as they worked together to produce reports, news, vox-pops, interviews, and pre-recorded inserts. Upon recognizing the interns' noticeable improvements and skills uptake, the station's editorial team worked with them to record segments that contributed to a number of different programs – including such as *Rahi Qarya*, *Nasli Omid*, and the station's flagship news program *Bakhabar* – that are broadcast to Salam Watandar's network of 67 partner stations.

Another memorable highlight from the internship program came earlier this spring when interns managed the broadcast of a roundtable discussion at the Afghan Cultural House for the program *Youth and Elections*. Together, they oversaw the entire process start-to-finish, from guest selection to question preparation to technical production of the program.

Even in a period of great uncertainty, as more young journalists are equipped with the skills and tools necessary to report responsibly, there is increasing reason to be optimistic for the future of the Afghan media sector.

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"Before participating as an intern...I only studied theory. [As an intern,] I practiced what I learned in theory and enjoyed running live programs for Salam Watandar. With my new confidence, the concerns I had have been solved." –Malalai Husaini, Salam Watandar intern