

Alfaz-e-Mewat: *Radiowaves of Change*

Community Radio and its Effects on Development in Mewat, Haryana

By
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2012 Borlaug-Ruan Intern



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Sikh Temple in Central Delhi

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Personal Introduction and Project Introduction:



Me at the 2010 World Food Prize Youth Institute

My name is Francesca Lubecki-Wilde. I am a senior at City High School in Iowa City, Iowa. When I was a freshman my Science teacher, Mrs. Lestina, introduced me to the World Food Prize Youth Institute. Attending the Youth Institute my freshman and sophomore year was a life-changing experience for me in many ways. It taught me important skills like writing an in-depth research paper and presenting my findings to a panel of (somewhat intimidating) experts. The Youth Institute sparked my interest for political science and economics. Most importantly, the Youth Institute opened my eyes to the state of hunger in the world today and forever engrained in me that “food is the moral right of all who are born into this world.” Dr. Borlaug’s fundamental lesson ignited my interest in international service work and taught me that each of us not only has the ability, but the responsibility, to fight hunger and food insecurity. When I learned about the Borlaug-Ruan Internship offered by the World Food Prize Foundation, I waited a little impatiently until I was old enough to apply and felt extremely blessed when I found out that I had been accepted to intern at the Institute of Rural Research and Development in Gurgaon, India, an initiative of the S.M. Sehgal Foundation.

In 1999, the S.M. Sehgal Foundation began work to improve the dismal circumstances in Mewat, an impoverished district a mere 30 kilometers from

India's booming capital, Delhi, and its suburb, Gurgaon. After six years of work and research, the S.M. Sehgal Foundation founded IRRAD. IRRAD's sole focus is improving conditions in Mewat through a comprehensive approach—targeting multiple aspects of village development at one time. Initiatives of IRRAD range from the construction of check dams that increase groundwater levels to knowledge dissemination about government assistance programs, such as the Mid-day Meal Program, to the creation of community radio stations that broadcast educational and cultural information.

At IRRAD, I interned for the Communications Department, which supports development efforts through creating social media outlets that disseminate information about IRRAD's initiatives to the people of Mewat. This was a perfect fit for me. My previous research for the Youth Institute had focused on social aspects inhibiting food security, such as ineffective government policy and insufficient educational opportunities. The work of IRRAD's Communications Department deals directly with providing increased education and awareness that leads to development. My mentor at IRRAD was Ms. Pooja Murada, and my project was to study the effects of social media on development.



Arti and Pooja, IRRAD Communications

Social media has a variety of definitions depending on its context. In the developed world, social media most commonly refers to websites and applications used for social networking¹. However, in the context of rural development, social media refers to any method of large-scale information dissemination, such as public wall paintings or educational theatrical performances. One of IRRAD's most recent and successful social media initiatives is the community radio station Alfaz-e-Mewat, which began broadcasting in January of 2012. After visiting IRRAD's community center in the

village of Ghagas, where Alfaz-e-Mewat operates, I became intrigued with the way community radio affects development in an area like Mewat and decided to explore this topic through my research. I also wanted to work directly with the Mewati people as much as possible during my internship. For my research, I went to the people of Mewat, collecting qualitative data through interviews to discover the impact Alfaz-e-Mewat and its programs have had on their lives.

I designed two sets of questionnaires: one for the staff of Alfaz-e-Mewat, the other for Alfaz-e-Mewat's listeners. Follow up questions were asked of non-listeners to gain more information about why they do not listen to Alfaz-e-Mewat. However, these questions were not planned prior to going in the field but the result of spontaneous conversation. Alfaz-e-Mewat employs six staff members who manage and broadcast for the station. My questions for the Alfaz-e-Mewat staff were designed to gain an understanding of how this community radio station operates and the challenges it faces, as well as Alfaz-e-Mewat's goals for the future. In addition to the radio station employees, I interviewed 22 men and 22 women from five different villages that Alfaz-e-Mewat broadcasts to, using questions designed to gain an understanding of how affective Alfaz-e-Mewat is as a catalyst for change.



Interviewing member of the panchayat in the village of Gumat

I employed a combination of purposive and convenience sampling methods to choose the participants of my "listener" survey. Through using purposive sampling, I was able to target listeners of Alfaz-e-Mewat who fall into a very specific category of people considered "rare" or "difficult to locate"². Therefore, of those I surveyed, ten men and ten women were purposefully selected by Alfaz-e-Mewat staff for being frequent listeners of the station. The remaining twelve women and twelve men surveyed were selected based on a convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is defined as "a method of drawing representative data by selecting people because of the ease of their

volunteering and availability.”³ The 22 surveyed using this sampling method were chosen simply through finding equal numbers of men and women to interview in two different, randomly-selected villages. In each of these villages, I was accompanied by an IRRAD staff member. We approached groups of men and women and asked if they would participate in a survey concerning their radio-listening habits. Once they agreed, I proceeded to ask them whether or not they listen to Alfaz-e-Mewat and follow-up questions depending on their answer. Because of the two different sampling methods adopted for my study, equal numbers of male and female known-listeners were not surveyed in each village; instead, an equal number of men and women were surveyed overall in five different villages. Surveying equal numbers of male and female citizens was paramount to the integrity of my study. Since the entire population of Mewat could not be surveyed, a representative sampling of the population was necessary in order to permit generalizations for the purpose of analysis and discussion on how to increase Alfaz-e-Mewat’s potential as a conduit for development.⁴ In addition, how gender influences community radio’s affects on development was of interest to me.



