

Trust, Influence, and Connectivity

Understanding Information Ecosystems
in Pakistan's Tribal Areas

A DESIGN RESEARCH APPROACH

By:

REBOOT

In Collaboration with:

 **Internews**
Center for Innovation & Learning

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Contents

2 Foreword

4 Executive Summary

Introduction

11 About This Project

13 Bringing New Perspectives to Media Development Efforts in Pakistan

14 Methodology

15 Research Process

16 Research Sites

18 Respondents

18 Research Team

19 Challenges & Biases

20 Regional Context

Findings

23 Media Access & Relevance

24 Limited Accessibility

26 Limited Relevance

27 Lacking Credibility

31 Unmet Information Needs

32 Influencers, Old & New

33 Disillusionment with Government

34 Mistrust in Religious Leaders

35 Embrace of Youth

37 Adaptive Behaviors

38 Fact-Checking for Credibility

40 Case Study: Going Viral in FATA: *Innocence of Muslims* Video

40 Trusting Mobile Sources

42 Seeking Safe Spaces

44 Repurposing “Old” Technology

Opportunities

47 Opportunities for Development

48 Design Recommendations

55 Design Concept

62 Further Considerations

63 Additional Design Concepts

65 Concluding Thoughts

Annex

67 About Reboot

68 About Internews

69 Endnotes

72 Photography Credits

73 Bibliography



Foreword



In 1988, I was in Burma during the student uprising. I was a young traveler on a year's sabbatical from my university research job. The moment was filled with violence and complete confusion. Available information was tightly controlled by authorities, unreliable, and certainly not trusted. As the entire community I was staying with crowded around an old shortwave radio, I witnessed first-hand the importance and power of the media. They listened anxiously to hear a faint but familiar sound: the Lillibullero, then the signature tune of the BBC World Service.

For this community and others like them, these BBC reports were the only reliable source of desperately needed news. The broadcasts provided a light in the darkness, a sense of connection, trust, and support. This experience deeply affected me at the time and continues to drive my work with Internews today.

The mission of the Internews Center for Innovation & Learning (ICIL) is to support the ability of individuals and communities to access the information they need to make informed decisions about their lives and futures. The research that produced this report was born out of the recognition that advancing this potential begins with an understanding that goes beyond technical knowledge of challenges to overcome. It begins with empathy.

Trust, Influence, and Connectivity

Interested in exploring new ways we might support human development through media and communication, we sought to harness a moment of hope for people living in Pakistan's troubled tribal regions. Empathy would become the guiding principle of the project.

Looking ahead to the May 2013 Pakistani general elections, our Asia team proposed an interesting but challenging technology-based initiative to trial an interactive voice response (IVR) project in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. The goal was to use this technology to connect residents with information that would allow them to be informed and active participants in the upcoming elections.

Internews has a wealth of experience to draw from in Pakistan, but when planning the project in FATA we realized that we were working from assumptions based on past success. We didn't know whether using IVR would address a real human need present in the region. To truly understand the information needs of a critically underserved population, and determine whether IVR was the most appropriate solution, we would first need to build empathy with those we sought to serve.



Our team determined that a design research study would provide key insights into the human factors critical to a successful intervention. Sam de Silva, Innovation Advisor for Asia, led the initial planning work and engaged Reboot to apply their expertise in design research in helping us to shape and carry out this unique endeavor. Mark Frohardt, ICIL's Executive Director, saw the opportunity for this immersive methodology to inform the work of Internews and the broader international development community. With the support of Internews Pakistan's Country Director Charmaine Anderson, Regional Director for Asia Oren Murphy, and then-Vice President Kathleen Reen, the project was born.

Over the course of the project's field engagement, I saw the lessons in the value of building empathy learned during my formative years as a young researcher rekindled. Since Burma, I have spent many years researching communities, observing people working through the habitual challenges of daily life, or following threads of stories that fanned out far beyond my own perspective. I had acquired skills in a plethora of research techniques, all highly effective and useful—yet somehow not quite enough. I understood that my surveys and well-structured interviews only sought to answer the questions I had the wisdom to ask.

Diving into the design research approach in Pakistan, I quickly realized that by observing and listening to the communities and the environments I sought to understand I could become aware of the questions for which I needed to answer. In Pakistan, this

dynamic and iterative approach to research allowed us to uncover nuances and pursue that which we could not have seen at the outset.

The insights you will read in this report are not meant to be definitive articulations of life in these areas of Pakistan. Rather, they present the voices and experiences of those kind individuals who allowed us to share a little of their lives and experiences.

Despite the bleak impression of a regional information blackout that conventional wisdom might suggest, the stories of our interviewees revealed a host of ways that the people in the tribal areas navigate around the pit falls in their information landscape. In each homegrown innovation and adaptation, we saw seeds of solutions that could potentially connect people across the region with a measure of certainty that is sorely needed in this fraught environment. Mapping the contours of the human relationships that form the basis of all communication, we saw how a sophisticated understanding of trust between people in the region would need to inform any initiative we might implement.

This publication does not mark the end of a journey, but is a signpost towards the way we hope to conduct our research activities in the future. ICIL has learnt much, and we look forward to adopting and adapting the methodologies as we continue to experiment, research, and learn. We want to push boundaries and challenge established practice. We invite you to join us on this exciting journey. Welcome!

Amanda Noonan
*Director of Research and Learning,
 Internews Center for Innovation & Learning*



Executive Summary



Introduction

Information and media play a critical role in furthering human development and good governance the world over. In Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), a host of factors constrain their ability to do so. Decades of crisis, underpinned by poor governance and regional conflict, have kept the region in a perpetual state of instability, poverty, and isolation. Media accessibility and information flows are consequently limited, leaving FATA's residents without the information they need to live safer, more productive lives.

Improving access to relevant, actionable information has the potential to support individual agency among residents and catalyze sustainable social progress in this troubled region. However, designing an information system that can achieve these goals requires a nuanced understanding of the lived experience of these residents. The success of such an intervention depends on its ability to engage the aspirations, beliefs, and capabilities of information-seekers, and respond to the conditions imposed by their operating environment.

Seeking to advance media development in FATA, Internews undertook this project to better understand the information landscape in Pakistan's tribal regions.

Recognizing the potential of design research to reveal the causes, relationships, and human dimensions of complex contexts—and to translate this knowledge into innovative, context-appropriate interventions—Internews partnered with Reboot, a social enterprise working to improve governance and development worldwide. Internews and Reboot conducted a design research investigation in Fall 2012. Using applied ethnography, researchers explored the information needs and behaviors of residents across diverse communities in FATA. Research sites in neighboring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were included to provide a culturally similar extension of the research area.

This report, the result of that investigation, offers a fresh perspective on the information and media landscape in FATA. It presents insights into the human impacts of information challenges and articulates opportunities to design development programming. By bringing a ground-level, human understanding to the complex dynamics of conflict in the region, this report seeks to supplement other analyses conducted through geopolitical, historical, or security lenses.

Key Findings

This project surfaced several key findings:

1. Media access and relevance is closely linked to the development context

The media landscape in FATA is deeply connected to the region's defining contextual conditions, particularly infrastructural shortcomings that are compounded by militant attacks and government intervention. These limiting factors severely restrict the relevance and credibility of information reaching media consumers in FATA. As a result, rather than informing and educating, FATA's media market often reinforces feelings of powerlessness among the region's residents.

Mobile phones, satellite dishes, and internet, all of which are increasingly present in Pakistan's tribal areas, offer the prospect of a greater variety of media reaching the region. But the utility of these technologies as a source of information is also heavily constrained by their limited accessibility.

2. Social and political shifts impact information behaviors

Individuals' access to and ability to effectively utilize information has always been closely linked to their social and political standing. Today in FATA, the established centers of power and influence are shifting. These changes deserve close consideration by development actors interested in supporting information access in the region.

While the influence and credibility of traditional power holders like tribal leaders and religious leaders are waning among FATA residents, educated, literate, and technology savvy individuals are seeing their social stock rise. These segments of society, particularly youth populations, are able to secure information through new channels, making them increasingly influential actors in their communities.

3. Adaptive behaviors help FATA residents compensate for the poor information landscape

Faced with deficiencies in their primary information sources, FATA residents rely on one another and adapt technologies both old and new to gather and share information. This analysis examines FATA residents' use of the following strategies to acquire, verify, and share information:

Fact-checking for credibility:

Highly skeptical of available news sources, FATA residents verify information they receive through social networks and as many trusted sources as they are able to access.

Seeking safe spaces for exchange:

To compensate for poor information delivery channels, people visit spaces in their communities where information is shared, debated, and analyzed. These include barber shops, mosques, and *hujras*.

Leveraging trusted mobile sources:

With personal mobility highly limited, FATA residents reach beyond borders through personal connections to get information from free and informed sources. Residents with geographic mobility, such as truck drivers or traveling merchants, as well as FATA's sizable diaspora population, play important roles as information suppliers and conduits.

Strategically using technologies:

Technology plays an important role in keeping information flowing to and through human information conduits. Cheap and discreet technologies that meet the constraints of residents, such as Bluetooth-enabled devices, help people distribute information widely. Analog technologies, such as cassettes and walkie-talkies, support information access for those residents with extremely constrained access to other sources of information.

These strategies and adaptations stretch the ability of FATA residents to understand the threats and opportunities of their environment. But their value is limited by personal bias and potential error introduced through the social transfer of information.

Opportunities for Development

The context-driven information behaviors used by FATA residents to meet their information needs are instructive for development practitioners. This report discusses how these insights may inform the design of locally relevant information and media development programs in FATA. A sample program concept, FATA Info, integrates several of these recommendations to illustrate how these guidelines might be used in a concrete intervention.

Programmatic recommendations stemming from this research include:

Provide constructive outlets for existing passions and capacities.

Programs should look beyond the media sector to leverage non-traditional actors and channels that have the desire, motivation, and ability to support the production of quality news. Programs drawing on the motivation, access, and behaviors of the diaspora and leveraging the drive, resources, and technical ability of FATA's youth have particular potential to harness these resources.

Foster analysis that illuminates structural challenges and paths to development.

Often, information consumers in FATA receive only partial stories that inhibit gaining a fully informed perspective. Programs can bridge this gap both by improving local capacities for producing quality news and analysis, and facilitating local conversations around structural issues impacting the region's development.

Leverage indigenous hacks in program design and distribution.

People in FATA fill holes in their information landscape with diverse and creative mechanisms for obtaining and sharing news. Programs can tap into these innovative uses of technology, gathering spaces, and social networks to increase their reach and accessibility.

Build a credible brand through transparency and savvy partnerships.

In FATA, organizations must overcome mistrust bred through negative experiences with outside actors—and Western organizations in particular. Development actors can demonstrate trustworthiness through open and fluid communications and strategic affiliation with established brands.

Revamp organizational policies for responsiveness and learning.

Institutional policies and procedures may create hurdles to effective interventions. Revising policies and operational structures to accommodate collaboration with smaller and/or independent actors, as well as developing appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to understand programmatic impact, are two examples of organizational adjustments that may be necessary to ensure successful media development interventions in FATA.

Conclusion

Although FATA has long been a geopolitical hotspot, to date few efforts have shed light on the lived experiences of residents seeking to maintain lives and livelihoods in this fraught environment. Most importantly, the process surfaced ideas for media development from the people of Pakistan's tribal regions—a population that has been distinctly absent from international discussions about their own development. By giving voice to these experiences, this report seeks to inform media development efforts across the region and, ultimately, to facilitate progress and development in FATA.



Introduction

Access to reliable, locally relevant information is crucial for development. But in FATA, residents lack the information they need to live safe, productive lives.

Sharif's *mukhabera* is his constant companion. "I use it daily, mostly at night time, because signals are clear then," he says. "I am in touch with most of my friends this way."

"*Mukhabera*" means walkie-talkie in Pashto. For Sharif, 24, this tool is what a mobile phone might be to other young men around the world: a cheap and reliable way to stay in touch with friends and family—so long as they are within an 18-mile range. Although he is unemployed, Sharif spends 100 Pakistan Rupees (Rs), about one US dollar, on batteries for his *mukhabera* each week. In the evenings, his friends all tune into the same frequency to "hang out".

For longer distance communications, Sharif uses cassette tapes. At Rs. 40 (USD 0.41) each, his family will record one cassette every two to three months to send to his brothers in the United Arab Emirates. Sharif's brothers migrated from the family home in Datta Khel, a town on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, to Dubai last year to work as day laborers. His parents use the cassettes to keep them abreast of developments at home. Sharif likes to include one or two of his favorite songs on each recording.

By all accounts, Sharif is a heavy consumer of information. But his *mukhabera* hang-outs and cassette tape swaps aren't just a way to keep up on local gossip or maintain connections with faraway family members. For Sharif, and others living in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), such information sources are a critical lifeline.

FATA residents are hungry for information they can trust

Decades of crisis have kept FATA in a perpetual state of instability, poverty, and isolation. In parts of FATA, a range of militant groups threaten regional security. US intelligence operations, attempting to defeat Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants, have targeted FATA with drones since 2004. Individuals like Sharif live in perpetual fear that they or their loved ones could easily—and unexpectedly—fall victim to these threats.

In this perilous environment, accurate and actionable information is critical for staying safe. And beyond insights into imminent dangers around them, people in FATA seek trustworthy information that can help them navigate instability, build livelihoods, and achieve their aspirations. Such information is exceedingly difficult to find.

Poor telecommunications infrastructure heavily restricts residents' ability to access media and other information sources. Many areas lack mobile signal and internet connectivity. Militants have intentionally destroyed radio towers to enforce a media blackout in areas they seek to control. Satellite dishes and televisions remain luxuries that are out of reach for many.

FATA's information deficiencies are hardly limited to poor infrastructure. In some areas, residents have access to Voice of America programming or other media sources, but many parts of the region are limited to broadcasts from state-owned Radio

Pakistan, which is heavily censored. Journalists report on sensitive topics at great personal peril. Coverage of security issues overwhelms all other topics, perpetuating an already significant anxiety about security, but without offering remedies. Further, government institutions are notoriously poor at communicating with residents, and traditionally-influential local leaders increasingly lack relevance in the face of persistent existential threats.

Given these constraints, information circulating through media and other formal channels often lacks substance and credibility, and is of limited value to FATA residents.

In response, FATA's residents cobble news together as best they can. Most often, they turn to each other in search of actionable information that can help abate their sense of powerlessness over their lives. With personal mobility restricted and public conversations endangered by unfriendly eavesdroppers, people in FATA have developed their own methods to communicate. Some workarounds make use of new technologies that are becoming more available in this restricted region. Bluetooth devices are a stealthy means to pass sensitive information between friends. Other tools—like Sharif's *mukhabera*, and the cassette tapes that he and his brothers send back and forth—repurpose technologies that have existed for decades. And some workarounds require no technology at all, as residents leverage relationships with people whose professions or social status afford them the opportunity to spread stories and observances from one place to the next.

These alternatives, however, have their own limitations. For example, the downside to using a *mukhabera*, essentially a two-way radio, is that conversations are broadcast over an open channel. Users, therefore, never know if their conversations are being picked up by militants or others who may seek to harm them. And without quality reporting or even secure forums in which to discuss, vet, and debate first-hand accounts, residents have little hope of finding credible and relevant news and information.

