

# SHORTWAVE RADIO ALIVE AND ALL-IMPORTANT

Shortwave radio continues to be a crucial means of informing and educating people around the world - despite increasing access to FM and television.

## Current Shortwave Audience Figures for BBC World Service:

- The BBC World Service shortwave audience has grown by nearly 7 million since 2006 (a 7% increase). In addition, nearly 10 million has been added to the global estimate from surveys in places not previously included.
- 58% of the BBC's radio audiences – **107 million people** – listen to BBC World Service on shortwave.
- In Asia and the Pacific region, **59 million** access BBC World Service via shortwave including 5.9 million in Afghanistan, 15 million in Bangladesh, 7.1 million in Burma, 16.6 million in India, and 6.1 million in Pakistan.
- In Africa and the Middle East, **45 million** listen to BBC World Service on shortwave including 22.3 million in Nigeria and 5.7 million in DR Congo.

## Shortwave reaches listeners where other methods of delivery cannot

Shortwave broadcasting is especially popular where other platforms such as satellite, FM or internet are unavailable because of high cost, geographical location, lack of infrastructure or political restrictions. Shortwave also provides a bridge across the Digital Divide, giving some of the most disadvantaged and isolated people in the world access to news and information otherwise outside their reach. Shortwave meets the need, highlighted in the WSIS Geneva and Tunis Political Declarations and Action Plans, to provide affordable content globally to improve people's lives.

*Khaza Aw Nananai Narai (Afghan Women's Hour) is one of my favourite programmes. It has given a voice to the most neglected, suppressed and oppressed section of our society. Our... male-dominated society has always been trying to silence the voice of this neglected section but you have provided them a good forum where they can express their feelings openly. Please keep it up.*

Listener from Khost, Afghanistan

Shortwave is an economical and efficient delivery method because of the propagational coverage benefits. It can reach targets at significant distances from the transmitter and cover large geographical areas. For example, BBC World Service uses transmitters in the UK to reach Africa. The 6 and 7 MHz bands propagate well from Europe in hours of darkness but the congestion in these bands causes problems with delivering the programmes to listeners. The 4-5 MHz bands are used extensively for national broadcasting in tropical areas but there is still no spectrum available here for international broadcasting.

## Shortwave is vital in regions affected by political instability, war or natural disaster and is used to promote health, good governance and accountability

Shortwave is used to reach audiences displaced by war, famine or natural disasters, helping people to return to their homes or broadcasting health information. In 2005, following the devastation of South Asia earthquake, BBC World Service set up special broadcasts to the affected areas in North Pakistan and Kashmir:

*The BBC was the only source for us here to know about the latest situation of the earthquake. Everything in our area was razed to the ground by the earthquake, and the radio set and the BBC transmissions were the only source of information for us. We are grateful to the BBC for its moment-to-moment coverage.*

Listener from North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan

In West Africa, a unique cross-border radio station, WADR, uses shortwave, in addition to its urban FM and satellite services, to cover rural areas in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Senegal. The broadcasts help these neighbouring countries to recover from years of war and disruption.

The BBC World Service Trust, the BBC's international development charity, says shortwave is vital for meeting the needs of millions who are not within range of FM transmitters. Examples include:

- **Darfur Lifeline Programme** - humanitarian radio for internally displaced persons in Sudan. Shortwave broadcasts stretch across the region, reaching refugees in Chad and the Central African Republic.
- **Kimasomaso** – a weekly youth programme discussing HIV/Aids and other issues related to sexual and reproductive health. The programme aims to reach Kiswahili-speaking young people across East Africa who have little or no access to such life-saving information.

## Shortwave helps to provide education

Some broadcasters and NGOs use shortwave radio to train people in the developing world, especially in Africa and Asia. The technical, editorial and financial skill sets offered via shortwave radio help local talent to run their own commercial stations in the future.

Some international broadcasters use shortwave to educate people as lessons are aired to schools where the teachers and pupils tune in to shortwave. BBC Learning English programmes reach millions of listeners via shortwave.

## Shortwave needs your help

Shortwave remains an important tool in international broadcasting. Be it India or northern Nigeria, rural Pakistan or Kenya, Tanzania, DR Congo, Afghanistan, Burma or Somalia - and around the world, many people are **still dependent on shortwave radio as their window into the world.**

# SHORTWAVE RADIO ALIVE AND ALL-IMPORTANT

WRC-07 Agenda Item 1.13 offers the best opportunity for many years for the ITU to address the audibility problems of shortwave broadcasters caused by overcrowded spectrum.

## Do broadcasters still use HF?

- Yes. HF is still the only way to reach some key audiences (see overleaf)
- Recent statistics from the HFCC submitted to the ITU show HF usage is significant.\*

## Do broadcasters really need more HF spectrum?

- Yes. More than 40% of transmitter hours in the 6, 7 and 9 MHz bands suffer co- and adjacent channel interference.\*
- To escape this congestion, some administrations already allow broadcasting in non-broadcasting spectrum. An estimated 330 kHz of spectrum is already in use outside the broadcasting bands between 4-10 MHz. \*\*
- This level of broadcasting already in bands allocated to other services shows that it is possible for spectrum to be shared. Broadcasters seek to formalise the situation which already exists.

## Is it only the BBC asking for more HF spectrum?

- No. The World Broadcasting Union (WBU) "supports the case for extra broadcasting spectrum in the range 4-10 MHz, with a view to satisfy this need" and the WBU represents broadcasting unions from all regions: ABU (Asia-Pacific), ASBU (Arab States), CBU (Caribbean), EBU (Europe), NABA (North America), AIR – IAB (Central and South America) and URTNA (Africa).

## Is the congestion in the lower bands only a problem in some parts of the world?

- No. Some regions do have higher levels of congestion in the lower bands than others (mid to high latitudes have the biggest problem). However, international HF broadcasting requires both the transmit and the receive locations to be considered. Looking only at a national situation will not address the broadcasting issue (eg, anyone wishing to broadcast into Europe is affected by the congestion in Europe).

## Won't the other services be disadvantaged if broadcasters get extra spectrum?

- No - not if adequate compensation is part of the solution. A solution must offer something for all HF services.
- The maritime community wants to upgrade its communications technology. This requires modifications to the HF channel plans and sub-band divisions for maritime mobile service set out in Appendix 17 of the Radio Regulations.
- The UK Ministry of Defence state "they are actively participating in WRC AI 1.13 to find an answer to Resolution 544 that supports the justified needs of all the services concerned to ensure the future effective use of this important HF radio resource."
- The UK believes that the compensation offered in the CEPT proposal on Agenda Item 1.13 brings benefits to the fixed and maritime services as well as to the broadcasters.

## Does HF have a future?

- All services are now looking at new technologies for use at HF. To fully realise the benefits of these, every opportunity to use HF more flexibly and efficiently needs to be considered.
- Based on the latest BBC audience statistics and research, there always will be a significant audience for analogue HF somewhere in the world.
- DRM (digital HF) provides a higher quality service compared to traditional analogue. Hear it for yourself and see the latest developments at the DRM demonstration in the CCV building.

\* see ITU-R document 6E/477 \*\*see HFCC data and data from CEPT monitoring campaign

*BBC World Service would like to thank VT Communications for the additional information on shortwave usage for broadcasters. If you would like any further information or have any questions, please contact Ms Cath Westcott, Senior Frequency Manager of BBC World Service at [cath.westcott@bbc.co.uk](mailto:cath.westcott@bbc.co.uk)*