Groundskeeper at the village whom I interviewed

Collecting qualitative data through interviews in the Mewat district proved challenging due to the language barrier. Three different languages were used during the survey-translation process. My questions were translated to villagers from English to Hindi. Villagers’ then responded in Mewati, the dialect of this region. I recorded villagers’ responses and translated them at the IRRAD office, where a Hindi-speaker translated the Mewati into English. Despite this, I do not think that this language barrier had an overarching affect on the results of my

study. Still, it is important to mention so my project maintains proper context and transparency.

The findings of my study are organized into the following four sections: *Introduction to Alfaz-e-Mewat*, *Alfaz-e-Mewat—Staff*, *Alfaz-e-Mewat—Listeners*, *Alfaz-e-Mewat—Conclusions*. The final section of this paper, *A Change in Me*, shares my personal experiences living in India for a summer and the impact these experiences had on me.

Introduction to Alfaz-e-Mewat:

Community radio stations are a catalyst for positive change and development in rural communities across the globe. Started by Bolivian miners in 1947, the first community radio station began a long and growing tradition of empowering people through education and communication⁵. Community radio serves as the most trusted medium for knowledge sharing and information dissemination in thousands of villages across six continents. In India, the development of community radio stations is a growing movement, with an estimated 82 community radio stations currently broadcasting to millions of people throughout the country and over 100 more stations in the process of creation.⁶ Thirty kilometers outside of Delhi, overlooked by the Aravallis hills, sits the village of Ghagas. Here, the community radio station Alfaz-e-Mewat broadcasts seven days a week to the people of Mewat, the poorest district in the state of Haryana.



Sonia (my translator) and me driving to Mewat for interviews

Mewat became a district of Haryana in 2005, carved from the districts of Gurgaon and Faridabad. Consisting of just over one million people and 500 villages⁷, it is primarily Meo-Muslim, meaning its people converted to the Muslim faith during the reign of the Mughal Empire in the 1300s. Because of this conversion, historically, the Mewati people were shunned by the Hindu

population of India and never fully accepted by India's Muslims, due to their status as converts. After decades of discrimination, the Mewati people isolated themselves and established their own community, shunning outside influences and, consequently, development. Poverty, illiteracy, poor sanitation, large families and a lack of resources are now serious issues in Mewat, despite its startlingly close proximity to India's thriving capitol. In addition, the citizens of Mewat tend to be distrustful of change, especially brought from outside sources, due to their history of oppression. For these reasons, one out of every ten families eats only one meal a day or less in Mewat, over one third of the children are severely undernourished and 37.1% of families experience one to three months of water shortages every year.⁸

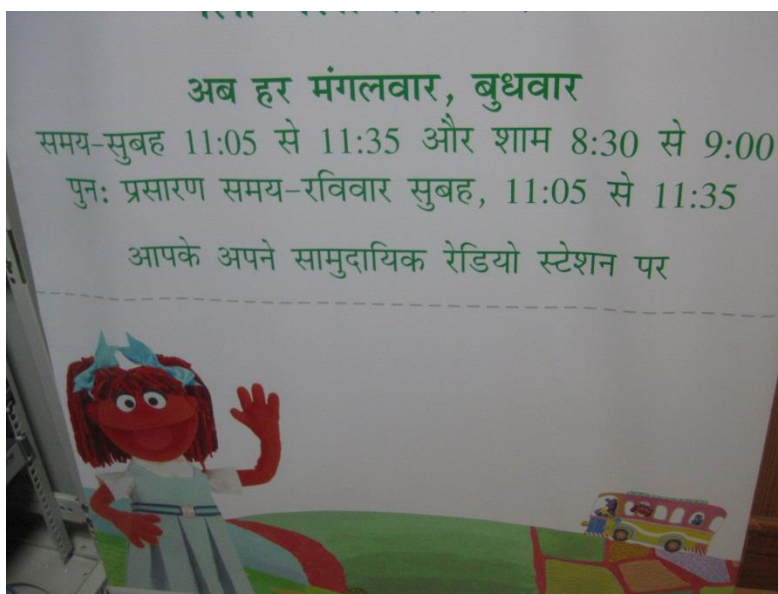
BROADCAST - SCHEDULE

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
10:00 AM to 10:05 AM	LAA PE AATI HAI DUA	"	"	"	"	"	"
10:05 AM to 10:35 AM	GULFON	"	"	"	"	"	"
10:35 AM to 11:05 AM	JAL-JANGLE JAMEEN	"	"	"	"	"	"
11:05 AM to 11:35 AM	HAMSE-HAI SHASAN	955 " 6th June-12	955 " 6th June-12	HAMSE HAI SHASAN	SUFI MEHIL	"	955
11:35 AM to 11:50 AM	SAAF -	SAFAI -	AUR -	SEHAT			
11:50 AM to 12:20 PM	JAL -	JANGLE -			JAMEEN		
12:20 PM to 12:35 PM	WAQT HAMARA HAI	"	"			RADIO School	"
12:35 PM to 1:35 AM	KISSE KIHANI	"	"	"	"	"	"