Understanding information needs can empower human progress

Access to high quality, reliable, and locally relevant information is crucial to development the world over. Good information facilitates a climate of awareness, education, and agency, empowering individuals to meet the challenges of their environment. For Sharif and other FATA residents, the stakes for finding such information are especially high to navigate the great uncertainty, ever-present dangers and formidable constraints of their environment. The inadequacy of FATA's information landscape restricts the ability of individuals like Sharif to improve their lives, and continues to restrain human development throughout the region.

Connecting FATA residents to information and communications channels could provide tangible improvements in people's everyday lives, and seed greater progress across the region. To understand what types of interventions could facilitate this change, practitioners first need human insight into how FATA's residents source, share, and evaluate the credibility of information.

Although FATA has long been a geopolitical hotspot, to date, few efforts have shed light on the lived experiences of residents seeking to maintain lives and livelihoods in this fraught environment. By giving voice to their experiences, this report seeks to inform media development efforts across the region and, ultimately, to facilitate progress and development in FATA.



About This Project

Internews and Reboot undertook a design research study to better understand the information landscape that defines the lived experience of people in Pakistan's tribal regions. The project sought to examine the human impacts of information challenges and to initiate a dialogue on ways they could be addressed. Most importantly, the process surfaced ideas for media development from the people of Pakistan's tribal regions—a population that has been distinctly absent from international discussions about their own development.



Specifically, this study sought to:

- Understand how people in FATA seek, access, share, create, and evaluate information and news;
- Explore the needs, capacities, constraints, and sensitivities that influence the information-seeking and media consumption behaviors of FATA's residents; and
- Identify opportunities to improve information access and relevancy for FATA's residents, particularly through applications of technology and new media.

The study used a combination of ethnographic and design research approaches. (The complete methodology is described in the “Methodology” section of this report.) This report is intended for a range of audiences. It seeks to broaden the understanding and representations of people in Pakistan’s tribal regions for a general, global audience. It also seeks to introduce international development practitioners to the role of media and information in conflict-affected areas in Pakistan, which may have implications for other regions. And for those working on issues of media development in Pakistan, it seeks to contribute additional perspectives on the information landscape in FATA and to enrich the ongoing dialogue about opportunities for programming.

The ensuing analysis draws primarily from original research conducted in FATA, and its insights pertain directly to the region unless otherwise stated. For reasons described in the “Methodology” section of this report, the research area was extended to include sites in neighboring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province. Due to differences in the political, economic and security conditions between FATA and KPK, this analysis does not purport to address challenges to media development in KPK. However, the report identifies points of difference between FATA and KPK where they are relevant to the research themes.



Bringing New Perspectives to Media Development Efforts in Pakistan

Since the early 2000s, media development efforts in the tribal regions of Pakistan have been used to advance strategic geopolitical interests in the region. The US and Pakistani governments have been key actors in these efforts, although exact figures on their development spending are hard to obtain. Funding comes through government agencies for international development, defense, intelligence, or other offices. Private foundations and nongovernmental organizations also support various efforts, though to a smaller degree. Efforts include the establishment of an enabling regulatory environment, support for media outlets, and capacity building and training for media professionals and journalists.

This project recognized from the outset that these sources of funding and geopolitical interests have impacted the type of media development seen in Pakistan's tribal regions. US strategic interests may not always align with the interests of people in these regions. Therefore, externally driven programs may actually stifle the evolution of a market- and audience-driven information landscape that addresses local needs. One result, made clear through this research, has been that current information channels and content in the region fail to address the needs of their intended audiences. To avoid being biased by the frameworks of geopolitically driven programs, this research project deliberately avoided studying prior media development efforts in Pakistan's tribal regions.

Partly as a result of this choice and partly as a result of the design research methodology, this project surfaced new insights that may contradict earlier studies. These are discussed throughout the report. For example, while recent research on media in FATA has found that national media is highly trusted by residents of FATA—and more trusted than international media¹—this investigation found otherwise. National media was found to be unreliable for accurate reporting of issues that impacted residents' security and day-to-day lives, and was widely believed to support government propaganda. International media was deemed to be more objective and more likely to report unbiased news. While the reporting was less localized, those that had access to both national and international news almost overwhelmingly preferred the latter.

Given these differences, future dialogue and reflection with experts in the region—both development specialists and the people who live there—will be necessary to refine the analysis and ideas put forward.



Methodology

This study utilized a design research methodology focused on information and communications behaviors in the tribal regions of Pakistan. Combining ethnographic, journalistic, and systems-thinking approaches, design research helps reveal the causes, relationships, and human dimensions of complex contexts—and provides tools to incorporate this knowledge into the design of innovative, context-appropriate interventions.

Design research emphasizes immersive and ethnographic research methods to understand how people interact with each other, with institutions, and with their larger environment. Methods were largely qualitative—and included ethnographic interviews, participant observation, service trials, questionnaires, photographic documentation, and artifact collection—and were supplemented by quantitative respondent surveys.

By bringing a ground-level human understanding to the complex dynamics of conflict in the region, this study seeks to supplement other analyses conducted from a geopolitical, historical, or security lens. Given the complexity of the region, this is an inherently difficult task. Thus, this study also builds upon recent studies on the tribal regions of Pakistan to contextualize respondents' assertions, and situate them within analyses from other perspectives. Where external research has been integrated, it has been noted for the reader.



Research Process

Field research was conducted over three weeks in September 2012. Semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation were the primary research tools. Researchers were guided by an interview instrument that probed respondent needs, behaviors, and constraints around information and media. Specific events—for example, a factory fire in Karachi, the *Innocence of Muslims* web video, and the 2013 national elections—were used to ground interviews using concrete examples to assess respondents’ access to particular information networks or types of information. The instrument was refined nightly to allow greater exploration into emerging themes and to accommodate for implementation challenges.

For each respondent, researchers completed a structured questionnaire of 31 questions covering key demographic indicators and relevant information and technology behaviors. Researchers conducted ten service trials, participating in relevant information and communication services, and collected one user diary. Photographic documentation was used, where possible, and artifacts from across the region were collected to allow the research team to analyze how communication tools and channels were designed and used in their natural context.

Research synthesis occurred nightly with individual field researchers throughout the field research period, facilitated by the Islamabad-based Reboot and Internews team. Synthesis sessions with the entire research team occurred twice during the fieldwork, at the midpoint and at the end of fieldwork, in Peshawar and Islamabad. Synthesis sessions were comprised of structured exercises to extract relevant observations, identify emerging patterns and themes, surface key insights, and propose recommendations for development programming in FATA.

Desk research was conducted throughout the study to design the research and to verify, contextualize, and supplement primary data. Key informant interviews were conducted with a range of subject matter specialists, including representatives of development organizations; civil society groups; academics and researchers; and media and technology professionals currently or formerly active in the region. This report underwent peer reviews by six development professionals with experience working in the tribal areas of Pakistan, including two who have lived in FATA and/or KPK.

Design Research for Media Development

Finding a human-centered, solutions-oriented approach to be especially suited to inform media development programming, Internews and Reboot developed the handbook “Design Research for Media Development: A Guide for Practitioners” to help development professionals employ design research methodologies in their own work. It features examples from this investigation in Pakistan. The guide and accompanying resources are available at <http://design.internews.org>.

Research Sites

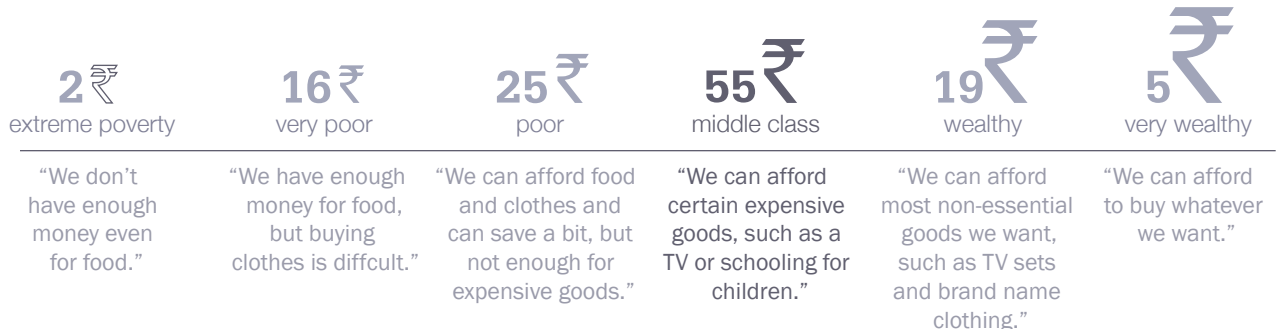
Research sites were located across four of seven agencies in FATA (Khyber, Mohmand, North Waziristan, Orakzai) and three in KPK (Buner, Dera Ismail Khan, and Peshawar).

Sites in KPK were included to account for the challenges of accessing the desired range of respondents in FATA. Given design research’s emphasis on culture, social structure, and context, KPK was identified as the most appropriate extension of the research area due to its cultural continuity with FATA—both regions are predominantly Pashtun, and significant FATA populations have migrated to KPK, with a high concentration in Peshawar. (From a developmental perspective, other regions, such as Balochistan, may more closely resemble FATA.) Inclusion of KPK also allowed researchers to analyze differences in media behavior of people with the same ethnic and cultural heritage, but who reside in areas representing differing levels of security and development.

Research sites were selected based on considerations of known media needs and behaviors in each region, geographic accessibility, and researcher and respondent security. Researchers were deployed to research sites in their home agencies—an intentional strategy to mitigate the dangers associated with traveling in unfamiliar parts of the region. This decision limited the geographic scope of research, but made strategic use of the researchers’ familiarity with their assigned locations.

Sites covered urban, rural, and remote communities, but were biased toward rural, media-deprived regions—with the exception of Peshawar, used as an urban counterpoint—as researchers assumed greater potential for information and media programs to impact development outcomes in such regions.

Financial Situation



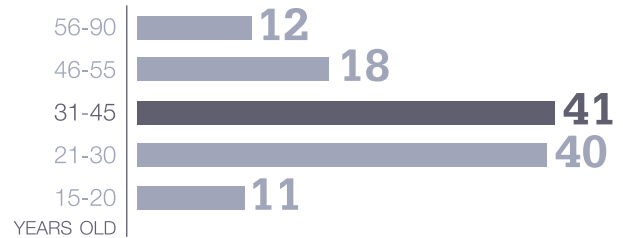
Total Respondents



Locations

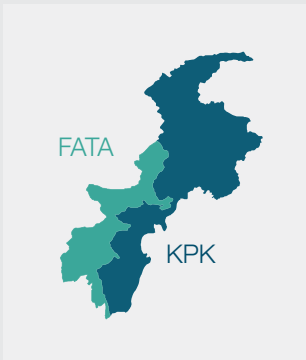


Age



Profession





ORAKZAI

RESPONDENTS:
14 14 men
0 women

MOBILE PHONES:
14 **9** **0**
own and use | also use someone else's | don't own or use

BUNER

RESPONDENTS:
27 25 men
2 women

MOBILE PHONES:
24 **0** **2**
own and use | use someone else's | don't own or use
1 N/A

KHYBER

RESPONDENTS:
5 5 men
0 women

MOBILE PHONES:
5 **0** **0**
own and use | use someone else's | don't own or use

MOHMAND

RESPONDENTS:
26 26 men
0 women

MOBILE PHONES:
23 **1** **2**
own and use | use someone else's | don't own or use

NORTH WAZIRISTAN

RESPONDENTS:
21 20 men
1 woman

MOBILE PHONES:
4 **0** **17**
own and use | use someone else's | don't own or use

PESHAWAR

RESPONDENTS:
26 23 men
3 women

MOBILE PHONES:
24 **1** **1**
own and use | use someone else's | don't own or use

DERA ISMAIL KHAN

RESPONDENTS:
3 3 men
0 women

MOBILE PHONES:
2 **0** **1**
own and use | use someone else's | don't own or use

Afghanistan

Pakistan

Respondents

122 respondents were interviewed for this study, selected using snowball sampling. Respondents represented a wide range of backgrounds and experiences across the regions and included farmers, journalists, housewives, social workers, politicians, taxi drivers, religious leaders, conflict-displaced refugees, traditional rulers, white-collar workers, former militants, and political activists.

Cultural norms made it difficult both to reach female respondents and employ female researchers. Due to these constraints, women represented only five percent of the overall sample, or six respondents. The reported experiences of these respondents were supplemented and verified through interviews with male respondents and desk research. This study does not, however, purport to present the full nuance of gender's influence on the research topics.

Respondents in KPK were, on the whole, more urban than those in FATA—on average, 98 percent of respondents from FATA lived in rural or remote areas, compared to 32 percent of those from KPK. This was primarily due to the extent of research done in Peshawar. They also tended to have greater access to information technology (55 percent of KPK respondents owned a television, compared to 40 percent of those in FATA), and were more frequent users (52 percent of KPK respondents used the internet at least once a week, compared to 26 percent of FATA respondents). On the whole, respondents in KPK were also more open in discussing sensitive topics with researchers, perhaps an outcome of the lessened security risks compared to FATA. This is reflected in the respondent quotes presented in the report, many of whom are from KPK residents. Researchers recognized these differences between respondents in FATA and KPK, and analysis was informed by this understanding.

For a breakdown of respondents by demographics and distribution, see page 16.

Research Team

A team of ten researchers from FATA and KPK conducted the fieldwork. Field researchers were all native to the region. Each spoke fluent Pashto and Urdu, and most had intermediate to advanced competencies in spoken and written English. Researchers underwent a five-day training on design research, conducted by Reboot, in Islamabad and Rawalpindi prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

Due to security restrictions and government regulations, Reboot and Internews staff were unable to conduct field research. Two staff members, one from each organization, managed field data collection from Islamabad, and a Pakistani field manager provided in-field researcher coaching and monitoring, operational support, and quality assurance. A translator supported quality assurance processes by translating and transcribing audio recordings of select interviews to assess quality of documentation, and facilitated synthesis sessions with researchers with more basic levels of English.

Challenges and Biases

Regional insecurity, poor infrastructure, and the unique cultural context influenced the research. The research team took several methodological and operational decisions to address challenges of security and access, which biased the findings. These include using researchers' backgrounds to help select research sites and build the respondent pool. While these minimized security threats to researchers and respondents, it limited the representativeness of the overall sample. Respondents in this study are likely to be more educated and more economically secure than the general population.

Security-related challenges and sensitivities limited respondents' willingness to engage openly with researchers. Even questions such as the radio programs one listened to were interpreted by some respondents to be highly sensitive. Although all researchers were from the areas to which they were deployed, wariness of strangers among the populace was noticeably higher in more conflict-affected agencies. These challenges were mitigated by the recruitment of respondents through researchers' extended social networks, by repeated visits to the same respondents, and by researchers' practice of allowing respondents to 'lead' interviews towards topics they were comfortable discussing. All had the effect of lessening respondent apprehension.

Poor communications infrastructure limited the research managers' ability to maintain consistent communication with the field team. Mobile networks were inconsistent, with connectivity being wholly unavailable in a majority of research sites in North Waziristan and Orakzai. Researchers in these agencies therefore had less iteration in their research topics, as their ability to conduct synthesis with the larger team was highly constrained.

Recognizing the value of design research to develop nuanced understandings of people—but also recognizing the limitations of this sample—field research was supported by secondary research.

Where discrepancies have been significant between the research and the broader literature, they have been identified for the reader. Qualitative research excels at surfacing findings that are invisible to less nuanced methods. Insights surfaced by design research can be probed further for representativeness through survey work, especially if they will inform policy or programs addressing areas with geographic variance.



