

First Youth Chat Radio Program Airs in Yemen

Sana'a (August 3, 2010) – The first episode of a new radio program produced by youth for youth and created by international non-profit Equal Access successfully aired in Yemen last week.

The first of its kind, this youth radio series, titled *Let's Be the Best Together (Ma'an Leenkon Alafdal)*, combines a chat show and entertainment with life skills and information to empower and engage youth across Yemen.

"I enjoyed hearing the program, especially the letter and information sections," one youth listener from Hadramout governorate said. *"For sure, I am sending you a message soon to solve my problem."*

Hosted by two youth -- one female and one male -- the program features engaging discussions, listener perspectives, interviews, a mini-drama segment, music, poetry, and vox pops featuring voices from across the country.

This first episode focused on how to leverage free time to learn new skills and aired one week ago on government-run radio stations. The program can be heard weekly in Sana'a, Aden, Lahj, Taiz, Hudaidah and Hadramout governorates.

The hosts discussed how to use training and volunteering opportunities to improve their lives. Building on this theme, the drama segment told the story of a girl who invested her free time positively by attending computer and English courses and now has a job. The unique appeal of this program, as noted by many youth listeners in response to the first episode, is that the content addresses youth issues and concerns from a youth perspective. This 32-episode series will cover a range of issues and is supported by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

Upcoming episode topics and themes include friendship, active citizenship, family relationships, early marriage, career choices and healthy lifestyles. Programs will continue to highlight youth voices and opportunities as well as feature scholars, poets, and religious leaders.

"[The program] has a lot of new info that I have never heard before from Yemeni radio," said a youth from Taiz governorate. Providing information and perspectives that foster dialogue and action among Yemeni youth is a key goal for Equal Access and for the program. The initial response to the program has been overwhelmingly positive, with youth from across the country voicing support and interest.

"Keep it coming Let's Be the Best Together and Equal Access," said one youth from Lahj governorate. *"Stay in Yemen forever...we need you."*

A communications for social change organization that combines the power of media with grassroots community mobilization, Equal Access has been active in Yemen since 2009. In addition to innovative media programming, EA is working to increase youth participation through leadership workshops and roundtable forums.

"Complementing our radio broadcasts with youth leadership training and community roundtables allows us to specifically address issues at the local level, while also reaching a broad portion of the population," Equal Access Yemen Country Director Amminadab Muyaneza said. *"With youth making up more than 70 percent of the population of Yemen, the prosperity and stability of the country hinges on engaging and empowering them. And this program is doing exactly that."*