GOLFON START - 6 June - 2012

Broadcast Schedule for Alfaz-e-Mewat

Broadcasted at 107.8 MHz, Alfaz-e-Mewat is accessible in approximately 183 villages surrounding the village of Ghagas in Mewat. Alfaz-e-Mewat began broadcasting in January 2012 and currently broadcasts for nine hours a day, seven days a week. Alfaz-e-Mewat broadcasts a wide variety of programs; programs chosen by citizens of Mewat hired by IRRAD to manage, perform and announce shows on the station. These shows include *Tohfa-e-Kudrat: Jal Jangal Zameen* (Water, Soil, Forests), which provides agricultural information to the over 58% of the Mewati community dependent on subsistence agriculture for income, *Jagga Ki Diary*, which shares cultural and historical knowledge about the villages of Mewat, and *Galli Galli Sim Sim*, an Indian version of Sesame Street, which entertains and teaches children practical and moral lessons.



Advertisement poster for *Galli Galli Sim Sim*

Alfaz-e-Mewat is completely managed and delivered by people of the Mewat district, making it a unique community radio station with the potential to be extremely affective as a catalyst for development. In order to begin broadcasting community radio in India, a Letter of Intent must be issued to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting by an *educational institution or an NGO*, thus preventing a community from starting a radio station on their own. Because of this, many community radio stations are heavily influenced by their sponsoring institution. This influence can cause a disconnect between the programs broadcasted and the community they are broadcasted to if the community's interests and concerns are different than what the sponsor chooses to broadcast. It is at the heart of IRRAD's philosophy to empower people to cultivate their own development. Therefore, Alfaz-e-Mewat is entirely controlled by community members. IRRAD understands that this is fundamental if a community radio station is truly to bring about societal and developmental change.

The following report presents the findings of the survey I conducted to study Alfaz-e-Mewat during my summer internship at IRRAD. Through my survey, I analyzed the current impact Alfaz-e-Mewat has made on the development of Mewat, as well as gave suggestions, based on my findings, that I hope will increase Alfaz-e-Mewat's ability to provide important education and food security to its listeners.

Alfaz-e-Mewat—Staff:

Alfaz-e-Mewat's greatest asset when bringing waves of change to the impoverished Mewat district of Haryana is its staff, all of whom are citizens of Mewat and therefore understand the problems facing their community and have a vested interest in providing solutions. The staff consists of one woman, Razia, who serves as program coordinator, and five men, Javed, Arshad, Sohrab,

Shakhir, and Fakat, who conduct interviews with community members, announce and report on-air, and operate the technical aspects of the station. The entire staff is under the age of thirty five. I interviewed the employees of Alfaz-e-Mewat with a survey of sixteen questions divided into four parts based on specific topics (see *Annex: Staff Questionnaire*, page 24). These topics were: Personal Experience, Current Status of Alfaz-e-Mewat, Community Impact, and Impact on Women and Children. Below are the results I collected on each of these four topics from my staff interviews.

Personal Experience—

The staff of Alfaz-e-Mewat was selected for their current positions through a community radio training course conducted by IRRAD, followed by an interview process which narrowed the participants of the training course down to the current hired staff. All Alfaz-e-Mewat staff had previous work experience with either an NGO or a form of community media. Razia's previous position was as a block coordinator for IRRAD, and Sorahb had over ten years of experience working for an NGO that provided free education to girls in Mewat. Arshad, on the other hand, had been employed by a local television news station before starting at Alfaz-e-Mewat. In addition, Arshad and Javed both attended post-secondary school and hold degrees in TV Journalism and Social Work, respectively.

Every member of the Alfaz-e-Mewat team greatly enjoys their work. Razia is ambitious and appreciates the promotion from her previous IRRAD job to her new title as Alfaz-e-Mewat Program Coordinator. Arshad expressed, "Media is my passion. I want to work with media for the rest of my life." Javed and Shakhir enjoy the learning involved with their current position. All the reporters expressed that they were gaining valuable experience through working for Alfaz-e-Mewat, primarily in the form of public communications. However, learning how to effectively interview members of the Mewat community for reports broadcasted by Alfaz-e-Mewat was considered not only valuable experience by the station's staff, but also the greatest challenge faced by many of them in their current positions. Almost all of the station's employees expressed the difficulties they faced in obtaining Mewati citizens cooperation and participation when taking interviews for their programs. "It is a challenging task to convince the people of Mewat to cooperate with us," said Javed. "Media is a new concept in Mewat, especially radio."