FATA is one of the most underdeveloped regions of Pakistan. Decades of crisis, underpinned by poor governance and regional conflict, has kept it in a perpetual state of instability, poverty, and isolation. 66 percent of its people live below the poverty line.² Unemployment is between an estimated 60 to 80 percent.³ Only 22 percent of residents—and seven percent of women—are literate.⁴

The region's history has been shaped by its geography. Originally fashioned by colonial military and civil officers catering to foreign interests, FATA was created as a buffer zone between British India and Russia, designed—along with Afghanistan—to block political movements and influences from the czarist empire. Seen as a strategic space, the cultural tribes living in the region were partitioned according to foreign interests.



Present-day FATA is a homeland to three million Pashtun residents and thousands of Afghan refugees spread across 3,000 mostly rural villages and towns.⁵ Particularly since the September 11, 2001, attacks on the US, however, international media has often depicted the region as a training ground for extremists. The political and physical inaccessibility of the region has further contributed to an already-wide gap of understanding between the global community and the people of Pakistan's tribal regions.

Today, the region is effectively a no-go zone for outsiders—and a turbulent home for its residents. In parts of FATA, a diverse range of militant groups continues to threaten stability in the region.⁶ Some groups target civilians; others offer protection. The Pakistani military's relationship with militant groups is complex. They have sought to neutralize some and protect others. Caught up in the conflict, civilians in the region have faced detention, collective punishment, and death as a result of these campaigns.⁷ In some areas, unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, circle overhead 24 hours a day.⁸ US intelligence operations, attempting to defeat Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants, have targeted the region with drones since 2004, killing an estimated 3,300 people.⁹ Survivors and witnesses may be physically scarred and psychologically traumatized. Mass displacement has been another human cost of conflict: as of May 2013, over 1.1 million people have been displaced within northwest Pakistan, with the vast majority originating from FATA.¹⁰

FATA's unique governance structure reflects and reinforces regional instability. The British annexed the tribal areas in 1848, and later established the Frontier Crimes Regulation to give considerable power to local tribal chiefs provided they served the interests of the British Raj. This colonial holdover—which continued through the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947—allows for arbitrary detention and collective punishment and keeps the Pakistani state at arms' length.¹¹ Pakistan's per-capita development spending in FATA is one-third of those in other parts of the country.¹² Critical gaps in essential services and inadequate infrastructure also undermine development.

FATA's tribal system of governance allows for local decision-making and accountability. Jirgas, or decision-making assemblies of elders, settle disputes based on tribal codes of justice. Pashtunwali (“the way of the Pashtuns”), a traditional code of honor, shapes individual and community behavior.

FATA's history of turbulence and semi-autonomous governance has alienated its inhabitants from the rest of Pakistan and contributed to the region's underdevelopment.¹³ Political reforms, however, are under way—although their effects remain to be seen. Since 2011, political parties have been permitted to form and operate in the region; the 2013 national elections were the first time that parties were able to field candidates from FATA under their banners.



Findings



FATA's information landscape is foremost defined by the mainstream media outlets that reach the region, which are limited in their coverage and quality. Media accessibility is an ongoing challenge, a product of infrastructural shortcomings that are compounded by militant attacks.

As a source of useful information, these outlets leave much to be desired. News reports are frequently censored, producing an environment where information that is locally relevant is often not credible and information that is credible is often not locally relevant. Further, coverage of security issues overwhelms all other topics, perpetuating already significant anxieties about security. Rather than informing and educating, FATA's media market is complicit in reinforcing a feeling of powerlessness among the region's residents in the face of tremendous challenges.



Limited Accessibility

FATA is not strictly “media dark.” Pakistan’s broadcast media industry has mushroomed since the liberalization of the media sector in 2002. While the impact of media liberalization has been less pronounced in FATA than in other parts of the country, several national and international media outlets distribute information through radio, television, and newspapers in the region.

50%

the number of FATA residents surveyed who formed their opinions from radio broadcasts

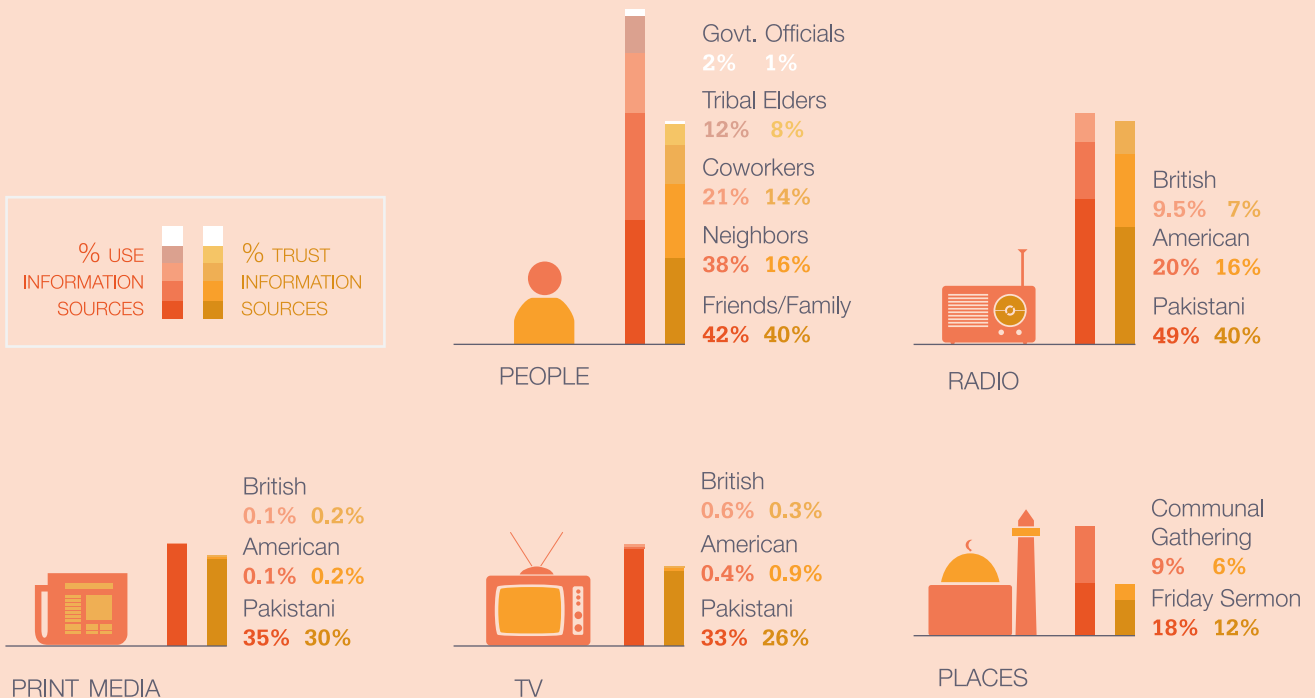
33%

the number of FATA residents surveyed who formed their opinions from television

- *Understanding FATA Vol. V (2012)*, which surveyed 4,000 FATA residents, with equal representation from male and female respondents.¹⁴

TRUSTED INFORMATION SOURCES:

People in FATA gather information from a wide range of sources. With all information sources, however, trust in the source lags behind use.



- *Understanding FATA Vol V (2012)*, pg. 3

Access to many of these outlets, however, remains limited at best, and is often unreliable. In much of the region, only state-owned media is more regularly available. Radio Pakistan is the sole radio station legally permitted to broadcast in the tribal areas. Signal coverage for military relay stations, university stations, and commercial stations exists in some agencies, but respondents did not cite these as news sources they use. And as terrestrial licenses are not granted to commercial television broadcasters, state-owned Pakistan Television is the only news channel accessible without a satellite dish.

Mobile phones, satellite dishes, and internet, all of which are increasingly present in Pakistan's tribal regions, offer the prospect of a greater variety of media reaching the region. But the utility of these technologies as a source of information is also heavily constrained by their limited accessibility. While 64 percent of FATA residents have access to a mobile phone, signals are unreliable.¹⁵ Satellite dishes remain a luxury that is out of reach for many—FATA's USD 250 annual per capita income is half the national average.¹⁶ Internet connectivity is intermittent and not widespread. A 2011 study in Northern and Central FATA found that only five percent of 64 respondents had internet access.¹⁷

Scant infrastructure in FATA extends beyond the information and communications sector. The majority of FATA's 3,000 towns and villages are connected by non-motorable earthen tracks. Periodic floods, droughts, and earthquakes in parts of the region—as well as the four-month long monsoon season—make these roads frequently inaccessible.¹⁸ Inadequate emergency preparedness and response systems mean that natural disasters can often be devastating, and disasters continually prolong and exacerbate the region's isolation.¹⁹

News by SMS

Non-traditional sources of news, such as text message, or SMS, news alert services are gaining ground in FATA. Such services offered by mobile operators Ufone and Telenor, for example, were ranked as highly trustworthy among respondents—on par with similar services from international news outlets such as Al Jazeera. The credibility of SMS-delivered information is often linked to the service provider's brand reputations. "Big companies like Ufone are responsible," said an elderly landlord in Buner. "They will not compromise on their integrity [by providing poor quality information]."

These SMS news services repackage content from a range of news sources and distribute to their subscribers. Mobile operators have neither the mandate nor the resources to produce news information. They are unable, therefore, to provide localized reporting.

Issues of information accessibility are further compounded by the presence of militant groups seeking to control information flows in FATA.²⁰ Militants have attacked radio and cellular towers, disrupting the broadcast capabilities of both international and local news sources, as well as internet cafes. Some militant groups have banned satellite dishes, televisions, and mobile phones, among other technologies, on the premise of restricting Western cultural influence in the region.



“All the time, we have to select [news] topics which have the potential to be linked with terrorism. For example, the simple and general problem of inflation can be linked with the economic depression and destruction caused by terrorism.”

- Radio Producer in North Waziristan, FATA

Limited Relevance

Security issues are pervasive in news reports available to FATA residents. (National and international politics comprise the next set of most-covered topics.) According to a 2012 survey of 24 journalists working in FATA, 56 percent admitted that at least three out of every four of their stories are about terrorism or conflict; a further 25 percent reported that half of their stories are focused on conflict narratives.²¹ Terrorism, explained a radio producer in North Waziristan, is an easy and versatile scapegoat for the region’s underdevelopment. It can be used to explain why the region lacks key infrastructure, education and health services, and employment opportunities. And the issue of terrorism, he said, can also be used to explain why such development challenges cannot be addressed in the near-term.

Yet reporting on terrorism has limited utility in people’s daily lives. Outlets emphasize incidents rather than patterns, challenges rather than solutions. Stories on militant attacks or drone strikes contain limited actionable information to help readers maintain personal security. Further, such incidents are often reported with little political context, with a focus on symptoms over causes. Respondents reported that such reporting left them feeling helpless. Addressing such issues was outside their means, and worrying about security was largely futile.

Respondents therefore preferred to focus on challenges that felt more manageable. They wanted information about possible ways to address endemic unemployment, poor public services, and lack of electricity. “We want to know how to get electricity and roads. We want to know how to get help from government offices,” said a peace committee member in Mohmand. “Where do we find this information?”

Such sentiments are reflected in a 2011 study that asked residents of North and Central FATA to name their most acute problems. Problems with electricity and gas (55 percent of respondents), lack of employment (38 percent), and lack of food or water (34 percent) were identified as the greatest challenges; lack of security and violence by terrorists/militants were each cited by only six percent of respondents.²²

But coverage of topics with direct relevance to people’s daily lives is largely lacking. A 2011 study of newspaper content in FATA found that only six percent of stories reported on development issues broadly, four percent covered education, two percent addressed electricity, and just one percent discussed the local economy.²³

While a handful of outlets cover development issues, their existence is often supported by foreign actors and therefore precarious. Radio Khyber, for example, was launched in 2006 with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and support from the Pakistani government. Programming included Pashto-language news, with content on health, education, and women’s rights, in addition to security-related and religious programming.²⁴ As of April 2013, however, Radio Khyber and two similar stations were at risk of closure. Their USAID funding had run through 2012, and it was unclear whether the FATA Secretariat would sustain them.²⁵



“We promote positivity [by providing] less direct criticism on the negatives ... Sometimes, this means restraining live guests or callers, or even our own anchors, if they support extreme versions of religion or criticize the army.”

- Radio Pakistan Reporter in North Waziristan, FATA

Lacking Credibility

Limited or simplistic news coverage beyond the prevailing security narrative is, in part, a product of strict government regulation of FATA's media. Local journalists are often barred from accessing government records, including information related to state development schemes and development funding.²⁶ As recently as September 2012, many international media outlets and human rights organizations have been denied access to report in the region.²⁷

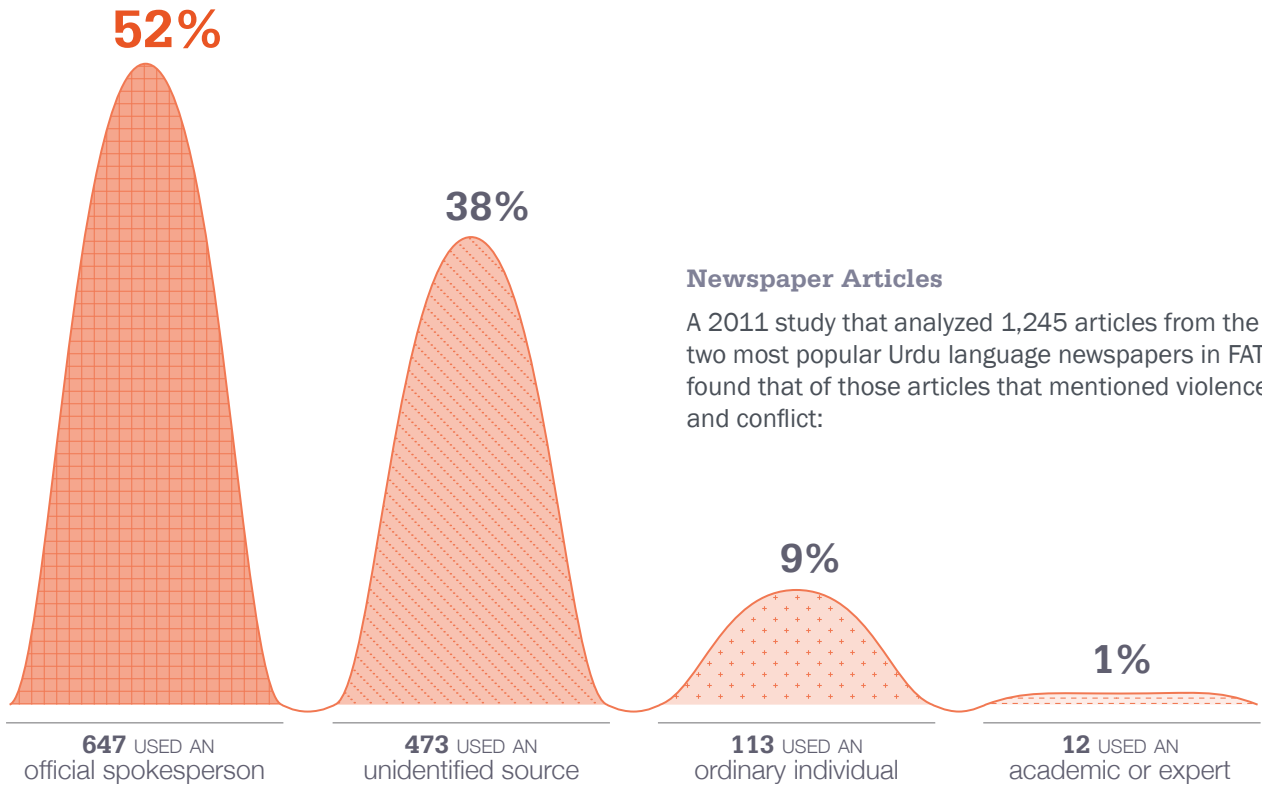
FATA is also notoriously unfriendly to journalists. Accessing sources for local news can be exceedingly difficult. Many journalists face extreme threats to their personal safety. A 2012 survey found that 74 percent of journalists in the region had received

threats in the past year, most commonly from militants and government officials.²⁸

