



Al Mirbad: local radio for southern Iraq



Start date: 2004

Finish date: Ongoing

Media types: Radio

Issue: Human rights and governance

Country: Iraq

Al Mirbad Radio is the BBC World Service Trust's biggest media reconstruction project to date. The station was launched in Basra in the summer of 2005 and since then has become one of the most recognised and listened-to radio stations across the south of the country.

Al Mirbad broadcasts live and pre-recorded output for twelve hours a day, covering the three southern provinces of Basra, Missan and Dhi Qar.

The station is funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID). Local income is also derived from advertising and the provision of production services.

Proven reach and impact

Under the former Ba'ath regime, media in Iraq had been tightly controlled and highly centralised. In an environment now characterised by plural but highly politicised media, Al Mirbad is a uniquely unbiased source of information that enables citizens to engage with officials, other listeners, and issues affecting their lives.

Al Mirbad became an important part of the community as soon as it was established. Three years on, it dominates the radio scene in southern Iraq. An audience survey conducted in 2008 shows that nearly a third of 15-65 year olds in the three southern provinces listen to Radio Al Mirbad every week - one in ten listen every day.

Well over half of its listeners said Al Mirbad is their main source of local information and that it provides a vital service to the community. Most listeners agree the station gives them a voice and assists in holding officials to account.

A truly local radio station

Al Mirbad is a local, southern Iraqi operation. Iraqis were employed in setting the station up, and facilitated its move to new, permanent premises in Basra in 2008.

Today the station employs around 100 staff members. After initial training by the BBC World Service Trust, ongoing training is now effectively performed in-house by senior staffers.

It has reporters based in the three provinces it covers and has built up a strong network of citizen reporters.

This network - along with listeners who frequently call into the station - enables Al Mirbad to report issues in a way that is most meaningful to its audience.