Current Status—

The greatest strengths of Alfaz-e-Mewat, as expressed by its employees, are the dedicated radio team that operates the station and the station's ability to disseminate important information to the people of Mewat. "The Alfaz-e-Mewat team spirit is strong," said Arshad, "and we support and help each other in our work." An affective work environment exists at the Ghagas station that enables

the broadcasting of educational programs to the people of Mewat. Each of the staff members spoke about Alfaz-e-Mewat as a necessary forum for opinion sharing and knowledge circulation in their communities. Alfaz-e-Mewat is the only medium of mass communication that provides up-to-date, accurate news concerning most of the villages where the staff members reside. Therefore, after less than a year of operation, the station's daily broadcasting duration of ten hours and the listener participation Alfaz-e-Mewat receives every day is a tremendous accomplishment for the station's staff.

Despite Alfaz-e-Mewat's many achievements in its relatively short existence, the staff is also aware of improvements that need to be made and have high goals for the station's future. Razia emphasized frequently in her interview that, while at the beginning the station was focused on increasing the quantity of programs broadcasted, Alfaz-e-Mewat's main focus now needs to be on improving the quality of its programs. Arshad felt similarly and suggested exposure visits for the radio team to other, more established community radio stations. Through these exposure visits, Alfaz-e-Mewat staff could learn new technical and public relations skills, directly from their colleagues, that would improve the quality of their programs. In addition to improving program quality, goals of Alfaz-e-Mewat include receiving a grant from the Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, increasing community involvement through gaining more support from the people of Mewat, and setting new standards for community radio.

Community Impact—

The staff of Alfaz-e-Mewat unanimously agrees that their station has had a positive impact on the Mewat community. Through daily calls from listeners to the station, they have received requests for new and longer programs, questions in response to informative broadcasts, and suggestions for future program content. These calls signal that many people listen to Alfaz-e-Mewat regularly and are more educated on topics ranging from government programs to health and sanitation through tuning into 107.8. The information received by the people of Mewat through radio has also increased their access to necessary resources like food and water. Programs providing information on more effective agricultural practices and water-conserving strategies have been broadcast to the hundreds of listeners that tune into the station every day. "We provide education to people who would not be able to receive it otherwise," said Razia.

The radio team feels generally supported by their community, though one reporter stated, "Some people respond negatively. You never know." The conservative, Muslim traditions of Mewat have definitely challenged the station to provide programs that are both accepted by the people and beneficial to development. "In the beginning, people said negative things about Alfaz-e-Mewat, but now they respect our work," stated Arshad. One of the biggest community impacts stated repeatedly by the station's staff was that Mewati

citizens are now listening to the radio with their families. This means that information broadcasted on Alfaz-e-Mewat is not only reaching men, but women and children as well. Education of women and children is absolutely crucial to development, and, in a society like Mewat, where women are often prevented from receiving an adequate education, a radio station like Alfaz-e-Mewat can provide information that is truly life-changing. The radio team's pride that the programs they broadcast can be listened to by the whole family signals their understanding of the importance of education regardless of age or gender.

In addition to these general community impacts, the employees of Alfaz-e-Mewat also shared the stories of a couple of individuals whose life the radio station changed forever. One was a man who ran a small thread-making shop out of his home. Alfaz-e-Mewat reporters interviewed this man for a program on community-owned businesses. Through the recognition and publicity he received from the airing of his interview on 107.8, the thread-maker's profits increased considerably and he was able to expand his business. He now has many clients and is an established entrepreneur in the Mewat district. Reporters also shared the story of a young boy who had lost both of his arms in an electrical accident. The station aired an interview with this child and, within weeks an NGO from a different district in Haryana that assists disabled children in gaining an education, heard the broadcast and began providing funding for the special services needed for this child to continue receiving education. Because of the information disseminated by Alfaz-e-Mewat, this child still has a chance at a normal and hopefully successful life. There is no doubt community radio can have a powerful impact, on both a large and on a small scale.

Impact on Women and Children—

The education of women and children is a fundamental aspect of development, as well as a direct signal that development is occurring in an area. Community radio serves as a powerful educational tool that can reach large populations, so Alfaz-e-Mewat's impact on women and children as perceived by the people that operate and manage the station is critical to its impact assessment. The staff of Alfaz-e-Mewat agrees that currently they are broadcasting enough programs for children, including "radio school" and *Galli Galli Sim Sim*. However, there was some disagreement on whether or not the station should broadcast more programs for women and what type of new female-centered programs should be created. Of the five male employees of the station, two stated they believed no more programming was needed for the women of Mewat. The remaining three men expressed the need for increased female programming regarding hygiene, sanitation and maternal health for women. All three of these men stated that, due to female illiteracy, it was Alfaz-e-Mewat's duty to broadcast information on women's health because, without information dissemination through radio, the women of Mewat would be ignorant of important sanitation and hygiene knowledge. Finally, the one female staff

member of Alfaz-e-Mewat also stated that there was a need for more programs for women. However, she stated that they were currently broadcasting enough programs on women's maternal health. Razia suggested, instead, broadcasting more programs on women's self-help groups (small businesses run by a cooperation of women) to share stories and strategies of small entrepreneurial ventures made by women in Mewat.