The combination of state control and journalist harassment has created a media market in FATA that is heavily censored, dangerous for journalists, and largely lacking credibility.²⁹ According to one recent report on the subject, “Conformism in news reporting has become the norm, and it is only since the liberalization of the electronic media that some enthusiasm for media independence seems to have resurfaced.”³⁰ This is unsurprising given that Pakistan is ranked 159 out of 179 countries in Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index.³¹

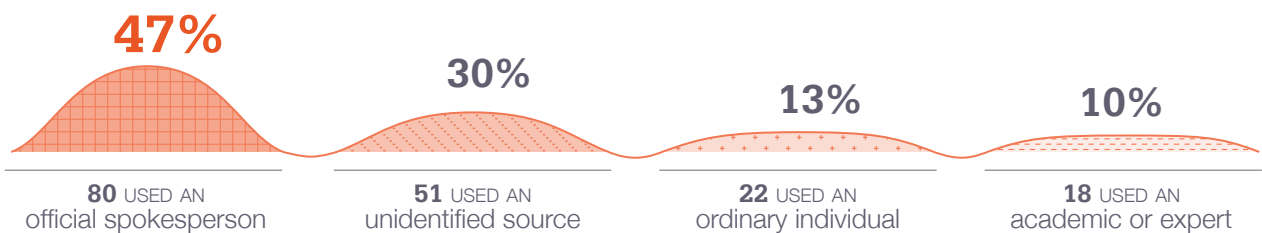
MEDIA IN FATA: Reinforcing Official Narratives of Conflict

Media narratives in FATA are heavily shaped by the state. Beyond industry regulation and journalist intimidation, the government directs the framing and content of reporting through the dominance of its representatives as news sources.



Radio Segments

A 2011 study that analyzed 171 radio segments lasting 1,405 minutes from five different radio stations in FATA found that of those segments that mentioned violence and conflict.³²



Foreign Media in FATA

“[Voice of America’s Radio Deewa] is based in Washington and there, it is all freedom. I saw Hillary Clinton give an excuse that the American government can’t take any action against the blasphemous person [Mark Basseley Nakoula, the creator of the *Innocence of Muslims* web video] because there is absolute freedom of speech in the United States. I am angry about the blasphemous film, but I trust Deewa because this means the station is free and under no pressure from the government like our radio channels [are].”

- Community Elder in Buner, KPK

Many respondents viewed foreign media outlets as more credible than domestic ones. According to a prior survey, Voice of America’s Radio Deewa enjoys 50 percent name recognition in FATA. Name recognition of the BBC, which broadcasts Urdu language programming, is 60 percent, a rate four times higher than in the rest of Pakistan.³³

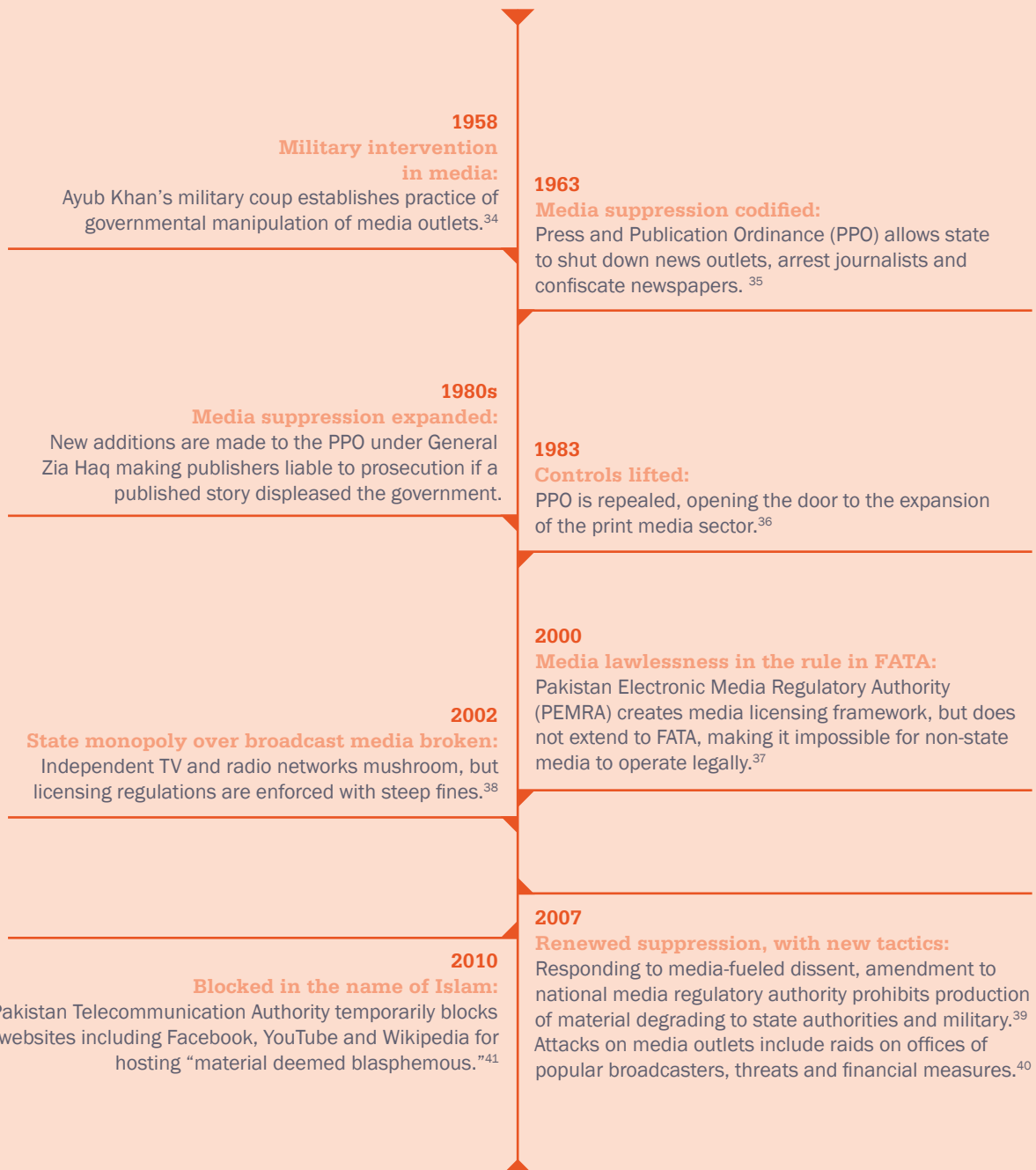
The demand for international sources can be viewed as a reaction to state control of domestic media. While respondents noted that Radio Pakistan was useful for staying informed about the unpredictable curfew schedule and Pakistan Television for learning when national holidays would fall, they universally rejected state media as a source of serious reporting.

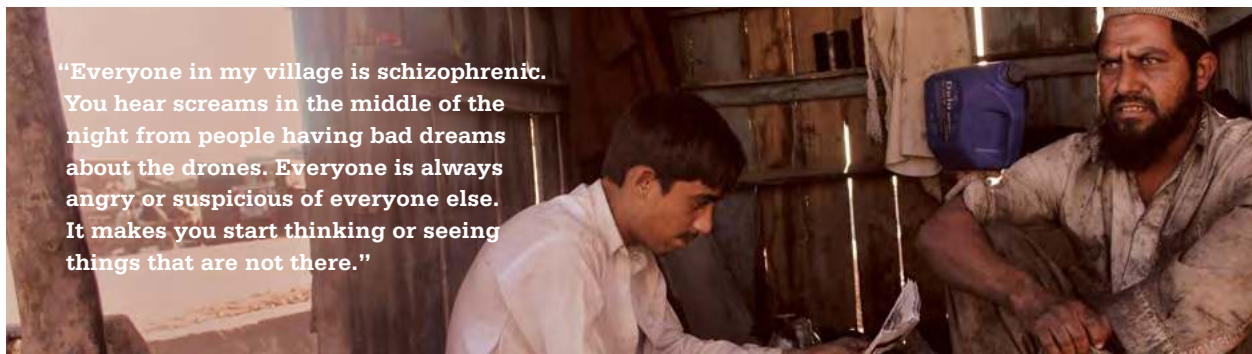
Demand for foreign media sources also stems from an interest in international news, which is often considered more relevant than national news. The Pakistani government has traditionally had little impact on the lives of people in FATA. But news from the United States and India, many believe, may portend changes in their environment given the relationships between those governments and their own.

Still, foreign media outlets have been unable to fill the gap in coverage of local issues, nor are they accessible to all. While respondents praised the credibility of international news, they bemoaned the lack of relevance to their day-to-day lives.

PAKISTAN'S PROFESSIONAL MEDIA: A Brief Timeline

Media freedom has faced an uphill battle in Pakistan since the first news agency, Associated Press of Pakistan, was founded in 1947. A long history of government controls on free speech and media expansion has stunted the development of a vibrant and inclusive media culture in Pakistan and FATA in particular.





“Everyone in my village is schizophrenic. You hear screams in the middle of the night from people having bad dreams about the drones. Everyone is always angry or suspicious of everyone else. It makes you start thinking or seeing things that are not there.”

- 24-Year-Old Man in North Waziristan, FATA

Unmet Information Needs

Across FATA, security anxiety is palpable. Residents train their ears on hints of potential military operations, rumors of suspicious persons, and movements of local militants. The pervasiveness of security issues in the available media perpetuates this anxiety. Communities in the most volatile regions face a constant reminder of being under attack, reinforcing a sense of powerlessness.

Information regarding personal security in a volatile region is only the most obvious of numerous information needs unfulfilled by available media. FATA’s residents deeply desire more information about pathways out of poverty, such as education, better health, and economic opportunities. Where agriculture is a primary means of survival, residents seek information that would help them bring in higher crop yields. Information about electricity issues is similarly needed. In parts of the region, blackouts can stretch for up to 20 hours a day, effectively stifling most economic activity and communications.

This lack of relevant, reliable information in the media to help address local social and development challenges erode FATA residents’ sense of agency over their lives. Analysis found that the emphasis on individual attacks and emergencies, combined with otherwise sparse local reporting, further inhibits people’s understanding of how the decisions of politicians and institutional actors impact them.



The established centers of power and influence in FATA's information landscape are shifting. The ability of tribal leaders, who have traditionally had access to privileged information, to help their communities navigate their daily challenges appears to be diminishing. Religious leaders, long considered opinion shapers, are increasingly viewed as minding their own agendas, rather than working for the population.

Disappointment with these traditional sources of influence is being matched with a rise in the social stock of the educated, the literate, and the technology savvy. These segments of society, as evidenced by youth populations, are able to secure information through new channels, making them increasingly influential actors in their communities.





- Member of Peace Committee in Mohmand, FATA

Disillusionment with Government

As a source of information and support, the government has long lacked credibility among FATA's residents. The image of an unhelpful government in FATA is compounded by poor communications between governing institutions and the communities they ostensibly serve. Respondents felt frustrated and removed from information that could help them access resources to address local and personal challenges. The information that does come from government, primarily through state-owned media, is viewed with suspicion.

As a result, respondents held few positive associations with government. Instead of being a source of useful information and a means to development, many perceive the state's influence on the information landscape as increasing confusion and inhibiting solutions to regional challenges. This disconnect and disillusionment with the state means that FATA's residents must work harder to find information they can trust.

PTI and Modern Political Campaigning in FATA

Disillusionment with government has contributed to an overall ambivalence toward politics and the political process among FATA's residents. This is especially true for rural respondents who are not significantly exposed to political information or politicians arguing for government's relevance.

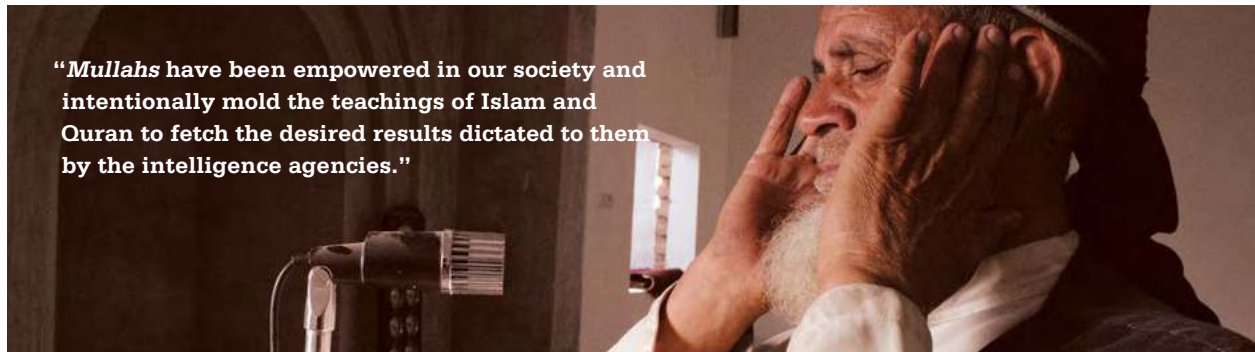
The popularity of Imran Khan and his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), however, offers an interesting counter-example to the general trend of civic disengagement. The party saw its profile rise considerably through its campaign leading up to the 2013 general elections, especially among youth. PTI won 17 percent of the popular vote in 2013, or 28 of 272 contested National Assembly seats, a significant increase from its 2002 results: 0.8 percent of the vote and just 1 seat.⁴² (PTI boycotted the 2008 national elections.⁴³) In FATA, the party won one of 12 seats; in KPK, where PTI was able to campaign more freely, it emerged as the majority and earned the right to form the provincial government.⁴⁴ Khan's history as a cricket

superstar and his Pashtun ethnicity contributed to his appeal, as did his populist message of change.

PTI's ability to generate enthusiasm was, in part, credited to savvy use of information technology. The party used SMS and voice technology extensively in its election campaigning. Text messages invited voters to text or call a number and automatically receive party information on their mobile phones.

The party also made efforts to build personal relationships with voters. Supporters receive membership cards, and many respondents displayed their cards proudly. The experience of being formally recognized as a member of a party had resonance, especially among younger demographics.

PTI's campaign gained traction because it found creative ways to reach and connect with supporters, changing long-established mindsets and behavior in the process.



“Mullahs have been empowered in our society and intentionally mold the teachings of Islam and Quran to fetch the desired results dictated to them by the intelligence agencies.”

- Malik in North Waziristan, FATA

Mistrust in Religious Leaders

Mullahs, religious scholars and leaders, have traditionally been influential actors in FATA’s information landscape. Literate, learned, and well-connected, they served as conveyors of knowledge and shapers of public opinion.

