



PHOTO & CAPTION

Happy Birthday, Independent Radio 68H



Photo: USAID/Virginia L. Foley

In the late 1990s, when the last independent magazine in Indonesia was closed down, journalists reacted by forming an underground society to promote uncensored dissemination of news. After political changes brought greater press freedoms in 1999, the journalists continued honoring their commitment to a free and independent media, this time out in the open. With help from a USAID grant, they launched an independent radio station: Radio 68H. Today, the station promotes free speech and a free press through trusted news coverage. In a way, these veteran journalists are also promoting democracy, since the radio station encourages citizens to stay informed and participate more in politics.

Radio News 68H technician Joni Yohanes broadcasting news that reaches eight million men and women across Indonesia and throughout Asia.

Since the station went on the air in 1999, its staff has grown from seven to 430. Its reach has also expanded — Radio News 68H now broadcasts to much of Asia. Programs are broadcast from Jakarta 18 hours each day and are aired throughout all of Indonesia. Internationally, its programs can be heard on Radio Netherlands and on Australia's SBS Radio.

One of the station's weekly radio programs, "Asia Calling," provides news roundups of major stories in Southeast and East Asia in both English and Indonesian. The program is broadcast on 80 stations throughout Indonesia, Cambodia, the Philippines, and East Timor. It covers topics like free trade, terrorism, security, the need for social freedoms, economic independence, and environmental issues. Listeners provide feedback on what they have heard and offer ideas on programming. Transcripts and recordings are also available on the Internet.

For seven years, Radio 68H's coverage has brought news stories, hourly bulletins, current affairs programs, and sports round-ups to 8 million men and women in 360 towns and cities. The radio's growing audience shows that there is a real demand for a vibrant, free, and independent press — and the journalists at the station have shown that they're eager to provide it.