At the Mewat Community Center

Alfaz-e-Mewat—Listeners:

My listener questionnaire was substantially shorter than my radio station staff questionnaire. It was designed for a large sample size and to cause relatively little inconvenience for those who participated. I asked listeners six fairly broad questions to determine the impact Alfaz-e-Mewat has made in the district's villages, the first of which was simply: Do you listen to Alfaz-e-Mewat? The most prominent trend in the data I collected was that 100% of the community members that I interviewed not specifically selected as listeners of Alfaz-e-Mewat by the station's staff had never listened to Alfaz-e-Mewat, nor heard of it. Therefore, the following data is a compilation of the information collected from interviews with the ten men and ten women identified by Alfaz-e-Mewat staff as "listeners". The data from the "listener" interviews is organized into six parts corresponding with the six questions of my survey. For each part, the data collected from the male and female interviewees is compared. The information collected from the twelve male and twelve female, randomly-selected "non-listeners" is presented at the end of this section.

How often do you listen to Alfaz-e-Mewat?

Fifteen surveyed listeners answered that they tune into Alfaz-e-Mewat at least once a day. Of this fifteen, nine were men and six were women. Only one man responded that he did not listen to Alfaz-e-Mewat everyday but stated that he usually did, he just was currently unable to because of the Ramadan fasts occurring at the time of the interviews. The four women who answered that they did not listen to the radio daily said it was because they did not have time to listen to the station every day and tended to listen a few times a week.

In terms of the time of day listeners most frequently tune in (afternoon or evening), an equal number of male listeners reported listening to Alfaz-e-Mewat in the afternoon as did in the evening. However, all female listeners who specified a time of day they listen to the radio said they listened in the evening because during the afternoon they were too busy working at a job or doing housework.



Interviewing in the village

How did you learn about Alfaz-e-Mewat?

Overall, the greatest percentage of interviewees (45%) began listening to Alfaz-e-Mewat because of a station employee, followed closely by 30% of respondents who stated they had heard about Alfaz-e-Mewat through other members of their community or family. The remaining quarter learned about

Alfaz-e-Mewat through IRRAD, most likely through attending a training session at an IRRAD community center. The data collected on this question varied fairly significantly depending on gender, however. For the men, seven out of the ten, a substantial majority, had heard about Alfaz-e-Mewat through a station employee. The remaining three had heard about the station either from other villagers or through the S.M. Sehgal Foundation. None of the women had heard about Alfaz-e-Mewat directly from a station employee. Instead, two of the women had heard a broadcast made by Razia on accident when listening to the radio one day. They recognized her voice because she had done development work in their village and started listening to Alfaz-e-Mewat after that. The majority of women interviewed learned about Alfaz-e-Mewat through a family member or through the IRRAD.

Did you listen to other radio stations before Alfaz-e-Mewat?

There was little gender variation in the data collected for this question. Seven men and seven women reported listening to radio before Alfaz-e-Mewat. Three men and three women did not. Of the men that listened to radio before Alfaz-e-Mewat, three stated that they no longer listen to other radio stations, only Alfaz-e-Mewat. All of the women who previously listened to other stations have continued listening to those stations, the majority of which are broadcast out of Delhi. Only one man reported listening to a different community radio station before Alfaz-e-Mewat.

What programs do you listen to most?

In general, men listened to a wider variety of programs than women. The program most frequently mentioned in male responses to this question was *Kissay Khaniyan*, a program about Mewati history and culture. However, *Galli Galli Sim Sim*, a children's program, and programs regarding agriculture were also frequently listed by male listeners, in addition to programs on water management, health and sanitation and Mewati culture. Women's responses fell under two basic categories: programs related to agriculture and programs related to health and sanitation. Overall, programs related to agriculture and programs related to Mewati culture were most frequently listed in response to this question.

How do you think Alfaz-e-Mewat could improve?

The most common improvement identified by both men and women was increasing the broadcasting time and the number of programs broadcasted by the station. Specific subjects of programs listeners would like more of were: health and sanitation, Mewati culture and history, girl's education and broadcasts of employment news and career opportunities. One man stated he thought the sound quality of broadcasts needed improvement. One woman stated that she thought Alfaz-e-Mewat should hire more women reporters because, when Alfaz-e-Mewat reporters interview citizens for the radio, many women would be less

reluctant to be interviewed if they were being interviewed by a female reporter instead of a male reporter. Many listeners praised the work of Alfaz-e-Mewat when responding to this question.

Would your community continue supporting Alfaz-e-Mewat if the S.M. Sehgal Foundation stopped?