The influence of *mullahs* grew with the national Islamization policy the Pakistani military leadership pursued in the 1970s and 80s. When their role as spiritual leaders connected them to institutions of political power, *mullahs* gained enlarged authority.⁴⁵ Conventional wisdom about FATA suggests that the influence of *mullahs* continues to run deep in the region.⁴⁶ A 2009 study found *mullahs* to be the most trusted figures in FATA society.⁴⁷

But disapproval with *mullahs*’ political activities suggests a widening gap between these leaders and their communities. There’s a sense that these leaders do not understand and are ill equipped to address the problems their people face today. Many *mullahs* are also seen to be cultivating relationships with militants who have opposed widely respected and influential tribal elders to gain control.⁵⁰ Many respondents believed these alliances are indicative of *mullahs* tending their own interests at the expense of peace and security for the people of FATA. By mixing religion with the impure sphere of politics, such relationships also impact their ability to perform their spiritual duties. Disapproving of their dual roles, some respondents said that they continue to obey *mullahs* in public, but are increasingly scornful of them in private.

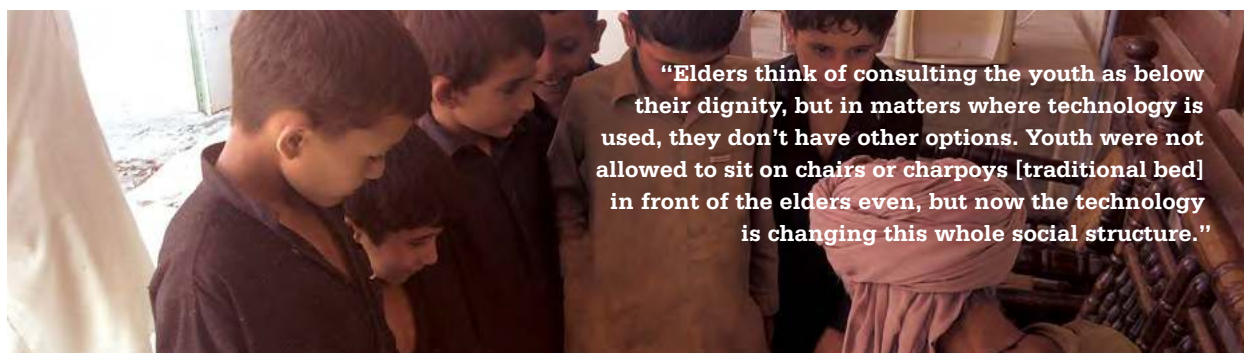
Mullahs in Politics

Mullahs’ official power and political role expanded greatly with the introduction of adult enfranchisement to FATA in 1996. Prior to enfranchisement, *maliks* had been the people’s connection to the government. In 1997 and again in 2002, a large number of *mullahs*, supported by Islamic parties, were elected to the National Assembly to represent FATA. As political parties had been banned from running candidates and holding events in FATA, *mullahs* were able to leverage their traditional platforms to reach a large base of supporters.⁴⁸ With the extension of the Political Parties Act to include FATA in 2011, political competition has greatly intensified in FATA, thus lessening *mullahs*’ previous advantage in regional politics.⁴⁹

“I have multifarious engagements: teaching students, guiding Taliban fighters, asking about relatives, maintaining relationships with intelligence agencies, and participating in the meetings of *shurah*.”

- Mullah in North Waziristan, FATA

Beyond mistrust of their political activities, *mullahs*—similar to other local leaders—are seeing the intractable challenges posed by local militants, drone strikes, and persistent poverty undermine their influence over the population. Lacking the means to provide information or resources that can address pressing concerns of communities, *mullahs* are increasingly one less source of credible, useful information for FATA’s residents. Rather, in the eyes of respondents, they are often one more source of uncertainty and possible misinformation.



“Elders think of consulting the youth as below their dignity, but in matters where technology is used, they don’t have other options. Youth were not allowed to sit on chairs or charpoys [traditional bed] in front of the elders even, but now the technology is changing this whole social structure.”

- Teacher in Buner, KPK

Embrace of Youth

The complexities of gaining access to trustworthy information has elevated the social standing of the educated, the literate, and the technology savvy. As new sources become increasingly—albeit slowly—available, residents are recognizing the value of education in order to access, analyze, and use information. Many respondents believed that educated peers were more trustworthy sources of information, since they were less reliant on news passed by word-of-mouth. According to a public health worker in KPK, educated people—sometimes identified by a ballpoint pen displayed in the front pocket of their *shalwar kameez*—are expected to share news with the illiterate and uneducated at their *hujras*. The ability to read English newspapers is a sign of great prestige.

Youth is the strongest example of a demographic whose social stock is rising as a result of the premium placed on education. Thirty percent of FATA’s residents aged 15 to 24 are literate, compared to 22 percent of the general population.⁵¹ While data on technology penetration rates by demographic are unavailable, anecdotal evidence suggests that the adoption of mobile technologies, internet usage, and social networking has been more rapid among the region’s youth than other age groups.

These skills, coupled with an enthusiasm for technology, have helped young people become essential information sources for their communities. Older residents, including those in traditional positions of power, rely on youth to benefit from new technologies. Several respondents with mobile phones often knew how to use two buttons—“the red and the green”—since they only receive calls. They call on local youth to help navigate the technology and look up useful information. In many areas, youth are increasingly the “eyes and ears” of their communities.

Youth Advocacy

Aware of their rising influence, young people—those aged 15 to 24, and comprising over 60 percent of the national population—are beginning to leverage their newfound power.⁵² Youth groups of all sizes, political orientations, and ambitions have mushroomed. Some are using digital tools in efforts to demand accountability from public institutions.

In Peshawar, one youth group addressed the rising rents in a local neighborhood. The group found contact information for the Peshawar Development Authority and the National Accountability Bureau online and executed a successful advocacy campaign to halt the rent hikes. To those even just one generation removed, this would have been inconceivable without preexisting connections to people in power. Another group, the FATA Youth Forum, aims to encourage youth involvement in shaping FATA. This group has employed Twitter and Facebook to spread its message and support its attempts to push for government policy changes.⁵³ While the field research only surfaced two examples, media reports suggest that there are a diversity of youth groups working in the region on issues such as education, sports and culture, and civic education.⁵⁴

The Pakistani government has formally recognized the importance of youth in shaping society. Its Ministry of Youth Affairs was established in 2005 and runs programs such as essay competitions, computer literacy training, and leadership development, as well as internship and volunteer programs. While the National Youth Policy, passed in 2009, was intended to support the civic and economic development of youth, it has been criticized as an exercise in rhetoric.⁵⁵



Adaptive Behaviors

FATA's residents are hungry for information they can trust. But their primary information sources—including mainstream media and traditional leaders—are severely deficient. To overcome these constraints, residents rely on one another. They test information through social networks and as many trusted sources as they are able to access, but recognize that misinformation is always a possibility. They visit spaces where information is shared, debated, and analyzed. They reach beyond borders through personal connections to get information from free and informed sources. In all these processes, they adopt and adapt technologies both old and new to keep information flowing.

The social nature of information exchange in FATA, however, can be simultaneously enabling and limiting. Information passed from person to person through multiple retellings introduces error and bias, and places people even further from reliable news. This challenge is particularly acute for those who face significant restrictions on the information they are able to access, such as women and those who are illiterate.



Fact-Checking for Credibility

Recognizing the limitations of the media available to them and the biases of their sources, FATA's residents are highly skeptical consumers of information. Respondents spent considerable time and energy attempting to verify news reports and assess the utility of the information they receive.

Processes for triangulating information vary from person to person, but are often based on one's beliefs about the trustworthiness of media outlets, strength of social networks, and ability to use technological resources. But there are some common steps that residents use to verify important news.

Ask: "Is my information source an eyewitness?"

FATA's residents tend to place the most faith in those who can report news firsthand; they are seeking information from those with personal experience of events. Despite the potential for misinterpretation, people accept that distortions occur as news is passed from source to source.

Consider other indicators of source quality.

These might include whether information is coming from a foreign or local source, a household name or an unknown outlet. These indicators help further determine the extent to which a source is credible.

Consider the medium.

Some residents trust live television broadcasts more than newspaper stories because the process of writing a story offers more opportunities to alter facts or introduce bias. Others prefer newspaper stories to check facts, citing the high level of detail available in printed stories. The medium matters.

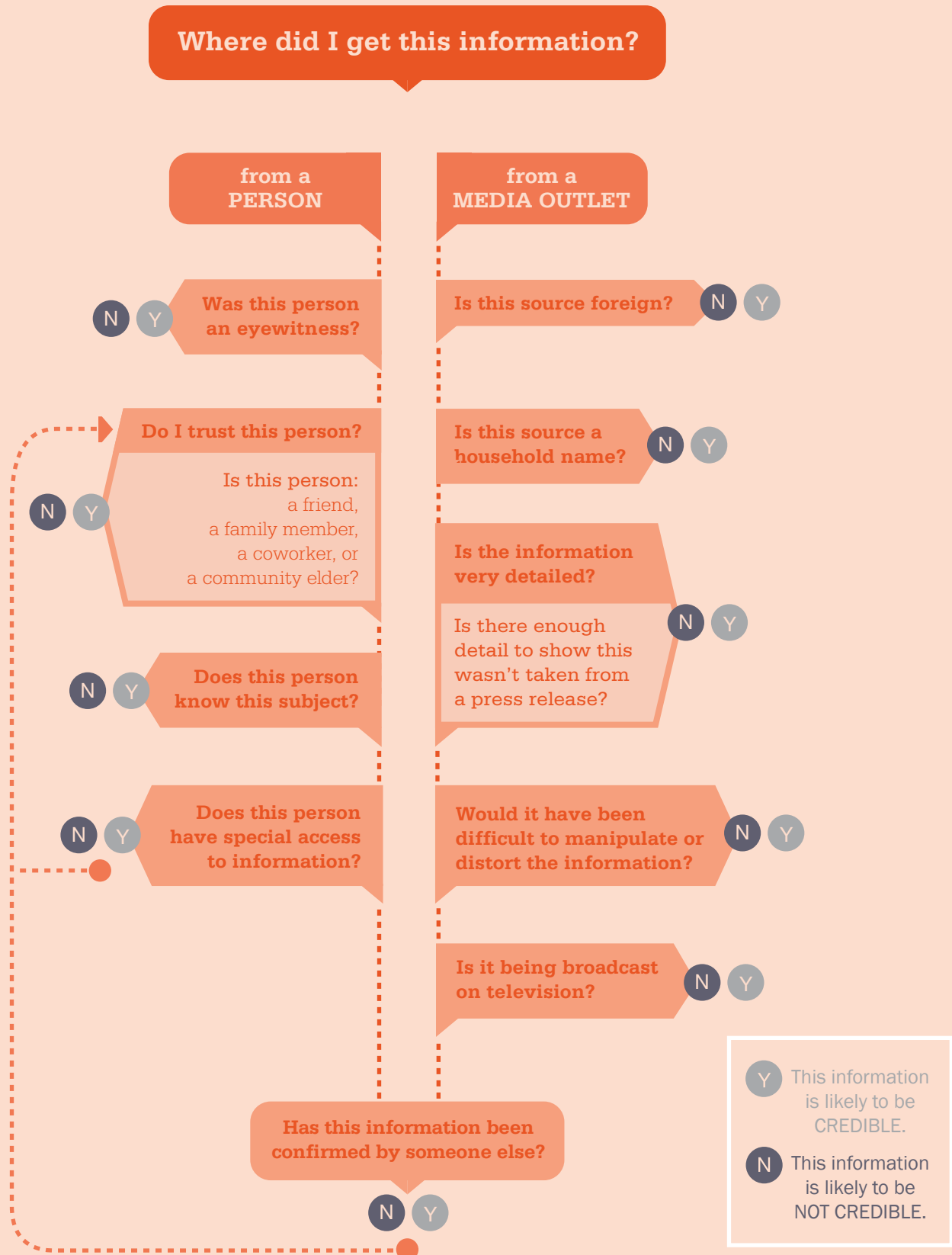
Look at the particulars.

The volume of details provided in a news story can be a key indicator of "quality journalism" for many. Often, news pieces are lifted directly from press releases, with spartan accounts of the events being reported. For many of FATA's residents, fact-filled stories are therefore indicative of quality journalism.

Ask around, repeatedly.

For important stories, FATA's residents seek certainty by triangulating multiple reports. They usually rely heavily on family, friends, and other contacts, as well as different media sources, to discuss interpretations before coming to their own conclusions.

“Is this information credible?”





CASE STUDY:

Going Viral in FATA: The *Innocence of Muslims* Video

During this study's field research in autumn 2012, a YouTube video denigrating the prophet Muhammad sparked outrage across the Muslim world. News of the video went viral, sparking protests throughout Pakistan. Analyzing the ways respondents found, verified, and assessed news of the video revealed larger patterns of how FATA residents interpret information.

Among our respondents, news of the video spread primarily through social networks and mass media sources. To verify the news, respondents typically checked at least three additional sources—other people, newspapers, radio, or the internet, for example—before accepting the video as fact.

Respondents, for the most part, lacked the ability to research the film and related themes, such as free speech, that may have helped them piece together

the story. YouTube was blocked in Pakistan shortly after the release of the *Innocence of Muslims* video; no respondents actually saw the film. They interpreted the meaning of the video based on their own understanding of media freedom in Pakistan and the West.

Considering the routine state control of media in their own country, many were angry that the United States had not banned the movie. "The US has freedom of media, but surely there are limitations," said a 40-year-old man in Islamabad, explaining the popular reactions across Pakistan. "The release of this video, made by an American, must have been sanctioned by President Obama; any other explanation is inconceivable to us."

Trusting Mobile Sources

Personal mobility in many parts of FATA is heavily restricted due to regional insecurity. In the most conflict-prone areas, residents fear leaving their homes. Women are especially limited in their mobility. Those who follow the practice of *purdah* are unable to leave their homes without permission from their husbands and an escort.

People who can move throughout the region seek opportunities to access information that is otherwise unavailable. In North Waziristan, some residents travel nearly 40 miles—a few hours' journey on bad roads—to receive a mobile signal so that they can

send and receive text messages. Those with the resources may go to larger cities, such as Peshawar, to surf the internet and read news from a range of sources.

FATA residents with geographic mobility, therefore, have become valuable conduits of information. Similarly, the roughly fifty percent of FATA's population living outside of the region temporarily as either migrant workers or displaced persons play important roles as information suppliers.⁵⁶



TRAVELING MERCHANTS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Retailers and service people provide more than just their products or services. They also carry responsibility for gathering information about their field to inform their customers. A fertilizer salesman, for example, is expected to collect and share agricultural best practices. Community health workers provide information about health services and news from the next town. While such practices exist in other contexts, the lack of mobility of FATA's residents increases their reliance on such traveling merchants.



TAXI AND TRUCK DRIVERS

Both local taxi drivers and long-haul truck drivers are considered valuable sources of information, since they bring eyewitness accounts from other towns or regions. Drivers also network with other drivers; fuel stops and taxi stands are key points for information exchange. In addition to providing news, drivers may deliver messages between loved ones or advise smugglers on the presence of police roadblocks.



DIASPORA POPULATIONS

The Pakistani diaspora is approximately seven million people.⁵⁷ Many from FATA travel to find work outside of the region. With greater access to communication channels such as the internet and a diversity of news media, migrants often find out about events in FATA before their families. Upon hearing bad news, many call home immediately. A man in Orakzai said that in the past, if his phone rang at 4 AM, his first thought would be, "What has happened to someone I love?" But now, he says, when a ringing phone wakes him in the night, he worries that the call may be from abroad. He answers the phone wondering, "What might be happening to me?"