The sustainability of community radio in Mewat was an important aspect of researching the impact on development Alfaz-e-Mewat has made. Six men and five women said that their community would continue to support Alfaz-e-Mewat if IRRAD stopped funding the station. Four men and five women said their community would be unable to support the radio station without the help of the Sehgal Foundation. The general trend signals that the community is split in its opinion about using their own funds if necessary to continue the station.

Non-listeners

As stated previously, all of the men and women surveyed for my study that were not selected by Alfaz-e-Mewat staff as “listeners” did not listen to Alfaz-e-Mewat, and only one man said that he thought he had heard of Alfaz-e-Mewat previously but could not be sure. From follow up questions asked of these randomly selected community citizens, some trends in radio listening were still identified. All of the men interviewed said they listened to the radio at times but simply had not heard of Alfaz-e-Mewat. The men mentioned listening to BBC News on the radio and other programs broadcast from Delhi. All of the women, on the other hand, said they never listened to radio because of both lack of access to a radio and lack of time to listen during the day. When men were asked why women did not listen to the radio, the men stated as well that women’s lack of time prevented them from listening to the radio and that it was not connected to religious or cultural inhibitions.

Alfaz-e-Mewat—Conclusions:

The most comprehensive conclusion I gathered from my study on community radio is that, ultimately, community radio is a source of positive change and development in the villages of Mewat. Alfaz-e-Mewat has created employment opportunities for Mewati citizens, who, through their jobs, are empowered to cultivate the development of their communities. The staff of Alfaz-e-Mewat does more than play a paramount role in the effective implementation of IRRAD’s development programs. They also serve as role models to their fellow community members by displaying daily the benefits of participating in development initiatives. Alfaz-e-Mewat also brings together families and community members, and, in doing so, facilitates discussion of the important issues and topics covered in Alfaz-e-Mewat broadcasts. The majority of listeners I interviewed stated that they listen to radio with either family members or friends.

The radio team as well stated that people listening to radio with their whole family was one of the biggest changes Alfaz-e-Mewat has brought to the villages it broadcasts to. A communal forum for learning and information sharing, like Alfaz-e-Mewat, is one of the most effective tools for knowledge dissemination an organization like IRRAD can utilize. Finally, all Alfaz-e-Mewat listeners expressed that they wanted more: more broadcasts, more information, more programming for longer. This can only mean that people are reacting positively to the station and will continue to provide the support Alfaz-e-Mewat needs to grow.

Alfaz-e-Mewat is a positive addition to Mewat's villages because effectively disseminates information vital to development. The most important lesson on development I learned through my internship at IRRAD is that, without education, development initiatives simply do not work. People must understand why initiatives are being implemented in their communities, how the initiative will benefit them and, most importantly, how and why to sustain the initiative without the assistance of an outside organization. While from an outsider's perspective the answers to these questions seem obvious, a rural villager is not likely to see the use in changing practices that have been engrained into their culture for hundreds of years. This is where education comes in. Through extensive education that answers the aforementioned questions, change can occur and development can take place. Community radio is quite possibly one of the most effective ways to provide this education. Alfaz-e-Mewat can provide information to people regardless of their ability to read, and illiteracy rates in Mewat are quite high. In addition, people readily absorb the information broadcast by Alfaz-e-Mewat because they enjoy listening to radio. Many listeners cited educational programs on agriculture and health as their favorite programs to tune in to. Most importantly, Alfaz-e-Mewat provides education to people regardless of their age, gender or salary.

Because of Alfaz-e-Mewat's outstanding capability to provide education, it is crucial that Alfaz-e-Mewat broaden its audience. The only way people are currently informed about the station is through word-of-mouth, either from family, friends or directly from the station's staff. This simply is not enough to expand Alfaz-e-Mewat to its full potential. Other methods of community media need to be employed so more people learn about the station and the information it broadcasts reaches as many people as possible. Wall paintings that advertise the station and door-to-door public service announcements would inform a large volume of people about Alfaz-e-Mewat. The necessity of increasing Alfaz-e-Mewat's listeners needs to be stressed to the radio team, because none of them specifically mentioned increasing number of listeners as a necessary improvement.

One way IRRAD can increase the number of Mewati people that listen to community radio is through increasing the number of people that own a radio set. This could be through giving away free radios, or providing radios at an inexpensive, subsidized cost, to the people of Mewat. IRRAD can also use a

“free-radio” initiative to publicize Alfaz-e-Mewat. Encouraging villagers to sign up to win a free radio through Alfaz-e-Mewat would spread excitement and anticipation among people about their very own community radio station. Lastly, even if radios are only given to a handful of people in each village, a “free radio” initiative where people sign up to win would allow the names of the people that do receive a radio to be publicized. As my study indicates, people already frequently listen to radio in groups, so it is probable that those who didn’t receive a radio would ask to listen to Alfaz-e-Mewat with someone they know who did.

Alfaz-e-Mewat needs to place special emphasis on women when increasing its listener base. My research shows that, overall, women listen to radio less frequently than men. Women who currently listen to Alfaz-e-Mewat are less likely than men to listen daily, and women I interviewed who do not listen to Alfaz-e-Mewat stated they didn’t listen to radio at all, compared with most of the male non-listeners, who stated they listened to radio, just not Alfaz-e-Mewat. However, women are quite possibly the most important audience for Alfaz-e-Mewat to target. Not only is women’s education crucial to development, women in Mewat have much fewer educational opportunities than men.