NOMADIC WOMEN

The Islamic practice of *purdah* (female seclusion) restricts many women from leaving their homes. Women also lack access to social outlets, such as *hujra*, and husbands may not discuss news with their wives. The information available to many women is limited to that which comes to them. In some areas, such as parts of North Waziristan, nomadic women are important information sources for other women. These nomads—notably from the Afghan Kuchi tribe—are not restricted by the same codes of behavior, and go door-to-door selling household items. While imperfect information sources, these traveling saleswomen may bring local gossip, security updates, or messages from others.

Seeking Safe Spaces

Given that access to information in FATA often depends on social contact, physical spaces to congregate and discuss news are vital to the flow of information. But gatherings in FATA involve risks: In conflict-prone areas, drone strikes are known to target groups of people. According to a 2012 study, fears of such attacks have undermined general community trust and diminished long-standing traditions of social gatherings, including attendance of funerals and participation in educational and economic opportunities.⁵⁸ Concern of militant informants within communities also reduces what people feel comfortable saying when they do meet in public.

In this tense atmosphere, FATA's residents continue to use public spaces to share information, but they do so less freely and restrict their conversations, thereby limiting information exchange.



HUJRAS: In Decline as Traditional Hubs

Hujras have long been centers of conversation and debate. These community meeting places are typically hosted by a well-to-do family or tribal unit and shared by community members. Members are mostly close relatives, although others from the neighborhood are welcome. Men often spend anywhere from one to three hours at *hujras* nightly.

Respondents named diverse conversation topics: on a given night, discussions may touch on American foreign policy, employment opportunities, the Pakistani Army, terrorist recruitment tactics, agriculture tips, operations in Afghanistan, and day-to-day local happenings. Many *hujras* have a television, sparking discussions around broadcast news.

In some parts of the region, people continue to visit *hujras* as they always have. On the whole, however, *hujras* seem to be decreasing in popularity and becoming more private. Conversations at *hujras*, some respondents said, are increasingly limited in acceptable topics or are otherwise strained, reflecting people's anxiety about sharing thoughts in public. In areas where expressing the wrong opinion to the wrong audience can have fatal consequences, people are nervous to converse freely, even in familiar company.

The increasing availability of other sources of information has also diminished the popularity of *hujras*. Young people in particular, who often have greater access to other technology-enabled information sources, rely less on *hujras* to meet their information needs.



MOSQUES: Growing in Influence

In areas under militant control, the apparent decrease in *hujras*' popularity may also reflect the pressure on residents to be visibly religious.

Islam is central to the identities of many in FATA, and religious practice is an important part of daily life. But in religiously conservative regions of FATA, appearing devout is increasingly tied to security. In some rural areas, an obvious lack of religious devotion (such as being clean-shaven) can draw suspicion. Respondents reported growing beards and developing prayer bumps—marks on the forehead of a Muslim that gradually develop from contact with the prayer mat—to signal devotion and to evade unwanted attention from those who seek to enforce extremism.

“We grow beards or develop [prayer bumps] to signal, ‘I’m religious,’ because there’s pressure to appear religious. You don’t know who is judging you.”

- Computer Engineer, 28, Mohmand Agency

Spending time at the mosque helps people broadcast their religious devotion. When faced with the choice of spending the afternoon at their usual *hujra* or showing their face at the local mosque, residents may choose the latter to send the correct signal to whoever might be paying attention. While mosques are undoubtedly important places for conversation and exchange on topics people care about, conversations at mosques are necessarily limited.



BARBER SHOPS: Democratizing Information Exchange

Spaces for conversation that may be under less scrutiny than either *hujras* or mosques are gaining importance, even if they do not serve as replacements. Barber shops are one example of a public space that serves a second function as a popular site for information exchange.

While *hujras* are becoming increasingly insular and exclusive, the diversity found at a barber shop is significant. All men—rich and poor, educated and uneducated—go to the barber. Research from both FATA and KPK showed that this is an environment ripe for information exchange. There are often newspapers, radios, and sometimes televisions in the shops, prompting discussion among those waiting for haircuts and facilitating debate among the diversity of voices present. Literate men may read newspapers aloud to fellow customers who cannot read, and educated customers share their viewpoints and interpretations of the news.

The barbers themselves are also a valued information source for many residents. Commonly seen as accessible and well-informed about local news because they converse with a wide range of people daily, some barbers now see information provision as part of the service they provide. One in Khyber told us: “I am a computer where people feed and receive information.”

Others see barber shops as hubs of gossip rather than credible news. For these residents, the open atmosphere and loose talk only spreads hearsay. This underscores the difficulty that people in FATA have in getting quality information if access to news is mainly through social sources.

Repurposing “Old” Technology

Overstating the limits of technology in FATA is difficult. While in urban areas, technology is increasingly available and widely used—especially among young people—long, enduring electricity blackouts render much technology useless. DSL internet networks also do not yet exist in the region’s cities, and even DSL is a big leap—many rural areas still lack mobile networks.

In addition to infrastructural challenges, the presence of militants contributes to widespread nervousness about the consequences of using technology.

Residents fear digital communications might be monitored by intelligence agencies, militants, or other actors, which limits what they say on these channels.

To overcome these constraints, residents of FATA have been resourceful in using the technology that is more readily available to them.

To get around the lack of mobile networks...



Walkie-talkies, or *mukhabera*, are popular. They are relatively cheap, quick, and work to a range of 30 kilometers. A heavy user will spend about Rs. 100 (USD 1.02) every week on batteries, and leave the device on at all times, just as others may do with mobile phones. People set appointments to tune into the same frequency at the same time. Groups of friends select frequencies to “hang out”, a particularly effective strategy at night, when there is less traffic on the networks.

Because there is no way to know who else might be tuning into the line—some respondents reported listening to local militants making plans over the radio networks—many adopt nicknames to protect their identities and use code words when discussing sensitive topics.

To get around the monitoring of communications...



Respondents record messages on cassette tapes and send them with friends or others, such as taxi drivers. Cassettes were used by respondents in conflict-prone areas. Each cassette costs Rs. 40 (USD 0.41). They are largely used for long-distance communication or for sharing information considered too personal or sensitive to convey via mobile, walkie-talkie, or pay-per-use phone facilities. Where available, these channels are considered to be vulnerable to surveillance by security or militant forces or to the curiosity of strangers.

To get around the ban on TV in conservative areas...



Respondents reported that some people have taken to hiding satellite television antenna dishes in their homes, balancing a fear of militants against a desire to be connected. But increasingly, mobile phones are a viable source of videos, music, and other entertainment—and are much easier to conceal than televisions. The spread and adoption of Bluetooth technology has provided an effective means of securely sharing content, expanding opportunities to exchange information within FATA and to bring news or entertainment from outside the region.

Despite the challenges and risks, there is widespread excitement about new technology. Those that are getting online, for example, describe the thrill of experiencing different viewpoints and seeking information beyond what their immediate circle of contacts can know.

Remitting Technology to FATA

Migrant laborers are driving technology adoption in FATA. Along with food and money, people are now sending technology home to their families. Once exposed to new communication technologies and tools abroad, such as Skype, many members of the diaspora

encourage their families at home to use them as well. Some may pay for their families to, where available, install an internet connection or bring home more advanced mobile phones when they visit.



Opportunities



Access to high quality, reliable, and locally relevant information is a crucial driver of development the world over. Good information facilitates a climate of awareness, understanding, and certainty, empowering individuals to meet the challenges of their environment with a sense of agency. For FATA's residents, the stakes for finding actionable information are especially high: they need this information to navigate the great uncertainty, pervasive suspicion, and ever-present challenges of their environment.

Low quality mainstream media, the shifting nature of social influence, and other challenges to access undermine people's ability to get the information they need. To overcome the inadequacies of FATA's information landscape, residents rely on one another in creative ways to find actionable information. The adaptive behaviors employed by FATA's residents to meet their information needs are instructive for development practitioners looking to offer locally relevant programs.





Design Recommendations

This section offers ideas for practitioners on how to support development in FATA, drawing upon findings from this research. It also features a sample program concept that integrates several recommendations to illustrate how they might work together. The further development of these recommendations will require the prototyping, testing, and iteration of program concepts, using a process that closely involves both the people of FATA and media and development specialists. The ideas presented here may contain useful guidelines for improving existing programming as well.

While this section is focused primarily on supporting FATA's development by improving its information landscape, the ideas within are valuable for the broader governance and development community seeking to design impactful programs in the region.



The Importance of Trust

Establishing trust among communities is essential to the success of any development program. In FATA, the crucial element of trust becomes even more central. A culture of mistrust bred by regional insecurity has implications for development actors as well: programs face a high bar in demonstrating their credibility.

Recognizing that lost trust means lost opportunity, practitioners should place a premium on establishing and maintaining program integrity. To do this, they must incorporate a close understanding of the way that trust operates in FATA society—where trust is centered and how trust is built, transferred, and degraded.

People in FATA seek certainty and reliability above all else, and go to great lengths to establish the veracity of information. Practitioners should expect programs to be highly scrutinized and evaluated by communities wary of misleading information and empty promises.

Practitioners should therefore carefully consider the question, “What can my program reasonably be relied on to deliver?” and design program elements and messaging around the honest answer.



Provide constructive outlets for existing passions and capacities.

Journalists and media outlets in FATA are severely constrained. Programs should look beyond the media sector to leverage non-traditional actors and channels that have the desire, motivation, and ability to support the production of quality news.

Programs can draw on the **motivation, access, and behaviors of the diaspora**. Once they leave FATA, members of the diaspora generally have greater access to information sources and technology. Most remain in frequent contact with family and friends back home, and retain a deep sense of obligation to their home communities. These factors make them strong potential assets for development initiatives.

Programs may capitalize on the interest of diaspora members and seek the investment of their talents, resources, and networks. Opportunities may also arise from their existing habits. Diaspora transit hubs, for example, may serve as information distribution points. Information targeted at hard-to-reach populations may be carried by migrant workers who are on their way home. Similarly, these hubs also present opportunities for distributing news from remote areas of FATA via individuals when they travel outside FATA.

Programs can also **leverage the drive, resources, and technical ability of FATA's youth**. Much like their counterparts around the world, young people in FATA are impatient for social change, seek to build social capital, and are early adopters of technology. Unemployment is also high among youth in the region; many seek productive and income-generating ways to spend their time. These traits make youth in FATA attractive candidates for supporting development programs.

The Pakistani Diaspora

The Pakistani diaspora is seven million people strong.⁵⁹ Domestically, cities such as Karachi have significant Pashtun populations. Internationally, there are high concentrations in the Persian Gulf states.

The diaspora provides significant financial support to loved ones at home. In 2010, remittances from overseas Pakistani totaled USD 9.4 billion, five percent of national GDP.⁶⁰ In 2010, remittances to KPK—which, like FATA, is almost exclusively Pashtun—comprised 9.4 percent of household income in the region.⁶¹

Diaspora members have started numerous organizations and projects to support development in Pakistan. These include: the Quilliam Foundation, a counter-extremism think tank; Khudi, a youth-driven advocacy organization; IMPAK, which manages volunteer place-

ments for diaspora youth; and the Pakistani American Public Affairs Committee, a US-based lobbying group.

There are several diaspora networking groups producing and sharing information and program-related content. One, PakAlumni Worldwide, has over 1,300 members that share news, engage in discussions, and socialize around any number of topics related to Pakistan and the diaspora experience. Activity on the site, however, is sporadic and dominated by a few users.

Diaspora networks on Facebook see more active engagement. The Pakistan-US Alumni Network, which seeks to promote cross-cultural understanding between Pakistan and the US, boasted over 2,900 members on Facebook in June 2013.⁶³ On average, users post five to ten pieces of content to the page each week.



Foster analysis that illuminates structural challenges and paths to development.

To learn about local news, many of FATA's residents must piece together hearsay and read between the lines of state-biased media reports. As a result, information consumers receive only partial stories that prevent an understanding of the big picture. Programs can bridge this gap both by improving local capacities for producing quality news and analysis, and facilitating local conversations around structural issues impacting the region's development.

Capacity development programs should **train information providers to analyze, not just report on, news**. Though the region's journalists face dire threats to their personal security, they are eager to improve their craft and produce in-depth original reporting. Programs that provide training on objective reporting, investigation, and responsible analysis can improve the ability of professional and citizen journalists alike to expand their lens beyond the security situation, illuminating evolving social patterns and diagnosing structural challenges. These trainings should be tailored to address gaps in news coverage identified by FATA's residents. At the same time, any programs to encourage or support journalism must proactively seek ways to protect the safety of journalists, their sources, content distributors, and program staff.

Programs can also **seed conversations about the role of institutions in regional development**. Information about participating in elections, for example, can be used to initiate dialogue about the role and responsibilities of the Pakistani state in addressing regional needs. Armed with information about the political process and a conceptual link between national institutions and local development, FATA's residents may have greater incentive to seize opportunities for political participation to influence development in FATA.



Leverage indigenous hacks in program design and distribution.

People in FATA fill holes in their information landscape with diverse and creative mechanisms for obtaining and sharing news. Programs can tap into these innovative uses of technology, gathering spaces, and social networks to increase reach and accessibility.

Development programs can consider judicious ways to make use of the **compact, easily shareable, and discreet vessels** that FATA's residents already use to store and share information. Tools like cassette tapes and Bluetooth-enabled mobile phones work without network connectivity and steady power sources, and are more widely affordable. They can be loaded with useful information and distributed through branching social networks, reaching many information seekers quickly. Additionally, these devices are also more private. Unlike televisions, for example, which for many are only available in communal spaces, their usage does not require participation in public forums. These features make them especially valuable in FATA's environment of widespread mistrust.

Programs should also consider ways to **employ trusted citizen sources** to disseminate information. People that can cut across geographic barriers to bring eyewitness accounts of local events, or across social barriers to access and synthesize diverse perspectives, are valued information sources. Barbers, for example, could be used as information delivery agents, and their shops as distribution sources. Drivers could be used to collect and disseminate information across diverse geographies and populations. Despite the access they provide, practitioners should exercise caution in employing these sources. As they may provide biased or incomplete information, programs should include mechanisms to manage their ability to influence or adapt content.

The Role of Technology

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) have the potential to play a transformative role in FATA's development. But their use in daily life—not to mention development programs—remains limited for many. Face-to-face communication is, by and large, still the norm. In addition to examining the opportunities presented by ICTs, programs should also consider how their use may hinder people's understanding, trust, and usage of a particular program.

ICT-supported programs should consider ways to incorporate a "human touch" to increase their resonance. As PTI's popular elections campaign demonstrated (see page 33), familiar, human factors—in this case, "calling" all users to relay a pre-recorded voice message—help alleviate the discomfort with new and otherwise alien tools.



Build a credible brand through transparency and savvy partnerships.

Establishing brand credibility requires more than strategic messaging and careful wording. In FATA, organizations have to overcome mistrust bred through negative experiences with outside actors—and Western organizations in particular. Development actors can demonstrate trustworthiness through open and fluid communications and strategic affiliation with established brands.

Organizations must **clearly communicate programming goals and processes** to the communities they serve. People in FATA want to know the behind-the-scenes stories of programs: the principles, rationale, and decisions underpinning initiatives in their communities. Providing answers to these questions through easily accessible channels is critical to winning their participation. Thoughtful messaging is, however, also crucial to managing the risks posed by actors hostile to outside interference in the region. Organizations need to evaluate the benefits of transparency against the risks and consider carefully how disclosures may be perceived.