The station can target a female audience a few different ways. One Mewati listener suggested that Alfaz-e-Mewat hire more female reporters and broadcasters. She stated that women would be less reluctant to express their knowledge and opinions in interviews with Alfaz-e-Mewat staff if they were being interviewed by a woman instead of man. Hiring more women would also increase the station’s appeal from a female perspective. It is easier to relate to someone who shares a fundamental similarity such as gender. Alfaz-e-Mewat should also strive to broadcast female-centered programming in the evenings. All of the female listeners who specified a time of day they listen to the radio said they did not have time to listen in the afternoons but only in the evenings. Finally, through targeting women specifically in a “free-radio” initiative, IRRAD could expand the number of women with the capability to access important knowledge through radio.

Through my Borlaug-Ruan Internship with the Institute of Rural Research and Development, I came to understand some of the considerable challenges facing development, poverty alleviation and food security in India today. Through my research on Alfaz-e-Mewat and community radio, however, I learned about one of the most effective catalysts to development that exists. Community radio provides education that enables other development initiatives to take shape and flourish. More importantly, community radio provides this education to everyone, regardless of age, gender or finances. Community radio will undoubtedly continue to play a vital part in development across the globe.

A Change in Me:

As my plane began its descent over Delhi, my nose flat against the cold glass window of the airplane, I was aware that my fascination with the bright yellow dots of light below me was slightly unfounded. From my vantage point at night, Delhi looked no different than any other metropolis. At that moment, however, my eyes were wide to absorb every bit of India I could. I knew that two months was not long at all to learn about a country like India, a country so old and big and rich in culture, and I did not want to waste a moment. Over the following eight weeks I experienced and learned more than I ever could have expected, not only about India, but about myself. While living in Gurgaon, a suburb of New Delhi, I grew to love India's culture and people, but was also brought to harsh realizations about poverty, food insecurity and the major challenges facing development in India today. Through these unforgettable lessons, I became motivated more than ever to dedicate myself to international service and seize every opportunity I am given to take action against poverty and hunger.

Before traveling to India, a good friend, who had spent the previous summer in Honduras, gave me an important piece of advice: the best way to learn about a country is through its children. This statement could not have held more true to my personal experiences this past summer. Few things affected me more than seeing and speaking with the children of New Delhi and Mewat. My fondest memories are of playing with Asfak and Tabasoumb, two children who live with their mother at IRRAD's community center in Mewat. We would make faces at each other and laugh, completely oblivious to language barriers because, during playtime, differences in language did not matter very much. My favorite place I visited in India, trumping the Taj Mahal, India Gate and Humayun's Tomb, was a preschool for young girls. Having the opportunity to interact with the girls and speaking to the women who work there was an experience I will remember for the rest of my life.



Tabasoumb, girl from Mewat

Finally, it was the children I saw begging for money at street corners and train stations, walking barefoot on the hot, trash-strewn ground, carrying brothers and sisters not much younger than themselves, who made me conscious of poverty on a deeper level than I could have ever expected. Seeing these children made me sad, angry, protective, but, most importantly, determined; determined to travel on a future path that provides me the education and opportunities to help change their conditions.

Through this determination, I came to value the educational opportunities I am given in the United States more than I ever had before. I realized that I took for granted so many of the important lessons I've learned through school, from simple math and logical reasoning to classes on women's health and hygiene. Because of this, I also came to understand the power community radio can have on a developing area due to its capacity to provide education to people regardless of age, gender or salary. Unfortunately, all three of these factors play a major role in one's ability to receive education in Mewat. Neither my parents' salary nor my gender has ever affected my ability to gain an outstanding education, through which I am challenged with lessons, homework and extracurricular activities. As a seventeen year old about to start my senior year of high school, I came away from my summer in India with a completely new perspective on the math problems and English essays that, after twelve years of schooling, I had come to look at as somewhat of a burden. I started my last year of high school feeling blessed to be pushed and encouraged to learn and somewhat ashamed that I had taken for granted the priceless gift of education I had been given my entire life.

My sensitivity to the importance of education was definitely heightened as a female. While I had been taught and understood that women in developing areas were often given much fewer educational opportunities than men, I was filled with strong, unexpected frustration towards the high female illiteracy rates in Mewat frequently discussed during my study of community radio. "Girls can do anything that boys can" was less of a statement and more of a rule in my household growing up, so the traditional, patriarchal society of Mewat impacted me tremendously. On top of my personal beliefs, through my research it became more apparent to me than ever that women's education is absolutely key to development.

The women I interviewed who broke the mold of Mewat to learn, whether through school or simply through listening to the radio, were incredibly inspiring to me. I felt such a strong kinship with these women. We seemed to share a mutual understanding, unaffected by the oceans that separated our homes. Even though I recorded each interview I conducted with these women, it is the minutes before and after the interviews, when the recorder was off, that I remember most clearly from my visits to Mewat. During this time we would sit and laugh and communicate as best we could, and, more often than not, one of the women would touch my head and say "daughter" or "sister". In this way, every woman I

met in Mewat became part of my family as I became part of theirs, and I became aware of a bigger global family connecting all women. This lesson, above all others, is what I know will drive me to pursue a lifelong path in international development because these women I will never forget.

My summer in India not only broadened my concept of family, but gave me a new appreciation for my immediate family at home. Close families are one of the most fundamental aspects of Indian culture. While it is customary in the United States to move out of the house at 18, the majority of Indians I met live with their parents well into their twenties. Many parents also move in with their children as they grow older, and often brothers, sisters and cousins live near each other, keeping the family unit very closely connected. Families provide an important sense of community in India of which I was acutely aware due to the extended absence I was experiencing from my own family. Before living abroad for a summer, I never fully realized how much support and security I draw from my family. As a teenager, it is so easy to get wrapped up in school, extracurricular activities and friends that, before this experience, I had forgotten that the one constant in my life is family. I hope to never take that for granted again.

At the same time that I was learning to appreciate my family on a new level, I was also learning to derive an inner strength and independence that can only be gained through living abroad. Upon arriving in India, I was quite disconcerted to find that my checked luggage had not made it to Delhi along with me. While lost luggage isn't anything special when flying internationally, waiting in long lines of bustling people, filling out paperwork and figuring out how to get my bag through broken English with the airport employees was quite the rights of passage for me. Never before had I had to deal with something like this without the assistance of an adult. At the time, I was definitely stressed, flustered and tired. However, the next morning, looking back on the events of the previous night, I could not help but feel empowered. I had made it from Iowa to India all by myself, with my baggage traveling right behind me. This is just one example of how participating in the Borlaug-Ruan Internship has enabled me in a way I will forever be grateful for.

In addition to all of the priceless lessons I learned about development and the personal growth I gained through my Borlaug-Ruan Internship at IRRAD, I also had a lot of fun. While living just outside of New Delhi, I was able to visit many monuments and historical sites with my fellow interns after work or on the weekends. These included Humayun's Tomb, Safdarjang's Tomb, Lodi Gardens, India Gate, Indian Parliament, Red Fort, Nehru Place Planetarium and Museum and, most fabulously, the Taj Mahal (see *Pictures* at the end). Going to the Taj Mahal was one of the highlights of my trip. It was very surreal, and I will never forget the feeling of being across the globe from my home at one of the world's most well-known historical landmarks.

I not only went to so many historical monuments, but also countless markets and bazaars, where I saw and purchased wonderful Indian artisanal crafts and greatly enjoyed learning how to bargain. Going out to eat and trying new food was also a common occurrence for me over the summer. I absolutely loved eating Indian food for (almost) every meal. It is one of the things I will miss most. I will never forget my seventeenth birthday, however, which I got to spend with a group of friends and interns at an *American* diner in New Delhi. Eating a



My 17th Birthday spent with dear friends

a tuna sandwich and fries and blowing out the candles on a chocolate birthday cake made me feel right at home despite the fact I was thousands of miles away. Through all of these experiences, New Delhi became a home away from home by the end of my trip. I learned so much about Indian culture and hope to find opportunities to return to India later in my life.

I will never forget the summer I spent in India, where I learned so much about food insecurity, development and myself. I feel eternally grateful to all those who made my experience possible. The opportunity to live abroad for a summer is such an incredible gift for a teenager, as they begin making important decisions about their future life and career. This experience definitely impacted what I hope to do with my life, in addition to helping me grow tremendously. I look forward to the next time I can return to India, ready to continue the fight on poverty and food insecurity started by Dr. Borlaug so many years ago.

ANNEX

Staff Questionnaire:

Personal Experience

1. How did you get your job working for Alfaz-e-Mewat?
2. What job did you have before working for Alfaz-e-Mewat?
3. Do you enjoy working for Alfaz-e-Mewat?
4. What challenges have you had working for Alfaz-e-Mewat?
5. What experience have you gained working for Alfaz-e-Mewat that you believe is important?

Current Status

1. What are the greatest strengths of Alfaz-e-Mewat?
2. What important accomplishments has the radio station made?
3. What are things that still need improvement?
4. What are your goals for the future of Alfaz-e-Mewat?

Community Impact

1. Do you think Alfaz-e-Mewat has positively impacted the people Mewat?
2. Do you feel Alfaz-e-Mewat is supported by the community?
3. Has Alfaz-e-Mewat increased people's ability to gain access to necessary resources such as food, water and education?
4. What other changes have you seen in the community as a result of Alfaz-e-Mewat?
5. What do people in the community say about Alfaz-e-Mewat?

Impact on Women and Children

1. Do you think Alfaz-e-Mewat should create more programs for women and children?
2. If so, what type of program do you think should be created?

Endnotes:

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