Programs can also establish credibility by **affiliating with established brands with regional presence**. These include private sector actors beyond media entities, such as mobile operators Telenor and Ufone, which have established consumer trust in the region. Even in tumultuous times, these firms are a local, constant presence in many parts of FATA. Such partnerships can have long-term payoffs as well. As stabilization and development in FATA make a stronger case for private sector investment in the region, having established partnerships with companies that perceive a core business interest in providing programmatic support can be a path towards sustainability.

Programs should also **communicate through multiple channels**. Given regional challenges around information access and people's habits for information triangulation, disseminating content across a variety of channels—local and international, on a range of media platforms—is important. Repeated sightings in multiple sources will enhance the perceived credibility of information.



Revamp organizational policies for responsiveness and learning.

To succeed in FATA requires creativity. While practitioners may be eager to design programs that are uniquely able to meet beneficiary needs, institutional policies and procedures may create hurdles to innovation.

Organizations may need to **revise policies and operational structures to accommodate collaboration with smaller and/or independent actors.** Trusted citizens—such as diaspora members, truck drivers, barbers, and traders—may be well suited to help deliver critical services to hard-to-reach communities, but engaging such actors may be difficult under many organizations’ operational policies. Organizations, from donors down, may need to revise policies and practices in areas such as procurement and financial control to enable flexibility and right-fit approaches, while maintaining appropriate levels of risk management.

Programs should also **develop appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to understand programmatic impact.** Linear approaches such as tracking quantitative outputs (e.g. number of journalists trained) have limited ability to explain why programs succeed or fail. Given the dynamic, complex nature of information ecosystems, organizations may consider alternatives. Qualitative or ethnographic approaches may be better suited to explain changes resulting from programs or to understand reasons why they fall short of expectations. The impact of investigative journalism training, for example, will ripple out and affect the information landscape in ways not easily captured by common approaches to impact evaluation. In this case, the perspectives of news producers and consumers will be critical to understanding programmatic impact.

The Development Landscape in FATA:

Development efforts in FATA center on supporting peace and preventing radicalization in the region. Programs for conflict resolution and peace building, democracy promotion, and supporting conflict-affected populations receive the majority of development funding.

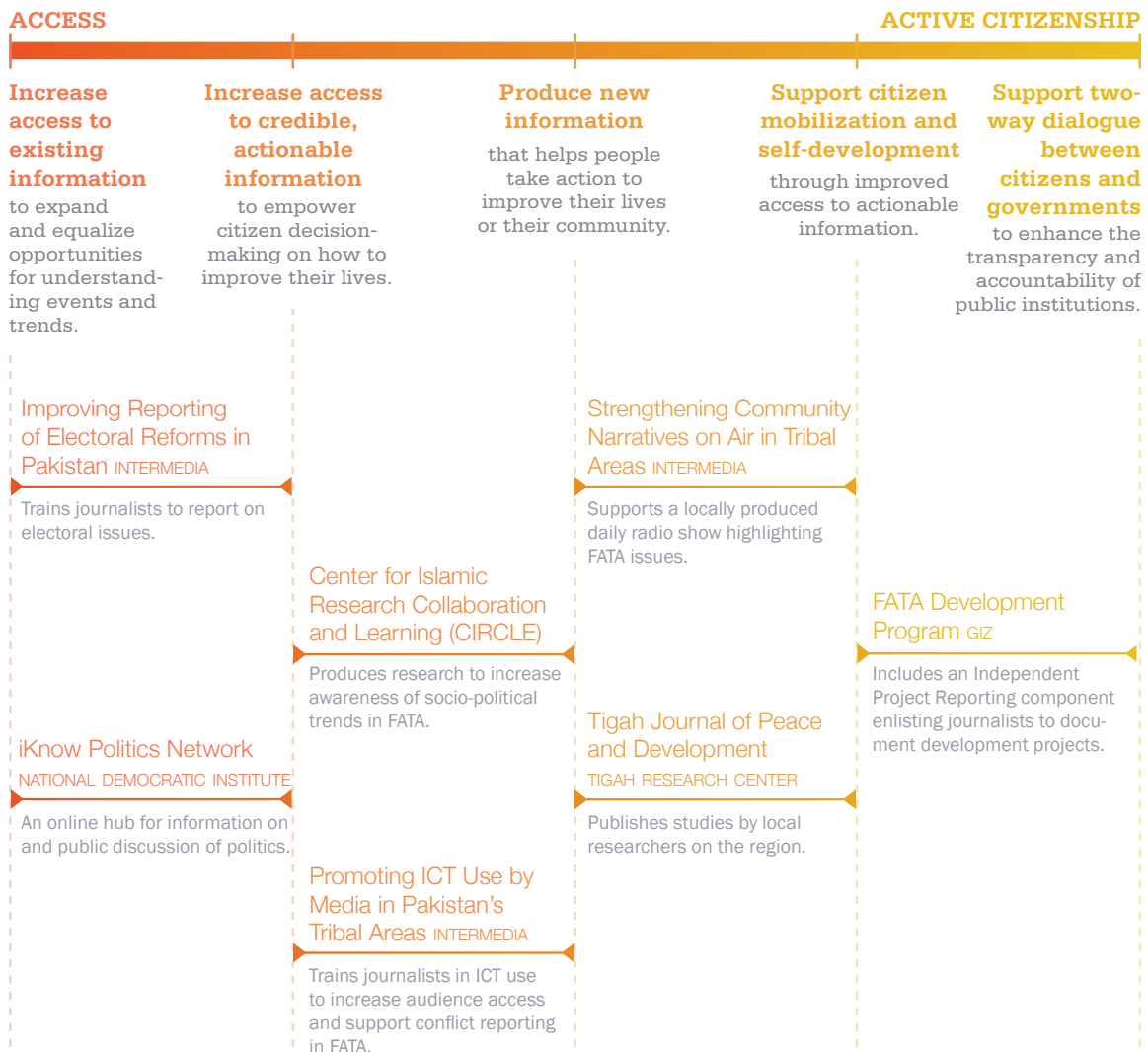
Media development efforts in the region similarly support these objectives. USAID, the World Bank, and UNDP, for example, have all invested significantly in increasing citizens’ access to political information and their engagement with public institutions. These efforts support broader governance programs in the region.

Media Development in FATA: From Access to Active Citizenship

Programs promoting media development and information access in FATA tend to fall on a spectrum. These range from programs connecting people to existing information and helping them make use of existing resources, to supporting their use of new information and holding public institutions to account.

This spectrum reflects the fact that people need to be informed before they can begin a dialogue with their institutions about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. It shows how media development programming can progressively build toward this dialogue, with empowering individual access to information as a first step.

Current media development efforts in FATA are mostly concentrated toward the left side of this spectrum, with several initiatives seeking to expand media access and/or improve the quality of available information. A number of journalist training initiatives, including for non-traditional media actors and marginalized citizens, particularly women, also exist. Finally, there are efforts to support news production and the development of an enabling environment for independent media. Projects in this last category include new media initiatives, impact evaluations of existing programming, and advocacy for journalists' rights.





Design Concept

What might these ideas look like in practice? This programmatic concept incorporates several recommendations to illustrate their applications and potential.



INTRODUCING FATA INFO:

What It Is:

FATA Info—or FATA Khparawanay in Pashto, with ‘khparawanay’ meaning both ‘information’ and ‘broadcasting’—provides reliable and locally relevant news, information, and analysis on FATA. Information is managed through a platform with both web and mobile interfaces to help individuals with a range of technical resources and capabilities use the service. An online content management system helps FATA Info structure and manage workflows around information requests.

How It Works:

FATA Info sources questions contributed by people in FATA, which are prioritized by a network of users. FATA Info’s contributors then research, analyze, and package responses to these questions, working with individuals based in FATA to improve the accuracy of responses. Contributors are individuals, largely drawn from FATA’s diaspora and youth populations, who are motivated to support the region’s development and have basic technical competencies.

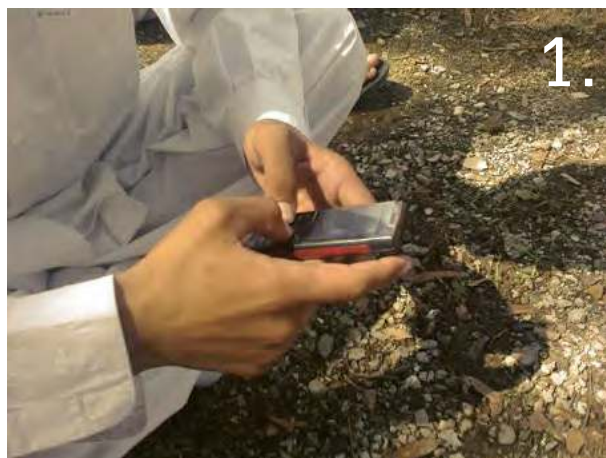
Once information requests are fulfilled, users can distribute responses through multiple channels, including phone and Skype conversations, social media, and partnerships with media. For topics where there is significant interest and sufficient data, collated and verified responses can be recorded and distributed via channels such as Bluetooth-enabled devices or cassette tapes to reach individuals with greater restrictions on their information technology use.

Who is Involved:

Role	Functions	Motivation for Using FATA Info
Information Requesters and Information Recipients Residents of FATA	Submit requests for information online or via SMS, personally or with the assistance of others Vote for the questions or topics they feel are most urgent or important, and that should be addressed by FATA Info	Want information that is useful in their daily lives Want to understand the drivers of regional challenges Want agency in determining the information available about FATA
Producers Members of FATA Diaspora	Solicit information needs from families and friends in FATA via regular communications Collaborate to find, collate, analyze, and package responses to information requests Distribute FATA Info information to their networks	Want to support loved ones in FATA Want to build social capital by being a conduit to quality information
Verifiers Local Youth in FATA	Provide or verify information about their local area Distribute FATA Info information to their networks	Want to build social capital within their communities and online Want to support the development of their communities and region Want to earn an income
Consumers & Contributors Journalists	Gather story ideas (from submitted questions) and potential sources (from the online community) See examples of in-depth reporting and analysis about diverse topics of relevance to FATA Publish reporting anonymously in response to information requests	Want to identify topics of interest to audiences in FATA Want to understand how to analyze events in FATA Want to share information about FATA without fear of censorship or negative consequences
Distributors Local & International Media Outlets	Distribute content sourced through FATA Info via new or existing programming	Want to get and distribute news about FATA in spite of regulatory and operational constraints
Trainers & Monitors Program Management Organization (Temporary)	Build capacities of FATA Info contributors to conduct research and analysis, develop source networks, conduct quality assurance, and package and distribute information Raise funding for the development and maintenance of FATA Info	Want to support development in FATA

FATA INFO STEP-BY-STEP

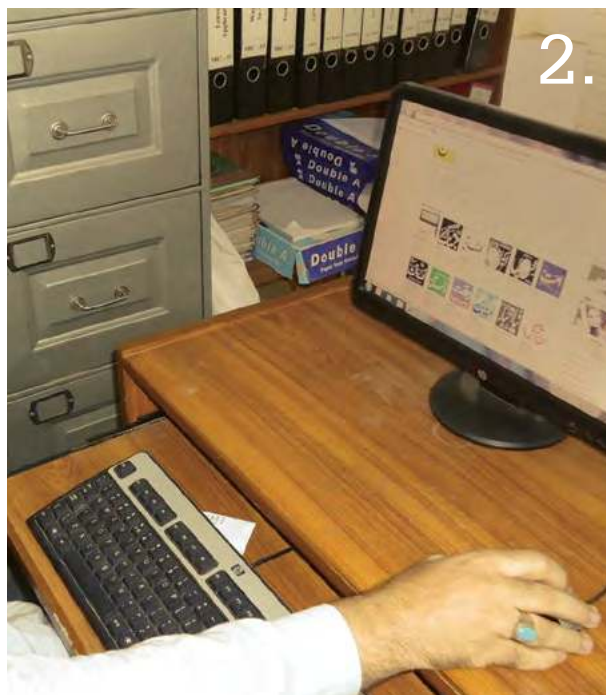
There are many ways that people could use FATA Info. Here is a sample use case to illustrate how the program might work and how different actors may interact with the system and with each other.



Requests for information are received.

People in FATA (**Requesters**) submit questions about events in or issues related to the region. This can be done by sending a text message to a FATA Info phone number, by filling out a form on its website, or by asking a family member or friend to do so.

Farooq, age 23, is from Mohmand. At the *hujra* last night, there was chatter about a Western organization named ANGO that was providing jobs locally. No one at the *hujra* had heard of ANGO. Farooq calls his brother Amjad, who is working in Karachi at a factory, to help him find out more. Amjad says he hasn't heard of ANGO.



Requests for information are posted and prioritized.

Questions are posted online on the FATA Info website. Community members can view, comment on, or vote for any submitted question.

Amjad goes to an internet cafe to try and find out more about ANGO. Since Amjad moved to Karachi, he has learned how to use the internet. Through searching online, he finds out that ANGO is doing work in Balochistan and is hiring for its offices in the US, but there is nothing about jobs in FATA. He posts Farooq's question on FATAInfo.com along with an explanation of why he thinks this question is important: If there are good job opportunities, he reasons, others can benefit as well. By the end of the day, 27 people have voted for his question.

Design Recommendation:

Draw on the motivation, access, and behaviors of the diaspora.



Researchers respond to information requests.

Certified FATA Info community members (**Aggregators/ Analysts**) volunteer to respond to posted questions. Many are members of the FATA diaspora—as a network, they have greater access to information sources than those in FATA and greater ability to analyze information.

Sumaira is scanning FATAInfo.com before her weekly Skype call with her family, who lives in FATA's Khyber Agency. Working in Kuala Lumpur, she thinks the site is useful for finding information her family might need. She found out about FATA Info through a Facebook group for the Pakistani diaspora that she belongs to. While she doesn't like the fact that FATA Info is run by a Western organization, she appreciates its detailed editorial policy and its active community manager who answers questions from users about the site.

Design Recommendation:

Clearly communicate programming goals and processes.

Sumaira sees Amjad's question and thinks of her own brothers back home, who are both looking for work. She signs up to answer the question. Having undergone two FATA Info trainings—she graduated from “Info Finder” to “Info Investigator” last month, and the badge is displayed on her profile page—Sumaira is certified to tackle this question, ranked a Level 2. She has found the trainings interesting and hopes to get to “Info Master,” another three levels away, some day.

Design Recommendation:

Train information providers to analyze, not just report on, news.

Her online research reveals that ANGO seems credible. Sumaira finds information about similar programs it has done in Afghanistan, and finds out about the organization's other work in Pakistan on the websites of the *Daily Aaj* and the *Express Tribune*. She finds out that in FATA, ANGO is not offering jobs; rather, it is starting a grants program that will award up to Rs. 50,000 (USD 508) to youth groups to implement projects to help their communities.



Verify collected information through local contacts.

Collected information can be sent for verification through a network of registered youth (**Verifiers**). Verification requests can be sent by SMS, email, or through social media channels.

While the information online seems credible, Sumaira is not convinced, and she knows that those requesting information will also want on-the-ground corroboration. Through the website, Sumaira sends out a question to the FATA Info Field Verifiers: "Have you received a grant from ANGO to support a community development project? If so, tell us about your experience!" Within an hour, she is alerted to two reports, one via SMS from Frontier Region Kohat and one via Twitter from Bajaur Agency. Both reply affirmatively and share their experiences as youth group members that applied for and received funding. The responses are logged on the FATA Info site but the verifiers' names and contact details are hidden.

Design Recommendation:

Leverage the drive, resources, and technical ability of FATA's youth.

Each verifier is paid Rs. 25 (USD 0.25) for the task, an amount specified by Amjad and paid through mobile credit transfer. For an additional fee, users can ask the Field Verifiers additional questions.

Design Recommendation:

Revise policies and operational structures to accommodate collaboration with smaller and/or independent actors.



Publish news information and analysis.

Collected information is published by the **Aggregators/Analysts** with source information and accompanying analyses.

Sumaira compiles all the information she has about ANGO and the work that it has been doing, and her field verification reports, into a FATA Info File. After she hits "publish", the website prompts her: "Do you want to record your findings in a one-minute summary audio file?" Sumaira clicks "yes", as she thinks many people will be interested in the information and she knows how hard it is for many to access the internet. Since she's done the research already and FATA Info is growing its audio distribution program, Sumaira thinks she might as well. She records her audio Info File, guided by a tutorial from the site.



Package and distribute information through individuals.

Responses to questions are packaged in multiple formats and distributed through social networks.

Amjad receives a text message saying his Info File is ready. He goes online to read what Sumaira has posted, then calls his brother to relay the information. While Farooq is disappointed—he had wanted a job, not a grant—he says that their cousin Ghawas is a member of a youth group. Amjad downloads the Info File, which includes a copy of ANGO’s grant application, and emails it to Ghawas.

While Amjad is on the site, he scans the top-rated questions of the day. They include: “What regions is it safe to take children for polio vaccinations?” (answered by a woman in Peshawar whose nephew had visited from South Waziristan to get immunized) and “How can I get in touch with people in Jalojai [a camp for internally displaced persons]?” (answered by a man in Lahore with friends in the camp).

The month’s most popular question, “Why do people want to ban the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR)?”, has a sizeable Info File, with 12 members of the FATA Info community—eight of which are Info Masters—contributing information and analysis. The File traces the history of FCR, compares it to Pakistani laws, and includes news clippings about FCR. Amjad finds it very interesting and records the twenty-minute audio summary on to the cassette tape he will send to his family this week. He likes giving them educational information in addition to his regular updates about life in Karachi and saving for marriage.

Design Recommendation:

Make use of compact, easily shareable, and discreet vessels.

Upon receiving his brother’s tape in the mail, Farooq takes it to their local barber, Abdul. Farooq is interested by what he hears and wants Abdul to ask his customers, which includes landlords and merchants, what they think about FCR. A week later, he returns to the shop. Abdul says that everyone has been talking about the tape and that one of his customers, a teacher, told him about a local group that opposes FCR. He encouraged Abdul to join. Farooq says he’s interested in learning about this group, and Abdul agrees to keep him updated.

Design Recommendation:

Employ trusted citizen sources.



Distribute information through media partnerships.

Responses to questions are disseminated through select media channels (**Distributors**) to ensure wider reach.

The following week, Farooq is listening to Radio Deewa's new weekly program "Highlights from FATA Info".

Design Recommendation:

Affiliate with established brands with regional presence.

The feature story is about Rs. 18 billion (USD 183 million) in spending that the government had allocated for development in FATA. On-the-ground evidence of the spending has been sparse. The story is a mix of research from FATA Info and Deewa's own reporting. Over a dozen Field Verifiers contributed to the story—all were from areas where infrastructure projects were supposed to have been initiated through this budget; only two reported seeing projects on the ground.

That night, everyone at Farooq's *hujra* is talking about the story. They agree that Arif, a university graduate who uses internet on his phone, will submit a request to FATA Info to ask which government agency was responsible for the Rs. 18 billion and what they have done with the money. Arif agrees to report back to the group what he finds.

Design Recommendation:

Seed conversations about the role of institutions in regional development.

Design Recommendation:

Develop appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to understand programmatic impact.

Further Considerations

The concept for FATA Info was informed by the expressed needs and observed capabilities of FATA's residents surfaced by this study. Effectively implementing such a project will require further research and design, and iterative testing and development. Additional aspects that require examination include:

Incentives for Participation:

While all identified actors have existing motivation to use FATA Info, what are ways the program can further incentivize and sustain participation? Mechanisms may be financial (e.g. payment for task completion), social (e.g. applaud user contribution through valued networks), or otherwise (e.g. integrate game mechanisms to encourage participation).

Quality Assurance Processes:

Establishing mechanisms to verify information from the FATA Info communities will be critical. These may include quality control units within the user community and different processes for fact-checking depending on the type of question being answer. For Verifiers, the system can compare submissions to other verification submissions for similar questions. Anomalies can trigger an audit of the Verifier's account. If a Verifier is found to deliver faulty information consistently, their account can be suspended or terminated.

Financial Models:

There are several options for financing and sustaining a project like FATA Info. They include: fee-for-service, whereby users pay for each information request fulfilled or each fact verified; crowdfunding, where multiple users can pool funds for the requests they want fulfilled; donor- or grant-based funding; or any combination of the above. Freemium and/or paywall models also offer certain types of services or content for free, and require fees for other, premium products. Finding a model that allows the project to be self-sustaining will require creativity and iteration.

Additional Design Concepts

FATA Info is just one example of how this research can support media development in FATA. Several other programmatic ideas came out of this study. They include:

Compile and collate information about services available in the region. Distribute widely through multiple channels.

Useful information could cover public health campaigns or vaccination programs from local health workers; education opportunities from government and development organizations; or other social programs or services. Information could be distributed through weekly features in newspapers, segments on radio programs, via social media accounts, or through branching human networks by targeting nodes that are at the center of or that move between information networks.

Support media literacy among news consumers.

This can be accomplished through instructional programming on existing, trusted sources, such as media channels that have credibility among FATA's residents (e.g. satellite television channels, or foreign radio stations). Programming can help residents identify elements of quality reporting; understand the impact of government constraints on media in FATA; and analyze the biases and quality of popular news stories.

Foster and facilitate youth reporting on community stories.

Solicit contributions of content (text, audio, or visual) from youth in FATA in response to specific prompts that encourage them to tell stories about their communities. The submissions can be published in outlets with wide or influential audiences. Internews and National Geographic have been supporting photojournalism training for youth in the region; graduates of their training now have the equipment and skills to share stories from FATA, but require editorial direction and

support and outlets for publication.

Record and distribute regular news digests produced across the region.









Appointed representatives in different towns and villages can be tasked to record news from the region on cassette tapes at regular intervals. A network of long-distance drivers can collect the cassettes and compile them into a master recording to be distributed back to contributors and through outlets such as *hujras*, where people can gather and discuss the information, and retail outlets, where people can listen in private or without expectation of participating in dialogue.

Build upon existing service delivery networks.

Existing development organizations provide critical or valuable services to FATA's residents that can be leveraged by new programs. For example, landmine survivor assistance centers can serve as distribution channels for information about social services that help survivors and their communities.⁶² People who use such centers often view themselves—or are viewed—as burdens on their communities and families. The chance to serve as an information provider would afford them a means of gaining status in their communities.

Related Reading

The FATA Info model draws upon insights about the people of FATA and the challenges they face gleaned through field research. It also builds upon existing examples of diaspora engagement in home-country development, globally and in Pakistan; crowdsourcing and crowdfunding for news production, as well as for relief and development efforts; and models for small task assignment and compensation. The following resources provide more context about existing applications of these concepts:

-  **Pakistan Center for Philanthropy:**
 A Pakistani non-profit that helps diaspora populations to support community development in Pakistan.
-  **The Role of Crowdsourcing for Better Governance in International Development:**
 A primer on crowdsourcing as an informational resource for development, crisis response, and post-conflict recovery.
-  **Diaspora Philanthropy: Influences, Initiatives, and Issues**
 A 2007 study examining how diaspora populations participate in development projects and support communities in their home countries.
-  **Pakreport: Crowdsourcing for Multipurpose and Multicategory Climate-related Disaster Reporting:**
 A case study on how relief agencies, volunteers worldwide, and crisis-mapping organizations mobilized to respond to the 2010 floods in Pakistan.
-  **PakAlumni Worldwide:**
 A global social network for Pakistani diaspora around the world with over 1,300 members.
-  **Improving Twitter Search with Real-Time Human Computation:**
 How the social media platform Twitter uses Amazon's Mechanical Turk, an online marketplace for on-demand labor for small tasks, to find the answers to human search queries.
-  **The Impact of Crowdfunding on Journalism: A Case of Spot.us:**
 A paper about collective intelligence and crowd-supported financing for journalism.
-  **Lessons in How to Crowdfund Journalism from ProPublica:**
 An article about how ProPublica, a non-profit investigative journalism platform, uses crowd participation.

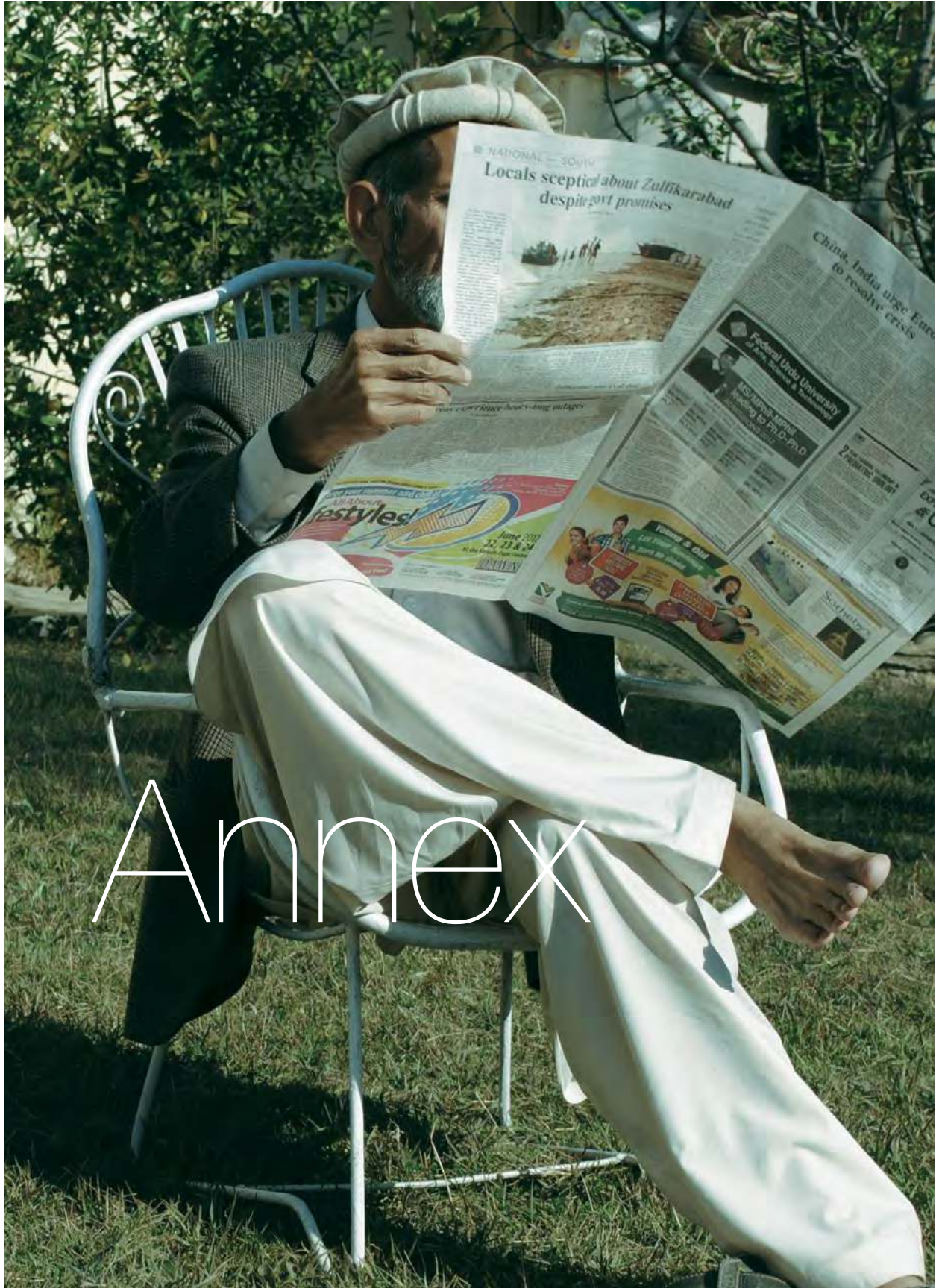


Concluding Thoughts

While most of this publication has discussed how to get critical, relevant information to the people of FATA, it is equally important to get accurate information about FATA out to the rest of the world. The global public, and even Pakistanis from other parts of the country, have limited access to and understanding of the region and its people.

Consequently, policy and programming decisions—defense, military, and development—are made without sufficiently nuanced appreciations of those they impact, and the significant human costs they impose. Understanding the experiences of FATA's residents can help policymakers make more responsible decisions, and help outside actors understand how to provide information or other services that can help improve their circumstances.





Annex



REBOOT

Reboot is working toward a 21st century social contract.

Around the world, new models of engagement are reshaping the relationship between citizens and institutions acting in the public interest. They present opportunities for greater justice, accountability, and inclusivity in the structures that affect our lives. Reboot is dedicated to unlocking this potential.

We help the world's leading organizations become more responsive to the communities they serve. We design and implement systems that enable institutions and individuals to engage one another in tackling social challenges.

Empathy is integral to our approach. We use applied ethnography to better understand people and the environments they inhabit. We have particular expertise in reaching underserved populations. Incorporating marginalized voices into program design allows us to create inclusive systems based around human needs and aspirations.

We employ this human-centered approach in helping our organizational partners turn a vision of change into action. We cultivate the internal processes, tools, and cultures necessary to balance short-term organizational priorities with long-term public interests. Our process promotes enduring change, delivered through systems that are tailored to both institutions and individuals alike.

Reboot's efforts have improved human development outcomes worldwide. Our experience is cross-disciplinary and our approach collaborative. From public financial management in Nigeria, to media development in Pakistan, to civic engagement in the United States and beyond, our work allows citizens to make their voices heard and live better lives.

These are our contributions to the promise of better governance and the hope of realizing a 21st century social contract.

www.Reboot.org



Internews is an international nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower local media worldwide to give people the news and information they need, the ability to connect and the means to make their voices heard. Internews provides communities the resources to produce local news and information with integrity and independence.

With global expertise and reach, Internews trains both media professionals and citizen journalists, introduces innovative media solutions, increases coverage of vital issues and helps establish policies needed for open access to information.

www.internews.org

The Internews Center for Innovation & Learning

Building upon the breadth and depth of Internews' activities and experience accumulated over a 30 year history of promoting independent media in more than 80 countries around the world, the Internews Center for Innovation & Learning (ICIL) supports, captures, and shares innovative approaches to communication through creative research and development worldwide.

Founded in 2011, ICIL strives to balance local expertise and global learning in support of our vision that healthy information ecosystems are a root solution to furthering human progress. ICIL serves as an open knowledge hub that develops and inspires collaborative investigation and experimentation. Through a rigorous, iterative process of pilots and experimental research ICIL seeks to contribute information and tools to better understand the changing world of communications.

This is far from a solo endeavor. Internews hopes that ICIL activities will engage and benefit both those working at the front lines of global development and the communities they serve.

www.innovation.internews.org



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